

'Faculty War' of 1830s cost school four professors

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president of Soule University.

The third professor, Dodds, was practically "home grown," since he arrived in Bloomington with his family when he was 13 years old. After graduation from the college in 1834, he was hired by the trustees to teach in the preparatory school. He was promoted to professor of mathematics in 1834.

Of Dodds, alumni Elder wrote, "Professor Dodds was a handsome young man and a Christian gentleman. He had dignity but sometimes failed to leave the impression on the minds of his pupils that he was thoroughly master of the situation."

After his dismissal from the university faculty, he went to Louisville to study medicine. He practiced in Corydon for a couple of years and returned to Bloomington to set up his office.

Parks, Ruter and Dodds were all fired from the faculty in a single resolution of the trustees. They had been dragged either willingly or unwittingly into the factionalism of the faculty war.

That term implies that the controversy was confined to the campus. Actually what transpired during those years spread beyond the boundaries of the little college at Second and College and included townspeople as well as faculty. Dr. William C. Foster, a Bloomington physician and a retiring member of the trustees, charged President Wylie with spending an unauthorized \$1,500 for library books and refusing to let Parks, Ruter and Dodds vote in faculty meetings. Furthermore, Foster hinted that the president favored Presbyterians.

Another townsperson, Cornelius Pering, the principal of the Female Seminary, sided with Wylie and said that Foster was about as knowledgeable about classic library books as "a barnyard cock was about the interior of a jewelry store." As for the charge that Wylie favored Presbyterian faculty members, Foster's charges didn't really hold any water. Though Ruter was a Methodist, Dodds was a Presbyterian and married to Wylie's daughter, Mary, to boot.

Perhaps the underlying cause of the dismissal of Parks, Ruter and Dodds was that Foster had pushed them into "the eye of the storm" over who was running the university after all. Certainly the controversy was damaging the young school. In two years the enrollment dropped from 62 to 41, a loss the school could ill afford.

Dodds' departure from the university was the most graceful — perhaps because of his relationship to the president. IU historian, Theophilus Wylie, hinted that Dodds' dismissal was more a mat-

ter of university finances than as a result of his being involved in any controversy.

Wylie wrote, "That no fault was found with Professor Dodds is shown by the following resolution of the Board, passed April, 1840, on motion of Governor W i l l i a m Hendricks: 'Resolved, That the Board of Trustees think it due to James F. Dodds, for some time Professor in the University, to testify to his industry and fidelity in filling the duties of his office. His dismissal was not on account of any fault alleged against him, but as a matter of expediency, resulting from the very peculiar circumstances in which it took place.'"

Whatever the circumstances, the school year of 1839 began with a professors' roster consisting of President Wylie, Theophilus Wylie, and Matthew Campbell, who taught in the preparatory school.

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