

# Teachers given little respect in mid-1800s

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diana have public tax-supported schools? A total of 1,825 Monroe Countians expressed their opinions at the polls. The vote was 377 for public schools and 1,448 against them.

Small wonder then that Woodburn found it difficult to summon up any personal pride in his profession. Part of the problem was that teaching had little or no status in the community life. he wrote: "When our ministers lose a few Sabbaths' preaching they are not required to make it up at the end of the year or to preach a few Saturdays as they go along, or have their salary curtailed . . . The teacher's work is too often measured by that of the manual laborer."

Having had his pay docked for not teaching on the Fourth of July, Woodburn deplored that on a national holiday when businesses were shut down, school was expected to "keep." And though the teacher was required to be in the classroom on such occasions, the parents had a very cavalier attitude about their children's attendance on those days or any others. Woodburn's recollection was that it was well-nigh impossible to classify his pupils. "One must stay from school to

go to the mill; one to the blacksmith to get Dobbin shod; one to go to town for something; one to go hunting with Dad. If there is anything else they want to do, school will not hinder. The absentees drag along in their classes and then complain that a day or two lost from school every week has hindered them in their progress. In a term of four months, on no two days in succession were the same pupils in attendance."

Woodburn also cited the prejudice in his day against female teachers. Reflecting on that prejudice, he recalled, "Why, female teachers were not wanted in this county when I commenced teaching. A trustee who would have talked about employing a female teacher then would have been recommended as a fit subject for the insane asylum. Our farmers would as soon have thought of employing a tailor to sharpen their ploys or a carpenter to shoe their horses as of employing a female to teach their children."

It was Woodburn's belief that things could be better that compelled him to be a leader in the organization of the first teachers association in Monroe County in 1843.

*Next week: A closer look at early county schools.*