



*B.B. Dougherty on the day
of his retirement in 1955
(Photograph courtesy of Special
Collections, Appalachian State
University)*

Recalling Dr. Dougherty

A LONG CAREER

After Lillie died in 1945, Blan Dougherty was the only one left of the trio to carry on the family vision for a grand teachers' school in the mountains.

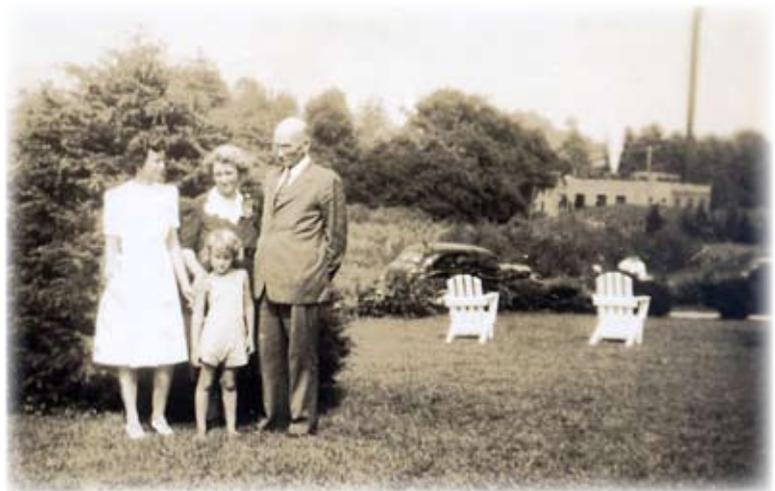
Tireless as an advocate for Appalachian, Dr. Dougherty wrote, traveled, and spoke almost continually before his retirement. As he began his sixth decade at the head of the institution he founded, *The Watauga Democrat* said that he "remains the same energetic little man who had made hundreds of trips to Raleigh and other towns in the interest of his school."³⁰⁶

The job of president called for responsibility and leadership on many fronts, all of which he provided diligently, being the consummate "type-A" personality; but by the mid 1950s the times had changed vastly from the 1890s, and it was time for the octogenarian to retire. Blanford Barnard Dougherty had served as the president of Appalachian through World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, and ten U.S. Presidents (including FDR's four terms.)³⁰⁷

Upon his retirement in May of 1955, Dr. Dougherty presented the report on the school's endowment fund. "I have raised more money for the Endowment Fund than the state has ever paid me," he boasted. He spent all his life seeking to benefit the college.³⁰⁸



Dr. Dougherty at the time of his retirement (Photograph courtesy of Special Collections, Appalachian State University)



Four generations: Virginia, Clara, Blan, and Nancy in the front. Notice the power plant in the background of the Dougherty front lawn.

At his funeral, a friend of the family noted that Blan Dougherty more than attained his three life goals: to be a good teacher, to administer school affairs in the best way, and to do something for the public schools in North Carolina.³⁰⁹ D. Hiden Ramsey, [editor of the *Ashville Citizen-Times* and North Carolina State Board of Higher Education chairman,] spoke at the funeral held at the First Baptist Church of Boone:

Blanford Barnard Dougherty was not born with a textbook in his mouth. In the grimly disadvantaged days of his disadvantaged youth, there was no royal road to learning in this mountain region.

He became an educated man solely because he was unshakably determined to become an educated man. . . .

Blan Dougherty was not content to obtain an education only for himself. He coveted for all of the promising youth of this mountain section what he won for himself through unusual fixity of purpose and personal sacrifice.

Early in life, he dedicated himself to education and that dedication reached in the idealism of youth remained with him until the end. . . .

Dr. Dougherty grew in stature and spirit with the years. He became the trusted friend and advisor of governors. His reputation spread to all sections of North Carolina.

But he never grew away from the people of this section. They always came first in his affections and loyalties. He knew full well that he could not obtain more educational opportunities for the youth of this section without fostering richer educational opportunities for all of the youth of all sections of North Carolina. But his ear was always here – in Boone where he was the first citizen, in northwestern North Carolina to whose economic and educational progress he made such lasting contributions.³¹⁰

Dr. Ramsey went on to describe Dr. Dougherty's contribution to the state Board of Higher Education:

To every question he brought mature judgment and a rare knowledge of the educational history and problems of the state. He was truly a Nestor—an elder statesman. (He rarely spoke in the Board [State Board of Education] meetings. He never spoke idly or purposelessly, but when he did speak, we listened.)³¹¹

After the death of B. B. Dougherty, *The Charlotte Observer* wrote (1957):

He trumpeted the blessings of better teachers and better schools throughout the mountain country. He looked ever the pedagogue. He was tall and thin, slow and fragile, very patient and very, very deliberate. When he talked it was like a kitten purring. He besieged every General Assembly for fifty years, hunting money for schools in general and his school in particular. He was a master beggar.³¹²