

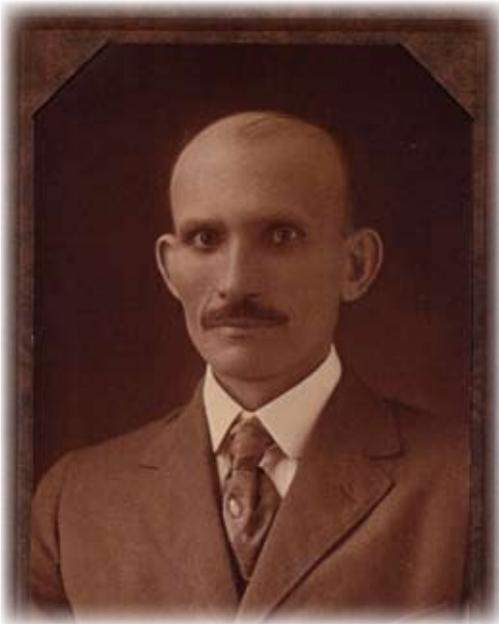
*Watauga Academy. The building stood in the center of the campus from 1899 to 1946, when it burned.*

# *A State-Supported School: Appalachian Training School*

## **THE NEWLAND BILL: STATE SUPPORT FOR THE SCHOOL, 1903**

As Superintendent of Watauga County Schools, Blan Dougherty saw the poor quality of teaching and the need for properly trained teachers in the schools. He recognized that the way to raise the quality of education for students was to improve the education of teachers. Teachers needed the additional training the new school had to offer, but they could hardly afford it on salaries of \$21.25 per month—less than what was paid the man who “shoed the horse and plowed the corn.” To make matters worse, they could only teach four months out of twelve.<sup>154</sup> Attracting and keeping qualified teachers in the county was a serious problem.

Professor Blan also realized there was a need for money to expand the school. Other sections of the state had special schools to educate teachers. Dougherty was adamant that the “lost provinces” of the North Carolina mountains needed access to qualified teachers, as well as a place to train them. He reasoned that the citizens of the whole state had been taxed for the university (UNC-Chapel Hill) for more than a century, but that it had “affected his county very little.”<sup>155</sup> He felt the state should do more to support the northwestern counties and that the area desperately needed a state-supported school.



*Blanford Barnard Dougherty and Dauphin Disco Dougherty around 1903*

Charles B. Aycock had become Governor of North Carolina in 1901, promising in his campaign tour in 1900: "If you vote for me, . . . I shall devote the four years of my official term to the upbuilding of the public schools of North Carolina. I shall endeavor for every child in the State to get an education."<sup>156</sup> Three significant voices for education in North Carolina, Edwin A. Alderman (who had been President of UNC when Blan attended), Walter Hines Page and Charles D. McIver, were all on the Southern Educational Board, appointed by the Conference on Southern Education in 1901, whose goal was publicity for the cause of better education for all.<sup>157</sup> These men continued Aycock's campaign for North Carolina schools and helped to distribute funds that were so evidently needed for schoolhouses and teacher salaries. J. Y. Joyner, a professor at the State Normal and Industrial School, was appointed to the Board in 1902 and wrote concerning teachers' salaries:

As long as the annual salary paid the teacher who works with the immortal stuff of mind and soul is less than that paid the rudest workers in wood and iron, less than that paid the man that shoes your horse or plows your corn or paints your house or keeps your jail, the best talent cannot be secured and kept in the teaching profession—the teaching profession must continue to be made in many instances but a stepping-stone to more profitable employments or a means of pensioning inefficient and needy mediocrity.<sup>158</sup>

The State of North Carolina had given Robert Martin funding for Cullowhee High School, in the southwestern mountains of North Carolina, to become a teacher-training center—a normal school. A normal school was a school created to train high school students to be teachers. Its purpose was to establish teaching standards or *norms*. Most normal schools are now called teachers' colleges; however, in some places, the term "normal school" is still used.<sup>159</sup> Madison and Blan Dougherty were serving as instructors in the summer school for teachers in 1902 at Mars Hill College, and Blan became fascinated when he learned about Cullowhee's appropriation from the state for the support of a normal school.<sup>160</sup> In college at Chapel Hill, Blan had been indoctrinated in the importance of teacher training by his professors, Edwin A. Alderman (then President of UNC) and M. C. S. Noble. "He plied Madison with questions about how to get state aid for teacher training, and by the end of the summer he had fixed his determination on turning Watauga Academy into a teacher-training school with state support."<sup>161</sup>

Making his first visit to the state legislature, Blan was to face the harrowing experience of being opposed by, of all people, Governor Aycock and Charles McIver.<sup>162</sup> Month after month in 1902, Blan appealed to the state legislature and other influential educators in his drive to obtain funding for a teacher-training school. Records show that he not only wrote letters, but also had meetings with James Y. Joyner, state superintendent of schools; Francis P. Venable, president of the University of North Carolina; Charles McIver, president of the State Normal and Industrial College; and many others. The process was difficult, but Blan Dougherty remained undaunted in his resolve for a state-supported school.

With characteristic boldness, the young professor planned to take his proposals to the North Carolina General Assembly in January 1903. He turned to Captain Edward F. Lovill, Confederate soldier, one of Watauga County's best lawyers and a public-spirited man who was always ready for action.<sup>163</sup> Much later, in 1955, Blan Dougherty recounted the events of that day: