



Mountain Educators

THE DOUGHERTY FAMILY AND THE
FIRST FIFTY YEARS OF APPALACHIAN

DORIS PERRY STAM



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*Cover: Graduates line up in front of Watauga Academy
and Science Hall, c. 1912. (Photograph courtesy of Special
Collections, Appalachian State University)*

*Opposite Title page: The faculty of the Appalachian
Training School (c. 1904) with Blan Dougherty on the back
row, far right. Notice the grove of pines and the steps of
Watauga Academy on the far right. (Photograph courtesy
of Special Collections, Appalachian State University)*

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The Dougherty House on Rivers Street, built in 1903. Originally part of the Appalachian campus, the house was moved in 1989 and became the Appalachian Heritage Museum. Watercolor by Bob Cloud, 1976.

Preface

Like many of my cousins, I grew up going to see Aunt Annie at the Dougherty home on Rivers Street in Boone. While our parents and other adults “visited” for what seemed like an eternity, we children would play softly on the ancient, monstrous, out-of-tune square piano in the front parlor—a room with heavy, formal Victorian parlor furniture, velvet-covered and reminiscent of a different era—when fainting sofas were as common as sectionals are today. Then we’d scurry up the squeaky steps—dark and as steep as a ladder—to the upstairs with the bedrooms of peeling wallpaper and the bathroom with the claw-footed bathtub.

Our outdoor playground was the expansive front lawn where a huge mushroom-shaped millstone table sat under the arching cucumber tree. In exploring the then sixty-year-old house and its surroundings, we would dip the ladle in the cool, moss-enshrined spring down behind the garage, a later addition to the house, where the legendary Professor Blan had lived for a few years. We would sneak back into the house, to the squeaky-floor kitchen where the “Swap Shop” played on WATA radio and where the original ringer-topped washing machine stood by the door to the dining room—by that time, a mysterious, dark storage space, full of old furniture and Mama Dougherty’s fragile and colorful tea cup collection.

“Girls, go pick some berries in that pail,” my mother’s aunt would say in her quiet, tuneful voice. No summer visit to Aunt Annie’s was complete without time in Mama Dougherty’s expansive raspberry patch, a huge, rambling maze of thorny stalks, hidden passageways, patches of sunlight, and plenty of luscious fruit; the raspberries claimed the area on the side of the hill between the house and the old red barn. When we were especially brave—enough to face scolding by the adults—we would shimmy up on the tin roof that hung low by the back porch where the mountainside touched the back of the house.

As youngsters, the thought of attending college was the furthest thing from our minds; but nonetheless, this house and those fabled old people held a particular fascination for us. This book is my tribute to the three people who lived in that home on Rivers Street so long ago: Papa and Mama Dougherty (my mother’s maternal grandparents), and Uncle Blan, (her great-uncle). My childhood memories of Boone go hand-in-hand with the stories and places associated with those three mountain educators—prized oil portraits, familiar names on the sides of buildings, snippets of rich mountain lore, anecdotes told with great affection and pride, and a host of family hand-me-downs that my children will have to deal with at a later time.

Yes, I was impatient with all the talk of family and mountain history—a child has little use for family heritage and academic explorations of earlier generations—and I thought I would die of boredom when we would drive around in the back seat of Aunt Annie’s black sedan on Watauga County’s winding roads. I recall vaguely listening to stories about her parents and her uncle—the Doughertys.

Even some years later as a young adult, Daddy Brown’s book on Blan Dougherty was terribly boring for me. I had not yet learned to “connect the dots” between my own family tree and the nascent educational experiment that would become a major research university in the Southeast. Now, however, that book by

O. Lester Brown, my mother's father, is a treasure to me. Privately published by the family in the 1960s, it needed to be rewritten. As the years passed, my boredom was transformed into interest, then fascination—and finally to a passionate desire to carry the torch. I resolved to tell the story, to continue to chronicle the legacy of the Doughertys and the part they played in the birth and growth of Appalachian State University.

Much of what is contained in this volume is a reworking of information and stories found in my Daddy Brown's 1963 biography of Uncle Blan, *B. B. Dougherty: A Man to Match His Mountains*. Add to that material from Ruby Lanier's more scholarly 1974 book, *Blanford Barnard Dougherty: Mountain Educator*. (Both books are now out of print.) I have explored numerous articles from *The Watauga Democrat* as well as other published sources from the early days of the university and Aunt Annie's piles and piles of pictures and clippings related to the family and the school. I have spent countless hours interviewing and enjoying old folks in the mountains, but alas, too late to gather very much from the people who actually knew the famous Dougherty trio. My father, Dr. H. B. Perry Jr., or "Johnnie" as he was known in his hometown of Boone, was a walking history book of Watauga County—both he and Alfred Adams, who was a well-known local banker from an old Watauga County family, shared their many memories of the Doughertys. Wade Brown, Mrs. Zeb Shook, and Carl Day, all old-timers from Boone, spun many a tale for me as well. Although I began my story gathering rather late in their lives, I deeply value what I have gleaned from their memories.

This project could not have happened without the countless hours of loving help, patient computer counsel, and editorial guidance from my husband, Chip; and from my dear friend, neighbor, swimming buddy, and co-editor, Becky Copeland.

My mother, Lillie Brown Perry, is still alive and alert at age ninety, and this book is written in honor of her. She was named for her grandmother, Lillie Shull Dougherty, wife of D. D. Dougherty, known to the family as Mama Dougherty. Dedicated to their spouses and their churches, models of gracious hospitality and perseverance, they shared a love for family, mountain folk, and music; both are worthy of deep respect.

Now there is another Lillie in the family, a three-year-old, to carry on that name. Two nephews are now teaching at ASU. One son and two nephews have recently graduated. To them and all future generations of our family, may the Doughertys inspire a genuine service to our gracious Lord Christ and to all His creation.

Doris Perry Stam
Louisville, Kentucky



The author's parents, Lillie Brown Perry and Dr. H. B. Perry Jr.