



Lillie and Dauph Dougherty in the very early years of the school. Note Meadow View, their first home, and the first building on the campus (built 1899), and Howard's Knob in the background. They are standing in the front yard of the Dougherty home (built 1903) with Rivers Street beyond the fence.

Starting Watauga Academy

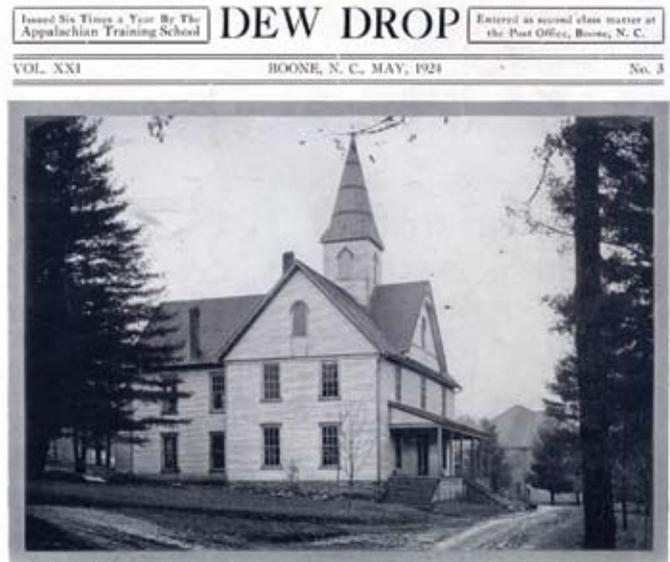
A NEW SCHOOL IN THE MOUNTAINS

Correspondence reveals that the idea of starting a new school had been brewing in the Dougherty family for some time, possibly originating with Daniel who wanted his boys to help educate the mountain people. As a spokesperson for the community, he also knew that Boone needed and wanted a school.¹⁰⁷ It is not known when the brothers decided that Boone, with a population of 200 in 1900, really held promise for a significant financial and educational venture. The church notes of Boone's First Baptist Church indicate that there had been unsuccessful efforts to establish a secondary school in Watauga County after the Civil War. The Three Forks Association of Baptist Churches had tried for years to start the Three Forks Baptist Institute, a high school. Even though a building had been nearly finished, the school never received the financial support it needed. The town was anxiously awaiting the decision of the Dougherty brothers regarding the beginning of their new school in Boone.¹⁰⁸

There were articles in *The Watauga Democrat* in January and June, surely written by their father, with hints that the brothers had agreed to start a private academy.¹⁰⁹ "It is rumored that two educators of no small worth are thinking of opening a high grade school in Boone. This, if true, is indeed encouraging, for there is nothing we need worse. The gentlemen are pushers and if they undertake it, they are sure to succeed. We trust they may."¹¹⁰



*Watauga Academy, built in 1899
(Photograph courtesy of Special
Collections, Appalachian State University)*



Watauga Academy (c. 1924)

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 shed
 —Yesterday was the Reunion of the Confederate Veterans at Lenoir and we trust it was a pleasant day for each and every one of them. We acknowledge with thanks an invitation to be present.
 —Prof. D. D. Dougherty arrived yesterday from Butler, Tenn. He brought his family with him and we learn that his wife will take charge of a music class in connection with Watauga Academy.
 —The young men of Watauga Academy have organized a debating society that will meet regularly each week. They will have a public debate at the court house in

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 2. History
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*The September 28, 1899,
 edition of The Watauga
 Democrat carried this notice.*

*Typical mountain farm
 (Photo courtesy of Ned
 Trivette)*



Watauga County had no high school in 1899. Ruby Lanier's biography of B. B. Dougherty describes the mountain life and commerce:

Still isolated because of its lack of good roads and a railroad, farming was the chief occupation of its people. Production on the farms was mainly for home use, though a few farmers drove cattle down the mountain or hitched their teams to wagons and hauled apples, potatoes, cabbage, wool, and chestnuts to the Piedmont markets.¹¹¹

Plans for the creation of a new school were being carefully made.¹¹² Squire Dougherty was persistent in urging both boys to pursue the enterprise. It appears that Dauph gave more serious consideration to the father's proposals. Blan did not appear enthusiastic about Boone as the location, answering Dauph's inquiries with a noncommittal "Yes, I am for a school anywhere."¹¹³ The zeal of his father and the faith of his brother, however, must have convinced him that the venture was worth the work and the risk.

On July 13, 1899, *The Watauga Democrat* announced that \$1,000 had been raised for the construction of a school: