

Atwater recalled as 'local character'

(Continued from Page 1)

fashion and got in return "a lusty Anglo Saxon epithet." Browning was asked to discuss his classroom prank with the faculty.

The Dagger, a campus publication, commented on the faculty and some got lukewarm and good-natured praise. Not Atwater. The editor called him poor old "Atty" — nothing but a hypocritical runt of a teacher who rode a pony teaching Latin and the alumni would burn him in effigy. "Seven to one for 'Atty'!" Hurrah! "Atty" has decided on one point. The first time that this idiot ever passed sentence on a point in Latin was on May 22, 1878, when he decided that a verb was in the singular, because it's subject was pure, a singular noun. He is a more profound reasoner than I conceived him to be." *The Dagger* editor also asked Atwater to resign.

HE DIDN'T ESCAPE other kinds of pranks. One evening he found a birch bark canoe with a lighted red lantern on his front lawn. The significance of that caper must have left him scratching his head.

In spite of his lack of popularity with his students, Atwater must have had the respect of his colleagues. In 1878 the faculty recommended a change in the grading system. He was appointed to the committee to come up with changes. In other years he served as secretary to the Board of Trustees and vice president.

But in March of 1893 during a changeover in IU's presidents (Coulter to Swain) the Board of Trustees asked Atwater and three other professors for their resignations at the end of the school year. The board's "reason" was that

several departments were going to be reorganized.

ATWATER WAS 53 years old and my no means ready for a rocking chair or a cane. It may have been that some of his other pastorates out of Bloomington took place during this period, but as early as 1890 he had begun investing in acreage at the edge of Bloomington. One of his earliest land transactions on the books in the Monroe County recorder's office lists him as a resident of Johnson County, Indiana, in 1893 after he left the IU faculty.

A 1900 record mentions "Atwater's Subdivision of the Seminary Addition." Ten transactions involving him or his wife indicate that he was both buying and selling real estate. It is said that he named Atwater Avenue after himself.

Already considered eccentric as a professor, anecdotes began to grow up around him. Known as a very frugal man, the most commonly known story is that he shopped for eggs with a board that had a hole in it. He would hand pick the eggs from a bin, and if they fit in the hole, he would reject them.

IN THE DAYS when the term "male chauvanist" hadn't even been thought of, he is said to have objected to females singing in the choir at the First Christian Church. Ironically, as a professor at IU he had been assigned the task of organizing a "feminine" literary society.

One of his last real estate transactions was to purchase a plot in Rose Hill Cemetery in 1915, four years before his death. Despite his foresight, he must have forgotten to make a provision for a marker on his grave.

It was several years before one was placed there.