

WALTER E. WOODBURN

The success of men in business or any vocation depends upon character as well as upon knowledge, it being a self-evident proposition that honesty is the best policy. Business demands confidence and where that is lacking business ends. In every community some men are known for their upright lives, strong common sense and moral worth rather than for their wealth or political standing. Their neighbors and acquaintances respect them, the younger generations heed their example, and when they “wrap the drapery of their couches about them and lie down in pleasant dreams” posterity listens with reverence to the story of their quiet and useful lives. Among such men of a past generation in Indiana was the late Walter E. Woodburn, of Bloomington, Monroe county, who was not only a progressive man of affairs, successful in material pursuits, but a man of modest and unassuming demeanor, well educated, a fine type of the reliable, self-made American, a friend to the poor, charitable to the faults of his neighbors and who always stood ready to unite with them in every good work and active in the support of laudable public enterprises. He was proud of Bloomington and of the grand state of Indiana and zealous of their progress and prosperity. He was a man who in every respect merited the high esteem in which he was universally held, for he was a man of public spirit, intellectual attainments and exemplary character.

Walter E. Woodburn was born in Bloomington, Monroe county, Indiana, on February 7, 1848, and was the son of James and Martha (Hemphill) Woodburn, the former having been a native of the Chester district, South Carolina. James Woodburn was a man of splendid character and fine intellectual attainments and at the time of his death, which occurred in 1865 he was a teacher in the Indiana State University and enjoyed a high standing among his fellow educators. Walter E. Woodburn received his preliminary education in the Bloomington public schools and for two years was a student in the State University, being compelled to relinquish his studies there on account of the death of his father, when he became the chief support and reliance of his widowed mother and the younger children. He nobly assumed his full share of the burden thus thrown upon him and from that time to the close of his life his record was one of unceasing activity. For practically a third of a century he was connected with the First National Bank of Bloomington, and during the greater part of this time he was at the cashier's desk, rendering honest and faithful service to the institution and doing much to keep it among the leading banking institutions of this section of the state. In evidence of the exalted position Mr. Woodburn held in the minds of those familiar with his history, the following lines are quoted from the Bloomington press: “There was no man who made more impression upon the community than Walter B. Woodburn. For over thirty-five years he has been an active and energetic part of the city, known of all men and in all avenues of trade and professions as the soul of honor. For over thirty years as cashier of the First National Bank he has been the fountain head of reliable information; a statement quoted as being from him passed as an accepted fact. Mr. Woodburn was not radical in word, but he was firm in belief and no one needed to ask his position on any question of right or any policy that meant the welfare and best interests of the city. As a banker almost all his business life, money was a sacred trust to him and, without a seeming thought of taking credit for the statement, he often said that in the thirty-two years of his work as a cashier he never touched a cent of the money or knowingly violated the laws of the institution. It

was a life principle with him not to speculate and though he was in a position where information was first-hand as to trades and prospects, these things were no temptation. No man could have been more faithful to the work before him. His view of business was that his time and energies all belonged to the bank and, though often importuned by the officials to take rest and recreation. he always refused, and it is doubtful if any man in the city for so long a time has such a faithful record of duty well performed. In all these thirty-two years he has probably not been absent from his place in the bank a month all told until the breakdown in his health last summer. He applied himself constantly to his work and in these few statements is told the life's story of an honest and faithful man." Mr. Woodburn died at his home in Bloomington on May 4, 1906.

On November 27, 1878, Walter E. Woodburn was married to Anna K. Arnott, the daughter of Rev. Moses and Mary (Pollock) Arnott, the former a native of New York state and the latter of Pennsylvania. At the time of his death Rev. Arnott was pastor of a Presbyterian church at Hanover, Jefferson county, Indiana. He was a man of good education, high intellectual attainments and was a successful and popular minister of the gospel. To Mr. and Mrs. Woodburn were born the following children: Laura, who became the wife of Prof. D. O. McGovney, who is connected with Tulane University, at New Orleans, Louisiana; Walter F., who is connected with the Collins & Seidel grocery store in Bloomington, married Helen Marshall and they have three children, Frank, John and Margaret; Arnott, who lives at home is an invalid; Mary and Martha, twins, who remain at home, were students in the same class in the State University. The family home is most beautifully situated on North College avenue, comprising ample grounds, from which may be had an inspiring view of the surrounding country in all directions.

Politically, Mr. Woodburn was an earnest supporter of the Republican party, especially in its views of financial matters, of which he had made a deep study. He took an interest in public affairs and performed his full duty as a citizen, attending his party conventions and primaries, but he never aspired to fill any public office, though in his earlier days he had served as treasurer of Bloomington and as a member of the school board, where he rendered efficient and appreciated service. At the time of his death he was treasurer of Indiana University and also treasurer of the Bloomington National Building Association. Mr. Woodburn had a deep and conscientious regard for the spiritual verities and for many years was a leading member of the United Presbyterian church, of which he was a member of the official board and treasurer for twenty-five years. He was a regular attendant at the various services of the church and by his daily life he set an example of correct living well worthy of emulation. Always calm and dignified, never demonstrative, his life was, nevertheless, a persistent plea, more by precept and example than by written or spoken word, for the purity and grandeur of right principles and the beauty and elevation of wholesome character. He had the greatest sympathy for his fellow men and was ever willing to aid and encourage those who were struggling to aid themselves against adverse fate, yet in this, as in everything else, he was entirely unostentatious. To him home life was a sacred trust, friendship was inviolable and nothing could swerve him from the path of rectitude and honor.

(History of Lawrence and Monroe Counties Indiana , 1914 B. F. Bowen & Co. Inc. Indianapolis, Indiana pgs 524-527)