

RECOLLECTIONS OF JAMES BALDWIN

Rev. Frank Brown Recalls His School Work At Westfield

Editor Ledger:

Announcement of the death of Dr. James Baldwin has stirred in me recollections of my boyhood days. I was not more than seven years old when James Baldwin and his wife taught a summer term, a "subscription school," at Westfield. The school-house stood in an open space, a short distance north and a little east of the Methodist church. It was a plain frame building, painted white and consisted of a large lower and upper room. The latter was not plastered and furnished until several years later.

I have a distinct recollection of the interior of that old downstairs school-room, the platform on which stood the teacher's desk, the expanse of well worn blackboards on either side, the discolored maps and charts that hung on the walls, the water-bucket that stood on a bench in a convenient corner with tin cups, one for the boys and another for the girls, and the clumsy wooden desks, most of them made of poplar, painted blue but sadly disfigured by the vandalism of their

mischievous occupants who carved on them all sorts of grotesque images and designs. There were a few smaller desks made of walnut. These were intended for the younger pupils, and I was proud to be installed in one of them.

I remember also that there was a globe on the teacher's desk that showed distinctly all the important geographical features of the then known world, and in connection with it there was a box that contained metal images of the plants, trees, animals and races of mankind. These were highly magnetized and would adhere to the globe when placed in the zones and countries to which they belonged. That globe with its accompanying specimens of life on the earth was an object of untiring interest to me.

With the imperfect facilities at their command, Mr. and Mrs. Baldwin wrought wonders in that little field of primary education. They had the spirit and intuitions of successful teachers. I have always held them in affectionate esteem. They were among my first and very best teachers.

I wonder how many of James Baldwin's old pupils are yet living in Washington Township?

Frank G. Brown.

(Editor's Note—Rev. Brown, who is now living in Indianapolis, was a son of O. F. Brown, pioneer resident of Westfield, who died two or three years ago at the age of 94. Rev. Brown was a minister in the North Indiana M. E. Conference for many years.)