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# Historical Sketch of The Indiana University

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HISTORICAL SKETCH  
of  
The Indiana University  
by  
David D. Banta

On the 18th day of April, 1816, the Congress of the United States passed an act providing for the admission of Indiana into the Union. In this act certain propositions were tendered to the people "for their free acceptance or rejection." Two of these related to education, the one proposing to donate every sixteenth section of land in aid of common schools, the other to give a township of land "for the use of a seminary of learning."

The wisdom of the acceptance of both these propositions by the people of the new State through their agents, composing the Constitutional Convention of 1816, has been attested by the experience of seventy-three years. Out of the township of land thus given by the United States "for the use of a seminary of learning," has grown the Indiana University, a brief sketch of the history of which is here given.

Eleven days after the acceptance of the propositions had been made known, President Madison designated for seminary purposes a Congressional township, which, on the organization of Monroe County, became a part thereof under the name of Perry township. On the 20th day of January, 1820, the Legislature of the State passed an Act establishing the "State Seminary," and appointed a Board of Trustees with power to locate its site on the reserved township, to sell a part of the land, to erect the necessary buildings and to open the school.

In 1824, two buildings had been completed, the one for school purposes, the other for the residence of a professor. On the first day of May in that



year, a school was opened under the care of Rev. Baynard R. Hall. Since that time every school day of each year has witnessed the assembling of teachers and students for recitation and drill in the class room.

Three years later, a second professor, John M. Harney, subsequently distinguished as an editor, was elected, and in the fall of 1828, the school had taken such rank, as to the general character of its work and the number of pupils in attendance, that the General Assembly of the State gave it a new charter under the name of Indiana College.

A new Board of Trustees was named in the charter. The first act of this body after organizing, was the election of Rev. Andrew Wylie, D.D., as President.

Dr. Wylie was at that time President of Washington College in Western Pennsylvania, and it was a year before he was able to enter on his new field of labor. In 1829 he took his seat, and for a number of years the work of the school was carried on with efficiency, with Rev. Baynard R. Hall as Professor of Languages, and John M. Harney as Professor of Mathematics and the Sciences. Later, however, the efficiency of the school became impaired by lack of harmony among the teachers. This led to a reorganization of the faculty in 1832, after which, till the death of Dr. Wylie in 1851, the growth of the institution kept pace with the development of the State. Early in Dr. Wylie's administration a new college building was built at a cost of \$11,000. This was a structure of three stories, the lower occupied by the chapel, the second by the recitation rooms, the third by the halls of the Athenian and Philomathean literary societies. This building, with all its contents, was destroyed by fire in the spring of 1854.

In 1838 the growing importance of the Indiana College led the Legislature to grant it a third charter, this time raising it to the dignity of a "University,"



with the name and style of "The Indiana University." Under this charter its existence is still maintained.

In 1843, in response to a general demand, a Law School was established at Bloomington in connection with the University. This department was successfully continued until the year 1877, when adverse legislation compelled the Trustees to suspend its operation.

During the administration of Dr. Wylie the institution became widely and favorably known. He was a man of signal ability and aptitude for teaching, and he was supported by a body of Professors all of whom were scholarly and earnest men. Students from remote States were drawn to the institution, and in all respects of thoroughness and efficiency, it stood in the front rank of the Western Colleges of the day.

After the death of Dr. Wylie, Rev. Alfred Ryors, D.D., was elected to the Presidency, an office which he retained for a single year. He was succeeded by Rev. William M. Daily, D.D., LL.D., who remained President until 1859.

In Dr. Daily's administration a series of calamities befell the University, by which it was greatly crippled. The main college building was destroyed by fire on the night of the 8th day of April, 1854, together with the college library of 1,200 volumes, and the furniture and library of the two literary societies. Still more disastrous consequences came from a litigation prosecuted against the State in behalf of the Vincennes University, in the result of which the Indiana University became vitally interested.

While Indiana was still a territory a township of land in Gibson County was set apart in pursuance of an act of Congress for the use of an institution of learning, to be located in the Vincennes land district. Subsequently, in 1807 the Territorial Legislature passed an act to incorporate "The Vincennes



University," and appointed for it a Board of Trustees. The site for the proposed institution was selected at Vincennes, then the capital of the Territory, and about 4,000 acres of the Gibson County reservation was sold, the proceeds being applied to the erection of "a large and commodious brick building in Vincennes." Here the matter rested. The State was organized, the capital had been removed to Corydon, the Board of Trustees ceased to act, and no school was opened under its auspices. This was the condition of things in 1820, when the State Seminary was established at Bloomington.

It was even then believed by many that the charter of the Vincennes University had been forfeited by non-user. In that year, the State for the first time assumed control of the Gibson county lands. Two years later, was passed the first of a series of acts providing for the sale of the remainder of these lands, and the appropriation of the proceeds to the State Seminary. Thus the matter rested until 1846, when the Legislature authorized the bringing of an action in behalf of the Vincennes University for the recovery from the State of the money realized from the sale of the Gibson county lands. The long and tedious litigation which followed, resulted, in 1852, in a judgment for \$60,000 in favor of the plaintiff.

Meanwhile this amount had become part of the endowment fund of the Indiana University, and after its supposed loss came the most discouraging period in the history of the institution. For nearly two years, its life trembled in the balance, until in 1854 when the State finally assumed the debt to the institution at Vincennes, and the sum in question was kept to the credit of the University.



Soon after the fire of 1854 the Board of Trustees made arrangements for the erection of a new and more imposing college building. The citizens of Monroe county lent a helping hand with a subscription of about \$10,000, and with this aid, was built the substantial building on the old campus now used by the Preparatory School.

After Dr. Daily's resignation in 1859, Rev. Theophilus A. Wylie, D.D. was appointed acting President for one year, and until the election and inauguration of John Lathrop, LL.D. After one year, in the fall of 1860, Dr. Lathrop was succeeded by Rev. Cyrus Nutt, D.D., who remained at the head of the institution until 1875.

During all these years the income was inadequate to the wants of the University. There was always need of scrimping and pinching to make both ends meet. The library destroyed in 1854, which it had taken twenty-seven years to collect, did not exceed 1,200 volumes. After the fire, not a dollar could be spared for the purchase of a single book. Soon after, however, Mr. H. W. Derby, a bookseller in Cincinnati gave from his stock in trade \$1,500 worth of books. For more than twenty years the "Derby Donation" formed a considerable part of the University Library.

For many years the scope of the work done in the University, which differed in no essential respect from that done in most contemporary colleges, was adapted to a small income. Mathematics, Ancient Languages and Ethical studies constituted the chief part of the course of study, while the Modern Languages, Science, Literature and History received but scanty notice. Expensive apparatus of any sort was scarcely thought of, much less provided. For nearly forty years, one professor was deemed quite enough for all the teaching of the Sciences which was done in the institution. The text-book was made the basis



of instruction, and no matter how large a class might be, a division into sections was rarely expected.

But in time something more was demanded. This demand was not peculiar to Indiana, but it was felt more or less by all the colleges of the country. In response to it, there was in all institutions a disposition toward the broadening of the College Curriculum. One of the consequences of this tendency was a gradual increase in the necessary cost of maintaining a college. In the Indiana University, this increase was met in 1867 by a legislative appropriation to its use the sum of \$8,000 annually. This beneficent act of the State, the first of its kind in the history of the institution, was followed by such an increase in the attendance that in 1873 it was found necessary to make an annual appropriation of the additional sum of \$15,000.

Dr. Nutt's administration of fifteen years was in the main a period of growth and progress. The facilities for instruction were much enlarged, and with this, the number of students steadily increased. In 1867, the wall of partition was broken down and women were admitted to the College Classes on the same footing with men.

In 1872, the very extensive collection of minerals and fossils collected by David Dale Owen and Richard Owen, known as the "Owen Cabinet," was purchased at a cost of \$20,000 and in the following year a large building was erected at a cost of \$24,000 to contain the Museum, the Library and the Laboratories. In the same year an arrangement was made by which the graduates of the High Schools commissioned by the State Board of Education, were admitted without examination to the Freshman Class in the University. This arrangement has been of great benefit to the High Schools as well as to the University.



After the resignation of Dr. Nutt in 1875, Rev. Lemuel Moss, D.D., was called to the presidency, which office he retained until 1884. In his administration the work of the University went on with a steady advance in breadth and thoroughness. The Law Department was suspended in 1877, on account of adverse action of the General Assembly, and the purely nominal connection which had existed between the Indiana University and the Indiana Medical College in Indianapolis, was also broken.

The departments of Chemistry and Physics were, however, equipped and provided with expensive material and apparatus. The library also became a special object of care, 12,000 well selected volumes being upon its shelves. In 1880 extensive collections in zoology were obtained largely through the aid of the United States Fish Commission.

All these collections, the Owen cabinet, the library and the laboratories were in the new Science Building, and the whole went up in flame and smoke during a heavy thunder storm on the night of the 12th of July, 1883.

Nothing could have been more discouraging. It seemed impossible to carry on University work without books, material or apparatus, and without even the necessary recitation rooms. And there was no money with which to buy or to build, for the only fund available was the ordinary income, for the most part already appropriated for the salaries of the professors.

The Board of Trustees met at once and decided to begin the work of rebuilding and refurnishing without delay. The remaining building was refitted as well as was possible, and word was sent forth that the work would begin as usual in September; for this fire, like the one nineteen years before, had come in vacation.

It was decided to abandon the old campus, too small for future expansion, and so near the railroad that the noise of the trains interfered with the work.



The Board selected as the future University campus that high, rolling tract of woodland on the east side of town known to twenty student generations, as "Durns Woods."

A donation of \$50,000 was made by Monroe County, and with this and some \$20,000 received as insurance money, two buildings of brick and stone, "Wylie Hall" and "Owen Hall" were built on the new grounds. A less pretentious wooden building, "Maxwell Hall," was built for the reception of those classes which could not find room in Owen Hall, and in the fall of 1885 all the collegiate work was removed to the new grounds. Afterwards the General Assembly of 1886 appropriated the sum of \$43,000 for the purpose of providing books, specimens, apparatus and the furniture needed in the new buildings.

Dr. Moss resigned the presidency in November, 1884, and Rev. Elisha Ballentine, D.D. was made acting president until his successor was elected. The most important event in the administration of Dr. Moss was the securing of the University Endowment Fund. The friends of the institution had long felt the importance of some permanent provision for its maintenance. As early as 1828, Governor Ray had pressed upon the General Assembly the propriety of providing an endowment, but over half a century passed before anything was done in this regard.

In the fall of 1883 the Board of Trustees, thinking that the time was propitious for legislative action, caused the preparation of a bill for the permanent endowment of the University.

The Alumni all over the State gave the measure the weight of their influence, while those of their number who were members of that Fifty-third Assembly were active in its support.

This act, which became a law on the 3rd of March, 1883, provides that "in the year 1883, and in each of the next succeeding twelve years, there shall be collected a half-mil tax which shall be placed to the credit of a fund to be known as the 'Permanent Endowment Fund of the Indiana University.'" It was hoped by the projectors of this scheme that this fund would amount in thirteen years to half a million dollars, but it is likely to fall considerably below this sum.

The resignation of Dr. Moss was followed January 1, 1885, by the election of David Starr Jordan, M.D., Ph.D., LL.D., as president. Dr. Jordan had held for four years the Chair of Biology in the University. The chief change in his administration has been in the direction of the specialization of the work of the different courses of study. That this change has met with popular approval is evident from the fact that the attendance in the college classes has more than doubled with the introduction of greater freedom of choice. Still more marked is the improvement in the general character and thoroughness of the work done in the different departments.

The increase in the number of students and the increase in the number of professors rendered imperative the demand for more room. This need was laid before the last General Assembly, and an act was passed appropriating \$60,000 for the erection and equipment of a fire-proof Library building.

Besides this, an additional sum of \$7,000 per year for the next two years was granted. In view of this the Board of Trustees, in response to what seems to be a general demand have decided to restore the Department of Law.

This institution, as Seminary, College and University has been in active operation for sixty-five years--the oldest college in the State, and one of the



oldest in the West. Notwithstanding the misfortunes it has from time to time encountered, it has never been closed to students for a single school day in all that time. The entire course of its history has been marked by a steady purpose to promote the welfare of the State through the education of its youth.

From first to last, 3,816 students have been trained in its halls, of which number, 816 have been honored by its bachelor's degree.

This number, 3,816, is exclusive of the Seminary students, of whom no record exists. It also excludes the students in the Preparatory School (1,581 in number before 1888) who did not enter college, and the law students, 603 in number, of whom 384 obtained the diploma of LL.B. The aggregate total of different names from the date of the first catalogue to 1888 is 5,860 to which 1889 adds some 200 more.

Who can estimate its influence in the past? Who can forecast it for the future?