

OLD COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS

Soon the Christmas holidays will be over and college students from New Albany, home for the annual vacation, will be returning to their studies at schools across the land. But in the past the start of a new year and a new semester meant many students in other cities returned to New Albany or Floyd County to attend the institutions of higher learning which have been located here.

New Albany's last institution of higher learning was moved from the city about 1900, but though it is no longer here it memorializes the name of one of New Albany's best-known citizens, Washington C. DePauw, whose generous contributions assured the future of DePauw University now at Greencastle.

Another well-known school, the McCormick Theological Seminary at Chicago, had its start in New Albany over a century ago.

But the history of higher education in New Albany goes back further than either of these schools – back to 1835 when the members of Wesley Chapel Methodist Church launched the New Albany Methodist Seminary and built a two-story frame building on Market across the street from the present location of the church. The term seminary then did not refer exclusively to a theological seminary but also was applied to schools which were a sort of cross between the present-day senior high school and junior college.

New Albany can also lay claim to the dubious honor of being the site of the nation's first medical "diploma mill". A so-called medical college, founded in 1833, passed out diplomas in vast quantities, sometimes even to students who

failed to attend the sketchy courses. This institution, fortunately, lasted only a short time.

The New Albany Methodist Seminary closed about 1843, but it may have been the seed which resulted in the building of the Indiana Asbury Female Seminary in New Albany at East Ninth and Main in 1852. This school, founded by the Indiana Methodist Conference, was plagued by the trouble common to all early New Albany schools . . . lack of money. The upheavals of the Civil War years cut attendance sharply and in 1866 the property fell into other hands when the school was unable to pay off its mortgage.

This was the centennial year of American Methodism, and Indiana Methodists marked the event by a state-wide drive to raise funds to repurchase the property. It was at this juncture that Washington C. DePauw, who had amassed a fortune during the war, made substantial contributions to the school and made the fund-raising drive a success. A few years later DePauw made another contribution to build an addition to the school, and in his honor the name was changed to DePauw College for Young Women.

Other early ventures in higher education in New Albany included Anderson's Female College, started about 1845 by John B. Anderson who remodeled a private home on Lafayette Street at Scribner Park to house the school. Later Anderson founded a boys' school, the Anderson Collegiate Institute, located at West Fourth and Market, where one of his students was John Hunt Morgan from Lexington, Kentucky, later to lead the daring raid which brought the Civil War to the soil of the Hoosier state. Anderson closed his schools about 1854 when he launched a newspaper here, the *Daily Morning Herald*.

At about the same time that Anderson started his school, an even more ambitious project was launched – the New Albany Theological Seminary, a school to train ministers for the Presbyterian Church. An endowment of \$15,000

from Elias Ayers, a leading New Albany citizen of the time, enabled the Seminary to build a school on Elm at East Eleventh and open for classes. But within 10 years the school found itself caught in the middle of a theological dispute within the Presbyterian Church and in the middle of arguments over the question of slavery in the Southern states.

So it was that when Cyrus McCormick, who had won fame and fortune with the invention of the reaper, offered \$100,000 to establish a theological seminary in Chicago, the church decided to move the school there and the transfer was completed in 1859. Part of the old building still stands on East Elm where it is cut up into apartments.

Not all of these early schools were in New Albany itself. Greenville was the site of the Floyd County Seminary, established by the Floyd County Commissioners, and opened in January, 1850. The school had a brief life of only two years, for the Commissioners sold the building when the State Legislature set up a public school system in 1852 and authorized closing the county seminaries.

Though New Albany is no longer home to any college or university, the city can look back with quiet pride in the accomplishments of the past which live on in the McCormick Theological Seminary and DePauw University.

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