



Butler University

Digital Commons @ Butler University

---

Undergraduate Honors Thesis Collection

Undergraduate Honors Thesis Collection

---

5-2021

## "An Advocate and Exponent of the Common and Equal Rights of Humanity": Defining and Assessing the Values of North Western Christian University, 1855-1880

Allison Lindsay Griffin

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/ugtheses>



Part of the [History Commons](#)

---

BUTLER UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM

Honors Thesis Certification

Applicant Allison Lindsay Griffin

Thesis title "An Advocate and Exponent of the Common and Equal Rights of Humanity": Defining and Assessing the Values of North Western Christian University, 1855-1880

Intended date of commencement May 9, 2021

Read, approved, and signed by:

Thesis adviser(s)  06 MAY 2021  
Date

Reader(s) Paul R Hanson May 6, 2021  
Date

Date

Certified by    
Date

Director, Honors Program

For Honors Program use:

Level of Honors conferred: University

Departmental

**“An Advocate and Exponent of the Common and Equal Rights of Humanity”:  
Defining and Assessing the Values of North Western Christian University, 1855-1880**

A Thesis

Presented to the Department of History

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

and

The Honors Program

of

Butler University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for Graduation Honors

Allison Lindsay Griffin

May 7, 2021

North Western Christian University set precedents in higher education. Founded in 1855, it was the first private nonsectarian university in the United States to allow men and women of any race to pursue the same degrees and the same honors in the same program.<sup>1</sup> From its beginnings, NWCU's founders publicized their belief that men and women of all races had the right to equal opportunities in higher education – at a time when illiteracy was far from unusual in Indiana's rural communities, a time when the nation was years from taking up arms over the issue of slavery, a time when women were far from being on equal footing with men.

The founding of North Western Christian University might have been unremarkable, just one of many learning institutions founded by churches at a time when Indiana severely lacked educational opportunities. However, mid-century Indianapolis was growing thanks to the efforts of politically conscious and religiously motivated civic leaders, some of whom founded North Western Christian University. The individual convictions of these founders, especially Ovid Butler, and the character of the Christian Church elevated NWCU to a new plane in higher education, where its progressive spirit would set it apart for generations to come.

Understanding the university's founding requires a brief examination of Indiana and Indianapolis during the 1840s and 1850s. The state of Indiana was established in 1816 out of land that was previously part of the Northwest Territory. This territory initially came under ostensible American control at the end of the Revolutionary War, when the British ceded it to the United States under the Treaty of 1783. At this time, indigenous people inhabited this territory, including the Delaware, Miami, Wabash,

---

<sup>1</sup> Barbara Butler Davis, introduction, *Affectionately Yours: The Civil War Home-Front Letters of the Ovid Butler Family*, edited by Davis (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 2004) 4.

Shawnee, Potawatomi, and more.<sup>2</sup> The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 regulated this land for American use, outlining its separation into smaller territories, the process by which these territories could become states, and its initial governmental structure. The influx of settlers brought on by the establishment of the Ordinance marked a period of increased American aggression as settlers sought to remove indigenous nations from the land they now claimed for their own.<sup>3</sup>

Though to Americans this region represented untapped potential and the opportunity of the frontier, it was mostly acquired through brutality. As governor of the Indiana Territory from 1800 to 1812, William Henry Harrison had unprecedented influence over the forced removal of indigenous people. Known for his policies that “focused on aggressive land acquisition,” Harrison was responsible for negotiating land cession treaties with indigenous nations across the region, opening millions of acres for white settlers.<sup>4</sup> The War of 1812 effectively ended the near-continual armed conflict between the groups, and the Indiana Territory petitioned for statehood at the war’s end.<sup>5</sup>

With the treaties of 1838 and 1840 marking the final cessation of indigenous lands within the state, Indiana’s territory continued to grow. A steady surge of settlers continued to make Indiana their home in the 1830s and 1840s, enticed by the availability of fertile, economical farmland, easily acquired directly from the government. The central areas of the state were made more easily accessible by the completion of the National Road in 1834, which extended through the state and marked the beginning of a period of

---

<sup>2</sup> James Madison, *Hoosiers: A New History of Indiana*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014) 23-25.

<sup>3</sup> Madison 31-32, 20-28.

<sup>4</sup> Madison 35-42

<sup>5</sup> Madison 41-44, 49.

internal improvements. The plains of central Indiana were very conducive to establishing a stable agrarian economy, which continued to attract settlers, primarily from New York, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Virginia, and North Carolina.<sup>6</sup>

At this time Indiana's racial and economic demographic was largely homogeneous, though settlers from the southern states, mid-Atlantic, and New England brought regional differences in culture. Despite these cultural distinctions, settlers from different regions shared a common pioneer experience. Many were farmers, and this lifestyle was accompanied by agrarian values that came to unite Indiana residents.<sup>7</sup> Settlers generally came from lower social and economic status in their former homes, and settling in Indiana often brought them relief from the social constraints of their former lives. This experience united them as well: settlers from the southern states had been among the poorest in Southern society, sharing a history of working their own farmland that connected them more closely to fellow settlers from Pennsylvania than to the generationally-wealthy plantation farmers of the south.<sup>8</sup> These settlers and native Hoosiers alike found unity in the sense of pride they had in their independence and self-reliance.<sup>9</sup>

Especially in central Indiana, where settlers of all regional backgrounds most commonly came into contact, "the cultures of the south, upland South, the Mid-Atlantic, and New England mingled and mixed, causing each to change," and resulting in a new

---

<sup>6</sup> Roger H. Van Bolt, "The Indiana Scene in the 1840's," *Indiana Magazine of History* Dec. 1951, 340-42; Madison 56-57.

<sup>7</sup> Van Bolt 355.

<sup>8</sup> Henry K. Shaw, *Hoosier Disciples: A Comprehensive History of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana*. (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1966) 14; Madison 56-61.

<sup>9</sup> Shaw, *Hoosier Disciples*, 15.

culture that was not the sum of these parts, but had its own character entirely: a Hoosier character.<sup>10</sup> Henry K. Shaw describes this emerging identity:

By 1830 there began to develop in Indiana what could be called the typical “Hoosier” character, a rugged individualist with an easily recognizable mentality and outlook on life. Indiana, therefore, was fertile soil not only for the cultivation of farm crops but also for the development of indigenous social, religious, and political views.<sup>11</sup>

This Hoosier character, rooted in the optimism that was necessary to pioneer survival, dedicated to the values of Jeffersonian individualism, and committed to continual progress, would persist long past the nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

In the 1850s, Indianapolis was a large town located centrally in a very agrarian state. Though its population grew quite significantly between 1840 and 1850, from 2,700 to 8,000, Indianapolis and the other populous towns of the state were far from the urban centers of today.<sup>13</sup> At this time, industry was growing in Indianapolis, with a particular focus on the export of the state’s agricultural surplus.<sup>14</sup> However, the growth of industry did not much distance Indianapolis from the rural character of the rest of the state. During this period, there was far less distinction between urban and rural life – Indianapolis itself was closely bordered by farmland.<sup>15</sup>

Surrounded by farmland, Indianapolis’ geographical position “produced an insular view of the world” that hindered the development of various cultural establishments that tend to facilitate community building, such as schools, libraries,

---

<sup>10</sup> Madison 62.

<sup>11</sup> Shaw, *Hoosier Disciples*, 15.

<sup>12</sup> Madison 55; 141-142.

<sup>13</sup> Van Bolt 355; Madison, *Hoosiers*, 95.

<sup>14</sup> Madison, *Hoosiers*, 88.

<sup>15</sup> Madison, *Hoosiers*, 95; John H. Holliday, “The North Western Christian University,” *Butler Alumna Quarterly* 4 (1914), Oct. 1914, 105-107. Holliday recalls the country dirt roads that ran through the city and adjacent farmland alike, which would eventually link the university to the rest of Indianapolis.

theaters, and societies.<sup>16</sup> Despite this slow cultural development and relative geographical isolation, midcentury Indianapolis developed a political scene that was surprisingly connected.

Politics in Indianapolis has always been colorful and competitive, influenced by the dialogue occurring in the city's active political organizations and newspapers. As in the rest of the United States in the 1830s and 1840s, much of Indianapolis politics dealt with the desire for reform – temperance, prison reform, abolition, public health, and women's rights. Issues of reform became politically divisive on both a local and national scale, particularly that of abolition.<sup>17</sup>

The city's politics often represented a microcosm of the national political scene, experiencing a similar rise and fall of parties, discussing the same issues and conflicts, and containing a similar range of opinions and beliefs. Indianapolis politics experienced the division and competition between the Whig and Democrat parties in the 1830s as well as the advent of the Free-Soil party in the late 1840s and early 1850s, the latter with the influence of Ovid Butler.<sup>18</sup> Indiana newspapers reveal that residents were partaking in comprehensive dialogue about a broad span of contemporary political topics. From advertisements for political conventions to opinion articles and petitions, they had opinions on everything from the Fugitive Slave Act<sup>19</sup> to women's rights,<sup>20</sup> from the proper course of action for the Kansas-Nebraska conflict<sup>21</sup> to President Lincoln's latest

---

<sup>16</sup> David G. Vanderstel, "Cultural Institutions," *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, ed. David J. Bodenhamer et al. (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994) 41.

<sup>17</sup> George W. Geib, "Politics," *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, ed. David J. Bodenhamer et al. (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994) 162.

<sup>18</sup> Geib 162-63; Sally Childs-Helton, "Ovid Butler and the Founding of Butler University," *Journal of the Butler Society*, 2010, 91.

<sup>19</sup> "Church and State," *Indiana State Sentinel*, 03 April 1851, 2.

<sup>20</sup> "Ladies' Patriotic Movement," *Daily State Sentinel* [Indianapolis], 30 Apr. 1864, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> "Contribution for the Kansas Sufferers," *The Evansville Daily Journal*, 13 Sept. 1856, p. 3.



speech<sup>22</sup> or Henry Clay's remarks in the Senate.<sup>23</sup> Indianapolis residents during the 1840s and the following decades were politically aware and participating in conversations about national politics.

Given that part of North Western Christian University's vision was education for people of all races, it is necessary to get a sense of how people of color experienced life in Indiana, specifically the black population. From its roots, Indiana defined itself with policies opposing slavery and asserting the ostensible equality of residents of all races. However, in the nineteenth century there was not an overwhelming sense of acceptance for black Hoosiers. From the Indiana Territory's establishment in 1800 and into the 1850s, the black population faced both social and legislative challenges that undermined their status and freedoms in Indiana.

While the land was governed by the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, slavery was prohibited.<sup>24</sup> After it became the Indiana Territory in 1800, though the Ordinance applied, some settlers wanted slavery to be legalized, calling for slave labor to help clear their heavily forested land.<sup>25</sup> During this time, some pro-slavery politicians, such as Governor William Henry Harrison, passed laws limiting the civil rights of free black people in the territory.<sup>26</sup>

Indiana's 1816 state constitution strongly asserted that slavery was prohibited and the constitution could never be amended to permit it.<sup>27</sup> However, though the state's bill of rights stated that "all men are born equally free and independent, and have certain natural,

---

<sup>22</sup> "Another War Meeting: Support to the Families of Soldiers," *Daily State Sentinel* [Indianapolis], 15 July 1862, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> "Congressional Speech of Mr. Clay," *Richmond Palladium* [Richmond, IN], 23 Feb. 1839, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> J. P. Dunn, Jr. *Indiana: A Redemption from Slavery*. (Boston; New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1888) 219.

<sup>25</sup> Dunn 447.

<sup>26</sup> "Being Black in Indiana," *Indiana Historical Bureau*, [www.in.gov/history/2548.htm](http://www.in.gov/history/2548.htm).

<sup>27</sup> Indiana Constitution of 1816, *Indiana Historical Bureau*, [www.in.gov/history/2460.htm](http://www.in.gov/history/2460.htm).

inherent, and unalienable rights; among which are enjoying and defending life and liberty,” no actions were taken to counteract the laws restricting the rights of black Indiana residents.<sup>28</sup> At this time, black people were not considered citizens of Indiana and were prohibited from attending public schools, voting, testifying in court cases that involved white individuals, and serving in the militia.<sup>29</sup>

Increasing prejudice against people of color was reflected in social and legislative attempts to discourage free black people from living in Indiana. The colonization movement gained popularity in Indiana, especially during the 1820s and 1830s. Believing that the nation’s history of slavery would prevent black people from successfully integrating into American society, colonizationists raised funds for free black people to emigrate out of the United States.

Many Indiana residents, state officials, and influential citizens, including the Governor, publicly supported the efforts of the American Colonization Society to encourage and fund the emigration of black people.<sup>30</sup> Gaining support statewide, the Indiana State Legislature passed an act requesting the support of Congress in their colonization efforts.<sup>31</sup>

Many Indiana residents clung to the idea of colonization as a way to address the question of free people of color and their role in society. Their primary motivation was to

---

<sup>28</sup> Indiana Constitution of 1816; “Being Black in Indiana.”

<sup>29</sup> Emma Lou Thornbrough, “African-Americans,” *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, ed. David J. Bodenhamer et al. (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994) 5.

<sup>30</sup> James Brown Ray, qtd. in “The Colonization Movement,” *Indiana Historical Bureau*, [www.in.gov/history/3123.htm](http://www.in.gov/history/3123.htm).

<sup>31</sup> Indiana State Legislature, A Joint Resolution of the General Assembly of the State of Indiana, relative to the American Colonization Society, *Congressional Series of United States Public Documents* (Washington: 1830) 25; “Colonization,” *Indiana State Sentinel*, 01 July 1852, 1; “The Colonization Movement.”

exclude black people from their communities.<sup>32</sup> One Indiana colonizationist, Reverend J. L. Richmond, even argued in 1846 that

a free negro in Indiana is very little better off than a slave in Kentucky. In fact it were better to [be] the slave of a good and humane master in Kentucky, than to be a nominally free negro in Indianapolis, with no political or social rights, and to be look down upon as an inferior by every person he meets in the streets.<sup>33</sup>

This is a strong statement of the experience of free people of color in Indiana.

In another effort to reduce the black population in Indiana, a new state constitution was created in 1851, which included an article outlawing the immigration of black and mulatto people to Indiana.<sup>34</sup> With colonizationist attitudes present both among citizens statewide and in Indiana's legislative bodies, Indiana in the 1850s enacted increasingly restrictive measures which violated free black people's freedoms.

Another factor that greatly influenced life in the Old Northwest was the development of frontier religion. Beginning in the 1790s, a series of religious revivals sparked new religious movements across the country, known now as the Second Great Awakening. At the same time, settlers began to move to the Old Northwest, and these movements took shape alongside the developing frontier communities. The early religious traditions to develop in Indiana, like those of the rest of the Old Northwest, were deeply influenced by the frontier lifestyle.<sup>35</sup>

One particular religious movement that developed in Indiana desired a restoration to the practices of Christianity without denominational divisions and sectarian divisions.

---

<sup>32</sup> "The Colonization Movement."

<sup>33</sup> Indiana Colonization Society, *Eleventh Annual Report of the Indiana Colonization Society* (Indianapolis: 1846) 27.

<sup>34</sup> "Church and State," *Indiana State Sentinel*, 03 April 1851, 2.

<sup>35</sup> Shaw, *Hoosier Disciples*, 11.

They renounced all doctrines and structures in order to look to the Bible as the sole source for their worship.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, another movement took shape with these same ideals, formed from the union of two separate frontier religious movements founded by Barton Warren Stone and Alexander Campbell, respectively. This combined movement was known by both names, called the Christian Church and the Disciples of Christ Church.<sup>37</sup> The existing congregations in Indiana separated or abandoned their previous denominations and began to label themselves after this movement that shared their beliefs, calling themselves Christian Church or Disciples of Christ.<sup>38</sup> Though regional differences created a slight difference in character between the Indiana Disciples and the followers of Campbell and Stone, the Christian Church grew in Indiana, becoming the second largest denomination in the state by the 1840s.<sup>39</sup>

As Indianapolis grew and religion in Indiana developed, “most of the city’s cultural and civic leaders were members (and often leading laypersons) of mainline Protestant denominations.”<sup>40</sup> The Christian Church was among these, and its influential members would go on to found North Western Christian University.

The founding of North Western Christian University was in part a fulfillment of Indiana’s need for education. Until mid-century, the educational opportunities in Indiana were severely limited. Though the Indiana Constitution of 1816 proposed free public schooling statewide, an education system did not develop at this time, nor was it

---

<sup>36</sup> George M. Waller, *Butler University: A Sesquicentennial History*. (Indiana University Press, 2006) 4.

<sup>37</sup> Waller 6; Henry K. Shaw, “The Founding of Butler University, 1847–1855,” *Indiana Magazine of History* Sept. 1962, 233.

<sup>38</sup> Waller 5.

<sup>39</sup> Shaw, “Founding,” 236.

<sup>40</sup> Jan Shipps, “Religion,” *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, ed. David J. Bodenhamer et al. (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994) 172.

considered a priority.<sup>41</sup> The agrarian lifestyle of most Hoosiers was generally incompatible with sending children away from the farm for education, and poverty was a considerable hindrance to the education of many. The scarce opportunities for education that began to spring up in the 1830s took the form of seminaries and private academies, and were often inadequate and mismanaged.<sup>42</sup>

It was not until the early 1840s, when reform movements became widespread, that Hoosiers began to prioritize education.<sup>43</sup> Illiteracy in Indiana was among the highest in the country at this time, and many recognized the lack of education as a threat to the state's future. Reflecting this changing attitude, J.A. Gilkey remarked in 1847 that "If we expect to remain free, and perpetuate our boasted liberties—hand them pure and undefiled to posterity—education *must* keep pace with the wealth of our country."<sup>44</sup> This realization resulted in greater conversation regarding the importance of education, with counties organizing conventions to discuss how funds could best be gathered to get public schools up and running.<sup>45</sup> Hoosiers came to understand a public school system was crucial to preserving the functioning systems within the state.<sup>46</sup>

Religious leaders in Indiana shared this perspective; they, more than any other group, saw the potential that education had to strengthen communities, provide practical skills and moral guidance, and spark the creation of the cultural establishments that

---

<sup>41</sup> Indiana Constitution of 1816.

<sup>42</sup> Allen R. Benton, "Early Educational Conditions and Founding a Nondenominational College," *Indiana Magazine of History* Mar. 1908, 14.

<sup>43</sup> U. C. Stover, "Scraps of Early Indiana Church History," 1.

<sup>44</sup> Stover 2; J.A. Gilkey, "Common Schools in Montgomery County," *Indiana Free Democrat*, 18 May 1854.

<sup>45</sup> "Address to the People of the State of Indiana," *Richmond Palladium*, vol. 11, no. 27, 10 July 1841, p. 1; "Report of Mr. Kerrick, to the Franklin County Education Society," *Indiana American* [Brookville, IN], vol. 11, no. 35, 25 Aug. 1843, p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> "Remarks of Mr. G. Burton Thompson," *Indiana State Sentinel*, vol. 6, no. 33, 4 Feb. 1847, p. 4.

Indianapolis lacked at this time.<sup>47</sup> Despite the relative incompatibility of education with the Hoosier farming lifestyle, religious groups were adamant about the importance of education as a means of building moral, religious communities.<sup>48</sup> As a result, for many years schools established by religious groups provided the only means for education.<sup>49</sup> Religion and education were also closely linked in the Old Northwest. The Northwest Ordinance noted the importance of both religion and education to the prosperity and governance of communities, and thus asserted that “schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.”<sup>50</sup> Establishing a university could help solidify the potential for education in the state, while also strengthening both the Indianapolis and the church community. This was especially true if, like NWCU, the university had a preparatory department to bridge the gap between the often-insufficient primary education students had received at public schools and a college education. It was at this point in time, with several other churches founding numerous colleges and academies, that North Western Christian University came about.

In the late 1840s, the members of the Disciples of Christ Church in Indiana desired a school of their own. The Christian Church was one of the largest denominations in Indiana and was growing in size and influence, with Indiana membership increasing from around 7,000 in 1845 to more than 20,000 by 1860.<sup>51</sup> As the church grew, there was a demand for educated ministry to staff their churches.<sup>52</sup> The Disciples of Indiana felt that

---

<sup>47</sup> Waller 2.

<sup>48</sup> Benton 14.

<sup>49</sup> Benton 13; Stover.

<sup>50</sup> Northwest Ordinance, July 13, 1787; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M332, roll 9); Records of the Continental and Confederation Congresses and the Constitutional Convention, 1774-1789, Record Group 360; National Archives.

<sup>51</sup> Waller 3.

<sup>52</sup> Holliday 112; Benton 15.

there was not yet a college that entirely shared their values, in Indiana or elsewhere. The other existing Disciples of Christ college was Bethany College, founded by Alexander Campbell in Bethany, Virginia.<sup>53</sup> However, the Indiana Disciples—known for their abolitionist views—were unwilling to send their children to school in slave territory.

Ovid Butler noted that the influence of Southern culture on Bethany College suggested to him that the Indiana brethren may be better off with a college of their own creation. He remarked that Bethany College was “influenced... by its local position” and therefore “relied upon the South for its principal support.”<sup>54</sup> This, he believed, indicated that the Indiana Disciples of Christ “will manifest their liberality especially in favor of an institution to be built up amongst them, and sustained by them.”<sup>55</sup> Thus, the Indiana brethren of the Christian Church began to undertake the enterprise of creating a university.

The university’s planning was executed first by the statewide Christian Church community, and later by a group of commissioners that had emerged from this community. The initial dialogue about forming a college occurred at one of the church’s annual state meetings. The Disciples in Lawrence County had begun to raise money to begin a school and had asked Bloomington preachers James Mathes and Elijah Goodwin to publicize their mission in the *Christian Record*, the newspaper they edited. Instead, the men brought the conversation to the state meeting in October 1847.<sup>56</sup> Others present also

---

<sup>53</sup> Childs-Helton 93.

<sup>54</sup> Ovid Butler, “The North-Western Christian University,” *Millennial Harbinger*. (Bethany, VA, 1850) 330.

<sup>55</sup> Butler, “The North-Western Christian University,” 330.

<sup>56</sup> Shaw, “Founding,” 236.

felt that it was time to establish a school, and a committee of five representatives was formed to aid in selecting a location.<sup>57</sup>

Debate over the school's location prompted the Disciples to begin canvassing congregations across the state, seeking their opinion as to whether a college should be built, and if so, where. When the representative chosen at the meeting was unable, Elijah Goodwin conducted the canvass, reporting later that "I never stopped for rain, wind, snow, ice or storm."<sup>58</sup> Goodwin's canvass revealed that the majority of congregations in the state wanted the college in the centrally-located capital city of Indianapolis, and the decision was finalized at the next state meeting in October 1849.<sup>59</sup> A committee of seven members was designated to raise funds for the school, headed by prominent Indianapolis lawyer and philanthropist Ovid Butler.<sup>60</sup>

The university's charter, drafted by Ovid Butler, was approved by the Indiana General Assembly on January 15, 1850. The charter included the names of the university's forty-three commissioners, who would be collectively responsible for selling 750 shares of stock to endow the university and making other necessary arrangements.<sup>61</sup> Progress was slow until Ovid Butler and James Mathes arranged for John O'Kane to assist in selling stock subscriptions. A respected preacher who had been living, preaching, and educating in Indiana since the 1830s, O'Kane had somewhat legendary status among Christian preachers due to urban legend that he had baptized Abraham

---

<sup>57</sup> Waller 6-7. The five-member committee included three future NWCUC commissioners: Ovid Butler, Love H. Jameson, and Elijah Goodwin.

<sup>58</sup> James M. Mathes, *Life of Elijah Goodwin, the Pioneer Preacher!* (St. Louis: John Burns, 1880) 210.

<sup>59</sup> Mathes 210-211.

<sup>60</sup> Waller 9-10.

<sup>61</sup> Ovid Butler, *Annual Report to the Board of Directors of the North-Western Christian University*. (Indianapolis Journal Company, 1855) 4.



Lincoln.<sup>62</sup> Calling upon his connections and reputation, the men convinced O’Kane to sell his Indianapolis bookstore and dedicate his full effort to selling subscriptions for the stock of the university. Eager for him to take on the new role, Butler and Mathes contributed their own money to buy him out for \$1,500. In the eighteen months that followed, O’Kane successfully helped raise the necessary \$75,000 in subscriptions.<sup>63</sup>

With the appropriate funds having been raised, the university was officially organized in July 1852, marked by the election of the first Board of Directors. This board was responsible for “closing up the subscriptions—collecting, securing, consolidating, and increasing the funds—of procuring a site, and erecting suitable buildings thereon for the Institution.”<sup>64</sup> After two years of construction, logistics, and organization, the University opened its doors on November 1, 1855, with three professors and 113 students. Its first students took courses in math, physical science, Greek, Latin, and philosophy. In addition to the collegiate program, the university had a preparatory department, offering two levels of courses: preparatory and pre-preparatory “English school.” The English school was an alternative to public primary school and covered such topics as reading, spelling, penmanship, grammar, mental and written arithmetic, geography, and composition. The preparatory department provided additional education that was not often covered in primary school but was necessary prior to college education, such as algebra, Greek, and Latin.<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> Madison Evans, *Biographical Sketches of the Pioneer Preachers of Indiana*. (Philadelphia: J. Challen & Sons, 1862) 331-334; Shaw, “Founding,” 247, note 45.

<sup>63</sup> Shaw, “Founding,” 246-249.

<sup>64</sup> Ovid Butler, *Annual Report*, 4.

<sup>65</sup> *Catalogue of Officers and Students of the North-Western Christian University for Session 1855-1856*. (Indianapolis Journal Co., 1856).

Although it would face countless challenges in the decades to come, particularly in the financial sense, the contributions of several key individuals would provide the university the strong basis it required to succeed. Commissioners John O’Kane, Elijah Goodwin, and James Mathes were especially influential in the university’s early years, helping to found the school and later serving on its Board of Directors. Elijah Goodwin was described as “indefatigable” in his campaign for the university, working to increase “both the funds and the popularity of the institution.”<sup>66</sup> He traveled across the state, “soliciting stock and contributions... and awakening an educational spirit among all the people, and especially among those of the household of faith.”<sup>67</sup> John O’Kane was described as having “entered his heart and soul” into the enterprise, raising the majority of the funding through selling subscriptions.<sup>68</sup> James Mathes wrote extensively in the *Christian Record* promoting the university, and another faculty member remarked that “his pen was one of the ablest advocates of the establishment of the N. W. C. University.”<sup>69</sup> The efforts of these men contributed to the university’s opening on November 1, 1855.<sup>70</sup> However, no one individual had a greater influence over the university than Ovid Butler.

As noted previously, Butler played a large role in both the university’s development at both the state Disciples of Christ convention meetings and beyond. He wrote the university’s charter, served as the president of the university’s Board of Commissioners, and would go on to be president of its Board of Directors, a position he

---

<sup>66</sup> Evans 175.

<sup>67</sup> Evans 175.

<sup>68</sup> Evans 334-335.

<sup>69</sup> Evans 291.

<sup>70</sup> Shaw, “Founding,” 262.

would hold for nearly twenty years.<sup>71</sup> In 1877, the university was renamed Butler University in his honor.<sup>72</sup>

Ovid Butler was a prominent Indiana lawyer, philanthropist, and member of the Disciples of Christ Church. Born in 1801 in New York, he moved to Indiana in 1817, settling in Jennings County with his family.<sup>73</sup> Butler began his career as a lawyer in Shelbyville before moving to Indianapolis to establish a law firm with partner Calvin Fletcher.<sup>74</sup> An avid abolitionist, he opposed slavery on moral and religious grounds. He was a founding member of the Freedmen's Aid Commission of Indiana, a society that, during the Civil War, provided food, shelter, education, and religious support to people residing in Indiana who had formerly been enslaved.<sup>75</sup>

Early in his life, Butler ran for various local political offices, but was defeated on account of his abolitionist views.<sup>76</sup> An active member in Indiana's Free Soil political movement, which sought to restrict the expansion of slavery into newly acquired territories, he served as a Free Soil elector in presidential elections.<sup>77</sup> He also arranged aid for individuals fighting to prevent slavery from taking root in Kansas during the conflict of the Kansas-Nebraska determination.<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup> Childs-Helton, 95; John H. B. Nowland, *Sketches of Prominent Citizens of 1876: With a Few of the Pioneers of the City and County Who Have Passed Away*. (Indianapolis: Tilford & Carlon, Printers, 1877) 525.

<sup>72</sup> Childs-Helton 92.

<sup>73</sup> Ovid Butler, letter to M.C. Tiers, 13 December 1863. Ovid Butler Letter Book, p. 264, Ovid Butler Collection, Special Collections, Rare Books, and University Archives Department, Irwin Library, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>74</sup> Nowland 524-525.

<sup>75</sup> "Freedmen's Aid Commission of Indiana," *Indianapolis Daily Journal*, 3 Sept. 1863, p. 3.

<sup>76</sup> "Ovid Butler, Sr," *The Indianapolis Leader*, 16 July 1881, p. 2.

<sup>77</sup> Childs-Helton 91; John B. Semans, "Free Territory State Convention," *Indiana State Sentinel*, vol. 4, no. 17, 29 July 1848, p. 1.; "Ovid Butler, Sr," *The Indianapolis Leader*, 16 July 1881, p. 2; "Free Soil Ticket," *The Evansville Daily Journal*, 30 Oct. 1852, p. 1.

<sup>78</sup> J. M. Tilford, "Free Democratic Convention," *Richmond Palladium*, vol. 26, no. 11, 28 Feb. 1856, p. 2.

Butler also created and funded a Free Soil party newspaper in Indianapolis, *The Free Soil Banner*, which defined its “grand objects” as “freedom of the north from southern dictation, and the non-extension of slavery.”<sup>79</sup> The *Banner* declared that although Congress had the power to legislate the Territories, “the introduction of slavery into them is a violation of the principles of our Constitution.”<sup>80</sup> Butler’s free soil beliefs laid the foundation for the university’s dedication to maintaining the rights and freedoms, including the free soil, of the Northwest Ordinance. In 1854, Ovid Butler joined with other antislavery leaders to organize all opponents of slavery into one political party, resulting in a meeting of over ten thousand people gathering to establish Indiana’s Republican party.<sup>81</sup>

Butler frequently discussed his abolitionist views with reference to his faith. He strongly believed that slavery was a sin according to the Bible and was adamant that Christians were obligated to actively oppose slavery.<sup>82</sup> This belief was controversial within the church; though many members of the Disciples of Christ Church were abolitionists, not all were. On numerous occasions, Butler debated the issue of slavery with Alexander Campbell, one of the main founders of the Disciples of Christ Church movement. Campbell, though not necessarily pro-slavery, was a pacifist who opposed the work of abolitionists.<sup>83</sup> The two men disagreed especially about the Fugitive Slave Law. While Campbell believed that a good Christian would not disregard any established

---

<sup>79</sup> “To the Public!,” *The Free Soil Banner* [Indianapolis], 25 Aug. 1848, p. 2.

<sup>80</sup> “To the Public!,” *The Free Soil Banner*.

<sup>81</sup> Davis, *Affectionately Yours*, 8.

<sup>82</sup> Jeremiah Smith and Ovid Butler, *Is Slavery Sinful?: Being Partial Discussions of the Proposition, Slavery Is Sinful* (Indianapolis: H.H. Dodd, 1868); Barbara Butler Davis, editor, *Affectionately Yours: The Civil War Home-Front Letters of the Ovid Butler Family*, (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 2004) 5.

<sup>83</sup> Waller 18.

civil law, Butler believed that the Fugitive Slave Act presented a conflict with the higher laws established by God. Butler boldly advocated for peaceful civil disobedience as a response to the law, stating that “there is neither revolution nor rebellion—neither treason, felony, or breach of the peace, in a passive resistance to, or in an open, quiet, firm, and even stern disobedience of, the requirements of the Fugitive Slave Law.”<sup>84</sup> As an individual, Ovid Butler’s influence over the creation of North Western Christian University was greater than that of any other individual founder. These strong abolitionist beliefs, so rooted in Ovid Butler’s character, were inseparable from the character of the university.

In examining the origins of North Western Christian University, one must understand the social and political context in which it was created, the process by which it was founded, and the character of its founders. However, these only reveal part of the story. What made NWCU unique was the principles put forward by the founders at the time of its creation, which set it apart from all previous institutions. While the context and process of the founding were important, the essence of the school came from the founders’ vision.

There are three elements of the founders’ vision for the university that convey its values as an institution. First, the founders desired that the personal liberties guaranteed to Midwesterners under the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 be continued in perpetuity, asserting the expansion of slavery as an impediment to human progress. Second, the university would incorporate the Indiana Disciples’ conception of Christianity and Christian morality—an inclusive, cooperative, and tolerant Christianity tied to the frontier

---

<sup>84</sup> Ovid Butler, “The Fugitive Slave Law,” *Millennial Harbinger*, Fourth Series, vol. 1., Mar. 1851, pp. 432.

spirit—into its curriculum and culture. Finally, the university would offer the opportunity for all people to learn and collaborate in the same classes, earning the same degrees and the same honors, regardless of race, gender, or religious affiliation.

The character of the university is represented in its original name, North Western Christian University. Both the *North Western* and *Christian* elements of the name are a clear statement of the institution's values and the ideas it sought to spread. The first component to examine is *North Western*. Though some assert that the *North Western* indicates the founders' desire to attract students from beyond the state, coming from the entirety of the Old Northwest, in reality this element of the name "was designed to be descriptive rather than geographical, and intended to stamp on its front its peculiar characteristics."<sup>85</sup> These "peculiar characteristics" were the namesake of the university and a model for its values – the characteristics of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787.

Historians agree that the Northwest Ordinance influenced the states that developed from this territory. The Ordinance set the groundwork for political participation to grow in this land, promising increasing self-governance as territories became states.<sup>86</sup> It established articles to govern the territory that would "forever remain unalterable" and would establish "the fundamental principles of civil and religious liberty ... as the basis of" all future government upon this land. Several of these articles formed a bill of rights, guaranteeing settlers' rights to religious freedom, trial by jury, no seizure of liberty or property, representation in legislature, and more. These articles also endorsed education as "being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind."

---

<sup>85</sup> Evans 418.

<sup>86</sup> Madison, *Hoosiers*, 32.

Perhaps most notably, the Northwest Ordinance also outlawed slavery and involuntary servitude on this land.<sup>87</sup>

The founders chose to include *North Western* in the university's name to reflect their belief that the Ordinance designated this territory as permanently free soil.<sup>88</sup> The Ordinance is said to have “forever fixed the character of the population ... by excluding from them involuntary servitude. It impressed upon the soil itself, while it was yet a wilderness, an incapacity to bear up any other than free men.”<sup>89</sup>

In the 1840s, the reemergence of the Ordinance was a more progressive notion than simply the desire to limit slavery's expansion. It was a public promotion of the personal liberties that had always been afforded to the people on this land—namely, the right to freedom without the threat of involuntary servitude—which they believed should *always* be afforded to the people on this land. In the context of determining the slave status of Kansas and Nebraska and the ruling of the Dred Scott case, it appeared to many that the promise of these liberties was increasingly endangered by the possibility of slavery's expansion. The continued advocacy for the rights afforded by the Northwest Ordinance was a clear criticism of the expansion of slavery, a system which NWCU's founders saw as a violation of human rights and universal progress.<sup>90</sup> Madison Evans, principal of NWCU's preparatory school, perhaps best described the way the institution was rooted in the spirit of progress and liberty that defined the Old Northwest. In his October 1862 sketch of the university, he noted: “so peculiar to these States, devoted to

---

<sup>87</sup> Northwest Ordinance; 1787 (M247, roll 79); MP, 1774-1789; RG 360; NAB.

<sup>88</sup> Benton 15; United States, Office of Education, *Circular of Information No. 10: Higher Education in Indiana*, edited by Herbert B. Adams, (Washington: 1891) 158.

<sup>89</sup> Webster, quoted in Dunn 177.

<sup>90</sup> Benton 15.

individual freedom and development, is the spirit in which the University is designed to work, and which is indicated by its characteristic name.”<sup>91</sup> This expression of the university’s values, though little known, is a testament to the progressive vision of the founders – a vision which established North Western Christian University as firmly opposed to the expansion of slavery.

Though this stance itself is not abolitionist in the sense of advocating for the termination of slavery, it is worth mentioning that many of the individuals who greatly influenced the school, its founding, and its operation were vocal abolitionists. While the spirit of abolition is not present in the university’s policies and mission, aside from its name, the abolitionist views of its founders are inextricable from the vision for the school itself. Many members of the Disciples of Christ Church in Indiana, the body largely responsible for the school’s creation, held antislavery views.<sup>92</sup> As discussed previously, Ovid Butler was an avid abolitionist. His influence upon the university’s foundations, including his creation of the institution’s charter, allowed him to define the university according to his vision – a vision shaped by his progressive views on human rights and equality.

Butler was not alone among the founders and early NWCU faculty in his abolitionist beliefs. Commissioners John O’Kane, George Campbell, James Mathes, and John B. New, of whom the latter three were longtime members of the university’s Board of Directors, were avid abolitionists.<sup>93</sup> New, a prominent minister, preached antislavery

---

<sup>91</sup> Evans 419.

<sup>92</sup> Waller 3.

<sup>93</sup> Eileen Gordon Vandegrift, “The Christian Missionary Society: A Study in the Influence of Slavery on the Disciples of Christ,” diss., Butler University, 1945, 47; Evans 80; Waller 17; Shaw, *Hoosier Disciples*, 156-57.



in his sermons and provided aid to formerly enslaved people by means of the Underground Railroad in Madison, IN.<sup>94</sup>

Beyond the walls of the university itself, the influential figures of NWCU participated in antislavery activism together. Unsatisfied with existing missionary societies which ignored the immorality of slavery, in 1859 Butler and church member John Boggs organized a convention to establish a new Christian Missionary Society made up of those who “regard American Slavery as a moral evil, at variance with the principles and spirit of the Christian code.”<sup>95</sup> Four of NWCU’s eight faculty members at the time were founding members of the society: ancient languages professor and university president Allen R. Benton, science professor Ryland T. Brown, English professor Madison Evans, and English school teacher Nancy E. Burns.<sup>96</sup> Butler himself helped pen the Society’s constitution, which asserted that “the qualification for membership in this Society shall be:…2. No complicity in the crime of American Slavery.”<sup>97</sup>

However, not all members of the Disciples of Christ Church shared these same views, and even some of the university’s founding members disagreed with Butler’s stance. Like Butler, Jeremiah Smith was a member of the Disciples of Christ Church, a commissioner of NWCU, and served on the NWCU’s Board of Directors for several years after the school’s founding.<sup>98</sup> Despite having these things in common, Smith and

---

<sup>94</sup> Evans 80; Michael J. Raley, “The Underground Railroad in Jefferson County, Indiana: An Interracial Partnership Ahead of Its Time,” *Indiana Magazine of History*, vol. 116, no. 4, 2020, p. 299.

<sup>95</sup> Report from Ovid Butler, chairman of the founding committee of the Christian Missionary Society, quoted in Vandegrift 47.

<sup>96</sup> Vandegrift 50; *Catalogue of Officers and Students of the North-Western Christian University for Session 1858-1859*. (Indianapolis Journal Co., 1859); W.K. Pendleton, “Reply to Bro. Jer. Smith’s Letter,” *Millennial Harbinger*. (Bethany, VA, 1859) 51.

<sup>97</sup> Corban Dean Thomas, “‘Slavery: A Colossal Crime’: A Religious and Political Biographical Thesis of Ovid Butler (1801-1881),” diss., Emmanuel School of Religion, 2005, 23-24; Vandegrift 54.

<sup>98</sup> “Charter and By-Laws of Butler University, formerly North Western Christian University.” (Indianapolis Journal Company, 1880); Waller 15, 68.

Butler had very different views on the religious permissibility of American slavery, which they debated in a series of letters: Butler argued that slavery was a sin; Smith argued that it was not. The pieces of this extensive debate were published periodically in the newspaper the *Christian Record* and later compiled into a book that is nearly four hundred pages long.<sup>99</sup> Despite the opposition to abolitionist ideals even among the founding members, Butler and other likeminded founders were persistent. They believed so strongly in the antislavery cause that they fought to ensure abolitionist values were solidified in the university's name and policies.

Butler also pointed to the issue of slavery as a factor in the founding of the university. He remarked that NWCU “originated in the desire of its founders and early patrons for an institution of learning of the highest class upon free soil...removed, as far as practicable, from the pernicious influences of slavery.”<sup>100</sup> The university's association with abolition generated conflict, particularly within the Disciples of Christ Church. Many members of the church took issue with the outspoken nature of NWCU's abolitionism – especially when several of the school's first students enrolled after being expelled from Bethany College, Alexander Campbell's university, for asserting their abolitionist views.<sup>101</sup>

Campbell, who had personally defended compliance with the Fugitive Slave Law, took this very personally, using his Disciples of Christ newspaper, the *Millennial Harbinger*, to write and publish critiques of the university on numerous occasions.<sup>102</sup> He

---

<sup>99</sup> Jeremiah Smith and Ovid Butler, *Is Slavery Sinful?: Being Partial Discussions of the Proposition, Slavery Is Sinful* (Indianapolis: H.H. Dodd, 1868).

<sup>100</sup> "The Northwestern Christian University," *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel*, February 22, 1876, p. 10.

<sup>101</sup> Waller 18-19.

<sup>102</sup> Alexander Campbell, "Slavery and the Fugitive Slave Law," *Millennial Harbinger*, Fourth Series, vol. 1. Mar. 1851, 171-172; Alexander Campbell, "The Fugitive Slave Law," *Millennial Harbinger*, Fourth Series, vol. 1., Mar. 1851, 434-435.

called the university a “proud monument of free soil jealousy.”<sup>103</sup> Campbell also made less-than-veiled criticisms of the university’s choice of name, remarking:

But literature, science and religion, are neither northern nor southern; neither south western nor north western, but are wide as the earth, broad as the sea, high as heaven, and deeper than the regions of the dead. I, therefore, cannot see either the wisdom or the utility of giving to learning, morality or Christianity, either a sectional, political, longitudinal, latitudinal or geographical designation, spirit or character. ... State pride, or sectional pride, arctic or antarctic pride, is just as much of the flesh as family pride or personal pride, avarice or ambition. Sectional feelings are even anti-Republican, anti-American, and reprobated by all good patriots.<sup>104</sup>

Like Campbell, some members of the Disciples of Christ Church opposed NWCUC’s abolitionist policies due to their desire to keep the idea of abolition separate from the church, as not all members agreed with these beliefs. Some Disciples objected to the active abolitionist activity by individuals like Butler and Allen Benton who were “so intimately, long, and influentially connected with [the university]” because they feared that the university’s abolitionist views would be extended to the Disciples of Christ Church at large, which they viewed as a danger to their reputation.<sup>105</sup> Others, who thought the issue of slavery was a purely political concern, believed that NWCUC was more concerned with politics than religious education: one member of the church, W. K. Pendleton, described the school as “too much tinctured with the fanatical sectarianism of politico-religious abolitionism to be of any service to the Christian church or cause.”<sup>106</sup>

---

<sup>103</sup> Alexander Campbell, “Our Visit to Nashville,” *Millennial Harbinger*, Fourth Series, vol. 5., 1855, 218.

<sup>104</sup> Alexander Campbell, “The North-Western Christian University,” *Millennial Harbinger*. (Bethany, VA, 1850) 331-332.

<sup>105</sup> W.K. Pendleton, “Reply to Bro. Jer. Smith’s Letter,” *Millennial Harbinger*. (Bethany, VA, 1859) 51.

<sup>106</sup> Waller 18; W.K. Pendleton, “Our Progress and Prospects.” *Millennial Harbinger*. (Bethany, VA, 1859): 713.

While abolition was not explicitly outlined in the university's mission, NWCU's founding and history are intertwined with the abolitionist views of its founders.

The other element to the institution's name, North Western Christian University, is *Christian*. This inclusion clearly references the university's founding by members of the Christian Church. The founders imparted their beliefs and values upon the school, and the Christian element is evident in the institution's name, charter, and curriculum.<sup>107</sup> The university did not adopt specific denomination, welcoming students of all denominations or none, but Christianity and Christian values were incorporated into the curriculum and experience.

The inclusion of Christian teachings into higher education was not unique to NWCU, especially at this time when church-affiliated schools were among the primary means of education. The truly formative element for the university was not merely the inclusion of Christian teachings, but rather including the specific conception of Christianity and Christian values developed by the pioneer preachers of the Disciples of Christ. Their conception of Christianity and Christian morality centered around inclusion, drawing one's own conclusions, diversity of shared voices, and cooperation.

The church movement in Indiana adopted the name of the Christian Church, also known as the Disciples of Christ, from the movement established elsewhere by Barton Warren Stone and Alexander Campbell, on account of their shared theological conceptions.<sup>108</sup> However, the Christian Church in Indiana had a different character to it.

---

<sup>107</sup> The university's charter maintains the goal for the institution to "[instruct] the students in every branch of liberal and professional education; ...to teach and inculcate the Christian faith and Christian morality... and for the promotion of the sciences and arts."

<sup>108</sup> Shaw, *Hoosier Disciples*, 11; Waller 6.

Christianity was practiced differently in Indiana, and the movement originating there that took the name *Disciples of Christ* was deeply rooted in frontier religious thinking.<sup>109</sup>

Early practice of Christianity in Indiana took on a different form than most organized religious practice. In the early years of the Reformation Movement, communities were made up of many different religious denominations represented among a small number of families, such that no one denomination could successfully establish a majority in any given community. As a result, at this time it was common for an entire community to observe sermons from traveling preachers, regardless of denomination.<sup>110</sup> In their pursuit of religion, Christian believers “listened and formed their own opinions. Frontier families sought truth in matters of faith. To find it they were not afraid to think for themselves.”<sup>111</sup>

The methods of Indiana Disciples reflected their view of Christianity not as something restrictive that existed with one correct execution, but rather as a dialogue. This notion was exemplified further when Disciples of Christ congregations began to develop independently, “linked loosely only by similar theological views,” and free of a higher authoritative body or hierarchy.<sup>112</sup> Though independent in nature, individuals and congregations in Indiana were noted for their concern for the broader Disciples of Christ community.<sup>113</sup> Annual state conventions, specific to the Indiana Disciples, allowed congregations to discuss topics of shared interest. The church “felt no guilt over

---

<sup>109</sup> Shaw, *Hoosier Disciples*, 11.

<sup>110</sup> Shaw, *Hoosier Disciples*, 42; Waller 4.

<sup>111</sup> Waller 4.

<sup>112</sup> Waller 4.

<sup>113</sup> Shaw, *Hoosier Disciples*, 15.

diversity” and operated without hierarchy, all members referring to each other as “brother.”<sup>114</sup>

These practices came to characterize the particular kind of Christianity that was specific to the Disciples of Christ in Indiana. To these people, Christianity was inclusive and cooperative, invited new voices and allowed all to draw their own conclusions. It was as independent as the settlers themselves, but still incorporated elements of community.

This particular conception of Christianity is crucial to understanding the goal outlined in the university’s charter, “to teach and inculcate the Christian faith and Christian morality.”<sup>115</sup> NWCU’s founders wanted to incorporate religion into the curriculum in a nondenominational way that was “as broad, [all-embracing], and philanthropic as Christianity itself.”<sup>116</sup> This meant not that students would receive a religious overview that was neither Baptist nor Methodist, but rather their education was intertwined with the broader values of Christianity as they were perceived by this group – the values of inclusivity, community, cooperation, and self-reflection.

This distinct idea of Christianity was a primary motivator for the Indiana Disciples to found their own university. After remarking that the other Disciples of Christ college, Bethany College in Virginia, was “influenced... by its local position” and therefore “relied upon the South for its principal support,” Ovid Butler notes: “We think, however, that the north-western brethren are as liberal and enterprising as any other, and that they will manifest their liberality especially in favor of an institution to be built up

---

<sup>114</sup> Waller 4.

<sup>115</sup> “Charter and By-Laws of Butler University, formerly North Western Christian University.” (Indianapolis Journal Company, 1880) 8.

<sup>116</sup> U.S. Office of Ed., *Circular*, 158.

amongst them, and sustained by them.”<sup>117</sup> In this way, North Western Christian University was uniquely influenced by a brand of Christianity that was inclusive and cooperative, that invited dialogue rather than rigidity, and that grew from its practice on the frontier.

The final element of the founders’ vision is their desire for North Western Christian University to offer equal educational opportunities to all people, regardless of race, gender, or religious affiliation. Many of the university’s missions were rooted in Ovid Butler’s vision, but perhaps none more than the notion of equal education for all.

At this time, education was not guaranteed for people of all backgrounds, and when available, it was in separate groups. As Allen Benton notes, “in 1855, the idea that women needed or would be benefited by a liberal education was generally questioned and often derided.”<sup>118</sup> Even more unusual was the practice of educating men and women together, as coeducation was considered “an odious and dangerous innovation.”<sup>119</sup> During this time, people of color were denied educational opportunities purely out of discrimination. In 1850, the same year that NWCU’s charter was established, the Indiana Supreme Court ruled that black children could not attend Indiana’s public schools, not because they did not need an education, but “because black children were deemed unfit associates of white, as school companions.”<sup>120</sup>

In spite of the pressure of this intolerant world, Ovid Butler unquestionably believed in the equality of all people and strongly desired that people be educated

---

<sup>117</sup> Ovid Butler, “The North-Western Christian University,” *Millennial Harbinger*. (Bethany, VA, 1850) 330.

<sup>118</sup> Benton 15.

<sup>119</sup> John Coburn, “Memorial Address,” *Founder's Day at Butler University Addresses* (Indianapolis, Carlon & Hollenbeck, 1882) 21.

<sup>120</sup> James Lewis v. John Henley, quoted in Emma Lou Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana: A Study of a Minority*. (Indiana Historical Bureau, 1957) 65-66.

together, without a thought to separating them by race or gender. In a draft of an essay, likely written shortly after the Civil War, Ovid Butler recorded his hope

that the Institution of the North Western Christian University occupy a position in the front ranks of human progress and Christian civilization as the Exponent and Advocate of the common rights of humanity, without distinction on account of sex, race, or color. [This] position recognized the absolute equity before God and before the Law of the individual members of the human family—not necessarily that these rights and duties of each are the same, but that they are equal. This equality of rights and duties, so far as race or color is concerned, has after a long struggle and a fierce and bloody war finally obtained recognition in our National Constitution; but, there is still a controversy about its applicability where sex is concerned.<sup>121</sup>

Butler envisioned the school not only as a provider of equal opportunity education, but as a model of the equity that he described.

This vision is evident in the university's initial policies. Despite the stigma surrounding women in education at this time, Ovid Butler believed that women were deserving of equal education opportunities and admitted them on an equal basis with men to all the university's courses. The Board of Directors asserted that the "University does not claim any exclusive patronage, on any grounds whatever," admitting male and female students of any race to the same program with the capacity to earn the same honors and the same degrees.<sup>122</sup> Furthermore, despite its link to the Christian Church, NWCU was a non-sectarian university and admitted students of all religions or no religion.<sup>123</sup> The only requirements for admission were "good moral character and habits" and an agreement to

---

<sup>121</sup> Ovid Butler, quoted in Sally Childs-Helton, "Ovid Butler and the Founding of Butler University," *Journal of the Butler Society*, 2010, 99.

<sup>122</sup> Minutes of the Board of Directors, 24-25 May 1854, Minutes of the Board of Directors, vol. 13, 27 July 1852–30 Sept. 1863, p. 92. University Archives, Special Collections, Rare Books, and University Archives Department, Irwin Library, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>123</sup> Board of Directors Minutes, 24-25 May 1855, 92.



uphold the university's rules and regulations.<sup>124</sup> This progressive attitude would become evident in NWCUC's faculty in the years to come, when it became the second college in the United States to hire a female professor, Catharine Merrill.<sup>125</sup> Embodying Ovid Butler's vision, North Western Christian University offered nearly unparalleled inclusion in education, striving to serve as a model for human equality.

The establishment of North Western Christian University represents at once the most expected and most unexpected outcome. At a time when education in Indiana was driven by church-founded academies and universities, its formation by the Christian Church was far from unique. However, the school's creation still set precedents in higher education, opening its doors to students of all races, genders, and religions at a time when higher education was nearly exclusive to elite white males.

These ideas presented by the founders set a lofty goal for the university to reach. It is clear that NWCUC's founders had created the university with the specific purpose of occupying a niche that had not yet been fulfilled in higher education, nor in education generally in Indiana. As Scot Butler, university president and Ovid Butler's son, remarked at the university's first Founders' Day celebration, "this is another educational institution. My friends, if it be not more, it fails of the high purpose of its founders, and, in the view of the large number of such institutions already established, is an unnecessary, a superfluous work."<sup>126</sup> The university was meant to do more than offer a standard education, but to operate with higher principles in mind.

---

<sup>124</sup> "An Ordinance for the Government of the University," *Catalogue of Officers and Students of the North-Western Christian University for Session 1857-1858*. (Indianapolis Journal Company, 1858) 22.

<sup>125</sup> Waller 26.

<sup>126</sup> Scot Butler, "Presentation Address," *Founder's Day at Butler University Addresses*. (Indianapolis, Carlon & Hollenbeck, 1882) 5. Scot Butler was far from the antislavery advocate that his father Ovid was, though he shared his dedication to maintaining NWCUC according to the vision of its founders. Davis, *Affectionately Yours*.

The university's charter asserts that it was created in order to in order

to establish...departments or colleges for the instructing of the students in every branch of liberal and professional education; to educate and prepare suitable teachers for the common schools of the country; to teach and inculcate the Christian faith and Christian morality...; and for the [promotion] of the sciences and arts.<sup>127</sup>

NWCU was founded to be a place of moral and spiritual, as well as intellectual, growth –to cultivate the growth of individuals who are well-rounded in academic and professional life as well as in character and morality. Students of all backgrounds would receive education that reflected the founders' Christian morality: tolerant, inclusive, and providing a community that allowed individuals freedom to make their own decisions. Their education would reinforce the principles of the Northwest Ordinance and the founders' belief in abolition: active opposition to the institution of slavery, and, more broadly, a model for integrity and active citizenship, opposing injustice even when it is unpopular.

In its first two decades of operation, NWCU upheld the goals of the founders to provide equal opportunity education, incorporate Christian inclusivity and morality into its operations, and oppose injustice to preserve the freedoms of others. Though financial restrictions at times threatened to pressure the university away from decisions of inclusion and accessibility, the outcome generally upheld these principles.

The university strived to provide equal opportunity education by making NWCU education more accessible to people of all educational and financial backgrounds. Its Board of Directors also demonstrated its commitment to

---

<sup>127</sup> "Charter and By-Laws of Butler University, formerly North Western Christian University." (Indianapolis Journal Company, 1880) 8-9.

education equality by eliminating policies that distinguished between male and female degrees. NWCU was also dedicated to the inclusion and morality as conceptualized by the Christian Church, represented in its unprecedented inclusion of female voices in higher education. The university continued to exemplify the founders' dedication to the freedom of the former Northwest Territory and the abolition of slavery, and utilized this as a model to oppose injustice.

NWCU's charter outlines its goal to provide instruction in the sciences and the arts, maintain Christian morality in their teachings and operations, train future educators, and, as A.R. Benton, university president from 1861-68, described, "in a broad way to train men to become safe and effective leaders of thought in all the walks of life."<sup>128</sup> In its first decades, NWCU worked to achieve this intellectual, moral, and professional education by offering a broad variety of courses in a liberal arts framework, allowing students options through innovations in curriculum, and designing extracurriculars to offer growth and community.

NWCU offered a liberal arts curriculum with emphasis on Christian morality. As was customary at the time, study of the classics was central to university education, with students learning to read and compose both Latin and Greek. First-year students took courses in Latin and Greek as well as algebra, geometry, and trigonometry. The sophomore year curriculum covered the next level of Latin and Greek, chemistry, surveying, and a focus on math: analytical geometry, spherical trigonometry, and conic sections. Juniors were educated in rhetoric, philosophy, physiology, and botany in

---

<sup>128</sup> Benton 14.

addition to the classical languages. They had the option to choose between calculus or history and another option of mechanics or engineering. German was offered as an elective for juniors. Senior classes included Greek, Latin, history, political economy, and a course on the U.S. Constitution. A class in logic was required, science classes were astronomy and geology, and German was available as an elective.<sup>129</sup> Seniors also took capstone courses in moral philosophy and religious applications, designed to teach students how to incorporate their moral and religious values into their personal and professional lives.<sup>130</sup> All students took courses in the Bible.

Beyond the standard liberal arts curriculum, NWCU's curriculum was innovative in its offerings. It was the first college in Indiana to establish an English department.<sup>131</sup> It also pioneered the practice of offering electives. As NWCU alum Lee Burns notes in his history of the school, "the university was also among the first to abandon the old rigid courses of study and permit students to elect the subject best suited to their needs."<sup>132</sup> Students could choose between the Scientific or Classical track and were given elective options in addition to their regular courses. In its first two decades, electives offered included French, Hebrew, German, additional Greek courses, and other courses catering to a particular course of study, such as engineering, international law, or ecclesiastical history for students pursuing ministry. Education courses were also offered frequently.<sup>133</sup>

---

<sup>129</sup> *Catalogue of Officers and Students of the North-Western Christian University for Session 1862 - 1863*. (Indianapolis Journal Co., 1863); 1855-56 course catalogue; 1859-60 course catalogue.

<sup>130</sup> Course catalogs 1855-56 through 1859-60; Waller 41

<sup>131</sup> Lee Burns, "The Beginnings of Butler College," *Butler Alumna Quarterly* 15 (1926), April 1926, 10.

<sup>132</sup> Burns 8.

<sup>133</sup> *Catalogue of Officers and Students of the North-Western Christian University for Session 1857-1858*. (Indianapolis Journal Co., 1858); *Catalogue of North-Western Christian University, for the Session Ending June 25th, 1869*. (Indianapolis Printing & Publishing House, 1869); *Catalogue of North-Western Christian University, for the Session Ending June 14th, 1870*. (Indianapolis Printing & Publishing House, 1870); 1855-56 course catalogue; 1862-63 course catalogue.

According to Burns, Brown University and Bethany College were the only colleges in the country to utilize a system of electives before NWCUCU.<sup>134</sup>

The curriculum also offered opportunities to study the fine arts. Vocal music was offered to all students in the university's early years and piano, flute, and guitar courses were offered as electives.<sup>135</sup> A full-fledged music department was established in 1868.<sup>136</sup> By the 1870s, financial considerations soon required the university to charge an extra fee for the available fine arts courses: vocal performance, a variety of instruments, drawing, watercolor, and oil painting.<sup>137</sup>

Beyond their academic obligations, students could seek extracurricular involvement in NWCUCU's literary societies during the university's early years. There were two societies for men, the Mathesian Society, formed in 1856, and the Pythonian Society, formed in 1857.<sup>138</sup> In March 1859, a group of female students formed the first female literary society, called the Sigournean. Literary society meetings were the primary social event for men and women during the early years of the university. Members would gather to discuss current events, share speeches, and take part in debates. Students were often joined by faculty guests, who would give lectures and facilitate debates.<sup>139</sup>

John Holliday emphasizes the importance of such societies, remarking that "these societies were of first rate importance in the university," singular in their opportunities for intellectual and social growth. Membership in the literary societies "broadened

---

<sup>134</sup> Burns 8.

<sup>135</sup> *Catalogue of Officers and Students of the North-Western Christian University for Session 1856-1857*. (Indianapolis Journal Co., 1857).

<sup>136</sup> Minutes of the Board of Directors, 21 July 1868, Minutes of the Board of Directors, vol. 14, vol. 14, 4 Jan. 1864-4 Jan. 1875, p. 160. University Archives, Special Collections, Rare Books, and University Archives Department, Irwin Library, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>137</sup> 1869-70 course catalogue.

<sup>138</sup> 1856-57 course catalogue.

<sup>139</sup> Waller 47-48.

intelligence, taught men the forms of expression and the ability to meet men in discussion, and developed powers that enhanced their success in life.”<sup>140</sup>

Aside from intellectual stimulation and practice in public speaking, literary society events provided social outlets for students. Since students lived in boarding houses off campus, these societies allowed them an opportunity to form communities within the university. Men and women also had the opportunity to interact at literary society events when men issued a formal invitation to female guests for their speeches and debates.<sup>141</sup> Society events also provided a connection to the broader community, with one member recalling, “seldom, if ever, did the flourishing college literary societies meet without a number of town people in their audiences, and college entertainments were liberally patronized.”<sup>142</sup> NWCUC’s literary societies created opportunities for students to partake in intellectual debates, hear speeches, socialize, and connect with their community. These activities contributed to the personal and academic growth that the university experience provided.

The dedication to a varied education and a well-rounded collegiate experience was manifested in the chosen paths for NWCUC’s first graduates. Despite the connection between many early colleges and various churches, the sole purpose of these institutions was not to educate ministry – at least not in the case of NWCUC. Recorded graduates from the university’s early years pursued a variety of careers and paths. After the first fifteen years, twenty-seven graduates were lawyers, twelve were ministers, eight doctors, and

---

<sup>140</sup> John H. Holliday, “The North Western Christian University,” *Butler Alumna Quarterly* 4 (1914), Oct. 1914, 114.

<sup>141</sup> Waller 47-49.

<sup>142</sup> Vida T. Cottman, “Historical Sketch of Irvington,” *Butler Alumna Quarterly* (1912), vol. I, no. 3, Oct. 1912, 88-89.

seven were educators. There were five farmers, three bankers, one florist, one furniture salesman, and one train station agent, among a handful of others.<sup>143</sup> Eleven of these graduates were women.<sup>144</sup> The university did not keep records of the race of NWCUC students until the 1910s, so it is difficult to assess racial diversity on the campus at this time.<sup>145</sup> Overall, the academic variety in the liberal arts curriculum, the freedom and flexibility in the elective system, and the opportunities for extracurricular involvement created an experience that fostered academic, moral, and personal growth which would serve students well past their years at NWCUC.

The value that Ovid Butler most explicitly outlined for North Western Christian University was that of equal opportunity education. Butler's standards for inclusive, equal-opportunity education were reflected in policies that originated with the university itself: NWCUC, from its opening in 1855, admitted students regardless of gender, race, religion, and background, provided they had "good moral character."<sup>146</sup> Prospective students took an entrance examination for admission, but this was not used as a basis for turning anyone away: it was an assessment of students' competency in the relevant subjects they would be studying and was used to place them into the appropriate level of courses.<sup>147</sup>

This unrestricted policy of admission was a major factor in the NWCUC's ability to make education more accessible, but the university devised additional means to work

---

<sup>143</sup> Butler University, "Butler College Alumni Directory 1856-1912," *Butler Alumni Directories*, 1912.

<sup>144</sup> "Butler College Alumni Directory 1856-1912."

<sup>145</sup> The first recorded Black graduate of NWCUC was Gertrude Mahorney in 1887. She was also the first Black graduate of an Indiana college. She earned her master's degree from NWCUC in 1889 and went on to teach in Indianapolis. Waller, 191.

<sup>146</sup> "An Ordinance for the Government of the University," *Catalogue of Officers and Students of the North-Western Christian University for Session 1857-1858*. (Indianapolis Journal Company, 1858) 22.

<sup>147</sup> *The Annual Register and the Annual Catalog of the Northwestern Christian University for the Eighteenth Session*. (Indianapolis Sentinel Co., 1873).

toward equal opportunity education. NWCUC worked to make education more accessible by establishing a preparatory school, creating a path to higher education for those who had not received quality primary education. Financial accessibility was also a consideration, with scholarships available to some and discounted tuition available to many students. The university also strived to create more inclusive and diverse classroom environments, demonstrating its commitment to education equality by revising policies that offered an optional separate female curriculum.

Though originating from a purely practical need, the creation of NWCUC's primary-level "English school" and preparatory department served as a means for the university to make higher education more accessible to people of different backgrounds. At the time of the university's founding, the state of Indiana's education system necessitated some support from other institutions. There were no public secondary schools in the state at this time, and with the deficiency of Indiana's public primary schools—educator Allen R. Benton called them "so inadequate and almost intolerable"—it could not be assumed that every student coming to NWCUC had received quality education.<sup>148</sup> It was thus necessary to ensure that students had a sufficient basis of education before they began collegiate courses.

For this reason, the university created a preparatory department, bridging the gap between primary education and college by ensuring students had the skills they needed to succeed in the collegiate course. The preparatory curriculum, equivalent to that of a secondary school, included algebra, history, composition, rhetoric, and introductory level

---

<sup>148</sup> Benton 13.



Greek and Latin grammar and translation.<sup>149</sup> Those who already possessed these skills from their prior education were given the option to enroll directly in the collegiate course upon presenting a certificate of completion from another institution or by passing an examination proving their mastery.<sup>150</sup> For younger students and those who had not received a primary education, there was the university's "English School," which covered the basics of elementary education: reading, writing, grammar, spelling, arithmetic, penmanship, composition, geography, and drawing.<sup>151</sup>

Providing a level of transitional education for students was a conscious decision made by the university, knowing that it was necessary to "giv[e] students more time to make thorough preparation for the college courses."<sup>152</sup> While this was a practical decision, at least in part, the creation of the preparatory department also represented NWCU's dedication to building a community and meeting the city's educational needs. As represented in the willingness to admit students of all backgrounds, part of the university's ethos centered around inclusion and accessibility to more people, beyond those who were traditionally extended education opportunities. Individuals with any background level of education—whether never having received any formal education, having some public school education, or having education from one of the few private academies in the state—were not turned away, but invited to pursue further academic endeavors. This, at least in principle, broadened the university's prospects for admission:

---

<sup>149</sup> *Catalogue of North-Western Christian University, for the Session Ending June 23d, 1865.* (Indianapolis: Holloway, Douglass & Co., 1865); *The Annual Register and the Annual and Triennial Catalogues of the North-Western Christian University, for the Seventeenth Session, 1871 - 1872.* (Indianapolis Sentinel Co., 1872); 1859-60 course catalogue.

<sup>150</sup> 1859-60 course catalogue; 1871-72 course catalogue.

<sup>151</sup> 1859-60 course catalogue.

<sup>152</sup> Board of Directors Minutes, 21 July 1868, 160.

it was not drawing students only from the few private academies, but drawing from a broader range of perspectives.

The Board of Directors demonstrated its commitment to the matter of preparatory and English school education from the very beginning, determined to meet the state's educational needs as soon as possible. The Board opened the preparatory school in 1853, before the university's official opening, renting classroom space in a nearby church until construction of the university building was completed.<sup>153</sup> Though it was forced to temporarily close several months later when a family death caused the teacher to move out of state, the directors expressed their optimism for its future, given its early success and financial stability.<sup>154</sup>

NWCU's directors continued to prioritize the department, even when financial challenges necessitated the dismissal of numerous faculty members and the reassignment of those who remained. During a "reorganization" of faculty in 1861, the university was forced to cut their faculty from seven teachers to five because it could not afford to pay staff salaries.<sup>155</sup> However, the Board of Directors ensured that the preparatory and English department remained, with A.C. Shortridge taking over both departments.<sup>156</sup>

---

<sup>153</sup> Minutes of the Board of Directors, 24 May 1853, Minutes of the Board of Directors, vol. 13, 27 July 1852–30 Sept. 1863, pp. 65-66. University Archives, Special Collections, Rare Books, and University Archives Department, Irwin Library, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>154</sup> Board of Directors Minutes, 24 May 1853, 65-66; Ovid Butler, *Annual Report*; Shaw, *Founding*, 252-53.

<sup>155</sup> Minutes of the Board of Directors, 1-3 July 1861, Minutes of the Board of Directors, vol. 13, 27 July 1852–30 Sept. 1863. University Archives, Special Collections, Rare Books, and University Archives Department, Irwin Library, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana; Minutes of the Board of Directors, 30 July-1 August, 1861, Minutes of the Board of Directors, vol. 13, 27 July 1852–30 Sept. 1863. University Archives, Special Collections, Rare Books, and University Archives Department, Irwin Library, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>156</sup> Waller 27; *Catalogue of Officers and Students of the North-Western Christian University for Session 1861-1862*. (Indianapolis Journal Co., 1862).

Those teachers who were dismissed from the English school were permitted to use NWCU classrooms to continue their own private instruction of primary level classes.<sup>157</sup>

As the university grew, the Board continued to divert more resources to the preparatory department to support its growth. Initially a separate level within the preparatory department, in 1868 the English school was officially designated as its own school. The Board of Directors resolved to hire more staff for the English School and provide it separate funding from the prep school.<sup>158</sup> This was their way of continuing to support the basis of education, providing a practicable path to allow people access to higher education.

The creation and continuation of English and preparatory schools helped make education, and the potential to pursue higher education, more accessible. However, it is important to acknowledge that this accessibility was limited by students' ability to finance their education. Though NWCU's English and preparatory school offered students education that was of more consistent quality than that of Indiana's free public schools, admission required tuition payments.

Initially, tuition cost \$30 per year for the collegiate course and \$20 per year for the English school and preparatory classes.<sup>159</sup> Fees increased in 1863, costing \$36 yearly for collegiate courses and \$24 for preparatory classes, with a \$5 matriculation fee.<sup>160</sup> The university provided options to make this education more affordable. Efforts to increase

---

<sup>157</sup> Waller 27.

<sup>158</sup> Board of Directors Minutes, 21 July 1868, 160.

<sup>159</sup> Course catalogs 1855-56 through 1859-60.

<sup>160</sup> *Catalogue of North-Western Christian University, for the Session Ending June 24, 1864*. (Indianapolis: Ellis Barnes, 1864).

financial accessibility to NWCUC took multiple forms. Discounted tuition was available, scholarships offered, and in certain situations, tuition offered free of charge.

One option available to students was discounted tuition paid to the university in scrip. Stockholders were awarded university scrip, which was redeemable to pay tuition. Stockholders with unused scrip were able to sell it to students, who could use it to pay their own tuition.<sup>161</sup> Course catalogs report stockholders' scrip as available to purchase for between one-third and half the cost per dollar, meaning that student tuition would cost one-third to half the normal price. Scrip could be obtained through the university secretary during the normal process of paying tuition, so a personal connection to a stockholder was not necessary to receive discounted tuition.<sup>162</sup> Through this process, discounted tuition was made widely available to many students. It was recorded in the Board of Directors minutes that there was an abundance of available scrip, "more probably than there [was] a demand for," so it was certainly possible that that all students could access discounted tuition.<sup>163</sup>

Scholarships and free tuition were also available under certain circumstances. Ovid Butler and several of the other members of the Board offered to use their scrip toward fully financing the tuition of "worthy students," seeking to study ministry and "devote themselves to the work of the Christian ministry, and need help to enable them to

---

<sup>161</sup> Board of Directors Minutes, 21 July 1868, 163.

<sup>162</sup> 1861-62 course catalogue; *The Annual Register and the Annual and Triennial Catalogues of the North-Western Christian University, for the Sixteenth Session, 1870 - 1871*. (Indianapolis: R.J. Bright & Co., 1871). The 1861-62 catalogue and subsequent editions report that paying in scrip will cost students approximately half the usual tuition price; from 1870-71 and onward, students would pay one-third of the usual price.

<sup>163</sup> Board of Directors Minutes, 21 July 1868, 163.

complete their studies for that purpose.”<sup>164</sup> This offer was advertised to all students in the university’s course catalog.

Some of the faculty and directors of NWCUC also provided scholarships not through university channels, but by means of the Christian Missionary Society. With donations provided by members—including many affiliated with NWCUC, such as Ovid Butler, Allen Benton, William Thrasher, Madison Evans, and George Campbell—the society offered scholarships. These funds went toward the NWCUC tuition for young men whose antislavery beliefs aligned with those of the founders, especially those who “may desire to enter the missionary field under the auspices of the Society.”<sup>165</sup> The society’s records show that in 1860, the society paid \$86 to NWCUC to cover the tuition of four students.<sup>166</sup>

In 1863, the Board of Directors also unanimously voted to offer free tuition to any veterans who had served in the Civil War.<sup>167</sup> This was particularly remarkable considering that the overwhelming majority of students in the collegiate course at the time had joined the war, leaving the university with an enormous financial challenge.<sup>168</sup>

In its early years, NWCUC established several practices that helped make its education more financially accessible. From discounted tuition, scholarships, and even free tuition offered by stockholders, financial accessibility was a consideration of the

---

<sup>164</sup> 1870-71 course catalogue.

<sup>165</sup> Report from the Board of the Christian Missionary Society at the Society’s first meeting, November 10, 1859, quoted in Vandegrift 60.

<sup>166</sup> Vandegrift 70.

<sup>167</sup> Waller 38-39; Minutes of the Board of Directors, 30 Sept., 1863, Minutes of the Board of Directors, vol. 13, 27 July 1852–30 Sept. 1863. University Archives, Special Collections, Rare Books, and University Archives Department, Irwin Library, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>168</sup> During the 1859-60 academic year, 63 students were enrolled in college courses. After the war had begun, during the 1862-63 academic year, there were only 31 students in NWCUC’s college courses. Total enrollment (including the preparatory and English schools) also decreased between these years, from 221 to 144 students. 1862-62 course catalogue.

university from its early years as part of its dedication to increasing the accessibility of education overall.

Making education more accessible was only one way that NWCUC worked to provide equal opportunity education. Another means to reach this goal was the concerted effort that the university put toward creating more inclusive and diverse classroom environments. The university exhibited growth in its commitment to equal opportunity education by revising the system of awarding degrees, eliminating the different degree title for female graduates.

In the early years of the university, there was a track set out for female students to earn the degree of “Mistress of Science” by completing a “female collegiate course” on a three-year timeline. This label is slightly misleading, because from the school’s opening, male and female students took courses together and shared the same classrooms.<sup>169</sup> The female collegiate course was also just one option for female students: from the university’s start, the course catalog reported that women could complete the regular four year program if they so chose.<sup>170</sup> Ovid Butler’s daughter, Demia, was the first female graduate of the four-year course in 1862.<sup>171</sup>

The only difference was that the three-year female curriculum had slightly different courses, modified for the shorter timeline: French instead of Greek and no courses in mineralogy, differential calculus, plane trigonometry, or navigation. The rest

---

<sup>169</sup> An 1852 letter from Ovid Butler to the architect of the university building revealed that there was initially a plan for a separate building for female classrooms, but Butler abandoned this idea for the purpose of having coeducational classrooms. Waller, 51*n*19.

<sup>170</sup> 1855-56 course catalogue.

<sup>171</sup> “Butler College Alumni Directory 1856-1912.”

of the courses remained the same. Women also participated in the capstone courses during their final year, same as men.<sup>172</sup>

The formality of this female degree track was short-lived. In 1868 the Board of Directors decided to remove the option of the female-only track, eliminating all distinction between the male and female educational offerings. In their explanation for this change, the directors asserted that the university was founded with the distinct purpose of providing “a higher standard of scholarship and a more extended course of study than usually found in the ordinary [college].” They continue, “as at least one important step toward meeting these demands, the board have determined to make no distinction between male and female students with respect to branches of study.”<sup>173</sup>

This decision exemplified the university’s commitment to education equality. Recognizing that the existence of a separate program for women was somewhat arbitrary given the coeducational classrooms, NWCU’s directors made an active decision to fully commit to the benefits of being a coeducational institution. These benefits were regarded as an advantage to the university overall. Ahead of their time, the university’s founders had recognized that the inclusion and coeducation of both genders would allow for a new kind of growth: “the moral restraints, the intellectual competition, and the refining influence of the sexes, may be reciprocally enjoyed in the school-room.”<sup>174</sup> Allowing students of both genders to engage with one other in intellectual and academic pursuits was not just a benefit for those women who may have been otherwise excluded – the

---

<sup>172</sup> 1855-56 course catalogue.

<sup>173</sup> Board of Directors Minutes, 21 July 1868, 161.

<sup>174</sup> Evans 420.

inclusion of new perspectives generated dialogue that benefitted everyone, a “reciprocally enjoyed” advantage.

This spirit of inclusion was present in the university’s continued development of policies that made education more accessible in its early years. In its first twenty-five years, NWCUC dedicated itself to providing educational opportunities to students of all experiences and educational histories, different financial backgrounds, and both genders. NWCUC’s dedication to inclusion originated with the university’s values of Christianity and Christian morality, which the Indiana Disciples of Christ and the founders of the university understood as inclusivity and tolerance. The founders were clear that this Christianity should be taught in classrooms, but also that the guiding principles of inclusion and tolerance were present in all university affairs.

During its first few decades, NWCUC proved its dedication to inclusivity by pioneering the inclusion of female educators in higher education. However, the university’s commitment to inclusivity at times faltered, often from the pressure of financial struggles. Though ultimately deciding against it, the university considered firing members of the faculty on the basis of their religious affiliation, marking a notable blunder in their policies of inclusion.

NWCUC continued to integrate new perspectives into the university system by being among the earliest institutions of higher education to have female educators. The seeds of this came from the university’s very beginning, with women serving as NWCUC faculty members from the first year of its founding, at which time there were no female university professors in the United States. NWCUC’s first female educators were connected to the university’s English, or elementary-level, school and the preparatory, or



secondary-level, school. Elizabeth Jameson informally assisted in teaching at the English school while her husband, L.H. Jameson, was teaching assistant at the preparatory school.<sup>175</sup> In the school's fourth year, 1858-59, the first official female faculty member joined the staff: Elizabeth J. Price took over as teacher at the English school.<sup>176</sup> She would be joined the next year by Nancy E. Burns, NWCUC's first female graduate, as another English school teacher.<sup>177</sup> Burns, who boarded at Ovid Butler's home, also served as an adviser to female students at the university. As Waller describes, this act itself indicated the university's dedication to prioritizing the hiring of female educators: "Mrs. Burns' appointment was a step in meeting the responsibilities imposed by coeducation."<sup>178</sup>

Several years later, NWCUC endeavored to further meet the needs of female students by becoming the second college in the United States to hire a female professor.<sup>179</sup> In 1869, Catharine Merrill was hired to the university's faculty as a professor of English literature. She was second only to Maria Mitchell, professor of astronomy at Vassar College.<sup>180</sup> Daughter of state treasurer Samuel Merrill, Catharine Merrill grew up in Indianapolis and began her teaching career teaching primary school out of her church. Shortly after, she served as principal in a private academy in Crawfordsville, IN. She spent two years studying abroad in Europe, served as a nurse in

---

<sup>175</sup> Evans 416.

<sup>176</sup> *Catalogue of Officers and Students of the North-Western Christian University for Session 1858-1859*. (Indianapolis Journal Co., 1859).

<sup>177</sup> 1859-60 course catalogue; "Butler College Alumni Directory 1856-1912."

<sup>178</sup> Waller 20.

<sup>179</sup> Burns 11.

<sup>180</sup> Waller 20.

the Civil War, and wrote an Indiana history of the Civil War before being hired to teach at NWCU.<sup>181</sup>

Merrill was the first holder of the Demia Butler Chair of English Literature, the first endowed chair position for a female professor in the country. Ovid Butler created the chair, dedicating \$10,000 to endow the position “to be filled always and only by a good and competent female professor,” in honor of his late daughter Demia Butler, one of the university’s first female graduates.<sup>182</sup> With this position, Butler created the first college English department in the state of Indiana.<sup>183</sup>

Merrill is widely regarded as one of the first professors to use lecture as a teaching method in a course other than science. Her innovative teaching methods caught the attention of leading educators across the country, and “she was in correspondence with them... all of whom were intensely interested in her work.”<sup>184</sup> This included Harvard educators Edward Everett and Charles Eliot Norton as well as Cornell professor Andrew D. White, who wrote to Merrill for advice about her lecture method before implementing it in his classroom.<sup>185</sup> One student described Merrill as someone “whom every one looked upon as a model in character, in scholarship, as the noblest exponent of the highest ideals in education.”<sup>186</sup> In this way, Catharine Merrill embodied the university’s values and aims in her own personal demeanor. As an educator and member of the university, she also exemplified the innovation, inclusion, and character that NWCU strived for.

---

<sup>181</sup> "A Great Woman: Catharine Merrill," *Butler Alumna Quarterly* (1916), vol. V, no. 3, Oct. 1916, 105-108.

<sup>182</sup> Childs-Helton 92; Ovid Butler, “Endowment for the Demia Butler Chair of English Literature at North Western Christian University, later renamed Butler University,” 1869.

<sup>183</sup> Burns 10.

<sup>184</sup> Burns 11.

<sup>185</sup> Burns 11.

<sup>186</sup> Josephus Peasley, “College Experiences,” *Butler Alumna Quarterly* (1913), vol. II, no. 3, Oct. 1913, 139.

Beyond the educational component of NWCUC, women also had a hand in the university's executive operations. Stockholders elected several women to the university's Board of Directors in the university's first twenty years. Demia Butler, Ovid Butler's daughter, served as secretary of the Board from 1863-64.<sup>187</sup> Marcia Melissa Bassett Goodwin, wife of founder Elijah Goodwin and editor of the newspaper *Ladies Christian Monitor*, held the secretary position from 1866-68.<sup>188</sup> Goodwin and two other women, Emma Birchard and Mary E. Duncan, later served a three-year term on the Board for the academic years of 1870-71, 1871-72, and 1872-73.<sup>189</sup>

Mary Duncan was married to Robert B. Duncan, a prominent Indianapolis lawyer and the clerk of the Marion County Court.<sup>190</sup> She was likely connected to the university through her father, Dr. John H. Sanders, who helped establish the Central Christian Church in Indianapolis, where numerous NWCUC founders were benefactors, parishioners, or pastors.<sup>191</sup> Though these women represented an exception to the otherwise-male Board and attained these positions because of their connections to influential figures in the university, it is worth noting that they were allowed to serve on the board at all. At a time when female voices were considered wholly unimportant in

---

<sup>187</sup> 1863-1864 course catalogue.

<sup>188</sup> Mathes 257-258; *Catalogue of North-Western Christian University, for the Session Ending June 21, 1867*. (Indianapolis: Douglass & Conner, 1867); *Catalogue of North-Western Christian University, for the Session Ending June 19th, 1868*. (Indianapolis: Downey, Brouse, Butler, & Co., 1868).

<sup>189</sup> 1870-71 course catalogue; 1871-72 course catalogue; 1872-73 course catalogue.

<sup>190</sup> Berry Robinson Sulgrove, *History of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana, Part 1* (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co., 1884) 175.

<sup>191</sup> James Mathes, L.H. Jameson, Elijah Goodwin, and Chauncey Butler, Ovid Butler's father, were all pastors at the Central Christian Church. William Robeson Holloway, *Indianapolis: A Historical and Statistical Sketch of the Railroad City*. (Indianapolis Journal Print, 1870) 222; Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis: The History, the Industries, the Institutions, and the People of a City of Homes*, vol 1. (Indianapolis: Lewis Publishing Company, 1910) 607-8.

higher education, these female Directors serve as a reminder of the university's openness and receptiveness to the inclusion of female voices in executive decisions.

The defining character of North Western Christian University, the progressive values that set it apart from all previous colleges, came from the vision of the founders. Amidst the growth that Indianapolis was experiencing at this time, one community within the Christian Church put their minds to something bigger. They envisioned a way to ensure that the growth would continue: an institution that would empower young minds to think critically, engage in civil discourse and debate, and grow into responsible and moral citizens. The ideals and convictions of its founders, especially Ovid Butler, and the influence of the Christian Church forged North Western Christian University as an institution dedicated to inclusion, equality, and never-ending progress toward a brighter future.

The university itself pledged to uphold these convictions relentlessly. Before the school's opening, the Board of Directors composed a statement asserting that it operated with a dedication to the principles of its charter alone, despite allegations that its abolitionist sentiments were reflective of a political agenda:

“this institution is pledged by its charter and to no sectarian or political party – [the university] is not bound to receive or reject any doctrine or principle because [it is] received or rejected by such party, but is at liberty to carry out the Principles to which it is pledged whither received by such party or not...”<sup>192</sup>

---

<sup>192</sup> Minutes of the Board of Directors, 24-25 May 1854, Minutes of the Board of Directors, vol. 13, 27 July 1852–30 Sept. 1863, p. 92. University Archives, Special Collections, Rare Books, and University Archives Department, Irwin Library, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana.

This was a clear expression that NWCU was bound to its charter and values alone, determined to uphold the principles outlined by the founders, without regard for any outside circumstances.

This stood true even when the progressive nature of the institution was questioned and criticized in the university's first decades. Despite doubt cast upon the university—especially by some members of the Disciples of Christ Church who were critical of NWCU's progressive character—the university's founders and administration never faltered. Madison Evans, an early NWCU faculty member, speaks to the university as reaching a degree of success “due, in a large measure, to the liberal and enlightened policy of its Directors, which, as it is better known, will be more heartily approved.”<sup>193</sup> The founders knew that the progressive values of the university would not be accepted by everyone, but they had faith that as it became better known, it would appeal to likeminded students and faculty. They maintained that their values would attract the right crowd, even if it took some time.

This attitude of integrity and patience, even when faced with criticism, has largely been attributed to the character of Ovid Butler himself. Despite his progressive views and influence upon his community,

Mr. Butler was not an aggressive reformer. His gentle nature had no taint of acrimony or intolerance in it. While he entertained, announced, and adhered to his own views with unalterable tenacity, he exercised toward all who disagreed with him an ample Christian charity....He was willing to wait patiently for the gradual and slow changes of public opinion as truth was developed. Far-reaching reforms begin quietly, with cool and sagacious men... who submit their propositions to the public judgment and leave them for adoption or rejection, well satisfied, that at least, mankind will travel up to and accept them.<sup>194</sup>

---

<sup>193</sup> Evans 421.

<sup>194</sup> John Coburn, “Memorial Address,” *Founder's Day at Butler University Addresses*. (Indianapolis, Carlon & Hollenbeck, 1882) 18.

In this way, Ovid Butler knew that he could not force anyone to believe in the equality he stood for – he could only stand by his own ideas, open the door for others to learn, and trust that they would come to their own conclusions. It was for this purpose that NWCU was established.

There have been virtually unlimited factors that have altered the perception of this university's values since its inception, particularly its dedication to diversity and inclusion. The university's adherence to the founding values has not been linear. However, it is worth asking how much of this conviction persists, how much the university continues to prioritize its values. For as much as the university invokes Ovid Butler's name and abolitionism in its marketing, for as much as it celebrates itself for being among the first in its open-mindedness, one must continue to ask: what is this institution doing today to carry on this legacy? It is not enough for the university to rely on its history to set it apart. It must continue working. Its founders would accept nothing less.

## Works Cited

Primary Sources

- “Address to the People of the State of Indiana.” *Richmond Palladium* [Richmond, IN], vol. 11, no. 27, 10 July 1841, p. 1. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress.  
[chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86058217/1841-07-10/ed-1/seq-1/](http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86058217/1841-07-10/ed-1/seq-1/).
- “Another War Meeting: Support to the Families of Soldiers.” *Daily State Sentinel* [Indianapolis, IN], 15 July 1862, p. 1. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress.  
[chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015683/1862-07-15/ed-1/seq-3/](http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015683/1862-07-15/ed-1/seq-3/).
- Butler, Ovid. *Annual Report to the Board of Directors of the North-Western Christian University*. Indianapolis IN, Indianapolis Journal Company, 29 May 1855,  
[digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/1](http://digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/1).
- . "Endowment for the Demia Butler Chair of English Literature at North Western Christian University, later renamed Butler University." 10 Mar. 1869. Butler Digital History, [digitalhistory.butlerlibraryservices.org/items/show/3234](http://digitalhistory.butlerlibraryservices.org/items/show/3234).
- . Letter to M.C. Tiers. 13 Dec. 1863. Ovid Butler Letter Book, Ovid Butler Collection. Special Collections, Rare Books, and University Archives Department, Irwin Library, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana.
- . “The Fugitive Slave Law.” *Millennial Harbinger* [Bethany, VA], Fourth Series, vol. 1, no. 8. 29 Mar. 1851, pp. 430–434.
- . “The North-Western Christian University.” *Millennial Harbinger* [Bethany, VA], Third Series, vol. 7. 1850, pp. 329-331.
- Campbell, Alexander. “Slavery and the Fugitive Slave Law.” *Millennial Harbinger* [Bethany, VA], Fourth Series, vol. 1. Mar. 1851, pp. 171-172.
- . “The Fugitive Slave Law.” *Millennial Harbinger* [Bethany, VA], Fourth Series, vol. 1, no. 8. 29 Mar. 1851, pp. 434–435.
- . “The North-Western Christian University.” *Millennial Harbinger* [Bethany, VA], Third Series, vol. 7., 1850, pp. 331-335.
- . “Our Visit to Nashville.” *Millennial Harbinger* [Bethany, VA], Fourth Series, vol. 5., 1855, pp. 217-218. *Google Books*,  
[books.google.com/books?vid=CHI:43635947](https://books.google.com/books?vid=CHI:43635947).

- “Charter and By-Laws of Butler University, formerly North Western Christian University.” Indianapolis Journal Company, 1880, digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/23.
- “Church and State.” *Indiana State Sentinel* [Indianapolis, IN], vol. 10, no. 44, 3 Apr. 1851, p. 2. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015677/1851-04-03/ed-1/seq-2/.
- “Colonization.” *Indiana State Sentinel* [Indianapolis, IN], 01 July 1852, p. 1. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015677/1852-07-01/ed-1/seq-1/.
- “Congressional Speech of Mr. Clay.” *Richmond Palladium* [Richmond, IN], 23 Feb. 1839, p. 1. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86058217/1839-02-23/ed-1/seq-1/.
- “Contribution for the Kansas Sufferers.” *The Evansville Daily Journal* [Evansville, IN], 13 Sept. 1856, p. 3. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015672/1856-09-13/ed-1/seq-3/.
- “Common School Convention, To the People of Indiana.” *Indiana State Sentinel* [Indianapolis, IN], vol. 2, no. 104, 5 May 1847. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82014301/1847-05-05/ed-1/seq-3/.
- Coburn, John. "Memorial Address." *Founder's Day at Butler University Addresses*. Indianapolis IN, Carlon & Hollenbeck, 1882, digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/24.
- Evans, Madison. *Biographical Sketches of the Pioneer Preachers of Indiana*. Philadelphia, PA, J. Challen & Sons, 1862, archive.org/details/biographicalsket00evan/page/n8/mode/2up.
- “Freedmen's Aid Commission of Indiana.” *Indianapolis Daily Journal* [Indianapolis, IN], 3 Sept. 1863, p. 3. newspaperarchive.com/indianapolis-daily-journal-sep-03-1863-p-3/.
- Free Soil Ticket.” *The Evansville Daily Journal* [Evansville, IN], 30 Oct. 1852, p. 1. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015672/1852-10-30/ed-1/seq-1/.
- Gilkey, J. A. “Common Schools in Montgomery County.” *Indiana Free Democrat* [Indianapolis, IN], 18 May 1854, p. 1, newspaperarchive.com/indianapolis-indiana-free-democrat-may-18-1854-p-1/.



- "A Great Woman: Catharine Merrill." *Butler Alumna Quarterly* (1916), vol. V, no. 3, Oct. 1916, pp. 105-08. Originally published in *The Indianapolis Star*, 27 Aug. 1916.
- Indiana Colonization Society. *Eleventh Annual Report of the Indiana Colonization Society*, 1845. *Internet Archive*, [archive.org/details/report00indi](http://archive.org/details/report00indi).
- Indiana Constitution of 1816. *Indiana Historical Bureau*, IN.gov, [www.in.gov/history/2460.htm](http://www.in.gov/history/2460.htm).
- Indiana State, Legislature. A Joint Resolution of the General Assembly of the State of Indiana, relative to the American Colonization Society, 22 Jan. 1829. *Congressional Series of United States Public Documents*, Vol. 201, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1830, p. 25. *Google Books*, [books.google.com/books?id=8YZHAQAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=8YZHAQAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false).
- Kavanaugh, B. T. "Colonization — Abolition." *Indiana State Sentinel* [Indianapolis, IN], 02 April 1846, p. 3. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. [chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015677/1846-04-02/ed-1/seq-3/](http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015677/1846-04-02/ed-1/seq-3/).
- "Ladies' Patriotic Movement." *Daily State Sentinel* [Indianapolis, IN], 30 Apr. 1864, p. 3. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. [chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015683/1864-04-30/ed-1/seq-3/](http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015683/1864-04-30/ed-1/seq-3/).
- Mathes, James M. *Life of Elijah Goodwin, the Pioneer Preacher!*. St. Louis, John Burns, 1880. *Google Books*, [books.google.com/books?id=1JWbGQAACAAJ&pg=PR1#v](http://books.google.com/books?id=1JWbGQAACAAJ&pg=PR1#v).
- Minutes of the Board of Directors, 24 May 1853. Minutes of the Board of Directors, vol. 13, 27 July 1852–30 Sept. 1863, pp 65-66. University Archives. Special Collections, Rare Books, and University Archives Department, Irwin Library, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana.
- , 24 May 1854. Minutes of the Board of Directors, vol. 13, 27 July 1852–30 Sept. 1863, pp 89-99. University Archives. Special Collections, Rare Books, and University Archives Department, Irwin Library, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana.
- , 1-3 July 1861. Minutes of the Board of Directors, vol. 13, 27 July 1852–30 Sept. 1863. University Archives. Special Collections, Rare Books, and University Archives Department, Irwin Library, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana.
- , 30 July-1 Aug., 1861. Minutes of the Board of Directors, vol. 13, 27 July 1852–30 Sept. 1863. University Archives. Special Collections, Rare Books, and University Archives Department, Irwin Library, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana.

- , 30 Sept., 1863. Minutes of the Board of Directors, vol. 13, 27 July 1852–30 Sept. 1863. University Archives. Special Collections, Rare Books, and University Archives Department, Irwin Library, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana.
- , 21 July 1868. Minutes of the Board of Directors, vol. 14, vol. 14, 4 Jan. 1864–4 Jan. 1875, pp. 160-163. University Archives. Special Collections, Rare Books, and University Archives Department, Irwin Library, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana.
- North Western Christian University. *Catalogue of North-Western Christian University, for the Session Ending June 14th, 1870*, Indianapolis Printing & Publishing House, 1870. University Special Collections, Historic Academic Bulletins, <https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/16>.
- , *Catalogue of North-Western Christian University, for the Session Ending June 19th, 1868*, Indianapolis, Downey, Brouse, Butler, & Co., 1868. University Special Collections, Historic Academic Bulletins, <https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/14>.
- , *Catalogue of North-Western Christian University, for the Session Ending June 21, 1867*, Indianapolis, Douglass & Conner, 1867. University Special Collections, Historic Academic Bulletins, <https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/13>.
- , *Catalogue of North-Western Christian University, for the Session Ending June 23d, 1865*, Indianapolis, Holloway, Douglass & Co., 1865. University Special Collections, Historic Academic Bulletins, <https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/11>.
- , *Catalogue of North-Western Christian University, for the Session Ending June 24, 1864*, Indianapolis, Ellis Barnes, 1864. University Special Collections, Historic Academic Bulletins, [digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/10](https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/10).
- , *Catalogue of North-Western Christian University, for the Session Ending June 25th, 1869*, Indianapolis Printing & Publishing House, 1869. University Special Collections, Historic Academic Bulletins, <https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/15>.
- , *Catalogue of North-Western Christian University, for the Session of 1861 - 1862*, Indianapolis Journal Co., 1862. University Special Collections, Historic Academic Bulletins, [digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/8](https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/8).
- , *Catalogue of North-Western Christian University, for the Session of 1862 - 1863*, Indianapolis Journal Co., 1863. University Special Collections, Historic Academic Bulletins, [digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/9](https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/9).

- , *Catalogue of Officers and Students of the North-Western Christian University for the Session of 1855-1856*, Indianapolis Journal Co., 1856. University Special Collections, Historic Academic Bulletins, [digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/2](https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/2).
- , *Catalogue of Officers and Students of the North-Western Christian University for the Session of 1856-1857*, Indianapolis Journal Co., 1857. University Special Collections, Historic Academic Bulletins, [digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/3](https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/3).
- , *Catalogue of Officers and Students of the North-Western Christian University for the Session of 1857-1858*, Indianapolis Journal Co., 1858. University Special Collections, Historic Academic Bulletins, [digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/4](https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/4).
- , *Catalogue of Officers and Students of the North-Western Christian University for the Session of 1858-1859*, Indianapolis Journal Co., 1859. University Special Collections, Historic Academic Bulletins, [digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/5](https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/5).
- , *Catalogue of Officers and Students of the North-Western Christian University for the Session of 1859-1860*, Indianapolis Journal Co., 1860. University Special Collections, Historic Academic Bulletins, [digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/6](https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/6).
- , *The Annual Register and the Annual and Triennial Catalogues of the North-Western Christian University, for the Seventeenth Session, 1871 - 1872*, Indianapolis Sentinel Co., 1872. University Special Collections, Historic Academic Bulletins, <https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/18>.
- , *The Annual Register and the Annual and Triennial Catalogues of the North-Western Christian University, for the Sixteenth Session, 1870 - 1871*, Indianapolis, R.J. Bright & Co., 1871. University Special Collections, Historic Academic Bulletins, <https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/17>.
- , *The Annual Register and the Annual Catalog of the Northwestern Christian University for the Eighteenth Session, 1872-73*, Indianapolis Sentinel Co., 1873. University Special Collections, Historic Academic Bulletins, <https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/25>.
- “North-Western Christian University.” *Lexington Times* [Lexington, IN], Volume 2, no. 12, 3 June 1858, p. 2.
- Northwest Ordinance, July 13, 1787; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M332, roll 9); Miscellaneous Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789; Records of the Continental and Confederation Congresses and the Constitutional Convention, 1774-1789, Record Group 360; National Archives.

- “An Ordinance for the Government of the University,” *Catalogue of Officers and Students of the North-Western Christian University for Session 1857-1858*, Indianapolis Journal Company, 1858, [digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/4](https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/4).
- Pendleton, W. K. “Our Progress and Prospects.” *Millennial Harbinger* [Bethany, VA], Fifth Series, vol. 2, no. 1. Dec. 1859, p. 713. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.ah68fb>.
- . “Reply to Bro. Jer. Smith’s Letter.” *Millennial Harbinger* [Bethany, VA], Fifth Series, vol. 3., Dec. 1859, pp. 50-52.
- "Remarks of Mr. G. Burton Thompson." *Indiana State Sentinel* [Indianapolis, IN], vol. 6, no. 33, 4 Feb. 1847, p. 4. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. [chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015677/1847-02-04/ed-1/seq-4/](https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015677/1847-02-04/ed-1/seq-4/).
- "Report of Mr. Kerrick, to the Franklin County Education Society." *Indiana American* [Brookville, IN], vol. 11, no. 35, 25 Aug. 1843, p. 1. *Hoosier State Chronicles: Indiana's Digital Historic Newspaper Program*. Indiana State Library. [newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=IA18430825&e](https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=IA18430825&e).
- Semans, John B. “Free Territory State Convention.” *Indiana State Sentinel* [Indianapolis, IN], vol. 4, no. 17, 29 July 1848, p. 1. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. [chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82014301/1848-07-29/ed-1/seq-1/](https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82014301/1848-07-29/ed-1/seq-1/).
- Smith, Jeremiah, and Ovid Butler. *Is Slavery Sinful?: Being Partial Discussions of the Proposition, Slavery Is Sinful*. Indianapolis, H.H. Dodd, 1868. *Google Books*, [books.google.gp/books?id=xzTEWBiqLHIC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_atb#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.gp/books?id=xzTEWBiqLHIC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_atb#v=onepage&q&f=false).
- Tilford, J. M. "Free Democratic Convention." *Richmond Palladium* [Richmond, IN], vol. 26, no. 11, 28 Feb. 1856, p. 2. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. [chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86058250/1856-02-28/ed-1/seq-2/](https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86058250/1856-02-28/ed-1/seq-2/).
- "To the Public!" *The Free Soil Banner* [Indianapolis, IN], Vol. I, No. 1, 25 Aug. 1848, p. 2. *The Indianapolis Public Library: Digital Indy*, [www.digitalindy.org/cdm/ref/collection/fsb/id/49](http://www.digitalindy.org/cdm/ref/collection/fsb/id/49).

Secondary Sources

- “Being Black in Indiana.” *Indiana Historical Bureau*, IN.gov, 2020, [www.in.gov/history/2548.htm](http://www.in.gov/history/2548.htm).
- Benton, Allen R. “Early Educational Conditions and Founding a Nondenominational College.” *Indiana Magazine of History*, vol. 4. no. 1, Mar. 1908, pp. 13-17. [scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/imh/article/view/5629](http://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/imh/article/view/5629).
- Burns, Lee. “The Beginnings of Butler College.” *Butler Alumna Quarterly 15 (1926)*, April 1926, pp. 3-12.
- Butler, Scot. "Presentation Address." *Founder's Day at Butler University Addresses*. Indianapolis, IN, Carlon & Hollenbeck, 1882, [digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/24](http://digitalcommons.butler.edu/histacbulletins/24).
- Butler University. “Butler College Alumni Directory 1856-1912.” *Butler Alumni Directories*, 1912. [https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/alumni\\_directories/1](https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/alumni_directories/1).
- Carmony, Donald F. *Indiana 1816-1850: The Pioneer Era*, Indiana Historical Bureau, 1998. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, [ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/butler/detail.action?docID=4696552](http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/butler/detail.action?docID=4696552).
- Childs-Helton, Sally. "Ovid Butler and the Founding of Butler University." *Journal of the Butler Society*, 2010, pp. 89-105, [digitalcommons.butler.edu/librarian\\_papers/50](http://digitalcommons.butler.edu/librarian_papers/50).
- “The Colonization Movement.” *Indiana Historical Bureau*, IN.gov, 2020, [www.in.gov/history/3123.htm](http://www.in.gov/history/3123.htm).
- Cottman, Vida T. “Historical Sketch of Irvington.” *Butler Alumna Quarterly (1912)*, vol. I, no. 3, Oct. 1912, pp. 84-91.
- Davis, Barbara Butler, editor. *Affectionately Yours: The Civil War Home-Front Letters of the Ovid Butler Family*. Indiana Historical Society, 2004. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, [ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/butler/detail.action?docID=5846511](http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/butler/detail.action?docID=5846511).
- Dunn, J. P. *Indiana: A Redemption from Slavery*. Boston; New York, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1888. *HeinOnline*, [heinonline-org.ezproxy.butler.edu/HOL/P?h=hein.slavery/indrslv0001&i=1](http://heinonline-org.ezproxy.butler.edu/HOL/P?h=hein.slavery/indrslv0001&i=1).
- . *Greater Indianapolis: The History, the Industries, the Institutions, and the People of a City of Homes*. Vol. 1, Lewis Publishing Company, 1910, pp. 607-8. *Google Books*, <https://books.google.com/books?id=chsVAAAAYAAJ&lpg=PA608&>.
- Geib, George W. “Politics.” *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, edited by David J. Bodenhamer et al., Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1994,

pp. 161-69. *EBSCOhost*,  
[search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=nlebk&AN=20340&site=ehost-live&scope=site](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=nlebk&AN=20340&site=ehost-live&scope=site).

Holliday, John H. "The North Western Christian University." *Butler Alumna Quarterly* 4 (1914), Oct. 1914, pp. 105-115.

Holloway, William Robeson. *Indianapolis: A Historical and Statistical Sketch of the Railroad City, A Chronicle of Its Social, Municipal, Commercial and Manufacturing Progress, with Full Statistical Tables*. Indianapolis Journal Print, 1870. *Google Books*,  
<https://www.google.com/books/edition/Indianapolis/J5dOG1LeG4AC?hl=en&gbpv=1>.

Madison, James H. *Hoosiers: A New History of Indiana*, Indianapolis; Bloomington IN, Indiana University Press, 2014. *ProQuest Ebook Central*,  
[ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/butler/detail.action?docID=1809828](http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/butler/detail.action?docID=1809828).

Nolan, Alan T. Foreword. *Affectionately Yours: The Civil War Home-Front Letters of the Ovid Butler Family*, edited by Barbara Butler Davis, Indianapolis IN, Indiana Historical Society, 2004, pp. xi-xii. *ProQuest Ebook Central*,  
[ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/butler/detail.action?docID=5846511](http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/butler/detail.action?docID=5846511).

"The Northwestern Christian University." *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel* [Indianapolis, IN], February 22, 1876, p. 10.

Nowland, John H. B. *Sketches of Prominent Citizens of 1876: With a Few of the Pioneers of the City and County Who Have Passed Away*. Indianapolis IN, Tilford & Carlon, Printers, 1877. *HathiTrust Digital Library*, [hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.hx3s26](https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.hx3s26).

"Ovid Butler, Sr." *The Indianapolis Leader* [Indianapolis, IN], 16 July 1881, p. 2. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress.  
[chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84027490/1881-07-16/ed-1/seq-2/](https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84027490/1881-07-16/ed-1/seq-2/).

Peasley, Josephus. "College Experiences." *Butler Alumna Quarterly* (1913), vol. II, no. 3, Oct. 1913, pp. 133-39.

Raley, J. Michael. "The Underground Railroad in Jefferson County, Indiana: An Interracial Partnership Ahead of Its Time." *Indiana Magazine of History*, vol. 116, no. 4, 2020, pp. 293-342. *JSTOR*,  
[www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/indimagahist.116.4.02](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/indimagahist.116.4.02).

Shaw, Henry K. *Hoosier Disciples: A Comprehensive History of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana*. St. Louis, Bethany Press, 1966.

- . "The Founding of Butler University, 1847–1855." *Indiana Magazine of History*, Sept. 1962, scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/imh/article/view/8905.
- Shippo, Jan. "Religion." *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, edited by David J. Bodenhamer et al., Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1994, pp. 170-81. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=nlebk&AN=20340&site=ehost-live&scope=site.
- Stover, U. C. "Scraps of Early Indiana Church History: (Disciples of Christ)." *Indiana Worker 1921-22*. 1921.
- Sulgrove, Berry Robinson. *History of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana, Part 1*. Philadelphia, L.H. Everts & Co., 1884. *Google Books*, <https://books.google.com/books?id=a1Q0AQAAMAAJ&>.
- Thomas, Corban Dean. "'Slavery: A Colossal Crime' : A Religious and Political Biographical Thesis of Ovid Butler (1801-1881)." *Emmanuel School of Religion*, 2005.
- Thornbrough, Emma Lou. "African-Americans." *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, edited by David J. Bodenhamer et al., Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1994, pp. 5-14. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=nlebk&AN=20340&site=ehost-live&scope=site.
- . *The Negro in Indiana: a Study of a Minority*. Indiana Historical Bureau, 1957.
- United States, Office of Education. *Circular of Information No. 10: Higher Education in Indiana*. By James Albert Woodburn, edited by Herbert B. Adams, Washington D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1891. Contributions to American Educational History 10. *Google Books*, [books.google.com/books?id=KZsFAQAAIAAJ&pg=PA9#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=KZsFAQAAIAAJ&pg=PA9#v=onepage&q&f=false).
- Van Bolt, Roger H. "The Indiana Scene in the 1840's." *Indiana Magazine of History*, Dec. 1951, scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/imh/article/view/8078.
- Vandegrift, Eileen Gordon. "The Christian Missionary Society: A Study in the Influence of Slavery on the Disciples of Christ." Diss. Butler University, 1945. [digitalcommons.butler.edu/grtheses/396](https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/grtheses/396).
- Vanderstel, David G. "Cultural Institutions." *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, edited by David J. Bodenhamer et al., Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1994, pp. 39-50. *EBSCOhost*,

search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=nlebk&AN=20340&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Waller, George M. *Butler University: A Sesquicentennial History*. Indiana University Press, 2006.