Indiana Academy Band, c. 1960-1961.

Photo courtesy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives.

Indiana Academy

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Indiana Academy is an accredited, co-educational boarding senior high school located in the U.S. state of Indiana, established in 1902.

Establishment and Founding

The Indiana Conference decided during 1900-1901 that an industrial school was needed for the education of Adventist young people; accordingly, they began searching for a suitable site within the state of Indiana for the school to be located. In June 1902, the conference leadership selected a “beautiful grove” on the farm of William and Laura Applegate, about three miles from the village of Boggstown. The Applegates had donated seven acres of their farmland for the school. In conveying this information to the constituency of the conference, I. J. Hankinswrote, “There is no enterprise more worthy of our united earnest effort than the establishment of schools for the education of our children. It will be the salvation of many; it will bring laborers into the cause of God; it will give strength and power to the closing message.”[1]

The fundraising of the Indiana Conference increased in intensity; the leadershipsolicited pledges and donations of money, materials, and food from the members in Indiana for the purpose of funding and equipping the school. Construction on the school’s buildings began immediately but proceeded slowly enough that the first term began on October 29,1902, in rented rooms in Boggstown, with Benjamin F. Machlan (1865-1928) as the first principal, and his wife, Myrta (Foor) Machlan (1871-1959), as the first preceptress (in today’s terms, registrar) and matron .[2]

Boggstown Manual Training Academy (1902-1905)

Fourteen students were in attendance on the first day of classes of the newly named Boggstown Manual Training Academy, soon joined by five more. By the end of the school’s first month of operation, it had twenty-four students. The boys worked with the school’s carpenter to finish and furnish the new buildings on campus. By the fall term of 1903, the teachers and studentswere able to move from Boggstown to the campus. The students planted trees, vines, and other plants, and did other manual farm labor as part of their studies.

Beechwood Academy (1905-1918)

In 1905, the name of the school was changed to Beechwood Academy, and its first stated aim was “to educate the whole man physically, mentally, spiritually.” The academic program included classes on the Bible, arithmetic, grammar, geography, United States history, physiology, rhetoric, civil government, algebra, advanced English, and German, among other subjects. Industrial classes included sewing and dressmaking, cookery, practical housekeeping, floriculture, printing, agriculture, and horticulture. The school’s first crop of students graduated in 1908.[3]

On February 28, 1911, the gas plant, which provided the lighting for the buildings on the campus, exploded. Fourteen-year-old Gilbert Chew, the student tasked with tending the plant and had gone to investigate why lights were flickering in the main building, was killed in the accident.[4]

As early as 1916, the Indiana Conference was seeking for a new location for Beechwood Academy, though no rationale can be found as to why this was desirable.[5] In early 1919, the conference decided that the school should be moved from Boggstown to a new, more central and more easily accessible location in the state. They formed a locating committee, which was initially disappointed in their scouting efforts until they headed south toward Indianapolis. Indiana Conference president, Charles S. Wiest (1879-1968), reported:

[W]e stopped at one place which had a beautiful grove. We investigated, and learned that the farm was for sale. The general surroundings did not appeal to anyone who might look for things actually up-to-date. However, when the owner told us that the price of the farm was $150 an acre, we stopped to investigate, for the farms in that vicinity were all priced from $250 to $300. We made a very close investigation, and found that we had practically everything on this farm of ninety-five acres that had been specified in the discussion by the conference when in session. After we had been over the farm, the committee began to be united, and all felt that this was the place for the school. This was the first farm we had looked at that the committee was unanimously agreed upon. . . . The farm was finally bought for the price of $13,720 including one-half of the corn crop in the crib.[6]

Indiana Academy (1919-Present)

With the new property in Cicero purchased, plans for constructing the buildings on the new campus and beginning classes there were put into motion. A groundbreaking for the new girls' dormitory was held on September 11, 1919, and classes opened on October 1, with a camp meeting tent being used as the dining room, kitchen, chapel, and some classes. The girls stayed in the farm cottage, the boys in a small 16' x 32' building, and the principal, Charles W. Marsh (1895-1984), and his family in a tent.

In 1918, the Indiana Conference had decided that the school should be re-named but had taken no formal decision on a new name. By the time Marsh and his family moved to the Cicero property, the academy had been called "the new Indiana Academy" in the *Lake Union Herald* and tentatively named "Maple Crest Academy" by Marsh, but seemingly the name 'Indiana Academy' had fallen into use and that name was kept. On November 29, 1925, the school was officially dedicated at a program where General Conference president William A. Spicer (1865-1952) gave the keynote address.

Since the property was purchased, the conference has always sought to improve it with buildings and other expansions as needs demanded and finances allowed. Its first administration building, completed in 1923, was outgrown by the late 1950s, which necessitated the construction of a new administration building in 1959-1960; the original administration building was demolished by controlled fire in 1995.[7] A new gymnasium was constructed in 1952, and three smaller dormitories replaced the previous ones (two in 1972 and one in 1980).A new cafeteria was built in 1975-1976. An auditorium, music, and industrial complex was dedicated in the spring of 1998; an additional office building was built directly next to the administration building to provide it with a

small lobby and new space for the principal, treasurer, and registrar.[8]

In 1940, with approval of the General Conference, the Indiana Conference purchased the fifty-acre farm across the road from the main campus for the academy to run and maintain. The purchase took place on May 30, 1940, for $6,250 and has been home to the academy farm since.[9]

While Machlan is probably the best-known principal that the academy has had, many fine instructors have taught at Indiana Academy, educating hundreds of Adventist young people, many who have embarked upon careers within church work throughout the globe. This was already true by 1925, when, as reported in the local newspaper, *The Noblesville Ledger*, Spicer remarked,

Already many of the young people of Indiana have gone across the seas and I do not now recall where an Indiana boy or girl has disappointed us. The thin line of our missionaries belts the globe today and in the erection of this school the young people of Indiana are calling out to the old and worn laborers in the cause "Be of good courage, we are coming to help you."[10]

Indiana Academy's current mission is "[E]ducating the whole student to know and serve God in their community." In addition to the school's educational work, the Indiana Conference conducts its annual camp meeting on the school's campus, as it has since 1920.[11]

List of Principals

Boggstown Manual Training Academy (1902-1905): B. F. Machlan, 1902-1905

Beechwood Academy (1905-1919): B. F. Machlan, 1905-1907; C. L. Stone, 1907-1908; C. L. Taylor, 1908-1911; W. L. Avery, 1911-1913; E. A. von Pohle, 1913-1916; J. G. Lamson, 1916-1919

Indiana Academy (1919-Present): C. W. Marsh, 1919-1925; Louis P. Thorpe, 1925-1930; J. W. Craig, 1930-1933; V. P. Lovell, 1933-1937; W. A. Nelson, 1937-1941; E. E. Bietz, 1941-1945; V. C. Hoffman, 1945-1948; C. M. Willison, 1948-1955; Dyre Dyresen, 1955-1959; V. L. Bartlett, 1959-1968; C. L. Newkirk, 1968-1970; James R. Nash, 1970-1977; Alan Bohman, 1977-1982; W. G. Nelson, 1983-1985; Harold Grosboll, 1985-1992; Nick E. Minder, 1992-1994; Steven Aust, 1994-1996; Rick Aldridge, 1996-1997; Robert Rice, 1998-2001; Perry Pollman, 2001-2005; William Hicks, 2005-2006; Peter Cousins, 2006-2008; William Hicks, 2008-2010; Jeremy Hall, 2010-2013; Steven Baughman, 2013-Present as of 2020

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