

Evansville Seminary of Evansville, WI

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The Methodist Episcopal Era (1859-1869)

At the annual Methodist Episcopal Conference held in 1855, Dr. Edward Cooke, President of Lawrence University of Appleton, WI, suggested that the church establish a seminary that would educate students for entrance into the college. Evansville's people responded to the call.

David Mills, an attorney, and O. F. Comfort are credited with planning the first organizational meeting for the Methodist seminary in Evansville. The meeting was held on Aug. 10, 1855, to determine if there was enough interest. Many of the village's prominent men attended the meeting. Mills offered to donate land for the school. Stockholders invested at least \$25 each in the corporation and were allowed to vote for people to serve on a board of trustees.

Mills and Comfort owned substantial real estate surrounding the grounds that eventually became the campus of the seminary. When the village was officially platted in November 1855, Mills owned all of the lots in blocks 18 and 20 and six lots in Block 5. These lots boarded the two acre seminary parcel on the north, east and south. O. F. Comfort owned all of the lots in block 19, bordering the school site on the west. Both men stood to see a substantial increase in their property values, if the school was successful.

Others believed there would be a benefit to themselves and to the community and the organization for the school was officially finalized with an act of incorporation by the Wisconsin Legislature, on March 18, 1856. Evansville was one of many villages and cities that received incorporation papers for the purpose of founding a private school. By 1850, 36 academies and colleges were incorporated, but only nine were officially opened for students.

The board of trustees for the Evansville Seminary was composed of 13 members. The first men to serve were Ezra A. Foote, Thomas Robinson, Henry G. Spencer, Jeremiah Johnson, David L. Mills William C. Kelly, P. S. Bennett, Myron A. Rowley, Hiram Griffith, Nelson Winston, Argalus Ballard, Joshua Howard and W. W. McLaughlin. Trustees were to serve three-year terms and the board was to meet at least once each year.

In addition, a visiting committee representing the Methodist Episcopal Conference was to visit the school each year to attend the examinations of the students. This committee was to submit a written report of the condition of the Seminary to the Board of Trustees, following the examination.

Although the Seminary was under the guidance of the Methodist Episcopal Conference, the incorporation papers stated that the board of trustees was to be elected without regard to their religious practices.

Although students were required to read the Bible and attend chapel services once they were admitted, and religious affiliation was not to be used as a criteria for admittance to the seminary.

Once the incorporation was received by the Evansville Seminary, the building of the school could begin.

Article 7 of the incorporation papers gave the board of trustees the power to "erect the necessary building, establish and continue on the plat of ground marked and known as Seminary Park."

It is unlikely that the Seminary building was under construction before the incorporation of the school in 1856. The trustees decided on a three-story building, of red brick. Jacob West and his sons, made the brick in their Evansville brickyard.

Only a few of those who worked on the building were named in histories of the school. Jacob West's son, James R. West designed the building and also served as a carpenter. James West and George Murphy installed the first floor timbers, made the doors and window frames. Alan S. Baker, who would later become a prominent manufacturer, sawed the decorative brackets that supported the over-hanging eaves of the building. Baker was paid three dollars a month and his board as compensation for his work.

At their annual conference in 1856, the Wisconsin Methodist Episcopal Conference reported that the Evansville Seminary was one of their new interests. The report stated that by the winter of 1856, the building was partially completed. The walls were up, but there was no roof.

A September 1857 entry in Levi Leonard's diary reported that there were still fund raising meetings for materials and workers to complete the building.

However, the lack of a new building did not deter the school from holding classes. While the building was under construction the first classes were held in the Evansville Methodist Church, then located on the south side of the first block of East Main Street.

There were no entrance examinations and anyone who could pay the fees was admitted to the school. Miss Minerva Gilbert taught the first term, as a substitute for Professor Kellogg, a Yale graduate and Lawrence University professor. By some accounts, Kellogg was too ill to teach the first term, but was able to teach the second term. Other reports say that Kellogg never was able to teach in Evansville.

Those who claim that Kellogg did not teach school here, say that a Miss Cleveland taught classes after Miss Gilbert left the school. Then Mrs. William Dawson taught for a term.

In April 1857, the Janesville Gazette, published in Janesville, Wisconsin, had an article about the Seminary. A Professor Shattuck was in charge and the winter term of the school closed in March with "a very satisfactory examination and an exhibition, attended by a large concourse of people. The Spring term was about to begin and would last for 13 weeks.

Professor G. A. Smith, a graduate of Yale University replaced Shattuck. Professor Smith's wife also taught in the school from 1857 to 1859. Burr Jones, a student of the Seminary at this time recorded in his autobiography, "Nine Decades," that Smith was a "cheerful, happy man, and there was a fine atmosphere in the little school." Jones reported that both boys and girls were admitted to the school and their ages ranged from 12 to 20.

Damon Y. Kilgore replaced Smith. Kilgore had served as superintendent of public schools in Madison and the Evansville Seminary Board of Trustees hired him to start the Winter Term on January 4, 1860. Kilgore had a grand vision for the seminary and increased the number of faculty members and advertised in Madison and Janesville papers for students.

Posters advertising the new administration announced that Kilgore was establishing a "Normal

Department for the education of teachers." Kilgore said that he would personally take charge of the teacher training. Kilgore hired four additional teachers; Professors Ingalls, Soutle, and Wallihan for academics and Miss Burnham, for music instruction.

William Kelley, one of the Board of Trustees served as the schools financial agent and collected the tuition of \$3 to \$8 per student, for a term. Students could board with local families for \$1.50 per week, according to the advertisements.

Kilgore's reputation and the advertising greatly increased the number of students at the school. When the Federal Census of 1860 was taken in June, the faculty had increased to 12 teachers, and 155 pupils.

The school also benefited by Kilgore's contact with the newspapers. The Madison Patriot and the Janesville Gazette published articles about the school. "From reading of the admirable arrangements of this seminary we have formed a high opinion of its character and efficiency and have pleasure congratulating Mr. Kilgore on his success," the papers reported.

The Madison Journal also gave Kilgore, and the school, good press. "Rev. D. Y. Kilgore, A. M., is the principal and under his energetic administration of its affairs, the seminary is assuming a high rank among the educational institutions of the state. The terms of tuition are moderate, and good board, including rooms, fuel and lights can be procured in private families in the village at \$1.75 per week.

Kilgore may have been well liked by his newspaper friends, but he was considered a radical by many local residents. According to Burr Jones' accounts of his student days at the Seminary, Kilgore often preached about the abolition of slavery, during the daily chapel. Kilgore was in step with the official Wisconsin Methodist Episcopal Conference beliefs, as the Conference had supported abolition as early as 1854. However, according to Jones, local critics believed that Kilgore was far more interested in politics than religion and held rather unorthodox and liberal views.

When Kilgore made the mistake of preaching a sermon for the funeral of a local spiritualist, his students accused him of being in league with the devil. His actions were considered a scandal.

Despite the criticism, the student numbers increased during Kilgore's administration. Kilgore also organized three literary societies and debating clubs for the students. A library, with a few tables and chairs, newspapers and other publications was added. Kilgore also added classes for younger children, thus competing with the local public schools.

However, Kilgore's grand schemes for the Seminary could not be realized, as the school was badly in debt. In May 1862, Kilgore told the Board that he had a scheme for paying off the debt and he bargained with the trustees to give him the deed to the school, if he was successful.

Although some on the Board doubted Kilgore's plans, more than \$3,000 was raised to pay the debt. When they were presented with the funds, the Board split over the decision to give Kilgore the deed to the property. The Board reluctantly agreed to deed the property to Kilgore, but David Mills and Argalus Ballard, two of the original trustees, were so angry about the decision that they accused some of the trustees of conspiring with Kilgore. Mills and Ballard filed suit against Board. Kilgore realized he was in for a major fight and tried to resolve the problem by deeding the property back to the Board.

The community's confidence in the school administration was fading. Under the stress of the conflict, Kilgore began arguing with his students and Board members wanted to oust Kilgore from his post. In

order to fire Kilgore, Board members wanted the support of all the trustees. However, by 1862, trustees, Dr. John M. Evans and William Kelley, were in the Union Army. They could not return to Evansville to participate in the meeting to decide Kilgore's fate.

The majority of the Board members present supported Kilgore and he was able to keep his position for another year. In November 1863, Kilgore left the Seminary and enlisted in the Union Army as a Captain and quartermaster.

A month later, the Board hired Professor Henry Colman, a graduate of Lawrence College, as the new administrator. In a letter that Jacob West sent to trustee and army surgeon, Dr. J. M. Evans, Colman was praised at the start of his administration. "Our school is now going off fine under the direction of Prof. Colman. It is altogether a different state of things here to what it was under D. Y. [Kilgore] and I do hope that D. Y. will financier [for the Army] better than he did either for the Seminary or the public here, but after all I fear my hope is not well founded."

Colman was a more conservative and less volatile man than Kilgore. he was devoted to his students and gave them a thirst for higher education. He encouraged them to see their years in the Evansville Seminary as a stepping stone to college. Colman introduced the study of Latin and other courses required for college entrance.

One of the teachers under the Colman administration was Jane Cleveland. At Christmas time, 1864, her students gave her an autograph book, a handwritten treasure of signatures of Evansville people, including Theodore and John Robinson, George, Fred and Frank Winston, George Higday and Hattie Taggart. It was presented "with many thanks for her kind instructions."

Despite the large number of students attending the school, only a few students were listed as graduates. In 1866, three girls, Carrie Hall, the Valedictorian; Josephine E. Knowles, German Salutatory; and Margaret F. Slawson were listed as graduates. The following year two more girls graduated, Maggie Clark, the Valedictorian and Elvira Gillman, Latin Salutatory. Maggie Clark also received the Lewis Prize, founded by former Governor J. T. Lewis, LL.D., and awarded to the student, who, during the year preceding, has made the best intellectual and moral improvement.

Advertisements for the school were placed in the Evansville Citizen, beginning in 1867. According to Rev. Henry Colman's advertisement, the faculty included R. Watson Seman, mathematics and astronomy; Bernard C. Jacobs, German and music; Eva Mills, French and English; Lucinda S. Colman (Henry's wife), Latin and sciences; and Colman taught Greek, Mental and Natural Sciences. An Evansville Seminary Catalog from 1867 lists the tuition for the winter term as \$7.50 for the common English students, \$8.50 for higher English students and \$9.50 for languages. Those in music had to pay fees of \$10, plus \$2 to use the piano or melodeon. Art students had additional fees of \$2 each for drawing and water colors and speech students paid \$1 for elocution lessons.

The Seminary offered Commercial (Business) and Normal School (Teacher Training) classes, as well as the college preparatory studies. The students fees also included special guest lecturers during the term. Students from Illinois, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and many villages and cities in Wisconsin were listed in the roster of the 1867 catalog.

Many of the original board members were still serving. The Board of Trustees included Clayton Semans, President; Daniel Johnson, Vice President; Rev. Elijah Robinson, Secretary; Dr. J. M. Evans, O. W. Gillman, D. Tipple, J. W. Hazeltine, A. Stevens, J. Sutherland, W. C. Kelley, Gov. J. T. Lewis, Jacob

West, J. Dawson, Lloyd T. Pullen, and J. Fisher. Rev. Henry Colman, served as agent and ex officio member.

Rev. Robinson, Rev. Foot and Rev. Colman served on the executive committee and Jacob West, David Mills, and Lloyd T. Pullen served on the auditing committee. The examining committee from the Wisconsin Methodist Episcopal Conference included Rev. J. C. Aspinwall, Rev. B. C. Parker, Rev. J. E. Davis, Rev. W. W. Smith, Rev. R. W. Bosworth, and Rev. J. Watts.

As the agent for the seminary, Colman required that all fees had to be paid in advance, but tuition could be paid in two parts during the term. Pastors' children could attend for half price. By 1867, board for students living with private families had increased to \$3 per week. There were also unfurnished rooms in the Seminary building available for students.

Many parents and students considered the weekly religious and Bible classes as important reasons for attending the private school. Students were required to carry at least three courses each term. They were expected to be punctual in attendance and prompt in preparation for classes. Students were also required to attend daily chapel prayers and church on Sunday.

Rules in the classroom were very strict. Students were not to talk to each other in the classroom. During study hours students were to stay in the assigned study rooms and were not to leave the school early. The following practices were also prohibited: communications between students during recitation; absences from town or sleeping out of one's room; leaving school before the term ended; receiving or making calls, riding or walking with one of the opposite sex; attending all parties, gatherings or public assemblies other than religious; holding any public meetings or forming any societies.

According to the 1867 catalog, students were not to make "clamorous" noise or scuffle, run, jump, or use of tobacco in the Seminary buildings. The students were forbidden to use gun powder on the Seminary grounds. The use of obscene or profane language, books or communications, or intoxicating drinks, the frequenting of barrooms or saloons, or engaging in any games of chance, or attending any dances was also prohibited. The catalog warned that anyone who could not keep these rules should not even apply for admission to the school.

Daily written presentations were required of each student and teachers gave special attention to the spelling and punctuation used by the student. In order to encourage "originality of thought and facility of expression", each student was required to write an original essay and present it during the class.

Colman's administration of the Seminary was considered successful in every way except financially. When Rev. Henry Colman left the Seminary in 1867, the school was \$2,500 in debt. He returned to the ministry and became the pastor of the Clinton, Wisconsin Methodist Church.

With the school so far in debt, trustee Clayton Semans made a plea in a Chicago newspaper for gifts to the Evansville Seminary. Semans offered \$1,000 of his own money, if the balance was raised by donations.

Although the Methodist Conference of 1868 noted in their report that the Evansville Seminary had been doing "ordinarily well," the Seminary was about to go into a period of great financial difficulty. Not only the debt, but the introduction of a free public high school in Evansville began drawing away students from the private school.

With the opening of the public graded school, which included a high school, the Evansville Seminary went into a period of decline. The Methodists withdrew their financial and administrative support.

The Free Will Baptist Era (1869-1874)

The Seminary trustees were determined to try to keep the school going and approached the state convention delegates of the Free Will Baptist Church, to try to find a new source of income and a new principal for the school.

Although the Free Will Baptist delegates did not contact individual churches, those assembled for the state convention agreed that the church organization would take over the administration of the Seminary. The delegates promised, on behalf of their churches, to endow the school with \$10,000.

A new administrator, Rev. George S. Bradley, a Free Will Baptist minister, was hired as principal of the school and taught classes in ancient languages and natural science. His wife, Ann, also taught classes in French, rhetoric, and botany.

Things seemed to be going as usual. Seventy four students enrolled for the 1869 fall term. The winter term had a large class of 124 names on the register. This was typical as the largest attendance was usually during the winter term. However, despite the large number of students reported, the student tuition did not cover the expenses of maintaining the school and the endowment that was promised did not materialize. Soon the school was in financial difficulty.

Because the Methodists no longer were in control of the school, and there was a new administration, the stockholders were required to change the school charter. In October 1869, the Wisconsin legislature was given the revised charter to consider. It would officially give control of the Seminary to the Free Will Baptists. The revision passed both houses of the State Legislature in March 1870.

The new charter gave nine seats on the board to members of the Free Will Baptist Church. Some of the original stockholders were also elected as trustees under the new charter, including Daniel Johnson and Nelson Winston.

Not everyone was happy with the new charter and administration. Editorials written under the pen name "Quietus" began to appear in the Evansville Review. Quietus charged that the Free Will Baptists had used shrewd financing to obtain control of the Seminary. The anonymous writer claimed that with \$150 cash and the promise of several thousand more to come, the church group had taken charge of the school.

George Bradley also used the power of the press and submitted an article to the Evansville Review demanding that Quietus' statements be retracted and the writer come forward under his real name. Accusations began to fly about the misappropriation of funds by Prof. Jacobs, the music teacher who had served at the Seminary under both the Methodist and Free Will Baptist administrations. Bradley came to Jacobs' defense.

In April 1870, Professor Bradley, no doubt to supplement his income from the faltering Seminary, also became pastor of the Evansville Free Will Baptist Church. He occasionally gave sermons as a substitute pastor at the First Baptist Church and they gave him a donation of food and money in return.

Bradley tried various fund raising techniques, including musical and educational programs at the Seminary. These special events brought in small amounts of money, but money from endowments and

other donations received on a regular basis were necessary in order to keep the school in operation. During the summer of 1870, Bradley acted as a financial agent for the Board of Trustees. He spent the time away from school on a fund raising tour and tried to secure money for the operation in the fall. By September, he announced that \$7,000 had been raised for the Seminary and \$1,000 in endowments.

However, most of the funds were in promissory notes that were due to be paid after the crops were harvested and sold. Cash was still needed and Bradley asked for more help from people in the community.

At the beginning of school in September 1870 only \$1,200 had been received in cash. Part of the funds were used to repair the cupola and build a fence around the grounds. Once again, accusations of misappropriated funds were made and the town was divided on the issue of financing the Seminary.

David L. Mills, the attorney who had donated the land for the Seminary in 1855, was serving another term on the Board of Trustees. Always vocal in his ideas about the school, he blamed the Methodists for the lack of cash contributions. Mills wrote an article for the Evansville Review. He claimed the Methodists were "prosecuting an unprovoked and unholy war on the Seminary." He argued that "Our Seminary is an institution in which all our citizens should take a deep interest and pride in sustaining."

There were still some outstanding pledges that had been made during the Methodist administration. Some who had pledged support felt no obligation to keep their agreement because they willingly supported the Methodists but not the Free Will Baptists.

At least one man who had served as a trustee and also had loaned money to the school was demanding repayment from the new administration. Clayton Semans held a mortgage on the property and he brought a judgment against the school for payment of the debt.

Semans was finally able to collect \$1,332.77 after the Rock County Sheriff intervened and got the money. There were others who also held promissory notes against the school, but they were more patient and did not press for payment of their loans.

Bradley felt the news reports of the controversy was causing some students to go elsewhere for their education. Looking for more positive publicity to encourage new enrollments in the school, Bradley placed a letter in the Madison State Journal. "The school is rapidly gaining public favor, notwithstanding the great efforts of certain unprincipled men to break it down."

The Evansville Seminary continued to accept students. Bradley's faculty was small and included his wife, who taught French, rhetoric and botany. Stella Wheeler taught English and Ada Robeson taught music, German and mathematics. Charles Turner, taught penmanship; and Bradley taught ancient languages and natural sciences.

According to a catalog published in November 1873, four years of study were required to complete a degree. Although there were many enrolled, few were able to complete the four year course. Graduates of the school included Byron Andrews in 1871. J. Franklin Browne graduated in 1872 and Locke W. Brigham and Laura A. Haseltine in 1873.

Although 164 students were listed in the catalog produced in 1873, 156 of those were enrolled in the preparatory program, the first year of the four year course. Only five were enrolled in the classical program that included four years of English, mathematics, Latin, Geography, Greek and bookkeeping.

The final year of study included trigonometry, astronomy, chemistry, zoology, mental philosophy and evidences of Christianity. Three students were enrolled in the scientific four-year program.

Just prior to the end of the Spring term 1874, George Bradley and several other ministers of the Free Will Baptists met. They elected Bradley and C. H. Wilder, President of the Board of Trustees, as representatives to the state Free Will Baptists convention at Winneconne. There the fate of the school was to be decided.

The school closed with the graduation ceremonies in early June 1874. There were four graduates, Eleanora Andrews, Charles E. Gould, Lizzie Evans and Louisa M. Campbell. Bradley used the commencement service as an opportunity to harangue the trustees and the Free Will Baptists for not living up to their contract. He announced that under the present conditions, the school could not continue.

Bradley's remarks started the rumors that the Seminary was to be closed and the Free Will Baptists were withdrawing their financial support. The main topic of conversation in the stores, at the post office and on the streets of Evansville was the question of the Seminary. The Evansville Review warned that there were still many who held notes against the school and still had not been paid for the money they loaned to keep the school going.

The law firm of Jackman & Norcross, attorneys from Janesville, were hired to send out notices for payment of subscriptions so that repairs could be made to the buildings. There was a call for all citizens of Evansville to do what they could to financially support the school.

Predicting the future outcome, the report continued: "If suits are commenced the fires of opposition will burn warm and hatred and revenge will be wrecked on every falling leaf. Let such feeling be averted if possible." The agitated community did not heed the call for peace.

The principal owners of the Seminary building and lands were about to be embroiled in a controversy. The battle lasted more than five years and was fought in the newspapers and through the legal system until it reached the Wisconsin Supreme Court.

On June 24, 1874, the Free Will Baptists met at Winneconne and officially dissolved their connection with the Seminary. After five years of administration, the church governing body agreed that they had made a mistake in trying to run the school. They had failed to get support from their own churches and could not support their local churches, missions and the school at the same time.

A Search for New Direction (1874-1879)

A meeting of the trustees and stockholders was called for July 16, 1874. Dr. John M. Evans was made chairman of the meeting. The future of the Seminary was in the hands of those who attended. David Mills gave a brief history of the problems the school had experienced after the Methodists were no longer the administrators.

Though Mills had accused the Methodists of misconduct in the early years of the Bradley administration, in his speech before the stockholders, he suggested that a committee be formed to approach the Methodists or some other church groups to take control of the school. The Methodists were already looking at locations in Whitewater and Lake Geneva for opening a school.

Those present at the meeting agreed that the committee should approach the Methodist Episcopal Church Conference with a proposal to reopen the Seminary. The group appointed David Mills, Nelson Winston and Daniel Johnson as the committee in charge of negotiating. They were ready to relinquish administration of the school to any group that would endow the school and find staff to operate it.

Bradley could not let the matter rest. Though he was no longer in charge, he blamed the community, the Free Will Baptists, and the hard times of the early 1870s for the failure of the Seminary. He pointed out that the Evansville public graded school had been promoted by Evansville citizens more often than the Seminary. He charged that the public school board had lowered the tuition for out-of-town students so that the Seminary fees were considered high.

Bradley came up with his own proposal and called a public meeting to offer his own suggestions for determining the fate of the school. He thought it could be used as the public high school. The public school principal, Mr. Burnham, supported the idea.

Another committee was appointed to explore this plan. W. T. Hall, Levi Leonard and O. W. Gilman were asked to consider the possibility of running both schools under one board and one principal or superintendent.

No plan seemed to suit the trustees and they decided to ask Bradley to return to his job as principal of the school. However, Bradley had already started up a newspaper called the Evansville Journal, in competition with the Review. His office was in the Snashall and Mygatt building on East Main Street.

In the fall of 1874, the trustees of the Evansville Seminary received over 50 applications from students who wanted to attend the school. They had to be turned down because there were no teachers or administration.

Though there were no classes being held in the building, the Seminary was used on a weekly basis by two literary and debating societies. The debating groups had been an extra-curricular activity at the Seminary. There was one for men, The Philalthean* Society, which met every Thursday evening. The other group was for women: the Eumathean* Society. After the Seminary closed, these two Societies' constitutions were amended to admit people who were not connected with the Seminary.

[*Note, the name Philalthean derives from the Greek words phileo (to love) and alethea (truth), thus meaning "Truth-lovers." Presumably, this was a literary society devoted to creative writing, reading, reciting, criticism and evaluative discussion. (cf. https://history.hanover.edu/hhr/94/hhr94_1.html) The name Eumathean also derives from Greek words eu (good, right) and matheo (to learn) meaning "Right-Learning" and was probably a similar literary society, in this case, for women.]

In October 1874, another meeting of the stockholders was called. The Wisconsin Baptist Association had met in Beloit and had offered to take over the Seminary and endow it with \$15,000. The Baptist delegation met with the Seminary stockholders but decided that before they could make a commitment, the individual churches in the Association needed to approve the program.

The State Educational Convention of the Baptists was also considering Beaver Dam for the location of a school. When they met in April 1875, they seemed to favor the Beaver Dam location, even though it was not on a railroad route. The committee at this convention urged caution in making a decision and once again the stockholders of the Evansville Seminary were left in limbo.

There was a glimmer of hope in the fall of 1875 that the school would open. Two "eminent clergymen in the Baptists convention" visited the grounds and buildings. There was even a report that one of the men, Prof. L. W. Hayhurst of Sparta, Wisconsin, was going to be the new principal. A week later, the paper had to print a notice that there was no substance to the report and no school would begin in September.

At their annual meeting in January 1876, the stockholders of the Evansville Seminary were convinced that no religious denomination wanted to endow and operate the school. The men voted to turn the building over to a boot and shoe manufacturing company being organized by local businessmen.

L. T. Pullen sold the stock for the new corporation at the Bank of Evansville and he was also responsible for taking the incorporation papers to the Secretary of State. Twelve men, some of them Seminary trustees and stockholders, purchased stock in the new boot and shoe company. The major stockholders in the new firm included I. M. Bennett, Lloyd T. Pullen, Almeron Eager, Nelson Winston, Daniel Johnson, Dr. C. M. Smith, William S. Smith, John C. Sharp, C. K. Landon (the shoe maker), and Charles F. Pullen. Each of the twelve men held at least five shares, four held ten shares.

The Board of Trustees issued a statement about their position on the use of the building. "If the Seminary cannot be employed for its original chartered purpose, let it be turned over to other legitimate pursuits. As it is now no one is benefited and the property is fast going to waste and decay."

David Mills, attorney and Evansville Seminary stock holder, filed suit to recover the Seminary property because it was not being used for educational purposes. Mills claimed he had deeded the land for use as a school and if a shoe factory opened in the Seminary building, that was not an appropriate use of his gift.

The stockholders disagreed with Mills' interpretation of his gift and they hired their own attorney to take the matter to court. First it was heard in Rock County Court before a Judge Conger. While the lawsuit was in progress, the shoe factory could not begin.

In July 1877, Mills was informed by the county court that the Seminary property was to remain in the hands of the original stockholders, even though it was no longer being used for school purposes. The judge's decision was that Mills could not substantiate his claims that the property was to revert to him if it was no longer an educational institution. Mills did not give up his legal battle. The question of what to do with the building remained unsolved.

Another false start for the Evansville Seminary occurred in 1878 when the Episcopal Church expressed some interest in organizing a school in Evansville. Anxious to get someone to use the building, the Seminary trustees appointed a committee to inspect the property to see what it would cost to refurbish it for school purposes. However, as the Episcopal proposal had no official recognition from the church governing body, there were no funds appropriated and no one was eager to push for a new school.

While the stockholders and trustees were declared the rightful owners of the Seminary, the building remained vacant until 1880. Seminary stockholders reevaluated what they should do with the property.

The Free Methodist Era (1880-1926)

The Free Methodists had no church in Evansville, but they were anxious to start the new school. The Free Methodist organization was only 20 years old, having started just before the Civil War by a schism

with the Methodist Church in August 1860. The Free Methodist Church started with the doctrine that it was free from slavery, secret societies and rented pews.

In the fall of 1879, the Evansville Seminary Board of Trustees offered the school property to the Free Methodist Church. It took several months to finalize the agreement and amend the charter of the organization. Long-time trustee, Isaac Bennett was credited with pushing the legislation to get the charter changed.

On March 11, 1880, the Evansville Seminary charter was amended. For the third time the school charter went before the Wisconsin Legislature. The 1880 revision authorized the Free Methodist Church to "conduct a school of high moral and Christian character, agreeable to, and in conformity with the principles and doctrines of the Free Methodist Church of North America, as expressed in their book of discipline".

According to the new charter, nine of the thirteen trustees of the new school were to be members of the Free Methodist Church. The board hired the Rev. J. E. Coleman as the administrator of the new school. Evansville stockholders who remained on the Board of Trustees were Isaac Bennett, C. H. Wilder, Peter Aller, Lloyd T. Pullen, and David Mills.

John Emory Coleman was a Free Methodist Minister and the son of a Free Methodist Bishop. John was born in Wyoming County, New York. He graduated from the University of Rochester, New York in 1879 and shortly after his graduation he came to Evansville to supervise the start of the new school.

His young wife, Lucy M. Sellew, was also a native of New York. Lucy received her education in the A. M. Chesbrough Seminary in Monroe County, New York. She taught at that school until she and J. E. Coleman were married in 1879. She joined her husband as a teacher at the Evansville Seminary.

The Colemans arrived to find the building in a state of disrepair. After nearly four years of neglect, the red brick building had rotted timbers, a sagging roof, old flooring and a damp and dirty basement that needed to be fixed. The trustees had hired masons and carpenters to put the building into shape for the new school.

One of the trustees, Charlie Webber, and his family moved into the building so that he could superintend the remodeling and take on the responsibilities of chief carpenter. To support the weakening building new timbers were put in and lateral rods were installed to support the sagging roof and the building was re-shingled. The balustrade surrounding the cupola was also repaired. To increase the usable space in the building, the basement floor was dug out and deepened. This enlarged the basement rooms so that there were eight foot ceilings. To keep the basement area dry and prevent damage from moisture, a moat was dug around the building. A new kitchen and dining room were built into the basement and a new entrance was chipped into the south wall.

Despite the progress made on the building and its return to its original purpose as a school, David L. Mills, one of the Seminary trustees, was still pursuing his law suit against the Seminary. He filed a notice of eviction against Charles Webber in September and tried once again to establish his rights to the property. However, Mills failed to achieve his goals and the school reopened as scheduled in the fall.

Advertisements went out for the new school. Tuition for the term was \$4 for the primary students; \$6 for the intermediate scholars and \$8 for those studying the classical languages. Organ lessons cost \$8 and there was a \$2 charge for using the instrument. Board for the students who lived at the school was two dollars per week.

On September 15, 1880, the Seminary was rededicated as a Free Methodist school. Several of the trustees gave speeches at the program. Nelson Winston said that he had donated to the school in the past and would continue to do so. Daniel Johnson made similar remarks. Lloyd T. Pullen, the Evansville banker, pleaded with those present to help finance the newly opened school. Pullen announced that the repairs to the building had cost \$2,590. Only \$600 of the amount had been donated. The trustees had borrowed \$1,000 at eight percent interest and they were in need of money to repay the loan.

School started on September 16, 1880. Once again the school was underway with pledges and loans that were outstanding. A catalog was issued in 1881 and listed three courses of instruction, Classical Course; Latin Course; and Scientific Course. Coleman announced that the staff wanted to start a commercial department to prepare people for business. Until there was sufficient demand for other courses, the school could only offer bookkeeping and instruction in penmanship.

Many students boarded in town or lived at home. Those who lived at the school heard the wake-up bell at 6:00 a.m. with breakfast served a half hour later. Classes started at 8:45, ending at 12:05 for dinner and resuming at 1 p.m. There was an hour for recreation from 4 to 5 in the afternoon, followed by supper. Students were expected to study from 7 to 9 p.m. and at 9:10 a bell was sounded for retiring.

Rules regarding behavior were strict and printed in the advertising catalogs sent out to parents of prospective students. Among the printed instructions was a notice that anyone who was not willing to abide by the regulations would not even need to apply. "The use of profane or indecent language, playing at games of chance, smoking, or chewing tobacco, or using ardent spirits, and wicked practices of any kind, will subject the offender to expulsion."

During study time, "Perfect quiet" was to be observed. The playing of croquet, billiards, and matched games of baseball is not allowed. Books brought into the Seminary were subject to inspection by Professor Coleman and all reading of novels was prohibited.

Nothing was said about a dress code for boys but clothing for the girl students was to be simple as "any attempt at fashionable display tends to counteract the best educational influences". Dresses were to be made at home and the girls were to do their own dress mending and repair at school.

The dormitory rooms at the seminary were furnished with a stove, bedstead, washstand and chairs. Students were required to furnish their own bedding, (except the straw-tick mattress), towels and lamps.

Even with the starting of the school, David Mills would not let go of his claim to the property. He found a judge in Madison, in the Circuit Court of Dane County, that would reopen his suit against the Seminary Board of Trustees. He continued to base his claim on the abandonment of the buildings in the late 1870s when the trustees deeded the property to the Evansville Boot and Shoe Company.

In June 1882, he received a notice that the judge had granted him the rights to his building. The trustees filed an appeal with the Wisconsin Supreme Court. In September 1882, the Dane County judge's decision was reversed and David L. Mills was denied a rehearing of the Suit. The nuisance of Mill's law suits had little influence on the operation of the school.

Advertising was one of the school's best means of getting students. The school principal, J. E. Coleman ordered 2,000 catalogues printed for distribution to potential students and their parents in July 1882. The 1882 catalog noted that there were five faculty members on the Seminary staff. Rev. J. E. Coleman, the principal, taught ancient and modern languages and natural science. His wife, Lucy, taught music and

higher mathematics. The other faculty members were Robert S. Person, Miss Carrie J. Coleman and Miss L. M. Taylor.

Carrie Coleman was J. E. Coleman's sister. Coleman's mother and father also moved to Evansville and lived in the Seminary. His brother Charles attended classes at the school.

The red brick building served as a dormitory, staff living quarters, class rooms, dining room and kitchen. The basement and the three floors above ground were all in use. The dining room and kitchen were in the basement. Classrooms were on the first floor. Teachers rooms and study-rooms were on the second floor and sleeping rooms were on the third floor. It was to the school's advantage to make the enrollment seem as large as possible. Although they were not present for every term, the 1882 catalog listed 144 students enrolled in the various programs. There was a primary department for children seven to twelve years old, an intermediate department, and an academic department for high school students.

The catalog published in 1882 emphasized the "decidedly religious influences" of the seminary. "The increasing secularity, and sometimes even immoral influences of our public schools, render the demand for denominational institutions absolutely imperative."

The advertising was effective and the school opened in September 1882 with about eighty students, the largest number since it reopened. Three courses were offered, the Classical, Latin and Scientific. According to a report in the Evansville Review, the school was "in a prosperous and flourishing condition."

The first class graduated in 1884 and one of the seven graduates was Marilla Andrews, sister of Eleanor Andrews, one of the last four graduates under the Free Will Baptist administration. Marilla Andrews and her classmate, May Johnson (later Mrs. John M. Evans, Jr.) both enrolled at the University of Wisconsin following their graduation from the Seminary.

As in years past, the large enrollment reflected in the catalogs were not reflected in the number of graduates. The 1884 graduating class had six girls and one boy. Each student was required to give a speech. At the ceremony, J. E. Coleman announced that he wanted to start a 2-year college course at the Seminary. The announcement of the first graduating class and plans for more classes brought increased confidence in the institution and enrollments grew.

Though more than 100 students registered, the second graduating class in 1885 again had seven people, 4 women and three men. Graduating classes at the public high school were also small. In 1885, the Evansville High School graduated 11 students.

In addition to classes, the Seminary was also used for church services for the small Free Methodist congregation in Evansville. Summer camp meetings were popular with the Free Methodists and the ample park-like Seminary grounds were used for a large Free Methodist camp meeting in late June 1885. The preaching at that camp meeting was reported to be some of the best the church had to offer.

By 1886, the old red brick building was overcrowded. An enrollment of 126 students had stretched the capacity of the school. The trustees pondered over whether to build an addition to the building or to erect a second building.

Professor Coleman began soliciting funds to enlarge the school. By 1887 the trustees had made the decision to build a second building. Coleman received a pledge of \$5,000 from the Free Methodists and he urged Evansville citizens to pledge an additional \$5,000 so that the building could be constructed.

By 1888, the funds had been raised and a white brick building was constructed. William Libby was the carpenter-contractor. Libby's sons worked on the project with their father. Isaac Brink did the mason work.

The stone and other materials needed for the building were delivered to the site in March. Ground was broken for the new Seminary building in early April 1888 but because of an unusually long cold winter, there was still frost in the ground. The excavation was done a little at a time as the icy ground could be broken.

The Spring term of the 1888 Seminary class was cut short by an outbreak of scarlet fever. The school closed after one of the teachers got the disease. No graduation ceremonies were held for the seven people who were scheduled to graduate.

In July 1888, Libby and his sons were putting the floor timbers to the second story of the new building. Brink was working with three assistants to complete the brick work. F. A. Baker & Co., hardware merchants, including, Frank Baker and his son, Fred, and an assistant, Will Sargent, installed a tin roof on the new Seminary building as school began in the red brick structure in September. William Libby and his sons were completing the cornices at the roof line of the new cream brick structure.

In December, the workmen were still trying to complete the building. Just as the building was nearing completion, Lucy Sellew Coleman gave birth to their first child, a son, John, on December 30, 1888. Lucy died eleven days later from "nervous prostration as the result of childbirth", at the age of 35. The funeral was held in the Methodist Church and there were many mourners, including students and townspeople. When the new school building was complete, there were no dedication services. The death of Lucy Coleman and the mourning period that followed prevented any celebration of the long awaited expansion of the school.

The Free Methodists occupied the new building in late January 1889. Additional classes were added to the curriculum. Coleman was finally able to realize his dream of creating business courses in the school. In addition to bookkeeping, the business school curriculum included commercial law, short hand and typewriting.

In addition to catalogs, newspaper advertisements were used to bring students to the school. Coleman noted that the school combined "thorough instruction with practical piety." Endowments to the school had also allowed Coleman to offer financial aid to "deserving students". One woman, Sarah Ann Spencer, of Ocean Grove, New Jersey, gave \$2000 for the instruction of penniless young women.

Coleman remarried in August 1890. His bride was a former teacher at the Seminary, Mary Louise Hopkins. After their marriage, she returned to teaching at the school. Mary taught classes in speech and music. Their first child was born in 1892 at the Seminary. A second child, a little girl, was born in October 1893.

John Emory Coleman had developed the school into a successful operation and a small Free Methodist Church was started in the community because of his efforts with the services held in the Seminary chapel. However, in late 1893 his health began to fail after a bout with "la grippe", as the flu was called. In 1894, he was forced to retire from his leadership of the Evansville Seminary. Coleman remained in Evansville until 1904 when he moved his family moved to Houston, Texas and the Free Methodists began to look for a new administrator.

Without the leadership of John Emory Coleman, the Seminary floundered for several months under the leadership of a young Professor Bertels, a graduate of Leland Stanford University, Stanford, California. Bertels arrived in March 1894. The graduating class that spring had 15 students. Bertels took over Coleman's classes in Greek, physics and moral philosophy, but he did not have the fund raising skills, nor the contacts with potential donors, that Coleman had developed over his years as the school principal. Enrollments dropped and in June 1895, there were only three graduates, the smallest number of students ever for the school.

While Coleman was able to cover the basic expenses of running the school with fees and tuition, the building constructed in 1889 had put the school in debt. To add to this misfortune, the nation was in a deep depression with bank and business failures in the early 1890s. Because Bertels could not raise enough funds and increase student enrollments during this difficult financial time, the Board of Trustees asked him to resign.

In 1895, Bertels was replaced by Rev. A. L. Whitcomb and his wife, who had been associated with the school for several years. Confidence in the school was once again restored and the fall enrollment in 1896 was eighty-five pupils. The student numbers under Whitcomb's administration continued to grow.

Minor changes were made to the Seminary buildings in the 1890s. The old bell in the cupola was cracked and on New Year's Eve 1893 it was replaced with a 600 pound bell, 32 inches in diameter. The bell was a gift from the 1894 senior class. One of the students, Bert Campbell, supervised raising of the bell to the top of the school and the senior students were given the privilege of ringing in the new year.

The focus of the school curriculum began to change under Whitcomb's administration. Training for religious vocations, in addition to the college preparation course, increased the number of classes offered at the Seminary. Courses in theology taught by Free Methodist minister, Rev. Newell J. Davis, brought a new group of students to the school.

The classroom and dormitory space again was stretched to capacity. To improve the facilities, the old chapel in the red brick building was divided into four rooms, this increased the dormitory space so that it could now accommodate 35 students.

In July 1898, improvements were also made in the ten-year-old cream brick building. A large room and hallway were constructed in the basement. Two rooms on the second floor were made into one large room for displaying geological and zoological specimens that were used in teaching the sciences. New seats were placed in the chapel.

Whitcomb was replaced as principal of the school in 1899, but he continued to play an active role as a teacher and preacher for the Free Methodist Church. From Evansville, he went to Greenville College in Greenville, Illinois. He became President of the Free Methodist College at Greenville and fostered an exchange of teachers between the two schools.

A. L. Whitcomb became a noted evangelist and was often asked to speak on the temperance issue. His lecture, entitled "The Crisis of the Ages", was a popular fund raising program for Seminary classes. Whitcomb was also elected President of the National Holiness Association in the 1920s, a movement that is today called the Christian Holiness Association.

Whitcomb was replaced by Professor Albert L. Stillwell in the fall of 1899. "Education for Character" became the theme of the Evansville Seminary. In the winter term of 1899 more than 130 students were in

attendance, one of the largest classes in the school's history.

The buildings were in constant need of repair and as previous administrations had done, Stillwell asked local citizens to donate money to paint and furnish the boarding rooms of the school. He also wanted new furnishing for the student dormitory rooms. A bedstead with springs, a commode, two chairs, a mirror and a study table would be supplied in each room. The Free Methodist conference of Wisconsin and Illinois donated money for this purpose.

To promote the school to potential patrons, Stillwell and his staff produced the school's first newsletter in March 1900. The eight-page piece, "The Bulletin", was printed by the Antes & Magee press in Evansville and was clearly meant to be a fund-raising tool. Local businessmen were asked to pay for the printing of the bulletin and in return four pages of the publication were devoted to advertising for Evansville enterprises.

Although no names of donors were listed, "The Bulletin" gave a full page to a letter from the financial agent, Rev. L. B. Webb, announcing that wealthy persons had given large contributions for endowments to the Seminary. He appealed to "elderly people, who are abundantly blessed with this world's goods" to help the school. He gave an example of a donor who had life time use of property valued at \$1,000 that would be given to the Seminary upon the donor's death.

The Seminary had three financial needs according to Webb. The first was to clear the debts so that the high interest payments on the \$6,600 in loans that were due would not endanger the future operation of the school. "Debt is a clog and a source of peril", Webb wrote. The second financial goal was to take care of necessary furnishing and repairs to the buildings. Library books, science lab equipment, a new heating system, furniture and minor repairs to the building were priority items. The final need was an endowment that would be used for special items. The day-to-day expenses of the school, such as teacher salaries, fuel and dormitory operations were met by the student tuition and fees. Endowments would mean the school could plan for future expansion and improvements.

During a pledge drive in February 1900, the Board of Trustees received promises of more than \$850, far short of the goal of \$10,000. Webb and Stillwell did not give up. They also traveled to Free Methodist conferences in Illinois and Wisconsin to beg for funds for the school. Webb was required to give weekly reports of his progress in the field.

Prof. Eldon Grant Burritt replaced Stillwell in July 1902. The students gave a farewell picnic for the Stillwell's on the Seminary grounds on the 4th of July. The couple then left for their new home in Seattle, Washington. Burritt raised the academic standards of the school so that graduates met all the qualifications for entrance into the University of Wisconsin. He also continued to supply strong leadership in bringing together prominent alumni to promote the financing of the school. Charles H. Van Hise, President of the University of Wisconsin; Dakota senator, Richard F. Pettigrew; Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice, Burr Jones; National Tribune owner, Byron Andrews; and Wisconsin's Governor, Robert M. La Follette lent their support to funding.

On official stationery from the governor's office, Robert M. La Follette pleaded for a \$20,000 endowment to the school. The endowment funds would relieve the staff of the distracting work of fund raising, he wrote, and "enable them to give their time more fully to the higher efficiency of the institution. There is a special field for this school, and as one of its old-time students, I feel a deep interest in its prosperity. Any assistance which may be given to the Evansville Seminary will certainly be most worthily bestowed, and will bless the giver in the good return which it is making to the cause of education."

In 1904, the alumni and the school staff began to plan for a reunion and celebration of the 50th year of the founding of the school. A Founders' Day gathering was held before the school year began in September 1904. Many former students gathered to begin the Jubilee celebration of the Seminary that would culminate the following spring. The golden anniversary was set for June 4-8, 1905. It would coincide with the celebration of the 25th year of the Free Methodist's support and administration of the school.

Alumni, former teachers, and prominent scholars from throughout the United States gathered for the celebration. The school's first annual, "The Oriole" was published to coincide with the jubilee program. It included the first history written about the Seminary, as well as pictures of the students and faculty. According to one newspaper report, the celebration marked a "new epoch in the life of the school and proved to all, that back of the Board of Trustees is a vast company of old students."

The celebration also marked the end of Burritt's successful administration of the school. Burritt had been invited to join Whitcomb at Greenville College, as the vice president of that institution.

In July 1905, the Board of Trustees of the Evansville Seminary announced a new administration, Rev. C. M. Sanford and his wife. Sanford, a graduate of Cornell University, immediately began to travel to Milwaukee and other cities to raise funds for the school. Sanford's administration lasted only a year and he was replaced by the return of A. L. Whitcomb.

Major fund raising became a necessity when it was decided that a new dormitory was needed, as well as major repairs to the old red brick structure. In the fall of 1905, the oldest building, used as a dormitory and administrative offices, came under scrutiny by state building inspectors who found that the structure was about to fall apart. The west wall of the building was sagging and there was a danger that the wall would collapse. The state gave the school two years to make repairs.

W. W. Waterman, an architect from Chicago, who had worked on Evansville's new Grange Store, was hired to draw plans for the reconstruction of the north building. Elmer Libby was in charge of the construction. A building committee, including Rev. Lynn Webb; financial agent, B. D. Fay, trustees, A. Critchfield, T. C. Richardson, and Marilla Andrews were to represent the trustees and oversee the remodeling.

The expected cost of the construction was \$15,000 and once again local people contributed large sums of money. Allen S. Baker, William Stevens, Olivia Eager, Thomas C. Richardson, each donated \$500. Charles J. Pearsall, Dr. J. M. Evans, Jr., Mrs. S. W. Andrews, John P. Porter and Sat E. Barnard gave \$200 each.

Although they had been given a deadline in 1905 by the state inspectors that they had two years to make the repairs, the project did not begin until the spring of 1909. The defective west wall was rebuilt. New stone caps and window sills were put on to replace the wooden ones. Fire escapes were installed and a fire-proof slate roof was put on the building. For the first time the dormitory had electricity and was heated with a steam furnace. Rededication of the building took place in October 1909.

While dealing with the deteriorating buildings, the school administration continued to concentrate on the expansion of the curriculum of the school. There was special emphasis on preparation for religious vocations. In 1908, a deaconess training program was authorized by the Board of Trustees.

The Evansville Seminary was the first Free Methodist school to include the deaconess program in its courses of study. The new program supported missions by training women as nurses, travelers aides, pastors' assistants and as workers in orphanages and rescue missions. The deaconess program specialized in training workers for city, home and foreign missions. The Evansville school had been especially interested in a mission in Chicago, called the Olive Branch Mission. Food baskets, including groceries, garden vegetables, canned fruit and pickles, were sent to the mission from the Seminary students at Thanksgiving and Christmas time each year.

In 1910, the Seminary added one year of college work to its curriculum. An advertisement in the local newspapers read "academic, pre-academic, theological and musical courses; first year college work and a strong theological course; well furnished dormitories, in a beautiful city with no saloons."

In March, 1911, Whitcomb resigned as principal of the Seminary once again and another young, dynamic administrator was appointed in his place, Rev. Richard R. Blews. The new head of the school held a Ph.D. from Cornell University and had studied at Columbia University and the University of Berlin in Germany. His title was changed from principal to President of the Seminary.

Blews added a second year of college classes to the Seminary curriculum in the 1912-13 school year. Trustees agreed to spend \$500 to purchase more than 1,000 additional books that were needed to expand the library to support the new courses. Recitals and other entertainments were given to raise money for the new books.

As the administration had hoped, the new programs brought more students. According to news reports the enrollment had doubled and the school had been renamed, the Evansville Junior College.

Tuition was \$48 a year for the college course. Room rent was \$20 a year and board at the school was \$3 per week. According to the school financial officers, a student could attend the Evansville school for \$176 a year, while the same education at the University of Wisconsin in Madison would cost \$225.

Encouraged by the expanded enrollment, in the fall of 1913, the trustees started a campaign for a new building. Draft drawings for a new gymnasium were presented to the board by a Mr. Pierson, of Peoria, Illinois. He was hired to be the construction superintendent.

At first the trustees envisioned two buildings, one north of the red brick structure that would serve as dormitory and classrooms and a second building that would house a gymnasium. The two buildings were expected to cost \$50,000. By March 1914, \$1,000 had been pledged but at least \$3,000 was needed before construction could begin.

Campaigns for funds over the years had created a school free from debt, thanks to the efforts of Rev. B. D. Fay, treasurer and financial agent of the trustees. So important was his contribution to the continued financial success of the school, it was announced in June 1915, that the construction of the new building was delayed because Fay was in poor health.

By the time the construction actually began, a much smaller project, with only one building had replaced the plan for two buildings. The laying of the corner stone was completed during the commencement exercises on May 31, 1916. The mortgage of old debts was burned at the same time.

The new building was started on land just south of the other two buildings. The new building was 46 x 86 feet and made of vitrified brick, manufactured in Illinois. By March 1917, the gymnasium, as the building

became known, was completed and the library was being moved into the new structure.

The ground floor was used for music classrooms and a new Chickering Concert Grand Piano had been purchased. The school of business was also located on the first floor, with a typewriting room and a stenography room. New L. C. Smith, Remington, and Underwood typewriters were purchased for the students to use. The second floor was devoted to a gymnasium, showers, and dressing rooms.

The new building was also opened to the Evansville community. The music department at the school offered a "musical kindergarten". Because of the new facilities, the music teachers were able to offer lessons to children from six to twelve years old after regular classes at the school were finished for the week. Each Friday at 4 p.m., children could take music lessons at the school and many in the community took advantage of this new opportunity. Evansville children were also invited to use the new gymnasium for recreation.

By 1917 the Evansville Seminary had three buildings for dormitories and classroom instruction. It was on the accredited list of schools which required that the classes were inspected on an annual basis by a professor from the University of Wisconsin faculty.

The school advertised that classes taken in the two-year college department could be transferred not only to the University of Wisconsin, but to other colleges in the state and throughout the rest of the country. Courses in college English, mathematics, history, French, economics, Latin, Greek and German were included in the college curriculum.

Heavy emphasis continued to be placed on the Christian influence provided at the school. The catalog of the Evansville Seminary gave special mention to the reason the school existed. "The elimination of the Bible and religious teaching from the public schools, and the prevalence of infidelity and immorality in many education institutions, are a sufficient excuse for the perpetuation of the school."

Daily chapel attendance was required by all, as it had been since the earliest days of the school. Roll call was taken before the service began, followed by the reading of scriptures, prayers and singing. The Seminary made every effort to instill Christian values in its students. While the school catalog stressed that students from all denominations and from non-Christian homes were welcome to attend, they were only advised to apply "if they wish to accept the regulations of the school."

The 1919 catalog of the Evansville Seminary and Junior College announced that in addition to the college courses, the school had also added a nurses training course. In a cooperative effort with Lakeside Hospital in Chicago, the Seminary offered an academic curriculum, with science courses. The hospital agreed to accept students from the Seminary into their nurses training program. Student nurses took classes in English, Latin, History, Physics, and Chemistry in Evansville and then transferred to Lakeside for their medical training.

By 1919, the old red brick building built in the 1850s had gone through another remodeling. The interior of the building had been repaired and new heating and electrical equipment installed at a cost of \$20,000. It was used as an administration office and living quarters for students and teachers. Richard Blews, the president of the Seminary, had his offices in this building. There was also a music room and dining hall.

The white brick building was used for classrooms, a large assembly room, and the library. The newest building, the red brick gymnasium continued to be used by the music school and commercial science (business) department. The second floor of the building was devoted to the gymnasium.

A small museum that contained a cabinet with specimens of nearly all the native birds of Wisconsin was a special source of pride for the school. The smallest bird in the collection was the tiny sparrow hawk and the largest was a bald eagle.

Former student, Byron Andrews had also donated his collection of structural marble ruins excavated at Rome. A collection of arrow heads and other relics of the North American Indians and geological specimens were also part of the materials available for students to study. A missionary had donated an African war drum and another former student had donated the head of a black mountain sheep.

Richard Blews and his wife, Iva, continued as administrators of the school until 1920. The Blews' had increased the physical size of the school and well as expanding the curriculum. By the time the Blews left Evansville, there had been more than 350 graduates from the Seminary programs.

A significant number of students had studied at the school since the Free Methodist's took over administration of the school. The graduates represented only a small number of people who attended classes.

Many people who became prominent Evansville men and women were among the graduates. Leonard Finn, Marion Jones, Fannie Powles, Eugene Millard, Everett Combs and his sister, Maude; and Robert Antes are a few of the Seminary students who remained in Evansville. Teachers, engineers, farmers, salesmen, ministers, missionaries, nurses, and bookkeepers were listed as occupations of the former students who had scattered throughout the United States.

The Blews were also witnesses to the beginning of the end of the Free Methodist school. Rev. Cooper replaced Richard Blews as the head of the Evansville Seminary in 1920 and remained at the school for two years. A former missionary to Japan, Cooper decided he wanted to pursue a career in social work, rather than be a school administrator. When Cooper resigned from the Seminary in June 1922, he planned to move his family to Ohio. When they were settled in their new home, he would enroll in a school to study social service work.

Cooper's replacement was J. Arthur Howard, a graduate of the Evansville Seminary. From Evansville he had gone to California and graduated from Occidental College in Los Angeles. Then he served as principal of schools in Los Angeles and Phoenix, Arizona. Howard had also taken graduate work at the University of Southern California. His wife, Ethel Knoles Howard, was a graduate of the Free Methodist Seminary in Greenville, Illinois and was also a graduate student at the University of Southern California.

Under Howard's administration the school offered high school classes, two-year college courses, three years of theology study, business subjects and three years instruction in the school of music. A new program was started called boys from 5 to 13 years of age who boarded at the school. If they were already living in Evansville, the boys could be day students.

There was an increasing demand for boarding schools as it became socially acceptable to send children away from home, even at a very young age. The Evansville Seminary catalog of 1925-26 stressed the home-like atmosphere of the grade program. The boys were housed in a separate building from the high school. They had their own dining room where a matron served as a mother figure teaching the boys proper table etiquette and conversation suited to their age and interests.

The importance of the developing a Christian character and social skills in the youngsters was a primary

responsibility of the woman who served as matron. Edith Curl was hired to serve in this capacity. She was to provide the same care as a Christian mother would in her own home.

Physical activity for the children was also considered an important part of their schooling. The five-acre park-like grounds surrounding the Seminary provided a playground for the youngsters. In winter or when the weather was inclement, the children could use the gymnasium for indoor games. The city park was also listed in the school's advertising as a place "where the children delight to swim in summer and enjoy an occasional skate in winter."

Despite the expanded programs, enrollment at the school began to drop and the last classes were held in the school year 1925-26. While Prof. Howard hoped that enrollment for the September 1925 opening would increase from previous years, he had hired nine teachers, including his wife, Ethel K. Howard. Esther Vore taught French and Mathematics; Edna Mae Thompson, English and Home Economics; Clarence Westbrook, history and Science; Ruth Crusius, English and History; May Killion and Esther Harold, high school classes. Piano instruction by Ruth Westacott and violin instruction by Amelia Anderson were offered to anyone in the community who wanted to take lessons. Edith Curl continued as matron of the grade department.

In June 1926, reduced enrollments forced the Evansville Seminary to close and the Free Methodists gave up the management of the school. The church organization announced that the buildings and the five-acre campus were for sale. When the school closed, Howard became a professor of psychology at Taylor University in Upland, Indiana. In 1927, he was elected dean of the school.

Vacancy and Speculation (1926-1928)

Once again, the vacant buildings became the subject of speculation and worry for those interested in community progress. The Evansville Review suggested that the former Seminary be sold to the Rock County Board of Supervisors. There was a great need for a county sanatorium for those suffering from tuberculosis. The Board of Supervisors had previously purchased land in Janesville for a sanatorium, but by 1926, it had still not been constructed.

"The Review would like to suggest that if the county board does not see its way clear to build the Sanatorium for which the land was purchased, that it purchase the buildings of the Free Methodist Seminary, in this city which are now for sale", stated the author of a front page article in the June 24, 1926 Review. The reporter also noted that the buildings were in a beautiful location, and could be purchased at a reasonable figure. Since they were built in a dormitory style, they were ideally suited for the purposes of a tubercular sanatorium. Women's clubs, the Lions Club, the Commercial Club and other community organizations were asked to lobby for the hospital.

The County Board ignored the Review's suggestions and the buildings went unused. Rev. Wolfe, the local Free Methodist Minister tried for months to find a buyer for the school and to dispose of its contents. It was suggested that the bird collection be given to the Eager Free Public Library or to the University of Wisconsin, where students could use the stuffed birds for study.

Parts of the collection had already been stolen because there was no one to guard the building. Windows had been forced open in the building and some of the best specimens of birds and geological materials had been carried away. Wolfe agreed to ask the Free Methodist National Executive Board to sell or donate the collection to some institution.

Wolfe also agreed to ask the national trustees of the church to reopen the school changing its focus to serve as a boarding school for young children. A similar school had already been started in Evansville by a graduate of the Seminary, Eugene Millard, and was known as the Millard home school.

The Wyler Boarding School Era (1928-1979)

For two years, the school was not used, then in August 1928 the Free Methodists announced that they had sold the building and grounds to W. H. Wyler of Dundee, Illinois and Charles D. Thompson of Elgin, Illinois. Rev. Wolfe's search for someone to purchase the school had ended and the "blot on the progressiveness and enterprise of the City of Evansville" was to be turned into a boys' home school.

Thompson and Wyler agreed to repair the buildings which they purchased by land contract from the Free Methodists. Wyler and Thompson planned to use only the oldest red brick building during their first year of operation in 1928-29. This building had to be brought up to state code, including new fire escapes, new electrical wiring and other repairs before it could be opened for school use.

Even after the repairs, the old 1850s building proved too costly to keep open in the winter months. Wyler and Thompson opened the school in the north building, but by December they had closed that building and moved into the cream brick building and the gymnasium. A covered passage way was built connecting the two buildings.

Wyler had considerable experience in operating a school. He had opened a school in Dundee, Illinois several years before purchasing the Evansville school. His enrollments were so large that he began looking for a larger campus. Thompson was a teacher and had also served as superintendent of the Chicago Junior School in Elgin, Illinois.

Just a few months after purchasing the school, Wyler became the sole owner, Thompson withdrawing as a partner. Wyler continued to renovate the buildings and soon all of the buildings were in use. The offices, boys dormitory, music department, club rooms and parlor were housed in the oldest building. The center building was the dining room, kitchen, manual training department and more classrooms. It also had the central heating plant. The newest building was used as a gymnasium and classrooms for the primary department.

By 1933, there were 50 children enrolled in the school, including several girls. The majority of the children were from Milwaukee, Chicago and St. Paul. William and Jenny Bone, teachers at the Wyler School, opened up a school of their own for girls and the old Seminary became a school for boys.

Karl S. Griffin and his wife, Emily, became partners with Wyler in the school in April 1935. Experienced in running military academies in Racine and Oregon, Illinois, the Griffins brought with them some of the boys who had been attending their school. The curriculum was expanded to include two years of junior high school.

There were now three departments, the primary, including kindergarten through third grade; the fourth through sixth grades; and the junior high school of seventh and eighth grades. Summer school classes was also added. Nine weeks of camp activities were organized like a boy scout camp with the children placed in one of four troops. Sports, nature study and handicrafts were part of the program. Stress was placed on cleanliness and group participation.

School classes were also offered during the summer for remedial studies. The 1935 staff included fourteen people, the Wylers, the Griffins, Dorothy Brown, Clara Doughty, Rachel Krull, Louis Laderach, and Hattie Adamovicz. The camp director was A. C. Bomberger of Hammond, Indiana and his staff, Clarence Wilkinson, Baum Beckman, Thomas Taussig, and Lile Mollenhoff.

As the school progressed it took on a semi-military atmosphere with reveille calls to wake the students, who were called cadets, personal inspections, modified military drills and uniforms. A drum and bugle corps and cadet drill squads were added to the curriculum.

The school uniform was a navy blue shirt, and pants, a navy blue sweater, a dress suit and campus coat and cap. They could be purchased from the Maurice L. Rothschild Store in Chicago.

Cooperation with others, religious tolerance, proper manners, and economical habits. Hobbies, such as stamp collecting, photography and making model airplanes were taught to the boys. Griffin told a reporter that he did not want to have the boys listening to radio serials or reading newspaper comics, as they might have a bad influence on the students' character development, including the use of slang and other bad language.

In the late 1930s the Griffins' added the Northwoods camp at Minocqua to their summer offerings. In 1939, the Wylers, who had withdrawn from administration of the Evansville school, had charge of the summer camp in northern Wisconsin.

Karl Griffin retired in 1948 and sold the Wyler School to Mr. and Mrs. Chester DesRochers of Minneapolis, Minnesota. DesRochers had been headmaster at the Breck School in St. Paul, Minnesota for ten years and with his wife also operated two camps, one for boys and one for girls at Cass Lake, Minnesota. The DesRochers, together with their son, Chester, Jr. and his wife, Mary, maintained the semi-military atmosphere of the school and kept the name, Wyler School.

The DesRochers had 64 students in 1949. During the winter months following Christmas, the staff and students of the school moved into quarters near Fort Lauderdale, Florida. They left in January and returned in late March. The group traveled by train and were housed in a giant building near the Broward County Airport. The building was a former naval air station hospital.

The school also had summer camp in northern Minnesota near Cass Lake. At Camp Mohegomi the Wyler school offered sports, tutoring for make-up classes, sailing, crafts, music and hobby activities. From June to August the school activities were carried on in Minnesota.

In 1962, the school was turned over to Chester DesRochers, Jr. and his wife, Mary. They continued the traditions of the school. They advertised by means of catalogs that included pictures of the school and community, activities at the school, and pictures of the students and staff. One catalog stressed that the military training program designed to teach respect for authority, orderly execution of duties and a sense of responsibility.

The Wyler school continued operation until October 31, 1979. In late October, 1979 charges of child abuse were filed against Chester Des Rochers and authorities removed the children from the school. Mr. Des Rochers died of heart attack before the matter could be brought to court. Two boys also made allegations against A.J. Taggart, 57, a native of Scottsville, Ky., who was the school's commandant of cadets from 1970 to 1979. Taggart had begun teaching at Wyler shortly after he was released from the

Tennessee State Prison in Nashville, where he served one year for a 1968 conviction for "crimes against nature" molesting boys at an elementary school where he had previously been teaching. Detective Norman Pierce faults the District Attorney for failure to file separate charges against Taggart. He subsequently returned to Kentucky to run a summer camp for boys, and was eventually arrested in 1987, charged in Elmhurst, Illinois. There Du Page County Court, he was found guilty on five counts of sexual assault. He was then sentenced to 30 years for four counts, and an added 15 years for the fifth. This judgment was upheld on appeal.

Dissolution and Repurposing (1980-present)

The school never reopened and once more the empty buildings were cause for concern among Evansville business men and civic leaders. In January 1980, the vacant property was the subject of a meeting before the Evansville Planning Commission. Proposals for a TIF district that would included elderly housing, single family residences and remodeling of the existing buildings into apartments were presented. Delays kept the project from going forward.

The next plans were brought before the Planning Commission in 1982. Again they included remodeling the three existing buildings into apartments. Plans were to also build condominiums along Liberty Street and around College Drive.

More than five years passed before anything was done with the property. In 1985, a Tax Incremental Finance Plan (TIF) was created to allow Gary Gorman and Berton Slinde, Jr. of Madison to rehabilitate the three brick buildings into apartments. They planned to make 30 units in the three buildings.

As with any project brought before a governing body, the project took months to get underway. The groundbreaking ceremony for the renovation took place in August 1985 and the apartments were finished in 1986. The architects for the project were the Potter Design group, Inc. and the contractor was Connery Building Corporation. The expected cost of the project was more than \$500,000. When finished the buildings were called the Seminary Park Apartments.

Today, former students of the Wyler School come back to Evansville to see the old buildings. Some stop at the Eager Free Public Library to add their name to the Wyler School file in hopes that some of their classmates will do the same and get in touch after years of separation. There are no reunions and it is just by chance that former students meet. Some have contributed copies of catalogs and pictures of their school days at the Wyler School.

If David Mills, the attorney and original owner of the property were still alive, he would no doubt start a lawsuit to regain the property because the buildings are no longer being used for school activities.

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