



49.1994.1 Indiana School for the Blind
Marion County
Marker Text Review Report
10/17/2011

Marker Text

Established 1847 by the General Assembly¹ to provide education for Indiana's blind children.² School on downtown site, 1848-1930.³ Relocated 1930 to present site on North College Avenue.⁴ Provides services to blind and visually impaired school-age children.⁵

Report

The marker text is correct, but lacks contextual information about educational reform in the period. The folder contained very little material, but most were primary sources. After a quick search, more primary sources were found to help substantiate the text. General context revealed that before the 1830s, blind persons were isolated from society and it was the assumption they were helpless to care for themselves. In schools, the blind received a classical education embracing the study of literature, poetry, drama, philosophy, history, art, and languages. After the 1830s a new, progressive way of caring for the blind involved teaching them how to be as self-sufficient as possible. They were taught skills which could be used to earn a living in society.

One of these progressive thinking men was William H. Churchman, who was instrumental in getting the Indiana school built, and served as the superintendent for 18 years. Blinded as a youth, Churchman was a product of such a school, the renowned Pennsylvania Institute for the Blind, now known as [Overbrook School for the Blind](#). George S. Cottman's 1914 *Indiana Magazine of History* article, "[The Founding of the State School for the Blind-A Biography of William H. Churchman](#)," provides a good history, but the actual laws and other primary sources should be pulled⁶ and Churchman should be mentioned in the text.

Several of the annual reports, beginning in 1847, provide information of the history of the school.⁷ Researchers needs to locate where these reports were found, as they are not identified.

¹ *Indiana Laws*, 1847, "An Act to establish an Institute for the Education of the Blind of the State of Indiana," Approved January 27, 1847, p. 41. Section 8, states, "That for the purpose of procuring furniture and apparatus of suitable description, for the various departments of instruction in the said institute, and for purchasing a suitable site for said institution, at or near Indianapolis, which the trustees are authorized to make the most of economical terms practicable, for the best accommodation of the institute, the sum of five thousand dollars be and the same is hereby appropriated, payable to the order of the trustees, on the warrant of the auditor, out of any moneys in the treasury not otherwise appropriated."; "First Annual Report of the Trustees of Indiana Institute for the Education of the Blind to the General Assembly, December 8, 1847,";

² *Ibid.*, 43, Section 8.,

³ "Trustees of Indiana Institute to Speming & Laforge," February 26, 1847, Marion County Deed Record, Book S 1845-1848, p. 564, states, ". . . William Speming & Wife and Lewis Laforge by Deed of Warranty dated 26th February 1847, have conveyed to the Trustees of Indiana Institute for the Education of the Blind, the following



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pieces, parcels or Lots of Land for the consideration of five thousand dollars viz: Out Lots number five and thirty-six of and adjoining the Town of Indianapolis, in the Donation in the County of Marion . . ."; "Plat of the Town of Indianapolis 1821 Indianapolis," ISLZ 912.772 IMAI21P (1821), Indiana Map Room Indiana Division, Indiana state Library; "Indianapolis Sanborn Index Maps, 1887 & 1898 Indianapolis Sanborn Map & Baist Atlas Collection, Indiana State Library, http://indiamond6.ulib.iupui.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISROOT=%2FSanbornJP2&CISOP; "Select Site for School for Blind," *Indianapolis Star*, April 17, 1925

⁴ Law that established the World War Memorial Plaza; "Select Site for School for Blind," *Indianapolis Star*, April 17, 1925,

⁵ *Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Student/Parent Handbook* at http://intra.isbrockets.org/public/policies/Student_Handbook.pdf states, "The Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired provides their mission as, "The mission of the Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired is to assist a student in exiting his/her educational program with lifelong living skills. We are committed to improving each student's ability to communicate at school, at work, and in the community."

⁶ "The Founding of the Indiana State School for the Blind-A Biography of William H. Churchman," George S. Cottman, *Indiana Magazine of History*, Vol. X, Indianapolis, 1914) pp. 77-82

⁷ *First Annual Report of the Trustees of Indiana Institute for the Education of the Blind to the General Assembly,* December 8, 1847; *Eightieth Annual Report of the Board of Trustees and Superintendent of the Indiana School for the Blind, for the Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 1926* (Indianapolis, 1926)