

"Often as I sit at the organ, softly playing the prelude for the service in fancy I see the meetings of years gone by," she indicates the method by which the book was written. As some episode, individual, or landmark occurs to her, it is lovingly described, given a chapter title, and fitted into her book.

The Harmony Society, fortunately, has had rather more written about it than have many of the communitarian settlements. Its longevity and economic success, its connection with Robert Owen, its colorful leader, all combined to make it interesting, and the contemporary material for many episodes in its history is ample. The Society has been fortunate, too, in having two fairly detailed histories written nearly eighty years apart by men long intimately connected with the settlement: Dr. Aaron Williams, whose book, *The Harmony Society*, was published in 1866, and Dr. John Duss, one of the Society's last trustees whose account (published in 1943) covered its whole span from its German origin to its dissolution in 1905.

This new book adds nothing to the evidence already available for the history of the Rappites. Its value lies in its intimacy and in its detail. Other books on American communities have given this society its place among the nineteenth century experiments or "Utopias." All that can be discovered, probably, about George Rapp and the society he founded has been published. Their place in the group of communities with religious or social objectives—or both—is secure. In the period when the Harmony Society flourished, Utopianism and perfectionism were marked phenomena of American life. This account adds a little more detail for the social historian and furnishes, with its profuse illustrations, one more reminder of a past when America was willing to permit a wide variety of social experimentation.

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*Central High School, Evansville, Indiana: Its First Hundred Years.* By Henry A. Meyer. (Evansville, Indiana: The Centennial Committee, Central High School, 1954, pp. x, 225. Illustrations. \$1.00.)

*Central High School, Its First Hundred Years*, is as the title says, the history of a specific high school that finished its first century in 1954. Known for sixty-four years, from

its founding in 1854, as the Evansville High School, it acquired the name Central in 1918 when the city's growth required another high school, and has retained the name Central now that Evansville has four secondary schools.

The 225-page book is more than a work of interest merely to Central graduates. It gives a clear picture of life in Evansville from 1850 to the present. It is a valuable history of secondary education in Indiana, substantiated by statute and contemporary reference, and copiously illustrated with period pictures and reprints. The author states in his preface: "My sources have been newspaper files from 1850; *Evansville City Directories* from 1858; the minutes of the Board of School Trustees from 1865; the public school payroll books from 1875; the enrollment records, with principals' and teachers' names, from 1859; previous histories of Evansville; and numerous unpublished letters and manuscripts referring to the early days of our public school system. Recollections of early students and old citizens are useful as clues for further study; but, unless I have so stated in the text, I have not accepted anything undocumented by contemporary printed or written record. . . . I shall be grateful to have errors or additional information called to my attention, preferably in writing so that the note can be filed. All corrections and additions will be entered in an annotated copy kept in the school records room."

The thirty-five chapters deal with legal, economic, social, and political conditions aiding and hindering the establishment and development of a public high school, and with specific discussion of buildings, locations, faculty, students, boards of education, curriculum, five wars, athletics, music, drama, parent-teacher relations, and alumni. An appendix of six sections gives lists of principals, oldest living alumni, distinguished alumni, officers of PTA and Student Government, current faculty, the Centennial Class of 1954, national affiliations, publications, benevolences, honors and awards, and a chronological table of important events of the first hundred years.

The research done for the book withdraws a previous belief that Central is the oldest high school in Indiana, but substantiates its claim to two important firsts: (1) "Central of Evansville is the first free public high school in Indiana to remain in continuous existence, never having closed during its

hundred years of existence." (Preface) ; (2) "The first known junior high school now an accepted part of secondary education, was established in Central in 1912." (p. 51)

Credit for (1) is given "to the courageous first Board of School Trustees" for "the momentous decision" in 1854 to establish a high school, and especially to H. Q. Wheeler, head of the board. "There is no doubt that it was the sincerity and zeal of H. Q. Wheeler which swayed his colleagues to . . . the idea." (p. 25) It was Wheeler who the previous year "was actually the father of the plan for free education for all" when the first free public grade schools were opened in Evansville in 1853. (p. 15)

Credit for (2), the junior high school, goes to Ernest P. Wiles, principal of Central from 1910 to 1916. Wiles became interested in the junior high school theory while doing graduate work at Columbia University before coming to Evansville. Meyer says: "Attendance beyond the eighth grade was optional with the students in those days, and each year hundreds of them rejected the chance to enter high school. Principal Wiles knew that those boys and girls needed the high school. The problem was to get them into the school before the ninth grade, thus interesting them in the activities of the high school so that they would be eager to stay through the next four years. He succeeded in convincing the Board of the merits of his plan and got them to agree to make the radical move. *Thus was born the junior high school movement, not only for Evansville but for the entire United States.*" (p. 51)

Letters from Wiles, who is now past eighty years old, received by Meyer during 1953, say: "Evansville can well boast. . . the first junior high school in Indiana—America—and the world. . . . Of course it was only the beginning, and since then the movement has spread over the land and has taken on maturity of form as it should." (p. 53)

Central has had and still has many great teachers, whose names and work Meyer records, too many to list here. Myself a member of the Class of 1901, I recall after more than half a century mathematics learned from Miss Sarah Vickery (Miss Sadie to us) and Mrs. Adelia Hornbrook; Latin from Mrs. Augusta B. Corsett; English literature from Miss Daisy Flower (Mrs. Henry B. Veatch, Sr.) and Miss Edith Reilly, who lent us classics to read during summer vacations; and German literature from Karl Knortz, though it was not until

many years later in my own Indiana University teaching days that I knew Herr Knortz, as we always called him, was then a recognized authority in both America and Germany for his translating and editing of the works of Walt Whitman, which introduced the great poet to European readers.

Henry A. Meyer is particularly qualified to serve as the author of the history of Central High School. He is a lifelong resident of Evansville, having received his grade and high school training there, as did his mother and father before him. He graduated from Central in 1912, and has taught in Evansville from 1913, since 1926 at Central, where he now teaches mathematics and German. He attended Indiana University, the National German-American Teachers Seminary in Milwaukee, and Evansville College, where he received an A.B. degree and also did graduate work. For years he has collected material on the history of Evansville and southwestern Indiana. He is an expert in pictorial and technical photography, and an authority on philately. He has done much research on the postal history of southwestern Indiana, especially on mail carried by Ohio River steamboats. He is the author of numerous articles for philatelic magazines and *The Waterways Journal*, and of a series of articles in *The S. P. A. Journal* on postmarks of letters carried on old-time steamboats. He is co-author and group leader of the authors who prepared *The Brazil Centenary* (1943), a history of the stamps and postal records of Brazil, and is co-author and group leader of the authors of *Hawaii—Its Stamps and Postal History* (1948). He serves as consultant for various authors working on philatelic research. He now has in process a history of mail carrying on old-time river steamboats.

Meyer gives generous credit in his book to many persons and organizations assisting him in research and in supplying material, but he is the one who organized and directed all the research and did all the writing, except for three chapters on vocal and instrumental music and drama, which were written under his direction by three Central students of the Class of 1955. Much of his material was used when Evansville celebrated in 1947 its centennial as a chartered city. During the next half dozen years he concentrated on collecting material on Central High School. The volume here reviewed is evidence of his effective work.

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