

“Give A Buck To Save A College”: The Demise of Central Normal College

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June 3, 1971, is an anniversary of special significance for the town of Danville, Indiana. On that day twenty years ago the community held a parade in an attempt to raise money to save its prized possession and important asset—the local college. In April, 1951, the trustees of Canterbury College, the five year successor to Central Normal College which had operated in Danville for a period of sixty-eight years, had declared that they had exhausted all hope of keeping the institution open beyond the current school year.¹ The parade was a money raising venture planned by local citizens with the theme “Give A Buck To Save A College” and represented a last ditch effort to keep the college going.²

The college was a source of pride to the community for it had contributed more than its share of graduates who had distinguished themselves as doctors, lawyers, public officials, teachers, and businessmen. At the time of the financial difficulty “approximately one-third of the teachers in Indiana schools claimed credit for courses taught” at the school;³ a reporter in 1926 asserted that “at one time some years ago . . . twenty-seven officials and deputies in the [Indiana] Statehouse” were former students.⁴ Among the notable alumni were several appellate court judges and an Indiana Supreme Court justice, Arch N. Bobbitt; the state’s twenty-seventh governor later elected United States senator, Samuel M. Ralston; United States Senator William E. Jenner; several past presidents of the Indiana State Teachers’ Association and members of the Indiana State Board of Education; Charles A. Greathouse, an Indiana state superintendent of public instruction; Benjamin J. Burris, president of Indiana State Normal School—Eastern Division (now Ball State University); Logan Esarey, historian at Indiana University; psychologist Lewis M. Terman; a three game winner in the 1925 world series, “Vic” Aldridge; Homer P. Hargrave, chairman of the Midwest Stock Exchange;

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¹ Danville *Republican*, April 26, 1951. The authors have relied heavily on newspaper sources for information about Canterbury College. Financial records and the minutes of the faculty and board of trustees meetings have not been located to date. The official student records of Central Normal and Canterbury colleges and the Canterbury College catalogs are maintained in the office of the registrar, Indiana State University, Terre Haute. The Danville Public Library has complete sets of Central Normal College catalogs and bulletins.

² Danville *Gazette*, May 31, 1951.

³ Indianapolis *News*, January 24, 1970.

⁴ *Ibid.*, August 7, 1926.

and James R. Duffin, president of the Southern Life Insurance Company, Louisville, Kentucky.⁵ At the end of the 1946-1947 spring semester Central Normal and Canterbury College alumni numbered nearly 60,000; many of them were in teaching and administrative positions in public schools throughout the country.⁶

The prospect of the college's closing was difficult for the community to accept. A strong relationship had existed between the college and the town since the 1870s when a group of Danville citizens subscribed \$10,000 to buy the Methodist Academy property in Danville to build a college. On May 10, 1878, the existing Central Normal College and Commercial Institute situated at Ladoga, Indiana, along with the students, library, and laboratory equipment, was transported the twenty miles to Danville. This beginning provided an established base upon which to build the envisioned college and helped to ensure its success. The relocated institution was continued in Danville as Central Normal College.⁷

Under the early leadership of President William F. Harper, who had attended the pioneer National Normal School at Lebanon, Ohio, and with a dedicated faculty the institution claimed to be debt free by 1885.⁸ Beginning in the 1890s, however, the prosperity of the institution began to lag, and financial difficulties appeared despite the fact that the college had maintained an enrollment exceeding that of Indiana University until 1890.⁹ Although Central Normal operated under a sole proprietorship arrangement during its first twenty-five years, by the turn of the century it had become clear that it was no longer practical for the school to be privately owned.

In August, 1900, eighty Danville citizens organized a stock company and assumed control of the college "in appreciation of the cultural worth and financial potential of the institution for the town." This reorganization broadened the financial base of the institution and involved a large segment of the local community in its affairs, helping to develop further a strong town and gown relationship. The new stockholders early declared a nonprofit policy and in 1911 the college was reincorporated as a nonprofit educational corporation

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Protestant Episcopal Church, Diocese of Northern Indiana, *Journal of the Proceedings of the Forty-Eighth Annual Council* (South Bend, 1946), 24. Here and elsewhere alumni figures may include former students and graduates.

⁷ J. D. Hogate, "History of Central Normal College" (1925), unpagged. This manuscript is on file at the Episcopal Church Center, Association of Episcopal Colleges, New York. An article commemorating Central Normal's fiftieth anniversary gives an interesting and entertaining account of the move. *Indianapolis News*, June 26, 1926.

⁸ Mary Graves, "The Case of the Stolen College . . . and the Vanishing Professor," *Indiana Teacher*, CIX (May, 1964), 358.

⁹ Richard G. Boone, *A History of Education in Indiana* (New York, 1892), 128.

with a self-perpetuating board of trustees.¹⁰ Under this new arrangement the college continued to grow and prosper and at the time of its golden jubilee in 1926 had enrolled in excess of 40,000 students and allegedly had more of its graduates teaching in the Indiana public schools than any other college in the state.¹¹

Following World War I private normal colleges in the United States experienced growing competition from the emerging publicly supported teachers colleges. The previous success and prestige of Central Normal, however, helped it to continue then despite the competition and also during the adverse years of the Depression of 1929 and World War II. On several occasions the citizens of Danville made contributions to help keep Central Normal College operating. In addition, special state legislation in 1945 permitted Hendricks County to levy a property tax on behalf of the college for the following year.¹² The levy on all real and personal property raised \$18,000 to sustain the institution, and county students were permitted to enroll at the normal school without paying tuition during the 1946-1947 academic year.¹³

By the end of World War II there was a decreasing need for single purpose teacher training institutions, and in Danville this situation apparently was recognized by the leaders of Central Normal College. In addition, the troublesome financial situation of the post-war years obliged trustees of such schools to consider three institutional options for future operation: go out of existence, become a state college provided the favor of the general public and the legislature could be gained, or attempt to change through a new and more viable purpose. A change in name and in character was the option agreed upon by the trustees as necessary for the continued existence of Central Normal College.¹⁴

In the spring of 1946 Central Normal College entertained an offer by a group of cleric and lay Episcopalians in Indiana for church sponsorship of the institution. Negotiations were begun and a resolution effecting this sponsorship was passed by the Indianapolis Epis-

¹⁰ Eber W. Jeffrey, "History of the Private Normal Schools in Indiana" (Ed.D. Dissertation, School of Education, New York University, New York, 1938), 1. Indiana, *Laws* (1909), 128.

¹¹ W. T. Lawson, "Brief History of Central Normal College" in *Central Normal Annual Catalog* (Danville, 1933), 64. Events of the first fifty years of Central Normal College are covered in newspaper accounts which appeared in the *Indianapolis News*, June 26, August 7, 1926. An earlier historical account appeared in the *Indianapolis Star*, April 11, 1915. See also James H. Parr, "The History of Central Normal College" (M.A. Thesis, School of Education, Indiana University, Bloomington, 1927).

¹² Indiana, *Laws* (1945), 242.

¹³ *Danville Gazette*, February 27, 1947.

¹⁴ Kent D. Beeler, "Canterbury College, 1946-1951: Its Decline and Demise" (Ed.D. Dissertation, School of Education, Indiana University, Bloomington, 1969), 4.

copal Diocese in Evansville on May 1, 1946, and by the Northern Episcopal Diocese in South Bend on May 8.¹⁵ This action gave Indiana the distinction of having the only coeducational liberal arts college sponsored by the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States.¹⁶ The old Central Normal College trustees stepped down on July 8, 1946, and relinquished control to the board of the newly named Canterbury College. The initial authority for Canterbury College to operate as an institution of higher education within the state and to award baccalaureate degrees was granted with the approval of a certificate of amendment to Central Normal College's original articles of incorporation. The certification was registered on August 8, 1946, with the secretary of state and changed the corporate name of the institution to Canterbury College.¹⁷ The agreement to release control of the Danville college brought to an end sixty-eight years of continued access to higher education under the aegis of that private normal college. Central Normal College officially ended its academic life after operation under three proprietorships, two incorporations, sixteen presidents, and an enrollment of over 60,000 students.¹⁸ The local institution was probably the last nondenominational and exclusively privately controlled normal school to operate in the Midwest and perhaps in the United States as an Indianapolis *News* reporter asserted in 1944.¹⁹

The newly reconstituted institution opened as Canterbury College, a Christian inspired, coeducational school with a program of liberal arts implanted on the former teacher training program. The campus, physical plant, most of the faculty, and even a majority of the students were part of the institutional transfer. The former trustees of Central Normal College allegedly "explained they were not selling out but they were perpetuating the control of the college in a different character."²⁰ The trustees indicated that they felt "the benefits to Danville of such a college with high standards and a promising future was ultimate in their final decision."²¹

By the spring of 1948, however, Canterbury College faced financial difficulties of its own. The lay Episcopalian president, Dr. Edgar C. Cumings, first president of Canterbury College, announced his resignation effective at the end of the spring semester; the college

¹⁵ Indianapolis *News*, May 2, 1946; Indianapolis *Star*, May 9, 1946.

¹⁶ Indianapolis *Star*, November 18, 1946.

¹⁷ Certified copy of change of name of Central Normal College to Canterbury College, approved and filed on August 8, 1946. Office of the Secretary of State (State Office Building, Indianapolis).

¹⁸ Protestant Episcopal Church, *Journal of the Proceedings of the Forty-Eighth Annual Council*, 24. A listing of the names of presidents may be found in Beeler, "Canterbury College, 1946-1951," 184-86.

¹⁹ Indianapolis *News*, August 24, 1944.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, May 2, 1946.

²¹ *Central Normal College Quarterly*, III (May, 1946), 1.

board of trustees stated at their April 2 meeting that the Indiana dioceses of the church following several months of investigation and discussion would withdraw their sponsorship after the current academic year.²² The college had operated since April, 1946, with income generated from student tuition, support from church parishes and individual churchmen, and a \$50,000 gift from the Canterbury College Founder's Association. In order to meet operating expenses of the college, the trustees estimated that \$50,000 annually would be needed in addition to income from student tuition. The college board also estimated that at least one and one half million dollars would be necessary to put the college in an adequate position financially to meet the competition for students.²³ In April, 1948, to encourage support for the institution a predominantly Episcopal group created the Laymen's Foundation, and that action prompted church reconsideration of its earlier announced withdrawal of sponsorship of Canterbury College.²⁴ With the new foundation's advance of \$30,500 Canterbury College continued to operate. However, continuing disagreements between the new Episcopal president, the Reverend Douglas R. MacLaury, and the college board over administrative policies and future plans for the institution allegedly led to the subsequent resignation of the president and several of the trustees in late 1950 and early 1951.²⁵ At this time control of the college began to revert back to Danville trustees as Episcopal trustees resigned and were replaced by local businessmen who continued to operate the institution under the name of Canterbury College.²⁶

Toward the close of the fall semester of 1950-1951 the Canterbury trustees decided that the college might not be able to operate until the end of the current academic year because of the growing financial deficit. Some classes were held for about 220 students during the spring semester and, in an attempt to salvage the college beyond the 1950-1951 academic year, interested individuals and college students reportedly appealed for support to Episcopal lay and cleric leaders, businessmen in the state, and philanthropic foundations. Some efforts allegedly were made by unnamed community leaders to have the state of Indiana assume control and establish a junior college or extension center under the auspices of one of the state supported institutions.²⁷ The college's accumulated indebtedness and the history of financial problems, however, proved to be strong liabilities

²² Indianapolis *Star*, April 3, 1948.

²³ Danville *Gazette*, April 8, 1948.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, April 15, 1948.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, January 11, 1951.

²⁶ Danville *Republican*, January 11, 1951.

²⁷ Indianapolis *News*, July 26, 1951. This course of action was also proposed in an editorial in the Danville *Gazette*, February 15, 1951.



DICK BRANAM, LOIS JAMIESON, AND MARGARET WRIGHT (LEFT TO RIGHT) GATHER AROUND FREDERICK G. NEEL, ACTING PRESIDENT OF CANTERBURY COLLEGE, IN HIS ATTIRE FOR THE FUND RAISING PARADE.

Photograph and caption information courtesy
Indianapolis *Star*, Indianapolis *News* library.

in attracting interest and investments in the struggling Danville institution. The Canterbury College board of trustees, now comprised mostly of local businessmen, nevertheless declined to consider seriously commercial and industrial offers for the college site and buildings.²⁸

Special state legislation in early 1951 had given the Danville Public School Corporation the first option to purchase the college property and assets should it become impossible to continue an institution of higher learning in that town.²⁹ The possibility of using the college facilities appealed to the local community since the high school was overcrowded and the township could not afford an expansion program costing an estimated one half million dollars.³⁰ The college trustees stated that they felt the only way they could carry out the trust under which the college assets were held would be for the institution to revert to the local community since Danville citizens had long contributed to the operation and building fund drives of the original campus of Central Normal College.³¹

It became increasingly apparent during April, 1951, that only a miracle could save the college from a closing because of lack of funds. There was a consensus among all interested backers, trustees, and townspeople that it would take a considerable contribution of money from one or more new sources to perpetuate the life of the local college. Eleven Danville civic, fraternal, and patriotic organizations, which had banded together as the Allied Civic Club, promoted the slogan of "Give A Buck To Save A College" as a final big drive for a financial revival of the institution. This solicitation was to serve as a springboard for a later national campaign.³²

The festivities began with a parade which assembled at 1:30 P. M. that first Saturday in June, 1951, at the Danville Park adjacent to the college campus.³³ Included in the parade were bands, convertibles with dignitaries and their escorts, a National Guard unit, a horse drawn surrey, a color guard, and a number of decorated tractors and automobiles. Also found in the estimated mile long procession were: a college fraternity man leading a goat that wore a sign saying "Give A Buck!", Shriners on horseback, the John Strange small fry rhythm

²⁸ Danville *Republican*, December 10, 1953. This article prints "in its entirety" a statement issued "this week" by the Canterbury College board of trustees describing actions from 1949 to 1953 regarding the property of the college.

²⁹ Indiana, *Laws* (1951), 201.

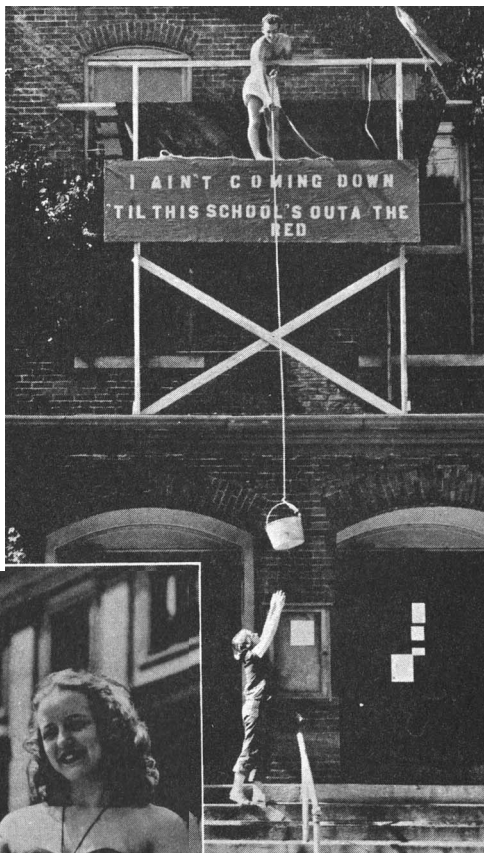
³⁰ Danville *Gazette*, April 26, 1951.

³¹ Danville *Republican*, January 25, 1951.

³² *Ibid.*, May 3, 1951.

³³ This account of the parade and events of the day is drawn from six contemporary descriptions: Danville *Gazette* and Danville *Republican*, June 7, 1951; Indianapolis *Star* and Indianapolis *Times*, June 4, 1951; Louisville *Courier-Journal*, June 3, 4, 1951.

JERRY DAVIS ON STRIKE IS ASSISTED BY BONNIE DEMAREE IN AN EFFORT TO HELP THEIR COLLEGE.



RUTH MCKINLEY, A CANTERBURY SOPHOMORE, DEPOSITS HER DOLLARS INTO THE GLASS VAULT, GUARDED BY PRIVATE ROBERT BALES, A DANVILLE NATIONAL GUARDSMAN.

Photographs and caption information courtesy Indianapolis Star, Indianapolis News Library.

band marching along attired in red and blue, and the Danville High School and County Legion bands blaring and booming a marching cadence. The acting president of the college, Frederick G. Neel, wore a suit of red underwear and appeared in a barrel while students trailed dressed in patched clothing and pleading for support of their school. Senator Jenner sat coatless atop an elephant loaned for the occasion by Cole Bros. Circus of Peru, Indiana. Governor Henry F. Schricker drove a team of mules while standing coatless in a light springwagon wearing his famous "white hat." Justice Bobbitt joined in the parade along with representatives of many other institutions of higher learning in Indiana.

Dignitaries and local residents joined in lending a hand. Lieutenant Governor Crawford Parker, the county sheriff, and local businessmen shined shoes for a dollar. The college trustees, mostly local community leaders, auctioned off their services in a mock "slave market" where each man brought in sums ranging from \$15 to \$55. Cigarette girls peddled smokes for a dollar a pack; soda pop and donuts also went for a dollar. Seventeen coeds, several of whom were local beauty queens, wore bathing suits covered with play money; they were to peel off a phony dollar in exchange for a real one. The girl who collected the most money was to receive a portable radio. Various business concerns looked for ways to help. The Capital Paper Company of Indianapolis donated a \$429 refrigerator which was auctioned off by Senator Jenner for \$350; a twenty-three inch television set was sold also under list price. The Hatfield Paint Company of Indianapolis, a college creditor, cut its bill in half and its president said he was mailing a small personal check. Neel reported that 250 of the outstanding accounts had been surrendered by creditors in an effort to help the college.³⁴ There was even a type of flagpole sitter. A fraternity president sat on a platform atop a wooden scaffold erected over the entrance to the ivy covered Administration Building. Below his makeshift roost was a sign that said, "I AIN'T COMING DOWN 'TILL THIS SCHOOL'S OUTA THE RED." A refrigerator had been hoisted up for his food and drink. Even strangers who happened through the small college town during the festivities did their part to help. They contributed dollar bills to students dressed in rags who were working the highways shouting "Give A Buck To Save A College!"

Those visitors who stopped joined the estimated 3,000 persons that paraded west up United States Highway 36 past the Danville business houses that were flying flags of purple and grey, the college's colors, to the Hendricks County courthouse. There the crowd stood

³⁴ Danville *Republican*, June 7, 1951.

in the 95° heat as it listened to educational and political leaders seated on the speaker's platform at the southeast corner of the courthouse lawn. Governor Schricker during his turn said that "if \$10,000 could be raised for the college back in those days [World War II], then surely ten times that amount can be raised in this day and age." The governor further pointed out that a total of 16,378 students were in private and church related colleges in Indiana and that it was vitally important to keep those colleges in operation; should these schools cease, the state supported universities and colleges would not be able to carry that extra educational load. Speaking of the loyalty to the college shown that day, Schricker said, "This loyalty is what makes America strong. The college here has never lost sight of its obligations and we must help now. I don't think the people of Indiana will allow this central Indiana college to die."³⁵

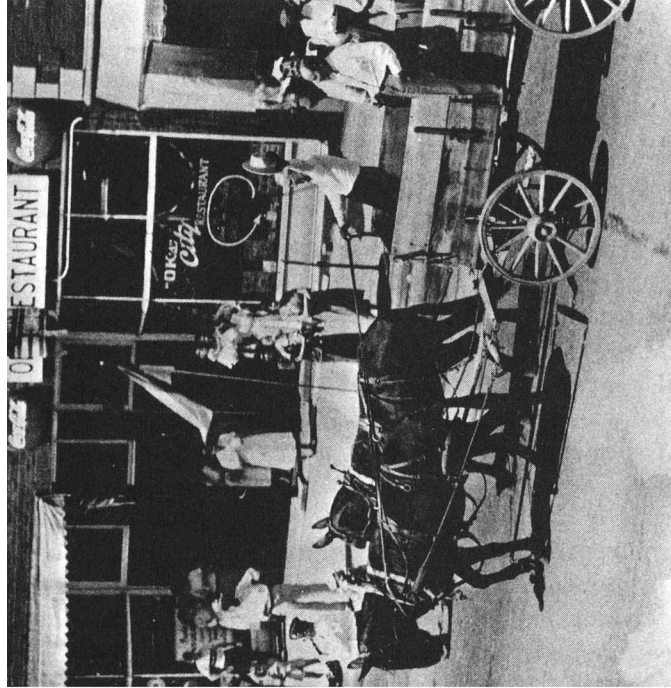
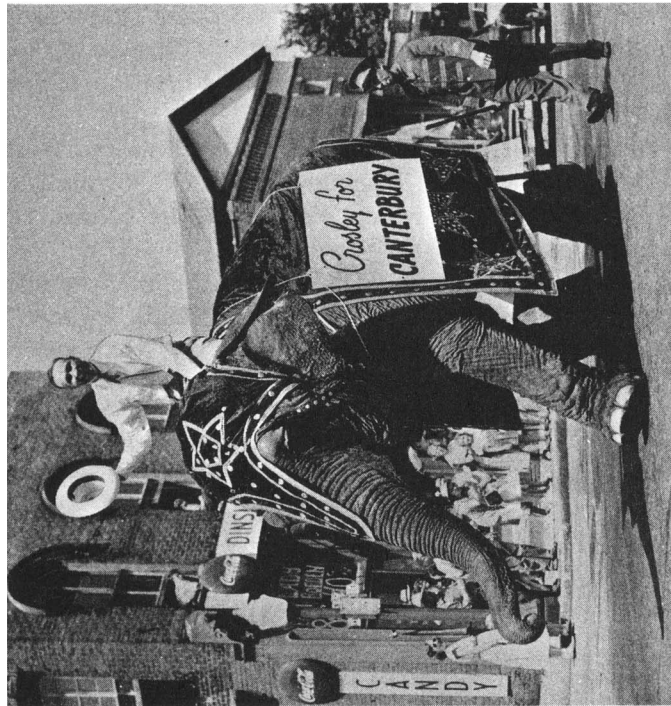
The events of the day concluded that evening in the college gymnasium with the seventy-fifth annual alumni banquet, which included former students from both Central Normal and Canterbury colleges. The "Give A Buck To Save A College" day was declared a success, and members of the local Allied Civic Club believed that a significant start had been made in erasing the debt that threatened to close the college. George Lewis, general chairman of the campaign, said he thought "between \$10,000 and \$15,000 had been raised at the end of the campaign day."³⁶ A final accounting by the treasurer of the college board of trustees showed that estimate to be somewhat optimistic as funds from all sources totaled less than \$8,000 with administrative expenses nearly \$500. Later included as part of the nationwide campaign to clear the college debt by August 15 was a door to door solicitation in Hendricks County and a mailing request to 4,000 friends, contributors, and alumni of the college. Those efforts, along with the "dollar day" program and other smaller drives, eventually reduced the debt against the college to approximately \$75,000 from the original \$90,000.³⁷ The effort was not sufficient; the college closed its doors at the end of the summer of 1951 never to reopen.

The continued life of a college is a matter in which many people may have a stake as the example of Canterbury College would suggest. Why the enthusiasm and support shown for the college during the special activities on June 3, 1951, along with the evidenced high level of interest and commitment to the college's survival dissipated in the space of several months is an interesting problem. Although

³⁵ Danville *Gazette*, June 7, 1951.

³⁶ Indianapolis *Times*, June 3, 1951. An alumni dinner meeting is held each October in the Danville High School gymnasium on the Friday night of the Indiana State Teachers' Association conference on instruction. Alumni may also receive a newsletter, the *Campus Crier*. Information is available from the Central Normal College Alumni Association, Box 128, Danville, Indiana 46122.

³⁷ Danville *Gazette*, July 26, 1951.



SENATOR WILLIAM E. JENNER ON AN ELEPHANT AND GOVERNOR HENRY F. SCHRICKER DRIVING THE MULES DO THEIR BITS IN THE "GIVE A BUCK TO SAVE A COLLEGE" PARADE IN DANVILLE.

Photographs and caption information courtesy Indianapolis Star, Indianapolis News library.

little of the evidence is available, the vantage point of time affords some opportunity for objective weighing of existing evidence related to the question.

With the eclipse of the private normal school as a viable educational institution the continuation of a college in Danville after 1946 was predicated on the ability of the new board of trustees to infuse a broader purpose into the institution along with a curriculum clearly reflecting the changing direction of education. This was never really achieved although in the early years of Canterbury College a sincere effort apparently was made. The low level of financial commitment to the new college along with a lack of success in developing a broad base of loyal supporters for its expanded goals evidently presented impossible obstacles to overcome. Without this base of support and with a lack of specificity as to the new goals with which the institution was to identify, Canterbury College in 1951 had no alternative but to succumb gradually to the stronger residual purposes of Central Normal College, purposes which five years earlier had been considered outdated. This dependence on earlier goals is reflected in the curriculum of Canterbury College which retained to a large degree the teacher education program of the antecedent institution.³⁸ In fact according to existing records Canterbury College had difficulty differing measurably from the previous educational orientation of Central Normal College.³⁹ This doubtless caused some skepticism as to what end an educational institution in Danville was to serve, especially when the goal of single purpose teacher education had already proved insufficient as to an educational need.

Support for the college at the end probably was really directed toward the vestiges of Central Normal College; this might be suggested also by the ease with which control of the college reverted to the local community. In essence two colleges closed in Danville in 1951, Canterbury College and Central Normal College, the latter for the second time. John Dewey once wrote that ends without means tend to degenerate into sentimentalism.⁴⁰ Perhaps that last general widespread outpouring of support for the college on June 3, 1951, was in reality a sentimental recognition, a sort of eulogy, for an institution which had played such an important role in the life of Danville and Indiana.

³⁸ For example, President MacLaury's 1949 Easter message mailed to parishioners in the Indianapolis Diocese indicated "that half of this spring's graduates would be licensed teachers." Douglas R. MacLaury, "Your Easter Message from Canterbury College" (1949). A copy of this printed message is in the possession of Mrs. Frederick G. Neel, Danville. Education courses remained steady and the education department followed business and physical education with the largest number of courses offered during the 1950-1951 academic year. Beeler, "Canterbury College, 1946-1951," 207.

³⁹ Beeler, "Canterbury College, 1946-1951," 181-86.

⁴⁰ John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (Boston, 1948), 73.