Without Ovid Butler, there would be no Butler University today. The history of the man and the university are intimately and inextricably entwined; without Ovid Butler’s vision, leadership, and financial support, the university may not have come into being, or survived its early years. One hundred and sixty years after it was chartered, Butler University today is a private, not-for-profit, comprehensive university located in Indianapolis, Indiana. Butler offers more than 65 majors from six colleges: Liberal Arts and Sciences, Education, Pharmacy, Business, Fine Arts, and Communication. The unofficial fall semester 2010 enrollment is 4,051 full-time undergraduates and 4,575 total students from over 43 states and 52 countries. The incoming freshman class of 2010 is the largest on record. In 2010, the university was ranked second best in the Master’s Midwest category of U.S. News and World Report’s America’s Best Colleges report, its highest ranking ever. The basketball team’s unprecedented NCAA tournament performances in the spring, resulting in losing the final game by a basket, gave the team and university national and international recognition. The fall of 2010 finds Butler University at the height of its success, and fully expressing the vision of founder Ovid Butler: to provide the highest-quality education, integrating the liberal arts and professional education, and to prepare each graduate to make a living as well as a life of purpose, in which personal flourishing is intertwined with the welfare of others. What follows is the story of the man and the university.

Ovid Butler – Family History and Life

Ovid Butler (February 7, 1801-July 12, 1881) was a lawyer, abolitionist, journalist, and founder of Butler University in Indianapolis, Indiana. His direct line of ancestors came from Ireland. James Butler, Sr. was born in Ireland between 1620-1630, migrated before 1659, and settled in Worcester County, Massachusetts; he died in 1681. James, Jr. (ca. 1675-ca.1735) of Lancaster, Massachusetts, was the father of Asaph Butler (1729 or 1730-1806, also found as Amos), born in Lancaster, Massachusetts and by some accounts a Congregational minister. Asaph’s son Joel Butler, Ovid’s grandfather, was a Baptist minister and Revolutionary War soldier. Born in Bolton, Massachusetts in 1752, he married Mabel Thompson (also spelled Thomson, b. 1749 in England) in 1771 in Windsor, Vermont. Joel died in 1822 in Geneva, Jennings County, Indiana; Mabel died there in 1834. Joel’s son Chauncy (also spelled Chancy, Chacey, and Chauncey), was born in 1775 in Windsor, Vermont; he died in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1840, after becoming one of the first Disciples of Christ preachers in Indiana to be part of the Restoration or Stone-Campbell Movement.¹ Chauncy married Demia Bullen (1778-1812) in Paris, New York, in 1798; they had eight children.

Demia died in 1812, and in 1813 Chauncy married Mary (nicknamed Polly) Norcross (1773-1840), the widow of his brother Asa (also found as Ora) Butler. The marriage of Chauncy to his brother’s “grass widow,” plus the Asa/Ora name discrepancy, has caused considerable confusion for Butler family genealogists and historians. Chauncy, Joel, and their families began
the trip to Geneva, Jennings County, Indiana, in 1816. They arrived in 1817, one year after Indiana gained statehood; they truly had moved to the frontier. There, young Ovid had some instruction in common schools, but for the most part was self-educated. Between 1819 and 1825, Ovid taught school in Indiana, Kentucky, and Illinois, clerked in a store in Vernon, Indiana, and read law. In Vernon, he attended Vernon Seminary and lived with William Avery Bullock, a lawyer who gave him his first legal instruction. 2

In 1825, Ovid moved to Shelbyville, Shelby County, Indiana, where he continued to teach school, and study and then practice law; he was the first lawyer admitted to the bar in Shelby County. He lived in a cabin on the southeast corner of the town square and Harrison Street. During the winter months he taught adult night classes in reading and writing in a room over Gatewood’s Tavern on the town square. Even though Shelbyville was a young town (platted in 1822), Ovid was active in community affairs, serving on the boards of the library and the Shelbyville Seminary (the forerunner of the school system), and as county agent. The Shelbyville Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) was organized in his home. 3 While in Shelbyville, Butler ran for the state legislature and also for county clerk, and both times was defeated because of his strong abolitionist beliefs. 4

While in Shelbyville, he met Cordelia Cole (b. 1809), the daughter of Judge Abel Cole of Hanover; they married April 19, 1827. Cordelia died in Indianapolis on September 30, 1838. The two had three children who survived to adulthood: Cordelia (1828-1866), who married William Wallace; Maria (1831-1911), who married Patrick Henry Jameson, and Ovid Dyer (1837-1919), who would later serve on the board of the university his father founded. Three children did not survive infancy: Dyer (1830); Edith (1833-1834); and Julia (1835-1836). 5

Ovid Butler moved his family to Indianapolis in 1836; his father, Chauncy, moved with them and became the preacher at the Central Christian Church. Ovid established a law practice, becoming partners with Calvin Fletcher, Simon Yanders, and Horatio C. Newcomb. Butler and Fletcher practiced law together until Butler, suffering from ill health in 1847, retired from the bar by 1849; they had one of the largest, most respected, and most lucrative practices in central Indiana. 6

On June 2, 1840, Butler married Elizabeth Anne Elgin (1818-1882), the widow of George M. Elgin of Georgetown, Kentucky, and daughter of Thomas McOuat (also spelled McQuat and McQuate) of Indianapolis. Their children were Georgiana Elgin (also spelled Georgeann and Georgia Anna, 1838 or 1839-1861 or 1862), Elizabeth’s daughter by her first marriage; Demia (1842-1867), who married George Townley; Scot (1844-1931); Janet (1846-1868); Chauncey (1848-1937); Thomas McOuat (called Mack; 1854-1872); and Anne Elizabeth (also spelled Anna, 1857-1937), who married David O. Thomas. One child, Thomas Lockerbie (1853), died in infancy. 7

In 1846, Butler bought farm land just north of the old Mile Square of Indianapolis. At the corner of what is now Park and 13th Street, he built a house and moved there in 1849; the house was several blocks west of what would become the first campus of Butler University. He
called the 25 wooded acres and the house Forest Home. As a real estate developer, Ovid Butler helped to create the neighborhood known in the 1860s and 1870s as “College Corner.” He subdivided the land on the south half of the farm and named the streets after trees common to the area. The house is at what is now 1306 N. Park Avenue. The land on the northeast corner of the farm would become the site of the university. 

Long an advocate of abolition, Butler helped to organize the short-lived Free Soil Party (1848-1852) from dissatisfied anti-slavery Democrats and Whigs. Free Soilers opposed the extension of slavery into the territories, and wanted to remove existing laws that discriminated against free blacks in Northern and Midwestern states where slavery was outlawed. Originally a Democrat, Butler helped to organize the Free Soil Party when Democrats failed to take a stand on slavery at the close of the Mexican War. In 1848 Butler established and financed an Indianapolis newspaper, the Free Soil Banner, which supported the Free Soil movement and called for the abolition of slavery. During the U.S. presidential campaigns of 1848 and 1852, Butler was a Free Soil Party delegate for presidential elector. At this point, he also helped to establish the Indiana Free Soil Democrat, which merged with the Indianapolis Journal in 1854, a paper he largely owned and controlled. He also helped to establish an anti-slavery newspaper in Cincinnati backed by the Disciples of Christ. Nationally, the Free Soil Party merged with the newly-formed Republican Party in 1852. In 1854, Butler called a meeting at the Indiana State House on June 15; the 10,000 people in attendance formed the Republican Party in Indiana. 

Butler remained affiliated with that party (then the party of Abraham Lincoln) for the rest of his life.

In 1847, Ovid Butler became engaged with the Disciples of Christ proposal to found an institution of higher learning in Indiana. In 1850, the charter he wrote to create the Northwestern Christian University was approved by the Indiana General Assembly. He offered 20 acres of his own property, located on the northeast side of the Old Mile Square of Indianapolis, to create a site for the university. As a member of the board, he saw the school through its founding, its first years of operation, and the move to a new campus. In 1877, the university was renamed Butler University in his honor. More on this portion of Ovid’s life is included later in this article concerning the founding of Butler University.

Ovid’s family members also played important roles in the history of the university. His daughter Demia was the first female graduate of the university from the full four-year classical program in 1862. She married in 1866, only to die in 1867. To honor her memory, her father established the Demia Butler Chair of English Literature, the first chair in the United States created specifically for a female professor.

On Ovid’s death in 1881, he left his stock in the university to his sons Chauncey and Scot. Scot was a faculty member, served on the board, and was president of the university from 1891-1904 and 1906-1907. Chauncey served as secretary of the board from 1897-1906. Scott’s daughter, Evelyn M. Butler, held the Demia Butler Chair from 1918 until 1930, and was the university’s first Dean of Women, 1923-1939. Over the years, many of Ovid’s descendants have graduated from the university that carries the family name.
Ovid Butler died in Indianapolis at Forest Home on July 12, 1881, and is buried in the Butler family plot at Crown Hill Cemetery, another project he helped to develop. The cemetery is less than a mile south of the current Fairview Campus.  12

On January 12, 1882, the year after Ovid’s death, the board of directors declared that the seventh of February, Ovid’s birthday, would be observed as Founder’s Day, with memorial services to be held that first year. On that first observance, Ovid’s son Scot presented the university with a life-sized oil painting of his father. An address given by General James Coburn noted Ovid’s mark on the school:

“Heis ambition was to make this institution as liberal, as thorough, and as beneficent as any one anywhere. ... He believed in the equal rights of men and women; that all should be free; that all should be educated alike.... He put his faith and creed in the charter of the University, and upon these stones he builded. His taste, his ambition, and his conscience acting in harmony carried him forward and over all the obstacles he met.”  13

Over the years, Founder’s Day has been marked in a variety of ways. Today it is observed with the library’s Celebration of Scholarship and Creativity, opening with a reception on or close to February 7, and exhibiting scholarly and creative works of faculty and staff for the remainder of the month.

In *The Bench and Bar of Indiana*, Ovid is described as “…a man of medium height, sturdy form, with a pleasant face, a very bright eye, and an expression of intelligence and kindness not to be forgotten. He had almost infinite patience and labor in the practice of the law, which for his firm was the most lucrative in the state....He...was as independent in social, political, and religious affairs as any man could be....He spent his time, his labors and his money liberally to further his political projects and sentiments. He largely endowed Butler University and put it into active operation.”  14

*The Founding of Butler University*

The impetus to create a new institution of higher learning in Indiana affiliated with the Disciples of Christ (Christian Church) came from several sources. First, in 1847 the state-wide church membership was 300 churches with about 19,900 members. The closest Disciples-affiliated school at the time was Bethany College in Virginia, founded in 1840 and located near what is now Wheeling, West Virginia. The 1850 Indiana census also showed a growing population of 8,000 in its capitol, Indianapolis. Establishing a centralized institution of higher education for Indiana students was attractive, especially since travel was difficult and costly.  15

Second, and more importantly, Indiana was a free, non-slave-holding state, and many members of the church in Indiana were abolitionists. Virginia was a slave-holding state, and most of the students attending Bethany came from southern states and supported slavery. This political and ethical division based on slavery provided the momentum for Ovid Butler and some of his
fellow brothers in the church to found a university based on Disciples’ principles--including abolition--in Indiana. 16

The importance of the anti-slavery issue as a primary motivator was summed up by Ovid Butler: “The Institution originated in the desire of its founders and early patrons for an institution of learning of the highest class upon free soil, in which their children and the youth of the Northwest might receive a liberal and Christian education, removed, as far as practicable, from the pernicious influences of slavery.” 17

The support to create such an institution came from church members and leaders, and not from a central church authority, as was the pattern with other church-based colleges of the time. Butler University was a relative newcomer in 1855, being preceded in Indiana by the Presbyterians (1827); Methodists and Baptists (1837); Catholics (1842); and Quakers (1847). The Disciples of Christ had no central structure or authority; instead, each congregation was an independent entity, linked loosely by similar theology, and in Indiana, by local associations and a state-wide annual meeting. The state meetings provided members with the opportunities to explore the creation of a university in Indiana. 18

The first statewide meeting of the Disciples was held in 1839. Present were Chauncy Butler (Ovid’s father), and other preachers who would become important figures in the founding of Butler University. At the 1847 state meeting, several of these preachers proposed the founding of a university in Lawrence County in south-central Indiana, supported by $10,000 in subscriptions already pledged by area church members. A delegation from Rush County in east-central Indiana also proposed a school, but they had no financial backing. 19

Before the meeting ended, it voted to appoint a nominating committee which would in turn nominate five men who would meet in Indianapolis in December of 1847 to receive and consider the offers from Lawrence and Rush Counties, and from other interested counties. Ovid Butler was one of the five selected. The group met in December 1847, and again in May 1848, with little progress and no further proposals (other than the possibility of working with Disciples in Ohio to create a school). At the 1848 annual meeting it was decided that the Lawrence County location was too far south. The meeting agreed it was time for the church to found and endow a college in the state, and a question was put to every congregation in Indiana: Shall we build a college, and where? 20

The state-wide canvass was completed with mixed results--though Indianapolis, as the centrally-located state capitol, had the most support. The initial report at the 1849 state meeting in Indianapolis stated that the church was not ready to support a college, but after several days of debate, a breakthrough occurred: the unanimous passing of a resolution to found “a North Western Christian University at Indianapolis.” To put off criticism, and to make the vote more representative of the whole state, Ovid Butler asked the Indianapolis area members of the church not to vote. 21
A committee of seven men was appointed to seek funding and begin the project of founding a university. Ovid Butler was on the committee and was elected its chair. Butler, recently retired from the practice of law, and with his interest in the public school movement, his long-standing commitment to antislavery and free-soil politics, his interest in public causes, his financial position, and his dedication to the church, was emerging as the man to head the founding of the university. In 1847, Butler went through a life-threatening illness, which prompted his retirement from law. He believed that God had spared his life to do other work, and it was possible that he took the founding of the new university as that work.  

Butler wrote the charter for the university, which was passed by the Indiana General Assembly on January 15, 1850. The charter named a board of 21 commissioners, including its author, and at the first commissioners’ meeting on March 5, 1850, Butler was elected president. At the July 14, 1852 board meeting, 21 board members were elected by the stockholders; again, Butler was elected to the board and its presidency. Butler held this position, with several short interruptions, until he stepped down at the age of 70 in 1871, citing poor health. The board created the position of chancellor for him, a post he held until his death in 1881.  

In the charter, Butler put his stamp on the university, his vision of the institution being much more broad and liberal than the church had considered. Even the institution’s name—North Western Christian University—reflected Butler’s idea that the school should attract students from around the old North West Territory and not just Indiana. Section three of the charter offered this often-quoted statement of vision, that the university be “an institution of learning of the highest class...for the instruction of the students in every branch of liberal and professional education; to educate and prepare suitable teachers for the common schools of the country; to teach and inculcate the Christian faith and Christian morality as taught in the sacred Scriptures...; and for the [promotion] of the sciences and arts.” Much of the remainder of the 18-section charter was devoted to the raising of stock and structure of the corporation.  

The university distinguished itself from its peer schools in that money was raised initially by selling stock subscriptions, creating a corporation, and stockholders voted in board members every three years. Although this was not a unique way to found a university of the period, Butler University maintained this corporate structure longer than most. On May 28, 1852, Ovid Butler announced in a letter that the original goal of $75,000 in subscriptions had been reached. Ovid controlled the largest portion of the stock, and on his death in 1881, it passed to his sons Scot and Chauncey. In 1909, the stock was called in and the board became self-perpetuating.  

Once sufficient stock had been sold, the next task was to find a location and an architect. Ovid Butler offered 20 acres of his own land as the new site for the school. Located at the northeast corner of the old Indianapolis Mile Square, at what is now College Avenue and 13th Street, some felt the site was too far out of town. Others believed it was an advantageous location since the city was expanding, and the site could be seen by railway passengers passing through the city. Butler’s house, Forest Home, still stands several blocks west of the first campus and is a beautifully restored private residence.
Butler described the site in a letter dated September 24, 1852, to the architect William Tinsley: “The ground selected as a site for the main building of the University is a lot of twenty acres being 80 rods in length East and West and 40 rods in width North and South. The ground is covered with forest trees but not so densely as to require the removal of many of them.” The letter goes on to describe how the State House can be seen to the southwest, the interest he anticipates being available from the sale of stock to fund the building, some possibilities for the building’s design, and the possibility of adding later a preparatory school and a normal school.

The board next advertised for architects to enter a design contest. Newly arrived to the United States, Irish-born architect William Tinsley won the contest and was hired. Tinsley designed the building to be built in three segments as the school grew and could afford the additions; the westernmost section was the only one built. The building held four recitation rooms and a chapel. Tinsley’s innovative design style became known as Collegiate Gothic; North Western Christian University was his first building in the United States, and he went on to design other significant buildings in Indianapolis and other Midwestern cities.

The university would not have become a reality if not for the time, talents, and financial support of Ovid Butler. The years between the charter being written in 1850 and the school opening its doors in 1855 were fraught with financial instability, in spite of $75,000 raised in stock subscriptions. The biographical sketch of Butler in the Christian Portrait Gallery of 1864 details Butler’s role in keeping the school alive:

“He was, ex-officio, general financial agent of the company. He was also its building agent during the progress and until the completion of the university building, and, as, such, had the making of the contracts, the superintendence of the building, and the disbursement of the funds. The university fund came in too slowly to meet promptly the payments to the contractors. To supply this want he, from time to time, advanced his own money to make such payments. At one time, such outstanding advances amounted to about ten thousand dollars. This, of course, was a loan to the university, and has, the greater portion of it, been repaid. In 1858, a warrant was issued to him for near two thousand dollars, for his services. This he invested in stock of the company. Other than this, he has never received any pecuniary compensation for his services.”

The university established a preparatory school in 1853 while the building was being built. In April 1855, the preparatory school opened in the new building. It was open to students of both genders, “to give the female an equal chance to obtain a thorough education.” The preparatory school existed until 1907.

The university opened its doors on November 1, 1855, as North Western Christian University, with two professors and 20 collegiate students. From the first day, the school admitted women and students of color, as well as students of any or no religious background, since the university was nonsectarian from its founding. Among the first class were students who had been dismissed from Bethany College because of their abolitionist beliefs. North Western Christian was the first college in Indiana to admit women on an equal basis with men, and the second in
the U.S. Ovid Butler’s daughter Demia was the first female to graduate from the school in the full four-year classical curriculum. After her untimely death in 1867, her father endowed the Demia Butler Chair in English Literature in 1869, the first endowed chair in the country created specifically for a female professor. Catharine Merrill, the daughter of Civil War general Samuel Merrill, was the first holder of the chair, becoming the second woman to be named a professor in the U.S. The chair would later be held by Ovid’s granddaughter Evelyn M. Butler. 32

In the undated draft of an essay entitled “Woman’s Rights,” likely created after the end of the Civil War in 1865, Ovid Butler writes:
“My desire is that the Institution of the North Western Christian University occupy a position in the front ranks of human progress and Christian civilization as the Experiment and Advocate of the common rights of humanity without distinction on account of sex, race or color. [This] position recognized the absolute equity before God and before the Law of the individual members of the human family—not necessarily that these rights and duties of each are the same, but that they are equal. This equality of rights and duties, so far as race or color is concerned has after a long struggle and a fierce and bloody war finally obtained recognition in our National Constitution; but, there is still a controversy about its applicability where sex is concerned.” 33

During the Civil War (1861-1865), the university lost almost all of its male students, 184 enlisting in the northern Union Army. Among these students was Ovid’s son Scot, who was later to become president of the university. The young school remained open with its female students and the preparatory school, and with financial support from Ovid Butler. After the war, the university offered free tuition to any young man who was permanently disabled in the war. Enrollment also increased, and the single building became crowded. The city of Indianapolis was also beginning to expand beyond the old Mile Square, and the university’s property was becoming more valuable. 34

At the same time, the university was offered enticements of land and money from the newly-formed village of Irvington, located five miles to the east of Indianapolis. Founded in 1870, Irvington was looking for ways to increase its population. The financial panic of 1873 was the motivation the board needed to accept the offer of 25 acres of land in Irvington, since the panic both retarded the further development or sale of the old campus, and the collection of subscriptions. Though Ovid Butler did not agree with the move, he supported the majority position. After 20 years at the College Avenue campus, the university moved to Irvington in 1875. Some voiced doubt that the university could survive moving that far away from the downtown area, but it turned out to be a propitious move. 35

The Irvington Campus

The new 25-acre campus was located in the southeast corner of Irvington, and the university had considerable room to spread out, soon going from one main building to a true campus. In 1877, the school changed its name from North Western Christian University to Butler University over the strong protests of its main founder, leader, and benefactor, Ovid Butler. Ovid disliked
ostentation, but the board felt strongly that he should be so honored, and persisted. In Irvington, Butler University became a focal point for the growing town, and many artists, musicians, and literary figures moved to the area. The Irvington campus soon had the Main Hall, the Science Building, “The Residence,” a gymnasium, sporting fields, a running track and tennis courts, an observatory, and the Bona Thompson Library (opened in 1903). None of the buildings stand today except for the Bona Thompson Library, which houses the Irvington Historical Society. Most of the other buildings were demolished in 1939. Some of the houses that were once fraternity, sorority, and faculty homes still stand.36

In 1896, Butler University became part of the University of Indianapolis, which included the Indianapolis dental, medical, and law schools, with Butler serving as its undergraduate college. Its name was changed to Butler College to reflect this new status. The University of Indianapolis lasted until 1906 and quietly disbanded, but the school did not change its name back to Butler University until 1923, when a move was anticipated to a third campus.37

While in Irvington, Butler University’s policy of admitting students of color was challenged by the growing strength of the Ku Klux Klan (a secret society that was against Catholics, Jews, and African-Americans) in the state in the early 1920s, and by the fact that the Klan’s Grand Dragon (national leader), D.C. Stephenson, lived across the street from the library. Butler not only continued admitting students of color, but also served as a meeting place for adult education classes for African Americans in the area. In 1922, a group of seven African American educators and Butler students founded the only greek organization to start at the school. Sigma Gamma Rho incorporated in 1922 as a sorority for African American female educators. It soon had chapters around the United States, and today is nationally and internationally recognized as one of the “Divine Nine” African American greek organizations.38 In 1925 D.C. Stephenson was convicted of murdering a young woman who had attended Butler, Madge Oberholtzer. The trial and surrounding publicity exposed many klansmen, including over half of the Indiana General assembly, and destroyed much of the Klan’s power in the state.

The Fairview Campus

In the late 1910s, the university began to once again feel growing pains. Enrollments increased following World War I, and the campus was hemmed in by two railroad lines and the surrounding residential community. In 1920, the university began talks about acquiring the grounds of the old Fairview Park in the north-central part of the city. The amusement park, at the terminus of a streetcar line, was owned by the Indianapolis Street Railroad Company, and encompassed some 260 acres. The land included gardens, large wooded areas, the old Indianapolis Canal, and the White River. The new campus incorporated some of the gardens, woods, and scenic walks along the canal. Construction began in 1926 on the original buildings, Arthur Jordan Hall, and Butler Fieldhouse, named Hinkle Fieldhouse after legendary coach Paul “Tony” Hinkle in 1966. Both buildings are on the National Historic Register. These two buildings, along with the Butler Bowl (the football stadium), comprised the campus when the university opened for classes in the fall of 1928. Arthur Jordan Memorial Hall (1928) was in the
Collegiate Gothic style, housing all the classrooms and administrative and faculty offices. It is still the anchor of the campus today. 39

When the fieldhouse was built, it became the largest structure under one roof in the state. For many years it was used for a wide variety of activities beyond Butler basketball, including the state boys’ basketball championships, the national Butler Track and Field Relays (1933-1942), and speeches by U.S. presidents; Willkie, Hoover, Eisenhower, Ford, George H.W. Bush, and Clinton all spoke there (Barak Obama spoke in the parking lot as a presidential candidate). It also housed the world’s largest piano recital and bicycle races, and during World War II was used as barracks for the Navy Signal School and the Army Air Corps. It is famously known as the fieldhouse in which tiny Milan High School won the 1954 Indiana boys’ basketball tournament, and where part of the film Hoosiers (1986, called Best Shot in the U.K.), based on the “Milan Miracle” story, was filmed. It remains the nation’s oldest college basketball arena. 40

Although campus growth was slowed by the Great Depression (In the U.S., 1929-1941) and the onset of World War II, after the war the campus was inundated with military men (and a few women) returning to school. With this came the need for additional facilities, and the 1950s saw a number of new buildings on campus, including a union building, an observatory with the largest mirror in the state, a new pharmacy building, and men’s and women’s dormitories. The 1960s saw further growth with the addition of Lilly Hall (the new home of the Arthur Jordan Conservatory), Clowes Memorial Hall (a 2,500-seat multi-purpose theater), and Irwin Library (designed by Minuro Yamasaki, who also designed the World Trade Towers). The 1970s saw the addition of a science complex, and in 1990 the Residential College dormitory was completed. Ground is being broken soon for a new performing arts complex. 41

Today the university comprises six colleges: Liberal Arts and Sciences; Education (created from a merger in 1930 with Eliza Blaker’s Teachers College of Indianapolis); Business Administration (established in 1937); Pharmacy (from a merger with the Indianapolis School of Pharmacy in 1945); Jordan College of Fine Arts (from a 1951 merger with the Jordan College of Music); and Communications, newly created in 2010. The old College of Religion separated from the university in 1958, moving to land adjacent to the university and becoming Christian Theological Seminary. At this point, the university also separated its ties with the Disciples of Christ. 42

The spring of 2010 saw Butler University and its basketball team thrust into the national and international spotlight as the Bulldogs first won their league championship, then worked their way through the NCAA national playoffs—the Sweet 16, Elite Eight, and Final Four, to play Duke University for the championship. Butler lost by a basket, but as many sports writers noted, won the hearts of the nation. Since the playoffs, by chance, were in Indianapolis, the basketball team members were in class the morning of the final game. Even though the game of basketball was invented ten years after Ovid Butler’s death, he would be proud to know that the highest educational standards were still being upheld by the school he founded 155 years ago.
Notes

1. Genealogy materials, Ovid Butler Collection, Special Collections, Rare Books, and University Archives Department, Irwin Library, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana.

2. Ibid.


5. Genealogy materials.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.


12. Ovid Butler biography file, University Archives, Butler University, Special Collections, Rare Books, and University Archives Department, Irwin Library, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana.


17. Bodenhamer, s.v. “Butler University.”

19. Ibid. 236.

20. Ibid. 237-239.


22. Ibid. 244.

23. Ibid. 244-246, 250.


25. “Charter for North Western Christian University,” Founding documents, University Archives, Special Collections, Rare Books, and University Archives Department, Irwin Library, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana.


27. Shaw 250.

28. Ovid Butler letters and writings in typewritten transcript, Ovid Butler Collection, Special Collections, Rare Books, and University Archives Department, Irwin Library, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana.

29. Shaw 251-252.


31. Shaw 261.

32. Bodenhamer, s.v. “Butler University.”

33. Ovid Butler letters and writings.

34. Waller 37.

35. Waller 81-84.
36. Waller 85-86; 154-167.

37. Waller 121-124.

38. Sigma Gamma Rho Collection, Special Collections, Rare Books, and University Archives Department, Irwin Library, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana.

39. Waller 224-228.


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