

“Two Giants Among Indiana Educators”

Indiana celebrated its bicentennial on December 11th 2016, just 10 months ago. My story this evening is about two educators who had a major impact in founding and growing one of the leading universities in the United States. That university is Notre Dame located just north of South Bend, IN.

The first white man on record to come to Indiana was a Frenchman Robert Cavellier, Sieve de la Salle in 1679. He, like a growing number of other brave men at this time, was an explorer trying to buy furs from the Indians and then ship them back to Canada and France. La Salle was followed by many more Frenchmen who founded the city of Vincennes in 1733 and used that City as their base in Indiana until it was taken away from them by the British in 1763. In 1779, George Rogers Clark defeated the British there and claimed the City for the United States. During this time period, Catholic clergy from France also immigrated to both Kentucky and Indiana to work with and evangelize the Indians and early white settlers.

In 1800, the Congress established the Indiana Territory which included the current states of Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and parts of Michigan and Minnesota. President John Adams appointed General William Henry Harrison as the first territorial governor. Vincennes became the capital of the new territory. By the time that Illinois became a territory in 1809, Indiana had almost the same boundaries as it has today. Continued fighting against the Indians and the British by the US Army caused great turmoil until the end of the War of 1812 in 1815. In 1816, Indiana became the 19th State as noted above. Mother Theodore Guerin of the Sisters of Providence religious order along with several other nuns arrived from France during this period and founded the College of St. Mary in the Woods in 1820

While all of this was going on in Indiana, the first French bishop of the Indiana Diocese, Simon-Gabriel Brute de Remur was appealing to his superiors in France for more priests and brothers and nuns to help with evangelism among the Indians as well as the growing numbers of white immigrants. His diocese included the whole State of Indiana and one third of Illinois. Bishop Brute was fairly successful in recruiting religious help partly because of turmoil in France during

the French Revolution beginning in 1789 and continuing on and off until the late 1840s.

One of these volunteers was a young man named Edouard (Edward) Sorin and he is the first of the two educational giants I am describing in this paper.

Edward Sorin was born at the small village of LaRoche, France on February 6, 1814 and baptized the same day in the Catholic parish church of Ahuille nearby where his family lived. Ahuille is located about 7 miles southwest of Laval in the Province of Brittany, France. He was the seventh of nine children born to Julienn Sorin and Mary-Anne Gresland, wealthy farmers in the area. The family's relatively high economic position had a positive impact on Edward during his educational and later professional career as a priest. In 1834, during his 4 years in the seminary, Sorin became close to the rector, Basile Moreau who would remain as his superior and mentor for most of the rest of his life. On May 27, 1838, Sorin was ordained and assigned as a curate at a small parish 30 miles from his family home. But he only remained here for 15 months before being reassigned to the novitiate of the Congregation of Holy Cross Order in Sainte-Croix. He joined the Congregation of the Holy Cross order on August 15, 1840.

During the 1830s immigrants continued to arrive resulting in 28 parishes, three schools for girls and one for boys and a fledgling seminary but more was needed. Edward Sorin was concerned about the revolutionary climate in France and became excited about this missionary work in North America. So in 1840, he volunteered to move to the missions in Indiana. Although only age 26 and newly ordained, he was selected to lead a team of three religious brothers along with a farmer, a tailor and a carpenter. None of this band spoke English and had never traveled out of France. But this small band craved the unknown and were excited about their impending journey.

On August 5, 1841 the band of seven headed for Vincennes. They were accompanied by a young Sister of Providence who was on her way to join the nuns at the convent in Terre Haute. They traveled on an American sailing ship from Le Havre to New York City and then up the Hudson River to Albany and then west on the newly constructed Erie Canal to the Great Lakes and westward to Toledo OH. On October 1st, 1841 they arrived at Ft. Wayne and worked their way south to Vincennes via the Wabash and connected rivers.

By the time that Edward Sorin and his team reached Vincennes, the first Bishop Brute had died and been replaced by Celestin Guynemer de la Hailandiere as the 2nd Bishop of the Vincennes Diocese. This Bishop was very different from the first, Bishop Brute and caused Father Sorin difficulty throughout the remainder of his life at Notre Dame. Shortly after their arrival at Vincennes, the band of 7 were assigned to a small parish, St. Peters at Black Oak Ridge in southeast Indiana. After a short period of arguing between the Bishop and Sorin, the group was transferred to Northern Indiana with directions to form a Catholic school on property that had been gifted to the Diocese for that purpose. The band of 7 headed north on November 16, 1842 and they had to walk with carts 250 miles north to their destination at the current location of Notre Dame. On November 26, 1842, they reached South Bend, the village that had taken its name from the unique configuration of the St. Joseph River.

Upon arrival, Sorin and his cohorts inspected the property totaling 524 acres just north of South Bend which Sorin named Notre Dame du loc because the property included two lakes taking up 90 acres. The donor who gifted the property to the Vincennes Diocese was Alex Coquillard, a businessman and civic leader who had begun his career as a fur trader 20 years before. There were only two small buildings or huts on the property in rather poor condition. But this did not stop Reverend Sorin! He was fascinated by the beauty of the land and the small team got right to work clearing the land, planting crops and repairing the cabins.

A commitment had been made to the Bishop to have buildings constructed and a school started within 2 years and by golly, Sorin was going to make that happen ... and he did. The scope was very modest at the beginning but the desires of the growing population supported the effort strongly. The first Notre Dame building was completed in August 1844 in time for the academic year. It was brick and 4 stories high and located on the banks of the two lakes. The local Indiana state senator, John Dougherty, supported the prospect of a college in his district and pushed through legislation to register Notre Dame as a college with the right to confer degrees "like all the great colleges in the United States". This was accomplished at a point when the school was just starting and at a grammar and high school level!

Edward Sorin continued to battle many daily problems such as forming a teaching staff of French religious who had to learn English before they could teach children at the grade school and high school levels; providing trades programs as well as liberal arts and sciences. And where was the money coming from? He needed students as boarders to pay tuition. All the while, he was negotiating with the bishops in Michigan and Indiana for more help to get the school up and running. Father Sorin was a very strong willed, active extrovert, a very religious man and extremely goal oriented. From the day this small band arrived at Notre Dame du lac, he worked tirelessly to have buildings constructed, teachers hired and trained and students recruited at the grammar & high school level. All the while, his goal was to create a university for learning beyond the college level. This was a major task attempted by many in the country but few succeeded. For example, there were 65 Catholic colleges founded in the U.S. from 1841 – 1860 and only 22 still open in 1960.

Progress was slow throughout Father Sorin's reign as president. Starting with a novitiate for priests, brothers and sisters, an orphanage and grade school, they struggled for funds from the sale of farm crops, small contributions from Congregation of Holy Cross in France, the Diocese in Vincennes and local leaders in South Bend. The first new building, 4 stories high, was completed for the 1844 academic year. With visible signs of growth, support from folks in the South Bend area increased. Outgoing Father Sorin entertained the local leaders such as the Studebaker family with French wines and fancy dinners etc. Their contributions and payments for boarding students helped provide the funds for additional construction.

By the summer of 1849, a new curriculum modeled after a St. Louis University plan that included six years of study; three preparatory and three university of arts & science was introduced. Unfortunately, a huge fire on November 18 1849 destroyed the orphanage dorm, study hall, carpenter shop, storage room and kitchen. Just another minor setback that took 18 months to fix. Through it all, Father Sorin continued to forge ahead. He was an excellent organizer, delegator and taskmaster. As a constant communicator with his superior in France, neighboring Bishops and his Notre Dame teachers, he was able to branch out and expand the presence of the Holy Cross Congregation in other areas of the United States.

There were a number of problems and set-backs during the 1840s and 50s such as fires, a typhus epidemic in 1854 that killed 18 students and staff and an announced transfer of Father Sorin to India, an order that he dodged. In 1857, the Diocese of Ft. Wayne was established and supervision of Notre Dame was transferred to the new Diocese. At this time Sorin was made provincial & vicar in the Holy Cross Congregation and spiritual director for Notre Dame, St. Mary's College and parishes in Chicago and Philadelphia. From this point forward, Father Sorin delegated governance of Notre Dame to several very able staff members while he worked with other Holy Cross Congregation locations scattered throughout the United States.

Marvin R. O'Connell in his massive biography of Edward Sorin summarizes Father Sorin's impact on Notre Dame University as follows --- "Despot Sorin surely was, but for the most part, an enlightened one. Or at least enlightened in the sense that without the assertion of his self-confidence and single-mindedness there would have been no faculty to ignore and no students to expel. Without Sorin there would have been no Notre Dame; without him it would have dissolved like a dream, as did many other institutions, private and public, founded during the same era. This is not to say that other individuals did not play critical roles in this great adventure. Nor should it be forgotten that had the railroads reached northern Indiana a decade later than they did Our Lady's University might well have been only a dim memory. Even simple luck must be taken into account; what if, when the stable burned down, the wind had driven the sparks onto the church and the college? Yet, when all the other factors are acknowledged, the paramount truth remains that Notre Dame survived because Edward Sorin --- domineering, charming, supple, courageous, sometimes duplicitous and always devoted to God's cause as he saw it --- refused to fail." Reverend Edward Sorin served as president of Notre Dame from 1842 until 1865, 23 years second only to Father Hesburgh who served from 1952 until 1987, 35 years.

So much for Giant # one among Indiana Educators! Now, who is the other?

I'm sure there are many who have lifted the educational levels in our great State of Indiana over the course of these 200 years but I have chosen to stick within the arena of Notre Dame. My second educational giant is Reverend Theodore Martin Hesburgh. Edwin Sorin was the first president of Notre Dame and he was followed by now 16 more presidents that moved the University forward. By selecting these

two giants I don't mean to degrade those other Presidents of Notre Dame and the faculty who's hard work successfully helped make it the fine university it is today. But, these two were outstanding!

During the years following the death of Edward Sorin in 1893, Notre Dame evolved into a college with gradual, normal growth until 1910 when Knute Kenneth Rockne arrived from Chicago. He was an excellent student who graduated magna cum laude in chemistry. But his major accomplishment was the invention of the forward pass in college football! In 1918 he became athletic director and head football coach and as they say, the rest is history. In 1931 he died in a plane crash in Kansas. His overall record was 105 wins, 12 losses and 5 ties with 2 national championships.

As we learned much later from Butler University basketball success, Notre Dame's football success in the old days brought in many students and alumni contributions.

Reverend Theodore Martin Hesburgh was born in Syracuse NY on May 25, 1917 and he died on February 26, 2015 at age 97. He was the 2nd of 5 children in a middle class Catholic family. His father, Theodore B.V. was the son of third generation German and French immigrants and his mother Anne Marie Murphy of Irish descent. His grandfather was a teacher and later a writer for the New York World and had a major influence on Father Hesburgh. Graduating 3rd in his high school class, he entered Notre Dame in 1934 and after one year, entered the Holy Cross novitiate to become a Holy Cross father. In his junior year he was sent to Gregorian University in Rome to study theology for three years. While there he learned many languages – French, Italian, Spanish, German and Latin. He also achieved a working knowledge of Russian, Portuguese, Greek, Hebrew and Japanese. Whew! Who among us could do the same? When World War II broke out in 1940, he returned to the U.S. and was ordained at Notre Dame in 1943. In 1944 & 45 he studied for his doctorate in theology at Washington DC.

He returned to Notre Dame in 1945 and taught theology and became a chaplain to the married veterans returning to college. In 1948 he became head of the theology department and one year later was named executive vice-president at age 32. Four years later in 1952 he became president of Notre Dame in which capacity he served for 35 years. So, what makes Father Ted Hesburgh so special? First, he was a Catholic priest for life, he lived very simply on the Notre Dame

campus for most of his adult life. During his tour as President for 35 years, he guided the growth of the College into one of the nation’s great institutions of higher learning. He did this by leading his staff in changing the academic structure from a normal 4 year college into four colleges, Arts & Letters, Science, Engineering, Business and an Architecture School. Somewhat strangely, President Sorin founded the Law School in 1869, the first under catholic auspices. Providing legal instruction to Notre Dame students was one of Father Sorin’s earliest dreams.

Notre Dame now has more than 50 masters, doctoral and professional degree programs. Here are some of the facts to support the fine results accomplished during Father Hesburgh’s terms in office and the current figures:

	1952	1987	2017
Budget	\$ 9.7 mil	\$176.6 mil	\$ 1.3 bil
Endowments	9.0 mil	350 mil	\$ 10 bil
Research Funding	\$735,000	15 mil	
Enrollment	4,979	9676	12,393
Faculty	389	951	1,241
# degrees	1,212	2,663	

There also were 40 new buildings constructed during his terms in office including a 14 story library that has the nickname “touchdown Jesus” because it is located directly north of the football stadium with a stained glass image of Jesus with his arms extended much like the referee’s signal. While President, he had the ownership of the University transferred from the Congregation of Holy Cross to the Notre Dame Board of Trustees and reversed a previous decision forbidding football play in post season games. The money earned for post season play was designated for minority student scholarships. As busy as he was, he always made time to visit with students and faculty. With a regular campus dorm room as home and an office on the 14th floor of the library, Father Ted was always readily accessible to students, faculty and staff.

All during his terms as President and into retirement from 1987 until death in 2015, Father Hesburgh was heavily involved in national, international and religious causes which took, he estimated, 40% of his time off campus. Here are only some of those projects:

1954 National Science Board

1957-1972 US Civil Rights Commission; chairman 1969-72

Rockefeller Foundation

Vatican Missions – world wide

16 Presidential Commissions

1979 Immigration Reform Commission

Awarded graduate degrees from 150 U.S. universities

He was also on many business and nonprofit advisory boards related to higher education, science, business and civic affairs.

In 1964 he received the Medal of Freedom from President Lyndon Johnson and in 2000 the Congressional Gold Medal and on September 1st 2017 his image was placed on a US Postal stamp to commemorate the 100th anniversary of his birth.

I think the following Hesburgh quote gives us a sense of his code of life:

In the Civil Rights Commission's 1959 annual report, Father Hesburgh outlined his position on civil rights and equality:

"I believe that civil rights were not created, but only recognized and formulated, by our Federal and State constitutions and charters. Civil rights are important corollaries of the great proposition . . . that every human person is a res sacra, a sacred reality, and as such is entitled to the opportunity of fulfilling those great human potentials with which God has endowed every man."

And so, my story about two giants among Indiana educators draws to a close. Reverend Edward Sorin, a newly ordained Catholic priest at age 27 was sent to the Indiana frontier to build a university. He didn't speak English, didn't have much money, encountered many setbacks but he got Notre Dame started and found the drive and time to start other religious projects before his death in 1893 at age 82.

Reverend Theodore Hesburgh born into an average middleclass family, became a priest and devoted his life to building Notre Dame into one of the top universities in America while also devoting time and efforts to many US government and private programs and problems while still finding time to meet and help students and faculty while spending his adult lifelong home on campus.

What a pair, a century apart!

Thank you for your time and attention!

Kenneth V. McGinity
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