

# This battle between IU and U of M goes way back

The University of Michigan claims to be the oldest of the Big Ten schools. That claim is fact. The basis for the claim is a bit murky.

Michigan did not become a state until 1837, but on Aug. 26, 1817, while it was still a territory, the governor and judges considered themselves equivalent to a legislative body. The "passed an act" appropriating \$380 for the establishment of the "Catholepistemiad, or University of Michigania."

The act provided for 13 professorships, which were conferred upon two men, the Rev. John Monteith, a Presbyterian minister, and Father Gabriel Richard, priest of Saint Anne's Catholic Church. By Sept. 12, the "university" was supposed to have had a seal with a device representing six pillars supporting a dome with the motto, "Epistemia" at the base.

A classical academy for the teaching of Latin, Greek and sciences was opened in 1818 in Detroit. (The usual meaning of academy is that of a high or secondary school.)

Meanwhile, the Indiana Territory was admitted as a state in 1816 and began with a constitution that called for a system of



## LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

schools, beginning with primary schools and culminating in an institution of higher education. On April 30, 1821, while Michigan was still not a state, the original charter of their university was repealed and replaced with one that called the academy "the University of Michigan."

In 1820, the Indiana General Assembly passed an act authorizing the creation of the Indiana Seminary, which became Indiana University. Construction got under way, and the doors were opened for the first class in 1824.

In Detroit, the academy was suffering from a quick succession of teachers — Lemuel Shattuck resigned in 1821; E. Clapp left in November of 1822; the Rev. A.W. Welton was replaced by A.S. Wells, who was succeeded by Charles Sears, who left in 1827.

According to a book, *The City of Detroit, Michigan, 1701-1922*, "The board then, having contemplated the state of the university funds, decided that they were inadequate for the support of a classical school, and that the teacher would thereafter have to work at his own risk."

The Indiana Seminary's name was changed by the Indiana General Assembly to the "Indiana College" in 1828 and the "Indiana University" in 1838. Andrew Wylie, Doctor of Divinity and president of Washington College in Pennsylvania, was hired as IU's first president in 1829.

IU graduated its first class in 1830. James Wilson Dunn became a lawyer and businessman. Michael Hummer chose the ministry as his profession and served as president of De Moines College in Iowa and Superintendent of Public Instruction in Kansas. And James S. Rollins served as a U.S. representative to the 37th Congress from Missouri and was author of the bill locating the University of Missouri.

Michigan was finally admitted as a state in 1837. The Detroit history noted, "At the first session of the state legislature, in the summer

of 1836, John D. Pierce was appointed superintendent of public instruction, with instructions to 'prepare and submit a plan for a system of common schools and for a university with its branches.' "

In 1837, the city of Ann Arbor donated 40 acres of land as a site for the university. The lease on the property the academy had been using was given to a committee organizing a University of Detroit.

The University of Michigan finally granted its first degree in 1845. By that time IU had already graduated 85 students.

Perhaps the most telling statement about the University of Michigan's claim that the school at Detroit was a university and predated IU can be found in the Detroit history: "Although a university in name, the institution never conferred a degree, and the schools taught in the building were devoted to elementary work, the character of the instruction never rising above that of the modern high school."

Case closed.

H - T 8/28/95