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Holy Ground: A Website Project on the History of Indiana's United Methodist Camps

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Contents

Preface

How does one describe church camp? Many Indiana United Methodists across generations have found that it is a week filled with making new friends, bonding tighter with old friends and participating in fun activities and friendly competition. For many, it is also a week where they gave their hearts to Christ for the first time, where they learned what it means to worship God alongside their peers, or even where they received a call to ministry or missions. Whether they know this week as “institute,” “camp,” or even “That Thing,” many attendees, whichever site or camp they attended, would say that this is an experience that changed their life for the better.

I am one of those changed lives. My first church camp experience was at Camp Adventure the summer after my sixth-grade year in 2010. I had a terrible time at Girl Scout Camp the summer before, mainly because of unpleasant counselors, and I was not looking forward to repeating that experience. One afternoon when I was again lamenting to my mom about that unfortunate week, she told me of a camp where the activities offered ranged from canoeing to paintball to blobbing, where the counselors were all volunteers and would often take off time from work to be with their campers, and where the main focus of the week was on Jesus. My interest was immediately piqued, and I agreed to try it, hoping that this would prove to be a better experience.

Little did I know that this camp would change my life. I nervously headed off to Adventure for a week, and despite being the last camper to arrive (I think in the whole camp!), I was immediately greeted by my counselor, who ran over to give me a hug and help me with my things back to my cabin. These displays of love would continue throughout the week until my sixth-grade self was almost overwhelmed. The activities that week were awesomely fun, the food was really good, the laughs and happiness abundant, but my main takeaways from that week was that 1) worship is meant to be alive and intentional, and that 2) I was abundantly loved no matter what. These things are what kept me coming back to camp year after year, even as other parts of camp changed.

After two years at Adventure, I aged out and, with some more convincing from Mom, decided to attend Epworth Forest’s That Thing in 2012. I was again nervous, as I was a freshman by herself in a camp setting where churches came together in groups. I knew no one, but again, I was immediately welcomed into Campus House, the group for all the other single attendees, and shown incomprehensible love. Camp became the highlight of my year, and I attended for five years.

When I finally reached college and was too old to be a camper, I applied to work at camp and became the multimedia storyteller at Pine Creek. While it was an exhausting summer with plenty of stressful and even tear-filled moments, I gained an even greater appreciation for camp and all the sacrifices and commitments required to make it happen.

Needless to say, camp has had a tremendous impact on my life. I hope this love for camp and the work it does in the lives of kids shines through in every part of this project.

I. Project Inspirations and Background

My interest in the history of Indiana's United Methodist camps stems largely from the fact that I am a third-generation United Methodist camper. My grandparents attended Epworth Forest as high school sweethearts in the early 1960s, and my mom attended Adventure and Epworth and counseled at Lakewood and Adventure for several years in the early 80s. This extensive family background means that I grew up hearing stories about church camp past, such as my grandparents wearing 'going steady' shirts at Epworth, or my mom counseling a little boy at Lakewood who dropped his hotdog and cried because it was his "favorite hotdog". These stories piqued my interest, but I did not have access to recorded camp history until I came to DePauw.

Contributing to my interest in this topic is the fact that I grew up United Methodist, attending the First United Methodist Church in Crawfordsville for nearly all of my life. I partly chose to come to DePauw University because of its Methodist background, and the fact that the Indiana United Methodist Archives are housed on campus may have also been a factor in my decision.

Perhaps the catalyst of my intentional search for the history of the camps was a groundbreaking ceremony for the new discipleship center at Epworth Forest in August 2016, just a few weeks before I came to DePauw as a freshman. My grandparents attended with me, and we stumbled across a registrar book from the 1960s that was on display with other historical items. It happened to be from one of the years my grandma attended, and we were ecstatic to find her name recorded in it. This brush with history spurred me to go to the archives almost immediately after I arrived on campus to seek out more information about Epworth Forest. The archivist brought out two boxes of information, and I devoured them for the next few hours, thinking it would be fascinating to do a project with this information.

In turn, this encounter with the archives motivated me to pursue a work study position there my sophomore year. After two years of working here, though I did not pursue camp history further, I gained archival skills and familiarity with navigating the archives, as well as good relationships with the archives staff.

Ultimately, my background in United Methodism and United Methodist Camping, as well as my experience in the archives, made selecting the history of the Indiana United Methodist Camping Ministry for my senior Honor Scholar Thesis topic a natural choice, despite never having had a history class at DePauw. Considering this and the unconventional vehicle I have chosen to convey this historical information, this paper may be rather untraditional, but it has been formatted to what I feel best suits the process and findings of this project.

Please be aware that because of my background in camping and my overwhelmingly positive experiences in camping, I bring a particular bias to this project: a bias towards particular camps and a bias towards church camping in general. For the former bias, I have done my best to treat all camps equally; in this paper specifically, I have deliberately pulled examples from different campgrounds throughout the analysis section and refused to default to ones that I knew best. At the same time, being more familiar with a camp often translates to having more knowledge about the culture and history of that camp, and that likely shows in places. I have been much less intentional about concealing my overall bias towards these camps. Though there are critiques to be made of the concept of church camp, this is not an approach I have chosen to take. I wouldn't be doing this year-long project on a topic if I wasn't passionate and invested in it – I doubt I would have the endurance – and I cannot and will not deny or disguise that camping has had an enormous impact on my life.

II. Methodology and Process

Original Plan

My initial plan for the project, as proposed to Honor Scholar Director Kevin Moore and Thesis Sponsor Wes Wilson, was to record a history for each of the seven camps currently operating under the Indiana United Methodist Camping Ministry, known as Impact2818: Camp Adventure, Camp Indicoso, Camp Lakewood, Camp Moneto, Camp Rivervale, Epworth Forest, and Pine Creek Camp. I planned to diverge from the traditional thesis route and create a website for the camps. This would allow better accessibility (as compared to the three books already written on Epworth Forest, which unfortunately tend to sit on the shelf and collect dust), and it would allow me to incorporate my computer science degree and fulfill the interdisciplinary requirement of the project. I decided my ideal website would have timelines, one for each of the camps, and several interactive features that would allow users to interact with camp media.

Historical Methodology and Process

My first strategy was to take inventory of camp resources in the archives. Some sites, like the 90-year-old Epworth Forest and Rivervale, ended up having boxes full of information, while others had only a slim vertical file (Pine Creek, Moneto, Indicoso) or nothing at all (Lakewood). Most of the collections consisted largely of photographs, documents, and letters, which, while very interesting, did not consistently provide enough information to source the extensive timelines I was planning.

During the inventory process, I discovered that Indiana United Methodist camping has historically included more than the seven camps operating today. This realization occurred when Wes approached me with a booklet on the history of a former camp called Battle Ground. This began a search for other camps that were no longer operating. I gradually found former conference camps that had been sold,

non-United Methodist campgrounds that had been rented to hold United Methodist camps, and United Methodist campgrounds that were operated on the district or church level.

With my list of camps continually growing, it was necessary the scope of the project be limited to a manageable number of camps. After careful consideration, I decided to focus the project on past and present campsites of any United Methodist branch that had/have operated on a conference-wide basis. This would exclude any church-owned sites and any camping programs not occurring at a conference owned site, such as a Boundary Waters Wilderness Camp or a non-Methodist camp rented for a few years to hold overflow camps. My new total came to twelve sites: Asherwood, Battle Ground, Camp Adventure, Camp Indicoso, Camp Lakewood, Camp Moneto, Camp Rivervale, Epworth Forest, the Methodist Protestant Camp, Oakwood Park, Pine Creek Camp, and Santa Claus.

Even with the scope limited to these camps, compiling any and all types and mediums of information for each site was much too big a project. (A case in point – Epworth Forest alone has had three books written on its history and is about due for another.) Thus, I decided to significantly limit the material I covered. Firstly, I focused on large events and changes to the camps, which often occurred in the form of building and infrastructure changes, new programs, capital campaigns and sometimes philosophical shifts. This information fit well within a timeline format and aligned with my interests in the physical history of the camps. I limited the timeframe I covered to years where youth programming was scheduled. This primarily applied to the oldest camp grounds, such as Battle Ground and Santa Claus, which were founded in the 1850s as part of the camp meeting movement.[1] While I believe these early years have their merits and lay a foundation for the youth camping that happened later, with time constraints it made the most sense to reduce time covered to the years where youth camping was occurring. Finally, I also chose to limit the mention of specific individuals, a decision I reached after reading the history of Epworth Forest's first 25 years, which briefly lists many names that very few people today even know. With the likely 1.5 million campers, staff and volunteers that have passed through the 12 sites over many decades, trying to determine who was influential would be an arduous, subjective process that risked offending my audience. I felt focusing on changes to the grounds and large events would be of more universal interest to those viewing my work.

An alternative approach I considered but eventually discarded was similar to that of Epworth Forest's third book, where former campers were interviewed and their stories organized according to topic and shared. While I find camp stories fascinating, I found several potential issues with this approach: 1) it would require tracking down a number of campers and staff, which could be difficult to get ahold of; 2) it might not produce enough volume or variety of information to satisfy the requirements of the project; 3) nearly all campers prior to 1940 are now deceased, which would leave the origins of the oldest camps left untold; 4) the process would require formal interviewing and transcribing the interviews, something

[1] Riley Case, "History of United Methodist Camps in Indiana," unpublished manuscript, undated, typescript.

I did not have much experience with. For these reasons, I decided a factual, event-based timeline approach would be better.

Also influencing my decision to take a timeline approach was my discovery of the Annual Conference Journals. These were – and are still – published after the annual gatherings of each Conference and often contain reports and notes on camping. These provide consistent, dated information – perfect for a timeline format. These journals have become my principle source for the project.

I quickly developed a methodology for collecting information from the journals. I would begin in a particular denomination and conference and flip through each journal, sometimes page by page, year after year, looking for information on camps. Each time that I saw relevant information related to a camp, I would mark that page. Once I had accumulated a decade's worth of material, I would scan the marked pages into a single PDF. The many former branches that make up the United Methodist Church, and the multitude of conferences in Indiana that made up each former branch, meant that the number of journals potentially containing camp information easily reached the low hundreds.

After I had accumulated a few scans of the journals, I would use them to create camp timelines. I created a document for each camp, and I read through the scans of the journals and extracted related information, placing it in a bulleted list format with the year it occurred in its respective camp document. These timelines were very informal and not in complete sentences, though I would often insert quotes that I thought conveyed the nature of the time, or I would screenshot important diagrams or drawings and insert these in the document.

The third step in the project was to use the bare bones timelines to write more fleshed-out timelines that better expressed a narrative from beginning to end. These were formatted in 1-3 paragraphs at a time and often covered a span of a few years. While these heavily drew from the simpler timelines, I often had to refer back to the journals to ensure I was telling a cohesive story rather than stringing several facts together. All in all, this entire process took from late October to late March.

In times I was not scouring journals or building timelines, I was oftentimes amassing a collection of camp media. Within the archives, I scanned in a collection of color and black and white slides of the Southern camps, contents of a scrapbook on Rivervale, two books on Epworth Forest, and several other photos, letters and documents from various camps. A lack of media from some camps meant I had to seek information outside of the archives. In September, I made trips to Battle Ground and Pine Creek, and over fall break in October, I traveled to Epworth Forest, Adventure, Lakewood, Oakwood, the Methodist Protestant Camp, Rivervale, Indicoso, and Moneto. I took extensive photos of the grounds at all these sites, and at many of them I was shown around by the camp manager. I frequently visited libraries near the camps to search for additional information, though these visits often were not very fruitful. I was fortunate enough that several camp managers loaned me blueprints and other documents from their camps. Once I returned to DePauw, I scanned in these borrowed documents, sometimes using a

specialty scanner for larger documents, and then returned them to the camps throughout the year as I was able.

A third source of information was social media, namely Facebook, which I used to connect with former campers and request their old camp photos. While the response was not quite as fruitful as I had hoped, it still provided me with some invaluable photos of Asherwood, for which I previously I had none, and connections with former campers.

My final source of information throughout this project was informal interviews with a handful of former and current camp managers, other Impact2818 staff, long-time volunteers, and additional people knowledgeable about camps. These interviews tremendously helped with filling in some of the gaps in journal information, particularly in recent years. All of the interviews were conducted by phone. I would typically prepare a few questions beforehand and would place the caller on speakerphone to allow me to better take notes. These notes were very informal and were usually typed up in Notepad.

Technological Methodology

The final product takes the form of a website, which consists of thirteen basic HTML files: one index page and one page for each camp. All pages use simple CSS for formatting background color and font. I created a logo for each page by downloading the Arizonia and Oxygen fonts from Google's font API and arranging the words and United Methodist symbol in PowerPoint, which I was then able to save as a PNG file. The primary substance of each page is an in-frame, moving timeline, which is implemented using the timeline.js JavaScript tool from Northwest University's Knight Lab. This tool was recommended to me by committee member Mike Boyles and has become the technological foundation for the project. Preparing and arranging media was also a significant technological part of the project. A few of the photographs I collected were scanned in upside down or rotated 90 degrees, so I wrote a small Python program using the PIL library to rotate them to their correct orientation. I also utilized an online PDF to JPEG converter or Window's Snipping Tool a few times when I wanted to extract a diagram or map from a PDF file. Perhaps the most involved aspect of incorporating media was building an image viewer that Timeline.js could easily link to in order to show multiple images. With the guidance of a colleague, I adapted W3School's lightbox tutorial[2] to create an image viewer that largely met my needs and tastes, which I then copied to create one HTML file for each group of photos I wanted to display. Finally, I developed a simple HTML file for the index page with some basic content about the project. I also created an image map of a map of Indiana with links to the different campsite pages using the tool Image Map Generator and inserted this on the index page.

Admittedly, the technological portion of this project is considerably smaller than I originally envisioned. I had originally planned to build the timelines from scratch, despite knowing little JavaScript. On top of

[2]W3Schools, "How To – Lightbox", W3Schools, undated, accessed April 24, 2020, https://www.w3schools.com/howto/howto_js_lightbox.asp

the timelines, I had planned dynamic maps of each camp that would show what the camp looked like at certain years, space dedicated to blueprints and plans that were never actually carried out, digital copies of scanned-in scrapbooks from the archives that users could flip through and interact with, etc.
There are a few reasons why I did not meet my initial technological hopes and expectations, namely naivety and lack of time. As I mentioned, I had very little knowledge of JavaScript before this project, and the features I hoped to implement were very complex, especially if built from scratch. The time taken to develop these features would probably be roughly equivalent to the total time I have devoted to the project so far. Further contributing to the problem of time, using the journals as my principle source, while well-suited for the timeline format, ended up being a tedious task and required lots of time that could otherwise have been devoted to developing the website.

Evaluation of Methodology

In evaluating the approaches I have taken in my methodology, there are certainly some disadvantages. For example, in using the Annual Conference journals as my principle source, I quickly discovered that while the journals were the most consistent source I had found, they were still not very consistent: 1) camping reports sometimes disappeared from journals for periods of years; 2) the information reports contained were highly dependent on the person or people writing them and varied from lots to little information; 3) information on each camp decreased the more campsites a conference became responsible for; and 4) the annual nature of the reports means they do not clearly tell a cohesive story, as they are considered standalone updates rather than a continuing narrative. These downsides meant there were gaps left in my work where there was little or no information given, or I was left wondering what became of a new program or initiative when it was no longer reported on; not to mention, the information contained in them was sometimes dry and rarely produced stories. Furthermore, using the journals ended up being a tedious and time-consuming process that drew time away from other parts of the project, such as website development.

Despite these problems, however, the journals were the most reliable, consistent, and – frankly – best source of information I could have had for sourcing timelines. What few firsthand written accounts I had were often proven unreliable in terms of dates when compared against the annual conference journals.

There were also downsides to choosing to focus more on buildings and structures and less so on individuals. While buildings serve as an important vehicle to the camping ministry, people and individuals have been and continue to be the driving force behind all of these camps, and leaving out their roles and stories leaves a massive part of these camps' stories left untold. Unfortunately, further incorporating people's stories would have taken time that was just outside the scope of the project. I hope that in the future I can continue to expand upon what I have done here to better include the people who are the lifeblood of these camps.

Finally, there are disadvantages to limiting the history of Indiana United Methodist camping to the history of twelve sites. This leaves out several camping experiences, including those held at local Methodist camps such as Camp Otto near Greencastle; those held at camps that were not technically United Methodist but were rented for years, like Maple Grove; wilderness trips like those to the Boundary Waters; and trips that happened via the Nightcrawlers, a bus ministry of the South Indiana Conference that allowed youth to take trips across the country. All of these experiences are just as valuable as those held at the twelves sites I chose; however, due to time constraints, I had no choice but to limit what I focused on to a manageable amount.

In terms of technological methods, diverting from my original plan and using Timeline.js significantly freed up large amounts of time required to process the journals. The timelines are also attractive and well-functioning, and they serve the website well. At the same time, they offer much less flexibility and customizability than a timeline designed from scratch would. For example, the timeline only allows one to display a single image or other piece of media per timeline slide. One does have the ability to link the piece of media to an outside page, but one has no control over how this link is handled without digging deep into Timeline.js' files. Thus, in order to display multiple images, I ended up creating a new HTML file for each timeline slide I wanted to show multiple pictures on. On top of this, the timelines are nearly identical to all other timelines developed using Timeline.js; the only thing distinguishing them is the content and the format of the webpage they are embedded in. Despite these downsides, I still think choosing to use Timeline.js was the best option considering time and knowledge constraints. Beyond the scope of this assignment, I hope to continue tweaking the format and adding features to this website.

Despite not hurdling my original high technological expectations, I am very proud of this work and feel that it provides a more than significant contribution to the Honor Scholar program, the archives, and the history of United Methodist camping in Indiana.

Potential for Future Work

Many of the shortcomings of this project described above could be remedied with additional time. As I heartily believe that church camp and the lives it changes are worth documenting, I plan to continue my research and work on Indiana's United Methodist camps beyond the scope of the Honor Scholar program. This would allow me to cover additional sites that did not fall within the scope I set, as well as camping programs that did not occur at a physical camp. It would also allow me to continue to collect media from the camps, including more stories and personal accounts.

A Note About COVID-19

On March 11, 2020, DePauw University announced its decision to send its students home amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. This effectively put an end to my access to the archives. Fortunately, I had scanned nearly all of the journals I needed to and several photos and other documents by this point; nonetheless, I would have loved to have added more media to the website. The pandemic also delayed

my return of materials borrowed from the camps, as they were shut down to visitors. Not all impacts were negative, however; I was able to interview several people that might have otherwise been too busy, and my social media outreach likely reached more than it would have under normal circumstances. All in all, while the pandemic has certainly been disruptive, I do not believe it has significantly reduced the quality of my work.

III. Findings

Studying and analyzing twelve sites with a combined 770 years of operation (and counting) produces, as one can imagine, a substantial amount of information. For this reason, I have attempted to classify my findings as much as possible into categories such as denomination, historical events, camping culture, etc.

Before diving into these categories, however, I feel it is necessary to define a few key terms crucial to this project. Firstly, the definition of the word "camp": while seemingly elementary, it is associated with several different meanings. It can mean a physical place, in other words a campground; it can mean a program, such as a baseball or drama camp, oftentimes held at a campground, but not always; or it can mean a style of outdoor ministry, as opposed to an institute or convention style. Another word worth defining is "conference." This word is particularly confusing in the context of the United Methodist church, as it can be used to refer to an organized region of the church with its own governing bodies, or the annual meeting of that region and its bodies. Throughout the website and this paper, I do my best to distinguish between the different meanings of these words.

In studying the camps, I believe it is also useful to know some of the history of the forerunners and origins of the church camp we know today: the camp meeting. As documented by Indiana United Methodist Pastor and Historian, Riley Case, camp meetings were enthusiastic, revival-style gatherings organized by numerous denominations that began at the turn of the 19th century. In its early days, land was typically offered up for use by religious landowners, and people would pour in, sometimes by the thousands, to hear evangelists and preachers share the gospel and lead the crowds in revival and worship. By the 1850s and 1860s, many church districts began purchasing permanent meeting-grounds and constructing cabins or cottages and tabernacles on the grounds. These much more resembled the campgrounds we know today, and in fact Santa Claus and Battle Ground were among those begun during this time in Indiana. By this point, Case notes, many churches were trading out evangelists for pastors, signaling the impending transition from wild, Spirit-filled revivals to quiet, orderly Christian education. This shift was further solidified through the introduction of the Chautauqua Assembly in the late 1870s, which included "Sunday school training, lectures, and concerts, and recreation."[3] This trend

[3] Case, "History of United Methodist Camps."

towards an education focus in turn set the stage for early youth events, which fully enter the scope of my research.

With this background information related, I now return to analysis of my findings. Admittedly, the categories I have chosen are not perfect, as they overlap in several areas. The alternative, however, would result in a very unorganized and disjointed presentation.

Denominations

From a historical perspective, one of the most influential factors impacting a camp was the denomination it was founded under and operated under at a given point. This seems surprising, considering that each of these denominations were similar enough to eventually be combined into the United Methodist Church. All the same, the denomination of a camp impacted its location, its camping philosophy and culture, the number of campers it had, whether it was retained or sold, etc. As the many denominations and mergers over the years can be quite confusing to someone who is not intimately familiar with them, I created a diagram showing the different denominations and conferences, which can be found on page 28.

Methodist Episcopal

Of the United Methodist Church's many ancestors, the Methodist Episcopal Church was by a significant amount the largest. Knowing this, it is perhaps unsurprising that the three English Methodist Episcopal camps in Indiana vastly eclipsed their contemporaries in youth programming in their early days. The camps, however, were not founded as standalone creations but in large part as vehicles for a greater movement: the Epworth League, an organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church for youth and young people. Begun in Cleveland, Ohio in 1889, the League combined five different youth organizations, and within ten years, it claimed over 1.75 million people in 19,500 chapters internationally. Out of this ministry grew Epworth League Institutes, weeklong summer conventions of area Epworth Leagues, where notable speakers were brought in and classes, certifications, recreation and fellowship were offered. Unfortunately, little information is available on the origins of these institutes, but we know that the first one held in Indiana was in 1913 at Battle Ground, which had been operating as a district camp meeting ground since 1852 and a conference assembly ground for the Northwest Conference since 1874. This first Institute was open to the entire state and drew 250 youth. This was enthusiastically deemed a success, and further institutes were organized.

Attendance gradually climbed at the Battle Ground Institute over the next few years to the point of being quite cozy. As a case in point, even though the North Conference had split off in 1916 to hold its own Institute, in 1917 Battle Ground claimed to have hosted the largest Epworth League Institute in the world so far. By 1919, the southern Conference (named the Indiana Conference) had also split off from Battle Ground to hold its own institute, though both the North and Indiana Conferences were only renting grounds to hold theirs. In 1923 and 1924, however, the Indiana and North Conferences purchased Rivervale and Epworth Forest near Mitchell and North Webster, respectively, largely to serve

as homes for each growing Epworth League Institute, but also to host other conference programs such as general assemblies, laboratory schools, etc. Within just a few years, both sites were attracting well over a thousand "Instituters," despite having bare bones facilities.

Several similarities existed between these three camps. For example, all three were platted out and lots sold to parishioners, who often built cottages on their lots to use as summer or vacation homes. This arrangement likely fostered a sense of community involvement and investment in the grounds. Nonetheless, the focus appeared to be on youth: while youth programming was strong in these camps from its inception, Epworth Forest's and Battle Ground's general assemblies for adult church members died out by the 1960s, and from the information gathered Rivervale did not have one to begin with. In other similarities, all three sites were eventually plagued by property constraints, and all three had sister sites (Camp Adventure, Pine Creek, and Camp Moneto) purchased in the late 1950s and early 1960s, which removed middle school programs to a more rustic environment as was popular at the time.

Intriguingly, despite these similarities, not all of these sites have fared similarly over the years. Battle Ground was sold after the merger of the Methodist and EUB Churches in 1968, and Rivervale only escaped after three years on the market in the 1990s produced no buyers. In contrast, Epworth Forest has been tremendously successful from the beginning, and despite occasional troubles has never seriously faced being sold. Possible reasons for this could include Epworth's lake setting, which adds significant value to the property and offers lots of additional programming possibilities to compensate for its modest size. In contrast, Rivervale has the White River, which is too dangerous for swimming and has variable water levels that sometimes make canoeing unsafe, and Battle Ground had no water source apart from a small stream. Other potential reasons for differences range from financial statuses to camping philosophies, but not enough is known about these to make any firm conclusions.

German Methodist Episcopal

As the name suggests, this denomination was just the German-language variant of the Methodist Episcopal Church, though members were much fewer and more localized. As a result, the Central German Conference, which included southern Indiana, also reached into many other states. In 1852, the Santa Claus Campground near Dale was purchased as a permanent district location for camp meetings. Unfortunately, I know little about Santa Claus's early happenings because the Annual Conference Journals were published entirely in German until 1921. By this year, the conference youth are attending Epworth League Institutes in other conferences, though it is unclear whether these institutes are held by English or German Conferences. The following year, Santa Claus hosted its first ever district Epworth League Institute and drew 58 youth.

While numbers continued to grow over the next several years, they never even neared the crowds drawn by the English Methodist Episcopal sites. This is likely due to the smaller numbers of German Methodist Episcopal members and youth, though the camp's peripheral location in very southern Indiana may have been an even larger factor. Once the German M.E. church merged with the English

M.E. church in 1933, it continued to hold Epworth League Institutes for a few years, though these were not well documented and likely were not as successful as Rivervale's. This was likely due to its location, though its former association with the German M.E. church may have also been a factor. Perhaps for these reasons, Santa Claus flipped back and forth between a district camp and conference camp for the rest of its United Methodist lifespan and was viewed as sort of an outsider among the southern camps.

Methodist Protestant

Unlike its closest sister denomination, the Methodist Protestant Church had no booming Epworth League to fuel its camping ventures. It was also a much smaller denomination, with only one conference in the entire state. Nonetheless, it had a camp of its own, known only as "The Methodist Protestant Campground." The property, located just outside of Marion, was donated in 1921 by a lay member. Like the Methodist Episcopal camps, the grounds were platted for parishioners to purchase lots, and a tabernacle and a few dormitories were quickly built. Campground attendees, however, were not predominantly youth, but adults; a boy's and girl's camp had such low numbers early on that each must have been outnumbered by those attending the annual camp meeting or the Women's Home Missionary Society, etc. Even when the youth program eventually grew, neither the girl's nor boy's camp broke 100 campers. Furthermore, programming appeared to be only offered to junior high youth, which omitted the demographic that made Methodist Episcopal camps so successful. It is unfortunately of little surprise that the camp was sold after the merger of the Methodist Protestant and Methodist Episcopal churches in 1939; ending up in the new North Conference of the Methodist Church, it simply couldn't compete with the burgeoning, lakeside Epworth Forest.

Methodist

As mentioned in the Methodist Episcopal category, Camp Adventure, Camp Moneto, and Pine Creek were the three Indiana camps established under the Methodist Church. These were founded out of a shortage of property, as attendance at Battle Ground, Rivervale, and Epworth Forest swelled during the 1950s. All three sites were much larger than their sister sites, allowing for more rustic camping and wilderness exploration, as was the trend at the time. All three sites also had primarily middle school programming, leaving institute style camping at the more developed camps for the high school students.

Despite these similarities, the trajectory of each is different. Today all three still operate, though to varying degrees. Camp Adventure, the smallest in property of the three, has remained dominant in middle school camping over the years. Pine Creek was hugely popular during the 1990s and early 2000s, but has had significant struggles since then, and Moneto was shuttered for five years in the wake of the 2008 recession and since its reopening has only housed retreats.

Evangelical Association

The Evangelical Association was also a rather small denomination and had only one campground in Indiana, Oakwood Park near Syracuse. Unlike the also small Methodist Protestant and German

Methodist Episcopal denominations, however, the Evangelicals' assembly grounds fared extremely well and were popular for decades. Acquired in 1892, the grounds of Oakwood were seated on the shore of Lake Wawasee. From the beginning, the Young People's Alliance, the Evangelical equivalent of the Methodist Episcopal's Epworth League, played a major role in the park: despite the national organization only beginning in 1891, northern Indiana's branch held its first convention at Oakwood in 1893. They also led fundraising efforts for the first tabernacle built in 1898, and later petitioned for a new hotel to be built. Unfortunately, not much else is known about them; unlike the Epworth League, they did not receive primary attention in the journals, and with a significant number of other groups meeting on the grounds, they quickly became one among the many.

Camping and middle school programming came on the scene at Oakwood in 1926, just a few years after the M.E. and M.P. camps were established. Numbers here were small and took several years to break 100 campers. Once the Evangelical Association merged with the United Brethren Church and the first baby boomers hit the camp scene, however, the camping program at Oakwood was quickly outgrown, requiring two more properties to be purchased/donated in the 1950s before growth finally slowed down. Unlike the Methodist Episcopal camps, middle school programming outlasted high school programming, as the Young People's Alliance dissolved, and succeeding groups appeared small and short-lived.

United Brethren

The United Brethren Church is the only major forerunner of the United Methodist Church to not have a camp included in this project, though that does not mean they did have camping programs. According to Riley Case's work, the St. Joseph Conference rented grounds at Winona Lake for assembly and other programs for many years, and in my research I found that UB youth conferences were frequently held at Oakwood Park before the Evangelical Church and United Brethren merged. In the southern part of the state, UB members gathered at the Maple Grove campground near Huntingburg. This camp was founded by the United Brethren and used for programs for many years. I was very close to including it in this project, but between time constraints and the fact that it was technically rented by the conference instead of owned by the conference, I ultimately decided to exclude it.

Evangelical United Brethren

This denomination was created by the merger of the Evangelical Church and the United Brethren in 1946 and oversaw the creation of three camps in the 1950s. It was also a relatively short-lived denomination, as it merged with the Methodist Church in 1968. Two of its camps were outgrowths of Oakwood; Lakewood outside of Kendallville was donated in 1951 and helped relieve Oakwood of its growing middle school ministry. Camping kept growing, however, so the Conference soon purchased Asherwood, located near Wabash. Both sites were rustic, significantly larger than Oakwood, and had primarily tents for lodging.

In the south, Indicoso was purchased after conference lines were redrawn in 1951 and left the South Conference without a camp of its own. This made it the latest camp of the twelve to be created organically, rather than as an offshoot of an existing camp. Interestingly, the original plan was to plat the grounds and sell lots to parishioners, perhaps in an attempt to imitate Oakwood. This plan was ultimately called off, however, and Indicoso took after the more rustic EUB camps in the north.

Upon merger in 1968, Asherwood, the baby of the EUB camps, was sold off despite large attendance, due to its lack of development. Lakewood, however, was retained; it took on elementary programming and was folded in with the Methodist Camp Adventure and Epworth Forest to form a sort of pipeline from elementary through high school.

Oakwood was retained but struggled to find its purpose over the next several years. From a denominational viewpoint, this was perhaps partly due to the fact that Oakwood had several adult programs and did not specifically focus on youth programming, while Epworth Forest and other old Methodist camps were moving away from general assemblies and other adult programming to focus on youth. On top of this, Epworth Forest was larger and had just completed a very successful capital funds campaign, meaning many of its buildings were in great condition. The two camps would compete to some degree for several decades after merger, as members from each former denomination preferred their respective camp. This continued until Oakwood exited conference control in the 1990s.

As the lone EUB camp in the South, Indicoso was welcomed in amongst the four other Methodist camps and has largely been successful, despite ongoing issues with its manmade lake.

United Methodist and Future Denominations

Since the United Methodist Church was formed in 1968, camps in Indiana have operated under a single denominational umbrella, albeit under two conferences. Even then, the conferences were merged in 2008 to form a single conference for all of Indiana, allowing the seven remaining camps to be grouped under the Impact2818 outdoor ministry. This corporatization of sorts certainly has its benefits. Firstly, it reduces costs and increases efficiency, as camps can to some extent share equipment and staff. Closer camps especially can form a support system and a pipeline of sorts: in the north, for example, Lakewood is an elementary camp that feeds into Adventure, a middle school camp, which in turn feeds into Epworth Forest at the high school camp, which then produces enthusiastic counselors for the younger camps and keeps the cycle going. Secondly, it affords better variety in programs, which is likely to attract more campers. Thirdly, it allows the ministry to create a uniform brand and market the camps more effectively and efficiently.

Of course, this combining of camps also has its drawbacks. When considering the number of denominations operating church camps in Indiana – let alone the number of Scout camps, camps for other religions, just-for-fun camps, etc. – seven camps for a single denomination in a single state suddenly seems like quite a few, especially when several of those seven camps are rather close

together. Having so many camps under one denomination can (and to some degree, has) lead to competition within Impact2818 camps. Had camps been kept more separate as they were before the 1968 merger or even the 2008 merger, there would not have been as much competition within groups. This would have led to certain camps faring better, as they would not have lost campers to more popular camps since they would have been 'outside' camps. Furthermore, had the camps been kept more divided, there may not have even been the need to sell off camps such as Asherwood, Santa Claus, Battle Ground, and Oakwood. A second drawback is the loss of individuality of each camp and the decreased attention given to each camp. As I was flipping through Annual Conference journals across the decades, it was painfully obvious that the more mergers occurred and the more camps a conference had under its control, the less nuanced and detailed the final report was. Whereas the earliest journals would dedicate pages to a single camp, celebrating the joys of its successes and bemoaning its troubles, the most recent journals are generous if they give a sentence-long update on each camp.

While these could-have-would-have imaginings may seem rather trivial or useless, now is perhaps a particularly appropriate time to examine what could have been done differently, as the denomination is likely facing separation over the church's stance on homosexuality. This will be a step in a very different direction for Impact2818, the Indiana United Methodist Church and the global United Methodist Church, as no large splits have occurred in any previous domination for the past 100 years – only mergers. Considering the many proposed plans for the church split, there are many possible scenarios as to what might happen with the camps. They may be split between the new denominations proportionally; one or both denominations may completely abandon the current camps and start from scratch; one or both may retain only one or two camps for their purposes and sell the rest; and so on. Considering camping's rich history within the church, it is highly doubtful that camping will be abandoned altogether, but there is little doubt it will look significantly different after the split.

Geographical Location

Upon viewing a map of the twelve sites, which can be found on pages 26 and 27, distinct clusters of camps quickly become visible. A north-south corridor of six camps is evident in the Northeastern corner of the state; Battle Ground and Pine Creek are sister camps in the western half of the state just north of central Indiana; Moneto, Indicoso, and Rivervale form a pocket of camps south of Indianapolis; and Santa Claus is left as the lone camp in the southwest corner of the state.

These clusters are by no means completely accidental, though there is an element of chance involved. The regional locations of most of the 12 sites were heavily dependent on how conference lines were drawn. For example, the Methodist Episcopal Church had three conferences in Indiana in the 1920s – a time of huge growth in camping – so one camp for each conference was established (Epworth Forest, Battle Ground, and Rivervale). In the EUB church, Indicoso was acquired after the newly-created South Conference realized it had no camp within its conference boundaries. Existing camps also led to the development of further camps. When the three Methodist Episcopal camps became overcrowded in the

1950s, each conference sought out and purchased a nearby "overflow" site to house junior high programs (Adventure, Pine Creek, and Moneto). In a similar manner, Asherwood and Lakewood were purchased as overflow sites for the relatively nearby Oakwood Park.

This leaves only Oakwood Park, the Methodist Protestant Campground, and Santa Claus unaccounted for. Santa Claus is the outlier amongst these, as its regional location was determined by the presence of a pocket of German Methodist Episcopals in the southwestern Indiana area. Outside of Santa Claus, the Evangelicals and Methodist Protestants were smaller denominations that had only one conference in the state of Indiana, leaving them with fewer restrictions on locations for a campsite. The location of the Methodist Protestant site was determined based solely on a generous donation, rather than a large presence of Methodist Protestants in its area; in fact, it appears Marion, the closest nearby town to the site, did not even have a Methodist Protestant church prior to the campground. Oakwood Park, located on the sizeable Lake Wawasee, was not a donation but a strategic purchase by the Evangelicals.

These clusters, or lack of clusters, have had a significant impact on the camps, particularly since the 1968 merger, when the 11 camps operating at that time were grouped into just two conferences from the original five conferences. For example, the newly formed North Conference suddenly had five camps operating in a 70-mile corridor on the east side of the state plus another two on the west side of the state. This was too much for the new conference to handle, and as a result, Battle Ground – the older sister site to Pine Creek – and Asherwood – one of the five camps in the corridor – were sold. This left the conference with a more manageable five sites, four of which were close enough to each other to form a network and support system; however, this decision heavily affected Pine Creek, as it was now the sole remnant of the Northwestern Indiana Conference and left isolated without another camp in a 100-mile radius. As a result, whereas the northern and southern camps clusters have been able to lean on each other for support and share equipment, Pine Creek has had to become rather independent, or perhaps more accurately, less dependent on other United Methodist camps and more dependent on the nearby community and churches for support. It also hosts a wider variety of age groups, as unlike the more northern or southern clusters, it cannot relegate different ages to different sites.

Pine Creek was not the only site heavily affected by an isolated location, however. Santa Claus, which returned to operating at the conference level after the 1968 merger, had no other camp site operating within a 50-mile radius. Santa Claus was more disadvantaged than Pine Creek, however, as it was located rather deep within the southwest corner of the state, where the only major population center nearby is Evansville. Pine Creek at least had access to Lafayette and northern Indianapolis, whereas the other southern camps stood between Santa Claus and Indianapolis. It was largely these factors that led to Santa Claus returning to operating at the district level in the 1990s; simply not enough people outside of the Evansville and Vincennes districts were willing to travel that far south to go to camp.

While I have focused largely on where camps are located, it is also worth noting where camps are not located. Central Indiana is left conspicuously void of camps, as is the northwestern corner of Indiana.

One possible explanation for this lack of camps could be that both of these areas are more urban, which could translate to higher land costs and larger difficulty in finding undeveloped land. Another possible reason could be a lack of interesting natural features in these areas. Unlike northeastern Indiana, which has many lakes of several sizes, and southern Indiana, which has terrain with rolling hills, central Indiana is mostly flat. Northwestern Indiana is slightly more interesting, as it has a decent number of lakes, but these appear much smaller and lower in density than those in northeastern Indiana.

Natural Features

The relationship between camps and their natural features is rather reciprocal: many camps' sites were chosen largely based the locations' natural features, and in turn the natural features of the site highly impacted the culture and success of each camp. When it came to selecting specific acreage for a campsite, access to water was a particularly important feature: of the twelve sites, four (Epworth, Oakwood, Adventure, and Lakewood) are located on the shores of existing lakes and two (Rivervale and Pine Creek) on the banks of sizeable rivers. Having access to bodies of water was considered so important that two camps, Santa Claus and Indicoso, took matters into their own hands and built manmade lakes. Pine Creek and Moneto also each had plans to build their own lakes – the Pine Creek site was in fact largely selected specifically because of its high potential for building a lake – although high costs and the significant upkeep required ultimately deterred them.

Having access to water was attractive to site search committees for several reasons. One of the dominant attractions it posed was the potential for additional program activities, such as boating, swimming, kayaking, canoeing, etc. These activities were particularly fitting for hot summer days at camp and would not only draw campers to the property but entertain them and keep them more comfortable. Having access to lakes were ideal; one did not have to worry about moving water and its accompanying dangers, and campers could be more easily lifeguarded from a single location. Having access to a natural lake was even better, as it prevented the high costs of building and maintaining a manmade lake, and sometimes camps could also avoid installing and maintaining an also-expensive swimming pool. Furthermore, as in the case of Epworth Forest and Oakwood Park, being situated on large, popular lakes where many people were increasingly vacationing also offered additional visibility and recognition.

For camps that did not have access to a natural lake, there was still the option of building a manmade one, which opened up programming possibilities and added significant value to the property. Unfortunately, this option proved to be costly and difficult. Extensive consultation with several agencies was often required just to determine whether the property was even suitable for a lake, and, if approved, engineers would need to be hired to design the lake. These consultations only piled further expenses on the already high cost of creating a lake. Furthermore, once the lake was created, maintenance was often required to keep it attractive; for example, Santa Claus at one point had to rent a 'Mud Cat' to clear out its muddied lake. Finally, after all of these expenses and efforts, lake projects

still were not guaranteed to be a success: Indicoso developed a sizeable lake, only to have it suddenly drain prior to 1983.[4]

Unsurprisingly, the presence or absence of a lake significantly impacted the success and culture of a camp property. Somewhat tellingly, three of the five sites that are no longer owned by the United Methodist Church did not have a lake. The failure of the lake at Indicoso and the unrealized lake at Moneto meant that none of the three camps in the southern cluster had access to a lake. (Early on, Rivervale had incorporated the White River into its programming, but this was eventually largely discontinued due to safety concerns.) Further north, Battle Ground only had a small stream nearby, and Pine Creek's plans to build a lake never materialized, so the northwest camps were also without lakes.

This lack of lakes meant that these camps had to get creative with the types of programming they offered. For some camps, this meant making the best of the features the property did have. For example, after their lake projects fell through, both Pine Creek and Moneto implemented horse programs, which were well suited for their respective 300+ and 600+ acre, heavily wooded properties that were lined with trails. Both sites also became the go-to camp for wilderness camping in their respective conference. Pine Creek also hosted a canoe camp at one point, and Indicoso and Pine Creek hosted bike camps. Another option was to host more unusual and eclectic camps in attempts to draw more campers. When I informally interviewed Ryan Gernand, current camp manager of Epworth Forest and Camp Adventure, he noted that prior to the merger of the North and South Conferences in 2008, southern camps were known for holding specialized camps, such as computers camps or specific sports camps.[5] A third option camps and camping ministries faced was to send campers offsite. On one end of the spectrum, trips to nearby attractions would be included in programming at camps. For example, early campers at Rivervale would frequently visit nearby Spring Mill State Park;[6] early campers at Pine Creek told stories of hiking to the nearest town for ice cream;[7] and a late 1920s Instituter's account of Battle Ground notes that "a chaperoned hike to Prophet's Rock, filled the time until supper time."[8] I have not come across similar stories from any of the camps that have lakes, which is not to say that such treks never occurred at these sites, but with a lake to occupy campers' time, it is unlikely that such trips occurred frequently, if at all. On the other end of the spectrum, some 'campers' never even set foot on camp property. Starting around 1962, the Indiana Conference of the Indiana Methodist Church (which occupied the southern half of the state) started organizing hiking camps in Tennessee. These outdoorsy trips proved popular, and by the 1970s, off-site caving camps, canoeing camps, and others had been added to the South Conference's camping schedule.

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[4] South Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church, "The 1983 Official Annual Conference Journal," Unpublished Manuscript, 1983, print.
[5] Ryan Gernand, Interview with author. April 14, 2020.
[6] A.J. Coble, "Much Interest Found at Spring Mill State Park," *Rivervale Ripples*, August 5, 1938.
[7] Grant Crumbaugh, "Untitled," *Big Pine Newsletter*, undated.
[8] Lorene Griffiths, "The Epworth League Institute," in *The Cross Collection: Dorp Dwellers' Recollections of Days Departed*, ed. Mary E. Cross, unpublished, 164-166.

Larger Camping Trends and Historical Events

The twelve Indiana United Methodist camps were (and still are) often significantly impacted by larger trends in both church camping and camping in general, or even historical events. While researching the camps, I discovered that several similarities appear across many of the twelve sites throughout the decades that have little to do with denomination, location, natural features, etc.

The six sites established between the 1850s and 1924 shared several similarities. For one, the layout of each's grounds was almost cookie cutter-like: 'camps' at this time were more like small neighborhoods, consisting of many private cottages owned by churchgoers, a large tabernacle – sometimes walled and sometimes not – for worship and gathering, perhaps a few dorms or even a hotel for those who had more means, and a baseball field. Rivervale was perhaps a slight exception in regards to housing, as it had seven large district houses and a few church-wide cottages rather than dozens of small private cottages, but otherwise this description also fit it flawlessly. Camping styles and programming were also very similar around this time; many of the camps were actually "Institutes" focused on Christian education and were based largely in a classroom-like environment rather than an untamed natural setting. This educational focus was largely patterned off of the Chautauqua movement popular at the time. Chautauqua gatherings generally consisted of several lecturers accompanied by musicians and performers; they were not necessarily Christian in nature but often had Christian elements.[9]

It is interesting to note that three of these six early camps were established between 1920 and 1924. While it's possible that this was mainly due to the popularity and growth of the Methodist Episcopal Epworth League (two of the three camps were Methodist Episcopal), this sudden growth was also likely influenced by the end of World War I and the rise of youth culture in the 1920s. With the war over, older youth were no longer being shipped off to fight, allowing more of them the chance to go away to Institute. Furthermore, this 'freeing up' of youth contributed to a significant rise in youth culture and increased attention focused on youth in the 1920s.[10] Thus, these camps may have been created, or at least endorsed and supported, out of a recognition of youth and their needs and wants. It is also possible that church members viewed these camps as an antidote to the frowned-upon drinking and partying culture growing more dominant in collegiate youth, and therefore put more support behind the camps.[11]

The 1930s, which brought the Great Depression, was perhaps the first major historical event to strike each of the six camps operating at that time. Somewhat surprisingly, while the Chautauqua movement

[9] "Chautauqua Movement History," Chautauqua, Colorado Chautauqua Association, undated, accessed April 27, 2020, https://www.chautauqua.com/about-us/history/chautauqua-movement-history/.
[10] Chloe Lizotte, "How the Youth Culture of the 1920s Reinvigorated America," OpEdNews.com, Sept. 2, 2011, accessed April 27, 2020, https://www.opednews.com/articles/How-the-Youth-Culture-of-t-by-Chloe-Lizotte-110901-472.html
[11] Chloe Nurik, "Collegiate Masculinity and the Rise of American Youth: Culture During the Roaring Twenties," *New Errands: The Undergraduate Journal of American Studies,* 5, no. 1 (2017): accessed April 27, 2020, doi:https://doi.org/10.18113/P8ne5160476

died off around this time, camp attendance did not suffer much, and in some cases it even grew. I have a few potential theories behind this success in spite of the Depression. Firstly, with tighter wallets, many people were not travelling much, and many teens likely were not able to find work, freeing them up to attend Institute. Secondly, people faced with limited finances may have prioritized church-related experiences over other leisure activities, keeping Institute attendance strong. Finally, Institute likely served as a highly welcomed escape for young people, particularly if fewer other leisure activities were being offered. This success in attendance, however, did not necessarily translate into financial security for the camps. Several had undertaken large building projects during the 1920s and had accumulated significant debt before the Great Depression hit. Churches, whose financial contributions camps were heavily dependent on for repaying loans, were now barely able to contribute enough to keep even the interest paid, let alone chip away at the principal. Somehow, all the camps managed to survive the Depression and eventually pay back their debts.

The next major national event to affect the camps was World War II. Several of the journals expressed concern that camp might be severely disadvantaged by the war; the 1942 Annual Conference journal of the Indiana Conference of the Methodist Church stated, "Due to tire shortage and the possibility of gasoline rationing we scarcely know what to anticipate this year in the way of attendance."[12] Despite these obstacles, youth made a way to get to camp. Attendance again increased at most of the camps during this time, despite rations and the inevitable drafting and enlisting of the oldest youth. This likely occurred because, once again, camp was a steadying escape for many youth in another tumultuous time. Furthermore, families that were financially constrained during the Depression were likely more able to afford camp by the 1940s. Some camps also assisted campers in avoiding obstacles to coming. Oakwood, for example, condensed its programming into as few weeks as possible to help families conserve on gas and make fewer trips.

Though the 1950s had no specific event defining the decade, this time frame was arguably one of the most impactful on camping ministries in Indiana. The huge influx in population after the war meant attendance soared and camps were pushed to their limits. Further contributing to the popularity of camp, according to Dr. Jon Malinowski, was the emergence of the portrayal of summer camping on television, which showed "that camp was for everyone" and that summer camping was "more than just traditional camps on northern lakes." Camps were depicted in a very positive light: "structured but fun, with caring, knowledgeable staff."[13] With population and the media on the side of the camps, it is unsurprising that the 1958 North Methodist Conference journal stresses that "Housing [at Epworth Forest] becomes evermore a pressing need! It is complicated by the fact that the youth age group

[12] The Indiana Conference of the Methodist Church, "The 1942 Official Annual Conference Journal," Unpublished Manuscript, 1942, print.
[13] Jon Malinowski, "Summer Camps in Popular Culture," American Camp Association, May 2011, accessed May 28, 2020, https://www.acacamps.org/resource-library/camping-magazine/summer-camps-popular-culture.

becomes larger every summer as 'war babies' mature."[14] In fact, Epworth and the North Conference were slightly behind the curve – other conferences had faced this problem several years earlier in the decade and had already secured additional campgrounds to transfer their middle school programs to. A total of five additional campsites were established in this decade, and Epworth soon followed with Camp Adventure in 1962. These new sites were not mere copies of their parent sites, however; all of them eschewed the neat, organized Institute settings for the more primitive, "rustic" camping trend sweeping the nation. The only exception was Indicoso, the first EUB camp in the southern half of the state; it originally intended to develop a community setup common to earlier camps and started selling lots to churchgoers, only to abruptly discontinue this plan and ultimately switch to a more rustic program.

The 1960s were not as universally kind to the camps. Growth began to slow – in some camps, for the first time since their opening. Part of this decrease occurred simply because national population growth was slowing. An ideological shift, however, also contributed to this decrease: the cookie cutter society of the 1950s quickly disappeared, and the utopian image of camps in the media quickly went with it, giving way to a view of camps as uncomfortable, unpleasant, and led by incompetent and even mean counselors. Two events occurred in pop culture in the 1960s, according to Malinowski, that significantly affected the image of camps in pop culture. The first was a 1961 book titled *The Butterfly Revolution*, which, in a similar vein as *Lord of the Flies,* told the fictional story of campers that took over their camp and "impose[d] a totalitarian regime."[15] The second was a 1963 song called "Hello Muddah, Hello Fadduh," which shared the less-than-ideal experiences of a young boy at summer camp, including catching malaria, coming into contact with poison ivy, suffering through hailstorms, etc. This song reached a wide audience, ultimately holding the number two spot on the Billboard charts for three weeks. Such exaggerated portrayals of negative experiences camp might well have detracted from attendance at the eleven camps operating at that time.

Also during this time, older youth in America were becoming more individualized, independent and rebellious, and many who might have been open to the idea of going to camp (or, alternatively, would have been forced to go to camp by their parents) in the '50s, were likely not as keen on attending a camp setting that likely appeared antiquated to them. Thus, the 11 sites attempted to adapt. The popular-at-the-time off-site "camps" incorporating rugged adventure and outdoors experiences were quickly introduced in several conferences' camping ministries and particularly became prevalent in southern camps. Epworth Forest conducted a study and implemented some "new" practices – it is debatable how different they really were – in an attempt to make their camps more youth-centered.[16] Despite these efforts, attendance still declined. It became even worse after the merger of the Methodist

[14] North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Church, "The 1958 Official Annual Conference Journal," Unpublished Manuscript, 1958, print.
[15] Malinowski, "Summer Camps in Popular Culture."
[16] North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Church, "The 1966 Official Annual Conference Journal," Unpublished Manuscript, 1966, print.

and EUB churches, and two camps were closed in its wake. With the exception of Epworth Forest, high school aged camping seems to have taken the brunt of the decline; once the primary focus of camping, senior high students began to fall off around this time as elementary and junior high campers came to the forefront.

It is worth noting here that after the 1960s, all of the nine remaining camps were organized under and controlled by just two conferences; therefore, similarities between their actions after merger are not so much a coincidence or indication of a trend as they are a unified effort amongst the conference. The camps still felt the effects of nationwide events and trends, however; for example, several of the journals throughout the 1970s and 1980s note having to increasingly compete with summer school, sports programs, and other summer activities.

The next major national event affecting camping did not occur until 1990, when the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed. Capital Funding programs had been started in both the North and South Conferences in the late '80s to help repair and replace aging facilities, and the new requirements imposed by the ADA provided additional motivation to overhaul facilities. While these extra requirements posed a financial burden and were met with some frustration and resistance, the new facilities and improvements born out of the ADA enabled camps to better reach campers with disabilities and host camps tailored to their needs.

The final major trend to impact the camps occurred in the 2000s and introduced high adventure activities onsite. In both the northern and southern camps, paintball fields, giant swings, rock walls, "blobs" and ziplines were installed and incorporated into programming alongside the more docile and traditional canoeing, kayaking, hiking, etc. These were likely implemented with the intent of drawing a new generation of campers accustomed to faster paced activities and thrills.

Finally, the most recent major event to impact the camps is currently ongoing: the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 camping season will undoubtedly look very different from previous years as camp managers and staff attempt to navigate Center for Disease Control restrictions on group size. Camps are faced with the prospect of not having camp this season, a first for most of them, the oldest of which have operated through war and depression without closing their doors. Even should programs be able to continue in a somewhat normal fashion, it is unclear whether they will face empty sites due to unemployed and/or fearful parents, or, at the other end of the spectrum, a barrage of kids ready to be out of the house and away from their parents and families. Time will only tell how these seven remaining camps will fare in these uncertain times.

Impacts on the Indiana United Methodist Church

There is no doubt that camps and camping have had a profound impact on the Indiana United Methodist Church. First of all, these camps have exposed over a million children and youth of church

and non-church backgrounds to the gospel. Amidst such a loving, godly environment, thousands of campers have given their lives to Christ over the years. These campers have returned home with the ability and inspiration to become involved in a church if they are not already or return to their church with a better sense of why they go to church. This creates enthusiastic church members. Secondly, for youth already familiar with the gospel, particularly older youth, church camp has provided further Christian education, exposed them to missionaries and the mission lifestyle, and challenged them to take up the church's causes upon returning home. These youth typically leave camp feeling engaged, empowered, and eager to invest in and remain in their home churches. This results in enthusiastic church members who are determined to get deeper involved and stay deeper involved in their churches. Thirdly, camp creates an environment where youth are more open to accepting God's call on their lives. As a result, many of the church's pastors, missionaries, and prominent leaders for the past several decades can trace their calling to ministry to a camp experience. The late Bishop Michael Coyner, for example, first received his calling to ministry at Epworth Forest, then became a minister and served at the head of the camping board in the South Conference, then became bishop of the South Conference, then became the bishop of the newly formed Indiana Conference when the North and South Conferences merged in 2008. Today the Bishop Michael and Marsha Coyner Discipleship Center at Epworth Forest stands as a testament to church camp's augmenting effects on God's calls to youth. For these reasons, the 1922 Northwest Methodist Conference journal was rather apt in its description of camp as "the greatest recruiting agency of the church."[17] I believe it is not a stretch to say that the United Methodist Church in Indiana would be much smaller today were it not for camps.

Additional Thoughts

Despite my best efforts at classifying, there are many observations I made that do not quite fit into neat categories. For example, an aspect of the camps that I was most amused by was the lack of creativity in their names. Epworth Forest's name drew from the same namesake as the Epworth League, and the two properties purchased as its offshoots were originally named Epworth Heights and Epworth Hills. Each of the three northern EUB sites had 'wood' in their name: Oakwood, Lakewood and Asherwood. (To make matters worse, they named two different sites Lakewood. The other was a very short lived, small site near Anderson. I was quite confused doing research until I realized they were two different sites.) Rivervale was named after the nearby railroad station, and Pine Creek was named after the nearby waterway. Undoubtedly, the award for least creative goes to the Methodist Protestant Camp. The most creative is probably Moneto, which means 'God's Spirit' in Iroquois;[18] I considered Indicoso in the running until it dawned on me that it stood for Indiana Conference South.

[17] Northwest Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church, "The 1922 Official Annual Conference Journal," Unpublished Manuscript, 1922, print.
[18] South Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church, "The 1970 Official Annual Conference Journal," Unpublished Manuscript, 1970, print.

Additionally, even after extensive analysis, there are several questions left unanswered: Why was the Anderson Lakewood site sold so shortly after it was purchased? What exactly has kept Epworth Forest operating successful high school programming while other high school United Methodist camp programming around the nation has plummeted? How would camps be different if various mergers had not occurred? How would Pine Creek operate differently if Battle Ground had not been closed? Why did some denominations feel the need to own their own campground and others perfectly happy to rent existing grounds? Some of these questions could be rather easily answered with just a little more research; some of them we will never know the answers to. As I continue to work on this project outside of the scope of the Honor Scholar Program, I look forward to learning what more I can and sharing it with the world.

IV. Parting Thoughts

On one of my trips to visit the camps this fall, I had a thought-provoking conversation with a camp manager. We were discussing previous camps and the uncertain future of the current camps when he said something to the extent of, "at the end of the day, a camp is just a piece of land with a bunch of buildings on it; it's more important what God is doing." I was kind of taken aback, as I knew he had a long history within Impact2818, and I expected him to have a little more attachment to the physical camps. I was also a little conflicted, partly because I had always considered the camps I had attended to be "holy ground," and I had even used the phrase as a working title for this project. Over the next few months, I chewed on his words as I went about working.

Ultimately I chose to keep the title "Holy Ground" for simplicity's sake and because current and former campers frequently consider these sites to be holy ground. Perhaps a more accurate title, however, would be "Ground that God Uses for His Holy Purposes." These twelve sites are not utopias that induce perfect behavior as soon as one crosses the property line – as a former staff member, I can speak from experience here. Profanity, lust, greed, selfishness, boasting and pridefulness, to name just a few, have all occurred at every single one of these twelve camps. Old newsletters, though joking in tone, prove that the camps are also not immune to racism and sexism. With this sinfulness added to the baggage campers are carrying with them into the unfamiliar and somewhat uncomfortable environment that is camp, it is almost a wonder anything good comes out of camp.

Here is where God steps in. He uses the unfamiliarity of the setting to shock campers out of their normal lives. He uses the counselors and staff to demonstrate His unconditional love to each child and help them confront and deal with their fears and baggage. He uses the activities to allow campers to bond together and in some cases form lifelong friends. He uses the uncomfortable mosquitoes and insert-crazy-Indiana-weather-of-your-choice to build character and patience into campers. He uses the enthusiastic and passionate worship leaders to help campers see that worship is meant to be alive and joyful. He uses the daily devotion times, classes, and quiet times to draw campers ever closer to Him. As

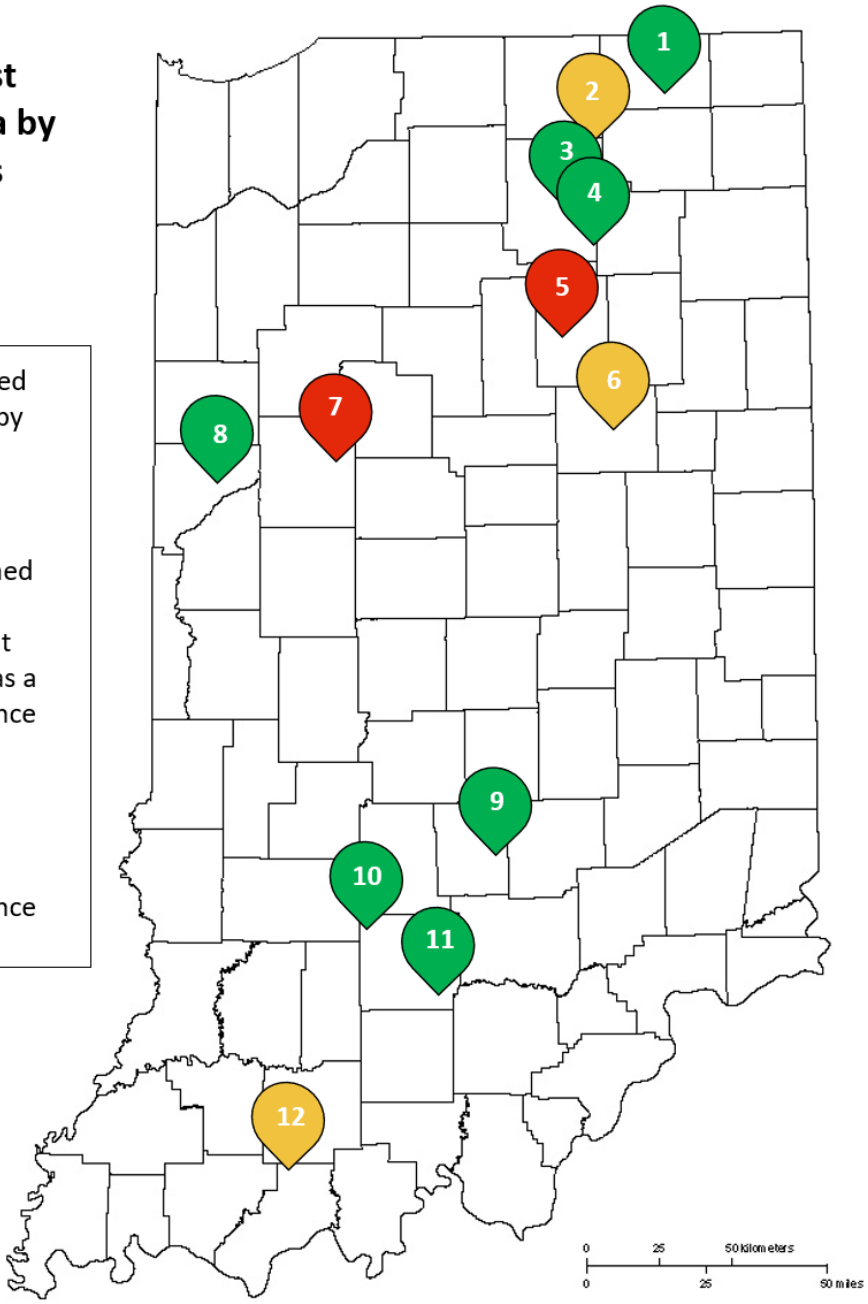
a result of God's doings, so many campers each week go home feeling loved, valuable, and on fire for Him.

Thus, I have come to largely agree with the camp manager. These grounds hold many treasured memories and are considered sacred for many, but the grounds and buildings are not inherently holy – it is a Holy God doing holy works on these grounds that give them this distinction. Therefore, may we never put these buildings and grounds, sacred and treasured as they may be in our minds and memories, in front of the purposes and will of God, but instead remember the wonderful things He has done for us at these beautiful places.

V. Addendum

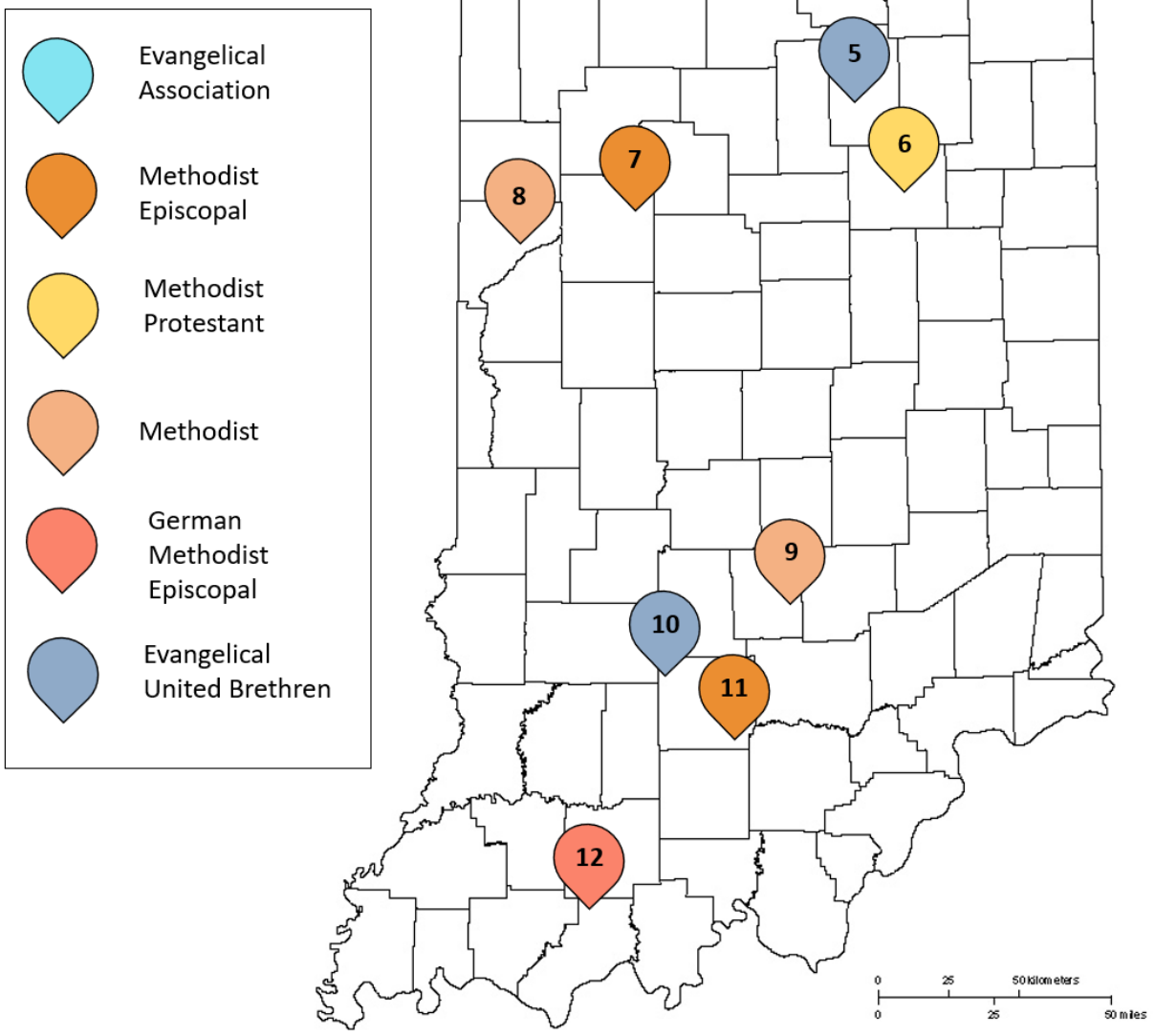
United Methodist Camps in Indiana by Operation Status

(as of April 2020)



1. Camp Lakewood
2. Oakwood Park
3. Epworth Forest
4. Camp Adventure
5. Asherwood
6. Methodist Protestant Camp
7. Battle Ground
8. Pine Creek Camp
9. Camp Moneto
10. Camp Indicoso
11. Camp Rivervale
12. Santa Claus

United Methodist Camps in Indiana by Denomination Origin



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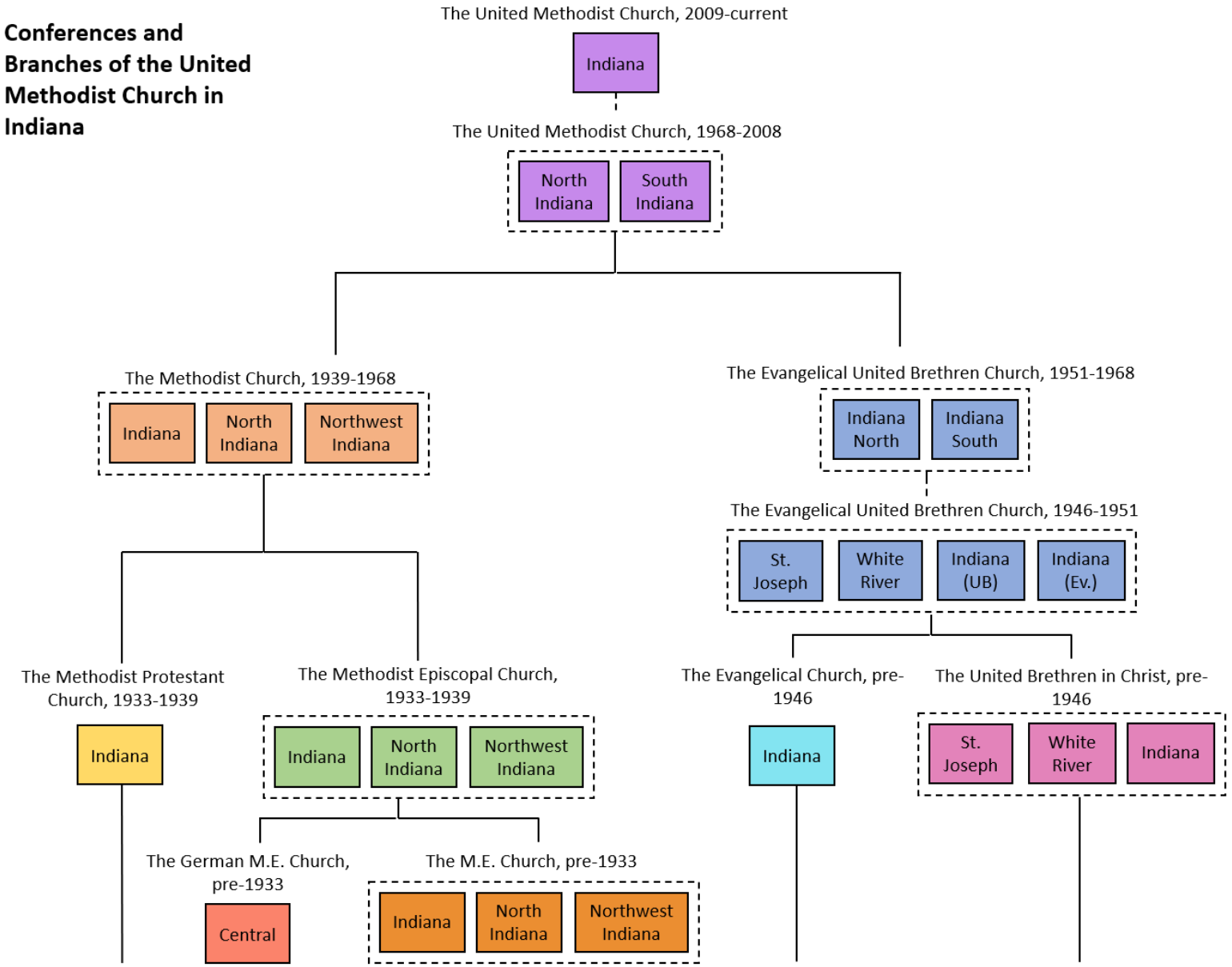
Conferences and Branches of the United Methodist Church in Indiana



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*All images on the cover taken from the Indiana United Methodist Archives or Impact2818 collections.

VII. Acknowledgements

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And finally, in honor of my mom and grandma, and in loving memory of my grandpa – I can't thank you enough for talking me into going to camp. The impact it's had on my life truly can't be summed up in words. Thank you for your love for me and for the godly examples you've been for me. Love you forever.