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Archival Research Project: Proposed Move to Fort Wayne in the 60's

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Skip Trudeau and Jeff Aupperle

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“It will take faith, it will take courage, it will take vision, it will take sacrifice, but it can be done. What can be done must be done!”

- Martin, The Decade of the Sixties and the Future of Taylor University

While the expansive farm lands and fields of corn are a far cry from the sandy beaches and palm tree laden landscape of Florida, where there was once the possibility of a new location, Taylor University has, no doubt, held true to her values and vision as expressed in the above quote by former president B. Joseph Martin. Taylor’s current reality looks far different from the vision that President Martin held at that time for the future of the university. In his mind, Taylor had reached its saturation point within the Upland, Indiana community and required a consideration of relocation (Martin, Some Questions, Undated). Due to a contentious relationship with Grant County hinted at by Martin and an invitation by a handful of locations, Taylor was weighing the options of a new city to call home. Marion’s Chamber of Commerce had made it clear that they could not support the financial burden of Taylor and had a rather complacent and apathetic attitude towards the college (Taylor University, The Decade of the Sixties, p.8). The needs as stated by president Martin were better transportation services, religious diversification, more places of employment for students, and a metropolitan area to serve as a laboratory for the university’s humanities courses (Martin as cited in Redmond, 1964). With a steady increase in the number of students seeking a college education, there was a desperate need to equip campuses across the country with quality programs, adequate resources and facilities, as well as room to continue further growth in the future. These considerations weighed heavily in the conversations amongst the board during the 1960-1965 period of Taylor’s existence.

The history of Taylor leading up to the conversation on relocation included a move already. Taylor first began as a women’s college in Fort Wayne, Indiana in 1846. In 1862, it

transitioned to a co-educational school known as Fort Wayne College and in 1890 officially adopted the name Taylor in honor of missionary bishop William Taylor. Taylor was called the modern day Saint Paul by historian William Hurst, and many of his values, Taylor University still embodies to this day (Martin, *The Decade of the Sixties*, p.4). The move to Upland took place in 1893, just 60 years before the University considered another shift in location. The move was a pursuit of industry. The University saw an opportunity due to the recent discovery of natural gas and anticipated their new location to be one of lucrative value and booming growth (Martin, *The Decade of the Sixties*, p.4). The reality however was far from that dream. The supply of natural gas quickly evaporated and the cities around it paused their infrastructure development. To this day, as people drive through some of the towns surrounding Taylor, the disparity between expectation and reality is evident. The streets are wide enough for multiple lanes of traffic, yet the population of the town is a mere 5,000 people. While the intention was to be a city school, the rural landscape where Taylor currently occupies is far from that. This identity as a rural school is one that Taylor wears proudly and one that impacts the programming of the university in the way that heavily centers around the importance of the student.

The 60's were a time of change in the United States. The country was wrestling with the loss of a president, the civil rights movement was a powerful force sweeping across the nation, and zip-codes were first used to classify locations, and the moon landing occurred in this time period. These were all impactful events that took place during the decade of the 60's. Taylor had her own catalytic events taking place on campus. President B. Joseph Martin was inaugurated into office on October 7, 1960. Beginning as a pastor in Cincinnati, Martin made his way into the higher education landscape as a professor at Pasadena, a Vice President of Asbury Seminary, and the Vice President of Oklahoma City University. His first role of presidency was that of

Wesleyan College in 1953 before taking the role at Taylor in 1960 (Taylor University, B. Joseph Martin Elected, Undated). The inauguration was a formal event where students were required to dress in their Sunday best to represent the University well. Prior to the inauguration of president Martin, Taylor had always had a Methodist president and that continued with this new president. Methodism was integral to his role as president and motivated much of his decisions and values. He desired for Taylor to be a strictly Methodist University which was a cause of tension amongst others on campus. In 1962, Martin made a move to officially generate a partnership with the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Church (Taylor University, A Statement Concerning Possible Affiliation, 1962). Taylor created a statement outlining what that partnership would look like and how it would impact the university. That move, however, was decided against as the desire was to keep Taylor untied to a denomination.

Quickly following the inauguration of President Martin, tragedy struck Taylor's campus. On January 16th, 1960, the Maria H. Wright administration building was burned down. In what would be equated today to the loss of the student union building, the admissions and president's building, and the administration building (Trudeau, S. personal communication, December 2nd, 2021), the loss of the Wright building was a significant blow to the life of the campus. President Martin lost his office, including the only copy of the near completed manuscript of his book, the chapel was destroyed, and the library was burned. The fire was a tragedy on the campus and resulted in the serious consideration of the current location of Taylor. The original purpose of Taylor, as articulated in the proposal to move written by Taylor, was: "preserving and transmitting our Christian cultural heritage, to advance knowledge, to provide intellectual and spiritual leadership, and to serve society" (Taylor University, The Decade of the Sixties, p. 5). A question that people were asking was: Is Taylor still serving this purpose it had originally held

and was Upland the place to be to fulfil that purpose? This curiosity led to five years of steps taken towards determining a new location for the university to occupy.

Following the fire, there were many people that reached out to the University to say that if Taylor were ever to consider a move, that this would be the time. This push to consider the move was spearheaded by Martin in his appeals to the board and to the broader Taylor community. As the conversations began to grow regarding the potential of a new location, the over-arching questions the board highlighted in the brief to the board where:

- What is the value of the university to a city?
- How great are the city's educational needs?
- How great is the willingness to give?
- How can a city afford to give?

Many cities sent invitations to Taylor to consider their cities as locations to relocate to and many were carefully considered by the members of the board. Many of the conversations were slow moving for the first couple years following the inauguration of President Martin, but quickly grew to a fast paced conversation around 1963. In a long proposal brief written by members of the university, the goals, vision, and qualities of the suggested move were laid out in depth in order to offer a holistic picture of the proposal. This brief, titled *The Decade of the Sixties and the Future of Taylor University*, was offered as a push towards innovation and growth for the campus. In determining the qualities of what make a college great, the top considerations were: quality faculty and students, adequate library and teaching spaces, and a climate conducive to the freedom of inquiry and discussion within the framework of Christian conviction and understanding (Taylor University, *The Decade of the Sixties*, p. 5). The board then weighed whether Taylor was meeting those considerations from her current location in Upland. They

determined that some of the reasons why staying in Upland was a possibility were the town and gown situation, the multitude of faculty homes surrounding the school, and the years of sacrifice and tradition rooted in this city.

In spite of these values, President Martin was still adamant about the need for a relocation. This is evident in the proposal to move saying that “If Taylor is going to fulfil her obligation to society, she must grow to 1200-1500 students. Is Upland the place to do that?” (Taylor University, *The Decade of the Sixties*, p. 5). This obligation as mentioned previously was a desire to impact the surrounding community and the larger society. In order to make this impact, finances had to be in order and had to be prioritized. At that time, the water tower and sewage system were in disrepair and would cost between \$340K and \$440K to fix over the following 30 years. Those were simply the facility needs. In addition to those needs, there were needs for new learning facilities, a new library, additional faculty housing, as well as additional residence halls to house the growing number of students. According to a McGraw Hill publishing study, the likelihood was that the number of college attendees would almost double during the 60’s from 3.5 million to 6.4 million and there would need to be facilities to house that population (Taylor University, *The Decade of the Sixties*). With such daunting financial commitments that needed to be made, the question of a move was ever more pressing. If Taylor were to move though, it would need to be a place that could support its growth and development.

The impact of the surrounding community was a contributing factor to the considerations on relocation. The relationship between university and the town or city immediately surrounding it should be one of reciprocal giving. The city should be positively impacted by the college and the college should be impacted by the city it is located in. In the early 60’s, Taylor’s consideration of moving was heavily influenced on what the place of relocation could offer the

school and how Taylor could most positively impact the city. The conditions required in the relationship between town and Taylor included a 250 acre campus deeded to the college, \$2 million to build the first building, \$25,000 per year for the first 10 years and \$50,000 per year following, as well as a major fund campaign. All of these conditions were expected to be negotiated through the chamber of commerce of the location they chose (Taylor University, The Decade of the Sixties).

The cities that sent invitations included Fort Meyers, Port Charlotte, and Clearwater, all in Florida. From Indiana, invitations were made by Fort Wayne, Wabash, and Kokomo. Each location was weighed heavily for their value to the university and the community support that would be offered. In considering one of the cities located in Indiana, there were many advantages to staying in the state of origin. These advantages included being at the center of alumni, current partnerships and affiliations with Purdue and Indiana University, strong student teaching programs in the area, as well as already established accreditation in Indiana. The advantages of moving out of the state included the idea of meeting new friends and a new public, increased attention due to fewer colleges in Florida, saving on heating, and the fact that students would likely enjoy the warmer climate (Taylor University, The Decade of the Sixties). While each of these locations were considered in earnest, the resulting decision strongly favored a move to Fort Wayne.

Fort Wayne offered many amenities and incentives that drew the gaze of Taylor's board as they surveyed locations. Fort Wayne's cultural center, its excellent recreational facilities, fine evangelical churches, and excellent work opportunities were all appealing (Taylor University, The Decade of the Sixties). There would be more opportunities for students to work and intern in a variety of places, the faculty would have more access to housing and schools for their children,

and the city could serve as a laboratory for the humanities (Redmond, 1964). Once the decision was made, the pieces began to fall into place. Taylor signed an agreement with Fort Wayne for a large piece of land that would serve them for many years to come as enrollment continued to rise. Taylor's Upland campus was put up for sale and the goal was to begin classes starting in 1964 (Taylor University, Proposed Move, Undated). Additionally, Taylor signed a contract with Indiana Northern University to purchase the Upland campus to use for their college and a payment plan was set in place as the plans to move were set in motion. The eagerness and excitement regarding the move to Fort Wayne was tangible on campus.

Students were eager to experience their new home, faculty was excited for the broader community, and Fort Wayne looked forward to the economic investment that a college would offer it. To Fort Wayne, Taylor would offer it the potential of becoming the education center of the Midwest, providing new cultural activities and supplementing current ones. Taylor would also provide Fort Wayne with additional personnel and service to local organizations such as hospitals, schools, and churches (Taylor University, A Partnership, Undated). Dr. Philo T. Farnsworth (Fort Wayne's most noted scientist) said: "our community needs a university of this caliber. Taylor University will have a profound influence on expanding our concepts, offering qualified educational experience for all ages, and assisting industry. Taylor will fill an academic void which exists here and I shall do everything I can to help in its return" (Taylor University, A Partnership, Undated).

As Taylor broke ground on its new Fort Wayne location, in celebration of the impending move, Taylor planned an event called "Taylor Day". The goal of Taylor Day was to offer Fort Wayne a glimpse into both the economic prosperity that Taylor would bring the city, as well as an image of the Christian nature of the Taylor student. On November 4th, 1961, students

caravanned to the Fort Wayne campus from Upland in a drove of 14 buses and a Pepsi truck, before meeting for a short time of prayer and being released into Fort Wayne (Taylor University, A Project Called Taylor Day, Undated) . Prior to leaving campus, students were given a silver dollar and told to spend it somewhere on their day in Fort Wayne (TU Bulletin, November, 1961). The idea was that the citizens of Fort Wayne would be able to tell the character of a Taylor student based on where that silver dollar would show up. It was a spectacular day of celebration and was referred to as a historic “friendraising” event centered on building relationships with a new community (Taylor University, In Pursuit of Greatness, Undated).

In spite of the valiant steps taken by President Martin towards pursuing a prosperous move for Taylor University, there were factors fighting against the move that resulted in a decision to abandon the relocation. Indiana Northern University was unable to make on time payments which led to financial strain on Taylor, other delays were causing fear that further pushback could affect the quality of academics, and there was a pressing need for new facilities to be built. There was no feasibility to Taylor holding both campuses, so in March of 1965, the board decided to end its contract with the Fort Wayne campus and remain in Upland (Taylor University, Decision to Remain, 1965).

An additional factor of the decision to stay in Upland was the loss of one of the original sponsors of the idea to relocate. In January of 1965, just a few months before the decision to stay, B. Joseph Martin resigned his position as president of the University. According to the Taylor University Archivist, Ashley Chu, in her interpretation of Taylor Board minutes, said: “It appears that Dr. Martin failed to keep the support and good favor of the Board of Trustees. This seems to have largely been related to the relocation initiative, especially regarding the fundraising and overall support from key players that Martin apparently failed to garner” (Chu,

A. personal communication, Dec. 7th, 2021). Although Martin resigned at the January board meeting, he was granted a leave of absence until June 30th as is a more standard timeline for the term. According to Chu, Martin vacated his role just a few days after the meeting, and Dr. Milo Rediger was instated as the interim president and later became president of Taylor (Chu, A. personal communication, Dec. 7th, 2021).

While the decision to stay certainly received mixed reviews, Taylor wasted no time in developing a strategic plan to grow the Upland campus and accommodate the needs of a growing student population. The town of Upland was also making steps towards improvements. The building of a new interstate closer to campus, new sewage and water systems, and a new grade and high school being built were all steps towards increasing the functionality of the relationship of Taylor and Upland. On September 15, 1965, Taylor's newspaper *The Echo* ran a story on all of the advancements Taylor was planning. Renovations and additions included adding to the Chemistry building, the construction of Wengetz and Olson, a science building, a library, a new liberal arts building, as well as a new fieldhouse (The Echo, September 15. 1965). Taylor was committed to its growth as a university and its commitment to maintaining their high value on Christian education. To this day, Taylor continues to pursue the development of the student and champions the pursuit of Christ-centered education.

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