

Collection #
P 0309

**MEROM INSTITUTE COLLEGE HALL
COLLECTION, 1966**

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF
COLLECTION: 1 folder

COLLECTION
DATES: 1966

PROVENANCE: Gift from the Merom Institute, Merom, Indiana, 1966

RESTRICTIONS: None

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RELATED
HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION
NUMBER: 1966.0405

NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

In 1858, at a convention of "New Light" Christian Churches (now part of the United Church of Christ), it was decided to establish a liberal arts college for men and women by the Wabash River in Merom, Indiana, in Sullivan County. It was to be called Union Christian College. College Hall was the first building of the college to be built, with construction beginning in 1859 on Merom Bluff, approximately 200 feet above the river.

The architect of College Hall was O. H. Wheelock of Chicago, and G. W. Webster of Marion, Indiana, was the builder. Workers built kilns onsite to fire clay brought up from the Wabash River banks to make bricks. Timber beams and supports were made from the black walnut trees that grew in the area. The first two floors were completed by 1861. Each floor was made a different height, ranging from 14 feet to 18 feet, to keep the visual symmetry of the building so that it does not appear to get narrower at the top. There is a spiral staircase that leads from the fifth floor up to the cupola tower.

The building was dedicated on Christmas Day in 1863. This Gothic-Romanesque structure housed classrooms, laboratories, a library, and chapel -- which also served as the Christian Church for the community. Union Christian College Academy provided a high school education. The college provided a bachelor's degree, and for the majority of the school's existence, a master's degree was also offered, as well as a theological education.

The college ceased to operate in 1924 due to financial difficulties. It was reopened in 1936 as the Merom Institute after ownership was transferred to the Congregational/Christian churches through the Indiana Conference, Illinois Conference, the National Home Missionary Society, and the Council for Social Action.

The first two floors of the building were renovated in 1963 to provide facilities for camps, conferences, and retreats. The top three levels remained in much the same condition as when the building was used as a college. College Hall was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

In 1985, the institute's name was changed to the Merom Conference Center after being purchased by the Indiana-Kentucky Conference of the United Church of Christ. It became the Merom Camp and Retreat Center in 2015.

Sources:

Correspondence in the collection, 29 April 1966.

Merom Camp and Retreat Center. "History" <<http://www.merom.org/about.html>>. Accessed 11 July 2018.

Merom Institute. *Merom Institute: Both a Place and a Spirit for Your Meeting* [pamphlet]. General Collection: pamQ BV1652 .M475

Merom Institute. *Merom: Then, Now* [1979 pamphlet]. General Collection: pam BV1652 .M46 1979

National Register of Historic Places <<http://www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com/in/sullivan/state.html>>. Accessed 11 July 2018.

United States Department of the Interior. "National Register of Historic Places Inventory —Nomination Form" <<https://npgallery.nps.gov/GetAsset/deae7807-83c1-4e2b-a73d-b9f00905128e>>. Accessed 11 July 2018.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of a gray folder that holds a letter and photographs. The two-page letter, dated 29 April 1966, to Hubert H. Hawkins, Executive Secretary of the Indiana Historical Society, from James W. Shaver of the Merom Institute, asks for recognition from the Indiana Sesquicentennial Association in the form of a historic marker for Merom Institute's College Hall. The six black-and-white photographs are attached to pages in the folder and show the exterior and interior of Merom Institute's College Hall building.

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CONTENTS

Two-page letter dated 29 April 1966 from James W. Shaver of the Merom Institute to Hubert H. Hawkins, Executive Secretary of the Indiana Historical Society. The letter requests recognition by the Indiana Sesquicentennial Association through the erection of a historic marker for the Merom Institute's College Hall.

Page with two photographs of the exterior of College Hall at Merom Institute.

Page with photograph of the spiral staircase that leads from the fifth floor to the tower of College Hall.

Page with two photographs of the interior of College Hall: 1) the original auditorium; 2) former literary room.

Page with photograph of the stairwell from the fourth floor inside College Hall.

CONTAINER

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