

**Dedication of Jane E. Leonard Hall
28 November 2022**

It has been six years since we gathered for this building's ribbon-cutting in January 2016, and we are now reassembled to free it from the cumbersome, generic name that it carried. Some of those who had migrated across campus to new offices here had hoped to carry the name of their former building with them in 2016. It is a joy now to see that wish fulfilled. This is to be Jane E. Leonard Hall.

I think I can assume that nearly everyone here today knows that this is the third building to carry Aunt Jane's name. The campus began with one building in 1875, known only as the Normal School Building. Two buildings were added in 1893 and known at first only by generic names: the model school and the boys' dormitory. When two more buildings, a recitation hall and a dining hall, were opened in 1905, it was thought that all five buildings should be dignified by more than generic names. The choices were the first four presidents of the Council of Trustees—essentially the school's founders (John Sutton, Silas Clark, A.W. Wilson, and Thomas Sutton) and Jane Leonard, after whom the recitation hall was named. It was an elegant building with a grand staircase and art glass windows, which unfortunately burned to the ground in 1952 (blame falls on the chemistry department where the blaze originated). That building was replaced by a second Leonard Hall that was modern and functional, but rather undistinguished architecturally. This building—as you know—was torn down to make room for the new Kopchick Hall.

Thankfully, Jane Leonard's name is now transferred to this building, which appropriately houses the academic departments to which she was connected. I say thankfully because there is no one in this institution's history who is more important or who is more deserving of being immortalized by a building name than Jane Leonard. And, I am happy if what I have written in my history book or my gentle, if persistent, prodding has helped this to happen. I cannot think of a better way for the university to thank Donna and me for *The IUP Story*. We are much pleased and very grateful.

Jane Leonard's place in the Indiana story is without parallel—you can read the full story in the book; she is the only person to merit a chapter of her own.

Longevity alone would call her to our attention. The first faculty member to be hired, she arrived in Indiana before Sutton Hall was finished. When she moved into "her two little rooms on the third floor," she stayed for the rest of her life. By her retirement in 1920, she had served the school for forty-five years and her aura continued to radiate long after that. After her retirement, the trustees allowed her to stay in her rooms, and she died there, in her sleep, in April 1924.

But longevity alone cannot explain the admiration, awe, and even reverence that her contemporaries showered upon her. 'Aunt Jane,' as she was known to generations of students and alumni, dominated the first half-century of Indiana's story and did more to shape the nature of this institution than any other person. People attributed to her an identifiable "Indiana Spirit and Culture," an unyielding commitment to excellence. The record is filled with

references to her as “the guiding spirit,” “a beacon light,” “an inspiration,” “a guardian angel”—“the soul of the school.”

Alumni searched for ways to explain what they thought of her and often despaired of finding adequate words. An 1883 alumnus tried placing her in a wide, historical context. “Every school of note owes its prestige to some great personality,” he proposed. “Rugby had its Arnold, Harvard its Eliot, Princeton its McCosh, and Cornell its White. It is in this way that I think of Miss Leonard.” A member of the Class of 1915 used a different historical analogy: Miss Leonard was to Indiana as George Washington was to America.

Her reputation spread until she was the embodiment of the school. One alumna said she enrolled because a friend told her, “It is worth going to Indiana just to know Miss Leonard.” Parents, it was said, did not send their daughters and sons to Indiana; they sent them to Miss Leonard. At her death, she was hailed as “the greatest woman educator Pennsylvania ever had.”

Jane Leonard was born two days after Christmas in 1840 on a farm near Curwensville, Clearfield County. She was educated at Millersville and taught history and geography there for 12 years before coming to Indiana. We recruited her as the preceptress, which meant she was responsible for the students’ behavior and nurture outside the classroom as well as within. I’d say she rather combined today’s Academic Affairs and Student Affairs divisions all by herself.

At first, she taught the same things she taught at Millersville—history and geography. In a reorganization of the faculty after the first year, she dropped geography and picked up English literature. She continued to divide her teaching between history and literature until the late

1890s, after which she gradually taught less and less history. In 1907, her identification as a member of the history faculty was dropped from the catalog, and she was listed simply as a professor of English. But I cannot resist noting that her literature class was titled “The History of English Literature.”

She was known as an exceptionally magnetic teacher. In her history classes, she adopted an innovative seminar method, had the students digging into primary sources and critiquing each other’s papers and presentations—and some of you think ‘peer review’ is a new idea. Her history students remembered her ability to make history come alive with good stories. Her literature students remembered gaining an appreciation of poetry. One alumna said she had never since seen a snowfall without recalling Miss Leonard’s reading James Russell Lowell’s ‘The First Snowfall.’ Another smiled at “how the veriest prose radical among us was lured to like poetry.” Not a few of the tributes submitted by alumni after her death were in verse.

But, the farther away from her classes that the alumni got, the more they believed her most important gift was not anything specifically about geography or history or literature. “As I have grown older,” an 1897 alumna wrote, “I appreciate the more her efforts to instill within us a love for the good and beautiful.” An 1893 alumnus who went on to a successful business career, came to this conclusion: “Most of the facts she taught are no doubt forgotten, but her life and influence have been molded into the minds and hearts of the thousands of young men and women who have sat at her feet.”

Leonard was an ardent feminist and suffragist. She seldom used sarcasm, but the times she saw women being ignored or treated unequally were exceptions. Once, a male colleague—

because he knew she kept track of all the alumni—asked her to provide biographical notes so that he could introduce those he had chosen to talk at the annual alumni banquet. She replied curtly, “Yes, it will afford me an opportunity to glorify the only lady speaker.”

Leonard passed this sensitivity along to her students. She pushed them—astonishingly hard, at times—to do something significant with their lives. Sarah Gallaher, an 1884 graduate who in 1922 became one of the first women elected to the Pennsylvania State Legislature, claimed that the need for women to assert their independence was “one of the wholesomest lessons” she gained from her time at Indiana.

Leonard attended the Women’s International Suffrage Conference in 1888, and in 1922—at age 81—she ran for Congress. She didn’t win, but she got more votes than previous Democratic candidates in the heavily Republican district, and her 37 percent was a lot more than the 13 percent polled by the only other Pennsylvania female Congressional candidate that year.

At her death, numerous co-workers and students tried to find words to describe what her life had meant. Hope Stewart, in her eulogy, emphasized its importance to the school: “Into the history of Indiana are woven, for generations yet to come, her plans, her ideas, her standards of life.” In the mind of Hubert Work, who was among her first students back in the 1870s and was now Secretary of the Interior in President Coolidge’s Cabinet, “She was more than a woman, more than a teacher, she was an institution.”

Scores of alumni sent in written reminiscences, which were bound up and are now deposited in the university archives as a “Memory Book.” Lily Lutman from the Class of 1914

wrote, “Her life itself is a paradox—dying old, she died young; childless, she left many heirs. She taught us...loyalty, patriotism, courage, service, self-respect, and a stern sense of duty. But to me the greatest precept of all was the fact that life itself is a glorious gift and each day of it is to be lived with joy and enthusiasm.” Another alumna provided a more succinct description—“this most unusual woman.”

Her portrait hangs in the first-floor hallway of Sutton Hall. It is at least three times the size of those of the institution’s presidents. One thinks the painters got the proportions absolutely right.