

WABASH VALLEY

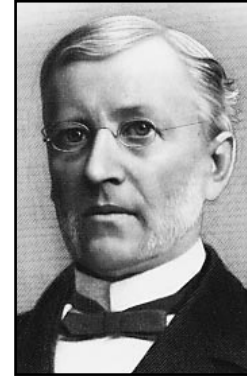
P R O F I L E S

A series of tributes to hometown people and events that have shaped our history.

Blackford Condit

The son of a wagon maker and shipbuilder, Blackford Condit became a man of the cloth, an expert on the Bible and a distinguished author.

His parents, Daniel Dayton and Charlotte (Blackford) Condit, were natives of New Jersey, migrating up the Wabash River in 1829. Blackford was born Aug. 6 of that year in a log cabin. Initially, the Condits settled in southern Sullivan County with acquaintances from Hanover, N.J. They then moved to Terre Haute in 1831, where Dayton opened a general store. Upon sustaining severe losses during the "Financial Panic of 1837," the elder Condit began making wagons and riverboats. Blackford was a superior student, graduating from Wabash College in 1854.



Committed to the ministry, he attended Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati to earn another degree in 1857 and accepted duties as minister at the Fulton Presbyterian Church there. Thereafter, he attended Union Theological Seminary in New York and Andover Theological Seminary in Massachusetts before undertaking pulpit duties at the Presbyterian Church in Springfield, Pa.

Intermittently afflicted with poor health, Condit resigned the position in Springfield early in 1860, recovering sufficiently to spend a year traveling around Europe. In August 1861 he returned to Indiana, smitten by Sarah Mills, daughter of Wabash College professor Dr. Caleb Mills, founder of the Indiana common school system. The couple wed Feb. 26, 1862, and set up housekeeping in an Italianate home built in 1860 by contractor Jabez Hedden at 627 Mulberry St. for local jeweler Lucien Houriet.

Between 1868 and 1875, Condit was pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church located in the Baldwin Presbyterian Church at the northeast corner of Fifth and Ohio streets. However, his health faltered once again and he retired to literary pursuits while devoting considerable time to Wabash College, where he served as a member of the board of trustees from 1871 to 1896. By 1882, when he published his acclaimed *History of the English Bible*, Condit owned the largest private collection of English Bibles in the Midwest, including two dating from 1549. Marietta (Ohio) College conferred an honorary Doctorate of Divinity upon Condit in 1889. Several years later, he published another scholarly book, *Short Studies of Familiar Bible Texts, Mistranslated, Misinterpreted and Misquoted*. Meanwhile, he worked feverishly on a brief history of early Terre Haute from its settlement in 1816 through 1840. Published in 1900, it is highly prized by collectors.

Condit died on March 27, 1903, at age 73. Sarah died March 12, 1914. Of the Condits' eight children, only three survived them. The Condit House, where maiden daughter Helen resided until her death on Dec. 10, 1961, is now surrounded by the Indiana State University campus. In 1966, it became the residence of the president of the university. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. Dr. Joseph Dayton Condit, a prominent physician in Pasadena, Calif., died July 7, 1940.

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