

Indiana's 1920's Jim Crow High Schools

Gary Roosevelt, Indianapolis Attucks, and Evansville Lincoln

Research question: What do they have in common?

Crispus Attucks High School opens in September of 1927

After being created in late 1922 by Indy's *status quo* (Chamber of Commerce, the Federations of Civic Clubs, and the Citizens School Committee, e.g., [The Mind Trust](#)" of the 1920's), Attucks opens in the fall of 1927. See [1922 events leading up to creating Attucks and to its opening in 1927](#).

As emphasized in the film [Attucks](#) and by 4 decades of research of the Charles & Virginia Loflin [Center](#) on IPS History, the KKK did not create Attucks.

Research is needed on these questions:

- Did Indiana's KKK influence school decisions in Gary or Evansville?
- Or, like in Indianapolis, were Gary's or Evansville's *status quo* ("white establishment") responsible?
 - Or, was it a combination of all these bigoted organizations?
- Like in Indianapolis, were efforts made decades later by Gary's or Evansville's *status quo* to hide their involvement in school segregation by trying to blame the KKK?
- Did efforts in Gary and Evansville to build a segregated high school also, like in Indianapolis, create an entire Jim Crow school district and segregated neighborhoods?
- Like the [Indianapolis Times](#) what part did Gary's and Evansville's newspapers play?
- Did any of Gary's and Evansville's colleges establish a racial quota like [Butler](#)?

Gary Roosevelt September 1927

"Although the [the city of Gary] continued to maintain segregated schools, some black students were enrolled in schools designated for white students on a space-available basis. In September 1927, after eighteen black high school students were transferred to Emerson School, the school's white students walked out in protest, beginning what was called the Emerson School Strike. The four-day strike ended when a settlement was reached that called on the Gary city council to appropriate funds to construct what became known as Roosevelt High School, as well as a temporary school to help alleviate school overcrowding. Emerson's African American students were transferred to the temporary school after the resolution and funding appropriation for the school buildings were passed. Gary's mayor, Floyd E. Williams, assured the city's African American community that the new high school would have facilities 'equal to existing high schools in the city, as well as having qualified teachers and staff.' This concept of Jim Crow segregation in education became nationally known as the Gary System. William Wirt, the city's first Superintendent of Schools, developed the Gary System during the early de-

acades of the twentieth century. It offered vocational training and college preparatory classes in the city's high schools, as well as extracurricular activities and athletic programs, an innovative idea that influenced the development of modern education. The Gary System was adopted by other school districts across the United States.” (Emphasis mine) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodore_Roosevelt_College_and_Career_Academy

Evansville Lincoln High School opens in September of 1928

“Lincoln opened in 1928, the same decade that saw Ku Klux Klan members win the Indiana governor's office and more than half the seats in the Indiana Legislature. Segregation was the law of the land.”

“Lincoln High School, the school for African-American students opened in 1928, a consolidation of other ‘colored’ schools in the area, including Frederick Douglass High School. It served students in grades K-12, not only from Vanderburgh County, but surrounding counties as well. The last all-black high school class graduated in 1952, and it was converted into a K-8 school. It fully desegregated in 1972.”

<https://www.courierpress.com/story/sports/high-school/2019/02/21/evansvilles-lincoln-high-schools-rich-sports-history-remains/2803388002/>

"Lincoln was the first new school built in Evansville for the black minority community. The school cost \$275,000 to build. The school included 22 classrooms, a gymnasium, auditorium, sewing room, home economics kitchen, study hall, and manual training center. However, Lincoln didn't have a cafeteria. The library had no books and the board refused to allocate money for that purpose. To stock the library, Mrs. Alberta K. McFarland Stevenson, Lincoln's first librarian, went door to door collecting books and money donations. Classes were first begun in 1928. It was a K-12 school. Since Lincoln was the only black high school for miles around, black students from Mt. Vernon, Rockport, Newburgh, and Grandview were bussed to Evansville to attend Lincoln. In 1928, the enrollment was over 300. The last all-black high school class was graduated in June 1962. Lincoln was made a K-8 school in 1962. By September 1972, the Evansville-Vanderburgh schools began desegregating under the order of federal court Judge Hugh S. Dillin. In order to achieve integration, the inner city was cut into a pie and neighborhood children were bussed to other schools. Over the years, many new programs were put into place. Title I, after school programs, scouting, and business partnerships."

The above history is from "Times Never Forgotten-A History of the Central Attendance District 1824 to 1994" https://lincoln.evscschools.com/about_us/history