

# Early IU trustee was descendant of an English earl

**A**mong the books about Indiana University history there is a specialized one that deals with the school's trustees and officers between 1820 and 1950.

The names and biographical data about some of those trustees cannot be found in the IU histories by James A. Woodburn or Thomas Clark.

A case in point is an account of the life of John Milroy of Lawrence County. Burton D. Myers, who compiled the biographies, included pictures, wherever possible.

In his picture, Milroy, a trustee from 1821 until 1828, is dressed in the fashion of his day. He wears a dark jacket, white shirt with stiffly starched collar points sticking up on either side of his chin and a dark cravat (also called a "stock" in those days).

Milroy, whose picture is a photograph of a painting, had a sharp hooked nose, high cheekbones, a wide forehead and sideburns. The eyes, which were a light color, are piercing.

Milroy was a Pennsylvanian by birth, but a Hoosier by adoption. He was born in Milflin



## LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

County, Pa., on Oct. 12, 1777, during the Revolutionary War. It was not the first time that his family had reason to cross soldiers with a British monarch's troops.

According to the biographical sketch in Myers' book, Milroy was not the original family name.

It had been McElroy before the fortunes of war made it necessary to change it to Milroy.

John Milroy's grandfather was the Earl of Annandale, a region of Scotland. He was said to have been a lineal descendant of the Scottish hero, Robert Bruce.

In 1744, the Scottish rebelled against the British, who had taken over Scotland earlier. The rebellion leader was Charles Stuart, the "king" of that country.

After the Scots decisive defeat in 1746, clan members who had fought against the king were, as the sketch indicates, "proscribed and pursued without mercy." Such was the case with relatives of the Earl of Annandale.

Continued Myers, "John McElroy with his young wife escaped to Ireland, changed his name to Milroy, and after a few years, emigrated to the American colonies ..."

They settled in Pennsylvania, where John and his eldest son were killed by Indians.

A surviving son was the father of the John Milroy who became an IU trustee. John Milroy (junior) and his brother struck out on their own to seek their fortune on the frontier.

John Milroy, a trained surveyor, served for a time in a peacetime army, but after a time, he kept moving west.

According to Myers, "Sometime in the early part of the 19th century, John Milroy and his family moved to Indiana."

He moved frequently because of his profession, but landed in Lawrence County, where he lived for some 10 years.

Milroy was not a member of the very first IU board (1820), having been appointed the following year.

But he certainly served at a time when some fundamental decisions were being made. Those included letting contracts for seminary buildings and overseeing the money that came in from the sale of land in Seminary Township.

Meanwhile, in Lawrence County, Milroy was working at his trade.

Myers noted that, "As surveyor he assisted (in 1818) in laying out the town of Palestine, on the White River, the first seat of justice of Lawrence County. ... The first entry in the records of Lawrence County Circuit Court (June 4, 1818) shows John Milroy serving as associate judge. From 1818 to 1828 he was county clerk."

Though he seemed to have put his roots down, Milroy moved one more time, settling in Hancock County.

He died in Greenfield on Oct. 15, 1858.

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