

Two early IU graduates tied to American history

When the Indiana General Assembly began to think seriously about founding an institution of higher education, they believed that learning was a safeguard against the enemies of democracy. The state needed teachers and lawyers and ministers of the gospel to ensure a civilized society.

Specifically, the legislators had no idea of the far-reaching effect of the graduates. A study of Theophilus Wylie's *Indiana University: Its History* reveals the stories of some of the little seminary's graduates.

Among the ones who chose the legal profession are two who stand out because they are inescapably tied to important events in American history, although their roles are not widely known. They were Hugh Thompson Reid and Andrew Wylie.

Reid was born near Liberty in Union County. Prior to enrolling at Indiana University (as the seminary later became) he studied at Miami University in Ohio and the Lane Seminary near Cincinnati. At some point he changed his mind about his course of study and arrived in Bloomington to further his



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

education.

Reid's IU education came the university buildings that stood on the first campus in what we now call Seminary Square. The course of study was classical subjects, but it is likely that at Miami and the seminary he had already mastered enough of the Latin and Greek languages to satisfy some of the requirements.

Considering that the records of the university were lost during disastrous fires on the campus, Wylie did an excellent (and very time-consuming) research chore in locating IU graduates and getting biographical information about them. We do not know which professors Reid admired most.

There is a strong possibility that his family may have had wealth or political influence.

Some time after his graduation Reid became the district attorney of the Iowa Territory and a visitor to the West Point Military Academy. He had some other titles, as well: member of the Society of the Army of the Tennessee, colonel of the 15th Regiment Iowa Volunteers, brigadier-general of volunteers and president of the Des Moines Railroad Company.

His military ranks were not strictly honorary. At the battle of Shiloh, Reid was wounded in the neck and died at the battle of Corinth in Mississippi.

But his "date with destiny" was earlier. Hugh Thompson Reid of the Class of 1837 at Indiana University was the defense attorney for Joseph Smith when the religious leader was assassinated in Carthage, Ill., on June 27, 1844.

Wylie was born in Cannonsburgh, Pa., before his father accepted the presidency of the Indiana Seminary. In fact, he, too, had received some higher education at Jefferson College before enrolling in what was then called the Indiana College (IU was the Indiana Seminary until 1828 and renamed Indiana University in 1838.) After receiving two

degrees from Indiana College, Wylie also chose to be a lawyer. He took additional training at Transylvania University in Kentucky and studied with a lawyer, Walter Forward.

By 1848, Wylie was practicing law in Washington, D.C., and Northern Virginia. It was President Abraham Lincoln who appointed Wylie as a justice of the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia.

The appointment had a far-reaching effect. John Surratt, one of the accused conspirators in the Lincoln assassination, had escaped arrest and wandered in Europe for some years. But American authorities never forgot he was out there somewhere. He was finally arrested in Egypt and brought back to the United States for trial.

Sitting on the bench was Andrew Wylie. In his biographical sketch, Theophilus Wylie noted that his cousin, Andrew, was "noted for his impartiality and ability."

John Surratt was acquitted, because the jury could not agree. He was fortunate. In the aftermath of the assassination, his mother had been hanged.

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