

Owen family rich in Hoosier heritage

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took him into the political arena, and he served his area of the state as a legislator (1836-39) and (1851-52) during which time he championed the causes of a married women's property law, a common free school system, and a more liberal divorce law.

He was pressed into service as a trustee of the young Indiana University, and took the cause of the school to heart when its financial condition was threatened as a result of the Vincennes law suit. Robert teamed up with Professor Daniel Read to get financial help for IU from the U.S. Congress.

In his congressional career it was Owen who drafted the bill founding the Smithsonian Institution. He capped his service to his new country with a stint as U.S. ambassador to Naples.

His brother, David Dale, found his niche in the field of geology. Well grounded in the sciences, he had received training in chemistry and medicine and at New Harmony set up his own meteorological station to take daily readings.

In later years David's collection of scientific apparatus components and animal remains and geological specimens became known as the "Owen Cabinet" that his brother, Richard, sold to IU. The collection was a boon to the young school,

since it provided "instant" science departments for the school.

David Owen's untimely death in November of 1860 was caused by recurrences of dysentery and malaria. But his extraordinary collection enriched the lives of several generations of IU students before it was lost in the fire of 1883.

Richard Dale Owen, like his brothers, came to New Harmony with his father in January of 1828. His education at Hofwyl had included the natural sciences, and he specialized in chemistry. Later at the Andersonian Institute in Glasgow, Scotland, he continued his study of chemistry and added physics to his scope of knowledge.

In America he taught for a time, worked in a brewery, and operated a farm at New Harmony. At the outbreak of the Mexican War in 1847, Richard secured a captain's commission with the help of his brother, Robert, and served until 1848. He then accompanied his brother, David, who was making a survey of the Northwest Territory.

Richard's next venture was the founding of the

Western Military Institute.

The Civil War called him away from his teaching duties and the new Col. Richard Dale Owen was put in command of the camp of Confederate prisoners located at Indianapolis.

In January of 1864 civilian Richard Owen became Professor Richard Owen at IU, and he gave 15 years of his knowledge to his students.

After his retirement he returned to New Harmony to spend his last years. A staunch member of the Presbyterian Church during his years in Bloomington, he was said to have been greatly missed by other members of the congregation.

By any financial measure of success, Robert Owen's social experiment at New Harmony was a failure, but his contribution to the State of Indiana and IU through the lives of his sons cannot be calculated in dollars and cents.

When the university was moved from Seminary Square to Dunn's Woods, the trustees named Owen Hall for the three extraordinary sons of the social reformer and maverick known as Robert Owen.

Court news

Compiled by the H-T staff

One Monroe County man has sued another in Monroe Superior Court for damages

E. Beech Lane, says he was driving his motorcycle south on College when the