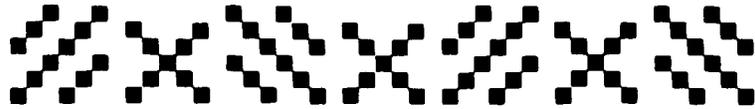


## The Adventures of a Novice in Research: New Harmony and Indianapolis, 1935\*

*Richard W. Leopold\*\**



It is a pleasure to address this 27th Spring History Workshop of the Indiana Historical Society, and I am flattered to have been asked to speak on my adventures as a novice in research in this historic town and elsewhere more than forty years ago. My remarks constitute a sentimental journey into the past, not a contribution to scholarship. If I resort to autobiography, my purpose is not to speak about myself but, rather, first, to describe the facilities for research at New Harmony and Indianapolis in 1935; second, to pay tribute to five persons—long dead—who helped me in my initial scholarly effort; and, third, to tell a tale which, in retrospect, sounds amusing but which, years ago, threatened the future of a young historian.

My story begins in the autumn of 1934 when, aged twenty-two, I was beginning my second year of graduate study at Harvard University. For my doctoral dissertation, Professor Arthur M. Schlesinger suggested that Robert Dale Owen would be a fruitful topic for someone wishing to specialize in social and intellectual history. At that time Schlesinger was evaluating for the *American Historical Review* the volumes of the

---

\*This essay was read in a slightly different form in the restored Opera House at New Harmony on May 21, 1977, as part of the 27th Spring History Workshop sponsored by the Indiana Historical Society, the Indiana Historical Bureau, and the Indiana State Library. It is based primarily on letters, diaries, and notes written and received during the time covered by the paper, though memory had to be relied upon at a few places. All documents are in the author's possession. The author is indebted to Gayle Thornbrough, executive secretary of the Indiana Historical Society, and to Aline Cook, librarian of the Workingmen's Institute, for supplying factual information while the essay was being written, and to Helen Elliott for confirming recollections and correcting misconceptions during a three hour conversation the afternoon before it was delivered.

\*\*Richard W. Leopold is William Smith Mason Professor of American history, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. He is the author of *Robert Dale Owen: A Biography* (Cambridge, Mass., 1940), and other works on diplomatic history.

*Dictionary of American Biography* and listing the names of individuals on whom, he believed, further work should be done. As a native New Yorker, whose education had been in the Northeast and whose knowledge of the Hoosier state was confined to the route of the New York Central and Pennsylvania railroads as they crossed northern Indiana en route to Chicago, I had never heard of Owen. I am not sure that I had even heard of New Harmony. A quick perusal of secondary works persuaded me that a biography of this second rank figure, with such diverse interests and activities, would be an excellent introduction to the field.

My first task was to make sure that no other dissertation on Owen was in progress. I checked the latest issue of the list prepared annually for the American Historical Association by the Carnegie Institution of Washington and found the topic open. I so reported to Professor Schlesinger, who then encouraged me to apply for a Social Science Research Council Predoctoral Field Fellowship for the academic year 1935-1936 to finance research in Indiana and elsewhere. No sooner had I done so than another graduate student informed me that the issue for 1931 listed a Columbia student, Maurice B. Cuba, as working on Owen. In consternation, I consulted Professor Schlesinger who promised to investigate. He assumed that his coeditor of the *History of American Life* series, Dixon Ryan Fox, had suggested the topic to Cuba. Fox had recently left Columbia to become president of Union College [Schenectady, New York] and told Schlesinger to check at Columbia with Evarts B. Greene and John A. Krout, both contributors to the *History of American Life*. On February 21, 1935, Krout wrote for Greene and himself saying that his colleagues had not heard anything lately about Cuba and assured Schlesinger that "the subject which Mr. Cuba long ago preempted is certainly open."

Meanwhile I had begun the task of locating unprinted materials. In 1934 there was no *National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections* or even the *Guide to Archives and Manuscripts in the United States* edited by Philip M. Hamer. The WPA inventories of state records had not yet begun. Hence I wrote first to the Library of the Workingmen's Institute and received from Mrs. Nora C. Fretageot a very helpful reply dated December 11, 1934. She enclosed a list of manuscripts in the Institute library that had been compiled the previous summer by Elinor Pancoast, a former student of Paul H. Douglas who was then on the faculty of the University of Chicago. In her letter Mrs. Fretageot warned me against using a picture of Owen recently published by Professor Norman E. Himes of



RICHARD W. LEOPOLD

Colgate, a Harvard trained sociologist, in an article dealing with Owen and birth control. When Mrs. Fretageot protested to Himes, saying that the picture did not resemble Owen in any way, Himes is alleged to have replied that Harvard had identified the picture as one of Owen and that "Harvard cannot make a mistake." In fairness to Himes, who died in 1949 and wrote a flattering review of my book, I never heard his side of the story, and in an essay published in 1935, he printed the same picture of Owen that Mrs. Fretageot later sent to me to present to the Harvard Library. But the episode did make me wonder how a Harvard graduate student would be received at the Workingmen's Institute.

At Mrs. Fretageot's suggestion, I wrote to Miss Pancoast at the Department of Economics and Sociology of Goucher College [Baltimore, Maryland]. I had not been able to discover anything about her research interests or publications. Only much later did I learn that she had been born in Ottawa, Kansas, in 1893, making her twenty-one years my senior. She had received her bachelor's degree at the University of Chicago in 1917, her master's in 1922, and her doctorate in 1927. Her dissertation, which remained unpublished, dealt with the International Photo-Engravers Union. She had originally started to do a biography of Frances Wright, but the appearance in 1924 of William R. Waterman's dissertation on Miss Wright forced her to change. A concern for Frances Wright led logically to an interest in Robert Dale Owen as I soon found out.

Writing on February 8, 1935, as chairman of her department, Professor Pancoast said:

I am glad to know that you are interested in Robert Dale Owen, although I should like to suggest that you might possibly find another topic for your doctoral dissertation more fruitful. It happens that I have been working on the life of Robert Dale Owen for . . . about ten years . . . and had planned to have the material ready for publication within the next year. . . . I am only awaiting a journey to England which I hope to take within the next year to round out what I have been doing. . . . It would seem to me . . . that this subject is too broad for a doctoral thesis; moreover, although my material is not yet published, the mere fact that it probably will be within the next year or two would mean, I should suppose, that the field was pretty well preempted. If I can be of any assistance to you in case you should wish to limit your subject to one phase of his life, I should be glad to give it.

Needless to say, I descended upon Professor Schlesinger after reading the letter from Pancoast even more quickly than I had after learning of the existence of Cuba. The man to whom I took my problem had been born in Xenia, Ohio, in 1888. He did his undergraduate work at Ohio State University and won his



ARTHUR M. SCHLESINGER

Reproduced from dust jacket of Arthur M. Schlesinger, *In Retrospect: The History of a Historian* (New York, 1963).

doctorate at Columbia in 1918. After teaching at Ohio State and Iowa, he went to Harvard in 1924 where he remained until he retired in 1954. His prize winning *Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution* in 1918 won him instant fame. His *New Viewpoints in American History* in 1922 and his two volume textbook with Homer C. Hockett in 1925 influenced several generations of college and high school students. His *Rise of the City, 1878-1898* in 1933 showed the need for a more serious study of urban developments. Already a past chairman of the Social Science Research Council, he was soon to become one of the youngest men to be president of the American Historical Association. An unimposing and undemonstrative man, he was an optimist by nature and had an ability to provide his students with sound advice without destroying their freedom to make their own decisions. He died in 1965.

Schlesinger read the Pancoast letter calmly and said: "I think she is bluffing. Go ahead and call her bluff." But, I expostulated, she will publish her biography before I can complete a dissertation, thus endangering my degree, and certainly before I could convert a thesis into a book. No, he said, if she has taken this long to finish, if she has not published even an article, she is not likely to meet that schedule. Thus ended the conversation. If told to go ahead, ahead I would go.

In April, 1935, I learned that I had received the Social Science Research Council Field Fellowship. By June I had completed examination of the printed sources in the Boston area and started for New Harmony with a short stop in New York and even briefer exploratory visits to Philadelphia and Washington. At the New York Historical Society I learned that someone, not identified, had recently sought material on Owen. At the Smithsonian Institution the trail was even hotter; a person from New York had been inquiring about sources on Owen. Perhaps Cuba had not stopped work after all. Rather apprehensively I made my way by public transportation to New Harmony, as much of a feat in 1935 as it is today. I took the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad from Washington to Vincennes, a bus from Vincennes to Evansville, and an Illinois Central local from Evansville to Stewartsville, never knowing how I could complete the last lap. When I got off at Stewartsville in the late afternoon of July 10, I found to my surprise an auto that would take me to the New Harmony Tavern on Church Street, where an even greater surprise awaited me.

At the tavern I was greeted by Cy Knight, the genial and friendly proprietor. He assigned me a room and said that, since



THE TAVERN, NEW HARMONY, INDIANA

Reproduced from Ross F. Lockridge, *The Old Fauntleroy Home* (New Harmony, Ind., 1939), facing page 46.

he had expected me, he had kept some dinner warm. Puzzled by the first remark—that he was expecting me—but cheered by the second—that dinner was available (I had not eaten since a skimpy breakfast in the B&O diner)—I was even more astonished when he said with a grin that a friend of mine had already arrived. He then ushered me into the dining room and introduced me to a short, dark man with a mustache—who turned out to be Maurice B. Cuba.

I need hardly add that the smile of my host was not shared by either novice in research. The small town of New Harmony was much too small to contain both of us. Happily, Cuba left the next day, having spent just forty-eight hours here. He was able to finish quickly because he had someone to microfilm pertinent manuscripts and rare books. He was the first person I had known to employ a microfilm camera, a medium then in its formative stage. But that first evening I learned that he was married and had two children, that he had graduated from the City College of New York in 1922 (making him at least eleven years my senior), that he had received a master's degree from Columbia in 1923 and a law degree from New York University

in 1928, and that he taught in a New York high school. Cuba told me that after Fox had left Columbia, Allan Nevins agreed to direct the dissertation, that he had completed all his research in Indianapolis and Washington, and that he regarded the appearance of his name in the 1931 list of dissertations in progress as reserving the subject for five years and thus obviating the necessity of placing his name in succeeding issues.

I reported this encounter to Professor Schlesinger at once. In his reply of July 16—the mails were faster in those days—he expressed surprise and dismay that Cuba was still on the job but encouraged me to continue. “Even if a book appears on the subject before your degree is granted,” he wrote, “the likelihood is that your own performance will be sufficiently different and that we will not hesitate to give you the degree.” That was some consolation, but not much. Who would publish a second book on Owen? Two weeks later I heard from Schlesinger again. Cuba had written him from New York on July 24, describing his past research and concluding: “I shall very soon be in a position to begin actual writing. In view of the foregoing, would it be fair to me to have Mr. Leopold continue on the same subject; especially since there is probably no need of two biographies of Owen.” What Cuba knew about Professor Pancoast, he did not say.

Schlesinger answered Cuba on July 30. He summarized the precautions taken in checking the dissertation list and quoted Krout's statement five months earlier that the topic was “certainly open.” He sought to soothe Cuba by saying: “You seem to have a practical advantage inasmuch as you state that you will soon begin actual writing. Mr. Leopold has several months of field research in America and, of course, will want to prosecute his researches also in England, which you no doubt have already done.” Actually, Cuba's letter had said nothing about having been or going to England. In sending me this exchange, Schlesinger wrote: “The allusion to carrying on research in England will, I hope, give him pause since Columbia requires publication at the time of receiving the degree.” Harvard did not. The fact, Schlesinger continued, that “Cuba is so frightened leads me to think that he has done little work on the thesis and fears that you will complete your job ahead of him.” Here was the same reasoning he had used with Miss Pancoast. He then concluded: “It is too bad that three different people should suddenly develop a passion for finding out about Robert Dale Owen.” How much work Cuba had really done, I never discovered. As for myself, I could not possibly contemplate

changing my topic after having received a field fellowship to work on Owen and after having reached New Harmony with about seven months of research behind me.

For the next eight weeks I virtually lived in the Library of the Workingmen's Institute. From Mrs. Fretageot, the librarian, and Miss Louise M. Husband, her assistant, I received constant help and soaked up New Harmony lore. Both were natives. Mrs. Fretageot, born a Chadwick in 1858, was the second wife of Achilles H. Fretageot, a grandson of a member of the Boatload of Knowledge.<sup>1</sup> She became librarian in 1908 and remained in that post until her death in 1937. Miss Husband, nineteen years her junior, served from 1910 to 1944, the last seven years as Mrs. Fretageot's successor. The two ladies made a wonderful team. Mrs. Fretageot was short, serious, quick of mind, and always in motion. Although she had properly insisted that Harvard could make a mistake, no one could have been kinder to me, both while I was in the library and after I had left. Miss Louise was more ample of frame, relaxed, and optimistic, with a cheery greeting for everyone on the street or in the library. What I remember most was their tolerance of a young outsider who, like all novices in research, was eager to challenge some of the myths that had become part of New Harmony lore and some of the exaggerated claims to uniqueness that had been advanced by earlier writers.

The research was exciting. Digging in the manuscripts was something of a treasure hunt. The material, frankly, was badly organized. I was too early to benefit from the descriptions published later by Roger Hurst, Arthur E. Bestor, and Josephine M. Elliott.<sup>2</sup> There was no locked, fireproof room. Ledgers and folders were scattered on shelves in no logical order. Miss Pancoast's list proved to be incomplete. The high moment each day came when I would stumble upon documents and bear them as a prize to Mrs. Fretageot who would frankly admit that she had not seen them for years and had almost forgotten they existed.

---

<sup>1</sup> In January, 1826, the keelboat *Philanthropist* arrived in New Harmony, Indiana. Better known as the "Boatload of Knowledge," its passengers were a group of brilliant, if somewhat eccentric, intellectuals whom Robert Owen, Robert Dale Owen's father, had recruited in the eastern states for his communal society. Lorna Lutes Sylvester, ed., "Miner K. Kellogg: Recollections of New Harmony," *Indiana Magazine of History*, LXIV (March, 1968), 53n.

<sup>2</sup> Roger A. Hurst, "The New Harmony Manuscript Collections," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XXXVII (March, 1941), 45-49; Arthur Eugene Bestor, Jr., comp., *Records of the New Harmony Community: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscript Volumes Preserved in the Working Men's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana, and Elsewhere* (Urbana, 1950); Josephine Mirabella Elliott, "The Owen Family Papers," *Indiana Magazine of History*, LX (December, 1964), 331-52.

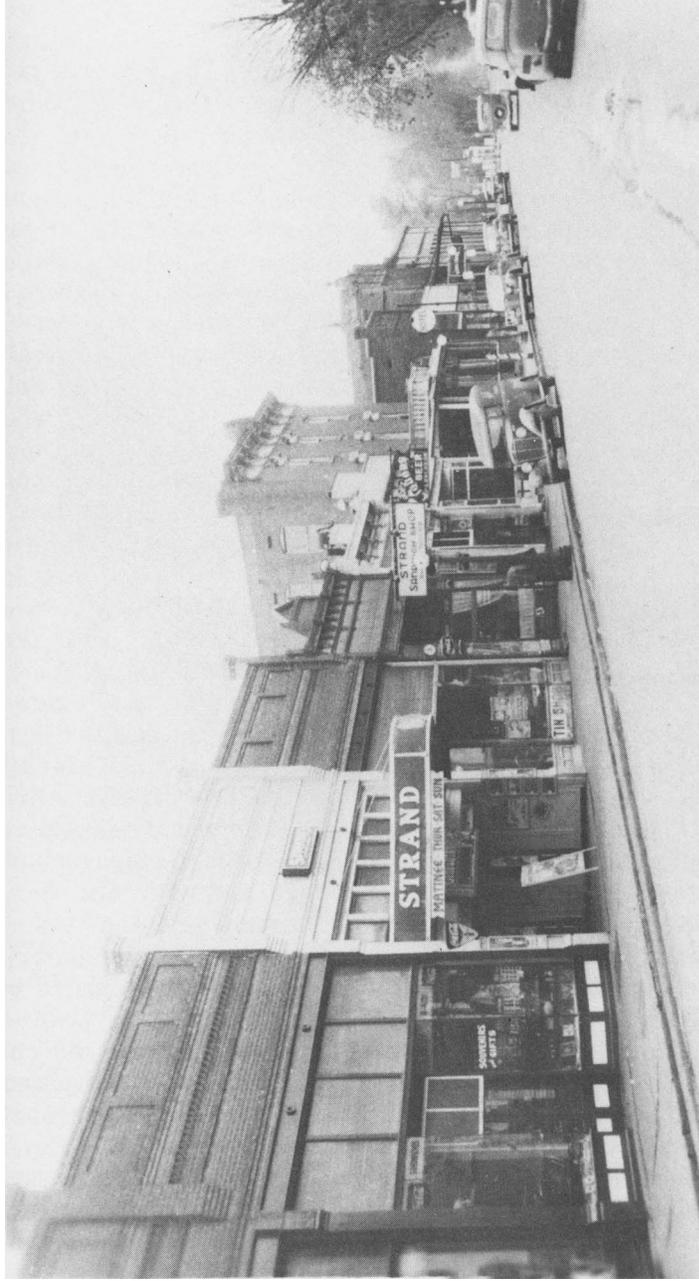
After a few weeks I had, apparently, proved my worth and was paid the supreme compliment. I was given a key to the front door so that I could arrive at dawn and work alone for a couple of hours, leave for breakfast, and return when the library officially opened. I never knew whether this act of kindness meant that Mrs. Fretageot had come to trust a Harvard trained man or whether it was to salve her conscience, which was very strong, for not coming before her regular hour to open the library for my use.

Lacking a car, I did not leave New Harmony once during those eight weeks that were marked by extreme heat and by the absence of two aids to research deemed essential today—the air conditioner and the Xerox machine. But life was not unpleasant, and the cost of living was perfect for an indigent graduate student. I ate at the tavern for the entire period,



LOUISE M. HUSBAND

Courtesy Library of the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana.



CHURCH STREET, NEW HARMONY, INDIANA

Courtesy Historic New Harmony, Inc.

paying \$6.00 a week for three meals a day. The fare was not that of the Red Geranium or Shadblow's,<sup>3</sup> and fried chicken for lunch and dinner almost every day became tedious. For the first month I also lived at the tavern, paying \$5.00 a week. Thus for \$11.00—less than half the cost of a night's lodging at the New Harmony Inn today—I had room and board for an entire week. In August, when the rodeo came to town, I beat a strategic retreat to a private house on Granary Street, where I paid the princely sum of \$2.75 a week for a quiet, private room. I found the residents of the town uniformly friendly. I recall especially a wide eyed lad of about twelve by the name of Bob Johnson, who came to the library every Saturday evening; and when he saw me examining a large bound volume of the New Harmony *Advertiser* or *Register*, he always asked: "Can't you find a bigger book?"

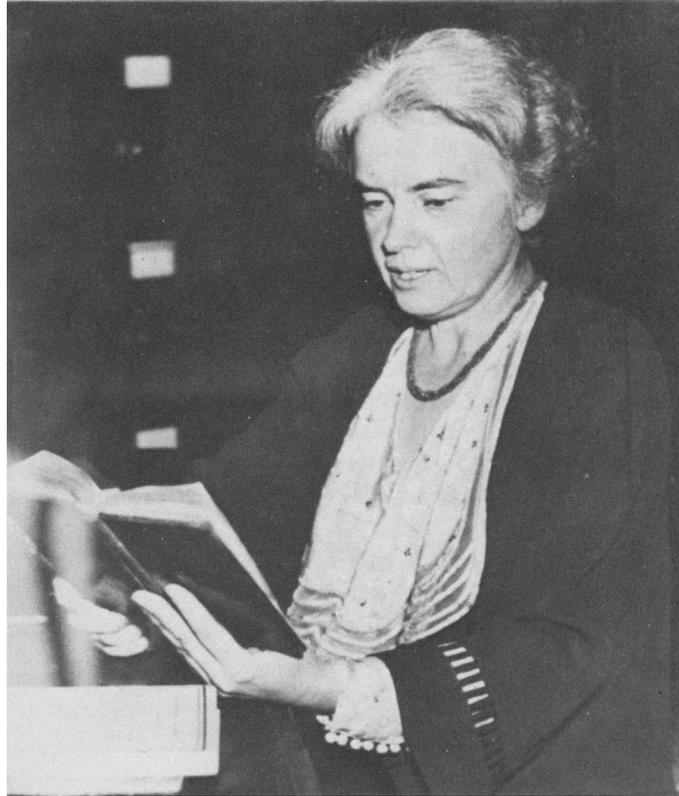
During those eight weeks, I encountered only one obstacle and one danger. The obstacle was my inability to gain access to private papers in family hands. Although I was allowed to read some, I had to warn in my book that I had not seen all of the papers of Owen's younger brothers, David Dale and Richard. The danger was getting caught in the rivalry that existed among descendants of the original settlers. Each had her own version of the past; each gave primacy to her forbears. I think I was able to tread warily in my pleasant talks with Mrs. Aline Owen Neal, granddaughter of Richard Owen and then residing in the Laboratory,<sup>4</sup> with Miss Eleanor R. Cooper, stepdaughter of Owen's older son by his third marriage, and with Miss Mary E. Fauntleroy, who was related to the husband of Owen's sister, Jane. Miss Fauntleroy later was a prime mover in gaining permission to return to Maple Hill in 1937 the remains of Robert Dale Owen from the original burial site at Lake George, New York. In a letter to me in January, 1938, she did not understate her role in the affair and also vented her anger on Cuba who, apparently, had not called on her while in town but later sent frequent written requests.

I left New Harmony on September 3, more at ease than when I had arrived. I did not believe I could complete my dissertation before Miss Pancoast and, perhaps, Cuba pub-

---

<sup>3</sup> The Red Geranium and Shadblow's are present day New Harmony restaurants.

<sup>4</sup> In 1858-1859 David Dale Owen, a geologist and Robert Dale Owen's brother, built an extensive geological laboratory in New Harmony. After his death in 1860 this "Owen Laboratory" was converted into a residence, and since that time it has been occupied by descendants of Robert Owen. Elliott, "The Owen Family Papers," 332.



ESTHER U. MCNITT

Courtesy Indiana Division, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis.

lished, but I knew I had examined sources they had not—mostly newspapers which alone could reveal Owen's preoccupation with state and national politics in the years from 1836 to 1853. Hence, before proceeding to Indianapolis, I went to Evansville, driven by Mrs. Fretageot's granddaughter, Mary, later Mrs. Joseph Hodge, who died in June, 1976. There I spent five days in the Willard Library reading a broken file of the *Evansville Journal*, a Whig paper violently hostile to Owen, and a sixth in Mount Vernon examining records in the Posey County Courthouse. I then took a bus north to Princeton, the seat of Gibson County, where for five days I perused the *Democratic Clarion*, a staunch Owen supporter between 1846 and 1853. Five nights at the best hotel cost me \$7.00. I suspect that I may have been the first out of state scholar to spend that

much time in the Princeton Public Library where I was courteously assisted by Miss Sadie L. Archer.

I arrived in Indianapolis on September 16, 1935, and remained for ten fruitful weeks. I lived at 127 East Michigan Street, within easy walking distance of the Indiana State Library to the south and Indianapolis Public Library to the north. I was able to make \$6.00 a week cover room and laundry and \$1.00 take care of three meals a day. Working conditions were ideal. The building housing the state archives and the Indiana Historical Society had opened only two years earlier; the collections were logically arranged and well cataloged. On evenings and holidays, when the building was closed, I went to the public library which had complete files of the Indianapolis newspapers of the period. I left the capital only once—a bus ride to Crawfordsville in a vain search for the papers of Lew Wallace.

Again, two individuals provided extraordinary help to a novice in research. One was Miss Esther U. McNitt, chief of the Indiana Division of the state library. A native of Logansport, she graduated from Vassar in 1909, took a master's degree in history at the University of Wisconsin, studied library science in Albany, New York, and began work in the state library in 1913. She became chief of the Indiana Division ten years later and held that post until her death in 1941. A knowledgeable, efficient, and gracious lady, she revealed the full warmth of her personality only to those who had gained her trust. Her frequent letters to me over a six year period combined business with a solicitude for my career. Miss McNitt was more of a professional than Mrs. Fretageot or Miss Husband. In 1928, when the American Historical Association met in Indianapolis, she arranged the joint session with the Mississippi Valley Historical Association; from 1929 to 1932 she sat on the Executive Committee of that organization. My debt to her can never be repaid. She scoured the state for manuscripts and located a small but useful collection of the papers of Elisha Embree, a devout Methodist judge who ended Owen's congressional tenure in 1847. These papers were then owned by a great-granddaughter, Louise, an author of children's books, whose letters to me showed a less than reverential attitude toward her pious ancestors. Miss McNitt continued to help after I left Indianapolis, strove to find a publisher, cheered when the book was favorably reviewed, and took umbrage at any comment that was in the least critical.

The second person was Christopher B. Coleman, for twenty years after 1924 secretary of the Indiana Historical Society and

director of the Indiana Historical Bureau. From 1936 to 1942 he was also director of the state library. Born in Springfield, Illinois, in 1875, he earned a bachelor's degree from Yale in 1896, a divinity degree from the University of Chicago in 1899, and a doctorate in history from Columbia in 1914. He taught at Butler University from 1900 to 1919, serving also as vice president, and was departmental chairman at Allegheny College [Meadville, Pennsylvania] from 1920 until his return to Indianapolis. An unassuming, considerate, and widely read man, with a nice sense of humor, he too was a professional. One of the first members of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association, he served on the Council of the American Historical Association, became vice president of the American Association for State and Local History, and was cited as the most useful member of the editorial board of the *American Archivist* during its first seven years. He, too, gave me sound advice on research and publication. Others in Indianapolis who went beyond the



CHRISTOPHER B. COLEMAN

Courtesy Indiana Historical Society and Indiana Historical Bureau,  
Indianapolis.

call of duty in my behalf were Marguerite H. Anderson, Nellie C. Armstrong, Caroline Dunn, Florence Venn, and Hazel Whiteleather, now Hazel Hopper.<sup>5</sup>

In Indianapolis I learned more about my competitors. Miss Pancoast, I was told, had not done a thorough job and had relied on her sister to do some of the work. Cuba had made a good impression and had arranged to have new accessions filmed and sent to him. He had not, however, responded to Schlesinger's July letter, while Professor Nevins, in writing to Schlesinger, never mentioned Cuba. While in the capital, I heard rumors that two older persons were collecting Owen material, perhaps for publication or perhaps for sale. Actually, the deeper I dug, the less I worried. I realized that the New Harmony community was only one of many episodes in Owen's life and that the best records for his later career would be found in newspapers, state and national, and in personal papers located outside of Indiana. Neither Pancoast nor Cuba had read the Evansville and Princeton press, and their stays in Indianapolis were too brief to exhaust the rich newspaper collections. Newspapers do not lend themselves to the hurried use of microfilm. Finally, save for a brief time early in the Civil War, Owen ceased to be a major Indiana figure after 1853, and the last twenty-four years of his life had to be told from non-Hoosier sources.

Although the title of this address speaks only of New Harmony and Indianapolis in 1935, I shall encapsulate my experiences during the five years after I bade an affectionate farewell to Indianapolis on November 27, 1935. I went next to Chicago to read in the Newberry Library the best file of one of the nation's two leading spiritualist weeklies [*Religio-Philosophical Journal*]. I continued to Madison, Wisconsin, to examine the only known run of the New York *Daily Sentinel* which Owen had edited anonymously for over a year after February, 1830. There was no evidence that my rivals had been to either place. On December 30, 1935, I began a fourteen week stint in Washington, exploiting the Library of Congress' unrivalled collections of manuscripts, pamphlets, periodicals, and newspapers. I lived at 625 Maryland Avenue, N.E., within walking distance, paying \$5.00 a week for a room until a friend vacated a smaller cubicle which rented for \$3.00. It was still possible to keep the cost of three meals under \$1.00 a day. I did not use the newly

---

<sup>5</sup> The persons listed were in 1935 employees of the Indiana State Library and/or the Indiana Historical Society.

opened National Archives Building, since Owen's dispatches as minister in Naples were still in the old State, War, and Navy Building on Pennsylvania Avenue and Seventeenth.

My only adventure in Washington that might interest this group was my use of letters and documents in the possession of Mrs. Grace Zaring Stone, Owen's great-granddaughter, who had won fame in 1930 for her novel *The Bitter Tea of General Yen*. Married to a naval officer and living in Georgetown, Mrs. Stone had first refused to permit me to examine the papers, saying they had become the bane of her existence because so many people wished to see them. Eventually she relented but did not go out of her way to ease my task when I went to her home. I read the manuscripts in an upstairs bedroom, not daring to take time for lunch and barely summoning courage to request the facilities of the bathroom. I did not learn whether my rivals had preceded me, though I guessed they had. Mrs. Stone put no restrictions on my use of the papers; for that I was most grateful. Although I later sent her a copy of the book, I never saw or heard from her again.

Early in April, 1936, I left Washington for Cambridge with stops for research in Philadelphia, New York, and New Haven. I expected to use the late spring, summer, and next academic year to write in Widener Library on the Harvard campus. To my initial dismay I was awarded by Harvard a traveling fellowship and told to spend the next year or part of it abroad, examining the Robert Owen Papers in England and such other materials as I could find. I was reluctant to go, for I knew that two weeks were sufficient to deal with the father's papers in Manchester, and I feared that it would be difficult to find a teaching job for 1937-1938 if I were in Europe. No one bothered to tell me that the Department of History had already decided to appoint me an instructor at Harvard for that year.

So in September, 1936, with six chapters carrying Owen to 1833 written, I settled in London near the British Museum. It was an exciting autumn because of the abdication crisis, but I was more concerned with Elinor Pancoast and Maurice B. Cuba than I was with Wallis Warfield Simpson and Edward VIII. Two experiences abroad deserve mention. One was a visit to Worthing on November 25 to see Owen's ninety year old daughter, Rosamond. It was a futile errand. There were no manuscripts; her mind was gone; she remembered nothing. She died the following June. The other was a journey to Glasgow, where Owen was born; to Braxfield, where he grew to manhood; and to Newtown in Wales, where his father was born and

buried. Save for checking dates on tombstones in the Newtown cemetery, I gained only a feel for locale. The real find was the Robert Owen Papers in Manchester, which none of my rivals had yet seen.

Late in October, 1936, I received from Professor Schlesinger an unopened letter which, he thought, was from Cuba. "Whatever may be in it," he wrote, "don't let him get your goat." The letter was not from Cuba but from a Fordham University graduate student, Leo P. Brophy, who asked what I thought of his doing a dissertation on Robert Dale Owen. My reply, I told Schlesinger, "made me feel very much like Miss Pancoast must have felt two years ago." I added: "Pancoast, Cuba, a couple of people in Indiana, Brophy and myself now make a half dozen panting to become Owen's biographer. Would not . . . William Maclure and other second rank figures contemporary with Owen be jealous?"

Meanwhile my friends in Indianapolis had not forgotten me. A survey of federal records outside of Washington, sponsored by the WPA and the National Archives, had unearthed in a United States courthouse in Chicago some six thousand documents from the files of Indiana governors. In March, 1937, H. Reid Nation, assistant chief of archives in the state library, wrote me of the find and in the next four months provided copies of Owen material relating to his Civil War work for Oliver P. Morton. I was never able to thank Mr. Nation in person, but our correspondence was sufficient four years later to persuade a dealer that some Owen letters he was then offering for sale to the Indiana Historical Society were stolen goods. I had used them in 1937 before an employee in the state library had absconded with them.

In April, 1937, I returned to the United States, having written seventeen chapters and bringing with me the original of the Donald Macdonald diary describing his trip to New Harmony in 1826 and which the Indiana Historical Society planned to publish. Settling in Cambridge, I completed in the next ten weeks a dissertation of 944 pages, 924 of which were the text. In September I cleared the last hurdle, although the doctorate was not officially awarded until February, 1938. During those months I heard that Professor Pancoast had again been to Indianapolis and New Harmony, but Cuba remained shrouded in silence.

Thanks to recommendations from Dr. Coleman and Miss McNitt, I was invited to read a paper at the Indianapolis meeting of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association in April, 1938. Entitled "Was Robert Dale Owen a Reformer?" it argued

that he had three careers, not one. Responding to changing environment, he was, first, a radical reformer, intent on eliminating injustice and irrationality in the world; second, an able politician, eager to promote the interests of an expanding, self assertive West; and, third, a cosmopolitan intellectual, dabbling as a free lance in the problems of the Civil War, relying upon his pen for a livelihood, but concerned primarily with the propagation of spiritualism. While in Indianapolis, I talked with people at Bobbs-Merrill, the local publisher. Understandably that firm, as well as two others in the East, were not willing to gamble on a five hundred page biography of a minor figure by an untested historian, though Dr. Coleman and Miss McNitt did everything they could to help. Not until January, 1940, did the Harvard University Press agree to publish the shortened and revised dissertation in its *Historical Studies* series.

Despite a kind invitation from Professor William O. Lynch, editor of the *Indiana Magazine of History*, I never put in print the paper I read in April, 1938. Indeed, I may be the only scholar who never published an article based on a dissertation before or after it appeared as a book. Since my interpretation of Owen's career was not the accepted one, I did not wish to tip my hand to my rivals. That feeling explained my response in the summer of 1938 when the Harvard Library received a request from a Miss Anne E. Lincoln to read my dissertation. Harvard then had a rule that unpublished theses could not be seen for five years after submission without the permission of the author. That rule spared a young scholar the need to rush into print prematurely—as often happened at universities that required publication on granting the degree—and also protected him from having his findings expropriated by either mature scholars or doctoral candidates.

Under the circumstances, I refused permission. I offered to talk with Miss Lincoln and did so. She said she was a free lance writer more interested in spiritualism than in Owen. I urged her to pursue the subject, on which no reliable book existed, and discussed sources I had found helpful. I did not divulge my conclusions on Owen's part in the movement. A slight, sad looking lady in her thirties, Miss Lincoln did not impress me with her knowledge or with the strength to complete the arduous research needed to write an authoritative history of spiritualism.

Late in April, 1940, the task of converting my manuscript into galley proofs began. On May 13, as the Nazi war machine overran the Low Countries, I suffered a setback of my own. I

received an announcement from the Principia Press of Bloomington [Indiana] of a forthcoming book entitled *The Incurable Idealist: Robert Dale Owen in America*. There were two authors—Elinor Pancoast and Anne E. Lincoln. While the world agonized over the fall of France, I waited feverishly, while reading proof, to see what my rivals had wrought. Since an appraisal by me would be in poor taste, I shall say simply that I was relieved to discover in July that the volume had only 109 pages of text, lacked an index, and tried to fit Owen's varied career into a single mold. My spirits were bolstered by the ever faithful Miss McNitt who wrote on August 27: "Miss Pancoast's volume has arrived, but I think I shall wait and read yours first." She had only two months to wait. On October 25, 1940, the Harvard University Press issued *Robert Dale Owen: A Biography*, totalling 470 pages, of which 416 were text. Again, it would be in poor taste for me to describe its reception; I leave that task to someone else.

Thus ended the adventures of a novice in research. Thus ended, too, my work in Indiana history and, soon thereafter, my contacts with cherished Hoosier friends. As early as May, 1938, an unexpected opportunity to teach my own lecture course and graduate seminar at Harvard on American foreign policy led me to shift my research from social history to diplomatic. Death also played a part. In January, 1937, while I was still in London, Mrs. Fretageot died of a heart attack. Although in declining health at seventy-eight, she remained active to the end. Only ten days earlier she had answered a long list of questions I had sent her, and she spent her last night editing a manuscript for the Federal Writers' Project. In October, 1941, I was shocked to learn of the death of Miss McNitt. Her frequent letters had given no hint the end was near. Rather she kept me informed of developments at the state library and the historical society and applauded every favorable review of my book. Her last letter of July 17, 1941, which I delayed too long to answer, was full of details about the stolen documents and of references to my meeting with her brother in June when her nephew, whom I had known well, graduated from Harvard.

In October, 1942, I left Cambridge for the duration of the war, most of which was spent as a naval officer in Washington teaching myself to be an archivist and devising a system for annotating and filing the operational records of the Pacific war. Correspondence with old friends unfortunately lapsed. Thus I missed word of Miss Husband's death in January, 1944. She had suffered a partial paralysis in 1942 but returned to work in the library until she broke her hip in November, 1943.

I also missed word of Dr. Coleman's fatal heart attack in June, 1944, on his forty-third wedding anniversary. His last letter to me, in August, 1942, was characteristically kind—an acknowledgment of my small part in making possible the publication of the Macdonald diary. The final paragraph of my last letter to him in my file, dated March 10, 1941, reads: "Both you and Miss McNitt have been more than kind concerning my book and I am very grateful. In fact I am quite sure that I shall never have more fun and more cooperation in working on any future project than I had in doing research on Owen." That statement has proved to be true to this day.

For the next thirty-five years I had almost no contacts with New Harmony or Indianapolis. In 1967-1968 I exchanged letters with Kenneth Dale Owen and Caroline Dale-Owen S. Baldwin about the reprint edition of my biography. In 1970 Professor Donald E. Pitzer invited me to participate the next year in the Robert Owen Bicentennial Conference, but since I had not kept up with recent writings in the field, I declined. During those decades I occasionally wondered about my rivals. A recent check showed that Leo Brophy submitted in 1940 a dissertation entitled "Horace Greeley: Whig or Socialist?" He later became historian of the Army Chemical Corps and in 1965 joined the history faculty at Biscayne College in Florida. Elinor Pancoast retired more than a decade ago from her professorship at Goucher College and now resides in Denton, Texas. Maurice B. Cuba remains elusive, though he seems to have been alive in 1972. Every so often, more out of curiosity than concern, I check the latest volume of the *National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections* to see whether any new Owen material has surfaced. Last winter, in paging through the volume for 1972, I found the following entry: "Research Papers on Robert Dale Owen, in Columbia University Libraries: about 1,500 items, in part photocopies from libraries in Indiana, of correspondence, outlines, and drafts for . . . projected study of Robert Dale Owen . . . Gift of Maurice B. Cuba, 1972."

In closing, I fear I may sound like the narrator on Thursday evenings at the end of "The Waltons," as he looks back on the trials and tribulations, the successes and pleasures of those distant days during the Depression when the young learned to cope with life. So, too, for that novice in research, the distant year 1935 recalls the sacrifices and fears, the satisfactions and friendships as he sought to master the craft of scholarship. Most of all, he remembers those who helped him learn. For as Miss Husband wrote on November 3, 1940, regarding the labor that had gone into the book: "I know you are happy and feel it

was more than worth while, out of it has come travel and lasting friendships you might not otherwise have had." How right she was. It is fitting, therefore, in this historic edifice and before this knowledgeable audience to conclude with a final tribute to the sagacious and unflappable Arthur Schlesinger, to the kind and energetic Nora Fretageot, to the cheerful and warm hearted Louise Husband, to the loyal and selfless Esther McNitt, and to the wise and modest Christopher Coleman. *Ave atque vale.* Hail and farewell.