

Educational Program of the New Harmony Memorial Movement

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Although the main feature of the New Harmony Memorial Movement is a very practical work of preserving and restoring some plain, old buildings, yet the educational features attending it, as provided for in the Memorial Act, are somewhat outstanding. Since the one-mill levy for the memorial is not fully available until July 1, 1940, the work on the buildings is beginning modestly with the restoration of the Tavern only. This is the structure which was known as Rappite Community House No. 3.

In the meantime, the educational program is getting under way. The first of a characteristic type of educational projects was launched with encouraging success on Tuesday, May 16th, 1939, in the form of a Say-Sistaire Shell Hunt. Special provision was made for this project in Section 5, of the Legislative Act, which reads in part as follows:

It shall be the duty of the director of the commission, by and with the approval of the commission to institute programs and projects of an educational, recreational, patriotic and cultural nature such as may be found necessary and feasible to restore the working system of the "Adventure in Happiness" of Robert Owen's "New Moral World", such as: forums, lyceums, balls, festivals, and public astronomical observations; shell hunts on the river, periodically conducted in memory of Thomas Say, the master conchologist, and his charming wife, Lucy Sistaire. . . .

It may be remarked that this particular provision of the bill elicited a bit of humorous comment in and about the Legislature. The success of the experiment of May 16, 1939, proves, however, that it was wise to include this provision. In addition to students and teachers from the New Harmony schools, this program was attended by eighty students and eight teachers, from seven other leading high schools of southern Indiana—Evansville two schools, Bloomington two, Mt. Vernon one, Bedford one, and Vincennes one. These were picked students and picked teachers and they entered into the project with extraordinary appreciation of its merits. They assembled at ten o'clock at the river front of the historic Roadside-Riverside Park which is just ready for landscaping.

The program of the day opened with a brief historical recital of the main events connected with our historic Wabash, including a somewhat vivid word panorama of famous craft that passed this place before the coming of the "Boatload of Knowledge" in 1826. The entire assembly was then divided into three groups for the purpose of exploring three different sand-bars. Two of these bars were across the river on the Illinois side, one some three miles up stream, the other about the same distance down stream and just below the Old Dam. The third sand-bar is in plain sight from the New Harmony ferry on the Indiana side. The students were about equally divided between boys and girls and the supervised groups were arranged in the same way. Care was taken to have each school represented in each of the three groups.

Those who went to the Illinois side were carefully conveyed across the river in motor boats. It is needless to say that the participants derived much pleasure out of the expedition, notwithstanding some wet feet and "sand in socks".

Dr. Fernandus Payne, Dean of the Graduate School of Indiana University and Head of the Department of Zoology, supervised the scientific phases of the expedition. He entered very heartily into all of the activities of the day and did some original searching for himself in the sandy beach just below the Old Dam.

The group returned from the hunt at about one in the afternoon. Having consumed their lunch with real zest and enjoyment, they re-convened on the charming lawn of the Old Fauntleroy Home. The extensive collections of shells which they had gathered were there assembled, and Dr. Payne gave a very instructive and interesting discussion covering the primary scientific aspects of the project.

It will be seen that the program as a whole constituted a genuine recreation of history. The story of Thomas Say and Lucy Sistaire is one of the most delightful romances of the Owenite "Adventure in Happiness." Thomas was a very handsome and bashful young bachelor and Lucy, as characterized by the Duke of Saxe-Weimar, was the "handsomest and most polished of the female world" of New Harmony. Their activity represents one of the most cherished contributions which that "Adventure" gave to the field of science

and to the general progress of education. The couple met for the first time as they journeyed with others of the "Boatload of Knowledge". The friendship formed during that interesting voyage ripened quickly into a real love affair and a sudden elopement. They made their home in several different places in New Harmony—among them, the Fauntleroy Home.

It was here in New Harmony that Say wrote his master treatise, *The American Conchology*, in which he was ably assisted by his charming wife. Together they explored the banks of the Wabash on both sides, for many miles, both up and down the river in the vicinity of New Harmony searching for shells of every kind. Say classified, described and identified the specimens found and Lucy painted and illustrated them. It was a labor of love as well as of science.

Thomas Say died in New Harmony in 1834. His tomb is a picturesque mound on the lawn of the Rapp-Maclure place, where he died. It has been a Mecca for scientists for more than a century and it was looked upon with much interest by the young high school students present on May 16, 1939, just after they had heard the intimate story of the scientist's life and career.

Say's young wife survived him, remaining a widow for more than fifty years. She did not continue to live in New Harmony, but returned occasionally and was often heard to exclaim: "Oh, for another successful shell hunt on the river".

The facts here recited make clear the significance of such a project as this shell hunt instituted by the New Harmony Memorial. It was more than a laboratory exercise in science and history. It introduced the Wabash River, one of the historic features of New Harmony; it was an exhilarating contact with nature and a delightful cultivation of romantic sense and true historic consciousness; it was a genuine enrichment of the teaching of history through the purposeful recreation of historic activities.

It should be mentioned, perhaps, that a characteristic feature of the program was a short informal dance in the old Dance Hall of Rappite Community House No. 2—a true historical reminder of a favorite activity of the "Adventure in Happiness".

It is needless to say that the success of this program was very gratifying. The splendid coöperation offered by various high schools and the expert assistance rendered by Indiana University through the service of Dean Payne, assures the future success of many kindred projects of similar nature.

President Herman B Wells and State Superintendent Floyd I. McMurray are ex-officio members of the New Harmony Memorial Commission and each is taking a deep personal and professional interest in the movement, especially in the educational features. The Memorial Act provides that "Arrangements may be made with one or more higher institutions of learning in Indiana or with individual members of faculties thereof" for the promotion of the Memorial Movement. As the program develops, leading members from the faculties of all colleges and universities in the state will participate in different special features from time to time. The Say-Sistaire Shell Hunt may be considered as the significant beginning of a four year schedule and a fixed annual feature of the New Harmony Memorial Movement.

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DEDICATION OF TABLET

At New Harmony on Sunday afternoon, June 25, 1939, a beautiful bronze tablet was dedicated to the memory of James Runcie, D. D., and his wife, Constance Owen Fauntleroy Runcie. The Rev. Runcie was one of the early resident ministers of New Harmony. Mrs. Runcie was a daughter of Robert Fauntleroy and Jane Dale Owen. She was married in St. Stephen's Church in New Harmony. The Rev. Runcie went first to Madison, Indiana, and then to St. Joseph, Missouri. Both are buried in that city. The tablet to the memory of the minister and his wife was erected in the Maple Hill Cemetery on the Owen-Fauntleroy lot. The erection of the tablet was made possible by a daughter of the Rev. and Mrs. Runcie, Mrs. E. St. John Marshall. Fitting and impressive ceremonies under the direction of Miss Mary Emily Fauntleroy were held.¹

¹ Miss Fauntleroy kindly sent clippings from the *New Harmony Times* of June 23 and 30, relative to the dedication of the tablet to the Runcie family.—*Editor*.