

The James Dunn Family in Indiana Education

RUTH P. SUTHERLAND

Among the most influential names in Indiana's educational history is that of *Dunn*. So closely is this name interwoven with the founding and maintenance of colleges throughout the state that it is of special interest to students of early Indiana history. Public spirited and generous in the highest degree, members of this family did their work in such a quiet and unassuming manner that few people today are aware of how freely the Dunns gave of their time and money.

Five prominent institutions of higher learning, Hanover College, Wabash College, Earlham College, Indiana University and Purdue University, are especially thankful for the help they received from the Dunn family when they were struggling for existence.

The founder of this family in America was James Dunn who was born in County Down, Ireland. About 1749, he married Martha Long, daughter of John Long, and in 1762 settled in Augusta County, afterward Rockingham County, Virginia. He enlisted in Rockingham County for the Revolutionary War. Sometime between 1784 and 1788, he migrated to Jessamine County, Kentucky, where he died about 1808, aged eighty-two years.

One of the sons of James and Martha (Long) Dunn was Samuel Dunn, who was born in 1750 and died at Danville, Kentucky, in 1802. In 1775, he married Elinor Brewster, the daughter of James and Elinor (Williamson) Brewster. Among their children were Williamson, Samuel and Nathaniel.

At an age when most men are contented with their surroundings, Williamson Dunn, son of Samuel and Elinor (Brewster) Dunn, made a decision which was to make him one of the foremost figures of early Indiana. He hated slavery, so, in a bold stroke, he and his brothers severed their home ties and came to Indiana.

Williamson Dunn was a striking figure. It is no wonder that he could inspire people to great endeavors. Five feet, ten and one-half inches tall, he was very strong, muscular and fair of complexion, with piercing Irish blue eyes.

In the year 1806, he married Miriam Wilson, and, in 1808, he came to the spot which is now Hanover, Indiana. Standing upon the wooded bluff, overlooking the beautiful Ohio River, Williamson Dunn was so impressed with the magnificent scenery and wonderful possibilities of the place that he determined to make it his home. Accordingly, he secured a large tract of land there. The following year he brought his young wife and two small sons to their new home in the Indiana wilderness.

For three years, Williamson Dunn lived in comparative seclusion, clearing his land and erecting buildings. In 1811, when William Henry Harrison, Governor of Indiana Territory and Commander-in-Chief of the military force in the territory, called upon him to serve as Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Jefferson County and to act as Justice of the Peace, he accepted.

After the commencement of the War of 1812, Indians, friendly to the British, became dangerous to the scattered settlers of Indiana Territory. It was in this period that the terrible Pigeon Roost Massacre occurred about twenty miles from Judge Dunn's home. Congress authorized the raising of four companies of Mounted Rangers on the frontier. Judge Dunn raised one of these companies and was commissioned captain by President Madison. The four companies were mustered into service at Madison, Indiana, on April 13, 1813. Captain Dunn's company was sent on a number of expeditions against the Indians. It was largely due to his efforts that the region around Madison did not suffer serious raids. Captain Dunn was mustered out of the service at Vincennes, Indiana, on March 23, 1814.

At the close of his military service, Captain Dunn returned to his home and resumed labor upon his farm. It was at this time that he and his wife made a profession of religion and joined the Presbyterian Church at Charles-town, Indiana. Later, he was influential in organizing the Presbyterian Church at Hanover. He became a ruling elder, which office he held during the rest of his life. In 1823 Rev. John Finley Crowe, then pastor of the Hanover Church, built a stone "meeting house" on land donated by Judge Dunn for that purpose.

Judge Dunn was appointed by President Monroe to be register of the land office at Terre Haute. In 1823, this

office was moved to Crawfordsville, where Judge Dunn and Major Whitlock, who was receiver of the land office, entered the land upon which Crawfordsville is situated.

For a number of years after the founding of Crawfordsville, it was the dream of some of its people that a College should be founded in the Wabash country. At last, on November 21, 1832, nine men met at a little brick house in Crawfordsville, the home of James Thomson, the pastor of the Crawfordsville Presbyterian Church, to found Wabash College. Of the nine men who gathered there, five were ministers, three were elders, and one was a layman. They were: James Thomson, John Steele Thomson, James A. Carnahan, Edmond O. Hovey and John Ellis, Presbyterian ministers; John Gilliland, John McConnell and Hezekiah Robertson, elders in the Crawfordsville Presbyterian Church, and Bradford King, a layman from Rochester, New York. They elected the following men as trustees of the new college: James Thomson, John Steele Thomson, James A. Carnahan, Edmond O. Hovey, and John Gilliland, who were at the meeting, and also Williamson Dunn, Samuel G. Lowry and Martin M. Post who were not present.

Williamson Dunn had donated fifteen acres of woodland for the college. On November 22, 1832, the morning after the meeting, the ministers and one or two of the other founders walked north through the woods to the chosen site. Kneeling in the snow that had fallen during the night the men dedicated the ground to the *Father*, the *Son*, and the *Holy Ghost* for a Christian college. The prayer was made by John Ellis. The first building of Wabash College, called Forest Hall, was completed in 1833, and the first class was taught in it on December 3, 1833, by the first professor, Caleb Mills. Elihu W. Baldwin was the first president.

The Hannas, Dunns, Wilsons, and Professors Hovey, Mills, and Thomson were among the earliest settlers of Crawfordsville. William Offield was the first settler in Montgomery County, and another early settler was Henry Ristine, a lieutenant in Captain Williamson Dunn's Company of Rangers. In the same year that Williamson Dunn moved to Crawfordsville, Henry Ristine also moved his family there from Madison. Crawfordsville was incorporated on October 14, 1834, and the first board of trustees was made

up of Chilion Johnson, Jacob Angle, Caleb Brown, Henry Ristine and Isaac Naylor.

There is a bronze tablet in the post office at Crawfordsville giving the names of the Revolutionary soldiers buried in Montgomery County. The names are: Jacob Miller, Sabastion Stonebraker, Samuel Gregory, James McArthur, Robert Gott, Alexander Foster, Presley Sims, John Hardee, John McNulty, Samuel Newell, John Snoddy and Jacob Westfall.

In 1829, Judge Dunn had laid off land on his farm for a village which was called South Hanover—now the town of Hanover. Here, in 1827, was founded Hanover Academy which later became Hanover College. From his farm, Judge Dunn gave land for the location of Hanover Academy and college buildings. He also gave fifty acres towards the endowment of the college and one hundred dollars in hard money.

Another son of Samuel and Elinor (Brewster) Dunn, was Samuel Dunn, Jr. He married Elizabeth Grundy, daughter of George Grundy, II, who had married Eleanor Burch. Samuel Dunn, Jr., lived on a farm which is now occupied by buildings of Indiana University. On a part of the grounds is an old cemetery, called "God's Acre," in which members of Samuel Dunn's family are buried. When the Dunn land was conveyed to the state for university purposes by Moses Dunn, grandson of Samuel Dunn, Jr., a special act was passed by the state legislature setting aside this small cemetery for the Dunn family for all time to come. Two of Elizabeth (Grundy) Dunn's sisters are also buried there; namely, Mrs. William Alexander and Mrs. Samuel Irvin. Both were widows of Revolutionary soldiers.

Samuel Dunn, Jr., moved to Bloomington, Indiana, from Kentucky about 1820 on account of slavery. His brick house was built there in 1823. He and his family were Presbyterians of the strictest type. The children of Samuel and Elizabeth (Grundy) Dunn were: George Grundy, Samuel Fowler, Felix Clellan, Williamson Dickey, William Charles, Benjamin Rice, Lucinda and Clara.

George Grundy Dunn, oldest son of Samuel and Elizabeth Dunn, was born in Kentucky on December 20, 1812, and died at Bedford, Indiana, on September 6, 1857. He married Julia Fell in 1841. They had two sons, Moses Fell Dunn and George Grundy Dunn, Jr. Moses Fell Dunn grad-

uated from Hanover College in 1862, took post-graduate work at Harvard University, and studied four years in Germany and France. In 1914 he gave the "Moses Fell Annex Farm," near Bedford, Indiana, to Purdue University. The same year, he transferred to Earlham College property willed to him by his aunt, Antoinette Fell, and made provision that two scholarships should go each year to Lawrence County, Indiana, to be known as the Fell-Dunn Scholarships. The property transferred consists of certain real estate located in the city of Bedford, Indiana, valued at about \$60,000. Moses Dunn was never married. He died on October 21, 1915, at the age of seventy-three.

Few Indiana families can boast of more men and women who were interested in college education or who showed greater zeal in furthering education in the state than can the Dunn family.