

# The Owen Family Papers

Josephine Mirabella Elliott\*

Robert Owen's experiment in communitarian living, established at New Harmony in 1825, remained in existence for only a few years.<sup>1</sup> By 1828 it had disintegrated and the property had been surveyed, subdivided, and deeded to the Owen children, relatives, and the friends who had believed in Owen's ideas strongly enough to help carry on the social experiment. Even though the community was formally dissolved, Robert Owen's four sons and one surviving daughter continued to make New Harmony their home, along with others of the distinguished group of scientists, educators, and reformers who had followed Owen in his dream. New Harmony of the 1830's, 1840's, and 1850's basked in the "afterglow," a period equally as interesting and important as the New Harmony experiment had been. The Owen children—Robert Dale, William, David Dale, Richard, and Jane—and other individuals such as William Maclure,<sup>2</sup> Charles Alexander Lesueur,<sup>3</sup> Joseph Neef,<sup>4</sup> Josiah Warren,<sup>5</sup> and William Phique-

---

\* Josephine M. Elliott (Mrs. John B.) is teacher-librarian of Hedges School Demonstration Library at Mt. Vernon, Indiana. She has served as librarian of the New Harmony Workingmen's Institute and was cataloger of the Owen Family Papers.

<sup>1</sup> Robert Owen (1771-1858) was a wealthy Scottish mill owner, idealist and social dreamer, educational and labor reformer, who bought the town of Harmonie from George Rapp and the Harmony Society in 1824. After the failure of his New Harmony experiment Owen abandoned his attempts at social reform in the United States but continued to promulgate his ideas until his death. For a discussion of Owen's ideas and the experiment at New Harmony, see Arthur Eugene Bestor, Jr., *Backwoods Utopias: The Sectarian and Owenite Phases of Communitarian Socialism in America: 1663-1829* (Philadelphia, 1950). For a sample of contemporary accounts of New Harmony and its residents, see Reuben Gold Thwaites (ed.), *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846* (32 vols., Cleveland, 1904-1907), XXII, 162-98, and Harlow Lindley (ed.), *Indiana as Seen by Early Travelers: A Collection of Reprints from Books of Travel, Letters and Diaries Prior to 1830* (Indiana Historical Collections, Vol. III; Indianapolis, 1916), 360-437.

<sup>2</sup> William Maclure was the principal associate and financial partner of Robert Owen in the development of New Harmony. An educator and scientist, he has been called "father of American geology." A substantial portion of Maclure's personal papers are in the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Alexander Lesueur was a French naturalist and artist who lived and carried on his scientific activities at New Harmony and in the Midwest between 1826 and 1837. Some Lesueur correspondence is in the Workingmen's Institute. For a description of Lesueur items in the Owen Family Papers, see pp. 337-38.

<sup>4</sup> Francis Joseph Nicholas Neef's activities at New Harmony are described briefly on pp. 336-37.

pal d'Arusmont,<sup>6</sup> exerted a lasting influence on the schools, laws, natural sciences, and society of the United States.

In the years of the Owen experiment and immediately following its abandonment, many travelers and scholars were attracted by the educational, cultural, and scientific activities at New Harmony and a number stayed to participate in them. William Maclure's interest in education and geology stimulated others to follow his lead. Richard and David Dale Owen both became geologists, the latter early developing a chemistry laboratory and geological museum which were unusually fine for that period and location. After outgrowing at least three earlier laboratories, David Dale built in 1858-1859 an extensive laboratory on the Maclure property he had purchased a few years earlier. After his death in 1860 this new laboratory was converted into a residence.<sup>7</sup> Since that time the "Owen Laboratory" has been occupied by descendants of Robert Owen.

Although all the children of Robert Owen were away for varying periods of time at school, traveling, or working at their professions, New Harmony remained their permanent home. William, David Dale, and Jane lived and died there; Richard returned to spend his summers and retired and completed his life there. Robert Dale was the only one of the five who married outside the New Harmony community and spent his later years elsewhere. Through the years a substantial portion of the family's personal papers and records, as well as other papers and records relating to the affairs of the Owen Community, have accumulated and been preserved in the Owen Laboratory. The house and the family papers are now the property of Kenneth Dale Owen of Houston, Texas, a great grandson of Richard Owen.

---

<sup>5</sup> Josiah Warren was an inventor, economist, newspaper editor, and musician, who lived at New Harmony during the Community period and again in the 1840's.

<sup>6</sup> William Phiquepal d'Arusmont was a Pestalozzian teacher sponsored by Maclure. He lived at New Harmony from 1826 to 1829. In 1831 he married social reformer Francis Wright.

<sup>7</sup> In manuscripts in the Owen Family Papers, Caroline Dale Parke Snedeker, daughter of David Owen's youngest child, Nina Dale, reports that in his will David Dale left the Laboratory to Nina Dale. She indicates that the building was converted to a residence by Nina Dale's husband, Charles Parke, and that it was sold in 1871 when the Parke family moved to Mt. Vernon, Indiana. The Owen Laboratory was included in the Historic American Buildings Survey in 1936. Measured drawings and construction details of the Laboratory are filed in the Library of Congress with copies in the Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

The Owen Family Papers include correspondence; business and personal papers; journals, diaries, and other records; and published materials by or relating to members of the Owen family. The collection also contains correspondence and other items of the Owen Community period and of the distinguished persons connected with it.<sup>8</sup> Most of the papers described in this article are related directly to members of the Owen family who lived at New Harmony. Occasional manuscript items in the collection have found their way into print as a result of personal contact and special permission granted by a member of the Owen family.<sup>9</sup> But, except for the autobiographical and professional items published by writing members of the family, the greater part of the collection has not been published.

During the past fourteen years two separate attempts have been made to arrange and classify the collection. In 1952 Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., then professor of history at the University of Illinois, cataloged one group of papers, and portions of this group were reproduced on microfilm for the Illinois Historical Survey.<sup>10</sup> The second classification program is the one with which this article is particularly concerned. During the spring of 1962 the rest of the papers that had accumulated at the Owen Laboratory were gathered together and arranged. These comprise all the papers and pictures that have been found in the house, where, as nearly as can be determined, no further unrevealed manuscripts are hidden away. During the summer of 1963 these were classified. It is hoped that eventually the significant portions of the recently

---

<sup>8</sup> This collection and the ledgers, daybooks, and other Owen Community records and papers at the Workingmen's Institute probably represent the bulk of existing manuscript materials about New Harmony during and after the Owen experiment. For descriptions of the materials in the Workingmen's Institute and other collections, see Bestor, *Backwoods Utopias*, 259-66; Richard William Leopold, *Robert Dale Owen: A Biography* (Cambridge, Mass., 1940), 419-20; Roger A. Hurst, "The New Harmony Manuscript Collections," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XXXVII (March, 1941), 45-49.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Leopold, *Robert Dale Owen: A Biography*; Walter Brookfield Hendrickson, *David Dale Owen: Pioneer Geologist of the Middle West* (*Indiana Historical Collections*, Vol. XXVII; Indianapolis, 1943); Victor L. Albjerg, *Richard Owen: Scotland 1810—Indiana 1890* (*Archives of Purdue*, No. 2; Lafayette, Ind., 1946); Bestor, *Backwoods Utopias*; William E. Wilson, *The Angel and the Serpent: The Story of New Harmony* (Bloomington, Ind., 1964).

<sup>10</sup> The group of papers cataloged by Bestor were made available by Mrs. Aline Owen Neal, sister of Kenneth Dale Owen's father, Richard Dale Owen. Mrs. Neal lived at the Owen Laboratory until her death.

cataloged collection also will be microfilmed. When this is done the materials processed by Professor Bestor and those processed in 1962-1963 will be merged into a single collection. The Owen Family Papers are not available for examination or research at this time.

Some gathering of family papers had been started in 1960-1961 by Miss Joyce Mann, hostess at the Owen Laboratory. In March, 1962, the author, with Miss Mann's help, undertook the difficult task of collecting from all possible places in the house—drawers, shelves, cupboards, attic boxes, and trunks—and physically arranging a mass of material involving hundreds of manuscripts collected over the years by generations of Owens. A basic archival principle, *respect des fonds*, had generally to be abandoned because many years of handling and rummaging by the family and early researchers had destroyed the original order. Days of quiet uninspiring drudgery were periodically enlivened by finding a Robert Owen letter in an unrelated notebook; discovering beautiful Lesueur drawings of archaeological artifacts in three widely separated locations; the revelation that an Owen Community daybook had been used by Richard Owen as a scrapbook for his clippings. After May, 1962, work ceased until July, 1963, when the final order of the major part of the collection was set up and the papers cataloged.

The largest and most important portion of the Owen Family Papers covers the period from 1795 to the 1950's. It includes the following groups of materials: (1) various journals, account books, and miscellaneous papers relating to Owen Community days and the "afterglow" period that followed; (2) correspondence and personal papers of some of the distinguished individuals who joined the New Harmony community because of their interest in Robert Owen's ideas and experiments; and (3) the correspondence and personal papers of the children of Robert Owen who came to New Harmony and there spent most of their lives, and those of a few of their descendants. The other, less significant, portion of the Owen Family Papers includes the correspondence and papers of later Owen descendants, in-law branches, and friends, and covers roughly the period from the 1850's to the 1950's. In addition to the manuscripts, there is a large collection of original paintings and drawings, both signed and un-

signed, and prints, etchings, and other art items. An equally large photographic collection portrays New Harmony people, places, and events.

The various items relating to the Owen Community and "afterglow" periods—the first of the groups of materials listed above—include some of the most unique items in the collection. One of these is an account book kept by John Burton, a carpenter who apparently worked at the English settlement established in 1817-1818 at Albion, Illinois, and at the Rappite village of Harmonie in Indiana. The account book contains such entries as "Wanbro [Wanborough] English Pririe [*sic*]" and work done "for M. Flower at Albion Tavern."<sup>11</sup> The first portion of the accounts, from 1813 to 1819, is reckoned in English money; from 1819 to 1823 the accounts are figured in American money.

The daybook of the Owen Community used by Richard Owen as a scrapbook appears to cover the period from November 12, 1825, to February 22, 1827. It consists of dated pages, each of which is devoted to a specific enterprise such as the tobacco factory, boarding schools, "Boarding House No. 3," cabinet maker's shop, "Cow's [*sic*]," the day school, "Dying [*sic*] and Weaving," farm, New Harmony improvements, orchards and nursery, the printing office, stocking factory, straw factory, shoe shop, "Tan Yard," feathers, "Barter Transactions." Items, prices, and lists of names are included on each page. The newspaper clippings posted into the daybook by Richard Owen have notations in his handwriting and include letters to the editor, speeches, articles, and other items from a variety of newspapers throughout the country. Those from the Evansville *South-Western Sentinel* are particularly interesting because copies of this newspaper, published by Josiah Warren and printed on the roller press Warren invented, are quite rare.

A legal document—a lease titled "Education Society to Robert Owen" and dated August 24, 1826—refers to land to

---

<sup>11</sup> Flower served as George Rapp's agent in the sale of the Harmonist properties to Owen in 1824, and close ties existed between the two communities during the tenures of both the Harmonists and the Owenites. According to an entry in an account book at Workingmen's Institute, Burton also worked at New Harmony during the Community period. *Day Book of the Education Society*, 187.

be used for the establishment of an iron foundry. The following signatures of important Owen Community members appear on this document:

F.J.N. Neef	RD Owen
Victor Neef	Lucy W. Sistare
L. L[B]. Neef	G. Troost
Louisa Neef	C A LeSueur
Hen Ainslie	Josiah Warren
Helen Fisher	Wm Phiquepal
M D Fretageot	Amos Clarke

Two undated maps of New Harmony and Harmony Township are of interest. Robert Dale Owen labeled the earlier of the two, "a part of New Harmony as laid out by Robert Owen." The other, post 1849, was drawn largely by Robert Dale Owen, and indicates land ownership.

The second group of materials—the personal papers of some of the prominent members of the Owen Community—includes two exquisitely done notebooks that belonged to Martha Chase, artist and teacher in the community schools and first wife of Richard Owen.<sup>12</sup> One is a music book dated approximately 1820, and the other a book of hand-drawn lace and embroidery patterns inscribed "1823, July 15 New York, United States, America." The sources of the patterns are noted in Mrs. Chase's hand.

The packet of papers relating to the Neef family contains correspondence, business and personal papers, printed articles, and clippings. Joseph Neef, a Pestalozzian teacher and protégé of William Maclure, had charge of the schools in the Community period and continued to live in New Harmony. Among the Neef papers is correspondence, exchanged before the Owen experiment began between Neef and Maclure and between Neef and Phiquepal, in which the writers discuss educational theories. Two of Neef's daughters, Caroline and Anne Eliza, married David Dale and Richard Owen. A letter written in 1854 by another daughter, Louisa Neef Evans, to her sister Anne Eliza Neef Owen in Tennessee has the penciled notation: "Louisa's letter informing us of father's death."

---

<sup>12</sup> Richard Owen was eighteen years old when he and Martha Chase were married. She died soon after.

New Harmony 10 April 1854

My dear Sister

From my last letter you will have been prepared for the melancholy news I have to impart. Our dear Father has gone to rest. He died on the 8th about mid-day, and to us who had watched by him it was a relief to see him smile to sleep. I have the consolation that he had every attention that could be given, being enabled to devote all my time to him, and whenever I needed assistance Dale [David Dale Owen] was ready to give it. Caro [Caroline Neef Owen] sent me my meals, so that I never left him. . . .

Dr. Mann made an examination of the head and found the ball (which Dale now has) it had entered about half an inch beyond the wound and dropped down and rested on the palate of the mouth. It weighs something over half an ounce.<sup>13</sup>

It was evident that it, was the whole cause of the diseased state of his head. . . .

Love to Richard and the boys from your affectionate sister

Louisa Evans

Charles Alexander Lesueur, naturalist and scientist, artist and teacher, was among the first to engage in archaeological research in the United States. During his years in New Harmony as participant in the Owen experiment and after, he made scientific investigations of a number of Posey County Indian mounds. That his interest ranged beyond the local sites, however, is borne out by a group of drawings, some delicately tinted with water colors, of archaeological finds which include effigies, axes, arrowheads, stone implements. Many of them have place identifications such as "Wabash," "Mississippi," "Missouri state," "at mouth of Mobile Bay," "Vincennes," and are accompanied by a text written in an odd combination of French and English. One drawing shows arrowheads that had been presented to him by Colonel Francis Vigo at Vincennes. A charming series of four pencil drawings of field mice, one of them partially colored, displays to advantage Lesueur's abilities as naturalist and artist.

A number of miscellaneous sheets contain notes on articles in scientific journals and what appear to be archaeological field notes. The arrangement is somewhat arbitrary because the material was found in three separate groups of papers. Dates for these items range from 1827 to 1837. Lesueur's name does not appear anywhere, but the notes are written in his customary blending of the French and English

---

<sup>13</sup> Neef had been wounded at the age of twenty-two while fighting under Napoleon at the Battle of Arcola in Italy in 1796.

languages, and careful comparison of the distinctive script with known Lesueur handwriting leaves little doubt that these exciting manuscripts are his.<sup>14</sup>

The third group of significant materials in the Owen Family Papers, the group containing the largest number of items, is composed of the correspondence and personal papers of the children of Robert Owen and their immediate families. As these and other papers were cataloged, all genealogical information was brought together and a number of charts were worked out in an attempt to provide a complete and up-to-date family record. The notes and charts and the correspondence, especially that with the Scotch collateral lines, testify to the interest and family pride of Robert Owen's descendants.

An extensive assortment of legal documents offers a varied view of the Owen sons' dealings, furnishing insights into their honest straight-forward characters—and indicating that they did not always demonstrate good business sense. There are numerous deeds drawn up among the four Owen sons or with their relatives and friends. The "Owen Trust" papers are concerned with the money Robert Owen had set aside in 1844 for his children, and include the petition dated October 29, 1869, for partition of the fund. Another matter, the estate of Robert Owen's father-in-law, David Dale, Esq., or the "Scotch business," as the family called it, caused some strain on relationships: there is correspondence between Robert Dale Owen as trustee and Richard, and between Richard and several nephews representing other branches and generations, stating some displeasure with the business management of Robert Dale Owen. Feeling for family outweighs all else, however, as indicated in the following quotation from a letter written by David Dale Owen's son-in-law:

I sincerely hope the affair can be settled without causing any ill feeling among members of the family; I am somewhat proud of my connection with the Owen family, which has always, among other good traits, been celebrated for unanimity of feeling and kindnesses toward each other, and I would dislike very much to see them go to law among themselves over the settlement of their grandfather's and their great grandfather's estates. I am always ready and willing to assist him [Robert Dale Owen] pecuniarily if he needs it in his old age and infirmities.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> These items are on fine rag paper bearing the watermark "Napoléon Empereur des Français Roi d'Italie."

<sup>15</sup> Charles Parke to Ernest Dale Owen, son of Robert Dale Owen, fragment (1875-1876?).



In another business matter, a misunderstanding over boundaries arose among Robert Dale Owen, his brother Richard, and John Elliott.<sup>16</sup> Robert Dale wanted no trouble with his brother, saying in a letter dated February 17, 1865, and addressed to Richard at Bloomington: "I lay all this before you not in the way of complaint, I know it happened by the blunder of an ignorant country surveyor. . . ."

The Owen Family papers have only three new Robert Owen items. That Owen was still true to his social beliefs in his eighty-first year is evident in a letter to Richard dated February 20, 1852. After duly commenting on his own grandchildren, he expresses his views on the rearing of children in general. He believes the exhibition going on at the Crystal Palace in London makes for the removal of national prejudices. He has strong hopes for the rapprochement of the United States and Great Britain; in fact, he has recently sent a proposal to President Fillmore and his cabinet that there be one nation made up of the Anglo-Saxon family. He wishes to introduce the Rational System of Society among governments and people. He reports that his health continues good although he is advancing in years. Even if the cataloger had not been familiar with Robert Owen's distinctive spidery script, a letter expressing such characteristic ideas could have been identified immediately though it was found in a totally unexpected place. The presence in the collection of a copy of the *Illustrated London News* showing the "exterior of the Crystal Palace erected in Hyde Park for the Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations, August 2, 1851," can probably be attributed to Robert Owen's thoughtfulness. A letter written by Richard's young sons, Eugene and Horace, thanks "Grandfather" for the newspaper about the "Glass Palace."

Robert Dale Owen (1801-1877)<sup>17</sup> was the oldest son of Robert Owen. He became one of the leaders of the Owen Community and with Frances Wright edited the *New Harmony Gazette* and the *Free Enquirer*.<sup>18</sup> A philosopher and

---

<sup>16</sup> John Elliott was the son of James Elliott, a member of the Owen Community who with other "English farmers" helped set up an offshoot community called Feiba-Peveli.

<sup>17</sup> For details of Robert Dale Owen's life and activities, see Leopold, *Robert Dale Owen: A Biography*.

<sup>18</sup> Frances Wright was a social reformer and a leader in the free thought movement who lived at New Harmony for a short time during 1827-1828. The *Free Enquirer* was published at New York in the 1830's. Miss Wright and d'Arusmont were married in France in 1831.

social reformer, he served state and country as member of the Indiana General Assembly and of Congress. In 1853-1858 he was at Naples as United States Minister to the Court of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Later in life he devoted most of his attention to the scientific investigation of spiritualism. Of the papers in the collection that relate to Robert Dale's public and private life, probably the most significant is the diary of a journey he took in 1827 with Frances Wright from New Harmony to Nashoba, a colony the latter had established in Tennessee to provide a way for selected Negro slaves to purchase their freedom and passage to Africa through a system of cooperative labor. The diary also describes his visits as he and Miss Wright continued the trip to New Orleans and Paris, and his journey as he went on alone to London, and to Braxfield, the Owen family home in Scotland, where he visited his mother and sisters.

The diary contains a copy of a letter Robert Dale wrote on May 3 to his mother. Describing the New Harmony community, he says that "the principal community in the town of New Harmony itself no longer exists as such, each occupation working and acting for itself." He goes on to describe Frances Wright and her coming to New Harmony, and tells of her Nashoba experiment. They spent the week of May 6 to 13 at Nashoba, which Robert Dale describes thus:

The land is not rich, producing about 35 bushels of corn an acre [on the cover he notes ". . . a little more than half what Harmony did"] . . . there are about 100 acres cleared; 2 double log-cabins, 1 single one, besides a cabin for the negroes' dining-room; and on the outside small cabins for the negroes. *May 6-13* The establishment appears to me likely to progress slowly; but I think it is established on correct principles, a bold and decided experiment to *live* according to correct principles. All that appears to me necessary to ensure success is to proceed gradually not overrunning the means that may be commanded and to be particularly careful in the admission of members.

Owen and Miss Wright then proceeded to New Orleans, where some time was spent making arrangements for the sea voyage and, because of adverse weather conditions, even more time passed before they got to sea. On July 27 they landed at Le Havre. The diary notes that on August 3 he wrote to his "sister Anne a letter of which the following [is] an extract. . . ." He explains in some detail his reluctance to stay in New Harmony; his own and his father's principles

are similar, but "his ideas of practice and mine now differ widely." He describes his feelings toward Frances Wright: "I esteem Miss Wright highly; I like her principles and feelings; I admire her talents; I value her friendship . . . and yet not withstanding . . . I am no more likely to fall in love (as it is called) with her than with yourself. . . . I know many who, for me, are more interesting. Her younger sister, for instance. . . ." He explains that he accompanied Frances on this trip as "an act of friendship" and nothing more, no matter what the world may construe from his action. He reports that Miss Wright was ill and could not travel alone and that it was necessary that her sister Camilla stay at Nashoba.

With Miss Wright he spent a few days visiting General Lafayette—a man whom he vastly admired—at the General's country home. There he left Frances, who was to stay with her old friend and try to recover her health. The last formal entry in the diary is for August 31. There is, however, the following notation written in pencil: "Then went to Braxfield. Got there about September 5 and staid till October 19. See succeeding cahier." But the "succeeding" notebook is not in this collection.

Mary Jane Robinson (1813-1871) married Robert Dale Owen on April 12, 1832. She was well educated and an active participant in the social reform movements of the period and in the intellectual and cultural life of New Harmony. Mary Jane usually remained at New Harmony when Robert Dale Owen was traveling, but she did accompany him to Washington during his second term in Congress and also to Europe when he began his ministry at Naples. During the first year abroad, however, she and Jane Dale Owen Fauntleroy lived at Stuttgart, Germany, where they supervised the education of their children (four each) and that of Alfred, son of David Dale Owen. In the Owen Family Papers are several letters describing this period which Mary Jane Robinson Owen wrote from Stuttgart to brother-in-law Richard. Also in the collection is a journal dated Paris, July 2, 1832, which bears her signature and contains what are probably her observations made on a journey in France. The journal also includes biographical, philosophical, and political notes; some of these notes are in her husband's handwriting and others were written by an unidentified person.

David Dale Owen (1807-1860), the third son of Robert, first participated in the Owen Community from 1828 to 1830. After a year in New York and two years studying chemistry and geology in London, David Dale returned to New Harmony in 1833. He set up his first chemistry laboratory in 1834 in the kitchen of the house then occupied by all the Robert Owen children. In 1835-1837 he studied medicine and was awarded a medical degree in 1837. Between 1836 and 1859, David Dale made numerous geological surveys of various states and territories and established an international reputation as an authority on the geology of the Midwest. He was appointed the first state geologist of Indiana in 1837—a position he was to hold several times—and director for the United States geological survey of the Chippewa Land District in Iowa and Wisconsin in 1847. The Owen Laboratory, the last of several he arranged and equipped, was completed in 1859, but he used it only briefly before his death. He married Caroline C. Neef, third daughter of Joseph Neef, at the Triple Wedding, March 23, 1837, when his brother Richard married Caroline's younger sister, Anne Eliza Neef, and brother William married Mary Bolton, daughter of another participant in the Owen experiment.<sup>19</sup>

David Dale Owen's papers contain a medical class notebook dated 1836 and several letters largely about his scientific work written to his brother Richard; to Edward T. Cox, a New Harmony geologist and colleague; and to some political figures. The most unusual item among his papers is the rough draft of the article, "Regarding Human Foot-Prints in Solid Limestone . . .," which he wrote for the *American Journal of Science and Arts*.<sup>20</sup> He discussed the various theories that had been expressed concerning the origin of the footprints on a limestone slab still to be seen in New Harmony. His conclusions, based on his geological knowledge, were that the footprints are Indian petroglyphs. Two features of this rough draft are of special interest. First, it contains the letter written to R. L. Baker, a Harmony Society trustee at Economy, Pennsylvania, by Paul Anderson, who had been in charge of quarrying the slab of limestone and shipping it from the

---

<sup>19</sup> For further information on David Dale Owen's life and activities, see Hendrickson, *David Dale Owen: Pioneer Geologist of the Middle West*.

<sup>20</sup> Volume XLIII (July, 1842), 14-32.

Mississippi River bank near St. Louis to Frederick Rapp in Harmonie, Indiana, in 1819. The letter describes the circumstances and the original location of the stone.<sup>21</sup> Second, most of the article draft is in Robert Dale Owen's handwriting instead of David Dale Owen's, which causes some speculation.

Jane Dale Owen (1806-1861), youngest daughter of Robert Owen, came to New Harmony in 1833 after her mother and two older sisters had died in Scotland within a two-year period. Equally as gifted intellectually both in literature and science as her brothers, she often assisted them in their scientific writings. In 1835 she married Robert H. Fauntleroy, a civil engineer from Virginia. After the early death of her husband in 1849, she set up a school for young ladies. As has been noted, in 1853 she and her four children accompanied Robert Dale Owen and his family abroad, where the children were given the advantages of a continental education.

Few of Jane Dale Owen's papers are in this collection. One, however, a letter dated April 17, 1837, is of interest. It is addressed to her three brothers and their wives—the six principals at the Triple Wedding which had taken place only a few weeks before:

My dear Brothers and Wives—

How goes the world with you? Is the honeymoon as bright a luminary as it pretends to be? Fie on it if you have allowed one cloud of discontent to disfigure its pretty face though its cause be ever so legitimate, though the hearth has been swept twice too clean and the bread has turned out twice too heavy.

By this time too no doubt the notable housekeepers have cleared away all traces of their disorderly sisterhood and you all look as neat and prim as old maids and bachelors.

Richard Owen (1810-1890), a geologist and doctor, was the youngest son of Robert Owen. He served as an officer in both the Mexican and the Civil wars; taught at Western Military Institute in Tennessee from 1849 to 1859; and from 1864 to 1879 was a professor at Indiana University, where he taught geology, chemistry, natural philosophy, and languages. He helped plan Purdue University and was its first president, but resigned in 1874 before the first classes were held. The years of retirement were spent in scientific research. He shared with his father and with his brother, Robert

---

<sup>21</sup> The letter from Anderson to Baker is quoted in full in Wilson, *Angel and the Serpent*, 73.

Dale, their keen interest in education and social reform, but carried on his activities more within the academic framework than did they. His first wife, Martha Chase, was an art teacher and a member of the Owen Community; his second wife was Anne Eliza, youngest daughter of Joseph Neef.<sup>22</sup>

Richard Owen's papers make up the largest part of the Owen Family Papers. They include his personal, business, professional, and scientific correspondence, and the journals, memos, and field books he kept of his geological surveys. Hundreds of his manuscripts were found all over the Laboratory, and many had to be examined sheet by sheet in order to identify and classify them. Richard Owen used every imaginable scrap of paper that was handy; sometimes a small sheet will contain notes on as many as five or six subjects, most of them in memorandum form, and he seems never to have discarded any of them! It is apparent from the arrangement of the rare undisturbed portions of the collection that Richard Owen himself had left his papers in a kind of order. This is particularly true of the materials he used for teaching. Packets of lecture notes and articles for newspapers and professional journals were found still tied in their pieces of old twine and ribbon and neatly piled in his trunks.

Richard Owen's correspondence covering the years 1840-1889 numbers almost two hundred and fifty items. Among them are letters (or copies) to and from his wife and children; his father; his brothers and their wives; editors of newspapers and periodicals; scientific and educational colleagues—Louis Agassiz, Baron Alexander von Humboldt, James Dwight Dana, James Hall, Leo Lesquereux, Theophilus A. Wylie, Edward T. Cox, Eugene R. Boch, Daniel Kirkwood; Horace Greeley; politicians and statesmen—Governor Oliver P. Morton of Indiana, Presidents Lincoln and Grant, Vice President Schuyler Colfax, James G. Blaine. The subjects include Richard's personal, family, and business affairs; his work and publications; the Mexican War; Western Military Institute; the Civil War—such topics as military affairs, Camp Morton at Indianapolis, Vicksburg; his years as a teacher at Indiana University; the

---

<sup>22</sup> Albjerg, *Richard Owen: Scotland 1810—Indiana 1890*, provides information on Richard's varied activities.

International Geological Congress in 1885; exchanges of views on scientific research after his retirement.

Richard's recording of the minutiae of his daily life provides much raw material for a full-scale biography. His personal papers abound in autobiographical information: "Notes for Autobiography," "List of Writings," daily schedules; notes on a trip to Europe and the Holy Land in 1869; expense memoranda; mailing lists; diet information; recipes, formulas, and prescriptions; organization memberships; attitude toward religion; ideas on immigration; his certificate of naturalization, dated October 8, 1835, and his passport; pros and cons of taking the teaching post at Indiana University; his faculty duties at Bloomington; programs for social, church, and university events; public honors.

The papers relating to Richard's professional and scientific activities reveal a man of wide interests and abilities. They cover such subjects as physics and chemistry; geology and meteorology; geography, botany, and zoology; anatomy, physiology, and hygiene; education; fine arts, language, and literature. Among these papers are materials used for teaching, such as lecture notes, memoranda, and examinations; lectures and addresses to various audiences and learned societies; drafts of articles and letters to newspapers or journals; and notes and rough drafts for survey reports. Many copies and variations of drafts occur for the same article or lecture. This is particularly true of his geological and meteorological writings: the same title sometimes will have as many as six copies in varying degrees of completeness. Though they are written in longhand, these may have been intended for the colleagues and correspondents on his lengthy mailing list.

That the son adhered to many of his father's ideas is revealed in Richard's papers on educational theory: "Infant Schools," "Education, Female," "Admitting Ladies to the Indiana University." In a memorandum he says:

If it is proved that Ladies should be admitted to college classes anywhere, I know of no reason why they should not to the Indiana University. . . . I shall endeavor to show that this would be nothing more than justice. . . . To woman is peculiarly entrusted the early

care of youth, when the character is forming, therefore she should have every facility for acquiring the best education that the parental means will permit. . . . But the great advantage is in the refinement of manners communicated to the young men who might otherwise suffer from rudeness or awkwardness. . . .

As Purdue's first president, Richard Owen spent several years, without pay, in assembling plans for the new college. In a packet he inscribed "Plans for the State Agricultural College" are drawings of the physical layout, a course of study, financial estimates, and much background information.

The manuscript of Richard Owen's *Key to the Geology of the Globe* (Nashville, 1857), and the incomplete manuscript of his *Report of a Geological Reconnoissance of Indiana, made during the years 1859 and 1860* (Indianapolis, 1862) are in the collection. One packet concerns his entry for the international contest for popularizing the study of geography, sponsored in 1885 by the King of Belgium, and illustrates the thoroughness of Richard's scientific mind. He was then in his seventies. In this packet are "memoranda for typewriting," labels for models and a sheet listing the materials needed for their construction, and even the exchange of letters with a Madame Montagnier of Cincinnati, who helped with the French translation.

Among Richard's papers are journals, ledgers, account books, geological field books, memoranda, copybooks, and notebooks—altogether there are fourteen of these items. Several are notebooks of medical lectures at the University of Nashville; in addition to class notes these contain later notes and lists on many other subjects. The geological survey field books are particularly interesting. One, dated May-August, 1849, is the journal of a trip taken along the Upper Mississippi and the north shore of Lake Superior and contains observations of an ethnological nature. For example, the June 19 entry reports the following, which occurred at "a trading post in the Indian Country":

Naganuk and Shingook (another chief) have just paid us a visit and are now sitting cross-legged on the floor of our tent, smoking their pipes and having a talk with Dr. Norwood; the remainder crowding round the tent and squatting where they can listen. Naganuk appears to me to have lost the natural grace peculiar to many of the Indians and to be rather constrained in his movements in his military coat. While



smoking he has deposited his black silk gloves on his crossed legs. His boy accompanies him clothed in bright scarlet leggings and a blue coat with green cuffs and facings. Some of them have a band to confine the hair, placed halfway back of the head, the front portion of hair being cut short and square across, the posterior portion long and plaited, three white colored earrings in each ear.

Sketches clarify the description. The other field books relate to the Indiana geological surveys of 1859 and 1860, and include field sketches and careful lists of itineraries and expenses. That Richard was a man of memoranda is illustrated by one small book, which contains notes on such diverse subjects as "Table of High Temperatures"; "Wards (Large) Fossils in Museum"; "List of desirable Bks. for Purdue"; numerous items headed "mem"; comments on his own and his wife's health; "Boxes and contents packed May, 1873."

After his retirement from Indiana University in 1879, Richard spent the last eleven years of his life in scientific research, with emphasis in the field of terrestrial magnetism. It is during this time that he experimented and wrote articles for professional journals, prepared papers for the meetings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and carried on a lively correspondence with his scientific colleagues. A notebook on seismology is filled with observations on earthquakes which he used in his later treatises. In one notebook dating from this period was a loose sheet on which were listed "Facts supposed not to have been published until I gave them to A.A.A.S. or other sources."

The members of the Owen family were closely associated with New Harmony's cultural and social life. The collection at the Laboratory contains several items indicating that their broad interests and their contributions to the community's development continued long after the Owen experiment. Among these is a rough draft of the constitution of the Posey County Agricultural Society, dated 1859 and written by Richard Owen. Also in the collection are the minutes of the New Harmony Society for Mutual Improvement, a literary society organized by the members of the Workingmen's Institute but independent of it. The minutes cover the period from 1879 to 1883 and are inscribed by various secretaries.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Richard Owen was a member of the committee that wrote the constitution of the Society for Mutual Improvement, and served as its president from September, 1879, to May, 1883.

Perhaps the most exciting item in this portion of the collection is a small packet of original writings for the Minerva Society, one of the earliest women's clubs in the country. These compositions include the inaugural address of the first president, written in her own hand, dated September 26, 1859, and signed "Constance Faunt Le Roy."<sup>24</sup> Two literary pieces written by Mary Sampson<sup>25</sup> specifically for the meetings of January 16, 1860, and June 24, 1861, display the quality of the work expected by her Minerva Society sisters. One letter in the packet discusses the Society and encloses the "Role of Members" for 1863, describing the activities of member participants.<sup>26</sup>

A small copybook, written in an unknown hand and containing both Mary Sampson's and Florence Dale Owen Cooper's<sup>27</sup> writings for the Minerva Society, injects two notes of poignancy. One section of the copybook is headed: "Mary's Prose and Poetry Copied Dec. 29, 1862, First Composition, written for the Minerva." This section includes "The Wind," which is identified as Mary's "Last Piece" and is a sad reminder of her tragic death. Another entry has the following note: "Since beginning the copying of our darling Mary's poetry the heart breathings of Florence the light of our home circle, are left me to place side by side with those writings she so dearly loved during her life." This moving entry refers to Florence Cooper, who had literally worn herself to death at the age of twenty-seven nursing in the Civil War hospital at Evansville. The compositions preserved in this copybook indicate that the Minerva Society members were well educated

---

<sup>24</sup> Constance Owen Fauntleroy, later Mrs. James Runcie, was a daughter of Jane Dale Owen Fauntleroy. She played an important role in the women's club movement in the United States.

<sup>25</sup> Mary Sampson became the wife of Robert Dale Owen's son Julian Dale. She drowned in August, 1862, while traveling down the Mississippi River to visit her husband, who was stationed at Helena, Arkansas.

<sup>26</sup> Lydia Hinckley to Della Mann (later the wife of Richard Owen's son Eugene Fellenberg Owen), January 25, 1863.

<sup>27</sup> Florence Dale Owen was the older daughter of Robert Dale Owen. She was married at Naples to Dr. James Cooper while her father was minister to the Court of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. After the birth of their son the Coopers agreed upon a separation; the mutual agreement was found among Robert Dale Owen's papers in the Laboratory.

and had gifts beyond those expected of teenagers and young adults today.

The succeeding generations of the Owen family continued to be a closely-knit group. They corresponded profusely and at length with each other and with numerous aunts, uncles, and cousins of the collateral lines. All members of the family up to the present time are represented in the Owen Family Papers. Of special interest, however, are the Civil War letters of Robert Owen's grandchildren, the first American-born generation of Owens. Other correspondence and papers of particular interest are those of the literary Owens. Among these are the papers of Rosamond Dale Owen Oliphant Templeton,<sup>28</sup> who had a delightfully bizarre personality and life, and of Caroline Dale Parke Snedeker, the author of a number of young people's books which include reminiscences of New Harmony and the Owen family.

The items that comprise the Picture Collection were as widely scattered throughout the Laboratory as were the manuscripts. In this collection are approximately one hundred drawings and paintings done in pencil, watercolors, wash, and bistre, and almost two hundred prints, including etchings and lithographs. A number of the originals are the work of Charles Alexander Lesueur, the four Owen brothers, Martha Chase, and other members of the Owen Community artist group. Some are signed or have notations which make it possible to attribute them to particular individuals. Many are scenes of New Harmony and its environs as they appeared at the time of the Owen experiment and are invaluable for supplying authentic versions of the Harmonist buildings and layout of the town. For example, a pencil drawing of the Harmonist Church has the notation: "The Hall or brick church in about 1832 when the wall began to crack out a bit, window supported by a beam. (Taken from the N. W.)." The note is in Richard's handwriting, but the drawing is signed "Martha." On another is the note, written probably by Richard: "(D. D. Owen's First Laboratory drawn by my bro. William) 22 Aug.

---

<sup>28</sup> Rosamond Dale Owen was Robert Dale Owen's younger daughter. Her first husband, spiritualist Sir Lawrence Oliphant, died a short time after their marriage. Her second husband was Murray Templeton, an associate of Oliphant.

1829. From Nature—Part of Steam Mill St. N. Harmony, Ia. William Owen inv. et del.”<sup>29</sup>

A drawing titled “The Lady Washington, a sandstone bluff at Rockport Spencer Co. on the Ohio,” is signed “D. D. Owen” and appears to be the original drawing for an illustration used in Richard Owen’s *Report of a Geological Reconnaissance of Indiana, made during the years 1859 and 1860*.

Subjects of the unsigned original drawings are the town and its surroundings, foliage, landscapes, still lifes, figures, animals, faces, and a large number of European scenes, mainly Scotland, Switzerland, and Germany. The artists are probably the persons already mentioned. Many of the drawings were undoubtedly produced in the art classes taught by Martha Chase and Lesueur. Some seem to have been used by the classes because they are numbered or otherwise marked. Quite a few are dated or identified as to place by Robert Dale, Richard, and possibly David Dale. It is interesting to be able to compare several artists’ versions of the same subject. For example, there are two renderings, both in bistre and both dated October, 1830, of a bewitching old tree stump. One of the drawings, the finer of the two, is titled, “Clorion après Ct. Bourgeois.” New Harmony street scenes showing the Harmonist buildings, views of the town from Indian Mound hill, the Cut-Off Stream, and the exquisite water colors of river views (probably painted by Martha Chase since they were found in her paintbox) seem as bright and clear today as they were more than a hundred years ago. The note on a charming pencil drawing of the Rapp-Maclure home contains the following bits of history: “Probable site of D. D. Owen’s house,” written in Richard’s hand; “Residence of the Free Enquirer” written by Robert Dale; and written faintly in the upper left hand corner, “X 38” (October, 1838?). An unsigned watercolor of Braxfield, the Owen family home in

---

<sup>29</sup> Photographs of these original drawings were made by early New Harmony photographers such as William Lichtenberger and Homer Fauntleroy. The photographs are in the collections of the Indiana State Library and the Indiana Historical Society Library, Indianapolis, and of Don Blair and the Workingmen’s Institute at New Harmony.

Scotland, with the place name written in by Robert Dale Owen, causes speculation as to when and by whom it was painted.

The prints in the picture collection date from late eighteenth through the early and mid-nineteenth centuries. Subjects are people of distinction in world affairs, politics, and literature; some are portraits of individuals connected with New Harmony, such as a picture of William Maclure done in 1824 which has the following notation in Richard's hand: "Wm. Maclure, at about age 50, I think." Many are landscapes, seascapes, buildings in England, Scotland, Switzerland, Italy, France, and the United States. A group of early prints contains a number of fine and rare bird items, among them Titian R. Peale's "Wild Turkey." Another group of thirty-one prints, largely of animals, probably belonged to Robert Dale since they have notations in his handwriting and were discovered in a book of views of Florence, Italy, which belonged to his wife, Mary Jane. The book is dated 1857, during the time he was at the Court of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. One group contains prints probably used as models for art class study because the same subjects that are in the prints turn up in drawings made by both Robert Dale Owen and David Dale Owen.<sup>30</sup>

The variety of the materials in the Owen Family Papers demonstrates the wide range of social, cultural, scientific, and educational interests of Robert Owen's children and their families. The collection also adds information about the activities of some of the gifted men and women who first came to New Harmony because of the ideas and plans of Owen and Maclure. The Owenites "left few physical marks upon the town, but the culture and tradition they established have persisted in the quiet and lovely little village on the Wabash . . . . Because of them, it has attracted, through the years, many of the best minds in the country; and its history is unequalled by any other town of its size in the reforms and social movements it has inaugurated."<sup>31</sup>

The individuals represented in the collection, and other talented residents of the Owen Community—such as scientists

---

<sup>30</sup> One drawing, David Dale Owen's version of Vernet's "Horse's Head," is in the Workingmen's Institute art gallery.

<sup>31</sup> William E. Wilson, *The Wabash* (New York, 1940), 148.

Thomas Say and Gerard Troost, educator Marie Duclos Fretageot, artist Lucy Sistaire Say, engraver Cornelius Tiebout—"remained to illuminate the western wilderness with their literary and scientific learning and . . . furnished a social coterie which never ceased to astonish and delight visitors. . . ." <sup>32</sup> But from the start the Owen children and their families were the leaders around whom the social and scientific life of the community developed. In the Owen Family Papers the purposes, impetus, and imprint of the inheritors of the culture and traditions of Robert Owen and William Maclure are plainly exhibited.

---

<sup>32</sup> Clarence P. Wolfe, *The Story of New Harmony* ([New Harmony, 1930]), 11. Among the scholars and travelers who were attracted to New Harmony in the decades following the end of the Owen experiment were Constantine Rafinesque, Maximilian Prinz zu Wied-Neuwied, Karl Bodmer, Frances Trollope, Karl Bernhard Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, John James Audubon, Sir Charles Lyell.