

Program: New Harmony, IN

Speaker: William H. Dick, MD, Sciencetech Club Historian

Introduced by: William Dick **Attendance:** 111

Guests: Dennis Mathews, Lynn Cohee, Howard Creveling, Cathy Roy, Roberta Walton

Scribe: William Dick **Editor:** Carl Warner

What are the chances that two men from different European countries could occupy the same land in America 200 years ago? What may seem to be a long shot is not. Both men were determined, innovative gentlemen who wanted the freedom to pursue their grand dream. It could not be done in the British Isles by Robert Owen or in southwest Germany by George Rapp. Such freedom was only available in the United States of America. America had quite a lot of land, and one could meet with the President to discuss land purchase. There was some land in the Indiana Territory.....

George Rapp was from the Wurttemberg area of southwest Germany near the Rhine River. He was a religious reformer who formed the Harmony Society in 1785. Rapp told a government official that he was a prophet. His followers, the Separatists, refused military service or to attend Lutheran schools (1798 Lomersheimer Declaration). Goods were held in common and Rapp maintained strict spiritual control. They believed in the Second Coming of Christ and practiced celibacy.

Rapp stated that the government was tyrannical; the government said that Rapp and his followers were a threat to civil order. Suddenly, Rapp decamped to Harmony, Pennsylvania (north of Pittsburgh) with 400 followers. He met with President Thomas Jefferson to discuss land further west. In 1804, Congress denied Rapp that land by one vote but he obtained it in 1814, when he purchased 20,000 acres of Wabash Valley land.

Robert Owen was from Wales but he worked at the New Lanark mill in Scotland. His wife's father owned the mill and Owen managed it. He was a great manager and he treated employees with respect. There was no child labor; free medical care and education were provided; and working conditions were safe. When Owen lobbied Parliament for these conditions to be applied to all similar workplaces, they refused.

Owen wanted to build a model community and he thought that the U.S. would provide the chance. He met with President James Monroe in Washington and with Rapp in Harmony, Pennsylvania. Owen knew that Rapp and the Germans had built 160 homes, a spinning factory, a threshing machine, a brewery, distillery and a winery. They also had good farms and had a wagon maker and carpentry shop. Owen purchased the town of Harmony, Indiana and 20,000 acres for \$125,000. Even though Owen lasted only two years in Indiana, New Harmony survived.

Owen's sons and William Maclure, a wealthy Scotsman, managed the town and brought educators and scientists from the east, mostly from Philadelphia. Maclure and the Owen family added to this foundation. They emphasized education for all and scholarship, especially in the sciences – geology, zoology and mapmaking.

New Harmony's Maclure was the father of American Geology; Thomas Say was the Father of American Zoology; Charles-Alexandre Leuseur classified Great Lakes fish; and Marie Duclos Fretageot managed the Infant's School and a store. In addition, Robert Dale Owen was a social reformer and served in the Indiana legislature and the U.S. House. His brother David Dale Owen was a physician and he did a geological survey of Indiana and Kentucky. Another brother, Richard Owen,

was a colonel in the Civil War and was the first president of Purdue University. Owen Hall at Indiana and also at Purdue are named for him.

It is a rich heritage that New Harmony has left us. From the first co-ed schools and library to the first town band and commercial brewery, New Harmony boasts many firsts. Over 30 structures from the 1800's exist today, most from the 1814-1822 period. It is certainly worth a visit.

William Dick

