

Col. Abraham Owen (1769-1811)

By Jerry Long
c.2024



Col. Abraham Owen (1769-1811)



Daviess County, Kentucky Celebrating Our Heritage, 1815-2015
(Evansville, IN, M. T. Publishing Company, Inc., 2015),
“Daviess County Bicentennial Chronology – 200 Historical Events,”
by Jerry Long in celebration of Daviess County’s Bicentennial, p.7:

1817, 2-3

Owensboro was named in honor of Col. Abraham Owen, of Shelby County, KY, who was killed in campaign against the Indians at the Battle of Tippecanoe in Indiana on 7 November 1811. An act of the Kentucky General Assembly enacted on this date provided that the town formerly called Rossboro and Yellow Banks “shall hereafter be called and known by the name of Owensborough”. The latter spelling was used in the annual Daviess County tax books throughout the 1820’s & 1830’s but beginning in the 1840 book the spelling of Owensboro is utilized. When the

first newspaper was published in 1842 “Owensboro” appeared in its banner and that is the spelling utilized when the town was granted a city charter in 1866. The spelling of Owensboro appeared on state maps published in 1824, 1827 & 1839. Owensboro became the official spelling when the town received a city charter on 16 February 1866.



**The Kentucky Encyclopedia, John E. Kleber, editor,
The University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, KY, 1992, p.699:**

ABRAHAM OWEN

Col. Abraham Owen, for whom Owen County and the city of Owensboro were named, was a native of Prince Edward County, Virginia, who moved to Kentucky in 1785, settling in what is now Shelby County. He served in the summer of 1791 in the campaigns on the White and Wabash rivers in Indiana and was twice wounded. Elected to the legislature in 1799, he was also a member of the state's constitutional convention in that year. In 1811 he volunteered to serve with Gen. William Henry Harrison in his campaign against the Indians in Indiana, and was killed at the battle of Tippecanoe on November 7, 1811, at almost the same time that Col. Joseph Hamilton Daveiss was mortally wounded. On February 3, 1817, the General Assembly provided that the town formerly called Rossboro "shall hereafter be called and known by the name of Owensborough."

See Lee A. Dew and Aloma W. Dew, Owensboro: The City on the Yellow Banks (Bowling Green, Ky. 1988).

LEE A. DEW



**Collins Historical Sketches of Kentucky: History of Kentucky, Vol. II,
Lewis Collins & Richard H. Collins, Collins & Co., Covington, KY, 1878, p.672:**

OWEN COUNTY.

Colonel ABRAHAM OWIN, In honor of whom this county received its name, was born in Prince Edward county, Virginia, in the year 1769, and emigrated to Shelby county, Kentucky, in 1785. The particulars of his early life are not known, and his first appearance on the public theatre and in the service of the country, was upon Wilkinson's campaign, in the summer of 1791, on the White and Wabash rivers. He was a lieutenant in Captain Lemon's company in St. Clair's defeat, November 4th, 1791, and received two wounds in that engagement —one on the chin, and the other in the arm. He was in the expedition led by Colonel Hardin to White river, and participated in the action which routed the Indians in their hunting camps. His brother John, James Ballard and others of Shelby county, were his associates on this occasion. It is not known that he was in Wayne's campaign; but in 1796, he was surveyor of Shelby county, and afterwards a magistrate. He commanded the first militia company raised in the county, and the late venerable Singleton Wilson, of Shelbyville, brother of the late Dr. Wilson of Cincinnati, was the lieutenant. They had

been associates in Wilkinson's campaign, and the humane efforts of Colonel Owen to provide for the wants and promote the comforts of his companion, were illustrative of his general good character. Owen was soon promoted to be a major, and then colonel of the regiment. Lieutenant Wilson was promoted to the rank of captain, having served with distinction as a spy in the campaign led by General Wayne.

Col. Owen was, soon after, elected to the legislature, by the largest vote ever before polled in the county; and, in 1799, was chosen a member of the convention which framed our present constitution. Shortly before his death, he was a member of the senate of Kentucky. No man in the county had a stronger hold in the affections of the people, whom he was always ready to serve in peace or in war. In 1811, he was the first to join Gov. Harrison at Vincennes, for the purpose of aiding in the effort to resist the hostile movements of the Indian bands collected by the energy and influence of Tecumseh and his brother, the Prophet. He was chosen by Gen. Harrison to be one of his aids-de-camp; and, at the memorable battle of Tippecanoe, fell at the side of his heroic chief, bravely fighting for his country, deeply regretted by the whole army and by his numerous friends in Kentucky. In battle he was fearless—as a citizen, mild and gentlemanly. He was esteemed an excellent officer on parade, and possessed a high order of military talent.

In the following December, the legislature of Kentucky went into mourning for the loss of colonels Daveiss and Owen, and others who had fallen at Tippecanoe; and, in 1819-20, the memory of Col. Owen was perpetuated by a county bearing his name. McAfee, in his history of the late war, says: " His character was that of a good citizen and a brave soldier;" which Butler, in his history of Kentucky, speaking of him, pronounces to be "no little praise in a republic and in a warlike State."

He left a large family to unite with his country in deploring his premature fall. His daughters intermarried with the most respectable citizens of Henry county, and his son Clark is a distinguished citizen of Texas, having won a high rank in her civil and military annals. His brothers, Robert and William, survive him, and are highly respectable citizens of Shelby county. His father was an early settler, of high standing and marked character. His fort, near Shelbyville, was the resort of intrepid families of that day, and may be said to have been the foundation of the capital of the flourishing county of Shelby. The chivalric patriotism of Col. Owen, in leaving a position of ease and civil distinction at home, to volunteer his services against the north-western savages, is truly illustrative of the Kentucky character; and after ages will look back upon the deeds of heroism at Tippecanoe, with the same veneration with which the present generation regards the memory of those who fought and fell at Thermopylae.

[Preceding sketch of Col. Abraham Owen was repeated in the History of Daviess County, Kentucky, Inter-State Publishing Co., Chicago, IL, 1883, p.322.]

Vol. I, p.356: Benjamin Logan and Abraham Owen, of Shelby County, were members of the convention which framed the second constitution of Kentucky, assembled at Frankfort, August 17, 1799.

Vol. II, p.709: Members of the Legislature from Shelby County - House of Representatives: Abraham Owen, 1808



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 12September 1915, p.1B:

Man For Whom Owensboro Was Named Never Lived in This Section of State

There have been many men of distinction in America and even in Kentucky by the name of Owen and it is not every school child or even grown up in Daviess county who knows what Owen the city of Owensboro was named after. That is the query here addressed without waiting for those who know below to them, but answer from is answer for those who do not.

Unlike Major Daveiss, after whom this county was named just one hundred years ago, Col. Owen never lived here nor, as in the case of Major Daveiss, did his immediate relatives ever reside here, though he left a large family and the Owens of his near blood scattered to many parts of the country and were worthy. His son, Clark Owen, removed to Texas, where he won distinction in that great state's military and civil annals. His daughters married men of much respectability in Henry county.

His name was Abraham Owen and his home county was Shelby, to which place he immigrated from his birthplace, Prince Edward county, Virginia, in 1785. He was more honored than by those who christened this good city after his name, for the legislature of 1819 named the good county of Owen after him. This was but seven years after his death at the battle of Tippecanoe, where Daveiss and many other brave Kentuckians also fell, and it is probable that Kentucky legislatures found their first opportunity in that, year to name a county for him after the honoring off Daveiss by naming this county for that hero in 1815.

Of Major Owen's boyhood days very little is known except that his father's fort near Shelbyville was a resort for brave and worthy men in the early days and is often spoken of as the beginning of Shelbyville. Evidently he had been inured to all the hardships of frontier life and he commanded the first company of militia ever raised in his county. When only twenty-two he engaged in the Kentucky campaigns against the warlike Indians on the White and Wabash rivers, and a little later he was a lieutenant in Capt. Lemon's company in that campaign in the Northwest that ended so disastrously for St. Clair. In one of the skirmishes of that campaign he received two wounds, one on the chin and another on an arm. Again he was with Col. Hardin in the campaign that routed the Indians from their hunting camps on White river, in Indiana, and thus helped to make this part of Kentucky safe for white settlement. A brother was with him on this expedition.

In peaceful pursuits that followed the Indian wars he was quite successful. He was surveyor of Shelby county, then a magistrate, then a member of the legislature by the largest vote ever given a candidate there up to that time. In 1799 he was a member of the convention that framed the second and better constitution of Kentucky and which lasted well for fifty years. His last promotion before his tragic death was his election to the Kentucky senate. He was very popular and had he survived the charges of Gen. Harrison's campaign he would surely have had many other and higher honors thrust upon him for he was very popular and deservedly so. He fell on that unfortunate morning in November, 1811, bravely fighting for his country, and there was deepest regrets in the army and throughout Kentucky.



A History of Owensboro and Daviess County, Kentucky,
Hugh O. Potter, Herff Jones-Paragon Publishing,
Montgomery, AL, 1974, pp.23, 26 & 27:

Chapter V: Named For Heroes

Owensboro and Daviess county were named for men who lost their lives in the battle of Tippecanoe. One had been a prominent pioneer resident of the Yellow Banks settlement. The other had no known connection with the city which bears his name.

The naming of "Owensborough" for Colonel Abraham Owen of Shelby county was the act of the Kentucky legislature which declined to accept the requested one, Rossborough.

The wording of the act, which specified "the said town shall hereafter be called and known by the name of Owensborough, in memory of the late Cot. Abraham Owen, who fell at Tippecanoe" (sic), indicates that Owen's friends in the general assembly concluded it would be proper and fitting to name the county seat for him, since the county had been named for Col. J.H. Daveiss twenty-five months before...

Colonel Abraham Owen was five years older than Colonel Daveiss and was also a native of Virginia, being born in Prince Edward county in 1769 and moved to Jefferson county, which was then a part of Virginia, in 1785. His father, Brackett Owen, had preceded his family into the wilderness and built Owen's station, a small frontier fort about four miles from the site of present Shelbyville.

At the age of 21, Abraham Owen was married to Mary Motley Dupuy, and the following year began the military phase of his career as a citizen-soldier-legislator-surveyor by joining Col. John Hardin and Col. James Wilkinson in their campaign against indians in the White and Wabash river country.

Later that year, according to an account of Owen's life prepared from family records and material in the Cincinnati library and the files of the Shelby county, the Owen county and the Kentucky Historical societies, which appeared in the 1964-65 edition of the *Owen County Almanac and Historical Fact Book*, Owen accompanied General Arthur St. Clair who marched with 1,400 men against Indians led by Chief Little Turtle.

St. Clair's force was surprised by a sudden Indian attack at dawn Nov. 4, 1791. Nine hundred whites were killed or wounded in that slaughter, which is known to history as "St. Clair's Defeat." Abraham Owen, a lieutenant in Capt. Lemon's company was wounded in the face and arm. He retreated with other beaten survivors to Fort Washington (now Cincinnati). There he met a newly commissioned army ensign, William Henry Harrison, later to be a major general and ninth President of the United States.

When Kentucky became a state, and Shelby county was created, its organizational meeting was held at Brackett Owen's home in October of 1792. A nearby site was chosen, and Abraham Owen helped lay out the new town of Shelbyville. He served as town trustee and magistrate and as Shelby county surveyor.

Owen was elected to the legislature by the largest vote ever before polled in the county; and in 1799, was chosen a member of the convention which framed the second Kentucky constitution. He was promoted to major in 1804, and commandant of the 18th regiment of Kentucky militia in 1808.

In 1811 the storm clouds of another war gathered due to the discontent of the Indians under Tecumseh, a one-eyed Shawnee known as "The Prophet". In addition to Shawnees, gathered with him were Miamis, Pottawattamies, Chippewas, Kickapoos, Winnebagos, Ottawas, Wyandottes and Sacs.

Harrison, now governor of the Indiana territory, with headquarters at Vincennes, called for volunteers. Old Indian fighters like Col. Owen, Col. Daveiss, and others, started for the field. Owen left Kentucky with Capt. Frederick Geiger's company. At the mouth of the Vermillion river, these 60 Kentuckians joined the main army. Gen. Harrison, in writing to the War Department said: "Col. Abraham Owen, commandant of the 18th Kentucky regiment, joined me a few days before the action. He accepted the appointment of volunteer aid-de-camp to me. . ."

The army, including one regiment of regulars, militia and volunteers from Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio, numbered over 900. They marched up the Wabash to within a few miles of the junction of that stream with the Tippecanoe, near which point was located the Indian settlement known as the Prophet's town.

Harrison had orders to deal with the Indians without fighting, if possible, so when he reached the Prophet's town, he tried to parley with the Indians. Nothing was accomplished, but the Indians agreed to renew the conference the next day. Harrison's force went into camp a mile west of the Indian camp, on an area of high ground beside a creek.

The encampment on the night of November 6, 1811, was in the form of a rectangle. Great fires in the center threw the men into silhouette once they arose.

Throughout the night a strong guard surrounded the camp, and the troops slept at battle posts with their weapons inside their blankets, ready for instant use.

Light rain was falling at 4 a.m., Nov. 7, as Harrison and Owen sat talking in the command headquarters tent. A sudden shot sounded in the night's stillness as a perimeter guard fired at a crawling figure approaching in the darkness. At this alarm the Indians launched a sudden attack from positions to which they had crawled, hoping to wipe out the whites as they slept.

As the attack commenced, Gen. Harrison mounted a bay horse and Col. Owen mounted a white horse and both rode toward the heaviest firing. The Indians had seen Gen. Harrison riding a white horse the previous day, and thus concentrated their fire on the rider approaching on a white horse in the semi-darkness. Col. Owen fell dead from his saddle.

Gen. Harrison, received a shot through his hat, but otherwise went through the battle untouched. He skillfully shifted his troops to meet each separate attack the Indians made, and repulsed them all. At daylight, Harrison's troops counter-attacked and dispersed the Indians. They then built breastworks and waited for another Indian attack which never came.

On Nov. 8 a scouting force found the Indian camp deserted and burned it together with all the Indians' food supplies. Harrison's 53 dead were buried at the battle site, five to 10 to each grave, and fires were burned over the burial places to conceal them. On November 9, the more than 100 wounded were gathered and the long march back to Vincennes was started. Nine who died enroute were buried where they died. Total Indian losses in the battle were never known.

Owensboro became the first place to be named for Colonel Owen, when the Kentucky Legislature determined on February 3, 1817 that it would honor the memory of the fallen soldier. Two years later, when a new county was carved out of portions of Franklin, Scott, Gallatin and Pendleton counties, the legislators again memorialized Col. Owen by giving it his name. Subsequently the town of Owenton, Kentucky, and Owen county, Indiana, were also named for him.



Tippecanoe Battlefield Memorial
Battle Ground, Tippecanoe County, Indiana



**“Memorabilia of the Trabue Family”, by Mrs. Z. F. Smith,
Register of Kentucky State Historical Society,
The Frankfort Printing Co., Vol. 7, September 1909, p.81:**

Martha Dupuy [daughter of Bartholomew Dupuy & Mary Motley] married Col. Abram Owen, of New Castle, Henry County. Born in Prince Edward County, Virginia, 1769, killed at the battle of Tippecanoe, November 7th, 1811. He came to Kentucky with his family in 1785, and helped to build Owen's Station, near Shelbyville. He served in the Indian wars with General Wilkinson, on the Wabash; with Col. Hardin and General St. Clair. He commanded the first Shelby County Company in Wayne's Expedition. He served in the Legislature in the Senate and in the Constitutional Convention of 1800. He fell upon the field of Tippecanoe as Aide to General Harrison. No man was more beloved or lamented in Kentucky. Owen County was named for him.

To Abram and Martha Dupuy Owen were born James Dupuy Owen, killed in 1836, at the battle of San Jacinto, Texas, under General Houston; Col. Clark Lewis Owen fought Indians upon the frontiers of Texas and was killed in the C. S. Army, at the battle of Shiloh, 1863.

Harriet Owen married Thomas Smith, of New Castile, who built the Louisville and Frankfort railroad.

Nancy Owen married Turner Woolfork.

Lucy Wooten Owen married William Smith.

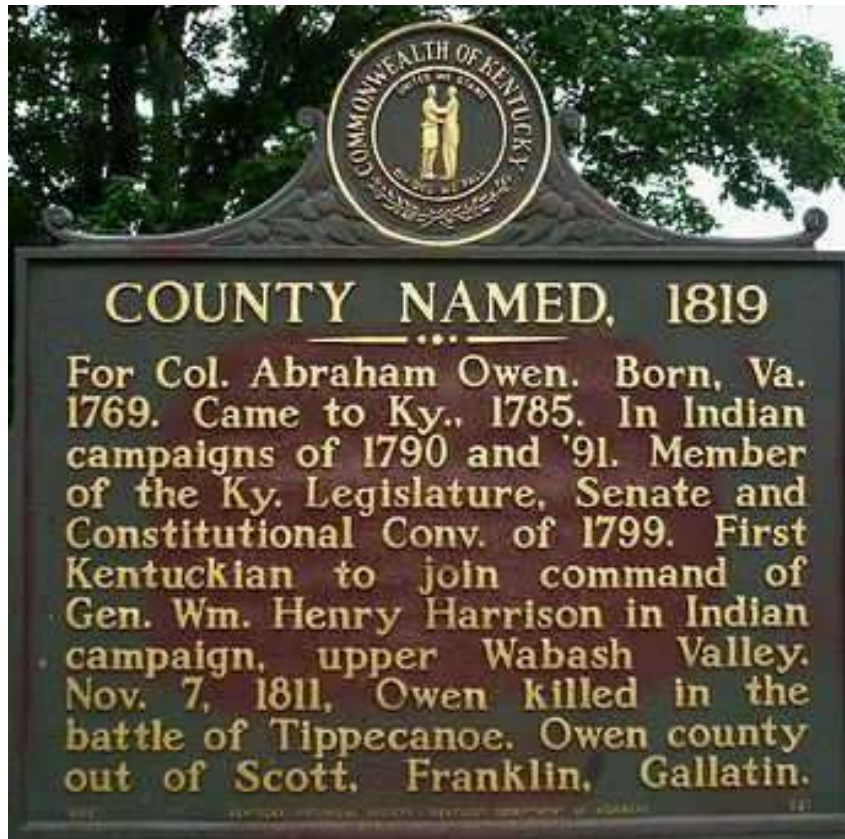
Susan Owen married William Henderson Allen.

Elizabeth Owen married Daniel Brannan. All the above are residents of New Castile. The two Sons moving to Texas and enlisting in the Army for Independence. Their descendants have been and are prominent in business and in affairs of church and State.



Grave of Martha (Dupuy) Owen (1771-1849), widow of Col. Abraham Owen (1769-1811), New Castle Cemetery, New Castle, Henry County, KY. Daughter of Bartholomew and Mary Motley Dupuy and granddaughter of the French Huguenot John-Jaques "John James " Dupuy. Married Abraham Owen 11 January 1797 in Woodford County, KY.





Owen County, KY Marker

