

SENATOR OWEN IS DESCENDED FROM CHEROKEE INDIANS

Life of Oklahoma Lawmaker Has Been One of Unusual Activity; First Struggles Are Described.

By G. Gould Lincoln

Poetic justice is a rarity in this era of hard facts and few fancies. Yet now and then an instance crops out. That a descendant of a race which held and ruled America in the centuries before the days of Columbus should occupy a seat in the senate of the United States is an example. And should he become president, as his friends and supporters plan, the spirits of his ancestors may well rejoice.

Senator Robert Latham Owen is the great-great-grandson of Quatsis, a beautiful Indian girl, sister of Cawmuna (the Raven), who was chief of the Seewah band of the Cherokees in the seventeenth and early part of the eighteenth centuries. A young English clergyman, John Beamer by name, came to America as a missionary to work among the Indians about the year 1700. In the country of the Cherokees he saw and fell in love with Quatsis, and, marrying her, settled among her people. Senator Owen's maternal grandfather, John Beamer, was a direct descendant of Quatsis and John Beamer.

DOES NOT SHOW AGE

The present Robert L. Owen was born in Lynchburg, February 2, 1856, and is 64 years old, though he might pass anywhere as 10 years younger. His career has been one of hard work, attended by success, which eventually landed him in the national legislature, one of the first senators from the state of Oklahoma. Senator Owen was educated in Lynchburg, in Baltimore and at Washington and Lee university, receiving a degree of master of arts from that institution in 1877. His alma mater conferred the degree of LL. D. upon him in 1908.

Colonel Owen, Senator Owen's father, died when the senator was coming to manhood. He was thrown upon his own resources just as he was beginning the study of medicine. A scholarship at Washington and Lee university was awarded him, and he took a six year course in three, leaving there with an M. D. degree. In college Senator Owen took part in athletics, especially on the track. He developed a talent for speaking and in addition to the president's scholarship, awarded to the most diligent and faithful student in the university, he won the debater's gold medal, and delivered the valedictory for his class. Senator Chamberlain of Oregon, by the way, was a student at Washington and Lee at the same time as Senator Owen, though he graduated a year ahead of the Oklahoma senator.

STRUGGLE OF YEARS' DURATION
Then began years of struggle to get a start, to fix his feet firmly upon the ladders of the ladder leading to success. For a young man Owen taught school at Gowanston, Md., utilizing the entire sum which he would have received as salary, except what went for his board, to pay a debt to an old preceptor who had aided him on his way through college. The following year he became principal teacher in the Cherokee orphanage in Oklahoma, and for three seasons he remained there. He clashed with some members of the Cherokee board of education, who attempted to have him ousted.

Counter charges against these persons by Mr. Owen, however, resulted in their enforced resignation from the board. In the spring of 1885 Mr. Owen was appointed United States Indian agent for the five civilized tribes. He was instrumental in effecting the establishment of the first court of civil jurisdiction in the Indian territory, at Muskogee. Prior to becoming agent, however, he had studied law, and in 1880 began the practice of his profession. The following year he became editor of the Cherokee Nation, and in 1884 editor and owner of the Indian Chieftain. He was the organizer of the first national bank ever established in Indian territory, the First National bank of Muskogee, in 1890, and its president for 10 years. He was interested in banking, real estate and farming.

FIRST BIG FEE

His big step toward fortune was through the successful prosecution of a Cherokee national claim, involving \$30,000,000. This claim had been turned down again and again when Mr. Owen

GOLD STAR MOTHERS ARE ANGELS OF MERCY



Front row, from left—Mrs. G. Johnson, Mrs. A. C. Hoggatt, Mrs. L. A. Young. Back row, left to right—Mrs. Florence E. Garver, Mrs. F. E. Walling, gold star members of the American Mothers, who will give a benefit dinner for their hospital fund, April 21, at the courthouse.

The gold star mothers of Chapter 1 of the American War Mothers—women who lost their sons in the late war—are still unselfishly giving of their time and strength to promote the good of their organization and to do what they can for the sons who returned. Although the war left them with heavy hearts and sad memories, they are doing their bit to cheer the boys who came back, but who are still confined in local hospitals, where they are recovering from disease, wounds and shell shock.

took hold of it. He obtained the passage of an enabling act through congress, took the case to the court of claims and finally to the supreme court of the United States. Originally he had an agreement with the Cherokee nation for a large percentage fee in the event he succeeded. He requested the court of claims, however, to fix the compensation. It was fixed by the court at \$300,000. About \$100,000 Mr. Owen had to pay out in connection with the prosecution of the case, and the balance he invested in real estate in Muskogee, then in its early stages of development. Today the city has a population of 50,000 and Senator Owen owns a large tract of real estate in the very heart of the business center.

This was only one, however of a number of important cases which he has handled for the Indians and in which he has been successful in obtaining for his clients large sums of money.

While he was acting as Indian agent he was instrumental in preventing a deal between members of the Cherokee Strip Livestock association and other persons, who were about to obtain a lease of 8,000,000 acres of land for \$100,000. Senator Owen held that the sum was inadequate. His advice to the Cherokees caused a rejection of the lease, and in the end they obtained \$200,000 rental.

HAD FULL LAND

Out of this contest grew a dramatic incident. Besides putting an end to the hope of easy money, Mr. Owen had brought about the indictment of one of the men involved. He came to the office of Owen with the avowed intention of killing him. But Owen was not a man to sit still and allow himself to be killed. His enemy reached for his gun. Quick as a flash, Owen grasped the man's wrist. At the same moment he drew his own revolver and shoved the muzzle against the man's stomach.

With the tables turned completely against him, the man pleaded for mercy. "You don't want to kill me, Owen," he said. Mr. Owen replied it was time to put an end to the threats and attempts on his own life. His assailant caught sight of a Masonic pin on Mr. Owen's waistcoat. "I'm a Mason, too," he said. Finally, after promising to cut out the gunplay in the future, the man was released by Mr. Owen, and went back to his chieftain, to whom he had been boasting he would "make Owen show his hand."

"Well, did you make him show his hand?" they asked.

"Yes," the man replied, "but he had a .44 in it."

Those were times in the Indian territory when human life was held more cheaply than today.

Word came to Owen that another enemy had hired a couple of men to kill him. An acquaintance offered to put this enemy out of the way "for a consideration"—in fact, for \$75. But to this Mr. Owen demurred. "Why not?" He's

planned to have you killed," persuaded his would be defender.

Instead of accepting the offer, Mr. Owen engaged the man and another for a sum of money to kill his enemy of his choice. He himself first was killed. Then he saw to it that word of the bargain reached the man who was seeking his life. It proved an effective way of dealing with the situation, and Mr. Owen was not troubled further by the same party.

IN FAVOR OF PROHIBITION

Senator Owen took a leading part in drafting the constitution at the time Oklahoma became a state. It was largely through his efforts that a provision for prohibition was included in the instrument. He had become impressed during his sojourn among the Indians with the evils resulting from the sale of intoxicating liquors. He took a stand, too, for woman suffrage in the constitutional convention, though his friends argued with him that he was courting political death. Under the tribal law of the Cherokee nation children took the tribal name of the clan of their mother. It was the women who preserved the history of the tribe. Senator Owen was a measure born to a recognition of the importance of women. There existed between him and his mother, a woman of unusual talent, a strong bond of sympathy and comradeship, which largely influenced his views as to suffrage.

He was elected senator by the unanimous vote of the Democrats in the state legislature, December 11, 1907, and took his seat a few days later. It was not long after his advent in the senate that Senator Owen entered heart and soul into the consideration of the so-called Vreeland-Aldrich emergency currency act. He showed his grasp of financial matters in one of the most eloquent and able speeches made on this measure. His interest in financial legislation has never flagged. He has been a prodigious student of finance, both domestic and international. When the Wilson administration came in, and the control of the senate swung to the Democrats, in 1913, Senator Owen became chairman of the senate committee on banking and currency. He was in charge of the bill creating the federal reserve system while the measure was before the senate, and had much to do with its final draft. He piloted the federal farm loan act through the senate, too. Today he is ranking Democratic member of the banking and currency committee, and has sought to obtain the backing of the administration for measures to aid in stabilizing foreign exchange, particularly the establishment of foreign exchange banks in the federal reserve system.

SPEAKS WITH EMPHASIS
The gift of oratory perhaps was inherited from his Indian ancestors. At all events, there have been few men in the senate since Mr. Owen's advent that have equaled him in speech and debate. He speaks with great distinctness and with a ring and emphasis that

point his sentences. His speeches are always brief and to the issue. Sarcasm and caustic invective at times have punctuated his arguments in the senate chamber.

Sensor Owen is a man of vigorous physique. He has lived much in the outdoors. Today one of his favorite forms of recreation is horseback riding. He is a finished horseman. Like many of his colleagues, he has taken up golf, and plays at Chevy Chase club, on the outskirts of Washington, and other country clubs. While he likes the exercise, he is hardly an enthusiast over this ancient and honorable game, and sometimes after playing a few holes through the efforts of the caddy, he ground and insist upon discussing with his opponents the questions of the day. He is convinced that it is possible to keep himself in good physical trim through the frequent tensing of the muscles in all parts of the body, and every hour or two he goes through such exercises wherever he may be, and his companions are none the wiser that he is taking his daily workout. Tall, well proportioned, slender of waist, Senator Owen gives the impression of strength. Thick, black hair, arched eyebrows, cleanly chiseled features and a strong mouth complete the picture of the man. He is invariably well dressed.

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School Building Planned

Plans have been prepared for a new school building for district No. 3 and bids on construction work will be opened April 17. The new building will occupy a two-acre tract facing Columbia boulevard in Park Rose. It will be of frame construction, two stories in height, and will contain 18 rooms. The building will be completed in time for the opening of school in September, according to Harlan J. Miller, chairman of the board of directors of the district. Cost is estimated at between \$50,000 and \$60,000.

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