

10-1977

As Maine Goes: Fred K. Owen, 1865-1940 Maine Journalist

Raymond S. Owen

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistoryjournal>



Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Owen, Raymond S.. "As Maine Goes: Fred K. Owen, 1865-1940 Maine Journalist." *Maine History* 17, 2 (1977): 85-108. <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistoryjournal/vol17/iss2/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Maine History by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.

RAYMOND S. OWEN

As Maine Goes
Fred K. Owen, 1865-1940
Maine Journalist

Fred K. Owen, the editor of the *Portland Evening Express*, died on March 18, 1940. On the following day, his family received so many telegrams and phone calls that his



daughter said in awe: "I guess I never knew father." Indeed, the family had not appreciated the extent of his accomplishments. He seldom spoke of them seriously. At supper one night, he said, almost jokingly as he passed his plate for a second helping of his homegrown peas. "I made a Governor today." The family knew from reading his editorials and political columns that he was acquainted with every political aspirant in the

state, but they failed to realize the extent of his influence in politics and community affairs.

Fred Kamph Owen, was born in Milo, Maine, on October 10, 1865, to a fourth generation Maine family. Educated in Milo schools, and also at Coburn Classical Institute, and Colby College, Fred began his fifty-three year newspaper career in 1887 as an undergraduate editor of the Colby College *Echo*, and as the Waterville correspondent of the *Bangor Daily Commercial*. A devotee of the work ethic, Fred was a prodigious writer, and a reporter of integrity. His finely fashioned sentences and contemporary rhyming met with ready community acceptance. In the office he could be gruff if a hanger-on took advantage of his hospitality by monopolizing a telephone line, and his formal bearing and capacity for work sometimes awed those younger than himself. His personality, however, was spiced by “the best known laugh in the State of Maine,” and further enriched by disciplined ability. His most important contributions were in the field of politics, and he was respected by Democrat and Republican alike. During his professional life, Maine seldom elected a Democratic governor, and the aphorism, “As Maine Goes, So Goes the Nation,” was applicable during his career.¹ Owen held policy making positions in Republican councils, and it was said that no Republican would consider running for the governorship of Maine without “consulting Fred Owen.”

Fred entered Colby University (now Colby College) in 1883,² as the shortest, fattest, and youngest member of a class of thirty men and four women. Life at that time was considerably different than it is today. Although railroads crisscrossed the state, and stagecoaches no longer provided the only means of transportation, trains were still novel enough to provide a certain measure of excitement. At Colby, central heating had just begun to supplant the students’ wood and coal burning stoves, and indoor plumbing was still a few years away. During Fred’s four years, the toilet facility – the “Necessary” – was a common

convenience building known as Memorial Hall, Jr. Fred and his roommate carried their drinking and washing water from the college pump.³

The awesome events of Fred's first day at Colby are recorded in his diary as follows: Sept. 5. Prayers and then the 'Tug-o-war.' Some of the boys got ducked. I was lucky enough to escape." Answering to the nickname of "Cupid" or "Cupe," he was reported to be "chubby and good natured."⁴

College in the late 1880's was a unique social experience wherein close relationships were made, and loyalty to class and college paramount. Man-to-man relationships were basic, and social activities were self-engendered. Within the confines of strict discipline, the individual acted through his peer groups, and the realities of sharing life more intimately promoted the growth of enduring friendships and loyalties. Central to this were Colby's four fraternities which counted 90 percent of the college's 116 students among their membership. Fred, following in the footsteps of his cousin, Hannibal E. Hamlin of the Class of 1878, became a member of Zeta Psi. The fraternity afforded him valuable contacts with "Zetas" who later became political leaders in Maine. William T. Cobb, Ashur C. Hinds, Byron Boyd, Hannibal E. Hamlin, Warren Philbrick, and John Nelson were among the Zetas who helped shape his newspaper career.

Education at Colby in the late 1880's, as at other colleges, was undergoing a revolution in curriculum and philosophy. To that time, the ability to recite from memory had been the mark of an educated man. Just before Fred's arrival, however, chemistry classes began to conduct experiments,⁵ and English and Logic classes were allowed to "summarize with a contemporary reference." Of the liberal arts faculty at Colby, two members were of special importance to Fred and his career – Julian Daniel

Taylor, “the Old Roman” who was professor of Latin, and John B. Foster, professor of Greek. These two men, and their respective disciplines, fostered Fred’s keen interest in the derivation and meaning of words.

Colby had championship teams during Fred’s student years, and with the exception of 1885, the Colby nines were the best college baseball team in the state from 1881 to 1887. Forrest Goodwin, a future congressman, was team captain, and Byron Boyd, later acknowledged as a key man in Maine Republicanism, played third base. Although Fred did not play college baseball, he developed an enthusiasm for the game that later enlivened his life, and provided a special medium for his reporting skills.

Among the memorable events of Fred’s graduation in 1887 was an afternoon he spent with his fellow classmate, Holman Day. Renting a canoe, and accompanied by a jug of cider, they paddled up the Messalonski River for a picnic lunch. Both Fred and Holman had been editors of the college magazine, the *Echo*, but despite their fondness for each other, they were as unlike in their natures as two men could be. Holman was aggressive, while Fred was modest and retiring. On this day, Holman painted for Fred, as only Holman could do, the brilliant future that might be his if only he would enter the world of journalism. Fred’s first responsibility, however, was to his family. His father had drowned in late August, 1884, and the family drugstore was now in the name of Fred and his brother William.

On the evening of graduation, the Owen family enjoyed a pleasant supper at home in Milo. The family dining room, ample in size to seat sixteen people, was just off the big kitchen with its wood-burning iron cook stove, behind which was the wood bin. The top of the stove, with its circular iron covers, was well suited for preparing the New England boiled dinner of corned beef, turnips, beets

(cooked separately), cabbage, and potatoes. The broth of this savory was a delicacy that gave Fred the warm feeling of being home.

After supper, the family, including Grandpa William, held council. The store was doing well, and it was felt that Fred would fit in well with future plans. Mother Clara, who “wa’nt no bigger’n a pint o’ peanuts,” wanted her son to do what he most enjoyed, and she read a quotation from George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* in which Caleb Garth said:

You must be sure of two things: you must love your work and not always be looking over the edge of it wanting your play to begin. And the other is, you must not be ashamed of your work and think it would be more honorable for you to be doing something else. You must have pride in your work and in learning to do it well. No matter what a man is – I wouldn’t give two pence for him if he didn’t do well what he undertook to do.

This sound advice was soon followed by the arrival of two letters. One was “a progress report on the beginnings of an illustrious newspaper career on the *Fairfield Journal*” from Holman Day. The other was from a classmate who offered Fred an interim teaching job in Stillwater, a small town on the Penobscot River between Orono and Old Town. Fred decided to take the job at Stillwater, but soon discovered that he did not enjoy the tedium of keeping discipline and correcting papers. Fortunately, a second letter arrived from Holman Day within a few months announcing that Day was going to Massachusetts to work for the *North Adams Sunday Express*, and asking if Fred would like to replace him at the *Fairfield Journal*. Fred accepted, and in January, 1888, he started his professional newspaper career.

The *Journal* was not much of a paper, and the job included taking care of the owner’s horse. Escape from this not overly desirable situation came within six months in the form of another letter from Holman Day who had given notice in North Andover that he had purchased a

part ownership in the Union Publishing Company of Bangor which published six weeklies. Holman wanted to know if Fred would be willing to take over as city editor of the *North Adams Sunday Express*. Fred, feeling that his enjoyment for writing had not been fulfilled at Fairfield, agreed.

The job at North Adams lived up to expectations. The mountains around North Adams supported a few good trout brooks, and the townspeople were friendly, and business associates congenial. Fred might have stayed on, but North Adams was not Maine. A long day's journey from family and friends, Fred's longing for his native state increased in February, 1889, when he visited Maine to attend Holman's wedding to Helen Gerard. Within a month after Holman's wedding, Thomas E. Calvert, fortuitously, beckoned him to Auburn, Maine, as news editor of the newly established *Auburn Gazette*. Little did Fred know, when he accepted, how joyful, socially as well as professionally, Auburn would be.

Located along the Androscoggin River opposite Lewiston, Auburn was once described at "the loveliest village of the plain." A pamphlet published the year of his arrival noted that Auburn "has not forgotten her puritan origin, has but little sympathy for the failings of others or even of her own children and readily hustles off the more disreputable ones to the tender mercies of her large-hearted but less particular sister [Lewiston]."⁶

At the turn of the century, Auburn was mantles and kerosene lamps, wide dirt streets with curbing in some sections, and brick walls. Luxurious maples and elms graced many streets, picket fences bordered the sidewalks, and the trees were often encased with verticle slats. There were barber poles, wooden two-and-one-half storied houses with hitching posts and blinds. A few homes had well manicured hedges, and horse-drawn trolley cars ran on the principal streets.

The *Auburn Gazette*, started on January 21, 1889, originated from the *Lewiston Gazette*, and was, according to Arthur G. Staples, the editor of the *Lewiston Journal*, “Sometimes . . . altogether too good to suit me.” Its founders were said to be those “who had some fishbones over the *Lewiston Journal*.” The front page had a mixed format, with the righthand column devoted to foreign happenings, another for news from Washington, and a third for other national news. At a time when good land sold for \$20.00 per acre, ladies’ boots for \$1.50, and church suppers for 25¢, the *Gazette* sold for 2¢. Although the situation was highly competitive, Fred easily impressed his peers. “Fred,” wrote one colleague, “is one I heartily admire. He is not a voluble talker – always a busy man, he has a rare executive ability – he is fertile in conception and rapid in execution. His method of working is quiet and unobtrusive.”

When the *Gazette* succumbed to the competition of the *Lewiston Journal* in 1893, Fred was immediately rehired by the *Lewiston Sun*, a morning paper controlled by Arthur Staples’ *Lewiston Journal*. Although the new position proved both enjoyable and fulfilling, in 1894, Fred accepted an invitation from Dudley Holman (Colby Class of 1884) to move to Taunton, Massachusetts, as managing editor of the *Taunton Evening News*. Taunton was an industrial town similar to Lewiston, but older and larger. The environment was much the same, but Fred thought the change would provide a broadening experience. The move represented a promotion for which he was ready.

In that day it was customary for the editor in one city to act as correspondent for papers in another, and Fred maintained his Maine ties by becoming the Taunton correspondent for the Lewiston and Portland papers. While at Taunton, he missed his Maine fishing, and lost none of his fondness for the Maine woods. Having

developed a serious interest in titian-haired Alice Gertrude Smith of Auburn's Prospect Hill, he had no difficulty in rationalizing the need for frequent visits to Maine which invariably included a walk up Prospect Hill, where in late August, 1895, Gertrude said "Yes" to his engagement proposal.

At Taunton, Fred recognized that he was more the writer and reporter than the manager and boss of people. At that moment of self-examination, he received a letter from Ashur C. Hinds of Portland, another Colby graduate and Zeta Psi fraternity brother. Hinds, editor and part owner of the *Portland Press*, had but recently started a distinguished career as parliamentary assistant to Thomas Brackett Reed, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives. Mr. Hinds offered Fred a considerable increase in salary if he would return to Maine as night editor of the *Press*. This was the fourth of Fred's five moves up the professional ladder assisted by Colby men.

The new assignment, even more than the others, demanded a reliable man. Portland was the largest city in which Fred had worked, and it was a city tested by fire and bloodshed since its first discovery by Captain Martin Pring in 1603. Population growth had been slow since the great fire of 1866, but the foundation of good government and sound business establishments had encouraged advancement in cultural matters and community life-styles. Portland was the music center of Maine, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow had shed his glory over the state.

Ashur Hinds' life-style was that of a man dedicated to his work. Demanding the same of others, Hinds believed Fred Owen to be a man he could entrust with the night editorship. As an introduction to Fred's new responsibilities, Mr. Hinds wrote an invaluable description of the night editor's duties. Under the date of February 26, 1896, this five page, step-by-step memorandum still represents wise

advice despite the radical changes that have occurred in the preparation of newspapers. The description of the night editor's job was a priceless statement of the orderliness that must undergird the essentially disorderly nature of the position:

have your table clear when you begin to work – the copy to the compositors must be plain as day – be in the composing room a great deal – as to telegraph copy you use – here is where you show your judgement.

The final sentence read: "I think these suggestions will be about all you will need. Experience and judgement are after all the requisites and it may be that what I have said is needless." Indeed, the letter was but a summation of Fred's seven years of experience, but he prized the advice.

The *Portland Press*, as Fred edited it, did not look like today's paper: the type was smaller; the lines closer together; and the format was completely different. There were approximately eighty words to the inch rather than today's forty-five, and a news item of several paragraphs would have a one-line, small-type heading. The two columns of advertising which appeared on the front page, however, comprised the most significant difference. Telegraph copy came to the Associated Press operator by dots and dashes which were interpreted on the typewriter before being delivered to Fred. In that day, news came instantly over the wire from its source, whereas only fifty years previously carrier pigeons had been used.

As Maine natives, Fred and Gertrude found Portland to be a veritable dream city. After a small wedding in Auburn on September 16, 1896, they started married life together, living their first two years in the home of Ashur Hinds. Fred found a happily married life to be a principal ingredient of his success. He said that "a man should have a wife who believed in him." The new partners were mutually supportive, but not demonstrative. Of the two,

Fred was more likely to show emotion, and his lower lip might quiver at a family parting.

Gertrude was devoted to her church, and Fred said that it was his Christian duty “to see that Gertie got to church.” Her closest friends were in the Woodfords Congregational Church where she seldom missed church services or Sunday School which she frequently taught. Fred, by comparison, could not conform to the strictures of religion in which he only partially believed. Although he believed in God, he was essentially a humanist “glorifying no ecclesiastical doctrine but rather the universal validity of just and moral action.”⁷ Despite this difference, Gertrude was proud of her husband, and their life together proved a happy one. She shared his interests in national and international affairs, and having worked in the office of the *Lewiston Sun*, she was thoroughly familiar with the complexities of her husband’s job.

Despite whatever changes the move to Portland may have made in Fred’s life, it did not diminish his interest in baseball. That enthusiasm had been born in college and nurtured in Lewiston and Auburn. It was a hallmark of his career to balance his fervor with expert knowledge, and so it was with his favorite sport. His joy for the game is well illustrated by a verse written over the name of “Peter Piffle,” a pseudonym he used for a humorous column of current events which always contained an original poem.

There’s a ball field in Old Portland
that we’ve known for many years
And ‘twas there we used to gather on
an afternoon to cheer
And return again quite happy
when we’d beat.

Fred became the official scorekeeper for the “Portland,” as the local team was called, and in 1899 and 1901 he was elected president of the Portland Baseball and Athletic Association. Three favorite players of the day

were Willard Eban Mains, Hugh Duffy, and John Coombs. Of these Coombs was Fred's favorite. He had pitched Colby to a 6 to 0 victory over Bowdoin for the state championship in 1906, and in September of the same year, he had single-handedly pitched a twenty-four inning game for Connie Mack's Philadelphia Athletics against the Red Sox, helping the Athletics win the national title.

Portland's 1896 team was not strong, causing Fred to write, "They're gold bricks. They don't look like the real thing." The team finished the season in next to last place. Fortunately, 1899 was a better year. There were eight teams in the New England league, and Portland started the season without a manager, and without players because they had not been in the league for two years. Two managers were considered: John 'Phenomenal' Smith, an excellent pitcher who had a life-time batting average of .300, and Mike Garrity, a long-time manager. Fred favored Garrity, saying, "John is not an organizer." When Smith got the job, Fred later wrote, "I confirm all the good things that have been said about him." Smith had grave difficulties to overcome in managing the team. 'It is lamentable,' Fred wrote, "that Portland management is obliged to hire out some of the best players for occasional games in order to get a few dollars to carry on." Despite this serious handicap, the *Portland Press* announced on August 30th:

PROUD PORTLAND
THE PHENOMS WIN PENNANT

Fred lamented the end of this successful year with one of his "pomes."

The summer days speed swiftly, but we
gave no thought nor care
Thought maybe they'd last forever
with the skies as blue and fair.
But we suddenly awaken; time flies we
know 'tis true
And we feel a whole year older when
the base ball season's through.

Fred's enthusiasm for sports also extended to fishing, and he wrote a series of by-line articles establishing his reputation as an accomplished angler. In a how-to-do-it which appeared in the *Portland Press* on March 30, 1902, entitled "Lovers of the Rod," he told how and where to catch landlocked salmon in Maine, and also proclaimed that "the Maine trout are the biggest in the world, there being no locality where they attain such size as in Mooselookmeguntic in the Rangeleys." In "Fishing on the Fish River" which appeared in 1903, he told of an area opened up by a new railroad line around Ashland and Fort Kent, having salmon up to twenty pounds, and square tails weighing twelve pounds. Although new sporting camps were being built, Fred declared his preference for tenting, saying, "there is a wild flavor to it that does not obtain in sporting camps."

Fred also wrote about Portland people and cultural events. The twenty year period between 1900 and 1920 witnessed the city's greatest population growth, and was a time of cultural development starred by the arrival of the great Kotzschmar organ for the City Hall in 1912. The gift of Cyrus Herman Kotzschmar Curtis, the Portland-born publisher of the *Saturday Evening Post* and other nationally known magazines, the famous instrument was named in honor of Herman Kotzschmar, the organist of Portland's First Parish Church for forty-seven years. This was also the era of the much respected William Rogers Chapman and his Maine Music Festival of a thousand voices and great soloists of the world.

While Fred reported cultural events with the understanding of a sympathetic critic, he did not ignore other aspects of city life. He wandered the neighborhood of Fore and Pearl streets which was as close as Portland could come to a foreign quarter, and wrote on the plight of its hardworking, honest people whom he described as the "men and women of the underworld." In other articles he

wrote of fifteen cent lodging houses where one could get a mattress, and for ten cents more, a substantial breakfast consisting of “a heaping plate of baked beans, a steaming cup of coffee, and two slices of bread and two doughnuts.” Contemptuous of the lazy and shiftless who went in and out of the City House of Correction, Fred reflected a friendly attitude toward the hoboies and tramps of the day who shaved, carried a cake of soap and a mirror, and kept up on the daily news, even though they never worked. He thought less of the common thief, who “as a class . . . were as yellow as they can be and if taken in alone will tell on one another.” An article on gambling covered the state and county fairs, the baseball lottery, and gambling houses in Portland and Westbrook. He talked of such places as the Bull Pen, the Palace, and the Cottage, observing that booze was not served in the Portland palaces of chance, but was readily available in the more elaborately furnished Westbrook facilities.

More in-depth treatment was given the subject of “Rum” which, in Maine, was a joymaker or a curse, depending on one’s convictions and habits. The abuse of alcohol had aroused people to form activist societies and associations to promote temperance. Maine had a long history of alcohol abuse. As early as 1773, for example, Dr. Benjamin Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and a pioneer of the prohibition movement, wrote an almanac article entitled “Effects of Spirituous Liquor Upon the Human Body,” which was “Calculated for the Merridian of Portland.” In the early 1800’s, Portland had a provocative habit of ringing the town bell at eleven o’clock forenoon as a signal to stop work and “indulge in drink.” Prohibition organizations such as the Maine Charitable Mechanics Association, the “Sixty-niners” (composed of ministers), Washingtonians, and the Young Men’s Total Abstinence Society became popular throughout the state. In the 1850’s General Neal

Dow of Portland, a dynamic leader of the prohibition movement, sponsored the so-called Maine Law which was "An Act for the Suppression of Drinking Houses and Tippling Shops."⁸ Despite these early efforts at reform, liquor remained a problem in Fred's time, and he addressed the situation in articles entitled "Rum Smuggling," "Pocket Peddling," "The Kitchens," and "Some Hides." Hides, by the way, were built-in secret compartments designed to conceal liquor at home or in the office. Obviously, enforcement of the Maine Law was replete with problems.

Fred's by-line articles highlighted the facts of life in a growing city. The honesty of their presentation proved popular, and won him the respect of his readers. His faithful attention to social and educational activities made a significant contribution to the community, and his personal correspondence files are studded with testimonials to his effectiveness as a community leader.

On the lighter side, Fred's skill as a rhymester also endeared him to his readers. "The poems were in the old fashioned way of writing and depicted charmingly and delightfully the time in our lives when the pace was slower and easier, when the homely, the innocent, the familiar and comfortable traditions were part and parcel of our daily living," said Mrs. W. Grimes, a poet and teacher of Dover, New Hampshire. "His were 'genre' poems. They are a tribute to a by-gone era and reflect the soul and heart of a poet — there was ease in writing and a nice rollicking movement of the lines." Fred loved to compose, and he threw off his poems easily and quickly. They appeared in his daily column on day-to-day community affairs, and included his own family's doings, especially the misadventures of his dog, Chester. "There are," he said, "always bright hits on the events of the day which are usually free from the stings that people are apt to take to

themselves.” As Fred moved from one Portland paper to another, his column appeared as “Peter Piffle,” “Pats and Knocks,” and “Small Packages.” The rhymes or jingles varied in topic and rhythm. One example is “The Floater,” a political jingle:

Young Mr. Floater
 he sat in the motor,
Which whirled him off
 to vote.
And in his “D” column
 he made an “X” solemn
And lugged off a two dollar note.

More serious was an eight line stanza written in tribute to Memorial Day. It began:

Let us pause awhile in our gladness
 on this beautiful morning in May
And consider a moment the sadness
 That visits some hearts today.

The publisher of the paper ran tests from time to time to determine the impact of these columns upon circulation. These samplings of public opinion, conducted from 1912 until Fred’s death in 1940, were always positive.

Recognition of Fred’s valuable services to the community came by way of election or appointment to many offices. The most significant of these was his appointment to the board of directors of the Port of Portland at a time when the port was handling 3,380,000 tons of shipping annually. Portland Harbor is indeed an extraordinary natural resource. With close proximity to the ocean, with a natural depth of thirty feet,⁹ and with no silt-bearing streams depositing sediments, the harbor is economical to maintain. Closer to Europe than any other major harbor in the United States, it was also the second most fortified, and the government made regular appropriations for improvements.

It was self-evident that after the turn of the century Portland should pursue her opportunities in shipping.

In 1919 the legislature created the Port of Portland Authority, to be managed by five directors. The act provided for the construction of a state pier, and the legislature appropriated \$1,500,000 for that purpose. Fred's responsibility was to see that the port received adequate publicity, and that public opinion and political attention was focused on the need to maximize the development of the port's potential. His effectiveness in discharging his responsibilities is indicated by his growing influence in state politics after 1924, and the increasing impact of his editorials upon public opinion.

When the legislature was in session, Fred usually spent three days a week in Augusta visiting with the state's solons. Continuously in communication with the politically oriented, he often toured the state, talking with people of all stations in life who kept abreast of the political situation in their respective communities. In this way, he acquired a profound knowledge of Maine politics which impressed friend and foe alike. Democratic Governor Louis J. Brann, for example, paid high tribute to Fred by saying, "His judgement was uncanny at arriving at correct political conclusions." Republicans relied upon his astute political analyses and predictions, and even the powerful and influential Frederick Hale who represented Maine in the United States Senate longer than any other man, sought Fred's advice and counsel. As a mark of confidence and respect, the Republican party elected him a member of the Cumberland County Republican Committee. In 1924 he was a delegate to the Republican National Convention at Cleveland, and was one of the delegates selected to go to Chicago to notify Charles G. Dawes that he had been nominated the vice presidential running mate of President Calvin Coolidge.

William S. Linnell, a Republican National Committeeman, paid the following tribute to Fred:

He became an authority on Maine politics. I am convinced the secret of his success lay in the qualities of personal character which caused him to be trusted with much of fact and opinion of a confidential nature, which while never divulging, he could himself ethically use to interpret events as they transpired. Thus trustworthiness became its own reward. May his example endure.

When Wingate F. Cram, a former president of the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad, and one of Maine's financially and politically powerful industrialists, said that "Owen doesn't know his own strength," he was right. Neither the quest for power nor social and financial ambition were in Fred's nature. To him, the respect of his fellowmen, and a job that gave him the opportunity to write truthfully and honestly were more important. His modesty and lack of personal ambition are well illustrated by the fact he derived greater personal satisfaction in receiving the honorary Master's of Arts degree conferred upon him in 1931 by his alma mater, Colby College, than from all the other honors that had been, and would be, bestowed upon him in the 1920's and 1930's. Receipt of the degree was an occasion of great joy. Bedecked in the "hood of the rank," Fred, still as rotund and bald as he was upon graduation forty-four years earlier, beamed along the campus walk in parade. It was indeed a joyous day for a joyful man. The pleasure of the occasion was further enriched by the many letters of congratulation that filled his mail. The theme of these friendly notes was echoed by the *Portland Press Herald* which said:

Colby has done credit to itself in recognizing the achievements of one of its best known graduates. Every job that Fred Owen has ever undertaken has been well done - an outstanding leader in his profession - has helped a great many men attain prominence but has sought no rewards.

Fred Owen died "in harness" as he would have had it. On Monday, March 18, 1940, he called the office saying rather apologetically that the doctor had advised him that he ought to go to the hospital for a few days. His editorial,

a political column, and the last of his “Small Packages” appeared in Monday’s *Express*. He died the following afternoon in his 74th year, just away from his desk.

– NOTES –

¹ Until the Civil War, Maine was a Democratic stronghold. In the elections of 1840, however, the state unexpectedly voted for Edward Kent, the Whig gubernatorial candidate, and for the national Whig ticket consisting of William Henry Harrison and John Tyler. As a result of this stunning upset, Whigs the country over shouted their now famous doggerel:

Have you heard from Maine
The wonderful news from Maine?
She went hell-bent
For Governor Kent
For Tippecanoe
And Tyler too.
That’s wonderful news from Maine.

² Tuition was \$45.00 annually, and total yearly expenses only \$237.00. See *The Sixty Third Annual Catalogue of Officers and Students of Colby University . . . for the Academic Year 1882-83* (Waterville, Maine: Printed for the University, 1883), p. 35.

³ Ernest C. Marriner, *The History of Colby College* (Waterville, Maine: Colby College Press, 1963), pp. 176, 215.

⁴ *Colby Oracle*, 1887.

⁵ Marriner, *History of Colby College*, p. 212.

⁶ *Androscoggin County Art Work* (Chicago: W.H. Parish Publishing Company, 1893)

⁷ John Haynes Holmes, *Rethinking Religion* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1938)

⁸ Neal Dow, *The Reminiscences of Neal Dow. Recollections of Eighty Years* (Portland, Maine: The Evening Express Publishing Company, 1898), pp. 334-358.

⁹ Maine Writers’ Program, *Portland City Guide* (Portland, Maine: Forest City Printing Company, 1940), p. 4.

Raymond S. Owen is the son of Fred Kamph Owen, the subject of this paper. Mr. Owen attended Colby College, Class of 1920, and graduated from the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania. Mr. Owen summers in Falmouth, Maine, and is a permanent resident of Stuart, Florida.

This essay, drawn from the author's unpublished full-length biography of his father, is largely based upon the personal papers of Fred Owen, and upon interviews with those who knew him.

The author especially wishes to thank Robert Beith, formerly with the Gannett Publishing Company, and Ernest C. Marriner, dean emeritus of Colby College, for the unselfish assistance they have given him.

WRITINGS IN MAINE HISTORY

Allen, Mel. "Suit Yourself First." (About Fred Anthoensen and the Anthoensen Press) *Down East*, Vol. 24, No. 3, October 1977.

Bennett, Randall L. "Oxford County Town Histories." *Maine Life*, Vol. 32, No. 2, August 1977.

---. "Oxford County Towns Well Documented." (Bibliography of county and town histories from the early 1800's to present, with biographical material on some of the authors) *Lewiston Journal Magazine*, August 20, 1977.

Butler, Joyce. "La Fanfare Pinchaud." (Maine's oldest band, in existence for 107 years in Biddeford) *Down East*, Vol. 24, No. 2, September 1977.