



E. QUILLIAN OWEN

24TH SHERIFF



Emory Quillian Owen served as Sheriff from 1944 – 1959 (second longest serving Sheriff)

The Owen ancestors came to Henry County from Greene County before 1830. Sheriff Owen was born to L. P. and Elizabeth Owen August 7, 1895 in the Kelleytown community of Henry County.

Quillian was an outstanding athlete while attending Locust Grove Institute. He was best as the catcher on the baseball team but earned the nickname “Bull” as the center on the football team. He remained in good physical condition throughout his life.

He married Annis Berrye Rowan born in 1908, daughter of Wyatt and Mary Dailey Rowan, on November 27, 1935. They were both mature adults when they married and were members of Kelley Presbyterian Church in Kelleytown where they are buried. They had two children Mary Jane and Elizabeth whom the Sheriff adored and encouraged to be adventurous.

As a young man Quillian took over responsibility of running the gin and mill operation where his oldest brother Edgar had been crushed to death by the machinery. It was here in an identical accident about a year later that he lost his left hand and forearm. He may have bled to death if it were not for the quick action of an African-American worker who understood natural cures and placed cobwebs on the wound.

Although this ended his participation in sports and at the mill, he would not allow anyone to consider him handicapped. So he turned his enthusiasm to politics and used his courage, popularity and charisma to win the election for Sheriff in 1943 to fill the unfinished term of Henry M. Amis.

It is said that although Sheriff Owen had lost much his arm, when he was threatened with a fight he could draw his pistol and knock an aggressor out cold before they could get in a good punch.

Sheriff Owen died July 21, 1959 and Hiram Cook was elected to serve out his unexpired term. (Hiram Cook was his brother-in-law)

If you have photographs or additional information about past Sheriffs' of Henry County that you would like to share for this display, please contact Major Jack Oakman at 770-288-7034.

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