

Hon. Rich W. Thompson

New Harmony, Indiana,
25th January 1843.

Dear Sir:

I perceive that a bill originating in the Senate's Committee on Public Lands to "provide for ascertaining and disposing of the lead mineral lands in the States of Illinois & Arkansas and the territories of Wisconsin & Iowa" has been engrossed in the Senate. Though ignorant of its details I presume from the nature of the subject & the title of the Bill, that the appointment of a Geologist or Mineral Agent, to "ascertain" what are mineral lands, must necessarily be one of the features of the bill.

If this be so, the office will be an important and responsible one; demanding unquestioned professional acquirements, & especially an intimate acquaintance with our Western geological formations.

Under these circumstances I am induced to do what is very natural, if it be not very fair; that is, when we have received one kindness at the hands of a friend to apply to him for another. I have not forgotten, that you were the means, in the Senate of our State, of passing the bill which gave my brother his appointment as geologist of Indiana; and now, when an opening seems to occur, for a more extended sphere of usefulness in the same line, I apply to you, for him, again.

I can, however, say most conscientiously, that I would not do so, did I not feel assured, that his qualifications

both as a professional & business man (which in his Iowa
expedition were severely tested) are probably equal to those
of any other claimant. I do not suppose that any other man
has devoted to the geology of the West in especial, half the
time & thought that he has done. He transmitted, a few
months ago, to the Geological Society of London a complete
Compendium of Western Geology illustrated by large paintings
in distemper on canvas; and W. Murchison, president of
that Society & one of the most distinguished geologists now
living, himself brought the memoir & its illustrations before
the British Association for the promotion of Science, at its
last Annual Meeting; when it engaged, for upwards of two
hours discussion, the attention of the leading geologists of
England, Buckland, Phillips, &c. who expressed the highest
gratification & approbation, during its examination.

My brother has devoted his life, for the last sixteen years,
to geology, chemistry & the kindred sciences. He studied,
first, at W^r. Fellenberg's celebrated establishment in Swit-
zerland, afterwards under professor Ure in Glasgow, Scot-
land; and subsequently at the London University. His
geological cabinet, which, for Western specimens is, I
presume, unequalled, either in England or America, fills
eight spacious rooms, his apparatus for analysis is of the
most complete and costly description, imported directly from
Paris; and his laboratory has been fitted up at an expense
of several thousand dollars.

Under these circumstances I do not hesitate to express

my firm conviction, founded as well on my brother's professional acquirements as upon the means thus placed at his disposal, that if ^{he} receive the appointment, he will fill it with unflagging zeal, and with credit to himself, to our State and to the Department.

It strikes me also, that the West, if she can supply a man fully qualified for the situation, is fairly enough entitled to the office. The lands lie in the West; and their proper selection demands an especial acquaintance with our Western formations. Is it not true, also, that Indiana, now the Sixth or Seventh State in the Union, has never received an undue share of appointments in the gift of the General Government?

If, under these circumstances, you feel willing to recommend my brother's claims, I should esteem it a favor, that you would say a word for him in the proper quarter. I imagine, but do not know, that the appointment will be left with the Land Office; and, if so, will be in Colonel Blake's gift.

If you have a moment to spare, may I ask you to acknowledge the receipt of this, & believe me,

Dear Sir, faithfully yours

Robert Dale Owen.