Daniel Drake Biography

Daniel Drake

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Biography

The American physician Daniel Drake (1785-1852) was one of the founders of the medical school in Cincinnati, Ohio. He also participated in social, political, and economic movements in the Ohio Valley.

Daniel Drake was born on Oct. 20, 1785, near Plainfield, N.J. His family soon moved to Kentucky. At the age of 15 he began to study medicine with a Cincinnati doctor, later graduating from the University of Pennsylvania. Returning to the Ohio Valley in 1805, he devoted the remainder of his life to science and the development of the West.

Drake played a major role in establishing a medical school in Cincinnati. He also wrote extensively on medical subjects, his most important work being *Principal Diseases of the Interior Valley of North America,* and was cofounder in 1826 of the *Ohio Medical Repository,* a medical journal designed to improve medical standards in the West. Another project that took up his time was the establishment of adequate hospital facilities in the Ohio Valley. In his *Natural and Statistical View, or Pictures of Cincinnati,* published in 1815, Drake recorded valuable data on the geology, botany, and meteorology of this region.

Drake crusaded against the "quack" doctors who invaded the frontier. He attacked the laws which allowed such unscrupulous men to practice and the politicians who refused to pass legislation to prevent them from taking advantage of the frontier's need for doctors.

Drake also supported social reform movements. Although an active crusader against the intemperate use of alcohol, he was not for total abstinence. As a doctor, he stressed the adverse effects of alcohol on the body; as a reformer, he stressed the social implications of overindulgence. He made speeches in behalf of the temperance movement and in 1841 helped organize the Physiological Temperance Society of Louisville.

Politically, Drake advocated national unity. He violently condemned the nullification crisis of 1832-1833. On the slavery question he condemned both Northern abolitionists and Southern "fire-eaters" as disruptive forces. Firmly opposed to slavery and to its extension into the territories, he also opposed extremism. To solve the slavery problem he strongly supported a national colonization policy.

In the words of his best biographer, Drake was "a man possessing commanding talents. By some he has been called a genius. He had an unusual, almost prophetic vision, a philanthropic outlook, an abiding philosophy, as well as a scientific and inquisitive mind."