



Daring to Be Different: Missouri's Remarkable Owen Sisters (MISSOURI HERITAGE READERS)

Doris Land Mueller

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In the 1800s, American women were largely restricted to the private sphere. Most had no choice but to spend their lives in the home, marrying in their teens and living only as wives, mothers, and pillars of domesticity. Even as the women's movement came along midcentury, it focused more on gaining legal and political rights for women than on expanding their career opportunities. So in that time period, in which the options and expectations for women's professional lives were so limited, it is remarkable that three sisters born in the 1850s, the Owen daughters of Missouri, all achieved success and appreciation in their careers.

Doris Land Mueller's *Daring to Be Different* tells the story of these exceptional sisters, whose contributions to their chosen fields are still noteworthy today. Mary, the oldest, followed a childhood interest in storytelling to become an internationally recognized folklorist, writing about the customs of Missouri's Native Americans, the traditions of its African American communities, and the history of St. Joseph's earliest settlers. The middle daughter, Luella, became a geologist, breaking into the "old boys club" of the nineteenth-century scientific community; her book, *Cave Regions of the Ozarks and the Black Hills*, was for over fifty years the only reference to include Missouri caves and is still a valuable resource on the subject. And the youngest Owen girl, Juliette, was a talented artist who painted images of birds and studied and wrote about ornithology. An ardent conservationist, Juliette was an animal advocate during the early days of the humane movement.

Through a compelling narrative driven by thorough research, Mueller showcases the different personalities of the three sisters who all eschewed marriage to pursue their callings, putting their accomplishments in context with the place and times in which they lived. With family stories, illustrations of early St. Joseph, and images of the Owen family to enrich the story, this book pays tribute to the Owen sisters' contributions to the Show-Me State. The latest addition to the Missouri Heritage Reader Series, *Daring to Be Different* will appeal to anyone interested in Missouri history and the early years of the women's movement.

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