

## **"Tricks upon travellers": Robert Owen, New Lanark, and the choreography of character, 1800-1826**

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**Advisor:** Pandora, Katherine A. **Committee members:** Crowther, Kathleen, Trachtenberg, Zev, Weldon, Stephen, Hale, Piers, Moon, Suzanne

### **Abstract (Summary)**

When he assumed management of the cotton manufactory at New Lanark, Scotland in 1800, Robert Owen (1771-1858) faced a population made up of employees of "ill-formed" character. Over the course of the next twenty-six years, however, New Lanark became a showcase of successful "pauper management" and through what he purported to be a "New View" of human character, Owen effectively eradicated lying, cheating, and disorderly and drunken conduct. New Lanark became a tourist destination not only because of its proximity to Cora Linn and other local natural features, but because of the way Owen crafted scientific spectacle to appeal to those in search of sensational activities. At the Institute for the Formation of Character, Owen developed a unique, performance-based curriculum which imparted lessons of cooperative and national behaviors while appealing to culture-conscious visitors. Owen also began, though did not bring to fruition, plans to manipulate the physical surroundings which dictated family structures in the village. In sum, a visit to New Lanark in the years under consideration provided travelers with a variety of experiences which Owen believed would convince them of the efficacy of his claims.