

Professor Gerald Troost  
March 15, 1776 – August 14, 1850

Section 29.1 # 290148

Gerald Troost was born in Bois-le-Duc, Holland, on March 15, 1776. He was educated at the University of Leyden where he received the degree of doctor of medicine and at the University of Amsterdam where in 1801 he received the degree of master of pharmacy. Much of his study time, however, was devoted to chemistry, natural history and especially to the then infant sciences of geology and mineralogy.

Between 1801 and 1807 Troost was a practicing pharmacist, both in Amsterdam and at The Hague. At that time the work of a pharmacist required knowledge and use of chemistry, botany and zoology. During part of this time, he also served as medical officer of the Dutch army.

His work attracted the attention of Louis Napoleon, King of Holland who sent Troost to Paris in 1807 to continue his scientific studies. In 1809 he was selected by the King of Holland for a scientific mission to Java. This mission, however, was interrupted by war and the ship on which he was traveling was captured by a French privateer that took him to France. On March 5, 1810, Troost received a passport permitting him to sail to Philadelphia. He became an American citizen and one of the founders of the prestigious Academy of Natural Science in Philadelphia. In 1825 Troost and several of these pioneer geologists moved to the utopian colony of New Harmony, Indiana, when this town was one of the most, if not most important center of geological study west of Philadelphia. Troost soon became dissatisfied with the impractical social arrangements of the colony. He left New Harmony for Nashville, Tennessee. It is believed that his move was encouraged by Dr. Philip Lindsley, president of the University of Nashville. On February 9, 1828, Troost was appointed professor of geology and mineralogy at the university. Later chemistry and natural science were added to his teaching curriculum.

On October 19, 1831, Troost made an address to the State Legislature that resulted in his appointment as state geologist on December of that year. He held that position with biennial appointment until February 4, 1850, at which time the position was abandoned by the Legislature. Troost died in Nashville on August 14, 1850 and was buried at City Cemetery.

Dr. Charles W. Wilson, Jr., Professor of Geology at Vanderbilt University. State Geological Services and State Geologists of Tennessee. Bulletin 81. 1981

Family History. Troost first married Margaret Teague in 1811. She died in 1819, leaving him with two children. He then married Mary O'Reilly, widow with two children, and they moved, in 1825, from Philadelphia to New Harmony, Indiana. After three years in New Harmony, the Troost family moved to Nashville. Obituaries for Professor Troost are on the City Cemetery website. Mary outlived her husband by 32 years and died on June 2, 1882. Following her funeral at the Catholic Cathedral, she was buried at City Cemetery. Professor Troost has a large box tomb. No tombstone was identified for Mary Troost in 1908 during the first Survey of City Cemetery. For more information about Dr. Troost, see Tennessee Encyclopedia. On-line.

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