

***JAMES
OTIS***



***BENJAMIN
OF OHIO***

James Otis

Benjamin of Ohio

A Story of the Settlement of Marietta

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD

BENJAMIN'S STORY

THE OHIO COMPANY

RUFUS PUTNAM

COLONEL PUTNAM, THE ENGINEER

THE FIRST EMIGRANTS

BUILDING A FLEET

CAMPUS MARTIUS

THE ARRIVAL OF GENERAL PUTNAM

THE WORK OF THE FIRST EMIGRANTS

CLEARING THE LAND

HOW OUR COMPANY WAS FORMED

MAKING READY FOR THE JOURNEY

CONCERNING MYSELF

SETTING OUT

MISTRESS DEVOLL'S OUTFIT

AT PROVIDENCE

ON THE ROAD TO BLOOMING GROVE

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

ON THE WATER ONCE MORE

FEASTING ON HONEY

AMONG THE MORAVIANS

THE ROPE FERRY

THE WAY THROUGH PENNSYLVANIA

THE SHAME OF THE GIRLS

MEETING WITH PARSON CUTLER

OHIO CORNFIELDS
THE GOVERNOR AND JUDGES
THE NAME OF THE TOWN
CAMPUS MARTIUS
INDEPENDENCE DAY
MASTER DEVOLL'S HOUSE
THE INDIAN MOUNDS
AT HARRISBURG
ISAAC BARKER'S SPORT
UNCLE DANIEL CARTER
UNCLE DANIEL JOINS OUR COMPANY
HARD TRAVELING
MUD AND WATER
A STORM OF SNOW
ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS
A FRIENDLY DUNKARD
MASTER HIPLES'S KINDNESS
A SURLY LANDLORD
ISAAC FLOGS THE LANDLORD
A MUCH NEEDED LESSON
A TIME OF REST
PACK TRAINS
A NIGHT ADVENTURE
FEARS ABOUT THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN
DESCENDING THE MOUNTAINS
AT THE FOOT OF THE HILLS
NEARING THE END OF THE JOURNEY
AT SUMRILL'S FERRY
PARTING WITH UNCLE DANIEL

OUR FLATBOAT
THE CATTLE ARE SENT AWAY
AT PITTSBURGH
TOO MUCH WATER
ESCAPE OF THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN
REPAIRING DAMAGES
OUR PILOT
A CHANGE OF WEATHER
NOISY FEAR
A REAL FEAST
FINDING THE CANOE
BUFFALO CREEK
THE MARCH ACROSS THE COUNTRY
AT MARIETTA
PLANS FOR THE FUTURE
INSPECTING THE TOWN OF MARIETTA
A TEMPORARY HOME
BUYING LAND
VISITING THE SAVAGES
CAPTAIN HASKELL'S ADVICE
A NEW FRIEND
FISHING THROUGH THE ICE
THE SABBATH IN MARIETTA
A REGULAR BUSINESS
A VISIT FROM THE SAVAGES
BUILDING A HOME
A GREAT PROJECT
THE TWO MILLERS
THE SAVAGES ON THE WARPAT

BOOKS CONSULTED IN WRITING BENJAMIN OF OHIO

FOREWORD

Table of Contents

The author of this series of stories for children has endeavored simply to show why and how the descendants of the early colonists fought their way through the wilderness in search of new homes. The several narratives deal with the struggles of those adventurous people who forced their way westward, ever westward, whether in hope of gain or in answer to "the call of the wild," and who, in so doing, wrote their names with their blood across this country of ours from the Ohio to the Columbia.

To excite in the hearts of the young people of this land a desire to know more regarding the building up of this great nation, and at the same time to entertain in such a manner as may stimulate to noble deeds, is the real aim of these stories. In them there is nothing of romance, but only a careful, truthful record of the part played by children in the great battles with those forces, human as well as natural, which, for so long a time, held a vast portion of this broad land against the advance of home seekers.

With the knowledge of what has been done by our own people in our own land, surely there is no reason why one should resort to fiction in order to depict scenes of heroism, daring, and sublime disregard of suffering in nearly every form.

JAMES OTIS.

BENJAMIN OF OHIO

BENJAMIN'S STORY

[Table of Contents](#)



It seems a very long while since I promised to tell you of what I did after coming into this Ohio country, and yet even now I cannot well begin the tale without telling something about the Ohio Company, which was formed, as you know, by General Rufus Putnam.

Twice I have begun the story, and twice I have stopped, understanding that you would not be able to make out why we did this or that, unless you first knew how it chanced that we came to make our homes here.

When you and I, while we were both in Massachusetts, talked about my journeying into this country, I may have spoken in such a way as to give you the idea that I believed it would be possible for me to do much toward the making of a new town.

In fact, I did really then believe that my services would be of great value to those men who expected to build a village here on the Muskingum River; but, although only two years have passed, I already understand that a boy of my age is not of much worth in such an enterprise, more

particularly when men like Parson Cutler and General Putnam are at the head of affairs.

Do you remember how old I am? Well, there is here in this town of Marietta a fellow by the name of Jeremy Salter, who has become quite a friend of mine, and the other day he asked my age.

I told him that I was born in December of the year of the capture of Ticonderoga and Crown Point, the election of General Washington to be commander in chief of the armies, and the battle of Bunker Hill, yet, if you will believe me, the dolt was not able to fix the date.

However, my age has nothing to do with our coming from Mattapoisett into Ohio, and now let me try to make it plain how it happened that we of Massachusetts could come so far away and take up land simply because of having bought shares in the Ohio Company.

THE OHIO COMPANY

Table of Contents

This is the story as I have heard it from General Putnam himself. It seems that when our war for independence came to an end, the government did not have money enough with which to pay the soldiers for their services, or, as Parson Cutler says, the country was much the same as bankrupt; General Washington himself declared that a wagonload of Continental money would be hardly sufficient to purchase a wagonload of provisions.

Now of course these soldiers must have their wages, and some men in the Congress proposed that the government sell land in the western country in order to raise enough money.



While this matter was being talked about, Congress ordered that a survey be made of the western lands, and Rufus Putnam himself received an appointment as one of

the surveyors; but, not being able to attend to the work personally, he induced an old comrade, by the name of Benjamin Tupper, to take his place.



When Master Tupper came back to the eastern colonies, after having been over the land, he told General Putnam what a great, grand country it was; and it is said that the two old comrades sat up all night talking over plans for buying land enough to form a colony, and that by daybreak they had decided to call a meeting of the citizens of Massachusetts and the near-by states, to be held at the Bunch of Grapes tavern in Boston, early in the month of March, 1786. This meeting was held, and a company was organized, to be known as the Ohio Associates.

The government had decided to use this land, as I have said, to pay off the soldiers, and this company, formed by General Putnam, employed Parson Manasseh Cutler and Master Winthrop Sargent to make a bargain with Congress.

These two men offered to buy one million, five hundred thousand acres of land at one dollar an acre, paying down five hundred thousand dollars when the contract was signed, with the debts due the soldiers reckoned as so much ready money.

Those who had banded themselves together could not raise the remaining million dollars, and the result was that the government cut down the agreement so that our Ohio Company had at its disposal a little more than a million acres of land, instead of a million and a half.



RUFUS PUTNAM

[Table of Contents](#)

You surely remember what General Putnam has done for his country, or, I should say, what he did, even before he came to Ohio. In 1757, when only nineteen years old, he enlisted as a common soldier in the Provincial army,—for there was then war between England and France,—and served faithfully four years, until the surrender of Montreal, when the army was disbanded. Then he went to his home in New Braintree and worked at the trade of millwright; but he soon discovered that his education was not sufficient to enable him to continue the business to the best advantage, therefore he devoted every moment of his spare time to the study of mathematics.



Seven or eight years afterward, when it was believed the British government would give to those soldiers who had served in the French war certain lands somewhere in the wild western country, Rufus Putnam was selected as one of a party to find out where it would be well for the people to settle.

No sooner had the battle of Lexington been fought than Rufus Putnam was among the first to enlist; and it shows that he gained a good military reputation, for he was made lieutenant colonel of the first regiment raised in Massachusetts.

COLONEL PUTNAM, THE ENGINEER

[Table of Contents](#)

Because of his knowledge of mathematics he was chosen by the leaders of the American army to lay out the line of defenses round about Boston, and did more than a full share in forcing the British to evacuate that city, because of the skill with which he established the fortifications on Dorchester Heights.



Later he was sent to New York, where he took charge of the defenses on Long Island at Fort Lee, and King's Bridge; and during the year when our people made their formal declaration of independence, Rufus Putnam was appointed engineer, with the rank of colonel and pay at sixty dollars a month.

The next year Colonel Putnam went back to Massachusetts, where he raised and took command of a regiment which he afterward led in the battle of Stillwater and again at Saratoga, covering himself with glory, so I have heard Parson Cutler say.

After the surprise at Stony Point, Colonel Putnam was appointed to the command of a regiment in General Wayne's brigade, continuing to serve with credit to himself, and to the best interests of his country, until 1783, when Congress promoted him to the rank of brigadier general; he remained in the service of the people, filling one position or another, until this Ohio Company was formed, as I have told you.

Another matter which you should bear in mind while thinking of us so far away, is that when Parson Cutler made the trade with the government for land in the Ohio country, he induced the Congress to set aside two entire townships, of thirty-six square miles each, for the support of a university, and in each of the other townships one square mile to be used solely for the support of schools and churches. Therefore, even before any man had begun the building of a home here on the Muskingum River, schools and churches were provided for, which is more, I believe, than can be said regarding most new settlements.

THE FIRST EMIGRANTS

Table of Contents

You remember all the talk and excitement in Massachusetts at this time, when so much was being told regarding the beauties of the Ohio country, and you know how eager I was to set out with that first party which left Danvers under the leadership of Major Haffield White on the first day of December, in the year 1787.



As you also know, these men were to halt somewhere on the Youghiogheny River to build boats, in order to continue the journey by water, and a second party, under the command of General Putnam himself, was to leave Hartford in Connecticut shortly afterward, to join those from Massachusetts.

This second company was really led by Colonel Ebenezer Sproat because General Putnam was forced to go to New York on some business of his own, and did not succeed in

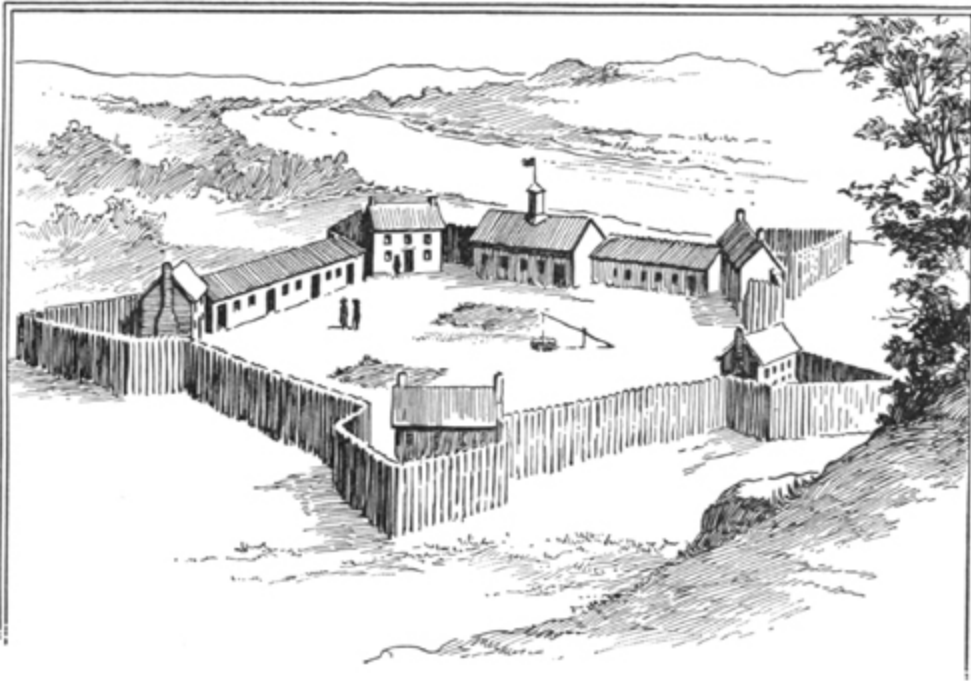
overtaking the people until they had come to Swatara Creek in Pennsylvania.



BUILDING A FLEET

[Table of Contents](#)

Major Haffield White's party arrived at Sumrill's Ferry, after a long and tedious journey over the old Military Road, on the twenty-third day of January, in the year 1788, and immediately began building boats.



On the fourteenth of February, General Putnam's party, by which I mean those who set out from Hartford, joined those who were already at the ferry, and the two companies landed here on the bank of the Muskingum River the seventh day of April, in the year 1788.

All this is an old and familiar story; but it is well for me to remind you of it, so that you can the better understand how I, who had believed and hoped I was coming into a new country to do my full share in building up a town, found everything, as one might say, ready to hand.