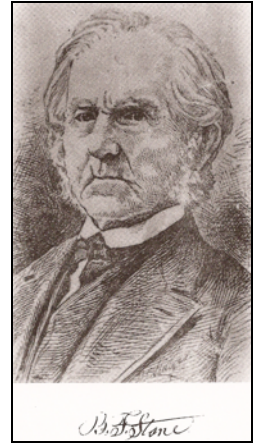


It Was A Scary Time!

Benjamin Franklin Stone was a young boy of eight when his family made the 800 mile journey from his family home in Rutland, Massachusetts to the new settlement of Belpre, Ohio in 1790. This narrative is based of the autobiography he wrote as an older man.

My mother, brothers, sisters and I had arrived in Belpre in November of 1790. Here we joined my father and brother Jasper who had come ahead of us to prepare a home. Our small cabin was very crowded for our family of 13. It was my father's intention that we were not live there long. You see, we had come to the Ohio country because my father was given free land in the donation tract. Here, we would have 100 acres where we would build a fine home and have plenty of land to farm and on which our animals could graze. This land was given away for free due to its distance from the settlements. The government felt that if settlement in the outlying areas could be encouraged then the Indians would be less likely to attack.



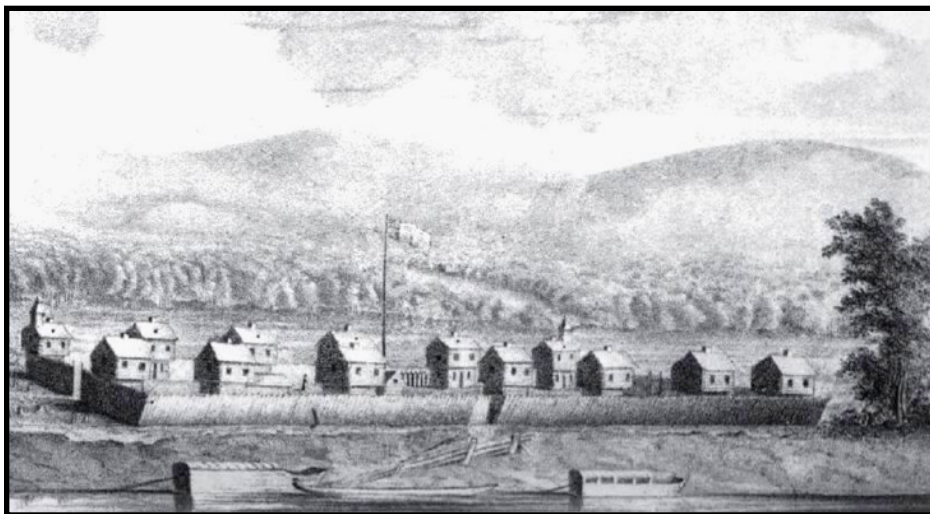
Father had planned to start clearing the donation land prior to our arrival. That did not happen. Shortly after Father arrived Captain Zebulon King was shot and scalped by Indians as he was chopping wood on his land in the small village of Belpre. As you can imagine it was quite a shock to the people. Gen. Putnam warned the residents stay close to their present settlement for fear of an attack by Indians. Our tract in the donation land was far from any settlement, Father thought it best that he put off any improvements of our land until the danger had passed.

For a time the threat of attacks was not felt, and some ventured to the outlying areas to claim their land. Our family arrived in Belpre during this time of peace, but it was short lived. On the evening of January 2, 1791 we received word of a massacre of twelve people at the Big Bottom settlement some ways up the Muskingum River. Only three people had survived, one

being a boy named Philip Stacey. He had escaped death by hiding under some blankets in the corner of the cabin as the Indians attacked his brother John and the others.

My brothers Sardine and Jasper, stood guard all that night. My mother would let none of undress for the night, saying "If anyone escapes he will not be naked." Morning came and we were all alive, but fearful that we should not live much longer.

The next day a meeting of all the inhabitants of Belpre was held and all were in agreement to build a garrison where we could all live in protection. Within a few days the eleven blockhouses were so far constructed that the people were able to move into them. We lived in the southwest blockhouse with two other families until the houses were finished. This garrison was called "Farmer's Castle" probably because all of the families there were farmers.



Farmer's Castle
Belpre, Ohio

These were scary times for us all. The way in which people had to cultivate their lands, by working in parties, changing work, going armed, having sentinels, was a hard way of living. Our farms were so far from the garrison.

My brother Columbus and I (he was then 7 and I was 9 years of age) were sometimes sent to put the cows in the pasture half a mile or more from the

garrison. On the way we crossed a bridge over a small creek. By some means we had the good fortune to each obtain a new pen knife. We were always more or less afraid of Indians. We talked about it, what we could do, if we should be taken prisoners. One consequence would be the loss of our knives. We concluded it would be best to hide them under the bridge. We did so, not considering that if we should be killed or taken, our folks would not know where to look for the knives! But we put the cows out and returned and got our knives.

The people began to move out of Farmer's castle in the fall of '91 into our old cabins, each on his clearing, hoping that they could live that way without being destroyed by the Indians. Experienced woodsmen then called "spies" would scout the outlying wilderness looking for clues of the approach of Indians near our settlements and give us word in time for the people to flee back to Farmer's castle.



We had great hopes for the success of the Gov. St. Clair's army, who had for some months, been marching his army up the great Miami, that he would defeat and intimidate the Indians so that we should soon enjoy peace. But the event was the reverse of our hopes . . . In Dec. '91, came the news of the defeat of St. Clair, with the loss of most of his army! This spread terror through all the small frontier settlements. But we kept close in our garrisons and the Indians never attacked one of our block houses all the time of the war. They passed by us into Virginia and killed many more there than in this territory. Several times we moved back to the safety the Farmer's Castle before General Wayne finally defeated the Indians in at Fallen Timbers and the Treaty of Greenville was signed in 1795.