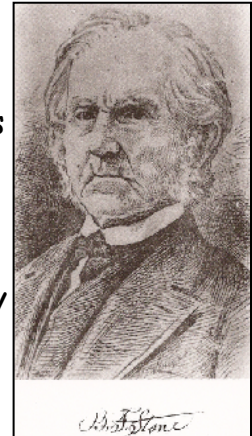


Benjamin Stone Comes to the Ohio Country

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 on the autobiography he wrote as an older man.



My father, Israel Stone, was a veteran of the recent war to win our freedom from Great Britain. The continental money he had received as pay was worth little. He once told me "a whole wheel barrow of that paper money couldn't buy a loaf of bread!" Our family, like many others at the time, lost our farm because we could not pay the taxes. Many of those affected started to consider moving to the new Northwest Territory.

Our family friend, Gen. Rufus Putnam, was the leader of the group that had recently started the first settlement, Marietta. He knew of the hard times our family and others were having. The General wrote to my father about the success of the new settlement, and the free land available to those who would promise to settle and farm on the land. Like several other families in our town, my parents then decided we would go west!

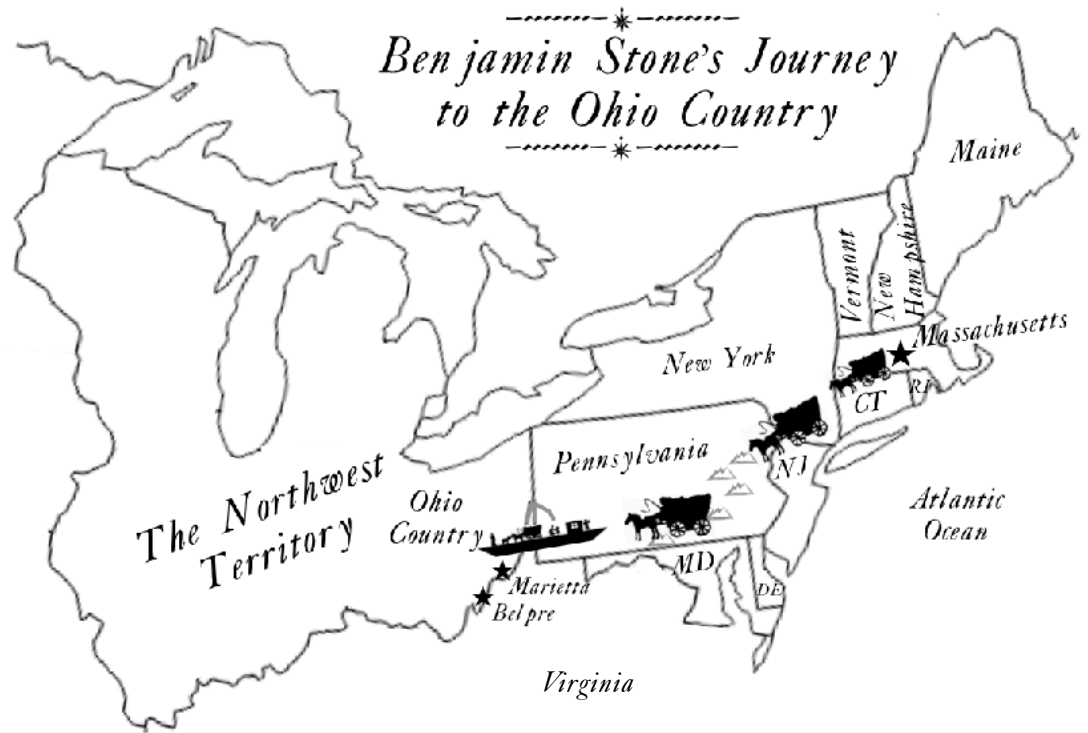
The land there was still unsettled. My father would go first, clear the land and prepare a home for us. He and our dog Flora left for the Ohio in March 1789. It was a sad day for me. Not only would I miss my father and my dog, but I would be moving to Mr. Burlingame's house.

There were ten children in my family, (Sardine, who was then 20 years old, Betsey, Matilda, Jasper, Lydia, Israel, Augustus, myself, Christopher Columbus, and Polly) too many to stay in the small home my mother was to live in. We were to live with

other families until we were summoned by my father to come to our new home. It would be over year of waiting before my whole family was able to come together again.



My father sent many letters during this time. He told us of the beautiful countryside and of how the little town of Marietta was growing. Father also described the tiny settlement of Belpre, just a few miles down the Ohio River from Marietta. This would be our new home. My older brother Jasper joined him to help with the building of the cabin.



In September of 1790, we began our eight week journey to our new home. It was a day filled with much emotion for a young boy. I was so excited to be able to see my father again, and the adventure ahead held much uncertainty. But there was also much sadness as we said good-bye to my grandmother Barrett and many of our friends. I remember my friend Freeman Ruggles gave me a walking stick with a bone handle as a farewell present.

Gen. Putnam had returned from Marietta to lead us on the 800 mile journey. The group included Gen. Putnam and his family, my family of nine, (My older sister Betsey had already made the trip with Capt. Miles family.), Mr. Burlingame's family, and several others, 26 in all. We





travelled with three ox wagons, each pulled by two yokes of oxen, Gen. Putnam's two horse carriage, one saddled horse and five cows. We were quite a parade when we came into the many towns along the way!

Gen. Putnam had made this trip several times. He knew the taverns and homes along the way where we could eat and spend the night. Most nights my bed was on the floor, or my brothers and I would sleep outside under one of the wagons.

As you can imagine travel was slow and sometimes very dangerous. The steep, rough roads over the Allegheny Mountains were especially treacherous. Once, the wheel of one of the wagons went off the edge of the narrow path. A teamster, Charles Mills sprang to the off side, set his shoulder to the upper point of the wheel and pushed it back. It was a daring and noble act!



The last part of our journey was by flatboat. Shortly after we arrived at Simeral's Ferry (where we were to start our river trip) my father arrived to finish the trip with us. We were so excited to see him! The wagons, livestock, and the passengers were loaded onto two flatboats and we headed up the Youghiogheny River to the Monongahala River.



Just before the town of Pittsburgh, the Allegheny River joined to create the great Ohio River. The Ohio took us on down to Marietta. It was tedious work on the river, often getting aground. Men from both boats had to work together to shove

the boat over the shoal. We now saw very few cabins, as the unsettled Ohio Country was on the north side of the river. At night we would go ashore on

the Virginia side of the river to camp. Someone always stood guard as there had been talk of troubles brewing with the Indians.

We first arrived at Marietta. Our family then pushed on down the Ohio to Belpre. Here at our little log cabin we found sister Betsey and brother Jasper. The cabin was fourteen feet square and one story high. It was not large enough for the whole family. Some of us had to sleep in the boat until a larger cabin was put up nearby. That was fine with me, my family was together again, and many adventures awaited me in my new world on the frontier!



Chillicothe Connection

Benjamin Franklin Stone Jr.

1831-1913

Benjamin Stone Sr.'s son, Benjamin Stone Jr. moved to Chillicothe in 1855 to accept a position as minister of one of the Presbyterian Churches. He left the ministry in 1858 to become a teacher at the new Chillicothe High School which was located at the northeast corner of W. Sixth Street and S. Paint Street. He served in the Civil War and later was elected Ross County Probate Judge. He lived at 133 N. High Street.

The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin Stone Sr., Property of the Ross County Historical Society
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