



America's Children



Benjamin of Ohio

by James Otis

This edition published 2023
by Living Book Press
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ISBN: 978-1-76153-011-1 (hardcover)
978-1-76153-012-8 (softcover)

First published in 1912.

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CONTENTS

1.	Benjamin's Story	1
2.	The Ohio Company	2
3.	Rufus Putnam	4
4.	Colonel Putnam, the Engineer	6
5.	The First Emigrants	7
6.	Building a Fleet	8
7.	Campus Martius	10
8.	The Arrival of General Putnam	12
9.	The Work of the First Emigrants	13
10.	Clearing the Land	15
11.	How Our Company was Formed	17
12.	Making Ready for the Journey	18
13.	Concerning Myself	20
14.	Setting Out	22
15.	Mistress Devoll's Outfit	23
16.	At Providence	26
17.	On the Road to Blooming Grove	28
18.	Plans for the Future	29
19.	On the Water Once More	31
20.	Feasting on Honey	32
21.	Among the Moravians	34
22.	The Rope Ferry	35
23.	The Way Through Pennsylvania	37
24.	The Shame of the Girls	38
25.	Meeting with Parson Cutler	39
26.	Ohio Cornfields	41
27.	The Governor and Judges	42
28.	The Name of the Town	44
29.	Campus Martius	45

30.	Independence Day	47
31.	Master Devoll's House	49
32.	The Indian Mounds	50
33.	At Harrisburg	51
34.	Isaac Barker's Sport	53
35.	Uncle Daniel Carter	54
36.	Uncle Daniel Joins our Company	55
37.	Hard Traveling	57
38.	Mud and Water	58
39.	A Storm of Snow	60
40.	Across the Mountains	62
41.	A Friendly Dunkard	63
42.	Master Hiples's Kindness	65
43.	A Surly Landlord	66
44.	Isaac Flogs the Landlord	68
45.	A Much Needed Lesson	70
46.	A Time of Rest	71
47.	Pack Trains	73
48.	A Night Adventure	74
49.	Fears About the Women and Children	76
50.	Descending the Mountains	78
51.	At the Foot of the Hills	79
52.	Nearing the End of the Journey	81
53.	At Sumrill's Ferry	82
54.	Parting with Uncle Daniel	83
55.	Our Flatboat	85
56.	The Cattle are Sent Away	86
57.	At Pittsburgh	88
58.	Too Much Water	90
59.	Escape of the Women and Children	92
60.	Repairing Damages	94

61.	Our Pilot	95
62.	A Change of Weather	97
63.	Noisy Fear	98
64.	A Real Feast	100
65.	Finding the Canoe	101
66.	Buffalo Creek	103
67.	The March Across the Country	104
68.	At Marietta	106
69.	Plans for the Future	108
70.	Inspecting the Town of Marietta	110
71.	A Temporary Home	112
72.	Buying Land	113
73.	Visiting the Savages	116
74.	Captain Haskell's Advice	118
75.	A New Friend	120
76.	Fishing Through the Ice	121
77.	The Sabbath in Marietta	122
78.	A Regular Business	124
79.	A Visit from the Savages	125
80.	Building a Home	127
81.	A Great Project	128
82.	The Two Millers	130
83.	The Savages on the Warpath	131

A NOTE TO THE READER

This book was written in the early 20th century, a time when societal attitudes and language were significantly from what we recognize today. As you delve into its pages, you might come across terms and descriptions that our modern sensibilities find offensive or inappropriate. These echo the beliefs and biases of that era, some of which were fueled by ignorance, fear, and misunderstanding.

We've chosen to preserve the original text, providing an unvarnished window into the past. It's essential to approach this reading with an open heart and mind, recognizing the historical context that shaped these terms and views. While we've made progress as a society, the shadows of these old attitudes sometimes persist.

By recognizing and reflecting on the profound impact such perspectives have left on our culture, we can deepen our understanding of history and chart a course towards a more inclusive and compassionate future.



BENJAMIN'S STORY

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 Mattapoissett 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

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 wagon-load 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 nearby 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

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 Brain-tree 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.

