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## Early Migration to the Western Reserve

*In late June* 1799, thirty-nine-year-old David Hudson finally stood upon his Ohio lands. He had left Goshen, Connecticut, two months earlier with his eleven-year-old son, Ira, and several hired hands, including Mr. and Mrs. Thaddeus Lacey and their two children. Hudson came to the Connecticut Western Reserve to inspect and develop the lands that he and five co-proprietors had purchased from the Connecticut Land Company.

The trip had been formidable. The party proceeded by wagon to Bloomfield, New York, where Hudson stocked supplies at the home of Nathaniel Norton, one of his co-proprietors. Here he also joined company with young Benjamin Tappan, Jr., who was on his way to examine family holdings in Ravenna Township.

Leaving hired hands to drive the livestock over Indian trails to Buffalo and along the Lake Erie shore, Hudson, with Tappan and party, embarked in small boats on Lake Ontario. In six days they reached the Niagara escarpment where boats and supplies had to be moved by hand to a spot safely above the falls and rapids. Rowing, poling, and cordelling (towing by ropes) were required to move the vessels upstream to Buffalo Creek. Ice jams and headwinds postponed embarkation on Lake Erie, but once underway the tiny flotilla reached the mouth of Conneaut Creek in seven days. There a gale drove the fleet ashore, stoving in the planks of a boat carrying potatoes and other supplies. Repairs were made, then with blankets for sails, the voyagers reached the mouth of the Cuyahoga on June 10. Ten more days were required to work the boats upstream to a point near the mouth of Brandywine Creek, where one of the boats was plundered at night, presumably by Indians. Here the men driving the livestock rejoined the party and, after a search of six days, the town line was located, sleds were fashioned, a trace was cut, and the supplies dragged eight miles to the town center. Benjamin Tappan faced a similar task to reach Ravenna, although he had to clear a trace an additional eight or nine miles.

No time could be spared for self-congratulation. While some men cleared land, erected a cabin, and planted wheat, others surveyed the township into lots. A support party sent out by Nathaniel Norton assisted in these labors.

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Then, after making sure supplies were adequate, Hudson, Ira, and two hired men made the long, cold autumn journey back to Bloomfield in an open boat. Leaving Ira in Bloomfield, Hudson walked on back to Goshen.

David Hudson was a "booster," one of those incorrigible optimists who could see the land as it would look after development changed it from a forest to an Eden of substantial farmsteads clustered near prosperous, well-ordered villages. He conveyed his vision to others and, in January 1800, Hudson, his wife and five children, and several neighbors started in sleighs for Bloomfield. There supplies worth two thousand dollars were loaded, and twenty-nine people set out on Lake Ontario while the livestock again was driven overland. After mind-numbing hardships, all arrived at Brandywine Creek and followed the trace to Hudson's settlement.

Order was established quickly in the new community. In 1802, the commissioners of Trumbull County, which then included all of the Reserve, authorized the name Hudson for the township. That same year a Congregational church was founded, a schoolhouse opened, and a lumber mill was built. By 1806, David Hudson was living in a frame house whose lumber was sawed in the local mill, and Heman Oviatt had opened a store. In just another twenty years, this crude frontier settlement opened Western Reserve College; Hudson's vision had materialized.

This telescoped account of one early migration to the Western Reserve reveals both typical and atypical experiences of early settlers. Hardship, improvisation, and unremitting toil are but a few of the constants of early days on the Reserve. But Hudson's experience is exceptional too. Few came to new lands in the West in parties as well organized, supported, and supplied as his. David Hudson was a remarkable leader with a knack for getting things done, and, with the exception of a handful of rowdies, his settlers pulled together. They retained their Yankee individualism alright, but perhaps this trait has been overemphasized in our histories since these folk had an equal talent for community organization and discipline.

There are numerous sketches of early settlement in the Western Reserve so it is not the intention of this essay to retell that story in all its parts. Rather we will look specifically at the early westward migration itself, touching upon other parts of the history but briefly. First, a word about how the settlers secured their lands.

The Western Reserve, retained by the state of Connecticut when she surrendered her western land claims to Congress in 1786, stretched 120 miles westward from the Pennsylvania line between the forty-first parallel and the shore of Lake Erie. The westernmost portion of this area—largely modern Huron and Erie counties—was the "sufferers' lands," or, as it was known on the Reserve, the "Firelands." Connecticut ultimately allotted these lands to citizens who suffered property losses to British raiders during the American Revolution. The rest of the land, and much of the larger portion, was sold to the Connecticut Land Company comprised of thirty-five men who paid \$1,200,000 for this wilderness. In 1796 and 1797 survey crews laid out a pattern of east-west, north-south lines

that crisscrossed the land from the Pennsylvania line to the Cuyahoga River. Lands west of the Cuyahoga were surveyed after 1805 when the Indians surrendered title in the Treaty of Fort Industry. The surveyed land was then proportioned among members of the land company according to the size of their investment. These men, in turn, sold lands to individuals and groups who wished either to settle or to speculate in western lands. Thus it was, for example, that David Hudson, Nathaniel Norton, Birdsey Norton, Stephen Baldwin, Benjamin Oviatt, and Theodore Parmelee became co-proprietors of Town 4, Range 10, some sixteen thousand acres. Since much of that land was swamp, the proprietors were granted an additional ten thousand acres in an "equalizing township." The price for the twenty-six thousand acres amounted to thirty-two cents per acre, a great bargain even in the Ohio wilderness.

Hudson and his associates, as we have seen, laid out lots and encouraged purchasers. With land available for \$1.00 to \$2.50 per acre, even a poor man, with a small down payment and a little credit, could buy a subsistence farm in the Western Reserve.

Some of the Connecticut landowners had no intention of settling in Ohio. They bought lands there solely for speculation. None of Hudson's co-proprietors ever came to the Reserve. Joshua Stow, who purchased Town 3, Range 10, was a member of the survey crews, saw the lay of the land on numerous trips west, but he returned to Connecticut to live out his life in familiar surroundings.

Since this was a Connecticut enterprise, it is natural that people from that state and from her Yankee neighbors should dominate the early settlement of the Reserve. Development of "New Connecticut" was but one phase of a large outmigration of New Englanders that had already sent thousands into newly opened lands in New York and Pennsylvania. Of these, hundreds moved on to the Western Reserve. For example, Robert B. Parkman, born in Leicester, Massachusetts, lived in New York for some years before establishing Parkman in Geauga County in 1803. The first settler of Willoughby, David Abbot, was born in Massachusetts and practiced law in Rome, New York, before migrating to the Reserve. In similar fashion, New Englanders living in northern Pennsylvania pushed on to the Reserve. This outpouring—this "Yankee Exodus" as Stewart Holbrook calls it—penetrated other areas of the west and south as well and was in his view "the most influential movement out country has known."

What caused this exodus; what brought thousands of Yankees to the Western Reserve in the early decades of the nineteenth century? Foremost among the varied reasons was the desire for economic gain. David Abbot, "anxious to make money in western lands," built a cabin at the mouth of the Chagrin River in 1797, and, in 1801, brought his wife and children to live there. In 1808, seeing better opportunity further west, he bought eighteen hundred acres near Milan and moved his family there. On a scale both great and small, this story was repeated over and over.

The search for better opportunity grew in part out of hard times in old New England. Impoverished veterans of the Revolutionary armies came west even though most were no longer young. Veterans like William Bierce, a

"cardwainer" and hardscrabble farmer from the Housatonic Valley, had been paid in paper money so worthless that he gave it to his children to play with. Bierce expected better things in Nelson, Portage County, to which he migrated in 1817; but it wasn't to be. In 1820 his assets were listed as 175 acres of unimproved land, an iron plow, a hog, and a chain, total value \$681.50. He died, a poor man, in 1835. Other hardships—killing frosts throughout New England in the summer of 1816 for instance—also sent farmers toward Ohio's milder climate (as it was reported).

But of course cheap land remained the primary lure. A group in Geneva, Ashtabula County, purchased 900 acres at \$1.50 per acre. In nearby Windsor, some early settlers paid \$3.50 per acre. These lands were good quality, hence the relatively high price. When the price became too high, sales were deferred. In Orwell Township, also in Ashtabula County, Daniel Coit and Christopher Lefingwell purchased land which they then held at a price of \$5.00 an acre, high enough that it "probably accounted for the delay in . . . settlement" of Orwell, which had no permanent settler until 1815. Elsewhere in Ohio, Congress lands were for sale for \$2.00 per acre, but the minimum size plot—320 acres—made it too expensive for many who could obtain smaller and cheaper lots in the Reserve and elsewhere in Ohio.

Costs to the individual buyer were often minimized by people grouping together for joint purchase of a large block of land at a price better than they could obtain through individual purchases. In 1809 residents of Granville and Blandford, Massachusetts, bought land in Portage County. Each of the thirteen members of the company agreed to move onto the land, clear five acres, and build a cabin within five years or else forfeit his right and pay a \$100 penalty. All but four fulfilled the agreement. These four were replaced by substitutes and the \$400 in penalty money was applied to the construction of a community building used for governmental, religious, and educational purposes.

There were as many reasons for migrating to the Reserve as there were migrants. Many young, single men like Ansel Beman, a "poor but honest" boy of nineteen years who moved to Canfield in 1806, came to the Reserve seeking opportunity and hired out to do the endless chores of an agricultural frontier. Some came to fight the devil and spread the gospel. The Reverend David Bacon founded a religious-centered community at Tallmadge, which failed when settlers refused to support his rather stringent requirements. Mrs. Betsy Austin of Trumbull County rode horseback to Bristol, Connecticut, in 1811 to persuade the Reverend Giles H. Cowles to settle in the Reserve where godlessness prevailed in some of the more isolated settlements.

Boosterism and propaganda persuaded some emigrants. Reports from the Reserve to the folks back East stressed the mild climate, rich soil, huge trees, and huge crop yields. The level loamy soil appealed to those who had struggled to farm stony hillsides in New England, and who had paid high taxes for the privilege. Stories of a radish three feet long and a pumpkin weighing over 134 pounds caused people to take notice.

"Yankee spirit" was also at work. The yen to see new lands and to start new enterprises was always a powerful lure, especially to the young and impractical. Though Yankee society had few drifters and loafers, it did have its share of escapist, seeking in the West release from some personal burden. An early settler of Ashtabula County left his family in the East and came to New Connecticut with another man's wife. In Randolph, Portage County, Nathan Muzzey was a "queer character" well known as a Yale graduate and promising young minister. He apparently was disappointed in love. "A screw became loose in his mental machinery," and he became an eccentric carpenter who carved the name "Emma Hale" on each building he constructed. He discovered a small lake in Randolph which bears his name to this day.

The New England character of early settlement on the Reserve was marked. Tiny Cleveland, not yet a village, "molded its destiny upon a foundation of New England character and culture." The term New Connecticut could be taken literally in most of Portage County, Bath, Copley, Boston, and Canfield. A strong Vermont contingent settled Hiram, Wadsworth, and parts of Geauga County. In 1873, James A. Garfield, a son of the region, spoke of townships "more thoroughly New England in character and spirit than most. . . towns in New England today." Settlers had preserved in the wilderness "the characteristics of New England" as it was when they left it early in the century.

Not all Yankees loved the Reserve. Many saw it once—Moses Cleaveland for example—and chose never again to venture there. Homesickness, "that dreadful malady," sent three of the first men in Ashtabula County heading for home "with the determination never to see the Reserve again." Some hated and feared the social and economic consequences of western migration. Henry Trumbull's lampoon *Western Emigration: Journal of Doctor Jeremiah Simpleton's Tour of Ohio* (Boston, 1819) severely criticized the new lands. But those who sold out their New England property and relocated in the Reserve seldom went back. Margaret Dwight, making the trip to the Reserve by wagon, despaired of the rain and a drunken wagoner who put his arm around her neck "and said something which I was too frightened to hear." She thought she knew why so few who settled the western country returned to their former homes. "It is not that the . . . country is so good, but because the journey is so bad."

There were two principal routes from New England to the Western Reserve in the early decades of settlement. The southern route to Pittsburgh followed Forbes' Road through Pennsylvania. From Pittsburgh the road ran along the Ohio, the Beaver, and the Mahoning rivers into the eastern portion of the Reserve. A new wagon road on the north bank of the Ohio reduced the journey by a day's time after 1805. Most using the southern route travelled by horse or ox-drawn wagon. Elijah Crosby was fairly typical; he and his family made the trip by ox-drawn covered wagon in forty days from East Haddam, Connecticut, to Ashtabula County. A well-equipped group led by John Kinsman, in 1804, had a "moving outfit" consisting of one two-horse wagon carrying the family, two four-horse wagons with household goods and supplies, one four-ox wagon, and two

riding horses. Richard Iddings and his new wife crossed the route by sleigh in 1809. After negotiating four feet of snow on the mountains, they ran out of that vital material and Iddings left the sleigh, his wife, and supplies with her uncle. He then proceeded on horseback to Warren. There he hired a canoe and an assistant, paddled the Mahoning, Beaver, Ohio, and Monongahela to Brownsville where he picked up his wife and supplies. It took them twenty-one days of effort to return to Warren. Some nights they had to sleep on the river bank and several days they had nothing to eat. Many pedestrians walked the southern route; John Campbell and his friends did it in 1800, making their way through six-foot snowdrifts on the Allegheny crests.

The northern route presented alternatives. Some crossed New York on horseback, foot, wagon, or sleigh to Buffalo. There they either shipped on boats or followed the lake trail to the Reserve. Many went by land to the vicinity of Rome and then by water the rest of the way. This route involved backbreaking labor at Niagara Falls. Jonathan Hale came to Bath (Summit County) in 1810 via the land route. He objected to the "enormous price" of \$1.92 charged to ferry him across the Hudson. A turnpike in eastern New York charged another 45¢ toll. He followed what later generations would call the "water-level route" to Buffalo where he shipped his goods by boat to the Cuyahoga.

As roads and other transportation improved, the time and energy required to reach Ohio was much reduced. The opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 was especially helpful. In 1842, Daniel Webster Cram went by rail from Boston to Albany, thence by canal to Buffalo, and then by lake steamer to Conneaut. By mid-century, Lucius Bierce, who migrated to Portage County in 1817, could write that the trip which formerly took months (forty to sixty days usually) "is now performed with ease in thirty-six hours." Obviously he was writing after rail connections had been completed. The "Pennsylvania System," a 363-mile combination of railroad, canal, horse car, and stage coach, opened in 1834. It cut time, but above all it saved great physical effort for travellers over the mountains.

Within the Reserve a none-too-successful effort to build roads had been underway from the earliest times. We have noted how the first people coming into an area had to cut their own roads to reach their property. Many such traces were later improved and extended to form the basis of a road system connecting the town centers and villages. Among the earliest roads of importance were the Ashtabula to Warren road built in the first years of the nineteenth century, and the road that connected Pittsburgh and Cleveland. Local farmers contracted out portions of this road. This was common practice. In 1808, three men from Deerfield "cut out and bridged" the road from Old Portage (Akron) to Range 17 west of Medina. In the Firelands the commissioners authorized the building of several east-west and north-south roads that tied the section together and connected it with the more easterly portions of the Reserve. Internal communication was aided enormously by the opening of the Akron-Cleveland stretch of the Ohio-Erie Canal in 1827. Thirteen years later, the Penn-Ohio Canal connected Akron with the Mahoning Valley and Pittsburgh. The railroad,

not much of a factor in the Reserve before 1850, became the most revolutionary transportation development of all in the last half of the century.

It is appropriate to emphasize the New England character of the Western Reserve in its early days, but one must also note a considerable leavening of Yankee influence in selected portions of that region. It is hard to determine the origins of many of the Pennsylvanians, New Yorkers, and others who came early to the Reserve. Often, as we have seen, they were but transplanted Yankees. One observer had a system for spotting a Pennsylvania farm—it would have a big barn and modest house, while the Yankee farm would have a big house and a modest barn. But enough evidence remains to state with assurance that nearly every early settlement on the Reserve had a small number of non-Yankee types among the early arrivals. Some of these were squatters from Pennsylvania and Virginia (mostly the western counties of each state) who took up land illegally and then moved on or, occasionally, stayed and purchased their land when the tide of settlement reached them.

Early settlers in Deerfield came from Connecticut, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, and New York. When Canfield held a militia election in 1806, the officers chosen were Philip Foust of German extraction; James McDaniel, an Irishman; and Elisha Whittlesey, a Yankee. Among the early settlers of Hudson were Irishmen named O'Brien, Lappin, and McClellan. Kinsman had several Irish settlers before 1805 as did Rootstown and many other rural townships.

Large clusters of Irish canal laborers formed at Akron and Cleveland in 1825. Akron's Irish settlement of about one hundred shanties was called "Dublin." Cleveland's Irish enclave was large enough to justify a priest. In 1829 a Cleveland newspaper reported that immigrants "were arriving at the rate of about 600 a fortnight to work on the canal." Most of them, however, must have just been passing through on their way south since the canal was already completed some forty or more miles south of Cleveland by that date.

Germans were common enough in the early days. Most of the first German settlers were native-born Americans of German extraction. After 1830, the flow of immigrants direct from the Germanies reached Ohio and the Reserve. Before 1810 Deerfield and Randolph in Portage County had many German families. St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Randolph was organized by Germans in 1829. They prospered so well in Randolph that they became the dominant element by mid-century. By 1850 Norton Township, one of the best in Summit County, was "rapidly settling with an industrious, hardy German population from Pennsylvania, who are buying out, and superceding the Anglo-Saxon race." They were paying nearly fifty dollars an acre for land that had sold for two or three dollars a generation earlier. Cleveland's Germans, direct from the old world, settled on both the west and east sides. By 1843 the city supported two German Lutheran churches and by 1846 a German-language newspaper.

The Welsh settled Paris township, Portage County, after 1831, and by 1835 had formed the Welsh Congregational church which conducted services in the

Welsh language. Near mid-century, coal mining brought the first of a sizeable Welsh contingent to the Mahoning Valley and the vicinity of Akron.

Cleveland was the area's most cosmopolitan center. To Yankee, Irish, and German stock were added English, Scots, and a surprising concentration of Manxmen who started to arrive in 1826. By 1823, Dutch immigrants were distilling gin and brandy in the village. Jews came early to Cleveland, mostly from the Germanies and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1839, twenty Jews formed the Israelite Society and by 1846 there were two Jewish congregations in Cleveland. Cleveland's population in 1846 was 10,135, of whom 6,780 were native white, 1,472 German, 808 English, 632 Irish, 144 Canadian, 97 Manxmen, and 96 Scots.

Blacks in small numbers were scattered across the Reserve in the first decades of settlement. An 1810 manuscript census of Trumbull County (then much larger than the present county) shows fifty-five blacks, or as it was quaintly phrased, "all other free persons except Indians not taxed." Eleven of nineteen townships had no blacks at all, Austin had twenty, Warren fourteen, and the rest were scattered across six other townships. They represented a mere six-tenths of one percent of the population. The census of 1840 revealed that Trumbull County, now much reduced in size, had seventy "colored" persons. Only 500 resided in the whole of the Western Reserve. Cuyahoga County, with 121, had the largest concentration, and most of these resided in Cleveland where the "Colored Men's Union Society" was organized in 1839. The small college town of Oberlin in Lorain County had an unusual concentration of black residents thanks to the college's open admission policy for black students and its sympathy for the antislavery cause.

The population growth of the Western Reserve paralleled that of other developing sections of the West. Once the influx of new settlers began about 1800, there were surges and lulls in the immigrant flow; this rhythm was controlled by national conditions—war, depression, and so forth—rather than by local conditions. It is true that local conditions—quality of soil, drainage, access to markets, healthfulness—affected the distribution of newcomers within the Reserve, but it didn't keep them from coming to the area generally. As early as 1801, John Stark Edwards wrote from Mesopotamia to his sister in Connecticut, "Every part of our country is rapidly increasing in numbers. . . . Every day brings a new inhabitant; a neighbor opens a new road; raises a new house, or begins a new farm." The scripture, he says, "is fulfilled when it says 'the wilderness shall be made to blossom as the rose.'" In 1811, Ezra Kellogg, Yale graduate and early settler of Ashtabula, wrote of three to four hundred wagons in the past year bringing New Englanders into the Reserve along the Great Ridge Road. "You may well be satisfied," he writes his brother, "that this country is meeting with most unparalleled settlement."

Early growth is easiest to document in the towns. Canfield, for instance, had forty-three resident taxpayers by 1803, and the following year, sixty-three men cast ballots in a militia election. Warren, the administrative center of the Re-



serve until 1809, had seventeen resident taxpayers in 1801, the year of its organization. By 1838 the town marshal's census enumerated 928 whites and 10 blacks. Among them were 14 lawyers, 27 merchants and clerks, 5 doctors, 9 cabinet makers, 18 joiners, 12 saddlers, 7 hatters, 13 blacksmiths, 15 shoemakers, 2 painters, 14 tailors, 3 silversmiths, 3 tool-makers, 4 clothiers, 1 glove-maker, 3 wagon-makers, 3 coopers, 3 plasterers, 8 printers, and 7 tinner. Cleveland, with a population of 606 in 1820, ranked fourteenth in size among towns of the Reserve. By 1840, however, Cleveland was already Ohio's second largest town, and in 1850 its 17,034 persons made it more than three times the size of its nearest rival on the Reserve.

Population of Selected Cities and Towns in the Western Reserve

City or Town	1820	1850	Gain
Akron	0	3,266	3,266
Cleveland	606	17,034	16,428
Elyria	174	1,482	1,308
Madison	931	2,986	2,055
Norwalk	579	3,159	2,580
Painesville	1,257	3,128	1,871
Poland	990	2,126	1,136
Ravenna	418	2,240	1,822
Sandusky	243	5,088	4,845
Warren	340	2,957	2,617
Youngstown	1,025	2,802	1,787

Population of the Western Reserve by Counties

County	1820	1830	1840	1850
Ashtabula	7,369	14,584	23,724	28,724
Cuyahoga	6,328	10,362	26,512	47,740
Erie	—	—	12,457	18,366
Geauga	7,791	15,813	16,299	17,820
Huron	6,677	13,340	23,934	26,164
Lake	—	—	13,717	14,616
Lorain	—	5,696	18,451	25,822
Mahoning	—	—	21,712	23,645
Medina	3,090	7,560	18,360	24,406
Portage	10,093	18,792	23,107	24,361
Summit	—	—	22,469	27,364
Trumbull	15,546	26,200	38,070	30,425

In rural townships growth varied with natural conditions. Freedom Township in Portage County was not settled until 1818. By 1830 it had 342 residents and just six years later it had 841. It is difficult to gauge the growth of townships and counties because their configuration changed frequently until 1840, when the formation of Lake, Mahoning, and Summit counties completed the realignment. Some Mahoning and Summit townships lay south of the Reserve. Three of Ashland County's townships were in the Reserve, although the bulk of the county was not. One is never too certain that census figures reflect the many variations of alignment, but despite these difficulties the decennial United States census gives us a reasonable sense of population at ten-year intervals.

Population was distributed fairly well across the Reserve. Density in 1840 varied from a high of sixty-five people per square mile in Lake County to thirty-three people per square mile in Lorain County. Most counties had population densities in the range of forty-two to fifty-two persons per square mile.

It is plain that the frenetic rate of growth that marked the 1820s and 1830s slowed for most counties in the 1840-1850 decade. Except for Lake, those counties with Lake Erie ports—Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Lorain, Erie—grew substantially in the 1840s as did Summit and Medina with their access to markets via the canal system.

By 1840, an out-migration from rural portions of the Reserve was underway. Although this population loss was more than made up by new immigration, it was nevertheless of some moment. The principal lure that had brought settlers to the Reserve—good cheap land—now lured their sons and daughters further west and north. The large farm families of the Reserve could not all be accommodated as children matured to adulthood. The extraordinary size of these families has often been described. Among the first settlers of Charlestown Township, Portage County, in 1815 was a party of four men, each with his wife and twelve children—fifty-six people in all. John Brown, resident of Hudson and other locations in the Reserve, sired so many children that several sought land in distant Kansas Territory with repercussions that were felt nationally.

Although northeastern Ohio retains to this day some visible evidences of her early origins, the Western Reserve has changed markedly from those early times. Its early migration stamped it with a Yankee character, but the meld of more recent arrivals left it with an all-American look and feel. No longer sectional in character, the Western Reserve is broadly representative of contemporary America.