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DOWN THE OHIO AND MIS-
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DOWN THE OHIO



AND

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BY JOHN T. FARIS

DOWN THE **OHIO**

AND **MISSISSIPPI**

BY **JOHN T. FARIS**

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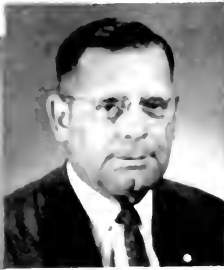
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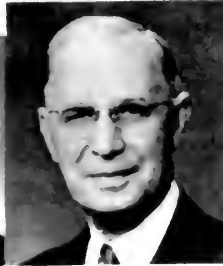
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FOREWORD

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Ohio and Mississippi rivers were important arteries of travel for settlers immigrating into the western country. Excerpts from the journals of travelers portray the beauty of the land and relate the many hazards encountered.

The following publication originally appeared as chapter III of *ON THE TRAIL OF THE PIONEERS* by John T. Faris. The volume was published in 1920 by the George H. Doran Company. Bethann Faris Van Ness, daughter of the author, has graciously granted permission to reprint the chapter.

The Boards and the Staff of the Public Library of Fort Wayne and Allen County present this account in the hope that it will be interesting and informative to Library patrons.

I. IN PERILS OF WATERS

The river is up, the channel is deep,
The winds blow high and strong,
The flash of the oars, the stroke we keep,
As we row the old boat along,
Down the O-H-I-O!

—Old Boating Song.

FOR two generations the Ohio river was the great emigrant highway between the East and the country west of Pittsburg and Wheeling. From Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York and New England the pilgrims thronged in ever-increasing numbers.

Until 1811 transportation on the river was by means of keelboats, barges, and flatboats. The keelboat has been described as being "long and slender, sharp fore and aft, with a narrow gangway just within the gunwale, for the boatmen as they poled up the stream," when they were unable to use their oars. The flatboat was "an unwieldy box, and was broken up, for the lumber it contained, on its arrival at its destination." Of course it was useful only in going downstream. Many of the early emigrants loaded their goods on flatboats, traveled by water as far as possible, then sold this means of transportation, and completed their journey on land.

Long before the real beginning of emigration John Jennings went from Fort Pitt to the Illinois country by way of the Ohio. In his Journal¹ he told of the trip. Extracts are illuminating:

March 9, 1766. This morning at Seven O'clock left Long Island [ten miles from Pittsburg] and proceeded down the River, with the following Batteaus, Viz.: The

Ohio Packet, the Beaver, the Dublin, The Good Intent, And The Otter.

March 10. At Twelve, Mr. Winston hailed the Boats, to bring too, in a threatenng manner, two of the Boats made for him, but Capt. Long ordered them to proceed down the River, & put on shore for him, not chusing to refuse his coming on board, as he observed some Indian Women, & did not know but there might be Men conceal'd, to do us an injury. . . .

March 18. At eight passed some Warriors' Cabbins; these are known by a Tree having the Bark strip'd of all round, about four feet from the Ground, with particular marks Cut on it, denoting what Nation they are, & their good or bad success in War, which is known by the Indians who happen to pass that way.

Saturday 29. [On the Mississippi.] Passed several Islands & a great quantity of Trees in the River, on those Islands are a great many Stumps of small Trees, which the Beaver's Eat through, & when the Tree falls, they either then Eat the Bark of the Top part of it, or else drag it into the River, & carry it to their holes to Eat, or build with.

April 1. A very Large Beace Tree fell into the River, providentially we had passed it about ten yards before it fell, or in all probability the Boat would have been Crushed to pieces, & every Soul on board perished.

April 5. At Eight heard a gun fire, & saw the St. George's Colours hoisted. . . . At Ten O'Clock came up to them at the Mouth of the Kuskuskes River. . . . Proceeded up the River, & . . . arrived at the Village. . . . It hath a Number of houses, some large, but meanly built, with good Lotts behind them, for Gardens, but make little use of them, the inhabitants in general being very indolent.

From Kuskuskes the leader of the expedition went on to Fort Chartris "by Land in a Calash, a very ruff imitation of our chairs."

One of the early travelers who left a record of his journey down the Ohio was George Rogers Clark, who in later years became famous by reason of his campaign against Forts Kaskaskia and Vincennes, in Illinois and

Indiana. The tales of other venturesome explorers of the West proved of such interest to him that, when he was twenty years old he crossed the mountains and made his way down the Ohio, where he remained a few months. One of his companions, David Jones, kept a journal of the trip. Of this journal the following are extracts: ²

I left Fort Pitt on Tuesday, June 9, 1772, in company with George Rogers Clark, a young gentleman from Virginia, who with several others inclined to make a tour of this new world. We traveled by water in a canoe. . . .

. . . Instead of feathers my bed was gravel stones, by the river side. From Fort Pitt to this place [Grave Creek] we were only in one place where white people live. Our lodging was on the banks of the river, which at first seemed not to suit me, but afterwards it became more natural. . . .

. . . We arrived at the Kanawha. . . . We went up this stream about ten miles and out on every side to view the land and to obtain provisions. My interpreter killed several deer, and a stately buffalo bull. . . .

On a later trip Mr. Clark made a location of land near Wheeling, on which he built a cabin. For a season he spent his time surveying, hunting, fishing and caring for his land.

On January 9, 1773, he wrote to his brother Jonathan:

I embrace ye opportunity by Mr. Jarrot to let you know that I am in good health, hoping that this will find you in the same. . . . I am settled on my land with good plenty of provisions. . . . The country settles very fast, and corn is in some parts 7s. 6d. per bushel, but I have a great plenty. The people are settling as low as ye Sioto river, 368 below Fort Pitt. Land has raised almost as dear here as below. . . . I get a good deal of cash by Surveying on this river.

Settlements on the Ohio between Pittsburg and Louisville were becoming fairly common when the author of Taylor's History of Ten Baptist Churches passed, in 1783,

the site of the Clark farm near Wheeling, on his way from Kentucky to Virginia. In giving the account of his trip³ he said:

We took water at Redstone, and for want of a better opening, I paid for a passage in a lonely, ill-fixed boat of strangers. The river being low, this lonesome boat was about seven weeks before she landed at Beargrass. Not a soul was then settled on the Ohio between Wheeling and Louisville, a space of five hundred or six hundred miles and not one hour, day or night in safety; though it was now winter, not a soul in all Beargrass settlement was in safety but by being in a fort. I then meditated travelling about eighty miles to Craig's Station, on Gilbert's creek, in Lincoln County.

We set out in a few days; nearly all I owned was then at stake. I had three horses, two of them were packed, the other my wife rode, with as much lumber besides as the beast could bear. I had four black people, one man, and three Smaller ones. The pack horses were led, one by myself, the other by my man. The trace, what there was, being so narrow and bad, we had no choice but to wade through all the mud, rivers and creeks we came to. Salt River, with a number of its large branches, we had to deal with often; these waters being flush, we must often wade to our middle. . . . These struggles often made us forget the dangers we were in from Indians. . . . After six days painful travel of this kind, we arrived at Craig's Station a little before Christmas, and about three months after our start from Virginia.

In 1785 John Filson went from Wilmington, Delaware, in company with a man named Jones and his family. The land journey has already been pictured in Chapter II. The trip down the Ohio was described thus:⁴

On Sunday, May 27, the wagon in which the party had traveled was abandoned at Pittsburgh for the more easy-going flatboat, better known as the Kentucky boat. The party took passage in one of these arks, loaded with horses,

cattle, groceries, dry goods, hardware, farming implements, and human beings bound for the Falls of the Ohio. Along the channel of "the beautiful river," severing the dark forests on either side, like the zig-zag lightning's path through the black clouds, they floated on the gentle current. The huge old sycamores and cottonwoods that had sentined the wild banks for untold years stood at the water's edge and leaned over the stream and beheld their wide-spreading arms and giant forms mirrored in the crystal waters. Every thing along the shore indicated the uninterrupted abode of the wild animals of the forest, except here and there, upon some rich bottom raised above the vernal floods, peeped from the rank foliage solitary mounds that had been reared so long ago by human beings that their builders had passed away without a tradition, a history, or a name. The haughty buffalo, and the timid deer, disdaining the smaller streams that paid tribute to the Ohio, came to the margin of the main river to slake their thirst, and there was nothing in all the vast solitude to remind one of civilized life except the rude vessel that floated along the current. On the thirteenth day after leaving Pittsburgh the boat was moored in the mouth of Beargrass Creek.

Later in the year of John Filson's own voyage, Daniel Trabue started out with his family from Virginia to Kentucky. Here is a part of the story of their pilgrimage:

We did intend to start to Kentucky the first of September, but we did not get off so soon. Captain John Watkins, his family, and his son-in-law James Locket went with us. . . . We had 5 or 6 white men, and 12 or 15 negro men, and altogether our company was above 70 souls. We went on to Redstone, and got a large boat, which was very heavily loaded with all our horses, and our carriages, goods, and our people.

Uncle Bartholomew Du Puy, with 3 of his sons, and a number of his negroes, and several other families, all started down the River at the same time. I think there were five boats, and in all 200 or 300 souls. I thought there was great danger of the Indians molesting us, but as we had

many guns we agreed to stick together. We thought the water was sufficiently high for our boats, and that we could go in safety, but after we left the settlement we kept running aground, as our boat was loaded very heavily. We went some distance below the Kanawha to an island, which is called the Dead Man's Island.

It was agreed by Mr. Locket and myself that he would steer the boat and I would take the front and Direct him by a wave of the hand which way to steer. We kept exactly after another Boat when on a sudden our Boat stove against the end of a log that was under water; the Boat made a sudden stop, and all the horses and people fell Down. I observed the boat was still, and the water ran as swift as a Mill Tail. I saw that a plank was bursted at my end, and the water was coming in very rapidly, as we were 40 or 50 feet from shore, I hollowed out to Mr. Locket and waved my hand to turn his end to the shore.

He did so, and it took several strokes with the assistance of another hand before they could turn it. When it got into that position I called out for them to jump. Some of the men, who were out first, held the boat. I hollowed for the women and children to go to the end, and jump out; and for the men, black and white, to throw out the things. My end began to sink very soon, and I, and another man, cut the ropes that held the horses. As the boat sank the horses swam out. This all took only three minutes.

The people were all saved, but we lost considerable of our goods. If the hind end had turned the other way, it was thought that most of the women and children would have been drowned. We were thankful that A Kind Providence had saved us, although we saw a great many things swimming off, there appeared to be not a murmur of regret, but all were thankful that it was no worse.

The reason the other Boats escaped, and ours struck the log, was because our boat was a great deal the heaviest loaded, and sank deeper in the water. The other boats stopped, and came with their canoes to our assistance, as quickly as they could. They caught some few of our things that were still near. We apprehended great danger of Indians, so we moved the women and children in canoes to

the Island, with all our things. The same night all the Boats encamped together.

The next morning we examined our boat, and took out all the iron things. She then floated, but was too much injured to mend. The Owner of the other Boats agreed with us that all the horses should be sent by land, and we then might have room in their boats. We were 21 days on the River, three times as long as we had expected. Our Provisions were scarce, and we often went ashore with our canoes, and killed Turkey which was plenty.

We had a hearty laugh at one of Captain Watkins negroes who said, "It will do very well, Master, if we have plenty of Turkeys, for we will never die; but if we have bread and bacon, too, we will live a heap longer."

We got all safe to Limestone, and landed; after waiting several days, the men with the horses arrived, bringing the bad news that the Indians had fired on them, and that several of the horses had been killed. Some of the people went on, with parts of their families and goods, and sent back for the rest.

We all settled in Fayette, now Woodford County; I settled on Gear's Creek, near Kentucky River. We thought that a safe place as several people lived across the River, and we expected that it would soon be better settled. Next year Brother Edward Trabue, and his family came out, and settled on the Fork, or cleft of the Kentucky River. My mother, Uncle John Du Puy, Uncle Bert Du Puy, and Uncle James Du Puy all settled in the same neighborhood.

The Indians soon became more troublesome, and the people who lived across the River moved over to our side. The Indians not only killed the people on the other side of the River, but also several in our neighborhood. We pursued the Indians many times, but they were too cunning for us, and we could not succeed in overtaking them.

When Mrs. Mary De Wees floated down the river from Pittsburg to Kentucky, in the winter of 1787-1788, she was delayed on McKee's Island, near her starting point, while she waited for high water. On November 17 her

party was encouraged by the rising river to make a fresh start.

Of the experiences of the trip she wrote:⁶

November 20. Just as the day broke got aground on a Sand bar, at the Beach Bottom. Just at that time a small Kentucky Boat that was ashore endeavoured to alarm us by firing of a gun and accosting us in the Indian tongue, but our people could just discern the boat which quieted our fears.

November 23. . . . At dark came to Bilwell, a place founded by Mr. Tilton, late of Philadelphia. 'Tis the most delightful situation I have seen on the Ohio; there are about a dozen snug little cabins built on the bank, in which families reside, with each a field of corn and a garden, with a small fort to defend them from the Savages. This settlement began about 2 years ago, distant from Fort Pitt 200 miles, on the Virginia shore.

November 24. . . . The variety of deer, ducks, turkeys and geese, with which this country abounds, keeps us always on the look out, and adds much to the beauty of scenes about us. Between the hours of six and eleven, we have seen twelve deer, some feeding in the grass patches that are on the Bottoms, some drinking at the river side, while others at the sight of us bound through the woods with amazing swiftness.

On November 26 Mrs. De Wees landed at Limestone, Kentucky. On November 28 she set out from Limestone for Lexington. On November 29 she camped on North Fork.

The journal continued:

We made our bed at the fire, the night being very cold, and the howling of the wolves, together with its being the most dangerous part of the road, kept us from enjoying much repose that night.

January 29. I have this day reached South Elkhorn and am much pleased with it. 'Tis a snug little Cabin about 9 miles from Lexington, on a pretty ascent, surrounded by sugar trees, a beautiful pond a little distance from the

house, with an excellent spring not far from the door. I have enjoyed more happiness the few days I have been here than I have experienced these four or five years past. I have my little family together, and am in full expectations of seeing better days.

Up to this time the movement of emigrants down the Ohio had been spasmodic, but with the beginning of Marietta, the first well-organized settlement on the upper Ohio below Pittsburg, emigration became steadier and the volume increased.

The first settlers went to Marietta in 1788, five years after 288 officers of the Revolutionary army petitioned Congress that the lands appropriated for the soldiers in 1786 might be located in territory west of Pennsylvania, south of Lake Erie, and along the Ohio.

When General Rufus Putnam forwarded the petition to Washington, he urged that it be granted, in order that "the country between Lake Erie and the Ohio might be filled with inhabitants, and the faithful subjects of the United States so established on the waters of the Ohio and the lakes, as to banish forever the idea of our Western Territory falling under the dominion of any European power." ⁷

Action by Congress was delayed, but General Putnam did not lose heart. In January, 1786, with Rufus Tupper, he called a meeting of officers and soldiers and others to form an Ohio Company. The meeting was held in Boston March 1, 1786, and the Ohio Company of Associates was duly formed. It was agreed to raise a fund to purchase from Congress, for purposes of settlement, the Western lands which Congress had been asked to give them.

On July 27, 1787, a tract of 1,500,000 acres on the Ohio River, between the Scioto and the Muskingum rivers was sold to the Company, at one dollar per acre. Half of the amount was paid down. When, later, it became impossible to pay the remainder, Congress gave a measure of relief.

The first emigrants to go to the new lands set out from Danvers, Massachusetts, December 1, 1787, under the

guidance of General Putnam, while a second party started from Hartford, Connecticut, January 1, 1788. The first party reached the Youghiogheny January 23, 1788, while the second, making better time, joined them on February 14. There a barge, called the *Mayflower*, was built, forty-six feet long, and twelve feet wide. A cabin was provided for the women of the party, and an awning was stretched. The men propelled the boat with ten oars.

On April 1, the voyage to the Ohio was begun, and on April 7 the party reached the mouth of the Muskingum. The barge was moored to the bank, opposite Fort Harmar.

Upon one of the old mounds near the bank the settlers built an enclosure of logs with a log fort at each corner. Within were the cabins occupied by the families. The fort and the enclosure were called The Campus Martius. On July 2, 1788, the name Marietta was given to the settlement, in honor of Marie Antoinette, queen of France.

Events followed rapidly. On July 4 the first celebration of the national holiday took place with great enthusiasm. On July 17 the territorial government was set up, with General St. Clair as governor. On July 26 Washington County was formed.

By the close of 1788 one hundred and thirty-two men had settled at Marietta. The influx of settlers encouraged the Ohio Company to start other settlements farther down the river.

Next to Marietta, the most important settlement of the year was Losantiville,* which later became Cincinnati. The

* The derivation of this strange name is explained thus: *L* stands for the Licking River; *os* is mouth, *anti* is opposite, and *ville*, of course, is village. Losantiville, therefore, means "The village opposite the mouth of the Licking River."

William H. Venable has told in rhyme of the founding of the town. Six of his stanzas might well be quoted:

John Filson was a pedagogue—
A pioneer was he;
I know not what his nation was
Nor what his pedigree.

pioneers who selected the location were led by Matthias Denman of New Jersey. The same year, John Cleve Symmes, Chief Justice of New Jersey, laid out the town of Columbia, which also became a part of Cincinnati. In 1789 Fort Washington was built to protect the settlements near by. Later Anna Symmes married, against her father's wish, Captain William Henry Harrison, an officer at the fort, who later became President of the United States.

One of the emigrants of 1788 was Colonel John May, who stopped for a season at Pittsburg, on his way from Boston to Marietta. With his party he rested on the shore opposite the junction of the Allegheny and the Monongahela. While there he wrote: ⁸

Yesterday two boats for Kentucky hailed us at our landing, having on board twenty-nine whites, twenty-four negroes, nine dogs, twenty-three horses, cows, hogs, etc., besides provision and furniture. Several have passed to-day equally large.

John Filson and companions bold
A frontier village planned,
In forest wild, on sloping hills,
By fair Ohio's strand.

John Filson from their languages
With pedant skill did frame
The novel word Losantiville
To be the new town's name.

Said Filson: "Comrades, hear my words:
Ere three score years have flown
Our town will be a city vast."
Loud laughed Bob Pattison.

Still John exclaimed, with prophet-tongue,
"A city fair and proud,
The Queen of Cities in the West!"
Matt Denman laughed aloud.

Losantiville, the prophet's word,
The poet's hope fulfills,—
She sits a stately queen to-day,
Amid her royal hills.

While waiting here word came of the capture by savages near Marietta, of three "Kentuck boats." But the news did not cool the ardor of the pioneers.

On May 14 General Harrison, from Fort Harmar, with several others, called on the May party. "They crossed the river in the *Congress* barge, rowed by twelve men, in white uniform and caps. This barge is fifty-two feet long."

Colonel May wrote further:

On May 19 a Mr. Medcalfe, of Dedham, came here, wishing to get a passage down the river. He being out of provisions and money, I took him into my family.

Not until May 24 did the opportunity come to start down the Ohio, in a boat forty-two feet long and twelve feet wide, which drew two and one half feet and was of forty-five tons burden. The voyage was prosperous.

Soon after reaching their destination on the Muskingum, two long boats arrived from the Falls of the Ohio, with about one hundred soldiers and officers. While coming up the river they were fired upon by a strong party of Indians led by a white man. Two of the party were killed.

On June 30 Colonel May wrote:

Poor Dr. M. out of provisions and no money. Had pity on him and took him into my family, although it was quite large enough before. I put powder-horn and shot-bag onto him, and a gun in his hand, with a bottle of grog by his side, and told him to live on my cornfield, and keep off squirrels and crows.

Colonel May and his family continued to live on his "Kentucky ship," as he called it, while his people were hewing timber for his log house. He was still on board the vessel when Governor St. Clair arrived, July 9. "This is, in a sense, the birthday of the Western World," Colonel May wrote, triumphantly.

The magnitude of the movement down the Ohio at this period has been described thus: ⁹

An eye-witness stated that between November 13 and December 22 of 1785, thirty-nine boats, with an average of ten souls in each, went down the Ohio to the Falls; and there were others which stopped at some of the settlements farther up the river. As time went on the number of immigrants who adopted this method of travel increased; larger boats were used, and the immigrants took more property with them. In the last half of the year 1787 there passed by Fort Harmar 146 boats, with 3196 souls, 1371 horses, 165 wagons, 191 cattle, 245 sheep and 24 hogs. In the year ending in November, 1788, 967 boats, carrying 18,370 souls with 7986 horses, 2372 cows, 1110 sheep, and 646 wagons, went down the Ohio.

II. BY FLATBOAT AND KEEL BOAT

Heigh-ho! boatmen, row,
A-floating down the Ohio!
The boatmen dance—the boatmen sing—
The boatmen are up to everything—
Dance, boatmen, dance—dance, boatmen, **dance!**
We'll dance all night till broad daylight,
And go home with the gals in the morning!
Heigh-ho, boatmen, row!
A-floating down the Ohio!

AMONG the rich stories of adventure written at this period is the account left by Ephraim Cutler,¹⁰ son of Manasseh Cutler, one of those responsible for the Ohio Company, who left his Connecticut home for Marietta on June 15, 1795. The trip was made on the advice of the family physician, for the benefit of Mrs. Cutler's failing health. Friends told her she could not survive the terrible journey, but she insisted that she could. She not only survived, but the experience restored her health.

Most of Mr. Cutler's property had been invested in three shares of land in the Ohio Company's purchase, and at the beginning of the journey he had on hand only sufficient money for his expenses. The cost of the trip proved to be about two hundred dollars.

When Mr. and Mrs. Cutler started on "their hazardous journey and perilous enterprise," there were with them their four children, aged eight, six, three and one. On the way they were joined by three other families.

After driving to the Monongahela in a wagon drawn by two horses and a yoke of oxen, Mr. Cutler waited long enough for the building of a small Kentucky flat boat, sufficient to take the four families down to Marietta.

On this boat the women and children embarked, while

Mr. Cutler and Colonel Putnam, one of his companions, took the horses across country to the Ohio.

The boat's progress was delayed by low water; many times it grounded on the bars. On some days they advanced but three or four miles. When the party was near Beaver Creek the one-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Cutler died and was buried on the Pennsylvania bank. Soon after Wheeling was left behind the eight-year-old daughter died and was buried "in the dreary wilderness, far from the habitation of any civilized being."

Of other disasters Mr. Cutler told in his journal:

As the boat was lying near the shore, Mrs. Cutler, in attempting to pass to the land on an oar or plank, fell and striking her side against the edge of the boat, broke two of her ribs and injured herself seriously. My own health, notwithstanding the great exposure from being very often in the water, continued good until about the time this accident occurred, when I was attacked with dysentery, and much weakened before the boat landed at Marietta, which was on the morning of September 18, 1795.

The river journey required thirty-one days, and more than three months had been spent on the way from Connecticut.

After a season in Marietta, the Cutlers moved to Waterford, going up the Muskingum in a canoe. Here they occupied half of a log cabin, being the thirty-third family in the settlement. There they saw few people until the discovery of a salt spring forty miles from Waterford, at what is now Chandlersville. The fame of the spring became so great that, after the opening of Zane's Road, from Wheeling to Maysville, Kentucky, as authorized by Congress in 1796, many travelers left this road either at Zanesville or at St. Clairsville, and sought the spring, stopping on the way at Waterford. The road from Waterford to the spring was laid out by Mr. Cutler. This was the first of many roads for which he was responsible.

Ezekiel Forman, of New Jersey, brother of General David Forman, who commanded the New Jersey troops at the battle of Germantown, set out in 1789 with his family and sixty or more negroes, for Natchez, Mississippi, where he planned to settle under Spanish authority. Major Samuel S. Forman, Ezekiel's nephew, accompanied the party.

The horses and wagon were sold at Pittsburg, and the emigrants embarked on a tobacco boat for Natchez.

Major Forman wrote of the trip: ¹¹

These boats were flat-bottomed, and boarded over the top, and appeared like floating houses. Uncle's boat was a seventy-foot keel boat, decked over, with a cabin for lodging purposes, but too low to stand up erect. The beds and bedding lay on the floor, and the inside was lined with plank to prevent the Indians from penetrating through with their balls, should they attack us. We had a large quantity of dry goods, and a few were paid and bartered in payment for boats and provisions. . . . Both boats were armed with rifles, pistols, etc. It being in Indian war time, all boats descending that long river, of about eleven hundred miles, were liable to be attacked every hour by a merciless foe, oftentimes led on by renegade whites. . . .

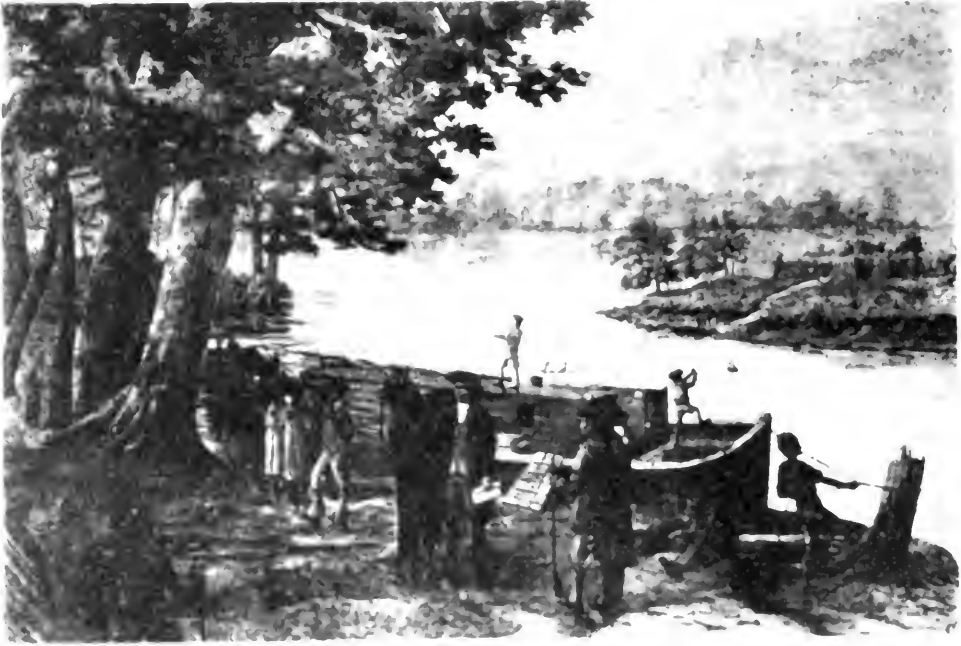
Our keel-boat took the lead. These boats are guided by oars; seldom used, except the steering oar, or when passing islands, as the current goes about six or seven miles an hour. As the waters were now high the current was perhaps eight or nine miles an hour. Before day-break next morning we had a narrow escape from destruction, from our ignorance of river navigation. We had an anchor and cable attached to our keel-boat. The cable was made fast to small posts over the fore-castle. When it began to grow dark, the anchor was thrown over, in hopes of holding us fast till morning, while the other boats were to tie up to trees along the river bank.

As soon as the anchor fastened itself in the river bottom, the boat gave a little lurch, or side motion, when the cable tore away all the frame-work around the deck, causing a great alarm. Several little black children were on deck at



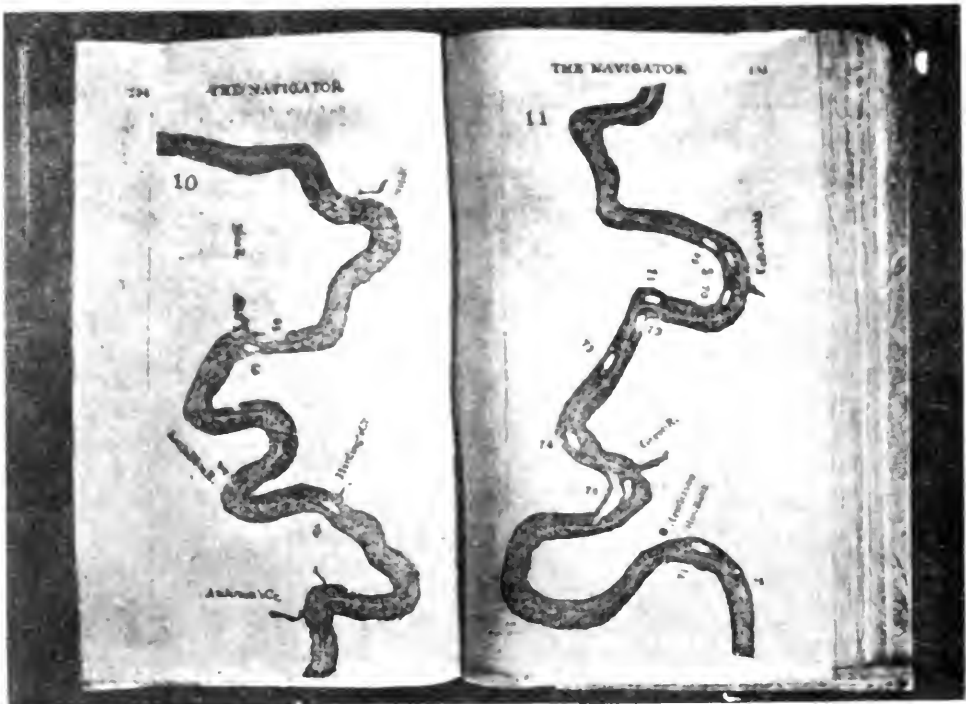
From an old print

FLOATING DOWN THE RIVER



Photographed for this volume from a painting in the possession of the Ohio Historical Society

GENERAL PUTNAM LANDING AT MARHETTA



From "The Navigator," 1811

TWO SECTIONS OF THE OHIO RIVER



*From Schoolcraft's "Historical Conditions and Prospects
of the Indians in the United States"*

OHIO RIVER FROM THE SUMMIT OF GRAVEL CREEK MOUND



From "National Gallery of America: Landscape"

WABASH RIVER, NEAR VINCENNES, INDIANA



*Photographed from painting in Federal Building,
Wheeling, West Virginia, by Nicoll's Art Store*

MC CULLOCH'S CLIMB, NEAR WHEELING, 1777

Pursued by Indians, who had hemmed him in on three sides on Wheeling Hill, McCulloch dashed down the precipitous fourth side to safety. The Indians did not dare to follow.



*Photograph by the United States
Forest Service*

ON THE SCENT OF THE EMIGRANTS

the time, and as it had now become quite dark, it could not be ascertained in the excitement of the moment, whether any of them had been thrown into the water. Fortunately none were missing. During our confusion, Captain Osmun's boat passed ours, a few minutes after the accident, and we soon passed him, he hailing us, saying that he was entangled in the top of a large tree, which had caved into the river, and requested the small row-boat to assist him. . . . Osmun got clear of the tree without injury. . . .

Some distance above Fort Washington, the Scioto river empties into the Ohio. Near this river was a cave, which the whites had not discovered till after Harmar's defeat. Here the Indians would sally out against boats ascending the Ohio. A canoe passed on the day before we passed the Scioto, which had been fired into at that point, one man having been shot through the shoulder, another through the calf of the leg, while the third escaped unhurt.

The writer disembarked at Louisville in January, 1790, because the river was full of ice. He took a house in the village and opened the front part as a store. There he sold goods brought from Pittsburg, and took tobacco in payment. Louisville at this time had about sixty dwelling houses. The writer stayed here to tend his store; the others went on.

An adventure which befell them soon after leaving Louisville was narrated by Major Forman:

While Uncle Foreman and party were sojourning in Louisville there was, it appears, a white man there, who learned the names of Ezekiel Forman and Captain Osmun, their place of destination, and all about them. This fellow was a decoyer, who lived among the Indians, and whose business it was to lure boats ashore for purposes of murder and robbery. At some point below the mouth of the Tennessee, this renegade saw the boats approaching, ran on the beach imploring, upon his bended knees, that Mr. Forman, calling him by name, would come ashore and take him on board, as he had just escaped from the Indians. Mr. Foreman began to steer for his relief, when Captain Osmun,

who was a little way in the rear, hailed Uncle, warning him to keep in the middle of the stream, as he saw Indians in hiding behind trees along the bank.

In 1791 Captain William Hubbell had a similar experience:¹²

He procured a flat-boat on the Monongahela; nine men, three women, and eight children were on board. As they floated down the Ohio they discovered signs of Indians, and kept watch night and day. One morning about daylight a voice from the shore was heard begging to be taken on board; Captain Hubbell refused to land. The Indians, seeing their decoy was unsuccessful, attacked the flat-boat; twenty-five or thirty approached in canoes. Firing commenced on both sides. The lock of Captain Hubbell's rifle was shot off by a bullet from an Indian gun, but he coolly seized a fire-brand and fired his piece with fatal effect. His right arm was disabled, but he continued to fight, using pistols and hurling billets of wood. The Indians were driven off; but of the men only two remained unhurt, and three were killed. After the fight one of the children—a little boy—asked to have a bullet taken out of his head. On examination it was found that a bullet was indeed lodged in his scalp. "That ain't all," said he, showing a wound in his arm which had broken a bone. He had made no outcry, because the children had been ordered to keep quiet. The horses were all killed but one. In a space five feet square, on the side of the cabin, one hundred and twenty-two bullet holes were counted.

The loneliness of the river banks was emphasized by Francis Baily,¹³ an Englishman, who floated down the Ohio and the Mississippi in 1796-7. On the Ohio he noted scattered settlements, but, when he passed into the Mississippi, for days he saw no one. Finally he wrote:

I could scarcely imagine that I was on the surface of a river which had flowed 3000 miles, and scarcely beheld the face of a man, much less washed the feet of his habitation, and had barely 200 miles further to go ere it would be

forever lost in the great body of the ocean. This appearance of cultivation I afterward found was not extended into the interior of the country, but merely on the borders of the river; for all the country behind these settlements is still overgrown with woods and possessed by wild beasts; and there is seldom an instance of there being one settlement formed at the back of another, except in the immediate vicinity of New Orleans.

A few days later the traveler ventured on a bit of prophecy. After telling of a man who built a schooner "at the head of the Ohio and actually navigated it down that river and the Mississippi, and sent it round by sea to Philadelphia," where it became a coastwise commerce carrier, he said:

If we may be allowed to anticipate a century or two, we may fancy we see a fleet of merchantmen doubling the cape at the mouth of the Ohio and bringing up that delightful river (where nothing is now heard but the croaking of bull frogs, the howling of wolves and wild beasts) the produce of every climate under the sun.

The experience of Josiah Espy in the country bordering on the Ohio river were somewhat more varied than those of other travelers. In 1805, he made a trip to visit his mother and brothers and sisters who had emigrated, with Mr. Espy, from Bedford, Pennsylvania, in 1787.¹⁴

On July 11, 1805, he arrived at Wheeling, by way of Pittsburg. On July 15 he sailed in the keel boat *Mary*. On July 25 he landed at Columbia. On July 26 he went up the Little Miami river seventeen miles, to the home of his brother, Thomas.

After a few weeks he started for Kentucky. On September 4 he reached Cincinnati, which at that time contained about two hundred dwelling houses, "many of them elegant brick buildings."

On September 7 he crossed into Kentucky and reached Lexington September 9.

Lexington is the largest and most wealthy town in Kentucky, and indeed, west of the Allegheny Mountains, he wrote. I have been in Lancaster, Pennsylvania and in Frederick Town, Maryland, but in neither of these places was there the same bustle or appearance of business. In fact, the Main Street of Lexington has all the appearance of Market Street in Philadelphia on a busy day.

I would suppose it contains about five hundred dwelling-houses, many of them elegant and three stories high. About thirty brick buildings were then raising, and I have little doubt but that in a few years it will rival not only in wealth, but population, the most populous inland town in the Atlantic States.

On September 22 he crossed over to Indiana Territory, near the Falls of the Ohio. He was interested to note how the surrounding country was settling rapidly by emigrants from Kentucky and the middle states.

At the close of his diary he made these observations:

The emigration to the state of Ohio at this time is truly astonishing. From my own personal observation, compared with the opinion of some gentlemen I have consulted, I have good reason to conclude that during the present year from twenty thousand to thirty thousand souls have entered the state for the purpose of making it their future residence.

These are chiefly from Pennsylvania, Virginia, New Jersey, Maryland, Kentucky and Tennessee, but on inquiry you will find some from every state in the union.

The emigrants from Kentucky, Tennessee and the Southern states are chiefly composed of those who are either opposed to slavery, or are unable to purchase slaves. Consequently, this class of people are daily increasing in Ohio. The expectation of the few who wish the introduction of slavery there can never be realized.

The Indiana territory was settled first under the same charter as the state of Ohio, prohibiting the admission of slaves, but the genius of a majority of the people ordering otherwise (the southern climate, no doubt, having its influence), the legislature of that territory, during the last

session, passed a law permitting a partial introduction of slavery. This circumstance will check the emigration of farmers who do their own labor, while the slave owners of the Southern states and Kentucky will be encouraged to remove thither; consequently the state of society there will be altogether different from that of Ohio. Its manners and laws will assimilate more and more to those of Virginia and Kentucky, while Ohio will, in these respects, more closely imitate Pennsylvania and the middle states.*

In traveling through this immense and beautiful country, an idea mingled with melancholy emotions almost continually presented itself to my mind, which was this:—that before many years the people of that great tract of country would separate themselves from the Atlantic states and establish an independent empire. The peculiar situation of the country and the nature of men will gradually lead to this crisis; but what will be the proximate cause producing this great effect is yet in the womb of time. Perhaps some of us may live to see it.

When the inhabitants of that immense territory will themselves independent, force from the Atlantic states to restrain them would be madness and folly. It cannot be prevented.

One emigrant, Joseph Hough, who floated down the Ohio a number of times, was attracted to the Ohio territory, rather than to the slave territory farther down the river. His journey by keel boat required thirty-nine days, though he had six men to help him. The reason for the slow voyage he indicated as follows:¹⁵

The river was then as low as had ever been known on many of the ripples in the deepest channel, if channel it could be called, when there was scarcely a foot of water. My boat drew one foot and a half, after taking out such articles as we could carry over the ripple in a large canoe, which was the only kind of lighter we could procure. Consequently we had to scrape out channels at the low ripples of sufficient width and depth to float our boat. We usually

* This law was repealed December 14, 1810.

found out the deepest water on the ripple and all hands would engage in making the channel. When we passed such a ripple, we reloaded our goods and proceeded on to the next, where the same labors had to be performed and the same exposure endured. The extent of the labor which had to be performed in order to pass our boat can be understood when I state that we were frequently detained three days at one of the worst ripples.

Of his first trip he wrote :

I left Cincinnati in December, 1808, with five flat boats, all loaded with produce. At that time there were but few settlers on the Ohio river below the present city of Louisville. The cabins were few and far between, and there were only two small villages between Louisville and the mouth of the Ohio. One was Henderson, known then by the name of Red Banks; the other was Shawneetown. The latter was a village of a few cabins and was used as a landing place for the salt works on the Saline river, back of the village. The banks of the Mississippi, from the mouth of the Ohio to Natchez, were still more sparsely settled. New Madrid, a very small village, was the first settlement below the mouth of the Ohio. There were a few cabins at Little Prairies, a cabin opposite to where Memphis now is, and on the lower end of the bluff on which that city is built there was a stockade fort called Fort Pickering, garrisoned by a company of rangers. Cabins were to be seen at the mouth of White river, at Point Chico, and at Walnut Hills, two miles above where the city of Vicksburg now is. From this place to Natchez there were cabins at distances from ten to twenty miles apart.

The whole country bordering on the Mississippi, from the mouth of the Ohio to Natchez, might be regarded as an almost unbroken wilderness. The Indians seldom visited the banks, except at a few points where the river approached the high land.

The bands of robbers who had infested the lower parts of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers had not been entirely dispersed, and were yet much dreaded by the merchant

navigators of those rivers, so that the men on the boats were well armed, and during the night, when lying at the shore in the wilderness, a sentinel was kept in order to prevent surprise.

John J. Audubon, the naturalist, made a voyage down the Ohio in the same year, 1808. He landed at Henderson, Kentucky. Of the town and the home he made there he said: ¹⁶

When I first landed at Henderson in Kentucky, my family, like the village, was quite small. The latter consisted of six or eight houses, the former of my wife, myself and a young child. Few as the houses were, we fortunately found one empty. It was a log cabin, not a log house; but as better could not be had, we were pleased. The country around was thinly peopled, and all purchasable provisions rather scarce; but our neighbors were friendly, and we had brought with us flour and bacon-hams. . . . The woods were amply stocked with game; the river with fish; and now and then the hoarded sweets of the industrious bees were brought from some hollow tree to our little table. Our child's cradle was our richest piece of furniture, our guns and fishing lines our most serviceable implements. . . .

The naturalist waxed poetical on the occasion of another trip down the river, taken in October, 1811: ¹⁷

When my wife, my eldest son (then an infant), and myself were returning from Pennsylvania to Kentucky, we found it expedient, the waters being unusually low, to provide ourselves with a skiff, to enable us to proceed to our abode at Henderson. I purchased a large, commodious and light boat of that denomination. We procured a mattress, and our friends furnished us with ready prepared viands. We had two stout negro rowers. . . . Here and there the lonely cabin of a squatter struck the eye, giving note of commencing civilization. The crossing of the stream by a deer foretold how soon the hills would be covered with snow.

Many sluggish flat-boats we overtook and passed; some

laden with produce from the different head-waters of the small rivers that pour their tributary streams into the Ohio; others, of less dimensions, crowded with emigrants from distant parts, in search of a new home.

When I think of those times, and call back to my mind the grandeur of those almost uninhabited shores; when I picture to myself the dense and lofty summits of the forests, that everywhere spread along the hills and overhung the margins of the stream, unmolested by the axe of the settler; when I know how dearly purchased the safe navigation of that river has been, by the blood of many worthy Virginians; when I see that no longer any aborigines are to be found there, and that the vast herds of Elks, Deer, and Buffaloes which once pastured on these hills and in these valleys, making for themselves great roads to the several salt springs, have ceased to exist; when I reflect that all this great portion of our Union, instead of being in a state of nature, is now more or less covered with villages, farms and towns, where the din of hammers and machinery is constantly heard; that the woods are fast disappearing, under the axe by day, and the fire by night; that hundreds of steamboats are gliding to and fro, over the whole length of the majestic river, forcing commerce to take root and to prosper at every spot; when I see the surplus population of Europe coming to assist in the destruction of the forest, and transplanting civilization into its darkest recesses; when I remember that these extraordinary changes have all taken place in the short period of twenty years, I pause, wonder, and although I know all to be fact, can scarcely believe its reality.

Soon after the close of the trip, Audubon was traveling through the Barrens of Kentucky on horseback, when he heard what he thought was the distant rumbling of a violent tornado. Then he noticed that his horse was placing one foot after another on the ground, with as much precaution as if walking on a smooth sheet of ice. "I thought he had suddenly foundered," the traveler wrote, "when he all of a sudden, fell-a-groaning bitterly, hung his head, spread out his four legs, as if to save himself from falling, and stood

stock still, continuing to groan. I thought my horse was about to die, and would have sprung from his back had a minute more elapsed, but at that instant all the shrubs and trees began to move from their very roots, the ground rose and fell in successive furrows, like the ruffled waters of a lake, and I became bewildered in my ideas, as I too plainly discovered that all this awful commotion in nature was the result of an earthquake."

This was the first of many shocks. Later he learned of the awful havoc wrought at New Madrid, Missouri, and on the Mississippi.

It is a coincidence that within a few months of the time when the trip was taken by Audubon, Alexander Wilson, another Philadelphia ornithologist, made a voyage down the river. He traveled in an open skiff, which he called *The Ornithologist*. He adopted this method of travel, not only because it would afford him the best opportunity to make his observations, but because his means were limited.

The start was made from Pittsburg immediately after the breaking up of the winter's ice. His stock of provisions consisted of some biscuit and cheese, and a bottle of cordial; his gun, trunk, and greatcoat were in one end of the boat. He wrote that he "had a small tin occasionally to bale her, and to take my beverage from the Ohio with." Later he said:¹⁸

The current went about two and a half miles an hour, and I added about three and a half miles more to the boat's way with my oars. In the course of the day I passed a number of arks, or, as they are usually called, Kentucky boats, loaded with what it must be acknowledged are the most valuable commodities of a country; viz. men, women and children, horses and ploughs, flour, millstones, &c. Several of these floating caravans were loaded with store goods for the supply of the settlements through which they passed, having a counter erected, shawls, muslins, &c., displayed, and every thing ready for transacting business. On approaching a settlement they blow a horn or tin trumpet,

which announces to the inhabitants their arrival. I boarded many of these arks, and felt much interested at the sight of so many human beings, migrating like birds of passage to the luxuriant regions of the south and west. The arks are built in the form of a parallelogram, being from twelve to fourteen feet wide, and from forty to seventy feet long, covered above, rowed only occasionally by two oars before, and steered by a long and powerful one fixed above.

Probably Audubon and Wilson had as their daily companions on their trips down the Ohio the Pittsburg "Navigator," the river emigrant's *vade mecum*. This was a pocket guidebook that gave as full information as any one could give about the river, its currents, islands, shoals and rocks, with detail maps of the banks. Those who used the "Navigator" would feel like saying amen to an appeal for the removal of the obstructions to navigation, which was expressed thus: ¹⁹

The consideration for opening the navigation of the Ohio has become a matter of greater importance and necessity for the interest of Pennsylvania now than ever before. The United States road from Cumberland on the Potomack to Wheeling on the Ohio, when completed, will naturally draw a great deal of the trade from the northern states to the states of Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, and to Louisiana through that channel, thereby abridging very much the trade of those states through Pennsylvania. Therefore, if Pennsylvania looks closely to her own interests, she will find that completing the turnpike road from Harrisburgh to Pittsburgh and opening the navigation of the Ohio are the two principal objects which will tend to secure to her her usual commercial, foreign and domestick advantages. Exclusive of the probability of the United States road drawing the trade to the south of Pennsylvania, New York state, on the north, is pushing her inland navigation and opening easy communications from one end of the state to the other, by way of turnpikes, canals, &c., to an extent unparalleled in any other state in the Union.

During the slow progress down the river many an eager emigrant rejoiced as he read of the prophecy of the blessings to come in the new country

where their posterity may rest in safety, having plenty of all the necessaries, and many of the luxuries of life, where their children's children may enjoy the rich and prolific production of the land, without an over degree of toil or labour, where the climate is mild and the soil salubrious, where each man is a prince in his own kingdom and may without molestation enjoy the frugal fare of his humble cot; where the clashing and terrific sounds of war are not heard; where tyrants that desolate the earth dwell not; where man, simple man, if left to the guidance of his own will, subject only to laws of his own making, fraught with mildness, operating equally just on all, and by all protected and willingly obeyed.

A copy of the "Navigator" which was used by one of these early home-makers is a valued possession of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. As the owner floated down the river he marked with ink little notes on the detail map:

Shot a deer . . . Steamboat passed . . . Struck on this island . . . passed 11 Boats . . . Landed in heavy Rain . . . Passed 14 Boats . . . Fastened to small willows . . . Passed 23 Boats . . . 2 Boats run ashore by wind . . . Canoe with Indian passed . . . Landed in hard wind on company with a family Boat . . . Altered our Steering ore.

Three years after the copy of the "Navigator" in which these notes were made was in the hands of actual emigrants, the island where the deer was killed was passed by Elias Pym Fordham, a homeseeker from England, who left Pittsburg for Cincinnati in the fall of 1817. His goods he sent on by flatboat at a cost of fifty cents per hundred-weight. "These flat boats, or Orleans boats as they are called, in the Western waters are from 12 to 25 feet wide, and from 30 to 90 feet long," he wrote: "They are sold

when they arrive at their place of destination, and broken up. Not over 100 nails are used in building one, but they are stuck together with wooden pins. They will carry 700 barrels of flour. They cost \$1 pr. foot in length and sell for 25c. They are manned by four men each, and a pratoon. In the Mississippi double that number is necessary for the stream runs eight miles an hour, and is full of Eddies. Goods are brought up the river on keels or keelboats, which require 12 to 24 men to row and pole them against the current."

Progress on the Ohio was slow, for the current was ordinarily only three miles an hour. But many of the long hours were passed in a skiff, in which he rowed to the shore, where he scrambled over the rocks and searched for curious plants or squirrels. Sometimes the skiff would strike a log, and he would be thrown into the water, but this merely added to the interest of the journey.

When he reached Cincinnati he set out across Indiana, for the English Prairie region in Edwards County in Illinois, to which William Birkbeck had gone earlier in the season. The journey was made on horseback, each person being furnished with an upper and under blanket, and saddle bags, and two pack horses with extra luggage and bedding.

At night the party stopped in roadside taverns, or with farmers, most of whom had a room for travelers. The country traversed was "one vast forest, intersected by a few Blaze roads, and two or three open roads. There are a few new towns and some settlements on and near the state roads and river. These are generally from one to three years old."

III. FROM ARK TO STEAMBOAT

The moonlight sleeps upon thy shores,
Fair river of the West!
And the soft sound of dipping oars
Just breaks thy evening rest.
Full many a bark its silver path
Is tracing o'er thy tide;
And list, the sound of song and laugh
Floats onward where they glide.

—Sara L. P. Smith.

ANOTHER English traveler, William Cobbett²⁰ gave an interesting sketch of his river trip, taken in 1817:

Leaving Pittsburgh on June 6 he “set out on a thing called an ark. . . . We have, besides, a small skiff, to tow the ark and go ashore occasionally. The ark, which would stow away eight persons, close packed, is a thing by no means pleasant to travel in, especially at night. It is strong at bottom, but may be compared to an orange-box bowed at top, and so badly made as to admit a boy’s hand to steal the oranges: it is proof against the river, but not against the rain.

Just on going to push off the wharf, an English officer stepped on board of us, with all the curiosity imaginable. I at once took him for a spy hired to way-lay travellers. He began to talk about the Western Countries, anxiously assuring us that we need not hope to meet with such a thing as a respectable person, travel where we would.

June 9th. Two fine young men join us, one a carpenter and the other a saddler, from Washington, in a skiff they have bought at Pittsburgh and in which they are taking a journey of about seven hundred miles down the river. We allow them to tie their skiff to our ark, for which they very cheerfully assist us. Much diverted to see the nimbleness

with which they go on shore sometimes with their rifles, to shoot pigeon and squirrels. The whole expense of these two young men, floating the seven hundred miles, will be but seven dollars each, including skiff and everything else.

June 13th. Arrived at Cincinnati about midnight. Tied our ark to a large log at the side of the river, and went to sleep. Before morning, however, the fastening broke, and if it had not been for a watchful back-woods man whom we had taken on board some distance up the river, we might have floated ten or fifteen miles without knowing it. . . .

We sold our ark, and its produce formed a deduction from our expenses, which, with that deduction, amounted to fourteen dollars each, including every thing, for the journey from Pittsburgh to this place. . . .

From Cincinnati the party floated down the river in a rowboat, ascended the Wabash, and went to Princeton. At Princeton horses were bought and they rode over to see Mr. Birkbeck on English Prairie. "Before we got to the Wabash we had to cross a swamp half a mile wide," Mr. Cobbett continued. "We were obliged to lead our horses, and walk up to the knees in mud and water. Before we got half across we began to think of going back; but there is a sound bottom under it all, and we waded through it as well as we could."

Travel along and through marshes like those crossed by Mr. Cobbett and exposure on the flat boats caused so much sickness among the emigrants that David Thomas²¹ in 1819 wrote for the benefit of those who should follow him:

The manner of removing hither is such that our surprise is rather excited that so few are diseased. Many are cooped up during the heat of summer for six weeks, exposed to the powerful reflection of the sun from the water, while the roof over their heads is heated like an oven. In addition, they have the smell of bilge water, and the exhalations from the muddy shores. Their daily drink is supplied by the river; its warmth relaxes the tone of the stomach.

This was Mr. Thomas' counsel:

Descend the river after the commencement of autumn at frosts . . . avoid going in a vessel with a leaky roof. A crowded boat is an inconvenient place to dry wet clothes, and the expense of being comfortably sheltered will frequently be less than the damage in furniture, without considering the probable loss of health. To bend thin boards for a cover is customary, but not sufficient. I have seen no roof of that kind which would be a shelter from a driving shower of rain. A sick woman said to me near the Wabash, "I ascribe my sickness, in great measure, to one dismal night that I endured on the river. The rain poured through every part of the roof, and to sit on the bed with my children, under an umbrella, was our only refuge."

Birkbeck's English Prairie was the Mecca of many Englishmen who had been lured thither by reading his letters from America. In August, 1819, John Woods,²² on his way to Illinois, reached the Ohio, after traveling by the National Turnpike. At the end of the trip he said that his journey from England had required one hundred and thirty-nine days, as follows: Voyage to Baltimore, 58 days; 16 days in Baltimore; 16 days to Wheeling; 38 days Wheeling to Shawneetown; 7 days here; 4 days more to the Prairies, by keel boat to the mouth of the Bonpas, and on foot the remainder of the way.

He spoke highly of the treatment received by the way, from residents, waggoners, tavern keepers. "In short, we met with as good treatment as we should in a tour through England; but the manners of the Americans are more rough than those of Englishmen."

Mr. Woods, in surprise, several times recorded the fact that he had not had an accident or sickness of any kind on the route. An emigrant woman of whom Thomas Nuttall²³ wrote was not so fortunate. She had a terrifying experience with a hurricane while on a flatboat on the Ohio. "She herself and one of her children had taken their regular turn at the oar, the master of the boat, who had his family

around him, became so far alarmed and confused as to quit his post in the midst of the danger which threatened instantly to overwhelm them, tremendous waves broke into the boat, which the affrighted steersman knew not how to avoid. This woman seized the helm, which was abandoned, and by her skill and courage saved the boat and the families from imminent destruction."

Another side of river travel was recorded by John A. Quitman,²⁴ twenty-one years old, who crossed the Alleghenies on foot and arrived at Pittsburg November 2, 1819. Of his passage down the river in a keel boat he said:

The accommodations were very rough, but the ladies made it agreeable. Miss Griffith played on the flageolet and I on the flute. I felt like poor Goldsmith when, wandering over Europe, he fluted for his supper. Our fowling-pieces supplied us with game; biscuit and jerked venison were our standbys.

Writing of a journey taken at about the same time, Judge Hall²⁵ said that the forty-five ton keel boat on which he was a passenger was "laden with merchandise and navigated by eight or ten of those half-bone and half-alligator gentry, commonly called 'Ohio boatmen,' who delighted to pull the oars to some such ditty as:

Some rows up, but we rows down,
All the way to Shawneetown.
Pullaway—pullaway!"

To-day we passed two large crafts lashed together, by which simple conveyance several families from New England were transporting themselves and their property to the land of promise in the western woods. Each raft was eighty or ninety feet long, with a small house erected on it; and on each was a stack of hay, round which several horses and cows were feeding, while the paraphernalia of a farm-yard, the ploughs, waggons, pigs, children and poultry, carelessly distributed, gave to the whole more the appearance of a permanent residence, than of a caravan of

adventurers seeking a home. A respectable looking old lady, with spectacles on nose, was seated on a chair at the door of one of the cabins, employed in knitting; another female was at the wash-tub; the men were chewing their tobacco, with as much complacency as if they had been in "the land of steady habits," and the various family associations seemed to go on like clockwork. In this manner the people travel at a slight expense. They bring their own provisions; the raft floats with the current; and honest Jonathan, surrounded with his scolding, grunting, squalling, and neighing dependents, floats to the point proposed without leaving his own fireside; and on his arrival there, may step on shore with his house and commence business. . . .

Many emigrants came to the Ohio from Tennessee and Kentucky by way of the Cumberland and Tennessee rivers. So few were the records left by these, however, that the story of W. B. De Wees²⁶ is of special value.

On March 1, 1819, he left Nashville. On a keel boat he reached the Ohio by way of the Cumberland, and then the Mississippi. He made no comment on the country until he came to the Walnut Hills, on the Mississippi River. Then he waxed enthusiastic:

They are elevated seventy-five or one hundred feet above the common level of the river. Although it was in the winter season, the grass was perfectly green. The scenery was certainly enchanting!

The vessels upon this river consist in part of barges and keel boats, but mostly of upper country flat-boats, generally called broad-horns. . . . While at Natchez I saw a steam-boat. I spent some time on board examining this boat. . . . I think this invention of Robert Fulton will eventually prove to be of great advantage to this part of the country, and I hope the time will soon come, as I firmly believe it will, when they will take the place of the vessels which are now occupied in navigating this majestic river. Nor do I think I am too sanguine when I say that in twenty-five years from now whoever lives to see that time will find steam navigation to be the most common mode.

After entering Red River, we found our labors very toilsome; on account of our boat being a large, family boat, crowded with women and children, we found it very difficult to row and push up stream. However, we got along very well, though slowly, until we arrived at the Big Raft. . . .

Our course through the raft was very slow and toilsome. The distance is about ninety miles. We were thirty days in making this distance. Ours is the only boat of any size that has ever passed through the raft. Had we not been so fortunate as to secure the service of a Caddo Indian, who had passed through before, as a guide, we should most likely have been lost.

I hardly know how to give you a description of this raft, but perhaps you can get the best description of it by imagining yourself in a large swamp, grown up with trees and filled up with driftwood, wedged in very closely, the water having no particular current and running in no particular direction. During the thirty days we saw land but two or three times, and then only some small islands. At night we tied our boats to a tree and remained till morning. Sometimes we would come across lakes two or three miles in extent, and then again we would spend a whole day in moving not further than the length of the boat.

But I must not forget to tell you of the immense quantity of bee trees which we found in this raft. At any time we could go in our "dug out," and return laden with a large quantity of honey, which we found truly delicious.

After we were safely through the raft, we had no difficulty in getting to this place, [Long Prairie] which is only about a three days' journey. The country from Natchitoches to this place is generally uninhabited, except by a few Indians.

Long Prairie is the first large prairie on Red river, from the mouth up, and is surrounded by a heavily timbered country. The land is very rich. . . . The population of this part of the country consisted of two families previous to our arrival. As to the health of the place I know but little . . . but from appearances I should not judge favor-

ably of it. Here I saw for the first time a person shaking with the ague. I supposed the person to be dying. . . .

The prevalence of ague in this region was due in large part to the curious Red River Raft, the largest and most remarkable formation of the kind of which there is any record. The Red river, more than seventeen hundred miles long, was practically closed to navigation by a timber raft of enormous extent. Early explorers were unable to ascend the stream, and most later navigators found it necessary to make use of a series of bayous and creeks to reach the headwaters.

The raft was described in 1855²⁷ as "an accumulation of trees, logs, and drift, extending over the surface of the river from bank to bank, and for miles in extent, so close and compact as to be walked over without wetting the feet. Broom straw, willows, and other small bushes are growing out of the rich, alluvial earth that covers the logs, so that it presents the appearance of an old worn-out field that has been abandoned to grow up again."

It has been conjectured that the formation of this raft began nearly five centuries ago. The cause, it is agreed, was that waters of the Mississippi, being high from a freshet when the Red river was low, backed up and made still water at the mouth. Driftwood floating downstream was stopped in the still water; further accumulations made a solid mass from shore to shore. When the Mississippi fell to the level of the Red river, the mass became jammed. The banks of the stream being heavily wooded, vast quantities of timber were added, and the raft grew at the rate of about a mile and a half a year. As the years passed, the oldest timber rotted, and sections of the raft broke away and floated down to the Gulf of Mexico. The process of decay was not sufficiently rapid to keep pace with the additions, and the raft increased in length, while gradually receding upstream. This recession was so slow, that one man said, "If we would wait two hundred years, it would

give us navigation up to some eight hundred miles above the mouth."

But it was impossible to wait on the processes of nature. The whole Red river country was malarial because of the decaying timber. As the raft grew, settlers were driven back, not only by the malaria, but by the waters which overflowed the prairie, and made of a fertile country a lake from twenty to thirty miles wide. Homes were deserted, and the development of the region was retarded. When Government engineers made a preliminary survey in 1833, the raft was found to be one hundred and twenty-eight miles long, the lower end being about four hundred miles above the mouth of the stream. Operations were begun at once, under the direction of Captain Shreve.

At first the work was not difficult. The lower part of the raft was in such a state of decay, and yielded so readily to the grapplings of the steamer that about one hundred miles of it was pulled away the first season. Good navigation was then established up to Coates' Bluff, now Shreveport, so named for the leader of the expedition.

The last thirty miles of the obstruction presented great difficulties. The timber was solid, and the completion of the work required many years. Not until 1873 was a navigable channel opened. At once the level of the water was lowered fifteen feet. But it is still necessary to keep snag boats in action, that the raft may not be renewed.

During the progress of the work of removal Captain Shreve and his associates were encouraged by the prophecy that some day the fertile lands of the valley "would be inhabited by a dense population, and the waters freighted with the produce of its unlimited fine range for cattle and hogs, and also with cotton, wheat and other grains."

It was not necessary to go to the Red River Country to find malaria. The author of "An Englishman's Pocket Note-book in 1828,"²⁸ who "took boat at Wheeling," on November 28, wrote:

The steamboat is very small and dirty . . . the low state of the water in the Ohio not allowing large steamboats to ply at this season of the year. . . . Crammed with passengers, all equally disagreeable. . . . The settlers are few, and cultivation along the banks scarcely seen. They are subject here and on the river to the ague and bilious fever. The few inhabitants I saw were sickly, emaciated beings. No doubt the climate will improve when the land is cleared.

The Englishman could not restrain his wonder at the number of steamboats on the river. On November 10, when he reached Cincinnati, he said:

We saw here 20 large and small steamboats, and on the quay an immense number of drays and wagons. . . . The town has risen within 2 years and in the very midst of forests to be a place of considerable importance and trade.

The Pittsburg "Navigator," printed in 1814, from which a quotation has already been made, spoke enthusiastically²⁹ of the marvel of the river that was to be such a large factor in the transformation of the Western Country:

There is now on foot a new mode of navigating our western waters, particularly the Ohio and the Mississippi rivers. This is with boats propelled by the power of steam. This plan has been carried into successful operation on the Hudson river at New York, and on the Delaware between New Castle and Burlington. It has been stated that the one on the Hudson goes at the rate of four miles an hour against wind and tide on her route between New York and Albany, and frequently with 300 passengers on board. From these successful experiments there can be but little doubt of the plan succeeding on our western waters, and proving of immense advantage to the commerce of our country. A Mr. Rosewalt, a gentleman of enterprise, who is acting it is said in conjunction with Messrs. Fulton and Livingston of New York, has a boat of this kind now (1810) on the stocks at Pittsburgh, of 138 feet keel, calculated for 300 or 400 tons burden.

A footnote called attention to the fact that the boat was in successful operation. "She passes floating wood on the river as you pass objects on land when on a swift trotting horse." The vessel, it was stated, could make thirteen trips a year to New Orleans, at an income of \$31,200 a year, and an expense of \$6,906. As the cost of the boat was \$40,000, this return seemed startling. The hope was expressed that these returns would encourage others so that the people of the world would "see the advantage of steam power over that of the oars and poles, and ere long have steam boats of all sizes and fashions, running up and down our numerous rivers, with as much ease and facility as does the common canoe under the direction of its skilful original masters, the Indians."

The "Navigator's" "Mr. Rosewalt" was Nicholas J. Roosevelt, who, in 1809, with Mrs. Roosevelt, made an adventurous trip down the Ohio and the Mississippi, as far as New Orleans, to examine critically the rivers with a view to the possibility of navigation by the steamboat which he hoped to build. Mrs. Roosevelt said of the trip:³⁰

The journey in the flat boat commenced at Pittsburgh, where Mr. Roosevelt had it built; a huge box containing a comfortable bedroom, dining room, pantry and a room in front for the crew, with a fireplace where the cooking was done. The top of the boat was flat, with seats and an awning. We had on board a pilot, three hands, and a man cook. We always stopped at night, lashing the boat to the shore. The row boat was a large one, in which Mr. Roosevelt went out continually with two or three men to ascertain the rapidity of the ripple or current.

As Mr. Roosevelt met travelers and traders along the river he told them of his belief that the river could be navigated by steamboats, but they laughed at him. His faith, however, was strong, and when he returned to the East he sought capitalists in New York. These were so interested in his report that in 1811 he found himself in Pittsburg once more, ready to work on the steamboat.

Men were sent to the forest to cut timber for ribs, knees, and beams. These were rafted down the Monongahela to the shipyard. Planking was cut from white-pine logs, in the old-fashioned saw-pits. A shipbuilder and the mechanics required were brought from New York.

When the boat, one hundred and sixteen feet long, was ready, it was christened the *New Orleans*.

On the initial trip Mr. and Mrs. Roosevelt were the only passengers. The crew was made up of the captain, the engineer, the pilot, six deckhands, and four servants.

Eager watchers at Pittsburg saw the vessel swing into the stream and disappear around the first headlands. Many of them shook their heads, declaring that the boat would never reach Cincinnati.

But it did reach Cincinnati. The welcome there was hearty, but there, too, doubters were many. When the lines were cast loose, some said, "We see you for the last time. Your boat may go *down* the river; but, as to coming up it, the very idea is an absurd one."

The Cincinnati doubters were convinced when the boat returned from Louisville, having been stopped by the lack of sufficient water to carry it over the Falls.

When the stage of water was right, Louisville was safely passed. Then began days of anxiety, due not to the steamer's failure to mind her helm, but to the great earthquake of 1811, which struck terror to the hearts of thousands, changed river channels, and worked other transformations in the physical appearance of the country for hundreds of miles.

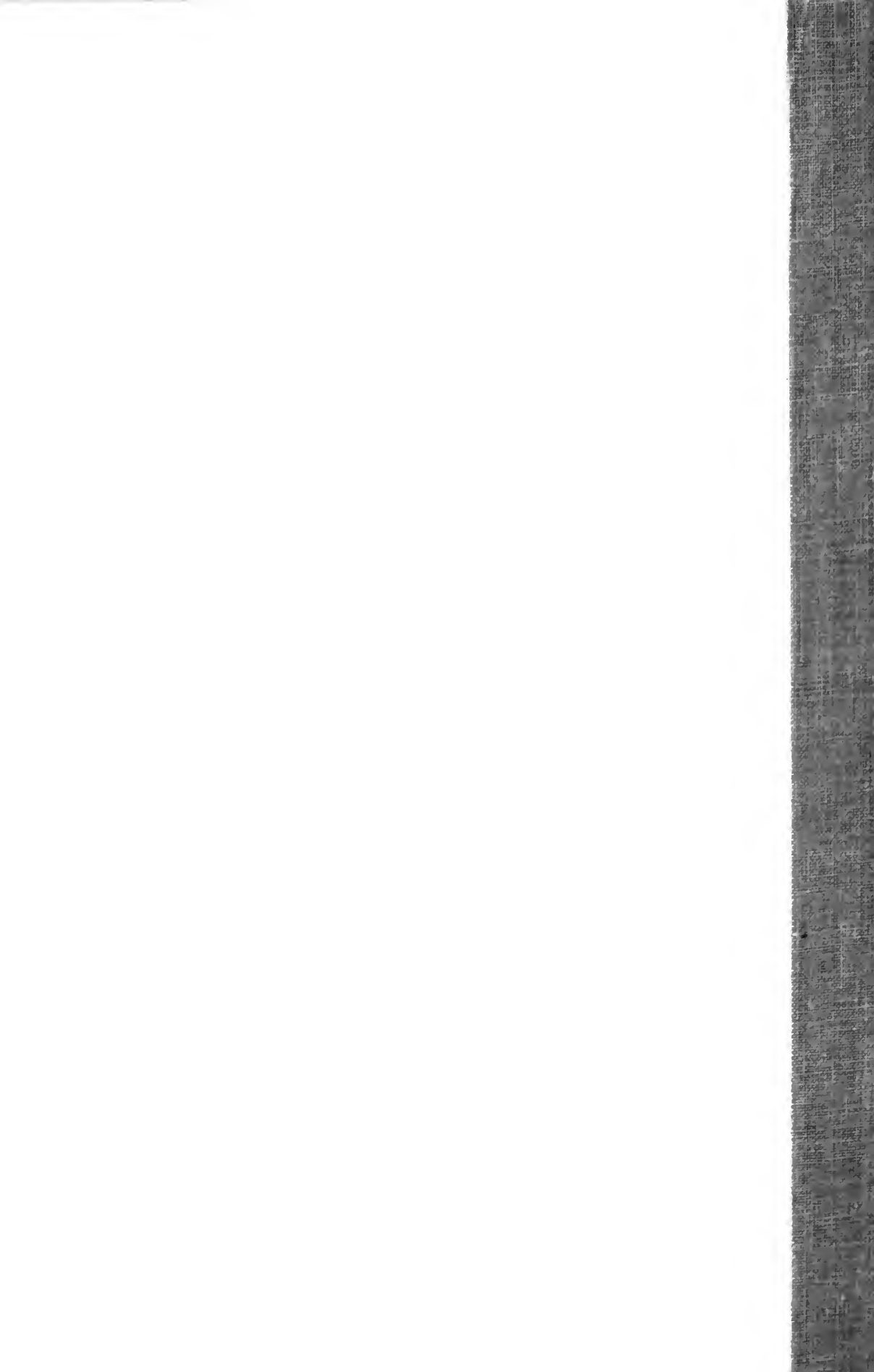
At New Madrid, scores of people begged to be taken on board. They reported that the earth had opened and that many houses and their inhabitants had been swallowed up. Other settlers hid from the boat, thinking that its appearance was a part of the calamity that had overtaken the town.

At last the steamboat passed out of the field of the earthquake, and once more there was quiet. Natchez and

New Orleans were reached in good time, and the voyage of the first steamboat on the Ohio and Mississippi was ended—"the voyage which changed the relations of the West—which may almost be said to have changed its destiny."

- NOTES -

1. "Journal from Fort Pitt to Fort Chartres," p. 145.
2. "Conquest of the Country Northwest of the River Ohio," Vol. I, pp. 60-63.
3. "The Wilderness Road" (Filson Club), p. 54.
4. "John Filson" (Filson Club), p. 40.
5. "Colonial Men and Times," p. 120.
6. "Journal from Philadelphia to Kentucky, 1787-8," p. 182.
7. "Washington County and the Early Settlements of Ohio," p. 29.
8. "Journal and Letters of Colonel John May," p. 38, ff.
9. "The Winning of the West," Vol. III, p. 15.
10. "Life and Times of Ephraim Cutler," p. 19.
11. "Narrative of a Journey on the Ohio and Mississippi," pp. 24, 25, 30, 36.
12. "The Wilderness Road" (Filson Club), p. 54.
13. "Journal of a Tour in the Unsettled Parts of the United States of America," p. 206.
14. "Memorandum of a Tour," p. 1, ff.
15. "Pioneer Biography," p. 316.
16. "Audubon and His Journals," Vol. II, p. 208.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 203.
18. "Poems and Literary Prose of Alexander Wilson," Vol. I, p. 179.
19. "The Pittsburgh Navigator," p. 28.
20. "A Year's Residence in the United States of America," p. 323.
21. "Travels through the Western Country," p. 214.
22. "Two Years' Residence in the Settlement of the English Prairie," p. 143.
23. "Journals and Travels in the Arkansas Territory," p. 23.
24. "Central Ohio Seventy Years Ago," p. 224.
25. "Letters from the West," p. 94.
26. "Letters from an Early Settler in Texas," p. 10.
27. "DeBow's Review," p. 437.
28. "An Englishman's Pocket Note Book," p. 334.
29. "The Navigator," p. 30.
30. "The First Steamboat in Western Waters," p. 7.





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