

**JOURNAL OF
THOMAS
WALLCUT, IN 1790**

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Journal of Thomas Wallcut, in 1790 by Thomas Wallcut

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From Dr. S. A. Green of No 88



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WITH NOTES BY
GEORGE DEXTER.



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THOMAS WALLCUT'S JOURNAL.

AT a stated meeting of the Massachusetts Historical Society, held Oct. 9, 1879, Mr. George Dexter communicated the following journal kept during a visit to Marietta, Ohio, and on the return journey to Philadelphia, by Thomas Wallcut, one of the founders of the Society and its first Recording Secretary. This journal had been found among Mr. Wallcut's papers, presented by his nephew, the Rev. Robert F. Wallcut, at the September meeting.

An appreciative and touching memoir of Mr. Wallcut has been prepared by this nephew for the second volume of the Early Proceedings of the Society (pp. 193-208). From this it appears that he invested all his pay as hospital steward in the Revolutionary war, in a share of the Ohio Company, then just formed, and an enterprise in which many officers and soldiers of the Continental Army were interested. In 1789 he decided to visit the new settlement, without, however, any definite plan of remaining there permanently. Among his papers is a copy of a letter from General Rufus Putnam, dated August 14, 1789, in which information is given as to the best way of reaching the Muskingum; and two draughts of a letter to his friend George R. Minot, from Ohio, dated October 31 and November 3, 1789, have been found also. From these draughts it appears that he arrived at Marietta on the 26th of October, having left Boston early in September, in a schooner ("Captain Snow"), and having had a rough passage of twenty-four days to Baltimore. Resting here four days, he

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tells Mr. Minot he found a conveyance for his portmanteau in a wagon, and started on foot for Wheeling, on the evening of October 1st, arriving there on the evening of the 20th. The only remark he makes about the journey is a comment on the wretched cabins of the settlers along the road on which he travelled; "even for two hundred miles in Pennsylvania, before I came to the Ohio," he says; and he expresses a hope that "our people will be the means of introducing more ambition and a better taste for building, as soon as we can turn our attention from the first and essential requisites of settling a new country." He remained but one day and two nights in Wheeling, and spent four days and a half in walking down to Marietta, having joined Mr. Cutler there (a son of the Rev. Manasseh Cutler), and one other person whose name he does not give. He is much pleased with all he sees and hears in Marietta, but "has thought of traversing a considerable part of the country, and may perhaps go down to Orleans," with the expectation of returning by way of Charleston to Boston.

Mr. Wallcut remained in Marietta from October 26, 1789, to March 8, 1790. If he kept a diary during the early part of his visit, it must have been in another book, for this begins with the first leaf of the book, "Wednesday, January 20, 1790." It is a compact little volume, five inches by three and a half, and opens on the shorter edge. It is kept in a very neat and careful manner. Mr. Wallcut's habits were methodical, and his handwriting almost a model for this generation of poor penmen.

After his return to Boston, Mr. Wallcut did not immediately lose his interest in Ohio. Among his correspondence is an occasional letter from a friend there, — Mr. Moody, with whom he boarded, or Paul Fearing, the first lawyer in the State. But occupation and distance from his lands (the Ohio purchase was the only financial investment he ever made) caused a gradual decrease of attention. When applied to by a friend in Marietta, he sent money from time to time to pay the taxes and other claims upon him. Some letters from William R. Putnam, who seems to have acted as his

agent, are found among his papers. But gradually, piece by piece, the land was sold for unpaid taxes, until finally, in 1838, he made a quitclaim deed of all his interest to Nahum Ward, for the sum of one hundred dollars. It may be of interest to some Ohio antiquary to note that Mr. Wallcut's land (as appears by a letter from Mr. Ward, dated December 17, 1831) consisted of "eight-acre lot, number 287; three acres, number 575; half-acre lot, number 1083; one hundred and sixty acres, number 1142; one-hundred-acre lot, number 498; six hundred and forty acres, and two hundred and sixty-two acres, number 13, in range number 15, town number 11."*

In printing the diary, the language has been modernized somewhat, and a few passages of a strictly private or personal nature have been omitted.

Wednesday, 20 January, 1790. It was perceived this morning that the River Mus[kingum] had fallen. When I got up it appeared to me it had fallen about a foot, and it continued to fall through the day, and faster much than it had risen. It froze considerably last night, and this is as cold or the coldest day I have felt in the country. Went

* In a copy which Mr. Wallcut has made of a letter from Benjamin Lynde Oliver to him from Zanesville, July 23, 1812, occurs the following: "With respect to your land, all the information I can obtain is this, — it originally contained five lots and a section and fraction. 1st lot, No. 287, of eight acres, was a very good piece of land, and worth \$10 per acre, at least. This is not redeemable. 2d lot, No. 575, of three acres, is rough, hilly land, not worth the taxes paid on it. 3d lot, No. 1083, is a house-lot, one-half acre, situated near the bank of the Ohio, a quarter of a mile from the Hockhocking, valuable merely as good land. 4th lot, No. 1142, one hundred and sixty acres, lies about twenty miles from Marietta. It is at least three or four miles from any settlement. It is rich land, but hilly, worth fifty cents or seventy-five cents per acre; and, when there shall be any settlement near it, will rise, perhaps, to \$2 per acre. 5th lot, No. 498, of one hundred acres, lies about eighty-five miles from Marietta, and separated from the Ohio by a small Congress lot. This is all good land; one-half of it is what is called bottom-land, — that is, low, rich, flat land, near the river. This land is worth at least \$3 or \$4 per acre. The section No. 13, containing six hundred and forty acres, lies about forty miles west by south from Marietta, about six miles west by south from Athens. It is partly rich, partly thin, hilly land. It is worth, on an average, about \$1 per acre. Seventy-four acres are sold. The fraction, two hundred and sixty-two acres, lies contiguous to the section, and is of the same value per acre."

out with Captain Prince,* and cut some poles for the smoke house. In the evening went to Mr. Parsons's vendue † and bid upon some linen, a pattern for a shirt. I went as high as two dollars, which was as much as I thought it might be afforded for here, but it went above me.

Thursday, 21 January. The weather much moderated to-day, and our creek and pond before the house fell so that it is almost dry. I believe this morning the Muskingum had fell six or eight feet from the highest state of the flood in about twenty-four hours.

Friday, 22 January, 1790. ‡

Sabbath, 24 January, 1790. A pleasant day. This morning Mr. Brockway, Mr. Dix, Mr. Cushing, and several others left this place on a voyage to Orleans. Their object is trade, as they have some flour, and perhaps to seek their fortune. Captain P. started the proposal of going down with them as far as Belle Prairie § to view that settlement. I readily assented to it with Mr. Moody. || We carried with us a

* Captain Joseph Prince was a hatter by trade. He came from Boston, and Dr. Hildreth says he removed from Marietta to Cincinnati. Among Mr. Wallcut's papers is a letter from him from that place, dated June 14, 1811. See "Pioneer History," p. 330.

† General Samuel H. Parsons, one of the judges of the Territory, and a director in the Ohio Company, was a distinguished officer in the Continental army. He was drowned in the Big Beaver Creek in November, 1789. Perhaps the vendue was a sale of his effects, for his son Enoch, who was with him in Ohio, returned to Connecticut in April of this year. There is a biography of General Parsons in Dr. Hildreth's "Memoirs of the Early Pioneer Settlers of Ohio"; and a full Parsons family genealogy in the "New England Historical and Genealogical Register," vol. i. pp. 263-276. There is also an account of his death in Craig's "Olden Time," vol. ii. p. 628. He was one of the first to call attention to the curious mounds and earthworks in the Ohio Territory. See Haven's "Archaeology of the United States," p. 23.

‡ Nothing but the date is entered.

§ For an account of the settlement and early history of Belpre, see Hildreth's "Pioneer History," chapters xvi.-xix. There were three settlements, some little distance apart, but the Indian war caused the building of Farmers' Castle at the middle settlement, in which garrison all the inhabitants took shelter. Dr. Hildreth gives a picture of Farmers' Castle and a list of its inhabitants in 1792, indicating the house in which each family dwelt. At the time of Mr. Wallcut's visit Farmers' Castle had not been built.

|| Mr. Nathaniel Moody was a baker in Marietta, with whom Mr. Wallcut and his friend, the doctor, boarded during Mr. Wallcut's visit. Among the Wallcut papers are two letters from Mr. Moody written after Mr. Wallcut's return to Boston. From Mr. Prince's letter, cited above, it appears that Mr. Moody went also to Cincinnati, that he was unfortunate in business there, and that he returned to New England for a time. When Mr. Prince heard last of him, he was in Kentucky.