

**JOURNAL OF THOMAS
DEAN: A VOYAGE TO
INDIANA IN 1817**

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Journal of Thomas Dean: A Voyage to Indiana in 1817 by Thomas Dean

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THOMAS DEAN

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A Voyage to Indiana
In 1817.

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Brief Sketch of the Life of Thomas Dean

(rel. 2.00)



THOMAS DEAN,
[1783-1844]
OF DEANSBORO, N. Y.

BRIEF SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF
THOMAS DEAN

My grandfather, Thomas Dean, was a very methodical business man, who left a chest of papers, containing letters, contracts, accounts, legal documents, etc., all filed in perfect order. There are old letters from Quaker friends and relatives dating back to 1799. In this chest, now in Indianapolis, was found the journal of a journey made by him in 1817, which is published in full herewith. This journal is the simple record of a voyage made one hundred years ago, from central New York to central Indiana, all the way by water.

The purpose of the journey was to secure land in the West for the Brothertown Indians, then living in Oneida County, State of New York. Owing to the encroachments of the white population, and their desire to purchase Indian lands in New York, it was deemed desirable to move the Brothertown Indians to the West, where they would have more land, advantageous surroundings, and removed from injurious influence incident to the presence of the white population on the weakness of the Indian character.

The New York Indians were the remnants of seven tribes of New England Indians, who had been moved to Oneida

County, New York, in 1788. A tract of land had been purchased from the Oneida Indians in 1774, but owing to the hostility of the Mohawk tribe during the Revolutionary War, it was considered unsafe for them to move until after the war had closed. The Brothertown Indians consisted of remnants of the following tribes: Mohegans, Farmingtons, Stoningtons, Pequods, Narragansetts, Montauks, and Ne-hantucks.

The boat crew, for the voyage to Indiana, consisted of chiefs and leading men of the Brothertown tribes, as follows: Paul Dick, Jacob Dick, Thomas Isaacs, Charles Isaacs, and Rudolphus Fowler. There were also two Indian women aboard, Sarah Dick and Betsy Isaacs, wives of chiefs. The only white person in the company was Thomas Dean, their attorney, agent, and captain.

There is no description of the boat, but at Vincennes, Indiana, "Dr. Lawrence S. ^{Schuler}Shoeler, who had been on the boat yesterday, took a brief account of our voyage with intention of publication." The boat drew twenty-one inches of water. Going down the Allegheny River they took on three passengers; it therefore carried eleven people with ease, besides the chests and other cargo. It was built by Thomas Dean at Deansboro, Oneida County, New York, and launched into the Oneida Creek. He, with his party, ran the boat down this creek into Oneida Lake, out through Oneida River into Oswego River, and down into Lake Ontario. On Lake Ontario he sailed to Niagara and up the Niagara River, portaged around the great falls and sailed to Buffalo. From Buffalo he sailed on Lake Erie to a harbor near Chautauqua Lake and there portaged the boat into

that lake. The waters of Chautauqua Lake are discharged into the Allegheny River, so that it was possible to sail down the Allegheny into the Ohio River and thus reach the mouth of the Wabash River.

The southern part of Indiana he found sparsely settled, but the central and northern parts were still wildernesses. In his voyage from Fort Harrison up the Wabash to the mouth of the Mississinewa River and return, a distance of about 360 miles, he does not mention having seen a single white man. The Indians he met on the river could not speak English and he therefore had great difficulty in communicating with them. He was looking for good land, well watered, and describes the fine, fertile, silent prairies near the Wabash. In his journey on foot from Fort Harrison to the White River country and return, he passed through a wilderness of forests sparsely inhabited by Indians. The hardships were most severe. What would a man of today think of making a journey from Terre Haute to Fort Wayne, about 220 miles, most of the way on foot, with a heavy pack on his back? Some days Dean and his party traveled forty miles.

His unusual resourcefulness was exhibited at Fort Wayne, where he was unable to obtain a boat for taking himself and party down the Maumee River. He at once went into the forest, cut down a big tree, and made a large canoe, not only sufficient for his party, but in which he was able to take two additional passengers. The canoe was made in two working days, launched into the Maumee River, served its purpose, and was afterward sold for a good price at Fort Meigs.