

**THE LIFE OF  
WILLIAM  
WOODBIDGE**

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The life of William Woodbridge by Charles Lanman

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**CHARLES LANMAN**

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CHARLES LANMAN,

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AUTHOR OF THE "PRIVATE LIFE OF DANIEL WEBSTER;" "DICTIONARY OF CONGRESS;"  
ETC., ETC.

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# L I F E.



## CHAPTER I.

WILLIAM WOODBRIDGE was born in Norwich, Connecticut, on the 20th of August, 1780. His father, Dudley Woodbridge, Esq., was a graduate of Yale College, and educated for the Bar; but about the time of his admission, the Revolutionary war broke out, the courts of justice were shut up, and he abandoned his purpose of engaging in professional business. He was one of the "minute men" of his native State during the war; afterwards joined the emigrants to the North Western Territory, and was one of the earliest settlers of Marietta— which was founded in part by another Connecticut man, the distinguished Manasseh Cutler. His family was removed to that place as soon as a residence could be provided for them; except that the three oldest of the children, of whom William was one, were left at school in their native State, until a few months before St. Clair's defeat in 1791, when William was brought home to Marietta. He remained four or five years in the Territory, passing a year of that time at school among the French Colonists at Galliopolis, and became a thorough

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master of the French language, when he was again sent back to Connecticut. He remained there at school until 1799, and then rejoined the family at Marietta. He continued at home, pursuing such studies as were deemed proper, and in writing for his father, who had now become engaged in mercantile affairs, until about the time of the formation of the State Government of Ohio. It was at this period that among other studies, he commenced reading law; not at first, with a view to follow it as a profession, but rather as a branch of education, which promised to be of use in the future exigencies of life. But becoming interested in the study, he began to look to it as a desirable occupation for future years; and it is a little singular, that his most intimate fellow student at that period, was no less a personage than Lewis Cass, both of whom subsequently resided side by side on the Detroit river, and were for nearly half a century the two leading men of Michigan. With the approbation of his parents, he soon afterwards entered as a student the celebrated Law School at Litchfield, Connecticut; at that school he continued nearly three years; when, after a creditable examination, he was admitted as a member of the Bar of Connecticut, and soon after, upon his return to Ohio, he was, early in 1806, admitted to the Bar of that State, and with flattering prospects of success, immediately commenced his professional career.

It has been stated that Mr. Woodbridge was one of three brothers. The oldest, named Dudley, was one of the most accomplished merchants of the day. He it was who had the enterprise and honor of building the first square-rigged vessel that ever descended the Falls of the Ohio. She was a brig named *St. Clair*; and her

master was a worthy man named Whipple. After constructing this vessel at Marietta, he filled it with furs and produce, and taking advantage of a freshet in the Ohio, sent it safely down the Mississippi to France, which venture was eminently successful in all particulars. The youngest son named John, became eminent as a financier, and was for many years the manager of the Bank of Chillicothe. The sisters of this family, of whom there were two, were distinguished for their accomplishments.

Having been born in Connecticut, acquired his education there, and cherishing a deep affection for her character and institutions, it was not strange that, after a few busy months of legal labor, he should have revisited his native State for the purpose of obtaining a wife. On the 29th of June, 1806; he was married at Hartford, to Juliana, a daughter of the Hon. John Trumbull, the able Judge and celebrated author of *McFingal* and other Poems. "Withdrawing," to use his own words, "from the companions of her earlier years; estranging herself from that circle of friends to whom she was so dear; and sundering the yet more solemn and endearing ties which bound her to her father's home, she departed, with none thenceforth to lean upon, but her husband,—for the far distant valley of the Ohio." A part of that long journey was performed on horseback, and to the happy pair must have been full of interest and romance. Their residence in Marietta was commodious and beautiful, the grounds ample, and about them were gathered as many of the elegancies of life, as could be brought together in a frontier settlement. Although the contrast was not small, at that time, between the refinements and intellectual character of society in Hartford, and the asperities and privations of "Border life," yet, sur-

rounded as they were by warm-hearted friends, and at least all the substantial comforts of life, everything seemed to promise a happy future.

In 1807, Mr. Woodbridge was sent, as a Representative, to the General Assembly of Ohio. It was the year of the Impeachment and trial of the Judges, for deciding an act of a previous Legislature, enlarging the jurisdiction of Justices of the Peace, and taking away the right of Jury trial, to be unconstitutional and void. Mr. Woodbridge took a very active, but an unsuccessful part, in opposing those Impeachments; upon their trials, all the Impeachments failed; and the Judges were honorably acquitted. Early in 1808, the office of Prosecuting Attorney, for the county in which he resided, was conferred upon him, and this he continued to hold until his removal from the State. His professional business, had otherwise greatly increased; and deeming it unwise to absent himself so much from his home and professional pursuits, as an attendance upon the Legislature would induce, he declined being a candidate for the succeeding Legislature. But nevertheless, he was at the fall election for 1809 chosen as a member of the State Senate; and continued, by repeated re-elections, to be a member of that body until he removed from the State. It will be readily imagined, that in the Legislature of a State just emerging into independency, when all things are new, when its institutions are first to be established, its interests to be developed, and the first impulse to be given to its onward course, questions must arise greatly involving its future prosperity, and consequently implying a heavy responsibility on the part of those who may be selected as its Law Makers. Such was unquestionably the condition of Ohio at that early period. But