

**EARLY YEARS ON THE WESTERN  
RESERVE: WITH EXTRACTS FROM  
LETTERS OF EPHRAIM BROWN  
AND FAMILY, 1805-1845**

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Early Years on the Western Reserve: With Extracts from Letters of Ephraim Brown and Family, 1805-1845 by George Clary Wing

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**GEORGE CLARY WING**

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WESTERN RESERVE**

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WITH EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS OF  
EPHRAIM BROWN AND FAMILY

1805-1845

Prepared and Edited by

GEORGE CLARY WING

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## FOREWORD

Near the close of the year 1914, some months after the death, at the imposing age of eighty-eight, of Anne, the youngest and last surviving child of Ephraim Brown, I received, from her late home at Bloomfield, Ohio, a firmly closed package, with an explanatory message, that it contained, among other letters, the family correspondence of George, Anne's brother, which, it was said, was sent to me in accordance with her own written and spoken words to such effect.

Inasmuch as her directions in this regard particularly mentioned, and thereby gave precedence to, the member of her immediate family to whom I was related both cognominally and cognately, it seemed proper to conclude that this dual connection was in her thoughts at the time, and sufficiently impressed her with its appropriateness, to allow it a determinative force in the connection.

Be that as it may, the gentle distinction seemed in the nature of an appeal to take up and finish a task that had been too long deferred and, of course, aroused an instant inclination and willingness to forthwith acquaint myself with what, if any, enduring value the legacy had, and decide its final destiny accordingly.

The undertaking, however, was not free of dissuasive considerations.



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The series, like the addition it soon received from the store which my own mother had left, was composed of numerous packets of neatly folded letters, each of which was duly endorsed with the writer's name, the period, or the special subject to which it related. As was to be expected, the individual pieces varied in size, the degree of preservation or change, and, sometimes, in the pains originally observed to insure legibility and ease of reading.

Although the material used, especially in the earlier of the series, had generally been excellent, nevertheless, the letters had paid their full tribute to time, and, in consequence, the paper was likely to call for too delicate a handling, and the writing for too strong a vision, to warrant a confidence that any perusal would be uninterrupted and free.

The physical process of unfolding, reading, and codifying an accumulation of this nature, is sure to be long, laborious, and trying to the faculties involved, and, then too, as in all such cases, from the more serious point of view of the feelings themselves, a journey backward, as that proposed, into the closed lives of those whom one has personally known and loved, is often a species of palingenesis so sombre, that its very contemplation makes one prone to halt, and, unless the urgency be plain, to cry out at last:

From its consecrated cerements  
I will not drag this sacred dust again,  
Only to give me pain;  
But still remembering all the lost endearments  
I go on my way like one who looks before,  
And turns to weep no more.

However, one, whose early associates were those of

an older generation and particularly of his own family and kin, is readily quickened to a kindly curiosity about their past, and whatever will renew them to him in all their previous activities and surroundings. He is eager, especially for the opportunity such as a continuous sequence of letters affords, of seeing them through their own eyes, or the eyes of their contemporaries, as they advanced toward, and realized the very individualities he knew.

After all, the process is not, necessarily, either a sad or even a pensive one, for, the personalities with which we are occupied at such times may be regarded, in a way, as by no means the personalities from which we parted, but as identities of long before; nor, are the scenes of which we read, the scenes we once shared. In fact, we are so constituted, that until the past we are recalling touches and blends with our own, it may be looked upon quite objectively, and without a sense of pain.

Furthermore, in this case, as was at once also recognized by those interested in and directing the work of The Western Reserve Historical Society, these long preserved records had the potentiality of shedding a new, though perhaps but a feeble light, upon an interesting epoch in the life of our country, and a migratory movement within its borders which, from the nature of things, can never occur again.

When light is desired, whatever may be the intensity, or the angle and direction of the ray, it is to be carefully conserved and rightly focused upon the main objective.

In 1805, when the first of the letters was written,

the flow of population westward to the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys had already begun, proceeding always, in distinct waves corresponding with periodic seasons of commercial hardship in the east. By the end of the century's first decade, there had been no fewer than three of these great waves, each predicated on and synchronous with disaster at its source.

During the uncertainty and distress consequent upon the French Revolution, for instance, this movement of population reached dimensions which threatened the Atlantic states with depopulation. Upon the opening of the European War, however, in 1793, the increase of our trade abroad, brought on a wide prosperity which checked and held back the exodus to the west through the long space of time to 1802, and the treaty of Amiens.

The ensuing year of peace was one of declining commerce along our shores, but, correspondingly, of a new transfer of people to the distant interior. Its proportions were so great that, by the influx, Ohio, in 1803, was enabled to achieve statehood.

With the renewal of the Continental War, in that year, the trade to the West Indies was again opened; and, once more, and until the Great Embargo of 1807, every ocean was free to our carriers. The seaboard states were soon busily occupied in the building and use of ships, and in producing and collecting flour, lumber, cattle, pork, and other supplies, for their cargoes, but no one in that portion of the country now needed to change their skies in order to gain a livelihood, and emigration again subsided.

In 1807, President Jefferson proclaimed the na-