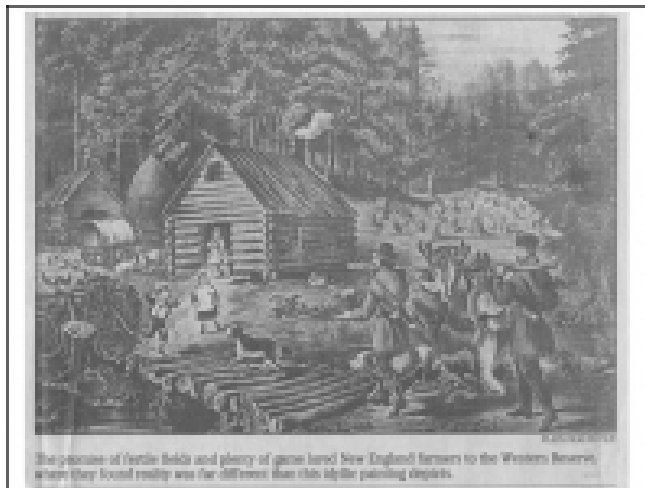


Take a trip to pioneer times without leaving your computer

by Jayne Broestl



This Connecticut Land Company "propaganda" painting appeared in The Plain Dealer in July 1996 with the caption: "The promise of fertile fields and plenty of game lured New England farmers to the Western Reserve, where they found reality was far different than this idyllic painting depicts."

If you are wondering what first brought the New England settlers to the Western Reserve some 200 years ago, you might start by visiting the website of Cuyahoga West Chapter of the Ohio Genealogical Society at <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ohcwogs>. Just click on the "Pioneer Women" menu tab.

Cuyahoga West's webmaster, John Noble, has posted an article that was written by local history instructor Bob Rich and appeared in a July 1996 issue of The Plain Dealer.

For the most part, New England farmers had a difficult life working the thin and rocky soils of Connecticut and Vermont. Ohio's Western Reserve promised an easier way of life, with cheap, fertile land and abundant game to provide them with a hearty diet. But what the settlers found here was nothing like the idyllic lifestyle that was depicted in the painting that was circulated by the Connecticut Land Company, to entice settlers to purchase land in the Western Reserve of Northeast Ohio.

Life of the pioneers was especially difficult. After building some sort of shelter for his family, a husband would spend his entire day in the field working the crops, leaving his wife to care for the children, cook, clean and weave yarn to make cloth for clothing the family.

A more detailed account of the life of specific pioneer women can be found in the multi-volume book titled "Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve." It was compiled and published by the Woman's Department of the Cleveland Centennial Commission in 1896 and is available at most local libraries.

However, you can access some of this material online now from this same Cuyahoga West webpage. John Noble scanned and uploaded the "chapters" for Cleveland, Cleveland's Westside and the townships of Brecksville, Brooklyn, Dover (Westlake/Bay Village), Middleburg, Olmsted, Parma, Rockport, Royalton and Strongsville.

Each "chapter" is fully searchable and John has added an every-name index for easy referencing. Also uploaded are the List of Men in the American Revolution and the List of Men in the War of 1812 that appeared in the original multi-volume book.

Check it out. Even if you do not have ancestors from the Western Reserve, you may enjoy reading what was written over 100 years ago about the earliest settlers.

Cuyahoga West Chapter meets the third Wednesday of each month from 6:30-8:45 p.m. at Westlake Porter Public Library, except August and December. Elizabeth Hauser will present "And Bob's Your Uncle! Basics of Family History Research in England," Wednesday, June 15, from 7:00-8:45 p.m. The public is invited at no charge.

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