

Program Notes

Washington County Chapter of the Ohio Genealogical Society 16 April 2021

Speaker: David Baker

Topic: "James Backus, His Fascinating Life in Early Marietta"

The program was provided by David Becker who spoke on Jim Backus and early pioneer in Marietta. While he did not come with the original 48, he did arrive shortly after. A very resourceful young man of 23, he was active daily hunting, fishing, doing carpentry and surveying. It is said that he completed the first permanent house at Pickett's Point. Born in Connecticut in 1764, he came to Marietta in 1788 and returned to CT. He never returned to the area citing his father's affairs and his own poor health. While in Marietta he documented his daily action and included a daily weather report. He saved receipts and much documentation of his life. He is noted for organizing the first Fourth of July celebration which ended with fireworks and much drunkenness. During the celebrations, thirteen toasts were given, each accompanied by the firing of the cannon, drums, fifes, and violins.

He also is noted for escorting the French 500 immigrants who were scammed in relation to land purchases to Gallipolis, via the courtesy of the Ohio and Scioto Land Companies. He met them at the Eastern Coast, made arrangements for food and transportation and guided them to their new home.

He served as a Deputy Sheriff and his main duty was delivering warrants for arrest due to violations of correctional policies that he helped to formulate.

During the time of the Treaty planning by Governor Sinclair, he was given the chore of securing all of the alcohol to prevent drunkenness of the Indians. He made receipts for each amount taken. He was not entirely successful.

He was also instrumental in organizing the first Birthday Anniversary celebration which also ended in a drunken riot.

His journal has been transcribed and published by his son and is available online (see link below). Much of his documentation is available at the Marietta College Special Collections and others at the Backus/Woodbridge collection at the Ohio State Library.

Respectfully Submitted,
Barb Handschumacher, Secretary

Learn More about James Backus Online

James Backus: Citizen of Marietta, 1788-1791 by Josephine E. Phillips. Ohio History Connection, Ohio History Journal.

[https://resources.ohiohistory.org/ohj/browse/displaypages.php?display\[\]=0045&display\[\]=161& display\[\]=172](https://resources.ohiohistory.org/ohj/browse/displaypages.php?display[]=0045&display[]=161&display[]=172)

A genealogical memoir of the Backus family, with the private journal of James Backus, together with his correspondence bearing on the first settlement of Ohio, at Marietta, in 1788. By William W. Backus. Internet Archive.

<https://archive.org/details/genealogicalmemo00back/page/8/mode/2up>