



PRIMARY SOURCE ACTIVITY

The Long Journey West in 1825

*(accompanies the **Heading West: Maps and Provisions** lesson)*

During the first part of the 19th century, many New Englanders moved west to Ohio, Iowa, Michigan, and Wisconsin for more land and opportunity. In 1825 Samuel Freeman, his wife, and ten children left Sturbridge, Massachusetts for northern Ohio. These two excerpts tell us a little bit about what the journey from New England to Ohio was like at this time.

As you read, think about how this differs from travel today. How many different modes of transportation did the Freemans take to reach their destination? How long did it take them? Was it expensive? How do you travel today?

Samuel's son Lyndon was 22 at the time of the move. In 1877, he wrote reminiscences of his life and described the long journey west.

My parents, with ten of their thirteen children, left Sturbridge, Massachusetts on the twentieth of April 1825. They were about twenty days en route. The same distance could now be traveled in as many hours by rail. We went by a hired team to Schenectady [New York], thence by canal to Rochester, as far as the Erie Canal was at that time finished. Thence by team again about 70 miles to Buffalo. At this time there was only one steamboat, and but few sail vessels plying on Lake Erie, hence we had to stop in this place several days. At length we took passage in the schooner 'Red Jacket' for Cleveland, Ohio. When we arrived in about 24 hours, we began to feel that we had at length arrived near to our new home in the wilds of Ohio. There was really at that time no harbor at Cleveland; on account of a sandbar across the mouth of the Cuyahoga River, vessels could not enter it. Hence all freight discharged for Cleveland was carried ashore in 'lighters.'

My parents had borne nearly all the care and responsibility incident to our journey. They now began to realize the fatigue of body and mind as they had not before. Cleveland in 1825 was only a village of a few hundred inhabitants. When we arrived in Cleveland we had yet before us the worst part of our journey. After considerable time spent in finding them, two ox teams were hired to carry the family and our effects to our final stopping place in 'Greenbrier.'

In the meantime myself and one or two of the younger boys were sent on to notify Mr. Fay, at whose 'Inn' we expected [to be] put up, to prepare bed and board for fifteen (including our teamsters and young man that came with us from Sturbridge). Weary and dispirited, yet we rejoiced when we espied

an oval shaped thing inscribed upon it in plain English 'B.Fay Inn.' Our landlord seemed utterly astonished when we made our announcement.

The teams had not succeeded in leaving Cleveland as soon as they expected to. We boys waited long and anxiously for their arrival. At length we heard as much noise as would seem necessary to drive 40 yokes of oxen. It had become quite dark when the teams hauled up at the aforesaid 'Inn.' A more dispirited, besaddened and forlorn company I never beheld. The season was unusually rainy and the roads awful.

There was nothing in or about Mr. Fay's family that was congenial to civilization but the aforesaid 'Aunt Ruth.' Those of us that could climb the ladder were ushered into the loft to lodge. 'Sweet restorer balmy sleep' soon brought rest to our weary bodies and minds.

Parma was indeed a dark place when we first entered it and was sought as a rendezvous of those who 'love darkness rather than light.'

This letter was written by Samuel Freeman to his sister and brother in-law. Samuel moved to Ohio in 1825. At the time of this letter, his sister still lived in Massachusetts and was coming west for a visit.

Parma, Cuyahoga County Ohio Aug. 19, 1844

Dear Brother and Sister

I often reflect upon the kindness we received from our friends in Sturbridge & Southbridge during our recent visit among them & especially from your family; & nothing would give me greater satisfaction than to have my friends visit me here & give us an opportunity to return those kindnesses. I often think of you Brother & Sister. I see you laboring incessantly day after day & month after month for the benefit of your children. I hope you will be able soon if not now to lay aside your hard work. Perhaps you have before now. If not, it may be your duty to do so, & I think your circumstances a.re not so straitened but you might do it; but you can certainly Judge best as to the expediency of it. I am not without hopes that you may visit us should our lives & health be continued another year. It seems to me you might make arrangements so as to leave home in August & return in the latter part of September. Our children would rejoice to see uncle & aunt Hooker here. The Journey would be a pleasant one by rail road to Albany which would take you 7 hours. Then by the canal to Buffaloe. By the Packet boat it would be about 3 days, by a line boat about 7 days. Then by steam boat to Cleveland from 18 to 22 hours. Cleveland is 7 miles from our house.

The expenses when we came home were as follows for one person.

From Charlton to Albany	\$4.00
From Albany to Buffaloe by line boat & boarded -	5.00
From Buffaloe to Cleveland deck passage on a Steam boat -	2.50
	\$11.50

Miss Weld who came with us said when she had got to Cleveland, that she thought she was well paid for the expence of the Journey by what she had seen. The Journey would be very interesting to you & the country here would not be less so. Everything here is so different from N.E. Instead of the crooked roads of Southbridge & Sturbridge you would see here roads on a straight line for miles. Instead of the dwarf trees of your country I could shew you white oak trees 5 feet in diameter & Hickory trees 120 feet high.

Yours affectionately, Sam'l Freeman

Samuel's nephew Pliny Freeman Jr. moved out to Ohio in 1829.

June 16 1829, Pliny Jr, Parma, Ohio, to Pliny, Sturbridge

We arrived here the 26th of May, twenty days on our journey, considerably longer than we expected but had a very good journey and enjoyed ourselves very well, considering the length of time and the patience we had to endure. We arrived at Albany the third day in the afternoon. We remained there one day and then set out for Buffalo. Arrived at Buffalo the nineteenth. Sailed up the lake in a schooner, arrived at Cleveland the twenty-fifth at sunset. Seven days on the lake. We had but very little view all the time

Source:

Freeman Family Papers, Old Sturbridge Village Research Library. Edited by Old Sturbridge Village.