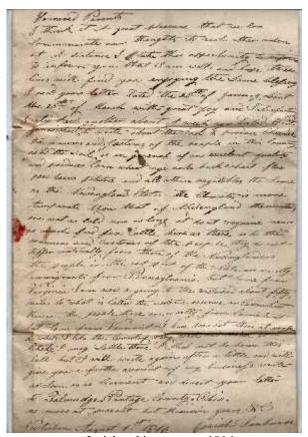
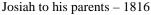
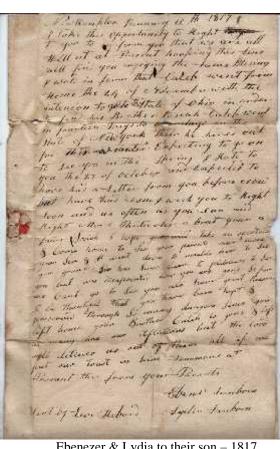
The History Corner

Life in the "Western Territory" of Ohio in 1816 - a Native Son's Perspective

Ebenezer and Lydia Sanborn were prominent New Hampton figures in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Ebenezer served as both a captain in the militia and a town selectman. The Sanborns had ten children: Josiah, Nancy, Abigail, Caleb, Lydia, Joseph, Thomas, Hannah, Lavinia and John, Today's History Corner features an 1816 letter from eldest son, Josiah, to his parents, about life in the western territory - of Ohio! An 1817 letter from mom and dad to eldest son follows. New Hamptonites spread their wings and head west (and return home as well).







Ebenezer & Lydia to their son – 1817

1816 letter from Josiah Sanborn in Tallmadge County, Ohio to his parents, Ebenezer and Lydia Sanborn, in New Hampton. While Josiah struck out for "the west" in his twenties, he died back in New Hampton in 1865.

New Lisbon August 4 [1816] **Honored Parents**

I think it a great pleasure that we can communicate our thoughts to each other when at a distance. I take this opportunity to inform you that I am well and hope these lines will find you enjoying the same blessing. I received your letter dated 28th January about 20th March with great joy and satisfaction. I also received another about a week ago dated April 11th.

You wished me to write about the soil and produce, likewise the manners and customs of the people in this county. As to the soil, it is in general of an excellent quality and produces corn, wheat, rye, oats, buckwheat, flax, peas, beans, potatoes and all other vegetables the same as the New England states. The climate is more temperate than that of New England, the winters are not as cold nor as long. It don't require near as much feed for cattle here as there.

As to the manners and customs of the people, they do not differ materially from those of the New Englanders. The people in the east part of the state are mostly emigrants from Pennsylvania, but some from Virginia. I am now a going to the westward about 50 miles to what is called the Western Reserve or Connecticut Reserve. The people there are mostly from Connecticut but some from Vermont. I have been out there at work a while. I like the country very well and think it likely I may settle there. I shall not be home this fall but I will write again after a little and will give you a further account of my business. Write as soon as is convenient and direct your letter to Talmage Portage County, Ohio.

No more at present but remain yours etc. Josiah Sanborn

1817 letter from Ebenezer and Lydia Sanborn to their son, Josiah Sanborn in Ohio. "Brother Caleb," referred to in both letters, was the fourth of the Sanborn children. Ebenezer refers to Josiah in the 3rd person ("Caleb went... to find his brother Josiah.") and Lydia refers to Josiah's father as "your sir."

New Hampton January 11th 1817

I take this opportunity to write to you to inform you that we are all well at present, hoping these lines Will find you enjoying the same blessing. I would inform that Caleb went from home 24 November with the intention to go to the state of Ohio in order to find his brother Josiah. Caleb went in 14 days to Onondaga in the state of New York. There he hired out for this winter expecting to go on to see you in the spring. I wrote to you 27 October and expected to have had a letter from you before now but have had none. I wish you to write soon and as often as you can and write more particulars about your affairs.

Josiah [written in his mother's hand] I hope you will take an opportunity and come home to see your parents once more. Your sir and I went down to Marblehead to see you. Your sir has since been to Plattsburgh to see you but was disappointed. Now you are gone so far we can't go to see you. We have great reason to be thankful that you have been kept and preserved through so many dangers since you left home your brother Caleb is gone and left as many are our afflictions but the love will deliver us out of them all if we put our trust in him.

So no more at present – this from your parents – Ebenezer Sanborn Lydia Sanborn

For more information on the history of the town, please visit the New Hampton Historical Society website at https://www.newhamptonhistory.org/

Kent Bicknell Historian, NHHS November 25, 2019