

Major Uriah Barber: Pioneer, Settler, Politician (1761 - 1846)

Dr Cora Tula Watters

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The narrative of Uriah Barber is full of one cliff hanger after another as Barber, veteran of the Revolutionary War, and his younger step-brother Isaac Bonser lead five families across the new nation from Northumberland County in Pennsylvania to the Ohio River Valley.

Dashing Uriah, his wife Barbara, blond, intelligent and pregnant, head south with their six children and nanny, lovely Rachael Baird. Heading down the Susquehanna River with Isaac, wife Abigail their four children, the Wards, Beattys and McAdams, who were newlyweds. Two keelboats were constructed to float them down the long and twisting Susquehanna to Paxtang, present day Harrisburg, where they exchanged their boats for Conestoga wagons and horses. Needing another man to pole the second boat, dark handsome Shawnee scout Jacob Early was hired in Sunbury. When they reached Paxtang he returned home taking with him the heart of Rachael Baird.

Crossing the breadth of Pennsylvania on what is now Pennsylvania Turnpike, they encounter everything from broken axles, tornadoes, critically ill children, another pregnancy and a wagon tumbling over the mountainside taking everything.

They finish their journey aboard an amazing three-story high majestic keelboat named the Floating Palace. Just when they need him most Early shows up to help them finish their journey on the Monongahela, then the Ohio where they encounter sandbars, underwater trees and river pirates.

The rest of the story tells how Major Barber settled in southern Ohio and carved his name forever in the history of Scioto County. The tale is full of passion, love, hope, humor and tragedy enough for a Shakespearean play.



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