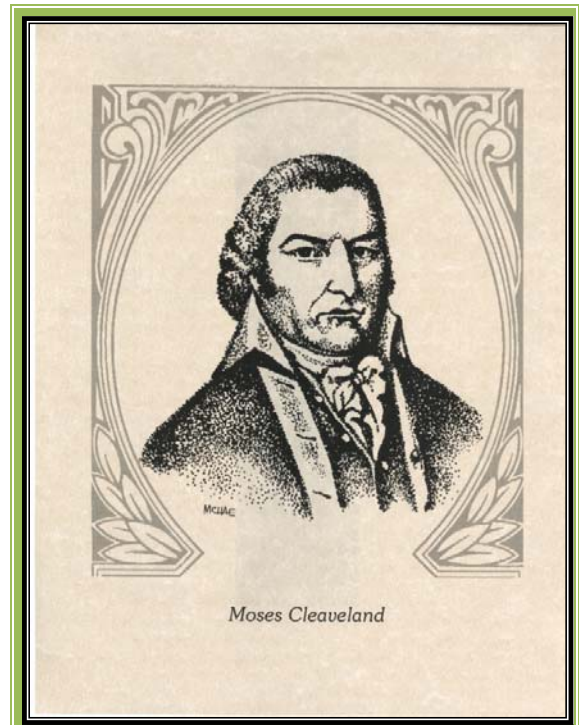

**MOSQUITOES, SWAMPS,
AND RATTLESNAKES
...OH MY!**

From:
CLASSIC CLEVELANDERS

By: Shelley Pearsall



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...OH MY!”

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The stern, black-haired frontiersman had done a lot of things in his 42-years...

He had graduated from Yale with a law degree. He had served in the American Revolution and had spent the brutal winter at Valley Forge with General Washington's troops. He had negotiated with unfriendly Indian tribes for western land. He had even achieved the position of General in the Connecticut State Militia.

But this was one of the most difficult challenges he had ever faced.

On July 22, 1796, he and his surveyors had arrived at the mouth of the Cuyahoga River. Now it was September and they were in a swampy, mosquito-ridden marshland. His surveyors were NOT a happy lot. Nearly everyone had fevers from the hot, humid air—air so thick with insects and heat that you could hardly breathe. The food supplies they had brought with them were now more than three months old, bug-ridden, spoiled, and nearly gone. The surveyors ate broiled rattle-snake, berries, and small game when they could, and complained bitterly about the poor planning which had left them in this condition in the desolate wilderness. Everything was the fault of their leader and the ruffle-lined people back in the east who had convinced them to join this expedition. They wanted to go home NOW. Or else.

It wouldn't take much to bring on a mutiny, the frontiersman knew. It had happened to explorers and leaders in history before. He shivered as he recalled the story of Henry Hudson abandoned by his crew on the waters of Hudson Bay, never to be seen again. The surveying team could easily take the boats and supplies, and leave him to perish on these unforgiving shores.

He rubbed his forehead, wearily. Who in the east could have expected what they had encountered out here? Surveying was simple in the open, dry lands of the eastern settlements, but out here the land was nothing but tangled, dark wilderness. In order to stretch their measuring chains across the land, surveyors had to chop down trees, cut through greenbrier brush, wade through swamps, and climb up rocky, rattlesnake-ridden ravines. It was slow, difficult work. In two months, they had managed only to survey a small area located on a bluff as the site for a town.

So, the frontiersman was in a nearly impossible position because he had been paid to bring this team out into the wilderness and complete a job, but the job was not even close to being finished, and he was in danger of losing control of the team—perhaps even losing his life. In all of

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his 42-years he had never been so close to failing in a job he had been sent out to do. He had nothing to offer the team to raise their spirits and convince them to stay a bit longer – nothing – he looked at the land around him, in disgust—nothing but this god-forsaken wilderness.

The wilderness??? An idea began to grow...

In just a short while, he had a plan—not a great plan, but the only plan which might work, he thought. Although none of the land was his land to give away—it belonged to the company which had sent him—he would take matters into his own hands and offer the surveyors their own special township in which they could buy land for a mere \$1.00 an acre in the future. While he half-expected the men who had spent more than four months in this wilderness to laugh at his proposal, he was amazed to find that 41 of his 49 men signed up, and the offer of land helped to smooth over their tempers for awhile. They worked well until the snow began to fly in mid-October and then headed back east.

As they pushed the boats onto the lake for part of the return voyage, the frontiersman knew that he would face a difficult battle when he arrived home. Most of what he had been sent out to do had not been completed. There appeared to be mathematical errors in the records somewhere because his surveyors had not found all of the land that had supposedly been out here. And to make matters worse, he had greatly overspent what the company had given to him.

Had they done anything useful on this expedition, he wondered? Would people ever settle out there in that swampy land they had surveyed? Would anyone besides trappers and frontiersman ever live in the town on the bluff which he and the other surveyors had carefully mapped out?

Well, Moses figured that even if the place never amounted to anything, it would be interesting to tell his friends and family back in the east that way out in the thick wilderness on the shores of faraway Lake Erie there was a town bearing his name—a town called Cleveland.

NOTES ON MOSES CLEVELAND:

Moses Cleaveland was born on January 29, 1754 in Canterbury, Connecticut — the second child of Colonel Aaron and Thankful Paine Cleaveland. Moses married Esther Champion on March 2, 1794 and they had four children.

When the Connecticut Land Company was formed, Moses was one of its 36 founders and one of its seven directors. He was selected to go out to the Western Reserve as the company's agent to survey and map the company's holdings. Moses had invested \$32,600 in the company. When he and the surveyors arrived at the mouth of the Cuyahoga back in 1796, they believed that they had found the ideal location for the capital city of the Connecticut Western Reserve. So Cleaveland paced out a 10 acre Public Square similar to the ones they had back east, the surveyors plotted a town around it, and they named it CLEVELAND, in honor of the leader of their expedition. In October, Moses and most of the surveyors left the frontier to return to Connecticut. Cleaveland went back to practicing law and never returned to see his namesake on the lake. He died on November 16, 1806.

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"Mosquitoes, Swamps, And Rattlesnakes...Oh My!" is from Eden Valley's CLASSIC CLEVELANDERS program. This storytelling program is just one of EVEs Ohio history programs which cover topics such as REMARKABLE OHIOANS and OHIO GHOST STORIES.

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