

Oberlin (Lorain County)

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In the first decade of its settlement (1833 - 1843) Oberlin was a remote wilderness colony, with a new college, at the western end of the Western Reserve. Oberlin College ("Collegiate Institute" before 1850) attracted a great many students from New England and upstate New York. Thus, how one was able to make his/her way to this part of the Western Reserve was a significant matter for all. No less so for a College that depended upon a flow of students in order to pay its bills. Thanks in part to the navigable character of the Niagara River, and to the timely completion of the Erie Canal (by 1830), faculty and students, along with settlers, were able to make their way to Cleveland by way of a steamer on Lake Erie, and on to Elyria and then Oberlin by carriage or foot. By the time of the founding of Oberlin, transportation costs were measurably less expensive; but the perils of the journey itself had largely remained the same.

The first-person accounts of Marianne Parker Dascomb (d. 1879) and Charles Livingstone (d. 1873), written in 1834 and 1840, respectively, report on the character of the trip of getting from Cleveland to Oberlin. They offer a full glimpse of what it was like to make this arduous trip.