

OLIVER BROWN

Early Settler of Concord

Oliver Brown was born February 9, 1760 at Stonington Point, New London County, Connecticut to Zebulon and Ann Main Brown. Oliver's family history began with the arrival of Thomas and Mary Newhall Browne in Massachusetts in 1635 on the ship "James of London". The Brown family for generations had a close view of the hostilities between Great Britain and the New England colonies that lead up to the Revolutionary War. On May 26, 1777 at the age of 17, Oliver enlisted at Stonington, Connecticut as a private. He served for one year in a company commanded by Captain Ebenezer Winter, in the regiment commanded by Colonel Huntington of the First Connecticut Line. He was discharged on January 12, 1778. Oliver reenlisted for three more years or for a "period of time at the pleasure of the Continental Congress". He fought in the battle of New York and Brunswick, where he was hospitalized for a gunshot wound to his leg. He fought in the battles of Brandywine and Germantown, and endured the hardships of Valley Forge. Oliver stood guard over Major Andre on the night prior to the spy's execution on October 2, 1780. One night, while on guard duty, Oliver halted General Washington returning to camp without the proper countersign and marched him to the guardhouse. General Washington marched willingly along, revealing his identity only after arriving at the guard house. Oliver was then praised for his steadfastness and caution. He was discharged at West Point, New York on November 22, 1780.

Oliver married Grace Gregory Welch in the First Church of Stonington, Connecticut on November 2, 1778. Oliver and Grace lived for a time in Norwich, Connecticut and later moved to Genessee County, New York. Oliver and Grace became the parents of seven children. Early in 1816, Oliver brought his family on a perilous journey via oxen teams across swollen rivers, through unbroken wilderness to military lands in Concord, Geauga County (now Lake County) where they settled and built a log home. It seems to have been the lure of land awarded for military service that drew them to this tract of the Western Reserve. Oliver's son Hosea (first row far left) and his family arrived by ox driven wagon in June, 1817. The two then worked together for several years, clearing the land of timber and building a necessary barn.



Oliver died on June 5, 1845 at the age of eighty-five. The funeral, at his own request, was conducted "under arms" or with full military honors. The Painesville Telegraph in June, 1845, reported that he "served his country faithfully from the commencement to the close of the war. His funeral was attended by a large concourse of people to pay the tribute of respect to one who has suffered long and hard to gain their independence. It was truly a solemn performance. Captain H. Huntoon, with his Guards, in full uniform, with the colors of his Company - the plaintive fife, and muffled drums, officiated in the performance". He is interred at Concord Township Cemetery.

Oliver and his wife Grace, are honored with a log used in the 1914 construction of the log cabin, better known as History Hall at the Lake County Fairgrounds in Painesville, Ohio. The Daughters of the American Revolution - New Connecticut Chapter have honored Oliver with an inscribed brick located at the America 250 Patriots Marker at the Lake County Courthouse in Painesville, Ohio.



In close proximity of their log homes, Oliver and Hosea located their barn on high, level ground on what is now Concord Hambden Road. Oxen were used to place the four large boulders that were to serve as the corner stones of the foundation. The barn was typical of pioneer building, its simple, sturdy construction making use of materials at hand. Oliver and Hosea hauled logs to a powered sawmill at nearby Big Creek to create boards and planks. Their barn was built in just twenty-nine days with three bays to house grain, hay and livestock.



A faithful renovation and recreation of the barn was conducted by Lake Metroparks after purchase of the Skok Meadow property and the barn in 2003. In recognition of the importance of the barn's history, Lake Metroparks undertook a piece-by-piece deconstruction of the barn with beams and materials repaired and saved as was possible to be used in the recreation of the barn. In 2008, the barn was painstakingly rebuilt on the original boulder foundation in the manner in which Oliver and Hosea had built it. It is the oldest known barn in Lake County on its original foundation.

