

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF THE TOWN OF ORFORD NH
DELIVERED ON THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 7 1865 WITH SOME
ADDITIONAL MATTERS RELATING TO THE HISTORY OF THE PLACE

by Joel Mann

(Adapted by Marguerite Ames for the 4th grade)

@I. My great-great grandfather Richard Mann, a planter, came on the Mayflower with the Pilgrims in 1620. His descendants settled in the Massachusetts counties of Plymouth and Norfolk. His son Richard (my great-grandfather) purchased a farm in Hebron, CT, and moved there. My parents were brought up in Hebron. They married on the Sabbath day, Feb 17, 1765. My grandfather, John Mann, learned that there was land for sale in what would become Orford. He purchased a lot of fifty acres for one dollar an acre. He gave this piece of land to my father, John.

@II. John Mann (my father) started on the 16th of October 1765, on horseback with my mother, who carried with her a wardrobe by no means ample for a bride. My father rode part of the way, carrying a knapsack, some tools for coopering, and an axe. On the day they left for the wilds of Coos the people of the village bid them farewell, not expecting ever to see them again. Indeed it was a greater and far more dangerous trip than now to go to California or Oregon.

@III. At Charlestown, NH, (Fort #4) Mann bought a bushel of oats for his horse, and some bread and cheese for himself and his wife. They set off, he on foot and his wife on horseback. From Charlestown to Orford, a distance of 60 miles, there was no road, only a foot path with marked trees to guide them. The path was often blocked with fallen trees. When they came to one that the horse could not get around, the young bride had to get off the horse. Then they had to unload the horse and make it jump over the obstacle. This happened many times. Once, the horse did not wait to be unloaded and leaped over a large tree, rider and all! His wife and all the luggage ended up in a heap upon the ground! Thankfully she was not hurt, so they packed up and continued on their way.

@IV. On their journey they stopped in Claremont, Cornish, Plainfield, Lebanon, Hanover, and Lyme to rest or to spend the night. As newcomers, my parents were welcomed and treated to what little food the settlers had. Just before arriving in Orford, they came to a stream that was too deep for wading and had to go upstream to find a safe place for crossing. The banks were steep with tangled underbrush, so this was quite dangerous.

@V. The whole journey of about two hundred miles took eight days, averaging

twenty-five miles in a day. They arrived in Orford on October 24, 1765. Orford was founded by John Mann, a man of pure and noble aims and of greatly useful life. Over the years, skill and hard work has transformed a gloomy wilderness into a productive town. The home of the savage has become the home of an intelligent cultivated Christian people.

@VI. My oldest brother, Major Mann, wrote an account of the early settlement. He said that when our parents arrived in Orford, Mr. Daniel Cross and his wife were living in a small log hut near the bank of the river. The hut was covered with bark and had a floor of split logs. There was no chimney or hearth. Mr. Cross welcomed the new comers into his cabin. The men agreed to share the cutting of wood and to keeping a fire in the middle of the cabin. They divided the space using blankets.

@VII When my father needed an augur to make a bed, he had to walk nine miles through the woods to Thetford to borrow one. When the bed and two or three chair frames were put together, it was back nine miles through the woods to return the augur. This labor and fatigue was considered as nothing!

@VIII Since there was no grain raised yet, Mr. Mann spent his evenings making pails and tubs. When the river was frozen, he piled them on a hand sled and took them to Newbury VT, about 20 miles away. There he exchanged them for corn with the three families living there: Johnston, Bailey, and Hazen. They had been there three years, had cleared land, and raised corn. Back in Orford, they pounded the corn in large mortars made from wood logs that they had hollowed out at one end. Mrs. Mann and Mrs. Cross used the finest ground part of the corn to make cakes. They boiled the coarser part and ate it with milk from Mr. Cross's cow. After they were settled in their own tent, Mrs. Mann went to the river and brought all the water they used in a three-pint basin, except on washing days. What would our young lasses think of beginning housekeeping in that way?

@IX My father told me that soon after they arrived, nearly two feet of snow fell and in a few days there fell two feet more. My parents began to think they might be buried alive before the spring. Fortunately plenty of wood was close at hand. My father had built their log cabin on high ground near the river. But, because of the spring thaw, the river rose so much that one morning they found their cabin entirely surrounded by water. He carried his wife to a place where it had not reached. The work of clearing the land may be imagined from the fact that the pine trees were an average two hundred feet high! I remember seeing their enormous stumps when I was a boy. When my parents first arrived here, there had been endless forest, the prowling wolf and the

timid deer.