

## **The Bird Expedition Part 1: British Rule to the Territory of Wisconsin.**

The Bird Expedition doesn't begin in Munnsville, New York in 1837: it begins with the conflict between the British Crown, the colonies, and the division of the colonists between the loyalists and patriots prior to the Revolutionary War.

Tabitha Bird's father was Augustus Horatio Burgoyne. Augustus Burgoyne came to the American colonies as an impressed man by King George III and placed under the command of General John Burgoyne. Augustus never knew his father. Nobody knows if there was any relationship between Augustus and General Burgoyne. During his impressment, Augustus volunteered to help the sick and injured in the British Army. Augustus was captured by the Revolutionary Army in 1774 and imprisoned in Bennington, Vermont. During his imprisonment Augustus met Annie Rice. They were married in 1779 at the First Congregational Church of Thetford, Vermont. Their daughter Tabitha was one of possibly twelve children.

Zenas Bird and other family members were loyal to the British Crown and fled to Canada during the Revolutionary War. At some unknown date after the war Tabitha met Zenas while she was working at an inn in Thetford. They were married on July 11, 1799 and resided in Thetford. They had twelve children. Zenas and his sons worked as carpenters and mechanics (stone cutters). In need of contracts, the family moved to Munnsville, New York. Zenas Bird died about 1833 and is buried in Watertown, New York. Since there was little construction work available the family decided to move west to survive.

Augustus traveled to Milwaukee seeking work for himself and his family. [One family tradition claims that Tabitha was the inspiration for the family moving west.] Augustus found employment for himself and joined James Doty in land speculation. James Doty managed to obtain the appointment of Augustus Bird as one of the three Commissioners for the construction of a new Territorial Capital in Madison. Augustus sent for the family. Bird arranged for his brothers, Ira, Charles, William, Zenas and Prosper (who were employed as carpenters and stonecutters in New York) to work on the project.

In early 1837, the brothers formed a party that included Prosper's wife and children, their sister Charlotte and their mother Tabitha. They rode in Conestoga wagons pulled by oxen for five months as they traveled 830 miles from Munnsville, New York to Milwaukee in the Wisconsin Territory. The family left Munnsville after Christmas of 1836 and traveled for six months to reach Milwaukee. They traveled west across New York State stopping near the towns of Casenovia, Manchester, Batavia, and Lewiston. Then the Bird family crossed into Canada and went near Queenston, Brantford, London, Chatham, and Windsor. In Michigan the family stopped at the Clinton Inn and White Pigeon. After rounding the south shore of Lake Michigan the Bird family reached Ft. Dearborn (Chicago). The family reached Milwaukee sometime in May 1837. The only known casualty on this expedition was Tabitha's youngest son James.