

# Joanna's JOURNEY



REBECCA MARTIN



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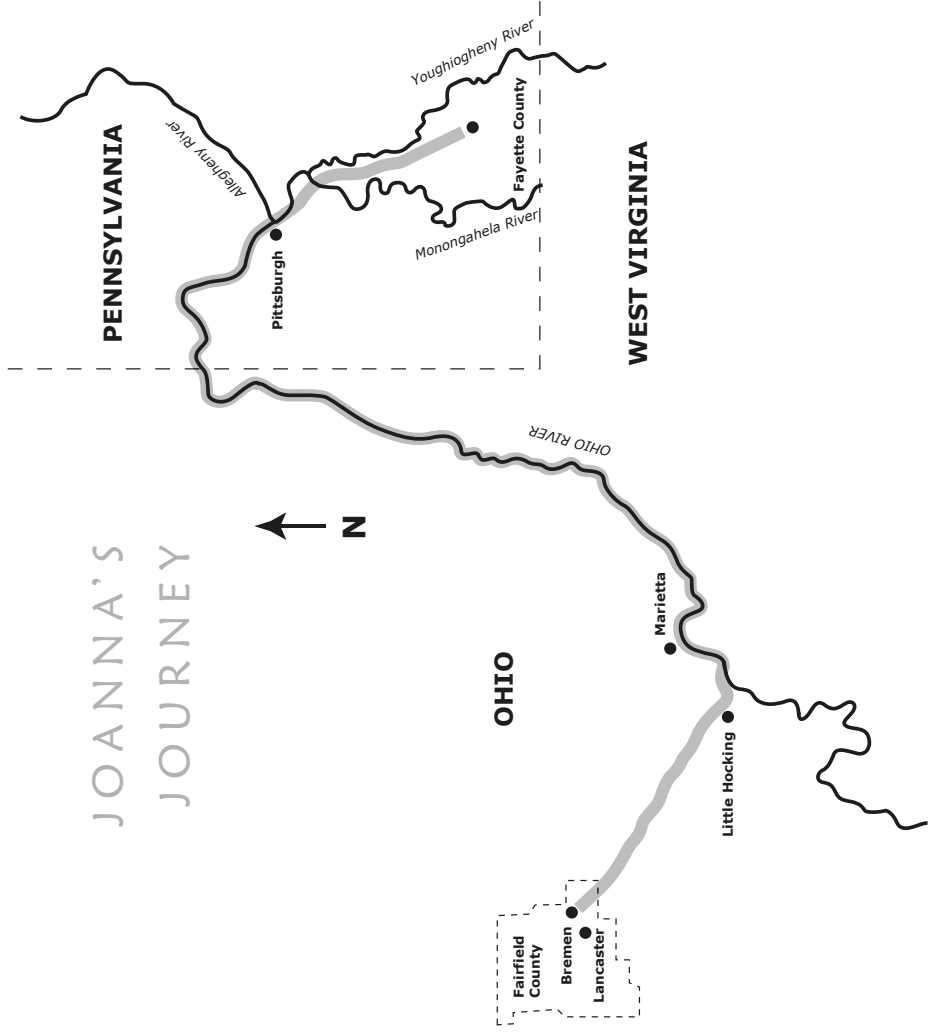
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**B**akersfield, the town in Fayette County, Pennsylvania that Joanna lived close to, is fictional. All other towns and rivers in this story are still named today as they were in Joanna's time. The Mennonite community Joanna's family belonged to before moving to Fairfield County, Ohio was located in the southern half of the arrowhead shaped land formed by the Monongahela River on the west and the Youghiogheny River on the east.

## JOANNA'S JOURNEY



## CHAPTER 1

# Scouts' Return

Joanna Huber opened the springhouse door and planted her feet carefully on the cold, slippery stone floor. It was like stepping from day into night. Outside was the bright spring sun; in the springhouse all was gloom and damp and chill.

Plop! Joanna set her crock of newly churned butter into the icy water that gurgled through the length of the building. Nearby were buckets holding last night's milk, and yesterday's milk. Already the thick golden cream had risen to the top, waiting to be skimmed and churned.

Ten-year-old Joanna's nose twitched, fascinated as always by the interesting mixture of springhouse smells—flowing water, clammy stone, milk, and butter. She never missed a chance to go the springhouse. It was one of her favorite places on the whole Huber farm.

Though March had barely begun, Joanna's feet felt hot and itchy in her high-topped shoes this morning. She wrestled



them off and slid her toes into the water. Ouch! It was cold. Knees tucked beneath her chin, Joanna wrapped her toes in her gingham apron.

Woof! Woof! Frenzied barking outside the springhouse sent Joanna scrambling to her feet. The door thudded behind her as she flew up the hillside. That puppy often yapped at roosters or cats, but such excited barking could mean only one thing—visitors!

Galloping out the lane on too-big puppy feet went Bell, the coal-black puppy with a musical name but a very unmusical bark. And plodding towards Bell came two horses, their heads drooping wearily. Joanna stared at the riders. Could her brothers be home from their long trip to Ohio?

The moment she knew for sure, Joanna dashed toward the Huber house, calling, “They’re home! Andrew and John are home.”

Every door of the house popped open. Out of the front door came 16-year-old Eliza, clutching a rug from the parlor. Out of the kitchen door came Mother, her apron dusted with flour from bread-making. And out of the woodshed came Father, trailing an axe.

Andrew and John had barely stopped at the gate before they were surrounded by family members. Mother cried, “You’re safe!”

Father asked, “How are things with Noah and Eli?”

Eliza wondered, “You didn’t buy any land, did you?”

Her brothers had been gone so long that they seemed almost like strangers. Eighteen-year-old Andrew’s beard had grown quite bushy, and 21-year-old John, with his dark hair



and snapping dark eyes, seemed somehow older than on the day he had left.

Andrew reached across from his horse and nudged John's elbow. "Eliza's. Answer Eliza's question first."

"All right." John looked around to make sure everybody was paying attention. "I've bought 250 acres of land in Fairfield County, Ohio, and Noah says to tell you he hopes all of you will move to Ohio, not just one young fellow in need of a housekeeper."

If John had hurled a burning torch at her, Joanna could not have been more startled. Move to Ohio, that wilderness territory recently opened to settlers? Joanna had never dreamed that her family might leave their snug home here in Pennsylvania.

It had been all right for her married brothers, Eli and Noah, who had left four years ago in 1799 to carve homes from the Ohio forests. It might even be all right for John. He was eager to start a home of his own.

But the whole Huber family? John must be joking. Joanna glanced anxiously at Father, who was smiling and not startled at all. Mother's forehead was wrinkled above the eyes. Eliza laughed and said, "Does Noah really think he can persuade us?"

"No persuasion needed on my part," grunted Andrew as he slid from his horse. "Dad, you should see those forests. And that rich soil... You wouldn't need much persuading either."

Father kept on smiling, but still he said nothing. Mother asked, "Did you see any Indians?"

"We chatted with a few on our way home," John said care-





lessly. Catching sight of Joanna's face, he laughed, "Don't look so scared, Sis. The Indians are mostly friendly."

Joanna's throat felt dry. "I thought they...they're mad at the white men for taking their land."

"Not anymore. And besides, we're not taking the land. The government is getting it legally by signing a treaty with the Indians. They wouldn't have to sign it if they didn't want to," Andrew assured her. Walking stiffly, the way a man does when he has been on horseback for a long time, he led the horse toward the barn.

Joanna skipped after him. "Jesse looks tired," she said. (They had named this roan-colored horse after King David's father, in the Bible.) "I hope you didn't make him go all those hundreds of miles without stopping."

"Of course not," scoffed her brother. "We stopped at Pittsburgh and a couple of other places. And we camped every night."

Joanna stroked Jesse's side, where the ribs were showing under the skin. "We'll have to get some fat back onto your bones," she crooned. Jesse swung his head around and sniffed at her flowery calico bonnet as if to say, "Hi, Joanna, it's nice to be home with you again."

"Listen, Sis," said Andrew in mock seriousness, "I hope you have dinner ready soon, because if you don't, I'd be hungry enough to eat your bonnet."

"O-o--oh!" shrieked Joanna, clutching her bonnet with both hands as she scampered to the house. Mother must have guessed how hungry the boys were, because she was filling the biggest pot with chunks of potatoes and salt pork and turnips.



The kitchen was soon filled with a savory aroma.

Not until he had downed one bowl of stew and started on his second did John speak at the table. “Will you consider it, Dad?”

Joanna nearly choked on a mouthful of turnip. John was still talking about moving to Ohio!

“I can’t say that I haven’t already,” Father drawled. “In fact, Mother and I have been discussing it for months.”

So Father had been thinking of moving already when he helped Andrew and John plan their horseback trip to Ohio! “Why didn’t...?” Joanna began.

Eliza’s shrill protest cut her short. “But there aren’t even any roads!”

“There will be soon,” John assured her. “Ohio’s a state now, as you know. In a couple of years they’ll have roads as good as any in Pennsylvania.”

“Then if we must move, we could wait at least until the roads are built,” Eliza mumbled.

Andrew shook his head. “Don’t you see? As soon as the roads are built, land prices will go way, way up. Now is the time to buy! Get there before anyone else and you can have your pick of the land.”

At last Joanna managed to get a word in edgewise. “How would we get there with no roads?”

“Same way as Noah and Eli did with their families, of course. By wagon to Pittsburgh, then by flatboat down the Ohio River. It takes only a few days to float down there, and it’s like a...like a holiday trip, or something. All you have to do is sit and watch the scenery go by.”



“We’d never see our friends again,” moaned Eliza. “I’ve never heard of people coming back up the Ohio River. They just go down and stay there.”

“I’d like to see anybody paddling a flatboat upstream,” chuckled John. “It can’t be done. That’s why nobody’s doing it. But like I said, there’ll be roads in a few years, then you can travel back in style by stagecoach to visit your friends.”

Eliza tossed her head. “I see you have everything figured out.”

“What about a house? Is there a house on the land you bought?” Joanna asked in a small voice.

Father started to say, “We’d have to build...”

But John cut in, “Yes, there is a house and a small clearing in the woods. Someone must have homesteaded there, then decided to move on again. Lots of people have been doing that in the past ten or twenty years.”

“Why?” wondered Mother. “Why move on if the land is as good as you say it is?”

John and Andrew looked at each other. “Some people seem to have itchy feet. Maybe the task of clearing the forest looked too big for them, and they decided to move west to the prairies where there are no trees to cut down.”

“I can see that a single family could get discouraged with all that work needing to be done. But we are starting a settlement, we hope, and we’ll all help each other,” Father stated.

Eliza sighed. “So you’re really thinking of moving?”

“We’re seeking God’s leading,” Father said firmly.

