Dexter.

BENJAMIN TAPPAN, JR. (1773–1857) AS A NATURALIST AND A MALACOLOGIST[1]

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I. BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH[2]

Benjamin Tappan, Jr. was born 25 May 1773 at Northampton, Massachusetts, the eldest of seven sons. After a common public school education, he worked with his father, a merchant at Northampton, as a goldsmith and silversmith until he was apprenticed to learn copperplate engraving and printing. His hobbies were portrait painting, which he studied under the famous Gilbert Stuart, and natural history. Following his student days at Yale, he studied law for three years and was admitted to the Bar at Hartford, Connecticut, in 1799.

That same year he came out to northeastern Ohio to claim land in Ravenna Township (10,291 acres) owned by his father. This was about two-thirds of what constituted Ravenna Township. Young Tappan became the founder and first settler of the village and township of Ravenna named after an Italian city—the first of nine communities in the U.S. to adopt this name. While it had been suggested by friends that the new settlement be named after Tappan, he preferred the name of Ravenna, suggested by his brother John, who had been to Ravenna, Italy.

The next year he returned to Connecticut where he was married to Nancy Wright 20 March 1801. They left at once for Ohio to settle in Ravenna Township.

Between 1803-05 Tappan was the representative for the Trumbull District in the Ohio Senate. In 1807, with creation of Portage County from a portion of Trumbull County, Tappan's house was designated as the County Courthouse. Until that time he traveled to Warren in order to attend court. In 1808 Tappan laid out the town plan for Ravenna, but the next year he left that community for Steubenville where he was invited to practice law. However, he continued to serve as prosecuting attorney for Portage County. During the war of 1812 he served as aide-de-camp to General Wadsworth as Major Commander of the First Brigade, 4th Division, Ohio Militia.

Between 1816-23 Tappan was Circuit Court Judge for the Third Common Pleas District of Ohio which included eight counties. In 1822 his wife died, and the following year he was married to Betsy Frazer who died in 1840. In 1823 he was appointed a member of the Ohio Canal Commission which he served for 11 years, and three years later he ran unsuccessfully for governor of Ohio.

In 1831 he published the first law reports in Ohio entitled 'Cases Decided in the Courts of Common Pleas in the 5th Circuit of Ohio' which became widely known as 'Tappan's Reports' and were frequently quoted in subsequent legal cases. Two years later he was appointed Federal District Judge by President Jackson, but served for a short time only since his appointment, along with other Democrats, was not confirmed by the Senate.

Between 1839-45 he was a U.S. Senator and a Jacksonian Democrat in politics. He joined the Free-Soil movement and became known widely for his anti-slavery sentiments. His law partner in Steubenville at that time was Edwin M. Stanton, who became Secretary of War under President Lincoln.

For several years (1846-48) he published editorials in the Columbus Free Press, which had been established by his second son, Eli. For the next five years he founded and operated with his brother William, the Tappan Female Institute located in Ravenna. William Hegeman was brought from Nantucket to conduct the school in which Tappan was keenly interested.[3]

Tappan had two sons. By his first wife was Dr. Benjamin Tappan, a physician at Steubenville. By his second wife was Eli Todd Tappan (1824-88), lawyer, editor, and educator. After teaching mathematics at

several institutions. he served as president of Kenyon College 1869-75. He also served as president of the Ohio State Teachers Association and the National Education Association. In addition to the newspaper he founded, he published works on mathematics and education.

Benjamin Tappan, Jr. died at Steubenville 12 April 1857, four years after the incorporation of Ravenna which he had founded. An unpublished autobiography covering the first 50 years of his life is deposited in the Ohio Historical Society in Columbus, and his personal papers are in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

II TAPPAN AS A NATURALIST AND A MALACOLOGIST

Tappan developed a lifelong interest in natural history. He became an amateur naturalist in his own right, and in his political life he played a leading part in developing scientific institutions. In the collection of his manuscripts at the Ohio Historical Society there are many lists and descriptions of shells which he copied from various publications. In 1828 he published an article 'On the Boulders of Primitive Rock Found in Ohio, and other Western States and Territories.'[4] In this article, he questioned the theory that boulders of foreign origin were brought down from the north by currents of water. He suggested that possibly they fell in place or were thrown up by volcanic action. He admitted that little was known on the subject, and Tappan apparently was not acquainted with glacial action which undoubtedly was the real cause.

In 1833 he published 'A Discourse Delivered before the Historical and Philosophical' Society of Ohio at the Annual Meeting of said Society in Columbus, December 22, 1832.'[5] Tappan was President of the Society at the time and stated that, ' . . . the opinion was formed, that something more should be aimed at in the organization of the State Society than collecting materials for a civil history of the State; its natural history, it was thought, was as important, as useful, and as necessary to be developed, and explained; hence was passed 'an act incorporating the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio' under the authority of which we are now assembled.--Neither can such a society compose full and complete treatises, upon subjects of natural history, but they may do more than can be done by isolated individuals in collecting materials and in storing up facts. We have several examples in our country, the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia and the New York Lyceum of Natural History have shown that much may be done by such societies to enlarge the boundaries of science. -- A full history of the people (native Indians) who have immediately preceded us in the occupancy of the soil of Ohio (some of whom yet remain among us) is of more interest--they have been constantly receding from the presence of the whites, and melting away from existence as a people. -- Let the members of the Society who may be favorably situated for the purpose explore their history--by ascertaining, all which can be known of the history, laws, usages, manners, and habits of these people, the philosophic inquirer will be furnished with materials, on a knowledge of which may be constructed a more rational and better system of treatment. -- Antiquarian investigations, traditionary and authentic history of the Indians; and the history of the rise and progress of this state, though interesting and important, are yet in my estimation of minor interest, and of secondary importance to a thorough investigation of its natural history. -- If the geography of this continent is yet imperfectly understood, is not much less known of its zoology and still less of its botany? -- to the lovers of botany our woods and prairies invite us to an unexplored field where new genera and species of plants will be found to reward with new beauties their tasteful labors. The uses economical and medicinal of our forest trees and plants should be investigated. The geology of Ohio remains also an unexplored field. -- We want geological maps and descriptive memoirs of every county in the state. -- In zoology much has been done in the other states, and something in our own, yet it is believed that we have birds which have eluded the industrious researches of Wilson, Bonaparte, and Audubon, and animals which have not been classified by Harlan, nor described by any other writer--the diligent student will find new species in the various families to reward his labors and enrich the collections. The fishes of America--have been drawn and described by our associate [Charles] Lesueur. The insects of Ohio have been collected by our associate [Thomas] Say -- The same gentleman is now engaged in a new and splendid work on the shells of America. -- It is hoped and expected that it will unite all the lovers and cultivators of natural science and bring them into communication with each other, and by means of a journal of their pro-

ceedings and discoveries in communication with fellow laborers everywhere. What has placed scientific France at the head of civilized nations? I should answer it is her garden of plants [Jardin des Plantes in Paris], herunrivaled Museum of Natural History, the effect and the cause of scientific associations.'

When Dr. Samuel P. Hildreth, physician-naturalist of Marietta, was on an excursion in northeastern Ohio in the spring of 1835,[6] he paid a visit to Judge Tappan at Steubenville. Dr. Hildreth wrote in his account 'May 7 -- I spent a part of the forenoon in examining Judge Tappan s cabinet of natural history. He has a fine collection of minerals, shells, and fossil organic remains. The minerals embrace nearly 1,200 species arranged in natural families. The fresh water shells amount to nearly 100 species, the great number of which are peculiar to our streams. The family of the Unios alone contains about 90 species, all natives of the Western waters. His collection of marine shells is also very fine. The library of the Judge embraces, besides a due proportion belonging to his own profession, many of the most valuable writings of Cuvier and Brongniart, in their original language [French], on the animal kingdom, as well as fossil organic remains. It is truly gratifying to see even a small part of the wealth of our country, and a share of its most brilliant intellect, devoted to the study and the development of natural history of 'the West': a subject deeply interesting, but until recently shrouded in much darkness; within a few years, however, many bright lights have been kindled, with promise to illustrate the hidden arcana of nature. The conchology and botany of the great valley have been pretty thoroughly examined while Entomology, one of the most fertile branches, has been but partially investigated, although the indefatigable Say made a very fair beginning. The study of fossil vegetable and animal remains of which the valley of the Mississippi is one vast cemetery, yet remains an almost entirely unexplored field. But the time is not distant when this vast cabinet of natural history, formed by a benevolent creator for the study and admiration of man, will be classed, and arranged by our own naturalists.

'Among the minerals in the cabinet of Judge T. [Tappan] I observed a specimen of native sinnabar, or sulphuret of mercury, in acicular crystals, being a fragment of a rolled mass of nearly a pound weight. This rare and beautiful mineral was found on the waters of Paint Creek, amongst the debris and rolled masses of primitive rocks, which abound through the Tertiary deposits, from Cillicothe to the shores of Lake Erie, and must have been brought from the region north of Lake Huron or Superior.

'The day before I reached Steubenville, an extensive collection of human skeletons, in a fine state of preservation had been found on the opposite side of the Ohio River, a few rods from the shore, and nearly against the lower part of the town. They were very probably placed here by the Mingo tribe of Indians, who for many years inhabited this spot and the country below, which still retains the name of 'the Mingo Bottom.' -- These skeletons not less than 50 or 60 in number were of all ages and of both sexes -- no relics, implements or ornaments of a metallic nature were discovered. Many interesting memorials of their own arts and of their affection for their relatives were found, consisting of pots and vases of coarse earthenware; some of them were formed with much taste and beauty of outline -- a number of the vases still contained relics of the food consisting of the bones of turkeys, opossums, etc. left for their departed friends while on their journey to the land of spirits. Stone pipes were also found--flint arrowheads were very numerous.'

Isaac Lea named a clam *Unio tappanianus* after Benjamin Tappan, but this is now regarded as a synonym of *Lasmigona viridis* Rafinesque by some authors.[7] Tappan questioned the validity of the name *Unio viridis* Rafinesque as applied to his specimens. He wrote to Isaac Lea of Philadelphia on 14 August 1836, 'Dr. Kirtland will publish a description of this shell probably, and name it *tappanii*.' It was Lea, however, rather than Kirtland who finally proposed this name. In the same letter, Tappan wrote to Lea that, 'Since I saw you I have had a visit from Dr. Kirtland and have spent a day with Hildreth; we have agreed to the following nomenclature of the Unios, vis.'[8] A list of 118 names then follows. On 9 October 1836 Tappan wrote to Robert Buchanan of Cincinnati, 'We might after a while learn the proper specific names of the Unios if the Philadelphians [i. e. T. A. Conrad, Curator at the Academy of Natural Science of Philadelphia] would let them alone, but while Conrad, etc. are laboring to father them all upon Rafinesque, and Lea is appropriating the discoveries of his predecessors to himself, we get little more than confusion. I am getting to think with Troost chat it is best to follow Lea, however, generally; he makes too many species, but

he will give way to reason and evidence and in his late synopsis has improved upon himself. [9]

In 1839 Tappan published a 'Description of some new Shells.'[10] This included the original description of *Physa sayii* Tappan and *Unio sayii* Ward, the latter of which was prepared by Dr. Charles J. Ward of Roscoe, Ohio; also, the original description of *Paludina heterostropha* Kirtland prepared by Dr. Jared P. Kirtland. The specimens of this new species were deposited in the cabinets of Thomas Say, Kirtland, Ward, and Tappan. *Unio sayii* is now known as *Elliptio sayana* (Conrad). In 1842 Zadock Thompson, in his book *History of Vermont: Natural, Civil, and Statistical*, described as a new species *Pupa tappaniana* known as *Bifidaria tappaniana* and *Gastrocopta tappaniana*). The type locality is given as Vermont and the range is from Ontario and Maine to Virginia and Alabama, west to South Dakota, Kansas, and Arizona.

During Tappan s service in the U.S. Senate, he was a member of the Library Committee, and he took leadership in establishing the Smithsonian Institution, the creation of which passed the Senate, but was not acted upon by the House of Representatives. It was accomplished, however, by the 29th Congress (1845-47). Arrangements for the museum were essentially those which had been proposed by Tappan. However, Tappan had included plans for a School of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, experimental gardens, and a Library of Science. Tappan led the opposition when the National Institute, which was a private body, offered to care for scientific collections obtained by the government. He made an attack on the body thinking incorrectly that the National Institute was planning to take charge of publications of scientific results of government expeditions. Actually the National Institute wanted only to arrange exhibits for the public, utilizing the government collections, Finally a bill was passed establishing the Smithsonian Institution which took charge of all government scientific collections and publications based upon them. This final bill was sponsored by Senator Robert Dale Owen of Indiana.[11]

While serving as a Senator from Ohio, Tappan was appointed as the agent for the Library Committee to superintend the publication of reports based upon the Wilkes Expedition of 1838-1842. This was the first U.S. naval world-wide scientific expedition. He worked with Commander Charles Wilkes in arranging for publication of the voluminous reports.[12]

Allison Cusick of Kent State University has called my attention to four herbarium specimens which had been collected by Benjamin Tappan, Jr. Two of these are in the Herbarium at the University of Michigan, while the other two are in the Herbarium of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. They were collected along the Ohio River in 1836.

Benjamin Tappan has been honored in recent years by having his name given to several things. Tappan Elementary School in Ravenna, the Village of Tappan in Harrison County, and Tappan Dam near Steubenville have all been named after Benjamin Tappan, Jr. Tappan Reservoir created by Tappan Dam covers 2,350 acres and is located in the Muskingum Conservancy District in Harrison County. It is an impoundment of a tributary to the Tuscarawas River.

Benjamin Tappan, Jr. was not only the founder of Ravenna, a leader in legal, military, and civil matters, but was also a pioneer in the natural history of Ohio and the nation.

NOTES

1. This paper was read at a meeting of the Portage County Historical Society held at Ravenna, Ohio, 27 October 1967.

2. Compiled from the following sources: *Appleton's Cyclopedia of American Biography; Dictionary of American Biography; Portage Heritage;* Howe, Henry, *Historical Collections of Ohio;* Upton, H.T., *History of the Western Reserve.*

3. Mc Cormick, E. L. 1962. Melville's Third Captain. *Historic Nantucket.* 9(4): 62-65.

4. Tappan, Jr., Benjamin. 1828. On the Boulders of Primitive Rocks found in Ohio and other Western States and Territories. *Amer. Jour. Sci. and Arts.* 14(2): 291-297.

5. Tappan, Jr., Benjamin 1833. A Discourse delivered before the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio at the Annual Meeting of said Society in Columbus, December 22, 1832. 16 pp. Privately printed.

6. Hildreth, Samuel P. 1837. Miscellaneous Observations made during a Tour in May, 1835, to the Falls of the Cuyahoga near Lake Erie; Extracted from the Diary of a Naturalist. *Amer. Jour. Sci. and Arts. O.S. 31(1): 1-84.*

7. Haldeman, S.S. 1841. Remarks on the Identity of *Unio viridis* and *U. tappanianus. Proc. Acad. Nat Sci. Phila., 1(7): 104*

8. Letter of Benjamin Tappan to Isaac Lea 14 August 1836. Original in library

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of Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia (Collection 98), and quoted with permission.

9. Letter of Benjamin Tappan to Robert Buchannan 9 October 1836. Original in Library of Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, and quoted with permission.

10. Tappan, Jr., Benjamin. 1839. Description of some new Shells. *Amer. Jour. Sci. and Arts. O.S. 35(2): 168-270.*

11. Goode, George B. 1901. The Genesis of the U.S. National Museum. *Ann. Rept., Smithsonian Institution for 1897. Vol. 2, pp. 83-192.*

12. Haskell, D. C. 1942. The U. S. Exploring Expedition, 1838-1842, and its Publications, 1844-1874. New York Public Library, 188 pp.

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