

CHAPTER 1 - "UNCLE SAM"

At the dawn of the 19th century, a governor with a love for classical names gave pompous titles to many American towns. Cities like Utica, Syracuse, and Ithaca, once intended to evoke grandeur, now call to mind small, modern places filled with trolley cars and churches. However, the governor's decision to name a city Troy and a nearby hill Mount Ida unknowingly set the stage for a significant legacy. A young man named Samuel Wilson, living near this hill, would soon become synonymous with the proud nation he helped symbolize.

Before the century turned, two brothers, Ebenezer and Samuel Wilson, moved from New York and established a brickyard in Troy. Samuel, the younger and more playful of the two, earned the affection of the children in the area, often giving them small sweets or toys from his pockets. The children affectionately nicknamed him "Uncle Sam," a title that would later be embraced as a symbol of the United States itself. This name would go on to evoke deep national pride, much like the sight of the American flag.

As the Wilson brothers' wealth grew, they shifted from brickmaking to a large-scale slaughtering business, employing over a hundred men and processing thousands of cattle each week. During the War of 1812, they contracted to supply meat to the troops in Greenbush. Samuel, known for his integrity, was appointed as Inspector of Provisions for the army. His commitment to fulfilling contracts and ensuring quality made the initials "U.S." synonymous with excellence. Soldiers, familiar with the nickname "Uncle Sam," believed the "U.S." marked provisions as trusted and of the best quality, leading them to demand only "Uncle Sam's" meat. Over time, this led to "Uncle Sam" being associated with the United States government itself.

In his later years, Samuel Wilson lived near Mount Ida, where he continued to be remembered for his warmth, humor, and patriotism.