

WEST JEFFERSON IN DAYS GONE BY

By Charlie Miller

Series 12

WAR OF 1812, the War of 1812 didn't affect West Jefferson because West Jefferson was not here, in fact Madison Co., had just been formed in March of 1811. On April 6, 1812, Governor Return Meigs of Ohio was ordered by the President to assemble the Ohio Militia of Ohio at Dayton, Ohio to be drilled and prepared to march to Detroit. In May, the President had commissioned Gov. Hull of Michigan as a Brigadier General. He arrived at Dayton on May 25, 1812 and marched to Detroit where he was defeated on August 16, 1812.

Ohio furnished 1,759 officers and 24,521 enlisted men. During the War, Captains John Moore and Elias Langham were the recruiting officers at London. The militia of Madison County was divided into classes so as to be in readiness when called upon. All able-bodied men between the ages of 18 to 45 years were required to respond to such a call. A company of 70 men was raised soon after the war broke out and was sent to Mill Creek in what is now the southern part of Union County. A block house was built and general preparations were made to defend the county against the Indians.

Jonathan Alder was in this company and after remaining about three to four weeks, he and John Johnston concocted a scheme to break up the camp and return to their homes. They were sent out scouting and after making many moccasin tracks in the vicinity of a mud hole, returned to the camp and reported that Indian signs were numerous, at the same time offering to conduct a squad to the place for the purpose of investigating the matter. This news created consternation among the men, and Alder, Johnston, and Andrew Clerno were detailed on picket duty that night. Clerno was informed of the plot and about 11 o'clock, while the camp was asleep, all three fired off their guns at an imaginary foe and rushed back to the fort. A general stampede ensued, the men running like a frightened herd of cattle, pell-mell in every direction through the forest. The shouts of the officers calling upon them to halt were of no avail.

Many ludicrous scenes took place, as well as a few accidents through coming in contact with the trees; while two brave boys plunged across Mill Creek irrespective of danger by drowning. The ruse succeeded for by 10 o'clock the following morning, all of the men were discharged and on their way to their homes. Much sport has been made of this event and many of the worthy pioneer fathers were the butt of the jokes throughout their lives on account of their participation in this campaign of the war.

During the siege of Fort Meigs in May 1813, the militia from Madison Co. hurried to Urbana where a large force was organized commanded by Col. Duncan MacArthur. After a four days march, they found that the siege had been lifted and they returned home. They were called out again and marched to Sandusky where they remained for a while. Records kept on those participating in the war from Madison Co. are sketchy, but the following men from Jefferson Township listed were: Abraham Johnston, Nehemiah Gates, and Thomas Springer. Others from Madison Co. who served were: John Arbuckle, Frederick Sager, Jacob Johnston, John Johnston, Peter Paugh, Frederick Loyd, Andrew Clerno and David Sidner. Most served between 1 to 6 months. In 1815, Congress passed a law making it obligatory for all males between 18 and 45 to perform military duty.

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