

WEST JEFFERSON IN DAYS GONE BY

By Charlie Miller

Series 16

MILLS: With Little Darby Creek in this area there were several mills erected at an early day. Probably the first was erected by Nehemiah Gates in 1814. He came to Jefferson Township around 1800 and remained here until after the War of 1812 when he returned to Virginia, married a Miss Johnson, and returned to the Township. To this union were born nine children. His wife later died and he married three more times. Mr. Gates was an industrious, hardworking man, who was much respected by the pioneers of his time. He owned land behind the current Dollar General store which ran down to the creek. In 1814, he erected a grist mill along the creek. At this time Old Springfield Road was part of the current Taylor-Blair Road. In 1819, he attached a sawmill and later a carding machine. He later sold this to his son-in-law, John Mills.

Rev. Isaac Jones erected a sawmill at an early date but due to an argument with the managers of the National Pike, in regards to the race crossing the road, he moved the mill and erected it in Jefferson on Little Darby Creek and it was known as a "flutter mill," (A flutter mill was a very small mill) This mill was on a mill race that ran from Little Darby starting on the west side of the Middle Pike, it ran into a mill pond which was located on the current site of the West Jefferson village garage, from there it ran east and emptied into the creek just north of the National Road bridge over the creek. In 1836 he erected a grist mill on the same site, ran by an undershot wheel. (This mill was located behind his house which still sets at 138 E. Main St.) A few years later he added a carding machine. After his death, his widow sold the machinery to Thomas Cartmill, who soon built a new grist mill and added a carding mill in 1848. In 1857 he built another mill farther down the creek. This cost was about \$5000. The mill was known as "The Oak Ridge Mill," by being built on a ridge covered with oak trees. This mill sat at the end of the current Mill Road.

Rev Isaac Jones was the son of Deacon Jones who along with Samuel Sexton laid out the village of New Hampton. Deacon Jones performed marriages at an early date. In 1830, he sold his son Isaac, 110 acres who then laid out the town of (West) Jefferson and had it recorded. Rev. Jones also founded the Little Darby Baptist Church in 1820 now the First Baptist Church. He also served as an Associate Judge in the Madison County court, he died at the age of 40 in 1840 and is buried in the Hampton Cemetery.

Other early mills were built on the creek, John Johnson 1834, known as the Byerly Mill, Charles Roberts 1847 1 ½ miles below Jefferson at the end of Roberts Road which runs from the Plain City-Georgesville Rd west to the creek. George W. Blair 1852, on the creek behind Blair Cemetery located on the Taylor-Blair Rd. George Blair was born May 20, 1817, and died March 29, 1886. The mill was located behind the cemetery where the current King Pike intersects with Blair Road. In 1853 George Blair was instrumental in erecting the Blair Chapel (Methodist) beside the cemetery.

The church later was moved to the intersection of U.S. Route 42 and Blair Road and was known as the Gillivan Methodist church. It is still a church under a different denomination.