

WEST JEFFERSON IN DAYS GONE BY

By Charlie Miller

Series 21

JAMES BURNHAM: James Burnham, son of James and Tamma (Holt) Burnham, was born in Windham, Conn. on December 21, 1791, and came to Ohio in 1817, located in the northwest part of Jefferson Township, where for years he kept a hotel on a stretch of the Columbus and Urbana Stage Route (Ohio Rt. 29). In 1832 he moved to a farm adjoining the land that was to be the future town of Jefferson.

In those earliest days of settlement when the Indians still prowled around, military organizations were thought of as useful as well as ornamental, and a brigade of cavalry was organized from the counties of Madison, Union, and Champaign. Mr. Burnham was appointed General of this brigade. Also in the early days, Mr. Burnham was elected county Commissioner and was contentiously re-elected to this post for a period of 15 or 18 years. He was also elected Justice of the Peace and was re-elected to the office until his successive terms amounted to over 30 years, and until in 1854, he declined to run again.

In 1823 he married Mary Ann Jones who was the sister of Rev. Isaac Jones who was the founder of Jefferson. Mr. Burnham died on January 6, 1857, leaving his widow, three sons, and a daughter. He is buried in the New Hampton Cemetery.

WEST JEFFERSON: On January 31, 1831, Samuel Jones and his wife, deeded to their son Isaac, for the sum of \$50.00, 110 acres in Virginia Military Survey 2836, whose area now encompasses West Jefferson. He then decided to erect a town on a portion of this land. Three months before he bought it, he had a description and plat of a town recorded at the Recorder's Office in London. As the National Road had been surveyed through here but not yet built, he made it the Main Street of the town, being 80 feet wide. This was notarized by Patrick McLene, the founder of London. He notarized this on September 13, 1830. There were originally 63 lots which were 50' X 150'. Lots number 7 and 8 were for public use and are now occupied by the Village Hall and parking lot. The correct name of the village was Jefferson, On October 18, 1833 the **West** was added to designate the Post Office as there was another Jefferson in the State. (A later amendment to the Charter made the name West Jefferson legal.)

The village was surveyed in the fall of 1831 by Col James Millikin and on April 24, 1834, the first town council met at the Post Office. This meeting lasted from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. At this meeting, the town was incorporated and the following offices were elected. President, John Simpkins; Recorder, Dr. David Wilson; the common council consisted of, David Mortimore, Ferrin H. Olmstead, James Roberts, Wilson Graham, and Abraham Hare. The Marshall was Joseph Powers.

The first ordinance passed was: "Be it ordained by the President and Council of the town of Jefferson, that the following rules and regulations shall be strictly observed by the council when regularly assembled for discharging their duties in relation to the Corporation. 27 more ordinances followed.