

WEST JEFFERSON IN DAYS GONE BY

By Charlie Miller

Series 24

EARLY BUSINESSES: Mr. Dalby opened the first tavern in Jefferson. (This was located in the building on the north east corner of Main and Chester Streets. For a long time this was called the Mantle House Hotel, it was a two-story building built in 1832 as the National Road was being surveyed. In later years it contained a barn with living quarters upstairs, Several years ago it caught fire and a resident who was living upstairs died. The second floor was removed and the downstairs still contains a bar.)

Around 1832 John W. Simpkins bought Lot No. 23 in the wilds of nature and built a second tavern, this lot was on Main Street and is now a parking lot for the former Jefferson Savings. In 1834 Mr. Simpkins served as the President of the Village Council. On October 18, 1833, he was appointed Postmaster of the Post Office at West Jefferson, he served until 1842. Mr. John Gilmore had served as Postmaster of New Hampton from January 4, 1830, until the Post office was named West Jefferson. Mr. Simpkins was re-appointed on January 26, 1842, and served until 1845. John Simpkins served as Mayor off and on from 1834-1849. His grandson Wayne Simpkins was killed in the battle of Chickamauga on September 9, 1863, he was 16 years old and is buried at the Chattanooga National Cemetery.

The first blacksmith in the new town was George Washington Lewis, he was also a farmer. Born in Ohio on February 11, 1807 and died on August 28, 1878. He also served as Mayor of West Jefferson at different times between 1854 and 1875. He was a former resident of New Hampton.

George Lewis was the father of Wallace W. Lewis born on April 12, 1843. Wallace Lewis enlisted in the Union Army during the Civil War. He was wounded in the right lower leg causing it to be amputated by a Confederate surgeon. He then spent 11 months in the Andersonville Prison. Later he served as Mayor of West Jefferson in 1881.

W.T. McCoy opened up a livery stable in the rear of the Mantle House, which is still standing and housed the former Williams Automotive Repair on Town Street. He also spent 9 months in Andersonville Prison.

The first doctor was Dr. David Wilson. Dr. Wilson is buried in the New Hampton Cemetery. He was also a former resident of New Hampton.

The new town grew rapidly due a lot to its location on the National Road. Many hotels flourished, plus a number of taverns and businesses. In 1846, Jacob McNeal Sr. started a carriage manufacturing business, which was located on the current site of the filling station on the southeast corner of Main and Twin Streets he also served as a Notary Public. He came to Ohio in May of 1837 with a family of 9 children. The great National Road was then completed to about the center of Madison County. They had traveled the road many miles and had not decided where to settle until they reached Jefferson. They knew that they were ending the end of the great road and felt that they could not leave such convenience and relocated here.