

WEST JEFFERSON IN DAYS GONE BY

By Charlie Miller

Series 38

History is a lot more than just the recording of dates, it also captures the mood of the times, the way that people thought and acted, the way of life, the hopes, plans, and dreams of the people who called West Jefferson "their town," in times gone by. In the following series, we hope to convey these feelings so that they can place themselves back in time to any era and feel that they could fit in as easily as taking a stroll downtown today. It is hoped that after reading you will have grown to know these people that would have been our friends and neighbors.

The following appeared in ***The Madison County Democrat*** in the 1920s and was written by Mr. **Matthew A. Horen**. Mr. Horen was born in London, Ohio, on September 3, 1875, and died on January 15, 1943. He was a music teacher/music dealer.

"Up and down the Main Street of West Jefferson 60 years ago, (1860) there appeared on the businesses houses, the names of people, for which the most part, would appear strange to the present inhabitants of that enterprising little city. To its very oldest citizens like the venerable Lawrence C. Englesperger, Edward Powell, and John Burns, who have spent many useful years of their lives in West Jefferson, and who are spared to the community, there is nothing strange in the recalling of the names of businessmen so long ago, unless it would be the interest that is awakened at the recital of names so long forgotten. The village according to the Federal Census of 1860, had a population of 450 persons and was situated mainly as it is today on the National Road.

West Jefferson is the logical successor to the Village of New Hampton but is not situated on the site of New Hampton, of which only a long-neglected cemetery is the only relic. It was located southwest of the National Road in the direction of Lilly Chapel. The building of the great Road left New Hampton a mile off its course and sounded the death knell of the village when merchants began to erect buildings along the road to catch the endless stream of stagecoaches, the village naturally followed and thus Jefferson came into being. The U. S. Postal name is West Jefferson but its proper name is Jefferson.

At one time when the National Road was in its hey-day of glory, Jefferson was the most important town in Madison County but at the time of which we write, the glory of the Road was on the wane, because the railroad had been built through the village and travelers preferred the comfort and speed of the cars to the weary stagecoach travel.

Lawrence Englesperger, born in Germany, on June 6, 1839, died April 14, 1925. Cpl. Englesperger served 3 years in Co A. 40th O. V. I. during the Civil War. He was a cobbler by trade. He died on April 14, 1925, and is buried at Mt. Calvary Cemetery, West Jefferson. In 1870 he was living with John Burns who was also a boot and shoe manufacturer. He died in 1919 and is also buried at Mt. Calvary Cemetery.