

WEST JEFFERSON IN DAYS GONE BY

By Charlie Miller

Series 51

IDA GRASSEL: Another interview with Ida Grassel in 1965: Mrs. Grassel will be 86 years old in December. She was born in 1879, she married George Grassel on December 31, 1899. She died on November 1, 1969. She belonged to the Methodist Church.

"The Methodist Church was located in what is now the Orient Theater. (The Methodist Church was built in 1862 and sat on the site of the current dentist's office on Main Street.) The Middle Pike was very dusty and was graveled once a year, but that didn't last long. My grandfather used to gravel it, and the bridge across Little Darby was covered. There was once a bad flood and Dr. Jones was almost drowned there with a team of horses. John Harbage was my grandfather and lived on the East Pike. Uncle Joe Harbage built his house on stones from the creek and one of the stones is in Foster Chapel. Great-grandfather Harbage was born in Oxfordshire, England. I lived 1 ½ miles down Middle Pike. In winter we used the sled and didn't worry about getting snowed in. I started school at the old Harbage School on the Middle Pike. (This was probably School House #6 which sat on the future site of the "A" Elementary School which is now a residence at 2531 Middle Pike.) I moved to town when I was 14, in 1893. We lived on the southeast corner of Frey Ave. and W. Pearl St. There weren't many houses there at that time. There was a big apple orchard on the west side called the old Frey apple orchard.

The Old London Rd. ran along the south side of the railroad, Old Martin Rix was killed there when he was hit by a train. (1904)(This is now an extension of W. Pearl St.) At that time Myron Silver built the elevator where Hartco Printing is now. I can remember when he built it, there was an incline going up to the entrance to get in. I was not living there when it burned but my mother was. I went up as soon as I knew of the fire, we were afraid it might take the house. Big chunks of the fire fell on her shed and caught it on fire, they pumped her well dry fighting the fire. Pete Frey used to ring the bell at the Catholic Church. He lived on Garfield Ave in Slim Justice's house, it's a very old house. The streets weren't as wide as they are now, Garfield was pretty dusty and there were no sidewalks, the yards came right down to the street and we just walked along the yards to go downtown. (I remember Slim and the house. Garfield was just chip stone and tar surface in the 40's) Mr. Shoemaker wrote a history of West Jefferson, he had a newspaper on Walnut Street (the present site of the VFW Hall) Howard McKinley worked for him. Mr. McCracken used to publish the *Home News* above Kuehner's Store, (Your writer used to live there, later the building caved in.)

My mother had a good well and a lot of people used to stop for a drink. We supplied water for them to bring over to the Silver Elevator. John McNeal made brick around the Catholic Cemetery on Lilly Chapel Rd. They used to bring in wood to be sawed and then stacked it right along N. Center St. Billy Redmond was the telegraph operator and ticket agent for the railroad. Bliss had a store on Walnut St. and Oscar Sprague had a blacksmith shop located in the Harrington Garage. (This sat on the west side of the street just south of the R.R. across from the VFW) A lot of changes were made when the railroad was elevated. Fred Grassel was my husband's father, he was a cigar maker in Germany, and he also made them here in Jefferson. He

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cured his tobacco, stripped it, and made his own cigars. He wholesaled them, I think that he wholesaled them to New York. He made them where Fisher Cast Steel is now.