

WEST JEFFERSON IN DAYS GONE BY

By Charlie Miller

Series 11

RAILROAD: The railroad was built through West Jefferson in 1848-1849 by the Columbus & Xenia Railroad. At the time that the railroad was built the citizens of Madison County voted \$20,000 toward its construction. The railroad company subsequently proposed to take from the county \$14,000 of said stock, leaving the company with but \$6,000, which was agreed to. Although the first official train ride was on February 20, 1850, the following appeared in the *Madison County Democrat* and was written by Mr. John Roberts who was a correspondent for that paper. "We saw a notice of the riding of two little girls on the first train that passed over the Little Miami R.R. (a later name) from West Jefferson to Florence Station. Mrs. John Roberts, Mrs. Ermine Truitt, and her sister Mahalia Godfrey, rode on the same train on the same day with the Creamer girls. This was in the year 1850. Your correspondent rode on the construction train from West Jefferson to Deer Creek, on Christmas Day, 1849.

The rail and iron used in constructing the road were shipped to Columbus on the canal. The hands on the construction work, refused to work on Christmas Day, so the engineer and fireman, who had no religious scruples concerning the Day, were all the people on the train. When it came to the water tank in Jefferson, they invited quite a number of us to ride out to the end of the line, to help unload one of the cars so the hands could ride out on it from Columbus the next day. Price Jones, Col. William Jones, (son of Isaac Jones) some of the Stutsons, and the writer were in the squad.

I do not know of a single person now living, who was on the train that day except myself. We made the return trip in five minutes, from the Glade Run, so the engineer said.

The following is taken from parts of the recollections of Mr. Jimmy Clark, in an articles in the April 1934 edition of *The Madison Press*: "The engines of the Little Miami were wood burners. A short distance north of town, was a large wood chopping camp. The railroad laid a spur track to it on the hill east of Little Darby Creek (just east and behind of the nursery on Rt.40) and would have ran to the Middle Pike. The railroad at best was a flimsy affair, the engines were small and a train consisted of five or six cars.

One day I was up at the wood shed when an old wood train engine blew up, and James Farrington was blown under the porch of O.H. Bliss' warehouse. (On North Walnut St. near the current over pass) but was not seriously hurt. The whole block adjoining the Baptist church (which sat on the far north end of Center St.) was piled high with four foot wood to be sawed.

At that time, I was living in an old hotel that stood on the present site of the Building & Loan." (Current site of the antique shop on the northwest corner of Walnut and Main Streets)

(Jimmy Clark was the village lamp lighter for a number of years when the village had gas street lights.)