

WEST JEFFERSON IN DAYS GONE BY

By Charlie Miller

Series 25

WAR: Just a few years after the town had been incorporated we were at war again. We called it “The Mexican War,” and the Mexicans called it “The North American Invasion.” This was an outgrowth of the Texas fight for independence which started in 1835 when Americans had settled in territory claimed by Mexico. The Americans banded together and revolted. Mexican generals Santa Anna and Urrea moved quickly to crush it. The Americans captured San Antonio in 1835. Santa Anna recaptured it on March 6, 1836, and wiped out the whole garrison at the Alamo. On March 20th, Urrea captured Golidad and executed 300 captives.

The Texans commanded by Sam Huston fell back to San Jacinto followed by Santa Anna. On April 21, 1836, Houston attacked and captured Santa Anna. Texas was soon cleared of Mexican troops and Texas won its independence as a republic. On March 1, 1845, Texas was invited to become a state of the Union. On May 1, 1846, the U.S. declared war on Mexico after an offer of \$30,000,000 was turned down by the Mexican government. The war lasted 16 months. The men of Madison County, as part of the Ohio Volunteer Infantry (O.V.I.), fought from Veracruz to Mexico City.

President Polk, suspecting the popular Gen. Zachary Taylor of political ambitions, put Winfield Scott in charge to take Mexico City. He sailed to Veracruz with 10,000 men and captured it. He then moved toward Mexico City. One of the heroes in this move was Capt. Robert E. Lee. Mexico City was captured on September 14, 1847, thus ending the war. Scott suffered 1,000 casualties

The following man listed from West Jefferson who fought in the war was Lt. Edwin. R. Hill (he also served as a Sgt. in the Civil War) Others from Madison County were, Samuel Cramer Adam Bidwell, Wm. Frost, Mortimore Garrlick and Samuel Armstrong.

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MORE BUSINESS: Things were starting to grow in the 1840s, and many businesses sprung up. Between 1844-1845 there were five hotels in town owned by R. S. Nichols, Nathan Patterson, Baltzer Mantle, James Hughs, and George Chapman., Two of the most well-known were the American House which stood on the lot first owned by J. W. Simpkins and the Mantle House. The American House burned to the ground in the Spring of 1882. It was not uncommon to see these five hotels thronged with travelers and the streets running stages at an early date, usually there ran to five coaches daily through West Jefferson. These coaches ceased running in 1853 due to the railroad.

Abraham Hare was the local hatter using the skins from local animals, and Squire (J.W.) Simpkins kept the first Post Office. At one time this town was the leading business point in the County. In 1846 O. H. Bliss with his father, Dr. Ezra Bliss established a large wholesale and retail dry goods business, which was on the west side of N. Walnut St. opposite the current site of Fisher Cast Steel. There were also two tanneries owned by E. J. Hancock and Balzer Mantle.