

WEST JEFFERSON IN DAYS GONE BY

By Charlie Miller

Series 29

THE CIVIL WAR: We could do a dozen pages on the Civil War, we'll try to hit the highlights. On April 15, 1861, President Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 men to be enlisted in the Union Army following the attack on Ft. Sumter by Confederate forces. The main bulk of the enlistments was raised by the individual states and mustered into the Federal Army. Most regiments contained ten companies. The Company formed from Jefferson Township became Company A, 40th Ohio Volunteer Infantry or (Co. A, 40th O. V. I.). This Company was mustered in at Camp Chase, Ohio on September 19, 1861.

Dr. John Noble Beach was commissioned Surgeon of the Regiment and Col. William Jones, son of Rev. Isaac Jones, later was the Commanding Officer of the Regiment from September 1, 1863, to November 1, 1862, when he resigned due to disability. Both men were from West Jefferson.

On paper, a regiment was supposed to contain between 900 to 1040 men. A regiment that could muster 350 enlisted men for duty was considered pretty solid.

The standard infantry weapon was the rifled Springfield, a muzzleloader firing a conical lead bullet usually a .54 caliber. Only a good man got off more than two shots per minute. The weapon had a range of nearly a mile and an effective range of about 250 yards. In December the 40th became part of the 18th Brigade, commanded by Gen. James A. Garfield. Their first battle was on January 10, 1862, near Prestonburg, Ky. Out of 900 men, 1 was killed and 7 wounded, and the Confederates suffered 125 killed.

On March 16, 1862, they fought at Pound's Gap, Ky., then returned to Pikeville, Ky. There was much sickness while encamped there and many men died. On September 13, 1862, they went to Louisa, Ky. And did picket duty. They did duty in several towns and ended up at Cattletsburg, Ky. On November 12. They stayed there until February of 1863.

On June 23, 1863, they moved to Shelbyville, Tenn, and made a feint against the point with Gen. Granger's Reserve Corps and some Cavalry. The army started in pouring rain, and the roads were terrible. The next battle was at Shelbyville, Tenn driving Bragg's Army of Tennessee back to Tullahoma, Tenn, forcing him all the way back to Chattanooga, Tenn. This fighting resulted in 560 men killed, wounded, and missing. One of these was Sgt. Wilson Burrows of West Jefferson. They remained at Shelbyville until July 3. The people of the town seemed much pleased with the arrival of the "Yankees" as when our Corps marched into town with banners flying, it was greeted with cheers and waving of Handkerchiefs. They were then ordered to Wartace, Tenn. Union General Rosecrans Commander of the Army of the Cumberland planned next to take Chattanooga.

Next: the Battle of Chickamauga, Georgia: