

WEST JEFFERSON IN DAYS GONE BY

By Charlie Miller

Series 4

THE FIRST white person to settle in the present limits of Jefferson Township was Michael Johnson, born in Ireland in 1750. He, his wife, and eight children. Immigrated to Virginia in the mid 1700's. But feeling the need of finding homes for such a large family he left Virginia in 1795 to explore the Northwest Territory which had been established in 1787, he returned to Virginia in 1797 and left for the Ohio county, he settled just north east of the junction of U.S. route 42 and State Route 29, along the Little Darby Creek.

One day in 1808 he and his son-in-law, Peter Paugh, were crossing the Little Darby in a canoe when it started to sink. Paugh suggested Mr. Johnson, who was a good swimmer, to jump out and swim to shore. He did, however the water was very cold, and he immediately took cramps and sank and drowned. Paugh was rescued by friends on the shore.

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Another early settler was Tobias Bright who settled along Little Darby around 1810, He shot and killed an Indian named Nicholas Monham, near an Indian mound located in the southeast corner of Monroe Twp. He was later tried and acquitted. One of the Lapins also shot an Indian near the same spot in later years. These events were common in the pioneer days, as the Indians as a rule were detested, especially by those who had lost friends in the Indian wars.

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Phillip Sidner, (also spelled Sidener) came from Bourbon, County, Kentucky in 1802 and settled on the Scioto River near Franklinton (Present Columbus) After a brief illness he headed for the Darbys. (At an early day Little Darby was called Treacles Creek) He built his cabin on the east bank of the creek. This was in an area which is now across the Creek from McDonald's fast food. Shortly after he settled, Bright shot an Indian. It was feared that a general uprising was expected. Mr. Sidner returned to Kentucky. The remaining settlers built a stockade 15 feet high, enclosing about an acre of land including Sidner's cabin. This was commonly called Fort Sidner. This was in 1811. The excitement soon subsided, and Mr. Sidner returned to the place of his recent settlement, and then built a cabin just south of the house that now sits clear at the end of Chester Street.