

WEST JEFFERSON IN DAYS GONE BY

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Series 46

WEST JEFFERSON GRADE SCHOOL: The first effort of having a school for the pioneer youngsters in West Jefferson was in 1823 when Lucinda (Burnham) Thomas procured a subscription and taught a school of a few scholars in a log hut that stood on the present site of the Pleasant Hill Cemetery. She taught until about 1826 when she was succeeded by George Pike who also farmed. Mr Pike also taught in this early cabin which was of the rudest kind. It had round logs chinked with split stickum and plastered with mud. It had greased paper drawn over the openings to admit the light, as well as a huge fireplace, puncheon floor, slab writing desks, and seats. In 1826-27 Samuel Sexton a widower, and having a double log house obtained a subscription and taught a session or two in a room of his dwelling. At this time he was living in New Hampton. In about 1830-31, the first school house was erected, it was just west of Mary Vicker's house (446 W. Main St.) this was used until 1836 when a frame building succeeded it and was located in Jefferson. On November 1, 1842, the council passed a resolution to let the citizens of Jeff use the Council House for a schoolhouse for 6 months when not in use by the council. In 1845 an Academy, which Jeremiah Olney was instrumental in organizing was built as a school. This institution was conducted by a stock company but failed to meet their expectations and sank into oblivion as an enterprise. In 1856 the building was bought by the School Board from Horace Putnam who bought it from Olney. In later years it was used by the African Methodist Church. This building was later bought by the Pentecostal Church which later built a new church on the same site. It is believed that about this time Jefferson was set aside as a separate school district and the 1856 building served until 1868 when a new brick building was built at a cost of \$17,000.00 including grounds and furniture. The building was a two-story 50' X 57' and had six rooms and a large 25' X 50' hall. This building was torn down in 1953 and in its place is now Garrette Park. The building was torn down by Etta Chenos in 1953 using a Jeep and hand tools. She salvaged enough bricks to build two houses.

The 'Old Brick Grade School' as many of us remember it, stood on a slight rise in the far end of the playground. As we look back many childhood memories center around this foreboding-looking construction with the outhouses out back. Your writer started the first grade in this building. I distinctly remember the outhouses out back, a little chilly in the winter. There was no running water. A pump sat outside and you could take your tin cup and get a drink. I can remember the large hall, sagging wooden steps with the tall handrails. I can shut my eyes and see once more in those small wooden initialed carved disks and looking back at us from behind the large wooden desk at the front of the room would be Miss Dessa McCoy, Mrs. Kell or one of the many faces that we recall from the past. The Blackboards were clear across the room with a little ledge for the erasers and chalk to sit on.

There was always a picture of George Washington and sometimes one of Abraham Lincoln. No doubt many of you can recall these scenes. Scenes that are a part of the past, but not the forgotten past, are only stored in our memories. The High School was built in 1911 and around 1952 an addition was added with others added in later years. This building was torn down in the early 2000s and a new school was erected on Lilly Chapel Rd.