

WEST JEFFERSON IN DAYS GONE BY

By Charlie Miller

Series 48

IDA GRASSEL: The following is an interview with Mrs. Ida Grassel taken on November 9, 1965. Mrs. Grassel lived on N. Center Street. She was the widow of the late George Grassel and was born on November 17, 1879, on the Middle Pike, the daughter of John and Hester Harbage.

“Charles Stickel lived in the Mantle House, which was on the corner of Main and Chester Streets. The building that was formerly on the site of the building which is currently the site of the Opera House (village Hall) was also called an Opera House and was better known as the G.A.R. Hall. (Grand Army of the Republic) It was somewhat smaller than the present building and had a bell that rang as a curfew, much like the present-day siren. Paddy Gillivan had the bell at one time. (The bell can be viewed at the Hurt-Battelle Library)

John Hoe bought the old Baptist Church which sat in the Middle of N. Center Street and later moved down to the site of Murray’s Elevator. (This building was used by Murray Lumber to store lumber, it later burned to the ground.)”

Mrs. Grassel’s mother worked at the American Hotel when it burned and was able to save her trunk. (The American Hotel sat on the current site of the Huntington Bank parking lot. A later story.)

“Fort Byron was on the lot newly occupied by the Fabric Shop, it was owned by T. D. Fellows. Bill Lyons is believed to have built the building and used it for a while as a Hotel. (This building was later the Royal Hotel on the current site of the parking lot of the Huntington Bank.)

Pat McCloskey owned the red brick house on South Street. He later married Hannah Riordan. (He later ran the Railroad House that her late husband Jerry had owned.)

James Peene’s elevator that burned was on West Street just south of the Railroad.”

J. M. Roberts: More reminiscences of John Roberts from the early days when the National Road was being built. -- Hugh McGloughlin and mother boarded hands that worked on the Pike. A man named James, always called “Lawyer,” lived on Markley Hill. He was a noted crook, but always managed to keep out of the penitentiary. He had a son, Tom James who had to serve five years in the Pen for stealing sheep. Tom James was a short, stout, thick-necked man. He stole sheep in the night in his neighborhood, drove them as far as he could toward the north, and stopped at daybreak and hid in the woods until night came when he would drive his flock on again. He was finally caught and sentenced to the Pen where he refused to work and swore he would suffer death before he would work. He was put into a pump or drown apparatus but he refused absolutely to work and came near being drowned. The warden sent a letter to his father who persuaded him to go to work. After his time expired the family moved out west.