

WEST JEFFERSON IN DAYS GONE BY

By Charlie Miller

Series 6

MOUND BUILDERS: About 900 A.D. a civilization called the Mound Builders or Gravel Kame People settled in Central Ohio. They obtained these names by burning their dead in mounds or gravel kames. One of the most important finds came in October of 1948 on the Oreleton Farms a few miles northwest of West Jefferson. Beginning in the southern part of this county, there is a chain of mounds extending to the northern limits although with no apparent connection in location or size. The largest mound in Ohio is located near Miamisburg, in Montgomery County. It originally measured 800 feet around the base and was over 80 feet in height.

There were also effigy or animal mounds. The most famous is the Serpent Mound located in Southern Ohio.

Many artifacts have been found in them, including mica from the Alleghenies, shells from the Gulf of Mexico and porphyry which is a reddish type of rock from Mexico.

These ancient people lived throughout the Ohio and Mississippi River valleys. The most interesting area of these people is found here in Ohio. The mounds have contained between one and 1,000 skeletons.

One of the closest of these mounds to West Jefferson is called the James Chase Hambleton Mound. It was found on the Hambleton property on the Roberts Road near the east side of Little Darby Creek. It is 55 feet in diameter and 6 feet, 8 inches high. An exploratory survey was done in the summer of 1964 by Dr. Raymond Baby of the Ohio State Museum. Eight burials were recovered from the mound, 5 were male and 3 were female. For the size of the mound there were few artifacts recovered. Gorgets, an ornament worn on the neck or breast. These were made of brown sandstone, red sandstone and limestone. Also found was a sandstone whetstone. A radiocarbon date of 271 A.D. was determined. These artifacts and skeletons appeared to be from the Adena culture.

The males were large rugged individuals, between 5'8" and 5'9". One female was 5'2" to 5'4" and between 45 to 50 years old.

Besides the Hambleton mound there are 4 mounds on Skunk Hill, some off of Roberts on the west side of Little Darby Creek.

The largest mound in Madison County is located on an elevated ridge overlooking the junction of the Little Darby Creek and Spring Fork. It is oval about 600 feet around and 25 feet high. During the pioneer days, the area around the mound was a favorite camping spot of the Indians. The Indians often returned to this spot after the pioneers had settled. Here it was in 1810 Tobias Bright shot and killed an Indian named Nicholas Monham. The act caused great excitement among the Indians and almost lead to further bloodshed.