

WEST JEFFERSON IN DAYS GONE BY

By Charlie Miller

Series 7

INDIANS: Indian reservations in Ohio? Yes, Long after the Mound Builders had disappeared, the modern Indian arrived. These may have been descendants, or may have had no connection at all with this ancient race. The ones around the West Jefferson were mainly the Shawnee who lived along the Scioto River and as far west as Clark County. One of the most famous was Tecumseh.

The Shawnees were mostly nomads, but did build some villages. There were also Wyandots who had some villages on the Scioto near Columbus. The Darby Creeks received their names from Darby, a Wyandot chief who lived near Plain City along Big Darby Creek.

By the Treaty of 1817, the Shawnees ceded their territory to the United States. In turn they were granted some small reservations. Among them was a tract 10 miles square with Wapakoneta as the center. A tract adjoining this one was 25 square miles set aside on Hog Creek, and one 48 square miles surrounding Lewistown. This one is in the vicinity of Indian Lake. By 1831, the Indians had ceded all reservations to the United States and moved to Kansas, some ended up in the Indian Territory (Oklahoma)

The geographical position of the territory comprising Madison County placed it in the direct route between the Indian towns on the Scioto River and those on the Miami and Mad Rivers. It therefore became one of the favorite hunting grounds of the Shawnees, Wyandots, Delawares, and the Mingo. In its forests and along its clear running streams, they pitched their tents. For generations the Indian wigwams were annually erected on the banks of Big Darby, Little Darby, Paint Creek, Oak Run and their tributaries.

It has been told that a Wyandot chief named Gararah, with a band of Indians, used to come annually from the reservation at Upper Sandusky on hunting expeditions to Madison County. These visits ceased about 1820.

Among the chiefs who frequented Madison County, none were so well known to the early settlers as Captain John, the Shawnee. According to Howe's History of Ohio, he was a man over six feet tall in height, strong and active, full of spirit and fond of frolic. In the War of 1812 he joined the American army and fought throughout the struggle.

Although many battles took place between the Indians and the White Man in Ohio, none took place in Madison County. The Shawnees in this area were of a peaceful nature.