

WEST JEFFERSON IN DAYS GONE BY

By Charlie Miller

Series 3

ABOUT 1825, there was a wolf den near the residence of A. R. Haynes, which was along the Blair Road near the creek behind the Pleasant Hill Cemetery. The animal made its usual visits south to the plains south of the town to catch sheep. A large pit was dug in the ground near his path, covered over with a board arranged to pivot, and bait suspended in the air. The animal scented it and became the desired victim. Rev. Isaac Jones, pastor of the Baptist Church, was called to the scene. A forked stick was procured and placed over the animal's neck. Rev. Jones had someone hold the stick keeping the wolf close to the ground, and he descended, chained and gagged the animal and took the wolf to John Mills' grist mill, (located on Darby Creek just south of the Dollar General store) where he was kept to fight dogs, for a long time. The wolf trap was thoughtlessly left open and subsequently a neighbor's cow became a victim.

Rev. Jones seems to have been given to hunting. In 1835 when game was becoming scarce, a large crowd assembled for a wolf-hunt, and such other animals as might be within their intended circle. Rev. Jones was appointed to climb a tree, and when the game was driven near him to do the shooting. As he was ascending the tree a Mr. Pitcher handed him his gun, and the hammer caught on Pitcher's sleeve, resulting of the firing of the gun, and the ball passed through Jones' wrist, crippling him for life. His attending physician was Jonathan Alder. The accident badly affected the hunt, but still a few wolves and deer were caught.

IN 1822-23 this county was visited with a terrible epidemic which struck down many of the hardy pioneers. There was scarcely a family in the area of the Darby Plains, the plains that lay between the Big and Little Darby Creeks, which death had not touched. All business transactions ceased, gloom brooded over the minds of people. Death reigned supreme. Even many of the people who were still able, left this part of the state. It has been computed that in what was then called the Southwest Settlement, one half of the population died from the sickness. Between Cuckery and Homer, there were 17 deaths, and one-fourth of the people of the Converse Settlement succumbed. This sickness was thought to be a form of malaria.