

# This Was Old Northfield . AUG 3. 56 . 1819

(Second in a series)

First settlers in the new Northfield township, many of whom had fought for a democratic way of life in the Revolution, wasted little time in setting up a local government.

By 1819 there were about twenty-five homesteaders in the township. The first election was held in May of that year, and just about all the qualified voters in the settlement wound up with township jobs.

These jobs included three trustees and a clerk, two Overseers of the Poor, two Fence Viewers, a township treasurer, four supervisors of highways, two constables. Despite the apparent need for two police officers, it was not until 1830 that voters saw fit to elect two justices of the peace.

In October of 1819, local candidates for county and state jobs were voted upon. Ten votes were cast for county commissioner, eight for state senator, two for representatives.

Northfield township at that time was a part of Portage County. Summit County was not to be created for another 21 years.

While the pioneers of Northfield gathered together infrequently in the role of electors, the number of settlers was increasing each year, and there was more social visiting, more trips to the various stores and mills scattered around the township.

The 20 years between 1814 and 1834 saw no less than four settlements within the boundaries of Northfield township. Each of these settlements had as many as ten or twelve families settled on homesteads, clustered within hailing distance.

One settlement had grown up around the area where Isaac Bacon, the first settler, had built his cabin. Another, to the east, was later to become Macedonia.

Two others, Brandywine at the falls of the creek, and Little York on the creek two miles east of the falls, both flourished and then almost faded during that 20-year period.

Although in 1800 there had been no settlers in Northfield, only four cabins in the promising little settlement at Cleveland, and the nearest postoffice was at Pittsburgh. — Brandywine by 1816 was threatening to outgrow Cleveland.

At the peak of Brandywine's boom, a sawmill was built in 1814 on the north bank of the falls, a grist mill a year later on the south bank. Also in 1815 was built a whiskey distillery. The following year a general store was opened. A wool carding mill was started in 1821, and in 1822 a postoffice was established at Brandywine. The postoffice was later moved north to what was called "The Center." A second general store was opened at Brandywine in 1844.

During the years that these many businesses were all operating at one time, they employed as many as 20 persons — making Brandywine an important factor in that remote backwoods country's economy.

Not the least important of these business enterprises was the distillery. Whiskey was an accepted medium of exchange, used extensively by drinkers and non-drinkers alike in business and trade. The Brandywine distillery disposed of 12 to 15 bushels of grain a day, produced 30 to 40 gallons of whiskey in the same period.

The distillery went out of business in 1830. The sawmill was operated until as late as 1851. Floodwaters took the woolen mill and part of the gristmill over the falls in 1843. The wool factory was not rebuilt, but the gristmill was repaired and operated for many years afterward.

The settlement at Little York, in the area of Highland rd. and County Highway 16, had less of a boom, and did not develop as did Brandywine. Biggest business was the sawmill built on the creek at Little York by Henry Post, in 1825.

At this mill site there was a heavy forest of whitewood, much in demand for construction of canal boats and lake vessels. A successor at the mill was George Leach, who built a heavier dam in the creek, operated two saws, and shipped vast quantities of oak, maple and whitewood lumber to Cleveland.

In its best years, Little York also boasted a blacksmith, a shoemaker, a tannery and a cartwright. These establishments were for the most part clustered along the creek on what are now the Melcher, Percy, Gililand and Esposito properties.