

DEFIANCE 100 YEARS AGO

Horseback Postmen Carry Powder and
Lead; Evans Brothers Control City
Business; Bomb Explodes in Store

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In my former article near the close I described two mail routes, one from Maumee to Ft. Wayne, and the other either by my mistake or your compositors I gave as from Defiance to Ft. Wayne, when it should have been Piqua, Miami county. Each was about 95 miles long, and while this matter is in my mind I will say that these mail carriers were known to everybody on the line of their routes, as they were not only mail carriers but express carriers as well and hailed with delight all along their trail as that was about all there was. They were very accommodating men, and in fact really what the mail carriers are in cities, they delivered and took the mail from every house.

Maumee To Ft. Wayne Afoot

The post-offices were a long way apart—as a rule from 15 to 20 miles, and when the mail was opened at an office, they stood by, and knowing every man on the line of their route, they took the mail in their pockets to distribute between that office and the next, and so with letters to be mailed.

John **Omans** carried the mail from Maumee City to Fort Wayne for a long while. At one time he told me he had carried it twelve years without missing a trip—sometimes carrying it on foot when impassable for a horse by reason of high water.

A man by the name of **Mansfield** carried it from Defiance to Piqua. I think he was an uncle to the **Mansfields** in Highland township. And so as express with all kinds of articles needed by families along the route, but boots and shoes and powder and lead were the most common articles they were required to transport.

\$1 Postage N. Y. to Defiance

I recollect one time Mr. Mansfield bringing a half dozen sickles from Piqua for a merchant here, with which to cut our large wheat crop. I did not intend to occupy so much space with this matter, but the contrast is as great between the mail facilities now and then as the difference in the price of postage. It would have cost a dollar then to have received from New York what you can get now for two cents.

To return to my recollection of the citizens of Defiance in 1834, the **Evans** family were the principal business men here. John **Evans** was a doctor with a very large practice. He was also Clerk of the Courts and Recorder of Williams County, and kept almost the only hotel here, on the corner of First and Jefferson streets, afterwards known as the Pavilion House, and long since burnt or torn down—the ground is now vacant and owned by Mr. **Squire**.

He also was a partner with his brother, Albert G. **Evans**, in the store kept in the building now occupied by Lake E. **Myers**, and probably did the largest business of any store in town. He was also quite a large land owner. He owned the **Krotz** farm at the mouth of Bean Creek, some 250 acres, and 140 acres afterward known as the Warren property, besides other lands in this vicinity. He finally went to Ft. Wayne and died there, and there is none of the family left in this vicinity.

Foreman **Evans**, another brother, had a store adjoining the hotel and did a good business, and owned quite a large body of land about Defiance and Independence, which lie finally disposed of mostly to Horace **Sessions**.

Boom At Independence

The three brothers, John, Foreman and Albert bought a farm of Benjamin **Widenhammer** at Independence about the time the canal was building, laid out a town and sold lots at fancy prices, some of which they got their pay for, but many were sold on long time with a small payment

down, and the balance they never got. They also had an interest in Evansport, out of which they made some money, also in New Rochester, once the county seat of Paulding County which once boasted of 2 hotels, 3 stores and some groceries. Now not a house remains, and there are but few men who know where the town was.

Foreman **Evans'** building was a two-story front with a one story rear, and his family occupied the rear part and over the store as a residence. He afterwards sold out his store and removed to Hillsborough, in Highland County, Ohio, where he died a great many years ago, leaving no children. His wife was a sister of Pierce **Evans** and died some time before he did.

Amos Only Attorney

Albert G. **Evans** and the doctor, John **Evans**, sold out their store of goods and when the doctor removed to Fort Wayne, Albert went to Troy, Miami County, Ohio, and married and engaged in the dry goods trade there, and is living there yet.

Amos **Evans**, another brother, was a lawyer, and being the only attorney here prior to the arrival of Horace **Sessions** was appointed Prosecuting Attorney, which office he held until the appointment of Wm. C. **Holgate** about 1837. He owned and lived in a two-story house where the **Flickinger** and **Lowe** stone front, stores are, and when the canal was let be opened it as a hotel and soon after sold it to same canal contractors. It was used as a boarding house and hotel for canal men until after the canal was built, when it was resold, another story added and it was used for a hotel for a number of years. It was finally torn down to make way for the Stone Front.

Amos Evans, after the sale of his property, removed to a small place called Hartford, where he died a great many years ago. He was called the black sheep in the flock by his brothers, because he was a Democrat and they and all their connections were Whigs.

Foreman **Evans** and Pierce were two of the Associate Judges, John **Evans** was Clerk and Recorder and Amos Evans was Prosecuting Attorney, so it would seem that the **Evans** family were a prominent factor in Defiance in those days.

Rinaldo **Evans** did a short time since, being the last of these families bearing the name anywhere in this vicinity.

Organizers of City

Benjamin **Leavell**, of Piqua, Miami Co., Ohio, had a store at the corner of First and Jefferson streets between First street and the Maumee River. He and Horatio G. **Phillips**, of Dayton, O., were the original proprietors of the town of Defiance, and owned considerable land adjoining to Curtis **Holgate**, father of our present townsman William C. **Holgate**, and soon after disposed of his goods and returned to Piqua, O.

An incident occurred in this store worth relating. An old bomb shell had been found in the river and laid kicking around the store for several years. George **Lantz** thought he would try it and see if it would go off. He lighted the fuse and it exploded making several holes through the building but doing no other damage.

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