



History of Eastern Jefferson County, WV: Volume 1. Early settlement to French - Indian War (History of Eastern Jefferson County, West Virginia)

William Theriault

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This history grew out of my curiosity about the area to which I had recently moved. The eastern section of Jefferson County between Shepherdstown and Harper's Ferry was sparsely settled in the early 1970's, and the Bakerton-Engle-Moler's Cross Roads area contained a general store, a couple of churches, and a few score houses surrounded by fertile farmland and orchards. However, evidence of a more prosperous era was everywhere to be seen. The countryside was dotted with substantial farmhouses, closed quarries, and other structures in various states of repair.

Conversations with old timers revealed that the area had indeed been prosperous. Their numerous anecdotes provided tantalizing glimpses of a village that was once more populous than Harper's Ferry and of industries that had vitalized the area for over 200 years. There was much here to interest the student of local history. However, the sobering words of an old history teacher came to mind: history is comprised of what our ancestors remembered to save or forgot to destroy.

Much of the past that is the subject of this book extends back beyond the memory of anyone now living, and I have used the historian's traditional documentary tools to piece this story together. However, many of the events that took place within our century were experienced by persons still alive people capable of describing their past with a richness and vitality rarely found in the earlier written records. For this reason, I have tried to use the more recent documentary information as a framework within which people can tell their own story.

During the preparation of this book in the 1980's, I saw the past being quietly destroyed around me. Limestone kilns and old buildings were dismantled and turned into barbecue pits, walks, and foundations for houses. Traces of iron ore mines were virtually obliterated. Bit by bit, our view into the past was becoming dimmer as the people who lived part of this history died. Soon the memories and the landmarks would be gone. The visitor's query, "Did anything ever happen here?" would be met with only a shrug. Our tenuous link with our past would be lost.

This history is an attempt to preserve a small piece of that past for the future.

This new edition is being released more than twenty-five years after its original publication. Except for a few minor corrections, the text follows closely that of the first edition. However, I have updated the maps and added numerous illustrations to help the reader gain a better understanding of eastern Jefferson County. All of the persons I interviewed for this study are now deceased. I have also included transcripts of my interviews with these residents in case you wish to delve deeper into their lives.

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