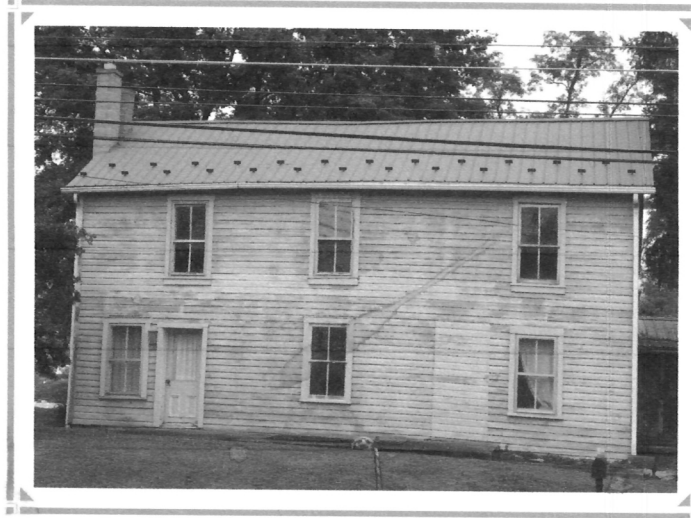


KISHACOQUILLAS VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

Fall 2017

Volume 1 Issue 2

MY STORY



There is something forlorn and mysterious about an old empty house. I am one of those empty houses and this is my story.

For settlers new to the Kishacoquillas Valley, log houses were the norm and are a symbol of humble origins. I am one of those log houses having been built in the 1800's.

I may be the oldest house still standing or at least one of the oldest houses in Belleville, Pennsylvania. I do not remember when I was built or who built me. I do know that in 1859, according to Deed Book MM, page 185, the lot of ground that I now sit on was owned by Sarah Taylor. When her property was put up for Sheriff sale it was purchased by Mr. Davis M. Coutner, Esq. and his wife Mary Ann of Lewistown, Pennsylvania.

On October 18, 1864, Mr. Coutner, Esq. and his wife sold this piece of land, containing 1/2 acre plus another lot containing 1/4 acre on which there was a log house, stable and other improvements to Rebecca Rodgers. The property measured 85 feet wide and 140 feet deep and was listed as located on the Great Road leading from Belleville to Allensville. My neighbor on the West is listed as Seneca W. Bennett and on the East is the lot of Joseph Hoar and Henry S. McNabb. Also, located on their lot was a Blacksmith shop but it was not included in the sale. I was sold for \$600.00.

In the 1880's, when Rebecca Rodgers passed away, she left her property to her daughter, Mary Rodgers. Later in her life, Mary married Charles Duslang. Upon his death that parcel of land became the sole property of Mary (Rodgers) Duslang. Unable to write she signed the document with an X.

On December 30, 1918, she sold her property to Joseph S. Wareman of Lewistown, Pennsylvania. This property of which I am part of, exchanged owners six more times from 1958 to 1984.

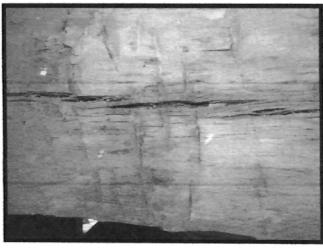
On August 27, 1984, according to Deed Book 22, page 631, I was sold to Robert W. and JoAnn M. Goss-Gardner by Naomi M. Zook. I was listed as a green unoccupied two and one-half story green frame and log dwelling house. My property measurements remained the same. During this transaction I am listed as the former property of the Presbyterian Church. To the North was my neighbor James W. Fleming, on the East was Dorothy Bennett, and on the West was Harry C. and Laura Moore.

I sure wish I could tell you who originally built me but I just can't recall. What I can share is that I was built by hand with tools of that era. These tools would have included: a cross cut saw, a peavey (a heavy wooden lever with a pointed tip and hinged hook near the end and used by lumber men in handling and rolling logs into position), an adze (an axe like tool for dressing wood), a hand drill and a broad axe. Of all of these tools the broad ax was the most important to own at that time. It was used to smooth and fit notches, shape the logs among other tasks.

The logs used to build me most likely came from Standing Stone Mountain. In most cases, they would have been left to cure for two years. If I were built by just one person, it would have taken approximately eight weeks from start to finish.

(continued on page 3)

(continued from page 1)



My logs are all hand hewn and quite large and the marks left by the striking of the axe are still quite visible. I am built on a strong foundation of large limestone rocks with dirt packed between the stones to give me strength to anchor my

floors.

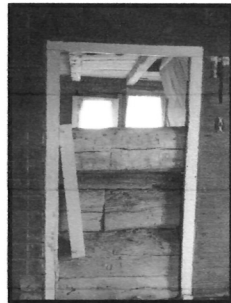
My exterior actually has three layers. My inner most layer is logs that are laid horizontal, the next layer, the logs were laid vertical and the exposed layer that we see today is framed wood and painted green. My front door faces South, so the sun could help warm and light my interior.

When the logs were in place, chinking (filling the cracks between the logs) was done with mud, moss or sticks squeezed between the logs to keep out insects, var-mints, rain and snow.

My roof is purlin and rafter construction. Snow-birds, which are metal ornamental pieces, were mounted on the roof's exterior to keep snow from sliding off in big chunks and damaging anything below.

I have a cellar which is really a room dug deep in the ground. In early times it was referred to as a pantry (a place for food storage). It is cool in the summer and yet warm enough to be above freezing in the winter.

When I was first built, I had only one main room downstairs and two rooms upstairs. Some of the logs visible in my main living quarters measure twelve inches wide. My smooth floor boards are nine and one-half inches wide. The antique hardware used on the doors throughout the house also date me.

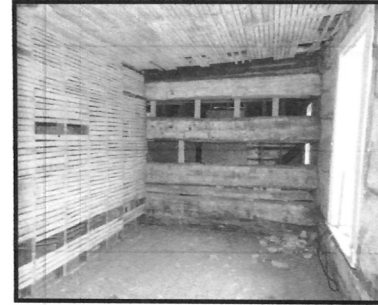


I would have had a stone fireplace at one end of my room but I just can't remember where it was located.

The stairway to the sleeping quarters has been gutted. On the staircase, the exposed wall shows the lath, or narrow strips of wood nailed horizontally across the wall studs. Horsehair or a similar material would have been stuffed between the strips to help insulate the walls.



My upstairs is now gutted and that makes it easy to see the square head nails that were used in the original construction.



My attic stretches the length of the house. There are nine narrow steps leading up to the attic. The small windows at either end do not allow much light to enter making it gloomy even on a bright sunny day.

When the Gardners moved out, I stood empty for a number of years. I really minded the quiet and emptiness. Well, that was until I noticed a spider had spun a beautiful web on my front window. What a great view she has when she crawls up to sit on the window sill. From there she gets a perfect view of the West Kishacoquillas Presbyterian Church, located on the other side of road that is now, State Route 655.



Remarkably, I have survived for around one hundred and fifty three years. During that time I have seen many families come and go and each family changed me in some way. The biggest change came when someone covered my logs with a frame façade and added an addition or two. It was then painted green and remains that color today.

For awhile, there was a large "For Sale" sign in my front yard and I wasn't sure what would happen to me. My future looked glum and then one day it happened. The "For Sale" came down and I learned that I was purchased by Mr. John Zook.

Recently, I over heard Mr. Zook talking and it looks like I may get a total make over and it will make me look like my old self again.

As my new owner, he will need to keep in mind this old saying, "When you buy a home, you not only buy the property, you also buy a piece of its history."



I am looking forward to a new beginning. My doors will once again be ready to welcome new faces.

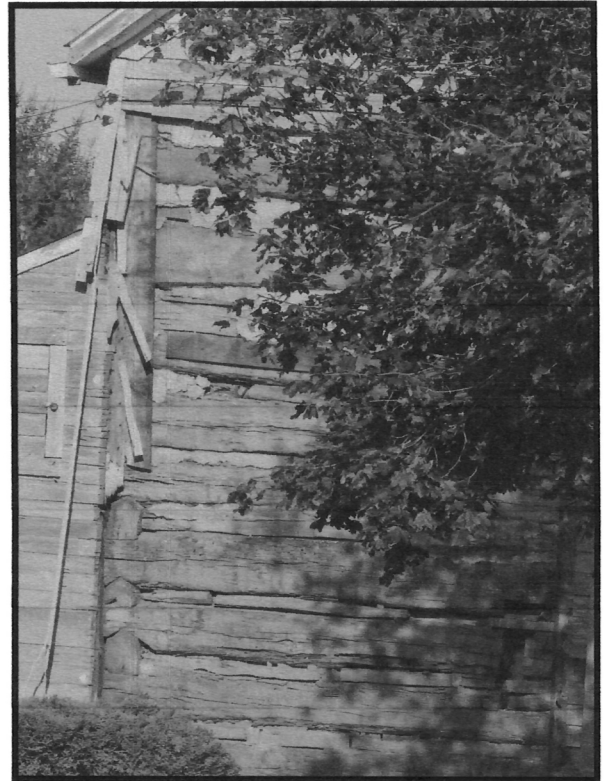


(continued on page 4)

(continued from page 3)

My Story, Update!

Mr. Zook has already begun to restore me. As you can see in the first picture a glimpse into what my vertical logs look like. In the larger picture, to the right, he tore off the framed siding and it is now easy to see my original horizontal logs.



Information researched and article written by Mary Ann Stratton

I have always been fascinated by old houses and this one really peaked my interest so I felt it worth sharing.



A TWO HARNESS COUNTER-LOOM

This two harness counter-balance rug loom was recently donated by the Huntingdon County Historical Society to our Society.

Its basic purpose is to hold the warp threads under tension to facilitate the interweaving. In earlier times it was a winter activity and was used primarily by men.

When we received this loom it was not in working condition. A huge thank you goes to Bart Ewing of Reedsville and Dan Wilson of Milroy for putting it back in good working order.

We are planning on holding a demonstration of how it works at our Annual Meeting. The Annual Meeting is held the last Monday in March.

Closer to the time, more information about this event will be posted in the local newspapers.