

Reflections of Past Years



by Ellen Rogers

The rambling reminiscences of Ellen's early childhood is dedicated to the people of these hills in hope that through it, some portion of their wisdom, ingenuity and individuality may "rub off" and remain in the memory of their offspring.

It is somehow rewarding or reassuring to know that even now, in our time, there are those left from an age which has so much to teach us. First, let me

confess I am a poor writer, but I consider our early days as memorable. This article is merely meant for a memorial to our heritage. Our youth should not be allowed to grow up without a devoirs knowledge of the hardships our forefathers faced and partially conquered, their strong devotion for freedom and worship and their sincere fear of God.

There are days and especially long sleepless nights when you are quiet and alone and have "gobs" of time to go back and live seventy years ago; recalling youth, how we lived, worked, played and managed to survive many hardships. Being one of the nine children born to John Witt Rogers and Mary Manerva (Rogers) Rogers, I had the opportunity to learn many things about my family as well as about each one of my parents' family. I have spent many nights in the early log homes. I've slept on Grandpa's carded bed. I've even rested in a trundle bed. I have seen the different things in this article made. I've enjoyed a shuck bed. The best food I ever tasted came from a Dutch oven skillet (ham and hot-cakes with red-eye gravy). I saw the red coals underneath and also on top of the lid. Grandma's fall beans cooked down low in a three-legged, black pot surpasses all description, and Mama could take a little of 'this and that' and make the greatest, most tasteful dishes of food you could

ever hope to have or eat. I think I must have been born in a family that liked log houses or else lived in them until they wanted a change -- my great, great grandparents, my great grandparents, my grandparents on both sides, my parents (from 1904 to 1906), Uncle Ike, Uncle Bill, Uncle Doug, Uncle Shelt, Uncle Lee, Uncle Sid, Uncle Jesse, Uncle Charles, Aunt Lizzie, Aunt Lou, Aunt Ellen, Uncle A.F., Uncle J.B., Uncle Isaac, Aunt Mag, and I could name many, yes, many more.

All of these homes are now gone. The remains are very scarce. Often, the old chimney or foundation is all that can be found. But the site is still precious to view. So is the sites of our log church and log school house, too.

Let's try to see them arriving in these rugged hills, covered by a bountiful growth of virgin timber, vines, fowls, wild animals and perhaps a few intruding Indians lurking here and there.

Calling upon God for aid and protection, they sought to find a secure or safe hiding place for their families until a log cabin could be built for their comfort and safety. However, the role that wood played in the settling of the Appalachian area cannot be over emphasized. Wood is now often a luxury, but then it was an absolute necessity for centuries. It provided shelter for people and animals, fire for warmth and cooking, materials for wagons, tools and furniture, household utensils, useful toys and other things. They built a solid rock foundation run-

ning the length and width of their projected house. Then they chose two logs for sills on which the "sleepers" were laid. The sills run along the longest walls of the building. The sills have all been hewed on all four sides until they measure square. If the house is over twenty feet wide, they'd use a middle sill or add a "dog trot" between the two rooms. They used saddle or dovetail notches for the corners, both for intricacy and beauty as well as pulling each wall toward the inside and locking it in place and making it impossible for one of the wall logs to "kick out" or roll -- no pins being necessary.

Our ancestors may have brought with them but a few tools, but they did bring a vast amount of ingenuity. They had to find ways to connect wood into most of what they needed for survival. Many of the tools used for working in wood were themselves made out of wood, such as handles for most of their tools, a mallet, maul, wooden wedges or "gluts" and a shaving horse.

The log cabin was once the only form of building in this area, but due to modern techniques, the fine art of building a genuine log cabin is all but lost in the past. However, the "art" is appearing again but mostly as "show" places. A few are trying to restore some of our ancient buildings or the remains of them.

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