A HOME NOT FORGOTTEN

In the 1840’s Mrs. Josephine Nihiser’s great-grandfather, Zephiniaht Atteberry, built his homestead just west of LaPlata, Missouri. The home has been recently torn down by Mike Ferrel, who plans to rebuild the house just west of Kirkville.

“I felt a little sad to hear that my old house was being moved away from where it was built, and had stood for so many years. I keep reminding myself that things never remain the same. I am glad it is being preserved, and would like to see it when it is finished,” Mrs. Nihiser, a life-long resident of LaPlata, wrote to a relative about her childhood home. The house was built by her grandfather, Zephiniaht Ellis Atteberry, before the Civil War. Mr. Atteberry purchased 640 acres of land for five dollars per acre. He chose the location because the land was fairly cleared, close to water, and suitable for farming.

Zephiniaht Atteberry came to Missouri in the 1840’s from Barren County, Kentucky. He built the house with hand-cut logs and wooden nails. In viewing the home for our story, we saw how large the logs were. One could barely put his arms around them. Each log was approximately 12 inches by 24 inches by 12 to 14 feet long and very heavy to lift. The house was sturdy and built to last. Mrs. Nihiser explained, “While relatives were visiting, a bad storm began brewing. They were trying to find a place to get shelter from the storm, but the storm came too fast so they decided to wait out the storm at the old house, and through the whole storm, the house never shook once.”

The original house had four rooms: two bedrooms upstairs, a kitchen and dining room downstairs. Mrs. Nihiser described, “In the dining room there was a place where the logs were cut out and a medicine cabinet placed into the wall.” In those days the beds were made of straw ticks covered with a

After the siding was removed, you could see the original structure built by Zephiniaht Atteberry in the 1840’s.
feather mattress. There was an open porch across the back of the house, which was later closed in with a frame and made into three rooms: a bedroom, kitchen, and a dining room. About ten years after the Civil War, siding was added to the house which gave it a more “modern” look.

There was a closet in the back stairwell in which Mr. Atteberry hid his money in a fruit jar. “When Grandpa Atteberry and his family went to church, a bunch of Confederate soldiers came into the house and turned everything topsy-turvy. They didn’t find the money, but they did manage to take Grandpa’s overcoat,” Mrs. Nihiser said.

“I can remember as kids our excitement mainly consisted of playing ball, can’t remember the exact name of the game, but it had two bases and you had to hit the ball and then run to one base and back again to score,” recalled Mrs. Nihiser. She added, “We had to walk over a mile and half to get to school. The schools were three miles apart. Schools didn’t have the classes we do now either; the main objective in school was

This cedar tree was planted by Zephinia Atteberry in the 1840’s.

Right: A back view of the original structure built by Zephinia Atteberry.
to learn the ABC’s and how to count. When children were bad, they didn’t stand in the corner or stay in after class, they got a good whippin’ from the school master. I can also remember paying ten cents for a loaf of bread, and every now and again going to a movie for a dime.”

The Atteberry family planted white pine trees and a spruce tree on the west side of the house. In the southeast corner they planted two Scotch pines, but most of the trees died during the dry years from 1934 to 1936; however, one cedar tree stands today. There was a rose bush planted in front of the parlor door by Mrs. Nihiser’s great-grandmother over 100 years ago. Before the house was torn down, Gary Nihiser, Mrs. Nihiser’s son, moved part of the bush to his home in Exline, Missouri, and the remainder to Mrs. Nihiser’s new home in Green Castle. “The rose bush was in full bloom last

Top: The hand in the picture is for comparison, showing how large the logs are. Middle: A pair of old, wire-rim glasses were found inside the house when it was disassembled by Mike Ferrel. Bottom: Mrs. Nihiser attended a one-room school in LaPlata, Missouri. She is shown (second row, sixth from the left) in this 1907 class portrait of the White School.
year," said Mrs. Nihiser.

Although Mrs. Nihiser's family had lived in the house for almost 100 years, the last few years the house had been rented. Mike Ferrel of Kirksville recently purchased the home. He has disassembled the house and has plans to rebuild it. Mr. Ferrel currently has the house stored at his farm, just outside of Novinger. Each log has been numbered so the house can be rebuilt as it stood so many years before. Mrs. Nihiser's childhood home, which has gone through five generations of her family, shall be preserved and not forgotten.

Susanna Prudence, daughter of Zephiniah Atteberry, lived in this house until she married John Plemons at age 16.

The logs from the house are stacked in sections and numbered to aid in reconstructing the home.

The spiral staircase, resting on the logs, is one of the original stairways from the house.

This wooden nail was used in the construction of the Atteberry home.