It Seems Like Yesterday

Ephriam Imbler was born in Fairfield, Iowa, on July 19, 1845, the son of Daniel and Saloma (William) Imbler. When he was 12 years old, his parents moved to Knox County, Missouri. In 1861, at the age of 16, Ephriam joined Company F, Third Missouri Calvary, and saw much hard service in Louisiana and Arkansas during the course of the Civil War. Afterward, he returned to Missouri and married Anna E. Murray.

In 1882 Ephriam and Anna and their five children settled in Adair County, Missouri, on 360 acres east of Kirksville. This land had been granted by the government in 1855 to John Thomas Imbler, a relative of Ephriam’s. Here their sixth child, Thomas, was born.

When Ephriam and Anna moved to the farm they lived in a log cabin which was on the property. Their son, Thomas, told Mr. Vernon Noe, a long-time neighbor and friend, the level of snow on the inside of the cabin in the winter was the same as the snow on the ground outside. Therefore, in the winter months, they lived on the second floor. They built the house and barn later around 1888. The frame of the house and barn were of white oak. This was of virgin timber from the area and contained no nails. It was pegged and grooved, instead. The lumber was bought from Frank Mason who lived on the land now known as the Still Meadows farm. The barn is a three level structure and was a very prestigious building. The house and barn are still in excellent condition today.

The crooked crossroad west of the Imbler property is a result of the courthouse records being burned in the fire of 1882. The south end of the road to Radical Ridge was already in place. There was a problem about the north end and it never did join in a straight line with the south end due to loss of records and disagreements.

The family earned their living by farming and from the apple, pear, and cherry orchard. It was known as Imbler’s Orchard and was especially known for the pears. When Ephriam died in 1901, Anna and the children carried on. They sold most of the fruit locally. At that time they had a new Ford truck and took a load of fruit to town every week during the season. Mr. Tom Imbler got rid of all but a few apple and pear trees when the orchard was about 75 years old. Mr. Noe said he remembered when Mr. Imbler took the orchard out he said, “It’s been here 75 years, that’s long enough!”

Tom’s mother, Anna, was a very feisty person. Mrs. Noe, one of Tom’s close friends, put it best saying, “She was a true pioneer type.” She also recalled that Anna would keep a rifle at the back door and use it to shoot rabbits in the orchard. She had her own horse and buggy and she would hitch them up by herself. She also went to town alone which was unusual in that day for a woman. Mr. Noe said, “Anna Imbler was very independent. She used to say that she didn’t need anyone to do anything for her.” Mrs. Imbler planted shrubs and flowers around the house in the late 1800s. Some of these plants are still alive today. The white shrub rose at the back porch today was planted by her. It is unusual because it only has a few petals.

By Laura Magruder

Anna Imbler planted the great maple tree on the west side of the house.
The three-story barn was built in 1888 and is still in good shape today.

Two pillars at the driveway present the Imbler name to all who pass through.

per bud. She planted the day lilies on the bank by the road to keep it from eroding, when the road was built. These are still alive today, but during the last three years have decreased in number because of close mowing.

Thomas, the youngest son, never married and lived on the Imbler property all but two of his 99 years. Those two years he went to the University of Missouri in Columbia. Young Tom went to the East Elm Grove county school east of Kirksville. He also graduated from the Normal School and donated his college notes to the library. These notes are in the Missouriana Room at Northeast Missouri State University. After attending the University of Columbia he returned to the farm and became a teacher at the Fairview School which was located four miles east of Kirkville on Highway 11. He later taught at Radical Ridge School which is now the living room of the Dr. Harry Still residence, three miles east of Kirkville on Highway 6.

Thomas Imbler also farmed, raised cattle and hogs, and worked the orchard. He was “big” in hogs. Mr. Imbler was also a surveyor for the government and helped to plot out the land in this area.

The style and structure of the house dates back to the 1840s. The staircase is typical of the style of that day, having a newel post at the base of the stairwell, and a landing about halfway, from which the stairs divide and go on up in separate directions. The windows and doors are grooved and each top corner has a circular medallion insert.

During the 1840s, homes were not built with fireplaces. Instead heating stoves were used. The flues to the stoves came from the interior walls, and when electric heat became prevalent the flues were covered with decorative plates or pictures to hide the openings for the pipes in the walls.

Across the floor of every room was a full size rug that was loom sewn. Each rug was made in pieces, then sewn together to fit the size of the room.

A china cabinet and panels in all the cupboard doors in the kitchen were styled with diagonal panels, a contemporary style of the day. Each cupboard had solid brass pulls with carvings that slightly resembled Japanese style.

The wall in the kitchen was fire proofed by building it in brick. The kitchen was actually a part of the house, which was not as common during the 1840s. All brick used during this period for inside walls was softer, lighter and susceptible to wear and tear. Therefore, all interior brick was covered with plaster to protect the brick from eroding due to changes in the weather.

Looking at the house and land today, one can only imagine the breathtaking beauty and splendor of its earlier days. It was well built and structurally sound. The home is excellently maintained and even now, it holds a special distinction to all who go near it. The home’s elegance has been carried forward through the years with grace, as Mr. Vernon Noe put it, “It seems like yesterday.”

The ramp on the west side of the barn led to the storage for the Imbler’s horse and buggy.