

Houser Home Built In 1803

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Six Years Required For Stonecutting

By ELIZABETH REED

For nearly a century and a half the stone house on the King's Mountain National Park grounds has stood firm and strong.

And to keep the record straight its sturdy builders, Henry Houser and his wife, Jane (Pinky) Houser had engraved over the massive lintel stone "Henry and Jane Houser—1803"—the date of the completion of the home.

Six long years of stonecutting and fitting were required to build the house standing today as a monument to two of the sturdy pioneers who first settled upper Yorkville district.

The massive stones were quarried near the house and in former days heavy stones also formed a walkway, a rock wall to the back of the house and the preliminary construction of a spring house.

Henry Houser lived only two or three years after the completion of the mansion of the day and died at the age of 36.

But Mrs. Houser, known to the countryside as Aunt "Pinky" lived to be past 85 and well within the memory of her great grandson, A. W. Love, well-known business man of King's Creek. She was independent and drove her own buggy when she wished to travel.

Mr. Love remembers his great grandmother Houser as a slight old lady with pleasing manners, who managed the 3,200 acre plantation with skill and ease. (The plantation covered 8,200 acres at the time of Henry Houser's death but his widow sold portions of it in the years following.)

As a little boy Mr. Love remembers the old house and eating pea-fowl meat. (Who else has eaten such meat?) He recalls that the meat was delicious and tasted like partridge except that there was more of it. He also recalls that his great grandmother was a wonderful cook who delighted in fixing the foods that her small great grandson liked.

Mr. Love remembers the day of his great grandmother's death and the details of her burial. She had been ill only a day or so, but against such an emergency she had heavy walnut boards curing in the barn loft.

When Mrs. Houser had breathed her last, the four Wells brothers, Mark, Wylie, Billy and Gabe, accomplished millwrights and neighbors were called in. They took the seasoned walnut boards and all day they labored at making one of the finest coffins ever seen in these parts. When the two inch boards



SHOWN ABOVE is the two-story house built of native stone in the six years from 1797 to 1803 by John Henry and Jane (Pinky) Houser. (Herald Staff Photo).

had been nailed and mortised the exterior was rubbed with a piece of glass until it shone, then varnished. At four o'clock in the afternoon the job was done. Grandmother Houser was placed in the casket and she was buried near the house by the side of her husband.

The little great grandson, with wide open eyes stood by as the work of making the casket was accomplished and as the body was buried. Today he remembers the event as all of us remember certain events of our youth better than those of later years.

Mrs. Houser had erected a tomb to the grave of her husband but no tomb stands today to say where one of the patriarchs of the county lies buried.

The Housers were of sturdy Dutch extraction who came to Yorkville district by way of Pennsylvania.

Henry and Jane Houser were the parents of four children, Robinson Houser, Sara Houser who married a Henry and became the grandmother of A. W. Love, J. R. Love and Mrs. N. J. Smith; Jane Houser Goforth who reared a large family and Fay Houser who married William Wilson of Bullock Creek.

At Aunt Jane's death about 1881 the house was sold. Mr. Love has lost sight of the various owners but at one time it was owned by James Jenkins. Later it became the property of the Merchants and Planters Bank of Gaffney and about 1935 with hundreds of acres of surrounding land the house became the property of the King's Mountain National Park area. For many years Tom Morris rented the house and lived in it.

The House

Symmetrical at the front with three windows upstairs balancing the door and two windows downstairs, the house must have been a landmark in the community from the day it was built even as it is at the present.

The window and door frames were of solid walnut and the chimneys ascended inside the walls. The winding stairs went up from one of the front rooms. In the early days a kitchen stood apart from the house. All vestige of the out-buildings and the kitchen have disappeared as neighbors from far and near have "borrowed" the useful stones for their own building.

A few pieces of the original house furnishings are left. Mrs. William Faulkner owns the spinning wheel for the making of thread from flax and Mr. Love remembers that an ancient churn that had belonged to Aunt Jane was sold at her sale as was a heavy loom.

A few years ago the National Park Commission, seeing that vandals were slowly but surely taking the old house away stone by stone and board by board, walled up the doors and windows. The home stands too far from the main offices of the National park to receive the oversight that it should have.

James and J. B. Hambright of Clover have assisted Mr. Love in furnishing information for this story.

(This is one of a series of articles on old York County homes and families. Another will follow next week).