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1815 Log House: Interpretive Manual

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Interpretive Manual

Types of House Museums

It is important to understand the different types of house museums and their purposes before we offer information about our own house museum. There are three basic types of house museums:

Documentary
Representative
Decorative

Each type has its purpose and distinct interpretive thrust.

The Documentary house museum, as its name implies, is based on documentary evidence that is germane to a particular house and its inhabitants. *Monticello* is a good example of a documentary house museum. As the home of Thomas Jefferson, plans and designs, furniture and account books, letters and drawings provide the information with which that building and its extensive grounds are restored, furnished and interpreted. Based on proprietary documents, *Monticello* presents colors, objects, surfaces, landscape ...whatever... documented facts about how that particular property looked at a given time which helps create a complete picture of the individual who lived there…Simply put, the documentary house museum documents the life of a specific individual or family.

The Representative house museum, as its name implies, has a broader scope to its interpretation. Still based on documents, this type of house museum represents what was common for a region or area, instead of being particular to one person or family. A good example is *Magnolia Mound Plantation* in Baton Rouge. Few documents survive for the duPlantier family who built the house.

There are no inventories, diaries, journals, wills, letters, or account books from the duPlantier family; no family documents. In a representative museum documents from **many** plantations in the region are used to develop a **typical** inventory, **typical** room designations, and **typical** furnishings for Creole Louisiana. Certainly the few documents that exist particular to the duPlantier's were used, plus the historic colors, wall finishes, door finishes, etc. to create the restored space.

A **representative museum** is a compilation of features from many similar properties in a region, brought together to present a typical house for that specific area or region. The builder and his family are important only in that they also represent life in the region at the time. This is often the most difficult type of house museum for visitors, guides, and interpretive staff to grasp as one continually wants to make the house documentary....seeking out one more shred of information about the family or the builder, when this is only peripherally important.

The Decorative Arts house museum basically exists to show off pretty objects in period rooms. *Winterthur*, or *Bayou Bend* are good examples. Both were built as homes, but exist only to show rooms **decorated** in the height of fashion, displaying the best-of-the-best for a given period. The people who built the original houses, from which the rooms on display were taken, are unimportant. The original furnishings from a particular house are not wanted. The best room from, say colonial Newport, is filled with the best furniture made in colonial Newport, and that is the purpose of this type of museum. Any regional context is completely centered on decorative arts style, not on social customs or folkways. The museum exists to show decorative arts within an architectural setting.

Our House Museum

Having very little information about the Felts family, it is

impossible to present our museum as the **documentary** *Felts House.* A much more realistic interpretive goal is as a **representative** *1815 Log House.* We have used what little bits of information we have about the Felts family, and the rest of our interpretation is taken from the letters, journals, inventories, objects, or other documents from their neighbors. The one neighbor we did not use was the South Union shaker community, since there was a rift between them and the Felts family.

As a **Representative House Museum**, we use documents from all over Logan County, and perhaps surrounding counties. We find out what was typical for the region. We compare relative wealth with relative wealth so as not to be confusing these interiors with those of a less wealthy family. We represent life in South Central Kentucky during the period of interpretation, a life that was enjoyed by the Felts' as well as some of their neighbors.

For instance, the 1815 log house is currently being painted, a job that would have been an annual chore for a wealthy family.

Period of Interpretation, or Cut-Off Date.

A cut-off date sets the time period to be interpreted, directs the restoration work to be done, and establishes the period of greatest significance for the property. Establishing the period of greatest significance is the first step in creating a restoration plan.

Let's say we have a small house, built in 1820, and lived in by nobody important. This house however was used by Lincoln when he was writing the Gettysburg Address. After the Civil War the boring family moved back in for the next 100 years. What do you think the period of greatest significance would be? Of course, it is the visit by Lincoln that makes this house worth saving and restoring. In that case we would choose 1863 as our cut off date. That means we try to make the house look as it did in 1863.

Anything earlier in the house is acceptable, anything later than that is out of keeping with our 'Lincoln's Visit' interpretation.

Selecting a cut-off date is one of the most important aspects of creating a house museum; it defines the program (restoration, furnishing, interpretation). It establishes what gets restored, and what gets removed. It establishes what furniture one seeks and which pieces will not be kept. It establishes which wall colors will be used, which floor coverings are appropriate, and what window hangings go with the period. It determines what story we tell to the public.

If we wanted to interpret the entire length of occupancy of the *Felts House*, we would choose a cut-off date of 1960, when the last Felts descendant left the house. We would have saved the building as it looked in 1960, leaving a later kitchen wing, leaving the siding, leaving the steps, keeping it exactly as it looked when the last family member moved out. Instead, a date of 1830 was chosen, in 1980, for reasons that are unclear, and a broad interpretation of folk life was put in place, again, simply because there was not a clear purpose to having the building on campus.

What is the most important feature of our house? Why was it saved and moved here? Is it due to the long residence of one family?.... No! Then that bit of information does not need to figure into our interpretation. Was it saved because the family who lived here was very prominent in the Civil War, or in local politics? No! Was it because of the abundance of folk culture displayed in the building?...NO!

The house was saved because it was a well preserved, large, early log house. Its most significant feature is its architecture, its age and state of preservation. This, then, should be the pivot for our interpretation. Our period of greatest significance, our cut-off date for restoration, should center on the most important feature, which

is the period of construction.

We have no firm date for the construction of the house; very few houses can claim an exact date for construction. We could easily settle for circa 1810, when the census shows fifteen people living in the Felts household. But those 15 people might have been crowded into an earlier one room log cabin. We might claim 1815, as a more reasonable date for construction; that has been the date accepted up until now. Others would claim a later date.

Family stories (which most often are embellished over the years but commonly are hung on a fact or two) suggest that the family first lived in a cave. The cave later served as the spring house, when the family built a small one room cabin. That smaller cabin likely became a detached kitchen when they built the big dog-trot house. Since ours is a representative museum, it makes little difference what the Felts family did or did not do. The limited information on the Felts family only adds to the general understanding of what was common or typical for the region.

Typically, a man would head out to the frontier and build a house and establish a farm before bringing the rest of his family to join him. Early settlers might find a cave to live in until they could build a house, others took over the log buildings built by the native population. Once a settler was established, having built a house and started a farm, he sent for his family. When they were all living in their new frontier home, plans might be made for a larger, more comfortable house to be built.

Indeed, a large log house was the standard of living for the wealthiest families of rural Logan County in 1815. Russellville was the largest town between Louisville and Nashville with a number of large, stylish brick houses, shops and factories. Log construction was still the common construction method out in the county. At the conclusion of the war of 1812, there was a great

economic upswing: just the time to be building a big house. It is reasonable, based on the economy, to settle on 1815 for the construction date, and our interpretation.

Our log house is representative of the rural upper class of Logan County in the early 19th century.

Our interpretive period is 1815-1820.

During the restoration 25 years ago, details like a much later hole for a stove pipe were preserved, which speaks to a different time period, a different lifestyle, and an interpretive plan that was never carried out. Sliding wooden locks were put on new doors which is more about Disneyland than Logan County.

Currently our interiors represent the 1830s, or later, not an important period for this house.

For many years our log house was not thought of as a house museum of a particular period, but more as a cabinet of folkways, mixing anything from the past together. Yet, as often happens, the desire to be documentary keeps getting in the way. Also a desire to talk about frontier life keeps surfacing, and our house becomes a mish-mash of 'old timey' stuff, not far removed from a Cracker Barrel gift shop.

We will be reinterpreting our house museum as a representative place, still a place to observe the folkways of the past, keeping the time period in mind, and also a place where something can be learned about lifestyles of the past.

What constitutes the Frontier??

Often, when someone is confronted with a log building, they

immediately think.... “frontier”....when that may not actually be the case. Log cabins still exist in the Philadelphia area from the 1650s…they were built in the “frontier”….but log cabins were still being built outside of Philadelphia 200 years later.... when it was definitely NOT the frontier. The construction method is only one feature that establishes the economy in which a structure is built.

What does the term ‘frontier’ mean? Frontier means territory or area being opened up, prepared for settlement on the edge of uncharted wilderness. It is the line between settled and unsettled, between human manipulation of the landscape and untamed natural landscape. Frontier is a place that is lived in, but not yet civilized.

Explorers discover new frontiers. Pioneers move in and begin taming the wilderness...they built crude shelter... they clear the land... they plant crops and began to create an economy of trade and barter. Settlers come next, people who want to recreate the comforts of the world they left behind… they bring civilization. At this point it is no longer the frontier. Soon the settled area has shops and stores which offer not only everyday goods, but luxury items. The frontier is gone.

An historian looks at facts, an antiquarian recalls tales and quaint stories. I’ve heard people quip that this part of Kentucky was still the frontier well into the late 1800s…that is the antiquarian talking. By any measure of goods and services available to local residents, the frontier was long gone, in Logan County at least, by 1810.

Kentucky was the wilderness in the 1750s when the early explorers came through. It was the frontier in the 1770s when pioneers moved here and began building forts. Settlers came next and made towns, and brought goods and products for sale. By 1792 Kentucky became a state, which implies that it was settled, had laws, and functioned like a civilized society. The very act of creating a state, suggests that civilization has been established.

Simply because Kentucky becomes a state, does not mean that every part of it is completely settled and civilized. There was an established government and established towns, but there were some remote areas which still required improvement. Russellville isn‘t founded until 1794, for several years after that they are paying hunters a bounty for bringing in wolf scalps….sounds like frontier to me…but very soon, within ten years, residents could by silks and velvets, and sit on decorative chairs made in the latest style.

The Cumberland Gap, by which the first explorers and pioneers arrived in Kentucky, was narrow and wagons could not move through the pass. Early settlers could not bring tables and chairs and other large objects with them, so they made do with the materials at hand. By 1780, however, the Gap had been widened to allow wagon travel, and suddenly goods for sale, trade, or barter were coming into Kentucky.

There was also the Ohio River, which brought pioneers, settlers and goods to Kentucky. Goods traveled down river easily, and civilized culture came much earlier to those parts of the state connected by water to the Ohio.

Pioneers and settlers also came by way of the Cumberland River... this was much more complicated than using the Ohio, but primarily serviced a different area of the old east coast. Anyone from lower Virginia or North Carolina could travel down the Tennessee River, all the way to the Ohio, then head back up the Cumberland River reaching Nashville. Goods could travel this direction as well.

Goods more easily came down the Ohio River from Pittsburgh, but there were about 300 hundred miles of rough roads to get merchandise from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh. In 1806 the

congressionally mandated National Pike opened between Baltimore and the Ohio River just south of Pittsburgh. Wagon loads of goods easily moved west on this new, well maintained road and Kentucky enjoyed the bounty.

An early overland route between Louisville and Nashville went right through the center of Russellville. Any goods or services available in those growing towns could be found in Russellville. Russellville newspaper ads in 1809 advertise furniture, silk, china and other finery from Baltimore and Philadelphia.

By 1811 steamboats were a reality and made the transportation of goods almost simple. Logan County did not have a navigable river and the economy of south central Kentucky soon turned to little Bowling Green. Once the Green and Barren rivers were fitted with locks to raise the water level (1838), steam boats began making frequent stops in Warren County.

There weren't many canals in this area, but a growing system of canals crisscrossing the young nation meant that goods could travel even faster. By the 1840s, railroads began linking communities, and by the Civil War railroads linked manufacturing centers with most parts of the country. The railroad came through Bowling Green in 1859.

When Mr. Felts arrived in Logan County in 1796, one year after the town of Russellville was laid out. This part of Kentucky could still be called the frontier. Mr. Felts acquired 800 acres near the juncture of Logan, Warren and Butler counties. As a settler he had to clear his land and plant his crops, and he is first recorded as bringing in wolf scalps to collect the bounty; this was little more than wilderness. No matter what hardships the Felts family may have faced in their little log cabin, the frontier fast disappeared and they were well-off by 1810 when fifteen of them are living together. By the time our huge log house was built, about 1815,

neither Logan County nor southwestern Kentucky could be perceived as the frontier. The frontier was now the great western plains, wagon trains set off for that frontier from Independence, Missouri, 520 miles west of Kentucky. By 1820 Missouri itself had become a state.

Russellville had some very stylish houses in the 1810s. These houses were built of brick with decorative details defining their owners as rich and fashion conscious. Looking at the inventories of neighbors can help furnish a **representative house museum** but one must also consider what goods local merchants were offering for sale. If the merchants didn't have clients to buy the goods, why would they order so many luxury items?

The Russellville newspaper of 1806-1809 carried advertisements for local shops offering silks, cashmere, velvet, and other fine fabrics recently brought from Philadelphia and Baltimore. Silk and kid gloves, kid and morocco shoes, and both black and green tea were available. Silk bonnets, silk shawls, and tortoiseshell combs were being sold to people in the county. The cabinet maker, piano maker, and Windsor chair maker in Russellville all advertised in the paper (any town that could support a piano maker was pretty refined). Looking glasses, flowered wallpaper, raisins, delft ceramics, 'china', and queensware, brass, copper, tin and iron of most every description could all be had at a store in Russellville. There was a silversmith in Russellville from the earliest days. If the Felts family desired a set of silver spoons, or a silver tea service they could buy one. This was definitely not the frontier.

We will never know if the Felts family owned silver spoons since there was no inventory of their property in 1825 when Mr. Felts passed. The Felts possibly bought fine fabric for their personal clothes. While they may have lived in a rural setting in a relatively new state, they were not behind, or lacking in much of anything. The Felts home may have been built of logs for

simplicity sake, but they could have enjoyed most of the luxuries of any east coast family. Inside they could have had wallpaper, furniture made here or finer pieces brought from Baltimore. They very likely spun wool or flax for sheets and blankets, but so did wealthy plantation owners on the East Coast, this was not a sign of frontier life, it was simply a part of everyday life.

As a representative museum, we need to fairly represent not only the Felts family, but their neighbors and friends. If people in the upper income brackets in Logan County bought silk shawls, then we should have silk shawls in our house. If they bought Baltimore furniture, we need some painted fancy chairs as examples.

Log Construction

European settlers brought their traditional building techniques with them to America. All of England, France, Spain and most of Germany had cut down their native forests centuries earlier, and no longer had a building tradition that used logs. The common form of construction in these countries revolved around stone, or heavy upright posts with heavy beams across the tops called 'post and lintel' construction. The walls in-between the posts were made of various materials, broken stone, broken bricks, or sticks and mud. In England this mud infill is called 'wattle and daub' and results in a look we call half-timbered. The French referred to it *en française* either as *bousillage entre poteau* or *briquette entre poteau* depending on what they put between the posts. Some built their walls out of all upright posts, *poteau en terre*. Ste. Genevieve, Missouri and New Orleans have some wonderful examples of these early French building types. These French towns were well established in the early 1700s, so by the time Anglo-American settlers move into Kentucky, there were already well established French communities farther west. The native population occasionally borrowed the idea of building vertical log structures

from these French settlers, and as Anglo-American settlers moved into Kentucky, they found and often took over these Native American houses built following European traditions.

In the black forest region of southern Germany, the mountains of Switzerland, Russia and in Scandinavia enough large trees remained that the ancient tradition of building with wood and logs continued. Few Swiss colonized America, and while some Germans came to Pennsylvania in the 1690s they were not from the forested part of Germany and built their houses of stone [as did my ancestors]. It was the Swedes, who settled along the Delaware River in the 1630s who introduced our well-known horizontal log construction to America. The earlier English settlers in Virginia and Massachusetts built the traditional English wattle and daub houses.

When English settlers took over the ceded Swedish colony on the Delaware in the 1650s, they found the Swedish citizens living in these easy-to-build log houses and soon learned to create log houses of their own...very soon. The English adapted log construction to fit their tastes and traditions, altering the chimney and door placements for a proper English look.

The Swedish settlers built their log houses to stand. The logs were huge and beautifully squared to fit so closely together that chinking was not necessary (see the 1650 Morton homestead, a single pen log cabin, with a second single pen log cabin built next to it, c. 1670, creating the very first dog-trot. The dog-trot was filled-in by 1730 with stone, giving the house an odd look [if you look at this property on the web it mistakenly identifies it as the grandson's 18th century house, which was torn down in the 1970s]). The full-dovetail notched corners are trim and beautifully square. The English who copied the log construction looked for ways to cut corners, to make the labor a little less difficult to create the product a little faster. Logs were not as often fully squared,

maybe just the top and bottom would be flattened. And full dovetailed notching is difficult and complicated, surely a half dovetail, or a simple “v” notch would be easier and faster.....and so goes the world.

Next, English tradition called for a house to be rectangular, with fireplaces set on the short walls at either end, and a door set in the center of the long wall, generally facing south... a style called English Colonial. This form, typical of the 17th, 18th, and into the mid-19th centuries, could be a simple one story with two rooms, the hall and the parlor, or, it could have two stories, with a hall chamber and a parlor chamber. A larger version of this simple house type might have a passage running front to back between the rooms... what we would call a hallway today...most often this ‘passage’ had doors front and back. This layout becomes a standard Center Hall plan, which is the basis for all Georgian architecture by the mid-18th century. This center hall layout became so dominant that several architectural styles following Georgian (Federal & Greek Revival) continued to adhere to the concept of a center hall right up to the 1860s. This plan also becomes the vernacular “I” house found throughout the rural south.

Dog trots not only copied the stylish concept of a center hall, and often functioned like center halls, because they were open they also proved how handy something like a porch could be. Dog trots were an early form of porch. As the concept of a porch became more popular many log houses, even those with dog trots had porches added to them…although earlier houses often had covered walkways, or a covered entrance, a porch in the sense of an outside living area, becomes popular in the late Federal period…the 1820s. The Greek Revival style (1815-) commonly included a porch with great big columns. Many vernacular farmhouses in the upper mid-south had double-storied central porches added to them, or built as part of the construction to make a very simple house look stylish.

The Felts Family History (I just told you it wasn't important, and yet I'm including it here)

As a typical family coming to South Central Kentucky, during the second wave of settlers, after Kentucky had become a state, the Felts are a good example.

As a representative person, Archibald Felts, born in Virginia in 1758, moved to North Carolina as a young man, and came through the Cumberland Gap to Logan County in 1796. He was 38 years old. He left his wife and younger children at home, likely bringing his older son, or sons with him. Our documentation is confusing at best, but it seems Archie had two older boys, Archie Jr. and Nathaniel who might have been old enough to take on such an adventure. Felts acquire about 800 acres.

By 1800, Felts had bought the services of an apprentice, for whom he would be required to provide shelter, so he had to have a dwelling and the beginnings of a farm. An apprentice, or indentured child, was a common way to exchange money for enforced labor without the ethical question of slavery. A child's parents would collect a fee, actually selling the services of their child until the age of 21. It was called an apprenticeship, because the young boy would be learning the hardships of farming. It was necessary to have an apprentice to help young Nathaniel run the farm while Archibald Sr. went to Nashville to meet the rest of his family and bring them back to their new home. The census records show us that the older son, Archie Jr., had land of his own in nearby Butler County.

Mary Felts had been sitting at home in North Carolina for four years with at least five children....who knows how they survived. Like many North Carolina settlers coming to the Nashville area,

the Felts family likely floated down the Tennessee River to the Ohio, and then traveled up the Cumberland River to Nashville. This is the route that the very first settlers took to get to Fort Nashboro, and this route was used for many years.

There were no cell phones or arrival schedules, so Archie may have waited for a matter of weeks for his wife and family to arrive. Mary Felts may have been sitting in Nashville for some time before Archie got there...we don't know. Anyway, they met and came home to Logan County perhaps by 1800.

There is a family tale that while Archie was in Nashville meeting the wife and kids, Indians attacked and burned his log home in Logan County. It's possible that young Nathaniel died in this attack, for records list a son named Nathaniel born in North Carolina in the 1780s who is never mentioned again, while another son, also named Nathaniel, is born in Kentucky and eventually inherits our log house. Similarly, while the oldest son, named Archie Jr. shows up on census records in 1800, another son by the same name is born here much later, likely the youngest child. This is one of those confusing things about family stories and early documents and we may never know the truth.

By 1804 the eldest girl, Sally, was married and had children of her own. Perhaps she was married before coming to Kentucky. Archibald and Mary also continued to have babies of their own.

The census records are not wholly reliable, but are the best source we have for understanding how many people were living in the Felts family. The 1810 census lists 15 people, there are no names given, except the head of household, and then tick marks for males and females fitting into age categories. The most likely grouping is this.....

1. Archie
2. Mary, his wife

their children...
3. Betsy
4. Bill
5. Sam
6. Polly
7. Charlie
8. Jim
9. Jack
10. Little Nathaniel
11. Little Archie
12. - 15. possibly Sally and her children, perhaps including another indentured child.

(Sally's husband joined the Shaker's and took her along. She greatly disliked it and left, taking her smaller children to live with her parents. Her oldest son stayed with his father at the Shaker community near Lexington, Pleasant Hill. They eventually got divorced, quite rare in the early decades of the 1800s)

It is possible that this huge family was still living in the one room log cabin that Archie built when he first came to Logan County, and/or rebuilt after it was burned by natives. But plans must surely have been underway for a larger home.

The economy was in a slump prior to the war of 1812, due to restrictive trade tariffs. These tariffs and open piracy between English and American fleets made for an inevitable war and a terrible economy. Not a good time for a building project. Just after the war in 1815, with the lifting of trade tariffs, the economy boomed for a few years, and that would be the most likely time that a family would have the extra income and feel comfortable building a big house. Selling a few good crops of corn, tobacco, or whatever they were growing might have helped them make the decision.

The next census, 1820, includes 13 people in the house, most

likely...

Archie & Mary, several of their grown children, possibly Sally and her children are still living there, and the younger Nathaniel, now married and beginning a family of his own.

When Archibald Felts passes away in 1825, he is survived by his wife, ten children, various sons-in-law and daughters-in-law and at least 13 grandchildren. The log house is left to Nat and his family. Five years later, in the census of 1830, only five people live in the log house, Nat, his wife and children.

Large, extended families were common, not just in isolated rural areas, but in all families well into the 20th century. There is a huge house in Delaware, built in 1801, with 22 rooms, 14,000 sq. ft. which had 25 family members spanning three generations, 3 slaves, and 9 other servants. This was a very rich, big, extended family.

It was not common for every child in a family to marry. Harking back to English laws of primogeniture, only the eldest son would inherit the estate, so he would be the only one able to support a family. The daughters might marry as they chose, but the younger sons had very few prospects, often living out their lives working for their elder brother's family. Younger daughters often ended up serving as nanny to an older brother's children.

In the huge house I mentioned in Delaware, only the three eldest of nine children got married. And the sons brought their wives home to live at Dad's house. Twelve grandchildren were born in this house as well.

So we have a picture of who was living in the Felts house, but how did they live?

Traditional Room Arrangements

In England, from whence our building traditions come, the rich lived in big houses, and the poor were often shoe-horned in with more than one family per room. A traditional housing type developed for the rural squire and growing middle class, was called the 'hall and parlor' house. The hall section had a high roof to reduce the effects of smoke from heating fires and cooking, which was done in the middle of the floor for many centuries until the development of a fireplace (late 1300s). The parlours or bedrooms were in a wing off the hall. This house may have been one story or the parlours might have been stacked for a two story wing. This form developed into a rectangular house with fireplaces at either end by the early 1600s, just when colonists were sailing to America, and they brought this developing housing type with them.

Like all pioneers, the colonists first lived in whatever shelter they could find, a cave or very simple one room cabins or cottages. When they settled into a routine, when their investment of time and labor began to pay off, they could build a bigger, better, more refined home. This scenario played out over and over again as settlement moved west. With our log house, we are talking about that second house, the one that replaced the first attempt at shelter.

The **hall & parlor** house that settlers built when they were at that point of being settled, varied in size, varied in material, might be an extension on an earlier dwelling, or could be a completely new house. The location of chimneys was pretty standard, but how they were built is indicative of the vernacular architecture of the local people. The house may have been one story, it might as easily have been two stories.

The **hall,** the everyday entertainment space, cooking space, eating

space, living space was the main room, often the larger room. It served as dining room, family room, work room, and kitchen. Indentured servants might sleep in the hall on pallets. In the hierarchy of sleeping arrangements, this was the lowest spot in the house.

The medieval house included private bedrooms, called a **solar**, or **parler**...the French word for talk. After the Norman invasion in 1066, most of the English words that dealt with important household features, or quality foods were French derivatives. Beef = French... it was eaten by the rich. Pork= English... eaten by the oppressed Anglo-Saxons. Mutton= French.....Chicken= English....Wine= French.... Beer= English.

One can imagine that the **hall**, with dogs and servants and guests milling about would be difficult places for private conversations or to discuss religion....so, private meetings retreated to the sleeping rooms, the solar or **parler.** This became **parlor** in common English dialect.

By the time English colonists came to America the average middle class home was a 'hall and parlor house.' It had become rectangular with a door in the middle of the long wall and windows on either side; looking like a house we would recognize. The **hall & parlor** were on the main floor, in a fine home these rooms would be separated by a passage.....which would develop into a center hall.

The **parlor** continued its function as a bedroom, either for guests or the head of the household. It also included the best furniture, because it continued to be used for private conversations.

Whenever possible the children's sleeping arrangements were separated by sex. If the house had only two rooms, the girls would sleep in the parlor with Mom and Dad for protection, the boys

would sleep in the hall. If the house had two bedrooms upstairs (called chambers), the boys would have one room and the girls shared the other. In a house like our log house with two separate staircases, the steps leading out of the parlor went to the girls' room while those leading out of the hall went to the boys' room. The boys required less supervision and concern. The girls lived a more protected life.

Our log house would still be considered a hall and parlor house.

Furnishings

Comparing inventories is difficult. Let's say my house is being restored as a museum 200 years from now, and all they can find to suggest how my house should be furnished is an inventory from someone who lived several miles away and had nothing whatever to do with me? How would they know anything about my tastes? Would they find antique Chinese cabinets in that other house? Would they find my hand-thrown ceramic collection in that other house? How about my collection of carved stone animals or oriental rugs? In fact, without an inventory of my property the restoration team might make my house look like nothing I'd recognize, but it might be a very good representative interior, typical of Allen County.

That's the difference between a documentary museum and a representative museum. As a representative house museum, my personal tastes are not important; rather an interior that shows the common place, average type of furnishings for the Allen County area in the early 2000s is what we should be looking for. And the typical use of space is what we would be going for, not my eccentric use of space.

So, the Felts House is big, much bigger than many log houses of

the time, and the family could spread out a little.
Since we don't have a separate kitchen like the Felts had, we will interpret the south room as the **kitchen.**

KITCHEN or hall:

Of course, this would be the room where all cooking and food preparation took place. In nice weather, butter churning, pea shelling, apple pealing and other similar tasks could be done in more comfort in the dogtrot or outside in the yard under a tree.

This room is where meals would be eaten, around a large table, or assembled tables. The same table where stew meat was cut up became the dining table when dinner was ready, and the cutting table when making clothes, and where the family gathered to read the Bible in the evening. There would be chairs or benches to accommodate the entire family ...all 15 of them. Tables were often designed with drop leaves, gate legs, or tilt-tops so they could be made smaller and pushed to the sides of the room when not being used.

There would be a cabinet for storing dishes, utensils, metal ware, and any other eating or cooking pieces that needed to be "put up." The sugar chest might be kept in the parlor under closer watch, but it may also have been here. Sugar, tea, and other precious commodities were kept in the chest under lock and key.

Even in this large house, with so many people living here, there would be a bed, or two in this room. Likely the older, married son would sleep here, along with his wife and small children or babies. His wife was likely the primary cook, responsible for teaching the younger women in the house how to cook, and the person who decided the meals. Once the children who slept here were old enough, likely about six, they would move upstairs to sleep with their brothers, cousins, and uncles, if they were boys, or sisters,

cousins, and aunts, if they were girls.

Kitchen chamber or hall chamber:

The room above the kitchen is the kitchen chamber. As the room with less supervision, it would have been shared by the boys. All unmarried boys, no matter their age would sleep here in whatever beds, trundles, palettes, or other sleeping arrangements could be made. The older a person was, the better their sleeping arrangement became; they got the choice spots. The space was not really used for much other than sleeping. Of course there would be some form of chest for clothing storage.

Boys could easily wash in the spring or creek, and a wash stand was not as necessary for them.

This room also opens into the trot attic, where things could be stored, like any attic today.

Parlor, parents/grandparents or guest bedroom:

This room would have the best furniture in it. If they had an arm chair, it would be here. If they had a desk, or clock it would be here. If they had a pair of brass candlesticks, they would grace this room. If they carried one piece of furniture with them from 'home' it would be in this room.

In a house where there was room to spare, this might be set aside as a guest bedroom and not used unless there were guests. Surely in this house of 15, the room could not be left unused.

Their best bed would be here for the head of the household to sleep in. A chest for clothing and linen storage, and possibly a smaller

bed for a young child might be in this room. In large extended families, Mom might still be having babies when her eldest is married and producing grand children.

As the quiet room, any specialized work that mom might do, such as quilting, would be set up in this room. Looms were often inventoried in attics, lofts, or back rooms...they were big and took up space. If Mom had nowhere else, her loom might be in this room.

Parlor Chamber:

This room would be occupied by the daughters of the family. The stair case rises out of their father's room. No one could sneak in or out without waking Dad, assuring that the daughters would be marriageable.

As many beds, trundles, and palettes as necessary would be in this room, along with a chest to store clothing and perhaps a wash basin and stand.

It is possible that the loom would be set up in this room, as the daughters were expected, not only to learn to weave, but to be the main weavers in the household.

The Trot:

This was a transitional space, both outside and inside the house. Work could be done here, in the shade, or protected from rain. This space could be used for storage, or for dinner in warm weather. This could be a play space for small children in bad weather, a retreat from the hot sun in good weather.

What Did They Do?

The men farmed. They cleared land, plowed, raised crops (corn, wheat, flax, tobacco); something to trade or sell. They may have cut timber. They built and mended fences to keep the animals **out**, and took care of the livestock, but this was a job shared with women. Men took care of horses, cattle (not dairy), sheep, and pigs. They butchered the hogs annually, sheared the sheep, and dressed a cow when needed.

The women cooked, cleaned, worked fibers into yarn or thread, and wove fabric. They tended the kitchen garden, kept the poultry and rung a chicken's neck when needed. Women were responsible for dairy products. The type of cattle they kept were not bred for milk, so gathering milk for butter and cooking (not drinking), and making cheese (this takes lots of milk) would be a difficult task. Women also hauled water from the spring to the house, and washed clothes. Women gave birth and raised the children.

Children, until the age of six or so, were considered babies. They dressed differently from adults, played, and were not expected to work. Once they reached that magic age of six, they became little adults, dressed like adults, were expected to do chores and behave like adults. By the time girls reached 12, they were on the lookout for husbands. Boys normally didn't marry until they were in their early 20s.

<u>Meals</u>

The main cook, Mom or possibly her daughter-in-law, got up very early to start the fire for **breakfast**. This meal basically consisted of corn breads, johnny cakes and other breads that could be made in a dutch oven or on a skillet, and meats. If they had coffee, they would drink it, otherwise it was beer or hard cider for all.

Dinner was served about mid-day, or slightly after. It was the big meal of the day, corn breads, roast meats, greens (both salad and cooked), other vegetables. This meal would normally be accompanied by spirits to drink, or more coffee.

The later meal was commonly called **Tea.** This was more like a snack than a full meal. It was basically made up of leftovers from earlier meals in the day. The one treat was the serving of tea, if they owned any. A rich family in Russellville could afford to have both black and green tea.

A TOUR

The public... The public want to be entertained. They want to learn interesting facts and details, but they don't want to spend much time doing it. They want something fun, educational, and brief... we call this 'edutainment.'

Your tour.... Now, all of the first 24 pages is only background information that you need to know if people ask questions. It is NOT the tour you will be giving.

Your tour should be short, hit the highlights, and be as entertaining as possible.

I. Great the public in the **dog trot** (if other doors are open, have ropes across them...only let people in through the ramped dogtrot door)

A. tell them

1. This is the 1815 Log House

2. It is called a dog trot, because it is two log cabins next to each other, connected by this breezeway ...they called this space a “dog trot”.
3. This space was used both as a work space and for relaxation, maybe a place to eat meals on a hot day. .
4. This family was very well off and lived a comfortable life, this is an especially big house
5. They did not own slaves

II. Move to the <u>Kitchen</u>

A. tell them

1. First you will notice a bed in this room, which is the kitchen... that’s because there were 15 people living in this house
2. This was a very big house for that time. Most people lived in a single room house.
3. The eldest son and his wife and babies likely slept in this room.
4. All the cooking took place on this hearth, all the meals would be prepared and eaten in this space.
5. Show them the simple earthen pots and wooden bowls, the simple chairs

III. Kitchen Chamber

A. Let them go upstairs (you don’t have to go with them)

B. Tell them

1. This was the boys room. All unmarried uncles, nephews and cousins shared this space .
2. The older ones got to sleep in the bed.

IV. Parlor

A. tell them

1. This was the “good room” the best furniture was in here, to entertain the minister or other important

guests when they dropped by

2. This is where the head of the household slept
3. Mom might set up her quilting frame in this room in cold weather
4. tell them how many expensive goods were available in Russleville in 1815…show them the queensware china, show them the Baltimore chair and we'll work on getting some silk shawls and other fine things to make the point of how civilized life in Logan county was in 1815.

V. Parlor Chamber

A. Let them go upstairs

B. Tell them,

1. This is the girls room, only three women shared this space, including a divorced daughter.

VI. Questions

The tour shouldn't take more than 15 minutes…ten would be a good goal….