

One person's memory of the beginning of Fort Klock Restoration

My first glimpse of Fort Klock was about 50 years ago. I knew it existed long before that, but had never ventured close. As I neared the old building it was almost invisible due to the tangle of trees and brush which had grown up around it. In places the silent stone walls had crumbled, reminiscent of a hero of old who had been brought to knees by a conquering foe. Fort Klock had fallen to its knees the result of an enemy called time and neglect. I walked through the doorway whose door had been wrenched from hinges by vandals. Window glass from long broken windows mixed with bones and trash covered the wide board floors. Black char covered some beams in the cellar where intruders had built fires on the cobblestone floor. The roof had begun to leak which was a sure sign that this old building's days were numbered, someday soon to become only a clouded memory.

What comes to mind when walking through a deteriorating building that housed generation after generation of a family? Sounds of earlier times flood one's imagination. We might hear excited words on another language totally foreign to our present day visitors. Words of these first settlers as they studied the site of their future home or the sounds of builders as steel tools help to wrest the stone from Mother Nature to build the walls. The sounds of the axe as trees which rooted before the white man set foot in our valley were brought to earth to become timbers, floors and shingles. Animal sounds of cattle and sheep who first grazed the land quietly sweep across our imagination. The most audible sounds of all come from the members of the family who lived here through the centuries and experienced the whole gamut of existence, joy that arrived with a new born child, the sadness at the passing of a family member, satisfaction after a bountiful harvest, the roar or musket fire on nearby fields as shifting allegiances brought fear and determination to those pitted against one another and finally the satisfaction of founding a new nation. Intermingled with all of these sounds from the past another voice prevailed. The voice of the ancient structure itself. The message it brought was "help to preserve me so that I can carry a message of determination of yesterday down to today and onward to the future.

Fort Klock remains today because numerous people through the last 50 years have struggled to preserve it. All has been done by volunteers much the same as the building would have been erected in its beginning. From the start of the effort to preserve Fort Klock some things should have been done differently if we had possessed more expertise and more funds. The heartaches common to man have persisted through the last half century for those who have struggled to preserve Fort Klock. Members came and went and each contributed to our effort.

The joy of friends made and the heartbreak of friends lost have both visited us in 50 years as happens in all ventures. Fortunately the positives have far outweighed the negatives.

What will the future of Fort Klock be? As the torch is passed who will seize it and go forward? Fort Klock does not belong to whoever's name is on the deed. It belongs to all who cherish our past not because it is past but because it is a guidepost to what is and what will be. May all of the readers help Fort Klock and our other remnants of the past keep from becoming fallen heroes.

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