

## St. Nicholas Day at Fort Klock

Today is December 4 of a new century, which had its beginnings only eleven years ago. I am here alone at Fort Klock on a snowless but frosty morning. Often that has been the case for over a half century. Why have I come? To start the fires in the three fireplaces in hopes it will remove some of the chill that would have otherwise net those who come to help us celebrate this St. Nicholas Day. This is a Holy Day doubtless familiar to those German pioneers who first chose this site for their new home in a new country—America. The fires have started and it might be a little warmer in here than it is outside. If I do not sit too far back from the fireplace, my fingers will stay warm enough to grip the pen. It is not too difficult to sense the triumphant and tragedies that that have occurred in this old house while sitting here along in its majesty of silence.

Are there other sounds besides the crackling of the fire? Some of those from way back toward two hundred years ago are so muffled that this human ear can hardly detect them the sounds of birth and death from within these old walls have grown faint. Those sounds and voices have accumulated throughout the fifty-seven years that I have been associated with this old building are encapsulated in my memory. Can it be that so many of those who went to preserve this once crumbling historic building have gone beyond the sunset? I yet hear their voices and the sounds of axe, hammer and saw. Doubtless, those sounds will remain within me as long as I survive. I look up to see that the fires are dying down, as they need more wood. This wood came from Fort Klock property. I guess it would be what an old friend called gopher wood. Why did he call it gopher wood? Because it burned so fast, you quickly had to go for more.

Best Wishes from Fort Klock

Skip Barshied

December 4, 2011