

"Aunt Betsy's"

Carroll County Times Article for 17 March 1996

By Jay A. Graybeal

When Mary B. Shellman wrote about the "early pioneers" of Westminster in her book, *Two Hundred Years Ago*, (1924) she began with a description of "Aunt Betsy's":

When I look back over the many years since my happy, carefree, early childhood, I see before me a long green street, with grand old trees on either side: wells with moss-grown pump stocks, and troughs made from hollowed logs, where man or beast could quench thirst, with a drink of the purest, coolest, most refreshing water.

But a few doors from my own home, on the lot now occupied by Mathias' marble yard, there stood a log, one-story, three-roomed cabin, with a little "lean-to" used as a summer kitchen.

The two smaller rooms were bed rooms, but the large, square room on the corner, was living room, dining room and candy store combined.

Three shelves, across the window in front, carried a tempting display of glass jars filled with mint sticks, lemon sticks, sassafras, cinnamon sticks, jujube paste, (called by us children "jugey paste") and best of all, because they lasted the longest, "bulls eyes" or "sour balls," two for a penny, and sugar kisses in many colored papers, each enclosing a printed verse.

We could get three of these for a penny.

Under the window was a big, old mahogany table with two drawers which held a store of ginger bread and sugar cakes, and in one corner, a handsome mahogany corner cupboard filled with a most fascinating display of odds and ends of china, each with a history.

A big, ten-plate stove in the center of the room, on which the most delicious corn flaps or johnny cakes were baked, and where the evening cup of tea was drawn, and big, flaky potatoes were baked, is one of my most delightful memories, because, to be sufficiently in the good graces of "Aunt Betsy," to be asked to share her four o'clock tea, was honor enough to last any ordinary mortal a life time.

When the sound of the hammer was heard, as workmen demolished the house, more than one eye filled with tears, and many expressions of regret were heard, that the march of improvement had reached the quiet old town, and was rapidly wiping out the dear, familiar land marks around which clustered so many happy recollections.

"Aunt Betsy's," -No one knows it by any other name, and as one generation of children after another would cross the threshold of young womanhood and manhood, another generation would take its place and be ready to follow in their footsteps, and exchange their cherished pennies for long, slim, very slim sticks of yellow taffy, or squares of ginger bread, and sugar cakes cut out in shapes of birds and hearts and stars. I don't think, as I recall them now, however, that "Aunt Betsy" was very liberal in the use of what the old darkies called "de Witness" when she mixed her dough, but to us children they could not be improved.

There were three inmates to the house, "Aunt Betsy," her sister "Peggy," and Peggy's daughter "Mary Ann."

The old house was built by their father and mother, Thomas and Eleanor Addelsperger, in the early days of their married life, which was some time before the Revolutionary War.

The name was popularly called Eckelsparrow, but we children knew them only as "Aunt Betsy," "Peggy Betsy," and "Mary Ann Betsy," and it was my delight, as a child, to slip away from my little companions, and listen to the quaint old stories and legends of early Westminster.

Miss Shellman's description provides a unique glimpse of this early residence and business. The occupations of the Addelsperger sisters were out of the ordinary at a time when most women were housewives. Both women became well respected in the community as reflected in their obituaries. When "Aunt Betsy" died in 1879 at age 85, the American Sentinel noted that "She was born and raised in the house in which she died" and that she had "made herself very useful by acting in the capacity of nurse, and her universal kindness in this respect [was] spoken of by all." Miss Margaret "Peggy" Addelsperger died in 1886 and her obituary provides additional information about her and the house. She too, lived her entire life in the log house on Main Street and she and her sister were recalled as "familiar landmarks." The paper also noted that the house, described as "one of the landmarks remaining," had been built in 1777 by their father Thomas Addelsperger.

An early image of the Addelsperger House survives to illustrate the written descriptions. The image also provides some evidence about the architectural history of this early structure. The original house appears to have been a two-bay, one and one-half story structure, the eastern end of the house in the photograph. The western two-bay addition has larger windows and a transom window above the door and does not appear to have a cellar below, all evidence of newer construction. The lean-to kitchen also appears to have been added later since it is covered in board siding.

Photo Caption: The Addelsperger House which formerly stood on the southwest corner of S. Court St. (formerly Addelsperger's Alley) and East Main Street (194 E. Main). From an c.1870 stereograph in the Historical Society of Carroll County collection.