

FOREWORD

OLD HOMES

of

Page County, Virginia



by

Jennie Ann Kerkhoff

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FORT EGYPT—

Location - State Route 615 - Four Miles West of Luray, Va.



HOME OF JACOB STRICKLER, whose father was ancestor of all Page County Stricklers.



The large, square old house in what is now known as "Egypt Bend" west of the Shenandoah River has long been a landmark in the Valley and the subject of many stories and tales. For it is on this property that Abraham Strickler, ancestor of most of the Stricklers in Virginia, located when he came to this Valley. The old house, however, is believed to have been built by his son, Jacob Strickler. On this property may be found what is believed to be the oldest mill in the Shenandoah Valley, the well-known Strickler monument, and an Indian mound so interesting as to have attracted the attention of the famed Smithsonian Institute and last, but by no means least, the house and fort itself.

Fort Egypt, an immense square building, is constructed of giant logs of maple, walnut, pine and oak, and paneled in some rooms with boards 15 to 20 inches wide. Some of the rooms are paneled in solid walnut and the doors are made of these wide boards with the well-known "H and L" (signifying "hope and love") hinges, used by early settlers as a sign of "good luck".

A huge stone chimney rises from the center of the house and there are fireplaces in several of the rooms. The fireplace in the kitchen is eleven feet wide! There are also a number of square holes in the walls used for burning pine torches for light.



INSIDE FORT EGYPT, "Fort of last resort."

Over the doorway in one of the rooms is penciled (or charcoal) the name of Jacob B. Stover, August 1813, in a fine, old-fashioned script.

Beneath the house is one of the best-preserved fort-cellars in this area. The outer cellar, which is reached by means of an inside stairway and through a doorway under the porch, is a very large room extending the length of the house. The outside walls of this room are constructed with the familiar loop-holes through which the defending settlers might shoot at attacking Indians. The ceiling of this room is exceptionally interesting because the old logs, interwoven with straw and then "sealed" with mud, are clearly visible.

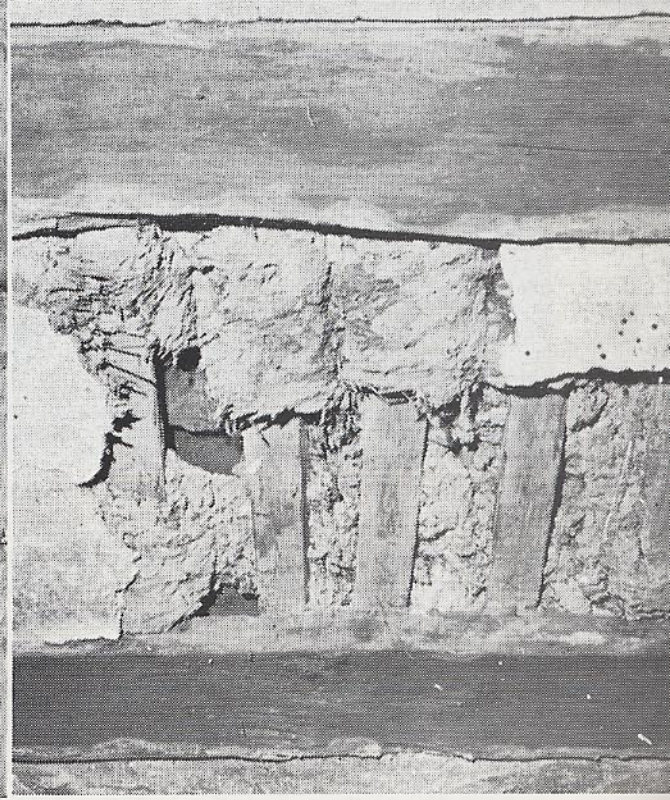
The inside fort, or "the fort of last resort" is a smaller room adjoining the outer fort. A huge wooden door with hand-made latch, leads to this room. Inside are more loop-holes, a spring which provided water, and hooks, apparently used to hang hammocks or perhaps supplies in case the settlers found it necessary to stay in the fort for any period of time.

The loop-holes are quite interesting to see. The inside where the defending settler stood with his gun, is quite wide enough to allow a man (or woman) to stand and shoot without being crowded. The hole slants upwards and out and is narrow at the outside, probably about eight inches wide and twelve inches high, thus cutting down the size of the target for the attacking Indian sharpshooters.

This house is said to have been built by Jacob Strickler, a son of Abraham, who migrated to this country from Switzerland.

According to Harry M. Strickler in "Forerunners", Abraham Strickler was born in the Canton of Zurich, Switzerland before 1700, probably as early as 1670. He was an expert weaver and may have learned this trade in his own country, or, if he resided in Holland for several years as many of the Swiss emigrants did, he may have learned this trade there.

Before 1730 he migrated to the Shenandoah Valley and settled at "Mesenuttin in Gerundo", (Massanutten) in Page County. He received a deed for 1,000 acres from Jacob Stover in 1735. He most likely built a small log house as did most of the early settlers.



(Upper) - Old Mill.
(Lower) - Fireplace in house.

(Upper) - Loophole in fort.
(Lower) - Ceiling in fort.

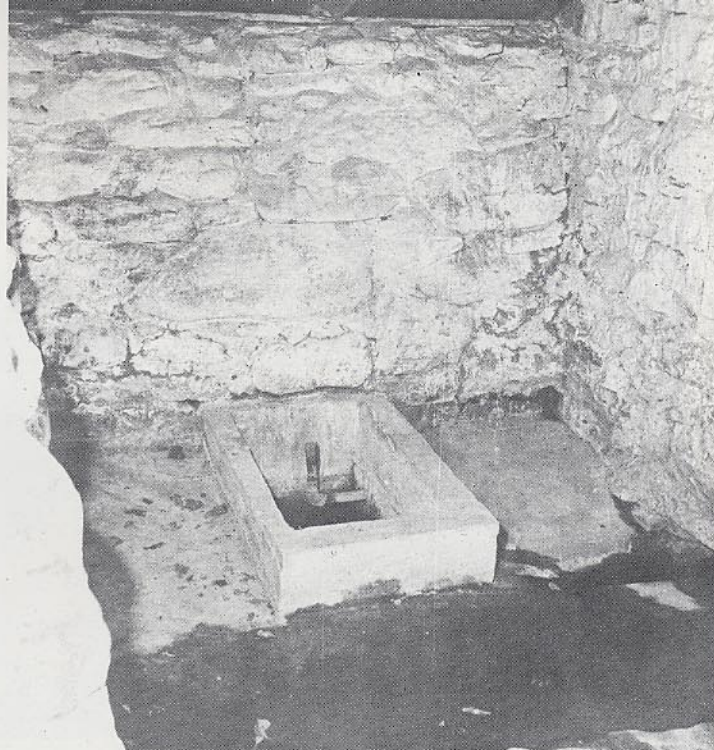
His property was always known as "Egypt" and that section of the county still bears the name.

Harry Strickler states that Abraham had at least four sons and a daughter, Jacob, Joseph, Benjamin, John and Mary, and possibly a fifth son. He died in 1746 and is believed to have been buried in Egypt opposite the mouth of Mill Creek.

Fort Egypt is now owned by Mr. and Mrs. S. B. Hoover of Harrisonburg and is in excellent repair. Through correct farming practices, Mr. Hoover has made the farm,



Strickler Monument.



Spring House at Strickler farm.

which was quite "farmed out" when he obtained it, one of the richest and most productive in the area.

In the yard of Fort Egypt is the old mill, a solid stone bowl about the size of an ordinary wash-tub with a small hole drilled from the bottom to the outside for the meal to pass through after being ground by the pestle. This mill may have been used by Abraham Strickler himself as early as 1726.

The Indian mound is located on the hill overlooking Fort Egypt. At one time it was an ordinary-looking round mound with a moat encircling it. The Smithsonian Institute became interested in it and opened the mound, where they found pipes, necklaces, arrowheads and other relics of the Indians who once roamed the surrounding fields.

In a field very near the old Strickler cemetery is the Strickler monument, erected in 1954 to the memory of Abraham Strickler. This monument is a small pyramid of native stones and is inscribed: "Erected to the memory of one of the pioneers of Page County, Abraham Strickler, 1670-1746 by Descendants, 1954". The monument was built by Robert Strickler.

The Strickler house, a lovely brick home near Fort Egypt, was built by the father and grandfather of Mrs. S. B. Hoover and Miss Martha Strickler in 1875. The brick was made right on the property and the total cost of constructing the house was \$800! The house and Strickler farm are owned by Miss Martha Strickler and her sister, Mrs. S. B. Hoover.

Also on the property is an old-time bake-oven in excellent repair and one of the few remaining spring-houses and no butter ever tasted any better than that kept in the cool of a spring house.

