

This Old House: Appendix 2

Letters (1996-2003) from Doug Long

Mr. Ed Lawson of Bowling Green, on the Board of Directors at Honeyshuck for many years, corresponded over a period of time with one Doug Long, great-grandson of Ezra Kirkland, who first built and then lived in This Old House from 1888 until 1898, when he sold it to the Clarks. As the Lawson-Long letters covered not only the history of Honeyshuck but of The St. Louis, Hannibal, & Keokuk R. R., Mr. Long's letters have been edited. TJ:02.23.10

October 17, 1996

Dear Mr. Lawson:

Thank you for your note of a month ago that let me know you have access to an abstract for the two lots (of the original eight) that were separated early on.

Someday I want to take you up on your offer to arrange for me to study it. It does not appear, however, that I shall get back to Bowling Green this year.

...[my sister]... came across a photo postcard captioned, ‘ ‘Champ’ Clark’s Home.’ Enclosed is a copy of it. The picture didn’t copy very well but what is of more interest is on the other side.... My grandmother [Myrtle Mae Kirkland Peters] who saved such things... wrote [on the back of the card] what is important to you:

“My father, Ezra Kirkland, built this house. It was my home for years, 10 I think. MKP”

The abstract you showed me for Block 36 shows that Ezra Kirkland bought it early in 1883 for \$800. The subsequent transactions are confusing since the abstract isn’t clear (at least to me!) as to which are related to debt, leaving Ezra Kirkland or other members of his family as occupants, and which are substantive. I notice that the warranty deed of October 31, 1888 [surely, Mr. Long means 1888] was for a much higher price, \$1800, than the preceding transactions. Perhaps this supports your postcard that claims the house was built in 1888 [surely, again...]. My grandmother was twenty years old by then, and did not marry Gerald Peters until 1902, so perhaps she did live in the house for ten years or so until the Clarks obtained it in January, 1899. If this is true, the intermediate “owners” might not have been substantive. Alternately, if the house was built in 1883, she might have lived in it until the transactions in 1893 that conveyed the property to the McDonalds [actually, James D. Biggs and wife Lucy C. Biggs], who then released it to the Clarks in 1899.

The transaction in 1903 involving Rupert and Myrtle Peters appears to be some sort of legal artifice.... My mother’s notes suggest her grandfather, Ezra Kirkland, died in 1904, which comports with the “Esther Kirkland, widow,” of the May 14, 1904, transaction conveying the east side of lot 282 to Ira B. Kirkland, who effectively gave it to the Clarks. The fact that the Kirklands were still involved with this alley strip well after the Clarks bought the rest of lot 282 plus Lots 283-287 suggests the Kirklands had retained Lots 281 and 288, so you can see why I am interested in the abstract you have found for those lots....

Sincerely,

/s/ Doug Long

December 18, 1996

Dear Mr. Lawson,

(Edit: information between Long and Lawson re: Short Line RR, then...)

On December 12 I talked, per your suggestion, to Irvin Kerr by phone. If I understood him correctly, he lived a while in Honey Shuck in an apartment downstairs on the west side, and he is or was nephew to, or otherwise knew, H. R. Moore (whom he knew as "Gilbert"), who with his sister Irene Wright sold lot 288 to the Bradfields in 1971 after their mother died; the Bradfields sold it to Mildred Nalley in 1974. He verified that he and his sister, Jo Ann Robinson, were nephew and niece of Mrs. Nalley. He thinks the Nalley house was probably built in the 1940s, after the war. (This makes sense if one assumes Bennett Clark owned it as vacant land from 1915 to his sale to the Meeks in 1944.) He said Mrs. Charles Meitler (Metler) may have lived in the Nalley house and could perhaps shed some light as to when it was built; she now lives down the street from you so maybe you know her. On top of all this, Mr. Kerr knew Tracy Peters, who lived in Bowling Green and was a brother of Gerald and Ralph Peters, hence an uncle of C. T. and great-uncle to me (I last saw him, at his home in Bowling Green, in 1964).

(Edit: pleasantries)

Sincerely,

/s/ Doug Long