



Another moving day. As the log house was being detached and re-sited on its own spot, this picture was snapped of Virginia Lancaster Shields, “the Matriarch of the Hill.” Displaying her usual broad, welcoming smile and enthroned in her familiar golf cart, Virginia is surrounded here by her adoring neighbors, who are, from left to right, Lee Epting, Daniel Epting, Andrea Smith, Iris Fiscus, Jim Fiscus and Jimmy Wilfong.

Photograph by Smith Wilson.

These are homes that have and tell stories of another time that we often long for and regard as simpler. It wasn't. It was a time of extremes. These homes were often too cold and drafty or too hot and “mosquito-ye.” It was a long way to the spring for water, and if you were last for the luke warm bath on Saturday night - well, what can I say? In the Donald house there are spinning wheels and a loom, the quilting frame and the axe, the heavy iron wash pots and the candle molds that all would have been in use continually in order just to survive. Even in an earlier time when there were slaves owned by these folks, there were only a few, and they worked the fields right along with the families of these homes. There were happy caring parents who worked to educate their children and better themselves and their community, and there were instances of hard-drinking men (and sometimes women) that made life for the family even more difficult.

There were happy times with weddings and celebrations, as well as sad times where children died early and were laid out in the parlors for the wake. Life was much as it is for us and will be for generations to come, but I think it was much, much more physical for them. I do like the air-conditioning that can be turned on in July and the heat that can be a choice of instant gas or a nostalgic wood fire. We can put a pot of soup over that fire or heat up leftovers in the oven. We have the best of both worlds here in our moved homes on The Hill, and I believe that we have a great appreciation and better understanding of those that came before. I hope this project will pass on this appreciation and understanding to the generations to come. I'm betting on it.