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**Century-Old Bitting Residence
Stands as Reminder of
Ability of Early Carpenters**

**Structure Once Lodged World-
Known Siamese Twins**

Erected 1835

Was Damaged by Earth-quake in 1886

By Elbert E. Stauber

It was the fall of 1845. The sun was setting behind the Pilot Knob, which lay some fifteen miles to the west, while the cool shadows were casting themselves around the Bitting plantation.

The Negroes had been toiling in the fields all day cutting corn, and preparing it for winter feeding. As they made their way homeward to their respective cabins, where their colored women were cooking over a large open fire, they could hear shouts of laughter and play as the pickaninnies welcomed them home.

Up at the large barn that gave shelter to more than thirty heads of cattle and horses, some of the slaves that drove the teams, were doing the night's feeding. In the large kitchen of the Bitting home the chief cook, a good-natured colored mammy, with her two helpers, were preparing the evening's meal. Special care and a few "extras" were being fixed tonight, because everyone was looking forward to the arrival of some unusual guests who were expected by coach from Salem at any minute, and who were also planning to spend the night at this hospitable stopping place for travelers on their journeys from Salem to the mountains. These unusual guests were no other than the famous Siamese Twins, who made their home near the present city of Mount Airy, in Surry county, and where they later spent their last days on two separate farms, living at one a part of the time and then at the other one. These well-known twins, who had gained their fame through a deformity which bound them together as one, made it a point to stop at the Bitting place rather often because of the true Southern hospitality which they always received.

Only One Still Standing

The present Bitting home is the only one of the many buildings that once surrounded it still standing. It is a monument of many things that have gone before; it is the silent remains of the beginning of Rural Hall, and the echo of happy memories of the past.

The only historical information obtainable regarding the Bitting family and the building of the interesting old dwelling is from Dr. Z. B. Bitting, who lives in the home with his sister, Miss Minnie Bitting, who was at one time postmistress when the post office was located in the Bitting home.

The Bitting family can be easily traced back to two young men, Ludwig and Yost Bitting [*Ludwig Bitting Sr. (1702-1775) is the father of Anthony Bitting Sr. who came to this area ca 1786. Anthony Bitting Sr.'s mother is Johanna Sabina Boehm (1709-1759)*], who left Germany many years ago and followed their brethren to the new settlement in America called Germantown, Pa. From there the family [*Anthony Bitting Sr. (1738-1804) was the only child of Ludwig Bitting Sr. to migrate south along with his wife Martha Poe Bitting (1746-1788)*] migrated south, stopping in Germantown, N.C., and later moving to what is now known of as Rural Hall, but then a wilderness unexplored and unsettled. Three generation passed from the time those two adventurous young men left their Fatherland until their descendant built the present Bitting home, which has been the cradle for the present generation.

Glowing Tales Told

It would take hours to repeat the many glowing tales about the happenings that have taken place at this historical old place. Stories about the slaves, their loyalty during the Civil War, and how they remained even after they were legally "free." Dr. Bitting enjoys telling these stories that he himself remembers and those that were handed down to him.

The present home was built in 1835 by Anthony Bitting Jr. [*Anthony Bitting Jr. (1788-1870) married Mary Wilkerson (1787-1845).*] and with the exception of the earthquake in the fall of 1886, has withstood the elements of nature to a remarkable degree. The earthquake caused quite a bit of damage to the plastering, which has never been permanently repaired.

The construction of the home is somewhat like it was originally. Between the weather boarding and the inside walls bricks were used as a protection against the extremities of the weather in a similar manner in which the modern insulation is used. The chimneys are built on large rock foundations, which have not given way in the least during the past hundred years. Each chimney has four fireplaces built into them, which burn large fire logs and were the only means of heating the home. The interior still shows the lines of good planning and simple but sturdy colonial construction. The fireboards are attractive and pleasing in their simplicity. These were made entirely by hand by the well-known craftsman of his day, Mr. Butner, of Bethania, N.C.

Well Constructed

The original weather boarding and most of the flooring shows signs of were, but also testify to the good lumber our forefathers used in building. It is interesting to look at the huge timbers used in the foundation, all hewn by hand and inter-fastened with wooden pegs.

Large flat rocks are used for the back and front porch steps, and are worth much more in beauty that steps made of concrete. The magnificent old mulberry trees with huge snarls jutting forth from their trunks, add age and dignity to the place as well as serene beauty not found in other trees. They stand as sentinels guarding the home and its memories from the years that go slipping by and from the elements that have caused considerable damage during the past few years.

Many children have gone from the portals of this famous old dwelling as well as many guests and visitors, to build homes of their own. Some have carried with them the principles of sound building and have built good homes and reputations. It is an inspiration for every new generation to see the works of their forefathers, and this famous old dwelling should remind us that the homes we build will stand as a memorial to us and as inspiration for those yet unborn.