

HISTORY - SEVEN OAKS

Seven Oaks was built as the residence of Mr. Peter Guerrant who owned an extensive plantation in what is now called the Jack's Mill district of Floyd County, Virginia. Peter Guerrant's family came to America from France in the eighteenth century. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Peter's father, Samuel owned a plantation in Franklin county, Virginia, consisting of thousands of acres. Samuel's home is still standing on route _____, _____ miles from it's intersection with route 221.

Some time around 1825, Peter Guerrant, who was born in Franklin county in 1799, purchased the land on which Seven Oaks now sits. In 1831 Floyd county was formed and named after the current governor of Virginia, John Floyd. Peter Guerrant was instrumental in the birth of the county, helping to lay out the county boundaries and serving as one of the first magistrates. In 1854 Peter Guerrant built a plantation house on a thoroughfare running to Christiansburg in Montgomery County and the county seat of Floyd, Jacksonville (named after Andrew Jackson, president at the time Floyd County was formed).

Peter Guerrant never married but family traditions and a will indicate that Seven Oaks was a lively place. Peter Guerrant fathered children by at least two women. Elizabeth Shockley bore two children to Peter, John and William Shockey. It is likely also that some or all of the children of Julia Snuffer were fathered by Peter Guerrant. Julia Snuffer married Peter Kefauver but descendants of Julia Snuffer Kefauver track their paternal line back to Peter Guerrant. Frances Shockey who is Peter Guerrant's great grandson says that at one time there were five women living in the plantation house. One of these was probably Judy Cayers who was Guerrant's cook, another was Jane Shockey, Elizabeth's sister. Jane was a seamstress who took care of Peter Guerrant's clothes. About the fifth female, nothing is known. The others, it is said, were jealous of Julia Snuffer because she refused to do any work, dressed in fine clothes every day and liked to sit out on the second story veranda and watch the slaves work.

Peter Guerrant also served as sheriff of Floyd county and this may explain a room in the house with bars over the window. This room, probably originally a pantry, is located between the two rooms on the ground floor and under the stairway. Stories abound about this room. It does have a window cut between the kitchen wall and the pantry and fitted with wooden bars. It has a door, which, if original, is like the other doors in the house. Elderly persons claim that this room was used for housing run away slaves. They claim that they recall seeing shackles mounted on the walls and floor used to restrain unruly slaves. No evidence has been found to support this claim. It is possible that as sheriff, Peter Guerrant was charged with apprehending run away slaves and whatever desperados Floyd county had in those days and would lock them up in this room until they could be taken to the jail at Floyd, a full days ride away. In an article about Seven Oaks carried in the Floyd Press, Mr. H. G. Thompson said that the room was called the "dark room" and slaves were closed up in there to punish them. This is unlikely however. Mr. Charles Janey who at this writing is 71 years old and was born in this house says that they coined the phrase "dark room" because his parents would send them to this room for punishment when they misbehaved.