



Built over a spring with a thick wooden door for extra protection, an influential German immigrant family made its home

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By Donna Dunn

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hile the front entry is welcoming, with rockers on the front porch and a hammock strung between two ancient trees, the Snapp House's heavy, two-layer wooden door was originally meant to keep people out.

The Colonial-era "Indian-proof" door is one of many items from the 1700s that tell a bit about the house and the people who lived here 250 years ago.

The house, located near Fishers Hill in Shenandoah County, is on the National Register of Historic Places and is a Virginia Historic Landmark. It is listed for sale for \$299,000 by Nancy Sullivan, the owner of the house and broker of Country Homes in Woodstock.

The house, actually an original log house built in the 1750s and a stone addition completed in 1824, reflects the building techniques brought to the New World by German settlers. Constructed by Johannes Snapp, the original house has wide pine floors, large stone fireplaces and a central chimney design.

Snapp arrived with his wife and three children in Philadelphia in 1733. They lived there until 1750 when they moved to the Shenandoah Valley and built a log house.

The Snapp family soon became prominent in the Shenandoah Valley. Three of Johannes' sons became commissioned officers in the Revolutionary War.

Lawrence Snapp, Johannes' second son, was a Woodstock trustee and one of 12 vestrymen of Peter

Muhlenberg's Lutheran church. Muhlenberg is famous for throwing off his minister's robe and revealing a Colonist uniform while standing in the pulpit of his church.

Lawrence was also an elder of St. Paul's (Lutheran) Church in Strasburg. He has been described in church records as someone "who had made good and whose influence was being felt in the community."

At the time of his death, Lawrence owned 2,000 acres in modern-day Shenandoah County. The property was divided between his wife and 10 children.

While most Germans didn't have slaves, Lawrence, in his will, lists four slaves. This record shows that slaves were not absent from the German settlements at the time of the Revolution.

Ms. Sullivan discovered much of the history of the house while renovating it, and researching information about it through Snapp descendants and Philadelphia records.

When Ms. Sullivan bought the house in 1971, no one had lived in it for a long time. There were no bathrooms and minimal electrical wiring.

Because it hadn't been in continuous use, many of its original elements remained intact. The property still had an original, simple German loom housed in a detached log cabin. While in relatively good shape, the loom, which had been used for weaving, was literally holding up the house.

"We tried to get the loom out and then the whole house collapsed," Ms. Sullivan said.

As she renovated the house, Ms. Sullivan tried to not to change its structural character. While it does have indoor plumbing, it still relies on the spring over which it was built for water. The spring water remains at 53 degrees year-round, she said.

"I tried to keep as much of the original house as possible," she said.

The four-bedroom, two-bathroom

SNAPP, C5



Above, the exterior of the Snapp House reveals that it is actually an original log house with a stone addition. The log house was built by Johannea Snapp in the 1750s. The addition was completed in 1824. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it and its surrounding 14 acres are listed for sale for \$299,000. Left, the stone portion of the house contains a dining room and kitchen downstairs and bedrooms upstairs. Far left, the house also features a variety of original hardware, including this door latch.



Above, a spring runs from underneath the Snapp House and out past the old chimney in the back yard. Right, a stairway reveals the exposed logs from which the original house was built.



Daily staff photos
by Rich Cooley

"I just love old houses, thinking about who lived here before."

Nancy Sullivan, owner and broker of the Snapp House