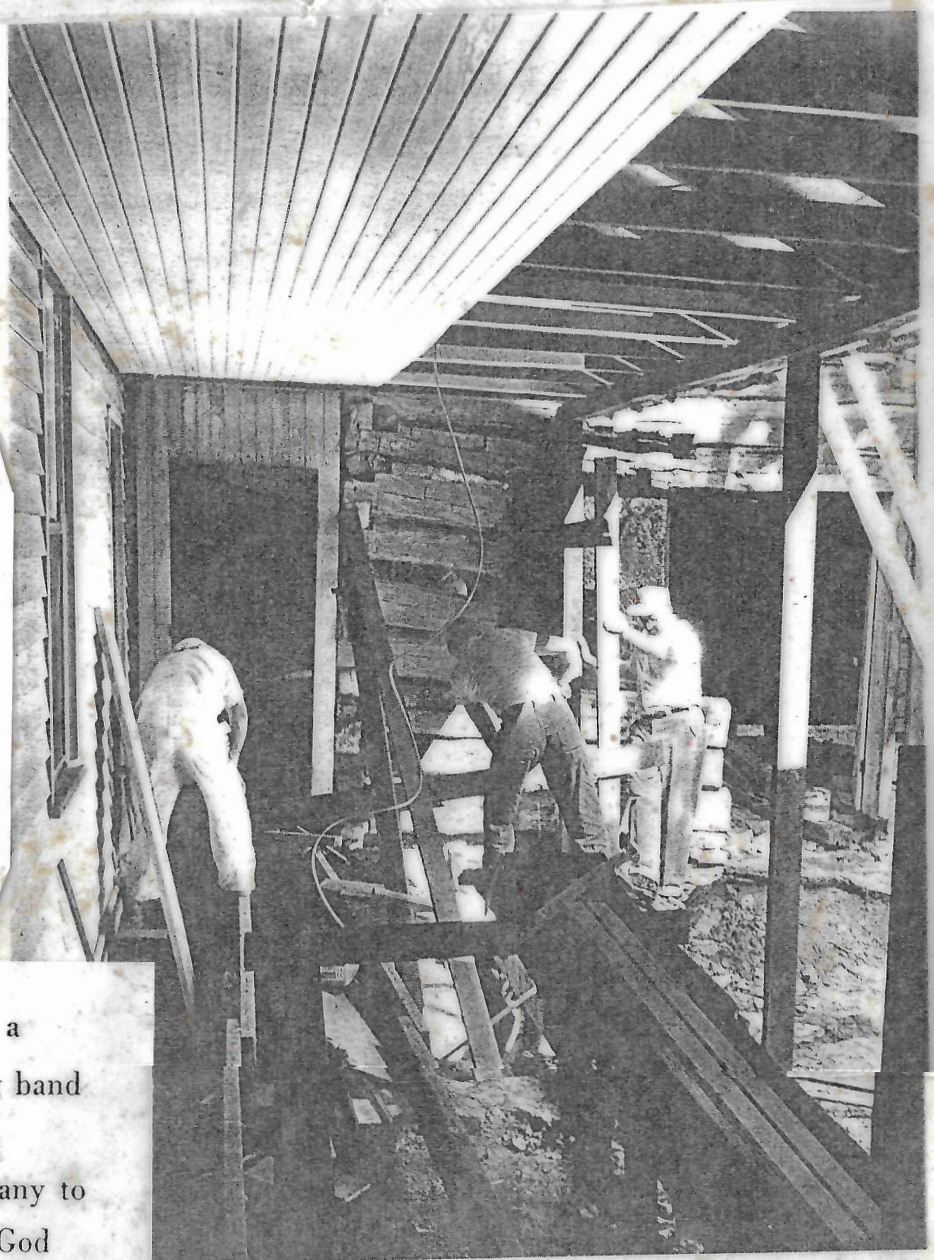


**It's
Just
an
Old
Farmhouse
Now...**

. But it is becoming a
memorial to a sturdy band
of Saxons who came to
Missouri from Germany to
find freedom to worship God
in their own way and
went on to found a great
Lutheran denomination



Volunteer workmen are affectionately restoring this derelict farmhouse, which began as a log cabin in the early years of Missouri, as a memorial to a courageous band of their German forefathers who left Saxony in 1838, crossed the Atlantic to find religious freedom in America.

A few years ago it was just an old farmhouse.

Its boards were gray with age; its doors sagged; its shingled roof no longer tried to keep the rain out.

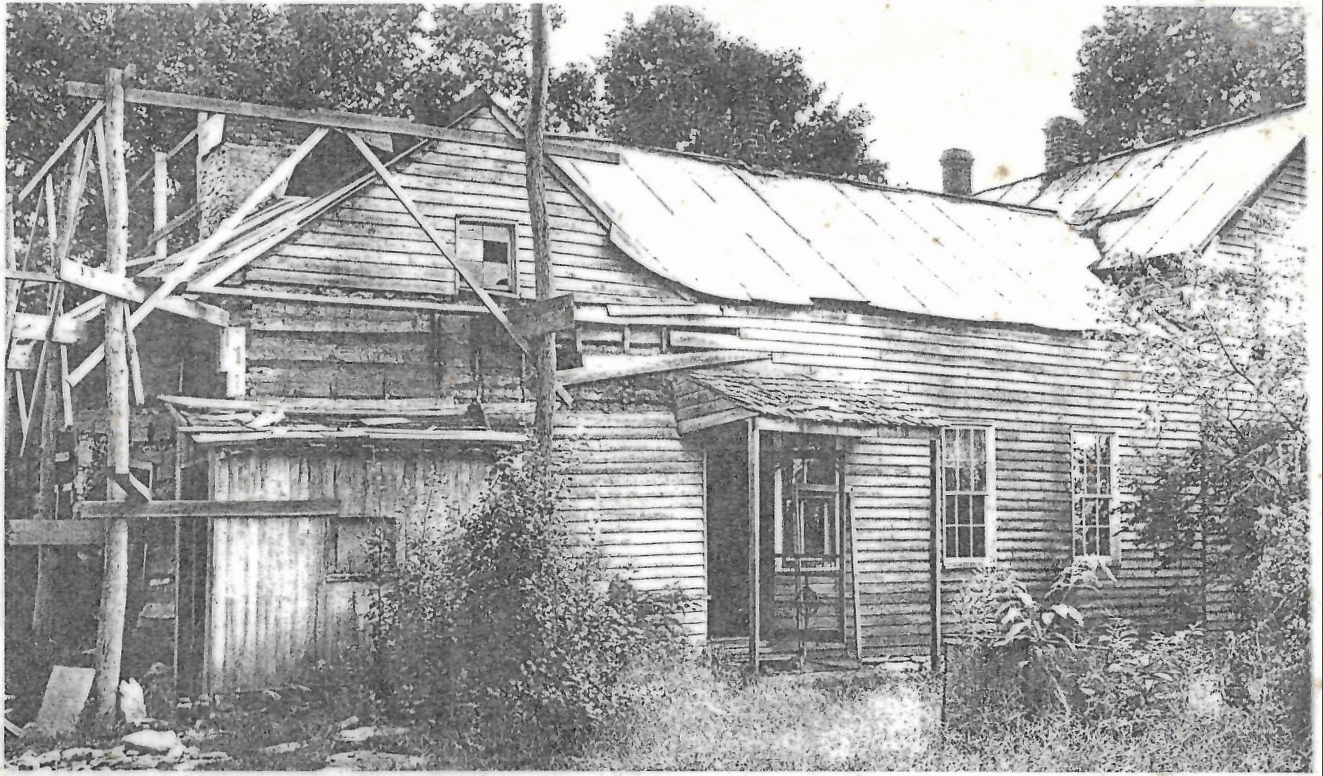
The last tenant was an old maiden lady who died at the age of 80. Her family had lovingly occupied the old homestead for well over a century.

The house stood vacant, on the edge of the little town of Frohna. Frohna is in the eastern part of Missouri's Perry County, near the Mississippi River. About 100 miles south of St. Louis. The people who live in Frohna—

Pictures by **PAUL OCKRASSA**

about 200 of them—are descendants of hardy, freedom-loving Germans who came from the old country and settled in the region about 123 years ago.

The little band of Germans who set up farms and founded Frohna and Wittenberg and Altenburg and other little hamlets were Lutherans of an independent and very determined breed. They came from a region called Saxony in central Germany, and they uprooted themselves from their native land to seek religious freedom in the New World. When they got here they did more than worship in their own way, free from the dictation of the



This old farmhouse was picked as a memorial to the Saxon migration and settlement in eastern Missouri's Perry County because it is one of the few typical buildings left and its history parallels that of the colony. After it is restored, it will become a museum.

German state. They founded a new denomination of the Lutheran faith and called it The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. With 2,500,000 members scattered throughout the world today, it became the largest Lutheran group until last June when four other denominations combined to form a somewhat larger segment.

The new settlers had hardly built homes in Missouri's Perry County when they set up a log cabin school which they called Concordia Seminary. It became the noted Lutheran seminary of that name which today stands in Clayton at the outskirts of St. Louis.

Through it all, the old farmhouse stood on the edge of Frohna. It had sheltered generations, and now it was abandoned. The storms rattled the windows and pried more shingles loose. The termites chewed deeper into the heavy logs behind the weathered siding.

And then a miracle happened.

One day men came and looked at the house. They looked at it tenderly, probed gently into its aged timbers. They caressed its weathered boards, its rotting shingles. Very carefully they tried its doors and windows.

When they came back again they had hammers and saws and crowbars and jacks. And they went to work on the house to make it robust again as in the days of yore, when its walls sounded to human footsteps and voices and its roof shed the torrents and its boards were painted a spanking white.

The old derelict was being made into a symbol, a shrine, a museum, a memorial. Its history had paralleled the the 123 years of the German settlement. It had stood through all the summers and winters, the rains and snows, the good times and bad, ever since the Saxons had come there.

Now, every other weekend a group of descendants of the original settlers get together and work on restoration of the old house, which some day will be a museum commemorating the migration and filled with artifacts and implements and other mementos of the settlers who founded not only a settlement but a great religious denomination, the tenets of which included freedom. The barn, too, will become a memorial museum for their old agricultural tools. A parking lot will be built accommodating 60 cars, for future visitors who will come to the museum, which will be finished in time for the 125th anniversary of the migration in 1964.



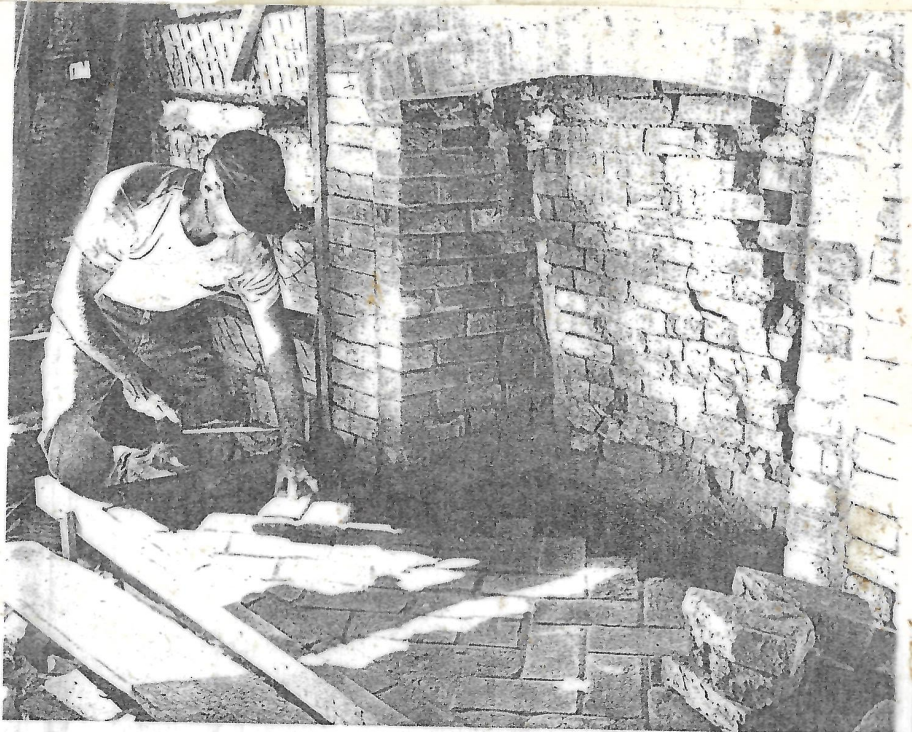
The house, which has been vacant for five years, is sound but has taken a beating from time and the elements over a period of more than 123 years. It is on the edge of the little town of Frohna.

JEN 21, 1962

CONTINUED



Going over restoration plans are Theophil Popp, left, of the Concordia Historical Institute, and St. Louis architect Gerhard Kramer, who is supervising the project.



Carefully old brick fireplace is restored, using mostly the original bricks. It is in log cabin portion of the building which was put up by the English long before the Germans arrived in 1839. Volunteers, descendants of Lutheran migrants, work on memorial project every other weekend.

Old Farmhouse

CONTINUED

The aged house parallels the 123-year life of the settlement

It all began in Saxony in the year 1838. The state, in those days, financed the Lutheran religion in Germany and dictated a little too much what the people should believe and how they should worship. A lot of hardy Saxons rebelled because they wanted to practice their own beliefs. And, like the Pilgrims 218 years earlier, they gathered together for a communal trip to America.

Men, women and children, taking along household belongings, clothing, family keepsakes and even a grand piano, arduously trekked to the port of Bremen in northwest Germany where, in late November and early December of 1838, they embarked on five sailing vessels bound for America.

There were 665, most of them artisans, skilled workers and professional men. Only 34 were farmers, only six were laborers and only one a servant. One by one the ships, loaded with Saxons, filled their sails and headed into the North Sea on their way to America. Winter storms swept the heaving Atlantic, whipped through the rigging.

After a month of rough sailing the first ship arrived at New Orleans Dec. 31, just in time for the new year. As the days passed one after another of the storm battered vessels limped in and docked. All except one.

It was the smallest of the ships and had aboard 56 of the freedom bound migrants—men, women and children. What happened to the lost vessel no one will ever know. Best guess is that it foundered in one of the severe Atlantic storms.

Counting the dead, and three who were born on the trip, 602 arrived at New Orleans. They all reached St. Louis by packet boat Feb. 19, 1839, and after a couple of months' stay here, 480 moved down the river again to Perry County, where they had purchased 4000 acres of land. The rest

had grown to like St. Louis too well to leave, stayed here.

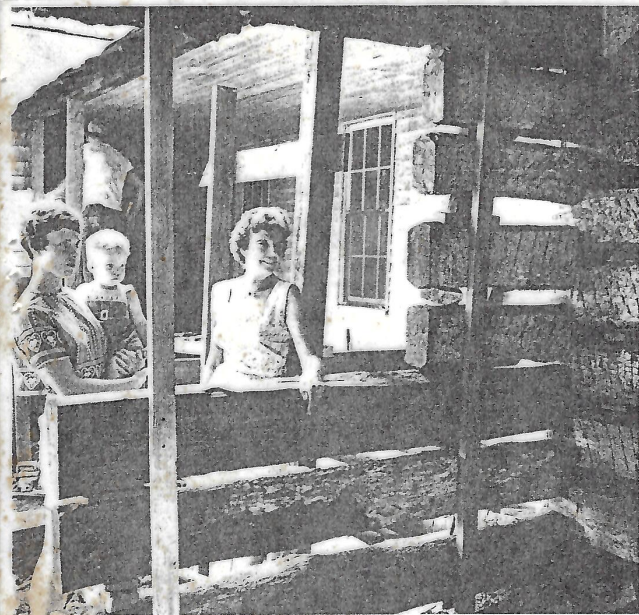
When the stalwart band of German migrants reached Perry County, they quickly learned it was no land of milk and honey. It was primitive country and the ground they had purchased was not very good. To provide food, the artisans and skilled workmen and professional men had to become farmers, which was hard because they were not used to that kind of work and didn't know how to grow things. They founded some hamlets which—as homesick wanderers always do—they named after cities of their native land. For the first few years it was touch and go whether the settlement would survive, but it did, and eventually it prospered.

Churches were established there and in St. Louis, and in 1847 the Saxon Germans in both areas combined to form The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, with C. F. W. Walther the first president.

Just outside the hamlet of Frohna was a log house that had been built by the English before the Germans came. It was occupied by the Bergt family, which as the years passed added another log room to it, and a log barn and a smokehouse and a chicken house. At periods through the years the Bergts made new additions and expansions.

The Concordia Historical Institute noted not long ago that the original physical appearance and flavor of this historic settlement in Perry County was fast disappearing and would soon be lost in the rapidly moving space age. Its members looked around for a typical building for restoration, which could become a memorial to this courageous and historic colony.

They found just what they wanted, and that was the day the miracle happened to the old derelict farmhouse on the edge of Frohna, which in German means happy.



Interested in progress are descendants of the Bergt family, the only one to occupy the farmstead since the Saxons arrived 123 years ago. Last resident was Lina Bergt, who lived alone in house, died five years ago at 80.



Though work is just beginning, passing tourists are already interested in the memorial to the early Saxon settlers who were also founders of a great world-wide