

Dog Trot House

Over the years, I've been disappointed that no one in the family has a photograph of John and Annie Trezevant's dog trot house in Franklin Parish. I have vivid images of it in my mind, having visited cousin Annie Montgomery there a number of times when I was a child in the 1940s and early 1950s. Luckily, I found a photograph online of the 1849 Autrey House Museum in Dubach, Lincoln Parish, Louisiana. It seems like a replica Grandpa's house as I remember it, though I suspect that Grandpa's house was somewhat bigger in terms of room sizes.



The family story is that the Trezevant house was built after the Civil War. It was placed on a rise of land. There was an elliptical driveway that circled from the main road, went by the front steps, and returned to the road. I have not done any research on the ownership and size of the property itself. I remember that it included a cotton field and grazing area for cattle. There was a barn nearby. The barnyard was defined by a fence that formed a rectangle that extended from the barn. The house was also included in the rectangle. The open dog trot permitted the dogs to go back and forth between the barnyard and the rest of the property, while other animals (like cows and horses) would not traverse it. My sister remembers a great flurry of excitement one time when a calf got onto the dogtrot and had to be herded back to the barnyard.

The Trezevant house was a classic of the dog trot genre. The dog trot itself functioned as the open-air living room, always furnished with an arrangement of rocking chairs. There was one large room on either side of the dog trot, and each room had a fireplace on the end wall. The house faced west, which is where the long front porch was. The big room on the south side had a very large dining room table in it, and the fireplace had long since been boarded up. The big room opposite it on the north side was the bedroom, and its fireplace had also been boarded up. A small bedroom had been partitioned off of it at the back, with its own door to the dog trot. That room was used for boarders and guests. Next to it was also a storage area. An indoor bathroom had also been created at the north end of the house. It's possible that the bathroom and some of the storage area were actually additions beyond the original fireplace wall. The rooms were heated by butane stoves.

As was typical of this kind of house, there was a kitchen addition at the back of the house behind the east dining room. That area included the kitchen proper, with its wood-burning, black cast iron stove, as well as a pantry and eating area. It was connected to the dog trot and had its own roof, probably perpendicular to that of the main house. Just off the kitchen was a walkway to the wash house. There was a hand worked water pump outside.

Annie was noted for her cooking. On our visits, we were always served a typical farm dinner in the eating area next to the kitchen. Dinner was mid-day. As also happened with my grandmother, the plates would be cleared, and a table cloth would be thrown over the food on the table to keep flies off of it. In the evening for supper, the cloth would be removed and the leftovers eaten. Since refrigeration was very limited (or non-existent), any uneaten food was simply thrown out the kitchen door to be eaten by the resident dogs, cats, and chickens, with some put aside as slop for the hogs.

Grandpa's house completely captured my imagination. It was so simple and rustic, some would say primitive. It seemed large to me at the time, but I now realize how relatively small it actually was. It connected several generations of our family. I have yet to figure out how John and Annie Trezevant could raise a large family there. But the house's sights, sounds, and smells became the emotional core of my interest in family history.

R.W.T. March 2017