

Nov. 22, 1988

Dear Georgia Greer

I am the great grandson of David Kitzmiller
Born Oct. 7 - 1799¹⁸⁵⁰ son of Martin and Mary DeWald
Kitzmiller who came to Tenn. around 1800.

David married Elizabeth Hughes Nov. 29, 1821
He built the Mansion with slave labor
Bricks made on place. Completing in 1828
This information handed down by family.

First sold to Keller family in 1860.
Then to James Bray in 1885. From the
Bray family to J. T. Brickley. His son and
daughter own it now (the land that was left
with it) the Mansion was torned down in
the late 1960's

We have records of the Kitzmiller from
when they left Austria. If interested come
out to see us. We have some books on
the Kitzmiller our telephone no. 477-7655

I'm enclosing a paper on the Mansion
which tells about it.

Fred Kitzmiller
Rt. 11 Box 104
Bray Tn. 37615

KITZMILLER - ROLLER - GRAY HOUSE

On the northwest side of Gray behind the Fair Grounds once stood the beautiful Kitzmiller House. The Kitzmiller's came originally from Austria and settled in York, Pennsylvania. From there they acquired land in Sullivan County, Boon's Creek, and other areas in East Tennessee.

David Kitzmiller's land numbered 1200 acres and he was known throughout the state as one of the best and most extensive farmers and stock raisers. In the prime of his days it was the custom to drive stock to market, and at one time he took 1800 head of hogs to South Carolina.

Several members of the Kitzmiller family were builders and with slave labor they constructed a number of other homes still standing in our area. They are distinguished by fine woodwork and beautiful mantels. One example is the "Stonehouse" in Boon's Creek.

The Kitzmiller mansion was the center of a typical southern plantation complete with its own slave house, central kitchen, two ice-cold springs to furnish water, a smokehouse, and a stagecoach route beside the side entrance going from Knoxville to Abingdon, Virginia.

Pastels and grays went with the American Empire Period, but this house used bolder colors. Pink went on the woodwork of the ballroom, chair railing, and shutters. The double mantels in the ballroom were black and it had an orchestra gallery.

The library was shades of blue-green. One bedroom, marbled in Dutch blue to the molding, had bright blue woodwork. In the drawing room were 14kt. gold flowers drawn on fabric-backed paper.

David Kitzmiller was an active Confederate sympathizer, furnishing the soldiers with pork. He and his family were closely associated with the Buffalo Ridge Baptist Church and he and his first wife, Elizabeth Hughes, are buried in that old cemetery.

David Kitzmiller had nine children. One son, George Washington Kitzmiller was the grandfather of Fred Kitzmiller, who still lives on some of the old family estate. Each one of the nine children was given a quilt made by their father. David cut all the pieces for the quilts and each one was alike. The pattern was called "Farmer's Fancy" and they were quilted by some of the slaves. Mr. and Mrs. Fred Kitzmiller have the quilt which was passed down through their family.

In his ninety-second year, David Kitzmiller married Mary Brown and in 1895 at the age of ninety-six he died a man of very modest means living in a log cabin in the Ford Creek area. He was of poor circumstance because his cash had been of worthless Confederate currency and he had been forced to sell his mansion and some of his property to pay his taxes in 1860. The house was purchased by the Roller Family of the Kingsport area.

In 1894 James Gray, "Uncle Jimmy", bought the Roller House and 300 acres for \$40,000. He came from Russell County, Virginia where he had been a member of the Virginia Calvary during the Civil War. He was 14 when he volunteered, and 16 the day Lee surrendered. He was a part of a unit commanded by John A. McCausland. He had a daughter, Miss Alice Gray and a nephew, John T. Bickley who also settled in Gray.

Uncle Jimmy worked on the land almost to the end of his life. It is said he took a bath in the Spring Branch the first thing each morning. Late in life he married a widow with one son and two daughters. Mrs. Vertie Boreing Irvin Gray lived on in the house and looked after her elderly parents Peter and Mary DeVault Boreing. Mrs. Gray's mother was a granddaughter of David Kitzmiller who built the mansion. Therefore, one relative of Mr. Kitzmiller lived and died in the old home place. Vertie Gray died in Lynchburg, Virginia, where she lived with her daughter and after her death the property went to John T. Bickley who lived on Cedar Creek and ran the Gray Canning Company at one time. His widow, Bessie Bickley, taught at Gray School for many years. His children were Carolyn Craven of Knoxville and Dr. Sam Bickley who lives in North Carolina.

The old home was rented for years and then fell into a sad state and was torn down in the late 1960's. Mrs. Craven took the elegant doorway, some mantels, and hand-hewn trim to Knoxville for her home overlooking the Tennessee River.

Thus ends the story of the famous Kitzmiller-Roller-Gray Mansion---
the house that David built!