

March 1, 2017

We lost the Cookhouse

A historical home was recently consumed in fire, Sublette Co lost a piece of its history.

The oldest lived in home in Sublette Co., Miller Land and Livestock's old cabin that they called the 'cookhouse' was destroyed by fire last weekend. It was built in 1879 and had been lived in continuously for 138 years.

Otto Leifer and Ed Swan were the first ranchers in the area, they came to this country with cattle in 1775 or 1776. Otto Leifer first built a small cabin that is still standing on the Miller ranch. Ed Swan built his cabin about 2 miles away. Then in 1879 Otto built a bigger cabin in front of the original, this 6 room cabin later became known as the 'cookhouse'.

This new house was very nice for the times. Otto had set himself up well and by 1887 felt that the ranch was a good place to bring a wife. In March he went to Virginia and returned with his bride, Delia M. Sollars. The couple resided at the Circle Ranch, in the new house for the next 8 years. In 1895, James Mickelson who had homesteaded at Labarge purchased the Circle Ranch from Otto Leifer.

Mickelsons lived in the 'cookhouse' until they built their big house in 1905. The 'cookhouse' was their first child's first home. By the time old Jim Mickelson and his little sister, Mildred Miller, came along, the '1879' cabin had become the cookhouse where the cook's family lived and cooked for the ranch hands. For the past several years, Millers have used the cookhouse for ranch hands and their families.

Mildred Miller inspired a love of the old buildings on the ranch and a desire to take care of them in her family. The cookhouse had many years of care and appreciation for its history and the hard work that had gone into its hand-axed logs and stucco-plaster walls. There have been many characters in and out of the old house throughout the years. "Boy, if those walls could talk!"

The fire started the night of Feb. 18th in the attic from the wood stove and caused a lot of damage to the roof. The Fire department extinguished it before it got into the lower portion of the house. Then fire started the night of Feb. 20th from the breaker box which had been turned off but shorted out, apparently from the water used in the first fire.

Many people have worked on the ranch and have lived in or knew this wonderful old house.





Otto and Delia Leifer on south end of the house



North End of Cookhouse in 2000 Chimneys were added years before.