



RARE OCTAGON HOUSE built in Rush County in 1855 has been kept in good repair and is unique in the Midwest. The house is presently occupied by Mrs. Walter Crull. The

(trees and shrubs planted by Hall may be seen around the house. Note the unusual banisters on the porch and balcony, and the eight sided column. (Harry Wood photo)

Rush County, Ind., Boasts Unique Octagon House

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Mrs. Walter Crull, 83-year-old Rush County, Ind. resident, is preserving one of the most unique and interesting pioneer houses in the entire Midwest.

This rare home, built in 1855, is known as the octagonal house. With its eight sides it is one of the few of its kind in the entire United States, and without question it is one among the first pre-fabricated houses in the nation. It is also one of the very few farm homes which has a flat roof.

William S. Hall, the builder, had the distinction of being one of the first advocates of a centralized school system. In the school yard at Raleigh stands a marker on which is the inscription: "First consolidated school built in America." Hall was town ship trustee when the building was erected.

He came from a family of soldiers. His father, Thomas Hall, served in the War of 1812 while his grandfather, Joseph Hall, served in the Revolutionary War.

Hall came to Fayette County with his parents when he was 4-years-old. As a youth, he went to live with an uncle in Cincinnati, who was a cabinetmaker, and for several years worked as an apprentice.

Returning to Indiana in 1835, Hall bought a farm in Rush County, and six-years later was married in a log cabin near where the octagonal mansion stands.

On the site stood a number of yellow poplar trees which Hall cut down and hewed into large beams for the house's foundation. The sides of the structure were built on the ground to be raised and joined later.

When the day came to join the sides, neighbors came from miles around to watch, doubting that the feat could be accomplished.

But Hall's training as a cabinetmaker came in handy, the pieces fitted perfectly.

Originally he had planned to build a round house with the heating system in

the center, but the octagonal arrangement seemed more practical.

All parts of the mansion show careful planning and skilled workmanship, particularly the unique banisters on the porch and balcony. And the eight-sided columns extend from the first floor of the front porch to the ceiling of the balcony. The window sash is similar to that used today.

Walls of the recessed porch and balcony are constructed of wooden panels 3-feet high, the remainder is of plaster.

Upstairs are four rooms with the same number below. Four of the rooms originally had large fireplaces.

Bad luck plagued the Hall family's tenure in the house. Shortly after the mansion was completed, Mrs. Hall died after giving birth to the couple's 11th child. The tiny babe died a month later, and only a few months after that, sadness again fell over the odd-shaped structure. Four of the Hall children died of diphtheria.

From 1853 to 1878, Hall was trustee, taking a leave of absence in the early 60's to serve in the Indiana General Assembly.

In 1860, Hall was remarried. His second wife, Melinda Knotts, bore five children in the octagonal house, which also figured in the rearing of one of Indiana's lieutenant governors.

Frank T. Hall, a son by the first marriage, became mayor of Rushville, and later lieutenant governor during the administration of Governor Thomas R. Marshall.

Mrs. Crull, the present owner, does not let her 83-years dampen her enthusiasm in keeping her house well preserved. Just this year she venerated the old yellow poplar weatherboarding with white aluminum
"I no longer will have to paint it," she said cheerfully.

She has even installed a modern tower to hold her television antenna, and covered the historic windows with aluminum storm windows.

Mrs. Crull appreciates the many stately trees. Striplings when the mansion was

built, these trees provide shelter for the many birds that sing for her enjoyment. She encourages the shrubbery, planted by the Halls more than a century ago, to still grow and flourish.

"I certainly appreciate the help my son, Marlin, who operates my farm, and my grandson, Gary, have given me in helping to replant and trim the shrubbery that was originally planted," stated the octogenarian lady, who lives in this most unique octagonal mansion.

For a number of years Meridith Hall, a grandson of the builder of this famous Rush County mansion, had as his hobby the gathering of information about the period in Hoosier history during which his grandfather lived.