

pinned on with wooden pins...Clapboard doors hung on wooden hinges...The chimneys were of sticks and dirt...The houses had split out puncheon floors when there were any kind at all.⁶

Most of the pioneers, however, could boast of dwellings somewhat better than the backwoods type. But at best their homes were crudely built; totally lacking comforts or conveniences and still strictly primitive structures. They at least had windows and plank floors and rock chimneys and fireplaces.⁷ Nor were the furnishings of these early dwellings superior to their surroundings. Most of the articles were of the roughest construction. Tables were made of green lumber from trees; chairs were built out of round sticks and cross-pieces, and seated with deer skin or rawhide. The beds, as tight as the face of a drum, were made of skins which were used without covering of any kind. Where mattresses were used, they were of Spanish moss, corn husks, prairie grass, etc.⁸ Doctor Lockhart tells us of his early surroundings as he remembers them:

The table, chairs, and bedsteads were usually homemade. If the head of the house possessed any mechanical genius the good lady could move her furniture occasionally; if not, the bedsteads were made by boring an auger hole in the side of the house, a pole was driven into it, extending out the width of the bed, a forked stick was driven in the ground for the end to rest on. This operation was repeated at the other end and a pole laid on, thus making a scaffold for bedding, and the job was completed.⁹

6 MS. Isaac Van Zandt Letters.

7 Lucy A. Erath, *Memoirs, Quarterly XXVI*, 223.

8 N. Doran Maillard, *Texas*, 223.

9 Wallis, *Sixty Years on the Brazos*, 91.

Houses of this type evidently lacked even the elementary comforts of life and did little to shelter the inmates from the weather. The howling Texas winds of the winter months had an annoying way of whistling through the many cracks in the poorly constructed walls "thus placing the small room still more at the mercy of the icy norther."¹⁰ Conditions were not much better in summer, as few homes had screens to protect the dwellers against the vicious sting of the mosquito.¹¹

Some of the most important men in the Republic had lived in these rude houses. General Moseley Baker, called one of Houston's "first citizens" lived in a "small house built of clapboards."¹² Even President Houston lived for years in "a small log house consisting of two rooms and a passage through, after the Southern fashion."¹³

It must be remembered that these dwellings were built by the immigrant immediately upon arrival, when circumstances forced him to be grateful for any kind of shelter. The progressive pioneer was not, however, content to live the rest of his days amidst such primitive conditions; accordingly, at odd moments, and whenever an opportunity presented itself, he improved the building. "The hewn logs were covered with weather boards, the interior walls ceiled [sic] and papered, a second story was added, and it was protected on three sides with wide galleries on both stories."¹⁴ Gradually, therefore, the log houses took on a more presentable appearance and the dwellings became habitable.

It would be false, however, to create the impression that most of the homes went through the log stage. In the towns and cities where material and labor were available, some very

¹⁰ Erath, *Memoirs*, *Quarterly* XXVI, 223.

¹¹ Bollaert, *Manuscript*, II, 94.

¹² Lubbock, *Six Decades in Texas*, 58.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁴ Adele B. Looscan, *Harris County, 1822-1845*; *Quarterly* XXXII, 369.