The Turnbull-Young-Brian House was a typical country home when Betsy Mills' ancestors lived there beginning in the 1840s.

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**Restoration**

a labor of love

Turnbull-Young-Brian House, a 'work in progress,' on home tour

By CAROL ANNE BLITZER

Betsy and Wilmer Mills have been restoring the Turnbull-Young-Brian House since they purchased it in 1998 and moved it 800 yards over a pond to their property off Old Scenic Highway. It's a big project but a labor of love for the Mills, who both trace their ancestry to families who lived in or near the historic home that will one day be their art studio.

Visitors can get a close look at their "work in progress" Sunday, Oct. 17, at the Zachary Historic Village Fall Festival of Homes, a tour that will feature three historic homes, two of which are presently being restored, as well as a reproduction Victorian home that incorporates historic elements into new construction. "Our home tour is centered on history, not elegance," said Lois Hastings, director of the Zachary Historic Village. "We are fortunate that we have a few of these old homes left." Betty Tucker, Zachary Historic Village historian, has combed through public records and family archives to develop a timeline of ownership of the Turnbull Young-Brian House. From conclusions by historic building specialists David Beeson, Jay Edwards, Bill Brockway, Sid Gray, David Floyd, Dr. Donald Fonte and Peggy Riddle, it is believed that the home is actually a "house within a house." The original building was a 16-by-28-foot one-room structure of Anglo construction. "The posts and beams in all four corners are hand-hewn, pit-sawn and mortised, tenoned and pegged," Tucker wrote in her timeline. With this method of construction, timbers are dovetailed with carved projections (tenons) placed in matching holes (mortises) and held with pegs.

The original part of the house is believed to date to the late 1700s. Over time, there were numerous renovations and additions. In many ways, the house is typical of country-style houses that sprang up around the area. But what makes the house unique is its collection of "local characters" who lived there over the past 200 years. The origins of the home can be traced to a 2,027-acre Spanish land grant to John Turnbull in what was then known as St. John's Plains, now referred to simply as The Plains.

Turnbull, a native of Scotland, came to Louisiana in the 1770s. Shortly after he arrived, he and John Joyce, a native of Ireland, formed the firm "Turnbull & Joyce."
Joyce to trade furs, provisions, slaves, livestock, indigo, tobacco and produce in Louisiana, Mississippi, the Chickasaw Nation and West Florida. Over many years, the partnership acquired large tracts of property. Other properties owned individually by Turnbull and Joyce were entered into the partnership, which was legalized, long after it was formed, in documents filed Feb. 24, 1798, in New Orleans.

John Joyce died in 1798, and John Turnbull died in 1799. Their widows, Catherine Rucker Turnbull and Constance Rochon Joyce, were left with the huge estate including property and slaves, which in 1800 was partitioned in the largest single litigation in West Florida records. "Catherine Turnbull kept the property in the country, and Constance Joyce kept the city property," Tucker said.

As a result, Catherine Rucker Turnbull received the property in St. John's Plains on which the Turnbull-Young-Brian House was originally located. Constance Joyce received Magnolia Mound, where she settled with her second husband, Armand Duplantier.

Among John Turnbull's heirs were three children whose mother was an Indian princess. One daughter, Sylvia, listed as a Chickasaw in baptismal records in Mobile, Ala., required a tutor because she was a minor at the time of her father's death. In appreciation for the tutor's service, Catherine Turnbull granted the tutor 600 acres including the tract on which the Turnbull-Young-Brian House was originally located. Catherine Joyce received Magnolia Mound, where she settled with her second husband, Armand Duplantier.

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