



THE FIRST CURATOR, Kathleen Claar, (above) held an old-fashioned iron, which was heated on the stove in the old days, at the soddy on the museum grounds. Charley Walton, with the trowel (below) worked with Johnnie Guy, an Oberlin

high school student, as they placed sod on the new soddy at the museum. Officers of the Decatur County Historical Society at the time were Ben Miller, president; Milton Nitsch, vice president; Chris Jorn, secretary, and Wallace Wolfe, treasurer.

Sod house built by volunteers

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**

Fifty years ago, men from the county joined forces to build an original sod house, or soddy, on the Decatur County Museum grounds.

The sod house was the first addition to the museum, and was built by Art Peterson with help from members of the community and the historical society. During his lifetime, Mr. Peterson helped repair and maintain the soddy. Ward Claar also helped build the sod home.

Information at the museum stated that sod was the primary building material of the early day settlers in this area. Grass acted as cement to hold the sod in place. The sod was cut three to four inches thick, 18 inches wide and two feet long. It was then laid like bricks.

The average sod house was one story with one room at about 18 by 24 feet.

Most of the roofs were made of sod, but some

were framed. The homes were cool in the summer and warm in the winter.

Stoves were used to heat the homes and cook, with the main fuel source being buffalo chips. A gun was kept over the door for protection from wild animals and Indians.

In May, 1965, after numerous leaks in the sod house the walls received a plaster face lift while the roof and floors were replaced with wood.

Inside the house is a wooden table that holds a pitcher and a bowl, called a "dry sink," which was made back in the 1870s by Mr. Anthony.

When the sod house was being built as a museum exhibit an article in *The Oberlin Herald* asked for donations of original furniture including a straw tick, pillows, a feather bed, coverlet, cradle, dresser, antique table stand, stove, table, chairs, cupboard, safe, cow chip container and a wall-bracket lamp with reflectors.

