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Home's heritage will live on

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Here's my question.

If Addison Harris were alive today, do you think he'd enjoy a cup of coffee from the Starbucks in his front yard?

Well, what used to be his front yard.

Mr. Harris -- I'll call him "Mister" because if he were alive today he'd be more than 100 years old -- was the stately ambassador to Austria-Hungary for President William McKinley.

Kids, Austria-Hungary was the name of a European empire that pretty much collapsed after World War I. I'm not sure what it is today (can't keep track).

Mr. Harris lived in a big white house that used to sit right on the corner of 96th and Allisonville Road -- a home that once anchored a 200-acre farm.

Really, it wasn't that long ago.

When my wife and I moved into a Fishers apartment on Eller Road back in 1992, we drove by the house daily. It was empty, looked haunted and was shrouded by overgrown trees and shrubs.

That was back when 96th Street was a little two-lane, nasty road that dead-ended at the river -- long before anyone had ever dreamed of high-rise condos at "RiverPlace."

We used to drive up Allisonville Road and wonder who lived in that house. In the mid-'90s, we found out.

The home was built some 176 years ago by a couple named Thomas and Sarah West, who probably were trying to escape the high taxes of Marion County. (OK, that was a joke . . . but not bad for pioneer humor, eh?)

Anyway, Mr. Harris lived in the house around the turn of the century, or so say the historians. And much later, after it became abandoned and was close to falling apart, the home was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1996, word got out that this corner was about to be transformed from farmland into a "paved paradise." And the rumor was that the house was to be demolished.

So, the town stepped in and a group of local volunteers helped secure a land swap, effectively arranging for the home to be picked up off its foundation and relocated to what was then a new town park off Eller Road -- and what is now Heritage Park.

But enough about history.

Read John Tuohy's story today on Page 4 to find out what's going on with this historic home now.

Can't wait to see the finished product.