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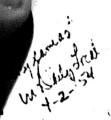
The following story, concerning the historic
White Horse Inn in East Whiteland Township,
was written by Robert E. Swayne, Glen Loch,
who has done considerable research into the
history of the inn.

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On Saturday, April 3, 1954, the historic White Horse Inn
will be sold at auction. This property is owned by Watson and Mark
Swanenburg, the latter a minister of the Mennonite Church at Frazer
for many years. The Swanenburgs have farmed here for almost 50 years.

The tavern is located in the Great Chester Valley on the
Swedesford (the old Lancaster) road and Route 29 at Planebrook village
in East Whiteland township. It was established about 1715 or 1716 and
operated until 1854-55. The date the building was erected is not known
but the eastern half was built in the early 1700's while the western
half was built after the Revolutionary War. This building was preceded
by a log one.

The traveling public stopped at this old inn for refreshment,
meals, and to rest over night. It was known as a "wagon stand" and was
patronized by Conestoga wagoners or teamsters who "put up" there for
the night.

The first Masonic lodge originally chartered in Chester County
was established in the White Horse. Lodge No. 50 was granted on December
6, 1790. Meetings were held in the second-story room of the eastern end
of the building. The lodge was moved to West Chester on January 5, 1807.

After the Lancaster Turnpike (now the Lincoln Highway) was
opened in 1794 the bulk of the travel was transferred to this new pike,
which was one mile south of the White Horse. Shortly thereafter the
tavern was known mostly as a "drove stand" where special accommodations
were to be had for the cattle, which were watered, fed, or pastured,
until they were again upon the hoof toward the city.

The last owner and landlord of the White Horse was Adam
Reitenbaugh. He bought the tavern in 1832 from Cromwell and Jane Pearce,
executors of Joseph Pearce, late landlord. In 1839 Reitenbaugh replaced
the old log barn with the large stone one which is still standing.

The following is quoted from a book which was recently given to
the writer by Mrs. Joseph Swanenburg, of Swedesford and Ship roads,
West Whiteland township. The book, "Over the Waters to Edinburgh Town"
was written by Dr. John M. Batten of Downingtown, who as a boy of 11 to
15 drove cattle for Reitenbaugh.

"Most farmers in Chester and Lancaster counties, fed cattle
on their farms between (in my recollection) 1845 and 1853, and
Adam Reitenbaugh was a heavy buyer of these cattle, which he
drove to and sold at the drove yard situated west of the
corner of Fortieth Street and Lancaster Avenue, Philadelphia,
every week. It was said that Reitenbaugh controlled the price

of cattle at the Philadelphia cattle market. Mark Connell, 'Biah Park and Matthew Anderson were partners of Reitenbaugh. Cattle that were left over after the market of Wednesday of each week were driven over to the market in New York the next week.

I drove cattle for Adam Reitenbaugh from 1847 to 1852. I usually came to Downingtown on Monday forenoon. At noon Adam would start me with the cattle toward the White Horse down the valley, seven miles from Downingtown. At every farm along the route my little drove would be increased, till it would count about thirty, when we turned them into the field at the White Horse. The lot of cattle would be further increased to about sixty the same evening, by what William Kerns brought from Lionville. The next morning, Tuesday, William Kerns drove up the rear and I led the front. The lot would be further increased to one hundred and twenty head between the White Horse and Howellville, when our lot was complete. We arrived at the Black Horse, three miles west of Philadelphia, Tuesday evening, twenty miles from White Horse.

The next morning, Wednesday, we delivered the cattle at the Ludwig's drove yard, Fortieth Street and Lancaster Avenue, where Adam Reitenbaugh shortly after our arrival there with the cattle, would pay me off, and I went home. Adam Reitenbaugh kept the White Horse and Henry Litzenberg the Black Horse. We, the boys, had a good deal of sport at these two taverns at nights, when we arrived there.

Adam Reitenbaugh's pocket book, which he carried in his inside vest pocket, was very noticeable, and to this may attention was often directed. It would be very dangerous now to make such a display of money on one's person. The name of the boy drivers that would meet at these inns were William Kerns, James Batten, John M. Batten, Robert Bailey, John Reynolds, Force Carey, Charles Bolston, and James Bones. In summertime we pastured the cattle but in winter they were fed hay, corn fodder and corn. The drivers would have to get out of bed about 3 a.m. to feed the cattle before putting them on the road. It would take about two hours to feed them. Cold mornings it was not very pleasant to load hay and corn fodder and break corn over the rim of a barrel, for over a hundred cattle."

Adam Reitnebaugh operated the tavern until 1854-55 when he gave it up and refused to take out a license. He sold this tavern property in 1866 for almost $31,000. Reitenbaugh died in 1867 and was buried at St. Paul's Episcopal Church cemetery, Glen Loch.