

3-19-1934

Historic Old White Horse Inn to Go On Auction Block

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In an area laden with history the White Horse Inn ranks with the finest of old buildings. In the hands of responsible owners the old house, spring house and blacksmith shop have weathered the years and retain many of the old touches which bespeak their heritage.

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Inside, the house is a delight to the historian. Pegs around the walls—for the use of such guests who were too dainty to place their clothing on the sanded floor—are still to be seen.

"A curious thing about the house was the precaution which was taken to resist any attack upon the inmates by the Indians in the event of an uprising, which was so much dreaded about the middle of the 18th century. To prevent being cut off from water, a wooden pipe or trunk was laid from the hill back of the house, conveying the water from a spring in the hillside through the cellar to a shallow well in front of the house to a pump which supplied the uses of travelers and teamsters; in case of necessity a plug could be withdrawn in the cellar and thus give an ample supply of water to the inmates without their leaving the sheltering walls of the house." This last is from the noted Historian Sachse.

"An old account of the Inn describes the table as being a split slab, supported by a round leg set in auger holes; the stools, three legged, made in the same manner; wooden pins stuck in the walls at the back supported some clapboard which served as shelves for the tables furniture. This consisted of pewter dishes, plates and spoons

but mostly of wooden bowls, trenchers and noggins; if the last ran short, gourds or hard shelled squashes made up the deficiency.

Monotonous Menu

The bill of fare at breakfast was usually coffee, hog and hominy, while potpie was the main standby for dinner. For supper, tea and coffee with mush and milk was the usual fare. During the Fall and Winter, however, there was no lack of venison and game. The neighboring valley hills furnishing an abundance of those luxuries. In the summer the products of the truck patch such as greens (beet tops) corn, pumpkins, beans and potatoes added variety to the almost monotonous menu.

"In Washington's campaign notes, and on the maps of the Hessians, reference is also made to White Horse Inn and it is so listed in the British Foreign Office.

"An extract from the journal of Governor Pownall in 1754 lists the Inns along the road and refers once again to White Horse 'in Whiteland'. In those days it was usual to list Inns according to the names of the owners but White Horse is mentioned repeatedly as such on numerous old maps.

"Thomas Paine in a letter to Benjamin Franklin also refers to being at White Horse, meaning the village wherein the Inn stood, now Planebrook."

When the Swannenburgs leave the property which they have farmed for so many years, they will also be leaving a great deal of American history behind them.

Inn Times - 2-18-1954



WHITE HORSE TAVERN at Frazer, west of Paoli, scene of the "Battle of the Clouds" is due to be auctioned on April 5. —(Harris Photo)

Rises In Assessments And Tax Rates Are Forcing Farmers Out Of Business

"Rises in assessments and an increased tax rate have made it unprofitable to farm, nowadays, and I'm going to sell out," explains Watson Swanenburg, an old-time Chester County farmer, when asked why he had decided to put the old White Horse tavern and 120 acres up at auction.

"Traiman Auction Co. will sell it off to the highest bidder. Cattle go on March 3 and the machinery and tools the next day. The old house, we've lived here for 43 years, and the farm is to be sold on April 5. That's-a Monday. There's just my wife and I left here now and the house is too big for the two of us. No, I don't have any idea where we'll go; sure hate to leave here after all these years.

"Guess maybe it'll be industrialized, though. Factory folks bought that section from me a while back, over where you see those iron girders going up.

"Heard that Malin Hall, down on 401 is up for sale, too. Yes, I guess it's because all those little prefabricated houses were put up right across the road. Was Famous White Horse"

"Oh, yes, this was the White Horse tavern. When we came here there was an old man about 80 years old who told us that when he was a boy

he saw the old bar right in the house and there was a line of carriage sheds up there along the road in front of the house.

"I sure hate to have to do it but farming simply doesn't pay any more."

The Swanenburg property is on Yellow Springs Road at Frazer just north of Immaculata College and only a stone's throw from the offices of the Philadelphia Memorial Park.

The locale is the beautiful Chester Valley, between the North and South Valley Hills. It was 24 "Golden Miles" from Philadelphia's Old City Hall at 2d and High Streets.

Neighbors are unaware of the rich historic traditions of the old house. In 1711 James Thomas, who owned almost all of the present town of Ardmore, sold out to his in-laws, the Llewellyns, and purchased a tract at Duffryn Mawr, the old name for this section.

In 1715 the Chester County Court granted him a license to keep a public house and on other occasions he was "taxed double", a certain indication of a tavern. Land records show he sold to Edward Kennison in 1722. Hambright operated the hostelry in 1735.

Scenes Of Indian Fight

In 1727 a group of passing Indians shot and killed Richard Thomas' cow there under the misapprehension it was some sort of fat deer. Thomas drove

them off with gunfire and rumors of an Indian uprising reached Philadelphia. Settlers at the Gulph petitioned the Colonial assembly for arms but that body, being Quaker-controlled, turned down the request.

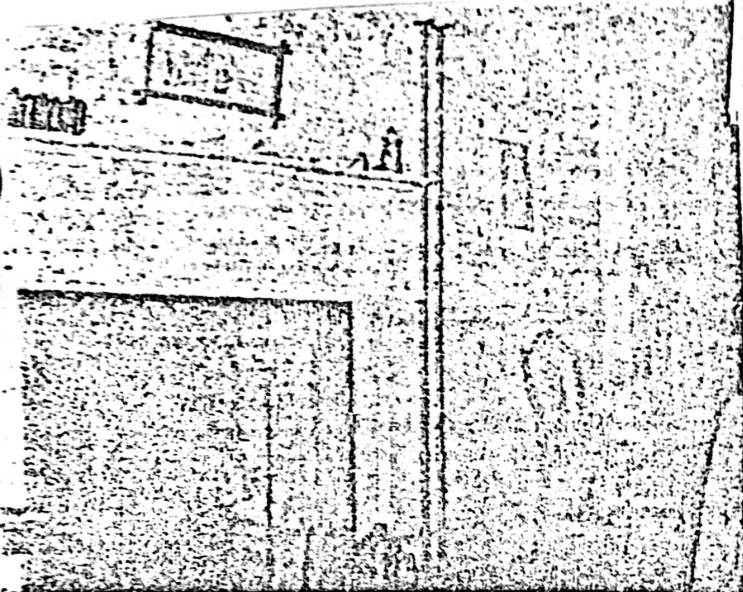
Lodge No. 9, Ancient York Masons, met there and it was an Army headquarters at the time the "Battle of the Clouds" was washed out by a autumn equinoctial cloudburst. After the "new" Lancaster Road was opened to traffic in 1795, it lost most of its clientele and became just a backwoods taproom. By 1817, when it was owned by Samuel Rittenhouse, it had fallen to the ignoble status of a drove stand.

In the face of a steady decline of rural population percentages, from 89.8 percent in 1790 to 29.4 in 1950, Chester County, with an area of 777 square miles has risen in population from 109,213 in 1910 to 159, 141 in 1950. During that same period assessment figures have practically doubled.

Rising Tax Burden

This results from increasing services that citizens are demanding from their local governments:

- (a) better roads
- (b) increased fire and police protection
- (c) development of public education
- (d) garbage and rubbish removal



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Fireplace At the Inn

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