

Inns Of Chester County

Two Inns In East Whiteland Sa

BY GRACE K. WINTHROP

The granddaddy of the early taverns in the Chester county area is "The White Horse" in East Whiteland township.

It was taxed as a "public house" in 1711. At this time the county was almost an unbroken wilderness this far



west. The house was a log structure sitting along a well-trod Indian path that led from the Schuylkill River to the Brandywine, (now the Swedesford road).

It was because of its situation that it became one of the most famous early inns. This spot was one of the most active centers between Philadelphia and Lancaster from 1730 to 1790. The Kings Highway, after 1733 known as the Lancaster road, branched off here. The Chester road terminated and intersected with the Lancaster nearby, and the Moorehall road going to Valley Forge terminated here.

The centering of these roads from earliest times was an advantage over almost any other tavern in the state.

With the increase in travel the tavern was enlarged around 1745 by adding a stone section at the eastern end. Years later, after the Revolution, about 1785, the log section was replaced with another stone section at the western side.

An old account of this inn describes the furnishings as: The table was a split slab supported by rough legs in auger holes, three-legged stools, pewter dishes, wooden bowls and noggins and even gourds were used.

The price of a drink of rum was three pence in 1741.

There were still Indians in this area up until the French and Indian War. They would stop at this tavern on their way into Philadelphia to trade furs.

They would ask for rum and sugar. If refused they would offer to shoot pennies for it. A penny then would be put on a stick, set up 30 to 40 yards, and the marksman would shoot at it with a bow

and arrow. If he hit he got the penny. He usually hit.

Although there is no record of Indians attacking the inn, the innkeeper knew this was a possibility and therefore had a wooden pipe system run from a spring in the back of the house through the cellar to a shallow well in front of the house. This was used by the teamsters and drovers. But in case of an attack, a plug could be pulled in the cellar and the occupants of the house could get water without leaving the house. This pipe was found much later by a new owner when renovating the house.

During the Revolutionary War this inn was right in the thick of things. In September 1777 General Howe's troops came through this area and cleaned out the inn. The owner filed a claim. The original claim for the losses, 199 Pounds cash, is in the possession of the Pennsylvania Historical Society.



Revolutionary Days Service

When the American Army went into winter quarters at Valley Forge three months later, the inn was selected as a stopping place and relay station for messengers between headquarters and York where Congress was in session. After the war the inn housed the members of the Great Valley Lodge of Free Masonry. This lodge became the most influential in the country until it succumbed to the Anti-Masonic crusade

around 1830.

The teamsters often could be seen on a long summer evening playing a game they called "Long Bullets" along the road in front of the inn. They would roll iron cannon balls down the road. The one who rolled the shortest ball would have to bring all the balls back and buy the longest roller a drink.

The inn was sold to a big cattleman in 1845. He would buy cattle from local

farmers and have drovers bring them into the innyard twice a week. They would take off at dawn the next morning with 50 or 60 head of cattle for the yards at 40th and Lancaster ave. in Philadelphia.

When the cattleman left the inn he sold it to a farmer who used the property as a private residence. The house still stands as a private residence today.

THE STEAM BOAT INN

This tavern was located on the north side of Lancaster turnpike in Glen Rock, East Whiteland township.

It was first registered as a tavern in 1790 by James Glenn.

The first postoffice for East White-

land and Frazer opened in the tavern in 1819, and the innkeeper was the first postmaster.

In 1857 the property was sold to Dr. David B. King as a private residence. Dr. William H. Gunkle, a well known county doctor lived and practiced

there. During the Civil War Dr. Gunkle was surgeon in charge of the 11th Corp Field Hospital.

In later years the house was used as a summer boarding house. It had many owners and little care and in 1954 it was demolished by the bulldozer.

