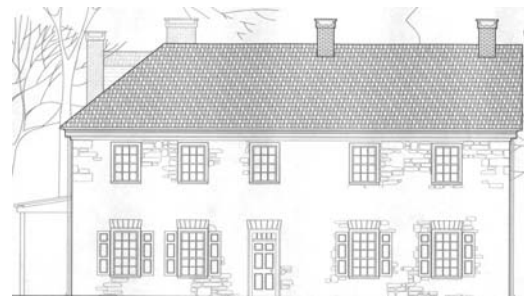


# *The Dill's Tavern Chronicle*

*Special Edition 2004*



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*Purpose: To promote and encourage the study, collection, and preservation of the historical heritage of the Northern York County area.*

## *A synopsis of The Old Stone House*

Midway between Gettysburg and Harrisburg, PA sits an old stone house that has a story to tell. For all recent memory, the true character of the house has been hidden by years of modifications and additions. Only now are the stories being told.

It began around 1742, over 30 years before our nation was founded, when Mathew Dill arrived from Monaghan, Ireland and acquired 504 acres here, near a spring. Sometime around 1750, his son, James built a simple square 2-story stone structure, though it was grand for its time and place. In fact, no other buildings in the area outside of the towns of York and Carlisle could boast such a treasure.

The frontier was a dangerous place in that time. Settlers were subject to Indian attacks and carving farms out of such an environment was a daunting task. But carve it he did. Soon "Dill's" became a landmark for travelers to find refuge from the elements. By 1758, he petitioned for and was granted a license to operate a tavern, a place for locals and travelers to find "entertainment," which in the 18<sup>th</sup>. century mind meant food and lodging.

For about a hundred-year period these establishments became the primary building blocks of the new nation. Travel by foot or horseback required a source of sustenance approximately every 8 to 12 miles and very few public places were yet built across the countryside. In fact, the local taverns became the civic centers as a place to meet others, exchange news, receive mail, attend church services, conduct trade, recover lost livestock, obtain medical care from traveling doctors, dance at a ball, and vote in an election.

Though no actual records of transactions at James Dill's Tavern in this era have yet surfaced (nor of his son John's later ownership), it was certainly typical of the period as recorded in other nearby taverns. The supporting farm operation was extensive and included many outbuildings and additional acreage requiring the labor of both indentured servants as well as slaves. Records do exist at the local church and at courthouses detailing Mathew's participation as an elder in the church as well as a captain in the volunteer militia and as a local justice. This was truly an eventful time in our nation's history, during both the early French and Indian War period and the later Revolutionary War as we sought and obtained independence. The area around what is now Dillsburg, PA contributed significantly to the birth of the nation, including raising, supplying, and transporting troops and materials. These records make fascinating reading.

We have extensive records of tavern transactions during the later periods of ownership, which include names of patrons, types and amounts of purchases and some fascinating diary-type entries. This era began in 1800 when Leonard Eichelberger, half brother of the owner of a famous restored tavern in York, the Golden Plough, bought the tavern. It then became known as "Eichelberger's Tavern." In addition to tavern and farm operations and expansion of the stone structure (during which time it began to be referred to as a "mansion farm and plantation"), Leonard continued his wheelwright, wagon making, and hauling trades.

The Eichelberger era of several generations through 1835 saw a huge increase in business. A well was dug outside the front door and other tenant farmhouses were built. A large distillery operation ensued to support the tavern as well as help local farmers convert their crops into cash. Whiskey was moved in hogsheads (250 gallon barrels) by multi-horse hitched wagons over rough roads to

Baltimore, MD. Return trips brought fish and oysters from the bay and all manner of imported goods like chocolate, sugar, molasses, buttons, combs, fish hooks, gunpowder, shot, and anything that could not be grown on the farm or made in local shops. A general store type operation evolved as the tavern trade slowly diminished due to faster overland travel.

Subsequent years saw ownership transfer through successive generations of daughters whose names became Welty, Coover, and Logan. Caroline and Helen Logan were the final private owners to use the Stone House as a residence. They operated an antique business on the premises until their deaths in the early 1960's. The building sat vacant but fully furnished for another 30 years and was only recently acquired by the Northern York County Historical and Preservation Society which is in the process of a museum-quality restoration.

The building has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places, for its significance as an example of an early tavern. It will become one of the few surviving taverns to be restored to its original condition and open to the public for interpretation of the huge role played by the tavern in the life of early America. This is truly a national landmark.

Men and women of the 18<sup>th</sup>. century were the builders. Their essence still lingers among the stones and rooms of the tavern they built. Come visit and touch the stones. Think of those men, ever cognizant of a hostile attack, while they mixed the mortar and laid each stone in place. Or perhaps sense the apprehension of a woman listening for noises in the night as she lay half awake and alone, after a full day of caring for her children, feeding the stock, and tending to the crops while her man went off to battle. These were brave and hardy people.

Now it is up to us, the men and women of the 21<sup>st</sup>. century to preserve their good works. In order to give the Tavern its rightful place in history we need your help. Additional funds are needed to complete the restoration that has begun. Tax deductible contributions are gratefully accepted by the Society. Simply designate, Dill's Tavern Fund on your check. Inquiries are answered including requests for tours and presentations to local organizations.

The Tavern committee thanks you for your support of Dill's Tavern.  
 Bob Eichelberger – Chairman, Mervin Ice, Larry Klase,  
 Joanne Klase, Connie Trostle, and Greg Wonders

### Join a Circle to Preserve Dill's Tavern and Its History

The Northern York County Historical and Preservation Society was gifted the funds to purchase the Dill Tavern on N. Baltimore Street. Now we must raise \$500,000 for the restoration of the property. Your donation is TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

*If/We would like to help by joining the:*

<i>Friends</i>	\$10 - \$ 99 _____	<i>Welty Circle</i>	\$1000 - \$4999 _____
<i>Logan Circle</i>	\$100 - \$ 499 _____	<i>Eichelberger Circle</i>	\$5000 - \$9999 _____
<i>Coover Circle</i>	\$500 - \$999 _____	<i>Dill Circle</i>	\$10,000 - _____

Place this name on my certificate for \$100 or more: \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Please print clearly.)

Donor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ St. \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Make out your check to NYCHAPS, designate, Dill's Tavern Fund, and mail to:  
 The Northern York County Historical and Preservation Society, 35 Greenbrier Lane, Dillsburg, PA 17019



