

The Dill's Tavern Chronicle

February 2006

Northern York County Historical and Preservation Society, 35 Greenbrier Lane, Dillsburg, PA 17019 Ph. 717- 502-1440



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

The History of the Second Eichelberger Era at the Old Stone House

It seems appropriate for the Chronicle to record the recent years of the “Old Stone House” history by those who lived it. In the January issue we learned from Mr. Vogelsong of his valuable role in its preservation. Now we are pleased to present Bob and Pam Eichelberger’s accounting of its existence while in their hands. In the future, we hope to receive a recounting of the Logan era (1930-1996) from some of their descendents.

The “Stone House” may be in existence today by divine intervention. When Bob and Pam first came into contact with it they had no idea they were connected to its history through Bob’s ancestors. The following is an account of their memoirs.

Bob and Pam Eichelberger 1996-2001

“Our ownership was relatively brief, but quite eventful. Our interest began with the auction of the house contents in 1990. On the auction sale sign we learned of a prior Eichelberger ownership. We attempted to learn more about those Eichelbergers, but hadn’t yet made the direct family connection during this time. However, it did pique our interest in the building.

It wasn’t until 1995 that we investigated the real estate sale sign near US15 and learned the stone house was indeed for sale as part of a 4-1/2 acre tract. It had nearly reached sale numerous times, but each time it was derailed by some event. The obstacle for us was a court-ruling that the property must be sold as a single parcel without subdivision. That made the price quite steep.

Thus began our plans. We would purchase the entire property, subdivide 3 acres of valuable frontage on US15 and use those proceeds to restore the house. It required all of our savings at the time and a mortgage on our home to make it happen. But we were determined to save the building, restore it to its former glory, and use it as our residence.

A long process of negotiation began since there were 19 heirs of the estates of Carolyn and Helen Logan as well as 2 trusts established by their wills. To their credit, the Logans had skillfully constructed things to favor ownership by family members as well as to force the building to be preserved. This, of course, wasn’t legally possible, but it did make the whole process quite complex. By settlement time in 1996, the heirs numbered 21. Finally, we were the proud owners, but our work had just begun!

We began work on 2 fronts on a nearly full time basis. First, we hired engineers, attorneys and real estate agents to

prepare the 3 acres for sale. We also worked with the borough to develop plans for their approval. Numerous prospective buyers came and went as ideas were floated, only to be deterred by limits of one type or another. Though the property was desirable due to its location on US15, it lacked access to the southbound lanes which limited the suitability for many types of buyers. With our need to sell the 3 acres, we considered many options for access, but none that would have destroyed the stone house or sold it to another buyer. We declined one very attractive offer for the entire tract because the buyer intended to tear down the house to make way for new development. We even obtained a price to move the house toward town. At 800 tons, the house would cost about \$100,000 to move 100 feet! Our costs continued to mount for the numerous plans, site designs, and traffic studies and at one point, we were even sued.

On another front, we spent hundreds of man-hours in personal work on the house and grounds, in addition to hiring help where necessary. We moved out, hauled away, or burned literally tons of household debris and trash of every type imaginable. We removed what seemed like miles of unsafe electrical wiring, plumbing, and steel steam pipes, 11 cast iron radiators, asbestos insulation, 2 old heating oil tanks, and a huge converted coal furnace. We demolished most 20th century “improvements” including the vestiges of the huge wrap-around porches, a shed-style addition in the rear, interior partitions, bathrooms, kitchen furnishings, one old winding staircase (which had been built in front of a fireplace) and enough plaster and lath to fill a barn.....not to mention our lungs! We opened 2 of the fireplaces that had been sealed behind brick and drywall. We then installed new underground electric service from the street and temporary wiring in the entire building. We also repaired the sewer line and the roof.

During that time we also maintained the lawn, shrubbery, trees, and field and had to deal with numerous instances of vandalism. We replaced glass in broken windows thus allowing birds and weather inside as well as repaired and secured doors from entry by trespassers. We removed paneling, scraped wallpaper and mopped and dusted for several open houses. We kept our enthusiasm by the architectural treasures we were discovering and the sense that our ancestors had spent considerable efforts in the same cause.

Over the 5 years, we forfeited sales to several banks, a couple restaurants, a classic car owners association, plus a few anonymous buyers. Ultimately, we sold the 3 acre lot on US15 to a Michigan-based home sales company.....a fortuitous buyer who did not require secondary access. This sale, however, caused further delays due to a requirement for a fully approved Sub-division plan, Land Development Plan, and Highway Occupancy Permit before the buyer would close. Interestingly enough, they have never used the parcel to this day.

During this time, we learned that several heirs of the estate had purchased items at the 1990 auction and wanted to sell them. We were successful in "buying back" some of the old tavern records and had generous gifts of some others. We also contacted the auction company in an attempt to learn the identity of some of the buyers in hopes of contacting them with our interest in purchase. The auction company was understandably unwilling to release that information. We are still hopeful that some of these items will resurface in the future. In these days of internet sales, we recognize that they may be half a world away by now.....but they can just as easily return!

After the sale of the 3 acres and 5 long years of trying to make a home in the "Old Stone House", we offered it to NYCHAPS. Though we had spent much more than was practical and were not in a financial position to donate it, we felt the next best thing for its preservation was ownership by the Society. We made the terms as generous as possible and ultimately, recovered most of our investment (as long as we don't count the investment of 5 years of our time).

Today, we are simply happy that we could be a small part in the buildings history and its preservation. We are much richer in friendships and stories learned for the time and energy spent. It is a very big part of our family history now. We are now comfortable in knowing that "this old house" will stand long after we are gone and we predict it will have a long and favorable impact on this community."



Once again we find another family in our area to whom we owe a great debt of gratitude. Was it Providence that brought them to the House? Whatever the reason, they contributed their time and considerable effort to retain the "Old Stone House."

A treasure for all to enjoy, Dillsburg and the entire northern York County area has been greatly enriched by their efforts.

This article was produced by the Chronicle editor.

You too can become an important contributor to the restoration of the great Dills Tavern.

ADD your name to those who are lending their time and monies to its preservation.

Just fill out the donation slip below and join a circle of folks who want to see our history live.

The Tavern Committee: Bob Eichelberger-Chairman, Merwin 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.

I/We would like to help by joining the:

Dill Circle \$10,000 - _____

Eichelberger Circle \$5000 - \$ 9999 _____

Wetty Circle \$1000 - \$4999 _____

Coover Circle \$500 - \$999 _____

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Place this name on my certificate for \$100 or more: _____
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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