

The Dill's Tavern Chronicle

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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.

It just gets better and better at Dill's!

An exciting new find at the Tavern



Who could imagine that after all these years, we could still find more treasure within these walls? Well, imagine no more! A very astute Donna Bert pointed out a scrap of material lying in a pile of other things in the 1819 kitchen. She recognized it as a very early textile. In recent years, it had been shuffled back and forth as work progressed from room to room and no one understood the true nature of it. Donna suggested a gentle cleaning and then an evaluation by someone more knowledgeable in the field.

We found the opportunity at the Historic Home Show in Philadelphia in January while displaying items from Dill's Tavern. We showed our find to Rabbit Goody of Thistle Hill Weavers in New York. To say that she was excited is like saying it's been a bit cool recently! She indicated that our find is very rare indeed! She plans to make a more thorough evaluation, but a preliminary investigation reveals some startling facts.

The photo shows one piece (about 2' by 3') of several in our possession which were originally part of a wall-to-wall carpet in our Tavern! It was made between 1770 and 1820 in America, probably close to Dill's. It is referred to as a Venetian Stripe, a reference to its style which originated in Italy and migrated to America in the 1700's. Virtually never found today intact, most building owners can only imagine how their floors were "dressed", but we are extremely fortunate to have this actual sample.



The warp thread is wool which makes it very durable. Hand woven and hand dyed with organic dyes, the yarn was furnished along with similarly dyed linen weft thread to a skilled weaver. The tight and rather ornate pattern of weaving suggests it was not woven on a home loom, but rather done on a skilled weaver's loom. We hope to find out more about how local that weaver may have been. These professional weavers either had their own shops where they received yarn for weaving or traveled from home to home.

After weaving single widths of fabric, they were then sewn together into large carpets and installed into rooms in a wall-to-wall fashion, even custom cut around hearths and similar changes in room shape. They were then tacked down along the walls to keep them in position. This created a warm floor for the winter and protected the wooden floor from excessive wear. They were then often rolled up in the spring and stored until the next fall.

Carpets of this quality were sometimes included in household inventories due to their value. They seldom left their point of original use however, and therefore, this carpet almost certainly saw its first and last use in Dill's or Eichelberger's Tavern prior to 1820! Though it has serious flaws after 200 years, it is in amazing condition. The colors remain quite vibrant, a testament to the durable homespun and dyes produced in those days. You can view it in color, either by viewing the photos on the web version of the Chronicle or by seeing the actual carpet remnant on display soon in the NYCHAPS barn. We also plan to have a future Society meeting to present more details about this truly magnificent find. Stay tuned!

Check the back page about 2 newly acquired items, 2 unique ways you can help, and a "don't miss" fun, learning opportunity presented by Sam McKinney.

18th Century Plates:



One other result of our trip to Philadelphia was the opportunity to purchase a reproduction of the type of creamware that was used in Dill's Tavern. Matching some of the shards found during archaeological investigations, we were able to acquire a single reproduction Rococo Twiffler made about 1780-1790 and a Scalloped Plate made about 1800. These plates will be displayed alongside the shards unearthed earlier in order to show one type of a plate that was in use at the Tavern in those times. The edge color is green.



Can You Help Us With Our Courtyard?



While we hope to be "open for business" in the spring, we do not yet have the courtyard paved with bricks. We are presently getting estimates for this work and don't know the total cost, but expect it to be well beyond our currently available funds. If you have the ability to help us with a major (or minor) donation to this feature, it will greatly extend the usefulness of our facility. Simply designate your contribution to this purpose. Thank you for your consideration.

Also, we are in need of more general reconstruction funds. Though substantial completion of the interior is in sight, much more work remains to be done and we have continued need for funds. If you are able, please consider a donation to help with the work.

Early Rope Beds Needed



Do you have an early rope bed in the attic that you don't know exactly what you will ever do with it? Well we have a suggestion! The tavern is looking for early rope beds to equip the bed chambers so that we can properly accommodate our overnight guests! We have many requests for rental of the tavern such as reenactment groups and many of those will plan on staying overnight in the tavern, just as travelers of old. To do that, we need more beds and that's where you come in. If you have one, please contact us to arrange for the donation. Claire Zeiders is currently engaged in making repairs and upgrades to those we have and making sure they are ready for use. As a fully functional facility with no "roped-off rooms", we will need at least 10 beds! So check your attics and basements and give us a call!

Preservation Workshops for 2007



Hugh "Sam" McKinney has recently announced a workshop to be held at Dill's Tavern. "Reproducing Early Pennsylvania Stonework" is a two day course intended to familiarize students with the basic skills of stone masonry as it was practiced in the 18th and early 19th centuries. A combination of class work, field trips and hands-on work, students will participate in construction of a stone base for a bake oven to be built for Dill's Tavern. Whether interested in learning masonry first-hand or just enough to knowledgeably speak about early masonry practices, this workshop is an ideal short course taught by a respected local authority and consultant. It also allows the student to soak up the atmosphere of the Tavern by staying overnight, cooking a meal in the fireplace, or just enjoying a conversation by the fire. It will be held May 24 and 25. Class size is limited. For details, contact Sam at Traditionalbldr@comcast.net or 432-4553.

While orchestrating the reconstruction of Dill's Tavern has been an overwhelming task, the Tavern Committee has pushed forth undaunted. Their reward is the marvelous joy and excitement of each new find and each new success. Now they are asking you to add to your life with the input of this same joy and excitement. Come join them with your time or your financial contribution.

The Tavern Committee: Bob Eichelberger-Chairman, Mervin Ice, Larry Klase, Joanne Klase, Connie Trostle, and Greg Wonders