

The Dill's Tavern Chronicle

June 2008

www.dillstavern.org

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.

\$5000 and a Trip to Eastfield Village, NY

The Accounting of the Trip is offered by Sam McKinney

Earlier this year, Bob Eichelberger, Jon Mehl, a restorer of 18th Century furniture and a friend of mine, and I took a road trip to Eastfield Village in Nassau, New York. It is the home of Don Carpentier a renowned antique collector and authority on early trades and architecture. He started at age fifteen to drag antiques and then whole buildings back to his father's farm. Now fifty six he has over 20 buildings filled with one of a kind antique collections. His tin shop holds a complete collection of period tin tools. The print shop has a huge early printing press and one of the largest collections of early type in the country. Other buildings include a huge Greek Revival church, a doctor's office, a number of small houses, blacksmiths shop, country store, many small period outbuildings, and a massive tavern, namely the Briggs's Tavern which was the inspiration for the Dills Tavern project.

For 30 years, Don has offered classes in early American building trades. I took a lot of his workshops, and we often worked on the Briggs Tavern during those classes. When I took the flat wall plaster class, we plastered two rooms in the tavern. In other classes we did trim repairs, siding, slate roofing, and period painting. After a number of years, the Briggs Tavern was completed. Don filled the tavern with period furniture, rope beds, a complete 18th Century kitchen to cook in, and it became the home of the students when they came to his school. I always enjoyed staying at the tavern, but I thought it was too bad the general public couldn't experience what early tavern life was like. (You can't visit Eastfield unless you take a class.) So when I started working on Dills Tavern, I hoped it could be something like Don's. I asked a group of people from NYCHAPS to travel to Eastfield with me and see Briggs Tavern. They did and they liked the concept of an inter-active museum, where you could use the building and the contents. That group experience launched the Dills Tavern experiment as you see it today.

Last summer, while teaching a class at Eastfield on early taverns I presented our restoration of Dills Tavern to other lecturers from Deerfield Village, Gatsby's Tavern in Virginia and others. At that time Don mentioned he would sell us some items from his collection for our Tavern. Don doesn't sell a lot of his better things, so I was happy to take him up on his offer. Because Jon has a great deal of knowledge of early American furniture and other accessories, I thought he would be a help to us. NYCHAPS gave us \$5000 for shopping. My guide lines included: Items must be something that would have been used in our area in that time period. They must be items that can be used at the tavern today and they can't be too delicate, too rare, or too expensive.

After five straight hours of driving we reached Eastfield, ate our lunch, met up with Don and grabbed our flashlights. In the Briggs Tavern attic we search through masses of tables, chairs, chests, spinning wheels, cast iron ware, picture frames, all piled up on top of each other. There were so many items it was nearly impossible to decide, but we slowly chose some things to put in the buy pile.

The Dills sale inventory from 1815 mentions three spinning wheels and one wool wheel. Don had 5 or 6 spinning wheels. Most of them were complete. One wheel was very early and had original paintwork on it. I wanted to get it but it had a flaw on one side. Should I buy a wheel that wasn't perfect, even though it was a beautiful example of craftsmanship otherwise? I couldn't do it so we settled on a complete but less exciting wheel. Another goal was antique tin ware. We hardly have any at the tavern and they were a common part of everyday life. We found a foot warmer with a punched tin design of hearts on the sides, a nice candle stand with an attached snuffer, and a pewter gill measure. Gill is pronounced "jill" and was a measure used to dole out alcoholic drinks in a tavern. We also acquired a hatchel bench. These are the items pictured below.



A hatchel bench is used to process linen. It has a collection of sharp spikes that act as a comb. You drag raw linen plant fibers over the spikes to break them up into usable fibers. This bench has two sets of spikes. One is finer than the other and can be used to produce a

better grade of flax fiber. It sits upstairs in our Tavern hall now. I grabbed a large tin wash basin to put on our pile, but Don made me put it back because he uses it under a leak in the roof.

After looking through the Briggs Tavern attic we went to the Print shop attic then on to Don's 1790 Store building. That attic was also full of 'stuff.' The predominant items found in this area were early display cases. However, overhead was a large frame made up of 3"x3" wood rails. It is 12" long or so, painted red and the rails are curved on each end. I asked Don "What's that?". He said: "You will want that. It was a frame used to roll barrels in and out of a tavern cellar." I did want it, but it wasn't going to fit in Jon's mini-van. We will get it when I have my pickup truck up there some time in the future. In the 1st story of the store, Don had another interesting piece of equipment we could use. It was a heavy duty hand truck for moving barrels. It had heavy cast iron wheels and a mortise and tennon oak frame. The iron work on it was all hand forged. We thought it would go well with our tavern. So it came home with us.



Next we got a boring but necessary stand to hold a wooden washtub. It holds a washtub up at a workable height so a servant or housewife can accomplish this chore. Not very romantic, but it is the kind of everyday thing needed to show what life was like. Another item we picked out was a simple three legged stool painted red. It was time to head home now, so we paid Don and packed up the van. The total we spent was around \$1100.00. We had hoped to find more than we ended up with, but our limitations made that difficult. I am sure Don has more stuff packed away that we didn't see. I will spend more time going through the rest another time.

It took us 5 ½ hours to get home. Jon and I talked straight through. We returned to Dills Tavern and unloaded our finds around 9:00 PM. I was tired but I felt great.

Every time I go to Eastfield I learn so much. I got to see so many interesting things. A lot of them were one of a kind. Don is a great guy, and he has taken a real interest in helping us develop our tavern. I always enjoy seeing him, whenever I can. Bob and Jon were great company. I think they had fun too. It is a great thrill for a guy like me to restore a big building like the tavern, but it is an absolute delight to get a chance to buy things that bring the time period to life. Especially, things that visitors can touch and use and get a better sense of what it was like to run Dills Tavern in that period.



♪ **Benefit Concert to be performed by John Eakin** ♪ **July 20 - 6pm**

Once again our annual concert event will be graced by the highly talented John Eakin, on Violin, and his Friends.

This is the 5th. year these talented musicians have presented a concert for our restoration project. It is a rain or shine event. The \$10 tickets will be sold at meetings and public events through June and July.

Included in the price will be an ice cream social after the concert donated by Homer and Sylvia Myers.



Annual Dinner Raffle tickets will be available starting at Publick Tyme and at every event until November. The Dinner will be served on November 8, 2008

The Tavern Committee:

Bob Eichelberger-Chairman, Mervin Ice, Larry Klase, Joanne Klase, Connie Trostle, and Greg Wonders
Web Site www.northernYorkHistorical.org

E-Mail Address nychaps@northernYorkHistorical.org