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MS 76 Box 8 Notebook 17 - The Kanawha Road

Fred Bussey Lambert

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MS 76
BX 8
NBK 17

Kanawha Road



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With all the bad roads which the early pioneers were under the necessity of using, one would imagine that men would remain at home, and thus avoid the unpleasantness, and inconvenience of travel; yet, anyone, who has ever had access to the early records, diaries, and writings, of our forefathers, cannot fail to be impressed, with the number of persons journeying, over the mountains, and elsewhere.

It is probably true, that the absence of newspapers, and ready means of communication, made people more inquisitive, at that early day than now. This travel made it necessary, that "Houses of Entertainment" be established, at more, or less regular intervals; otherwise, the general public would be under the necessity, of caring for the travel, from the glowing accounts it often read, of the hospitality, of the early pioneers, we would infer that every home was open, to anyone who might chance to pass through. Therefore, we are surprised to find these Houses of Entertainment so widely distributed, as an examination of the County Court Records, would indicate. The writer has carefully examined the records of Cabell County, for several years from 1814, and finds this statement to be correct.

The law required every person, who wished to keep a tavern, to obtain a license, from the County Court, and to enter into bond and security. The following is a copy of one of the records granting a license; to Thomas Morris, in 1814: "On the motion of ordinary in the Town of Barboursville at the house now occupied by Ben Maxey, who thereupon, with Cadwallar Chapman, his security, came into Court and gave bond, as the law directs". The earlier County Court records are misplaced.

The license fee was usually about \$18.00 per year, and proportionately less, for a shorter time.

The records show that Peter Dirting, (now spelled Dirton) was granted such a license, in 1814. He was jailer also, but died about 1815, and his widow, Elizabeth Dirting, continued to keep an ordinary, at her house, in Barboursville, for several years. In 1815, licenses were granted to John Everett, Samuel Short, Jeremiah Ward, Thomas Morris, Adam Black, George Chapman, John McConahan, John Morris, June and Joseph McGonigle.

Jeremiah Ward lived in Somewhere, in the region of Four Pole Creek; Thomas Morris lived in Barboursville, John McConahan in Guyandotte; Adam Black lived just above the present Town of Ona; while John Morris lived on the road, a few miles above Ona. Adam Black continued to keep ordinary for years, although it is not certain he kept one all the time. In fact, he was keeping a hotel and stage stand, in a building yet standing, about three miles below Milton, up to the Civil War. John Y. Chapman kept, in Guyandotte and Ben Maxey, in Barboursville. In 1817, Ben Maxey, Phillip Baumgardner, Elizabeth Dirting, William McComas, June and Thomas Morris, were all keeping in Barboursville. In 1818, James Conner, who lived in the valley, near Culloden, got a license, where he continued to keep, for some time, while John Shelton was licensed to keep "at a brick house he rented of Thomas Ward, in Barboursville, on the north east corner of Main and Center Streets.

The county Court had the legal right, to fix the ordinary rates, in this county, but, as usual, except, that lodging was 12- $\frac{1}{2}$ ¢, oats and corn 12- $\frac{1}{2}$ ¢ per gallon, horse, standing in hay all night, 12- $\frac{1}{2}$ ¢. Cordial, cherry bounce and gin 18- $\frac{1}{2}$ ¢ per half pint. The Court seemed to forget to fix the rates, on this occasion, for "Whiskey and Peach Brandy, but a little later, they were fixed them, at 18- $\frac{3}{4}$ ¢ per half pint, peach brandy, per ditto 18- $\frac{1}{2}$ ¢. On page 215 of this same record, we find whiskey could be sold at \$2.00 per gallon the best wine and peach brandy, at \$6.00 per gallon, while meals were 25¢ each.

It is not likely that these rates were always charged, as they

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were the maximum. Nearly all the old men with whom the writer has conversed on the subject, insist that liquor could be had at a very much cheaper rate, in their day. Long before this in 1802, the County Court of Kanawha County had established a rate of 8-1/3¢ for lodging, meals 25¢, whiskey per half pint 10¢ #1 peach brandy 12-1/2¢ Beer, or cider, per qt. 10¢.

Stepher Teays settled at Coalsmouth about 1800, "on the lower side thereof. Here he established a ferry, and kept an Inn and worked on his farm, and entertained the travel, which was then from and to the Ohio River, at Gallipolis and Point Pleasant. Later, his son, James T. Teays, came and settled where the turnpike crossed Coal River, in 1831, and built a small two-story frame hotel. When Judge Lewis Summers made his tour, from Alexandria to Gallipolis, he makes the following note: "Tavern kept by Tyree; pretty good house." This was Richard F. Tyree, who, it is claimed, kept the first House of Entertainment in Lewisburg.

Probably the most celebrated tavern, on the whole route, with the possible exception of the one, at White Sulphur Springs, was Callaghans, of whom more anon. He came, at a very early time, and left his name perpetuated by Callaghan station, on the C&O. Railroad, near which he was located.

John Hansford moved to the Kanawha River below Paint Creek, in 1799, and built the first frame house on the Kanawha River. He kept a House of Entertainment, and was militia Captain and also a magistrate. Henry Clay and Henry Banks, land speculators, members of the Legislature, and the Congress, and travelers generally, stopped there. They had muster rolls each year, spring and fall. Here, from all parts of the county, the militia would gather. Mr. Hansford made peach and apple brandy, and let it age. After the muster practice, he would roll out a barrel of brandy, and then purposely disappear, as the sequel did not fully accord with the dignity of the official position. The fighting would commence. The amused themselves, by what was known as "gouging," in a process of fighting with nails, purposely trimmed sharp. Such were the mountain taverns, before the building of the Kanawha Road. They had their origin in the very necessities of the time. From the list of names of these early taverns, it seems that almost every backwoodsman was a tavern keeper. This indicates that there was considerable travel in that early day, and also, that money was scarce. (The early landlords differed from those of a latter day, in that they were not tavern keepers by profession. They were hunters, farmers, and ferry keepers, as well. Aside from the fact that they kept liquor for sale, they made little, or no extra preparation for their guests. Reminiscence of Alvah Hansford.

The travel was of a transient and spasmodic nature, and, if one house should be overcrowded, the doors of all the others were open. Most of the buildings, even in the towns, were of logs. Almost in the center of Barboursville until a few years ago, an old log dwelling was standing yet, a reminder of the days, when only the wealthy could afford better buildings. The traveler, who chanced to stop at one of these first ordinaries, found little to distinguish it, from an average mountain cabin. The food consisted of whatever the season afforded; molasses of homemade sugar, game, fruit, in the natural state, or dried, but never canned.

Pumpkin and beans, bried in strings over the fire, formed the bulk of the food. This, with the corn bread, made of meal, ground at the little water mills, was a meal fit for a king. At night, it was no uncomming thing for a guest and his family to occupy the same room, as sitting room and bedroom, tell their hunting and Indian stories, and drink liquor from the same demijohn.

After the building of the pike, the Inns took on a more mercenary character. The landlords were no longer, to the same

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The Charleston Hotel stood "in the center of the beautiful village of Charleston and immediately on the bank of the Great Kanawha River, nearly opposite the steam-boat landing". George Spottswood was the proprietor. At first it was a stage stand, but a change was made to Major Ruffner's, about a mile and a half above town. Mr. Spottswood adroitly calls attention to the fact that the "charges at stage establishments are sometimes unreasonable", and "hopes the removal of the stages will not prevent those desirous of resting a few days, and awaiting a boat from putting up at his house. Charges are

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Most of the advertisements for these old Houses of Entertainment were of a condescending nature. In 1830 C. W. Dreckslor opened the Saline Hotel at the Salines, 6-½ miles east of Charleston. He had "extensive stabling provided with wholesome hay, corn and oats and careful ostler. "By strict attention to the comvort of tavelers he hopes to merit a share of public patronage". "Separate rooms for the accomodation of private families always in readiness". This was to accomodate the local travel to the Salines, as it was too close to Ruffner's to be a stage stand, a hach would run to Charleston morning-and evening.

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notice the condescension, of the landlords. Said one: "The mountain taverns are moreover, exceedingly hospitable, and attentive, with a full measure of "Yankee curilosity." Kanawha Banner, Jan. 7, 1831.

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