TAVERNS AND THEIR PATRONS

BEFORE RAILROADS WERE MAIN CHANNELS TURNPIKES OF TRANSPORTATION

EMIGRANTS GOING WEST LODGED OVER NIGHT AND DRIVERS OF WAGONS LOADED WITH FREIGHT PUT UP FOR A FEW HOURS REST –

e only avenues of trade be-
en the waterfront and the
before the. railroads were
, were turnpikes, and the
isterstown and Westminster
npike was one of the main
nnels over which the long
ravans of covered wagons,
ded with the products of the
t, journeyed to Baltimore
m Pittsburgh and Wheeling,
and returned loaded with merchandise for the frontier men.

People who sought a home in the West traveled over the national routes, and with their worldly possessions stowed in the wagons, would trudge along beside them, the women and children riding. At nightfall, when the tired teams would reach the taverns, there to join with scores of others, an animated scene was presented. Drivers were unharnessing their horses and making "confusion worse confounded," until the watering and feeding of the animals finished, they would partake of their suppers and join in the sports for the night.

A tavern on the line of traffic was a source of profit, and although there was a tavern for almost each mile of turnpike, they all flourished.

From the records available it appears that about 1830 there were no less than five taverns in Reisterstown, not to mention those scattered here and there in other sections of the county, including the old hotel at Towson.

At the intersection of the Westminster and Hanover turnpike was Ducker's Tavern. It was owned by Captain Jeremiah Ducker, who was also one of the leading merchants and landowners in town. He was one of the old defenders, having served as captain of a company of militia in the War of 1812, participating in the battle of North Point.

Following the turnpike, the next tavern was located where the hall is now situated. This tavern was in charge of George Fisher.

"Forney's" was a household word with the traveling public, for its reputation reached from Baltimore to Pittsburgh. It was located on the Reisterstown pike, north of Chatsworth avenue, and was dismantled about thirty years ago.

It was always under the management of the Forneys, who catered to the wealthier class of visitors.

These were the days when trolley cars were unknown, and intercourse with the city was by private conveyance or by the four- horse, leather spring mail coach. The fashionable people of Baltimore hied to "Forney's," sure of enjoying hospitalities obtainable nowhere else outside of Baltimore. Among the prominent guests who have been entertained there, were General Lafayette and Hon. Henry Clay, events which contributed to local pride.

The "Yellow Tavern" was located on the site of the present Central Hotel. This was one of the oldest taverns between Westminster and Baltimore, and was quite popular.

The "Yellow Tavern" was always a popular stopping place for the market wagons that journeyed from the Blue Ridge to Baltimore, and many wonderful "stories" have been told around the old-fashioned ten-plate stove that gave warmth to the travelers while storms raged without.

Where the postoffice is now located, and including the grounds of the Gore and Stocksdale properties was the Sumwalt Tavern. It was owned by Mr. Sumwalt, who was also one of the largest land owners in the town.

Passing out of Reisterstown, the next tavern was William King's, now known as Hooper property, which closed its doors about the beginning of the Civil War.

The "Calico" House, or the Fourteen Mile House, came next. It is still standing, though long ago went out of business as a tavern. It is said of William Dwyer, the manager of this tavern, that when his bed time arrived, he would put the decanter of whiskey and a pitcher of water on the bar counter, and telling the guests to help themselves, would retire, and woe to the one who dared to disturb his rest.

"Great's" was the next on the turnpike. With the decline of custom it closed its doors as a tavern and was remodelled, becoming a handsome private residence, and is now owned by Mr. Gilmore.

The "Eight Square House," near Owings Mills, was run by Daniel Shugars. It has long since passed out of remembrance as a tavern, and is now the property of H. Y. Dolfield.

The tavern at Owings Mills was known as Conn's, who conducted it for a long time and sold out to Henry Filch, who conducted a tavern and store, finally closing out as travel diminished.

These taverns of Reisterstown and vicinity sheltered the travelers of the older days, and contributed to the prosperity of the community. Only the oldest inhabitants remember them, and they recall the days when the streets of Reisterstown were all day long filled with trains of loaded wagons passing to and fro. Regular transportation lines were maintained to transport goods from the West over the turnpikes. Long lines of old-fashioned Conestoga wagons, drawn by from four to six horses, daily wended their way between these points, loaded with flour, leather and other goods and produce, to be unloaded at the water's edge in Baltimore and returned loaded with dry goods, groceries, and other things for people along the Ohio River. The owners of these teams followed them in old ramshackled buggies, stopping from place to place, trading horses and indulging in all kinds of sports. The hired drivers would have a joll ytime as their employers. When time came to retire they would unload their bedding on the tavern floors and turn in for the night.

In the winter farmers along the route would put extra teams on the road and engage in the transportation of merchandise. These teams were known as "militia," and were held in derision by the regular teamsters. The roads were kept in good condition, and a trip between Baltimore and Pittsburgh took from two to three weeks.

Emigrants going west used this method of transportation, and often a hundred or more men, women and children would take turns in riding and walking on or beside two or three of these wagons, on which would be loaded their boxes and luggage, whiling away the time in singing and merry-making, as they trudged along.

At night the large tavern yards would be filled with wagons, the horses haltered to either side of long troughs filled with feed, there to remain during the night, while the tired drivers joined in the fun long into the night.

It was no uncommon sight to see from fifty to a hundred of these canopied wagons lined on either side of the turnpike, leaving only passage room for vehicles to pass.

With the completion of the B. & O. R. R. to Wheeling, this means of transportation rapidly passed away, and with the withdrawal of the four-wheeled freighters from the turnpikes, the glory of the old taverns passed away. The modern hotel, with its improved methods, has been evolved from the old-time county tavern.

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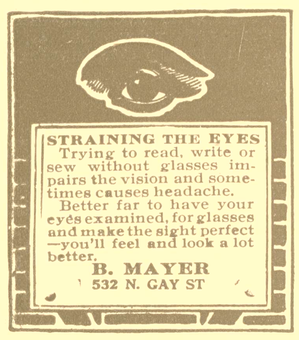
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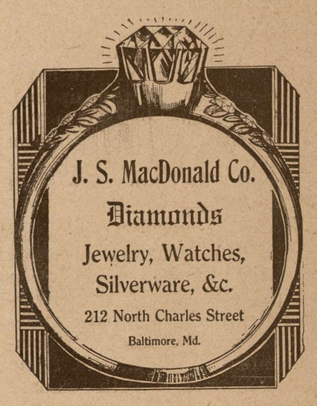
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