

The Journal Messenger

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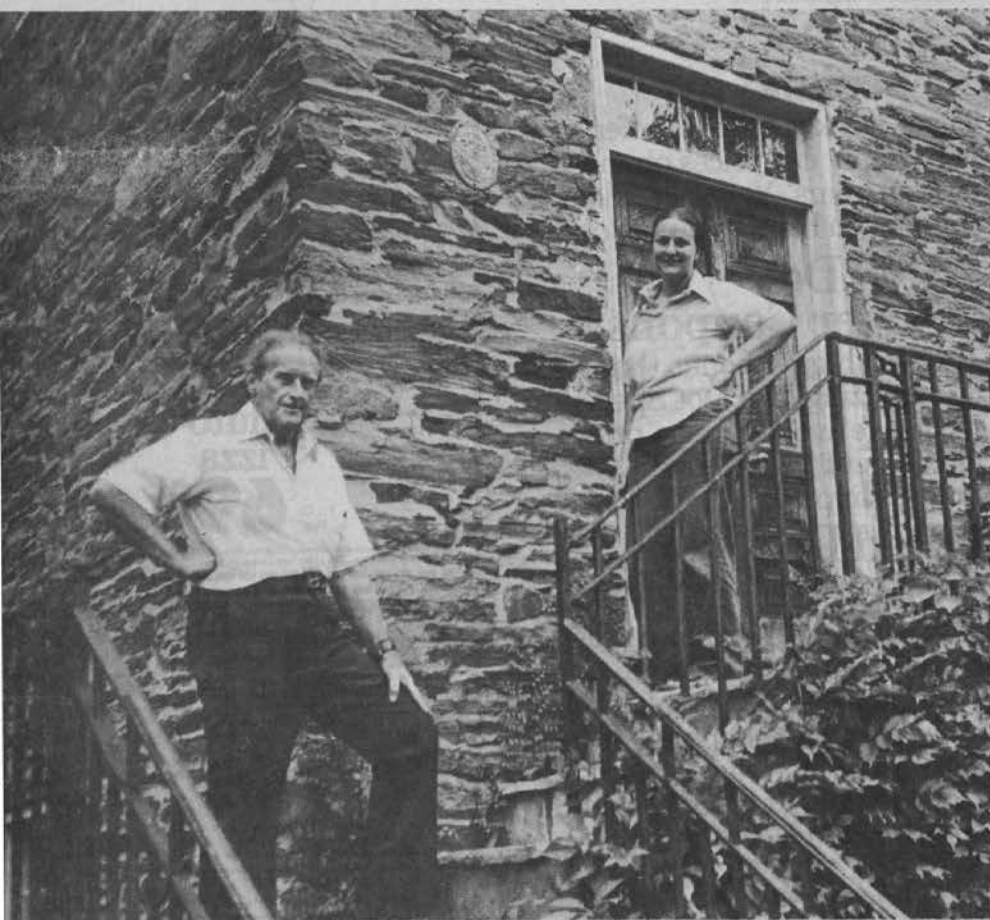
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Randi Deiotte-The Journal Messenger

Thomas and Elizabeth Ashe at historic Buckland Tavern

History, Progress In Zoning Clash

By RANDI DEIOTTE
JM News Editor

History and progress confront each other tomorrow (Tuesday, July 5) when the Prince William Board of County Supervisors considers an application for neighborhood business zoning on U.S. 29-211 just west of the 185-year-old "town" of Buckland.

At issue is a 1.85-acre agricultural parcel owned by Robert I. and Laura M. Kennedy (for which Maximilian A. Tufts is the contract purchaser). The applicant proposes to build initially a 2,500 square foot "country living store" of Virginia post and beam construction. The store, according to Tufts as quoted in the county's planning staff report, would sell "high quality items associated with country life such as...fishing gear, outdoor clothing, woodstoves, crafts, plants, bird feeders and other specialty country items."

The applicant's revised rezoning proposal reduces the area from 6.09 to 1.85 acres, reduces the amount of road frontage, reduces the number of entrances to one and excludes all special permit uses in the B-2 zone.

The proposal has a favorable recommendation by the planning staff and a 6 to 0 recommendation for approval from the Prince William Coun-

ty Planning Commission.

But according to Thomas Ashe Jr., owner of historic Buckland Tavern which lies about 1,000 feet east of the proposed store, and his daughter, Elizabeth, 70 percent of resident homeowners of the Buckland community "don't want and don't need" the country living store and see it as a threat to their historic community. "It's quite unlike me" to be cast in the role of an adversary," says Ashe, a mild-mannered man who thinks and then speaks with conviction.

"But there comes a time to speak up for something...If we didn't, we'd be kicking ourselves for the rest of our lives," he said.

Ashe says he has collected the signatures of 116 homeowners within a one-mile radius of the proposed store. "It's not just a little group on Buckland Mill Road," the main street of the community on either side of U.S. 29-211, Ashe said.

He says he did not ask tenants nor those related to the applicants nor those who stand to gain from the rezoning should it be approved. "I didn't get them off the street. It took me a week to gather them."

He said he was surprised at the response. He said he thought he'd ask a few and probably be turned down

and then probably give up. Upon learning about the petition, others have come by the house to sign, he said. "They were anxious to sign," he said.

Ashe, at the urging of his daughter, Elizabeth, outbid the Prince William Historical Commission and Dorothy Abbott, secretary to the Prince William Circuit Court judges, to buy Buckland Tavern at a court-ordered auction for \$41,150 in August, 1975.

A builder and antique dealer, he spent two years restoring the uninhabitable structure (sometimes called the Tavern of the Three Generals...General Washington, General Lafayette and General Tom Thumb, according to the Pioneer America Society). And he and his wife, Mary Elizabeth, presently live there.

Their daughter, Elizabeth, a nurse at Fauquier Hospital, has recently purchased another house within the Buckland "town" boundaries and has undertaken its renovation.

"This is one (rezoning) that could go either way. I'm glad there are seven people making the final decision," said Planning Director Roger Snyder.

The planning staff recommended denial of the original application. But See "ZONING" on A-3.

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Zoning

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it changed its recommendation to approval when the applicant revised his proposal. "Our obligation is to call it as we see it as professionals before there is any citizen input," Snyder said.

The staff feels there is a natural geographic boundary between the "town" which is no longer incorporated and the proposed commercial site because of a rise in the topography, Snyder said.

The difference in elevation and 1,000 feet distance should provide an adequate buffer for the residential uses at Buckland and would make a natural zoning boundary for future commercial uses, should any occur, the staff report said.

Snyder said the Prince William Historical Commission is not among the county agencies which regularly receive rezoning proposals for review and comment and did not receive this proposal.

There's an "informal understanding" that a planning staff member monitors "what's in the mill" and brings anything on the list of historical places that might be threatened to the Commission's attention, Snyder said. The Historical Commission has placed a historical

marker on Buckland Tavern.

Perhaps a "more formalized" procedure is in order, the planning director suggested.

He also noted that there is a only one "perc" location for a septic system which the staff believes will be a limiting factor to development.

The Ashes say residents of the community moved out to the country to get away from commercial uses. "If

they want to go to the store they can go to Manassas or to Warrenton," Ashe said. During a walking tour of the area between the proposed store and Buckland Mill Road, along Elizabeth Street, Ashe points out the residences that he says are in the "buffer zone."

The public hearing on the proposed rezoning is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. in the supervisors' board room in Manassas tomorrow.