



Talmadge Rutledge-The Journal Messenger

Thomas and Mary Elizabeth Ashe in front of Buckland Tavern

Rosehead Nails Put to Good Use In Tavern Restoration Project

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JM Special Writer

He saved the rosehead nails for 25 years. The waiting went beyond the fact that the nails had been hammered by a blacksmith in 1742—beyond intrinsic value.

Thomas J. Ashe Jr. said he just had not found the right place to use them. Until 1975, that is, when he bought Buckland Tavern. Legend has it that the tavern catered to generals George Washington, Tom Thumb and Lafayette's appetites.

Now the stone building on Buckland Mill Road, off U.S. 29-211, has a T-shaped wooden addition as it did in Washington's day—the boards pounded together by those centuries-old rosehead nails.

When Ashe bought the old tavern, all that remained of the original wooden structure was a chimney that marked where fireplaces once stood, and members where the wooden frame had connected to the stone facade.

"We don't know what happened to the original wooden addition," said Ashe, who took two years and pieces of several other older buildings to make Buckland Tavern habitable for his family.

"I tried to make it as much like its original appearance as possible." He believes he has succeeded with about 95 percent of his goal.

The Ashes added two rooms that were not a part of the original building—a basement family room and an additional second floor bedroom.

Within the addition where once a porch stood, the Ashes now cook their meals. The kitchen floor and beams were once part of a 150-year-old farm house near Flint Hill. Ashe said he bought the farm house, which had fallen into disrepair, to use as material for the wooden addition. A mantle for one of the fireplaces in the new addition came from his wife's father, who acquired it from what was once the oldest house in Fauquier County,

built in 1720.

Ashe jokingly says the current addition may be older than the original, adding that the determination to make the house as authentic as possible led to his instructing the plasterers to do a bad job in the addition to match the rest of the house.

He also had local carpenters Edward Foster, Tyler Laing and Phil Burke—who helped with the rest of the house—do the stone work in the basement family room to match the other portions of the basement.

"This was my first experience at restoration. It's dirty work, but a lot of fun," Ashe said, although he's been a contractor for a quarter of a century. He sold antiques for several years while residing in Maryland.

"I've always been interested in old things." In the yard, below a log cabin he transported from Bull Run Mountain, sits a testimony to this love—a Model-T Ford he bought

when he was 24.

But, it was his wife, Mary Elizabeth, with the help of their daughter, Elizabeth, that brought Buckland Tavern into the Ashes' possession. "I found out later she told my daughter not to let me leave the auction without buying that house," he says.

Mrs. Ashe says she felt a kinship with the area she passed so frequently when she went to Warrenton to visit relatives of her great-grandfather, Joseph H. Nelson, who fought beside the Southern Civil War hero, General Mosby.

"I would not have bought it to live in if it had not been an old tavern," admits Ashe.

The Ashes plan to join the Fauquier Historical Society, and continue to landscape their land—using antiques of course.

Ashe said he would like more background history about Buckland Tavern. Anyone with information is urged to call him at 754-4231.