



—Washington Star Photographer Geoffrey Gilbert

Buckland Tavern awaits a new owner when the auctioneer's hammer falls tomorrow.

Bills Put a Bit of History on the Block

By Lee Flor

Washington Star Staff Writer

The historic Buckland Tavern near Gainesville, Va., which has seen flowery celebrations and has heard the screams of wounded and dying soldiers, will fall beneath the auctioneer's hammer tomorrow.

At 11 a.m. the old fieldstone tavern, long since converted to a residence, will be sold to pay the nursing home bills of its most recent owner, Grace M. Bear.

MRS. BEAR bought the old tavern-house in the early 1940s and spent a lot of time and money restoring it. When she became ill five years ago, she moved to a Manassas nursing home. She will not be able to attend the auction tomorrow.

"We're all hoping the old house brings a good price for Mrs. Bear's sake," said James Young, who has lived in Buckland for the past 14 years. "Also, we'd like to have a nice neighbor again."

The tavern's chief claim to fame is that it was the scene of a ceremonial dinner in 1825 in honor of the Marquis de Lafayette, who at 67 was the last surviving major general of the American Revolution.

Lafayette was only 19 when he served as a general under George Washington at Valley Forge. He later led a division in Washington's Army, obtained French funds for the American Revolution and acted as a

liaison between French military forces and the American army.

AFTER THE victory over the British at Yorktown the American Congress made him an American citizen, and the Virginia legislature also declared him to be a citizen of Virginia.

The French aristocrat who had used his personal fortune to finance a revolution in a far-away and strange country, had become impoverished by 1824, when he was invited to visit the United States.

For Americans, it was like seeing a legend come alive. All over the country a spontaneous outpouring of emotion and patriotism welcomed the old soldier.

In the spring of 1825 Lafayette was visiting Washington and made numerous visits and trips into the Virginia countryside. Route 29-211 then was known as the Alexandria-Warrenton Turnpike, according to a Works Progress Administration (WPA) history compiled during the Depression.

AT THAT TIME the stone building at Buckland, on the banks of Broad Run Creek, was a wagoners' tavern where travelers could water and rest their horses while they had dinner.

Throngs of people turned out to see Lafayette.

Little girls strewed flowers along his path, ladies made up poetry that

he had to listen to and he was entertained at a dinner at the tavern, the WPA history said.

Nobody is sure exactly when the tavern was built.

Buckland itself today is a community of about eight homes, but it has been more in the past. It was created in 1798 when the Virginia General Assembly passed a law to create the town.

YOUNG SAID the old tavern was used as a field hospital during the Civil War because it was close to the Battles of Bull Run and Gainesville. There was a doctor's office across the road and the tavern was a convenient place for the overflow of wounded, he said.

Mrs. Bear bought the tavern about 35 years ago.

BUCKLAND is a friendly and compassionate settlement, and when Mrs. Bear became ill in the late 1960s the community rallied to help her. After a fall she was hospitalized, and a court-appointed guardian placed her in the nursing home.

Buckland Tavern is on the southwest corner of U. S. Routes 29-211 at Buckland Mill Road, about 5 miles south of Gainesville in Prince William County. The auction will be held there, rather than at the courthouse.