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*Buckland Tavern
Prince William Co*

County loses bid try for Buckland Taverns

By EILEEN MEAD

Dreams of county historians to have at least one county-owned historical building open to the public were shattered in 15 minutes Monday when a Maryland builder and antique dealer outbid the county and purchased the 200-year-old Buckland Tavern near Gainesville for \$41,150.

The Prince William County Board of Supervisors had voted in executive session to allow the county's Historical Committee to go as high as \$30,000 for the tavern. But during the spirited bidding, Finance Director G.C. Ball took the bid up to \$32,500, and still lost.

The county hoped to use federal, state and local historical funds available to restore the building for use as a museum and tourist center.

The new owner, Thomas J. Ashe Jr. of Cheverly, Md., said he learned about the auction Sunday from a newspaper article and drove down early Monday morning with his daughter, Elizabeth, to look at the property before the bidding at 11 p.m.

"Mother sent me along to make certain he bought it," Elizabeth grinned. She is a student of nursing at the University of Virginia. After examining the fine red sandstone building, Ashe said he decided his final bid would be \$30,000. "I went higher than I had intended," he said.

ASHE SAID he really had not had time to think about what he would do with the building once he restored it, but after talking to local people he said he was thinking of using it as an antique shop rather than as a private home. "That way it would be open to the public."

"The first thing I will do," he said, "is replace the roof with cedar shakes which were used originally. (The building now has a rusting tin roof.) And then I shall just work down." He said he definitely plans to restore the solarium at the rear of the home. He said he thinks the original, larger fireplace may still be behind the smaller one in the basement and if so



New owner Ashe

he will open that up. "I plan to restore the building-not just refurbish it," he

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Owner to restore building

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said. He said he would start work as soon as the weather gets cooler.

Sue Coe, president of the county's historical commission said she was very disappointed that the county did not get the building. The commission has been attempting to acquire it for five years, she said, but she is pleased that Ashe plans to restore it and have it open to the public.

Ashe was not aware, he said, that the county was attempting to acquire the property. He said he learned a great deal about old buildings when he salvaged an old home in Bladensburg, Md. He said that house was restored brick-by-brick in Baltimore and is now valued at \$800,000.

"You don't mean to dismantle this house?!" a woman asked in a shocked tone of voice. "Definitely not!" Ashe replied, "it will stay right here."

Brentsville Supervisor Ralph Mauler told Ashe that the county would like to know first, if for any reason the purchase of the tavern did not go through as planned.

BESIDES THE county and Ashe there were three other persons bidding on the tavern: Dorothy Abbott of Manassas stopped \$50 short of Ashe's bid. She said she had no idea how high he planned to go or she would have gone another \$200. She said she would have liked to turn the tavern into a tea room. Mrs. Abbott is secretary to the County Circuit Court judges.

Mrs. Jo B. Kennedy of Falls Church dropped out in the teens. "I've been kicking myself ever since," she said Tuesday. I went down there thinking I would go to \$40,000. If I had been able to move in with a bed and a coffee pot while I was designing and restoring, I believe I would have gone to \$45,000."

she said, "I wanted it as something of my very own and my son, a contractor, would have helped me restore it. I have a feeling I still might get that house," she said.

Vernon H. Wood of Broad Run stopped bidding at \$35,000. He said he wanted to use it as an antique and photography shop. He said in order to put the building back in A-1 shape it would take between \$30,000 and \$40,000—perhaps less if one was in the building business as Ashe is.

Wood said his wife's great-great aunt, Miss Josephine Spillman was born in the house in 1870 and later lived in Warrenton, so there would be a sentimental attachment.

There was plenty of activity in the Buckland Community several hours after the bidding was over.

Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Leitch who live down the street in the former Buckland post-office and store, invited Ashe, and his daughter and members of the Historical Commission to lunch. Henry H. Douglas, founder of the Pioneer America Society, was also a guest.

BUCKLAND HAS sometimes been called "Tavern of the Three Generals" General Washington, General Lafayette and General Tom Thumb visited there.

It has not been established exactly when the tavern was built, but the town of Buckland was incorporated in 1798 and in order to incorporate there had to have been at least 20 buildings in the community. It is assumed that the tavern was one of those buildings.

Through the years there were many owners, some who abused and neglected it. The building was said to have been in even worse condition that it is now in 1947 when Mrs. Grace Fulton Bear purchased it.

Mrs. Bear was widowed. She had

homesteaded by herself in Oregon and was familiar with building. When she restored the house she added a large plant room and a flagstone walk. She furnished the home with antiques.

When Mrs. Bear, who is now in her late 80's went to the Manassas Manor Nursing Home in 1970 a guardian ad litem was appointed but the house and Mrs. Bear's affairs were not taken care of, according to Douglas. After review by Judge Arthur W. Sinclair of the Circuit Court a new guardian ad litem, attorney Tom Beane, was appointed and the tavern was auctioned off in an effort to raise money to take care of Mrs. Bear's affairs.

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