

PWL-HISTORIC BUILDINGS
(BUCKLAND TAVERN)

6.00

Potomac People

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REFERENCE

Prince William Public Library
Manassas, Va.

Built
200
years
ago

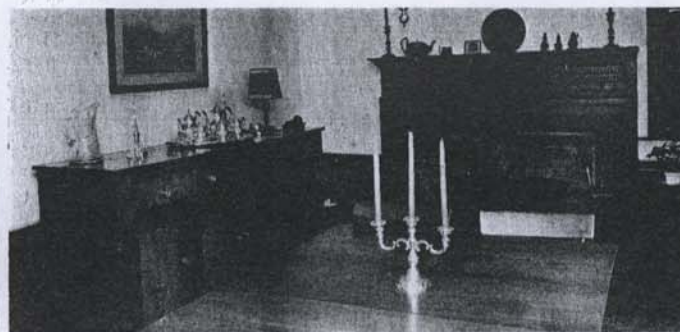
By MARILYN MUSE



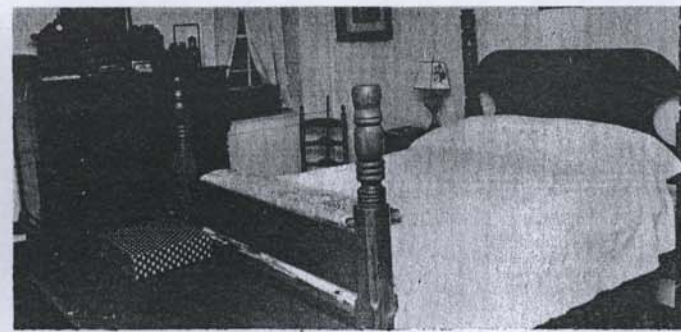
Mary Elizabeth and Tom Ashe Jr., owners of Buckland Tavern, (below, right), in stone English basement of restored 1700's home



Guest bedroom, in red, white and blue, has beams



Dining room of tavern, which was once a wagon tavern where guest ate



Master bedroom, with fireplace, antiques

Ask Thomas Ashe Jr. what it takes to restore an old home and he will tell you "a bit of vision and quite a bit of nerve."

He should know. He practiced what he preached, recently, when he restored not just an old home, but one of Prince William County's few remaining historic sites, Buckland Tavern, built in the 1700's.

It took quite a bit of vision when Ashe bought the tavern at auction in 1975. He bid \$41,150 as high bidder and came away, he said, "with a stone pile." The stone house, located on Highway 211-29, in the village of Buckland, near Gainesville, was in a bad state of repair, having been hit by vandals and unoccupied, since its former owner, Grace Bear, a widow, had been staying in a nursing home. Her estate put the home up for auction to pay her rising medical bills.

Nevertheless with the encouragement of his wife, Mary Elizabeth, and their two children, Ashe, a builder by trade, set out to restore the home, once called "The House of Three Presidents," since General Washington, General Lafayette and General Tom Thumb (who had to sit on cushions while eating there) were all visitors.

Hoping to finish the restoration in one year for the bicentennial in 1976, Ashe found the work took longer than he had anticipated and also was more of an expense. It was two

years before the Ashe family moved from Maryland into the former tavern.

Much of the tavern is the way it would have looked 200 years ago. In fact, Ashe says it is "90 percent" the way it was, from the wide-width random pine floors, to the hand hewn chestnut beams to the quarry stone exterior walls.

Many of the window sills, woodwork and other details in the house are original, too. The back portion of the house, however, was too far gone to be repaired and new rooms were built on the stone foundation. The house, which was kitchenless, except for a kitchen "nook", now had a full kitchen with beam ceiling. In keeping with the house, the kitchen is not really completely modern. Antique pie safes are used as cabinets along with dry sinks. For the kitchen sink, a dry sink was lined with copper and used for that purpose. A small pantry is in the large, 14 by 20 foot kitchen.

Off the kitchen is the family dining room with its fireplace and old pine mantel. The mantel is not original with the house, but came from an old home in Warrenton, which had belonged to Mrs. Ashe's family. Fireplaces abound in the house from the one in the living room, to the master bedroom to the large cooking fireplaces in the downstairs English basement.

In fact, the Ashes, whose

children are now grown and living away from home, spend most of their time in the English basement with its rustic stone walls and brick floors. A wood stove is placed in one of the fireplaces there, and helps heat the rooms, including the den with its one modern convenience, a television set. While doing the restoration, Ashe did add a built-in bar in the basement which hadn't been there but seemed appropriate for the one-time tavern.

The house has a cedar shank roof.

"It's only the third roof for the old boy, as far as I can tell," said Ashe saying the tavern had earlier roofs of tin and cedar shingles. He even put the beams in with wooden pegs as it would have been done 200 years ago.

"It was a matter of making the new look like old," said Ashe about the restoration. He told, too, how he used a steel brush to remove the "summer grain" from the new old giving it the look of old. The summer grain, which grows on the trees in the summer, is softer than the grain in the winter.

Even the door panels in the door to the living room, tavern room, were left the way they were.

"It looked like someone had kicked the panel out— perhaps when it was a tavern— and they were replaced backwards," said Ashe. "I left it that way."

Some of the original pit-sawn chestnut beams were weak, but Ashe left them, by reinforcing

them.

"I guess, for the most part, this house has been put back together with the help of, you can say, 10 old houses and one drugstore," said Ashe.

As a builder, he found many items—like old staircases— to replace rotted ones— from old homes he had dismantled as a builder or from family homes. Some of the old pine floors are from the old drug store in Warrenton.

Every wire in the house" had to be replaced with new

wiring and a new heating system was put in, electric baseboard heat.

"It had a hot water heating system, but I didn't trust it," said Ashe. "We wanted to show the old beams, too, and you couldn't have with all those pipes."

A former antique shop owner, Ashe used many pieces— like the old door locks he had saved over the years — in the house. Antiques, collected by the family, fill the house. A pair of antique chairs, placed by the fireplace in the living room, once belonged to Mrs. Ashe's great-great-grandfather, who

had fought with Mosby's Rangers. Another old piece, a French bathtub, is in the red, white and blue guest bedroom.

Ashe, whose ancestor Samuel Ashe, was governor of North Carolina, the inspiration for the then little town of Asheville, N.C.; had always wanted to restore an old home which would be a setting for their antiques.

"At times I think maybe it wasn't worth it for all the work that was involved," he said "But then someone comes by and admires it, and that makes it all worthwhile."

