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Home With Lafayette Link Sold

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Photos by Charles Del Vecchio—The Washington Post

Thomas Ashe and his daughter Elizabeth pose before home they bought for \$41,150.

By Jane Seaberry
Washington Post Staff Writer
A two-story fieldstone house in Prince William County, which reportedly was the site of an 1805 ceremonial dinner for Revolutionary War Gen. Marquis de Lafayette of France, was auctioned off yesterday to pay the bills of its 87-year-old owner, who is confined to a nursing home.

Thomas J. Ashe, Jr., an antique store owner in Bladensburg and a builder for 22 years, paid \$41,150 for the home, called Buckland Tavern. During the 1800's it served as a roadside tavern.

Ashe said he bought the six-room home to live in with his wife, Mary Elizabeth, 19-year-old son and 20-year-old daughter and for esthetics and personal reasons.

"I'm going to have to sell my present home" to pay for the purchase, Ashe said. He said he plans to spend at least \$20,000 "to replace the roof in its entirety and then go on from there."

Ashe was one of six bidders on the property, but more than 100 history and antique buffs and spectators gathered on the 1/4-acre property at Rtes. 29-211 and Buckland Road, about three miles south of Gainesville, for the auction. The usual 55-mile-an-hour traffic slowed to a crawl and at least 50 cars lined usually vacant streets near the intersection. Neighborhood children, who cut the 10-foot high weeds in front of the house before the sale, sold "cool-aid" in the 85-degree heat.

The stone home had been kept in meticulous manner by its former owner, Grace Mary Bear, who moved to



Littered interior of the Buckland Tavern in Prince William County, where Lafayette is supposed to have dined.

Manassas Memorial Nursing Home five years ago and did not know her home was up for auction according to Mrs. Vernon Leitch, a neighbor of more than 20 years. Since she left, relatives have taken many of her belongings and the rest of the house has been vandalized, Mrs. Leitch said. Several people said Mrs. Bear was committed to the home under a court order.

The money from the sale of the house will go to pay

her bills, mostly for the nursing home care, that now total between \$15,000 and \$16,000, according to Mrs. Bear's court-appointed attorney, Thomas Beane. The rest of the money will go to pay future bills.

Wallpaper has been ripped from the walls, remains of old furniture are strewn around the floors, along with old newspaper clippings and magazines dating back to World War II. A two-story room, which a neighbor said once

held ceiling high plants, is filled with mud and debris.

"I'd love to make it into a tea room," said Dorothy Abbott, a secretary for a circuit court judge who bid \$50 under the selling price.

"I could just see all these ladies with their big hats saying, 'Oh, let's go to Buckland Tavern.'"

Susan Coe, a bidder for the Prince William County Historical Commission, dropped out of the bidding at \$32,500, the top price she

said the county had authorized.

"We've been working on buying the building for five years," Mrs. Coe said. "We wanted to restore it and open it to the public." The county has no historic buildings open to the public, she said.

Mrs. Leitch, said Mrs. Bear had been a clerk with the Treasury Department and had bought the house in 1947.