

Ocoquan town 100 tomorrow

By ANN HOLIDAY

Water has been the life—and once was feared to be the death—of Ocoquan, the pocket of settlement on the Ocoquan River between the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers. It was established in 1681, year as a town tomorrow.

Ocoquan's roots go back more than 100 years before its incorporation in 1874. The streets were platted in 1884, and the first buildings were erected in the 1790's when Ocoquan was one of several towns being established along the Potomac River and its tributaries.

Boat and barge traffic carried trade to and from Ocoquan, and the town housed several mills during its early years. The business office of one mill still stands, and is now a museum in which Historic Ocoquan, Inc. stores and displays relics of the town's past.

The other early building is Rockledge, the old store house on a ledge above the Mill House, built in 1728 and now being restored by Don Sanner, owner of Blackbeard's Inn. Commerce was lively in the late 1700's and early 1800's, until the shifting river bottom moved the town and buildings completely. A narrow channel never came to pass. However, the town's shops and stores served the people of Ocoquan and

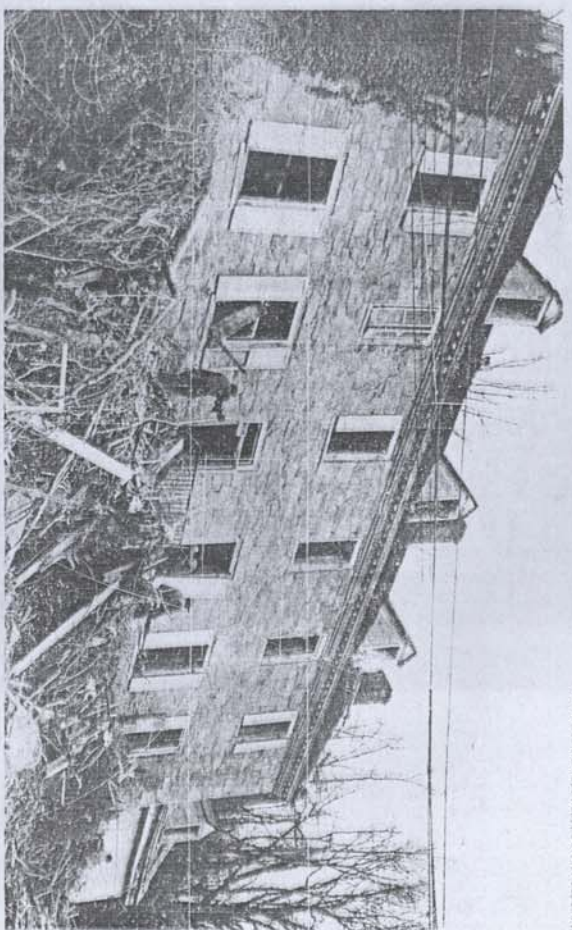
surrounding area. Woodbridge became a railroad stop in the late 1800's, but Ocoquan had the grocery store, hardware store, barber and scattered farms and homes outside the town.

The town continued to grow until the fire of 1916, which burned 22 buildings and threatened to wipe Ocoquan from the map. Before the fire, the town had two grist mills, two hotels, three bars, a small granary, a drug store, a saloon, a drug store and Lynn's General Store.

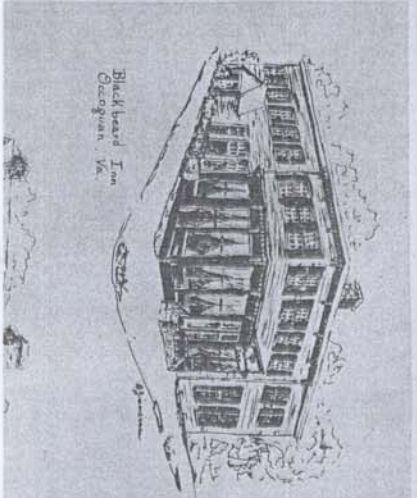
Only a few buildings were saved, but Lynn's Store rebuilt at its present location and the town began to grow again. Lynn's Store remains another grocery store, operated for more than 55 years by Ogle Harris and his family, and a thriving business, but the automobile and the supermarket spelled the end of the grocery store in Ocoquan.

Ogle Harris and Son had been open only in the summer during the past few years, existing on soda pop, penny candy and hardware. Harris' block, where chunks of cheese will be cut to order, but hunting and fishing supplies take up far more space than

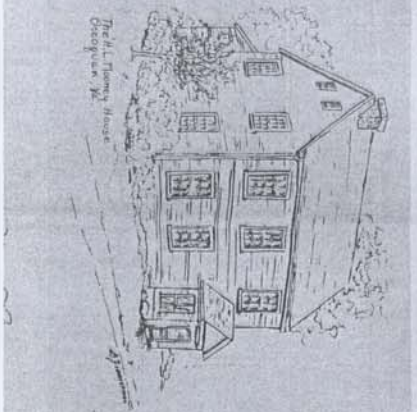
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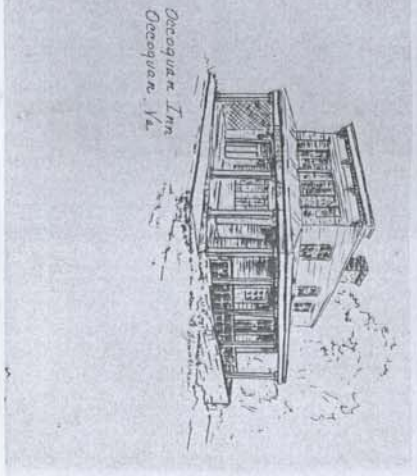
Workmen comb over grounds outside Rockledge during current reconstruction



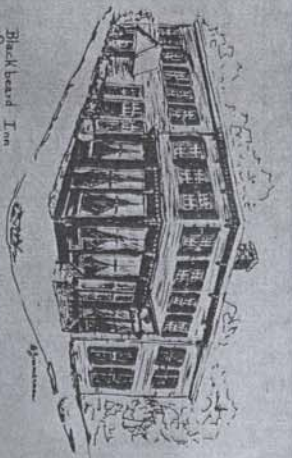
Blackbeard Inn
Ocoquan, Va.



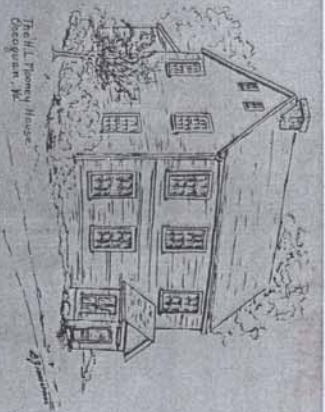
The Mill Homey House
Ocoquan, Va.



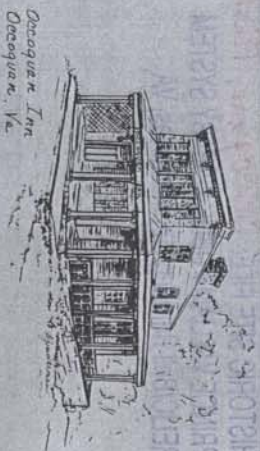
Ocoquan Inn
Ocoquan, Va.



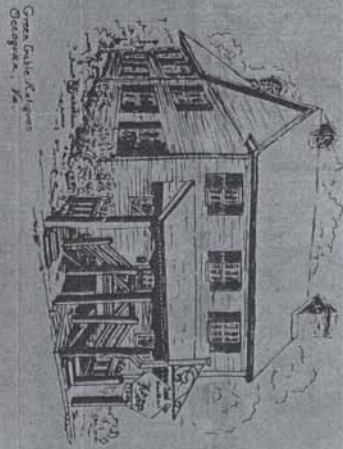
Blackhead Inn
Occoquan, Va.



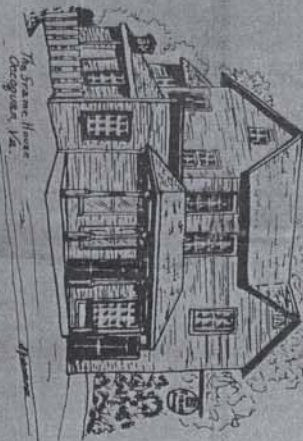
The Hill Farm House
Occoquan, Va.



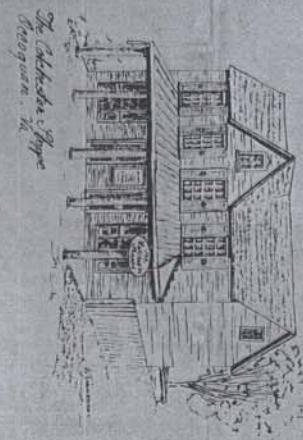
Occoquan Inn
Occoquan, Va.



Green Gate Cottage
Occoquan, Va.



The Stone House
Occoquan, Va.

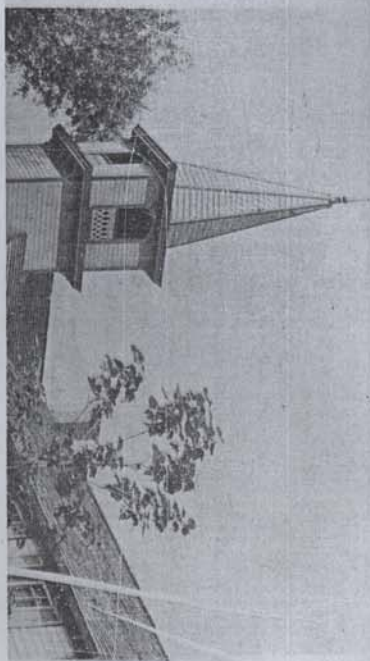


The Whitehall Inn
Occoquan, Va.

Old homes survive to please modern-day visitors to Occoquan



Looking east from corner now occupied by Town Hall; original Lynn's Store building is in center



*Green Gothic Revival
Occoquan, Va.*



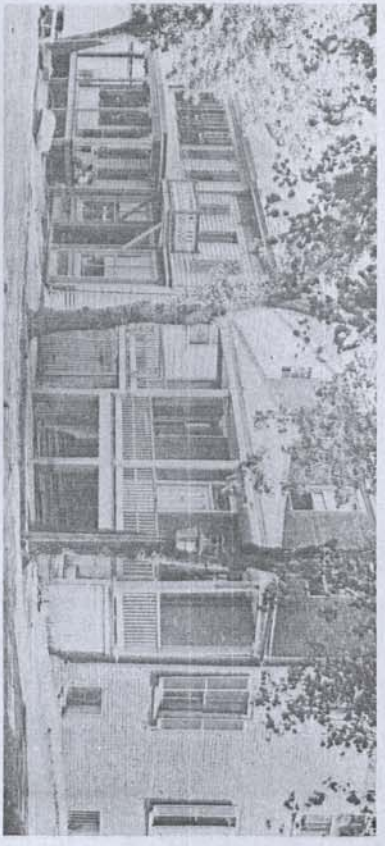
*The Same House
Occoquan, Va.*



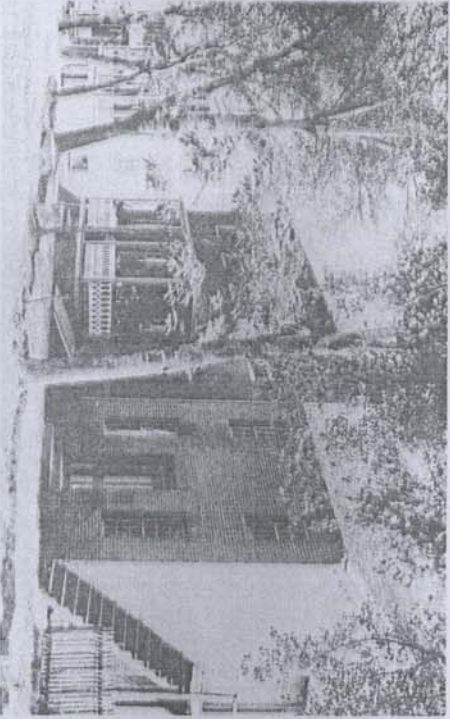
*The Middle House
Occoquan, Va.*



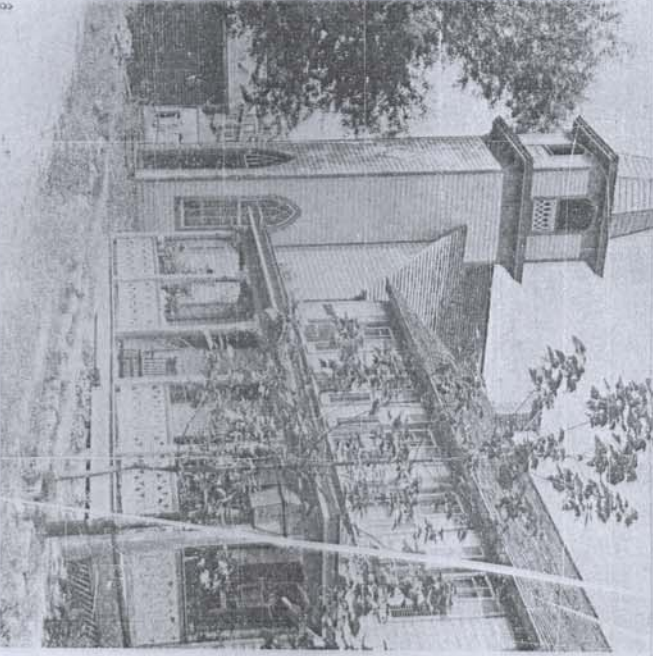
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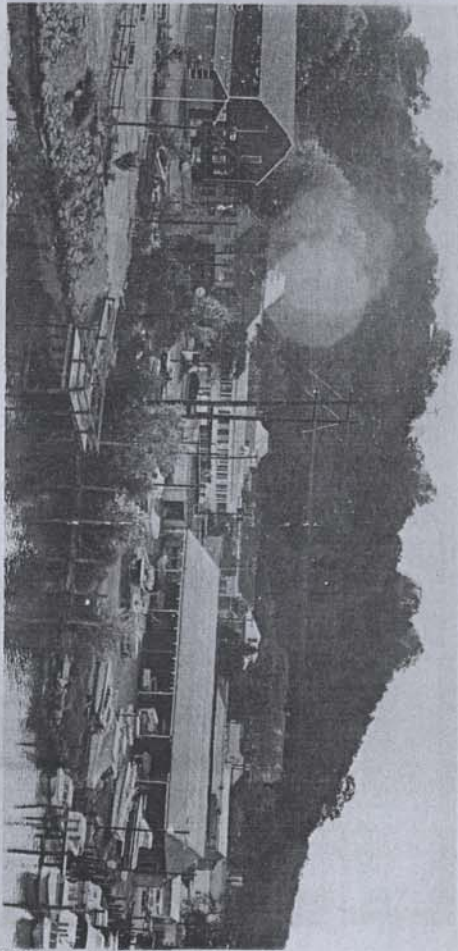


Tree-lined Mill Street before 1916 fire; third house from right where Town Hall is located



Before the fire, the church stood on Commerce Street behind the present Town Hall site

Photos courtesy of Mill House Museum



View of the town from new bridge. Rockledge is at very top right

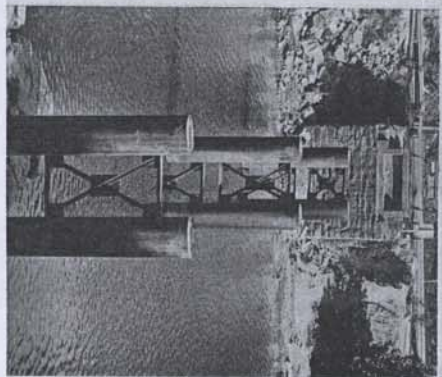
Staff photo by Janet Pogue (1)

New bridge—the view and impact

Traffic change alters shopping habits, some say

Perhaps the best view of the town of Occoquan is seen from the Va. 123 bridge which opened this summer, replacing the 94-year-old one-land span washed away in the flood of 1972. From the bridge one can see the Mill House, Rockledge and the Victorian buildings which give the town its atmosphere. But look last. The trip is a head-on collision over the high, wide bridge. Before it was built, townspeople feared the replacement of the old bridge would choke the town, cutting off the traffic and keeping people from shopping at its stores.

Most merchants now, however, don't agree. Any Lynn of Lynn's Store finds sales down on "racket and dime items" such as beer, milk and other groceries. "I had a better offer on my home," but people are still hunting and fishing and have "a little more to me."



Occoquan. "People can cross the streets and not worry about traffic." Lynn said the main complaint he had heard from the town was that the new bridge was too narrow. Motorists must make a left turn just before the bridge in order to get into the town from Woodbridge. Several merchants have complained that they don't expect people from out of town to approach to a bridge. The merchants have taken steps to solve another problem brought about by the bridge. They're planning to direct traffic into Occoquan.

At the site of the old bridge, which is to be rebuilt for cyclists and pedestrians, the merchants have complained that the old bridge was not built around has not been constructed and there are plans to install a six-foot chain link fence with three strands of

some say business has dropped off somewhat during the week but has not changed on weekends. One merchant said traffic from the new bridge is routed through Occoquan and many sightseers would turn just before the bridge in order to get into the town since the road no longer goes through the town.

"Parking is a whole lot easier than it used to be," said Bill Peters, owner of Bill Peters Hardware. "I don't have to hassle our business. People are coming to shop anyway."

"It's quieter," noted Nancy Yardo of the Cinnamon Celler. "I almost think it's better."

Birthday party!

Country music will fill the air and shopkeepers will be out in long dresses to help Occoquan celebrate its centennial tomorrow. A variety of crafts will be demonstrated on around the center of the day's activities, the vacant lot next to the town Hall. The festivities will last from 12:30 to 5:30 p.m.

Town's changing scene

Continued from Page B-1
Lynn's Store came close to being destroyed by water in 1972, as tropical storm forces inundated the riverfront area of the town. Most of the town's businesses were damaged; some never came back. Water covered much of Mill Street, where boats and caskets floated free from the marina and the funeral home.

Highway Department announced plans to replace the one-lane truss bridge at one end of town with a high, four-lane bridge crossing over the other end of Occoquan. The old bridge had been there for 94 years. Its steel truss structure is being replaced by a modern concrete and steel structure. The new bridge will be 1,200 feet long and 40 feet wide. It will have four lanes of traffic and a sidewalk on each side. The bridge is expected to be completed by the end of 1975.

available during the day. The Woodbridge High School Band, by a vote of its members, has scheduled a visit to the festivities. Mayor H. L. Mooney will deliver brief remarks on the past and future of the town at 3 p.m. Free dogs, sole raw, coffee and soft drinks will be available during the day.

When it was swept away by the flood, before the bridge was built, a ferry boat carried Route 1 travelers over the Occoquan River. Route 1 was later rerouted through Woodbridge, the water which helped create and almost destroyed the town is used mainly by boaters, fishermen and barges from the quarry, whose blasting still annoys town residents.

The quarry was another rallying point for town activities, who appeared month after month at meetings of the Fairfax County Board of Zoning Appeals attempting to stop removal of the quarry's use permit in 1972. They were scored a partial success in having a number of limitations put on the quarry's operations.

Occoquan enters its second century as a quiet residential town, an oasis of Victorian homes in the midst of suburbia. It is this atmosphere which has attracted numerous sightseers every weekend and which encourages the small shops which now form the core of the business community.

SOMETHING NEW
— Plimms at site of