

FIREPLACE AT "HOUSE OF MANY STAIRS" where meals were cooked during a period of the house's history. Two bayonets, found buried on the place, can be seen in the center hangs a powder horn.

Pennsdale's Beautiful 'House of Many Stairs' Still Delights Visitors

PENNSDALE — The beautiful home known as "the House of Many Stairs," one of the oldest properties in Lycoming County, is the most visited spot in this section of the county.

Situated in this quiet village, its fame has travelled far. Visitors come from places as distant as Canada and Florida.

Steeped in history, the old house is owned by Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Brant, who have put in modern conveniences and restored it. But they have not touched its architecture.

The old house is of stone that seems to have taken on a rosy hue. Mellowed by the snows of many Winters and the sun of returning Summers, the house has a beauty that only time can give.

Blockhouse Preserved

On the property is another building, kept in perfect repair, known as the blockhouse, which was a stronghold during the time of the Indians. Gun holes through which Indians were shot are still in the building.

Outside of the wall of the kitchen of the house, where a refrigerator now stands, was a cave where settlers hid from the Indians.

The old house gets its name because every room is on a different level. There are at least four or five steps going from and into every room in the house.

Interesting History

At first the house served as a home and as a protection against the Indians. Later, in 1795, it was "The Bull's Head Tavern" and during the days of the stagecoach it served to refresh the weary traveler. Finally the old house fell on evil days and was used as a hideout for horse thieves and highwaymen. Its jumble of stairways and exits made an ideal route of escape.

During slavery it became a station on the "underground rail way." The highest dormer window became a lookout where some one was stationed to warn of hostile agents.

The secret stairway in Salem's "House of Seven Gables" has nothing on Pennsdale's "House of Many Stairs." For the Pennsdale house still has its own secret place where slaves were hidden until it was safe to smuggle them into Canada.

On the doors are designs in nailheads, one in the shape of a halo, to keep out the evil spirit. The belief in these evil spirits was common during a period of the house's history.

Later the old house became an inn again and in more recent years a tearoom.

Owners Restore House

With the purchase of the property by the Brants the building returned to its original status as a home.

The old house could not have been more fortunate in its present owners. Mr. and Mrs. Brant seem to have the love of the old house in their hearts. Their son and daughter-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Elwood Brant, who also reside there with their two sons, have a fondness for the place too.

Nothing has been too much trouble for the owners to restore and bring out the natural beauty of their home. Every charm, from the old fireplace where the cooking used to be done, to the slaves' hideout, has been kept intact. The old gun cupboards are still there too.

Treasure Old Bayonets

Almost every piece of furniture, furnishings and decorations, down to the smallest piece of lovely colored glass has a history of its own. Standing at the old fireplace are two bayonets that were found buried in the ground on the property. These bayonets are said to fit the Harpers Ferry muskets, guns that were made at the Harpers Ferry Arsenal before and during the Civil War.

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Mr. and Mrs. Brant are hospitable folk and are forever called upon to show their place to interested travelers.

Old Resident Returns

The most interesting of her callers, Mrs. Brant thinks, a little old lady now living in Philadelphia. This lady was reared in the old house, was married there and upon her return from a wedding trip spent part of her married life there. She was a Miss Masters before she married and became Mrs. Ferris.

Nearly every Summer since the Brants have been living there, Mrs. Ferris has come to pay her respects to "The House of Many Stairs." She would go from room to room drinking in its delightful atmosphere, jealously watching for any changes, or a jarring note. Often she would tell Mrs. Brant interesting facts about the old house. When it came time to depart she shed many tears.

Mrs. Ferris could not come to Pennsdale this past Summer as she is now blind. However, so tight are her heart strings tied to the house that she sent her nephew instead. She told him not to miss anything. He must tell her if there were any changes. "Tell me in detail how it looks," she

said, "so that I can see the old house again.

It was Mrs. Ferris's niece, Miss Masters, who gave Mrs. Brant two plates which she prizes. One of them was purchased at the old store of Benjamin Warner at Bryan's Mills and the other is dated 1826. Another plate, a gift from a neighbor, is much older than the others and is Dresden.

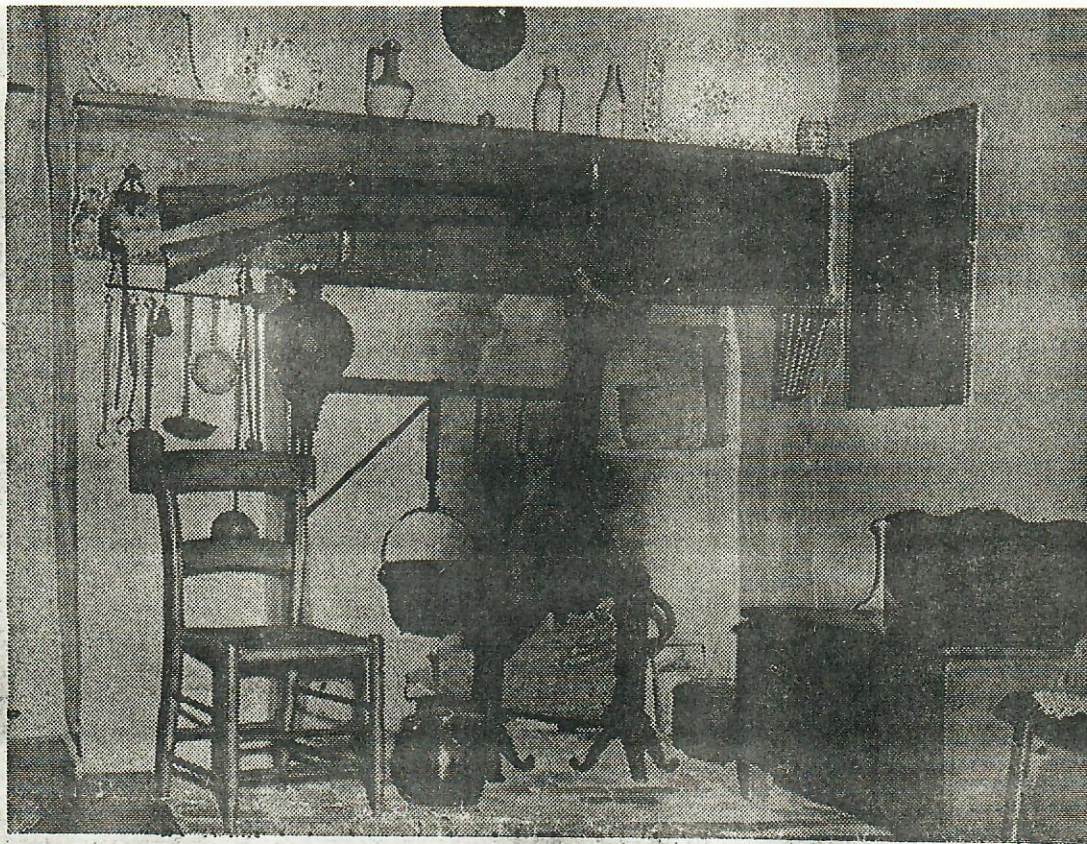
Keystone Date 1807

The initials "J. S." and "E. S." and the date "1807" are carved on the keystone above one of the doors. These initials are believed to have been those of John Stryker and his wife who bought the place in 1807.

The first building on the property, which is no longer in existence, was a pottery plant operated by a Frenchman. The present inhabitants of the house have found pieces of this pottery while gardening.

The house has seen many generations come and go and it looks happy to the passerby as it seems to smile all over its rosy face.

It is a home again for the part it has played in American history, Pennsylvania may say "Well done thy good and faithful servant."



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Articles pertaining to the life of the early settlers of the old Quaker settlement of Pennsdale have found their way to the old house, things that money could not now replace.

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