

BASS RIVER GAZETTE

A newsletter from the Bass River Community Library History Committee and the Great John Mathis Foundation

• Issue No. 18: January-June 2005 (Next issue due December, 2005) • donations appreciated •

BASS RIVER'S OLD TAVERNS AND HOTELS

by Peter H. Stemmer

The history of taverns in Bass River, like most things in Bass River's past, must go back to Little Egg Harbor, as Bass River Township was a part of Little Egg Harbor until May 30, 1864, when it became a separate township by an act of the New Jersey State legislature.

Leah Blackman, in her classic *History of Little Egg Harbor Township*, states that the first tavern in Little Egg Harbor Township was built by David Falkenburg about the time of the Revolutionary War. Known in Leah Blackman's time as the "Old Tavern", it was located on Main Street about where the current Tuckerton Borough Hall is today. Its Bass River connection lies not in its location but in its financing. Falkenburg borrowed 150 pounds to build the tavern from the Great John Mathis, the first white settler in the area that would later become Bass River Township.

Taverns played an important part in the history of our country in the 1700's and into the late 1800's. The early taverns located in the Bass River area of Little Egg Harbor were no exception. There were no government or office buildings, banks, or post offices. It was at the taverns that local government meetings were held, business deals were struck, ships' cargoes were bought and sold, auctions were held, mail was distributed, taxes collected, court convened, local militia drills were held, money was borrowed and loaned, traveling and medicine shows entertained the locals, gambling was enjoyed, carriage and stage coach teams were fed and tended, and bed and board was provided for weary travelers with their jugs filled to ease their long journey. This largely excluded women from participating in many important community functions, as a respectful lady would not have been seen in a tavern except while traveling.

The two earliest taverns within today's Bass River Township boundaries, Bodine's Tavern and the Bass River Hotel, were built mainly to provide services for stage coaches and livery wagons on their way from Tuckerton to Philadelphia over what was to become known as the old Stage Road. We have no description of their appearance. They were probably small, crude framed structures built on local Jersey sandstone foundations with rough cedar framing and clapboard siding. Food and lodging accommodations were likely sparse and unimaginable by today's standards. Although we don't know the accommodations offered by these two early Bass River taverns, we can surmise that they were probably less than those experienced by Leah Blackman as a little girl traveling to Philadelphia in 1829 with her father along the old Stage Road. She reports the following accommodations on an overnight stop at a larger Stage Road tavern closer to Philadelphia and thus probably more luxurious than those available in the lower New Jersey Pine Barrens.

Here we stopped for the night and had supper consisting of coffee, buckwheat cakes, Jersey sausage, butter, cranberry sauce and cucumber pickles . . . Among the travelers was one lady. When bedtime came the landlady told us three females that they had so many men to lodge we three [the landlady, the traveling lady, and Leah - all strangers] would have to occupy one bed. We went to our room and when we got in bed we were dismayed to find that there was no mattresses between the rope cords of the bedstead and the feather bed, and the cords seemed as if bent on



The old cellar hole of Bodine's Tavern in the early 1960's shows its Jersey sandstone foundation stones. Today, the foundation stones are gone and all that remains is a shallow, grassy indentation. (Photo courtesy of Stephen Eichinger.)

cutting our flesh to the bones, but we had to endure the infliction. ["Old Times and Other Writings", p 126]

Bodine's Tavern

Bodine's Tavern was built by John Bodine in the early 1790's on the east side of the Wading River, a stone's throw from the wooden bridge that crossed where the road from Tuckerton to Philadelphia crossed the Wading River about 7 miles from Tuckerton and 2 ½ miles down stream from the iron town of Martha Furnace with about 400 residents.

John had enlisted as a private in the Revolutionary War and served seven years while rising to the rank of captain. He took advantage of new State regulations which gave tavern licensing preferences to Revolution War veterans. By the mid 1780's a majority of New Jersey's taverns were operated by colonels, captains, or widows of former Revolutionary War soldiers. Bodine was an enterprising individual, as were many of the early tavern owners. He operated a nearby saw mill and ran horse teams hauling store supplies, livestock, salt hay, oyster shells, and bog iron for the operation at Martha Furnace.

Because of its close location to Martha Furnace, Bodine's became a frequent hangout for the iron workers at Martha. This would undoubtedly make its clientele considerably less polished than in the average stage-stop tavern traveling from Philadelphia to Tuckerton. Martha employed immigrant workers, so it would not be unusual to see Irish and black workers unwinding at Bodine's after a hard day laboring at the iron furnace town just down the river.

We get a special glimpse into the activities happening at Bodine's Tavern from brief entries in the *Martha Furnace Diary* which was kept by the clerks at Martha from 1808 to 1815. The entries show how the tavern and it's owner interacted with the surrounding community in a variety of ways. I'm particularly intrigued with the "learned Goat." Entertainment was much simpler and less sophisticated 200 years ago.

6/10/1808 - [Militia] Training at Bodines was very fully attended from ye works. Most of the hands about the bank ret'd. Orderly. [Note: In the early 1800's, all male citizens over 18 years of age were compelled by law to report to a designated place four times a year for military training. Taverns became of their central locations and available refreshments became a popular place to hold these training sessions.]

8/1/1808 - This Day the 2d Company Court of Appeals was held at Bodines.
9/2/1809 - Sol Rieve idle. Went to Bodines & got drunk and let Bodine whip him.
10/1/1809 - D. Phillips at Bodines and fought with Jack Johnson.

(Continued on page 3)

YESTERDAY'S RECIPES by Elaine Weber Mathis

THE BISHOPS OF RIVERSIDE DRIVE

Early one morning last summer, while talking a walk, I met Marie Bishop Doherty, who was also walking in the area of N. Maple Ave. and Riverside Drive. Marie is the daughter of Sylvester (1903-2001) and Irene (1909-2003) McAnney Bishop. The Bishop's lived at what is now 9 Riverside Drive in New Gretna. Marie's son, Tom, is the current resident at that address. Marie and her husband, Ernie, live in Virginia but spend vacations with their son, John, who lives in the old Caleb Mathis home at 7 Riverside Drive. Marie said how much she enjoyed visiting her grandparents, Alvin (1884-1950) and Della Loveland (1888-1959) McAnney when she was a child. They were the previous owners of her parent's home. Caleb and Ella Mathis were neighbors. Marie spent lots of time running in and out of the Mathis home when she visited her grandparents. We thank Marie for sharing some memories of her visits with Caleb and Ella Mathis and information that she has learned about their home, along with some of her mother's recipes.



3 generations: Della Loveland McAnney (r), Irene McAnney Bishop (l), and baby Marie Bishop who provided the memories below (Photo courtesy of Marie Bishop Doherty)



Irene McAnney Bishop, in 1920 (Photo courtesy of Marie Bishop Doherty)

IRENE BISHOP'S GERMAN APPLE CAKE

3 cups flour	4 eggs	2 ½ Tsp. vanilla
2 cups sugar	1-cup oil; Salt	½ cup raisins
3 Tsp. baking powder	½ cup orange juice	6 med. apples

Sift dry ingredients together, and make a well. In the well, add the oil, orange juice, vanilla and eggs. Mix all at once and beat until smooth.

Peel & slice 6 medium apples & mix with ½ cup raisins. Grease and flour pan. Layer with batter, apples & raisins, ending with batter. Bake 1 ½ hr. at 350 deg.

CORN CHOWDER

2 cups potatoes	1-cup corn	salt and pepper
½ cup chopped onions	1 slice salt pork	
4 cups milk	small amount of onion	

Slice potatoes, let soak while preparing other vegetables. Cut salt pork in small pieces and fry. Drain potatoes and add with onions to salt pork. Cover and cook for ½ hour. Add salt, pepper, corn and milk. Bring to a boil and thicken slightly if preferred. Serve with oyster crackers.

DEVILED CRAB OR CLAM MIX

1 Tbs. butter	2 Tbs. breadcrumbs	Salt, pepper, and
2 Tbs. flour	2 egg yolks	small amount of
1-cup milk	1 Tbs. chopped parsley	onion

Make sauce with fat, flour and milk. Add Crumbs, egg yolks and parsley. Cook. Remove from fire and add clams (or crab meats). Chill mixture in the refrigerator until its time to fry (or bake clams). Roll crab cakes in cracker crumbs.



Della Loveland McAnney and her son, Reuben (1910-1972), Irene and Marie's brother. Known locally as Ruby, he ran Allen's Dock after the death of Chet Allen. (Photo courtesy of Margaret Cramer McAnney)



Irene (l) and her sister, Marie, the aunt of Marie Bishop Doherty. (Photo courtesy of Marie Doherty)

Marie Bishop Doherty's Memories

Caleb (1863-1940) and Ella (1868-1942) Mathis built a white cedar farm-style house sometime after the Civil War that is now 7 Riverside Drive. The floors were covered in heavy paper with strips of straw matting over it. The walls are plaster and the steps to the second floor are one half the width of today's. The sources of heat were a cook stove in the kitchen, a small pot-bellied stove with esien glass windows in drop down sides, and a small stove in one second floor bedroom. The two brick chimneys come together as one. The downstairs stove had a top lid where a log was put and burned down to the bottom. Caleb would split logs in the cellar into all sizes for the cook stove. He could heat one small spot in the winter. The source of water was one pitcher pump in the cellar. A large barrel caught the water from the back porch roof at the end of a large grape arbor extending to the one hundred year old walnut tree.

The grape arbor had benches and a mirror for shaving with a straight razor. Actually the back porch and the arbor were the summer house unless you were driven inside by a swarm of mosquitoes. When you looked out back there was a wood building for wood and a path that went to a gated fence. There was a pile of oyster shells because Caleb was an oysterman. He sailed to the bay and stayed there several days until work was finished. He even had a cook stove on his boat.

Beyond the gate was a vegetable garden complete with delicious gooseberry bushes. Finally there was a fenced in chicken yard with fruit trees. One side would be Adams Road now. Aunt El had a sun bonnet with a tunnel like brim that hung on the back porch and she would wear that on her daily trips to get the day's rations. [Note: Marie was not related to Ella Mathis even though she refers to her as 'Aunt El'.]

They had no children, so my cousin, Jimmy McAnney, and I were invited in and out of their home and yard over the years. I think Jimmy's sister, Ruthie, was young and missed the era.

If you would like your family featured in a future "Yesterday's Recipes" column, please send a recipe or two to Elaine Mathis c/o Bass River Community Library, P.O. Box 256, New Gretna, N.J. 08224.

OLD BASS RIVER TAVERNS AND HOTELS

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10/11/1809 – Several of the women and children went to Bodines to see the learned Goat.

1/3/1810 – J. Williamson ret'd. From Bodines with his knee hurt wrestling with M. Crane.

1/10/1810 - McEntire sick. Nash & S. Reeve making a Coffin. 1/11/1810 – J. Bodines agon attended the Funeral.

3/10/1810 – Sundry Law suits at Bodines. J. Evans summonsed on a jury.

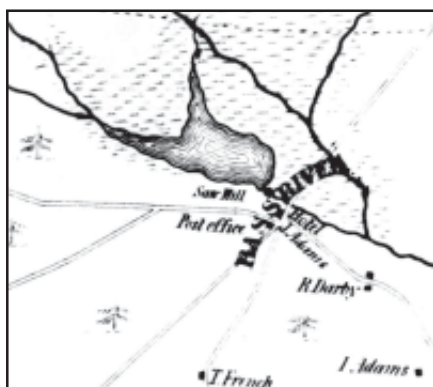
7/21/1810 – Townsend away tawing [preparing and softening animal skins so that they can be made into clothing] at Bodines.

10/8/1811 – Election at Bodines. Men went and gave in their mite [A small coin about a third of an English farthing.] and all ret'd. Sober.

After John Bodine's death, his widow Anne and their son Jesse kept the tavern until the late 1830's when it was closed. It's demise was probably due to a combination of factors: (1) The decline of Martha Furnace in the 1830's; (2) the building of a swing bridge across the Wading River at Bridgeport in 1824 rerouted much of the Batsto-Mullica River town traffic away from Stage Road and Bodine's Tavern; and (3) continued improvements on the Tuckerton-Philadelphia road made stage and wagon traffic faster with less need for frequent tavern stops. Today a shallow cellar hole adjacent to a sandy camping area in Wharton State Forest, appropriately named "Bodine's Field", is the only reminder of the once bustling Bodine's Tavern.

It is interesting to note that, while the Bodine Tavern cellar hole is in Bass River Township today, the tavern never operated within the jurisdiction of Bass River Township. It was located in Little Egg Harbor when it was built, and then became a part of Washington Township in 1802 when that township was formed from Little Egg Harbor Township. Fittingly, the first Washington Township governmental meeting was held in Bodine's Tavern with John Bodine being elected to the first Township Committee. Finally, in 1864, the Bodine Tavern area became a part of Bass River Township when the boundaries in that area were again realigned.

The Bass River Hotel (Red Tavern)



The Bass River Hotel, also identified as a Post Office, is located on the 1849 Otley-Whiteford Map of Burlington County just south of the Saw Mill. A small cluster of farms can be seen in the area which is identified as "BASS RIVER."

locates it at the north-east corner of the old Stage Road and Allentown Road where Stage Road bends northward toward Bodine's Tavern. Franklin Adams Gray (1896-1986) told this writer that he remembered, as a boy, seeing a pile of bricks from the Red Tavern's foundation along the Stage Road in a location that would be in front of the present Pilgrim Lake Campground office. This would support the Gordon and Otley-Whiteford map locations for the Hotel.

E.M. Woodward in his 1883 *History of Burlington County*, devotes a

paragraph to the Red Tavern under the heading "Villages and Hamlets."

Red Tavern is a little hamlet situated about two miles northeast from New Gretna, in a farming district. It contains one hotel and a few dwellings. The hotel was erected prior to the Revolutionary War, by William Davis, who carried on the business for several years. In 1816, Recompense Darby became the hospitable host, and carried the business on for a few years. Since Mr. Darby disposed of it the old tavern has passed through many hands. In 1853, Francis Adams purchased the property and carried on the business until 1855, since which time it has been closed. [p.230]

It is interesting Woodward uses the designation "Red Tavern" for both the neighborhood and the hotel. Old deeds, maps, and documents used "Bass River" as the neighborhood designation with only the locals using the more informal "Red Tavern" but only for the name of the hotel, not the neighborhood. Their terminology indicates that the old building was probably at one point painted red.

Not only is Woodward's labeling the area "Red Tavern" suspect, but the remainder of the paragraph appears questionable, at best. Unfortunately, he does not cite his sources so we have no way of ascertaining the validity of his claims. This researcher has found no evidence that the hotel was built prior to the Revolution and has found no reference to a William Davis in the Little Egg Harbor area. Leah Blackman references a Davis family in Little Egg Harbor, but no mention is made of William Davis. One would think that a man so prominent as to build a hotel would surely be mentioned in Blackman's writings.

It is more likely that the hotel was built in the mid or later part of the 1790's. An early reference is made of the hotel in an 1809 road survey which says that the road passes by the "Tavern house now occupied by Thomas French on Basriver". Entries in the *Martha Furnace Diary* also mention Thomas French (1776-1845) as the hotel owner and indicate that militia training and court business was also held there.

5/8/1809 - Training at Frenches Bass River.

9/7/1811 - Richard Phillips gone to T. Frenches to pay off an execution in favour of Ichabod Smith.

9/21/1811 - Howard attending to his trials at Frenches.

Documentation regarding ownership of the hotel is sparse. It is unlikely that Thomas French built the hotel as his birth in 1776 would make him 20 years old in the mid 1790's, rather young age for an entrepreneur. However, coming from a wealthy family, it is possible. Woodward's claim of Recompense Darby being the host in 1816 may be creditable as the 1849 Otley-Whiteford map shows an "R Darby" house located just south of the Bass River Hotel. [see map at left]

The Bass River Hotel's most prominent owner was Isaiah Adams (1805-1860) who Leah Blackman calls "one of the leading men of Bass River . . . [who] For many years kept what is known as the 'old Bass River Hotel,' at the upper bridge, over the west branch of the Bass river." Isaiah had large farm holdings in the area and carried on extensive business in lumber, ship building and agriculture. He held a variety of offices in Little Egg Harbor and was elected to the State Legislature. The September 14, 1850 Little Egg Harbor census lists Isaiah as a farmer living at the hotel with his wife, Mary, and four children: Charles (15), Jesse (14), Henry (11), and William (4). His 22 year old nephew, Franklin Adams, is also listed as a Clerk living at the hotel. He was probably hired by his uncle to help run the hotel.



Isaiah Adams (1805-1860) and his wife, Mary Mathis Adams, kept the Red Tavern Hotel at the upper bridge in Bass River. (Photo courtesy of Franklin A. Gray)

The 1850 census also lists 16 hotel residents, 3 being Irish immigrants,

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who were laborers or watermen. This would indicate that, by 1850, the hotel had to be a rather large structure by the day's standards. It seems to have evolved from a tavern-stagecoach stop along the old Stage Road to Philadelphia, at the turn of the century, to a neighborhood boarding house-hotel establishment that met the needs of the surrounding community. The business was able to adapt and survive well beyond the 1830 closing of Bodine's Tavern just 5 miles up the old Stage Road.

Leah Blackman states that both Isaiah and, later, Franklin were both abstinence landlords. Some have interpreted these abstinence comments as indicating that Isaiah and Franklin did not sell liquor at their establishments. This is unlikely, as it is doubtful that a hotel-tavern could financially exist without the sale of alcohol. Also, records exist indicating that Franklin regularly applied for a license to sell liquor. This would be a futile exercise if he did not sell alcohol.

We do not know the exact date that the old Bass River Hotel closed. Woodward states that it was closed in 1855 by Francis Adams. This may be a transcription error of "Franklin" as there does not appear to be a Francis Adams in the family. The year may be accurate; however, it is more probable that it was closed by Isaiah's nephew, Franklin, who likely took over the responsibilities of operating the hotel, allowing Isaiah to pursue his other extensive business dealings. United States' Post Office records show that a post office existed at the hotel from 1827-1854. This would tend to support a closing of the old hotel around 1855.

Bass River Hotel (New Gretna)



The Bass River Hotel at New Gretna, located at the site of the present "Munchies" Deli, was a forerunner of the modern day strip mall. It was destroyed in a 1917 fire. (Photo courtesy of Franklin A. Gray)

For over 125 years the only bridge across the Bass River was the upper bridge located just east of the Red Tavern. It is here that the old Stage Road crossed the river and ran past the old Bass River Hotel before making the turn north to head toward Harrisville and on to Bodine's Tavern, the location of the only bridge across the Wading River. In 1814, a new swing bridge was built across the lower Wading River at Bridgeport. It was followed, in 1824, by a new swing bridge on the Bass River at the present bridge location. It thus became possible to travel from Tuckerton over the lower Bass River bridge, roughly along the present Rt. 9, along the old "Hammonton Road", and on to the Wading River Bridge at Bridgeport. This was a much quicker and convenient route for those traveling to Lower Bank, Green Bank, Batsto, and points beyond. Simply stated, the construction of the lower Wading River and Bass River bridges drastically changed the traffic pattern in the Bass River area.

An effect of this changing traffic pattern was the opening, in the late

1840's, of a new Bass River Hotel by the lower bridge in present day New Gretna and the subsequent closing of the old Bass River (Red Tavern) Hotel at the upper bridge. It was capitalism at work. The business simply moved to where the money was. It is not surprising that the new hotel would be operated by the person who had the experience and the ability to finance the operation. That person was Franklin Adams who simply moved from the old to the new hotel. We do not know the exact date of his transition, only that it was before 1849, as the 1849 Otley-Whiteford Map shows the Bass River Hotel on the south-east corner of the U.S. Route 9-Maple Avenue intersection.

Woodward in his 1883 *History of Burlington County* states, "The hotel was erected in 1851, by Thomas French, who carried on the business for a short time, and was succeeded by Franklin Adams, who purchased the property in 1856, and has carried on the business since." [p230] This clearly flies in the face of the 1849 Otley-Whiteford Map which shows the hotel on the southeast corner of the intersection at the town center. Woodward does, however, have it correct that Franklin operated the hotel for a very long time as he was the proprietor for over 36 years. Federal records show that he was the New Gretna Postmaster for 28 of these years, from 1857 to 1885.



The new Bass River Hotel at New Gretna is clearly marked on this 1849 Otley-Whiteford Map of Burlington County. However, New Gretna is mistakenly called Harmony.

The 1860, 1870, and 1880 Federal census list Franklin's occupation as Hotel Keeper. Interestingly all three census lists Franklin, Mary A. (his wife), and their children, but there are no other names listed as boarders in the hotel as there were in the 1850 census of the old Red Tavern where 16 boarders were listed. That the hotel had no boarders would indicate that the nature of the hotel had changed from that of the Red Tavern. It likely was smaller and more a tavern-restaurant and stage stop for day travelers with no need for overnight lodging facilities. A room was likely available for government meetings, elections, court sessions, and various community functions, an arrangement that was good for the community while also profiting the proprietor through the sale of food and liquid refreshments.

Franklin Adams married Mary Ann Mathis, the great-great-great granddaughter of the Great John Mathis through his second son, Job. As host and hostess of the hotel, they were respected, influential people in the community. The new Bass River Hotel quickly became the focal point for the growing community at the lower bridge. It was a magnet for development. Other businesses and houses were built in its vicinity, and New Gretna became the new town center of Bass River.



We are fortunate to have a photo [left] of the Bass River Hotel from the family of Franklin Adams Gray (1896-1986), the grandson of Franklin Adams, who was named after his grandfather. Both are buried in the family plot on the hill in Miller Cemetery. The gentleman dressed in white, holding his hat at his side, is Franklin Adams, the hotel's proprietor. The sign hanging off the front of the building reads "Bass River Hotel." The configuration of the building, with four separate exterior doors, suggests that it may have been a multi-purpose building housing a store and post office in addition to the hotel . . . a

Franklin and Mary Ann Adams operated the Bass River Hotel for over 35 years. (Photo courtesy of Franklin A. Gray)

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forerunner of today's strip malls. The photo was taken prior to 1885 when Franklin died.

The *Mt. Holly Herald* carried this brief news item concerning Franklin's death on September 5, 1885. It was a simple obituary for such an important man.

Franklin Adams, the veteran hotel keeper and postmaster at New Gretna died there on Wednesday [9/2/1885] after a few weeks' illness. Mr. Adams was a Republican and was appointed postmaster in Buchanan's administration. He enjoyed the respect and esteem of the community.

Franklin Adam's real estate was sold at a public auction on September 4, 1885, just two days after his death. The hotel property at New Gretna brought \$1,500.00 and was purchased by Mary Ann Adams, his wife; Blanchard Adams (1863-1940), his son; and Elizabeth Adams Deacon (1853-1887), his daughter. Elizabeth's husband, Charles Deacon, became the new proprietor of the hotel. The following news items from the *Mt. Holly Herald* show that the hotel quickly became associated with the new proprietor.

The rain on Tuesday and Wednesday flooded Charles Deacon's oyster cellar and pool room. 4/18/1886

There is to be an oyster supper at the hotel of Charles R. Deacon, which is to be followed by a ball. 2/5/1887

Charles Deacon is rebuilding his hotel. No doubt it will be an improvement over the old one and Charles will try to make drinks very palatable. 7/30/1887

The old hotel building, post office, and store were destroyed by a fire on Friday, January 5, 1917. The fire started about 10 PM in Milton Cramer's store and spread to the adjacent Post Office, owned by Howard Mathis, and to the old hotel building, owned by Fred Minor and occupied by Levi Downs. Sub freezing temperatures prevented the gathering of water to fight the blaze and, with no local fire company available to fight the fire, the old cedar buildings quickly were destroyed as helpless residents looked on at the disappearance of the old Bass River Hotel.

Bass River's Floating Hotel

A small news item in the *Mt. Holly Herald* mentions a little known Bass River Hotel. It's owner, Levi French, was a prominent Bass River resident and local entrepreneur. It is unfortunate that we don't have a photo of this floating marvel, but it is likely that it was the talk of the town for quite some time.

We called on Capt. Levi French at the Novelty floating hotel near the bridge last week and were really surprised to see the capacity and comfort which this curiosity affords. Capt. French has recently given it a thorough overhauling and is now applying the paint which makes the hotel look very attractive. There are accommodations for 48 people and everything is arranged in first class style. *Mt. Holly Herald* 2/27/1892

[To be completed in the July-December, 2005 issue with the McKeen Hotel at Bridgeport, the only old hotel-tavern building still standing in Bass River Township.]

Gazette Subscriptions

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THE NEW GREтна HOUSE

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Deed Book 339, p 314 records Joseph B. and Eva Lamson selling the New Gretna House property to the Essex County Brewing Company for \$4,000.00 on 7/18/1899 with a \$2,000.00 mortgage.

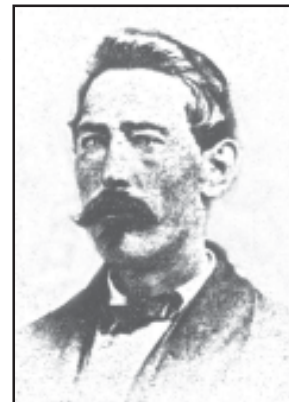
This researcher is unaware of the identity of the owners of Essex County Brewing Company; however, there is a connection to the local Sooy family as evidenced by the following *Mount Holly Herald* news items. Further research in the N.J. State Achieves' corporation registration records is needed to determine any connection between the brewing company and other New Gretna locals.

Benjamin Sooy has moved into the hotel property, and is said he is to have the place licensed at the next term of court. [1/26/1901]

The license application of Samuel T. Sooy, Jr. of New Gretna, was next disposed of. Mr. Sooy declared under oath that he had not exhibited any letter from the court in which it was stated that he would be granted a license. The remonstrants failed to appear, so the license was granted. [2/23/1901]

The possibility of a local Sooy family connection to the Essex County Brewing Company is further reinforced by the company's sale of the New Gretna House to Daniel T. Sooy on 9/22/1904 for \$1.00 plus

the balance of the mortgage owned to the Mercer Building & Loan Association, Newark, N.J. [*Burlington County Deed Book 389, p. 322*]. Daniel T. operated the New Gretna house for 14 years until he defaulted on a \$2,925.00 mortgage [3/16/1918 *Chancery Court decree, Book H-10 of Executions, p 260*] with the property granted, by Sheriff A. Engle Haines, to the estate of Michael Allen on 3/16/1918 for \$3,000.00 [*Bur. Cty Deed Book 545, p71*]. The property was then sold by the estate three months later to James S. Pedrick for \$3,000.00 [*Bur. Cty Deed Book 608, p 445*]. Pedrick owned the property until 4/17/1923 when he sold it to Anna Klus for \$6,500.00 [*Bur. Cty Deed Book 612, p225*].



Daniel T. Sooy, Sr. owned and operated the New Gretna House from September, 1904 to March, 1918. (Photo courtesy of Thelma Loveland)

Anna Klus, affectionately known as "Miss Anna", operated the New Gretna House for almost 25 years, selling the property to the New Gretna House, Inc. for \$35,000.00 on 2/14/1948. Many of today's New Gretna residents fondly remember Miss Anna's days as hostess. It was an active, happy time when the hotel hosted large numbers of hunters and fisherman. According to the season, it was not unusual to see large numbers of duck and other shore birds or deer hanging from the New Gretna House porch. The crews for the Atlantic Electric Company boarded at Miss Anna's while they were installing the first electric lines in town in the late 1920's. It is said that she became a wealthy woman upon taking their advise to buy stock in the fledgling company.

The New Gretna House passed through many owners since Miss Anna, but their tenures were largely uneventful. The hayday of the New Gretna House had clearly disappeared. Her doors closed in 1992, and she sat vacant and boarded up, a pathetic shell of her former glory. Mercifully, a mischief night fire on October 31, 2004, put the old hotel to rest.

[See page 7 for a brief photo history of the New Gretna House.]

WHO WE ARE

The Bass River Community Library History Committee members are Harry DeVerter, Steve Eichinger, Jean & Murray Harris, Elaine Mathis, Almira Steele, and Pete Stemmer. You may write us c/o **The Bass River Community Library, P.O. Box 256, New Gretna, N.J. 08224**; or call Pete Stemmer at 296-6748.

NEWS FROM THE PAST by Harry DeVerter

A hearing regarding Charles Deacon's application for a 1888 Liquor License for the old Bass River Hotel gives us an interesting insight into the hotel's influence in the community. Whether it was good or bad depends upon whose testimony you believe. Many old New Gretna family names are mentioned- Adams, Cramer, Darby, French, Mathis, and Trueax .

A remonstrance was presented against the granting of a license to Charles R. Deacon to keep a hotel at New Gretna, and the court announced that it would hear the case at once:

The application was presented by Eckard P. Budd, Esq., who stated that it was properly drawn and contained the requisite number of freeholders.

Joseph H. Gaskill, who appeared for the remonstrants, said some of the signers had also signed Catherine McKeen's [*proprietor of the McKeen Hotel at Bridgeport*] application. But the main objection was that the hotel had been kept in defiance of the law, and was not a necessity, also, that the applicant had sold liquor on election day, on Sundays and to minors.

Darius Cramer was the first witness. He lives at New Gretna, and said he procured liquor at Deacon's before he was of age on several occasions in company with other minors, Jesse French, William Trueax, Godfrey Darby, and Jon Cramer's son. Witness had played pool there. Witness was of age last April. He only remembered having but one drink there when he was under age. He couldn't remember what it was he drank, whether it was beer, whiskey or "soft stuff."

William Trueax will be of age next month, and couldn't tell how long he had lived at New Gretna. He said that he had bought beer at Deacon's hotel by the drink, also, "apple ginger," but never "treated the house." He had seen several minors drink there, but couldn't tell how long the hotel was kept open on Saturday nights. Pool and dice were played there, and several times disturbances had occurred. Witnesses had played pool there with minors. He was unable to say whether he looked older now than he did a few months ago when he procured the drinks. The only time he saw Godfrey Darby drink there was when the latter sneaked a drink of apple ginger off the bar. Darby got his drink the night the band was there.

John F. Cramer a life-long resident of New Gretna, who said he had known Charles R. Deacon from infancy, then took the stand. He said he was not a Prohibitionist, and took a drink when he felt that he needed it. He had visited Deacon's hotel and seen minors drink there. Jess French used to have his drinks smuggled to him by some one in the crowd, and after that Jess would go up and take his medicine like any one else. Witness's son had also drunk there; also a young man from Mount Holly by the name of Holeman; don't know whether his first name was Ernest or not. One took beer and the other whiskey. Pool was played there by two men- one of whom assaulted the Methodist preacher.

Godfrey Darby is between 16 and 17 years old, and is quite boyish looking. Witness had seen drunken men around the hotel on Sundays. Alonzo Johnson and **Blanchard Adams** got that way and were stowed away in the hay mow one Sunday. At another Willard Adams [*Charles Deacon's brother-in-law*] got a bottle filled with something that looked like liquor. He thought Deacon's hotel was not necessary; most of the people stopped at Lamson's [*the New Gretna House*]. Not long since one man went there drunk and came near turning Deacon out of the hotel and taking possession. Mr. Deacon has kept the hotel open until 2 o'clock in the morning.

Jesse French then stood up for the court to see how old he looked. Judge Black then said: "I should think he was thirty-five years old."

Judge Black here interrupted Mr. Budd in his examination by remarking that the law against the sale of liquor to minors applied only to student of colleges and apprentices.

Mr. Gaskill insisted, however, that it was proper to show that minors had procured liquor there, as showing the character of the house.

"You have a feeling against Mr. Deacon haven't you?" asked Mr. Budd.

"Yes, I had a little racket with him." Answered the witness. The particulars, however, were ruled out by the court.

Samuel Johnson testified that he lived in New Gretna, and has a brother Alonzo, who is 19 years of age, and is a carpenter by trade.

Witness had worked for Mr. Deacon and had seen Alonzo drink there despite of his forbidding Mr. Deacon selling him liquor. The latter once said he would sell Alonzo what he wanted when he had the money, but afterwards Mr. Deacon said he would not sell him any more. Witness said Jess French and young Holeman sucked fancy drinks through straws on Sunday night; he didn't know the name of the drinks. Last election day witness had a drink of rye whiskey there, but couldn't tell whether it was paid for or not. Constable Cramer also had a nip that day. It was put down on the slate, as witness has an account there. Witness admitted that he had a difference with Mr. Deacon, and had threatened to have his license taken away.

Alonzo Johnson, 19 years old, said he had visited Deacon's hotel several times, and drank there three or four hundred times during the last three months, and had spent about \$35. Witness had the drinks taken out of his wages on Saturday night when he worked for Mr. Deacon; he had been drunk there, but generally kept on his feet. Witness had procured liquor there on Sundays of Mr. Deacon. The latter had asked witness how old he was, but witness refused to tell him.

Maja B. Mathis testified that he had seen people playing pool for drinks at Deacon's and had seen the man losing the game pay for the drinks. John F. Cramer was engaged in a disturbance there once.

John O. Mathis was called by the defense. He said Deacon kept the best hotel that had ever been kept in the township, and he thought it was needed.

Joseph B. Cramer said the hotel was needed there, and was well kept. He denied Samuel Johnson's statement that he had paid for liquor on election day.

Charles W. Cramer also thought the hotel there was a necessity, and had been well kept. He had heard Samuel Johnson threaten to have Deacon's license taken away from him.

Jesse French testified that he never obtained liquor at Deacon's hotel until he told Mr. Deacon that he was of age. Ernest Holeman, of Mount Holly had once offered Mr. Deacon \$1 in payment of drinks, but the money was handed back to him.

Blanchard Adams denied the statements made by Alonzo Johnson that he had procured liquor there on Sunday.

Charles R. Deacon, the applicant, testified as to the accommodations for the public at his hotel. He admitted having sold liquor to Jesse French, but supposed him to be of age. He denied having sold drinks to Darby, and never allowed pool to be played for drinks.

The case was adjourned until Monday morning.

On Monday morning the concluding argument in the contested license case of Charles R. Deacon was made.

Judge Parker said a majority of the court had decided to grant the license, but wanted it understood that any future violation of the law would be promptly dealt with.



Blanchard Adams was the brother-in-law of Charles Deacon (Photo courtesy of Franklin Adams Gray)

THE NEW GRETNA HOUSE . . . REMEMBERED



Circa 1920's (Postcard courtesy of Paul Steinbauer)



Circa 1930's (Postcard courtesy of Sally Allen)



Circa 1940's (Postcard courtesy of Sally Allen)



Circa 1960's (Postcard courtesy of Georgine Bartlett)
 Note the error on the postcard which places the building of the New Gretna House in 1861. This is not unusual, as many people believed that the New Gretna House was much older than it actually was.



July 22, 2004 (Photo by Peter H. Stemmer)



Betty Lamson West, the oldest living relative of Joseph B. Lamson who built the New Gretna House in 1885. November 1, 2004, the day after the fire. (Photo by Peter H. Stemmer)

THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE NEW GREटना HOUSE

by Peter H. Stemmer

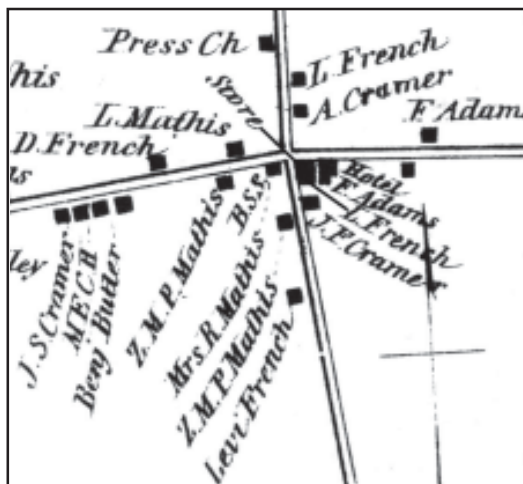
The New Gretna House was the last of the Hotel-Taverns built in Bass River Township and, perhaps, the last landmark to remind us of a simpler and more innocent time in New Gretna. For 120 years it stood in the center of town, a beacon on the New York Road, now Route 9, between Atlantic City and New York City. Whether one passed this noted establishment by carriage or stage at the turn of the 20th century or by car at the turn of the 21st century, you knew when you were in New Gretna

The New Gretna House was built sometime between 1883 and 1885 by Joseph B. Lamson (1853-1917), the son of Adolphus Lamson, a Wheel Wright, who did an extensive business in the manufacture of heavy wagons which he shipped to the western states. Adolphus was one of the first businessmen in New Gretna and, likely, gave his son the itch to be an entrepreneur.



The New Gretna House, circa 1910 (Photo courtesy of Ruth Cramer Soles)

The first mention of the structure that was to become the New Gretna House was found in a single sentence in the 2/24/1883 edition of the *Mt. Holly Herald* which simply states, "Joseph B. Lamson's new house is now enclosed and ready for the masons as soon as weather will permit. It is quite an improvement to the corner." It takes a knowledge of the area and some deduction to connect this news item with the New Gretna House. The 1876 J.D. Scott Atlas map of New Gretna clearly shows Levi French's store and Franklin Adams' Bass River Hotel on the southeast corner and the Blacksmith Shop (BSS) on the southwest corner in the New Gretna town center. That leaves only the northeast and northwest corners available for the Lamson house. With historic hindsight and the following 4/25/1885 item from the same newspaper, it is obvious that the Lamson home became the Lamson restaurant - "J.B. Lamson is building an addition to his restaurant, and proposes doing a rushing business." We do not know exactly when that home to restaurant transformation took place, but it is clear that Joe B, as he was locally known, was operating a restaurant there in April of 1885.



The 1876 J.D. Scott New Jersey Atlas map of the present day Rt. 9-Maple Avenue intersection shows the northeast and northwest corners vacant.

only President to serve two non-consecutive terms from 1885-1889 and 1893-1897, was also the only Democrat elected to the presidency in the era of Republican political domination between the Civil War and the election of Woodrow Wilson in 1912. Undoubtedly, Joe B, being a staunch Democrat, was inclined to honor one of his political heroes; however, it was not to be. For whatever reason, the "New Gretna House" was chosen as the name for his new enterprise. Perhaps Joe B did not want to offend prospective Republican patrons who might chose to frequent the Bass River Hotel just across the street rather than to patronize an establishment named after a Democratic President.

The earliest documentation found regarding the use of the "New Gretna House" name was a 12/25/1886 *Mt. Holly Herald* item which stated, "Mark W. Adams, township collector, was at the New Gretna House on Monday to receive taxes" and a listing in the 1887-8 *Howe's Burlington County Directory* which simply said, "NEW GREटना HOUSE, J B Lamson, prop." Business must have quickly thrived, as evidenced by a 1/22/1887 *Mt. Holly Herald* item stating that "The ice crop has been excellent, and all of the ice houses in this town are filled. The New Gretna house has about 200 tons stored for the coming summer." That's a lot of ice!

A brief item in the *Tuckerton Beacon* tells us that Joe B sold the New Gretna House in June, 1899 - "The well known New Gretna House has passed out of the hands of its old proprietor, J.B. Lamson. Our people will greatly miss his genial welcome and his excellent ice cream" [6/29/1899 edition]. Burlington County

(Continued on page 5)

A 6/6/1885 *Mt. Holly Herald* item sheds additional light on the development of the New Gretna House:

J.B. Lamson is making extensive improvements on his saloon this spring. When he gets it all done he is going to call it the "Cleveland House," and expects to move the post office in before long. He will also accommodate the travelling public with bed and board. He is prepared to furnish all kinds of refreshments, when called for or ordered at the shortest notice. We hope he will meet with success for his enterprise. 6/6/1885

The "saloon" reference in the news item clearly shows that the business is a tavern-hotel, not merely a restaurant. Webster's 1913 Dictionary defines "saloon" as (1) a room or establishment where alcoholic drinks are served over a counter; (2) tavern consisting of a building with a bar and public rooms; often provides light meals. Joe B's plans for moving the New Gretna Post Office into his establishment were successful, as Federal Postal records show that Joseph B. Lamson was the New Gretna Postmaster from 11/02/1885 through 06/06/1889.

Joe B's intention of calling his new venture the "Cleveland House" is not surprising. Grover Cleveland, the only President to serve two non-consecutive terms from 1885-1889 and 1893-1897, was also the only Democrat elected to the presidency in the era of Republican political domination between the Civil War and the election of Woodrow Wilson in 1912. Undoubtedly, Joe B, being a staunch Democrat, was inclined to honor one of his political heroes; however, it was not to be. For whatever reason, the "New Gretna House" was chosen as the name for his new enterprise. Perhaps Joe B did not want to offend prospective Republican patrons who might chose to frequent the Bass River Hotel just across the street rather than to patronize an establishment named after a Democratic President.



ANNOUNCEMENT
JOSEPH B. LAMSON
 NEW GREटना
 BASS RIVER TOWNSHIP, N. J.
 Candidate for the office of Clerk of Burlington County, subject to the decision of the Democratic Primary Election, September 22nd, 1914.
 This advertisement ordered and paid for by Joseph B. Lamson.

This 1914 politic ad shows Joe B's ties to the Democratic Party. He served multiple terms as Burlington County Clerk.