

# The Black Bear Inn

Mike Bertram

The “Black Bear” stood just below the 18th milestone of the Lancaster Turnpike, on the southwest corner of what is now the junction between route 30 and 252 (see map below). Route 252 was originally called Leopard Road. Thomas Pennington purchased the property from Robert Russell in 1768, Russell having acquired it from Joshua Evans in 1763.



An annotated section of an 1847 map of Chester County

*Courtesy of the Pennsylvania State Archives.*

The first innkeeper to petition for a license was Thomas Pennington. The licensing papers at the Chester County Archives unfortunately give no details of this first application which may have been contentious. When the Paoli Inn was first licensed, in 1769, there were objections from another inn owner, so one would have expected that there would be issues licensing an establishment so close to the Paoli Inn.

One of the later innkeepers was a John Philips. He called himself “Captain” Philips, and insisted that he was a captain during the Revolution, although in the Pennsylvania Archives he is listed as a lieutenant – but it also lists him as having died in action, whereas in reality he died at the inn in 1790<sup>1</sup>. He was captured during the battle for Long Island and later exchanged.

When Thomas Pennington senior died in 1796, the property was partitioned between his son, Thomas Pennington junior and his daughter, Hannah Parker, who acquired the section including the inn. She was initially married to John Parker who died in 1807. Hannah then married James Foot. They sold the inn to Eliza Parker in 1820. By 1828 it had been acquired by Randel Evans.

A description of the property is given in the sale notice from 1833:

## *Land and Tavern for Sale*

*Will be offered at Public sale on Friday, the third day of January next, on the premises, that well established stand, known by the name of the*

## *Black Bear Tavern*

*situated in Tredyffrin township, on the Philadelphia and Lancaster turnpike road, between the 17th and 18th mile stones, including about sixty eight acres; twelve of which are woodland, the remainder well cultivated, enclosed with good fence, and divided into convenient fields. The buildings are a large tavern house, fifty eight feet in front, part new, a new stone barn, a livery stable, sheds, and oats house, a blacksmith shop with two fine hearths, a stone spring house over a constant spring of water.*

*There are also two wells of water, with pumps, one in front, the other at the back of the dwelling house. The Pennsylvania rail road passes within about five perches of the buildings. A public road, leading from Howellville to the Darby road, passes through the premises, between the house and sheds.*

*This stand has, in general, received a large share of wagon custom; and by its advantages as a place of business, it should invite the attention of persons desiring an establishment of this kind. Sale to commence at one o'clock, P. M. and conditions made known by*

*Randal Evans, Dec. 10, 1833*

This attempt at a sale failed and Randal Evans kept the inn property until 1851 when it was sold to pay off his debts. The inn was acquired by its final owner, Hugh Steen. He held the license of the Black Bear until 1854. Presumably when it closed down it was due to travelers using the railroad rather than the turnpike as well as competition from the Paoli Inn. The Bear Tavern was torn down in 1877.

### Licensees

1785	Thomas Pennington, on Lancaster Road
1786	Thomas Pennington - tavern (tax)
1786 - 1788	John Phillips, formerly kept by Thomas Pennington
1787 - 1789	John Phillips - tavern (tax)
1789 - 1790	Thomas Pennington
1791	Thomas Pennington - tavern (tax)
1791 - 1794	William Himes, formerly kept by Thomas Pennington
1795	Thomas Himes
1796	Hannah Himes
1797 - 1806	John Parker on Lancaster Turnpike Road
1807 - 1809	Hannah Parker
1810	John Oldwine
1815-6	James Foot
1817	Henry Harn
1818	James Foot
1819	Robert Armstrong
1822	Henry Harn
1828	Henry Harn
1829	Randal Evans
1830-3	Abraham Beitler
1834-6	Abraham Lapp
1838-40	John Zuck
1841-3	John Robinson
1844	Joseph B. Townsend
1845	Joseph B. Townsend?
1848	Joseph B. Townsend?
1850	Hugh Steen?

### References

1. 'Early Inns and Taverns,' by Grace Winthrop, *Tredyffrin Easttown Historical Society Quarterly* vol. 25, #3 (July 1987).