

Bob Goshorn's "Devon Inn" article—originally published in the October 1984 issue of the *Tredyffrin Easttown History Club Quarterly* (Volume 22 Number 4, Pages 125–138)—is considered to be one of the most definitive treatments of the subject, and is often used as a reference source. At the time of the original printing, the quality and quantity of images used to illustrate the article were quite limited. This reprinted version includes small improved versions of the images from the original (with larger versions and captions in the following section), and annotations that refer to items in the following substantial collection of additional images and information found during more recent research.

# Devon Inn

Bob Goshorn

For three decades, from 1882 to 1913, many wealthy and socially prominent families from Philadelphia and elsewhere spent their summers at the well-known Devon Inn. The huge hotel was situated on a knoll about 300 yards south of the railroad station, overlooking well-kept lawns, trees, and gardens. A shaded boardwalk led from the station to the Inn, and carriages and omnibuses met all trains.

Before the purchase of the site by Lemuel Coffin and Joseph B. Altemus, it had been part of the farm of Lewis Davis. It was one of a number of farms in the area bought by Coffin & Altemus, dry goods commission merchants turned developers, located on Chestnut Street in Philadelphia, in their plan to build a town of "large and handsome country residences" near the new railroad station called Devon. After its purchase in August of 1881, it was announced that "as soon as this property is conveyed to them, Coffin & Altemus will commence the erection of a large hotel similar in its appointments to the one at Bryn Mawr." In addition to providing facilities for a fine summer resort "in the English manner" in pleasing surroundings, the new hotel obviously also was intended to acquaint prominent Philadelphians with the advantages and convenience of summer, or even year-round, country residence in the area. [\[See "1883 Map" on page 4\]](#)

The architect for the project was a "Mr. Sims," probably James P. Sims, of 560 Walnut Street in Philadelphia. The plans called for a building with a frontage of two hundred feet and a depth of one hundred feet, a "novel and beautiful affair." Ground breaking ceremonies were held on February 11, 1882, with the expectation that the structure would be completed by the first of May, for the summer season. [\[See "The Architects of the Devon Inns" on page 34\]](#)

The contract for the foundations and masonry work was awarded to Peter Burns, of Berwyn, while the contract for the carpentry work went to William H. Bilye[u], of Philadelphia. The work was to be supervised for Coffin & Altemus by Charles Paist.

By the first week in April, Paist reported that some 700 perches of stone, 50,000 bricks, and 250,000 feet of lumber had been hauled onto the property, and that 2500 yards of dirt had been excavated from the cellars. Nonetheless, the opening date had to be set back three times, despite the fact that all "hands have been working as rapidly as it was possible for them to do."

The Inn finally opened on August 16. The structure was basically of the English Queen Anne style, a long, low, L-shaped

building that "hugged" the hill on which it was situated. The superstructure was built of stone, with the rest made of wood. The roof was of red tile, and there were a number of projecting porches and gables that gave it a "picturesque look."

The managers of the Inn were 32-year-old Harry Crump and his younger brother George. With their father, they were also the proprietors of the Colonnade in Philadelphia, and of the Congress Hall in Cape May. In both these enterprises they had been, it was reported, "eminently successful." Their staff at the Devon Inn included more than 100 employees. [\[See "Crump Brothers" on page 31\]](#)

When the Inn opened in mid-August, nearly all its rooms had been engaged through the month of September, an auspicious beginning. (On September 22 it was noted that there still were more than 150 guests registered at the Inn.) The first season continued until the middle of November, and many of the guests reserved rooms for the next season.

On the day before the opening of its second season, on May 31, 1883, its "elegant furnishings" were described in some detail in the *West Chester Daily Local News*. in "a look into [the] quarters in which many of Philadelphia's elite while away the lazy hours of the summer term."

*"Devon Inn," it was reported, "is a mammoth boarding-house, the conception and realization of men possessing plethoric purses and grit, who, seeing the needs of such a place to accommodate the best families of Philadelphia during the summer term, set at work, and the result claims the attention and admiration of every passenger that flies past in the cozy coaches on the best railroad in the world..."*

*"In the construction of this building special care has been exercised in making each and every room large, cozy and in strict observance of the laws which govern sanitary results. The most of the rooms are at least double the size of those found in hotels of this period ... The ceilings are high, windows large and of the best grade of glass, and nearly one half [of them, the rooms] are on the communicating plan and connected with elegant bath rooms and water closets of the most superb appointments and costly finish. [The rooms on the lower floors were actually 14 by 20 feet, with 16' ceilings. Some also had attached private dining rooms.]* [\[See "Sanitation" on page 21\]](#)

*"The dining room is a model apartment in itself, and has a capacity for seating 150 persons at one time. Large, airy windows are open three sides and the handsome furniture and chandeliers give it a very inviting appearance without*

the aid of an elaborate bill of fare. On the south of this apartment, a spacious kitchen is situated, the outfit of which in the way of cooking ranges, boilers and a score of other necessary features go to make it perfect in every respect....

"The parlors set aside to the use of the lady guests are situated in the southwest portion of the original building and are very complete, their walls being elaborately decorated with handsome paper, mirrors and paintings. The furniture is of the most modern style, tastefully upholstered in raw silk while the elaborate workmanship displays skill and perfection of taste. Herein a piano is found, one which masterfully assists at the hands of the lady guests in adding charm to a sojourner at the Devon Inn.

"A gents parlor, and also a large smoking room are located on the first floor in the main portion, both of them being furnished in keeping with the generous spirit of the gentleman in charge of the house. Several other smaller parlors are also found upon this floor, serving as private parlors, each one being made as inviting as a lavish outlay of money is capable of making them. The office is in the centre of the building fronting north and is a spacious room, well arranged and equipped with everything necessary for the transaction of business and at the same time extending a cheerful reception to guests. Upon this floor, there are also a number of sleeping rooms, which are designed to meet the wants of aged people, and others who have a dislike for upper rooms....

"The furniture is all of walnut, ash and mahogany and of the Eastlake design, and we may here add that a large portion of it was made in the furniture manufactory of Messrs. Crump, the proprietors, and under their special supervision.... The beds of the establishment consist of two mattresses each, the lower being composed of hair and springs and the upper of hair entirely. Those with feather bolsters and pillows and blankets of the best quality serve to make a bed sure to entice the influence of the drowsy god, providing of course that the conscience be in a favorable condition.

"In the sleeping rooms, in fact throughout the entire Inn, large and prettily designed open grates are placed.... The fireplaces have slated fronts, which is a great improvement on the brick ones and assist very materially towards making the rooms neat, cleanly and attractive in their appearance....

"Large and tastefully constructed piazzas extend on the lower floor almost entirely around the building, while several smaller ones but of more attractive design, add beauty and comfort to the second tier, the latter in plain walnut, as hand pine, well oiled and carefully spread with shellac. The carpets are all of the best quality and latest design, each room having a pattern suited to the color and style of the furniture therein.

"Meals are served at the Devon Inn as follows: Breakfast from 7 to 11, lunch at 1 p.m., and dinner from 6 to 8.

*The menu is all that the markets and skilled cookery can provide and in a word everything that can assist in making guests comfortable the Crump Bros. provide with a liberal hand...."* [See "Dining Room 1899" on page 38]

Even allowing for editorial enthusiasm and perhaps some exaggeration, it obviously was, as this article in the *Local* noted, a "large, toney and picturesque" inn!

Water for the Inn was taken from a reservoir a mile to the [south], fed by five springs "of as pure water as the State can provide." It was pumped by steam engine to three large 5000-gallon tanks in the attic of the building, and from there ran into each room. [See "Water Supply" on page 20] Lighting was by gas. [See "Gas Lighting" on page 19] Steam pipes also ran through each room, to provide heat in addition to that provided by the fireplaces.

In the winter months, ice for use the following summer was cut at the dam at Waterloo Mills. More than 600 tons of "clear and transparent" ice, about eight inches thick, was cut and stored in a "large and handsome" ice house especially built for the purpose.

So successful was the abbreviated first season at the Inn that a four-story addition, 107 feet long by 44 feet wide, was built in the spring of 1883 to accommodate more guests. With this addition, there was now a total of 202 sleeping rooms available.

In April work was also started on a large two-story livery stable, 200 feet by 50 feet, for the accommodation of horses belonging to guests as well as those used by the Inn. Located to the north of the Inn, it was designed to contain sixty stalls, of hard wood and with iron gates and troughs, "in first class style." The upper story was for sleeping quarters for coachmen, grooms, and hostlers. The side of the building was made of slate slabs, each eight feet long, five feet wide, and three inches thick, set in posts of the same material. [See "Livery Stable" on page 27]

A new four-story laundry, 80 feet long and 40 feet wide, was also added. In addition to providing a first-class laundry, a portion of the lower floor of the building was made into several billiards rooms, with the upper floors used as servants' and maids' rooms. [Ed. – Other *Daily Local* reports specify the stable at 200 x 80 feet, and the laundry at 100 by 40 feet.]

A number of large shade trees were also planted on the grounds during the fall and winter months, and in the spring about 20 acres of land were set apart as a garden to raise vegetables for the Inn's kitchen.

The Railroad also constructed a new "handsome and commodious" [stone] station at Devon, and made arrangements for nearly all its passenger trains going in either direction to stop there for the convenience of the Inn's guests. [See "The Devon Station" on page 15] [See "The Battle of Waterloo Road" on page 26]

The Devon Inn reopened for the season on June 1, 1883, again under the management of H. J. and G. [R]. Crump. On the eve of the opening, it was noted in the *Local* that "the register of Devon Inn at this time foretells a busy and fashionable season at the place, and there isn't any doubt as to its being kept full during the entire season."

By mid-July it was reported that there was “considerable stir and fun at Devon Inn”. “The heated term being now at its bulge,” it was noted, “this popular interior resort is well filled with boarders, all of whom are Philadelphians, excepting “two or three who hail from New York City. This Inn is now under full sail, and nearly every room in it has an occupant — the number of guests being about 180. During the week a program of amusements, gotten up by the proprietors and ably assisted by the guests, is observed, embracing vocal and instrumental music, riding, lawn tennis, croquet, billiards, cards, and some athletic sports of not too violent a character. These sort of culminate in a grand hop on Saturday evenings to music by Asher’s Philadelphia orchestra, and among the number who dance there are many who are styled graceful in the extreme. These hops are not loaded down with stately formalities, but are replete with sociability, ease and merriment, and as a matter of course Saturday nights are looked forward to with much interest, not only by the guests of Devon Inn but by a large number of Philadelphians who ‘run out’ to take a hand in the good time which is guaranteed to all comers.”

The popularity of the stables, still under construction, and of drives through the countryside were also noted: “From 4 o’clock in the afternoon until after 6, the gay equippages roll up to the Inn, receive their fashionable freight and then drive in the beautiful surroundings for which Easttown is noted. Some of the ladies are accomplished equestrians and they permit no suitable day to pass without devoting a portion to this healthful and graceful recreation.” [See “Afternoon Riding and Driving” on page 39]

The season, originally planned to run into the fall, ended abruptly in mid-August. On August 13 the Inn was destroyed by fire. (Ironically, in the May article in the *Local* it had been noted, “On each landing of the building are what are termed fire or water stations, twenty in all, which provision is ample for protection against fire.” The blaze, apparently caused by a defective flue over the kitchen, was discovered at about half past eight in the morning. By ten o’clock two-thirds of the Inn “was in ashes and the flames still raging.” All that remained that evening were eleven brick chimneys, a few stone foundation walls, and a mass of burning timbers in the cellar. Fortunately, neither the laundry nor the stables was touched by the flames, although a frame stable on the property of Mrs. H. M. Ruth, near Eagle about a mile away, was damaged when sparks from the blaze were carried by the wind and set it afire also. [See “First Devon Inn Fire” on page 17]

Nor were any of the guests injured. The only person hurt was a porter who reportedly “was drunk and in his maudlin state jumped out of a window and was injured quite severely.” Actually, there was little sign of panic as guests and employees worked together to empty the building and save such of their effects as they could.

There was, however, a considerable loss of clothing, jewelry, and other items of personal property. One guest and his wife, displaying a great presence of mind, threw their three trunks

out the window to save their clothing — only to remember afterwards that the trunks were empty and that their clothes had all been put into the wardrobes and bureaus in their room! On the other hand, another guest was greatly grieved over the loss of a diamond cross valued at \$6,000, forgetting, in her fright, that it had been placed in the Inn’s fireproof safe a few days earlier. A little girl of about six was quite worried when she couldn’t find her favorite doll in its tiny doll carriage; after she later found the small carriage unharmed by the flames and pulled the little wax doll from it she exclaimed to her mother, “Mama, I believe she slept all through it!” For one guest this was his third hotel fire; he had also been in fires in a hotel at Beach Haven, New Jersey; and at the Beechwood House in Jenkintown. [See “Herring’s Patent Champion Safe” on page 17]

Neighbors around the Inn immediately offered to help the guests, and the Pennsylvania Railroad sent fifty men to guard the property and help in whatever way they could. The proprietors of the Bellevue Hotel in Wayne and the Bryn Mawr Inn, as well as the Colonnade in Philadelphia, also offered accommodations for those needing them. Most of the guests, however, returned to their homes in Philadelphia, the Pennsylvania Railroad also having dispatched a special train to Devon to be at the disposal of the guests.

Although the damage to the Inn was estimated at about \$150,000, it was covered by insurance, there being a policy for \$75,000 on the frame hotel, \$43,000 on the furniture and fittings, and \$2,000 on the brick-frame L-section of the building, as well as several, other smaller policies. Lemuel Coffin, who was staying at the Inn with his wife at the time, immediately announced that he and Altemus planned to rebuild the Inn at once, and that it would be ready for the next season. He also added that the new building would be of brick, with the latest improvements to make it safe, comfortable, and popular. [See “Fire Insurance” on page 17]

Within a week more than 400 men were clearing away the rubble and debris of the old Inn, preparatory to building the new one. By the end of the month everything was in readiness to rebuild.

The architects for the new Inn were G. W. and [W]. D. Hewitt, of Philadelphia. If anything, it was to be even grander than its predecessor. Larger than the original hotel, it was 334 feet long and 58 feet wide — [almost as long as] a football field — more spacious and better arranged, with accommodations for fifty more guests. [See “The Architects of the Devon Inns” on page 34]

While in the same style as the original, it had four, rather than three, stories, the first story of stone, the second of sandstone, and the balance of brick, making it “as nearly fire-proof as possible”. The water tank in the cupola of the Inn was also larger than before, with a capacity of 20,000 gallons “for ordinary use and in case of fire.” Other improvements included steam heat, and an elevator for the convenience of the guests. [See “Stokes & Parrish” on page 19]



The builder was John Lowber Welch. Samuel Runt, of Philadelphia, the contractor for the brick and stone works and James Ericson, also of Philadelphia, the contractor for the wood work, both agreed to complete construction by the following May 15. So rapidly did the work go that by early December it was reported that the “main building of Devon Inn ... is now up and the slaters are putting on the roof.” In late March 400 men were at work “finishing the interior of the hotel, building porches, and doing other work about the grounds.” The porches extended around the Inn, affording a promenade 700 feet long. [Ed. – The *Times* reports a length of 500 feet.] [See “The Porches” on page 24]

A 140-foot-high flag pole, topped with a handsome bronze weather vane, was erected at the east end of the hotel. From it was to fly a flag 50 feet long and 35 feet wide. [Ed. – the actual flag pole height might have been less, and the flag flown somewhat smaller, given this enormous size.]

A beautiful new lake, containing some two million gallons of water, was also constructed. In addition to being a source of ice and providing additional fire protection, it also provided boating and fishing facilities for the Inn’s guests. An engine house to pump the water to the hotel if needed was also constructed. The lake was stocked with carp by a Dr. Thomas, one of the residents of the Inn, for fishing. [See “Ice House and Lake” on page 20]

In April, the boardwalk from the railroad station to the Inn was laid down, with a row of shade trees planted on either side. The Pennsylvania Railroad also removed a bank of earth near the station, improving the view of the Inn, and laid out gardens and walks around the station grounds. A variety of handsome trees was also planted on the spacious lawn of the Inn. [See “Devon Boulevard” on page 25]

Although a few “old staggers” came out, bag and baggage, on May 31 the grand re-opening of the Inn took place of June 7, 1884. As reported in the *Local* on June 9, “A brilliant assemblage of prominent and fashionable people were present on Saturday evening at the opening of the new Devon Inn. The [Messrs.] Crump [Brothers – sic] sent out over a thousand invitations, and the majority of those whose company was requested responded with their presence. The Inn was in complete order, and the perfect appointments and elegant furniture were the theme of general admiration. A handsome collation was served in the guests, followed by a concert by an orchestra under the leadership of J. P. Zimmerman.” The guests, it was noted the next day, included “six hundred of the wealthy and influential citizens of Philadelphia and its neighborhood”, including the officers of the Pennsylvania Railroad. (The railroad had special cars at the Devon station to take the guests home after the entertainment.) [See “The Second Devon Inn” on page 36]

A few years later, Julius Sasche described the new Inn as “a substantial building of stone and brick of large size and quaint design. The rooms are so large as to give spacious accommodations to all the hundred and fifty guests — the halls, parlors, reading and smoking rooms and card rooms are all of

the most attractive and convenient arrangement.... It has all the conveniences and comforts of the best hotels — including fifty rooms with private baths attached.” [See “Second Inn Interior” on page 23]



[See “Devon Inn, 1910” on page 22]

Again, it was a successful season for both the Inn and its guests. In mid-July it was reported that unlike other hotels and “watering places” where business was off, Devon Inn had 250 guests and was within twenty of capacity. Among them, incidentally, was one lady guest “who brought with her nine horses and nine vehicles, consisting of carriages of various kinds, village carts, etc., and quite a retinue of servants.”

Although one Devonite complained that “the Inn’s late breakfast, Sunday papers, church, a grand dinner, a lazy nap, with fly sauce, a few more to church, a great many to drive and some for a walk” was about the program for a Sunday, the activities at the Inn were actually as varied and extensive as those of the previous year, with boating and fishing on the new lake also available. And for the autumn season, private theatricals and a series of dancing assemblies were held, as well as lawn tennis and croquet parties. [See “Life at the Inn” on page 36]

The stables also saw additional activity when in early June a club of gentlemen riders, who engaged in hurdle racing, steeple chasing, foxhunting and other equestrian activities, moved their hurdles from Rosemont to Devon, to take advantage of its greater space for practice. To accommodate the club, the Inn cleared a 300-acre area — and sold the grass from it for \$2200!



[See “Livery Stable” on page 27]

A special event in mid-August was a baseball game between the waiters at the Inn and the Spence-Thomas nine, both colored teams, before a good-sized crowd made up primarily of the hotel’s guests. In the report of the game, it was noted, “The West Chester boys waited on their competitors to the tune of 7 to 4.” [See “Amateur Base Ball” on page 39]

At the end of the season another reservoir, 30 feet long, 10 feet wide, and seven feet deep, its bottom of slate covered with Cape May gravel, was built to augment the Inn's water supply. In the following April a second water tank, with a capacity of 22,000 gallons, was also erected, giving a total capacity of 42,000 gallons of water. [See "Water Tank" on page 20]

Other improvements and additions were made over the ensuing years. In September of 1887, for example, two large and handsome cottages were started near the Inn to provide additional rooms for guests. But the Inn was so popular that in November the next year, it was announced that because so many people wanted to spend their summer in Devon, another 100 rooms were being added. [See "Cottage Avenue" on page 25]

In August 1887, it was also necessary to replace the flag pole, which had been struck and shattered by lightning on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July. The new pole was 174 feet, 2 inches, tall!

In 1891, the gas lights in all the rooms were replaced with new electric lights. The current was provided by the new Wayne Electric Light Company. [See "Electricity" on page 18]

Guests for the 1893 season were also able to enjoy a new 50 by 70 foot frame ball room, connected with the Inn by a lobby. This addition was built by John Dyson, of Wayne, at a cost of about \$5,000. At one end of the room was a stage, 12 feet by 22 feet, and along the sides were several octagon bay windows with seats. The interior was finished in pine, with a maple floor and a ceiling of makite. [See "The Ballroom" on page 41]

Extensive alterations were also made in 1895, including a big new swimming pool [See "Swimming" on page 42] and a golf course. (It was reported by a native of the area that the Devon Inn guests "play golf every day and twice on Sunday.") [See "Devon Golf Club" on page 41]

The Messrs. Crump continued to manage the Inn through the 1892 season. (Prior to the 1885 season they had obtained a liquor license for it: it was said to have been the first license to sell liquor in Easttown Township in more than twenty years.) In 1893, management of the Inn was taken over by G. James Waters, of Waters & Sons, who were also the proprietors of the Windsor Hotel in Cape May. Two years later Miss Mary E. Simmons became the manager. She was formerly manager of the Bryn Mawr Hotel, where she had a host of friends and was very popular. In 1898, she also became the owner of the Devon Inn. With her sister Ellen (who later became Mrs. John W. [Patten]), the Misses Simmons were the managers until 1910 when Mary Simmons died. [Ellen and John married in 1892.] To take over the operation, Mrs. [Patten], who became the owner, leased its management to the American Resort Hotel Company, with its president, A. Stanley Stanford, the resident manager. [See "Miss Mary E. Simmons" on page 32]

The livery stables were operated, starting in 1885, by Francis Gheen and Baynton Hickman of West Chester, but after a couple of years Gheen took over their management alone. In addition to a stable of first-class horses, a variety of "trap[e]s, surreys, breaks, buck-boards, phaetons, buggies, etc." was available for afternoon drives.

During the management of the Messrs. Crump and the Misses Simmons, the Devon Inn continued to be a popular summer residence where the "best and most fashionable people held sway." Except for a part of August, when some families went to the mountains or to the shore, most of its 250 rooms were occupied through the summer and on into the fall. The guests for the most part continued to be prominent Philadelphians — bankers, lawyers, merchants, company executives, political figures, gentlemen — and their families. But they came from other places too: one year an Italian count, for example, engaged four suites of rooms for the entire season; and in 1892 [G. F.] Ferdinand Ritschl, the German Consul to Philadelphia, was among the registered guests. [See "Noble and Notable Guests" on page 33]



[See "The Devon Horse Show" on page 28]

In the Pennsylvania Railroad's guide of "Useful Information for Summer-Home Seekers" for 1890, the rates for a week's stay at the Inn were listed at \$10 to \$60, the latter for a suite of rooms with bath and a private porch. [See "Rates at the Inn" on page 15] In addition there were billiards, bowling, a ball grounds, etc. as attractions, a feature of the Inn was its orchestra "morning and evening." The music at intervals during the day and evening was supplemented, in the 1895 season, with dancing on the porches and in the "palatial" parlors, a tea every Wednesday, and a hop every Wednesday. (One of the "more brilliant" events during the 1887 season was a "german", an evening of dancing — it took its name from a lively dance of the period — with elaborate favors, profuse floral arrangements, and beautiful "variegated" lights. [See "The German" on page 40] Another popular divertissement were the *bals poudres*, in which the ladies wore their hair high and heavily powdered.)

In the description of the Devon Inn in the 1913 edition of the Railroad's guide to "suburban living," it was noted: "Polo matches are held here during the summer season and the Devon Horse Show Association for several years past has been giving exhibitions in the spring, these functions being largely attended by the lovers of horses and the elite of fashion." The first Horse Show in Devon was a one-day show at the polo field to the northeast of the Inn, on July 2, 1896. From 1898 to 1900 it was moved to the lawns of the Inn, and guests of the Inn could watch it from the porches. For the next decade no show apparently was held, but in 1910 it was renewed as an annual



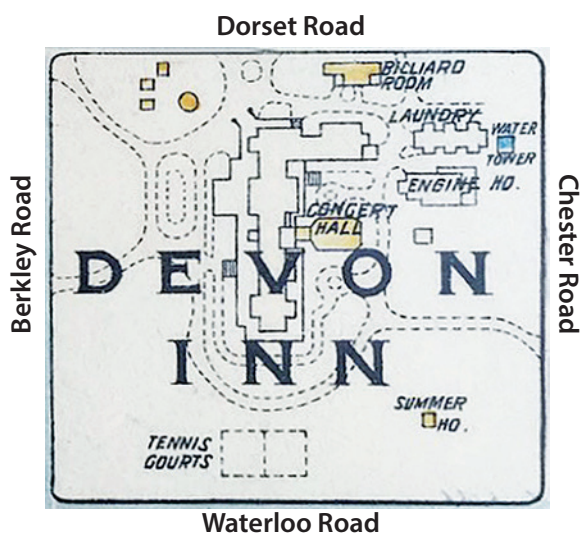
affair. [See “Devon Polo Club” on page 45] [See “Fashion at the Inn” on page 37]

Other attractions advertised by the new manager of the Inn in 1910, incidentally, included the Devon Fancy Cattle Show — and also an Auto Exhibition!

A feature of the early summer season, from the beginning, was the fireworks display on the Fourth of July. It was a tradition started in 1883, the Inn’s first Independence Day. On that occasion the guests contributed to bring the Phoenix Military Band to the Inn for a concert, and wound up the evening with a good display of fireworks. Four years later, this “good display” had grown to “a magnificent pyrotechnic display” given under Mr. Coffin’s management.

The fiery program included some sixteen spectacular displays, interspersed with musical renditions by a German orchestra from Philadelphia. Among the displays were the Illumination of the Boardwalk, “in crimson and emerald”; the Discharge of Signal Rockets, “filling the air with every hue”; a Fusillade of Bombshells, “exploding in the heavens into thousands of meteoric stars”; a Harliquinade of Rockets; the Falls of Niagara, “whose mighty waters upon this occasion, by the Pyric Art, was changed into a cascade of liquid fire”; and, finally, Devon in Arms, “commencing with rotating fires of ruby, sapphire and jasmine, when suddenly bursts forth a grand pyric display, forming in the heavens an immense floral cloud.”

The tradition was continued the following year with a “good old-fashioned Fourth, and ... plenty of it.” It included bunting decorations throughout the Inn, patriotic music by the orchestra all day, bonfires, and “an elaborate display of fireworks, including several set pieces” in the evening, with the Inn “crowded to the roof.” By 1890 the traditional fireworks exhibition attracted more than 2400 people, who enjoyed, according to the *Local*, “the most magnificent display of pyrotechnics ever witnessed in the vicinity,” with twenty-four pieces, interspersed with a polka quadrille. After the fireworks ended, there was dancing in the parlors for the guests of the Inn. [See “Fourth of July at the Devon Inn” on page 42]



Thus, for three decades the celebrated Devon Inn was a popular and well patronized summer and fall resort for families in search of rest, relaxation, luxury, and pleasure in pleasant surroundings, the scene of many fashionable fetes and sporting events, where some of the best and most fashionable families from Philadelphia and elsewhere “held sway.”

## Postscript

In April 1914 John and Ellen Simmons [Patten] sold the Inn and about 14 acres of ground (the block surrounded by Waterloo, Berkley, Dorset and Chester roads) to William A. Hamilton. The new owner announced that he would continue it as a suburban hotel.

The venture apparently was not successful, however, for in the next year he defaulted on the mortgage. By deed poll the property was conveyed to the holder of the mortgage, and to David C. Leech, trustee.

He held the property until June of 1919, when, in a series of transactions, it was transferred to the Devon Manor Corporation. That fall, after some remodeling, it opened Devon Manor, a school for girls. The founder and president of the school was Frances R. Lowell, and the principal was Miss Edith Samson. The speaker at the opening ceremonies on October 3 was former President William Howard Taft.

In the summer of 1924 the Devon Manor School entered into bankruptcy. By court order, in October the property was conveyed by quit claim deed back to John Leech and the heirs of William F. Leech.

In March 1926, a syndicate composed of Guy B. Wheeler, T. L. Latta, Thomas R. Latta and Edgar C. VanDyke, called the Devon Park Hotel Realty Corp., acquired the property and opened it as the Devon Park Hotel. The hotel was managed by A. Stanley Stanford, who had been the manager of the Devon Inn fifteen years earlier after Miss Mary Simmons died. Once again it briefly became a center of Main Line society.

After two years, the syndicate reorganized and, working with then Capt. Milton Baker, became the Valley Forge Military Academy Realty Corporation. After remodeling, in September 1928 the Academy opened, with Capt. Baker as the superintendent, a staff of thirteen, and an enrollment of 117 cadets. It was to stay at Devon for only a few months, however. On the following January 18, despite the observation in the *Local* when the new Devon Inn opened in 1884 that “Phoenix-like, the Inn has risen from the ashes of last autumn, but un-Phoenix-like, it will probably not burn again”, a disastrous fire swept through the old building and totally destroyed it.

The famous and well-known landmark, the old Devon Inn, was no more. [See “Postscript” on page 46]