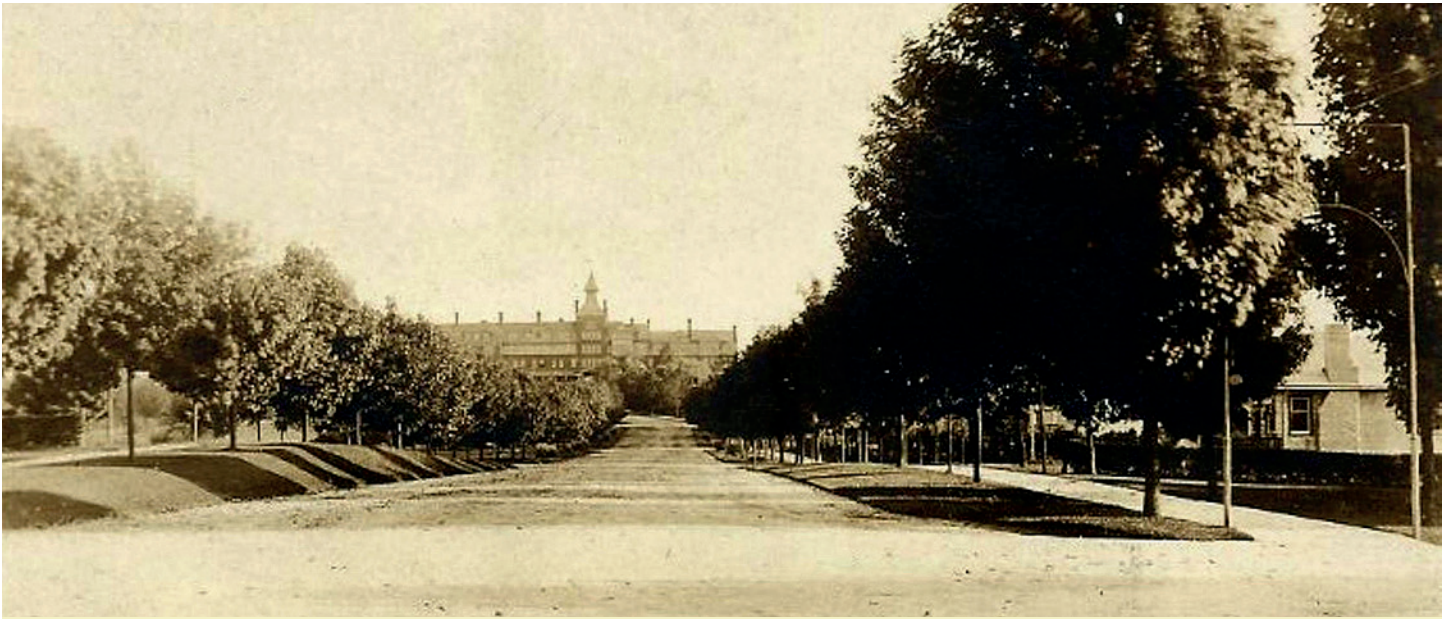


Surroundings

The existence of the Devon Inn had a profound effect on its surroundings. A number of the structures and streets we see today, such as Devon Station, Devon Boulevard, and the Devon Chapel (St. John's Church), are there at least in part because of the Inn. Others, such as the large livery stable, have disappeared.



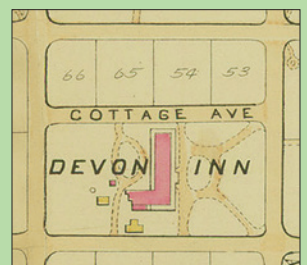
Devon Boulevard — This photo from the early 1900s shows a view from Devon Station to the south along Devon Boulevard, here lined on both sides with relatively young shade trees. A review of the maps from 1887 and 1897 reveals that the original “boardwalk” was not replaced by the boulevard until sometime during that period. It probably was done during or before 1891, based on the notice in the December 1891 issue of *Paving and Municipal Engineering* stating that Smith & Son, contractors from Norristown, had been awarded a contract for “laying one of their patent pavements” from the Station to the Inn. Given what must have been a carefully planned alignment of the Station and the Inn, it is surprising that it took quite that long to present railroad passengers with this fine setting for their first view of the Inn. *Photo courtesy of Barbara & Jack Jacobsen.*



Devon Chapel — Coffin and Altemus provided a lot near the Inn for the construction of the Devon Chapel in 1893. This small church served the growing community and survives today in an expanded but still very recognizable form as St. John's Presbyterian Church on Berkley Road. The adjacent building initially served as a school, and what is now known as the Carriage House annex of the church originally served that role as part of the neighboring Davis estate. *Courtesy of TEHS Archives.*

Cottage Avenue

Through 1900, there are a number of newspaper references to people “taking” cottages for the summer, and these cottages were described as being near the Inn or on the property. An advertisement in the July 9, 1887, *Times (Philadelphia)*, referring to the Inn being at capacity, states that “an additional building on the lawn...now gives us rooms...” Evidently there were cottages with some connection to the Inn, but where were they located? The 1887 map shows a road named “Cottage Avenue” just to the west of the Inn, and it would be reasonable to think that this is where the two “large and handsome” cottages referred to in Goshorn's article were being constructed. However, by the time of the next *Atlas of Properties*, in 1897, Cottage Avenue is no longer shown on the map, and there is no sign of any suitably sized buildings in that area or elsewhere on the grounds. It has been speculated that the houses that stood on the east side of Devon Boulevard, where a Devon Yard parking lot is now located, belonged to the Inn, but those buildings do not appear until the 1926 *Atlas of Properties*.





Waterloo Road and Railroad Bridge, Devon, Pa.

This card, postmarked 1910, shows the “new” route of Waterloo Road looking north through the underpass that replaced the grade crossing at the site of the current railroad station. This same structure is in use today, and has been the downfall of many a truck driver who failed to heed the low clearance warnings. The locomotive about to cross the bridge is typical of those in use for the local trains of the era. *Courtesy of TEHS Archives.*

Drawing showing old Waterloo Road from its intersection with Arlington Road. Barrels, fences, and guards were in place to block access to the station by this route. The railroad station can be seen in the background. “From Peace to War.” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 22, 1896.

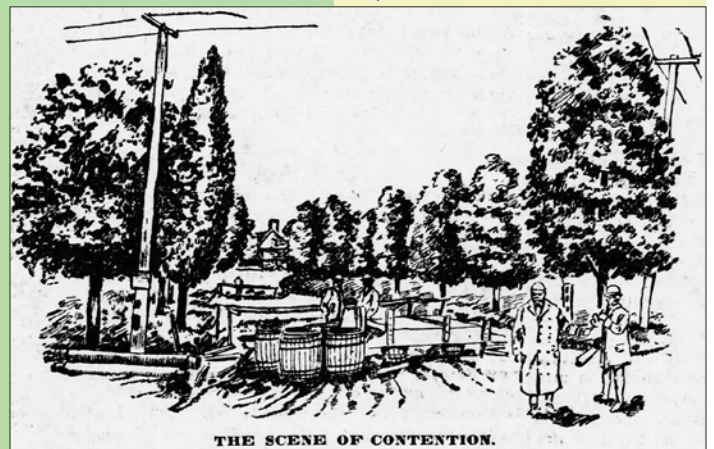
The Battle of Waterloo Road

When Coffin and Altemus purchased the land for their Devon development, Waterloo Road crossed the railroad tracks at grade level and the Devon Station was located a short distance east, as shown on the 1881 map. The developers and the Pennsylvania Railroad subsequently came to an agreement on building a new station at the site of the grade crossing, leading to construction of an underpass and realignment of Waterloo Road to its current path, thereby also eliminating a dangerous crossing.

The old segment of Waterloo Road from Arlington Road (now Lancaster Avenue/Rte. 30) to the Station was left in place, landscaped, and maintained. Residents along Waterloo Road used it as a convenient path to the Station.

Problems arose when Altemus and the Coffin estate bought back part of a two-acre tract that had been given to the railroad to beautify the Station. This parcel was bounded by the new Waterloo Road, Arlington Road, and Devon Boulevard, and was bisected diagonally by the old Waterloo Road segment. Of course, the developers wanted to close the old road to make the land more saleable. They argued that old Waterloo Road had been legally vacated when the grade crossing was removed, and the fact that it had remained open to passage did not mean it had been rededicated. The residents disagreed.

In 1895, they brought suit. The local “Battle of Waterloo” ensued, and not just in court. As reported in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* of June 21, 1897—in one of several rather tongue-in-cheek articles that appeared in the local press—“Only a brief year ago warlike demonstrations were painfully apparent on every hand in the picturesque suburb of Devon....” To block passage, Coffin and Altemus erected fences, which were promptly torn down by the residents. That cycle was repeated, and eventually the developers added ditches, piles of barrels, and posted guards. By the time the suit was settled in June 1897, the road had been planted with clover. But the residents won, and the road was reopened. Their victory was not short-lived: that very same piece of road remains today, 123 years later, as the diagonal drive from the northeast corner of Waterloo Road and Lancaster Avenue to Devon Station, providing parking spots for SEPTA patrons, and access to the post office, former magistrate’s office, and the present-day Liberty gas and service station.



This September, 2020 photo shows roughly the same view depicted in the 1896 illustration. The Post Office is on the left, and the Liberty gas and service station on the right. *Photo courtesy of Larry DeYoung.*



Stables, 1927 Devon Horse Show — This portion of an aerial photograph taken during the 1927 horse show shows the large livery stable structure directly across Lancaster Pike from the Country Fair. The railroad siding seen near the bottom of the photograph was built to accommodate the “horse Pullmans”—railroad cars designed to carry horses and carriages—that belonged to the Inn’s patrons. Several of these cars are shown on the siding. By the time of this image, the cars belonged to exhibitors at the horse show. The large building to the east was originally a livery stable belonging to Dennis Sullivan, another supplier of horses and vehicles who profited from proximity to the Inn. Its use in 1927 is not known, but part of it survives as the Devon Design Center. The photo was taken May 28, 1927, by Dallin Aerial Surveys. *Courtesy of the Hagley Museum and Library in Wilmington.*

Livery Stable

The architect who designed the Devon Inn Livery Stable was Washington Bledlyn Powell (1854-1910) of Philadelphia. Mr. Powell was also known for his work on the Pennsylvania Railroad stations in Devon and Wayne, and for the prominent Union League building on Broad Street in Philadelphia. This latter effort potentially connected him with both John Crump, who supervised construction of the Union League, and Joseph Altemus, who was an active early member. M.J. Phillips was hired as the building contractor for the stable. Phillips also worked on the Inn itself, installing fire escapes.

Riding was a popular feature for guests of the Inn. The large livery, with capacity for 60 horses, was used not only for stabling the horses and carriages brought by guests, but also offered ladies’ riding horses trained by stable manager P. Tobin. Morning riding parties, longer afternoon riding and driving parties, and jumps in the fields were a major source of daily entertainment.

The stable had not only stalls for the horses, but also provided storage space for guest carriages and living quarters for the coachmen and grooms. The July 23, 1883 *Times* described the stable as “very pretty, with zig-zag coral roofs, splatter dashed sides, and an unusually nice balance of proportions”.



This Julius Sachse photo of the stables from his book provides a view of the south side, from Arlington Road. *Courtesy of TEHS Archives.*

The Devon Horse Show and its Relationship with the Inn

On May 22, 1896, a group of local gentlemen met at the Devon Inn and formed the Devon Horse Show Association. Included in that meeting were the following familiar names: Lemuel C. Altemus (son of Joseph B. Altemus and first captain of the Devon Polo Team), John W. Patten (husband of Ellen Simmons Patten, sister of then-manager, Miss Mary E. Simmons), and C. Davis English (who had been involved with constructing the Devon swimming pool in 1894).

Both the *Times* and *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported that the first show was held Thursday, July 2, 1896, at the newly opened Devon Polo Grounds. Photos suggest, however, that at least parts of the exhibition may have taken place nearby at the Inn. It was a beautiful day, and evidently thousands of spectators attended, many staying overnight at the hotel. Barclay H. Warburton—of “noble” guestbook fame—was one of the judges. Just two months later, the firm of Coffin, Altemus & Co. failed in the face of dire business pressures.

From 1897 through 1900, the show was held at the Inn during the month of June. Before the 1897 event, two permanent changes were made to the hotel’s southwest lawn. A new 280’ x 180’ fenced ring was erected with a judge’s stand in the center. In addition, a grandstand was built on the sloped area between the Inn and the ring. A band is said to have played during the show to entertain the thousands of spectators that arrived by train and carriage from Philadelphia and the surrounding areas.

In 1898, the show was lengthened to two days. It rained nearly the entire time, and guests either left or rushed to the porches and terraces of the Inn. Mary E. Simmons purchased

the Inn later that summer.

Before the 1899 show, the ring was re-graded, re-sodded, and enlarged to 300’ x 175’. (The dimensions of the Devon Horse Show’s present-day Dixon Oval are 325’ x 150’.) Day One was hot and dusty, and attendance was affected by a lavish garden party also held on the grounds that afternoon. Day Two, however, was described as glorious. Except for a brief shower that served only to “freshen up the grass and soak up some of the white dust that lay three inches deep on the roads,” the weather was perfect. The attendance was larger, and a band of musicians played throughout the day. The balconies of the Inn were crowded with spectators in their best summer attire.

Prior to the show’s opening in 1900, a new pavilion was constructed for the band. The weather cooperated for both days of the show with lots of sun and a cool breeze. The attendance was larger than any previous year, and the Inn was crowded with socially prominent and fashionable people. The ladies strolled about the grounds in the newest style of gowns with well-groomed men at their sides. Others graced rocking chairs on the terrace, holding parasols of lace and ribbons. The driveways of the Inn were crowded with stylish coaches and mounts, and the atmosphere was described as brilliant. Many dinner parties were hosted in the evenings at the Inn.

Unfortunately, due to unresolved concerns about dates in conflict with the competing Philadelphia Horse Show (held adjacent to the Wissahickon Inn), and despite the Devon show’s prior success, it was not held in 1901. Nor would it be held again until after the Philadelphia Horse Show was discontinued in 1909.



1899 Devon Horse Show — In this Schreiber photo of the 1899 Devon Horse Show, exhibitors are lined up for judging inside the ring on the southwest lawn of the Inn. *Courtesy of Greg Prichard.*

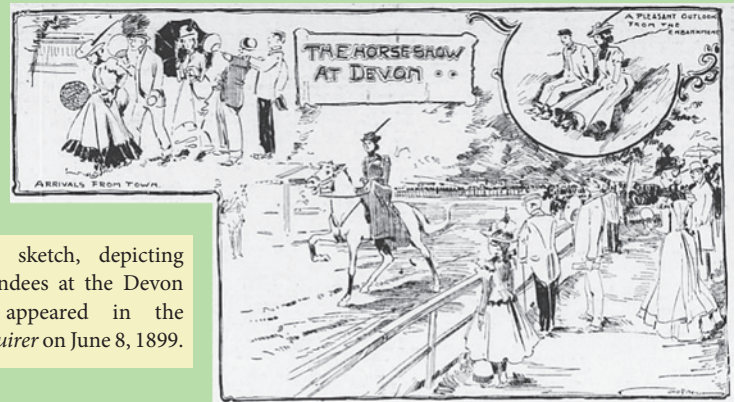
Local resident William T. Hunter has often been credited with reviving the Devon Horse Show in 1910 as a three-day exhibition at the Polo Grounds beginning on Memorial Day. Earlier that same year, Miss Mary E. Simmons passed away, but under the Inn's new manager, A. Stanley Stanford, the hotel became popular with horse show attendees for lunch and dinner at the newly opened Floral Café. An elaborate ball was also held at the Inn on the show's final evening.

The Inn continued to support the horse show in similar ways each year until Ellen S. Patten, heir to Miss Simmons, and her husband John sold the property in 1914. After that time, it appears that the horse show leased the Polo Grounds even though the hotel itself was not available for its use. In 1917, the Devon Inn was purchased by the Devon Manor Corporation for the purpose of creating a school for girls.

The 1920 Mueller map shows John R. Livezey as owner of the 12-acre Polo Grounds, and in April of that year, he sold the property to the newly formed Devon Horse Show and Country Fair, Inc., establishing a permanent home for the show.

The following year, Devon Manor School hosted a grand Horse Show Ball attended by nearly 2000 guests in the former Devon Inn building. The opening feature was a Hunt Quadrille in which seven clubs participated: Radnor, Rose Tree, Cheshire, Whitmarsh, Pickering, Chester and Brandywine. The men wore formal scarlet hunting attire, and the ladies wore white ball gowns. Many dinners preceded the ball at the former Inn.

By 1926, the Inn had been sold again and reopened as the Devon Park Hotel. From 1926 through 1928, it hosted either a horse show ball or a cabaret dinner dance. In 1927, Charlie Chaplin was said to have attended the cabaret where he was initially unrecognizable without the signature mustache, unmistakable walk, and famous cane of his famous on-screen character.



Devon Horse Show c.1897 — Although this photo has been labeled 1896, we believe it was more likely taken in 1897, the first year that the horse show was officially held on the south lawn of the Inn. This image shows both the newly erected fenced ring and the addition of the center “judge’s stand.” The ring is surrounded by spectators and their carriages. On the right, you can see what appears to be wooden steps leading up to what is presumably the grandstand. This structure had been recently constructed on the sloped area between the Inn and the ring. *Courtesy of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.*

This whimsical sketch, depicting fashionable attendees at the Devon Horse Show, appeared in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on June 8, 1899.

