

The Franklin House

Tavern and Restaurant Established in 1746

ALEXANDER SCHAEFFER EMIGRATED FROM GERMANY TO SOUTH-CENTRAL PA. IN THE EARLY 18TH CENTURY. IN 1740 HE PURCHASED 200 ACRES OF GOOD FERTILE LIMESTONE LAND NEAR THE FOOTHILLS OF THE SOUTH MOUNTAIN. SHAEFFER LAID OUT A VILLAGE AROUND A LARGE CENTRAL SQUARE AT THE INTERSECTION OF TWO MAIN ROADS, EAST AND WEST, FROM HARRIS'S FERRY TO EPHRATA VIA THE CORNWALL IRON FURNACE, AND NORTH TO SOUTH, FROM CONRAD WEISER'S SETTLEMENT AT TULPEHOCKEN TO LANCASTER, PASSING BY THE ELIZABETH FURNACE IN BRICKERVILLE. HE WOULD CALL HIS NEW VILLAGE HEIDELBERG AND IMMEDIATELY BEGAN SELLING BUILDING LOTS BUT KEEPING ONE OF THE BEST LOTS ON THE SQUARE FOR HIMSELF.

SCHAEFFER BUILT A LARGE LIMESTONE BUILDING WITH BROWN SANDSTONE STEPS AND CURBING ON THE NORTHWEST CORNER OF MAIN AND MARKET STREET, THERE IN 1746 HE OPENED AND RAN THE "KING GEORGE" TAVERN. THE POPULARITY OF THE TAVERN GREW AS TEAMSTERS, DROVERS, FREIGHTERS AND TRAVELERS HAD OCCASION TO SHARE IN ITS HOSPITALITY. SCHAEFFER'S FARM PROVIDED THE TAVERN WITH EVERYTHING FROM FRESH PRODUCE AND MEAT, TO DISTILLED OR FERMENTED DRINK, BUT SCHAEFFER HIMSELF LIVED AT THE INN. THE TAVERN ALSO HAD A STABLE ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE BUILDING SO THERE WOULD BE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR THE HORSES AND MULES. SCHAEFFER ALSO INSTALLED UNDERGROUND WOODEN PIPES CONNECTING A SPRING AT THE NORTH END OF MARKET STREET FILLING TWO TROUGHS OR FOUNTAINS IN THE TOWN SQUARE RIGHT IN FRONT OF THE KING GEORGE. IT'S NO WONDER THE PEOPLE WOULD COME TO REFER TO THIS VILLAGE AS "SCHAEFFER'S TOWN".

THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR BROUGHT ABOUT A NAME CHANGE FOR THE TAVERN, FOR A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME IT WAS KNOWN AS THE "GEORGE WASHINGTON", BEFORE FINALLY CHANGING TO THE "FRANKLIN HOUSE". IT WASN'T UNTIL 1883 THAT IT UNDERWENT A MAJOR RENOVATION BY OWNER JOHN GRAYBILL IN ORDER TO ADD MORE ROOM. A THIRD FLOOR WAS CONSTRUCTED BY REPLACING THE GABLED ROOF WITH A BRACKETED MANSARD ROOF ADDING THREE MORE BEDROOMS IN THE FRONT AND A LARGE MEETING ROOM IN THE BACK ACCOMMODATING LOCAL LODGE

MEETINGS AND THE SCHAEFFERSTOWN BAND. A FULL PORCH WAS CONSTRUCTED OVER THE FIRST FLOOR CREATING A BALCONY ACCESSIBLE FROM THE SECOND FLOOR WHERE TWO WINDOWS WERE TURNED INTO DOORS. ON THE FIRST FLOOR INDIVIDUAL DOORS WERE INSTALLED SEPARATING THE BAR AND THE DINING ROOM AND AN ADDITION WAS ADDED TO THE REAR OF THE OLD HOTEL ALMOST EQUAL TO THE SIZE OF THE ORIGINAL BUILDING.

THE 20TH CENTURY BROUGHT THE ADDITION OF AMENITIES THAT MOST OF US CONSIDER ESSENTIAL, ELECTRICITY AND INDOOR PLUMBING. GONE ARE THE DAYS OF HEATING, LIGHTING OR REFRIGERATING THAT INVOLVE CANDLES, COAL BUCKETS OR ICE LAYERED WITH SAWDUST IN THE CELLAR. KEEPING THE TAVERN CONTEMPORARY IS AN ONGOING PROCESS. OWNERS SINCE 2019, BROCK MOSHIER AND KYLE WEAVER AND GENERAL MANAGER JENNIFER OLIVIERO HAVE BEEN KEEPING CURRENT BY MODERNIZING THE CONVENIENCES WHILE TRYING TO KEEP THE HISTORICAL AMBIANCE. THE FRANKLIN HOUSE ACCOMMODATES GROUPS FOR PARTIES AND OFFERS A WIDE VARIETY OF DINNER SPECIALS ON WEEKNIGHTS. THE TAVERN SERVES SEVERAL LOCAL BEERS ON DRAFT ALONG WITH MIXED DRINKS WITH HOUSE INFUSED LIQUORS. WHETHER YOU DINE IN THE TAVERN, THE RESTAURANT, OR OUTSIDE, YOU'LL ENJOY THE DELICIOUS FOOD, FRIENDLY SERVICE AND CASUAL ATMOSPHERE AT THE FRANKLIN HOUSE TAVERN.