

The Hostetters Of Hayesville Continuing The Heritage Of Their Home

BY PAT PURCELL

OXFORD (CHESTER CO.) —

The historically rich three-story brick home of the Hostetters towers above the more modern homes in the village of Hayesville, Chester County.

The magnitude of this home finds its only competition sky in the adjacent feed and grain towers of Hostetter's Grain Company. The Hostetters are doing more than processing neighbors grain into livestock feed. They are making history.

The home of William and Melissa Hostetter and their two children, Rebekah, 9, and Phillip, 5, is located on the Hostetter family farm owned by William's parents, Wilmer and Joyce Hostetter. This home dates back to the early days of the 1700's.

If Walls Could Talk

Ten years ago, William and Melissa Hostetter moved into a house which already had a long and active history if need of repair was any indication. William, who now manages the grain operation, moved into the house when he and Melissa were married, but it was hardly a sight which would delight many young couples.

"It was in need of a great deal of repair when they moved in. 'All the walls had one or two layers of wallpaper on them. The floor in the what is now the family room was rotted and all the windows were in very bad shape. When the wind blew, the curtains moved,'" explained Melissa.

But she is not complaining. Restoring an 18th century home may not appeal to everyone, but Melissa appreciates its aged look.

"If I had a new house, I would find a way to make it look old," said Melissa.

However, restoring an old home is not without its problems.

Located on the "road leading from West Chester to the Oxford Borough, two-and-a-half miles from the later place, known as the Hayesville Hotel property," according to newspaper clippings from the Chester County Historical Society, this home is on part of the Hayes original tract.

Described in an 1880 newspaper real estate sale ad in 1880: "The improvements consist of a large substantial brick dwelling

conveniently divided into comfortable rooms, with a most excellent wash house attached, containing pump, water furnaces and all the necessary conveniences. The house also contains a large store room and fixtures . . . There are also three good tenant houses.

The room described as the wash house with all the necessary conveniences may be the room which serves its present family as the kitchen. Described as being "attached" Melissa believes the wash room now kitchen was definitely an afterthought.

"The big block of granite between the kitchen and dining room makes me believe the room was built on after the rest of the house was built. A block of stone like that was usually found at the entrance of a house. It just doesn't make sense to put it between two rooms within the house," said Melissa.

Also directly beneath the kitchen and mudroom are two hand dug wells lending more evidence that the kitchen was the washroom.

According to Melissa there was up until a few years ago a small house on the property that could have been the tenant house they mentioned. It has since been torn down. There were two tracts of land and some different accounts on the Hayesville Hotel and post office which were operated on both tracts of land.

Hayesville Post Office and Hotel

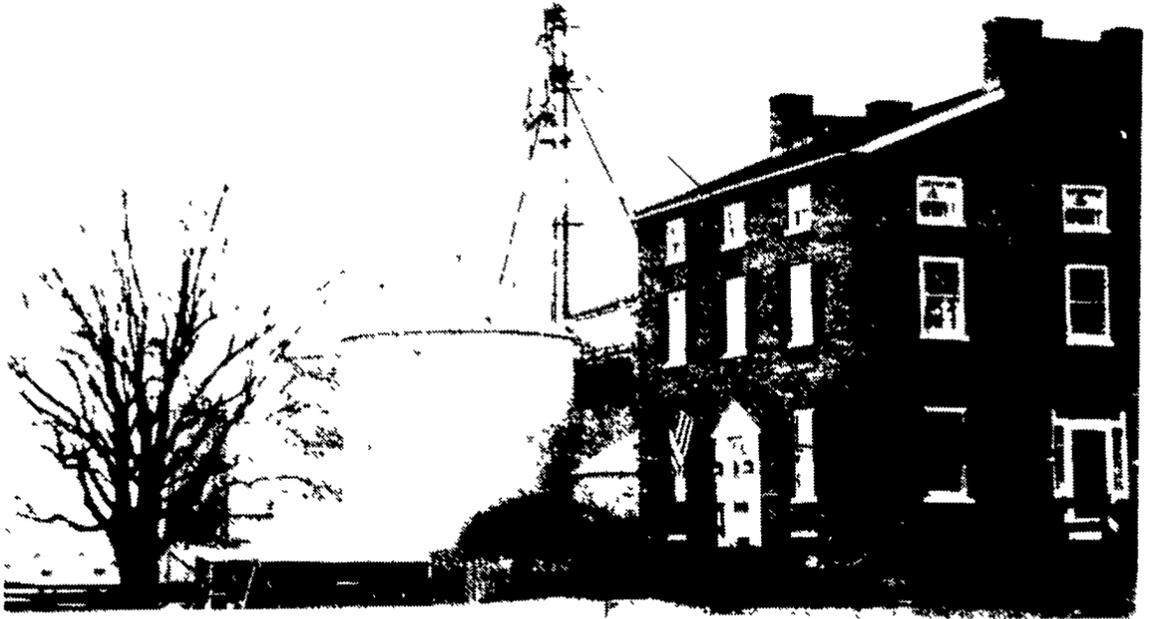
From the 1946 newspaper article "It was Henry Hayes who took over 500 acres about the year 1705, where he had 15 children and many grandchildren ."

The first post office was established in 1850 with James Hayes as the first postmaster.

"It is supposed that the post office was in the general store or hotel belonging to James Hayes, and that he died while he was postmaster."

After several subsequent postmasters the post office was closed in 1879, but reopened in 1881 under a new name of Townsend. The new postmaster was Harry S. Powley and he acted until Jacob H. Wolf was named postmaster in 1884. Wolf served for more than 12 years.

However, Wolf reportedly was a farmer and a hotel proprietor. He



The three-story brick home towers proudly over the smaller modern homes in the Hayesville neighborhood and is only outdone in height by the Hostetter Grain Company on the adjoining property.

moved the post office to his hotel and about 1935 he tore down the the post office building. By 1946 he had died, but it was reported that his family still owned the hotel property, which is the Hostetter home.

"We have had several people drop in whose ancestors have lived here. One man whose mother lived here was a descendant of Jacob Wolf. He brought with him a picture of the house when it housed the post office and general store. The men were all sitting around outside on boxes and horses were tied up outside. I would love to have that picture, but he would not part with it. I don't blame him. He remembered the general store of the early 1900's," explained Melissa.

The front room of the Hostetter home extends for the entire length of the house. According to Melissa it was this room in which the post office and general store were operated.

It must have seen a great deal of traffic. Its wooden floor is made of narrow planks, which were used in houses built much later than the 18th century. All the other rooms have the wide plank board floors. This suggests perhaps that this floor was replaced in the 1900's.



Room by room and piece by piece Melissa and William have turned this 18th century house into their home. Family antiques fill the home with memories as well as beauty. Every corner and niche has a story to tell and the observer always finds something different.

A history of Restoration

The bricks were reportedly brought over from Great Britain on ballasts by Henry Hayes, but in 1850 Jacob Wolf purchased the home and covered the bricks in stucco. Consequently, the Hostetter's first task was to clean the stucco from the brick.

The Hostetter's contracted Oxford builder Joseph Chamberlain, who is well-known for his restoration work. However, after beginning the process of cleaning the brick with blasting machines, Chamberlain noticed that many of the bricks were disintegrating under the pressure.

"For the next two years Bill and his brothers spent weekends and any free time they had chipping away at the bricks with hammer and chisel for the next two years,"

said Melissa. "We had no choice. Mr. Chamberlain came back and finished with some sandblasting. He replaced and repointed the bricks," she said. "To keep out the fine dust we had to hang wet sheets over the windows and doors. It's beautiful now, but I don't think we would ever go through that again."

However by exposing the beauty of the brick, the brick was also being exposed to the weather and that resulted in some unpleasant surprises.

"After a driving rain one Christmas Eve, we returned home to find water streaming down the inside walls of our living room on one side. The bricks were porous. Since then we have had the house sprayed with silicone to seal the

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Although not the size of a concert hall, the spacious living room in which the Hayesville Post Office and general store were operated at one time is now filled with the old and new. Melissa Hostetter (left) assists her daughter Rebekah on the piano. This is the only room in the house with a narrow plank floor suggesting the floor was probably replaced long after the house was built in the 1700's.