

2.1 *Historic Overview*

Bethlehem Pike opened in 1703 but was not completed until 1734. It traveled between Philadelphia and Bethlehem, PA and provided farmers access to mills along the Wissahickon. The first stagecoach route was established in 1763 and, by 1820, nine lines traveled the turnpike. Flourtown was the first stop outside of Philadelphia. Trolleys replaced the coaches in 1901, and ran until 1926.¹

The Black Horse Inn was one of eight Inns that lined the Pike between Erdenheim and Flourtown. The Black Horse Inn was constructed in at least five building campaigns, the earliest of which may be from the eighteenth century. The current footprint was intact by the turn of the twentieth century.

Ownership

The site initially passed between the Penn family to Reynor Tyson in 1741 as one part of two tracts: 110 acres and 75 acres. As with typical land transfers of that era, the site changed hands a number of times in a short period of time, each owner either further dividing the lot or adding land. In 1744 and 1750 Abraham Wackerly purchased two properties totaling 12 acres and 30 perches. He built at least one building on the site before selling that building and 4 acres to his son, Ulrich Wackerly in 1775.²

According to 1798 “window pane” tax records, the property, owned at that time by John Heiligh, contained an 18’ x 16’ 2 story stone dwelling, a 15’ x 15’ 1 story stone kitchen, and several outbuildings. Shortly afterwards in 1805, Wendle Weant, a tavern-keeper, was operating a tavern on the site. At this time the inn was known as Sampson & the Lion. It is unknown when Weant purchased the property from Heiligh. Apparently the deed transfer went unrecorded, as Wendle Weant was the seller during the next property transfer in 1814 to Philip Sellers.³ From this sale forward the deeds specifically mention a Tavernhouse on the property.

Sellers, like many of the owners after him, were recognized tavern-keepers. Shortly before his purchase of the Black Horse, on January 1, 1814, Sellers held a meeting of tavern-keepers from Philadelphia, Bucks and Montgomery counties to agree upon a uniform rate for accommodations.

Phillip Sellers sold the Black Horse to Michael Baum, Jr. who, several years later, sold it to his father, Michael Baum, Sr. The Senior Baum also owned the Eagle, an Inn located on the Pike slightly northwest of the Black Horse. Dual ownership of these two taverns occurred once more in the late nineteenth century.

¹ Kitto, Marie C., “The Black Horse Inn – 1432 Bethlehem Pike” n.d.

² Deed information and ownership is from “Brief of Title” author unknown, provided by the Chestnut Hill Historical Society.

³ Chapter XXII: Manners and Customs - Sports and Pastimes - Local Superstitions - Inns : Bean's 1884 History of Montgomery Co, PA

The property continued to change hands two times more (including one Sheriff's Sale in 1827⁴) before it was purchased in 1832 by Jacob Meninger. Jacob Meninger may have been responsible for the construction of the large north wing. It is said that a wooden half moon block with the date 1833 and the initials JM can be found in the gable end of the north wall.⁵ During Meninger's ownership, the Black Horse was one of five Inn's in Flouertown alone.

Samuel Roeder purchased the tavern from Jacob Meninger's estate in 1843. By this time, the Inn was known as the Black Horse Hotel.⁶ During Roeder's ownership, in 1846, the Black Horse became the local election place for the Township of Springfield.⁷ Public meetings and elections were held in the loft of the large barn into the twentieth century.⁸ Roeder sold the property to Jacob Slifer in 1856 and the property changed hand five more times before 1880 when Edward McCloskey purchased it.

Edward McCloskey is likely responsible for many changes and "modernizations" found within the in (see the building chronology). During his tenure, in 1901, the Board of Commissioners for the Township of Springfield was formed⁹ and the Black Horse served as their meeting place until 1905.¹⁰ He ran the Inn for more than twenty-five years before it passed to his son, Robert in 1906. Robert McCloskey also ran the Inn for many years passing it to his children in 1952. He too is likely responsible for the later upgrades such as bathrooms. The McCloskey family owned the property for more than 100 years until Edward P. McCloskey, the grandchild of the first Edward McCloskey, passed away.

2.3 *Period of Significance*

The Period of Significance, as defined by the National Register Nomination, is from the date of construction through 1926. The end date was determined when the Inn's historical role was entirely severed. In 1919, prohibition was enacted ending the sale of alcohol. Because of the increase in automobile traffic, the trolley service was discontinued along Bethlehem Pike in 1926, significantly decreasing the need for overnight accommodations. This ended both of the Inn's traditional roles. It is important to note that the Inn, as it stands today, has had minimal changes since the Period of Significance. The Inn's form is identical to that on maps prior to 1900 and photographs attributed to 1880.

⁴ A second compilation of deed records was also provided by the Chestnut Hill Historical Society, titled "Black Horse Hotel – prior to 1840 known as Sampson & the Lion." This information disagrees with the previously mentioned "Brief of Title" ownership prior to this Sheriff's Sale.

⁵ Some sources say this stone is in the south gable end of the south addition.

⁶ Chapter XXXV - Part II : Past and Present Politics : Bean's 1884 History of Montgomery Co, PA, Philadelphia: Everts & Peck, 1884, 526.

⁷ Chapter XXXV - Part II : Past and Present Politics : Bean's 1884 History of Montgomery Co, PA. P 526.

⁸ Kitto

⁹ Township of Springfield Website

¹⁰ Kitto



2.3 *Building Chronology*

The Black Horse Inn was built in at least five building campaigns and has had several interior improvement campaigns as well. This building is extraordinarily complex and was continually expanded and altered over time. The interior fabric was updated to conform with architectural fashions leaving typical physical evidence such as trim styles difficult to find. The only absolutely clear physical evidence remaining that is the masonry construction revealed through probes. Although no dates can be confirmed at this time, there is reason to believe that the first construction dates to the eighteenth century and most of the building appears to have been completed by the mid-nineteenth century. Historic photographs and maps confirm that the current footprint was in place by 1900.

The oldest section of the building is the first floor of the East section. The second story was constructed at a later date.¹¹ The second build is the South section, a significantly larger two and one half story section constructed to the west of the earlier section.¹² The fact that these

¹¹ This can be confirmed by an early roof line exposed by the unauthorized demolition at the second floor level above this room.

¹² A probe that removed plaster revealed the original masonry corner of the East section and rubble masonry wall of the South section abutting it rather than being interconnected with it.

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two sections were constructed separately and that the East section was constructed first is confirmed through physical evidence in the building. However, other physical evidence, combined with archival documents from the 1798 Windowpane Tax suggest that the chronology of these two sections may be more complex.

The foundation below the older, East section is divided into two areas, a full basement to the south, and a crawlspace to the north. It is possible that this section was actually constructed in two campaigns; the north area, above the crawlspace, may have been constructed after the south area above the full basement. If this is the case, the first build would have been not the entire East section but only the area above the basement; measuring approximately 15 feet by 15 feet.

In the South section (the second build), the north basement wall jogs at its mid-span. The east end of this wall aligns with the north wall of the full basement in the older section. The two basements share the east/west wall between. It is possible that the South building was constructed in two phases, expanding to the west. If so, the jog would represent the remaining inside northwest corner of the former configuration. A low masonry ledge, possibly an old footing exposed by lowering the basement floor, extends along the east and north wall, ending at the jog. This original South room would have been approximately 16 feet by 18 feet.

If the East and the South sections were indeed constructed in four builds rather than two, the two original room sizes correlate directly with the windowpane tax information of 1798. Therefore, the building that we see today is a much expanded upon, much changed version of the 1798 building and kitchen, retaining only the original masonry walls and those much altered. Furthermore, the kitchen (the East section) was constructed before the dwelling (the South section). If this hypothesis is correct, then not only does the Inn date from the eighteenth century, but it had already experienced two construction campaigns by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Further investigation is required to confirmation this hypothesis.

If the South section was indeed constructed in two parts, the second part was erected very shortly after the first. The North 1833 section, a significantly larger 2-1/2 story addition, was constructed abutting and on top of the South section's complete north wall. The main porch was probably constructed with the North section.¹³

After the North section, a full second story over the East building was constructed. If the first floor south area is indeed older than the first floor north area of this section, the north area was likely constructed as part of this build. A small porch from the south wall of the East section abutting the main porch was also constructed.

The section furthest east was a small one-story kitchen to the east of the original section. It had an entry porch to the south that was enclosed in the late twentieth century.¹⁴

¹³ The porch around the two large sections of the building was clearly constructed at one time. However the porch at the original building was constructed after the main porch.

¹⁴ This porch is evident in historic photographs attributed to 1880.

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Three shed roof structures span the length of the North section's east wall. These appear to have originally been porches that were converted into a bathroom and a kitchen. It is unclear when these were constructed.

Physical evidence within the building indicates that, aside from the multiple building campaigns, the interior was being regularly modernized as well. Two major campaigns occurred during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and seem likely to have occurred under the first and second McCloskey ownership. The installation of a high style Victorian bar was installed probably by the first McCloskey ownership. The detailing of the furthest east addition also suggests strongly that it was constructed during this campaign. Early twentieth century upgrades include enclosing the porches to install bathrooms and a kitchen, replacing the trim throughout the North section and widening the trimmed opening between two rooms in the North section. Later twentieth century alterations include the insertion of two bathrooms, and enclosing the entry porch for the furthest east kitchen.