

Cross Keys Hotel

By Karen Gensey-July 14, 1994 M75

Jacob Mickley relocated in the area of Mickleys after the great Massacre of 1763 along Spring Creek north of Egypt, in which two of his children were killed. Because of the vast real estate holdings of the Mickley family, 278 acres, the area soon became known as Mickleys and is still referred to as such today.

In 1770, Mickley built a frame hotel building at the northeast corner of the crossroads of "The Road from Allentown to Egypt" (now MacArthur Road) and Mechanicsville Road, later the site of Oswald Memorials, Martin Volkswagen now U-Haul Storage & Rentals.

For many years the hotel business was conducted by several members of the Mickley family, and was considered one of the largest and finest buildings to be found in this region.

From 1834 to 1838, Daniel Mayer operated the hotel. It then was taken over by Andrew Sheldon, who married Anna Mickley. In 1838, Sheldon allowed a portion of the hotel to be used as a general store, operated by R. Faust & Co.

Local hotels were the center of every community. Not only did they accommodate weary travelers, but they were also used for public meeting houses and taverns. On November 11, 1848, sixty-one men and women gathered in this historic hotel to begin the organization of Mickleys Church.

Edwin Mickley, the mining engineer for the Thomas Iron Co., eventually obtained ownership of the hotel. While it remained in his possession over the years, he hired managers to operate it. Under the management of Jacob Scherer and Philip Storch, it was commonly referred to as "Scherer's Hotel" and "Storch's Hotel" respectively.

When Whitehall Township was divided into three election districts in 1887, the polling places selected were Egypt, Mickleys and Fullerton. In order to accommodate the 400-500 voters in each district, a place with ample room was needed. Naturally, Storch's Hotel was selected to serve this purpose in the Middle District.

When the Lutheran congregation of Mickleys Church gathered in 1892 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Rev. Jacob D. Schindel's service, entertainment followed at Storch's Hotel.

In later years, it became known as the Cross Keys Hotel, and the succeeding innkeepers were William Berry and Samuel Guth.

Management of the Cross Keys Hotel was taken over in January 1893 by the former proprietor, Philip Storch. Time had taken its toll on the historic structure, and it was in urgent need of repairs. It was his hope to restore the old relic, but upon examination, he found that remodeling would not be feasible.

Edwin Mickley, the owner, decided to raze the old Cross Keys tavern, and hired architect L. S. Jacoby to design an elegant new hotel building to be built east of the former hotel. The new structure was to be 40 by 60 feet in dimensions, three stories high with two towers.

The first floor was to be stone, decorated with pebble dashing, and the upper floors of frame and shingling. The basement would contain the barroom, storeroom and kitchen. The main floor would hold a reception hall, double parlor, public dining room and two bedrooms. Bathrooms and eleven bedrooms were planned for the upper floors.

In February 1893, they began to quarry stone for the new hotel at Eberhart's quarry (today's Cameron Tract). However, fate and circumstance halted all plans for this fine hotel. Due to the depression of 1893, Mickley decided to postpone construction, and the old Cross Keys continued serving the public.

By 1896, Mickley suffered financial ruin and was forced to sell the property at auction. It was purchased by George W. Melville in June 1896, who later transferred the title to the mortgagor, James Meily, in February 1902.

William H. Steward, who operated the hotel since 1898, purchased the property for \$1 after Meily's death in 1905. Because of its dilapidated condition it was torn down, and on November 20, 1905, Steward transferred the liquor license to the property diagonally opposite, the Mickley Hotel (recently demolished), formerly Edwin Mickley's home once dubbed "The Homestead."

The Cross Keys Hotel served the public for 135 years, during which time it was a favorite summer resort for city dwellers to escape to the country. It was the site of tax collection, voting, shooting matches, dances, and special celebrations.

Caption: William Steward's home (circa 1900) stood in the area of Gilboy Ford, 2805 MacArthur Road. Steward was the proprietor of the Cross Keys Hotel. The woman on the right is Eva, wife of Dallas Semmel. Behind the ladies, the dirt road is MacArthur Road.

