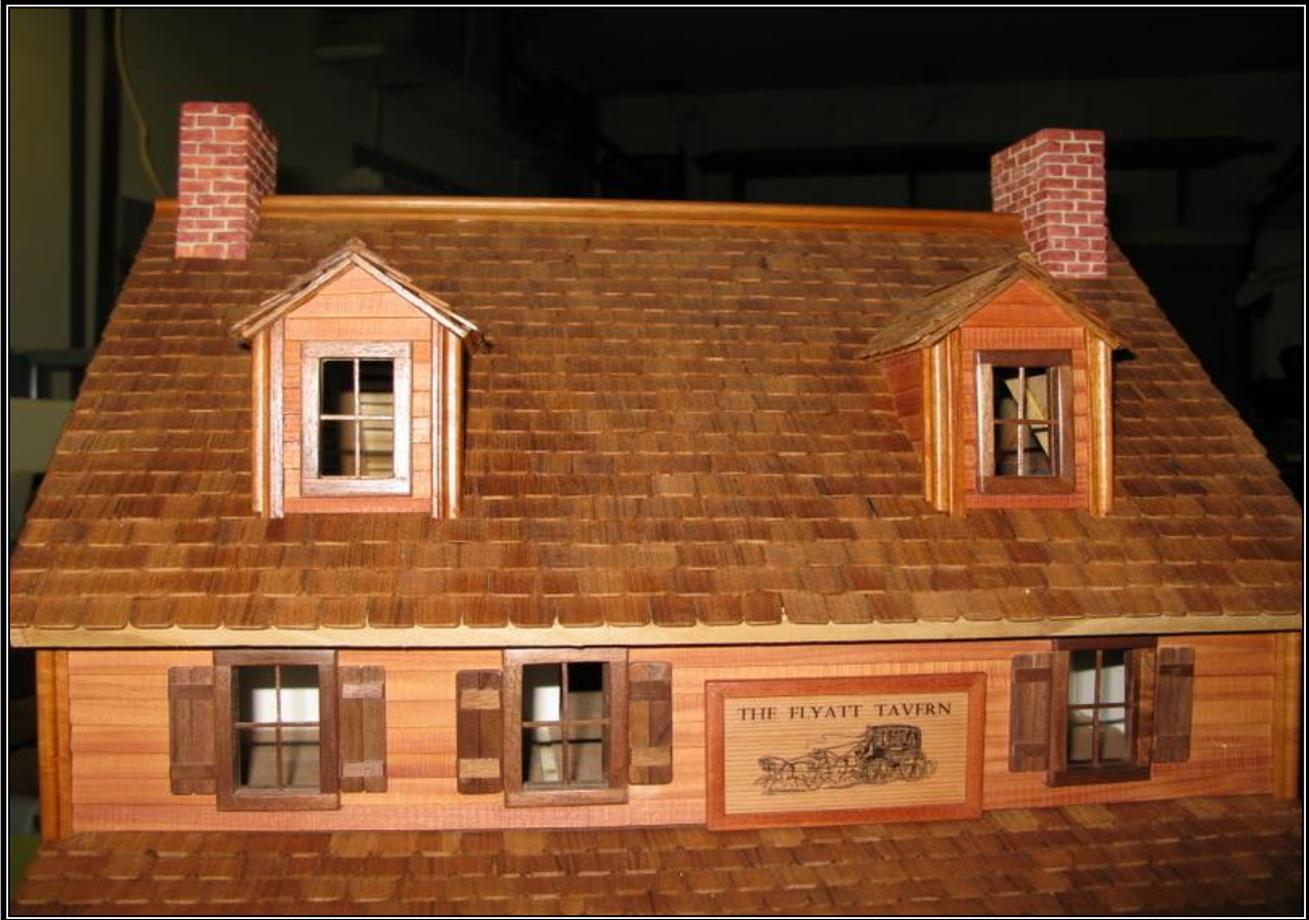


"HALF MOON AND SEVEN STARS TAVERN" MODEL LATER "THE FLYATT TAVERN"

by Donald D. Catts



The Half Moon and Sevens Stars tavern house also served as home for tavern keeper John King, his wife Margaret and their ten children.



The construction of a scale model of the historic "Half Moon and Seven Stars Tavern" Hotel and Stagecoach Stop (Flyatt Tavern) was not the original objective of the archaeological investigation of the site in 1975. The site was on high ground on the right-of-way of Oak Shade Rd., extremely close to the roadway and blocking the view of traffic entering the intersection. This presented a dangerous situation.

Sometime in early 1975 the road department cut the hill back to within a few feet of the tavern cellar hole.

Fearing further cut backs, the Indian Mills Historical Society decided to sponsor an archaeological excavation of the site to save



as much of the archaeological data and artifacts as possible before further grading of the right-of-way and cutting back of the high ground where the tavern sat would destroy the site forever.

Universities in New Jersey and Delaware, as well as the Archaeology Society were contacted, but showed no interest in the project. The society decided to start the excavation itself. In October 1975, permission was granted by the property owner to investigate the tavern site. George Flemming, with archaeological experience, was appointed by the Indian Mills Historical Society to lead a field team which included Don Catts and the late Robert Jones.

A large square test unit was excavated. However, we were soon stopped by Mr. Jerome Jennings, the owner of the property. With the excavation so close to a busy intersection, his concerns were safety and liability. However, this short excavation period revealed several artifacts and coins dating to the early part of the nineteenth century. Also exposed was a four foot section of a Jersey Fieldstone foundation (fireplace) set in a level yellow clay construction platform (cellar floor) about 2 or 3” thick, revealing the tavern's cellar. It would be the first look at this feature since the tavern burned to the ground over 130 years earlier.

The corner was regraded back several times before we were able to re-enter the site. In September 2008, the new owner of the property, and member of the Indian Mills Historical Society, Clarence Reichenbach, gave us permission to resume further exploration of the site. Luckily, we had the foresight to lay out a baseline and tie it off before we backfilled the excavation. In 2008, George Flemming was again appointed chairman of the project and he along with members of the society Don Catts and Grady Howard, resumed excavation at the tavern site. Our objective at this point was to determine the extent of damage that had occurred to the site since 1975.



The baseline of 1975 was reestablished and a grid was laid out, using the baseline to establish a series of 3' square excavation units over the entire site. We found that the eastern one third of the site had been graded away. This was a disappointing discovery but, as luck would have it, the grading was about 12 inches above the yellow clay cellar floor. Although there was no way of knowing what was graded away, we still had the cellar floor and the footprint of the building. Since then the entire eastern two thirds of the site has been completely graded away.

After reviewing the field notes, I realized I had recovered enough information on the tavern to build a fairly accurate model. Information uncovered during the excavation such as the size of the building, construction methods, and spatial patterning of artifacts was used. Newspaper articles describing the tavern house and property were also used along with records from the County Clerk’s Office in Mt. Holly in the construction of the tavern model.

The model should not be construed as being absolutely accurate as gaps in the information were many. Nor should it be assumed that my interpretations are correct. Among its purposes, this composite tavern offers simply a framework, based on the results of my investigations. I constructed a model for the interpretation of the Half Moon and Seven Stars tavern.

The exterior of the tavern was fairly easy, assuming that the superstructure was contemporary with the foundation. Using an archaeological method known as open-area excavation, the entire footprint of the cellar was uncovered. This exposed the artifact lying on the clay cellar floor. The physical location of these artifacts furnishes important clues about how the space above was used and subdivided. The remains of the chimney foundations confirmed the orientation of the house as facing south toward the Tuckerton Stage Road. Also discovered were the remains of two red brick columns setting on large brown stone footings, indicating the structure over the cellar was supported by a main beam seated on two columns. The location of the columns set the main beam in a east-west direction. The charred remains of large dimension floor joists perpendicular to the main beam assured me that I had the beam in the right location.

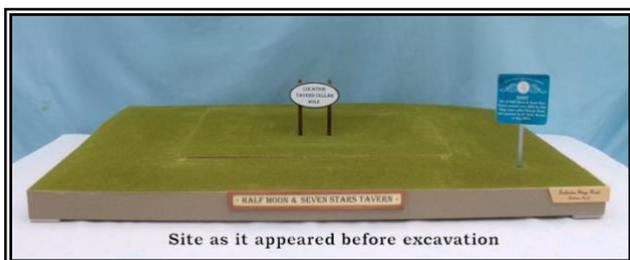
There were two sets of exterior door hardware found in the ashes at the front of the building. This presented the possibility of two main entrances on the front facade of the house. The two door arrangement provided an entrance to the tavern room and another one for the private living area of the house. This resulted in the doors being off center on the front of the house. Such irregularity was common in early-18th century tavern/homes. Very few artifacts were found in the center of the cellar hole, perhaps indicating the location of a center hallway and staircase.

Unfortunately, I could not find a description of the interior of the building or documentation as to the tavern's contents. So the rooms were arranged from the spatial pattern of the artifacts found on the clay cellar floor. The first floor was divided into four rooms, two on either side of a central passage, each room heated from a corner fireplace. The south west room was designated the tavern room because the artifacts found there included pipe stems, pipe bowl, and several coins that may have fallen through the cracks. Behind the tavern room, the northwest room I believe was the kitchen. A butcher knife, a well used sharpening stone, dinner silverware, cut animal bones, and a pewter tablespoon found in this area of the cellar led me to this assertion. Personal item found under the two eastern rooms included beads, buttons, stone marbles, and a small ceramic toy doll, indicating the rooms were used by the tavern keeper's family.

The rooms on the second floor was configured the same as the first floor. The two eastern bedrooms were for the tavern keeper's family. The large bedroom above the kitchen was for the general public usually sleeping two, three or more in a bed. However, if you wanted a private bed to yourself, they were available in the front bedroom at an additional cost.

Once the room configuration was determined, the location of windows and doors were derived based on researching taverns of the era, from local houses of the time period and the typical Burlington County house of the early 1800's. Once all the available information was gathered, I was set to start building.

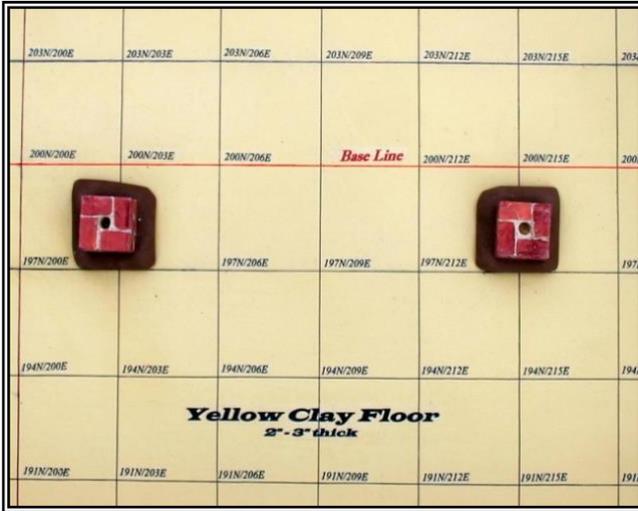
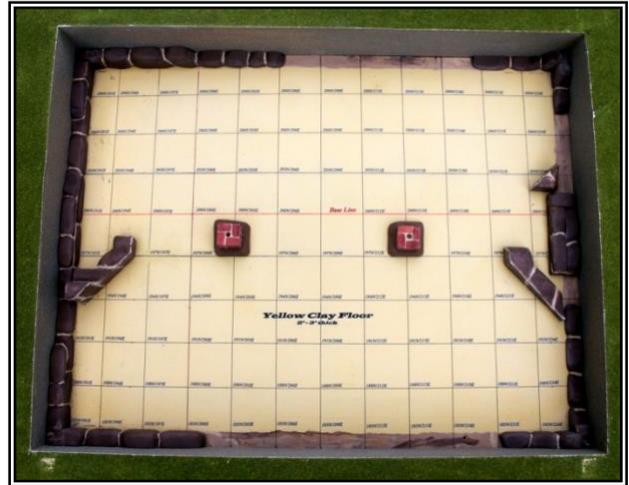
EXCAVATION OF THE SITE:



CELLAR HOLE WITH FEATURES COMPLETELY EXPOSED:

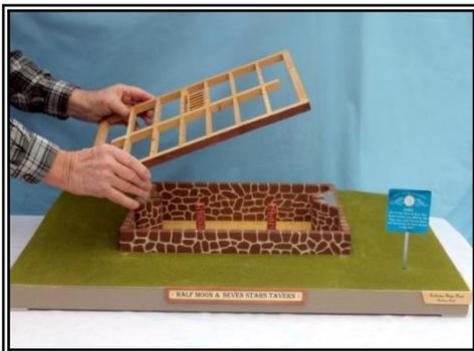
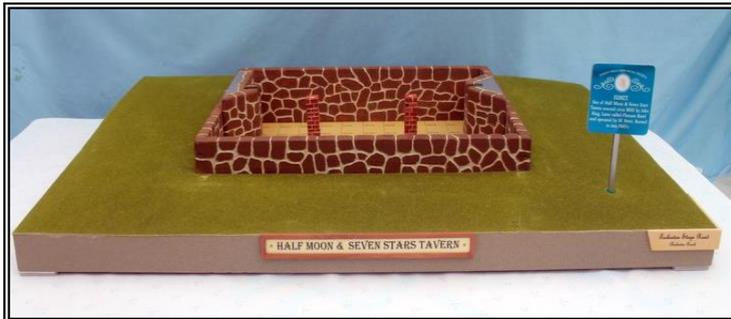


Cellar Hole after Excavation was complete



On the Cellar floor of the model I drew and identified the 3' x 3' archaeological grid units we used in the excavation, to show the exact location of what remained of the foundation and the red brick columns.

The cellar walls and the red brick columns were brought up to the sill plates and the main beam of the frame. Frame floor joints & beams.



THE FIRST FLOOR:



The tavern/local meeting room, a kitchen, a central staircase, and two rooms for the tavern keeper.



THE TAVERN BAR ROOM and LOCAL MEETING ROOM:

Like most taverns, the bar room was accessed directly from the main entrance. This, along with the artifacts found in this area, would indicate the tavern room was the large room in the southwest quadrant of the first floor. Also used for local business, a courtroom, auction house, and social gatherings as well.

TAVERN KITCHEN



KEEPER'S FAMILY ROOMS



Central Staircase First Floor - Artifacts in this area were few, mostly just a layer of wall plaster covering a layer of ash, charred wood and nails. With the two off center entrance doors on the front, a center hall and staircase was a strong possibility



THE SECOND FLOOR:



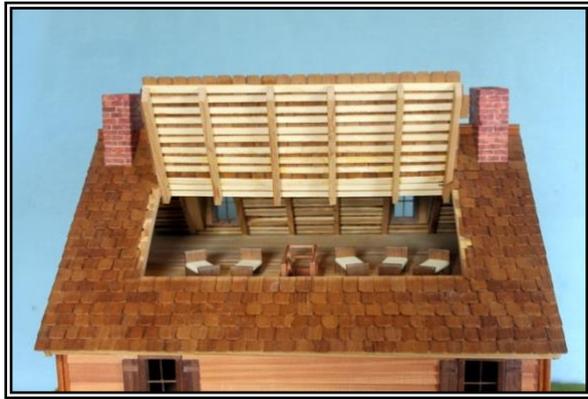
BACK BEDROOM



FRONT BEDROOM



Back bedroom over the kitchen was a general sleeping quarters for guests. A typical room furnished with six or seven beds could accommodate twelve to eighteen guests. Privacy was difficult to achieve, you may find yourself in bed with a total stranger. Even the wealthy slept communally in the same room and even in the same beds with others. However, there were also private beds available for an extra fee. Front bedroom would be used for the overnight guests wishing to sleep alone. For an additional fee one could have a bed to themselves.



I added extra beds in the attic, just in case. Most likely, it was only used for storage.

The Finished Model



CONCLUSION: The purpose of the model is to provide a visual representation of how it might have looked. Knowing the shortcomings of these conclusions and explanations are numerous, this model was put together in module form for easy removal or rearrangement, except the exterior walls which should be a given. They were bought up from the exterior foundation walls. Artifacts recovered from the tavern site were recorded, filed, and stored in an organized manner for future evaluation. Based on the evidence found at the site, it may be supposed that at the time of the tavern burned, it was completely empty and abandoned.

The excavation performed an unexpected but important function. It developed into the interaction of an on-going archaeological invitation with local visitors stopping by to look, ask question, and check the progress of the project. This aspect of the project proved quite interesting to everyone.