

**Design of Early Ordinaries and Taverns in Montgomery County, Virginia
from 1773 to 1823**

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(ABSTRACT)

The Wilderness Road, starting in Big Lick (Roanoke today) was a primary route over the Allegheny mountains for travelers migrating to the Kentucky frontier. Ordinaries and taverns (referred to as public houses) were known to offer food and lodgings to travelers in the state capital city of Richmond, but little is known about what, if any, accommodations were available to these settlers headed westward through southwest Virginia.

With the first stops along the Wilderness Road being in Montgomery County, this study sought to determine if public houses existed in this county between the years 1773-1823, and if so, where were they located and who operated them. Further, what was the typical design or plan of public houses and how would they have been furnished. What comparisons could be made between public houses in Richmond and on in southwest Virginia.

County court records, including wills, appraisals, licensing records, and court order books revealed that public houses not only existed, but also there were often as many as 5 or 6 operating at one. A license had to be purchased each year from the court and names of proprietors were recorded. These listings also helped to identify structures standing today that once served as a public house. On site observations along with WPA (Work Projects Administration) reports and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources surveys documentation of historic houses in the county offered notable similarities in design and plan among five former houses selected for this study. Wills and appraisals provided

some clues about furnishings. The result of this study adds an important chapter to the story of public houses in early Virginia history.

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Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgement.....	iv
List of Figures.....	v
List of Tables.....	viii
Chapter One	
I. Introduction.....	1
II. Purpose of the study.....	9
III. Research questions.....	10
IV. Justification.....	11
Chapter Two	
I. Review of literature.....	13
A. The history of travel accommodations.....	13
B. Lifestyles of travel accommodation managers.....	13
C. Design and services of travel accommodations.....	13
D. Travel conditions.....	19
Chapter Three - Methodology.....	23
Chapter Four - Findings.....	28
Chapter Five - Conclusions.....	74
References.....	77
Appendices.....	81
Vita.....	100

List of Figures

	Page
1.1 Map of the routes of the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road and Wilderness Road	3
1.2 Map of the New, Kanawha, and Ohio rivers.....	5
1.3 Map of the Alleghany Turnpike.....	6
2.1 Illustration of a “kitchen in an ordinary”.....	15
2.2 Photograph of typical sleeping accommodations.....	18
4.1 Map of Montgomery County, with highlighted names of public house proprietors.....	36
4.2 Drawing of v-notched split face log.....	37
4.3 Floor plan of Jesse Hall’s public house.....	40
4.4 Photograph of original batten doors.....	41
4.5 Photograph of possible storage area for whiskey and weapons in Jesse Hall’s public house.....	42
4.6 Photograph of second stairway in Jesse Hall’s public house.....	43
4.7 Photograph of second stairway detail in Jesse Hall’s public house...	44
4.8 Photograph of Brugh public house.....	47
4.9 Photograph of interior of Brugh public house.....	48
4.10 Floor plan of Brugh public house.....	49
4.11 Photograph of possible storage area for whiskey and weapon in Brugh public house.....	50
4.12 Photograph of original structure, with the western and eastern Additions to the Ingles’ public house.....	53
4.13 Projected floor plan of Ingles’ public house.....	54
4.14 Photograph of existing Ingles’ public house.....	55
4.15 Photograph of original front entrance to Ingles’ public house.....	56
4.16 Floor plan of existing Ingles’ public house.....	57

4.17	Drawings of north and south elevations of Ingles' public house.....	58
4.18	Drawings of east and west elevations of Ingles' public house.....	59
4.19	Photograph of ghost markings of previous stairway in Ingles' public house.....	60

List of Tables

	Page
4.1 Exterior architectural descriptions of public houses predating 1823.....	61
4.2 Interior architectural descriptions of public houses predating 1823.....	62
4.3 Inventory of David Wade’s interior furnishings.....	66
4.4 Inventory of Levi Flanagan’s interior furnishings.....	67