

NEW ENGLAND

INNS AND TAVERNS

BY HUBERT G. RIPLEY

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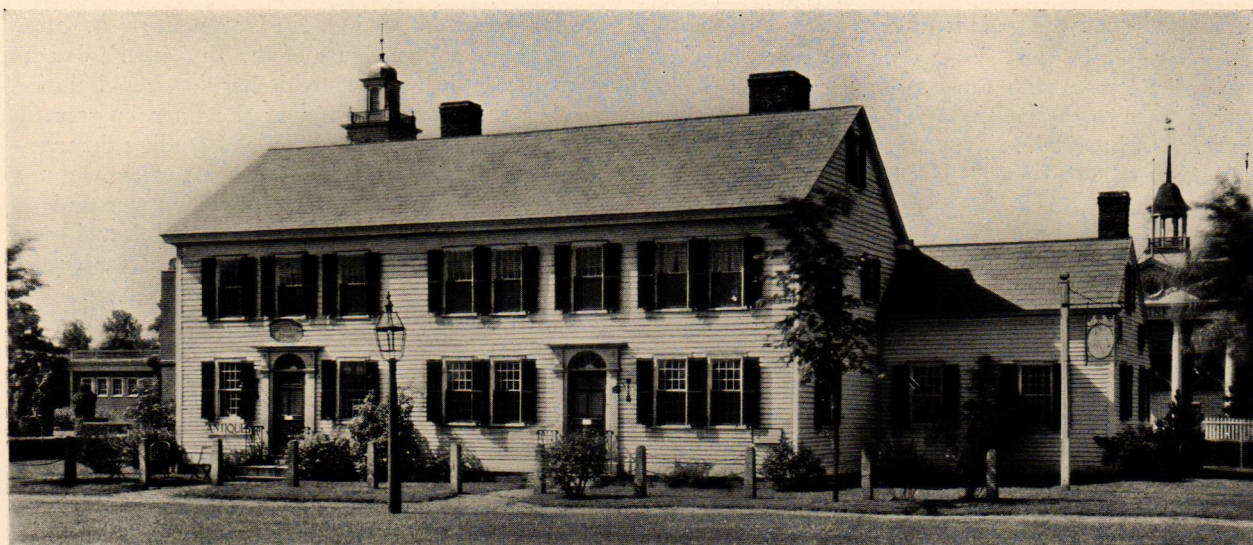
EDITED BY RUSSELL F. WHITEHEAD

INCLUDED SIX TIMES A YEAR IN PENCIL POINTS

FOUR NINETEEN FOURTH AVENUE, NEW YORK



Detail of Front Elevation
COLLIN'S TAVERN, NAUGATUCK, CONNECTICUT
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ATKINSON HOLLOW TAVERN, NOW AT EASTERN STATES EXPOSITION, SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

INNS AND TAVERNS

The American Colonies were settled so rapidly that one of the earliest evidences of the new order was the establishment of a string of inns and taverns reaching from Massachusetts Bay to the Carolinas. The seaports, of course, had to provide accommodation for the constant stream of new arrivals, until they could find homesteads and build the lovely old houses, churches, court rooms, and town offices, many of which, so well were they designed and constructed, are still cherished monuments of XVIIth and XVIIIth century culture. The Old State House in Boston and the old court room in Yorktown are splendid examples of the Georgian style, than which no finer exist any place.

The designations "Inn" and "Tavern" are used interchangeably, though in comparatively recent times "Tavern" has come to mean a place where food and drink were served to travelers, while "Inn" means that lodging also may be had. What fragrant memories cluster around the mention of "The Bell in Hand," and "The Old Elm," for example, "The White Horse Tavern" and "The Bunch of Grapes" in Kingston. It was in this latter hostelry that the great American cocktail, at first christened the cock's tail, was invented. Whether the original Bunch of Grapes is still standing, I scarcely know; probably it was destroyed when the British, under Sir Henry Clinton, burned the town in 1777. Anyhow the history of the cocktail (whether authentic or not is immaterial) is a poetic legend and so fraught with

romance that the telling of it may not be out of place here. We are indebted to "The Bumper Book," New York, 1899, for the tale that runs as follows.

Squire Allen, bluff and hearty, face a deep *bois de rose* o'erspread with indoor tan, dispensed good cheer to all comers at the aforesaid Bunch of Grapes. None need leave the Tavern thirsty whether possessed of the medium of exchange or not, for mine host kept a blackboard behind the bar, on which the customer's score was chalked up when specie or barter lacked. Good ale and strong drink flowed freely, and the Squire's buxom daughter, Betty, assisted her father in caring for the wants of the guests. When the stage coach from Albany arrived and the driver pulled in his foam-flecked horses, it was a busy time for them both, and Betty, her apron strings fluttering in the fresh breezes, her rosy cheek "like a Catharine pear, the side the sun shone on," as Sir John Suckling puts it, skipped lightly from table to table under the old apple tree with pewters of ale, trays of glasses, bowls of loaf sugar and water from the Old Well Sweep. Her father followed, a wicker covered demijohn under one arm, a black bottle of Sour Mash in hand, and a merry greeting for all.

When Lieutenant Titheridge, with his hardy recruits, tall gallant fellows recently returned from the Plains of Abraham, appeared one day, and drew up his squadron in the yard between the early American wagon sheds with their row of elliptical arches, and the great hay barn, Betty was at the Well Sweep.

"Halt!" cried the gallant officer.

"Allow *me!*" were his words, and dismounting quickly he strode with rapid strides across the intervening space to the well, flinging his reins to Sargent Simpkins as he did so.

"What a lovely spot!" he added. "I think we'll stay here for a while and rest up a bit. You men look tired."

As he spoke these words, his muscular arms manipulated the well sweep and, despite Betty's protestation, he carried two full buckets of ice cold water into the kitchen with the ease and familiarity bred of active outdoor life combined with the grace of manner that betokened a gallant soldier not unfamiliar with the salons of the quality.

"Oh sir!" said Betty, dropping him a curtsy, "I thank you. You must be awful strong!" and she blushed prettily and looked down in modest confusion.

"*Du tout!*" replied the lieutenant lightly, for he spoke French fluently, and was fond of displaying his knowledge. In the midst of the slight embarrassment caused by the unexpected meeting of two extremely attractive young people of opposite sex (such an embarrassment would be most unusual nowadays, it may be said) the Squire appeared.

His face was like a thundercloud, the cause of which was not long in appearing. It seemed that the Innkeeper was greatly addicted to the sport of cock-fighting and inordinately proud of his prize cock Excalibar, whose valour and skill in the cock-pit were renowned throughout the countryside. The exploits of this lusty fowl had gained not only a redoubtable reputation for its owner as a trainer and sportsman, but had also resulted considerably to his pecuniary advantage. Many envied him the possession of such a paragon, and, indeed well they might for never before in three counties had been seen such noble courage, finer breed, and staying qualities than displayed by this young hero of many a cocking main. His age was three years and seven months and he tipped the scales at 4 lbs. 14 oz., a very knight among birds with a plumed tail worthy of Agamemnon's crest. For two days Excalibar had been missing, the Squire had hunted for him high and low throughout the neighborhood and among his corn cribs. Nowhere could a trace of him be discovered. The prince of birds had been stolen!

Leftenant Titheridge looked thoughtful as he recalled a half-forgotten incident of the hike down the river, but he said nothing. It was solemn and dismal cheer for the guests that night at the Bunch of Grapes. Shortly after daybreak the next morning the young officer rode away, bidding his men await his return. Everyone at the Tavern was disconsolate. Even Sargent Simpkins, a fine upstanding young man with

a prepossessing face, and an eye for a pretty gell, scarce remarked the nimble figure of the Innkeeper's daughter as she busied herself with her household duties, sweeping the taproom, sanding the floor in graceful arabesques, plucking green corn, and tending the mari-golds and johnny-jump-ups, for her garden was the delight of all visitors. Night drew on apace and no lieutenant appeared. Again a gloomy and dismal meal while the candles guttered unsnuffed and the Squire smoked pipe after pipe, refusing all conversation.

As dawn, the rosy fingered, came peeping o'er the hills, Sargent Simpkins felt a touch on his shoulder.

"*Qui va la?*" he muttered sleepily, for he had picked up a smattering of French during the hardships of the Quebec campaign.

"*Je,*" whispered the voice of Leftenant Titheridge, for it was indeed none other. He held something indistinguishable in the half light. It was Excalibar unharmed and in all the glory of his plumage, brilliant as when the rays of the rising sun tip with iridescent glow the towering walls of the Fred F. French Building on Fifth Avenue, or the first view of the 1933 Chicago World's Fair startles the astonished visitor.

The sensitive ear of Squire Allen, a light sleeper, caught the whispered conversation in the adjoining room, and slipping quickly into his small clothes, he pushed open the door. Catching sight of his matchless bird, he uttered a great shout that aroused the entire household. Soon the room was filled with a joyous throng of guests, retainers and soldiers. Even Betty, with a green joseph thrown hastily over her night rail, peeped shyly in with admiring glances at the handsome young officer who, after searching far and wide, had returned triumphant with his quarry. Fully recovered from the spleen and black humor of the past three days, the overjoyed host called for the best breakfast the house afforded, while Betty slipped off hastily to put into execution an idea of her own. Let us quote an extract from the tale itself.

"Now whether it were from excitement or nervousness, or whether, perchance, mistress Daisy had before discovered the secret, and held it close for a great event, certain it is that she mixed sundry drops of bitters and wine of roots, with a dram of good Kentucky whisky, the whole poured over some generous bits of ice (not a little luxury in itself), and they all drank of the beverage "to the cock's tail"—for Jupiter had not lost a single feather. And then the gallant lieutenant swore bravely that, in memory of the event, the delectable mixture he had drunk should be known as a cock's tail through all the army."

[Note. The author seems a bit confused. He calls the charming inventor "Betty" instead of Daisy, (Continued on page 255)]



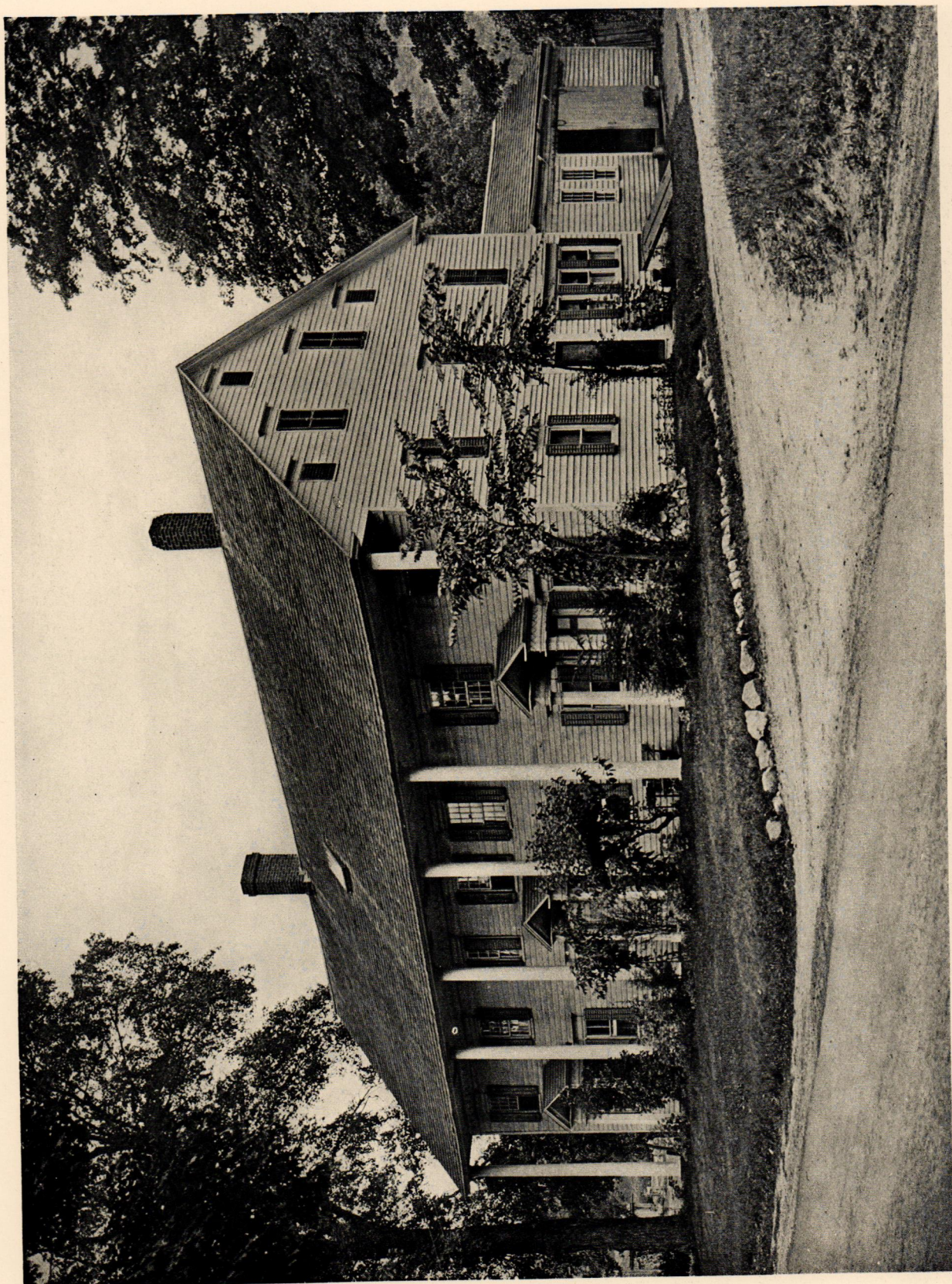
THE RICE TAVERN, KITTERY, MAINE

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THE RICE TAVERN, KITTERY, MAINE

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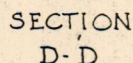
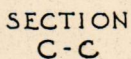
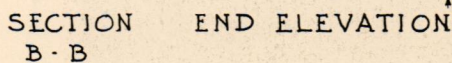
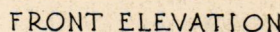
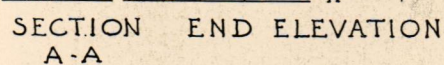
COLLIN'S TAVERN, NAUGATUCK, CONNECTICUT

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Detail of Front Elevation
WAYSIDE INN—1686—SUDBURY, MASSACHUSETTS

[252]

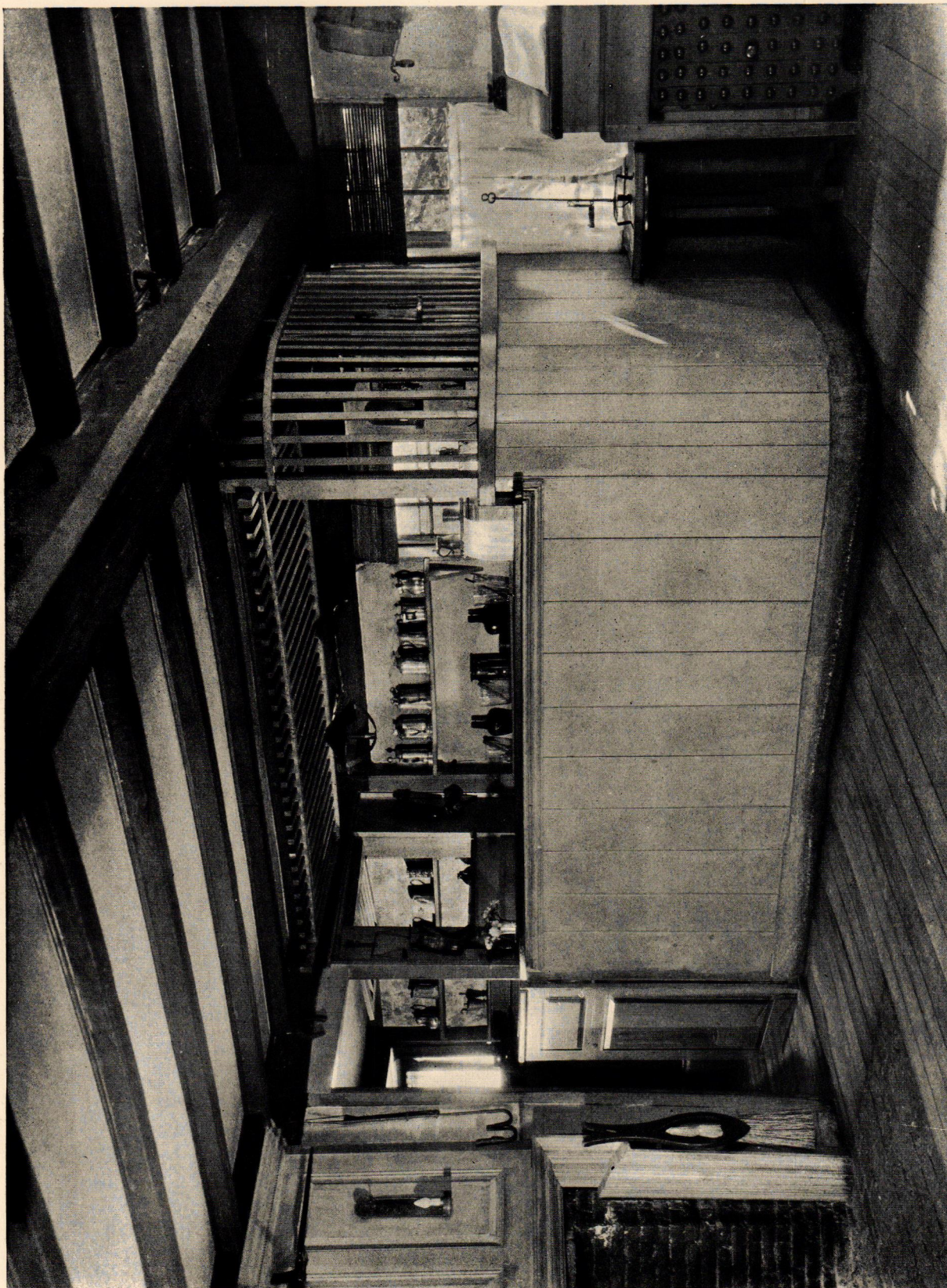


Measured & Drawn by
Robert I. Carter July 1932

THE WAYSIDE INN **TAP ROOM** Built about 1686 SUDBURY, MASS.

Drawing reproduced exactly at scale marked.

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TAP ROOM AND BAR—WAYSIDE INN—1686—SUDBURY, MASSACHUSETTS

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and the gallant cock "Excalibar" instead of Jupiter. *Ed.* Well, maybe I did, memory plays us pranks at times, but what of it? *Author.*]

The subsequent adventures of Leftenant Titheridge and Betty [he means Daisy, *Ed.*] is not strictly concerned with the subject of New England Inns and Taverns and need not be dwelt on further. Interested students and Antiquarys will find more of it in the "Bumper Book," together with other timely knowledge.

One of our early recollections was a visit to the famous "Bell in Hand," located for over a hundred years in Pi Alley, Boston. This was strictly a Tavern and no other beverage, not even water, was served save good stout ale. Brie cheese, cold meats, coarse bread and hot mutton pies were available for the modest sum of five cents for each item. A "half with a dash," was the customary order, meaning a half mug of ale with a dash of porter. The ale was Bass', imported in barrels, and besides this a very special brand called Union Ale, which was smooth as silk and strong as the Hercules of Lysippus. About three full mugs of Union and you felt as if slammed by the Hero's club. The porter was bitter without being acrid, and seemed like velvet to the tongue. When drunken with brie cheese, its full flavor could best be appreciated. Customers almost always ordered half mugs (nothing but pewter was used in the tavern, by the way) in the belief that two halves were greater than a whole, yet so canny was the skill of the burly tapsters who drew the precious fluid, great husky lads with mighty arms, that it was a toss up either way. We've tried the experiment several times and never found that two halves caused an overflowing when poured together.

Many famous men were the inn's customers, and while the place was severely simple, Early American in character with wide pine boards and sanded floors, low ceilings and a few old prints on the walls, and while the clientele included almost every strata in our complex civilization from the highest to the lowly, I've never observed unseemly behavior or conduct that could be classed as an offense against good taste. When such men as Judge Palmer, the well-known authority on jurisprudence, Lieutenant Colonel Will, U.S.A., A.I.A., P.D., etc., etc., and Chelsea Joe, that polished devotee of the goddess of chance, patronize an establishment, one may safely follow in their footsteps.

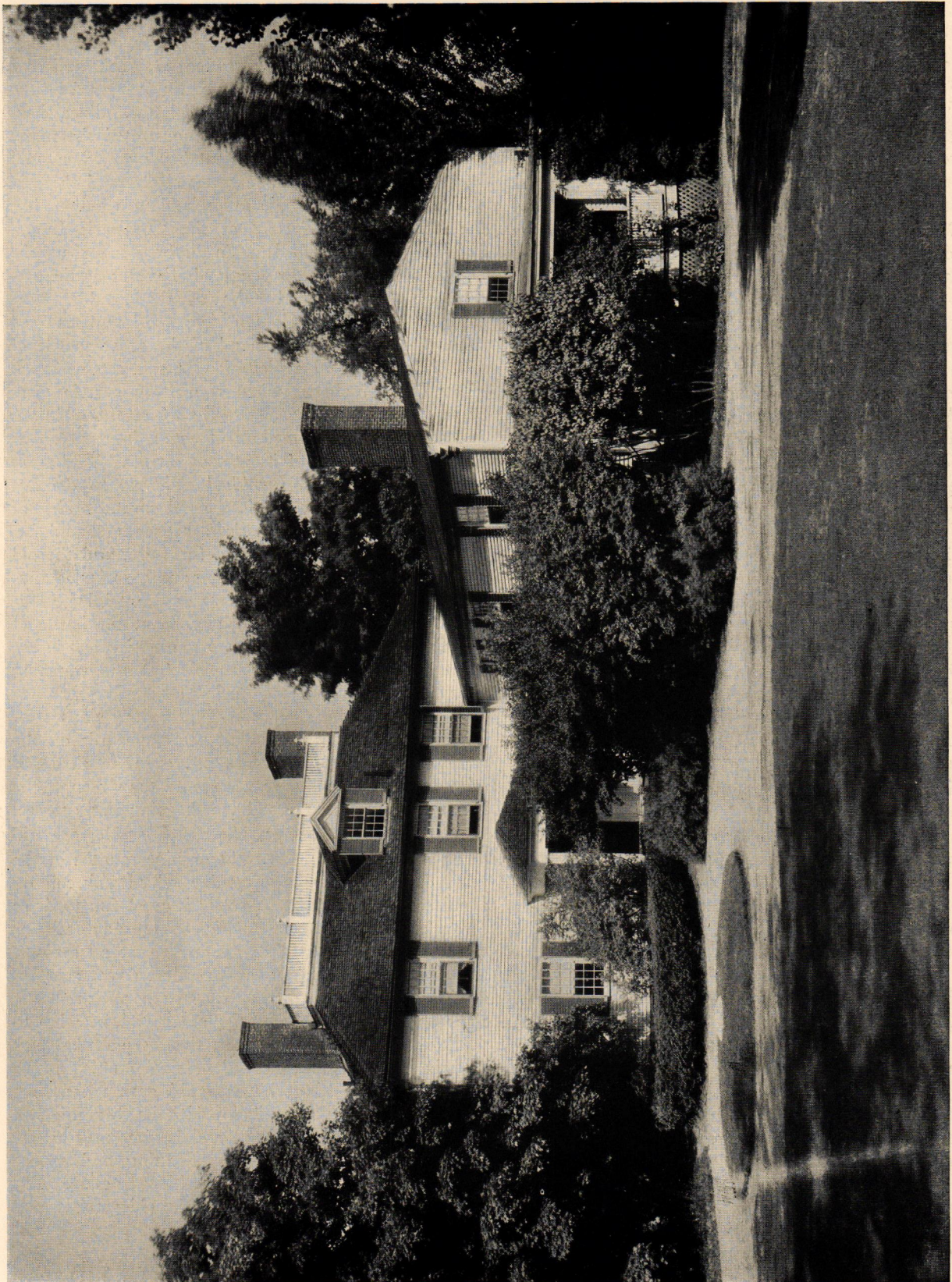
Then there was "The Old Elm," a tavern that lent distinction and the aura of its personality to Tremont Street Mall in its declining years. This place was named from its proximity to the Washington Elm that grew opposite it on Boston Common. (The original Washington Elm was in Cambridge, of course, and the one on the common an offshoot from the parent stem.) Maybe there was once an "Old Elm" near the Cambridge tree, I don't know. Food was

the main idea there, and the best *beer* in Boston, according to the local connoisseurs. We had our first glass of beer there when a student at Tech, and as I recall the incident, I was not greatly overjoyed by the experiment. It tasted strange and bitter. Since then, experience and wisdom have demonstrated the many excellent qualities of this ancient beverage when used with discretion. Weisse beer was also served there in babble glasses, great huge mugs holding a gallon, like the famous "*formidable*," at the "Brasserie Lipp."

"The Old Wayside Inn" in Sudbury is perhaps the best known of all New England Taverns as the setting of the delightful tales of the lovable transcendentalist of the Golden Age. Though marred somewhat by the vandal hand of the great apostle of standardization and exploitation, it still retains much of its original charm when seen from certain view points, in spite of the absurdities of recent additions and strictures as to freedom of action imposed on its guests by the policy of its present owner. There are lovely old bedrooms, furnished right up to the last word of the present-day interior decorator's idea of just what an Early American bedroom should be, many pieces of really good old furniture, and the old bar and dining room practically as was, as far as anybody knows. There are glass cases containing General Witherspoon's sword belt worn at the battle of Bennington, some old pewter, a spinning wheel in the front hall that tangles up people's feet and warming pans and trivets and trammel irons (whatever they are) galore; quite a store of junk when all is told. The front porch is punk, but the clapboards on the walls, still painted the same old exquisite shade of salmon pink it has always worn, and the sweep of the hospitable gambrel, are still worth going miles to see.

Many of the old inns, like the Wayside, are still doing a thriving business eight or nine months of the year, due to the motoring craze which is becoming popular again this fall. It really is great fun to drive through the brisk, snappy air of late autumn or early spring, or even through any air at all seasons, and find broiled chickens and candied sweet potatoes awaiting one. Some places they let you put the bottle right on the table, but mostly, on arrival, one has to sneak out behind the shed where they keep the harrows and the plow shares and say, "Here's how!" to the astonished cows. Not like the old days when they had real parties in these hallowed halls, beginning at two o'clock in the afternoon and lasting until breakfast time the next morning. Feasting and square dances and hard cider spiked with New England rum, and a bit of bundling perhaps, if the old records may be trusted. But dear me! here's the space all used up before the story's scarcely begun.

HUBERT G. RIPLEY.



THE WILSON TAVERN—1797—PETERBOROUGH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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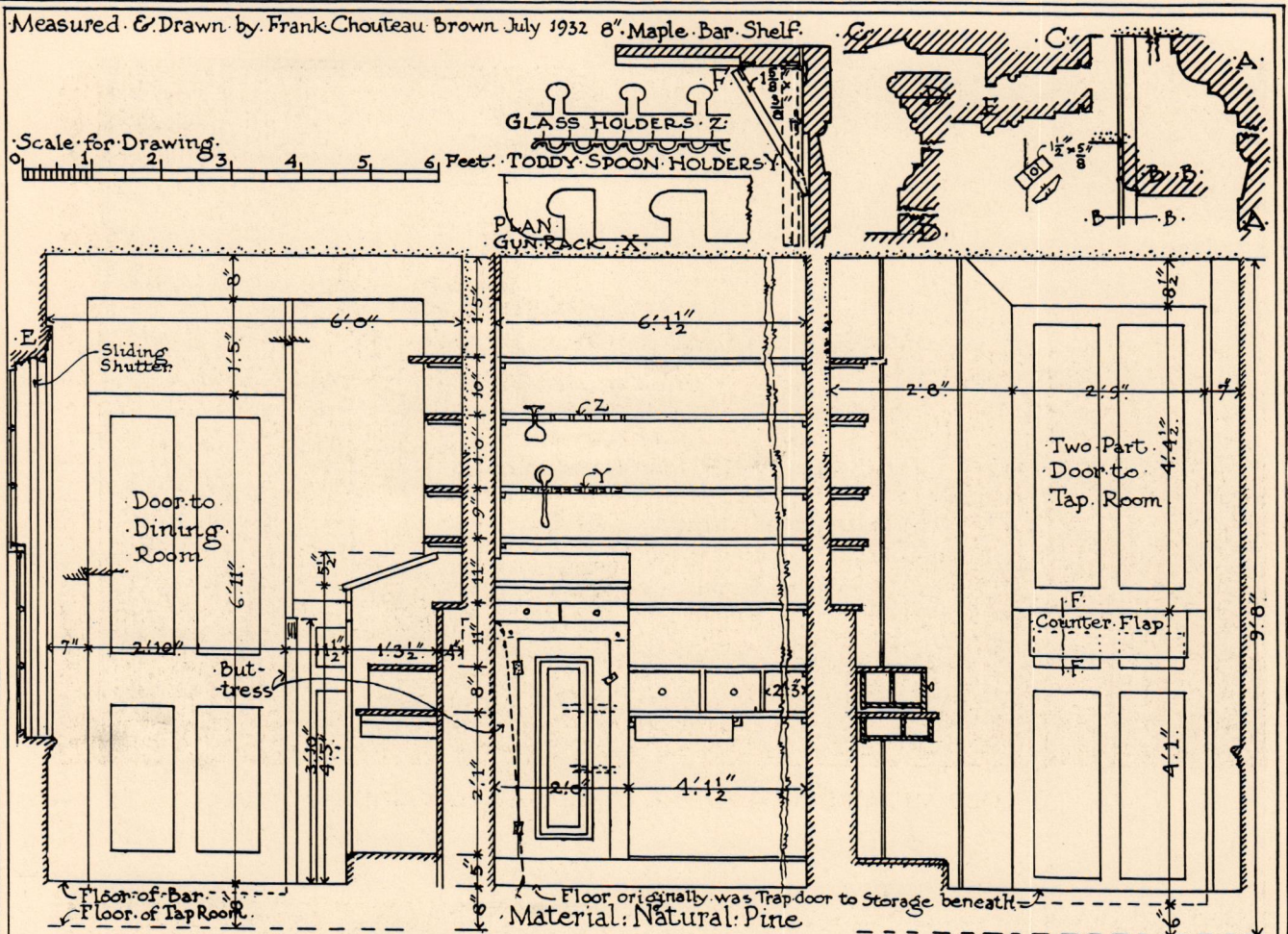
(Measured drawings of this paneling and of adjoining bar on following page)
 TAP ROOM—THE WILSON TAVERN—1797—PETERBOROUGH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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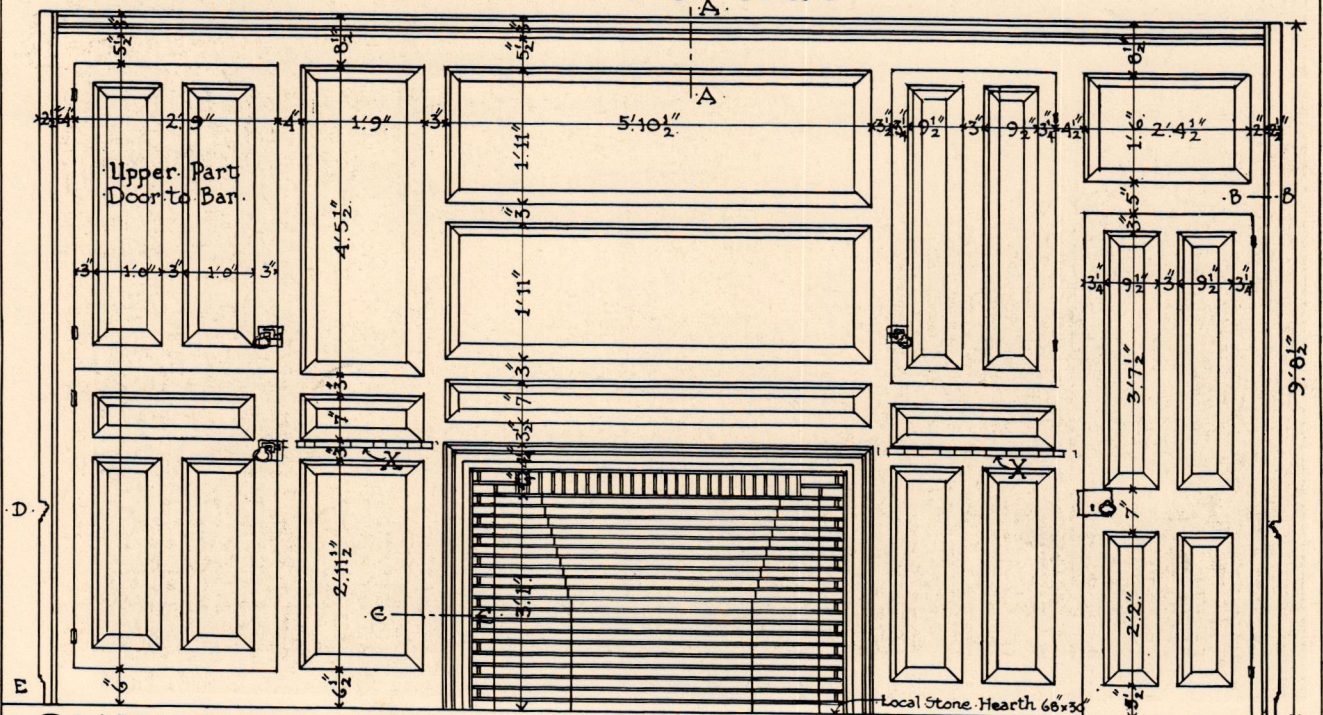
Measured & Drawn by Frank Chouteau Brown July 1932 8" Maple Bar Shelf.

Scale for Drawing.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Feet.



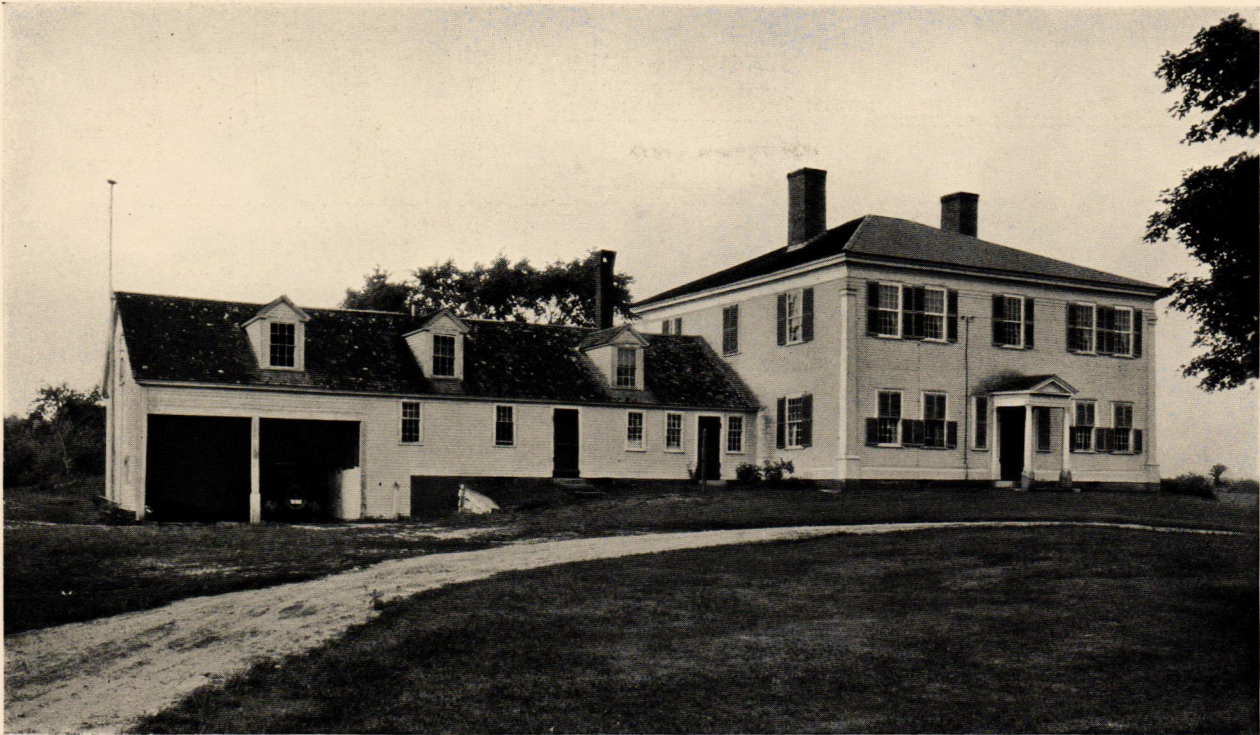
ELEVATIONS OF BAR



PANELED END OF TAP ROOM & FITMENTS OF ADJOINING BAR
THE WILSON TAVERN 1797 PETERBOROUGH N.H.

Scale for details, $\frac{1}{8}$ " to an inch

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OLD MILFORD TAVERN, MILFORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE



TAVERN—1774—WEST TOWNSEND, MASSACHUSETTS

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Entrance Porch
OLD MILFORD TAVERN, MILFORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE
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