

The Black Horse Tavern Of Lovington, Moultrie Co., Illinois¹

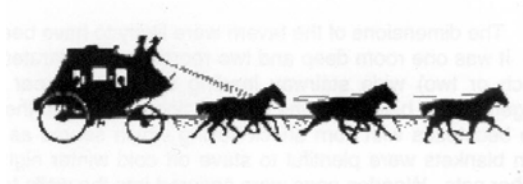
Compiled by Carol Cazier Reynolds



The **Black Horse Tavern** was built in 1838 and was probably the singularly most important establishment that moved Lovington, Illinois, from its status as a wilderness village to a progressive little town. It stood on the main road between Springfield and Paris and served folks of all walks of life, including the Decatur Paris Stage Line.

Built by James H. Kellar and probably at least partially supported financially by his father-in-law Henry Snyder², the inn was actually operated by a friend of Mr. Kellar, our grandfather William Cazier and his family.

Since there was no sawmills in the area at this time, the logs used for the inn were hewn to form four-sided beams placed one on the other with a plaster-like mud to chink between the logs. The floors were of puncheons³ smoothed first with an adze⁴ and later, during a “tavern” warming, polished by the dancer’s heels working on a layer of bran spread on the floor beforehand so that the dancers would polish it.



Being two stories high, the structure took about two weeks to raise. During the construction, as the walls grew higher, opening were made for a door and windows. Before the roof was added a fireplace and chimney were built. Since there were no brick-works in the vicinity, it was necessary to haul the bricks from Decatur, a distance of about twenty-five miles. When the last of the walls were laid, two poles were placed at the ends of the building. These poles projected about eighteen inches over the edge and served as the line for the first row of clapboard shingles.

¹The larger part of the information for this article was provided in a book obtained by Andy Cazier of Federal Way, WA. The name of the book has been forgotten, but was about the history of Lovington, Moultrie Co., IL.

²Henry Snyder was also the father-in-law to Charles Hinkle Bryan. Charles’ first wife was Jane Collins Snyder; she was the mother of John Henry Bryan who his second wife Maranda raised as her own. See biography of Charles Hinkle Bryan and Maranda Cazier.

³These were wide, rough-hewn boards. Furniture such as benches, tables, etc. were also made from puncheons.

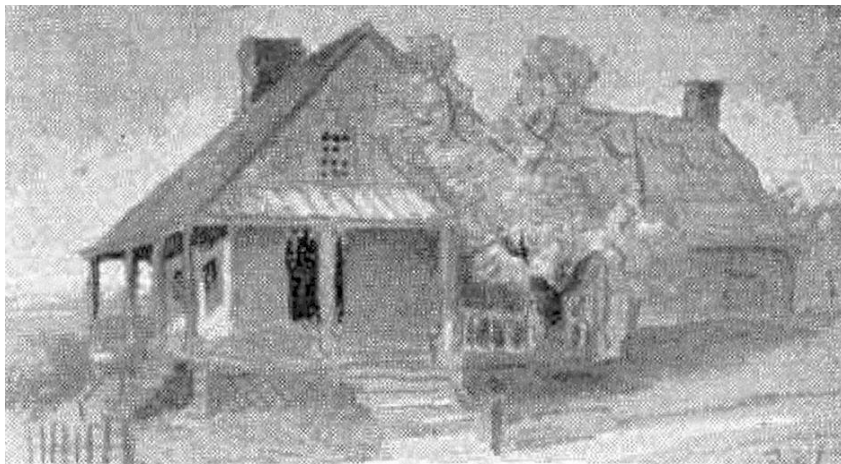
⁴An ax-like tool with a curved blade at right angles to the handle used for dressing wood.

The shingles were secured with nails, if attainable, if not, heavy poles were laid across the shingles parallel to the ridge poles.

At the rear of the tavern a lean-to kitchen (some referred to it as a summer kitchen) was attached to the inn. In the lean-to, there was also a fireplace for the preparation of food.

“Black Horse Tavern-

An old building on the Richmond Road [NY], near Egbertville, now much modernized (1929), represents the Black Horse Tavern of the Revolution. The preservation of the old sign by Patrick Curry, who kept the house in pre-Volstead days, helped to maintain the romantic character of the establishment of which many stories and even a poem have been written.”



(From Staten Island & Its People, by Charles W. Leng, Vol. II, p. 865)⁵

The dimensions of the tavern were likely to have been no more than 28 feet long and 12 feet wide. It was one room deep and two rooms long separated by a three-and-a-half foot (give or take an inch or two) wide stairway leading up to the upper floor which was laid out in the same arrangement as below. In the second floor bedrooms there were simple furnishings such as the frame bedsteads with corn shuck ticking which served as mattresses. Hand-stitched covers and woven blankets were plentiful to stave off cold winter nights. Beneath the beds were tucked the chamber pots. Wooden pegs were secured into the walls for the hanging of clothing, gun belts, and saddle bags.

The porch spanning the front of the building was added a few years later and was especially preferred by those coming from the southern states. This was also a favored spot for the ladies to pursue their everyday chores, such as the churning, sewing and mending, the shelling of peas, plus many other activities. The tavern was located in a grove of trees. This was a protection from the severe winter winds. It was customary to place a building facing the south or east in order to benefit from the warm early morning sun.

The sign of the tavern was one of a black horse painted on a white board, mounted on a pole and

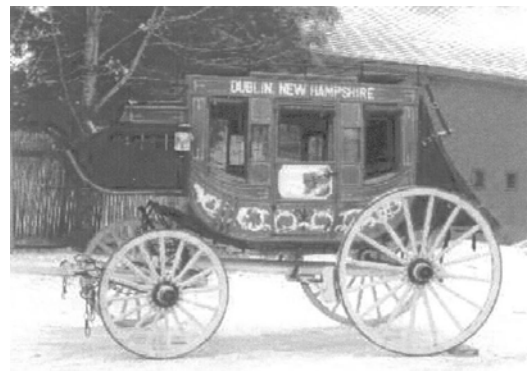
⁵ This tavern is in New York and is not the **Black Horse Tavern** of Moultrie County, Illinois, fame. I have included it because it does give perspective as to how taverns of the day looked and, even though it is in New York it is very similar to the description given of the one in Illinois. In lieu of anything better in the way of a picture alas the **Black Horse Tavern** - CCR

driven into the ground. The lone figure of the horse was large in order to be readily recognized from a distance. The words, “**Black Horse Tavern**” were printed above and possibly the name of the proprietor or owner below.

A stage carrying the mail from Charleston to Decatur arrived on Thursday at the tavern on its way to Decatur, two and a half hours away (on dry days). The trip from Paris to Decatur took one day in good weather – two if the roads were wet. Muddy roads caused much delay in stagecoach travel. Sometimes it took a half day to pry loose the wheels embedded in thick, sticky mud reaching the top of the wheel rim.

At this time Lovington township was a part of Macon County. It was at the court session in 1829 that rates for the services rendered by the taverns were established in the county:⁶

Breakfast & horse fed..... 37 ½ cents
Keeping man & horse each night.. 62 ½ cents
(the man to have supper and lodging)
Brandy, rum, gin, wine or cordial. 25 cents/pint
Whiskey or cider brandy... 12 ½ cents/half-pint



The Concord Coach



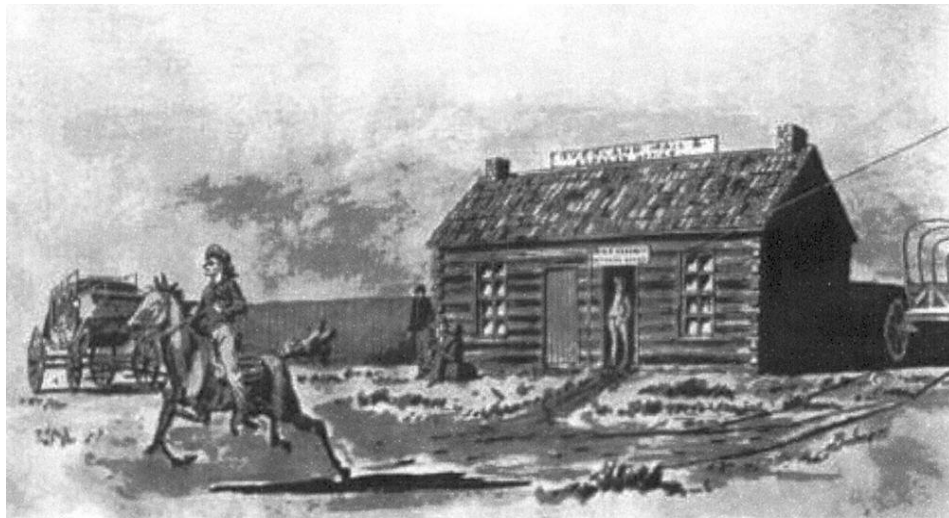
The Stage Coaches were mostly of the Concord type, drawn by four horses and carrying six passengers as well as mail and freight.

⁶As in many other early 19th century communities, it was a fact that whiskey was as much a part of the frontier as were the rifle and the ax. In nearby Marrowbone Township, Nathan Stephens settled in the year 1831 and built one of the first distilleries so that he could produce corn liquor from the corn left over from each year's harvest. Any excess corn was converted to whiskey because it was easier to transport to distant markets than if it were left in its original state. Very likely he was the supplier for the **Black Horse Tavern** in Lovington.

Andrew Love, for whom the town of Lovington was named, was known for his vision and resourcefulness. On December 30, 1839, he was appointed the first postmaster of Lovington Township, holding the post office in his home. In 1845, James Kellar succeeded Love as postmaster and the **Black Horse Tavern** became the post office. Kellar, however, held the position for only four years.

In October of 1849, Elijah Wingate took over. Several other men owned and operated the tavern through the years, however, no record can be found from documents as to when the tavern was razed. It is believed to have been in the early 1870's. With the advent of the railroads came the demise of the stage coach lines and this mode of mail service.

The tavern was also a haven for settlers to reside in while their land was being cleared and cabins built. This was the case for Charles Hinkle Bryan who married William and Pleasant Cazier's daughter Maranda on 27 June 1842. They were married at the Black Horse Tavern, but Charles and his young son John Henry had built another residence nearby at Turkey Spring.⁷



⁷So named by John Henry Bryan because he had shot a turkey there that they took to the Inn to be prepared to eat. This is where Charles and John Henry first met Maranda. Their biography is written by their son John Henry and told in a separate narrative