

# **Endangered White Bear**

## **A History Of The Spread Eagle Inn**

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Northampton Township Historical Society  
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The Spread Eagle Inn, located in the center of Richboro, faces demolition in the name of progress. The Northampton Township Historical Society has organized a campaign under the leadership of its president, Doug Crompton, to save this important local landmark. To commemorate the importance of this building in the township's history, Doug and his wife, Adelaide, commissioned noted Bucks County artist Ranulph Bye to paint the Spread based on photos of the building from the turn of the century. The Cromptons and Ranulph Bye have authorized the Historical Society to make copies of the watercolor and sell prints as a fundraiser. Proceeds will be earmarked for the "Save the Spread" campaign.



76. *BUCKS COUNTY (PA.) VIEWS*  
*Arnold Bros., Printers, Rusland, Pa.*

WHITE BEAR HOTEL, RICHBORO.  
Hiram McCool.

Arnold Bros. postcard taken of the White Bear Hotel May 16, 1907.

## **The Origin Of The White Bear, Or The House That Enoch Built**

*"I sailed straight into Addisville or as it is commonly called, the Bear, in Northampton Township, Bucks County. This is a very old Ville, and it was formerly known only by the name of the Bear, from the fact that there are two hotels here, one bearing upon its sign a White Bear, and the other a Black Bear. This is a pleasant little village, and the hotels are filled with city boarders, there being daily communication to Philadelphia by stage."*

As the above traveler wrote in 1858, weary travelers were fortunate, when reaching Richboro after a long day on the road, to have two taverns from which to choose: the White Bear Hotel, now known as the Spread Eagle Inn, or the Black Bear Hotel, no longer in existence.

Documentation shows that the White Bear was built by Enoch Addis, who purchased the property where the building still stands in July of 1790 from Peter and Sarah Stryker.<sup>1</sup> References to an inn being in existence on the White Bear site appear as early as 1793, when a sign advertised lodgings "for men and beasts." It is likely that this this was a smaller building on the property, perhaps Enoch's residence, since he bought the property in 1790. In May of 1810, Addis officially petitioned the county court to open a tavern:

That your petitioner hath just erected a commodious house for a Tavern in the said Township at the junction of the Road from Newtown with the Wrightstown Road where he means shortly to move and wishes with the Court's approbation to open a house of public entertainment.<sup>2</sup>

On the petition, backed by 70 signatures, one signer wrote:

as we believe Enoch Addis and his wife well qualified to keep a good house of public entertainment & as his stand when the road is established (which is now applied for from the Tinkertown Road) will become very public -- beg leave to solicit the court to grant a license.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bucks County Courthouse, Office of the Recorder of the Deeds, Deed Book 72, page 463.

<sup>2</sup> "A History of Northampton Township: 1722-1972," by Virginia B. Geyer, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Addis's tavern license was granted in 1811, and the establishment was named the White Bear. Down the street, at the corner of Bustleton and Second Street Pikes, there was already a popular tavern known as the Black Bear, owned by the Leedom family from 1762 to 1858.<sup>4</sup> The Leedoms petitioned for a tavern license in 1800 and for what was first called "The Sign of the Bare," later called the Black Bear.<sup>5</sup> William W.H. Davis discusses the origin of the bear references in his voluminous book *The History of Bucks County, Pennsylvania*:

The bear was early made choice for a tavern sign. For centuries the Bear inn was a celebrated tavern at the foot of London bridge, and in the time of Richard the Third it was the resort of aristocratic pleasure-seekers. Probably the first White bear was named after this animal. Henry the Third received one as a present from the king of Norway in 1252. There were also Black bears. According to "A History of Northampton Township," written in 1972, a "spite lane" was built, making it easier to get to the Black Bear.<sup>6</sup>

For many years, the two taverns divided the town geographically. Before the town took on the name Richboro, it was known as "Beartown" or "the Bears." Locals who frequented the White Bear named the town Addisville (after Enoch's well-respected father Amos), while Black Bear patrons used the name Leedomville after Richard Leedom's establishment. The Black Bear was headquarters for local politicians throughout the area, giving it a great deal of notoriety. Once the new road leading from Tinkertown (Jacksonville) was built, Enoch's tavern was on equal footing with the Black Bear. Almshouse Road originally followed Hatboro Road to Tanyard Road and then intersected with Second Street Pike, taking the traveller to the Black Bear. With the approval of the new road from Tinkertown Road, Almshouse Road directed the traveler straight to the White Bear, a boon for Enoch's new inn.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Winds of Change*, Second Edition, Inns: Black Bear.

<sup>5</sup> "A History of Northampton Township, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> *A History of Bucks County, Pennsylvania*, W.W.H. Davis, 1876, pp. 840-841.

<sup>7</sup> "A History of Northampton Township," p. 11.

## **The White Bear's Importance After the War**

After the Revolutionary War, volunteer militias continued to meet in the area. In 1807 Enoch Addis was chairman of a meeting held at the Black Bear “to organize a volunteer horse troop in the 4th Militia Regiment after the Revolutionary War.”<sup>8</sup> Later, rival political factions met separately at each tavern. Republicans were said to hold meetings at Addis’s White Bear Inn while Democrats favored Richard Leedom’s Black Bear.<sup>9</sup>

Davis also noted in *The History of Bucks County*:

The author’s first recollection of mimic war is connected with the blood-stained fields of Northampton lying around the two bears, where our doughty volunteers met, fall and spring, to do their constitutional amount of drilling. But these days have long gone by, and most of the “warriors bold” have been called to the great drill-ground.<sup>10</sup>

In 1821, with Enoch Addis still the owner of the tavern, the Alert Light Horse Company was organized at the White Bear Inn.<sup>11</sup>

In 1830, 20 years after he opened the White Bear Inn, Enoch Addis died. (That same year, the post office and the name Addisville was changed to Richboro, possibly after the first postmaster, Richard Thomas, or Dr. James Rich, the local physician.<sup>12</sup>) In his will, Enoch divided his property up among his children, with his two daughters, Abbey and Sarah, receiving the tavern. James Cummings, administrator of Enoch’s estate, was ordered by the Orphans’ Court to sell the property.

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<sup>8</sup> *Winds of Change*, First Edition, p. 17.

<sup>9</sup> According to “A History of Northampton Township,” soon after Leedom built the spite lane in 1811, the town split politically, with Democrats holding meetings at the Black Bear and Republicans frequenting the White Bear. It should be noted, however, that the Republican Party was not formed until 1854, causing the author to question this statement.

<sup>10</sup> Davis, op. cit., pp. 363-364.

<sup>11</sup> History Report on the Spread Eagle Inn By Stacey Parry, p. 2. Northampton Township Library Archives.

<sup>12</sup> “A History of Northampton Township,” p. 11.

On January 20, 1836, an advertisement for the sale of the property appeared in the Bucks County Intelligencer:

Orphans' Court Sale: Pursuant to an order of the Orphans' Court of Bucks Co., will be exposed to sale, in Northampton Township, on Monday, the 8th day of February next. Sale to commence at 1:00 in the fore-noon, on the premises-the following REAL ESTATE-Late the property of Enoch Addis, dec'd, a tavern stand., and 2 acres of first rate land, sign of the White Bear at Addisville, in Northampton township, at the intersection of a road leading from New Hope to Phila., and a road leading from Almshouse to Newtown, 20 miles from Phila. . .The improvements are a large and commodious stone Tavern, 50 ft. long & 30 ft. wide, with a piazza in front and on one end; there are 4 rooms and an entry on the first floor, the same on the 2nd and 3rd floors, all well finished, a cellar kitchen and 2 good cellars, 2 wells of water with pump therein, contiguous to the house-a large frame stable, and sheds sufficient to hold a great number of horses-an ice house and other out-buildings. There are a number of fruit trees on said lot-the whole in good repair and considered a first rate Tavern stand.

In April of 1836, the property was purchased by Andrew Jackson Beaumont, a land speculator. Although Beaumont only owned the tavern for three years, many important events took place at the inn during his ownership. From August 29 to 31, 1837, some Bucks County light horse companies held a military encampment called Camp Washington above Addisville. The *Doylestown Democrat* noted that it was "expected that both public houses close by [the White and Black Bears] will provide separate tables for the accommodation of gentlemen who took ladies with them."<sup>13</sup>

The following year, in October of 1837, three public meetings were held to discuss Negro Suffrage. One of those meetings was held at the White Bear, on October 21, during party leaders were chosen to fight Negro Suffrage.<sup>14</sup>

Andrew Jackson Beaumont sold the property in April of 1839 to William Stuckert and his wife, Rachel, who operated the White Bear for ten years. The Stuckerts sold the property to William Harris in 1849, who owned the property for eight years and then sold to Daniel and Catherine Dungan. Two years later, in 1859, the Dungans sold the tavern and 1 1/2 acre lot to Hugh Atkinson. Atkinson was a successful innkeeper and held the property for 11 years, accumulating more land before selling to Warren Groom in 1868.

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<sup>13</sup> Doylestown Democrat, September 6, 1837.

<sup>14</sup> "A Collection of Papers on Northampton," pages 597-598.

## The Origin Of The Mansard Roof

Warren Groom owned the White Bear for about 11 years before a heavy debtload forced him give up ownership on March 26, 1879 in a public sale. An ad in the *Doylestown Democrat* on October 28, 1879 provides some clues about changes to the property, most notably Hugh Atkinson's purchase of additional land:

. . . 6 acres and White Bear Hotel, large stone house 42 by 30 ft, 3 stories, 15 rooms, cellar kitchen, stone dining room 38 by 25 ft, porches on East & South, Two wells, frame barn, new stable 45 by 26 ft which holds 25 horses, 2 sheds, ice house, milk vault, pig pen. .

William Cornell was highest bidder at the sheriff's sale. Cornell quickly turned around and sold the property to Alfred Luff, who died three years later and left the inn to his children. Alfred's son Oliver bought the other shares of the property from his siblings on April 21, 1883 and ran the tavern for 10 years before being ordered to sell the property to pay off his debts. The November 29, 1893 issue of the *Doylestown Democrat* provides this description:

. . .6 acres of land, 3 story stone house, mansard roof, 18 rooms, cellar, porch side & front, well in kitchen, large frame barn, stabling for 25 horses, wagon house, ice house w/ vault. . .

In the advertisement for the sale, a mention of the tavern's simple concave mansard roof appears. This allows us to date the roof to between 1879 (the year the previous advertisement) and 1893, when the above ad appeared. Second Empire houses, whose main identifying feature is the mansard roof, were popular from 1860 to 1880 and continued to be stylistic in villages well into the 1880s. (Interestingly, the Black Bear's mansard roof as added in 1882.<sup>15</sup>) It was probably also at this time that Victorian details were added to the piazza.

Frederick Schiefer of Philadelphia was the highest bidder at the public sale of the tavern and took over ownership on April 3, 1894. Six-and-a-half years later, on October 5, 1900, Schiefer sold the White Bear and most of the land (about 3.7 acres) to Hugh Thompson and his wife, Ada May. The Thompsons, either unsuccessful innkeepers or unhappy owners, sold the property less than a year later to Thomas C. Yeakle and his wife, Emma.

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<sup>15</sup> Winds of Change, Inns: Black Bear.

## McCool's Tavern Takes Over

The Yeakles sold the property in 1907 to Hiram S. McCool, who changed the name of the inn to McCool's Tavern. According to Winds of Change, it was around this time that many repairs and additions were made to the inn: "By 1908, a heating plant, bathroom and other modern conveniences were added, as well as a new addition. Several years later, a fire lasting 4-5 hours, forced interior renovation." Firemen soon discovered that gasoline from their pumps leaked into the wells being used to extinguish the fire, forcing them to switch to wells further down the road.<sup>16</sup>

McCool operated the tavern for 30 years until his death in March 1937. It should be noted that during McCool's ownership, the Black Bear was purchased by Jack Frey and turned into a private home. The inn, located where Davis Used Cars currently stands, was torn down in the 1950s and a smaller house was built.<sup>17</sup>



Arnold Bros. postcard taken across Second Street Pike on July 24, 1907, one month after Hiram McCool took over ownership of the White Bear Hotel. Notice the addition of stables to the left of the building.

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<sup>16</sup> Winds of Change, Inns: White Bear (Spread Eagle).

<sup>17</sup> "A History of Northampton Township," p. 11.

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McCool's executor, W. Aubrey Merrick, sold the property to Harry E. Benner in 1937. Two years later, Benner named First National Bank and Trust Co. of Newtown as trustee of the property to hold for the benefit of Ray and Charlotte Weber and their daughter, Charlotte Weber Brown.

The property remained in the family for 50 years, and it was during this time that extensive renovations were made to the exterior of the building. After Charlotte Weber Brown's death her two children, Marie L. Berwind and Joel Brown, operated the inn for years.



The Spread Eagle Inn as it appears after the Webers become proprietors. The slate roof and Victorian porch remain, but progress begins to appear: on the right side of the photo we see a Bell Telephone sign and a telephone pole.



Extensive changes were made to the second floor in the 1970s. This photo from December of 1971 shows much of the second-floor porch has been enclosed and appears to be used as living quarters

## **‘Lost It’s Integrity’**

In 1989, Bucks County officials had discussed applying to list the building as a historic landmark but the project was abandoned shortly after due to drastic changes to the building and its environs. The Heritage Conservancy, known at that time as the Bucks County Conservancy, noted that the inn “had lost its integrity as far as location, and that additions to the building had damaged its architectural purity.”<sup>18</sup> The Brown children grew weary of operating the inn but turned down offers from the township and developers. According to the *Bucks County Courier Times*, Northampton Township planning officials wanted to tear down the inn to create a right-turn lane on Almshouse Road. Developers also offered the Brown children large sums of money for the Spread’s prime location, led by a \$1.3 million offer from McDonald’s. But the family refused to sell.<sup>19</sup> The Brown children found a buyer in 1990: John Maurer, a former real estate salesman living in Holland, who formerly owned a restaurant in Manayunk with his partner and head chef, Vincent Cous, Jr.

After nine months of renovation, the Maurers opened the Spread Eagle Inn as Cous’s Spread Eagle Inn. Maurer added support beams to the floor joists, “added walls, updated bathrooms and converted the second floor from living quarters to a dining area,” which allowed the restaurant to seat 130.<sup>20</sup> The *Courier Times* noted that “the first floor is decorated in pink with plush chairs of wine-red, the second floor in salmon. In the second-floor Victorian room, Maurer’s wife, Joanne, has painted dangling strings of flowers on the walls.” The cost of the renovation was not reported but was said to cost Maurer twice what he expected.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> “Piece of Richboro History Is Sold,” by Andy Brownstein, *Bucks County Courier Times*, June 11, 1990.

<sup>20</sup> “Aging Inn Revived To Serve Again,” by Richard Bedard, *Bucks County Courier Times*, April 10, 1991.

## **Pave Paradise And Put Up A Parking Lot**

The costs of purchasing the Spread Eagle Inn (reported to be \$640,000 including the cost of the liquor license) and renovation eventually caught up with the Maurers. Four years after they reopened the Spread Eagle, the Maurers quietly closed it down and would not comment on their decision.<sup>21</sup> The following month, Sal Giaimo of Giaimo Brothers Builders, which owns the shopping center behind the Spread Eagle, offered to buy the property and tear down the building to expand the parking lot. However, the Giaimos failed to meet township requirements in designing the lot.<sup>22</sup>

The pension plan company that holds the papers on the Maurer foreclosure, Stanton L. Peritz as trustee for various investment groups, is listed in the county Office of the Recorder of Deeds as the last owner of the property. However, Amoco Oil Company has since agreed to buy the property with a contingency clause that requires approval of a gas station on the site. If the township approves the sale, the Spread Eagle will likely be torn down as the township probably will require Amoco to make room for a right-turn lane.

Though the building has been called “an eyesore” by some residents of the township, the Spread Eagle’s place in history cannot be denied and its splendor can be restored with sympathetic repairs. It is highly possible that the original slate roof remains under the white aluminum siding now on the mansard roof which, if removed, would be a big step toward restoring the integrity of the building. The main windows are still of the Victorian era and could easily be repaired and painted. Additions on the exterior of the building could be removed, which would also improve the outward appearance of the inn. These are small steps when compared to the money required to demolish this endangered White Bear. As William W.H. Davis wrote in his 1887 edition of *A History of Bucks County*, “let the metropolis of Northampton be known ecclesiastically as Addisville, politically as Richboro, and popularly as the Bear to the end of time.”

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<sup>21</sup> “Spread Eagle Inn Quietly Closes,” by Patricia Wandling, Bucks County Courier Times, May 12, 1994.

<sup>22</sup> “They Want To Buy Spread Eagle and Pave It Over For a Parking Lot,” by A.L. Coughtan, Bucks County Courier Times, April 30, 1994.

## Chain of Title - White Bear Inn

GRANTOR (SELLER)	GRANTEE (BUYER)	TRANSFER DATE	DEED BOOK/PAGE	PRICE	ACRES
Peter Stryker and his wife, Sarah	Enoch Addis	July 20, 1790	26 / 248		
James Cummings, Admin. Enoch Addis Estate	Andrew Jackson Beaumont	April 4, 1836	72 / 463	\$2,510	2 acres, 3 perches
Andrew Jackson Beaumont	William H. Stuckert	April 1, 1839	63 / 440	\$2,750	2 acres, 3 perches
William H. Stuckert	William Harris	April 4, 1849	76 / 719	\$2,850	1 acre, 71 perches (more or less)
William Harris	Catherine Dungan and Daniel S. Dungan	April 1, 1857	98 / 523	\$3,765	1.5 acres
Catherine Dungan and Daniel S. Dungan	Hugh Atkinson and his wife, Jane	April 1, 1859	113 / 11	\$4,750	1.5 acres
Hugh Atkinson	Warren Groom	April 1, 1868	186 / 34	\$10,000	hotel and 3 tracts of land #1- 1.5 acres #2- 1 acre, 98 perchs #3-2 acres
James C. Finney and John M. Jamison, assigners of Warren Groom (Misc. Book No. 20, p. 152)	William Cornell (highest bidder in sheriff's sale)	Mar. 26, 1880	197 / 154	\$7,500	hotel and 3 tracts of land #1- 1.5 acres #2- 1 acre, 98 perchs #3-2 acres
William Cornell and his wife, Cornelia Ann	Alfred Luff	Mar. 30, 1880	197 / 157	\$7,500	hotel and 3 tracts of land #1- 1.5 acres #2- 1 acre, 98 perchs #3-2 acres
Heirs of Alfred Luff	Oliver J. Luff (siblings sold to one brother)	Apr. 21, 1883	205 / 582	\$2,250	5 acres, 18 perches
Assignee of Oliver J. Luff and Jane E., his wife (Alfred E. Firman)	Frederick Schiefer (highest bidder in public venue sale)	April 3, 1894	264 / 398	\$8,500	5 acres, 18 perches
Frederick Schiefer and Nellie, his wife	Hugh Thompson	Oct. 5, 1900	295 / 80	\$10,000	hotel and 2 tracts of land #1- 1 acre, 67.4 perches #2- 2 acres, 49.11 perches
Hugh Thompson and his wife, Ada May	Thomas C. Yeakle	April 9, 1901	297 / 112	\$11,900	hotel and 2 tracts of land #1- 1 acre, 67.4 perches #2- 2 acres, 49.11 perches

Thomas C. Yeakle and Emma J., his wife	Hiram S. McCool	June 6, 1907	335 / 504	\$13,000	hotel and 2 tracts of land #1- 1 acre, 67.4 perches #2- 2 acres, 49.11 perches
Executor of Hiram S. McCool (W. Aubrey Merrick)	Harry E. Benner	Sept. 1, 1937	656 / 293	\$7,400 (?)	3.713 acres (hotel and two tracts of land)
Harry E. Benner	First National Bank and Trust Co. of Newtown, Trustee (to hold for benefit of Ray Weber and Charlotte Weber, his wife)	March 6, 1939	668 / 373	\$1	3.713 acres
Harry E. Benner	(grants under First National Bank and Trust Co. of Newtown real estate in trust for the benefit of Ray Weber, Charlotte Weber and their daughter, Charlotte Webber Brown)	May 29, 1947	823 / 201	\$1	3.713 acres
First National Bank and Trust Co. of Newtown (for the life of Ray Weber and Charlotte Weber (deceased))	Charlotte Weber Brown	July 21, 1953	1114 / 119	\$1	3.713 acres
Charlotte Weber Brown	Charlotte Weber Brown and Joel A. Brown	May 1, 1956	1304 / 392	\$1	3.713 acres
Joel A. Brown and Charlotte Weber Brown	Charlotte Weber Brown	Dec. 20, 1972	2068 / 262	\$1	3.713 acres
Marie L. Berwind, executrix of last will and testament (Will # 9-87-1761) of Charlotte Brown, deceased	John Maurer and Joanne M., his wife	June 15, 1990	189 / 878	\$500,000	3.713 acres
Lawrence R. Michaels, sheriff	Stanton L. Peritz as trustee for Lindstrom Management C. Inc. Money Purchase Pension Plan Fund Gable, Peritz, Mishkin & Co. Retirement Plan and Leonard D. Ehrlich, M.D. Associates Pension Plan		632 / 938	\$2179.53	3.713 acres