

The Elioenai Clark Tavern
Woodbridge, Connecticut

HABS CONN.-76

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Connecticut

Historic American Buildings Survey
Harold H. Davis, District Officer
29 Whitney Ave., New Haven, Conn.

HABS Conn.-76

THE ELIOENAI CLARK TAVERN
Woodbridge, New Haven County, Connecticut

OWNER: YALE UNIVERSITY

DATE OF ERECTION: 1780

ARCHITECT: Not known

BUILDER: Elioenai Clark

PRESENT CONDITION: Good

NUMBER OF STORIES: 1½

MATERIALS OF CONSTRUCTION:

Stone foundation
Framing Hewn Oak
Floor board 1" thick.
Exterior walls, clapboards
Roof framing, oak
Chimney, brick

EXISTING RECORDS:

Old Inns of Connecticut
M. D. Terry
Colonial Dames of America
Conversation with Mr. Clarence Newton

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS:

1. Northwest Elevation
2. South Room, 1st Floor
3. Detail Former Kitchen
4. North Room, First Floor
5. Detail of Bar
6. Batten Door, Rear

THE ELIOENAI CLARK TAVERN

Woodbridge, New Haven County, Connecticut

On the Old Litchfield Turnpike in Woodbridge, Connecticut, just a few miles from New Haven, stands the Elioenai Clark Tavern within a stone's throw of the equally famous Darling Tavern. The former was built in 1780 on what was later to be the Straits Turnpike.

This turnpike which operated on a franchise granted in October, 1797 was a direct route from the courthouse in Litchfield to the courthouse in New Haven, and was the road used for driving the herds and hauling the produce to the market in New Haven. It was the custom in those days to stop over night just outside the market city, and start early in the morning with all the cattle and stocks freshened up. So, these two taverns flourished, Darling's being patronized by the drovers, there being ample facilities for the pasturing of their herds, and Clark relying for its custom from the teamsters of the horse and ox-carts.

The convenience of the customers was always the forethought at Clark's and the cheery atmosphere, as well as the fine barn to the north for the horses, and another to the west for the oxen, kept them in ample patronage.

The tavern was a simple place, with no ballroom or other added luxuries, as their patronage did not call for such. The men were contented to smoke their pipes by the warmth of the fire and sip their tankards of ale served from the bar which is still there and in good condition.

It might be well to mention here that the part of the building which seems to be historically important as the tavern is the newer part on the south end. It is in this end that the bar is located and apparently here was the drinking-room. The character of the detail of the mantels, bar, and stairway, as well as the construction of this addition, seems to be of a later period than the original house, probably early nineteenth century. It is our opinion that originally the main structure was just a dwelling and that the tavern was an after-thought prompted by the issuance of the franchise of the Straits Turnpike.

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The dormer windows in the main house also are not original and were probably put in at the same time the addition was made. A study of the drawings and photographs of this building will make this paragraph much more comprehensible, and will, we think bear out our opinion.

The structure today is in very good condition and has been transposed into a very comfortable dwelling house, with much of the old atmosphere being retained.

Not so many years ago a mural was uncovered over the fireplace in what is now the living room. It was a country scene and was in poor condition, and therefore it was immediately covered with plaster and is even now hidden from the inquisitors eye.

There is an unusual story connected with the lead pipe line which supplied this old inn with water. It ran from a spring, which was inexhaustable and which was a considerable distance across the road. The Spring is still running and the remarkable part is that it still runs through quite a bit of this original lead pipe. When one thinks of this fine inexhaustable water supply, it is not difficult to determine why Clark's was patronized by the teamsters, who could use this water to such good avail in freshening their oxen and horses.

This picturesque tavern was operated as such for nearly sixty years and has remained in possession of the Clark family until a few years ago. The last Clark owner, Mr. Noyes D. Clark, upon his death bequeathed it to the Sheffield Society of Yale University, he being a Yale Graduate. Mr. Clarence Newton, also a descendant of Elicoenai Clark, has now among his cherished treasures a pair ofwheels from Elicoenai Clark's one-horse-shay, and a day ledger of the Clark Tavern.

It will gladden ~~the~~ hearts of all those who are appreciative of colonial architecture to know that this old structure is in very capable hands, the real estate department of the university being equally as appreciative of this typical tavern.

Sources of information: Old Inns of Connecticut-
M. D. Terry, Colonial Dames of America.
Conversation with Mr. Clarence Newton.

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Approved: *Harold W. Davis* Date: *5/28/40*