

Colchester Inn (Fairfax Arms Tavern)  
Colchester, Fairfax County  
Virginia

HABS No. VA-413

HABS  
VA  
30-COLCH  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Washington 25, D. C.

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COLCHESTER INN (FAIRFAX ARMS TAVERN)

Present Owner: Mr. and Mrs. Robert V. H. Duncan, 218 South Fairfax Street,  
Alexandria, Virginia

Present Occupant and Use: Summer home of owners

Description: This story and a half building over a high stone foundation, is believed to have been built shortly after 1753 when the town of Colchester was laid out. The south chimney is a combination of stone and brick, whereas its opposite member is all stone. There are hipped dormers front and back. Twin entrances may indicate Huguenot influence. In the large dining room entered at the left are a pair of fluted cupboards.

History: At the end of the eighteenth century this tavern elicited the warmest praise from the Englishman, John Davis who was visitor in the household of the Ellicott family in Occoquan. Davis wrote as an habitué who frequently enjoyed the food and drink dispensed therein:

On the side of this bridge stands a tavern, where every luxury that money can purchase is to be obtained at the first summons: where the richest viands cover the table and where ice cools the Maderia that has been thrice across the ocean. The apartments are numerous and at the same time spacious; carpets of delicate texture cover the floors, and glasses are suspended from the walls in which a Goliath might survey himself. No man can be more complaisant than the landlord. Enter but his house with money in your pocket and his features will soften into the blandishments of delight; call and your mandate is obeyed; extend your leg and the bootjack is brought you.

References:

John Davis, Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America during 1798, 1799, 1800, 1801, and 1802, New York, 1909.

Prepared by: Russell Jones and Worth Bailey, HABS, National Park Service, April, 1959.

Approved: *Dixie Sutton* Date 7/9/59  
Chief Architect