



The Cedar Inn today. . .

Cedar Inn, as it looks today. Jimmy Weaver poses in the front yard by a stump of one of the cedar trees which gave the inn its name.

The inn is being converted into a private home by the new owners, Dennis and Delores Hill. (Zane A. Saunders photo)

A legend undergoes change

Once home to many, inn becomes family home again

By VIRGINIA RUCKER

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RUTHERFORDTON — When Cedar Inn was sold last June and remodeling began, a town legend passed out of existence.

Since the early 1900s the inn on West Court Street has been home for hundreds of people — singles and couples, some who stayed briefly, others who called the big house home for years.

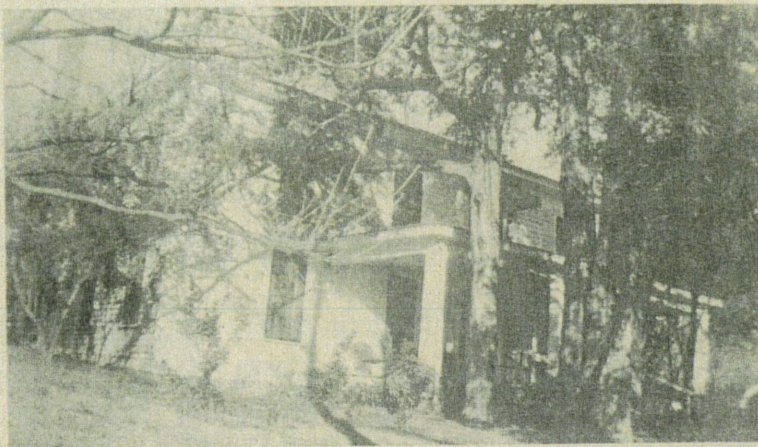
The house, bought by Dennis and Delores Hill, will revert to its original use — a private home.

Around 1830 William Mitchell of New York came to Rutherfordton as a merchant, married Letitia Hamilton of that town and served two terms as mayor.

The street which crosses West Court is named Mitchell for that early family.

Windows in the house are floor-length and some contain the original wavy panes of glass. The location of a back porch and an upstairs door converted from a window, indicate a large addition was made to the original house.

When the house became a boarding house it was dubbed "Cedar Inn" for the large cedar trees which stood in the front yard. Because of



...And how it looked in its heyday

Cedar Inn, on West Court Street, in Rutherfordton, as it looked for many years. Built as a private home in the early 1800s, it served as an inn until two years ago when it was sold by the owners, Wilson and Jimmy McKnight Weaver. Jimmy's mother, Mrs. Daisy Rucker McKnight, operated it as an inn from 1930 until her death in 1964.

rot the trees had to be cut down several years ago but a stump still remains.

Inevitably a house that old must

have legends or ghosts or both. Ghosts no, the family says, legends, yes.

William Mitchell passed the story down that during the Civil War Union soldiers came to the house, marched him upstairs and held a pistol to his head demanding valuables they believed were hidden in the house.

He refused so resolutely that the officer consented to release him unharmed if Mitchell's daughter, Delia, played the piano for him. Afterward the soldiers left the house and its occupants, unharmed.

Ellen Hoyle of Caroleen says her grandmother, Ellen Mitchell, was born in that house in 1840 who married Dr. James Hauge of Camden, S.C. a lieutenant in the Civil War. He moved to Rutherford County in 1871 and when the house was converted into an inn bins in a closet were reputed to have been part of his pharmacy.

In 1930 the inn became vacant and one of the owners, the late Deck Wilson, telegraphed Mrs. Daisy Rucker McKnight and asked her to operate the inn.

Mrs. McKnight, a member of the Rucker family of Rutherford County, then living in Florida with her three small daughters, Doris, Margaret and Jimmy, had been a dietitian at Rutherford Hospital.

She was glad to get back to her home county and she and Cedar Inn soon became renowned for hospitality and an abundance of good food.

Like most small towns in the early 1900's there were no motels, no restaurants and no apartments for singles. The inn provided room and board to nurses, teachers, traveling men (called drummers in those days), employees of telephone and utility companies temporarily stationed in the county and office workers.

The inn contained six rooms (turn to page 7)

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honor role

Legend undergoes change

(from page 6)

downstairs where Mrs. McKnight and her children lived, and eight upstairs, occupied by roomers.

The upstairs rooms were small and each had a lavatory; a toilet and bathtub were in a bathroom at the end of the hall. In the dining room guests ate at three long tables which seated eight and two smaller tables for four. Food was placed on the table in vegetable dishes and platters and passed, family style.

Heat in winter was provided by a big oil heater in the living room and small heaters in each bedroom.

Jimmy McKnight Weaver recalls that her mother served three hearty meals a day and some of the townspeople came there just for meals.

"We had a wood cook stove and the fire never went out. Mother would let me invite any of my friends home with me for a meal but it was understood that we'd have to wait until the second or third seating."

In the early days, Weaver recalls her mother charged roomers \$15 a week which included the three meals.

Laundry was sent out and the charge was five cents for each piece, the same for a washcloth as a sheet or tablecloth.

"Mother couldn't have managed if it hadn't been for Emma, who helped cook, and Felix, who could do anything. Louis was another man who helped and later a married couple lived in a small house behind the inn and the man tended the yard and the vegetable garden."

Several couples found romance through the inn. "Nell and Rachel Tate, our neighbors, met the men they married while the men were staying with us."

And, she said, "I met my husband there. Wilson was transferred to the Employment Security Commission office in Rutherfordton and came to the inn looking for a room. Mother didn't have a vacancy so she sent him across the street to the George Smith home. Mrs. Smith sometimes took people in when we didn't have a room. He stayed there but it wasn't far across the street and we had met at the inn."

After their marriage they stayed in Rutherfordton until 1963 when they moved to Lexington; when Mrs. McKnight died in 1964 they moved back to Cedar Inn.

The couple and their children, Susan, Mary, Myra and George, lived downstairs and rented the

upstairs rooms until June 1984 when Wilson developed a serious illness and he and Jimmy moved across the street to the Yelton Apartments where she now lives. He died last July 1.

The Hills say they were looking for a larger house and bigger lot than their present home on North Washington Street when they found this.

They have replaced the yellow board exterior with gray-blue siding trimmed with white, are adding white shutters and renovating the inside. Upstairs their children, Leniece, 9, and Casey, 8, will have two of the bedrooms and each will have a playroom.

Jimmy's apartment has a clear view of the house and she has feelings of nostalgia about it but no regrets at selling. "I'm delighted to see the house fixed up and lived in by a family. It was a happy home for me and my family and I hope it will be so for them."

210 Logan-Keeter House ca. 1885

Around 1885, a Mr. Logan had this one-and-a-half story frame house built. The structure features multiple gables with elaborate gable inserts and a deep porch with simple Doric columns. C.W. Keeter purchased the dwelling in the late nineteenth century.



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211 A.T. Lynch House ca. 1889

This late Victorian period frame house was probably built for A.T. Lynch prior to 1889 when it was sold to W.H. Miller. The wide wrap-around porches are ornamented with a spindle frieze and simplified Chippendale railings. The second story and gables are clad in mousetooth shingles.



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212 C.L. Miller House ca. 1883

The Montfredo brothers are thought to have been the carpenters for this two-story frame house built about 1883 for C.L. Miller. In 1899, A.F. Miller, the brother of C.L. Miller, purchased the house. The structure is decorated with delicate sawn-work details on the porch and pinwheel bargeboard beneath the gables.



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213 M.L. Mitchell House

M.L. Mitchell had this two-story large frame house built in 1880. In later years, it was deeded to his daughter, Ellen, and her husband, Dr. James Hague. The house was later purchased by Daisy McKnight, who operated the Cedar Inn there. The house has only been slightly altered. The house has massive single shoulder brick chimneys and a long, simple, three-bay porch.



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