



The History of the Buffalo Tavern



The History of the Buffalo Tavern West Jefferson, North Carolina

Owners

1872-George Washington Ray and his wife Mary built the house on the 500 acres of land that they owned.

1887-Their son Walter Ray and his wife Margaret were deeded the house.

1947-W.H. and Edna Graybeal purchased the house.

1970-James and Irma Lyons purchased the house.

1972-Ernest and Marie Blevins purchased the house.

1984-Thomas and Victoria Lewis purchased the house.

1993-Mark and Martha Faye Marquette purchased the house.

1994-Roger and Edith Casciani purchased the house.

1998-Karon Torrence purchased the house.

2006-Brian "Doc" Adams purchased the house.


2018-Steve and Susan Edwards purchased the house.

The Ray Family

George Washington Ray was born on December 21, 1822 and died on January 21, 1900. He was the son of James and Jennie (Hardin) Ray and the grandson of Jesse and Eleanor (Baker) Ray.

Mary Ann Dickson was born on January 29, 1835 and died on October 16, 1920. She was the daughter of John and Sibyl Dickson.

George Washington Ray married Mary Ann Dickson on May 24, 1855.



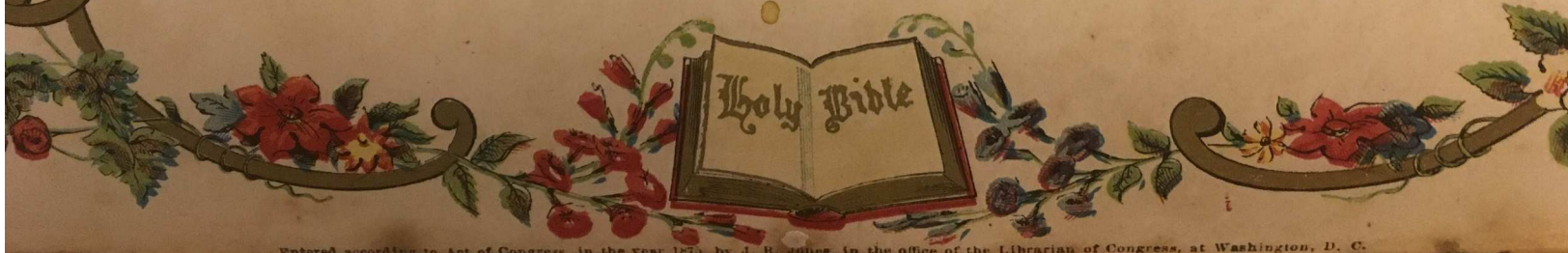
WHAT GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER, LET NOT MAN PUT ASUNDER.—MATT. XIX. 6.

THIS CERTIFIES THAT
THE RITE OF

Holy Matrimony

WAS CELEBRATED BETWEEN

George W. Ray of Ashe Co N.C.
and Mary Ann Lickson of Ashe Co N.C.
on May 24. 1855 at Jefferson N.C.
by Rev Jas Stagg.
Witness Wm K Wilcox Witness Wm Weaver,



Holy Bible

Their Nine Children

Wyley-Born March 9, 1856 and Died October 10, 1862 at age 6

Rosa-Born January 15, 1858

Charlie-Born April 17, 1860

Laura-Born August 17, 1862 and Died October 24, 1862

Florence-Born September 15, 1863

Mary and Callie-Born February 9, 1868

Lucy-Born February 6, 1871

Walter-Born July 29, 1873 and Died on December 9, 1956

BIRTHS

George W. Ray, December 21, 1822

Mary Ann Dickson, Jan 29, 1835

Wiley, C. Ray, March 9, 1856

Rosa Ott Ray, Jan. 15, 1858

Charlie W. Ray, April 17, 1860

Laura Blanch Ray, Aug. 17, 1862

Florence S. Ray, Sept 15, 1863

Babies Ray, Feb 24, 1866 ^{and} Feb 13, 1867

Mary Lee ^{and} Callie Dore Ray, Feb 9, 1868

Lucey Marlin, Ray, Feb 6, 1871

Walter J. Ray, July 29, 1873

Babies Ray, Jan 25, 1876 ^{and} Nov 16, 1879

Construction of the House

The original 500-acre plot was purchased in 1851 by George Washington Ray from the state of North Carolina for five cents an acre.

The house is made of hand-hewed timber and stone. The timber came from Bluff Mountain, which is the mountain that dominates the view from the front of the house. Ray had a woodworking shop on the property and did the woodwork himself with the help of hired laborers from the area.

The structural design of the house is notch and peg and the original wood floors with square nails are still in the front part of the house.

Ray also had a brick kiln and the clay for the bricks used in the house came from Buffalo Creek. There are seven fireplaces in the house.

The original kitchen was in a separate building behind the main house. The kitchen also had living quarters for two servants. In that day, people kept their kitchen separate from the house, because cooking over an open hearth was both dangerous, and in the summer the heat was unbearable. There was a back stairway built for the servants to access the upstairs rooms.

The house was the first house in Ashe County to have glass windows.

The Tavern

In the pasture beside the house, George Washington Ray planted an extensive vineyard. Eventually, there were so many grapes that his wife, Mary had the idea of turning the house into a tavern and selling their wine.

The Tavern was a popular stop on Buffalo Road, which was the main road from Jefferson to Tennessee during that time. The Tavern managed to continue operating unofficially throughout prohibition. Perhaps there were special arrangements with the local sheriff?

The Tavern offered wine and "shine" beginning in the late 1800's. Spirits and meals were provided as well as sleeping quarters. There was a wine cellar under the house. The parlor had a piano on the front wall and that is where the dancing took place.

With the end of prohibition, son Walter and his wife Margaret officially opened the Buffalo Tavern with dinner and dancing on May 6, 1932. The invitation to that event is on the parlor wall by the dining room.

With the depression era came the closing of the Tavern. But the original Buffalo Tavern sign, dating back to the early 1920's, is still hanging in the foyer



The Bed and Breakfast

The house remained a private residence after the closing of the Tavern in the 1930's.

In 1998, Karon Torrence purchased the home and remodeled it, adding claw foot tubs to the three guest rooms. She opened it as a bed and breakfast in 1999.

In 2006, Doc Adams purchased the house and turned the Innkeeper's living area into the President's Suite. He remodeled the old kitchen behind the house into new living quarters for the Innkeeper.

In 2018, Steve and Susan Edwards purchased the home and continue running it as a bed and breakfast with four guest rooms.



The Civil War

The house was built during the Civil War era, but there is conflicting information about the date it was built. Most accounts say the house was built in 1872, but one account says the house was built in the 1850's. There are a couple things that support this account. First, there are some architectural elements in the house that were common to houses built in the 1835-1850 range. Second, it was normal for the house to be built before a couple got married and since George and Mary Ray married in 1855 it seems likely that George would have finished the house before he married

If the house was built in the 1850's that gives credence to the folklore that the room located under the parlor wasn't just a wine cellar, but it was also a stop on the underground railroad. This would explain why the only entrance to that room was a trap door on the front porch, which is not easily recognized as a door.

We do know that George Washington Ray's parents, James and Jennie Ray, owned at least three slaves: Luce, Ben, and Rachel.

We also know that George originally fought with the Confederate Army in the 1st Calvary, but abandoned his command and then served with the Union Army at the end of the Civil War. Perhaps George had a change of heart after growing up in a family of slave owners and decided to help the Underground Railroad?

After the Civil War ended, George became captain of the Ashe County citizen police force-effectively a reconstituted militia-which maintained law and order in the area.

Ashe County

Prior to the 18th century, the Cherokee, Creek and Shawnee Indians hunted and fished within the region.

1749-Peter Jefferson (father of Thomas Jefferson) surveys southern Virginia establishing the border with North Carolina and the future Ashe County.

1755-Andrew Baker is the first documented white settler to live in this area.



1799-Ashe County is founded and named for NC Governor, Samuel Ashe. Jefferson is established and becomes the first U.S. town named for Thomas Jefferson.

1861-1865-The only Civil War skirmish fought in Ashe County took place near Old Fields, where today Route 221 crosses the South Fork of the New River.

1870-The first public school in Ashe County opened.

1905-Route 16 was completed and Ashe County was connected by road for the first time with the rest of the state.

1909-The Town of West Jefferson is incorporated as the second city in Ashe County.

1915-The Norfolk and Western Railway Company began operating as part of the Creeper Trail.

We hope that you enjoy your stay in this beautiful home that has such a rich history. May the peaceful surroundings bring you a time of refreshment and relaxation from the busy world.



