

CHESTER TIMES – December 14, 1905

OLD LANDMARK GOING AT CLIFTON HEIGHTS – Destruction of a Historic Building that was Erected in 1798

The old Blue Store on the corner of Baltimore and Springfield Avenues, will soon be no more, but a more substantial and modern building will occupy its site. The old building, which is said to have been erected about 1798, will be torn down. Already workmen have begun to remove the roof from the part of the structure nearest Springfield Avenue. The exact date when the building was erected cannot be very easily ascertained but the above date is said to be about correct. In 1798, or about that time, Asher Lobb erected the old store which has withstood the wintry blasts for many years and in which business has been conducted. In fact it was the only general store in this vicinity for miles. In those days there were no railroads or trolley lines running through the town and on Baltimore Avenue, which was at that time called Baltimore Pike. On this old thoroughfare the stage coaches used to run to Philadelphia, which was the only conveyance and facility to get to the Quaker City. The barn row on Baltimore Avenue was at that time a big stable, in which the owner of the state line, stabled his horses. The past few days the old landmark has been a mecca for photographers, who have taken numerous views of the old structure. A Times reporter called on Maurice E. Gilmour, one of the oldest residents of the town, who gave the scribe a very interesting history of the old building. Mr. Gilmour said:

“When I was a young man I remember very well how a lot of us young fellows would gather in front of the old store and discuss the stage coaches, which at that time ran from Clifton to Philadelphia. This was about 1848. The old store,” continued Mr. Gilmour, “was the stopping place for the coaches and one trip a day was made. The stage would leave the store about 7 o’clock in the morning and would put up at the Eagle Hotel, Eighth and Market Streets, Philadelphia, where big department stores are now located. The stage coach would leave the Eagle about 4 o’clock in the afternoon and if the passengers were not there at that time, they would have to remain over in the Quaker City until the next day. The coach held about thirty persons and the fare in those days was 50 cents for a return trip between this place and Philadelphia. The stage coach soon disappeared when the Pennsylvania railroad ran through the borough. On the Springfield Avenue end of the building we used to play hardball and I saw many interesting games played and took part in many myself, driving the ball against the broad wall of the old building. I remember distinctly when my father, Andrew Gilmour and William Hey, both of whom are now dead, played some hard games. Mr. Hey was bald-headed and he wore a wig. In the excitement his wig would fall from his head and as his head would shine he would be the object of twitting by his friends. On Springfield Avenue, where two brick houses owned by Maurice Gilmour now stand, there lived in a small house a man named Goodwin. This man had an unsavory reputation and in the 50’s he sold ale and porter from the place. Outside of the house he had a sign with the words Buck’s Hotel. This place used to be visited by people from the surrounding villages. About that time the barn which stood in the rear of the store was burned down and ‘Buck’ or Goodwin as he was called, was blamed for the fire, although the charge was never proved.

“It is said that the first part of the building nearest to Springfield Avenue was erected about 1798 and was built by Asa Lobb. The first person who conducted the store was David Cornog; later William Hay conducted a general store. Hay married Asa Lobb’s

daughter and then the other part of the building was erected as a dwelling. This was in 1833.”

The old building has been since Mr. Hey’s time, occupied by the following persons: Horatio Lobb, Ethelbert Lobb, Stephen Ogden, Heacock & Allan, and ‘Squire Joseph E. Bowers, John P. Kelly, Walter S. Brown, George Jones and Eugene McCabe, the latter now conducting a cigar store in one part of the building.

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