

Chapter XVI

Hotels Taverns and Inns

Dating back to the early years of settlement of the area, Pittsburg and Tullahoma were the location of houses of public accommodation called taverns, inns or hotels. The location of the Federal Land office at Chocchuma, a few miles west, and its subsequent removal to Grenada; the existence of a ferry, and the fact that the Memphis-Rankin Stage Line crossed the Yalobousha River in the vicinity of Grenada all contributed to the establishment of these facilities. Later, when Grenada became a railroad junction town, this fact contributed to increased activity in Grenada in the matter of housing accommodations for the many people who passed through the town. The early inns or taverns were rather crude, but not more so than those found in other early settlements. One of the earliest, perhaps the earliest such place in Pittsburg, was the Union Hotel operated by John Smith. In the November 19, 1835, edition of the Pittsburg Bulletin he was advertising his place in the following manner: "John Smith (formerly of Elliot) respectfully informs his friends and the public generally, that he had opened a tavern in the town of Pittsburg, Yalobousha county, at the sign of the Union Hotel, on the South side of the Public square, near the ferry, on the road leading to Carrollton, and a half mile from Belfor's Ferry in Tullahoma, on the road leading to Tuscahoma, Chocchuma, Leflore, Chula, Benton, and Manchester, where he will keep the best of grain and fodder, for horses and teams, and will furnish his house with the best provisions which the country affords." The tavern was located at the northeastern corner of the block south of the early Pittsburg Town Square. The building faced what was then called Vine Street, but which is now called College Street. The tavern building came into the possession of the Yalobousha Female Institute and served for a brief time as the location of that school, and this probably gave rise to the change in street name, although the school was soon moved to a new building on Main street. There were at least two hotels in Tullahoma; one was operated by Major Jack Williams and the other by Mrs. Annie Parker. These two Tullahoma hotels were not advertised in the early issues of the Pittsburg Bulletin.

The first newspaper advertisement of a hotel in that part of Grenada that was once Tullahoma, which we have found was one which appeared in the March 12, 1842, issue of the Weekly Register. In this advertisement Levin Lake who operated the house stated "THE YALOBOUSHA HOUSE:" The subscriber begs leave to inform his friends and the public generally, that he has opened a House of Public Entertainment, at that large and commodious house, formerly known as the Mansion House, in the East Ward of Grenada, on the business square. This house has been undergoing a thorough repairing, and will, in a short time, be entirely comfortable, He is determined no pains shall be spared to render all who may favor him with a call thoroughly pleased; and he hopes, from a strict attention to business to share a portion of public patronage. P. S. The road leading through East Ward of Grenada is in first rate order, and at the river, there is one of the best Ferry Boats, and most attentive ferry-man in the country. On the north side of the river two miles from town, take the left hand road. On the south side near the edge of town, take the right hand road. Since the Yalobousha House was to use the same building which had formerly been known as the Mansion House and which now needed repairing, it would seem that this building must have housed a tavern or hotel several years earlier, possibly about the same time as that when John Smith was operating the Union Hotel in Pittsburg. In his direction of patrons to his hotel Mr. Lake indicated that the Coffeeville-Grenada road divided two miles north of the river. This was probably due to the fact that there were two early ferries operating, one at Pittsburg, and the other at Tullahoma. One branch of the divided road probably led to the Pittsburg Ferry and the other to the Tullahoma Ferry.

Another early Grenada Hotel was located adjacent to the public square.

On January 4, 1845, the paper, Harry of the West, carried the following quoted advertisement which was inserted at the direction of J. A. Williamson who operated the house: "GRENADA HOTEL: The subscriber begs leave to inform the public generally that he has taken charge of the above establishment. It is handsomely situated on the North-east corner of the public square, east side of Main (sic) street, and is now undergoing repairs. He flatters himself by integrity, assiduity, and strict attention, to merit public patronage. Hoping the good people of Grenada and vicinity (as well as the public generally) by their patronage will assist him in his undertaking, as he pledges himself if sustained, to make the house worthy of the name it has; his servants are first rate; his table shall be furnished with the best the country affords, and charges to suit the times. N. B. My old patrons who favored me while in charge of the Eagle Hotel in Tuscahoma Tallahatchie county; also my old acquaintance from Madison and Yazoo counties are respectfully solicited to give me a call." The location of this hotel raises the possibility that it might have been the same building which Levin Lake was, in 1842, operating as the Yalobousha House. In 1852 the A. S. Brown Hotel on the north side of the square was being operated by Col. J. G. M. Buffalo. Mr. Buffalo later became a sort of publicity man for the Georgia Pacific Railroad System, and spent much of his time away from Grenada in the process of his employment. He maintained a home northeast of the public square, and always managed to be in Grenada on election day. There was an early hotel located on the lot north of the Grenada County Courthouse, and now occupied by the Grenada Theater. At different times this hotel was known as the Carter House, the Pass House, and the Haber House. At times it advertised its nearness to both the courthouse and the town square as a great advantage to potential guests. Another up-town hotel was the Commercial Hotel, located on the north side of the square. It was owned by Mrs. A. R. Davidson, and managed by Walter Crump. A two story wooden hotel building, which was on the south side of Depot street, was first known as the Walthall House, and later it became known as The Central Hotel, Hotel South and Planters Hotel. It was known by the last name when it burned to the ground sometime in the 1930's. At one time W. B. Hoffa was the owner of the building, although he probably never operated a hotel there.

It is very probable that the best known of the early Grenada Hotels was the one located on railroad property and known as the Chamberlain Hotel. In 1871 The Southern Railroad Association, a Mississippi Corporation acting as a kind of holding company for a number of railroads including the Mississippi Central, leased to William C. Chamberlain a designated part of lot number 199 in the East Ward of Grenada. The designated area began a few feet west of the East Track of the Mississippi Central Railroad and extended west, toward the west track of the railroad. This is the area just east of the present railroad station. The term of the lease was for thirteen years, beginning September 1, 1871. For a consideration of one dollar per year the Party of the First part leased the property to the Party of the Second Part for the purpose of the erection of a hotel "according to the specifications attached and signed by G. Burgland, contractor and builder". The building was to cost not less than \$12,000, and was to be completed by the first of September 1871. Chamberlain was to "furnish and keep open at all times for the accomodation and convenience of travelers on the trains of the Party of the First Part a waiting room for ladies on the first floor of said building and convenient to the track-said room to be of ample size for the purpose and properly attended and cared for by the Second Party, and to place at the deposal of the First Party a telegraph office, a room on the first floor and in the front part of the said building of ample size for the purpose, having in view the convenience of the operators and those dealing with them, and properly arranged for the business of a telegraph office." One room of the Hotel could be used by the operator of the hotel as a bar-room "provided the business is conducted in an orderly manner". The operator was to keep the building "in first class style in every

respect, and to the satisfaction of the Party of the First Part." If representatives of the grantor of the lease should ever find that the building was not maintained to the satisfaction of the grantor, the operator was to make the necessary changes to the satisfaction of the grantor within twenty four hours. Failure to do so would result in forfeiture of the lease, with the grantor paying the cash value of the building to the grantee of the lease.

Since the Mississippi Central Railroad connected with the Mississippi and Tennessee Railroad at Grenada, it would be to the advantage of both railroads to have a hotel convenient to the railroads where passengers could stay while waiting for rail connections. This hotel operated at first by Chamberlain, and then by others, became a focal point for much of the social life of Grenada. Many dances and other social functions were held in the hotel, and many events of importance in the history of post-Civil War Grenada centered about this building. Political figures of the time held frequent conferences here with their supporters. It was at this hotel that the people who came in from Memphis to help during the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1878 had their headquarters. Out of town sales representatives, then called drummers, made their headquarters here; hired rigs from the local livery stables, and called on the town and country storekeepers in this vicinity. Evidently Mr. Chamberlain became over-extended financially in building and furnishing the hotel, since on April 16, 1875, he gave a deed of trust to C. T. Wood in favor of Pickney C. Peeples, Peacock and Powell, Lake Brothers, Loys, Yeager & Vandam, and Flash, Lewis & Company, to secure obligations due the several individuals and firms. P. Q. Peebles was the largest creditor of Chamberlain in the amount of \$824.00. Peacock & Powell were the next largest creditors with the amount due them being \$5,453.08. The amount due Lake Brothers was \$5,000.00, while Chamberlain owed Loyd, Yeager & Vandam \$500.00 and Flash, Lewis & Company \$450.00. The last named two firms were out of town creditors, while the others were local men or firms. One day after giving this deed of trust, Chamberlain sold J. C. Brannum an undivided one-third interest in his lease of the property. The sale price was \$4,000. Evidently Peeples and Brannum satisfied the other creditors since in August, 1880, the Chicago, St. Louis and New Orleans Railroad Company, which had consolidated a number of rail lines, including the Mississippi Central, into a rail system extending from Chicago to New Orleans, made Peeples and Brannum a lease on the lot and building similar to the lease originally made to Chamberlain. These two men began to operate the hotel, still called the Chamberlain House, and soon leased the Edwards House of Jackson, Mississippi for a rental of \$300.00 per month. These two men operated the two hotels for a period of two years, after which period Brannum sold his interest in the venture to Peeples for a consideration of \$4,000.00. Newspapers of that period referred to Peeples as Dr. Peeples. So far as we can determine, he never practiced medicine in Grenada. For a number of years he was one of the most popular hotel operators in the state. In April, 1894, the Chamberlain House was destroyed by fire. The Grenada Sentinel, in its report of the fire, stated that the building had been constructed at a cost of \$20,000 and that it contained \$5,000 worth of furniture and equipment.

On November 1, 1894, we find the I. C. Railroad making another lease on Railroad Property for the location of a hotel. The property leased this time was in lot number 202 part of which is west of the Railroad line. It was this portion which was leased as the location of a hotel. The proposed building was to front on Depot street. The lease was given to B. F. Thomas, and was for a period of twenty five years. Mr. Thomas was to pay seventy five dollars per year for the lease of the property, and was required to construct a hotel building on the property within a period of ninety days according to the description; "A good, substantial Hotel-frame building with metal roof." The Lessee was required to charge "fair and reasonable rates, and to operate the hotel in a prompt and careful manner so that neither the Company (Railroad) nor the public will be prejudiced by reason of the Lessee dealing unfairly or negligently in

their behalf, or in the transaction of the business connected with the Hotel Building." At about the same time as the date of the above described lease, B. F. Thomas was petitioning the Board of Aldermen for permission to operate a "saloon on Depot Street, near the Depot." It is possible that Mr. Thomas may already have been operating a saloon in the vicinity of the Depot and was merely requesting permission to continue his old business, or he may have been requesting the permit in order to be able to operate a bar-room in connection with the new hotel. The lease to Mr. Thomas contained most of the stipulations which had been a part of the lease granted Mr. Chamberlain in 1871. It would seem that Mr. Thomas was acting not only on his own behalf, but also for others, when he obtained the lease. On October 17, 1894, the Grenada Sentinel announced the formation of The Grenada Hotel Company. Max Ginsburger was President of the stock company which was to operate the hotel, with F. N. Hartshorn as Vice President. Directors were John W. Griffis, Max Ginsburger, F. N. Hartshorn, B. F. Thomas, G. W. Tribble, S. A. Morrison, while J. C. Perry acted as Secretary and Treasurer. The hotel had thirty rooms for guests, as well as a large dining room. Eleven of the guest rooms were on the third floor, sixteen on the second floor and three on the first floor. Some of the passenger trains which passed through Grenada, but did not have dining cars, scheduled stops in Grenada long enough for passengers to get meals in the hotel dining room. In his news report on the new hotel the Editor of the Grenada Sentinel commented: "While it is not a mammoth concern, it is built in conformity with modern taste and convenience, and will soon be in the front ranks of Southern popular hostelryes. Under the management of B. F. Thomas it falls into the hands of no tyro as the Major in this line has made a reputation known from New York to Florida, from Charleston, S. C., to San Francisco, California."

The Grenada hotel was the last hotel of any considerable size to be built in Grenada, although after Grenada College discontinued operation one of the large Dormitories of that college was purchased by a stock company which operated it for a time under the name Barwin Hotel. The Grenada hotel continued to serve Grenada until some date during the Second World War, but not under the operation of the company which had constructed it. The construction of motels along the improved highways spelled the doom of many of the small town hotels. Mr. Dinsmore, one of the later operators of the Grenada Hotel, recognized this trend; sold out his interest in the Grenada Hotel, and constructed the first motel to operate in or about Grenada. For over a hundred years the various taverns, inns and hotels of Grenada served the traveling public, and also served as social centers for the people of Grenada. Many social functions such as dances, banquets, and even marriages, took place in the public rooms of these houses of public entertainment. Many of these hotels were well known for the quality and variety of foods served in their dining rooms. We give hereafter the advertised menu of the Hotel South for one particular Sunday." Breakfast: Quaker oats, Fried oysters, with tomato catsup, Calf liver, Breakfast Bacon, Macerel, Biscuit, Butter, Rice, Brains and Eggs, Chipped Potatoes, Milk, Oranges, Apples, Waffles, Tea and Black Coffee." For Dinner, as the mid-day meal was then called, the guest could have soup, Roast Beef, Chicken, Baked Fish, Stewed Evaporated Apples, Stewed English Peas, Vegetables, Baked Pork and Beans, Pickles, Stewed Tomatoes, Creamed Potatoes, Coffee, Fruit, Nuts, Whipped Cream and Cake." If the Sunday guest was still hungry when the supper bell rang he could be served with "Scalloped Oysters, Steak, Ham, Eggs, Fried Sausage, Potatoes, Hominy, Stewed Fruits, Iced Tea, Oranges, Apples and Coffee."

Although many people took their meals in the dining rooms of the various hotels, there were, from time to time, restaurants which became well known. Many of them were started; prospered for a brief time, and then were unable to meet the rugged, stiff competition. The frequent failure of restaurants is indicated by a comment of the Editor of the Grenada Sentinel in reference to a restaurant which had been able to survive the fierce competition: "The

restaurant business has had a very precarious run of luck in Grenada. Sometimes ham, eggs, fish and oysters seemed wanting customers at every door, while flaunting signs, inviting the men of hunger to come in and eat, were hanging in all directions. One by one they have failed, or fallen, until but one remain to tell the tale of other, and more plentiful days, when a little silver jingled in the poor man's pocket, and bank bills lined the wallets of the well-to-do. Our old friend Mrs. Lowenstein, still holds her own, is at the same place, well prepared with dainty morsels for the delicate, or a square meal for the strong; of long experience, business knowledge, liberal feelings. She deserves success and wins it. May her days be many and her business a success." This Jewish lady seems to have been a great favorite with the people of Grenada. She had many misfortunes but always seemed to be able to rise above apparent disaster and keep operating. On one occasion her business was ruined by one of the frequent fires which occurred in the town. She had an epileptic son who was the source of more trouble for her. This man got into some kind of an argument with a negro and was charged with murder when he killed the negro. He was convicted of the charge. Not long after this the mother, who had been in ill health for several years but still continuing her business, died and the wife of the son tried to continue to operate the business. After a few months she was forced to discontinue the business. The restaurant, which was in existence as early as 1881, and which operated for a number of years, was officially known as the New Orleans Restaurant, but generally referred to as "Mrs. Lowenstein's". Another well known restaurant which flourished at a much later date was the Dixie Cafe which was located near the Railroad Station. During the earlier years of its existence, the absence of adequate hardsurfaced highways made travel over the roads impracticable for people who were making a journey of great distance. As a result, the railroad station was a site of much activity. In those days many people, who had no intention of boarding the trains, went to the station "to meet" the large number of trains which then ran on the I. C. lines. The Dixie Cafe served, along with the dining room of the Grenada Hotel, the food needs of railroad passengers, as well as the many people who came to the station to meet friends and relatives, or merely to see the train come into and depart from Grenada.