

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name; Skinner Tavern  
other names/site number Skinner's Inn; Halfway Hotel; Western Inn; Geyer Hotel

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2. Location

=====

street & number 13361 Upper Strasburg Road not for publication N/A  
city or town Letterkenny Township vicinity N/A  
state Pennsylvania code PA county Franklin code 055 zip code 17265

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3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this x nomination      request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property x meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant      nationally

     statewide x locally. (     See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Andrew MacDonald (Signature) June 6, 2005 (Date)  
Signature of certifying official Date

Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission  
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register  
criteria. ( \_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official/Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

=====  
4. National Park Service Certification  
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I, hereby certify that this property is:

\_\_\_ entered in the National Register \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_ determined eligible for the \_\_\_\_\_

National Register

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the \_\_\_\_\_

National Register

\_\_\_ removed from the National Register \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper    Date of Action

=====  
5. Classification  
=====

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

private

public-local

public-State

public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

building(s)

district

site

structure

object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing    Noncontributing

  1              \_\_\_\_\_ buildings

\_\_\_\_\_            \_\_\_\_\_ sites

\_\_\_\_\_ structures  
\_\_\_\_\_ objects  
1 Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

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6. Function or Use

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>DOMESTIC</u>	Sub: <u>hotel</u>
<u>COMMERCE/TRADE</u>	<u>restaurant</u>
<u>DOMESTIC</u>	<u>single dwelling</u>
<u>COMMERCE/TRADE</u>	<u>department store</u>
<u>GOVERNMENT</u>	<u>post office</u>

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: VACANT/NOT IN USE Sub: \_\_\_\_\_

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Colonial/Georgian  
Mid 19th Century

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE  
roof METAL  
walls STONE/BRICK  
other STONE

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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8. Statement of Significance

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Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

x A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history

B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past

C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE  
COMMERCE

Period of Significance 1788 to 1909

Significant Dates N/A

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder UNKNOWN

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheet

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: See Continuation Sheet

See Continuation Sheet

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreeage of Property . less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	18	264230	4438846	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====  
11. Form Prepared By  
=====

name/title Jo G. Treat  
organization N/A date 1 September, 2004  
street & number 14660 Lower Horse Valley Road telephone 717-532-9235  
city or town Orrstown state PA zip code 17244  
=====

=====  
Additional Documentation  
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets for Section 7, 8, 9 and 10

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map of floorplan.

Photographs

- Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====  
Property Owner  
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_  
=====

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to Keeper, National Register of Historic Places, 1849 "C" Street NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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Skinner Tavern  
Franklin County, PA

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## **Narrative Description**

### Summary

The Skinner Tavern lies in Horse Valley in Franklin County, PA, between the Kittochtinny and North mountains. The Three Mountain Road runs through Horse Valley between Upper Strasburg, PA, and Fannettsburg, PA. Skinner Tavern is located in Horse Valley, approximately 40 feet to the west of the road and faces the road. Skinner Tavern is surrounded by lawns on the front and both sides. A large lawn is behind the tavern, with fields beyond and woodland further behind the building, to the west. The building front faces east, toward the Three Mountain Road. It consists of a square two and one half story Georgian style stone building, circa 1788-1794, with a rectangular two and one half story Mid 19th Century style brick addition, which was added in between 1837 to 1850, due to increasing traffic along the road during the Drover's Era. The entire building measures approximately 70 and 1/2 feet in length and 27 and 1/2 feet in width, with a stone foundation. There are many original features remaining in the building and many of the alterations appear to be easily reversed. A recently patched metal roof covers the entire stone and brick building with an unbroken roofline. The roof originally was of wooden shakes. The building has a simple wood, badly worn cornice. One interior chimney is visible above the roof of the stone section, which is on the south side of the building. The rough cut stone section with large corner stones is approximately one third of the building length, and the brick section is approximately two thirds of the building length. The brick walls are laid in common bond brickwork. The Skinner cemetery, located approximately 100 yards west of the building in the forested area, contains the remains of the original Skinner family that inhabited Horse Valley.

### Description: Exterior

The fenestration on the eastern front side consists of three bays in the rough cut stone wall and five bays in the brick wall. Across the eastern front first floor are, from left to right, two windows and a door in the stone wall and then one window, one door, one window, one door and one window across the front brick wall. The windows are a mixture of only having storm window panes intact with no sashes or having one or two, two pane sash windows.

A large stone porch measuring 43' by 6'3', possibly built when the brick addition was built since it is mostly attached to the brick section, is coated with what appears to be a cement coating to look like blocks. It is topped with a four inch thick concrete slab and covered with a sloping metal roof. Wood slatted doors to the cellar exist on the east front stone wall on the southernmost side.

The 27'4" stone side wall on the south side has two small attic windows at the top.

The 17'8" common bond brick wall on the north side, has two windows on the first floor of two pane over two pane sashes, and two small attic windows at the top.

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In the common bond brick wall to the west, there are five, six pane over six pane sash windows, except where three sashes are missing and only the storm window panes are present, across the second floor of the brick part. On the first floor of the brick part on this western side, from north to south, the first window was filled with bricks, then there is a door with ghost lines of a missing peaked roof over this bricked window and door, where a roof had been. Next, there are three six over six pane sash windows to the right of (or south from) the door.

On the west side stone section, there are two windows on the top floor that contained six over nine pane window sashes, although the far right nine pane sash is missing. The next window to the left is between the first and second floors and has six pane over nine pane sashes. Directly below this is a door with a small uncovered concrete porch measuring 11'9" by 5'8", and to the right are two six pane over six pane windows on this first floor. Storm windows cover many exterior windows.

Description: Interior

The interior is also two distinct sections-the circa 1788-1794 stone part and the circa 1837-1850 brick part.

The Original Stone Tavern Section, c.1788-1794

In the stone section, the first floor consists of two rooms and the stair hallway.

All rooms in the stone part have chair rails, base boards, plaster walls, beaded board ceilings attached with hand forged nails, plank floor boards, two inch molding around windows and doorways that are almost flush with the wall plaster and the windows measure 40" wide by 53" high downstairs and 31" wide and 53" high upstairs, with sills between 20 and 25 inches deep, unless otherwise noted in the remaining text. There is no crown molding around the ceilings, as is typical of many colonial era residences in south central Pennsylvania, except on all of the fireplace walls.

The front door on the eastern front side of the stone section has four glass panes over two raised panels and a transom overhead. Upon entering through this door, the keeping room runs the length of the stone section front, or eastern side. However, there are two wooden, rough cut support posts inside the front door and to the south. The floor boards inside the front door up to these posts run from east to west, but the floor boards on the other side of the posts run perpendicular to this. This gives the appearance that the section just inside the door originally may have been a long entrance hall that ran from the east (front) to the west (back) side of the building with a wall where the rough cut beams are currently located. Additionally, the chair rail in the keeping room is cut where it appears a wall may have been and the beams support a ceiling joist. The doorway from the keeping room to the west side of the stone part does not match the dimensions nor the woodwork on other downstairs doorways and the plaster in this area appears to be of a different texture, adding to the suspicion that this wall is not original. It is not know when the walls may have been changed. These apparent changes adversely affected the buildings ability to reflect its'



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significance because the original hallway would have been a larger, more prominent room in the original stone building and would have revealed the elegant staircase upon opening the exterior door. The chair rail in the keeping room has square notches cut repeatedly in it, but the reason for this is not known, nor is the date when the notches were cut.

Two cupboards with raised panel doors above and below and curved shelving inside, flank the 5'8" brick and plaster fireplace that has ornate crown molding. The mantle appears not to be original as there are paint "ghost lines" of a mantel the same style as mantels that are on the two other fireplaces in the stone part. It is not known when this may have been altered. The over-mantel, however, with two panels below and decorative frame molding above may be original.

The interior door in this room leads to the stair hallway. The stairs make a U turn to the left (or south), going upstairs and have a chair rail along the wall and a banister with decorative spindles on the other side. The newel post is square. There are raised panels below the banister and spindles, and a thin beaded board door beyond leads to the cellar. The back door beyond and on the west side wall leads NPS outside and has a large plate glass window over two horizontal raised panels. There are two coat rack boards in the stair hallway walls and ornate crosseted doorway moldings. Plywood covers the flooring.

To the left of the hallway, or south, is the tavern room. Wallboard covering precluded examination of some of the wall surfaces. Four raised panels are over the brick fireplace. The ornate mantel appears to have been lowered onto the lower two panels as is evidenced by paint "ghost lines" matching this mantel shape, appearing in the middle, between the two sets of raised panels. The original placement may not have been as useful but was more balanced in appearance since the current position hides parts of two of the raised panels. A cupboard with a single raised panel door above and below, is to the left or eastern side of the mantel and a cupboard with two raised panel doors, above and below, is to the right, or western side of the fireplace with the cupboards have curved shelves. Ornate crown molding tops the fireplace and cupboards. Plywood covers the floor.

Going upstairs, a six pane over nine pane sash window is where the stairs make a U turn. A beaded board wall is above the banister upstairs and also encloses the attic door on the second floor. It does not appear to be original since it is built around the banister and spindles and the woodwork does not favorably match the other interior woodwork. It is not known when this may have been added, although it may have been added for heat conservation, if the original stairway to the attic was completely open.

The room directly ahead at the top of the stairs, to the eastern front side of the building, is a small, converted modern half bathroom with a new ceiling and flat board crown molding. The first layer of wall paper appears to be a 1940s or 1950s western

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scene, but the date(s) of alteration is/are not known. This room appears to stand out from the other rooms in the stone section due to the modernization and lack of original woodwork and plaster in the room.

The bed chamber on the southeast corner of the stone section, was divided with a plywood wall, date of construction not known. The southern end wall has a plastered fireplace with raised panels above and also to the right side. There are two cupboards on either side of the fireplace that have two raised panel doors above and below, and the ornate mantel appears to be in the original position. Ornate crown molding is above the fireplace and cupboards.

The guest chamber on the south west corner, at rear of the building, has two six pane over nine pane windows with one nine pane sash missing. The beaded board ceiling was removed in 2002 due to water damage from metal roofing material that had been missing for several recent years.

All upstairs rooms have doors with six raised panel thumb latches.

#### The Brick Section Addition, c.1837-1850

There are two front rooms on the east side and two back rooms on the west side, in the downstairs of the brick section. The northeast corner room is the library and the other front room, to the south is the parlor. The room west of the library is a kitchen and the room west of the parlor is a dining room.

All rooms in the brick part have plank floor boards, base boards, plaster walls and ceilings, 100" to 103" high ceilings downstairs and 88" to 92" high ceilings upstairs, doors with two vertical panels (some with hand painted graining), and 32" wide by 55" high windows with five inch sills, unless otherwise noted in the remaining text.

The upstairs doors have room numbers on them from the days when the building was a hotel.

The parlor has a mantel but no fireplace, and a two over two raised panel exterior door with a glass transom.

The library has a brick exposed wall where plaster was removed, between the door and window on the front wall. The date the plaster was removed is unknown. The exterior door has a one pane window over three horizontal raised panels and a glass transom. Rough texture plaster covers the walls and does not appear to be original, but the date added is not known. A cupboard/closet on the northern end wall is to the right of a fireplace which has a wooden surround.

The kitchen has no base boards but has plank wainscoting. Plywood covers the floor and a half door leads to a storage area under a stairway to the south. A fireplace with

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a wooden surround and mantel is in the north end wall. The exterior door on the west side back wall has two glass panes over two raised panels and a transom above.

The dining room has plank wainscoting, some of which is replaced with plywood paneling, which is in poor condition, and plywood covers the floor. Dates of alterations are not known. The closet on an interior wall has a beaded board door.

The L shaped stairway from the dining room to the upstairs has plaster walls on both sides and a six pane over six pane window in the upstairs hallway. Rooms upstairs are numbered one through four from the left (north) to the far right (west) when exiting the top of the stairs.

Room number 1 has a chimney bump out into the room on the north wall. This brick wall bulges outward several inches.

Room number 2 has a two over two raised panel door with a thumb latch leading into a closet to the right of a fireplace that has a mantel and wooden surround.

Room number 3 has been cut in half with a pine, beaded board wall and door. It is not known if this is original to the building.

There are attics over both the brick part and the stone part. There is one cellar under the stone section.

It appears many of the original features are intact in the building, but have been neglected and many alterations could easily be reversed. The circa 1837 brick addition reflects the necessity of larger sleeping quarters for the larger amount of travelers who used the building as a tavern and inn during that time.

#### Outbuildings

It is not known when the original stone outbuildings (sheds/stables/barn) were destroyed. These were mentioned in the late 18th century/early 19th century tax records. All other outbuildings were removed in 2002 while clearing vast amounts of debris from the property, which was also excavated at the time to redirect water away from the building.

#### Conclusion

It appears that the building has remained in generally stable condition, except for the outward bulge in the northern brick end wall. Several original windows and doors remain, but others have been replaced, as has the roofing material. Original ornate woodwork survives in the stone section, as have chair rails and baseboards.

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**SUMMARY**

The Skinner Tavern is significant for association with commerce in Franklin County, PA. It was a thriving tavern and inn, in addition to being a general store and post office, from when it was built, in approximately 1788 to 1909 when it ceased to be used as a business along the Three Mountain Road. This road was part of a much used route from Philadelphia, PA, to Pittsburgh, PA, during the young nation's beginning in the late 18th and through the 19th century. Many travelers, including drovers taking livestock to Philadelphia, used this route, which resulted in taverns and inns being erected at frequent intervals along the road to accommodate the travelers. The large brick addition resulted from the high numbers of travelers along the road who needed accommodations during the mid 1800s.

The Skinner Tavern is a significant example of a late 18th century Georgian style stone tavern and inn with a Mid 19th Century brick addition. The stone section is one of the earliest stone buildings in Franklin County, PA, with many original features remaining and ornate woodwork throughout. The brick addition also has many original features remaining, to include hand grained two panel doors that still have room numbers on them from the days when the building was a thriving inn.

The period of significance for Skinner's Tavern is from between 1788 to 1794, the date of the earliest construction of the stone part, until between 1837 to 1850, when the brick addition was added. The building also functioned as a general store and housed the Stenger Post Office from 1888 to 1909, when the building was converted to a private residence.

**History Of Ownership, 1780-1909, and Commercial Significance**

**Commerce and Travel in South Central Pennsylvania**

John Skinner was born 1733 although his date of birth was also noted as 1738. He served in the New Jersey militia and died 21 Nov 1801. His wife was Mary Skinner (1743-1799). <sup>1</sup>

In 1757 John removed to Hopewell Township, Lancaster County, PA. A John Skinner of Hopewell Township, in what was then called Cumberland County, PA, bought the nominated property, called Penquin, from a Capt. Robert Peebles in 1780 <sup>2</sup> and Skinner allegedly moved to Horse Valley in 1781 or 1782. <sup>3, 4, 5</sup>

However, another reference indicated John Skinner bought Penquin soon after Peebles obtained a patent in 1782. <sup>6</sup>

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On 21 Nov 1786, John Skinner was awarded the contract to build the Three Mountain Road which is in front of and east of the nominated property, and extends from Upper Strasburg in Franklin County, PA, over three mountains to Burnt Cabins, in Fulton County, PA. <sup>7, 8, 9</sup>

Local historian Harry Foreman, confusingly stated in several of his articles and books that the nominated property could have already been built by a Robert Peebles when he sold the property to John Skinner, Sr.. Foreman also stated in an article that Skinner, Sr. may have built the nominated property in 1788. In yet another article, Foreman claimed George Skinner, the son of John Skinner, Sr., may have built the nominated property in 1794. He claimed the earliest report of a Skinner Inn was in 1788, but this does not specify if this was the nominated property or another Skinner Inn which was also owned by Skinner, Sr., and later owned by his son, John Skinner, Jr., which is just south of the nominated property.

Local historian John G. Orr, stated that on George Washington's return from the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794, he passed through Horse Valley, then commonly known as Skinner's, from the fact that the two taverns in this valley were kept by two brothers, the Skinners. <sup>10</sup> Since this article states that the valley was "commonly" known as Skinner's by 1794, it seems that the taverns must have been in existence for years before that date.

Foreman also states that early 1790s tax records (not further identified, but possibly tax records for Franklin County, PA, which is the county in which the Skinner Tavern is located) indicated a stone house, stone stable and two stone sheds were at the Half Way site, which was another name for the nominated property in the past because it allegedly was half way between Pittsburgh, PA, and Philadelphia. He deduced that these stone buildings were erected by the Skinners about 1790, but stated that this date may be too late, without explaining how he arrived at that date. <sup>11, 12</sup>

John Skinner, Sr. deeded the property to his son, George Skinner (born 1761) on 13 Jan 1790. <sup>13</sup> There is no date when George ended his hotel career or died. <sup>14</sup>

TAX RECORDS. There were no Skinners noted in the 1786 tax records at the Franklin County Clerk of Courts (FCCC), Chambersburg, PA. 1786 is the earliest tax year recorded in Franklin County, PA, records, although Foreman indicated John Skinner and George Skinner were listed this year.<sup>15</sup> It is not clear if there are missing tax records or why there appears to be a discrepancy.

In 1788 a John Skinner was listed in Lurgan Township, but not Letterkenny Township, including the Horse Valley section at the end of the Letterkenny Township section. This John Skinner was taxed for two horses and one cow.

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In 1790, there was no Skinner listed in the Lurgan Township tax records. A John Skinner was listed in 1790 in the Horse Valley section of Letterkenny Township tax records, who had "400" (acres?) of land, including one grist mill and one saw mill. Therefore, this would have been the mill site, to the south, not the nominated property. No other Skinners are listed in 1790. (As reported above, 1790 is also when John Sr. split his property with two taverns between John Jr. and George, his sons. George is the one who received the nominated property. It is not clear why the nominated property is not mentioned in the 1790 tax records, unless the above records reflected a combination of the two properties.)

In 1791, a George Skinner is listed with "150" land, two horses and six cows.

In 1794, George was taxed for "300" in land, three horses and five cows.

In 1796, George owned what appeared to be "300 as. land" and "500 as. ds." (not further explained), three horses, eight cows, one stone house, one stone stable and two stone sheds. This indicates George may have actually been the one who built the stone buildings sometime between 1794 and 1796, rather than 1788, as previous documentation suggests, since the buildings were not mentioned before 1796 taxes. However, it could not be determined if buildings were not taxed until a certain year, which would explain

the lack of buildings mentioned in the tax records. Foreman reports that in the tax year 1794, (vice 1796), George Skinner was taxed on 300 acres of farm land, 500 acres of mountain land, three horses, eight cows, one stone house, one stone stable and two stone sheds in addition to a distillery.<sup>16, 17</sup> However, a distillery was not listed in the actual tax records in 1794 or 1796.

The U.S. Direct Tax in 1798 lists a stone house and stable with two stone sheds on the site of this inn, making it one of the earliest stone houses still standing in Franklin County, PA, according to Eschenmann.<sup>18</sup>

The FCCC tax records for 1799 indicate George Skinner was taxed for "300 ac.PT land" and "500 mtn. land", (not further explained), one stone house, one stone stable, one stone shed and one old barn, (which may be one of the stone sheds mentioned above in the 1796 tax records), plus one horse and six cows.

In 1804, George was taxed on "300 as land, 600 ac mtn land", (not further identified), a distillery and 2 horses.

In 1807 George had "300 acrez P.", "700 acrez M", (not further identified), one distillery, two horses and nine cows.

No buildings were mentioned in the 1804 or 1807 tax records and there is no explanation of exactly what was taxed over the years. Therefore, there may have been

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a tax on buildings only in the years 1796 and 1799, which would not have revealed if the buildings were erected earlier than 1796.

No other tax year records in the late 1700s or early 1800s could be located, according to personnel at the FCCC.

George Washington noted coming from "Skinners" on a very rough road, during his return trip from the Whiskey Rebellion in Pittsburg (sic) to Philadelphia, PA, in 1794, but did not specify which Skinner Inn. <sup>19, 20</sup> Local historian Hayes Eschenmann indicated in his book The Three Mountain Road, that, "President Washington and his aides stopped at Skinner's Half Way Inn" during the Whiskey Rebellion <sup>21</sup> but Washington's actual diary states only that he was coming from "Skinners". <sup>22</sup>

In 1811, George Skinner sold 1,037 acres for \$6,000.00, which included the tavern and inn, to John McAllen (1768-1840), who married Sarah Skinner, (1802-1865) in 1823, who was George's niece and the daughter of John Skinner, Jr.. The building was still called McAllen's Inn in 1830. <sup>23, 24, 25, 26</sup>

A John Stump owned the building shortly after 1830, and sold the property to David Geyer in 1837.

A large brick addition was added to the property between 1837 and 1850, by David Geyer. <sup>27, 28</sup> Eschenmann indicated Geyer actually built the brick addition in 1837. <sup>29</sup> It was during the Geyer ownership that the height of the droving era was reached. <sup>30, 31, 32</sup> Geyer died in 1872.

Orr stated in his article on the Three Mountain Road, that this road has "long been known, was part of the great thoroughfare between Philadelphia, PA, and Pittsburg. For many years prior to the completion of the Pennsylvania railroad and several years afterwards, the cattle, horses, mules, sheep and hogs for the use of Philadelphia, PA, and the lower counties of the state were driven over it. The cattle in droves of a hundred, sheep in flocks of five hundred to three thousand and over, horses that were driven two by two

in strings of thirty or more, or bunches of five to ten, mules that freely followed their leader on horseback, guided by his whistle when likely to wander from the way, or encouraged when they lagged, and hogs by the hundreds filled the road from early spring to late autumn. These with the wagon lines that hauled the produce east and west and the general travel combined with the local travel made it a busy thoroughfare. The results were taverns almost every mile for the accommodation of the traveling public. It also made a home market for the grain, hay and other products of the contiguous farms." <sup>33</sup>

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Towns along this route were thriving at the time, with a tavern approximately every mile. The Skinner Tavern reportedly was one of the better taverns along the road. The railroad and Pennsylvania turnpike ended use of this road as a main route. <sup>34</sup>

The hotel was owned by a Jacob Neusbaum (1821-1910) during the Civil War, but it was not indicated when he sold it. His daughter, Anna Margaret Neusbaum, married a George Geyer.<sup>35</sup>

George W. Geyer was the last owner to operate the building as a hotel, although the building also functioned as a general store and housed the Stenger Post Office from 1888 to 1909. <sup>36, 37, 38</sup>

Eschenmann stated that when the hotel ceased, it was used as a general store and housed the Freestone Post Office that closed on January 30, 1904. <sup>39</sup> (The Freestone Post Office was actually located further south.) However, Eschenmann also stated earlier in his book that the Stenger Post Office (at the nominated property) operated from 1888 to 1909 with George W. Geyer as the only postmaster. <sup>40</sup>

Other names used: McAllen Inn <sup>41</sup>, Western Inn <sup>42</sup>, Half Way Hotel, Geyer Hotel, and possibly Franklin <sup>43</sup>, although the Franklin is also listed as a hotel in Fannettsburg, PA, by local historians Orr and Eschenmann. <sup>44, 45</sup>

After 1909, the property was used as a private residence.

Even though there was a tavern every mile during the Drover's Era and other nearby Horse Valley taverns of this era appear to be gone, across either mountain to the east and west are old buildings that served as taverns at the time. Skinner Tavern is unique in comparison to these other taverns in that the Skinner Tavern served many functions including a general store, post office, tavern, and an inn, whereas, it is believed that the other area taverns only offered meals and lodging to travelers.

The Eagle Hotel in Upper Strasburg, PA, operated during the peak of driving livestock over the Three Mountain Road before a fire destroyed it along with the store beside it in 1850. This tavern was later rebuilt and is currently a large brick building in Upper Strasburg, PA. A David McKenny family operated an "upper hotel" in Upper Strasburg, PA, until 1840. A third hotel of the day, in Upper Strasburg, PA, was described as a "noted resort of the day" but was also noted as "a dirty Dutch Tavern" in records. <sup>46</sup>

The Union and Franklin hotels were operating in Fannettsburg during the drovers era. <sup>47</sup>

Further west on the Three Mountain Road was a tavern at the foot of the Tuscarora Mountain, a mile east of Burnt Cabins and John Burd ran an inn at Fort Lyttleton (now called Fort Littleton, PA.) <sup>48</sup>



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Unfortunately, documentation on the interiors of all of these taverns was not available.

The Reverend Samuel Wilson House in Lower Mifflin Township, pre-1798, the Widow Piper's Tavern and original section of the Shippen House in Shippensburg, PA, both 18th century buildings, have similar stone construction, layout and woodwork.<sup>49</sup> The Widow Piper's Tavern in Shippensburg, PA, is a two and a half story stone building with an entrance door and hall on the left side of the front, and two rooms to the right, a mirror image of the stone part of Skinner's Tavern. The James Given Tavern, also called the Two Mile House, 1189 Walnut Bottom Road, South Middleton Township, Cumberland County, PA, which is listed on the National Register, is also a good example of a Colonial era stone tavern that was a necessary part of commerce during that time.

### **Architectural Significance**

The architecture of the Skinner Tavern is typical of 18th century stone taverns and mid 1800s brick inn additions elsewhere in the region. The surviving original exterior details, such as solid stone work and large corner stones, thick walled American bond brickwork and small pane sash windows plus the surviving original interior details such as ornate woodwork and doors, hand painted grained doors, chair rails, baseboards, wide plank floorboards and beaded board ceilings attached with hand wrought nails, are vernacular and typical of some of the better homes and commercial buildings of the era.

Early 18th century taverns usually were small, private residences with enough room to accommodate an occasional traveler who slept by a fireplace in the tavern's main room or in the attic and had meals with the family. The compact floor plan of the original stone Skinner Tavern would have been typical of these early taverns. The mid 19th century brick addition was necessitated by the increased travel and commerce at the time of this construction and the resulting need for more room.

As was noted above, the Reverend Samuel Wilson House in Lower Mifflin Township, the Widow Piper's Tavern and original section of the Shippen House, both in Shippensburg, PA, all 18th century buildings, have similar stone construction, layout and woodwork.<sup>49</sup> The Widow Piper's Tavern in Shippensburg, PA, is a two and a half story stone building with an entrance door and hall on the left side of the front, and two rooms to the right, a mirror image of the stone part of Skinner's Tavern.

The Skinner Tavern building has solid stone walls, fine woodwork, many original features and is a good example of a colonial tavern in Franklin County, PA, as compared with the above mentioned buildings.

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**Conclusion**

Skinner's Tavern is of significance because of its assistance with encouraging commerce in the early years of the nation. The businesses included a tavern, inn, general store and post office.

Skinner's Tavern is architecturally significant because it is typical of an 18th century tavern in Franklin County, PA, where few taverns of this era remain. The original interior and exterior architectural details and craftsmanship that are no longer attempted are a treasure to be found Franklin County.

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- 42 *ibid.*
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Geyer, James and Phyllis, 6904 Fairway Drive East, Fayetteville, PA.

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**Geographical Data**

Verbal Boundary Description

The eastern most boundary is a line 30 feet away from and parallel to the eastern side of the building.

The southern boundary is a line 30 feet away from and parallel to the southern end of the building, connecting to the eastern boundary line.

The northern boundary is 30 feet away from and parallel to the northern end of the building, connecting to the eastern boundary line.

The western boundary is 30 feet away from and parallel to the western side of the building, and intersects with the northern and southern boundary lines.

Boundary Justification

The only remaining original building is located within these boundary lines.