

## A SECOND HOTEL FOR AMBLER

by Newton M. Howard

"We've just come from the Village of Ambler, where we found its Hotel Wyndham to be one of the finest and best-equipped hotels we've ever seen in a country town". These were the words of New York millionaire Edwin Gould on arriving at the Three Tuns Inn, seeking refreshment for both man and beast. Gould himself was at the reins of a fine carriage drawn by four gray hackneys. Having attended a family wedding in Germantown, the Gould party was returning home by the scenic route which brought them into Ambler of 1895.

Hotel Wyndham at the time was just two years old, construction having begun in the fall of 1893. It was built by John Cooper, on ground fronting on Butler Avenue at present-day Spring Garden Street.

The Coopers had owned the old Ambler Park Hotel for only a year, when they felt that Ambler was ready for a second hostelry. They sold the hotel, built in 1871, to William Blackburn in 1892, realizing a profit of \$12,500.

Using \$5,000 of this money, they purchased the lot from Charles and Susan Shoemaker. It was a part of

their 10-acre farm, acquired way back in 1869.

It's assumed that little more than excavation for the foundation was done that year with winter approaching rapidly. Major construction of this 45 room hotel, as well as the stables and carriage sheds, began the following spring.

By mid-1894 a handsome quartered oak bar was being installed. By June the new "Wyndham Hotel" sign

was placed on the building; and, with Cooper's hotel license received, guests began arriving in large numbers for the hotel's first summer.

The Coopers operated the business successfully for a number of years until financial problems began to plague them. In 1904, it became necessary to sell their hotel to a creditor, Alexander Hipson, for \$37,500. Considering it a good investment, Hipson

held the property until 1906, selling it for \$50,000 to George and Lydia Kern.

The Kerns, enjoying years of successful operation of their business, were suddenly faced with serious decision-making. The Eighteenth Amendment had brought about the Era of Prohibition, making it necessary for the Kerns to adjust their operations.

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Hotel Wyndham on Butler Avenue at Spring Garden Street. Begun in 1893 by John & Elizabeth Cooper, full-scale operation began in mid-1894. Visible behind the hotel are its stables and carriage sheds, destroyed by fire in the 1920's.

Photo from Postcard Collection of Henry Scholz

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In an effort to survive this Prohibition period, Mrs. Lydia Kern arranged for the entire contents of the hotel to be sold. She then proceeded to convert upper floors into apartments, with the first floor reserved for commercial and office space. The Wentworth Bakery leased most of the ground floor, with the remainder of the space becoming small stores and offices. All signage referring to the bar or the dispensing of alcohol had to be removed by law.

For fourteen years it was operated as an apartment building. The most prominent tenant occupying the first floor during the period 1928-1932 was the Ambler Postoffice. Entrance to the Postoffice was from Spring Garden Street.

And now in 1933 comes the long-awaited news that the Prohibition Act of 1919 has been repealed. George Kern had died during this period, leaving operation of the Wyndham to his widow Lydia and their son William, who stated that, "It is our aim to place the Wyndham in the front ranks of such hostelrys along the North Penn, which position it held before it was closed in 1919." Mr. Kern was quite frank in stating that "it is due to the restoration of beer that we are making these changes to return the Wyndham Hotel to its original status."

Now for a theory concerning the origin of the name "Wyndham" given the hotel by John Cooper: Why was it not called the "Cooper Hotel" or "Cooper House"? Possibly because of John Cooper's time spent in the Army during the Civil War. He was in the Quartermaster Department at Indianapolis for a year, after which he helped organize an independent company in Montgomery County.

Members furnished their own equipment and horses, but soon after enlisting, all independent companies were required by the War

Department to be attached to a unit. Cooper's company became a part of "Col. Wyndham's" Company "A", First New Jersey Cavalry,

where he served for three years. Perhaps "Wyndham" seemed a better name for a hotel than "Cooper". We'll probably never know.

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