



Historic Smithton Inn

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Innkeepers: Rebecca and Dave Gallagher

Reference Links:

- [The Ephrata Cloister](#)
- [Historic Smithton Inn](#)

The Smithton Inn is a historic country inn in the northern part of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. It occupies the 18th century Henry Miller House.

Henry Miller opened an inn and tavern at this location in the early 1750s. He and his wife Clara were members (householders) of the Ephrata Cloister, an unprecedented Protestant monastic society. Well known throughout the colonial world, these people, who called themselves Seventh Day Baptists, built a cloister of medieval German buildings that survive today as a museum operated by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

The Cloister was founded by Johann Conrad Beissel, a former member of the Brethren who left them to begin a new religious experiment in communal living near the village of Ephrata. Over the years, it became a thriving community which garnered many other Brethren who also left their congregations to join Beissel. Members were largely vegetarians who also practiced celibacy. The colony was very autonomous. It had orchards, gardens, grain-fields, the resources to manufacture clothing from flax, a saw-mill, gristmill, paper-mill, and a printing press.

Henry Miller was a prosperous man of practical affairs. He contributed substantially to the support of the Seventh Day Baptist society, including contributing a good deal of money and labor to the construction of a new chapel. At the dedication service, Beissel announced in his sermon that the new building would be used as a place of worship only by the celibate members of the society, and that the 'householders', married people like Henry Miller, would be excluded.

Although he resented Beissel's rebuff, Henry Miller maintained his association with the Ephrata Cloister. In 1748, to settle rift, the Cloister gave Miller 100 acres of land to which they, the society had no clear title. Henry Miller died in 1757, leaving his tavern to his son, Henry Miller II.

In 1762 Henry and his wife Susana replaced his father's 'primitive structure' with a large stone building. It stood on a hill that overlooked the Cloister and was on the main road to Scranton and points north. In 1763 Henry Miller opened his new inn and tavern to travelers and to those who came to visit the now-famous Cloister.

A traveler's diary noted that Henry Miller and his wife kept a good and proper house that would not offend a lady. Limits were imposed on how many could be lodged in one room, or might sleep in one bed. The food was said to be uncommonly good.

When many of the wounded from the Battle of Brandywine were brought to the Ephrata Cloister for treatment, both Henry and Susana volunteered their assistance. Things went poorly for the wounded men. Many of those who did not succumb to their wounds lost their lives in an epidemic that at the time was called "camp fever". Henry Miller shared their sad fate, leaving the inn to his son, Henry III.

From 1795 – 1808 the Miller Tavern served as the polling place for the northeastern part of Lancaster County, evidence of its prominence in the community during that timeframe. Henry III died in 1832, leaving the Inn Tavern to his son, Samuel. The Henry Miller House was operated as a public place by the Miller family until the Civil War, when it was converted into a private residence. In 1875 the South Wing was added onto the house as a Tailor Shop. The property was owned by Miller family descendents until it was sold at auction in 1979 to Alan Smith.

History of Smithton Owners:

Heinrich and Clara Miller: approx 1751 - 1757
Henry II and Susanna Margaret Henkel Miller: 1757 - 1778
Henry III and Catharine Martin Miller: 1778 - 1832
Samuel Miller: 1832 - 1838
Adam Miller: 1838 – 1848 (estate in flux)
Maria Miller Erb & Israel Erb: 1856 - 1906
Samuel D. Erb: 1906 - ??
Carrie Erb Garber & Andrew Garber: ?? - 1978
Alan Smith & Dorothy Graybill Smith: 1979 - 2009
David Gallagher & Rebecca Cesa Gallagher: 2009 – present

Alan purchased the property with the intention of turning it back into an inn. He made major structural and aesthetic renovations to bring the property back to life, including the addition of closets, bathrooms and a kitchen. The front façade of the inn was also changed. A wrap-around front porch was replaced with a portico and the two stone walls were built by local artisans. Alan's appreciation for art and history are evident throughout his renovations, tying the property back to its Cloister roots. Traditional construction methods and materials were used, the 'Cloister Doves' were incorporated into the west wing structure and the stone wall design & wood cap matches the Cloister's.

In the 30 years that Alan Smith and Dorothy Graybill-Smith owned and ran the Smithton, it was a lovely and successful inn. Alan passed away in 2004 and the inn became too much for Dorothy to handle on her own. In June of 2009, David and Rebecca Gallagher purchased the property and began updating the property's structure and décor, combining old-world charm with modern comfort.

Since the Gallagher family took over the property in 2009, many updates and enhancements have taken place. Most notably, the interior and exterior of the property were meticulously restored to their former glory. The living room was converted into a wine bar and with that the parking lot was expanded and a charming courtyard was added to the Main Street side of the property. The small pond in the back garden was also converted into a cozy sunken fire pit. And keeping in touch with the needs of today's traveling public, some modern features were incorporated in recent years including 43+ inch flat screen Smart TVs, robust & reliable WiFi throughout the property and an EV charging station for guests driving electric vehicles.

There's no doubt that the Historic Smithton Inn is lovely building with a fascinating history. Visitors to this early stone house are ideally situated to take in Lancaster Counties largest farmers market (The Green Dragon), the Ephrata Cloister, the Pennsylvania Farm Museum, one of the East Coast's great antique markets (Adamstown), and the historic town of Lititz. Ephrata is central to the 19th century farms of the plain people, the Old Order Mennonite and Amish, who pursue their daily activities as their forbearers did a hundred years ago. This area of Lancaster County, unspoiled by commercial tourist attractions, is almost a city of tiny farms; a picturesque anachronism in today's world of "big everything".