

Preservationists went through the Spread Eagle Inn to take pictures and measurements before part of it is relocated.

Inn's down on paper now

Thanks to a group of student volunteers, Northampton will get documentation on a historic inn before sections of it are demolished and the original part moved.

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Once the original Spread Eagle Inn in Richboro is moved next year, that part of history will be preserved, hopefully, for the rest of time.

But the basement, which supported the inn since the early 1800s, will be filled in and gone forever, according to Doug Crompton, president of the Northampton Historical Society.

He wanted some record of the original foundation before the inn is moved, and he's getting it, with help from historic preservation students from the Bucks County Community College.

"We're going to get the basement footprint of the original part of the inn documented," he said.

"This will ensure that written documentation of the inn's original location is preserved in perpetuity as part of the township archives."

The students recently toured the inn from top to bottom along with their professor and preservation consultant, Kathy Auerbach.

"We all have a shared interest in historical preservation," Auerbach said. "This isn't part of the class curriculum. They're doing this on their own."

The group found the structure, boarded up for the last few years, in surprisingly good condition.

And the students discovered a couple surprises. Federal period chair rails could be seen through a hole in a staircase wall, and Victorian glass door knobs were still on upstairs doors.

"The floor joists were made by pit saws," said Auerbach. "That's odd, because this area had so many water-powered saw mills."

With pit saws, carpenters dug a pit and put the wood over it. One man stood in the pit and another on top. Then they would push and pull the saw to cut the wood.

One surprise wasn't so pleasant: All of the fireplace mantels were gone.

"That made the (property manager) David McDonald very angry," Crompton said. "We're going to have to locate them and get them back," but he's not sure how.

The students photographed the place inside and out. Then they painstakingly measured the outside of the building and

all of the inside basement rooms and cubbyholes.

"We're only interested in documenting the old, original stone part" of the basement, said student Richard Green.

He'll use the information to draw the basement's floor plan and document it for its Second Street Pike and Almshouse Road location. Then the students will put together the report, including the diagrams and photos, that'll go to the township.

Spread Eagle owner Amoco Oil Co. originally wanted to tear down the building and build a gas station and mini-market. The prospect raised Crompton's ire.

"So many old places are being torn down in this township, and I had to put my foot down with the inn," he said.

Then, a few months ago, Amoco officials agreed to pay to move the original part of the historic inn 300 feet to a parking lot in front of Guiseppe's pizza restaurant, owned by the Giaino family. Newer sections of the structure, including part of the kitchen and storage rooms, will be demolished.

"It's probably going to be an Irish Pub," Crompton said. "Amoco has been so helpful. They've taken very good care of this place."