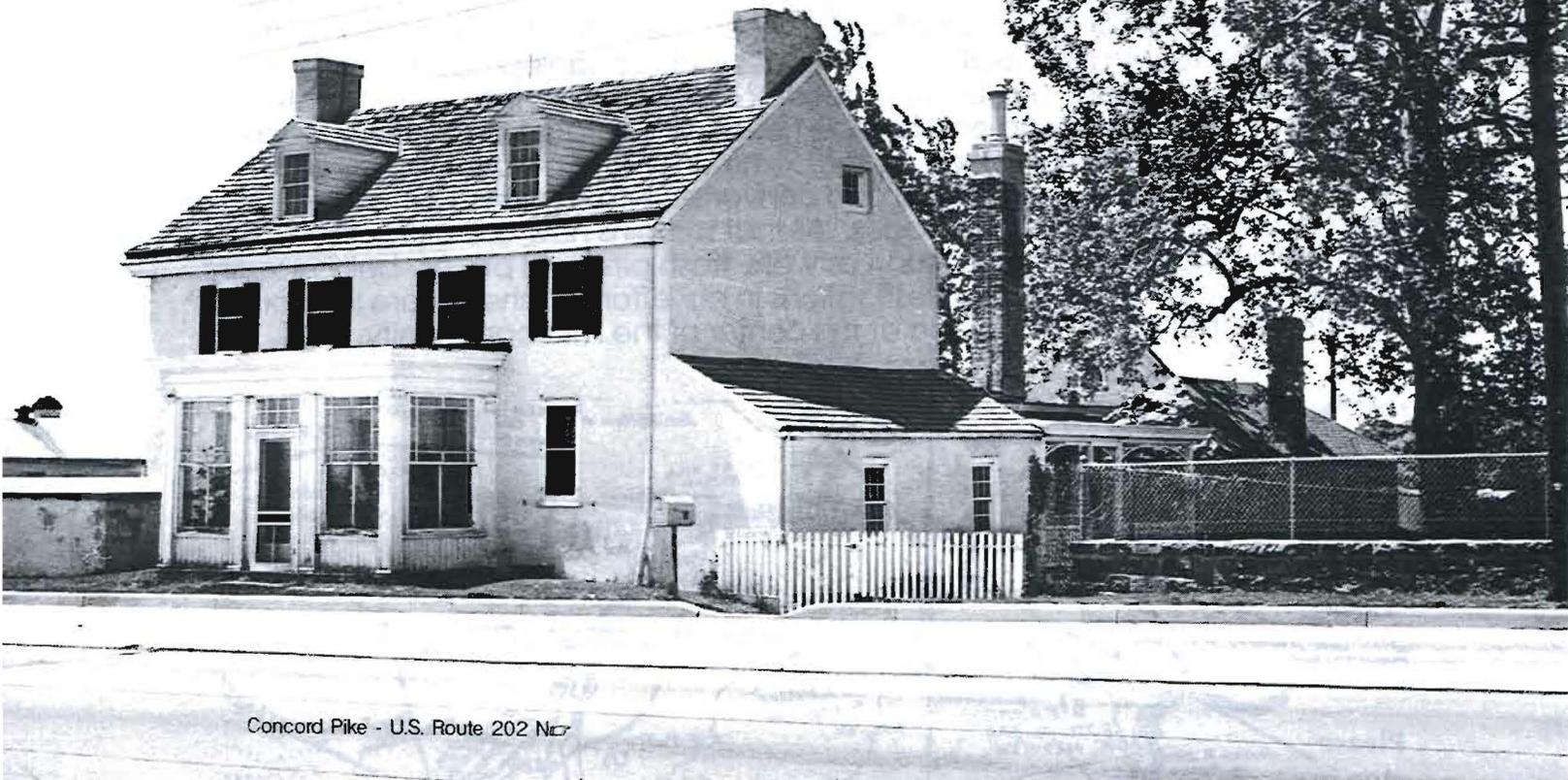


Archeological excavations are currently being undertaken prior to the widening of US RT 202 - Concord Pike. The excavations focus on the long history of the Blue Ball Tavern site, a part of the Dupont – Nemours National Register District that includes the nearby Blue Ball Dairy Barn. Please stop in for a visit or to volunteer, Feb. – May, 1997.



The site of the Blue Ball Tavern represents an important period in Delaware's history. During the late 1700's, the State's population was steadily increasing and local communities were being developed. As the populations grew, roads improved, and travel became more commonplace, the number of taverns increased. While it appears that tavern locations were often near high density traffic areas and road intersections, the pace at which the area in which the tavern was located grew was most important: taverns served a primary function as convenient, social locations for the consumption of alcohol by the local community. While the most obvious functions of taverns were for entertainment and for lodging travelers, they also served as polling places, post offices, toll houses and other public roles.

The Blue Ball Tavern was located along an important toll road, the Concord Pike, near its intersection with Rockland and Foulk Roads. The Concord Pike was a particularly "upscale" road for its time, possessing three lanes, one of which was graveled—probably a good indication of its importance to the volume of traffic to and from Wilmington.

The first mention of the Blue Ball Tavern comes with the records of tavern licenses: Thomas McKee was the innkeeper, duly licensed as such, from 1808 to 1814. A spare room and stabling for two horses were all that was needed to obtain a tavern license in the early years if the owner was judged to be of suitable character to operate a tavern.

The Blue Ball Tavern got its name from the blue ball fastened to the end of a pole; should a traveler require that the stagecoach stop to pick him or her up, the pole would be hoisted up to catch the attention of the coach's driver. History tells us that Blue Ball became a polling place in 1811, and a toll point for the turnpike in 1818.

It appears that the Tavern was still functioning in 1837, when a tax Assessment notes a "stone tavern (Blue Ball)" on Maria Dickinson Logan's property, and it is noted on an 1849 map. But, by 1852, the tax assessment of the Logan estate listed the property as having only a stone house with a frame barn; it has ceased to exist as a social meeting place for the community and a traveler's haven. The building, which had been enlarged and converted into a farmhouse, was destroyed within the last few decades. All that remains now are artifacts, foundations and other features—such as wells, trash pits, and privies—being sought in the on-going archeological investigations in our efforts to shed more light on the activities that once took place at this center of the little community.