

Harry Snover Relives History of Metamora's Famous Inn  
White Horse's Past Includes Period as Stagecoach Stop  
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by David V. Graham, Journal Staff Writer



METAMORA – Harry “Jake” Snover, 81, is a link with the decades when Metamora’s storied, 119-year-old White Horse Inn was a stagecoach stop.

Snover remembers when the inn’s barn, which still stands, was “full of horses.” There are horses to be seen in the rolling countryside today, but these are a different breed—the expensive mounts of fox-hunters who ride to hounds.

Red-coated hunters, giving the area a dash of the picturesque, sometimes stop at the White Horse for refreshments. In the fox-and-hounds set, the district is renowned. It was the subject of an article in the New Yorker magazine in 1940.

THE STAGECOACH period ended around 1910. By that time, daily runs were being made only to Hadley, eight miles to the west, and Thornville, four miles to the east.

Snover, a farmer who retired in 1935 and looks far younger than his years, has vivid memories of the coaches that lumbered along the dusty roads through the hills. One memory is painful.

“Once when I was 14 or 15 I tried to catch a ride with the stage as it was passing by on its way to town,” he said. “I leaped up and grabbed for the hand-hold along the top and I’ll be damned it I didn’t miss it.

“Well, the back right wheel ran over my leg and I also bashed my head against the side of the coach and it left this scar you see here on my forehead.”

Snover spent many nights at the White Horse, then called the Heard House, when he was too tired to go home. The charge was “only 50 cents.”

He remembers the first time he ate at the White Horse, when he was a boy:



“My father took me out for lunch during noon hour at school and bought me a piece of apple pie,” he said. “I could show you within six feet where we sat.”

Over the decades, the ownership of the White Horse has passed thorough more than a dozen hands. The old-timers still talk about some of the proprietors.

THE LATE Gilbert Olds bought the Inn about 1917 for \$2,200 and kept it until 1922 or 1923. He is remembered for going around in the summer without shoes. Olds had two children, Audrey and LaVerne. Audrey is now Mrs. Guy Russell of Metamora, and LaVerne lives in Plymouth.



Mrs. Russell, who was married in the White Horse, has several pieces of furniture once used in the inn. One of LaVerne’s boyhood chums was Ross Lewis, who became a political cartoonist for the Milwaukee Journal. LaVerne has several originals of Lewis sketches of Metamora scenes on the walls of his home. Lewis, who won a Pulitzer prize in 1934, died last month.

Frank Peters, who owned the inn during most of the Prohibition Era, made the White Horse a financial success by promoting breakfast specials. It was he who changed the name from Heard House.

After a goat jumped though one of his large picture windows, Peters reportedly said, “Well, it needed remodeling anyway.” He replaced all of the pictures windows with small windows and made some minor additions.

The present bar was installed as World War II was ending. The barroom was enlarged by eliminating smaller rooms and expanding the inn southward a few feet over the wooden sidewalk. The old walk remains as part of the barroom floor.

LaVERNE OLDS has a story about “bugging” a room at the inn when he was living there just after the first World War, when he was 19.

“I was interested in radios, as I still am, because I was the telegraph operator for the railroad that ran through town. Well, I bought this button microphone, just a small thing, for a dollar.

“Then I drilled a hole in the center of a picture that used to hang in the drawing room that was located where the barroom is now. And then I put that microphone in the hole and ran some wire up to my room on the second floor where I listened.

“You see, the drawing room was used by the young men of the town when they came in and entertained the hired girls. Nothing indecent or anything, but for a pretty unsophisticated lad I sure did learn a lot.”

Olds describes the daily life of the Metamora of that period: “The big event of the day was 6:10 every evening when the passenger train would whistle the depot. Ten minutes earlier you could shoot a cannonball down the street and not hit anyone, but after that whistle sounded, the town would just come out of the woodwork.

“Well, everyone would go to the depot and watch them unload about 250 milk cans, and also see who got off the train and who got on. Then they would follow the mail up to the Post Office and sit around waiting for their mail.

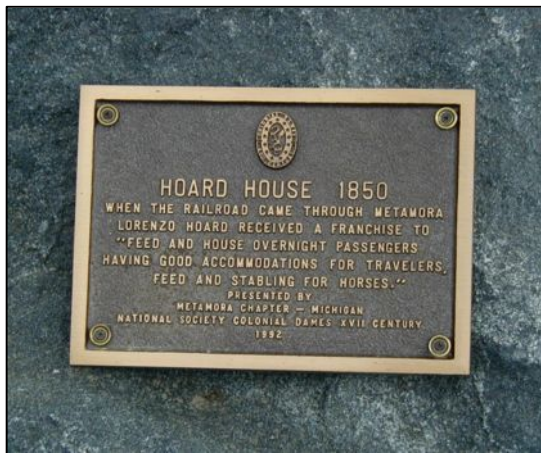
“After the mail, everyone would either sit on the steps or go down to the inn and sit in the captain’s chairs on the porch and talk until bedtime.

“At 6 in the morning the south-bound train would come and whistle and wake everyone up. Better than an alarm clock.”

THE HISTORY of the White Horse includes the names of some of the earliest pioneers of southern Lapeer County.

Daniel Ammerman built the inn in 1850. After several changes of ownership, it passed in the Hoard family, first represented in this area by Lorenzo Hoard. He passed through Metamora in 1837 when Flint was little more than a few log cabins and Indians were as numerous as settlers.

Hoard returned in the early 1840s and on Oct. 15, 1846, bought 40 acres. The same year, Isaac Hoard, a retired sea captain believed to have been his uncle, brought some land from Able Webster.



Later, when Lorenzo Hoard bought the inn, he renamed it the Hoard House. He added the east wing to the north-south structure. He served no liquor, and the inn remained dry until 1906, when the family ownership ended.

By 1858 Hoard was paying almost \$50 a year in taxes on the inn.

He was appointed postmaster of the village on Aug. 2, 1861, and served until 1877.

James Banker, grandfather of Mrs. Hoard, lived in the area. Banker, who had fought in the Revolutionary War, had to go to Pontiac once a month to pick up his \$100 pension. He was 105 when he died.

In the early days, the stagecoaches went to Pontiac as well as Hadley and Thornville. Thornville was on the Flint River and its mill made it a center of commerce larger than Metamora. Now it is all gone except for a church and a few homes.

ABOUT 1872 the Michigan Central Railroad built its line through Metamora and Hoard received a franchise to feed and house overnight passengers. By 1874, Metamora had 271 residents.

Hoard House was listed in the 18/6 Atlas of Lapeer County as having “good accommodations for travelers. Feed and stabling for horses.”

The Michigan State Gazeteer and Business Directory of 1887-88 had this rundown on Metamora”

“Metamora was originally settled in 1836, a village on the Bay City division of the Michigan Central Railroad, 52 miles north of Detroit, in the township of Metamora, Lapeer County.

It has two churches, Methodist and Congregational, a graded school, a grain elevator, a stave mill and several good stores.

“It is a prominent trading and shipping point for the surrounding country. Stage to Hadley, eight miles west; fare 60 cents; and Thornville daily. Daily mail.

ONE OF Hoard’s daughters, Louisa, was born in Penn Yan, N. Y., but was reared in Metamora. Her husband, James Perkins, son of Harry F. Perkins, was postmaster from 1841 to 1843.

They managed Hoard House after the death of Lorenzo Hoard in 1888. Their daughter, Bessie, and her husband, William Thompson, sold it in 1906 to William Detter and Samuel Miller.

The partnership of Miller-Dexter put liquor in. But temperance was gaining popularity and it wasn’t long before the townspeople voted under the Local Option Law of 1889 to make the town dry.

Today the White Hors is owned by a Detroit firm that has remodeled the interior and plans still more work. The weight of its years is lightly borne, and it is keeping up with the times under the management of Mrs. Betty Bailiff.

Where travelers once waited for the stagecoach, there now are jazz sessions, every Sunday.

## Miss Lucy's Tea Room

In the eighteenth century home, tea drinking was an occasion of great ceremony. Tealeaves were kept in a locked caddy, for which there was only ever one key. Once or twice a week, the lady of the house would unlock the caddy to serve tea to impress important guests. The fine porcelain in which the tea was served was an opportunity for a refined woman to not only emphasize the family's wealth, but added to her sense of ceremony. A lady who loved her tea was Lucy Carpenter Hoard, the lady of the Hoard House, now known as the Historic White Horse Inn.

The Historic White Horse Inn was purchased by Lorenzo Hoard in 1850. It functioned as an Inn and restaurant, charging 50 cents for overnight guests. It was also said to be a stop on the Underground Railroad, a network of smuggling routes that helped slaves make their way from the South to friendlier places in the north.

Miss Lucy's Tea Room is named in honor of the "Lady of the Inn" – Lucy Carpenter Hoard.

The Historic White Inn is located:  
One East High Street  
Metamora, MI 48455  
(810) 678-2150  
Websites:  
[www.historicwhitehorseinn.com](http://www.historicwhitehorseinn.com)  
[www.misslucystearoom.com](http://www.misslucystearoom.com)

<http://www.ajlambert.com>



In 1992 the Metamora Michigan Chapter of the Colonial Dames of the XVII Century commissioned a historic marker to be placed in front of the White Horse Inn when in 1850 it was called The Hoard House owned by Lorenzo Hoard.

HOARD HOUSE 1850: When the railroad came through Metamora Lorenzo Hoard received a franchise to "feed and house overnight passengers having good accommodation for travelers, feed and stabling for horses." Presented by Metamora Chapter – Michigan, National Society Colonial Dames XVII Century, 1992.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> day of December 1986 the Metamora Chapter was started by Organizing President Laura Cheger-Barnard.

Sitting on the rock housing the Colonial Dames of the XVII marker is Audrey J. (Denny) Lambert present member since July 2005 through ancestors Edward Jones & his wife Mary (Field) Jones: National Number # 35530.

Picture taken: May 2006.



L to R: Colonial Dames of the XVII – Metamora Michigan Chapter, Audrey J. (Denny) Lambert & Catherine Pouls. Picture taken 2007.