The Smiths

By Amelia Smith Ackerman (1945)

In the year 1808, Great Grandfather Edward Smith came from eastern PA. With his bride Martha Watson and settled in their log house just east of the present Smith homestead, which lies just five miles from the county courthouse in the city of Zanesville, Ohio.

When the news went out that the government was building a highway through to St. Louis, Mo. and opening up a right-of-way through his land. He laid plans for a more pretentious dwelling, one of sandstone blocks. It was built with three stories, patterned after those he had admired in eastern PA. In the oak woods near by there was much in the way of stone and this was quarried and cut into large blocks. Labor was cheap and a rather pretentious home was made for his family for the period and our local which was in the year of 1830. All six of their children had been born before moving into the new stone building.

Their youngest son, Alexander (my grandfather) inherited this house and land and brought his bride here in the year of 1849 after a wedding trip to Columbus, Ohio by stagecoach.

No doubt great grandfather's idea was to conduct a tavern when he built his home, as the first floor consisted of one large room with a

small anteroom where the spirits were kept, this being called the bar room even when I was a little girl with no such liquid refreshments to be found anywhere near it. The second floor, reached by a narrow winding stairs had one large room with two small ones to the east of it. The third floor had three bedrooms and a hall. Since the house is built into the hillside one can enter onto the ground from the second floor, here at that time there was some kind of building which served as a kitchen. Later this was done away with when grandfather Alexander built onto the west half of the building giving a broader effect to the front and making more room for grandmother to entertain as when aspired no doubt to do. She had her upstairs sitting room and grand parlor with the black mohair set, and gold wallpaper and red carpet.

Grandfather had his public room downstairs and I can imagine many a tale was told there in front of the huge fireplace with the great logs pilled high; the men with their pipes and the barrels piled nearby. I have a license taken out in 1842 by Edward Smith permitting him to sell liquor the cost of which was $10.00 I do not know if grandfather sold it or not for he did not use it himself at least not according to grandma's eagle eye, and she knew what was going on and ruled with a high hand. But grandfather never made a business deal without counseling with her, he had great respect for her ability often giving her the right to sell stock when he could not be present, knowing

that she could drive a harder bargain than he. How well can I believe this, for it was always my lot to "take her to town" in her last years, and many times I was embarrassed by her dickering with the sales girl over a yard of silk or lace. I could not make her understand that the old custom of bargaining had passed out, it simply was not done anymore. She would say, "Tush, tush I know what I am doing, go along with you."

I so well remember this public room when we first moved into the house, I was about four years old. There was no tavern then, it had a rough board floor and high stiff back wooden chairs and several high pine desks that one stood up to write on or they may have had high stools but I do not remember having seen them. There was a bed in one corner where the hired man slept at the time. Perhaps it was my mother's lament at such deplorable furnishings, with the order to remove it to the barn that impressed me, that I remembered it so well. I also remember the discussion over the oleander that stood in the middle of the room beside grandmother's chair. She was so fond of oleanders, it was in a wooden tub, a rather spindly looking tree with no distinguishing quality, it was done away with too, no doubt, as I can not recollect ever seeing one about the place from that time to this. Mother did not care for oleander.

If we could only have a peep into the tavern in those old days. It was probably just as interesting then as now. A large family with the older generation as well as the children. Grandmother often told of the soldiers on their way to the armies in 1863, stopping by and sleeping on the floor, wrapped only in their blankets. The government came also to confiscate all the good horses for the armies, but grandfather hid his best ones in the woods, not very patriotic of him. He may have felt he needed them for his farming purposes.

In the '30's and '40's almost every house along the road was a tavern to accommodate the many wagon teams that were constantly moving over the new pike; many going west to settle with their families on government lands and others traveling east as drovers with their herds of sheep, cattle and hogs to the eastern market. Wagon teams with four to six horse hitch were not an uncommon sight as this was the only means of transportation east except the river routes. Then there was the mail carried on horseback with a fresh horse saddled and waiting every five miles. The stagecoach, which lumbered and jolted over the hills served as a conveyance to those bent on travel.

A few rods from great grandfather's and due west was another stone tavern owned and operated by Squire Uzal Headley. Between the two houses there was a Hugh barn or shed which housed the drover's herds of stock and horses, here was kept one of the horses that ran

the daily mail or perhaps weekly, I know it did not come in so frequently ad it does today.

Uzal also had a bar or room where he sold whisky as one of the stone doorsteps shows the frequent use of the door as being the most popular entrance. It was during the building of the pike that two Irishmen, no doubt indulging too heavily, staged a brawl, and it has been said that one was killed there by the old stone culvert. At least there is and inscription on one of the stone which reads "Battleborough 1835." The stones have been taken away now to make way for a new highway with concrete covert. But we have the stones and hope to have them used some day as entrance posts. Then the war is over and people get back to work again.

These taverns were also used as community houses offering a place for the neighborhood to gather for social entertainment. After the railways were built the tavern business fell off, whether due to this or other reasons I do not know, but Uzal Headly was gradually disposing of small tracts of land from time to time to great grandfather Edward and then the grandfather Alexander. These were land grants from the Northwest Territory Grants. After selling the house to them he moved to Jacktown and opened a tavern there.

Grandfather was a good businessman and raised droves of cattle and sheep. He never worked especially hard, as help was cheap and

plentiful in those days. These he paid in hard liquor, side meat and a few odd pennies. In 1860 he had acquired enough wealth to aspire for more rooms in his dwelling and had the house made larger, adding a west wing as large as the first.

After acquiring the Headley estate, he made some small repairs and after renting it for a short time, boarded it up and used it only for a storehouse and shearing sheep and storing wool. At one time he and Great Uncle Andy Watson had 10,000 lbs. Of wool stored there. It was after the Civil War and after holding it they received $1.00 per lbs.

As I first remember it they called it "The Haunted House" and "Five Mile House." We loved to go inside and climb the cobweb stairs and walk on the sawdust floor, especially if we had guests who were a bit afraid of the spookiness of it all. The front porch had disintegrated almost to nothing but shambles, it was swell to go there for hunting snakes and hens eggs, which were always on a high shelf that had to be reached by shinning up a board or so. How I did dislike hens, it seems as I think back, we spent most of our spare time hunting eggs. Why is it that no one ever thought of penning them up? Perhaps then we would not have had any way to put in our time. It was grandma that was the persistent one, she loved hunting them and since she was thought too old to be out by herself, Gladys and I were delegated to always go along, it was never too hot nor the weeds too high.

I loved watching the men shear sheep. They always ran a sort of contest and my father could always shear better and faster than any of them, then he would carry it upstairs and sack it in Hugh sacks hung in the stairway. Some times there would be as many as 1000 head.

It was in 1900 that Grandfather passed on. The only picture in my mind of him was as he lay in his bed in grandmother's sitting room and his children all home. Upon his passing my father Alexander Watson Smith inherited the farm as his share in the estate, it was then we came to live in the big house of sixteen rooms. Mother did not like coming here, as she not doubt looked on it as a great burden, and I wasn't sure it would suit me either, for the day we moved (I was 4 years old) I brought my yellow bantam rooster and grandmother said, " EI, EI, we won't have that bird here to mix with my good hens!" I must have cried for I always did and I remember feeling terrible down in the pit of my stomach, but I got to keep him.

Grandmother lived to be 91 years old. My sister and I would always go with her on walks over the farm or hitch up her white horse (Dolly) to the phaeton and drive with her to see Great Uncle Michael or Jacobs who lived on the Ridge road a few miles to the south of us. This was the locality of grandma's girlhood as the Bumgartner farm was nearby. One thing she did that I envied her was the way she clucked the horse. She had a certain twist to her tongue, I never could learn.

She always wore white net caps and scarves around her neck, and always talked about it being aristocratic to this or that. I was her name sake so it always fell to me to wait upon her since I was to only one mentioned in her will. I was to have the horse, Old Doll, the phaeton, and all her bedding. Since featherbeds were out, all that I have are two bed pillows, the rest simply disintegrated. One thing I forgot to tell about grandfather was his knack for keeping up on the news of the countryside. He would lean on his stone posts and call to each passerby, "Ei, stranger what be your business and where you bound for?" After all no telephones, radios or newspapers of consequence, it was something to keep up with your neighbors in those days.

My father married Laura Malinda (called Linnie) Tanner, daughter of James Tanner and took her to live in a log house one mile east of here. Later they built a nice white frame house and barn, but left it to come here upon grandfather's passing. With the 100 acres of his own plus his inheritance brought the acreage to 1000 acres. He could not sell any of it as it was willed to go to his children. Grandfather bought farms for all of them and tied them up so they could not dispose of them during their lifetime. Father was a hard worker, but I often thought he did not like to work, but since it had to be done he did not believe in putting it off. His motto: "Let's get up and get after it and

get it done." He always had us out at 4 am to haul hay shocks or mow away hay in the barns, while it was cool he said, but he never stopped in the heat of the day either until all was in. He never liked to have much help around but always kept one man to do the things he despised to do, milking for instance. After our summers in the hay field he would give us a quarter to spend or it feeling a little loose we might get a dollar. But who cared, we had nothing much to spend it on anyway. Mother was not far behind when it came to working. She could turn out a big day of work and have a little time left to sew or visit.