

Carroll Yesteryears
9 April 2023
A Window into the Past
By Frank Batavick

Our understanding of history grows by accretion, layer by layer. With each new discovery, we add to the story. For example, for years I thought New Windsor's Dielman Inn received the name when Louis W. Dielman acquired the hotel and tavern at the corner of High and Bath Streets in 1864. However, a recently unearthed guest register from 1867 with notations from as late as 1890 reveals otherwise. Dielman boldly inscribed his name on the frontispiece, claimed the role of "Proprieter" (sic), and dubbed his establishment, "New Windsor Hotel." Of course, this may have been the name of the hostelry he purchased, and he traded on it until sometime after 1890 when newspapers began extolling his "Dielman Inn" for its fine food, musical entertainments, and other cultural offerings. There's no way of knowing when the switch in names occurred.

The register itself is full of fascinating details. In May of 1867, the 42-room inn had only eight guests. This bumped up to 20 in June, but fell back to eight again in August, though some of the notations for this month have the guest's name with "& family" or "& daughters," so we can't be certain of the exact number of guests or rooms in use. With Dielman, the hotel had room to grow, and grow it did until its closing in 1927.

Visitors in 1867 came from as close as Westminster and as far away as Baltimore, Washington, D.C., Norfolk, VA, and Wheeling, WV. The cost of a room was \$1.00 a night or \$4.00 a week, and that apparently included your meal. A Mr. Wishart, who travelled with his daughter, secured two rooms from November 2, 1888, to November 1, 1889, for \$25. He then rented rooms for 1889 to 1890 for \$35, showing inflation was challenging back then too.

The register records other transactions as well. Passage to Westminster was \$.50, and \$2.00 got you to Frederick. A barrel of whiskey was \$75.85, a bottle of French brandy (for Mr. Wishart) was \$.75, and a telegram was \$.25, but I am guessing that individuals had to go to the combination pharmacy/post office up the street for this service. They were operated by Louis H. Dielman, Louis W.'s son.

The prices appear quite low by today's standards, and in most cases are. The CPI Inflation Calculator website computes that a dollar in 1867 would be worth \$20.21 today. I don't believe there are any B&Bs or motels where one can stay for \$20.21 a night, and a cab or Uber to Frederick from New Windsor would cost appreciably more than \$40.42.

Louis H. studied at Baltimore's Maryland College of Pharmacy and went on to get a degree from the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy in 1885. This is worth mentioning because the register has two prescriptions in the back pages. One is for a linnament (sic) that was "good for sprains bruises and shoulder gals (sic) on the horse. For man it is good for sprains bruises and old sores- for corns Bunions and toothache." To concoct it, one needed one pint of spirits of turpentine and one ounce each of gum camphor, oil of stone, Barbare tar, British oil, and oil of spike. I tried Googling all these and could find no references for oil of stone, Barbare tar, and British oil. Oil of spike is lavender oil, and the oil conglomerate BP Amoco showed up for British oil!

Image 2: Sample entries in New Windsor Hotel guest register, 1867 (Courtesy, New Windsor Heritage)

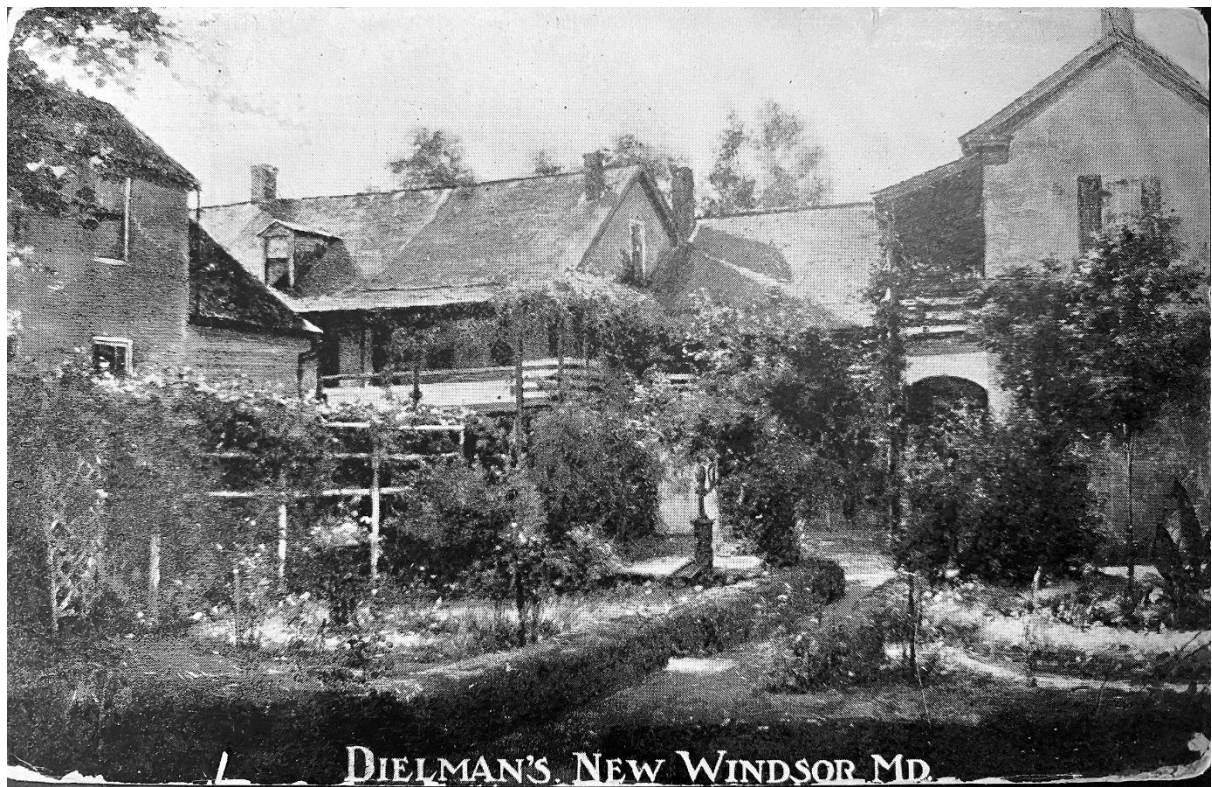


Image 3: Lush gardens behind "Dielman's," c.1910 (Courtesy, New Windsor Heritage)