

The Jean Bonnet Tavern Dining, Lodging & “Spirits”

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The Jean Bonnet Tavern and Cabin Shoppe with their appealing rustic charm are open daily to browse and enjoy.

For more than two hundred years, Pennsylvania’s Jean Bonnet Tavern has welcomed guests to this historic landmark, located just west of Bedford along the Lincoln Highway, at the intersection of Routes 30 and 31. Built in the 1760s with fieldstone and chestnut timbers, the Tavern sits at the crossroads of what were then known as the Forbes and Burd Roads, both former Shawnee trading paths. Given its strategic location at the base of the eastern side of the Allegheny Mountains, the Tavern once served as a vital rest stop along the only road connecting eastern and western Pennsylvania beyond the Susquehanna River.

Today the Jean Bonnet welcomes thousands of guests each month to partake of food, lodging and spirits in a rustic setting evocative of Colonial life. The ground level restaurant features fine dining in a cozy setting within fieldstone walls accented by hanging coverlets, an impressive stone fireplace,

The restaurant’s kitchen is open Sunday – Thursday 11 am – 9 pm and Friday & Saturday, 11 am – 10 pm.

and 250-year-old chestnut support beams overhead. Pub fare and libations are offered on the building’s mid-level in the tavern room, with a large fireplace, beamed ceiling and plank floors creating a welcoming atmosphere. Also on the mid-level is a colonial meeting room for larger groups, and a seasonal outdoor dining porch and side patio where diners can order from the tavern and restaurant menus. Bed and Breakfast lodging on the top floor includes four options of two bedrooms and two suites, all with private bathrooms, plus the use of the upper porch balcony. Overnight guests are served a hearty country breakfast featuring local foods.

The Jean Bonnet also offers several outdoor attractions adjacent to the parking lot – an herb garden, goat paddock, and the Cabin Shoppe, an authentic log cabin built in the 1700s with hand-hewn timbers. In 2005 the cabin was



The ground level restaurant features fine dining in a cozy setting within fieldstone walls.

Dine by the glow of candlelight in the warmth of the impressive stone fireplace.

carefully transported from Fayette County and renovated as a store.

Since its opening in 2006, the Cabin Shoppe has proven to be a hit with patrons. “It’s been fantastic,” says Melissa Jacobs, who owns the Jean Bonnet with her husband Shannon. “We feature regional artists and items we use in the restaurant. We commit to giving a flavor of the region with one-of-a-kind items. People can take their experience home.” Or they can order items by phone. An online Cabin Shoppe is in the works.

“Our main focus is to provide great food and great hospitality,” Melissa says. “We want to elevate this to an



experience. We call it ‘dinnertainment’ – so much more than a meal.”

Food and beverage offerings are extensive, featuring Monthly Specials that highlight fresh, local foods in season and a Signature Menu featuring Tavern specialties. Examples include Crab & Corn Chowder, Broiled Crab Cake Sandwich, Locally Raised Bison Burgers and Jean Bonnet French Dip. Additional vegetarian selections are available on request, and the Gluten Free Menu offers an extensive number of options. All desserts are made from scratch, on the premises. The Tavern serves a wide variety of beers on tap, with most brewed in Pennsylvania, plus a black cherry hard cider.

Melissa Jacobs, co-owner and host of Jean Bonnet Tavern, welcomes guests with a warm greeting and pleasant smile and is happy to show visitors around the grounds.

Photo below: The upstairs bar area has access to a large porch with additional outdoor seating.



Other libations include a selection of bottled beers, wines that include a Pinot Gris from Bedford's Briar Valley Winery, and several Featured Cocktails. Standard non-alcoholic drinks such as sodas, coffee, tea, juices and lemonade are on the menu, with a few specialties like 1919 Draft Root Beer and seasonal Hot Spiced Apple Cider.

The Tavern is thriving under the Jacobs' management. Melissa credits the new Omni Bedford Springs resort for drawing patrons to the area, observing that "a rising tide raises all ships." She believes that smartphone technology has also helped business, noting that some patrons come

to the Tavern after spotting it from the Pennsylvania Turnpike and checking it out on their phones.

The Jacobs, both native Pennsylvanians, came to the Tavern with backgrounds in restaurant management. They first noticed the Jean Bonnet when a job promotion for Shannon brought the Jacobs family to nearby Duncansville during the 1990s.

Shannon and Melissa decided to settle in Bedford. "I loved the small-town feel," Melissa says. "It's charming and vibrant, and the right place for us."

After a few years, the couple was ready for a career change.

The Jean Bonnet Tavern had been for sale for some time.

"The Jean Bonnet was one of only a few places in the area where people could enjoy a sit-down meal with cocktails," Melissa says. After extensive research and planning, the Jacobs decided to take the plunge and secured the funding they needed to purchase and renovate the Tavern.

"Renovation is ongoing with the stewardship of an historic property," Melissa says. "We always weigh functionality versus historic integrity."





once observed that a friend at the bar was intoxicated and unable to drive. They made sure that the bar was empty when they locked it up to take the friend home. When they returned, they both saw a solitary man sipping a drink, who somehow gained entry to the bar despite its having been securely locked up. Another incident was witnessed by a guest accompanied by friends, plus several members of the Central Pennsylvania Paranormal Association. After they settled into their attic room, they headed to the bar where both a male member of the group and another female patron independently experienced a feeling of being touched. Neither one saw anyone nearby. Later that evening, another group member, a nondrinker, saw a group of people in “frontier type” clothes looking through the door while he watched a piano player perform at the other end of the room. He said it was “like trying to watch two televisions at once.” Melissa’s first experience occurred soon after she and Shannon purchased the Tavern. Every

The purchase was not made without some trepidation, given the high risk of failure in the restaurant business. And then there was the Jean Bonnet’s well known reputation for being haunted.

“The first thing people asked us when we bought it was, ‘did we know?’” Melissa says. “There’s something to it. It’s like another layer. But it’s not evil.”

Stories dating back to the 1760s about strange encounters and odd happenings at the Tavern have prompted some to describe it as a “haunted hot spot.”

According to Pennsylvania’s tourism web site *VisitPA.com*, the Tavern has been called “one of America’s most haunted restaurants and bars.”

Several more recent stories come from employees, guests, and Melissa herself. A bartender and her male companion

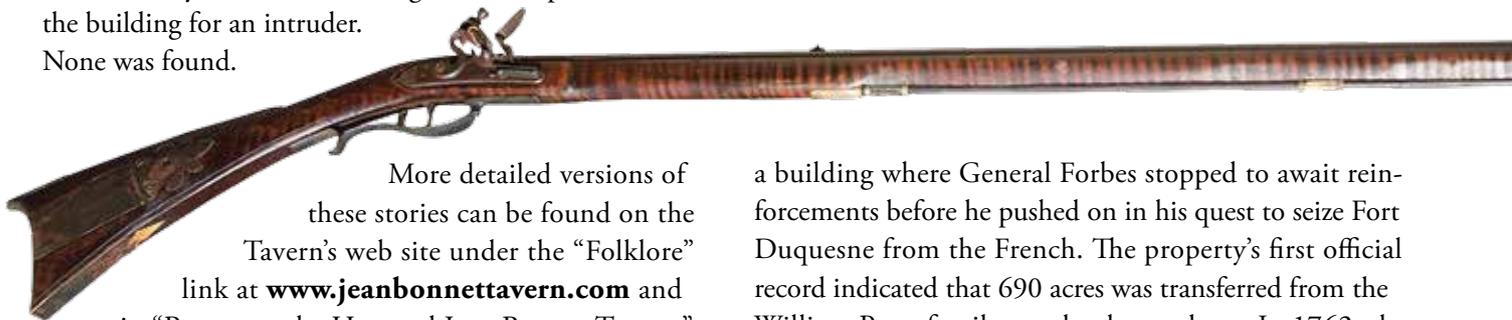


In various parts of the Jean Bonnet Tavern there is a sense or presence of early travelers to the tavern. A solitary man of colonial times sits harmlessly above as if waiting for food or drink, while a sentry waits to follow you to your room upstairs (above photo). Co-owner, Melissa Jacobs says, “there’s something to it, but it’s not evil.”



The Cabin Shoppe, an authentic log cabin built in the 1700s, features regional artists and items used in the restaurant, as well as one-of-a-kinds. It is an eclectic gift shop that has proven popular with Jean Bonnet guests and patrons.

time she passed by the door to a vacant attic apartment, she noticed that the door would be in a different position. If the door was closed when she passed by, it would be wide open soon after she came by again. Her story was confirmed by a salesman who agreed to help her search the building for an intruder. None was found.



More detailed versions of these stories can be found on the Tavern's web site under the "Folklore" link at www.jeanbonnettavern.com and in "Return to the Haunted Jean Bonnet Tavern," published in *The Pennsylvania Ghost Guide, Volume II* by Patti Wilson, the Ghost Lady of Pennsylvania.

Given the intriguing and lengthy history of this Western Pennsylvania landmark, it's not surprising that the Tavern has a reputation for otherworldly visitors. It sits upon what was once a French fort and trading post that reputedly fell into disrepair. The British chose the site to construct

a building where General Forbes stopped to await reinforcements before he pushed on in his quest to seize Fort Duquesne from the French. The property's first official record indicated that 690 acres was transferred from the William Penn family to a land speculator. In 1762, the title to this property went to Robert Callender, a trader who ran a commissary for troop supplies and served as a scout for General George Washington.

During Callender's ownership, the current building was constructed and subsequently used as a public tavern and inn. As such, it became a meeting place for the area's settlers, including farmers involved in the Whiskey Rebellion, who

erected a liberty pole in protest against a wildly unpopular tax on distilled spirits. It was the first sales tax imposed on a domestic product in the fledgling Republic and part of Alexander Hamilton's plan to help pay expenses incurred during the Revolutionary War. The farmers often bartered this precious whiskey, made from their surplus grain and corn, for other goods, and many had fought in the War. They believed they had a right to use the whiskey as they saw fit. The Rebellion fizzled after George Washington arrived with a large company of militiamen and quelled the insurrection.

In 1779, Jean Bonnet and his wife purchased the property and Bonnet was issued a license to operate a Public House. Although its ownership often changed hands, most owners maintained the building as a tavern and inn. In 1957, the Enyeart family purchased the Jean Bonnet and spent four years restoring the building. In 1979, the Old Forks Inn, also known as Bonnet's Tavern, was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1992, a Pennsylvania Historical Marker honoring the "Bonnet Tavern" was placed alongside Rt. 31, near the Cabin Shoppe.

"The building itself has so much history," Melissa says. "It attracts people and draws them in." Even ghosts.



A Lehigh Flintlock, Pennsylvania Long Rifle, typical of the region and era, shown with powder horn and "Possibles" bag. The possibles bag carried everything possible needed by the shooter; extra flints, wadding material, balls and tools. This rifle was hand made by Lance C. Bell.

6048 Lincoln Highway, Belford, PA 15522. For reservations, call 814-623-2250 or visit www.jeanbonnettavern.com.

Jean Bonnet's Famous Oatmeal Pie



Crust:

2 Cups Flour
1 tsp Salt
6 Tbsp Butter
6 Tbsp Shortening (Crisco)
1/3 Cup Water

Filling:

2 Eggs
1/2 Cup White sugar
1/2 Cup Brown Sugar
1/2 Cup Butter, melted
1/2 Cup Light Corn Syrup
6 Tbsp Evaporated Milk
1 Cup Sweetened Coconut, shredded
2 Cups Oatmeal

Crust: In food processor, combine flour and salt. Add butter and shortening, blend til crumbly. Add water and mix until it forms smooth ball. Cut in 2, wrap in plastic wrap. Set aside.

Roll out one of the halves of prepared pie dough and place in pan.

Filling: Combine all ingredients and mix well. Pour into the prepared crust. Bake at 350° for 20 to 30 minutes. To check doneness, insert a clean knife, if it comes out clean, the pie is done. Serve with vanilla ice cream or whipped topping.