

TAVERN IN THE TOWN

*Early Inns and Taverns
of Ontario*



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On 16 June 1837, a skilled hand carved the date into the first planks to be used in the construction of Hayes' Tavern, a few miles west of Picton in the village of

Consecon. When construction was finished more than a year later, the date 'October 1838' was added. These marks were made either by Martin Miller, the carpenter and joiner responsible for the superior workmanship, or by the proud new owner, Richard Hayes. It is anyone's guess as to who later carved the pithy 'R.H. Esq. Rogue and Liar' into the woodwork.

Martin Miller was only twenty-three when he built this refined and beautifully detailed inn in a remote Prince Edward County village. He was an American, and he and his Irish-born wife, Elizabeth, had four children.

Just three years after it was completed, the inn became the property of George Hayes, probably Richard's brother. The deed of sale, dated 9 October 1841, gave a good description of the property: $\frac{1}{2}$ acre

with buildings thereon erected known by the name of Hayes' Tavern which said building is at present occupied as an inn by the said Richard Hayes with all the out-buildings consisting of barn, stables, sheds, yards and all the other appurtenances thereon.' George Hayes paid one thousand pounds for all this.

George's wife, Susan Marsh, was a great-granddaughter of Colonel William Marsh, whose services to the Crown during the American Revolution had reaped a reward of thousands of wilderness acres in Upper Canada. He never settled in Canada but left the land to his sons, one of whom, Matthias, eventually became the owner of two thousand acres and the father of two dozen children. One of those twenty-four, Archibald, was the father of Susan Hayes. George's father-in-law owned all of Consecon and much more of the surrounding land as well. George ran the inn for six years, and then it passed to the Pennock family, first Samuel and then John, both merchants.

By 1869, Consecon was a busy village, and the inn had become the Porter Hotel. It was run by Robert Porter and his wife, Hannah, until 1895. Over the years, as Consecon's fortunes diminished, the hotel fell into disrepair, and its days seemed numbered. But by great good fortune it was rescued in 1966 by a discerning and far-sighted purchaser and moved, board by board, to the village of Waupoos – on the opposite shore a few miles to the east, but still in 'The County.' Now years of laborious, painstaking restoration have made the building a thing of rare beauty. It stands in incongruous splendour beside a curve in the road, its fine proportions and classical detailing causing passers-by to catch their breath in delighted astonishment.