History of the Carmichael Inn

The Carmichael Inn, constructed from 1831 to 1832 by John Hudson Carmichael, remains a landmark in Loudon County, Tennessee. The two-story log structure originally stood on the opposite side of the Tennessee River on Rock Quarry Road. The Inn was a stopping place for stagecoaches enroute from Nashville to Washington, D.C. and for visitors coming north on the East Tennessee & Georgia railroad from Chattanooga. Even in those early days of East Tennessee history, summer resorts and many Tennessee passenger trains came through Loudon on their way to help their best spring scenery in the area.

Travelers from the south would be ferried across the river and after a night at the inn could continue their journey by the next stagecoach. In 1826, John Carmichael was granted a license to operate a ferry from his own land on the north side of the Tennessee River. However, Carmichael and his brother-in-law and fellow Loudon resident, James Blair, got into a legal dispute over ferry rights. Blair didn’t like the competition Carmichael was using Blair’s ferry landing on the south side of the river.

Despite occasional outbursts on tearful nights, notably when a Confederate ship was captured in the War of 1812, the Carmichael family turned their energy to operating the inn and providing hospitable service. Upon the death of John, James, and Daniel Carmichael in 1862, John Hudson Carmichael, who ran the inn, passed the inn to his son, John H. Carmichael, and was known as the fourth owner of the inn.

The will of John Carmichael gives insight into its operation and maintenance. The inn was a stopping place for stagecoaches, and travelers could find rest, refreshment, and good cheer at the inn. The will states: “I will give to my son, John H. Carmichael, my interest in the Inn, and if he is willing to pay the balance of my interest, he shall have the said Inn. If he is not willing to pay the balance, it shall go to my son, Daniel Carmichael.”

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