

## *History of the 1861 Farmhouse*

### *The "Hard" Taylor House, circa 1861*

#### *Historic Valle Crucis*

*One of the earliest homes built in the Valle, the original structure of this magnificent house was completed in 1861 ~ the year The Civil War began ~ as a modest two-room, brick house. It was built by hand by Henry Taylor, the patriarch of one of the four founding families of Valle Crucis. These two original rooms are located to the left as you enter the front door. The brick for the house was made personally by hand by Henry at his own brickyard. Henry created walls for his home that are more than a foot thick. The lumber for the house came directly from the land and was hand-sawn at the Mission House. Primarily hickory and hemlock, it has stood the test of time and is still impressively sound.*

*Henry and his wife, Emaline Mast Taylor, later added an addition to the house and raised four sons here. Emaline passed away in 1880, and shortly afterward Henry gave the house to his youngest son, Thomas Hardester "Hard" Taylor, and his wife, Victoria "Vickie" Baird, daughter of Sheriff David Baird, the patriarch of another of the four founding families of the Valle. Hard and Vickie completed an even larger expansion to the house around 1895, bringing it to its current size of nearly 5,000 square feet. The result was one of the Valle's grandest homes, featuring three stories, two parlors, six bedrooms, a back stairway for the help, and two large, formal porches for enjoying the cool summer breezes and the peaceful pastoral views.*

*The Hard Taylor house was the first home in the Valle to have indoor plumbing ~ including a bathroom! ~ and a closet in every bedroom, quite a luxury at that time. As early as 1912, the Taylors also enjoyed central heat, which was supplied by a coal furnace in the basement which came from a Charlotte bank. Water to the house was supplied by a well of only 18 feet deep, which has never run dry. Connected to the house were a wash house and a spring house with water supplied by a gravity-fed spring. The house was also one of the three houses in the area to first have telephones, along with the homes owned by Hard's brother, "Squire" ~ now The Inn at The Taylor House ~ and Josie & Finley Mast's home ~ now The Mast Farm Inn.*

*The Hard Taylor house also had another important role: it was home to the Valle Crucis Post Office, which was located in the front yard, where "Aunt Vickie" served as Post-Mistress for more than 30 years, from 1896 until her death in 1928. Hard Taylor also served as Postmaster, for two 5- year terms while Vickie raised their seven children. Don't miss seeing the framed certificates, from the U.S. Postmaster in the foyer which named Hard & Vickie to their positions, which were given as gifts by the granddaughters of Hard and Vickie. The Post Office eventually moved across the street to the Mast General Store, which Henry Taylor had built in 1882 and managed, before later selling it to W. W. Mast. The Original Mast General Store still serves our community today, and is one of the finest examples in the country of an old-time general store.*

*The Hard Taylor House was a popular gathering place for the young people of Valle Crucis. The Taylors were also widely-known to welcome visitors, and, beginning in 1872, travelers could secure room and board for 25 cents a night ~ or 40 cents for one "drummer" (salesman), driver and horse. The house became so popular that it was listed in the North Carolina Business Directory as a "hotel." It remained a private residence for the Taylor Family until 1988.*

## Chapter Two

*At this time, the house was purchased by John and Joan Hastings, who lived in the rooms on the upper floor, and operated the first floor as a general store. Continuing a tradition of ownership of the home which spanned generations, the Hastings eventually passed the house to their son, John Jr., and his wife, Tracy, who also lived for a brief time on the upper floor and operated a craft mercantile downstairs.*

*In 2004, The Hard Taylor house was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. By this time, the house had been sitting empty for several years. It was then purchased by Seth and Mary Baker, of Vero Beach, Florida, who continued the upkeep of the unoccupied house until 2009.*

*At this point, a new chapter began for the Hard Taylor house. Steve and Alison Garrett, Valle Crucis residents and active supporters of our little community, purchased the house and began an extensive, two year restoration of the property. The longest and most grueling part of the process involved the removal of layers and layers of material which had been added to the house over the decades. The original bricks, which are now so beautifully prominent in the wine room ~ the original section of the house ~ were buried under layers of material including wallpaper, drywall, plaster, lap siding, and even newspaper. The process of revealing, cleaning, and sealing the bricks took more than two months in and of itself. These rooms now provide the setting for the wine room, and also wonderfully warm and intimate dining. Throughout the lengthy restoration, the Garretts tried to remain true to the original structure. As "modern" materials were removed, the original walls and ceilings were revealed, and great care was taken to restore the original vision of the house. Even little things, such as the lace curtains in the dining rooms, were chosen to reflect what the house probably looked like in the 1800's through the first half of the twentieth century.*

*On Memorial Day 2011, the Garretts opened the Hard Taylor House  
as The 1861 Farmhouse Restaurant & Winery*

*~ a nod to the year when the original home was completed by Henry Taylor.*

*And today, we take great pleasure in knowing that the 1861 Farmhouse is once again enjoying the role for which it was intended: welcoming visitors, providing nourishment, and creating a peaceful respite from the hurry and stress of the outside world. We invite you to take your time here. Enjoy a wonderful meal with family and friends, have a glass of wine or sweet Southern iced tea in a rocking chair on the front porch, and savor the view of our peaceful, tranquil valley.*

*Travelers and locals alike have done just this for 150 years.*

*Step back in time with us.*

*And come back again.*

*- Steve and Alison Garrett, May, 2010*