

# A beer and bed had here

## VINTAGE VIEWS

By Tim Mosher

*Tavistock and District Historical Society*

This corner in Tavistock has seen numerous changes spanning all three centuries since the community was founded in 1848. The northwest corner of Woodstock Street (Highway 59) and Hope Street has always been part of the busy centre.

The Commercial Hotel located here was an impressive three-storey structure completed in the mid-1890s replacing Eckstein's Tavern, a structure resembling Fryfogel's Tavern. Captain Henry Eckstein is Tavistock's founder, first called Freiburg, then Inkerman and later Tavistock. He was a soldier in the Prussian army, hence the title.

The Commercial was a very up-to-the-date Second Empire style building constructed in three stages. Here it had a mansard roof, an iron widow's walk along the top edge, finials on the corners, dormer windows, an iron fire escape ladder, brackets under the eaves, rare decorative lintels above the windows, six-sided slate shingles and false quoins (brick corners painted to resemble stone blocks). The front corner was topped off with a tall flagpole in a barrel. This angle shows the north- and east-facing facades and what's likely a smoke or outhouse on the right. Behind were five good-size barns no doubt mainly used as livery stables. On the left corner (not visible) was another door where above it was painted "Licensed to sell wine, ale, beer and other spiritous liquors."

The proprietor's name is proudly displayed on either side of the chimney: "Otto Jung." Though difficult to read, "Commercial Hotel" is on the front. The success of the Commercial and five other hotels in the growing community attests to the new-found benefits of the railroad that was built a very short distance north of here in 1857. Until then, Sebastopol was the local centre of activity, but it moved one mile south to Tavistock because of the ease of passenger, freight and transport of livestock by rail.

I remember a faded remnant of this grand structure as a boy. Wally Schaefer's two-storey white Sunoco service station was here until it was demolished to build the present one-storey, three-store plaza and gas station – livery of a different sort.

One hundred years from now, will we be looking at photos of this same corner as it appears today with the same amount of nostalgia?

**The answer to last week's History Mystery:** The question was "Despite Tavistock not having a lake, natural large pond or river, what was the local body of water that froze and supplied the village and environs with ice?" No one provided the correct answer. The answer is: a reservoir was dug a little northeast of the community where reliable springs were located. It was scooped out with horses on the Feick farm. The June 29, 1911, Gazette reported its creation, so the commercial sale of ice largely started then.

**This week's History Mystery is:** What are the three colours of the Commercial Hotel's flag? This question is open to all ages. Send your answer with your first and last name, the name of your community or rural route number to [tim\\_mosher@hotmail.com](mailto:tim_mosher@hotmail.com). Whoever sends the correct answer first will have this information published in the next edition.



(PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN; LEMP STUDIO COLLECTION #0187)

Even today, there are not a lot of three-storey structures in Tavistock and the surrounding communities, but by the 1890s, the village had the rebuilt Commercial Hotel.

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