

Historic sign returns to The Berry Tavern in Danvers

By Caroline Enos Staff Writer, December 2, 2023

DANVERS — A piece of history has returned to its rightful spot at The Berry Tavern in Danvers Square.



An 1898 sign from the original Berry Tavern in Danvers Square has been returned to the new Berry Tavern. From left: Berry Tavern owners Joe and Ashley Bono, Laura Cilley, development coordinator for the Danvers Historical Society, and Historical Society President Dave McKenna. CAROLINE ENOS/Staff photo

Owners Joe and Ashley Bono welcomed back a large wooden sign that was crafted in 1898 and hung outside the original Berry Tavern until the site closed in 1930. As of this week, the sign is on display in a glass case for customers to see as they enter the High Street restaurant.

“I know how much history there is here in Danvers and we knew that people in Danvers love that, so we just wanted to carry that history on,” Ashley Bono said.

The tavern has a long history relative to Danvers’ own timeline. The original public entertainment house on the same High Street site was opened by John Porter in 1741, and became The Berry Tavern in 1808 under owner Ebenezer Berry following extensive renovations.

The tavern hosted significant moments in Danvers' colonial history. The traitor *A1* Benedict Arnold camped on the tavern's grounds while on his way to take British-occupied Quebec during the American Revolution — an unsuccessful effort that killed many of his troops and nearly himself.

“There was a tavern here in 1776, so I wouldn't be surprised if Benedict Arnold or Dan Morgan had a beer in here on their way to Quebec,” said Danvers Historical Society President Dave McKenna.



A 1925 photograph of Ye Olde Berry Tavern on High Street in Danvers Square, where the current Berry Tavern operates today. COURTESY OF THE DANVERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The tavern was also the site of elections for military officers and meetings for the local lyceum, select board and town assessors.

The establishment's name changed several times between 1838 and 1890 until it was reintroduced as “Ye Olde Berry Tavern” in 1898, when the sign was added.

The sign was most recently on display at the Danvers Historical Society's Tapley Hall on Page Street, where Ashely Bono and her father Bob Wight discovered it during a local meeting there three years ago.

“When we first saw it, we knew we wanted to hang it on a wall at the tavern. But at the time, there just wasn't space for it,” she said.

The Bonos expanded the tavern into commercial space that opened up next door to the eatery over the pandemic, adding a function room, more restaurant seating, another bar and outdoor tables to the restaurant.

The one-story building doesn't look much like the colonial or even Victorian- era buildings that once served as a tavern and inn on the property. But Ashley Bono has tried to capture the property's history through more than just its name.

Along with the sign, she hung framed photos and postcards sent from guests who once stayed at the tavern in the restaurant's main dining room and, soon, will add artwork of newspaper clippings about the building. She plans to display an artifact from the old tavern that her friend found in a wall and create a plastic recreation of the postcards to give guests their bill on.

Her father has also researched the tavern's history for the Historical Society.

While the sign captures the tavern's history, the Bonos' mostly Italian menu doesn't quite — even if it's still delicious, as McKenna boasted during a visit to the restaurant Wednesday. They serve pub food favorites like burgers and chicken wings, too.

The Bonos live in Danvers and also own the restaurants Al Dente, Beneventos and Bencotto in Boston's North End.

They opened The Berry Tavern nearly eight years ago after Joe Bono spotted a plaque on the side of the site's building that commemorated the tavern's history — and a for sale sign in the window.

“We did not, obviously, want to change the name,” Ashley Bono said. “That was the whole purpose of what drew my husband's attention to the building.”

The Historical Society hopes to reunite more relics with local spots tied to their history, like what's been done at The Berry Tavern, McKenna said.

“The more history we get back out in front of the public, the better. It just reminds them of what was here.”

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