

MANCHESTER MINUTE

A VERY POP-LAR PLACE

There was once a tavern located near the present junction of Stevens St Extension and County Rd 7. It was called the Poplar Tavern since the place was surrounded by many Lombardy Poplar trees. The tavern was built around 1814 and lasted until 1923 when it was destroyed by fire. One of the unique things about this tavern was that it was owned by one family-the Harmon family-for all 109 years of its existence, according to an article from 1923 in the "Clifton Springs Press".

In its heyday, the Poplar Tavern was,indeed,popular. Due to its prime location,it was a favorite stopping place for cattle and sheep drovers. The tavern-which included a hotel-was also a social center for entertainment, served as a rural post office,and a place for town meetings, political and other. Also, because of its proximity to the Erie Canal at Port Gibson, the tavern became even more popular for canal workers and traders.

The coming of the railroad, however, spelled the beginning of the for the Poplar. At the start of the rail era, the tavern was seen as a needed resource. It was used as a railroad stop and even served as headquarters for the superintendent of this part of the railway. However, this was short lived. As surrounding towns grew, bigger stations were required, and the Poplar ceased to be used as a station.

Many prominent people graced the halls of the Poplar, including Stephen Douglas who once orated there. Douglas, of course, lost the 1860 presidential election to Abraham Lincoln. A sign, located a short way east of where the tavern stood, notes the place where Douglas lived for a time.