



HUMMINGBIRD INN

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND



Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Easton Map and Directory 1891, Block 22

Historical Background of the Hummingbird Inn

Aurora Street was known as the “Silk Stocking District” of Easton because it was home to many notable businessmen, politicians and philanthropists. Historically, the Hummingbird Inn at 14 N. Aurora Street was part of the one-acre, Block 22, a property that was subdivided several times. The original block was part of the David Kerr family holdings. Members of the Kerr family were influential in Maryland politics and the economic development of Easton.

Entrepreneur and banker, Jacob. C. Willson, purchased the block in 1839 and at the time it contained a dwelling and outbuildings. This property was commonly known as the “Bull’s Eye”. Thomas and Julia Robson acquired the property in 1851 and set up residence. Thomas Kemp Robson was owner and editor of the *Easton Star* newspaper. Bishop Henry Lay, of the Episcopal Church, and his wife Eliza, also lived on the block in the 1870s and 1880s. Eliza Lay was the first to sub-divide the one-acre block into smaller parcels. She sold the northernmost parcel to May and Susan Price in 1886.

The house at 14 N. Aurora Street, now the Hummingbird Inn, was built in 1887 when May Price owned the property. The house was built in the Queen Ann, Victorian style that was popular during the late 19th Century. Charles Nickerson and Lillian Nickerson purchased the house in 1893 as newlyweds. Charles established a successful phosphate fertilizer company on Port Street in Easton. He was highly regarded as a businessman.

John and Florence McDaniel purchased the house in 1923. John Sharpe McDaniel was a prominent leader in the state of Maryland. He served in the State Senate and as a Talbot County Delegate. McDaniel also owned a vegetable canning industry, *John McDaniel & Company, Inc.* Laura and Enalls Tull purchased the house after John passed away in 1932. A number of short-term owners followed, including, Anne Hyde Ingraham, Elfreda Branagan, James and Elizabeth Mayhew, and the Tidewater Inn, Inc.

The Victorian-style house at 14 N. Aurora lent itself commercial use during the late 20th Century because of its size and style. Dr. Callum Bain and Albert T. Dawkins utilized the house for their medical practice 1971 to 1986. William and Genie Kramedas opened the *McDaniel House Bed and Breakfast* in 1987. The inn featured four guest rooms on the second floor and the third floor housed a child’s bedroom. They sold to Mary Lou and Francis Karwacki in 1999 and the name of the inn was changed to the *John S. McDaniel House Bed and Breakfast*. There was a house fire in 2006, however, renovations proceeded quickly, and the inn was reopened just several months later with five guest room options.

Eric Levinson purchased the house from the Karwackis in 2017 and renamed it the *Hummingbird Inn*. Substantial work has been done to enhance the house and gardens. The inn now offers a sixth guest room. As in the past, 14 N. Aurora carries on the tradition of being a “house of rare charm” and “one of the finest houses in Easton.”

History of 14 North Aurora Street House, Block 22 (ca. 1887)

Bishop Henry Lay and his wife, Eliza, purchased Block 22 in Easton in 1872.¹ This block is bounded by Aurora Street, August Street, East Street and Dover Street. The Lays occupied the house in the central portion of the block. The 1877 Lake Griffith and Stevenson Atlas shows Block 22 containing four dwellings, one in the center and three situated at the Southern end of the block.² It has been circled in blue (*see below*).

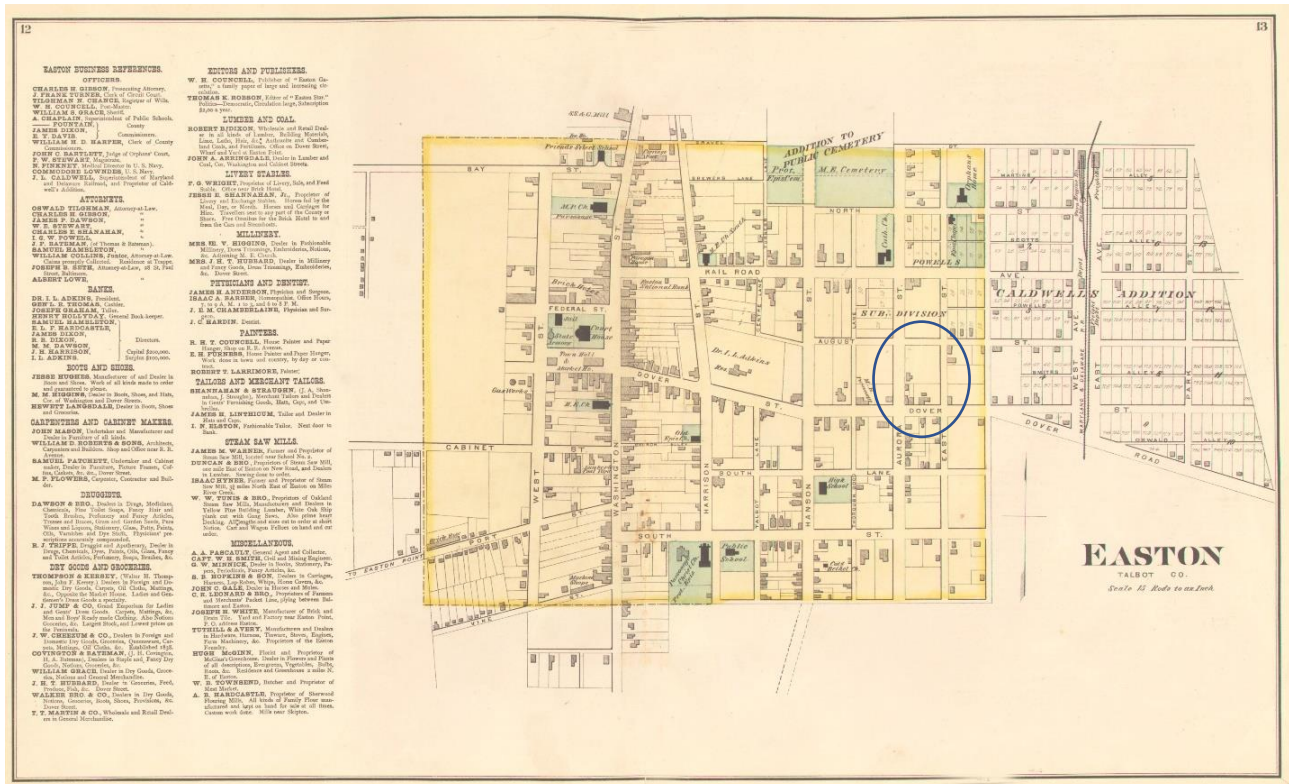


Figure 1: Lake, Griffin and Stevenson Atlas of Talbot and Dorchester Counties, Easton Map and Directory 1891, Library of Congress

Bishop Lay passed away on September 17, 1885 and Eliza was pressured to quickly sell personal property and real estate to settle debts. She sold the northern portion of the block, which did not contain any structures at that time, to May R. Price and Susan W. Price for \$2,100.00 in 1886.³ The northern section of the block was subdivided and delineated for the first time when Eliza Lay sold the property. It is detailed in the deed which stated that, "all that lot, piece, or parcel of land lying in the town of Easton.... Beginning at the same by a point formed by the intersection by the east side of Aurora Street... with the

¹ Talbot County Land Records (TCLR) Liber 78, Folio 103

² 1877 Lake, Griffin and Stevenson Atlas, Talbot and Dorchester Counties, Easton and Business Directory (p. 13)

³ TCLR, Liber 103, Folio 386

southern side of August Street and running thence fronting and bounding on and with said Aurora Street southwardly one hundred and sixteen feet (116 feet), thence on a line perpendicular to the said Aurora Street eastwardly to East Lane, thence bounding on and with said East Lane northwardly to August Street, thence bounding on said and with said August Street westwardly to the point of beginning.... Being *part* of the same land and premises conveyed to the right Rev'd Henry C. Lay by Robert D. Tilghman and Augusta Tilghman."⁴

The 1876 land tax assessment for Easton states that the Lays owned a house and lot on Aurora Street valued at \$2,800.00. This was a house in the center of the lot, depicted on the 1877 Atlas. The Lay's personal property was also assessed, including, one horse, five cows, furniture, a piano, silver, a cart and two carriages. The 1887 tax assessment reflects the sale of the new parcel. It states, "Lot on Aurora Street to Mis. Price."⁵

After the lot was sold to May and Susan Price the construction of the house at 14 North Aurora proceeded rapidly. The 1887 land tax assessment states that May Price owned a lot "116 feet on Aurora Street, Easton & running back to East Street of Lay."⁶ This lot was valued at \$1,500.00. The 1887 assessment also lists, "New dwelling house, carriage house on Aurora Street", valued at \$4,000.⁷ The total land tax assessment for May Price in 1887 was \$5,500 (see Figure 2 below).

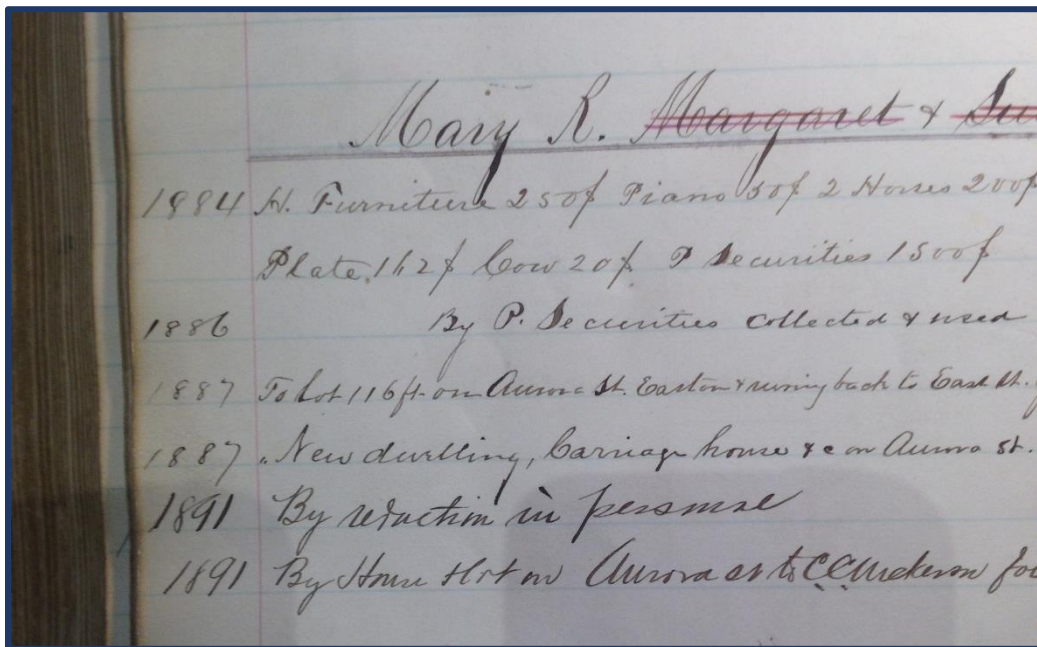


Figure 2: Land Tax Assessments for May R. Price, 1887 and 1891

⁴ TCLR, Liber 103, Folio 387

⁵ Talbot County Land Tax Assessments, District 1, Easton, 1876 and 1887 (Folio 460)

⁶ Talbot County Land Tax Assessments, District 1, Easton, 1877 (Folio 974)

⁷ Talbot County Land Tax Assessments, District 1, Easton, 1877 (Folio 974)

May Richardson Price was 32 years old and unmarried in 1887 when the house at 14 N. Aurora Street was built. She was one of the three daughters of Joseph and Sarah Price, who owned one of the larger estates in Talbot County. Joseph Richardson Price purchased “Cedar Point”, a 645-acre farm on the Tred Avon (Third Haven) River in 1857. Joseph Price hosted regional Quaker meetings, as well as Medical Association meetings, at his estate. After his wife, Sarah, passed away in 1867, Joseph appears on the census as residing in Easton. He is listed as a 71-year-old widower with three daughters, May (age 29), Margaret (age 25) and Susan (age 24)) in the 1880 census. The record also states that Joseph Price was quite wealthy. His real estate was valued at \$63,000 and his personal property at \$25,000.⁸ When Joseph passed away in 1882, “Cedar Point” was bequeathed to his daughters, May and Margaret.⁹

The 14 N. Aurora Street house is shown on the 1891 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map and circled (*see below*).¹⁰ A two-story, frame carriage house was situated approximately 50 feet east of the dwelling. It is not clear whether May or Susan Price ever occupied the house. Susan married William Barton soon after the house was built. Then May Price and Susan and William Barton sold the house to Charles C. Nickerson for \$8,000 in 1893.¹¹ May Price married Edward B. Hardcastle in 1895 and the couple built a new house at 18 N. Aurora Street, which became their main residence.



Figure 3: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Easton Map and Directory 1891, Block 22

⁸ Talbot County General Census, 1870, District 1, Easton

⁹ Talbot County Wills, August 14, 1882, Liber JNC, No, 12 Orphans Court Proceedings, E.H.R. 13

¹⁰ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Easton Map and Directory 1891 (p. 13)

¹¹ TCLR, Liber 118, Folio 327

The 1907 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (*below*) shows the delineation of three parcels within Block 22. A new frame shed is depicted in the northern parcel. Notably, the four dwellings depicted in the Southern section of the Block 22 on the 1877 and 1891 maps are not shown in 1907.¹²

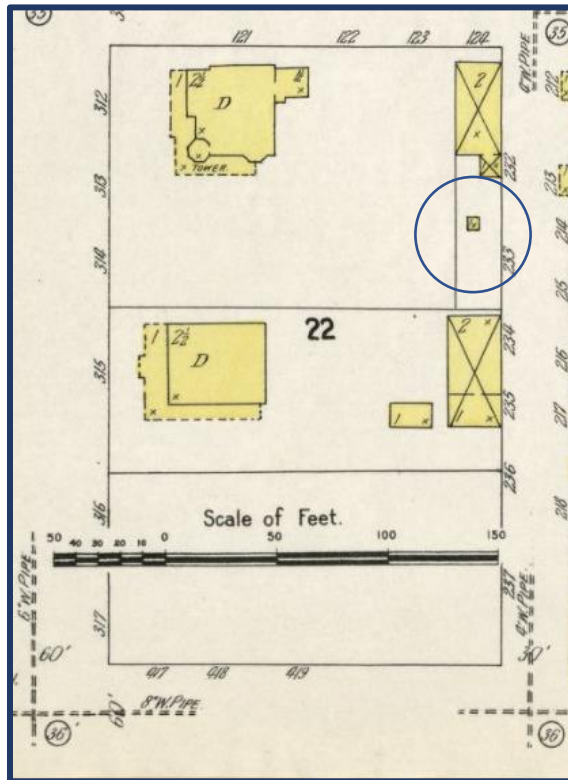


Figure 4: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Easton Map and Directory 1907, showing Block 22

Charles C. Nickerson is listed in the 1900 census as living in House 1, Aurora Street with his wife Lillian (age 34) and their two children, Paul (age 13) and Lillian (age 3).¹³ Charles Nickerson grew up in Oxford Maryland, where he worked with his brother in fertilizer manufacturing. After moving to Easton, Charles established a phosphate fertilizer factory on Port Street in Easton which is shown on the 1891 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (*below*).¹⁴ The factory was very successful and was later absorbed into the holdings of the American Agricultural Chemical Company of New York. Highly regarded as a progressive entrepreneur, Nickerson was instrumental in the regional expansion of Eastern Shore industries. For a time, he served as Vice-President of the Easton National Bank.¹⁵ Charles Nickerson’s 1914 obituary in the Denton Journal states, “Mr. Nickerson had been a resident of Easton for 35 years and was the town’s most prominent businessman.”¹⁶

¹² Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Easton Map and Directory, 1891

¹³ General Census, Easton District 1, 1900

¹⁴ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Easton Map and Directory, 1907

¹⁵ Ingraham, Prentiss, Land of Legendary Lore, Romance and Reality on the Eastern Shore of the Chesapeake (288)

¹⁶ *Death of C.C. Nickerson*, Denton Journal, May 16, 1914, p.5

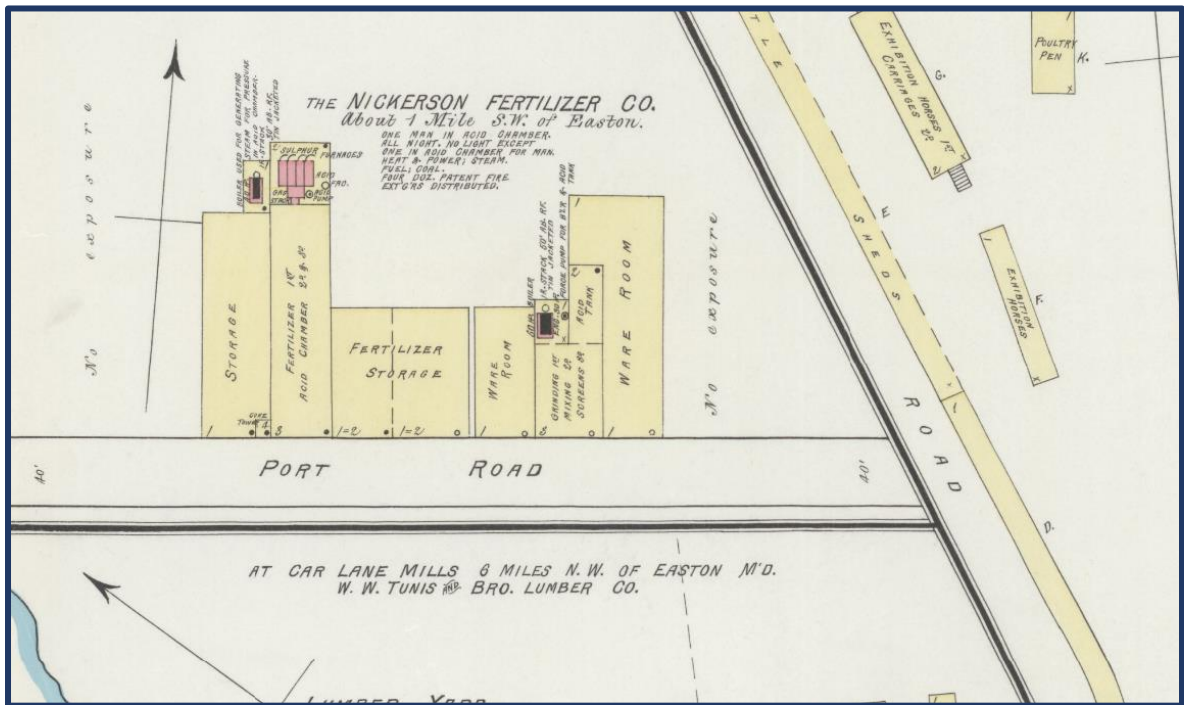


Figure 5: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Easton Map and Directory 1891, Library of Congress

Charles Nickerson devised the house to Lillian in his will. She later conveyed the property to her brother-in-law, George Nickerson.¹⁷ Nickerson sold the property to J. Dukes Wooters in 1919.¹⁸ The 1920 census states that Wooters (age 40) was occupying the Aurora Street house with his wife, Irenie (age 28). He was listed as being employed in the vegetable canning business. The Wooters were parents to two children, J. Dukes (age 2) and Charles (infant). A nurse, Elizabeth Frericks (age 17) was employed by the Wooters and residing in the household.¹⁹

J. Dukes and Irenie Wooters sold the property to John and Florence McDaniel in 1923.²⁰ John Sharpe McDaniel was an influential and active figure in the state of Maryland and in Easton. He served as a Democrat in the Maryland State Senate (1922 and 1924).²¹ McDaniel also served as a Talbot County Delegate in 1920 and in 1931. McDaniel established *John McDaniel & Company, Inc.* which specialized in canning and packing vegetables, such as spinach and sweet potatoes.²² John McDaniel helped to form the Maryland Fire Insurance Company of Easton and acted as Secretary.²³ In 1930 he is listed

¹⁷ Talbot County Wills, No, 118:348

¹⁸ TCLR, Liber 182, Folio 144

¹⁹ Talbot County Census, District 1, 1910

²⁰ TCLR, Liber 195, Folio 217

²¹ Papenfuse, Edward C. et.al. Archives of Maryland, Historical List, Vol.1. 1990

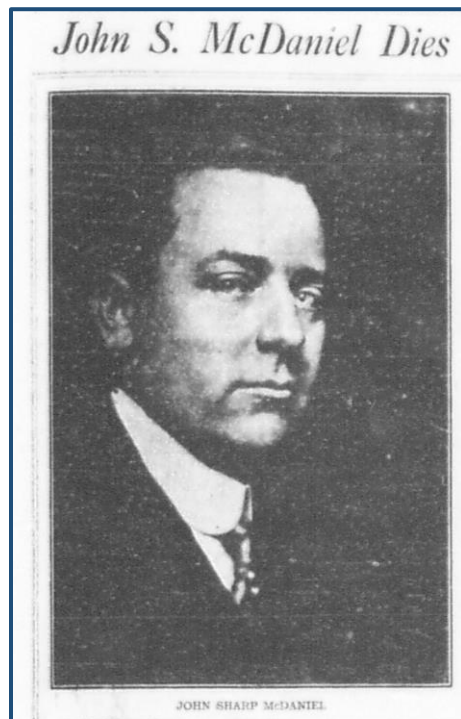
²² California Fruit News, Vol. 49, Issue 1336

²³ The Weekly Underwriter: An Insurance Newspaper, Vol. 80, 1909, New York

as the President of the Easton Utilities Commission.²⁴ McDaniel also served as Treasurer of the Easton Diocese of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the late 1920s.²⁵

Florence McDaniel passed away on August 23, 1929, at the age of 39. Following her death, the 1930 census shows that John was living in the house with his sister, Mary McDaniel (age 44), and his three young children, Florence (age 7), John Jr. (age 4) and James (age 3). A house servant, Stella Brinsfield, was also residing with the family. John was listed as a canned goods broker, and the house was valued at \$17,000.²⁶ John McDaniel passed away on February 8, 1932.²⁷ The death certificate states that he died at age 49 as the result of a hemorrhage from his stomach with the contributing condition being ulcerative gastritis and enteritis. John had not been at work for a period four months before his death. A lengthy obituary in the Easton Star on March 4, 1932 states:

“The entire Eastern Shore is under a sense of deep loss in the passing of John McDaniel. Few men have so completely woven themselves into the life and affairs of a wide community. The past months when all knew that he was battling against odds to regain his health, inquiries regarding him were met at every turn. His friends seemed without number and interest and concern were met on every hand.”²⁸



²⁴ Report to the Public Service Commission of Maryland, November 26, 1930.

²⁵ The Living Church Annual: The Churchman's Yearbook and American Church Almanac, 1928

²⁶ Talbot County Census, District 1, 1930

²⁷ State of Maryland Death Certificates, Talbot County, Registration District No. 290, 61956

²⁸ "John S. McDaniel Dies", Easton Star, March 4, 1932

Newspaper accounts show that the loss of Florence and John McDaniel was felt throughout the Easton community. They were known as gracious hosts, frequently entertaining. The obituary notes that “their home was one of rare charm.”²⁹ John was an avid gardener and he was active in the local garden club.³⁰ The house was filled with an exceptional collection of colonial period antiques. Many of these antique furniture and household items were advertised for sale by Anderson Galleries in New York City on November 2, 1929.³¹ Unfortunately, the timing was terrible as the stock market crash in October negatively influenced the success of the sale.

When they first purchased the house in 1923, the McDaniels secured a mortgage with Mary Lloyd. After John’s death, an assignee, William Herman Hopkins, sold the property at public auction in August 1932 and Mary Lloyd purchased it.³² Lloyd sold the property to Laura Tull a year later.³³ Enalls and Laura Tull were an older couple who resided at 14 North Aurora for less than ten years. Prior to purchasing the house, the 1930 census lists Enalls Tull as retired and 68 years of age. He was residing with his wife Laura (age 61) and his son, Earnest (age 35) on Goldsborough Street. Enalls died on February 16, 1940 and Laura inherited the Aurora Street property. She sold the house to Roger and Emily Ringgold in 1943.³⁴ It is unlikely that the Ringgolds ever occupied the house as there are numerous accounts of Roger Ringgold and his affiliations with the Ridgely community in Caroline County and his extensive involvement in local politics.³⁵ The Ringgolds owned the house just a few months before they sold it to Anne Hyde Ingraham in July 1943.³⁶

Anne and her husband, Langley Ingraham, had been residents of Easton for some time. Langley was the son of the famous writer, Prentiss Ingraham. Langley passed away in 1935 and in the 1940 Census, Anne was listed as a 49-year-old widower and lodger at a guest house.³⁷ In the 1948 Easton Maryland City Directory, Anne Ingraham was listed as residing at 14 North Aurora.³⁸ The directory also states that she was working for the *Holiday Inn*. Records suggest that Anne may have struggled financially because she mortgaged the North Aurora Street property for 5,000 in 1945.³⁹ She later sold the house to Elfreda Claire Sammons in 1951.⁴⁰

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Sales Pamphlet, Sale Number 3784, *Colonial Furniture, Collection of John S. McDaniel, Easton, MD*. American Art Association, Anderson Galleries, Inc. New York city, 1929

³² TCLR Liber 229, Folio 175

³³ TCLR Liber 231, Folio 398

³⁴ TCLR Liber 255, Folio 412

³⁵ Denton Journal, April 29, 1933

³⁶ TCLR Liber 292, Folio 40

³⁷ General Census, District 1, Easton, 1940

³⁸ Easton Maryland City Directory, 1948

³⁹ TCLR, Liber 260, Folio 284

⁴⁰ TCLR, Liber 292, Folio 40

Prior to purchasing the house, Elfreda and Robert Sammons were living on North Washington Street. The 1940 census, Elfreda (age 41) is listed as a shop owner and her husband, Robert (age 56), had retired from the Navy in 1938.⁴¹ The Sammons spent seven years in China when Robert was stationed there as a naval officer. Robert passed away in 1944.⁴² The 1948 Easton Business Directory shows that Elfreda (Clarie) Sammons was operating the *Wayside Gift Shop*.⁴³ The business, located at 9 South Washington Street, was successful for fourteen years before Elfreda sold the shop and its inventory to Martha Trippe in June 1951. The store specialized in “nationally advertised brands of cards, glassware and other gifts.”⁴⁴

When Elfreda purchased 14 North Aurora Street in 1951 she was a recent widow. Elfreda mortgaged the property in 1957 for \$13,000.⁴⁵ In the same year she also purchased a store on West Street and a lot on Hanson Street.⁴⁶ Elfreda was married to Daniel J. Branagan in 1963, just before she and her new husband sold the North Aurora Street property to James and Elizabeth Mayhew from Connecticut.⁴⁷

It is unclear whether the Mayhews ever occupied the house because their ownership was quite short, from 1963 to 1967. James Mayhew was born in 1916 and died in Easton in 2002. Elizabeth was born in Connecticut and died in 2013. They were both interred at Spring Hill Cemetery in Easton.⁴⁸ In the 1967 Easton Directory, James Mayhew was listed in Easton Directories as residing on Prospect Street. Later directories indicate he resided on Patrick Road and in Bethany Beach.⁴⁹ The Mayhews sold the property to Tidewater Inn, Inc. in May 1967.⁵⁰ It is unclear how the house was being used from 1967 to 1971. A review of the land records for shows that 14 North Aurora Street was the only property that Tidewater-Inn, Inc. purchased or sold during the 1960s.

Dr. Albert T. Dawkins, Jr. and Dr. Callum Bain purchased the property in 1971 from Tidewater Inn, Inc. as tenants in common.⁵¹ They established a medical practice in the house, however, Easton directories for the 1970s showed that the doctors were not occupying the house as a residence. Both doctors were respected medical practitioners, quite active in charity work, business circles and the general civic life of Easton.

⁴¹ Navy Department Library - Naval History and Heritage Command; Washington, D.C.; *Navy Register: Officers of the U.S. Navy and Marine; Year: 1938 (v.1)*

⁴² *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012.

⁴³ Easton Maryland City Directory, 1948

⁴⁴ Star Democrat, Easton, July 13, 1951, p. 6

⁴⁵ TCLR, Liber 331, Folio 279

⁴⁶ TCLR, Liber 337, Folio 279 and Liber 339, Folio 211

⁴⁷ TCLR, Liber 391, Folio 238

⁴⁸ *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012

⁴⁹ Easton Maryland City Directory, 1967

⁵⁰ TCLR, Liber 420, Folio 81

⁵¹ TCLR. Liber 451, Folio 355

Dr. Callum Bain was born in England and moved to Talbot County in 1967. He practiced until his retirement in 2007.⁵² Dr. Dawkins was an internist who completed his education at the University of Maryland Medical School and the George Washington University School of Medicine, in Washington D.C.⁵³ At the time the doctors opened their Aurora Street practice, Dr. Dawson was an internist on staff at the Memorial Hospital in Easton. In 1985, he had the opportunity to become the medical director of the skilled nursing facility which he led from 1985 – 1994.⁵⁴ It was after this opportunity arose that Dr. Dawkins sold his share of the property to Dr. Bain for \$55,000.⁵⁵ In 1986, following Dr. Dawkins departure from the practice, Dr. Bain sold the house to William Kremadas.⁵⁶

William Kramedas, a retired teacher, and Genie Kramedas, a librarian from Delaware, purchased the house at 14 North Aurora. In 1987 they opened the *McDaniel House Bed and Breakfast*.⁵⁷ The inn featured four guest rooms on the second floor and the third floor housed a child's bedroom.



Pistol River Properties purchased the house in 1990.⁵⁸ They sold to Mary Lou and Francis Karwacki in 1999.⁵⁹ During the Karwacki ownership, the name of the inn was changed to the *John S. McDaniel House Bed and Breakfast*. The house caught on fire in 2006, resulting in approximately \$300,000 in damages. Mary Lou and Francis moved out of the house during the time that renovations were completed. The Inn was reopened several months later with five guest room options.⁶⁰

⁵² "Dr. Callum Bain Obituary", Fellows, Helfenbein and Newnam Funeral Home, P.A.

⁵³ Rasmussen, Fred. "Obituary for Dr. Albert T. "Skip" Dawkins, Jr." The Baltimore Sun, December 20, 1995

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ TCLR, Liber 596, Folio 773

⁵⁶ TCLR, Liber 626, Folio 534

⁵⁷ "Victorian Bed and Breakfast, John McDaniel House Now Open". Talbot Banner, Vol. 6. No.6. August 12, 1987.

⁵⁸ TCLR, Liber 689, Folio 788

⁵⁹ TCLR, Liber 950, Folio 716

⁶⁰ "Repairs Continue at the McDaniel House B&B". The Star Democrat. July 18. 2006

Eric Levinson purchased the property from the Karwackis in June 2017 and undertook major renovations which expanded the number of guest rooms.⁶¹ He renamed it the *Hummingbird Inn*. Substantial work has been done to enhance the yards and gardens. As in the past, 14 N. Aurora carries on the tradition of being a “*house of rare charm*”⁶² and “*one of the finest houses in Easton.*”⁶³

⁶¹ TCLR, Liber 2450, Folio 330

⁶² John McDaniel Obituary. *John S. McDaniel Dies*, Easton Star, March 4, 1932

⁶³ Ingraham, Prentiss, Land of Legendary Lore, Romance and Reality on the Eastern Shore of the Chesapeake

History of Block 22 now containing 14 North Aurora Street

The Kerr families owned and built residential dwellings on what was Block 22 (which contains 14 N. Aurora Street) and Block 33 which lies immediately to the north during the early 19th Century. David Kerr, Sr. and his son, John Leeds Kerr, were political leaders, representing Talbot County in Annapolis. David Kerr was a member of the House of Delegates from 1806 until 1809. John Leeds Kerr was a member of Congress from Maryland (1825 – 1829, and 1831 – 1833). He also served as U.S. Senator (1841 – 1843).⁶⁴ The two brothers, David and John were also notable business leaders who were instrumental in the early town development of Easton.

David Kerr, Sr. (1749 -1814) purchased Easton Town Lots 79 and 80 in 1789 from John Harwood.⁶⁵ Kerr passed away in 1814 and the lots were bequeathed to son, David Kerr, Jr.⁶⁶ David Kerr, Sr. and David Kerr, Jr. died within a month of one another in 1814. David and Maria (Perry) Kerr were residing on the one-acre N. Aurora Street lot before his death. Maria inherited all of David's estate, real and personal, when he died.⁶⁷ It appears that Maria continued to live in the N. Aurora Street residence because she is listed as residing next to her brother-in-law, John Leeds Kerr on the 1820 census.⁶⁸

Maria married Dr. John Rogers in 1822 and at this time she still owned the Aurora Street property.⁶⁹ A mortgage from 1830 shows that Maria and John Rogers moved from Easton and were residing at Maria's family estate, Perry Hall.⁷⁰ The 1823 Land Tax Assessment for John Rogers refers to the same property on Aurora. The tenant was W. Jenkinson at that time. The frame dwelling was assessed at \$500. The lot also contained a kitchen (assessed at \$50), a meat house (assessed at \$15), a stable and carriage house (assessed at \$55), and a corn house (assessed at \$10).⁷¹

Jacob C. Willson acquired the one-acre lot for \$1,000 from Maria Rogers in 1839. The deed states that the property was conveyed from David Kerr, Sr. to David Kerr, Jr. It was "bequeathed to Maria Rogers, then Maria Kerr, the wife of David Kerr, Jr. which said messuage, or lot or parcel of ground, is bounded by the said Aurora Street on the west, by August Street in the north, by which it is separated from the property of John Leeds Kerr, Esquire, and on the east side by East Lane."⁷² The term "messuage" indicates that there was a dwelling and outbuildings on the property.

⁶⁴ Spencer, Richard H. Thomas Family of Talbot County, Maryland and Allied Families, Williams and Wilkins Company Baltimore. 1914

⁶⁵ TCLR, Liber 23, Folio 500

⁶⁶ Talbot County Wills, David Kerr, Sr., Liber JP 7 Folio 241

⁶⁷ Talbot County Wills, David Kerr, Jr., Liber JP 7 Folio 224, 1810

⁶⁸ General Census, District 1, Easton, 1820

⁶⁹ *Maryland, Compiled Marriages, 1667-1899*. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2000.

⁷⁰ TCLR, Liber 49, Folio 34

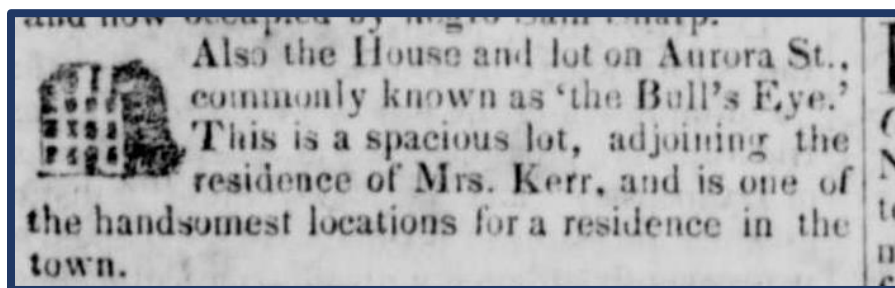
⁷¹ Talbot County, Commissioners of the Tax, Land Tax Assessment, 1832, District 1

⁷² TCLR, Liber 54, Folio 531

The buildings on the Aurora Street block were also detailed in the 1840 Tax Assessment which states that Jacob C. Willson owned ten properties in Easton. The one-acre, Aurora Street lot that Willson purchased from Maria Rogers contained a frame dwelling and kitchen (assessed at \$400), a meat house (assessed at \$10), and a stable and carriage house (assessed at \$50). The lot itself was assessed at \$100. Samuel Clayland was in tenure of the property at the time.⁷³

Jacob Willson (1795- 1851) was a political figure, businessman, banker and developer from Dorchester County. He also purchased and developed properties throughout Easton. Census and tax assessment records show that Jacob Willson and his wife, Clarry, owned dwellings in Caroline and Dorchester Counties but also maintained a residence in Easton on Harrison Street.⁷⁴ Willson appears on the lists of those attending the Third Haven Quaker Meetings in Easton.

When Jacob Willson passed away in 1851, close family members acquired the majority of his real and personal estate. In his will, Jacob authorized Turpin Wright, his executor, to sell the residue of his property.⁷⁵ Several of the Easton lots were part of this public sale which was advertised in the Easton Gazette on October 4, 1851. The property is described in the advertisement (*below*) as follows; “the house and lot on Aurora Street commonly known as “the Bull’s Eye”. This is spacious lot, adjoining the residence of Mrs. Kerr, and is one of the handsomest locations for a residence in the town.”⁷⁶



Thomas Robson purchased the advertised Aurora Street lot from Turpin Wright for \$450. This conveyance is mentioned in an 1863 Deed of Trust between Thomas K. Robson and Charles Robinson in which Robson mortgaged the Aurora Street property (where he was residing) as well as the Union Hotel property and the Easton Star Newspaper, both of which Robson owned at the time.⁷⁷ Robson was clearly having financial difficulties at this time. The 1860 census record shows that Thomas Robson (age 39), was residing with his

⁷³ Talbot County, Commissioners of the Tax, Land Tax Assessment, 1840, District 1

⁷⁴ Ibid

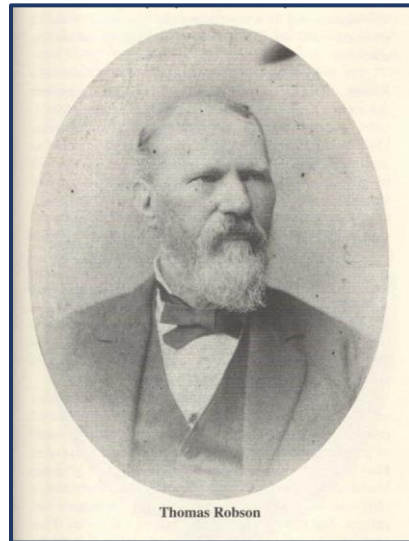
⁷⁵ Talbot County Wills, Jacob C. Willson, February 2, 1851, Folio 143

⁷⁶ *Sale of Lots owned by Jacob C. Willson*, Easton Gazette, October 4, 1851

⁷⁷ TCLR, Liber 70, Folio 266

wife, Julia (age 27), and two children, William (age 16) and Ada (age 7). There were three unrelated persons living in the house including, Eliza Dawise, a dressmaker, Susan Bennett and Robert Busteid, a painter.⁷⁸

There are numerous accounts of Thomas Kemp Robson and his contributions to the Easton community. But he was best known as being the editor and proprietor of the Easton Star. He also owned the “Union Hotel” for a period of time. His obituary in the Denton Journal states, that Robson was “one of the foremost businessmen of his county.”⁷⁹



The house was sold to Augusta Foreman for \$2,900 in June 1863. The deed, in the name of Julia Robson, describes the property as, “the house and lot on Aurora Street..... The property now occupied by the said Julia Robson and formerly known as “the Bull’s Eye” whereof Jacob C. Willson, deceased, possessed.⁸⁰

In 1866, Robert Tilghman and Augusta Tilghman inherited the lot and house on Aurora Street from Augusta Forman.⁸¹ The will states that Augusta was residing at the house the time the will was written. It also stipulates that Robert and Augusta Tilghman should inherit the house as joint tenants. The 1870 census for District 1 lists Robert Tilghman (retired lawyer, age 49) Augusta (age 56) and Henrietta (age 53). However, the census record does not clearly show that the Tilghman’s were residing in the Aurora Street house.

⁷⁸ General Census, District 1, Easton, 1860

⁷⁹ “Obituary of Thomas Kemp Robson”, Denton Journal, Vol. 43 No. 11, Nov. 17. 1888

⁸⁰ TCLR, Liber 70, Folio 302

⁸¹ Talbot County Wills, Augusta Forman, 1866, Folio 229

Robert and Augusta conveyed the house and lot to Reverend Henry Lay and his wife, Eliza, in 1872.⁸² The 1880 census lists the Henry Lay (age 56), Eliza Lay (age 53), son George Lay (age 20), son Burnie (age 18), daughter Louisa (age 11), Elmina Smith (age 24), Alice Denby (age 22) as residing in the house.⁸³ Also listed next to the Lay's on this page of the census were Thomas and Julia Robson, suggesting that they were occupying another house on the lot.

The Lay's dwelling is shown on the 1877 Lake, Griffin and Stevenson Atlas of Easton. It was a two and a half-story frame dwelling that is also shown on the 1891 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. It was situated in the center of the block and is indicated by the circle on **Figure 6** (below). A shed and stable were behind the dwelling. The house fronted Aurora Street.



Figure 6: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Easton Map and Directory 1891, Block 22

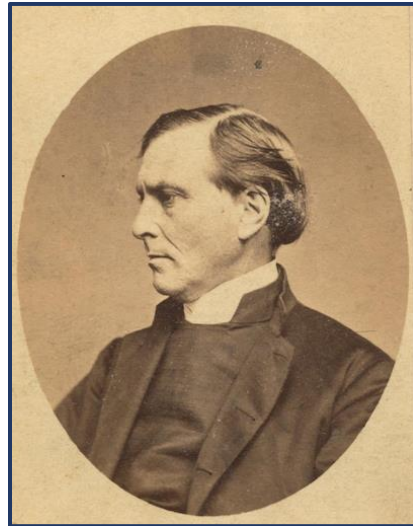
Reverend Henry C. Lay moved to Easton in 1869 when he was elected Bishop for the Protestant Episcopal Church.⁸⁴ He was instrumental in establishing the Episcopal Church on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Lay founded Trinity Cathedral, even though construction was not completed during his lifetime. Bishop Lay was held in high regard in the Diocese

⁸² TCLR, Liber 78:103

⁸³ TCGC, District 1, 1880

⁸⁴ "Bishop Lay Obituary", Easton Star, 1885

and by the Easton community. Bishop Lay died in Baltimore on September 17, 1885.⁸⁵ His remains were brought back to Easton and funeral services were held at Christ Church. Lay was interred at Spring Hill Cemetery. The photograph below is from Project Canterbury.⁸⁶



Eliza Lay sold the house and lot to Elizabeth T. Johnson in 1893 for \$2,400. 00.⁸⁷ The 1907 Sanborn Map shows that major changes took place during the Johnson's ownership of the property. The house in the central parcel of Block 22 appears architecturally changed in both shape and size, and the outbuildings were reconfigured, or likely rebuilt. It is possible that the house depicted on the 1907 map is a new structure. This difference is also reflected in the property value at the time of sale. Eliza Lay sold her house for \$2,400 and later, Elizabeth Johnson sold her house in the same parcel of the block for \$6,500.

The 1900 census record shows that Elizabeth (age 55) and her husband, Julius (age 50) were residing in in Easton with two sons (ages 16 and 19).⁸⁸ Julius Johnson served as President of the Talbot County Medical Society. He was also the physician for the county jail. Dr. Johnson passed away in May 1906.⁸⁹ His obituary in the Maryland Medical Journal states that, "He enjoyed a large practice and had the respect and confidence of a community in which he lived and labored."⁹⁰ Soon after her husband's death, Elizabeth Johnson sold the house to Joseph Seth for \$6,500.⁹¹

⁸⁵ Ibid

⁸⁶ Project Canterbury Digital Archive, *Photograph of Bishop Henry Lay*, <http://anglicanhistory.org/usa/hclay/>

⁸⁷ TCLR, Liber 118:364

⁸⁸ General Census, District 1, Easton, 1900

⁸⁹ *Find A Grave*. Find A Grave. <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi>. Julius Alonzo Johnson

⁹⁰ Maryland Medical Journal: Medicine and Surgery, September 1907, Vol. 50. Pg. 270

⁹¹ TCLR, Liber 147 Folio 332

Joseph and Mary Seth are listed on the 1910 census as residing on Aurora Street, next door to Charles Nickerson.⁹² Mary's sister, Eliza B. Walker, was also part of the household. Joseph Seth is listed as a lawyer, working on his own account. Joseph Seth was a politician and respected businessman. Seth served at the state and national level. He also served as President of the Baltimore, Chesapeake and Atlantic Railroad.⁹³ Later in his career, he was elected as Mayor of Easton. Joseph Seth and his wife, Mary wrote the poignant account, *Recollections of a Long Life on the Eastern Shore*, in 1926.⁹⁴



Joseph B. Seth (1845-1927)

Maryland State Archives SC 3520-1707

House, TA, 1874, 1884-1886

House Speaker, 1886

Senate, TA, 1906-1908

Senate President, 1906-1908

Photograph and Caption, Maryland State Archives Website

It is unclear how long the Seth house remained standing in the central parcel of the block. Mary and Joseph Seth fought commercial development when the parcel adjoining theirs in the southern section of the block was acquired by Liberty Bank from Bishop John J. Monaghan in 1919.⁹⁵ The Seth's had their lawyer present Liberty Bank with 1905 deed from Frances Wrightson that stipulated that no commercial building such as factories or stores should be built in the southern parcel. However, this approach failed, and the bank proceeded with construction.⁹⁶ Another change by the 1930s was that East Lane, lying on the eastern side of the block, was renamed Locust Lane (now called Locust Street). Today, this section of Aurora Street is still mixed use, residential and commercial, as it has been since the early 20th Century.

⁹² General Census, District 1, Easton, 1910

⁹³ Poor, Henry Varnum. *Poor's Manual of Railroads*, Volume 27. H.V. & H.W. Poor, 1894

⁹⁴ Seth, Joseph and Mary. *Recollections of a Long Life on the Eastern Shore*.

⁹⁵ TCLR, Liber 183 folio 272

⁹⁶ TCLR, Liber 145 folio 250

**Appendix 1: Chain-of-Title
14 North Aurora Street, Block 22 (1886 – 2017)**

Date/Instrument	Sellers	Property Notes
6/1/2017 Deed (02450/00330)	Mary Lou Karwacki to Douglas Eric Levinson	20,300 Square Feet Lot 7 – 116X175 Map 104 - 000EA Parcel 117
12/7/1999 Deed (00950:00716)	Pistol River Properties to Mary Lou Karwacki	No parcel dimensions
7/3/1990 Deed (00689:00788)	William and Imogene Kramedas to Pistol River Properties	No parcel dimensions
12/29/1986 Deed (626:534)	Callum R.W. Bain to William Kramedas	No parcel dimensions
3/5/1985 Deed (596:773)	Albert T. Dawkins to Callum R.W. Bain	No parcel dimensions
4/20/1971 Deed (451:355)	Tidewater Inn, Inc. to Callum B. Bain and Albert T. Dawkins, Jr. (as tenants in common)	116 feet by 175.88 feet
5/24/1967 Deed (420:81)	James P. Mayhew and Lizabeth H. Mayhew to Tidewater Inn, Inc.	No parcel dimensions
12/31/1963 Deed (391:238)	Elfreda Claire Branagan and Daniel J. Branagan to James and Elizabeth Mayhew	No parcel dimensions – Adjoins the land of Cora Riley
6/8/1951 Deed (292:40)	Anne Hyde Ingraham(widow) to Elfreda Claire Sammons	No parcel dimensions
7/1/1943 Deed (255:412)	Roger and Emily Ringgold to Anne Ingraham	No parcel dimensions – “It is understood that the residence on said property is to be painted in accordance with the provisions of the contract from June 4, 1943.”
2/8/1943 Deed (254:362)	Laura E. Tull to Roger and Emily Ringgold	No parcel dimensions – Being the same lot or parcel described as “Parcel 1” in a deed from Laura Tull and husband to

		William Reddie, dated April 24, 1937.... the said Enalls Tull, her husband, having departed this life on or about February 15, 1940, thereby vesting the title to said property to Laura.
11/24/1933 Deed (231:398)	Mary Donnell Lloyd to Laura Tull	No parcel dimensions
8/12/1932 Deed (229:175)	William Herman Hopkins, Assignee, to Mary Donnell Lloyd	No parcel dimensions – “Whereas at a public sale made on the 23 rd day of April, 1931 by Hopkins by a certain mortgage from John S. McDaniel and Florence G. McDaniel to Mary Lloyd, on May 23, 1923 in 195: 302, which sale was made after a default was made under said mortgage and after public notice of sale, in Equity, being the property by said mortgage conveyed was sold to Mary Lloyd, a bidder for \$7,700.00.”
5/1/1923 Deed (195:217)	Irenie and J. Dukes Wooters to John and Florence McDaniel	No parcel dimensions
7/10/1920 Deed (182:144)	George F. Nickerson to J. Dukes Wooters	No parcel dimensions – “And being the same land devised to Lillian M. Nickerson by Charles Nickerson by his last will and testament....”
2/27/1893 Deed (118:327)	May R. Price and Susan and William Barton to Charles Nickerson	No parcel dimensions
6/1/1886 Deed (103:386)	Eliza Lay to May R. Price and Susan W. Price	Northern section of block, to 116 feet south of August Street

Appendix 2: Chain-of-Title for Block 22 (1803 – 1872)

<p>4/10/1872 Deed (78:103)</p>	<p>Robert Tilghman and Augusta Tilghman to Reverend Henry Lay</p>	<p>Situate in part upon August Lane and East Lane, now in the occupancy of Robert and Augusta Tilghman.... by the last will and testament of Augusta Foreman, March 22, 1866, and being the property conveyed to Augusta by Turpin Wright, Executor of Jacob C. Wilson....</p> <p>Devised to Eliza W. Lay by Henry Lay's will, Orphans Court (Wills, E.H.R. No. 13)</p>
<p>3/22/1866 (229) Will of Augusta Forman</p>	<p>Augusta Forman to Robert Lloyd Tilghman and Augusta Tilghman as joint tenants</p>	<p>"My house and lot on Aurora Street in the town of Easton where I now reside."</p>
<p>5/21/1863 Deed of Trust (70:266)</p>	<p>Thomas K. Robson to Charles Robinson</p>	<p>Mortgage includes the Aurora Street property (on which he was residing at the time) the Union Hotel property and the Easton Star Newspaper, both of which he owned.</p>
<p>6/7/1863 Deed (70:302)</p>	<p>Turpin Wright, Executor of Jacob C. Willson and Charles Robinson, Trustee of Thomas K. Robson and Julia Robson to Augusta Foreman</p>	<p>Thomas and Julia Robson acquired property in 1851 for \$450.00. See the advertisement in the Easton Gazette.</p> <p>Julia Robson is on the deed of title. The property is described as, "the house and lot on Aurora Street and also on August and East Lane.... The property now occupied by the said Julia Robson and formerly known as "The Bull's Eye"</p>

		whereof Jacob C. Willson, deceased, possessed". Augusta paid \$2,009. 00 for the property.
2/21/1851 Will (Folio 143) Jacob C. Willson	Jacob C. Willson authorizes executor, Turpin Wright, to sell the residue of his real estate at public auction	Real estate, undefined in the will
10/28/1839 Deed (54: 531)	Maria Rogers to Jacob Willson Jacob Willson's 1840 tax assessment shows that there was a dwelling and kitchen (400.00), meat house (10.00), stable and carriage house (50.00) on the one-acre lot. One possibility is that Willson improved the lot after he bought it in 1839.	To Willson for \$1000.00. Property conveyed from David Kerr, Sr. to David Kerr, Jr. Then "bequeathed to Maria Rogers, then Maria Kerr, and wife of David Kerr, Jr. which said messuage, or lot or parcel of ground is bounded by the said Aurora Street on the west, by August on the North, by which it is separated from the property of John Leeds Kerr, Esquire, and on the East side by East Lane." Mentions improvements and buildings.
3/3/1810 Will of David Kerr, Jr. (JP 7: 224)	David bequeaths, "all of my estate, personal and mixed of every description and kind" to his wife, Maria Kerr. David died in 1814 and Maria married Dr. John Rogers, so her name changed from Kerr to Rogers. She is shown on the 1830 census as living next door to her brother-in-law, John Leeds Kerr. She conveyed the Aurora Street property to Jacob Willson in 1839.	
10/1803 Will of David Kerr, Sr. (JP 7: 241)	David Sr. bequeathed his estate to his wife Rachael. His son, David Kerr, Jr., acquired the Aurora Street property which adjoined the property of his brother, John Leeds Kerr.	

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