

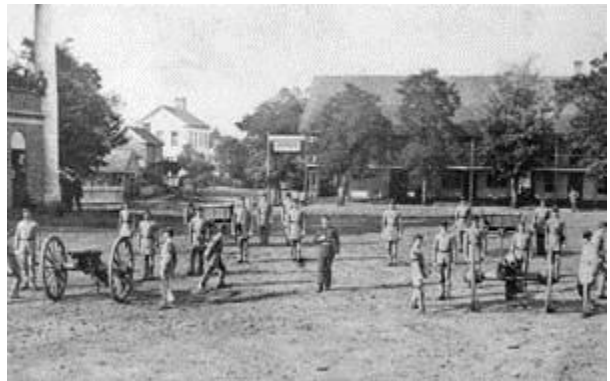
Inns and Inn Keepers of the Gold Fields of Lumpkin County, Georgia

by Sylvia Gailey Head
(January 2001)

<http://www.goldrushgallery.com/news/innkeep.html>

The Choice House

During the month of October, 1833, John Choice bought eight lots in the new town of Dahlonega from the Inferior Court of the new County of Lumpkin. They compose the entire block on the south-east corner of the town square, with the exception of lots 85 & 88 which faces today's Choice street. He also obtained lots 91 & 92 in the next block. Now he owned all the lots along Park Street to the place where the first Methodist Church building was erected and the new one stands today. On his property, he built Dahlonega a hotel.



The hotel built by John Choice before 1837. The students in the foreground make the date of this picture some time after 1872. The Masonic Hall, the white two story building in the background, verifies the location of the hotel. Courtesy of Enoch J. Hicks

Many years ago, the seventy-six year old W. Reece Crisson, in reminiscing for the newspapers, placed the Choice House on lots 79 and 80, the corner of Park and Main Streets facing the town square. He also said that Choice was among the early merchants of Dahlonega. The logical place for his store house faced Main Street adjoining the hotel. Another old Citizen said that Dahlonega's early hotels "were large and commodious and the comforts for the inner man were not excelled by any in the state."

The only means of transportation, in that day, was by horseback or horse drawn vehicles so it took as much space for a man's horse as for himself. The stage coaches, with no less than six horses, and the hotels horses had to be considered also. Therefore, all the space in back of the hotel with lot 82 on Choice Street and 91 and 92 were designated "stables"

In the meantime, John had taken Tully and Cyrus Choice of DeKalb County as partners and he became John Choice and Company.

G. W. Featherstonhaugh F.R.S., F.G.S. wrote in his Journal, reproduced in A Canoe Voyage up the Minnay Sorter, "August 11, 1837, I left Gainesville by stage at 3:30 a.m. and arrived in Dahlonega ten and a half hours later. Here I got a room at a tolerably clean house run by a person named Choice". Senator John C. Calhoun met him there and the Geologist from England wrote at length about their evening together. Featherstonhaugh obtained a horse and the two men spent the next day visiting mine sites. When they returned to the hotel at night, they found Governor Schley of Georgia there.

[2017 – Comment added by City: For more on Dahlonega and north Georgia in 1837 as described by George William Featherstonhaugh, please see the accompanying link <https://cdn.loc.gov/service/gdc/lhbum/6643b/6643b.pdf>]

Paul Rossignol, the second superintendent of the Dahlonega Branch of the United States Mint, his wife, Adrienne Dugas, and daughter, Emily lived at Choices from the spring of 1841 to the summer of 1842. This was revealed in the family correspondence written mostly in French. When Paul's parents, of royal blood, had to leave France, they settled in Santo Domingo where Paul was born. When he was six years old, a slave uprising caused a move to the United States.

John D. Anthony, Jr. (Jack) did extensive searching to help with this article. Among court records and the records given to him by his mother, Madeleine, he found a deed made to a group of men under the name of Miller, Ripley and Company, Charleston, South Carolina. It was signed by John Choice and Tully Choice in payment of their promissory notes given during the years 1836, 1837, 1838, and 1840. Among other things, the Choices deeded the town lots that they bought in 1833 with their appurtenances and improvements. These included lot #79, where the hotel stood. Household furniture was included in the deed, naming such things as 36 bedsteads with straw mattresses and feather beds, 48 Windsor chairs and other bedroom, dining room and kitchen furniture. Two bay horses and a four-wheeled pleasure carriage were items in the deed.

The 49 year old John Choice died September 2, 1842, leaving wife, Mary Ann, and three children. From the minutes of the Masonic Lodge, it is learned that Mary Ann then ran the hotel: At a meeting on January 24, 1845 the Masons resolved to crepe the jewels of the lodge and to wear black ribbons on their arms for sixty days as a memorial to Andrew Jackson, who had just died. On that day they marched through the town to the Methodist Church. The return march was "from the church to Mrs. Choice's hotel, around the Court House by the course of the sun, thence up Main Street to the Lodge room." Mary Ann Choice and John M.

Gregory were married November 30, 1847. The date that she gave up the hotel is not known.

The next time the Choice lots, including lot #79, were mentioned was in a deed giving them to Isaac L. Todd by Horatio Miller of the state and city of New York and Charles V Chamberlaine of Charleston, South Carolina.

The Globe Hotel

In the 1850's the local newspaper was advertising "The Globe Hotel, Isaac L. Todd, Proprietor" and was announcing, "The Dahlonega Stage Lines Leaves from the Globe Hotel". Todd, born in Pennsylvania, was assistant assayer of the Dahlonega branch of the United States Mint from its inception in 1837 to 1843 when he was made assayer. Being a Democrat, he was forced to stand aside during the Whig administrations of Taylor and Fillmore. Not until December of 1850, did the Whigs succeed in ousting Todd. A. W. Redding, the newly appointed superintendent of the mint, wrote in a letter to George W. Crawford, "Mr. Todd has purchased recently, a store and a tavern in the village". From 1850 until 1853, Todd waited in Dahlonega for the Democrats to regain the presidency and he, his old job. Becoming assayer again, he advertised a stock of goods at cost. Todd remained assayer until the onset of the Civil War when the mint was closed. He then moved to Rome, Georgia and became a conductor on a railroad.

The Lawrence House

Isaac L Todd made a deed on April 3, 1854 to William G. Lawrence and James A. Lawrence giving them Choice's original lots (with improvements) for the sum of \$2,000. This included the lot where the hotel stood. The place now became The Lawrence House. On June 30, 1857, the Lawrence men gave Todd a morgage deed on the property known as the "Lawrence House which originally belonged to John Choice, deceased" May 30.1859. the property "known as the Lawrence House" was sold at Sheriff's sale at the suit of Isaac L. Todd against William G, Lawwrence and James A Lawrence. Harrison W. Riley was the highest bidder. Riley sold the property to William Roberts, President of the Augusta and Dahlonega Mining Company on May 4, 1862. It was still being called the Lawrence house. Since it had not changed names, the assumption is that the Lawrence men were managing the hotel under lease.

All that is known about the Lawrences is: William G. Lawrence was an employee in the assay department of the Mint from 1849 to 1854 and his name was connected with some of the gold mines. He was born in South Carolina, was married to Rossana Harkins, a second marriage. There were five children in his family in the 1850 census, one of whom was named James. There are indications that this was James A., the partner in the hotel business. All that

is found about James A. is that he picked up some nice nuggets in the streets of Dahlonega after big rains.

According to Jimmy Anderson's article, "The Burnside Family of Lumpkin County" published in the Winter 1989 issue of The North Georgia Journal, W. A. Burnside bought the Lawrence Hotel in 1877 and it became the Burnside Hotel.

The Burnside family came to Dahlonega in 1850 but they were in the county in the Shoal Creek District in 1848. James W. came first and established a successful mercantile business. He was soon followed by his mother, Catherine, and twin brothers, Thomas E. and William A. Thomas died in 1851. Mrs. Burnside died in 1874. She had been a widow since 1828 when her husband was killed in a duel with political adversary, George Walker Crawford, who later became Governor of Georgia. The details of this duel have been told by Jimmy Anderson and by Lucian Lamar Knight in his book, *Georgia Landmarks, Memorials, and Legends*.

James Burnside's store flourished and William A. bought and published a newspaper and became Judge of the Probate Court. He went into partnership with his brother under the name of J.W. and W. A. Burnside Company. He repaired the rambling two story Hotel of 15 guest rooms, the family living quarters, the Dahlonega Post Office and large porches. The hotel with the stables covered about one and one-half acres.

James Burnside died in 1884 of consumption and the Burnside fortune went to William A. who continued to be a leading citizen of the town. In a few years, a series of little strokes affected him mentally and he went to the insane asylum in Milledgeville where it was thought he would get better medical attention. He died there in 1891 at the age of 64 years.

The Burnside estate was quite large and W. A. had willed a good portion of it to Thomas E. Dyer, Mary Estalina Dyer and James W. Dyer, children of Arrena Dyer. It seemed to be generally known that James Burnside was the father of these children. William requested, but did not require, that the Dyer children change their name to Burnside when they reached the age of twenty-one, which they did. In time they had families of their own and "the Burnside family of Lumpkin" lives on.

The settling of this large estate began after 1891 and it was so involved that research has not yet revealed who got the hotel; however, without knowing the name of the new owner, it can be said that the name of the hotel was changed. Judge Ulysses V. Whipple of Cordele, Ga. visited Dahlonega in 1903. He wrote in his pictorial diary, published by his granddaughter in her book *Reflections of Northeast Georgia*, "There were two hotels in Dahlonega. I stopped at the Dahlonega Hotel, the oldest building, but said to be the best hotel. I found a good many students there." Judge Whipple made several pictures of buildings in the town and the

one with the sign on the front "The Dahlonega Hotel" is definitely the old Burnside. The hotel captioned "The Other Hotel" is easily recognized as the one Harrison Riley built. Under a picture of the Lumpkin County Courthouse, he wrote, "I believe this is the only instance I know of where the post office is in the county courthouse." So, the post office had been moved out of the hotel.

The changes in ownership of Dahlonega's first hotel were revealed in deeds. These were found in Lumpkin County records with the assistance of Carol Seabolt, Jack Anthony and Al Adams.

The Choice/Globe/Lawrence/Burnside/Dahlonega hotel burned in 1904.

Helen Head Green, daughter of Dr. Head and "Aunt Nine," remembers that one year in the next decade, almost all of the block on the southeast corner of the town square was Tom Smith's cabbage patch, a lucrative crop for farmers due to the special taste of mountain cabbage. The plants were a welcome sight after looking at the unsightly burned over block for so long a time. However, when the crop was harvested and the discarded parts of the cabbage were left on the ground to rot, the unpleasant odor made the block a disgrace again.

Millard Shelton came to the rescue. When automobiles were beginning to be plentiful, he built a gasoline station on the corner of Park and Main and a home on the corner of Park and Choice. Today, the Chamber of Commerce and Welcome Center replace the station and his home is occupied by Vintage Music. A building housing the Park Street Restaurant and some offices is in between them in the middle of the cabbage patch.

The stable lots in the second block were bought by the Head brothers. Homer, the doctor who would be 132 years old if he were living today, bought the first lot and built a two story, eleven room (counting the garret) home that had a wrap-around porch on two sides. A part of the lumber that he used was the Baptist Church's dismantled first building. The doctor was then a bachelor and his Aunt Vashti kept house for him until he married Nina McClure, who later became Dahlonega's "Aunt Nine," and a leading citizen of the town. Brother Gordon's home was also a large structure.

Aunt Nine, who loved building houses and repairing old ones, built a little house between the Head homes during the 1930's. It was occupied by Graham Dugas, a miner who caused Lumpkin's last gold excitement when he discovered a rich pocket of the ore at the old Calhoun mine.

This was the era of the leisure living, fun loving Dahlonega, and the time when the Gold Rush Celebrations started. But at that time, they were more like a homecoming than a tourist attraction.

Today, Doc's home is occupied by Rick's Restaurant. Gordon's home is an apartment house. The little house between them, remodeled and enlarged, is The Royal Guard Inn, a Bed and Breakfast that serves real breakfasts.