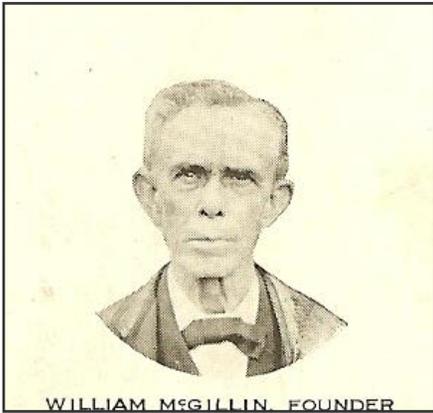


## A CURIOUS OLD PHILADELPHIA ALE HOUSE



WILLIAM MCGILLIN, FOUNDER

The "Bell-in-Hand," a little ale house hidden in Drury Street, between Thirteenth and Juniper streets has lost its old time proprietor and the widow takes his place. William McGillin, who for thirty years presided over it is dead, and with his death there ended a unique career, remarkable and interesting.

William McGillin was 75 years old when he died, and he had given way to the march of modern improvement sufficiently to permit the installation of a steam heating apparatus in his place just before his death. The engineers had installed it and in the installation had cast some debris on the floors of Mr. McGillin's beloved cellars. He followed them about and swept and dusted the debris away – and the exertion proved too much and he succumbed and died.

The cellar – with their rows of vats and hogsheads of ale, new, old, medium, light, dark, quickuse, stock India pale, Burton, brown stout and all that – were the pride of Mr. McGillin's good old heart. He fairly reveled and gloated in them and prided himself on their neatness and the quality of the brew. All

ales have their little peculiarities in Mr. McGillin's mind and he knew their characteristics and needs. He knew how long a barrel should be upon the skids before being tapped – some lay for a year or more before the plug went into their timber.

In the Bell-in-Hand tavern there was no revelry. It is a good old home-like place, where men could sit and drink their glass, but no one ever dreamt of being "gay," in the ordinary modern meaning of the word. Mr. McGillin was a small man and not fleshy. Yet he could more quickly anticipate and suppress a disturbance than many a larger man; and in the early days of the Bell-in-Hand – before its reputation as an abode of peace was made, he often did. The locality was favorable for the occasional entry of an unsuspecting person, who thought that an ale house was a fit and proper place to vent his surplus pugnacity and steam. A few words from the little man, spoken at one side or in a corner, soon enlightened him on that head.

So it came to pass that the Bell-in-Hand was famous in its sphere. Millionaire and politicians, statesmen, leaders in the old set, were glad to step into its shade and quaff of its amber fluid and eat the "roast potato," which latter constituted its unique and only free lunch. Given a roast potato, some butter, salt and pepper and a glass of nut brown ale, and many temporary kingdoms had been erected. And if perchance the stranger made himself known to the proprietor he was almost certain to be accorded an invitation to inspect the cellars, which inspection, with sundry "samples," was

an event. Mr. McGillin showed the cellars himself and drew the samples with his own hand; and so tender and affectionate was he in his regard for the various brews that no person could be hardhearted enough to refuse to drain every sample glass to the bottom. The sample glasses, fortunately were small, else the consequences of a visit might often have been serious.

Mr. McGillin, was tenacious in his adherence to the Bell-in-Hand, as it was – not as it ought to have been – either in the estimation of the antiquary, who would have altered it into the semblance of an old London ale house, or what should have been in the fancy of the modern man, who favors veneer, gilding, glass and marble. Indeed, it is reported that a wealthy Philadelphian, a member of the Philadelphia Club, offered to convert the Bell-in-Hand into a London taproom, with small, many-paned windows, oak settees, sanded floors and

all that, at his own expense. But Mr. McGillin refused.

Mr. McGillin vented much of his admiration upon his floors – in fact, he felt an affection for the floors, second only to the regard he felt for the various sorts of ale in his cellar. None of the floors were ever torn up. They were merely covered over with other floors, until now they are in triplicate, three layers of floor, three layers of steps in the stairs and all that. The houses are of old variety, with open fire-places and cupboards sunk into the walls. They were probably built in the early part of the last century. Their old residence arrangement has been interfered with but little in the establishment of the ale house – the only Bell-in-Hand ale house in Philadelphia. Long may it ring!

