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STORIES of New Jersey

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SCOTCH PLAINS

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THE OLD TIMOTHY BALL HOUSE -- WASHINGTON INN

At number 425 Ridgewood Road, Maplewood, in the shade of a giant walnut tree, stands a stately house of colonial design. From the tree hangs a sign bearing a black and white likeness of our first president and the words "Washington Inn."

Mounting the attractively landscaped terrace, the observant visitor notices features that unmistakably mark the house a veteran. The heavy sand stones of the foundation and the graceful line of the roof are characteristic of the houses built by the early settlers of this region. A portico, extending across the front, supported by five tall Ionic columns, and the three dormer windows in the attic, while not a part of the original house, have been added without marring its simplicity.

The house has a history reaching back more than two hundred years. For 109 years it remained in the possession of the descendants of the original builders. When in 1858 it fell into the hands of strangers it was neglected and allowed to fall into decay. But in 1919 it was taken over by the Washington Park Company and was repaired and restored as it stands today. Then one of the descendants of Timothy Ball, the builder, purchased it. He is Arthur Ball of Indiana, one of the makers of Ball Mason jars. Mr. Ball rents the house to others but only on condition that it shall be used as an inn, or in some way be kept open to the public.

A trip through the house under the guidance of the kindly keeper gives one a vivid picture of the way the early settlers lived, the hardships they endured and the courage they showed in making their homes in the unbroken wilderness.

Timothy Ball was a grandson of Edward Ball, one of the original settlers of Newark. One bleak December day in 1734 Timothy was married, and went with his young wife, Esther, to their log-cabin home out in the woodland to the west of Newark. For about nine years they lived there, until at last they were able to plan and build a house that was really large enough for them and their growing family.

It took nearly a year to build the new house on their property. It is partly of wood and partly of stone. Powerful oxen dragged great blocks of sandstone from neighboring quarries on sleds, while great oak timbers were cut and brought from the surrounding forests. As nails were hand-made in the blacksmith's shop and were very scarce, the heavy beams were fastened together with wooden pegs. At length the house was finished and, in accordance with a