



# Revolutionary Times



*Containing the Latest News from the Sons of the American Revolution*

## Colonial Taverns

“All Taverns they call ‘Ordinary’s’”  
“There is no distinction here between inns, taverns, ordinaries and public houses; they are all in one and are known by the appellation of taverns, public house or ordinary ... They are all very indifferent indeed compared to the inns in England.”

“So came the establishment of the ordinary. It was created for the entertainment of travelers and for the mutual comfort of the settlers. This was scarcely second to their providing a gathering place for the church.”

“[T]he General Court of Massachusetts made towns liable to a fine for not sustaining an ordinary. Great inducements were offered to persons keeping them. Land was granted, pastures to keep their cattle or exemption from church rates and school taxes.”

“The early ordinaries were not operated just for the convenience of travelers, but also for the comfort of the townspeople, exchange of news and opinions, and the sale of liquors and socializing.”

“Drunkards were severely punished, either thrown into stocks, whipped or fined. Tobacco was considered more sinful, degrading and harmful than liquor. Both the use of and planting were forbidden.”

Samuel Cole opened the first tavern on March 4, 1634 in Boston. It was not long before the demand and necessity for taverns throughout the colonies was overwhelming.

The first ordinaries were built by a town to accommodate travelers, so they offered bed and board, and sometimes drink. So, initially, they weren't exactly a tavern as we think of them as a place to go get a drink.

Taverns were traditional institutions “whose effect was to pull fledgling communities together.” “[E]arly taverns were not opened wholly for the convenience of travellers; they were for the comfort of the townspeople, for the interchange of news and opinions, the sale of solacing liquors, and the incidental sociability ... the importance of the tavern to its local neighbors was far greater than to travellers.”

“The tavern has ever played an important part in social, political, and military life, has helped to make history. From the earliest days when men gathered to talk over the terrors of Indian warfare; through the renewal of these fears in the French and Indian War ... and through all the anxious but steadfast years preceding and during the Revolution, these gatherings were held in the ordinaries or taverns.”

Arguably the taverns’ most important role in society (and American history) is the role they played in the beginning of the Revolutionary War. As anger spread throughout the colonies, many took to the tavern to discuss, argue, and debate what needed to be done.

“These discussions soon brought decisions, and by 1768 the Sons of Liberty were organized and were holding their meetings, explaining conditions, and advocating union and action. They adopted the name given by Colonel Barre to the enemies of passive obedience in America. Soon scores of towns in the colonies had their liberty trees or liberty poles.”

“The story of our War for Independence could not be dissociated from the old taverns, they are a part of our national history; and those which still stand are among our most interesting Revolutionary relics.”

This broadsheet is dedicated to the 250th Anniversary Celebration of the Declaration of Independence for more information visit the National Society Sons of the American Revolution website at: [www.sar.org](http://www.sar.org)

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