



by Donald Yates

1640 – The early taverns were called ordinaries and were often located near the ferries. Early ordinaries were established for the pleasure of the town folks. They were social meeting places for conveying news and selling beer and liquor.

There was a popular ordinary in Lynn, Massachusetts, that was a half-way house between Salem and Boston. The magistrates stopped in frequently, on their various trips from court to court. Games were prohibited by the Puritan Magistrates. The town drunks were publicly punished by being thrown into the bilboes, (an iron bar with shackles to confine the feet), locked in the stocks, and beaten with a whip.

1650 – Many New England taverns also served as meeting houses. Church councils had great influence on the activities of the ordinaries. Frequently the ordinary was also used for religious services.

Rum was produced in Barbados and in New England from imported molasses. It was also universally known as Kill-Devil. Early mixed rum drinks included toddy, sling, and grog. Calibogus was a blend of rum and beer. Mimbo was made from rum, water, and loaf sugar.

1660 – Many early ordinaries were owned by women. Life was rugged, and many men died young, leaving their widows to carry on their business. Women were very competent and reliable in business affairs. 1680 - Boston Judge Sewall enjoyed his home life. He was very kind to his fourteen children and his three wives. His mother-in-law was the richest lady in Boston.

1693 – Clarks Inn was built in 1693 in Philadelphia. It was located near the State House, whose members often visited.

William Penn often stayed for dinner and smoked his pipe on the porch. Clark's signboard painting was of a coach and horses. A negative attribute was that he used a turnspit dog for roasting their meat. A very common but cruel practice.

1700 – Boston's population was nearing 10,000 by this time. It had 34 ordinaries; four regular victuallers, 41 liquor retailers and a few sellers of cider. A young man was fined for throwing a beer pot at the maid. Being drunk was common.

Flip was an American concoction. It was dearly loved in Colonial days. Flip was made in a large pewter pitcher, filled two-thirds full of strong beer, sweetened with molasses, and flavored with a gill of New England Rum. A red hot iron was taken from the fire and thrust into the flip, which gave it a burnt, bitter taste so dearly cherished.

1710 – In Virginia there was no charge to any traveler for their hospitality and overnight stay. Tobacco was a commodity and used as a means of exchange.

The Virginia magistrates limited the number of ordinaries to one at the court house and one at the wharf of each county. They were usually limited to selling beer and cider.

1720 – The Virginia ordinaries had abundant supplies of liquor. They also had imported Malaga, Canary, and Madera wines.

1725 – The Fountain Inn of Medford, Massachusetts had a unique charm all of its own. It was built in 1725 and had a perfect location. All of the carriage travel to and from Maine to Boston, Eastern New Hampshire, and Northern Massachusetts flowed along the main road through Medford. The Fountain Inn treated its



customers with the best food and lodging. The clients always remembered the Fountain Inn and planned to return in the near future.

1730 – Baltimore's best tavern was the also called the Fountain Inn. It had an English Style courtyard, and its interior was well furnished. Many of the early taverns have vanished due to harsh weather and poor roofing material. This was a very sad situation, considering the thousands of hours of labor that went into building each one.

1740 – Each town elected its selectmen and they conducted town meetings within their taverns. Gloucester, Massachusetts had five selectmen in 1744 and their annual





salary was five dollars.

1750 – Tea and coffee came into general use during the same period. Coffee houses were popping up everywhere. People loved the odor of roasting coffee beans. One of the most notable establishments was the Boston Exchange Coffee House. It was a frightening seven stories high. They kept a register of marine news, ship arrivals, departures; and many prominent naval officers were registered there. President Monroe stayed there in 1817.

The tavern of the Moravian settlement in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania was called

“The Tavern Behind Nazareth.” It was a substantial brick structure. In 1754, under its first owner, Josiah Schaub, a cooper, and his wife, Mary, it carried a signboard with a large rose. It was afterwards known as The Rose.

William Penn owned the land and charged the owners one red rose each year as payment.

Abbott’s Tavern in Holden, Massachusetts was built in 1763, and was owned by three family generations of Abbotts. Their famous flip was known throughout the colonies, for its superior flavor and character. Most New England homes had their own loggerhead hung next to the fireplace ready for heating, and plunging into the next pitcher of flip.

Rum Punch was quite popular throughout New England and Virginia. It was made with oranges, lemons, limes, and pineapples, and a dash of rum. Sister Brandish of Harvard College baked homemade bread, and brewed her own beer. Good stuff!!!!

Many colonial taverns had their own specialty small beers. The residents brewed sassafras, birch, and spruce beers. They boiled roots and herbs with pumpkins and apple parings, and added sweeteners, such as maple syrup and molasses.

In England, the early Celts made and drank mead and cider. Wild honey and apple trees were plentiful.

Mead and Metheglin of fermented honey and herbs, has been made all over the world. They were both popular in England.

1770 – The town selectmen of Cambridge, Massachusetts met at the Blue Anchor Tavern, and enjoyed dinner and drink. Drinks included Flip, Wine, and Punch.

Ordination of new ministers was an occasion of great celebration, and they took place in the local tavern. At one Hartford Ordination, 24 people had dinner plus four bowls of toddy, 20 bowls of punch; five mugs of flip; 12 quarts of wine; three bottles of bitters; and 5 segars.



Sign-board of Three Crowns Tavern.

They did not have much room for food.

The Cromwell’s Head Tavern of Boston was owned by the Bracket Family. It was a high class hotel and they served wine, punch, porter, and liquor. A Virginian, George Washington stayed at the Cromwell and conferred with Governor Shirley on military activities.



Green Dragon Tavern.



1780 – Philadelphia experienced rapid growth after the Revolution. They had many taverns and visitors, and new immigrants.

1790 – One fourth of the buildings in New Amsterdam – New York – were taverns, for the sale of beer brandy and tobacco. Early taverns had British sign boards.

1800 – The City Hotel on Broadway in New York City was one of the largest hotels. It was a warm, welcome place. The dining room was spacious and was occupied by well-trained waiters. It also boasted a lady's dining room for concerts, dances, and lectures.

The New York Tavern – Black Horse, was famous for its Todd drinks, which were mainly made from West India rum.

1810 – Each tavern had a taproom, which was its largest room. They had a great fireplace, bare floors, chairs, and a writing desk for conducting business. The bar was of ornate wooden construction.

The lamp-lighter or night watchman went about his established rounds in many colonial towns, and called out the time and the weather. He carried a lantern and a staff, telling late comers that it is time to go home.

Englishman, John Melish, often praised the taverns of New York State. John noted that even in the backwoods at Little Falls, New York, breakfast tables included: tablecloth, tea tray, teapot, milk-pot, bowls, cups, sugar tongs, teaspoons, casters, plates, knives, forks, tea, sugar, cream, bread, butter, steak, eggs, cheese, potatoes, beets, salt, vinegar, and pepper, and all for twenty-five cents.

Turtle was also a prized meat. All of the ships that sailed to the Caribbean were expected to bring home sea turtles for a feast. Turtles were considered an elegant gift. A keg of limes was usually brought from the same trip.

At the Mendenhall Ferry Tavern, near Philadelphia, catfish and waffles were a very popular combination.

Metheglin was one of the favorite drinks of the American colonies. It was a favorite of Kentucky for over a hundred years. In Virginia, large plantations of honey locust trees were planted for the sweet beans. The beans were ground and mixed with honey, and fermented.

Cider became plentiful in New England and many folk switched from beer to apple cider. Cider was consumed by all ages; even though it contained alcohol.

The tedious cider making process

consisted of crushing apples in wooden mortars. This pomace was pressed in baskets. Primitive cider mills with a spring board and heavy maul crushed the apples in a hollowed log. Cider presses were later developed to meet the demand. The horse press was used in 1749 in the Hudson Valley. Cider was often mixed with rum, forming many of the most intoxicating, yet popular colonial drinks. Cider Royal was made by boiling four barrels into one.

A summer drink called Beverage was made from water, ginger, and molasses.

Ebulum was made from the juice of elderberries, sweetened and spiced.

Sack was a sweet wine of the sherry family. Sack-Posset, the drink of brides, was made from wine, rum, eggs, milk, and nutmeg. Sober brides were hard to find.

Negus, a pleasant wine punch, invented in the 1800's, by Colonel Negus, was improved by grating a fresh nutmeg.

Perry was made in the same manner as cider, only pears were used instead of apples.

English Ginger Beer was made from ginger, lemons, brown sugar or honey, and cream of tartar. It was brewed and fermented with yeast.

1819 - Hop Beer was identical to ginger beer, with the addition of hops.

1846 - Lemon Beer was very popular, and was identical to ginger beer, with the addition of a few more lemons.

1869 - Philadelphia Beer was identical to ginger beer just with a fancy name.

1869 - Spring Beer was brewed root beer made from sweet fern, sarsaparilla, wintergreen, sassafras, and prince's pine. This was made in 1846.

Spruce Beer, another root beer, was brewed with molasses, essence of spruce, sugar and yeast.

1850 - Ginger Pop - was identical to ginger beer, only the term Pop was used to

imply a soft drink for the Temperance Movement, even though it was brewed identical to ginger beer using yeast and sugar.

Root Beer was brewed from natural ingredients – hops, burdock, yellow dock, sarsaparilla, dandelion, and spikenard, plus oils of spruce and sassafras. “What's Updock?”

Other interesting early beverages included: Ratafia, Syllabus, Bishop, Cardinal, Tabourney, and Elixir.

New England taverns were famous for their sign boards. The signs were constructed of various materials such as: painted carved wood, hand-carved stone, molded from terra-cotta and plaster; also forged from brass and cast iron.

Some of the notable sign boards in Boston included: The Golden Ball of Goldsmith, Daniel Parker. A famous lemon trader, John Crosby, had his sign painted as a basket of lemons. A nautical instrument shop in Boston had a carved figure of a sailor with a cocked hat, blue coat, short breeches, holding a quadrant instrument in his hand.

Another favorite subject for sign boards was Indian Chiefs. Notable ones included the Stickney Tavern of Concord, New Hampshire; and the Wells Tavern of Concord.

Dedham, Massachusetts had a famous hostelry in 1700, which had a sigh-board: Lieutenant Joshua Fisher, Apothecary, Surveyor, and Innkeeper.

All of the planning and operations of the Revolutionary War were conducted in the taverns, away from the British. By 1768, the Sons of Liberty were organized and advocating Union.

Reference:

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