

Name _____



Date _____

Tavern Keeper

By Sharon Fabian

From the carved sign hanging out front to the conversation inside, a colonial tavern was an interesting place. A colonial tavern was part bar, part restaurant, part motel, and part stable. It was also the place where meetings of all sorts and events like formal balls were held.

An important task for someone opening up a tavern would have been to have a sign made. Since many people in colonial times could not read, a sign with a picture was a necessity. Tavern signs were often carved from wood, but some were also painted on plaster or cast in metal. The sign indicated the name of the tavern. Some tavern names, such as The King's Arms, showed the tavern keeper's allegiance to England. Some, such as the Washington Tavern, showed the tavern keeper's American patriotism. Other names, such as the Goat and Compass or The Pig and Carrot are more of a mystery.

Inside the tavern, travelers and locals would all be made welcome. Travelers might want dinner and overnight accommodations, as well as place outside for their horse. Locals might just want a place to meet and socialize.

A typical tavern might have several small rooms and one large room on the main floor. There might be a parlor where lady travelers could rest and a taproom where beer and cider were served. The large room might have been used for elegant balls on special occasions. Upstairs, the tavern often had sleeping quarters. In the early days of colonial taverns, visitors might sleep four to a mattress in one big sleeping room. Later, private rooms were added to some taverns. Downstairs in the basement, or possibly in a separate building out back, would be the kitchen as well as a place for the tavern workers to sleep. Behind the tavern, there was often a stable where travelers could rest their horses.

Smaller taverns only served beer and cider, but larger ones might have served wine and spirits as well. Taverns also served meals - breakfast, dinner, and supper.

A night's stay in a tavern in colonial times, including meals and a stable for the traveler's horse might cost about \$2.00. Here are the prices charged by one colonial tavern: Lodging - \$.12 1/2, Breakfast - \$.37 1/2, Dinner - \$.50, Supper - \$.37 1/2, Lodging for the horse - \$.50.

Local townspeople often came to the tavern to talk and catch up on the news.

Some government leaders and businessmen conducted business over meetings at the tavern. Visitors to the tavern read local and foreign newspapers there.

Since the tavern sometimes had the only large meeting room in town, a variety of special events were held in the tavern. Colonial taverns hosted concerts and auctions among other activities.

The tavern keeper had to keep all of this running smoothly. He or she had to be a master of many trades. Most colonial taverns were kept by men, but not all. According to one estimate, a woman operated one of every five colonial taverns. Tavern keepers at that time were usually respected citizens of the community. Citizens wanted a tavern keeper who could prevent trouble and guarantee safety for the travelers staying there.

Whether it was the Raleigh Tavern in Williamsburg, the Man Full of Trouble Tavern on Philadelphia's waterfront, or the Pig and Carrot, managing a tavern was a busy and demanding job.

Name _____



Date _____

Tavern Keeper

Questions

- _____ 1. In colonial times, taverns were _____.
- A. present in only a few towns
 - B. popular meeting places
 - C. present only in Williamsburg and Philadelphia
 - D. not allowed
- _____ 2. A tavern sign told _____.
- A. whether the tavern had any vacancies
 - B. whether the tavern was open or closed
 - C. the tavern's menu
 - D. the name of the tavern
- _____ 3. A tavern usually included _____.
- A. rooms for eating, drinking, and sleeping, and a place to stable horses
 - B. private sleeping rooms for each guest
 - C. dining rooms for elegant meals and fast food service for quicker meals
 - D. one room
- _____ 4. A tavern keeper _____.
- A. served drinks
 - B. served food
 - C. provided accommodations for travelers
 - D. all of the above
- _____ 5. According to the article, which of the following is true?
- A. Women could work in taverns but not be a tavern keeper.
 - B. Women were not allowed to be tavern keepers.
 - C. Some tavern keepers were women.
 - D. All tavern keepers were women.
- _____ 6. The cost of a meal in a colonial tavern was about _____.
- A. \$20.00
 - B. less than \$.01
 - C. \$.50 or less
 - D. \$2.00
- _____ 7. _____ would probably have been in the basement of the tavern.
- A. sleeping rooms
 - B. the kitchen
 - C. stables
 - D. the taproom
- _____ 8. The Pig and Carrot was a _____.
- A. drink
 - B. meal
 - C. tavern
 - D. none of the above

Name _____



Date _____

Write a paragraph about the services provided by a colonial tavern. Include information about the activities that often took place in a tavern.

Create an interesting name for a colonial tavern. Draw a sign for the tavern, and write a brief explanation about why you chose that name.
