

Celebrating Writers and Writing in our Communities

Volume 1

Issue 1 *Celebrating Writers and Writing in our
Communities*

Article 16

October 2019

Colonial Tavern

Zyne Morris-Slattery

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/rwc>

Recommended Citation

Morris-Slattery, Zyne (2019) "Colonial Tavern," *Celebrating Writers and Writing in our Communities*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 1 , Article 16.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/rwc/vol1/iss1/16>

This Poetry Informational/Argument is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Digital Commons @ Humboldt State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Celebrating Writers and Writing in our Communities* by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Humboldt State University. For more information, please contact kyle.morgan@humboldt.edu.

Colonial Tavern

By: Zayne Morris-Slattery

Did you know that a tavern keeper kept and received all the mail in their tavern because there were no post offices? The colonial tavern keeper was an innkeeper, much like a person who runs an inn in modern times. A colonial tavern keeper was a very important part of the town because he provided rest for travelers, held formal balls and meetings, and also provided food and drinks for the town. Tavern keepers had several daily duties to tend to. The Colonial tavern keeper provided rest for tired travelers and horses. Traveling by horse was the fastest way to travel during the colonial times. Travelers would typically find a tavern in a city or town, according to Edwin Tunis, "It was its own building with two separate floors. The upper floor was where the beds were for sleeping, and the lower floor was where the bar and tables were for eating..." The main drinks at the tavern bar would typically be hard alcohol and beer. The tavern keeper would also have many other duties. First, the tavern keeper would have to go to the butcher very early in the morning to get meat. Next, they would have to go to the miller to get yeast for brewing beer. Then, the tavern keeper would harvest fruits and vegetables from the garden. Finally, he would return to the tavern and start preparing food and drinks for the day. The tavern keeper would also buy many tools and items from a lot of the other colonial trades. An example of the other trades he would visit would be the blacksmith, the carpenter, and the chandler. These trades were necessary to run the tavern and help the townspeople work together and survive.

The tavern keeper used many tools to perform their trade. A good example is a spitjack which was used to cook meat. Knives, pots, pans, forks, spoons, plates, and glasses were some other tools important to the tavern keeper. The glasses were used for serving drinks such as rum and beer along with other popular drinks of the time. Knives, forks, spoons, and plates were used for eating food. Likewise, knives, pots, and pans were used for preparing and cooking food for the guests. Cooking on a spitjack was a very long process. This process required spinning meat on a skewer for twelve to fourteen hours a day. Nobody really liked spinning a spitjack for that long, it was tiresome and hard, plus there were other chores that had to be done. So the tavern keeper used dogs to turn the spitjack. The dogs were small and nimble, so they could run fast. According to NPR, "Bondeson thinks possibly it's the queen of England's favorite dog, the Welsh Corgi," that turned the spitjack. First the tavern keeper would put the meat on the spitjack. A spitjack was a metal stand that had a bar through it so the spitjack would turn. Then the spitjack dog would be tied onto the spitjack with a rope. Next a spitjack dog would be placed on burning hot coals so it would run. Finally, the dog would run and the spitjack would turn evenly to get a nice even cook on the meat. This is how the tavern keeper made meat. The tavern keeper made many products for the travelers and town people.

Beer and alcohol were served at formal balls, parties, and meetings, along with meat and salads. A colonial tavern keeper had to know how to calculate prices. This meant that they had to know basic mathematics. According to Kathy Wilmore, "Small colonial towns had no post offices, so mailmen often left mail at the

inn. Townsfolk would stop by to see if any mail had come for them." The colonial tavern keeper also would serve drinks to people of all ages, according to The Montgomery School Organization, "The principal drinks were Rum, small beer, and cider. These were used freely by men, women, and children." The tavern is where the townspeople went to gossip. According to The Montgomery School Organization, "The tavern or ordinary was not only a lodging place for travelers but also so a drinking house and a place of general gossip for the village and neighborhood."

In conclusion, a colonial tavern keeper was a very important part of every town because he provides rest for travelers, town entertainment, mail services along with food and drinks for the townspeople. Many people are tavern keepers at hotels in modern times people have employees and there is now high tech gadgets involved to help them do their trade. My trade is performed locally by all of the hotels in Humboldt County on a smaller scale, they provide a place to rest for travelers. I would not like to perform this trade because I don't want to burn little dogs feet and I would not enjoy serving alcohol to the townspeople due to problems it can cause. I still think the colonial tavern keeper was important because this is where hotels started and they were the center of town. I think that the colonial tavern keeper was one of the most important trades in the colony.