

'Mixed Company': Colonial American Taverns' Connections to the Atlantic World,
1620-1775

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Down the Road, where it swept to the right to go round the foot of the hill, there was a large inn... Bree stood at an old meeting of ways; another ancient road crossed the East Road just outside the dike at the western end of the village, and in former days Men and other folk of various sorts had traveled much on it. *Strange as News from Bree* was still a saying in the Eastfarthing, descending from those days, when news from North, South, and East could be heard in the inn, and when the Shire-hobbits used to go more often to hear it.

–Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*¹

On June 8, 1744, Dr. Alexander Hamilton stepped into a Philadelphia tavern.² Less than a month earlier Hamilton practiced medicine and endured the grueling politics of Annapolis, but on this day he was a full-time gentleman tourist on his way to New York and back again. He welcomed the adventure—a distraction from his tuberculosis. Flies buzzed Hamilton’s head as his eyes adjusted to the tavern’s dim interior.³ The cloying scent of sweat lingered in the crowded room, mixing with the clinking glasses and murmuring patrons. Hamilton found a seat at a large table and greeted the “mixed company” of “Scots, English, Dutch, Germans, and Irish... Roman Catholicks, Church men, Presbyterians, Quakers, Newlightmen, Methodists, Seventh day men, Moravians, Anabaptists, and one Jew” with his signature cough.⁴ As the men’s bellies felt full and their spirits light, the twenty strangers “of different nations and

¹ J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994), 162.

² This was not the Alexander Hamilton who served as America’s first Secretary of the Treasury in 1789, but rather a Maryland physician who decided to travel the eastern seaboard in 1744 (eleven years before Hamilton the Federalist was even born).

³ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a tavern is “a public house or tap-room where wine was retailed; a dram shop.” Yet, the *Oxford English Dictionary* also equates “tavern” with “public house.” The *Dictionary*’s definition of a public house is as follows: “a building whose principal business is the sale of alcoholic drinks to be consumed on the premises; a pub, a tavern,” or “an inn or hostelry providing food and lodging for travellers or members of the public, and usually licensed for the sale of alcohol.” Colonial Americans called taverns “inns,” “public houses,” “ordinaries,” “alehouses,” and “coffee houses.” Although inns, taverns, and alehouses held individual distinctions in England, American taverns were a mix of the three, and thus did not garner such distinctions. Consequently, since colonial Americans did not distinguish between the different names for public drinking places, neither will I. Taverns will be addressed primarily as “tavern,” “inn,” “public house,” and “alehouse.” Only in direct quotes will they be referred to as “ordinary” or “coffee house.” For further detail on these distinctions, see Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History, 1200-1830* (London and New York: Longman House, 1983), 5;

⁴ Alexander Hamilton, *Gentleman’s Progress: The Itinerarium of Dr. Alexander Hamilton, 1744*, ed. Carl Bridenbaugh (Williamsburg, VA: University of North Carolina Press, 1948), 20.

religions” divided into conversations on politics and the possibility of a French war.⁵ Hamilton eavesdropped on a group of Quakers ardently debating flour prices and religion while a gentleman next to him inquired about news from Maryland. Yet, Hamilton exchanged ideas in a much larger setting than the tavern hall itself. This Philadelphia inn, along with hundreds of taverns across the eastern American seaboard, served as points of local, continental, and Atlantic connection. Geographical and ideological barriers eroded within the walls of the public house.

Although historians have noted colonial taverns’ importance for local and continental connections, they have not adequately framed taverns as *Atlantic* spaces of culture, communication and consumption. Pre-Revolutionary North American ordinaries provided taverngoers of all classes, and for a time all races and genders, unprecedented outlets to the Atlantic world. As colonists conversed with travelers, read newspapers, sent and received transatlantic letters, and consumed beverages in public houses, colonial taverngoers established, confirmed, and realized their position in the Atlantic world. Some other Atlantic outlets like churches and dockyards existed in the colonies, but neither matched the inclusiveness, convenience, or frequency of taverns (the availability of alcohol did not hurt inns’ popularity either). Within early American tavern walls, members from every walk of life and corner of the Atlantic world shared gossip, ideologies, alcoholic beverages, and sometimes beds.⁶ Even pious church leaders occasionally enjoyed a pint among sailors, sinners, and citizens at their local inn.⁷

⁵ Hamilton, *Gentleman’s Progress*, 20.

⁶ In a tavern at Bohemia Ferry, Alexander Hamilton noted: “I went to bed at 9 at night; my landlord, his wife, daughters, and I lay all in one room.” Hamilton, *Gentleman’s Progress*, 10; Kym Rice, *Early American Taverns: For the Entertainment of Friends and Strangers* (Chicago: Regnery Gateway, 1983), 103.

⁷ David W. Conroy, *In Public Houses: Drink and the Revolution of Authority in Colonial Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 2; April Lee Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia: Intercolonial Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 60-85; Samuel Sewall, *The Diary of Samuel Sewall, 1674-1729*, 2 Vols., ed. M. Halsey Thomas (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), I, 258, 492, 552, II, 626, 635, 905, 947; Crawford pointed out that in the early Puritan days church services were sometimes held at the tavern in Mary Caroline Crawford, *Little Pilgrimages Among Old New England Inns: Being an Account*

Moreover, while British American tavern patrons' consumption habits connected them to the trade economy of the entire Atlantic World, most of colonists' tavern interactions associated them with the Anglo-Atlantic world, which consisted of the European empires and colonies in and around the northern Atlantic Ocean.

Besides serving as primary hubs of Atlantic culture, communication, and consumption, colonial taverns also reflected colonists' shifting ideologies. Prior to the French and Indian War, colonists deemed themselves English citizens abroad and consequently sought out public houses for numerous Atlantic connections. Thus, inns met Habermas' three requirements for "public spheres;" they disregarded status, became domains of common concern, and were relatively inclusive. But the British Empire considered Americans second-class citizens, and the aftermath of the French and Indian War only drove this point home.⁸ After 1763, patriots began to utilize taverns primarily as continental connectors, which was not necessarily a conscious choice, but rather a reflection of the turbulent American political and economic climate. Ironically, as upper-class patriots lauded these public spheres as key sites of American independence, many also attempted to prevent the lower classes from fomenting rebellion—and even worse, democracy—in taverns. Taverns began to shift from "literary" public spheres into "political" ones, and with this transition arrived increased class restrictions in public houses.⁹ But in spite

of *Little Journeys to Various Quaint Inns and Hostelries of Colonial New England* (Boston: L.C. Page and Company, 1907), 3.

⁸ For more on American's shifting identities, see T.H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), xiii; T.H. Breen, "Ideology and Nationalism on the Eve of the American Revolution: Revisions Once More in Need of Revisions," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 84, No. 1 (Jun., 1997): 22, 26-39; John Murrin, "A Roof Without Walls: the Dilemma of American National Identity," in *Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity*, ed. Richard Beeman, Stephen Botein, and Edward C. Carter III (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 334-39; Gary B. Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution: The Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2006), 44.

⁹ See Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991). Taverns were public spheres because they existed between the private sphere (home) and the sphere of public authority (government). Before the Revolutionary era, taverns also met Habermas' three requirements for public spheres—they disregarded status, became domains of

of status restrictions, all classes of white colonists still managed to employ taverns first for their transatlantic, and later American, connections.

Until the last twenty years, scholars have over generalized colonial tavern life. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Oscar F. Northington, Jr., Alice Morse Earle, Mary Caroline Crawford, and Edward Field considered taverns simple but important community-building establishments.¹⁰ Northington asserted, “During the Colonial and National periods of [America’s] history perhaps no single group of establishments played a more important part in the lives of the populace than did the taverns.”¹¹ While these early scholars noted colonial taverns’ significance as gathering places, they did not appreciate taverns’ complex Atlantic connections and implications.

More recently, historians have taken a much more analytical approach to inns’ implications for early American community, identity, and rebellion. David Conroy and Peter Thompson, for instance, investigated early American tavern culture in specific regions.¹² Yet,

common concern, and were relatively inclusive. Colonial taverns most closely resembled Habermas’ “modern” public sphere, since colonists used them as a link to the economic, social, and political conditions of the Atlantic World. Like Habermas’ second incarnation of the public sphere, early American taverns restricted certain members. However, they restricted fewer groups in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century than the revolutionary period. As taverns became more exclusive and tied to politics during the Revolutionary War, upper class colonials assembled in these “modern” public spheres to pen revolutionary documents, plan insurrections, and rally support.

¹⁰ Oscar F. Northington, Jr., “The Taverns of Old Petersburg, Virginia,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Second Series, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Jul., 1936): 340-346; Alice Morse Earle, *Stage-Coach and Tavern Days* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912); Crawford, *Little Pilgrimages* (1907); Edward Field, *The Colonial Tavern: A Glimpse of New England Town Life in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Providence, RI: Preston and Rounds, 1896).

¹¹ Northington, “Taverns,” 340.

¹² Conroy, *In Public Houses*; Conroy investigated taverns—“the most numerous public institution in colonial New England”—as a public stage where southeastern Massachusetts’s men and women challenged authority and acknowledged a new range of social, economic, and political values (2, 6, 83). Conroy noted the old world “drinking habits” that spurred a “temperance-tavern conflict” between anxious Puritan leaders and the taverngoing populace, but did not extend his Atlantic indicators further; Peter Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution: Taverngoing and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999). Thompson argued that pre-Revolutionary Philadelphians viewed the tavern as an open and inclusive public space—“a site where they could express and, if necessary, defend their complicated and contested notions of community and society”(4). But after the French and Indian War, Philadelphia’s taverngoers increasingly attended inns among men of similar background or belief. Revolution-era taverns represented only a portion of Philadelphia’s spectrum of opinion, and thus the contradictory link between rum punch and revolution emerged.

Conroy's argument for public houses' decisive role in the transition from Puritan to republican Massachusetts ignored Atlantic connections, and although Thompson noted that Philadelphia inns "brought together rich, poor, and middling, Quaker, Presbyterian, and Anglican," he also neglected the influence of transatlantic taverngoers.¹³ Sharon Salinger and Benjamin Carp strove in recent studies to reveal British American taverns' larger significance.¹⁴ Salinger built upon and diverged from Conroy and Thompson's geographically limited arguments by examining the public house "throughout the mainland British colonies rather than within a smaller geographic area," while Carp explicitly claimed that "New York taverngoers...used public houses as their conduits to the rest of the Atlantic world."¹⁵ But besides a particularly informative section on early taverns' Dutch and English origins, Salinger did not analyze Atlantic impacts on North American tavern development, and Carp did not expand on his brief statement of taverns' importance as Atlantic connectors.

Thus, numerous historians have grappled with early American taverns' roles in communication, class, and revolution, but none has adequately placed these public spheres in a transatlantic context.¹⁶ This article builds upon Carp's assertion that New Yorkers used taverns

¹³ Thompson, *Rum Punch*, 16.

¹⁴ Sharon V. Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking in Early America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); Salinger also diverged from past scholarship by arguing that early American taverns' old world roots encouraged exclusion instead of inclusion and preserved traditional culture rather than implicating the transformation of society; Benjamin L. Carp, *Rebels Rising: Cities and the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). Although an analysis of major American cities' impact on revolutionary fervor, Carp's argument that "as key nodes in Atlantic networks of communication, taverns encouraged a broad spectrum of white men to engage in voluntary action" brought to light a glaring stimulus so many historians overlooked (63). Conroy, Thompson, and Salinger each argued for public houses' position as insurgent hotbeds, but they did not recognize taverns as Atlantic networks of communication. Carp, on the other hand, contended that because New York taverns' harbored close social and communication relations with "far-flung mercantile networks," they became "intimately connected with the Atlantic world"(66). Unfortunately, Carp did not develop his statement of taverns' transatlantic connections. On the contrary, Carp concentrated on local and continental contingencies for the remainder of the chapter, which developed New York taverns' importance in the Revolutionary War but did little to advance his Atlantic assertions. Moreover, Carp provided no primary evidence for his argument that taverns were key conduits of Atlantic contact.

¹⁵ Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking*, 5; Carp, *Rebels Rising*, 66.

¹⁶ For a recent and thorough investigation of Madeira wine's transatlantic transmission through a number of public and private spaces, including taverns, see David Hancock, *Oceans of Wine: Madeira and the Emergence of*

as “conduits to the rest of the Atlantic world,” first, by describing the numerous Atlantic “conduits” that taverngoers utilized across the British American colonies and, second by explaining how colonists’ tavern interactions reflected the transformation of their national identity.

Because taverns were not American inventions, colonists sought out pre-Revolutionary public houses for their familiar Old World cultural markers like regulations, drinking habits, spatial organization, and correspondence. Since the journey across the Atlantic Ocean did little to change the inn, it served as the New World’s strongest link to Europe. Like their Old World equivalents, early American taverns were also widespread—in fact, they were the most common non-domestic buildings in British North America. Colonists even often constructed taverns prior to erecting a church because of public houses’ importance for trade and community.¹⁷ The ratio of public houses was very high in major port cities like New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston, and the burgeoning intercontinental road system was dotted with inns for needy travelers. Although the southern colonies did not have as many taverns as the North, the South still supported limited rural, frontier, and urban public houses.¹⁸ As a result, no matter where a weary traveler journeyed, he was almost certain to find a public house along the way.

American Trade and Taste (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 239-271. Hancock studies much more than Madeira’s role in the public house, but provides a telling and transatlantic interpretation of its alehouse distribution and consumption; Kym Rice also presents a broad survey of colonial tavern life in Rice, *Early American Taverns*.

¹⁷ As David Pietersz DeVries dejectedly explained, “...I was daily with Commander Kieft, generally dining with him when I went to the fort, he told me that he had now had a fine inn, built in stone, in order to accommodate the English who daily passed with their vessels from New England to Virginia, from whom he suffered great annoyance, and who might now lodge in the tavern. I replied that it happened well for the travelers, but there was great want of a church, and that it was a scandal to us when the English passed there, and saw only a mean barn in which we preached...” David Pietersz DeVries, *Voyages from Holland to America* (New York, 1853), 148; David Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, 240.

¹⁸ Thomas Prince, *The Vade Mecum for America: or A Companion for Traders and Travellers* (Boston, 1731); William Mylne compared tavern ratios in the North and the South, explaining, “In a few days I came to Philadelphia, in my way I passed through many pleasant villages in a fine cultivate country. Indeed here a man travels as much at his ease as in England, there being good inns and good beds, proper accomadations for ones horse, a great difference betwixt this and to the southward where I have road thirty miles without seeing a house.” William Mylne, *Travels in the Colonies in 1773-1775, Described in the Letters of William Mylne*, ed. Ted Ruddock

Whether one visited a tavern in Boston or Bristol in the seventeenth or eighteenth century, he could expect a fairly uniform experience. Although some inns were better maintained and more hospitable than others, nearly all consisted of a “great hall” with one or more tables where patrons could gather to converse with each other and “get all kinds of refreshment.”¹⁹ Archaeological excavation has shown that many colonial taverngoers even ate and drank out of English-made ceramics.²⁰ Furthermore, since taverns often had only one large table, colonists had little choice but to rub elbows with their fellow patrons.

A tavernkeeper often tended to patrons in the great hall and thus largely contributed to whether a taverngoer’s experience was good or bad. For instance, Daniel Fisher called his Philadelphia tavernkeeper “a very civil courteous Quaker” who “confirmed in me the favorable opinion I had long entertained of their peaceable, inoffensive society,” while Philip Vickers Fithian remarked that his tavernkeeper Mrs. Laidler’s accommodations were “good” after dining on “fryed Chicken, Ham” and “good Porter.”²¹ After having his fill of conversation, food, and drink in the great hall a taverngoer could either retreat to a communal sleeping room or continue on his journey.

(Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1993), 73; Daniel B. Thorp, “Taverns and Tavern Culture on the Southern Colonial Frontier: Rowan County, North Carolina, 1753-1776,” *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 62, No. 4 (Nov., 1996): 661-688; Kathleen Brown noted that the Southern spirit of hospitality facilitated travelers and Virginia’s rather isolated plantation settlements largely counteracted the need for inns. Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 268.

¹⁹ Peter Kalm, ed. Adolph B. Benson, *Peter Kalm’s Travels in North America: The English Version of 1770* (New York: Wilson-Erickson Inc., 1937), 174.

²⁰ Hamilton, *Gentleman’s Progress*, 20; For instance, an archaeological excavation of an early-eighteenth-century whalers’ tavern on Cape Cod (the Wellfleet Tavern) unearthed a large variety of ceramics imported from England, including sgraffito, mottled ware, salt-glazed stoneware, combed slipware, and delft. Erik Ekholm and James Deetz, “Wellfleet Tavern,” *Natural History*, 80 (1971), 48-58.

²¹ Hamilton, *Gentleman’s Progress*, 7; Daniel Fisher, “Extracts from the Diary of Daniel Fisher, 1755,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. XVII (1893): 263-264; Philip Vickers Fithian, *Journal & Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, 1773-1774: a Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion*, ed. Hunter Dickinson Farish (Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg, Inc., 1943), 272.

In the early seventeenth century, British American public houses entertained a mixed company of patrons. However, like European taverns, North American inns became more exclusionary over time, and by the eighteenth century, colonial leaders banned slaves, servants, and Indians from taverns as a reaction to the upper classes' perceived loss of control and order. Many women were also excluded and Virginia even denied sailors entry.²² White colonists' taverngoing experience also became increasingly regulated, especially in Massachusetts. When John Josselyn arrived in Boston in 1637, he quickly realized the Puritans' suspicion of drunken strangers. Josselyn observed that if an unfamiliar person visited an inn, "he was presently followed by one appointed to that Office, who would thrust himself into company uninvited, and if he called for more drink than the Officer thought in his judgment he could soberly bear away, he would presently countermand it, and appoint the proportion, beyond which he could not get one drop."²³ Yet, peripheral groups still managed to drink in taverns, which contributed to heightened English anxiety about native drunkenness, lower class debauchery, and slave rebellion.²⁴

In spite of various regulatory attempts, the spatial and consumer cultures of the Old World alehouses facilitated close contact between a "mixed company" of patrons, which occasionally resulted in a miserable experience.²⁵ On a journey through the southern colonies in 1774, for instance, Philip Vickers Fithian endured the company of a "sick Woman that kept a

²² Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking*, 23; also see Conroy, *In Public Houses* for more on tavern regulation in the early American colonies.

²³ John Josselyn, *John Josselyn, A Colonial Traveler: A Critical Edition of Two Voyages to New England*, ed. Paul Lindholdt (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1988), 120-21.

²⁴ See Peter Mancall, *Deadly Medicine: Indians and Alcohol in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995) for a thorough investigation of Native Americans' relationship with alcohol. Also, see Jill Lepore, *New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan* (Vintage, 2006); Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh, *The Many-Headed Hydra: The Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 174-210 for in-depth examinations of the New York City slave uprisings instigated largely in taverns. Rediker and Linebaugh point out that the New York slave conspiracy of 1741 was an Atlantic event, since the conspirators came from Africa, Ireland, Spain, and Jamaica.

²⁵ Hamilton, *Gentleman's Progress*, 20.

dismal groaning all night” at one tavern and at another had “for company all the night...Bugs in every part of [his] Bed--& in the next room several noisy Fellows playing at Billiards.”²⁶ Sarah Kemble Knight, a rare female traveler, experienced a broad spectrum of tavern accommodations during her unaccompanied trip from Boston to New Haven. One public house was “clean” and “comfortable,” but because of the “Clamor of some of the Town tope-ers in next Room,” Knight could not sleep, so she composed her resentments in a pithy poem:

I ask thy Aid, O Potent Rum!
 To Charm these wrangling Topers Dum.
 Though hast their Giddy Brains possest—
 The man confounded with the Beast—
 And I, poor I, can get no rest.
 Intoxicate them with thy fumes:
 O still their Tongues till morning comes!²⁷

Like so many other taverngoers, Knight experienced the downside of close tavern contact that sleepless night. In this case, Knight’s discomfort drove her to hope for the utter drunkenness of the “wrangling Topers” just so they would let her rest. Whether or not the “Potent Rum” stilled the men’s tongues until morning, Knight’s tavern experience was largely indicative of inns across the thirteen colonies. Just because colonists enjoyed sharing conversation and drink with their fellow tavern patrons, they did not necessarily want to share a room.

Such close quarters mixed with too much alcohol sometimes even proved hazardous. For instance, a drunken man’s advances caused his tavern landlady to fortify her bedchamber and

²⁶ Philip Vickers Fithian, *Journal & Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, 1773-1774: a Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion*, ed. Hunter Dickinson Farish (Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg, Inc., 1943), 272, 146.

²⁷ Sarah Kemble Knight, *The Journal of Madam Knight: Including an Introductory Note by Malcom Greiberg and Wood Engravings by Michael McCurdy* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1972), 9, 11; For more on female tavern patrons, see Susan Clair Imbarrato, *Traveling Women: Narrative Visions of Early America* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), chapter 2. Also see Nancy Isenberg, *Sex & Citizenship in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), chapter 3 for why women were excluded from the public sphere in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

defend herself with “a chamber pot charged to the brim with female ammunition.”²⁸ Like the landlady, John Fontaine also endured a dangerous incident at an inn in Maryland. Fontaine and his comrade were forced to draw swords and fight their way out of a tavern when a group of “about eight rogues” attempted to rob them.²⁹

Yet all interaction was not raucous within the tavern hall. In fact, like their Old World counterparts, British American public houses served as primary outlets for transatlantic news and written correspondence. For instance, most tavernkeepers stocked newspapers for curious guests.³⁰ Early American newspapers imitated their English counterparts and imported most of their news from Great Britain and Europe. London merchants attempted to keep “all persons in his majestys colonies in North America” furnished with British newspapers of the “freshest advices” through the packet boat system, which was a cumbersome and expensive method of transatlantic communication driven by merchant shipmasters. But not even *The London Courant* or *Wilcock West Indian Intelligencer* could compete with the currency of direct correspondence, since newspapers’ information was often months behind an Atlantic traveler’s knowledge and limited in scope.³¹

Printed papers also required literate readers, of which there were few in the early American colonies.³² Select groups of readers could transfer their knowledge to the illiterate, but

²⁸ William Byrd, *The Prose Works of William Byrd: Narratives of a Colonial Virginian*, ed. Louis B. Wright (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1966), 96.

²⁹ John Fontaine, *The Journal of John Fontaine: An Irish Huguenot Son in Spain and Virginia, 1710-1719*, ed. Edward Porter Alexander (Charlottesville, VA: The University of Virginia Press, 1972), 120.

³⁰ Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic, 1675-1740: An Exploration of Communication and Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 167; Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, 270.

³¹ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, February 19, 1756. This article provided prices and issue frequency for many different imported newspapers from the British Empire, including *The General Advertiser*, *Daily Advertiser*, *London Courant*, *General Evening Post*, *St. James Evening Post*, *Whitehall Evening Post*, *Spectator*, *Gentleman of London Magazine*, *London Gazette*, *French Hague Gazette*, and *Wilcock West Indian Intelligencer*; David Cressy, *Coming Over: Migration and Communication between England and New England in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), chapters 9 & 10.

³² Steele, *The English Atlantic*, 133-167, 266. Steele noted, “a bare majority of white adult male households and about one third of white adult female households were literate in colonial North America in 1660...Adult male

this was not an effective strategy. When the news arrived at a Pennsylvania inn, for instance, Dr. Hamilton observed, “there came great crowds of the politicians of the town to read the news, and we had plenty of orthographicall blunders.” Although Hamilton and his fellow taverngoers learned about “some prizes taken by the Philadelphia privateers” from the politicians, this information was filled with errors and bias.³³ Consequently, while newspapers provided colonists’ key contacts to the Old World, they could not match direct correspondence with European travelers in alacrity, intimacy, or pervasiveness.

Letters were even more personal forms of Atlantic correspondence than newspapers, and taverns served as the primary outlet for sending and receiving transatlantic missives. New York developed an intercolonial post in the 1690s, which spread through the colonies and soon connected the city to Boston and Philadelphia. This limited intercolonial post combined with a transatlantic packet boat system to extend colonists’ correspondence opportunities far beyond the colonies. But since the packet boat system was not an economic success, ship captains, crewmembers, and travelers worked with colonists to deliver notes across the Atlantic. Shipmasters hung up mailbags in taverns where colonists could leave dispatches, while travelers would often deliver a letter as a favor.³⁴ Of course, ships did not always successfully cross the Atlantic; a disaster at sea ended any hope of communication.

Colonists also received transatlantic mail at their local public house. When Peter Kalm arrived in Philadelphia from Sweden, colonists flooded his ship inquiring for letters. The ship’s

literacy in New England rose dramatically to 70 percent by 1710 and to 85 percent in 1760,” but “elsewhere in English America there seems to have been no comparable transformation...only a minority of the English-speaking adults in England or America could read and write well enough to do so regularly.”

³³ Hamilton, *Gentleman’s Progress*, 166.

³⁴ Steele, *The English Atlantic*, 113, 168-188; For a thorough investigation of “polite letters” conception in upper class colonial taverns, see David Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 55-88; John Harrower, “Diary of John Harrower, 1773-1776,” *The American Historical Review*, 6 (Oct., 1900): 85-86, 101; William Gregory noted in 1771 while in Boston, “I put my letter to Pater aboard the brig *Betsey* for London, dated September 25, Boston.” William Gregory, “A Scotchman’s Journey in New England in 1771,” ed. Mary G. Powell, *New England Magazine*, 12 (1895), 346.

captain ordered “those which remained...to be carried on shore and to be brought into a coffee-house, where everybody could make inquiry for them, and by this means he was rid of the trouble of delivering them himself.”³⁵ Upon arriving at Todd’s tavern in New York City, Hamilton received a transatlantic letter from his French friend La Moinerie who sent it “by a medical doctor from Barbados who [was] going to Rhode Island.” A carrier took the letter from Rhode Island to Boston and finally to Hamilton’s eager hand in New York City.³⁶

But just because missives made their way to a tavern did not mean their intended recipients would ever read or receive them. In fact, prying colonists often read and discarded or destroyed a note before it reached the true owner. After a letter did not reach his sweetheart, Philip Fithian disgustingly wrote, “I hear with much surprise, that none of my letters, since I left your family, have been so fortunate as to arrive safe. I impute this to the jealousy of the public, concerning the contents of the letters passing through the continent.”³⁷ Aside from unreliability, the time period between statement and reply also left much to be desired. While a colonist who conversed with a transatlantic taverngoer could exchange information within only a few minutes, missives’ erratic journey across the Atlantic took at least a month. Hamilton received a letter about Alexander Pope’s death, for instance, over three months after the fact.³⁸ Letters also required literate colonists, which excluded the majority of the colonial populace. Thus, mail-carrying packet boats and newspapers afforded some early colonists opportunities of transatlantic correspondence, but both presented too many drawbacks to supplant direct conversation as the best form of Atlantic communication.

³⁵ Peter Kalm, *Peter Kalm’s Travels in North America: The English Version of 1770*, ed. Adolph B. Benson (New York: Wilson-Erickson Inc., 1937), 16.

³⁶ Hamilton, *Gentleman’s Progress*, 182.

³⁷ Fithian, *Journal*, 281.

³⁸ Shortly before leaving London for New York, Archibald Laidlie explained to his brother in Scotland, “As to the Distance from Great Britain, that is not so great as to prevent our frequently hearing from one another as there is a Packet Boat once a month to and from New York.” quoted in Steele, *The English Atlantic*, 10, 58; Hamilton, *Gentleman’s Progress*, 180.

Although taverns could be dangerous, dirty, and drunken houses of “iniquity,” public houses’ Old World traditions, combined with their status as the primary outlet for news, drink, and lodging, made them the key hub of transatlantic community.³⁹ Moreover, direct contact with transatlantic taverngoers connected colonists to the broader world in a way that newspapers, letters, and goods could not. Consequently, this “conversation of a Polite Company” regarding topics like “lands, Madeira Wine, fishing parties” and “politics,” extended colonials’ vision beyond “the Length of [their] Nose” and helped taverngoers to imagine themselves within a larger and more complex world.⁴⁰ As one globetrotting English taverngoer poetically explained, “mountains could not, but men who go and see the world can, meet each other.”⁴¹

Alexander Hamilton’s tavern conversations with transatlantic travelers were varied and influential. He discussed the merits of the Freemasons with “a Barbadian gentleman” and had a quick lunch with “a trader from Jamaica” in two separate Philadelphia taverns.⁴² Upon arrival in a Kingston public house, Hamilton enjoyed a heated discussion of Christianity and creation with “two Irishman, a Scotsman, and a Jew,” and in a New York tavern, he compared the climates and inhabitants of Maryland and Jamaica with a pair of Jamaican gentlemen. One gentleman from the small Caribbean island of Curaçao told them “that in a Month’s time [he] had known either 30 or 40 souls buried which, in his opinion, was a great number in the small neighbourhood where he lived.”⁴³ Hamilton’s English Protestant ethnocentricity shone through as laughed that

³⁹ Cotton Mather, *Sober Considerations, on a Growing Flood of Iniquity...* (Boston, 1708).

⁴⁰ Alexander Mackrabry, “Philadelphia Society Before the Revolution: Extracts from the Letters of Alexander Mackrabry to Sir Philip Francis,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 11 (1887), 283; William Black, “Journal of William Black,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 1 (1877): 405.

⁴¹ DeVries, *Voyages from Holland to America*, 52.

⁴² Hamilton, *Gentleman’s Progress*, 19, 26.

⁴³ Curaçao was a small, Caribbean island “first visited by Europeans in 1499 and was settled by the Spanish in 1527 and then by the Dutch, who established it as a major centre of trade for their West India Company...The island was subjected to frequent invasions from competing privateers and suffered during the wars between the English and Dutch. It has remained continuously in Dutch hands since 1816.” “Curaçao,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*,

“it was customary to bury souls anywhere but in Ireland.” However, he held his tongue so as not to start a quarrel.⁴⁴ After an uneasy encounter with a group of drunken “Bacchanalians” at Tradaway’s tavern, Hamilton realized that, although public houses were excellent sources of drink and debate, a loose tongue could quickly turn them dangerous.⁴⁵

Each of Hamilton’s Atlantic conversations challenged his assumptions, reinforced some of his observations, and broadened his worldview. However, his extended acquaintance with Monsier de la Moinerie provided Hamilton an insight into culture, friendship, and the Atlantic world that he could hardly have obtained outside tavern walls. Hamilton first met La Moinerie while the Frenchman “chattered like a magpie in his own language” at their Boston inn. La Moinerie explained that after “merchandizing” for some time in Jamaica he had taken “passage for Boston in a sloop before the French war was declared, intending from thence to old France.” As a Frenchman in Boston during King George’s War between England and France, La Moinerie was not safe walking the streets. Despite this danger, Hamilton soon learned that the Frenchman, although his English was poor, was a very loquacious lodger. La Moinerie’s accessibility, combined with his reluctance to leave the inn for fear of being made a prisoner of war, created the perfect opportunity of a transatlantic colleague.⁴⁶

As Hamilton and his “fellow lodger” became acquainted, they learned much of each other’s culture. Dr. Hamilton noted that La Moinerie “was the strangest mortal for eating I ever knew.” The Frenchman ate all of his meals on a trunk in his disorderly room: “here a bason with relicts of some soup, there a fragment of bread, here a paper of salt, there a bundle of garlick,

Encyclopaedia Britannica (2009), <http://www.search.eb.com.www2.lib.ku.edu:2048/eb/article-9028242>. Accessed Nov. 18, 2009.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 34-35, 47-48. Hamilton also dined with “some Dutchmen and a mixed company of others” in Brunswick (37).

⁴⁵ Ibid., 6-7.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 115, 130, 131.

here a spoon with some pepper in it, and upon a chair a saucer of butter.” To Hamilton’s surprise and disgust, La Moinerie employed the same basin to eat soup, clean cabbage, shave, and bathe.⁴⁷ Compared to the sensibilities of an English-American physician like Hamilton, this Frenchman’s behavior was nothing short of shocking.

Nevertheless, Hamilton and La Moinerie continued to enjoy “comical chat” in the tavern and eventually became very close friends. The odd couple met every morning for an hour before breakfast to help in learning each other’s language, even though Hamilton’s “faultiness in the pronunciation” of French embarrassed him. After much “chawing” and discourse, La Moinerie gave Hamilton “an account of his own country, their manners and government, and a detail of his own adventures since he came abroad,” and when the Governor allowed La Moinerie to go abroad, Hamilton took the Frenchman to Witherhead’s (another tavern) for a celebratory meal.⁴⁸ As Hamilton’s own departure date loomed, he spent more time tarrying with La Moinerie at their tavern, noting, “I regretted much that I should be obliged to leave this facetious companion so soon, upon the account of losing his diverting conversation and the opportunity of learning to speak so good French.”⁴⁹ When Hamilton finally had to leave his French confidant behind, the peripatetic Marylander lamented:

Nothing I regretted so much as parting with La Moinnerie, the most lively and merry companion ever I had met with, always gay and chearfull, now dancing and then singing tho every day in danger of being made a prisoner. This is the peculiar humour of the French in prosperity and adversity. Their temper is always alike, far different from the English who, upon the least misfortune, are for the most part clogg’d and overclouded with melancholy and vapours and, giving way to hard fortune, shun all gaiety and mirth.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Ibid., 130.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 139, 130, 140.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 143.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 147.

Although Hamilton leapt to some rather large conclusions about French character by concluding, “their temper is always alike,” in Hamilton’s mind his rather short affiliation with La Moinerie had afforded him a distinct vantage point from which to compare French and English character. Just as all Englishmen were not “clogg’d and overclouded with melancholy and vapours,” nor was every Frenchman constantly “gay and chearfull.” Nonetheless, these reflections show how Hamilton and his fellow early American colonists continuously sought to learn more about the other inhabitants of the Atlantic world.

Hamilton’s insights into the discrepancies between peoples of the Atlantic world did not stop with La Moinerie. Later in his travels, for example, Hamilton compared the hygienic habits of the French and Dutch while gulping punch in a tavern. “The French,” he observed, “are generally the reverse of the Dutch...They care not how dirty their chambers and houses are but affect neatness much in their dress when they appear abroad. I cannot say cleanliness, for they are dirty in their linnen wear.”⁵¹ Hamilton once again utilized his newfound “knowledge” of French character when he met a Spanish prisoner of war in a Newport public house. After speaking with “a very handsom...and well behaved” prisoner, Hamilton noted that the Spaniard displayed “none of that stiffness and solemnity about him commonly ascribed to their nation but [was] perfectly free and easy in his behaviour, rather bordering upon the French vivacity.”⁵² Thus, more than just comparative cleanliness, Hamilton’s companionship with La Moinerie reinforced and extended his understanding of the wider world. And if not in a tavern, Hamilton probably never could have developed such an intimate relationship with a Frenchman, especially during a time of Anglo-Franco war.

⁵¹ Ibid., 133. Brown provides a solid discussion of how this interaction showed differences in hygiene habits in Kathleen M. Brown, *Foul Bodies: Cleanliness in Early America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 151-53.

⁵² Ibid., 156.

Hamilton was not the only colonist to use taverns as centers of Atlantic connection. Although many colonial tavern patrons enjoyed only brief contact with transatlantic travelers when compared with Hamilton's extended association, this communication taught them much about themselves as well as the world outside their local community. Madame Knight, for example, interacted with more than one transatlantic traveler during her 1704 journey. While her overnight stay was a rather trivial incident, Knight realized her partiality for English as opposed to French cuisine when she stayed at an inn owned by a French family. "Here being very hungry," Knight requested a "fricassee, which the Frenchman undertakeing, managed so contrary to [her] notion of Cookery, that [she] hastned to Bed superless."⁵³

Knight's French misfortunes continued upon meeting a French doctor in a Boston public house. The Frenchman insisted on escorting Knight to her next tavern, but he and the accompanying rider's habit of "put[ting] on very furiously, so that I could not keep up with them, only as now and then they'd stop till they see mee," revealed the Frenchman's unaccommodating character. A subsequent tavern occurrence shed more light on the French doctor's inconsiderate tendencies as he and the "full mouth'd" tavern landlady burdened the guests with "Inumirable complaints of her bodily infirmities." Rather disgusted with her French acquaintance, Knight slipped away to write in her journal.⁵⁴ Not everyone was as lucky as Hamilton in their Franco-relations.

Just as Knight connected and conversed with inhabitants of the Atlantic world during her intercontinental tavern visits, so did other travelers. European transients visited the colonies for a number of reasons, and during their peregrinations these transatlantic tourists often stayed in public houses and interacted with the locals. During his 1680 trip through North America in

⁵³Knight, *Journal*, 26.

⁵⁴Ibid., 11-12.

search of a prospective settlement, Jasper Danckaerts sought out an inn where he and his fellow Labadists “could be at home, and especially to ascertain if there were any Dutchmen.”⁵⁵ The Scotchman William Gregory similarly found a link to the Old World while staying in a Newport tavern in 1771. Gregory “spent the evening together with...one Mr. Skelton, a Scotchman from Jamaica, with whom [he] got very intimate after drinking plentifully of punch, toddy and wine.”⁵⁶ Like numerous colonists who had already settled in the New World, Danckaerts and Gregory trusted taverns as a reliable connection to Europe.⁵⁷

While visiting New York in 1716, the Irish Huguenot John Fontaine also used taverns to enmesh himself in society. He visited inns daily to participate in French and Irish clubs, gossip, and dine with all sorts of locals, ranging from lawyers to landladies.⁵⁸ The Londoner Alexander Mackraby frequented public houses during his tour of North America in 1768 as well. Although not thoroughly impressed with American tavern life compared to that of London, Mackraby noted that in his alehouse interactions he “made about three times as many acquaintance” as his local friend acquired “in so many years...I dine with governors, colonels, and the Lord knows who.” Mackraby later “danced, sung, and romped and eat and drank, and kicked away care from morning till night” in a public house with twenty-nine Philadelphians.⁵⁹ Even an incredulous Englishman could not resist the bonhomie of the colonial tavern.

⁵⁵ The Labadists took their name from Jean de Labadie, a Frenchman who detached himself from the Society of Jesus. “Labadism, theologically, belonged to the school of Calvin; in its spirit it was in line with the vein of mysticism which is met throughout the history of the Christian Church. In general respects the theology of Labadism was that of the Reformed Church of the Netherlands. Like so many adventitious but zealous movements, Labadism centered in its millennial hopes.” Jasper Danckaerts, *Journal of Jasper Danckaerts, 1679-1680*, ed. Bartlett Burleigh James and J. Franklin Jameson (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1913), xxiii. Danckaerts was sent to the New World to find a haven for the oft-persecuted Labadists.

⁵⁶ Gregory, “Journey,” 347.

⁵⁷ Danckaerts, *Journal*, 260.

⁵⁸ Fontaine, *Journal*, 116-119.

⁵⁹ Mackraby, “Letters,” 278-79, 286.

Such European travelers' accounts provide a valuable insight into taverns' position as central nodes of the Atlantic community. As transatlantic tourists utilized public houses as places of lodging, drink, information, gossip, and ties to home, they also afforded colonists an unrivaled connection to the Atlantic world. There were few other chances for a Dutch Labadist and a down on his luck Englishman to confide in each other.⁶⁰ Consequently, colonists and transatlantic travelers alike sought out taverns for food, lodging, and connections they could gain nowhere else.

But like any meeting place, ordinaries sometimes brought false and unwelcome conversation to their patrons. A prominent Puritan judge who was already suspicious of public houses, Samuel Sewall realized first hand how unreliable tavern gossip could be while attending artillery training for the local militia (usually held at taverns) in 1703.⁶¹ A Mr. Oakes hurried to Sewall, inquiring if he "had not heard the news?" Louis XIV "had his Neck broken by a fall from his Horse, as he was viewing an Army Rais'd to goe against those of the Cevennes." When the judge promptly questioned Mr. Oakes' sources, he replied, "One Bodwin brings the Report, who comes from New Castle, and had it at Sea from Commodore Taylor."⁶² Of course the King of France did not die that year, but Sewall and Oakes's interaction provides a keen insight into the reliability of transmitted Atlantic news. Three people across two continents carried this juicy bit of gossip to Sewall, and while inaccurate, the news's diffusion informed Sewall of distinct transatlantic communication lines. Unfortunately, the rumor also probably supported Sewall's distrust of the tavern.

⁶⁰ Danckaerts, *Journal*, 67.

⁶¹ For instance, William Gregory "sett off to a tavern four miles off, at which place there happened to be a training." Gregory, "Journey," 351.

⁶² Sewall, *Diary*, 492.

In addition to receiving Atlantic misinformation at alehouses, tavern patrons also experienced uninvited contact with transatlantic transients. During Philip Vicker Fithian's return trip from Virginia to Philadelphia in 1774, he stopped at a tavern to rest. After ordering a drink, Fithian glanced across the room and caught the eye of "a smart looking Girl" who made him smile. Always the opportunist, Fithian greeted the young woman and struck up a conversation. That was when his opportunity turned to dismay. She immediately began complaining about the American climate, explaining that since she emigrated from Europe six months ago, she had "a constant Ague and fever." Ignoring the young woman's grievances, Fithian asked whether she hailed from Britain. "No Sir," she replied, "I came from London." As a schoolteacher and scholar, Fithian regretted making the acquaintance of this ignorant woman and quickly attempted to depart. But his female companion did not let him go. She continued to whine that "her situation [was] so lonely, being out of the Way of Entertainment by Company!—That Music and Drawing [were] her chief and necessary Amusements—That She was glad of the Opportunity of an Hours Conversation even of an utter stranger!" If Fithian's situation was not already awkward enough, the young woman revealed her hopes for a travel partner to Philadelphia. "Fearing a Proposal to wait on her down to Annapolis, and thence to Philadelphia," Fithian guzzled his drink as quickly as possible and "mounted and rode twenty miles" to the next inn.⁶³ Although Fithian did not gain a life long friend in this tavern as Hamilton had in Boston, Fithian's experience opened his eyes to one of the possible ideological discrepancies between British and American citizens while also providing him an insight into the difference of climates in Britain and North America. Consequently, while not every Atlantic exchange in taverns was pleasant, all were informative in one way or another.

⁶³ Fithian, *Journal*, 272, 275.

Just as taverns connected colonists to the Atlantic world through culture and communication, so did inns' alcoholic beverages—namely Madeira wine and West Indian rum. If the prospect of conversation and news could not get colonists into the tavern, the availability of alcohol would. Colonists and transatlantic travelers avidly sought drinks they and their forebears had enjoyed in the Old World, and public houses served as one of, if not the, primary alcohol retailer prior to the Revolutionary War.⁶⁴ Consequently, as colonial taverngoers enjoyed a glass of Madeira, a bowl of rum punch, or a mug of toddy in the time-honored atmosphere of the alehouse, they not only enjoyed these Old World beverages with transatlantic guests, but also actively participated in a burgeoning Atlantic economy.⁶⁵

When William Byrd first tasted Madeira wine, he described the drink as a “splendid wine from Madeira (a Canary Island), which is very delicious, and also strong, and [which is] far better and more healthful than all our European wines, not only because of its agreeable sweetness but because of its soothing quality.”⁶⁶ Byrd was not alone in his praise. Madeira wine was the most popular wine in British America before 1775, and since public houses were the most widely distributed and accessible retailer of Madeira in the colonies, colonists flocked to their local tavern for on-site and at-home consumption of this intoxicating nectar. Of course, Madeira wine's distribution reached far beyond American shores. Inhabitants of Copenhagen, Bordeaux, Lisbon, Bengal, Canton, Cape Verde, Bahia, Surinam, St Croix, and Quebec all popped corks on casks of Madeira as well; however, because of “decentralized, opportunistic and

⁶⁴ Although not pursued at length in this article, colonists also translated their eating habits across the Atlantic. For instance, while dining at a British American tavern in 1771, William Gregory exclaimed, “I eat a very hasty dinner of roasted beef and potatoes, the glory of old England and Ireland combined; and when finished, I felt as well as any of his majesty's subjects.” Gregory, “Journey,” 351.

⁶⁵ Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, 240; Carole Shamas, *The Pre-industrial Consumer in England and America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 163-185; Earle, *Stage-Coach and Tavern Days*, 100-137.

⁶⁶ William Byrd, *William Byrd's Natural History of Virginia, or the Newly Discovered Eden*, ed. Richmond Croom Beatty and William J. Mulloy (Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1940), 90.

specific entrepreneurship” in the thirteen colonies, Madeira wine ultimately became “America’s wine.”⁶⁷

Madeira wine was a foundation of colonial tavern culture, and for many colonists a trip to the tavern was not complete without a glass of “excellent old Madeira wine.”⁶⁸ During his 1744 journey from Virginia to Philadelphia, William Black enjoyed the wine in almost every tavern he visited. When Black arrived in Annapolis, “several Gentlemen of Distinction” whisked him off to “the first Tavern in Town” for “a Bowl of Punch and a Glass of Wine.” A few days later Black met some gentlemen at “the three Tunn Tavern in Water Street” for “a few Glasses of Good Madeira.” Shortly thereafter they convened at another inn to discuss “several subjects” over punch and wine.⁶⁹ Aside from enjoying wine in taverns, William Byrd even attributed healing powers to Madeira wine, contending that it “heals and cures [disease] completely by the alkaline or soothing quality which it possesses...it sweetens the whole mass of the blood and strengthens and supports the nerves.”⁷⁰ Not only did Madeira provide colonists a social lubricant in the tavern hall, but according to Byrd, the “splendid wine” was also a cure-all! Yet, while Madeira was the cheapest wine available in 1703, increased shipping prices, marketing, and specialization placed the beverage’s price beyond all but the wealthiest colonists’ means by 1807.⁷¹ Of course, this alteration did not end taverngoers’ drinking habits; they always had other alcoholic options.

Colonists drank many types of alcohol within alehouse walls, but they had favorites. As a traveling Frenchman noted while dining with Williamsburg tavern patrons, “Madeira wine and

⁶⁷ David Hancock, “‘A Revolution in the trade’: Wine Distribution and the Development of the Infrastructure of the Atlantic Market Economy, 1703-1807,” in *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy*, ed. John J. McCusker and Kenneth Morgan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 128, 107-8. David Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*.

⁶⁸ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 7, 1764.

⁶⁹ Black, *Journal*, 124, 406, 409.

⁷⁰ Byrd, *Natural History of Virginia*, 90-91.

⁷¹ Hancock, “Revolution in Trade,” 150.

punch made with Jamaica rum Is their Chief Drink.”⁷² Colonists transferred the tradition of rum consumption across the Atlantic, and in doing so, became entangled in dual triangles of transatlantic trade, enslavement, and empire.⁷³ Of course, a Pennsylvanian taverngoer enjoying a bowl of lemon punch with an Atlantic merchant was not directly participating in the African slave, sugar, or molasses trade. But by flocking to their local inn for West Indian and New England rum, or “kill devil” as many colonists called the intoxicating liquor, colonial consumers became active members of a transatlantic consumer marketplace.⁷⁴

One scholar estimated that, in 1770, each North American white male drank more than seven one-ounce shots of rum each day, or about twenty-one gallons a year.⁷⁵ Colonists loved rum, and like wine, taverns were the best place to obtain this “cursed liquor.” But taverngoers seldom drank straight rum. Instead, they often shared a congenial bowl of rum punch, which, according to William Byrd, consisted of “two or three bottles of water—according to whether the drink is desired strong or weak—a bottle of brandy [rum], the juice of six or twelve lemons, which are strained through a clean cloth or piece of linen, and a pound more or less of sugar—

⁷² “Journal of a French Traveller in the Colonies, 1765, II,” *The American Historical Review*, 27 (Oct., 1921), 743.

⁷³ Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 43. Mintz points out “two so-called triangles of trade, both of which arose in the seventeenth century and matured in the eighteenth.” One “linked Britain to Africa and the New World: finished goods were sold to Africa, African slaves to the Americas, and American tropical commodities (especially sugar) to the mother country and her importing neighbors.” In the second triangle, “from New England went rum to Africa, whence slaves to the West Indies, whence molasses back to New England (with which to make rum).” Also see John J. McCusker, *Rum and the American Revolution: The Rum Trade and the Balance of Payments of the Thirteen Continental Colonies*, Vol. I (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1989), 6-7.

⁷⁴ Byrd, *Prose Works*, 205; Breen provides a more in-depth explanation of the development of the consumer marketplace in the colonies, stating, “Great Britain had created an empire of consumer colonies.” Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution*, chapters 2-4; John Josselyn also referred to rum as “that cursed liquor called Rum, Rum-bullion, or kill-Devil, which is stronger than spirit of Wine, and is drawn from the dross of Sugar and Sugar Canes...” Josselyn, *Colonial Traveler*, 99.

⁷⁵ McCusker, *Rum Trade*, 468.

according to the sweetness desired. All this is mixed together...after which one has a very pleasant drink.”⁷⁶

Just as the sweet intoxication of rum punch kept colonists coming to the public house, so did the camaraderie it encouraged. While at a Newtown tavern, Alexander Hamilton shared a bowl of “lemmon punch” with a Captain Binning while he gave Hamilton “letters for his relations att Boston.”⁷⁷ William Black, continuing his reputation for constant consumption, was welcomed into Philadelphia by a group of gentlemen “with a Bowl of fine Lemon Punch big enough to have Swimm’d half a dozen of young Geese,” and on numerous occasions William Gregory shared “some good punch” with his fellow tavern patrons.⁷⁸ Numerous colonial magistrates, especially those in Boston, attempted to curb rum consumption, but because of rum punch’s popularity as a communal drinking experience, it continued to provide closer inter-tavern contact than any other colonial beverage.⁷⁹

But rum punch’s ties of communication stretched beyond the public house. All the punch’s ingredients—rum, sugar, and citrus fruits—were part of the Atlantic trade, thus creating

⁷⁶ Byrd, *Natural History*, 92; Benjamin Franklin composed a more musical recipe for rum punch. It was entitled “Boy, Bring a Bowl of China Here,” and was featured in a 1737 edition of Poor Richard’s Almanac:

*Boy, bring a bowl of China here
Fill it with water cool and clear;
Decanter with Jamaica ripe,
And spoon of silver, clean and bright,
Sugar twice-fin’d in pieces cut,
Knife, sive, and glass in order put,
Bring forth the fragrant fruit and then
We’re happy till the clock strikes ten*

The Papers of Benjamin Franklin, ed. Leonard W. Labaree, William B. Willcox, Claude-Anne Lopez, Barbara B. Oberg, et al. 32 vols. to date (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1959-), 2:168.

⁷⁷ Hamilton, *Gentleman’s Progress*, 11.

⁷⁸ Black, *Journal*, 242; Gregory, “Journey,” 347. The Scotchman, William Gregory’s colonial peregrinations were also marked by constantly drinking “New England rum-toddy,” “toddy,” “wine,” “punch,” etc.

⁷⁹ Cotton Mather, *Sober Considerations, on a Growing Flood of Iniquity...*; For another example of anti-rum sentiment in Boston see the comical broadside, *The Indictment and Trial of Sr. Richard Rum* (Boston, 1724), Early American Imprints, 1st ser., no. 2582.

a beverage of transatlantic tastes.⁸⁰ Although New Englanders began distilling their own rum in the early eighteenth century, their kill-devil was still “drawn from the dross of Sugar and Sugar Canes,” which was harvested in the West Indies.⁸¹ In addition, colonists often preferred West Indian to locally-crafted rum, prompting one merchant to advertise New England rum as “so much improved in Smell and Flavour, as to be little inferior to, and scarce distinguishable from, that made in the West Indies.”⁸² However, sugar’s value transcended New England rum production, for without sugar and molasses the transatlantic trade triangles could not exist.

This strong beverage needed a citrus twist, and rum punch’s final ingredients—lemons, limes, and oranges—provided just that. Each of these citrus fruits originated in India and spread west with Islam, ultimately becoming West Indian and even North American crops.⁸³ Colonists attempted to grow oranges as far north as Virginia in the mid eighteenth century, but like sugar, colonials preferred the taste of the West Indian variety.⁸⁴ Merchants soon realized the transatlantic market for West Indian citrus fruits and advertised in Boston and Philadelphia “extraordinary good and very fresh Orange juice which some of the very best Punch Tasters prefer to Lemmon,” and “a quantity of choice orange and lemon Shrub.”⁸⁵ For numerous reasons, rum punch became the ultimate Atlantic beverage. Since this bittersweet drink’s ingredients were direct products of transatlantic trade, punch-drinking colonists facilitated, encouraged, and contributed to the Atlantic economy through its consumption. Moreover,

⁸⁰ Rum punch actually originated in India, made its way to England, and traveled with the colonists across the Atlantic. Earle, *Stage-Coach and Tavern Days*, 114-16.

⁸¹ Josselyn, *Colonial Traveler*, 99.

⁸² *Pennsylvania Gazette*, November 2, 1769.

⁸³ L. Ramón-Laca, “The Introduction of Cultivated Citrus to Europe via Northern Africa and the Iberian Peninsula,” *Economic Botany*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (Winter, 2003): 508-510; Harold W. Glidden, “The Lemon in Asia and Europe,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (Dec., 1937): 381-396; Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, 25. Mintz points out that sugar also transmitted from India and spread west with Islam.

⁸⁴ In 1751, John Blair of Williamsburg traveled to Green Spring with a friend, where “We gather’d oranges.” John Blair, “Diary of John Blair,” ed. Lyon G. Tyler, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 7 (Jan. 1899): 137; Sally Smith Booth, *Hung, Strung, & Potted: A History of Eating in Colonial America* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1971), 159.

⁸⁵ *Salem Gazette*, 1741; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 21, 1768.

colonial taverngoers often shared a bowl of this Old World cocktail with Atlantic travelers in the most Atlantic of public spaces—the public house.

Prior to the French and Indian War, British American colonists employed taverns as primary conduits to the Atlantic world through culture, communication, and consumption. But as colonists began to identify themselves as American citizens rather than British subjects, this transition reverberated within the walls of the public house. Colonists still utilized taverns as Atlantic connectors; however, by 1764 American ordinaries became central sites of “spirited and patriotic behavior.”⁸⁶ This ideological shift was especially reflected in what colonists talked about.

Colonial taverngoers still conversed with Atlantic travelers, but patriots’ discourse turned away from “lands, Madeira Wine, fishing parties,” and instead regularly focused on anti-British topics like “Damnation to the Stamp act.” As events like the Townshend Duties, the Boston Massacre, and the Boston Tea Party unfolded, the dividing line between American and British loyalties became even more pronounced. For instance, while staying in a New York tavern in March 1775, the traveling colonist Dr. Robert Honeyman noted, “Party spirit is very high...here nothing is heard of but Politics.”⁸⁷ When rain trapped a traveling Frenchman and two American militiamen in a Williamsburg tavern in 1765, the transatlantic lodger gained a candid insight into American jingoism at its finest. As the militiamen rattled on about the stamp duties, one of the majors “says freely he’l sooner Die than pay a farthing, and is shure that all his Countrymen will do the Same.” When the name of “the Noble Patriot Mr. hennery” came up, both Americans swore, “that if the least Injury was offered to him they’d stand by him to the last drop of their blood.” As drink loosened the two men’s tongues, they mentioned that many local inhabitants

⁸⁶ “Journal of a French Traveller in the Colonies,” 85.

⁸⁷ Robert Honeyman, *Colonial Panorama, 1775: Dr. Robert Honeyman’s Journal for March and April*, ed. Philip Padelford (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1939), 29.

“muter betwixt their teeth, let the worst Come to the worst we’ll Call the French to our sucour!”⁸⁸

While these two militiamen may have been an extreme case of American patriotism, they represented the new American patriotism in their distrust of British enforcement, relative willingness to stand together against English imperialism, and realization of their connection to a larger world. Just as public houses once reflected colonists’ urge for Atlantic connection, now they reflected the development of British rebels’ American identity.⁸⁹ No longer did rebels seek out taverns primarily for Atlantic communication. By 1765, tavern conversation with colonists and travelers alike concentrated chiefly on politics, patriotism, and distrust of the British Empire.

Yet this public stage of rebellion against imperial authority was a contradictory one. Colonial magistrates outlawed Native Americans, African Americans, servants, sailors, and (indirectly) women from ordinaries during the seventeenth century, and just as the line between British and American colonists became more pronounced by the mid eighteenth century so did class disparities in public houses. As revolutionary riots erupted across the colonies, elites sought to keep the local peace by keeping lower classes out of the tavern and away from the bottle. While Honyman noted the New York taverngoers’ obsession over politics in 1775, he also found the same New York public house “much divided.”⁹⁰ Not only did this “rabble” disrupt the peace, but they also challenged elite authority and invoked a term that scared colonial leaders—democracy.⁹¹ When a New York printer advertised he would publish an anti-*Common Sense* pamphlet in the summer of 1775, “a meeting was summoned, the parties met” at Drake’s

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 747.

⁸⁹ Carp, *Rebels Rising*, 62-98; Conroy, *In Public Houses*, 241-309; Thompson, *Rum Punch & Revolution*, 145-181.

⁹⁰ Honyman, *Colonial Panorama*, 29.

⁹¹ Ronald Schultz, *The Republic of Labor: Philadelphia Artisans and the Politics of Class, 1720-1830* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 32; Woody Holton, *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007); Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*.

tavern, “and after swallowing a sufficient quantity of Rumbo [rum punch]” the patriots forcibly pulled the printer out of his bed in the night and destroyed the manuscript. Although many celebrated these actions as “heroism,” the upper classes viewed this sort of drink-induced rebellion as raucous and uncivilized. They hoped to keep lower classes out of taverns in order to prevent further drunken debauchery.⁹²

Revolutionary fervor also drastically altered colonists’ private and public consumption habits.⁹³ After enduring the Navigation acts and numerous Crown-induced taxes on everything from sugar to playing cards, patriots banded together to boycott many British goods. As the traveling Englishman William Mylne noted, America’s transatlantic trade with Britain had “in a manner stoped” by 1775. Mylne continued, “the other day a ship was sent back that had brought out goods from England, another that lies [in New York harbor] will share the same fate.”⁹⁴ Due to trade restrictions, many Atlantic goods, including wine, sugar, and rum, became extremely scarce in Anglo-America, which forced taverngoing colonists to increasingly consume local beverages like beer and cider rather than their favorite Atlantic beverages.⁹⁵ As a result, colonial tavern patrons became more exclusive in their drinking habits and (willingly and unwillingly) detached themselves from Atlantic commerce and Old World drinking habits. After the War for Independence, alcohol-loving Americans fervently sought again their favorite Atlantic beverages and continued to enjoy rum punch and wine in taverns. But American ordinaries were much different from their colonial predecessors. Just as alcohol had become limited during the Revolution, so too had the inclusiveness of the public house.

⁹² Thomas Jones, *History of New York during the Revolutionary War and of the Leading Events in the Other Colonies at that Period*, ed. Edward Floyd de Lancey, 2 vols. (New York: Trow’s, 1879), 63-63.

⁹³ See Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution* for an investigation of colonists’ revolutionary consumer habits.

⁹⁴ Mylne, *Travels in the Colonies*, 75.

⁹⁵ When “the Revolutionary War commenced...the amount of wine shipped to Anglo-America fell by two-thirds.” Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, 96; Rum exported to the colonies from Barbados dropped from 48,528 cwt. in 1771 to 14,220 cwt. in 1774. McCusker, *Rum and the American Revolution*, 209.

In major cities like New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston, white patriots collaborated in class-restricted taverns for the common cause of liberty. Yet, the lower classes' idea of liberty differed from that of the gentry. While the elite required protection of property and constitutional liberties, the "lower sorts" sought revolution for elementary political rights and social justice. Consequently, "England's attempts to rule its colonies with a stronger hand" revealed deep intercolonial class strife, which was reflected in tavern culture. Inns were no longer the most inclusive public spheres in the colonies. Instead, many became divided along class lines just like society as a whole. Nonetheless, disparate public houses continued to provide colonists with central locations of communication and contest, which every class eventually utilized for their own revolutionary ends.⁹⁶

Furthermore, transatlantic travelers in the colonies also realized American colonists' newfound independent identity. After experiencing yet another tavern conversation where colonists damned the Stamp Act, the traveling Frenchman realized, "this Country can not be long subject to great Britain, nor Indeed to any Distant power...no Nation whatsoever seems beter calculated for independency, and the Inhabitants are already Intirely Disposed therto and talk of nothing more than it." By 1774, Patrick M'Robert, a Scottish traveler, described Bostonians as boasting "high notions of liberty." The indentured Englishman, John Harrower, wrote that if Parliament did not concede, he was afraid "it [would] cause a total revolt as all the North Americans [were] determined to stand by one another, and resolute on it that they [would] not

⁹⁶ Nash, *Unknown American Revolution*, 44; Gary B. Nash, *Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Harvard University Press: 1986), xii; A vast historiography exists on the causes and consequences of the Revolutionary War. Gordon Wood argues that the American Revolution was the single most important event that transformed America into the most liberal, democratic and commercially minded country in the world, while Neo-Progressives Holton and Nash view the Revolution and its aftermath as a less democratic affair. This paper seeks neither to confirm nor repudiate either side; instead, it argues that colonists dealt with inherent class conflict and conciliation of the Revolution within the tavern. Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (Vintage, 1993).

submit.”⁹⁷ After two years of traveling through the colonies, William Mylne was less impressed with the “mad...mobility” than Harrower, and believed “one third” of patriots “would run away, one third be killed, the other hanged.”⁹⁸ Each of these transatlantic travelers gained their new understanding of American rebellion, patriotism, and identity largely from tavern interactions. Thus, as the most prominent public stage in the British American colonies, public houses more visibly and widely reflected the ever-changing identities of rebellious colonials than any other space.

Of course, not every North American colonist stood against Britain as M’Robert, Harrower, and Mylne insinuated. But by 1765, most anti-British ordinaries refused to serve tavern patrons who remained loyal to the Crown and thus marked them as outsiders.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, as more colonists identified themselves as American citizens rather than subjects of King George, patriots translated this ideological shift to their tavern interactions, consumption habits, and activities.

Taverns continued to reflect and foster the fluctuating tides of American ideology after the Revolutionary War, but American public houses were never as important to extra-American connections as their colonial forebears. Early American taverns were the most important, inclusive, and accessible outlets to the Atlantic world for colonists hoping to strengthen and broaden their ties to the Old World. Inns provided taverngoers a level of Atlantic culture, communication, and consumption they could obtain nowhere else, while also strengthening colonists’ identity as European citizens abroad. Even when colonial identity shifted away from its British origins, ordinaries continued to reflect American development and divergence. But

⁹⁷ “Journal of a French Traveller in the Colonies,” 84; Patrick M’Robert, *A Tour Through Part of the North Provinces of America: Being, A Series of Letters Wrote on the Spot, in the Years 1774, & 1775*, ed. Carl Bridenbaugh (Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1935), 15; Harrower, “Diary,” 84.

⁹⁸ Mylne, *Travels in the Colonies*, 75.

⁹⁹ Nash, *Rebels Rising*, 62-3.

British American taverns' central position as "conduits to the rest of the Atlantic world" positioned them as one of the earliest and most important contributors to colonists' Atlantic-American ideological mindset.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Carp, *Rebels Rising*, 66