



## The Tavern Degenerate: “Rendezvous of the very Dreggs of the People”

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It is notorious, that Ordinaries are now, in a great Measure, perverted from their original Intention and proper Use; viz. the Reception, Accommodation, and Refreshment of the weary and benighted Traveller; which ends they least serve or answer and are become the common Receptacle and Rendezvous of the very Dreggs of the People; even of the most lazy and dissolute that are to be found in their respective Neighbourhoods, where not only Time and Money are, vainly and unprofitably, squandered away, but (what is yet worse) where prohibited and unlawful Games, Sports, and Pastimes are used, followed, and practised, almost without any Intermis-sion; namely cards, dice, Horse-Racing, and cock-fighting, together with Vices and Enormities of every other kind.<sup>1</sup>

*T*he anonymous Virginia clergyman who in 1751 penned this complaint about the local tavern scene listed exactly the societal ills colonial leaders had sought to prevent. Taverns were supposed to accommodate travelers, but, as he noted, they had been “perverted” from their proper use and had descended into decadence. His lament appears to be aimed at a particular segment of society—those least able to spare the time or money and for whom abusing drink inexorably led to other and greater vices.

## Accommodation on the Road

For the travelers who depended upon taverns for their lodging and meals, finding a suitable house was like a game of chance in which the odds were most often stacked against them. James Clitherall, whose journey took him from his home in Charleston, South Carolina, to Philadelphia, complained bitterly about the taverns he encountered. At one of them he was resigned to ingratiating in order to secure services, even though he described it as “by far the worst House we visited. . . . We obliged to be on our very Best behavior for we were given to understand that ourselves & Horses would get nothing to eat.”<sup>2</sup> When Ebenezer Hazard stopped at Smith’s tavern in New Jersey on his trip through New England and New York, he encountered “as vile a house as I would ever wish to be in: about twenty drunken men in the house, cursing swearing and fighting in great abundance: an old man called his son a dog. . . . Smith did have a good stable and our horses were well taken care of.” A few days later, Hazard stopped at Caleb Merrit’s, which he judged to be a good clean house, although the bedroom was cold, and “the sheets not well aired.” Again Hazard noted that his horse had the better end of the bargain.<sup>3</sup> A merchant named Anthony Stoddard, on his travels from Boston to Vermont, lamented how ill-prepared he was because he had virtually no way of gaining advance knowledge about the quality of the accommodations along his route. He discovered only too late about the mediocre facilities he was forced to hire. In two public houses it was the food that he found so awful, since it consisted exclusively of bacon and eggs. Stoddard ranked one house, which had only a few bugs, as “pretty good lodging,” even though it was “very noisy most part of the night with partying, dancing, firing guns &c on account of a training day & a wedding which disturbed our rest.”<sup>4</sup> Philip Fithian described a tavern where he stayed one night in Port Tobacco, Maryland: “For my company all the night in my Room I had Bugs in every part of my Bed—& in the next Room several noisy Fellows playing at Billiards.”<sup>5</sup>

Travelers often had little choice about where to stay, which put them at the mercy of the unpredictable roadside accommodations. Nicholas Cresswell, an English traveler, wandered through the colonies for three years, from 1774 to 1777, filling his diary with vivid, humorous descriptions of the meaner sorts of taverns. His literary efforts enabled him to highlight the inferior nature of tav-

erns in the colonies as compared to public houses in Britain. In Annapolis, Maryland, he breakfasted at Rollins', "a Public House, but in this Country called Ordinaries, and indeed they have not their name for nothing, for they are ordinary enough." He complained that it made no difference where he ate or which meal of the day it was, for he was always served bacon or chicken. "If I still continue in this way [I] shall be grown over with Bristles or Feathers."<sup>6</sup>

Rural taverns could be even worse than those in towns. An account by William Logan, president of the governor's council of Pennsylvania, gives us a palpable sense of rural houses he encountered on his trip from Pennsylvania to Georgia. At Skidmore's tavern he "Lodged on a tolerable Good Bed" in "a very nasty room." Dinner the next day was broth made from recently killed fowls, "but everything was so nasty that One might have picked the Dirt off." In Bath, North Carolina, when rain prevented him from going on, he stopped at a tavern that was "by far the worse we have met with; there being a stinking ordinary Bed, an Earthen floor & many air holes."<sup>7</sup>

James Birket fashioned himself a keen observer of early American customs and habits from his year-long journey through the colonies. The tavern keepers he encountered shared the trait of indifference. In Rhode Island, he stopped at "One Mother Stacks, who I thought realy very Slack in her Attendance." All she supplied was a candle in a house that was so dark "we could Scarce See Another." What was worse, she offered them nothing for supper. However, he and his traveling companions rummaged around and found food aplenty, so that they made out a "Handsome supper & Liquor." He only wished they could have done as well with the "very Indifferent" beds. Birket was hard pressed to find good words to describe publicans. The best he could say about Captain Bradock's, in New London, Connecticut, was that the keeper was polite and had good manners "when Compared with the rude lay drones of this part of the world." Frustrated with again not being offered food and drink, Birket chalked a message on the table, perhaps to remind the proprietor of his duties to his patrons:

Wee can't pretend to Poetry  
 His Brains are dull whose Throat is Dry,  
 Wee Little else can say or think  
 But give us victuals and some Drink.<sup>8</sup>

One traveler, William Ellery, recorded the set of rituals he adopted to protect himself from the repugnant tavern services he expected to encounter. Rule number one was “Search [the bed] first before you enter.” Ellery described one occasion in which this practice yielded an enormous, bloated bed bug, which he sacrificed, using the candle blaze, to the “God of Impurity.” This, according to Ellery, was in a “good house.”<sup>9</sup>

Favorable assessments of roadside accommodation, although few, also exist. John Penn reported on a number of quite agreeable taverns on his tour through Pennsylvania and Delaware. He found Whitman’s tavern “worthy of a respectable country town.” There he “dined heartily upon catfish, which the river plentifully affords.” However, Penn’s judgment did seem to be clouded by the proprietor’s political views. He was the only tavern keeper whose name had not appeared on a petition written against the proprietary estate. Penn also discovered a good tavern in Newport, a town close to Wilmington, Delaware. Here he found “proper entertainment for horse and man.” He liked the place even though while there he watched “two rustics completely drunk and by degrees becoming less and less intelligible.”<sup>10</sup>

Although foreign travelers were not amused by having to stay in dirty and noisy taverns that failed to provide adequate food, they mustered even more hostility for the practice of sharing beds. European visitors equated the habit of bed sharing with the worst characteristics of American life. One, James Birket, described being forced by heavy rains and darkness to find shelter before reaching Horseneck, near Stamford, Connecticut, with his traveling party. The tavern keeper, “an Illnaturd old fellow” was reluctant to give him a room, and then he “wanted a barefooted fellow who we afterwards understood to be [the keeper’s wife’s] Son to Sleep with one of us but we one & all refused the favour.” The French traveler Moreau de St. Mery criticized all manner of American accommodations, including how the lack of curtains on beds or windows in any inn meant that during the long summer days the fatigued traveler was sure to be awakened at the crack of dawn by the sun streaming into his room. But the very worst aspect of American taverns was the habit of sharing beds. For him, this practice was “untidy” and “unhealthy.” According to the Scottish traveler Thomas Cather, American “guests pig together two and three in a bed.” When he insisted on having a bed to himself, the landlords thought him quite unreasonable. St.

Mery and Cather evoked images of pigs and feared threats to their health. St. Mery was incredulous upon discovery that people who did not know each other were “admitted to the same room. . . . Even while one traveler is asleep, another often enters to share his bed.” Americans, he observed, considered this custom “perfectly natural”; and he went on to reflect, “I cannot help but rebel at the non-sensical belief that such customs are a proof of liberty.”<sup>11</sup>

Colonial travelers fully expected to join strangers in a bed or be awakened as newcomers arrived. Private sleeping spaces in public houses were so rare that a historian cites a case of a woman traveler who expressed discomfort at having a room at an inn all to herself.<sup>12</sup> Colonists described sleeping arrangements matter-of-factly; they might remark on the idiosyncracies of their sleeping partners, their manners or snoring habits, but they did not question the practice or expectation that they would sleep in a bed with one or more strangers. A distasteful example is provided in an account by James Clitheral, who somewhere in North Carolina stayed the night at Major Berkely’s tavern, “by far the worst House we visited. . . . we passed the night very disagreeably & caught bad colds. In the morning our greasy landlord (who wanted to sleep with Me & entertained Me with his adventures when he went to subdue the Scopholites . . . ) charged us an enormous Price for the worst of Accommodation.” David Sewall, a Harvard undergraduate, kept a journal of his travels with a Harvard tutor, Mr. Flynt. Of the tavern in Marblehead he said, “we were cordially entertained, and at bedtime we were introduced to a chamber where was only one bed.” Mr. Flynt iterated that Sewall would be “keeping well to his own side.” Alexander Hamilton reported that early on in his travels he lodged at a ferry house; “my landlord, his wife, daughters, and I lay all in one room.” On his way back to Annapolis, Hamilton stayed in a public house in Newcastle, Maryland, where he shared the room with “a certain Irish teague and one Gilpin, a dweller in Maryland.” Hamilton had a bed to himself; the other two shared. Hamilton and Gilpin conversed while in bed before they went to sleep and then had their slumbers disturbed by the Irish teague “who made a hideous noise in coming to bed, and as he tossed and turned, kept still ejaculating either an ohon or sweet Jesus.”<sup>13</sup>

Sharing accommodations was the custom in every colony and was not limited to those from a particular socioeconomic status. When colonial leader William Byrd and his party surveyed the boundary line between Virginia and North Car-

olina, they camped most nights, because taverns were so scarce. On one evening, however, they stopped at a private house. His traveling group and the family lodged in a single room; “nine persons, who all pigged lovingly together,” as he put it. The group split up the next night. Three of his companions stayed at another private house, where the owner let them have his bed. The three of them “nestled together in one cotton sheet and one of brown Osnaburgs, made still browner by two months’ copious perspiration.” Edgecomb County, North Carolina, established a tavern rate schedule that included different costs “for a bed where more than one in a bed [or] any person requiring a bed to himself.” The latter arrangement cost twice as much.<sup>14</sup>

The practice of putting strangers in beds together remained in American public houses until well after the Revolution and persisted as a source of irritation to visitors from abroad. Francisco de Miranda, a Portuguese visitor to the United States in 1783–84, found this particular custom to be among the most unpleasant he encountered in America and endlessly argued with tavern keepers about it. In a small North Carolina town, which contained only one public house, the proprietor intended that de Miranda would share a “terrible bed” with a Mr. Tucker, a fellow traveler, from Boston. De Miranda was adamant that this bed was suitable for only a single person. The landlady gave in to his pleading by “thrust[ing] two other guests into another small bed in the very room that had been set aside” for de Miranda and Tucker. In New London, Connecticut, de Miranda was relieved that the landlord had merely put “another guest in my room; thank God he was not put in my bed, according to the custom of the country!”<sup>15</sup>

The quality of accommodation at roadside taverns in early America ran a wide gamut. Travelers might encounter a public house with good provisions for humans and horses along with passable entertainments. They were just as likely, however, to stumble into houses in which the conditions made their skin crawl—monotonous diets served in filthy conditions and beds that contained the evidence of their previous occupants and commonly had six-legged occupants. Since the threshold for tolerance of dirt was quite high in early America—a time before regular laundering and bathing constituted normative behavior—the taverns that elicited negative comment must have been quite awful. The variation in services also suggests that while colonial statutes were designed to regulate

tavern conditions, nothing motivated colonial officials to enforce these laws. Colonists traveled at their own risk.

### Sociability and Conversation

Elite male travelers longed for good public houses. They assumed that they deserved decent fare for themselves and their horses and they expected suitable entertainment. They sought tavern sociability that would provide them with the opportunity to encounter men much like themselves who, with the aid of ample quantities of drink, were eager to explore ideas through conversation. Dr. Alexander Hamilton was one of a number of diarists whose writings offer insight into this tavern phenomenon. Hamilton was a physician who received his medical degree from the University of Edinburgh. His older brother John, also a doctor, had emigrated to Annapolis, Maryland, and established a lucrative practice; Alexander followed him in the winter of 1738. Six years later, following an illness, he journeyed from Maryland to Maine and back in an attempt to restore his health. In his detailed journal, he joins other elite men who expressed a common goal—to locate a tavern that would provide them with genteel entertainments. The pages of his diary drip with sardonic descriptions of how most taverns fell far short of what he, as an elite man, merited. Most public houses were indeed ordinary and frustrating approximations of an imagined space where men like Hamilton were forced to rub elbows, drink, and talk with those well beneath them in terms of education and status.<sup>16</sup>

Hamilton's stay at Waghorn's Sign of the Cart and Horse in New York turned into a lesson in frustration. Hamilton negotiated the terms of his lodging, arranged to buy horses for future travel, and secured goods. He detested the scene he encountered in the public room. It was midday and a group of drinkers was gathered around William Jameson, the High Sheriff of New York. Hamilton observed that those assembled were transfixed by Jameson's story telling—the combination of wit and vulgarity. Hamilton found himself incapable of concentrating on the tale; he could only stare at the man's face. He had a "homely carbuncle kind of a countenance with a hideous knob of a nose, he screwed it into a hundred different forms while he spoke and gave such a strong emphasis to his words that he merely spit in one's face at three or four foot's distance." His

mouth was constantly full of spit “by the force of the liquor which he drank and the fumes of the tobacco that he smoaked.” According to Hamilton’s standards, the High Sheriff was as coarse as he was drunk and as ugly as he was common. The scene was made far more depressing for Hamilton because the crowd was so captivated by the sheriff.<sup>17</sup>

While elite men like Hamilton might have been frustrated in their attempts to find taverns and drinking companions that befit their stations in life, they could depend upon the locals to include them in their tavern entertainments. When Hamilton arrived in Trenton, New Jersey, he “put up” at Eliah Bond’s tavern. Two gentlemen came in and invited him to join them; they “supped upon cold gammon and a sallet.” Hamilton criticized their rambling conversation, although he appreciated the considerable time and effort they put into explaining New Jersey politics. After that “the discourse turned to religion and then to physick.” Hamilton’s experience was typical of the upper-class traveler. In towns in which he knew no one, he expected and received an invitation to join the locals. He may have considered them unworthy, but he was asked to participate in their drinking, eating, talking, or other entertainments.<sup>18</sup>

No matter where James Birket stayed on his journey or how foreign his surroundings appeared to him, the tavern provided him with companionship and a semblance of familiarity. In Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Birket lodged at the Widow Slaton’s, “the best tavern for Strangers in town.” He was there from August 16 through August 31, 1750, and listed his dining companions for each night in his diary. He recorded the same experiences in Boston. With the exception of the day he arrived, September 5, Birket did not dine alone in the city. William Gregory, a Virginia merchant, had no sooner arrived in Philadelphia than he was invited to dine with a Mr. Bell, described by Gregory as a gentleman, “in company with two others.”<sup>19</sup>

During his stay in New York City, Hamilton presented himself and one of his letters of introduction and was soon invited to join a group of gentlemen for supper. After they finished eating, they settled in to drink. For Hamilton, this best summed up life in New York: “They filled bumpers att each round of toasting. I drank only three—to the King, and the governors of New Jersey and New York.” Two or three of the company voiced their deep philosophical musings that the most sociable quality of a man was to “be able to pour down seas of liquor and



remain unconquered while others sunk under the table.” Hamilton’s commentary reveals that these men did not measure up to his standards. They were incapable of sustaining a decent conversation, let alone a discourse on philosophy. He claimed that he did not agree with the views espoused, although he refused to share his own opinions publicly. He chose instead to leave the group early, around ten o’clock. This was Hamilton’s rendition of the events. Another possible interpretation is that he could not get a word into the conversation and he crept away in silence. Even though he had consumed only three bumpers, he was “pritty well flushed.”<sup>20</sup>

William Black, the Virginia representative to the treaty meeting with the Iroquois, claimed that the benefit derived from taverns was not to be found in the food and drink but in the conversations. It was to his and others great benefit that the focus was almost always on political topics. He professed that an hour spent in discussion in a tavern yielded more information about people and places than a week of observation. The advantages of “Polite Company” were numerous, he said; they assisted understanding in a person “who might otherwise [have] his Sight Limited to the Length of his Nose.”<sup>21</sup>

Hamilton agreed with Black. At the end of his journey to and from Maine, Hamilton summarized what he had learned about the colonies as the result of his travels. He offered general observations about the density of the populations, governments, the quality of the air, and the relative physical size of the people. In his judgment, the “politeness and humanity” of the colonists was alike everywhere except in the “great towns where the inhabitants are more civilized, especially in Boston.” He admitted that he learned quite a lot from walking the streets. However, most of his conversations and contact with people occurred in taverns. And these public houses shared a remarkable similarity no matter where he was. “Polite company” everywhere, he ventured, conformed to the same set of rules, and for Hamilton, this was an essential ingredient in being “civilized.”<sup>22</sup>

Hamilton also concurred with Black’s assessment that political discourse ranked among the most common forms of tavern conversation. At a tavern in Darby, near Philadelphia, Hamilton and his traveling companion “were entertained with an elegant dispute between a young Quaker and the boatswain of a privateer concerning the lawfullness of using arms against an enemy.” The argument became quite heated, and Hamilton, in his most imperious tone, predicted

that they would not reach a conclusion. At another stop, the local doctor talked to him about the miserable condition of the local governing assembly. It was “chiefly composed of mechanics and ignorant wretches, obstinate to the last degree.” In this situation Hamilton no doubt found comfort and companionship and appreciated the doctor’s sentiments about the base nature of the assemblymen. In his journal he confessed to feeling more like the recipient of a lecture from the doctor than a participant in an intellectual discourse. By Hamilton’s standards, even this fellow did not quite measure up.<sup>23</sup>

European travelers expressed genuine surprise at the level of political discourse that took place inside colonial taverns and the degree of emotion displayed in the course of the debates. A French visitor dined in a tavern not far from Annapolis, “in a large Company, the Conversation Continually on the Stamp Dutys. I was realy surprised to here the people talk so freely.” It was the same the next night. “After dinner as the botle was going round the Conversat’n fell on the Stamps, and as the wine operated the rage against the proceedings of the parlement augment.” The discussion became so agitated that someone declared that the citizenry should take up arms. Even the magistrate present, who throughout the proceedings had done his best to temper the intensity of feeling, agreed that he too might be required to defend “his liberty and property, upon which he had a huza from the Company.” Politics combined with drink was a sure formula for increasing the political temperature.<sup>24</sup>

Tavern conversation afforded local residents the opportunity to inquire about the origins, goals, class, and religious persuasion of all strangers. Hamilton often referred to how completely he was scrutinized by landlords or their families and how he put up with a barrage of questions he thought impertinent from people he took to be beneath him and without the entitlement to ask them. Andrew Burnaby, on a visit to the colonies from his home in England, claimed that when he went into an ordinary in Massachusetts, every individual in the proprietor’s family directed a question or two at him “relative to his history; and that, till each was satisfied, and they had conferred and compared together their information, there was no possibility of procuring any refreshment.” Burnaby concocted a prepared speech detailing his identity in order to preempt the interrogation and increase his chances of quicker service. Travelers were at the mercy of such inquisitive tavern keepers.<sup>25</sup>

Josiah Quincy, in his travels from Boston to South Carolina in 1773, successfully located well-appointed taverns by relying on the advice of folks he met on route. Through the rituals of drinking and the language of class he was able to connect with other gentlemen. “I toast all the friends, Sir. Each gent gave his toast round in succession.”<sup>26</sup> The Marquis de Chastellux had a very different opinion of this custom. He complained of the tiresome rituals required of drinkers in the better American taverns. When he visited Philadelphia in the early 1780s, he described at length what he referred to as an absurd and barbarous practice—with the first drink and at the start of the meal he had to call out each person’s name to inform that man that he was drinking to his health. He likened the situation to an actor in a comedy who is dying of thirst yet must take the time to enquire after or “catch the eye of the five and twenty persons” before taking the first swallow.<sup>27</sup>

By the mid-eighteenth century, when the well-heeled traveler happened upon a high-quality establishment in a city, he encountered scenes that were filled with strangers yet were familiar and comfortable. They were entreated to join with the locals, to participate in the drinking and conversation. Locals bombarded strangers with questions determined to gain information about where they had come from, why they were there, the nature of their business, and how long they might stay. In some regions, like New England, proprietors had a legal obligation to know who was in their houses, so that the presence of any visitors who planned to remain in their tavern for more than a few days could be reported to the authorities. Elsewhere the interrogation was motivated by a desire for information and news about places and events outside the locals’ experience. It was also the time that travelers presented their identity, an identity that was based on their outward appearance as well as their familiarity with the rituals of tavern sociability, the drinking and conversation inside the tavern.

## The Tavern as Gendered Space

In a letter penned to the *New England Courant*, Benjamin Franklin reminded readers about the vice of drunkenness and pointed out the value of moderate drinking: a “little Liquor” combined with “much Study and Experience,” he claimed, were required in order for some men to become accomplished orators;

the moderate use of liquor endowed the bumbler with fluency and warmth. Intelligent, informed talk was valued and practiced by men in Franklin's station. The tavern was an important site of conversation, and the relationship of drinking to conversation contributed to sustaining the gendered nature of tavern culture. Franklin was quite sure that "my own Sex are generally the most eloquent because the most passionate . . . that they could talk whole Hours together upon any thing; but it must be owned to the Honour of the other Sex, that there are many among them who can talk whole Hours together on Nothing."<sup>28</sup>

Jacob Hiltzheimer, a lesser government official in Pennsylvania, engaged in a wide range of social events that took place both inside and outside the tavern. Away from the tavern his wife more often than not accompanied him. They attended weddings and funerals, dined at the homes of friends and family, entertained visitors at their home, and appeared at plays. On the many occasions when Hiltzheimer socialized in the tavern, his wife was not present. He could often be found in a tavern day or night, drinking with friends, celebrating special events, or meeting with business associates. He "got decently drunk" to celebrate the approaching marriage of a friend, although "the groom could not be accused of the same fault." He drank punch with Levi Hollingsworth to mark his recent marriage and with Henry Keppele to commemorate the birth of Keppele's son. Some trips to the tavern required no special excuse; on January 14, 1767, he "spent the evening at John Biddle's" with three gentlemen. Two days after his "wife gave birth to a son" Hiltzheimer spent the evening at Mrs. Gray's drinking punch.<sup>29</sup> Hiltzheimer also regularly dined at the tavern, with various informal gatherings of men. At times these meals preceded events, like the breakfast at Mrs. Gray's with five gentlemen before they set out to go fox hunting.<sup>30</sup> Hiltzheimer spent considerable social time with his wife; when he went inside the tavern, however, he did so without her. That space was reserved for his engagements with men.

Captain Francis Goelet worked the Boston to London sea route. By day, Goelet loaded and prepared his ship for its return voyage; at night he transformed into a frenetic socializer and drinker. Unlike many drinkers who remained planted in a single seat for hours, Goelet moved around the city from tavern to tavern. On one layover, his second night in Boston, Goelet joined a group of "abt 40 Gentlemen" in a tavern. They dined elegantly, drank extensive

toasts, and “Sang a Number of Songs, and [were] Exceeding Merry until 3 a Clock in the Morning.” The group he was with walked in the direction of his lodging, past the Boston Commons, where they encountered a group of “Country Young Men and Women with a Violin at A Tavern Danceing and Makeing Merry.” When Goelet and his group pushed their way into the space, the “Young Women Fled, we took Posession of the Room.” A fiddler was present; so was a “Keg of Sugard Dram,” which, according to Goelet, contributed greatly to their merriment. They left the tavern and proceeded to Mr. Jacob Wendells’ establishment, where they were “obliged to Drink Punch and Wine.” The party broke up about five o’clock in the morning, and Goelet went off to bed. The following night he began his entertainments anew.<sup>31</sup> He went to a “Turtle Frolick with a Compy of Genth and Ladies” (presumably a frolic with human companions while dining on turtle). They danced “Several Minuits and country Dances and [were] very Merry,” and about dusk the men escorted the women to their homes and regrouped in a tavern for the evening’s drinking. On another occasion, he “Drank Plentifully Toasted the Ladies Singing &c. Abt Dusk the Evening returned to Boston,” and spent the remainder of the night playing cards with “some Ladies.” Goelet was invited to dine at the home of Mr. Thomas Leachmore, the Surveyor General, and found there a gathering of men and several women. After he left the dinner he retired with his male friends to a tavern. Goelet lived a busy social life while in Boston. When the occasions took place outside the tavern, they included women; when inside the public house, it was only men.<sup>32</sup>

Account books confirm the gendered nature of tavern sociability. The Lowrence Tavern in Rowan County, North Carolina, sold liquor—by the drink and as a carry out trade—and exchanged a wide variety of goods—tobacco, paper, flints, shot powder, medicines, nails, tools, cloth, buttons, and leather goods. In the eleven years before the American Revolution, 195 individuals had accounts with the Lowrences. Only seven were women, and all of those appear to have been unmarried. Two were listed as widows, a third was referred to as Granny Cathy, and three others must have been recently widowed, since they replaced a male customer with the same surname.<sup>33</sup>

These seven women conducted their business with the Lowrences very differently than did their male counterparts. Men rarely went to the tavern just to pick up the supplies they needed. Usually, they tended to their business and

spent some time in the tavern over a pint or a bowl of punch. In contrast, the women did not order anything to be consumed on the premises, nor did any of them purchase liquor in any quantity smaller than a quart. Women were clearly not part of the public culture of drink. If they bought liquor, they carted it off to the privacy of their homes.

Of all of the people with whom tavern keepers Robert and Lydia Moulder, of Chichester, Pennsylvania, had accounts, only two were women. Neither was charged for drink on the premises. Rachel Pedrick carried home wine, spirits, butter, and a small cash loan; Catherine Lawrence purchased six pounds of beef. Similarly, of 221 customers of John Wilson's merchandise business and tavern, only 6 women were listed as having accounts with him. They purchased a huge variety of goods—salt, gloves, nails, beef, sugar, rope, linen, buttons, butter, and more. Of the three women who purchased liquor, none did so in small quantity. Thus, it is highly unlikely that they stayed on the premises to imbibe. In an account book from an anonymous tavern in Salem, Massachusetts, from the early decades of the eighteenth century, not a single woman is listed as a customer.<sup>34</sup> Women are completely absent from Mary Cranch's account book as well.<sup>35</sup>

A business advice article in the *Boston Gazette* portrayed women's exclusion from the tavern as an advantage to employers. The author advocated apprenticing women to the retail trades, because it would ultimately lower overall expenses and increase profits. "Men generally transact all Business of this kind in Taverns and Coffee houses, at a great additional Expence, and the Loss of Much time . . . while Women, upon the Conclusion of a Bargain, have no Inducement to make a longer Stay, but go directly Home, and follow their Affairs."<sup>36</sup>

Respectable women in the colonial period entered public houses rarely and in restricted contexts. Their limited relationship to taverns as patrons is not meant to imply that women did not drink alcoholic beverages. Rather, they drank as they generally lived, in the private rather than the public realm. Even the notion of drunkenness was gendered. The condition was read differently if the culprit was a man or a woman. Female drunkenness exacted a toll on women's reputations that was not comparable with the same behavior in men.<sup>37</sup> In depositions taken in September 1626, Roger Dilke and his friend Thomas Dellamaior described the events that had occurred around nine or ten at night when they were returning to their lodging. They saw Goodwife Ffysher and Mr. Sotherne walk-

ing ahead of them. Dilke testified that “good wiefe Ffysher did reele and stagger as she wente, and that shee stumbled and fell uppon a Cow or by a Cow or an ewe or some such beste.” Goodwife Ffysher’s companion tried to grab her arm to steady her but her antics had already been witnessed. Dellamaior deposed that “it was greate shame to see a man drunke, But more shame to see a woman in that case.”<sup>38</sup>

Over a hundred years later, drunkenness in women still left an indelible blemish. Late one spring night at around eleven o’clock, on William Black’s walk back to his lodgings from his night’s entertainments, he “was met by a Woman tolerably well dress’d, and seem’d a good likely Person to Appearance but very much in Liquor. . . . I had curiosity enough to turn her round to have a better view; on which I made the Discovery of her being in a Condition, which of all others, least becomes the Sex.”<sup>39</sup> Black, Dilke, and Dellamaior represent the shared attitude of early Americans: public drinking and drunkenness were masculine and the consequences of being drunk were weighed differently if the person reeling and staggering was a man or a woman.

The experiences of women travelers exposes further the gendered nature of the tavern space. Although women occasionally stopped overnight in taverns, they stayed in them only reluctantly, after they had exhausted the possibility of other lodging. When women were in a traveling party, landlords on occasion made some effort to reduce the awkwardness of the sleeping arrangements, and sometimes homeowners came to their rescue. James Clitherall was escorting two women on a venture from Charleston, South Carolina, to Philadelphia in 1776. In one town along the way, a gentleman, “seeing the Poorness & noisiness of the tavern [and] having two spare beds in his house, kindly invited the ladies to partake of them.” All Clitherall himself received from the same gentleman was an invitation to dine. He had to return for the night to his own, unsatisfactory, lodging at Adamson’s tavern, where he found “so much drinking and gaming, fighting & swearing . . . that I found it impossible to continue there.” He moved to Fagan’s tavern, where to his delight there were clean sheets and no noise.<sup>40</sup>

Sarah Knight, whose four-month journey to New York from her home in Boston began in October 1704, also preferred lodging in private homes rather than taverns. Her guide escorted her as far as Dedham, Massachusetts, where he expected that she would catch the western post. However, it never appeared.

She adamantly refused to lodge at the local tavern, though she entered it briefly to inquire whether any of the group assembled would accompany her to Billings' tavern twelve miles down the road. She received no response. She interpreted their unwillingness to be of assistance as a reluctance to cease drinking even for a moment; "they being tyed by the Lippss to a pewter engine."<sup>41</sup>

"Madam Knight" secured a guide eventually, and her arrival late that night at Billings' tavern caused quite a stir. The proprietor's eldest daughter bombarded her with questions. The landlord's daughter confessed that she had never seen "a woman on the Rode so Dreadfull late, in all the days of my versall life." The sleeping arrangement offered was unappealing to Knight: "a parlour in a litle back Lento, wch was almost fill'd wth the bedsted." Knight "was forced to climb on a chair to gitt up to ye wretched bed that lay on it."<sup>42</sup>

Madam Knight was unable to avoid taverns altogether and lodged in them at other points in her journey. Unlike male travelers, she tended to overhear conversations rather than participate in them. At Mr. Havens', a rather good tavern, she reported that this house, despite being "neet and handsome," afforded her no rest. She was disturbed all night by "the Clamor of some of the Town topers in the next room, Who were entred into a strong debate." The intensity of the argument increased until opinions were punctuated by "Roreing voice and Thundering blows with the fist of wickedness on the Table." Knight wished the debater "tongue tyed" in her effort to sleep. She calmed herself by writing a poem and recalling a story told to her by a friend who was similarly disturbed all night in a country inn where four drinkers were "contriving how to bring a triangle into a Square." The only respite from the discussion was as they called for another "gill."<sup>43</sup>

If women partook of tavern services, proprietors and patrons assumed they were wives, servers, or prostitutes. Charlotte Brown, a matron of the English General Hospital in America, traveled to Philadelphia with her colleague Mr. Cherrington in 1756. At each tavern, the proprietors and patrons presumed, not surprisingly, that they were husband and wife. Charlotte Brown had a difficult time persuading them otherwise. In the first tavern, she refused the landlord's offer that she and Mr. Cherrington share one bed and she tried in vain to persuade them to give her a room of her own. At the Indian King in Philadelphia, Brown endured stares from all of "the People of the House," while those as-



sembled debated whether she was Mr. Cherrington's wife or mistress. When her role was revealed, Brown reported, "they treated me with much more Respect." In order to conduct her business, Brown moved out of the tavern into the city's hospital. Her business required that she meet with both men and women. She would have been too exposed at the tavern, opening herself up to all sorts of misinterpretation about the nature of her business. Women did venture inside the tavern. However, respectable women preferred to avoid the discomfort and the risk to their reputations of being seen there.<sup>44</sup>

The gendered nature of the space was further revealed when women were present as proprietors or when they worked in the tavern alongside their husbands or fathers. It appears that women working in the tavern did not, like their male counterparts, participate in the sociability of the house. They were there to serve and not to be seen or heard. According to Dr. Alexander Hamilton, women had no place in the lofty conversations of men. In Annapolis, Hamilton and the tavern keeper Mr. Hart "conversed like a couple of virtuosos." Hart's wife, also present, did not participate in the conversation, a situation Hamilton relished. "He is blessed with silent women, but her muteness is owing to a defect in her hearing. . . . It is well I have thus accounted for it; else such a character in the sex would appear quite out of nature." Hamilton in fact lauded the gendered nature of "polite society." "There is polite conversation here among the better sort, among whom there is no scarcity of men of learning and good sense." However, he noted, the "ladies, for the most part, keep att home and seldom appear in the streets . . . Except att churches or meetings."<sup>45</sup>

### A Dangerous Mingling

The earliest taverns included a mix of classes, although they quickly developed distinguishing characteristics and specialized clienteles. City taverns were the first to be differentiated by class. The first taverns in every port city were built along the waterfront. Gradually, as more public houses were erected toward the middle of towns, those clustered around the water became the sites for laboring-class socializing while the new establishments toward town centers attracted middling-class and elite clientele. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the tavern culture in the major port cities accentuated the gaping distance between

those on the top of the economic ladder and the rest of society. The culture of drink practiced by proprietors and patrons of lower-end establishments was not only different in character from that of middle-class or elite houses; it challenged the traditional ordering of society by providing a place where various disenfranchised elements of society could mingle.<sup>46</sup>

Early in the history of New Amsterdam, taverns catered to particular clienteles: Farmers who traveled into the city congregated at Sergeant Litschoe's tavern. The White Horse tavern, opened in 1641 by Philip Geraerdy, was a small place, just eighteen by twenty-five feet, and contained only a single door and window, which likely opened into the kitchen, dining room, parlor, and taproom. It attracted servants and soldiers, "bumptious young fellows from all parts of Northern Europe, who caroused and brawled at the tavern when off duty." The White Horse witnessed its share of disorder when the drinking turned violent.<sup>47</sup> Inside the Blue Dove might be a mixture of apprentices, soldiers, and sailors. One particular night in the mid-seventeenth century, the night watchman was called to the Blue Dove to stop a brawl. The place was "badly battered." The watchman escaped, but without his sword. When asked, during his testimony about the event, to name those present, he named a hatter, a servant, and a number of soldiers and sailors.<sup>48</sup>

Sections of New Amsterdam, and later New York, earned a reputation for having rough houses, characterized by rowdy mobs, frequent violence, and hard drinking. Montayne's tavern was the "House where all the Riotous Liberty Boys met in 1765 and 1766." It was center stage during the Golden Hill and Nassau Street riots in 1770. Although less well known than a contemporary event, the Boston Massacre, the Golden Hill and Nassau Street riots had similar origins. The tensions in New York were related to the quartering of a large number of British troops in the city. Montayne's tavern was situated near the liberty pole, the site of much of the street action. A group of the British soldiers attempted to blow up the liberty pole but failed. In their embarrassment at their failure, the troops stormed the tavern. Once at the tavern they turned violent, shattering windows and smashing pottery and furniture. Among Montayne's patrons were those who had the most to lose economically in the competition with soldiers, who searched for temporary jobs to supplement their meagre army pay; for those colonists the liberty pole held much meaning.<sup>49</sup>

At the moment of the troops' attack, the tavern represented the mood of defiance within New York City. It remained a focal point. On the five-year anniversary of the repeal of the Stamp Act, newspaper reports claimed, thirty-five toasts were drunk there in celebration. Five years later the anniversary was marked at Montagne's with a mere twenty-nine toasts. Taverns like Montagne's also housed the city's prostitutes. These taverns, referred to as "receptacles for loose and disorderly persons," were well situated to cater to the soldiers quartered nearby. In 1760, "Mr. Pearson, a Mate belonging to his Majesty's Ship the Mercury, now in this Harbour, having been in Company with a lewd Woman . . . , got his Pocket picked of his Money." He suspected that the other women in the house had assisted in the robbery. On a Tuesday night in October 1766, between eleven and twelve o'clock, "a number of soldiers with bayonets went to Several houses in the Fields where they were very noisy and abusive, to the great disturbance and terror of the inhabitants. This was occasioned, it is said, by ill treatment, which some of the Soldiers had received the night before at one of those infamous houses."<sup>50</sup> In 1768, Fanny Bambridge, an apparently well-known New York prostitute, was found dead at a tavern; the coroner ruled an overdose of alcohol. As further indication of how violent these taverns could be, a report from the early 1770s claimed that a woman was murdered for refusing to bed with a customer in Dower's tavern. The proprietor of the house, Mary Harvey, left, after providing wine to a male customer, leaving him in the company of a woman, Christian Taylor. Taylor reported that the man had "set her on fire" by lighting her petticoats with a candle because she "refused to let him lie with her, he having threatened before, that if she would not, he would either stab or burn her to Death."<sup>51</sup>

Although these taverns contributed greatly to the violence and rowdiness of New York, officials were fundamentally unperturbed. However, when the tavern gatherings included both whites and blacks, New York's leaders took notice. The activities and alliances that occurred in certain taverns complicate our notions of race, status, and gender relations of the time. The stories of the 1712 and 1741 New York slave conspiracies are beyond the scope of this work. Germane, however, is the role played by the tavern in the events leading up to and during the revolts, as well as the involvement of tavern keepers in a series of related illegal activities. The 1712 uprising began on the night of New Year's Day. "A group of

slaves” gathered in a tavern, “determined to strike against New York city in an effort of liberation and destruction.” Little is known about the collaboration of the tavern keeper except that he welcomed slaves into his house and served them willingly and regularly. The conspirators were comfortable there and used the tavern space to plan the events of the next twelve days. The participants in these gatherings violated a number of New York laws. Tavern keepers could not legally serve slaves liquor nor allow them access to a public house without the express permission of their master. Slaves were forbidden to gather in groups, had their movements within the city restricted, were bound by a strict curfew, and were to limit their contact with free persons.<sup>52</sup>

More is known about the centrality of the tavern in the events leading up to the 1741 slave uprising. Daniel Horsmanden, one of the state supreme court justices involved in the postconspiracy trials, published an account of the 1741 slave conspiracy. In his efforts to convince readers that an organized conspiracy had taken place, “that the negroes were rising,” Horsmanden mixed trial testimony with liberal doses of his interpretation and defense of his actions on the bench, but he accurately identified an unmistakable, and for him disturbing, alliance of blacks and whites. Horsmanden’s portrayal describes a city divided along the lines of color and class, a configuration that he sought to maintain. What transpired in low-end taverns threatened to upset this racialized arrangement. Several people testified at the conspiracy trials that tavern keeper John Hughson had entertained twenty to thirty slaves at his alehouse and that on more than one occasion constables had had to be called to break up a party. A slave named Cuffee, hanged for his participation in the conspiracy, testified that a club was to meet at “Hughson’s in the Easter hollidays, but that the d — d constables hindered them.” Another tavern owner, John Romme, was similarly implicated. One witness described a scene in Romme’s tavern, “where she saw in company, together with said Romme and his wife, ten or eleven negroes, all in one room.” In their July 23, 1741, session, the supreme court convicted and punished ten additional tavern keepers for keeping “a disorderly house, entertaining negroes, etc.” Slaves would frequent city taverns “in the evenings, and . . . stay often late in the night, drinking and playing at dice.”<sup>53</sup> Horsmanden’s subtext called attention to how the plot was realized within an alliance of blacks and whites, and with the participation of women.<sup>54</sup>

Horsmanden devoted considerable space in his chronicle to the story of Margaret “Peg” Kerry, a white Irish woman, and John Gwin, also known as Ceasar, a black slave. Margaret Kerry lived at John Hughson’s tavern, located on the waterfront on the west side of Manhattan. John Gwin paid her board and often spent the night with her. He entered her chamber by climbing through a window Kerry left open. In Horsmanden’s telling, Kerry was a prostitute. However, no evidence exists to support that claim. More likely, Horsmanden was incapable of imagining a love relationship between a white woman and a black man. “She pretended to be married;” Horsmanden believed that it could only have been an illicit relationship. The idea of marriage between a black man and white woman apparently so repulsed Horsmanden that at one point he slipped and referred to Margaret Kerry as “Negro Peg.” This constellation was more tolerable; sex between a black man and white woman was not.<sup>55</sup>

Horsmanden’s knowledge of Gwin and Kerry’s relationship contributed to his fears. This love connection revealed solidarity on the personal level but also reflected a far broader alliance. Since many illicit connections—fencing stolen goods, lovers meeting in the night, plots to free the slaves—took place in the multiracial waterfront taverns on the margins of New York society, it is little wonder that the only tavern-related crimes city officials prosecuted involved the illegal gatherings of whites and blacks. These taverns posed a thorny problem for New York’s leaders who worked to prevent the “cabals” of poor whites and blacks before plans could be formed and executed. Horsmanden ordered “diligent inquiry into the economy and behaviour of all the mean ale-houses and tipling house within this city” with particular attention to those where “negroes, and the scum and dregs of white people [were] in conjunction.” According to Horsmanden, these sites encouraged the worst sorts of behavior but most importantly provided space for the “most loose, debased and abandoned wretches among us to cabal and confederate together.” Horsmanden’s negative reaction to the racial fluidity of the low-end tavern hit its mark directly. “Negroes, the scum, and dregs of white people” did gather there, armed with a shared work experience and the “insurrectionary connections” aimed at turning the social order upside down.<sup>56</sup>

Dr. Alexander Hamilton’s recounting of an event in Newtown, Maryland, in 1744 offers a different perspective on the ways race, gender, and class were

marked within tavern culture, in the entertainment offered. After dinner one afternoon, Hamilton watched “the tricks of a female baboon in the yard.” He expressed surprise at the size of the coterie of attendants and handlers for this baboon and claimed she received better care than members of the upper class in Newton. The baboon “was very fond of the compliments and company of the men and boys but expressed in her gestures an utter aversion att women and girls, especially negroes of that sex.” Hamilton left nothing to the reader’s imagination. He reminded us that the baboon too was “of a black complexion.” He proclaimed his amazement that the black baboon demonstrated no affinity toward persons of color. Hamilton supplied the explanation for this behavior and a clear sense of his attitudes. He attributed class status to the baboon, referring to her as “this lady” and equating her attendants with servants. “This lady” behaved as a lady should: her gender assumed an attraction to men. Women were not the object of a well-bred woman’s affections. Her class drew her to other people of quality. For Hamilton, as a member of a racialized society, *quality* meant white. Color and gender lines were so clearly drawn in eighteenth-century America that Hamilton assumed a trained baboon would not threaten the distinctions.<sup>57</sup>

Philadelphia’s leaders also feared the disorders that could result from multitudes of people gathering in the tavern. Tavern keeper John Simes was presented before the court for keeping a disorderly house. According to the Grand Jury, Simes’s tavern was the site, on December 26, 1701, of a “disturbing” event that was liable “to propagate the throne of wickedness amongst us.” On that Boxing Day, Simes allowed and encouraged customers John Smith and Edward James to “dance and revel.” This disorder would have been sufficient for official sanctions, because dancing in taverns was forbidden in Philadelphia; but it was compounded by the fact that both men were dressed in women’s clothing and they were in the company of two women, Sarah Stivee and Dorothy Canterill, who were dressed in men’s clothing. The only place where the day after Christmas was associated with this type of costuming was the West Indies. In its English versions, Boxing Day was for filling boxes of alms primarily for the poor. In Nassau, however, the day’s festivities included a parade and festival incorporating elements of Mardi Gras and ancient African tribal rituals.<sup>58</sup> Whatever the origin of the Philadelphia revelers’ activities, it is not by accident that this subversive be-

havior took place in a space that was by its very nature involved with various forms of resistance that often included rubbing up against the norms of the dominant culture. Simes was charged with keeping a disorderly house. He contested the charge and brought tailor John Williams with him to his hearing. It is unclear if Williams was consulted in his position as tailor to alter the costumes worn by the four revelers. He did supply a ten-pound bond for Simes's appearance in court. Simes survived this court appearance with his license intact.<sup>59</sup>

This eighteenth-century example of cultural inversion could imply a wide range of potential behaviors, it opens the possibility that the revelers were parodying social codes and were engaged in a form of subversion and resistance aimed directly at society's rigid gender roles.<sup>60</sup> The laboring classes residing in the northern American port cities shared a socioeconomic ethos. Pushed increasingly toward the economic margins, they turned toward strategies that enabled them to survive. The events in Simes's tavern reveal a particular moment in which members of the laboring class transgressed a number of boundaries. The raucous mixtures of men and women and the gatherings of individuals from different ethnicities constituted the regular fare of these lower-end public houses.

Philadelphia leaders continued to voice their concerns over gatherings that mixed race and gender. Beginning in 1732, the Philadelphia Common Council complained on a regular basis that "the frequent and tumultuous Meetings of the Negro Slaves, especially on Sundays," contributed greatly to the city's disorders. Drafts of laws were presented periodically to control these behaviors, and they began to mention not only the gatherings of slaves but also of "Mullato's & Indian Servants." In 1741, the Council ruled that in order to address the complaints that "great numbers of Negroes & other Set there [near the court house] with Milk pails & other things late at night," the Constables of the city would be allowed to ask these persons to disburse half an hour after sunset. If they failed to do so, they would be required to appear before the Council.<sup>61</sup>

The 1744 Philadelphia Grand Jury blamed a cluster of taverns situated in "Hell Town" as the cause of the city's disorders. Because so many taverns were concentrated in a small geographic space, they impoverished one another. In order to survive economically, tavern keepers enticed "even negroes" to drink in their establishments. Situated north of Arch Street between the Delaware River

and Third Street, Hell Town harbored the city's under classes. It was also home to many of the city's transient mariners and a magnet to the apprentices, servants, and slaves when they gathered for their "evening pleasure." Situated in the middle of this section was the "Three Jolly Irishman," reputed to be one of the toughest taverns in the port town. Men gathered there to consume large quantities of drink and to gamble at a variety of games—cards, dice, bull baiting, cockfights, and boxing matches. It was there that traveling shows displayed their offerings; for a small payment, tavern patrons could view leopards, trained pigs, and camels.<sup>62</sup> Participants in these low-end tavern entertainments represented a mixture of races, and these were the only sorts of taverns where women were regularly included. The women who frequented them drank, danced, talked, engaged in illicit sex, and were involved in illegal trading networks. They violated the law and society's sensibilities.<sup>63</sup> The city's constables were charged with maintaining order in the city. Faced with the threats to the social order that these taverns housed, they did not hesitate to send to the workhouse "people of both sexes, who could give no good account of themselves, being found in a disorderly house."<sup>64</sup>

By the middle of the eighteenth century, laboring-class Philadelphians, like their New Yorker counterparts, were involved in a tavern culture that was separate from those of elite and middling society. There had developed a subversive economy in which servants and working-class people exchanged stolen goods. They drank together, made plans, hid their stolen items, and sold them. Hannah Gooding, the Philadelphia tavern keeper mentioned earlier, serves as an example. She had her license pulled for drinking-law violations, but the court was probably more concerned with her involvement in the underground economic network. She fenced stolen goods received from members of the city's servant class.<sup>65</sup>

The most notorious incident in Philadelphia involving a tavern and an illegal trading network erupted in the winter of 1750. The city was "alarmed by the unusual Frequency of Robberies, Thefts and burglaries." Stores and houses were being broken into. Clothing, jewelry, handkerchiefs, silver spoons, a tea chest, "among other things," had been taken.<sup>66</sup> The five people, men and women, most directly involved in the thefts were all from Philadelphia's lower orders and lived in the area of Water Street. Although no one linked their activities to anything that resembled a slave conspiracy, the cast of characters involved represented diverse ethnic groups and both free and unfree. Elizabeth Robinson was suspected



of wrong doing when it was discovered that she had sold some goods at suspiciously low prices to an indentured servant. Robinson was an Englishwoman who had been shipped to Maryland as a convict servant. John Crow, the servant who was caught with the goods, was an Irish Catholic indentured to a Philadelphia brewer. Francis and Mary McCoy, husband and wife, also played a key role in the thefts. They were Irish Protestants who had lived in Philadelphia for a number of years. Also accused, but later released because he gave evidence against his fellow defendants, was Joseph Cooper, indentured to a “Turner in Town.” John Morrison apparently orchestrated the events. At the time of these robberies he was about 24 years old, an Irish Catholic who had come to the colonies as an indentured servant about ten years before.<sup>67</sup>

The McCoy, Crow, and Robinson were arrested and held in the jail. Morrison was picked up somewhat later at his usual haunt, Stinson’s Tavern in Water Street. The Stinsons admitted that they knew Morrison well, and Mr. Stinson was sentenced to be “burnt in the Hand and his Goods being forfeited were seiz’d by the Sheriff” for his involvement with the pilfered items. Once the thieves were captured, the court heard their confessions. Morrison provided a litany of thefts. They spoke of misspending their time, their delight in “Strong Drink, even to Excess,” and how drink provided for them the energy to commit new sins. The members of the “gang”—John Morrison, Elizabeth Robinson, Francis McCoy, and John Crow—“receiv’d Sentence of DEATH”; Mary McCoy was released, since it was assumed that her participation had been coerced by her husband.<sup>68</sup>

Patrons of low-end taverns in New England challenged elite society as well, and were distasteful to them. In 1760, young John Adams found himself away from his usual haunts in Boston, meeting friends at Thayer’s tavern in Weymouth, Massachusetts. The place was packed with people: “Negroes with a fiddle, young fellows and girls dancing in the chamber as if they would kick the floor thru . . . fiddling and dancing of both sexes and all ages, in the lower room, singing, dancing, fiddling, drinking flip and toddy, and drams.” Although a scene that might appeal to many, Adams expressed great disdain for this experience. In this tavern, he was forced to rub elbows with, drink with, and shout over the noise of a greater variety of the people of Massachusetts than was his habit.<sup>69</sup>

The taverns of Salem and Marblehead, Massachusetts, were a mixture of legal

and illegal houses. In Salem, a substantial proportion of the clientele was fishermen and sailors. Their presence was bolstered substantially by “farmers, artisans, housewives, church members, and even an occasional clergyman.” Marblehead’s taverngoers were somewhat different. There the patrons were “the often-transient, relatively poor, and predominantly young, male fishing population.”<sup>70</sup> In the working-class taverns and illegal houses in Marblehead and Salem, patrons spent their time in ways “deemed improper in the larger society.” Commonly men and women participated in dancing, fiddling, and gambling at cards and dice, and assaulted the rules for both physical and verbal conduct. The court records of Marblehead are suspiciously silent even though the population was notorious for drunken, unruly behavior. One reason for the low incidence of indictments was that the selectmen knew the dangers of entering this world. “Nither Constable grandjuryman nor Ti[t]hingman can com Nere them to prevent . . . Disorders.” While the officials of Salem received more support than Marblehead’s officials for their attempts to curb these behaviors, tithingmen and constables in Salem were often abused when they entered taverns to quell disturbances.<sup>71</sup>

Boston contained a wide range of public houses, including ones frequented by laborers, people of color, and women. The diary of Robert Love, a city clerk ordered by the selectmen to warn undesirable people out of the city of Boston, offers a tantalizing glimpse of gatherings of such taverngoers. Love noted, for instance, that Pennelope Whinkake, an Indian woman, had come into the city in October 1765, from Newport, Rhode Island. She first lodged with an unnamed tavern keeper but then began residing with Robert McCurday “near the windmill upon the neck at the South End.” The link with McCurday and the south end is highly revealing. A large proportion of those warned out of the city of Boston had resided in the rooms of taverns, boarding houses, or private residences in Boston’s south end. At about the same time that Love warned Whinkake, he also gave legal notice to Deborah Jennins. She had entered Boston from Ebintown; Love described her as well as an Indian woman who lodged at Robert McCurday’s. About Jennins Love noted, “[She] keeps company with a Pacience Peck a mulatto woman that is often with gentlemen negros.”<sup>72</sup>

It is unclear what all these individuals were doing at McCurday’s. Did they reside with him because they labored for him as servants? Or did they work out

of McCurday's as prostitutes? If so, were their primary clients the free black men of the city, a notable issue for the white men of Boston? Or is it, as Love suggests, that these Indian women and black men were "keeping company," that, living on the physical and social margins of Boston society, they found each other at McCurday's?

The southern urban environment also afforded blacks access to a tavern culture that heightened white anxiety. When in 1693 the governor complained about the city's disorderly houses where "strong liquors" were sold; he included among his list of their patrons the lower orders of whites and "Great numbers of Negroes . . . knowing they can have drinck . . . for mony or what else they bring." The Grand Council of South Carolina summoned Charleston's constables before them in 1702 to chastise them for not enforcing the "negro act" and for "Suffering Caballs of negroes" at a tavern called the Rat Trap. Given the number of references to these sorts of behaviors, the problems associated with the tavern escalated during the eighteenth century. A newspaper advertisement claimed that a runaway slave had been seen in a tavern; a mistress claimed that her slave had lost his wages "either by Gaming or spend[ing] among the lettle Punch-Houses"; the grand jury identified twelve houses that retailed "liquors to Negroes"; a butcher threatened to prosecute anyone who sold alcohol to his slave. During the 1770s, a series of grand jury presentments to the court warned about the dangers to society from dram shops and tippling houses that entertained "negroes and other disorderly persons" or enticed the youth into "corruption of the morals and loss of service to their masters." The grand jury recommended that a law be passed "that the selling of rum and other spirits to Negroes may be limited from sun rise to sun set." Because these establishments were open early in the morning and did not close until late at night, "Negroes" could become intoxicated early in the day and be of no use to their "owners." The late night hours encouraged "rioting through the streets." Complaints about servant and slave access to drinking establishments continued on the eve of the Revolution. A slave was advertised for sale because he was "too frequently getting to the Dram-Shops (these too numerous Pests that are a Scandal to this Town, and bid fair to ruin every Black Servant in it)." A "Stranger" reported that the city's dram shops were open at all times of the day and night, were crowded with "negroes," and were even equipped "with private passages for them to enter by."<sup>73</sup>

It is difficult to establish a relationship between Indians and the tavern. A very flimsy historical record inhibits our observation of Indians inside the tavern. Their invisibility in the sources derives from two impulses. Indians' presence inside the tavern went unrecorded because selling alcohol to Indians was illegal. Both the tavern keeper who sold the drink and the Indian who purchased it had powerful incentives to avoid keeping a written record of these illegal transactions. During the 1741 conspiracy trial in New York, "Wan, Indian man of Mr. Lowe," testified before the grand jury that he and John, "a free Indian, late of Cornelius Cosine," had gone together to John Hughson's tavern. There they each drank a mug of beer and paid for it. Hughson had stopped Wan as he was leaving to remind him that "a law was made to sell no liquor to slaves." He asked that they tell no one about their time in his tavern and they swore their silence. Countless examples exist in the unofficial record that convey the ease with which Indians could obtain alcohol, especially rum. Traders complained that if they refused Indians liquor, the Indians would find other traders to supply them.<sup>74</sup>

The analysis of alcohol-related prosecutions throughout the colonies reveals that selling drink to Indians played a significant role in the illegal activity related to alcohol. Tavern keepers were the most commonly prosecuted for these violations, and these men and women paid the price of a fine or the loss of their licenses. It is reasonable to assume that the transactions took place if not inside at least at public houses. Some of this illegal drink trade enabled Indians to carry the alcohol away and to use it as they wished. In other cases, it was consumed on the premises. William Beeckman, in a complaint to Peter Stuyvesant in 1660, directly linked Indians' access to alcohol with taverns: he saw "many drunken savages daily and I am told, that they sit drinking publicly in some taverns." Robert Love's records of the people he warned out of Boston offers evidence that Indians were present in the "meaner" sort of taverns in that city. James Logan, secretary to the Pennsylvania proprietor, blamed "low end establishments" for supplying Philadelphia Indians with alcohol.<sup>75</sup>

In addition, colonists essentially did not "see" Indians, although they lived and worked near them. With very few exceptions, journal writers and diarists failed to mention Indians, not because they were absent but because Indians did not warrant discussion any more than did other parts of the landscape. When Benjamin Bullivant stopped for a night in Newport, Rhode Island in 1697, he ob-

served 3 Indians in the stocks who had been caught drunk on the Lord's day. They were to remain there until they were sober. Bullivant also "tooke notice of sundry sober Indians both men and women cleanly clothed, Quaker fashion, very observant at the meeting."<sup>76</sup> Dr. Hamilton's journal is also unusual in that he observed and mentioned Indians throughout his colonial travels; he "could not help but run into" them. He passed Indians on the road, he sat near them in a Boston church, and George Ningret, a Narragansett "King," treated him to a glass of wine.<sup>77</sup> Except for traders and treaty negotiators, Indians are missing from the pages of most colonial travel journals and diaries. Bullivant and Hamilton may have kept more accurate and more careful reports because they were relative newcomers to the colonies. Everything they witnessed and everyone with whom they interacted merited their attention, and this included their frequent encounters with Indians. Similarly, Gottlieb Mittleberger, who traveled from Germany to Pennsylvania in 1750, remarked that Indians "living close to the Europeans are frequently to be seen." He was also struck by their participation in Philadelphia trade: "Every fall they [Indians] come to Philadelphia in huge numbers, bringing with them various baskets which they can weave neatly and beautifully, many hides, as well as precious furs."<sup>78</sup>

Further clues reveal that Indians gathered at specific taverns and expected to meet friends there. The Narragansett, who lived in and around the towns of the colony of Rhode Island, patronized taverns. In 1753, Christopher Fowler, licensed to operate a tavern in South Kingston, was accused of "Entertaining Indians, Negroes &c." Joshua Gardner received a license in 1760 on the condition "that he Entertain no Indian or Black people on ye day Calld Fair [market] day at his House on any pretence whatever." When the Rhode Island General Assembly passed laws in 1704 and again in 1750 to prohibit Indian and black servants from frequenting taverns, they intended to stop an ongoing activity. It became illegal to sell liquor "to any Indian, Mulatto or Negro Servant or Slave." These laws notwithstanding, the Narragansett, free and slave, knew where they could go to drink, to relax, or to celebrate with their friends. Proof of this is in the writings of Joseph Fish, a Puritan pastor and a missionary to the Narragansett. He traveled regularly from his home in Connecticut to Narragansett settlements in Rhode Island. The record of his expenses reveals that he spent time eating and drinking with representatives of the Narragansett in a public house.<sup>79</sup>

Indians were also visible as patrons of public houses on the western fringes of the colonies and in the many trading posts established to do business with them. Vernon's tavern in Easton, Pennsylvania, was apparently a popular spot visited regularly by local Indians. German Geiger, who lived in South Carolina and established a trading network, was reputedly "supplying the traders with goods and serving food and drink to passing Indians."<sup>80</sup> Andrew Montour, an Indian guide and interpreter for the English, was detained in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, because of an outstanding debt to a tavern keeper. Montour had a reputation as a heavy drinker. His bill intimates that at least some of his drinking took place inside a public house.<sup>81</sup>

The historical record contains frustratingly few examples of Indians inside ordinaries, being entertained together or drinking alongside white or black companions. This lapse exposes the broad range of Euro-American hypocrisy. Colonists' representations of Indian drinking behavior and their expressed attitudes toward drinking reveal that the styles of drinking practiced by the two groups were not nearly as different as whites might have wished. And under self-serving circumstances, white colonists did join with Indians to drink. Most indicative of Indians' presence in taverns is that over time a substantial number of tavern keepers were indicted for serving alcohol to Indians.<sup>82</sup>

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FROM THE EARLIEST colonial period, many taverns catered to particular clienteles, and as the eighteenth century progressed, increasing numbers of public houses served society's elite exclusively. Upper-class men, especially in cities and port towns, frequented public houses that provided good entertainment and ample refreshment. Their rituals were inclusive, bonding each to the other, while also exclusive, reserving the space for them alone. Public houses located along the cities' wharves attracted their patrons from the middling and laboring classes. These taverngoers also shared a particular tavern culture, and their activities had similar effects of drawing some participants together while excluding others. This helps to explain why upper-class male travelers settled easily into the tavern routine in unfamiliar places while upper-class female travelers had to be prepared for an unwelcome environment and did their best to avoid staying in taverns.

A coherent alehouse culture did exist separated from polite society by at least issues of status. During a Sunday morning service a man wanted “a pot of beer and a cake” at an unlicensed house. He explained that “he scorned to go hear old Higginson [the Salem pastor] for he was an oppressor of the poor.” A constable who sought to collect a delinquent ministerial rate in a tavern provoked “a rage.” While the town’s officials were offended by the behavior of taverngoers, the patrons seemed quite clear about the motivations for their actions. As Daniel Vickers suggests, “for men reminded daily of their subordinate status, the heavy consumption of cider and flip, and the tavern life which accompanied it, provided a realm of sociability in which they might set the rules.”<sup>83</sup>