

A History of **Wenham Taverns** *From 1643 to 2008*



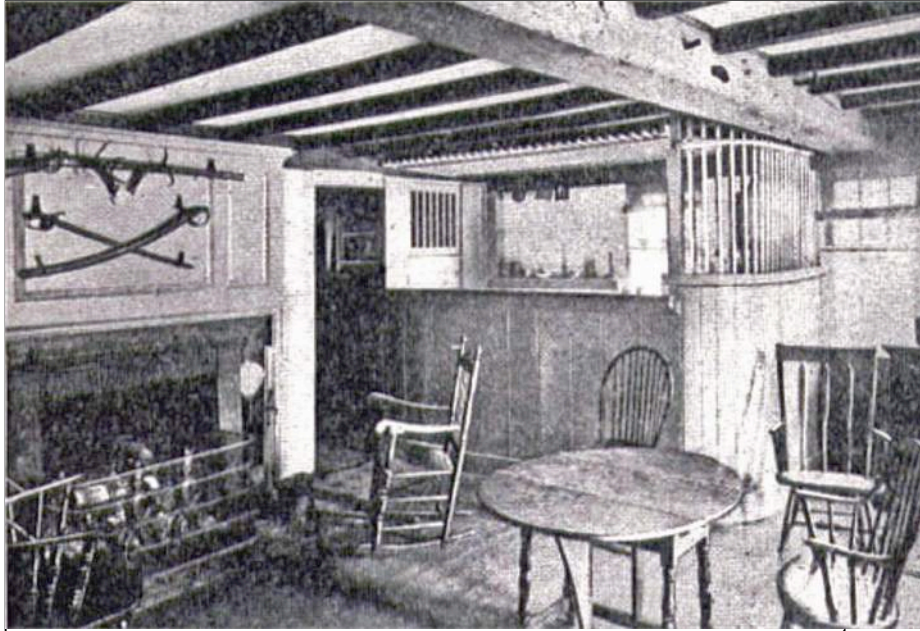
They had various names, including an "ordinary," "publik house," "tap house," and "tavern." Tavern Scene-1658, David Teniers

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Jack E. Hauck



A tavern's taproom was a jovial place for both travelers and townspeople.⁴

TAVERNS OF WENHAM

Taverns played a key role in New England's early history. In the 17th century, traveling, any long distance by foot or horseback or coach, necessitated frequent stops at an ordinary or tavern.

On Mar. 12, 1637, the General Court of Massachusetts ordered that "thereafter. Every town shall present a man, to be allowed to sell wine; strong water, made in this country; and no other strong drink to be sold."¹ Most towns already had taverns: likely, the primary aim of the law was to prevent the import of alcohol, West Indies rum in particular.

The colonial public houses were located, about a day's journey apart, on turnpikes or through roads. The very first edition of the Farmers Almanac, in 1793, had a list of taverns, on the main roads leading out of Boston, including the road through Wenham and on to Ipswich.⁶

At best, stagecoaches traveled about ten miles in an hour, and that was on good-weather days. The route was winding and passengers had to endure constant jouncing and jarring, a fact which made the tavern a most welcome sight for the weary rider.

First called an "ordinary", then "publik house" or "tap house," and later "tavern," these rest spots were very important to the traveler, providing food and lodging and, sometimes, entertainment. In England, ordinary meant a basic, ordinary meal served to all travelers, at a set price. The emphasis was on food and not alcoholic beverages.

The name "ordinary," by the end of the 1600s, seldom was used: tavern was the common name. The word comes from the Greek "taverna," meaning workplace. In England, taverns served wine, and an inn served beer and ale. Some public houses offered guests rooms, for the night. Many taverns had a hall, which occupied the upper floor, for local entertainment or where meetings were held.

In the Massachusetts Colony, the standard rooms of a tavern were:

The *hearth room* was less chaotic and was where guests sat, drank and ate. It had a few tables and a large open hearth, where, food being prepared for patrons filled the room with pleasing odors, as well as the raucous sounds coming from the adjoining taproom.

The *taproom* was where the drinks were served to men. On the walls, were a mélange of messages, advertisements, and legal notices. Country taprooms were jovial places "where there was a great smell of hay and boots and pipes," along with "drinking and story-telling."¹⁶

Some taverns combined the taproom and hearth room, in which case, such places might have a ladies-parlor, for it was not considered proper for women to be in the taproom.

Often, the tavern and the meetinghouse were close together. A tavern keeping license was granted on condition that the tavern was near the meetinghouse: a total inconsistency to current laws prohibiting the sale of liquor, within a certain distance of a church. This requirement was not protested, for the poorly built meetinghouses were cold and damp during winter. Town meetings could be adjourned and shortly reconvened, at the more comfortable tavern.

It has been said, perhaps by W. C. Fields, that "there is nothing contrived by man, which has produced so much happiness as a good tavern." Without granting or denying this, many may recall good times passed around the cheerful hearth of the old-fashioned inn.

The 17th century taverns were not just for use by travelers; they also were a place where townspeople might exchange news and opinions,

read newspapers, hear the latest gossip about other towns, and buy a drink or two. In fact, the importance of the tavern to its townspeople was far greater than to travelers, as can be attested to by many 17th century diaries and writings.

There were restrictions upon the admittance of strangers. Tavern keepers had to give the name of all strangers to the selectmen, who could, if they deemed them a potential menace or laggard, have them immediately escorted out of the town, by the constable.

There were, in the early years, many unusual laws pertaining to tap rooms and taverns.

For a time, some tavern owners were only permitted to serve people from out of town, because the town's people did not want any of the locals to be tempted by the evils of alcohol.

Additionally, tavern keepers were required to keep the tavern windows uncovered, so that the town's people could easily see into the establishment, to ensure that everyone inside was behaving properly.

What libations did the keepers offer?

Two of the more popular beverages were "New England Rum," and a rum-based mixed drink called "Black-strap." ⁵ It had three ingredients: good rum, good molasses, and water. The rule concerning the use of water, as it is today in making bourbon and water, was not too much. Rum is a distilled beverage made from molasses. Thus, making Black-strap was putting more molasses back into distilled molasses.

It is a perplexing paradox that the General Court of Massachusetts enacted a law to ban the import of rum from the West Indies, to protect the production of New England rum, which was made from molasses imported from the West Indies.

The name Black-strap may have come from English sailors, who may have learned about Black-strap from the people in the West Indies. Some people liked their Black-strap further sweetened with sugar, in which case it was called "grog." Others asked for a dash of hot water, called a "toddy." The toddy, a name from the West Indies, was a favorite drink on cold winter evenings, by male and female.

Not that they needed an excuse for having a toddy or two, but tavern guests were known to play table games to see who would buy the next round.

A common game played was "trolling the tog." It was played with a shoemaker's "shoulder-stick." The four-sided "stick," which was about 8-inches long, was marked with numbers on the sides, from one to four. Each player took three spins, or "trolls," of the "stick" or "tog." Twelve

was the highest number attainable. Whoever got the lowest total, bought the next round.⁷

So popular was Black-strap, that it was kept --- purportedly for personal consumption --- at various other business places, the ten-footers (*shoe maker shops*), in particular.

Rum could be purchased, by "the everyday people," at the grocery store.² They would bring their empty jug and have it filled from the rum keg. These were duly licensed places, operating in strict accordance with the law.

New England Rum was a favorite, from the very earliest time of the settlers. Production reached a peak, following the Revolution, and lasted well into the 1800s. Nearly all the rum distilled in the country was made in New England; hence its name. Massachusetts distilled more rum than all the rest of the New England states. In 1783, there were 60 rum distilleries. In 1821, Salem had 8 distilleries. Salem was noted for the quantity and quality of its "New England Rum." Boston rum stood high, but the Salem Rum far outranked it, in preference.⁸

There is no record of rum being made in Wenham; however, in the mid-1600s, there was a malt mill on Wenham Pond Brook.¹ Beer is made from malt, and taverns generally brewed their own beer.

Beer was the basic drink, at taverns, but seldom was it served "straight." A popular beer mix was called a "flip." John Adams reported a person spending a day in the tavern would find it "full of people drinking drams of flip, carousing, and swearing." A flip was a large pewter or earthen mug filled two-thirds of strong beer; sweetened with sugar, molasses, or dried pumpkin, according to individual taste; plus `a dash' of New England rum. Into this mixture, a red hot iron poker was thrust, just before it was served.⁵

Another popular beer mix was the "Whistle-Belly-Vengeance." It reportedly was very popular in and around Salem. To make it, the tavern keeper started with sour beer, which was simmered, in a kettle, and sweetened with molasses; and to thicken it, crumbs of 'ryneinjun' bread were added. It was served hot.⁵

Other popular drinks included "Calibogus" or just plain "bogus," which consisted of rum and unsweetened beer. A variation of this drink was cider-based and went by the name "Stone Wall." Yet another drink was "Mumm." It was a flat ale made of oat and wheat malt.⁵

In colonial times, women were the principal brewers of beer. Called "alewives," they fermented a special, high-proof "groaning ale," for pregnant women to drink during child labor.¹⁸

Often beer and rum drinks were served in a pewter or ceramic baluster, or more commonly a mug, tankard or pub pot. The latter also was called a "pip," from which "Ain't that a pip," may come. (*There are many other thoughts on what a "pip" is, including "pretty important person."*)

For those not liking strong-liquor, there were various herbal cordials. Snakeroot cordials were popular, particularly by persons whose constitutions could not bear the stronger beverages. However, cases were known where cordials were taken by ladies, whose health was not seriously weakened. Indian tribes used Snakeroot for healing snakebites and showed the settlers where to find the herb.

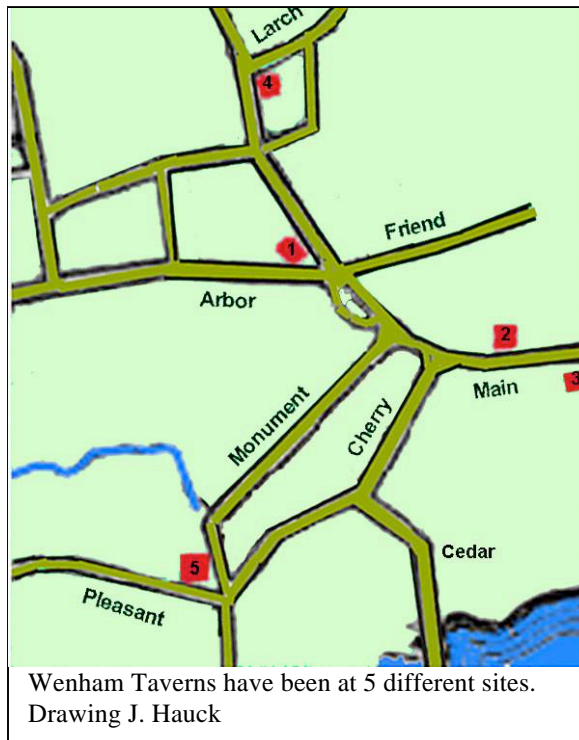
Where were Wenham's taverns?

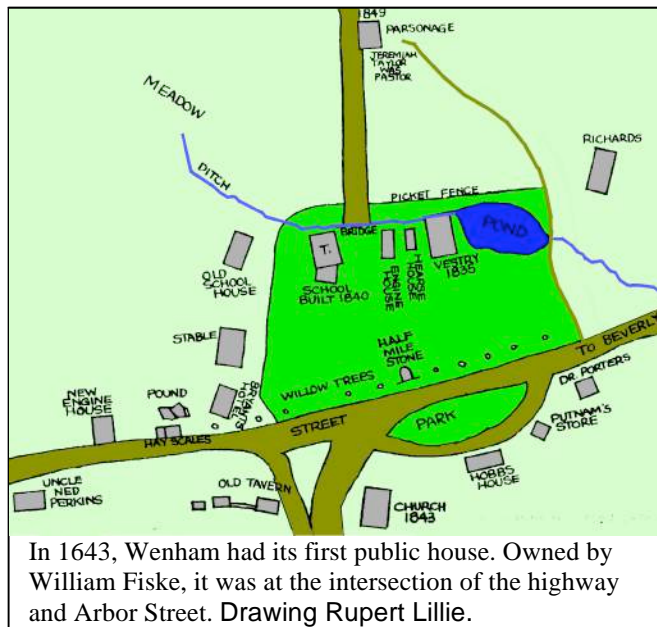
Not long after Wenham was incorporated, 1643, Wenham had its first public house. Since then, there have been, at least, four other locations for public houses in Wenham. Town records cite many people as having been appointed to be "Keeper of the Tavern." However, often where the tavern was kept was not recorded.

On Mar. 7, 1643/4, William Fiske received authority to keep a tavern from the General Court: "Will'm: Fiske is appointed & allowed to keepe an ordinary at Wennam." A year later, Nov. 13, 1644, 'm Willi: Fiske, of Wenham, hath liberty to sell wine." Fiske continued as the Tavern Keeper until 1647.^{9, 22}

William Fiske was the brother of the town's first minister, John Fiske. William and John arrived in America, in 1637. They both moved from Salem Village to Enon (Wenham).⁹

According to Adeline Cole, "The first tavern was undoubtedly on the lot next to the historical house.¹ Thus, the tavern (see #1 on map) was on a parcel of land across from Wenham's First Church. John Fiske served the "good word"





and William Fiske served the “good drink.” Later, this lot became known as the “car barn lot,” from its use in the late 1800s, as a storage barn for horse-drawn street-cars.

No drawings or descriptions exist of the Fiske tavern; however, it was probably a fairly simple structure, similar to the homes described by Allen, in his

book, “History of Wenham.”²⁰ Based on a sketch of central Wenham by Benjamin H. Conant, the old tavern, at its end, consisted of two buildings, connected by a covered walkway.²

On Sep 13, 1644, the State government put a tax on the ordinaries. The Massachusetts General Court, informed all towns: "It is ordered that every vintner or other person, that hath license to draw wine, within this jurisdiction shall pay unto the officers appointed by the Court to receive it 20 pence for every butt of sack drawn, and so proportionately for every greater or lesser vessell and for every hogshead of French wine or other wines 5 shillings and that every drawer of wine, shall appear once every quarter, either at Court in Boston, or other courts, there to take oath."¹

Several years later, the State also levied a tax – called a rate -- on all types of alcoholic beverages, not just wine.

In 1654, William Fiske died. The public house was transferred to his brother, Phineas, who also was licensed to keep an ordinary. When William’s property was appraised, by Phineas Fiske, one of the items was a "sign with the sign post", which were part of his public house.⁹

Large tavern signs were hung over the main entrance. They were very important in announcing the location of a tavern. The signs used a combination of pictures and words and, thus, were a type of pictograph. The tavern signs were very useful, during a time when only a limited number of people were able to read.

In 1647, Phineas Fiske was granted authority by the General Court Oct. 27, 1647: "Phineas Fiske is granted to keepe an ordinary in Wenham." May 10, 1648, by the same authority, "Phineas Fiske, of Wenham, is allowed license to draw wine there for this yeare ensuing," and three days later he "hath libtie given to sell wine for this year ensuing."²²

The appointment of the Ordinary Keeper was always made by the state, in order to ensure a reliable man was entrusted the legal dispensing of liquor, and, of course, paying all taxes. The Keeper, of that time, generally was addressed by the title of landlord. The General Court required: "No tippling after nine at night. On week days, during the hours of Meeting, the house must be cleared of all persons able to attend Meeting."¹ Tippling was excessive drinking.

By 1650, the General Court transferred the granting ordinary licenses to local governments. The increase in the number of ordinaries and changes of keepers made was deemed excessive for the General Court.

To prevent excessive drinking, towns had a tithing-man, whose job it was to spy on ordinaries. If he found there was excessive drinking, he would report the ordinary to the constable. Not only was there a fine, but the names of all who drank in excess were posted on the wall of the tavern.

In 1656, concern for the interests and treatment of travelers, and more likely a desire to tax the sale of liquor, seemed to the General Court important enough reasons not only to recommend, but to enforce the opening of some kind of a public house, in every community. The General Court made towns liable to a fine, for not maintaining an ordinary. ("*Ordinary*" is an old English term for a place that offers lodging and meals, at a fixed price.)¹¹

In 1655, the Wenham selectmen appointed Samuel Foster, as Keeper of the Tavern. Samuel Foster was licensed "to sell strong water, for the reliefe of travel." He ran the old Fiske tavern for about twenty years.¹

William Geare (*also Geary*) apparently purchased the tavern following William Fiske's death. Initially, Geare was Foster's landlord. In 1676, Rev. Gerrish purchased the Geare property.

The following year, 1677, John Fiske became the tavern keeper. The son (*b. 1628*) of Phineas and Sarah Fiske, he was commonly known as "John, the Constable," to distinguish him from Rev. John Fiske, Wenham's first pastor, who had moved to Chelmsford, in 1653.

John the Constable, born in 1627, served, as a soldier in the Indian War, and was "sore wounded" in the Battle of Turner's Falls, in 1676, during King Philip's War. Upon returning to Wenham, the town fathers grant-

ed John the Constable a license to keep a public house, to be "Keeper of the Tavern". At 48, he took over the tavern, previously run by Samuel Foster.⁹ He died in 1683.

Records of this period are not clear concerning the old William Fiske property. Rev. Gerrish purchased the Fiske property from William Geare in 1676. At the time he lived at the MacClafin house.²³ John Fiske continued running the tavern until he died in 1683.

It appears that in 1688, Rev. Joseph Gerrish and his wife moved into the Geare house,²³ where they would live, until his death, Jan. 6, 1721/22. Apparently, Fiske's tavern was in an extension to side of the house.

In the later part of the 1600s, the old Fiske tavern was not the only public house in Wenham.

In 1670 John Solart, Sr., was appointed Keeper of the Tavern, in Wenham.²⁶ He built a tavern, in 1670, at what today is 106 Main St. (see #2 on pg. 6)

Solart purchased the property from Esdran Reade, a relative of Rev. Hugh Peter. Reade's property was in front of the First Meeting House, built on December 4, 1643. The meeting house remained there until 1664, when the second meeting house was built across from the town common.²⁰

In 1672, Solart, who was wealthy, drowned himself. The tavern remained open after Solart died. The executor of the Solart estate was Walter Fairfield.²⁵

A year after John Solart died, his wife, Elizabeth, married Ezekiel Woodward. A housewright, Woodward was licensed to keep the "ordinary and to draw liquors." ²⁰

In the 17th century, a woman might be licensed to keep an ordinary, provided she "procure a fit man, that is godly, to manage the business." This requirement was dutifully enacted by the Massachusetts General Court.¹

However, Woodward gave up the license, saying that running the tavern "would undo him." The selectmen gave the license to Walter Fairfield¹ (spelled "*Fayerfield*," in *Wenham Town Records*). He took over the tavern in 1680.²⁵

Fairfield was a member of the Flagon and Trencher Society, a heredity group of men and women that traces their ancestry to one or more licensed operators of an ordinary, tavern, public house in New England.

Shortly after, Woodward had second thoughts about running the tavern and wanted Fairfield to give back the license. In 1682, Woodward and Fairfield filed lawsuits against each other for illegally selling "spirits." ²⁵

The legal squabbling between Fairfield and Woodard continued for several more years. When Fairfield gave up the license, Ezekiel Woodward became the Keeper of the Tavern, in Wenham, at the former Solart house.²⁵

It appears that the tavern later also was an inn, for on Aug. 7, 1694, Woodward was licensed to keep an inn. It was called, "The Sign of Ye Flower de Luce."²² (*An archaic name for the iris.*) Selectmen meetings were held there, from 1693 to 1699. The town's meetinghouse was not heated.

Further confusion about who owned the old Fiske property occurs from 1693 to 1709, when according to town records, Thomas Fiske, Jr., was licensed to sell liquor. It appears that he rented the building on the corner of Main and Arbor from Robert Symonds, who the records state was the landlord in 1705 and 1706.²²

Again, town records state that from 1709 to about 1716, Joseph Dodge was the keeper of the public-house at Main and Arbor. The owner of the Main and Arbor building, 1708, apparently was Ebenezer Kembball, who had it at least until 1720.

Selectmen closely watched over the morals of townspeople. Town records show that on "Feb. 27, 1719. Upon complaint made to the selectmen of Wenham that Robert Symonds, of said town, doth live as a common tippler, misspending his time and estate at the tavern, greatly to the damage of his family, these are to give notice to the tavern-keeper that he do not entertain him, in his house, to sit tippling and misspending his time upon penalty of the law."²⁸

This was the same Robert Symonds that previously (*1705 and 1706*) owned the tavern at Main and Arbor streets.

During the latter part of the 1700s, Wenham likely had three taverns, and possibly four.

There was the tavern at Arbor Main and, in 1773, William Fairfield (spelled "Fayerfield," in Wenham Town Records), opened a tavern at what is now 79 Main St. (*see #3 on pg. 6*) He kept the tavern until 1791. ?? The large yard readily accommodated stages coaches.

There was another Wenham tavern in the 1770s. Rupert Lillie's map of 1776 Wenham shows that Dr. Tyler Porter had a tavern on the corner of Pleasant St. and Cherry St.²⁹ (*see #5 on pg. 6*)

?? check WTR for Tavern Keeper 1716-1808

From 1796 to 1798, Col. Paul Porter ran the tavern at Arbor and Main.²²

Sidney Perley wrote, in 1924, that, at the close of the Revolution, there was a tavern kept at the sign of the "sun." ²² (*No other information has been found. This may have been the tavern at the Fairfield property on Main St.*)

Being across the street from the town meetinghouse and church, there were many times, when town meetings became rather heated, but the meeting house was cold. Voters would adjourn and go over to the tavern and continue listening to the arguments, sometimes lasting for hours.

Adeline P. Cole tells us about a heated town meeting, at which Timothy Pickering and Dr. Daniel Killam, gave opposing views, following the Revolution. The bitter debate went on so long, that the meeting adjourned to the tavern, to listen to the two leaders, for hours more.¹

Apparently, for many years during the early 19th century, the old tavern building, at Main and Arbor, was the site of the town post office. This, however, was not unusual. A Post table was a long-time custom, in taverns. Townspeople would deposit a letter on the post table, hoping that a traveler or the mail coach would carry it closer to its destination.⁶ Regular stage coach service had begun, between Boston and Newburyport, in 1762.²

In 1809, Thomas Barnes became Wenham's first Postmaster. The post office was at his tavern, on the corner of Main and Arbor. Barnes was the Postmaster and the Keeper of the Tavern from Apr. 21, 1809 to Jul. 5, 1812.²²

In 1812, Uzziel Dodge, who lived in the tavern, was appointed Postmaster and Keeper of the Tavern. He held the positions for six years.²²

In 1818, John Thorne Dodge became the Keeper. Perhaps the last Keeper of the Tavern, on Main and Arbor. Squire Thorne also was the Postmaster and Tavern Keeper, until 1828.²²

Squire Thorne's Tavern, was said to be the topic of many a heated town meeting discussion between Dr. Killam and the Squire concerning the sins and virtues of selling liquor.²

The old tavern on Arbor and Main, vacant since about 1830, was torn down in May, 1854. The property next became a street car depot.

For a short time, in the late 1820s, there again were two taverns in Wenham and both on Main Street.²

For in 1827, Ezra Lummus opened a stage tavern, on the corner of Main and Larch. (*see #4 on pg. 6*) Main Street was part of the stagecoach route from Boston to Newburyport. (*The house was built in 1810.*²)

Lummus already had a blacksmith shop, located on the west side of the tavern, beyond the stagecoach yard, now the garden area.

Travelers entered the tavern through the door, on the west side. Upon entering, there was a vestibule. Off the left, there was a door to the ladies' parlor; and off the right, there was a door to the taproom. The entrance, on Main Street, was for private use and special occasions held at the hall on the second floor.

The upstairs hall had two large chambers, connected by folding doors, which could be opened, for balls and dancing, as well as for Freemason meetings. There were no guest rooms.

Lummus was a Freemason, and his tavern sign loyally showed the Masonic square and compass. (*The sign is now in the Wenham Museum.*)³ During colonial time, the Masons was as a very influential group.

After 1830, when Ezra Lummus became postmaster, his taproom also served, for a few years, as the town's post office. Thus, townspeople could get malt and mail, at the same place. From 1833 to 1836, Lummus was a Wenham Selectman, in addition to being a blacksmith, postmaster and tavern keeper.

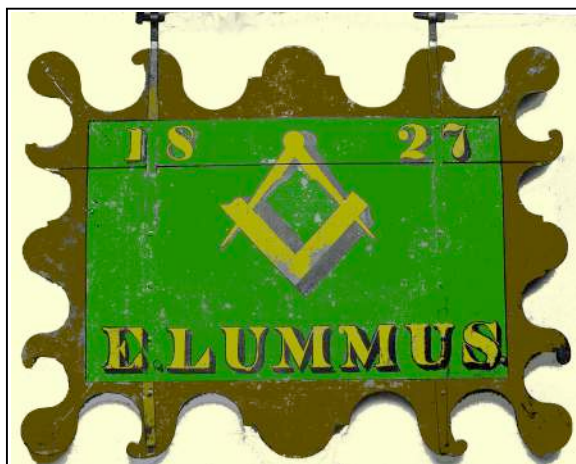
Prohibition in Wenham

In the late 1830s, a prohibition or "dry" movement gathered force, in the U.S. Many of Wenham's townspeople women especially, were ardent supporters.

It appears that the last time there was a dedicated tavern, in Wenham, was in 1835, when the Lummus Stage Tavern closed and the building sold.



Lummus building (*right*), in 1891, was no longer a tavern. Also, coaches did not pass by, rather street cars rode by on the tracks of the Naumkeag Streetcar Co. (*at left*). Photo courtesy Wenham Museum



Lummus sign now hangs in Wenham Museum. Drawing J. Hauck

There is a rather colorful poem about three Wenham Selectmen – Stephen Dodge, Warren Peabody, and Ezra Dodge – who served from 1833 to 36 that perhaps describes what brought the Lummus Stage Tavern to its end.³

Three Selectmen

One at the "Neck" one at West End,
Stephen Dodge and Peabody,
And Ezra Lummus made the three.
A committee had selected.
These three men who were elected;
The first held to temperance views,
The third sold liquor, when he chose.
One night a party met before
Our worthy townsman Lummus' door,
Rufus Dodge among the lot.
"Lummus how much rum've you got?"
Says Lummus, "Well I guess,
'Bout eight gallons, more or less."
Says Rufus "We'll pass round the hat,
Collect the chink and buy him out."
They let friend Ezra prize his rum,
They out with purse and raised the
sum.

Then, Rufus gave the bar a rap,
While with his hands he held his cap.
Now there's no game that two can't
play it,
This is a fact, although I say it.
Behind the counter stood some rum,
Drawn in a bowl, which quickly come;
Friend Ezra turned it bottom up,
And Rufus caught it in his cup.
Old alcohol was in the keg.
They bought him out – pulled the peg,
And o'er the earth his blood did flow,
While his spirit went below;
And from that night, until this minute,
This town has had no tavern in it.

Allen Peabody, *The Bard of Enon*, 1868

On Dec. 18, 1840, Abraham Lincoln, speaking to the Illinois House of Representatives said: "Prohibition will work great injury to the cause of temperance. It is a species of intemperance within itself, for it goes beyond the bounds of reason, in that it attempts to control a man's appetite by legislation, and makes a crime out of things that are not crimes. A Prohibition law strikes a blow at the very principles upon which our government was founded."¹⁰ Not a surprising statement from someone who held a liquor license and owned several taverns.¹⁹

In 1842, the townspeople voted on "*the propriety and expediency of allowing the sale in intoxicating liquors, within limits of the town.*" There were only three yeas and 54 nays.²⁰ Shortly thereafter, many townspeople formed a Temperance Society.

After some success in the 1850s, the push for prohibition lost strength. It revived in the 1880s, with the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the Prohibition Party.

The absence of liquor in Wenham likely had a big effect on its hotels on Main Street. According to Perley, William H. Bryant, in 1851, opened a hotel in the Old Parvern building, on the north corner of Main St. and Friend Ct. It was taken down in 1853. There are no records indicating that Bryant received a liquor license.

Bryant next opened the "Green House," a hotel with a ?? tavern, on the east end of the Common. On Apr. 18, 1869, a fire destroyed the building and those by it.²²

In 1886, Stephen Currier opened the Enon Hotel. It was at what today is 130 Main St.²² There are no records indicating that Currier was given a license to sell alcoholic beverages.

Taverns often are referred to as "watering holes," gathering places for imbibing in aqua vitae. In 1918, the old tavern site, on the corner of Main and Arbor, which once again was vacant, would in fact become a watering hole. It was one of 27 sites in Wenham, at which the town dug water cisterns, for use by the fire department.¹

In the middle 1800s, many Massachusetts towns appointed a Liquor Agent, who was responsible for licensing and regulating the sales of intoxicating liquors, as well as levying fees and taxes on products sold. The Liquor Agent's Reports, from the Wenham Town Records of 1858 to 1869, show that sales were less than a hundred dollars; however, in 1866, they spiked to \$210; followed by \$465.91, in 1867; and \$691.13, in 1868; before going back down to \$102.36, in 1869.

The Liquor Agent position was abolished, several years later.

However, liquor was still available in Wenham, at the town's apothecary store.

Wenham Town Records show that throughout the first half of the 19th century, the Selectmen voted to allow the sale of "ardent spirits."

Each year, the selectmen a license to the druggist: for example, in 1906, "*James H. Perkins, Jr., doing business at Main Street, the Wenham Batchelder Building, the street floor,*" was licensed "to sell, expose or keep for sale, until May 1st 1907, spirits or intoxicating liquors for medicinal, mechanical and chemical purposes only," but they were "*not to be drunk on the premises.*"

1919 brought an official end to any thought of taverns in Wenham, as well as the rest of the country. Prohibition began by means of the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, passed by Congress, in 1917, and ratified by three quarters of the states, by 1919. It prohibited the manufacture or sale of alcoholic beverages, anywhere in the United States.

The Volstead Act of 1919, also known as the National Prohibition Enforcement Act, gave the 18th Amendment some teeth. It clearly defined an alcoholic beverage as one with an alcoholic content greater than half a percent. Prohibition began on January 16, 1920.

From 1920 to 1933, the manufacture, sale, and transport of alcohol were prohibited in the United States. However, the private possession

and consumption of alcohol was not uncommon. In Wenham, this reportedly was especially true at Pleasant Pond.

On December 5, 1933, the 18th amendment was repealed, by the 21st Amendment. States still have the right to restrict or ban the purchase and sale of alcohol. Wenham was one of numerous “dry” towns in Massachusetts, where no liquor has been sold, since 1835. However, alcohol has been brought in, for private consumption. At both ends of Wenham’s main thoroughfare, Route 1a, there are liquor stores, in adjoining towns (*Beverly and Hamilton*).

Wenham stayed dry for 171 years

One hundred and and seventy-one years, after going dry, the townspeople of Wenham changed their minds.

On May 1, 2006, Wenham voted approval for the Selectmen to request the Massachusetts General Court to enact a special act authorizing the Board to grant four licenses for the on-premises sale and consumption of all alcoholic beverages in restaurants, with a capacity less than 100. A request also was to be made for ten one-day permits to sell liquor.¹⁴

In December, 2006, the Governor signed the act allowing the Wenham Selectmen to grant liquor applications. Unlike the original State law, in which a tavern was to be located near the meetinghouse, current law prohibits an establishment, with a liquor license, if it is within 500 feet of a school or church.¹⁵

The first liquor license was granted to the Wenham Tea House. Originally opened in 1915, the Tea House began, in 2005, to offer evening meals, but without offering any alcoholic beverages. In 2007, the Tea House offered beer and wine to its luncheon customers. However, few people have taken advantage of the opportunity to have an alcoholic drink.

When and where will Wenham open its next tavern? Some say it may be the Wenham Tea House. Certainly, it would not be called a tavern, more likely a restaurant ... or perhaps not a tea house, but rather a tap house?

Might there be a reprieve of the much maligned tavern? Might there be a return to a place of sharing thoughts, among good friends?

*I'll keep a little tavern
Below the high hill's crest,
Wherein all grey-eyed people
May set them down and rest.*

Taverns, by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Wenham's Tavern Keepers

Year	Keeper	Location	Comments
1670-1673	John Solart Sr.	106 Main	
1673-1680	Ezekiel Woodward	106 Main	Married Solart's widow
1680-1686	Walter Fairfield	106 Main	Solart gave up license
1686-1699	Ezekiel Woodward	106 Main	Called Sign of Ye Flower de Luce
1773-1791	Walter Fairfield	79 Main	
		Arbor & Main	
??-1809		Arbor & Main	
1643-1647	William Fiske	Arbor & Main	Rev. John Fiske's brother
1647-1655	Phineas Fiske	Arbor & Main	One of first selectmen
1655-1676	William Foster	Arbor & Main	William Geare landlord
1677-1692	John Fiske	Arbor & Main	"John the Constable"
1693-1709	Thomas Fiske Jr.	Arbor & Main	
1708-1720	Ebenezer Kimball	Arbor & Main	
1709-1716	Joseph Dodge	Arbor & Main	
1716-17??	??	Arbor & Main	
1797-1798	Col. Paul Porter	Arbor & Main	Grocery store
1798-1809	??	Arbor & Main	
1809-1812	Thomas Barnes	Arbor & Main	Also Postmaster
1812-1818	Uzziel Dodge	Arbor & Main	Also Postmaster Lived at Claflin house
1818-1828	John Thorne Dodge	Arbor & Main	Also Postmaster
1827-1835	Ezra Lummus	Main & Larch	Also Postmaster
1776-1791	Tyler Porter	Pleasant & Cherry	

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Updated 06-01- 2014