

Sources of News in Revolutionary Massachusetts

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Framing Questions:

What were the sources of news in Lexington & Concord? Where did people gather to share news? How did these sources influence their outlooks?

Objectives:

As a result of this lesson, students will understand that...

- Information and the exchange of ideas are key to making change.
- The colonists had developed the ability to manage their own religious, commercial, and governmental affairs.
- Ideas need to be shared in order to give them shape, meaning, and the means of being implemented. Without this they cannot flourish.
- Every age of mankind has found the means to exchange ideas, and places to encourage the growth and discussion of ideas.

Artifact: Hartwell Tavern, Concord Massachusetts

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/51154990@N03/4754616911/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/51154990@N03/4841707806/>

People of every age and every place are social by their nature. They think, they feel, they dream and they have a need to communicate with those closest to them. What has changed then is not the need to communicate but the means. Often what we talk about most are the issues that involve us most directly, our jobs, our families, and our government.

Critical Thinking Questions:

1. Are people happy and satisfied with our government today? Why or Why not?
2. In what ways are our views/ complaints similar to those of the colonists in the period that directly preceded the revolution?
3. Imagine that you have found a group of like minded students or others who like what you have been saying and share your views on the topic of government. Then answer the following questions: Where do you meet to discuss these ideas? How do you communicate your ideas so that others may see them? How do you get input from others so that your ideas can be agreed upon? Once you have developed your own ideas what do you do then? In today's society whom do you try to contact first in order to implement change?
4. Are there any people that you wish to exclude from the group? Why might you not want them to participate? Do you try to keep anything a secret or is your whole philosophy made open to public comment?

Document: *A Bloody Butchery, by the British Troops; or the Runaway Fight of the Regulars*. Reprint of Salem, Mass: E. Russell, 1775. View this document online at the Massachusetts Historical Society website: <http://www.masshist.org/database/467>

This broadside spread the news throughout the colonies about the events at Lexington and Concord. It was printed in newspapers and contained a dark boarder indicating death or mourning. Readers were instructed to cut out this portion of their newspapers—or buy a copy of the broadside itself—and hang it up in a prominent place in their homes. The broadside contains a clear message and point of view, and the author clearly identifies which parties he or she considers the “victims” and the “attackers” in this confrontation. Note how the author of this broadside played upon people’s emotions: each coffin contains a specific name underneath it, the account contains a poem in the middle, and each colonist who died in the confrontation is listed and connected to a specific town or community.

Critical Thinking Questions:

1. How do this account compare to your American history textbook’s version of the battle?
2. What purpose does this broadside serve?
3. What words/adjectives does the broadside use to shape opinions about the British troops?
4. Which parts of the account do you think are accurate or believable and which do you think are exaggerated or unbelievable?

Landscape: Wright’s Tavern



Learn more about Wright’s Tavern at the National Park Service’s online publication *Colonials and Patriots*: http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/colonials-patriots/sitec21.htm

Wright’s Tavern is a historic tavern located in the center of Concord, Massachusetts. Wright’s Tavern was built in 1747 by Ephraim Jones, who operated it until 1751. At the dawn of the American Revolution in April 1775, it was managed by Amos Wright, whose name it has borne ever since.

The tavern has links to the Massachusetts Provincial Congress which met next door in October 1774, in the First Parish Church. John Hancock was president and Benjamin Lincoln was secretary. The Congress consisted of 300 delegates from Massachusetts towns who passed measures ending tax payments to the Crown and organizing a militia force to defy King George III with arms.

On April 19, the day of the Battle of Lexington and Concord, the Concord Minutemen assembled at Wright's Tavern after the courthouse bell announced the approach of Major Pitcairn's troops. After the battle, Pitcairn's troops refreshed themselves in the tavern.

Taverns were viewed as an economically viable occupation. They housed everyone and everyone could be involved. Taverns were the social and cultural center of colonial life. Colonial governments found taverns so critical to the development of the community they enacted laws to encourage their construction.

Landlords could be magistrates, the chief of a battalion or militia, or a member of a state legislature. Landlords could also be active patriots, a politician, or a soldier. Usually tavern owners were cheerful men; a lackluster landlord was not part of a welcoming tavern.

Critical Thinking Questions:

1. Describe the general location of taverns in communities. Explain the significance of this location.
2. Explain why the taverns were an attractive meeting place in communities. What was the purpose of the tavern?
3. Identify socio-economic, political, and religious groups that lived in Concord, Massachusetts Bay Colony. Would you describe this as a democratic community? Explain.
4. Given your knowledge of the issues that faced Massachusetts Bay Colony and the Concord community in 1775 what concerns or issues would each group bring to the tavern?
5. Describe how the tavern brought about a common identity or a sense of cooperation given varied socio economic, political, and religious issues discussed there.