



Another



Ye Olde Towne Tavern

1664



1840

An Inn Keeper had to be of "good behavior", with a certificate of approval from the village constable and two overseers, and a "lycense first obtained under the hand of two Justices of the Peace" to be a "common victuler, keeper of Cookes shop, or house of Common entertainment or publique seller of wine, beare, ale or strong waters at retail, or in less quantity than a quarter caske". He must hang out a "signe", too, "obvious for direction of strangers". Signes bore the names of famous old English Taverns and were painted by the best known artists of the period, among them Charles Wilson Peale.

The ordinaries, under Berkely and Carteret, 1668, were licensed "for the relief and entertainment of strangers" and the inn-keeper, "obliged to make sufficient provision for meat, drink and lodging". Only he could retail strong drink in less quantity than two gallons (later, this amount was reduced to one gallon). For failure to comply with any of these requirements, he forfeited forty shillings to the country for every month's default.

The prices for liquor wines and cider, meals for guests and "natural" pasture for horses were fixed and any ordinary who trusted above five shillings could not recover by suit. This was an "act in restraint of tippling". The penalty provided for violation of the law was five pounds.

Each licensed retailer paid an excise tax of four shillings for each barrel of malt liquor or cider and twelve pence per gallon of wine and rum. The justices determined the number of "retailers sufficient for every town". Sometimes they held court in the Inn—"just off the tap room".

In 1716, the General Assembly imposed a liquor tax "to raise income to support the government", and, after fixing the rate, sold the privilege of collecting to William Bradford and David Seyell for a term of five years at three hundred pounds per year. To prevent "unreasonable prices"—excess profits! — the Judges of the Court of Quarter Sessions fixed "the various retail prices" with the granting of the licenses.

The act set forth "the great grief and concern of all sober and well-disposed persons, that many inhabitants of mean and low fortunes do make it their constant practice to frequent taverns and there spend much of their substance and time in gaming, tippling and often drinking to excess". Nevertheless, the tavern was the only general meeting place to get the news and keep warm, without carrying a hot brick, and it so remained until the stove was invented.

Proceedings, New Jersey Historical Society, C. S. Boyer, 1931.