

Early Hotels and Taverns of Coventry Connecticut

In early America, as travel among towns became more prevalent, taverns were a necessity. As early as 1644, the colonial records of Connecticut ordered “one sufficient inhabitant” in each town to keep an ordinary (tavern).

The first tavern-keepers were nominated yearly. Connecticut’s laws of 1780 read that the Civil Authority of a town shall nominate the person whom they think suitable to keep a “House of Entertainment” in the town for the ensuing year. The physical requirement for a tavern was a stable for two horses and a spare bed. In the 1800’s when road information became part of most almanacs, the inns were known more by the innkeeper’s name rather than the name of the inn or tavern.

Taverns were kept for the convenience of travelers for a quick stop for refreshment or for an overnight stay, for the comfort of townspeople to interchange news and opinions, for the sale of refreshments and beverages, and for incidental sociability. They served as places for mail distribution, stage coach stops, meetings of businessmen, the induction of militia, the collection of taxes, buying and selling of goods, etc. Innkeepers usually were afforded high public status.

Tavern Keepers were subject to a number of regulations as noted in a 1746 law for the licensing and regulating taverns including the process for nominating tavern-keepers, the setting of bonds, licensing, the drinking age, etc. (17)

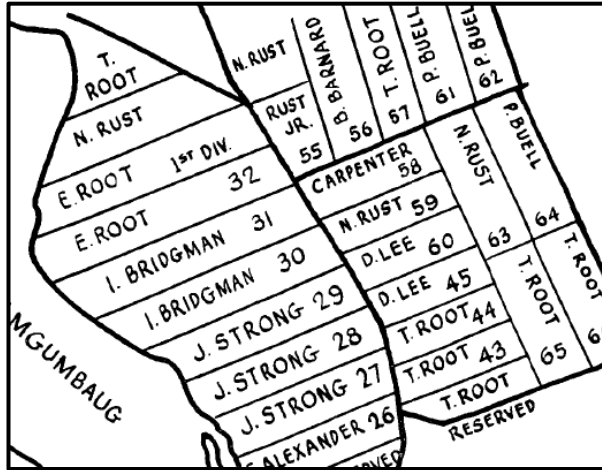
John W. Boynton was a prominent resident of Coventry in the mid 1800’s. His statements regarding taverns were recorded by J.R. Cole in his “History of Tolland County”, 1888 and serve as an introduction to the hotels and taverns listed herein. (1)

I. NATHANIEL RUST TAVERN

John W. Boynton- “ The first (hotel) of which I have any information was at the house or location now occupied by William Gardner on Ripley hill.” (1)

John Porter– Nathaniel Rust resided where William O. Gardner lived in 1891 and kept a tavern there for many years. He was appointed tavern keeper 1714 and 1717. (Noted as such 9/5/1714 town meeting). (4) (5)

Nathaniel Rust (1670-1760) was one of the original inhabitants of Coventry. About 1712 he was granted a plot of land on today’s Ripley Hill #59 of 30 acres located where the High School is today. Nathaniel established himself as a stopover for weary travelers. (2, 3) Nathaniel died in 1761 and the site descended to his heirs. William O. Gardner and his family owned the site from 1852 to 1911, and is shown on 1857 and 1868 maps of Coventry. There is no deed evidence that Gardner owned a tavern. The site is now the location of Coventry High School.



A Sketch of the original home lots on "Wickett Hill". (Ripley Hill) showing the Rust property. The road running diagonally top to bottom is Main St. (2)

II. John W. Boynton- "The next in order of time was at the south end of South Street, and was recently occupied by Buel (Ruel) Loomis-Novatus Cushman, landlord. This hotel was on the main traveled road from Hartford to Windham and Brooklyn until the turnpike road was built through the village in 1808." (1)



The adjacent map shows that in 1792 the road through Coventry to Windham either followed Route 44 east to Route 31 south to Lake Street, then High Street and Flanders Road to Route 32 in Mansfield, or Route 44 east to Silver Street to South Street to Pucker Street and across Rose's bridge to then Lebanon and Windham.

Ruel and Roxanna Loomis owned the property that is now 1000 South Street from 1816 to 1840, and owned half the house (with son John Loomis) from 1840 to 1857 (CLR). Ruel died in 1865. The house was built by Samuel Robertson near the start of the Revolutionary War. However, deed records give no definitive indication of a hotel or tavern.

III. BRIGHAM TAVERN

John W. Boynton- "A hotel was kept on the mail stage road from Hartford to Boston, now the residence of Addison Dimock." (1)



Uriah Brigham is referred to in 1775 feeding two rifle battalions. (2) The tavern was started ca1778 by Gershom Brigham (son of Uriah). (16) In 1797, 1798 and 1805 meetings of the Boston Turnpike Company were held there. (6) Gershom's niece (daughter of brother Cephas) married 1806 Roderick Dimock who took over the inn in 1816. (CLR) Roderick Dimock noted in 1850 Federal census of Coventry as innkeeper.

1857 map of Coventry shows A. (Addison Dimock there); 1860 Federal Census of Coventry has Lewis Addison Dimock as a farmer. So it's likely the inn was discontinued ca1850. The house exists today on Route 44, north side, just west of the Willimantic River. The picture is from 1940.

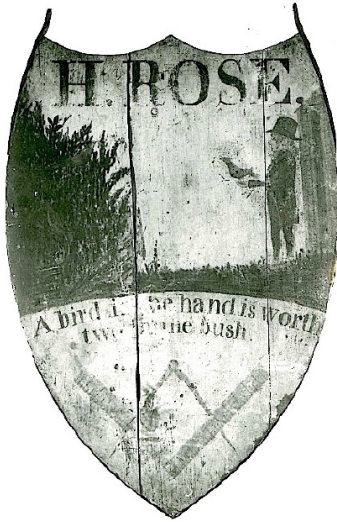
IV. RICHARDSON TAVERN

Amos Richardson (1728-1802) was granted land in Coventry, on the highway from Hartford, in 1731. He and his son Amos Jr. kept a hotel-tavern noted 1775 and " a number of years past" and 1788. (8) It was sold to his son Hezekial in 1802 (CLR, 2) Also noted- Tavern during the Revolutionary War, and after the war the military company met at the tavern when E. Pomeroy 2nd was a young man. (E. Pomeroy-1776-1867) (4, 7) Located on 3251 Main Street, south side, west of Skungamaug River-house remains today. The picture is ca1940.



V. ROSE TAVERN

John W. Boynton- "A hotel was also kept at the house just west from where Judge Jesse Root lived and died, on Ripley hill. The name of Roderick Rose was on the sign." (1) Jehiel Rose licensed tavern keeper (Bird-in-Hand) 1800-1812, son Horace tavern keeper from 1813-1814 and son Roderick from 1817-1818. The house was sold in 1824. (Located at 2011 Main Street on the curve- The Daniel Rust House.) The picture is ca1920.



VI. CHARLES CARPENTER TAVERN

John W. Boynton- "After the opening of the town pike road a hotel was kept at the house recently taken down by William Cummings. Axel Edgerton, Charles Carpenter, Mason Dimock and John Bard in turn were landlords." (1) William Cummings sold his lands and house in Coventry in 1873. (CLR)

The Windham Turnpike Company was incorporated in 1799. Part of its route extended from Willimantic, through Coventry, to the Boston Turnpike on what is now Main Street. Prior to this there was no road through South Coventry Village save for a few paths to the saw and grist mill on the brook. The turnpike road was completed in the Village about 1808. A tavern was built about this time by Daniel Dimock. It was located about where #984 Main Street is today, across the street from Woods Lane. Daniel Dimock's account books (19) indicate that he rented the building to Charles Carpenter and later John Bard for \$80 per year between the years of 1812 and 1819. The tavern was torn down ca1830 and the present house, at 984 Main Street, was built in 1845.

Charles Carpenter, born in Coventry in 1771, built the first residence on the turnpike in the Village about 1810. It was located about where the Congregational Church parking lot is today. Interestingly he sold it in 1814 and re-purchased it in 1818. (CLR)

In February of 1818 there is a deed selling a small cotton factory on what is now Woods Lane. The site is described as “near the turnpike in front of the tavern house in which Charles Carpenter now lives...” In December of 1818 the mill site is sold again and the deed notes as an abutter “the shed and tavern house where John Bard now lives...”

It can be assumed that the tavern operated from ca1812 to beyond 1820.

VII. MARTIN LYMAN HOUSE

John W. Boynton- “... and next the house opposite Hale monument, Martin Lyman, landlord.” (1)

Tavern noted 1800; Martin Lyman (1782-1859) purchased the house in 1819 from Jeremiah Fitch. He was postmaster in 1822, and he sold the house to John Boynton in 1825. (CLR) The house remains on Lake Street across from the entrance to the Hale cemetery. The picture is from 1965.



VIII. SOLOMON BIDWELL HOTEL

John W. Boynton- “In 1822 the present hotel was opened by Solomon Bidwell. He was succeeded by his son and grandson.” (1)

Solomon Bidwell built the hotel in 1822. Solomon died 1858, and the hotel descended to son Lyman who died in 1877, then to his son Charles who died 1881, then to widow Lydia who leased it until 1889 when she sold it, then bought it again 1891. Lydia died 1918. Edward Naven acquired the hotel at that time. (9) The hotel stopped operating around 1938. (CLR) The building remains today on Main Street in the Village across from the 1876 building. The picture is from 1959.



IX. ROSE/MANNING HOTEL

John W. Boynton- "Following this the house occupied by Richard Rose, John Rose, landlord. The John Rose hotel was continued by Royal Manning, and discontinued at his death about 1844."



Frederick Rose acquired the site in 1785. Dr. Frederick Rose was licensed as tavern keeper 1786-1822 and son John licensed 1813-1814. Royal Manning (Rose's son-in-law) purchased the site in 1826 and he continued the hotel until his death in 1847. The tavern had a sign of a "Spread Eagle". (11,12) The building remains today on the corner of Cross and High Streets facing the Town Green. The picture is ca1912.

Hartford Courant Dec. 28, 1810- The subscriber has to collect of the inhabitants of Coventry and nonresident proprietors of land, a state tax of one cent on the dollar and a town tax against the ratable estate of the north society on ten cents on the dollar on the 1809 list. Payments made at **Brigham's tavern** on the 7th, **Rose's** on the 14th and **Loomis'** on the 17th of January from 2 to 7 o'clock. Eleazer Pomeroy jun.

X. KIMBALL TAVERN

Dr. Timothy Kimball (1721-1765) acquired a piece of land on Boston Turnpike in 1752. (CLR) He and his son Timothy Jr. (1754-1786) operated a tavern later in the century. By the 1960's the building was in disrepair and was taken down for the Pilgrim Hills subdivision, across from Peracchio's farm.

A 1792 Almanac notes a Kimball kept a "House of Entertainment" on the Boston Post Road. (This title implies a house that serves the public with necessities of travel.) A journal of Rev. M. Cutler from Ipswich in 1788 notes he breakfasted at widow Kimball's in Coventry on a trip west. Dr. Kimball's estate listed much furniture above and beyond a normal family's and several medical books Son Timothy's estate noted a large store of foodstuffs, glass bottles and vials as he was likely an apothecary. (10)

Both Timothys died young, the 119 acre Kimball farm was sold 1791 to Jeremiah Ripley then to Ichabod Skinner. (CLR) The place was occupied by William Wilson after the Kimballs, then to Skinner. "The place has been occupied as a tavern at some periods of its history." (7) In 1802, the only chance to obtain accommodations between Mansfield and East Hartford was Kimball's Tavern in Coventry six miles from Dunham's in Mansfield and six miles to Woodbridge's in East Hartford. (15) From 1818 to ca1830 the site was owned by Daniel Loomis and references are made to his tavern here. (CLR)

An ad in the Hartford Courant dated July 2, 1798 for the sale of the Kimball tavern stand shows a large dwelling house with a back kitchen, a large barn, cow and horse houses, a convenient merchants store with English and West India goods, a slaughter house, large bins for salt, flax seed, beans, etc., a tallow house, 3 good wells and an orchard. The premises have been used for forty years as a tavern and fifteen years as a merchant's store.

XI. DAVENPORT/TAYLOR TAVERN

Regarding the house at #44 Stage Road- This place has been owned and occupied as a tavern for many years and kept by John Taylor, Zelotes Long, etc. (7) John purchased the place in 1797 with Eleazer Pomeroy. (CLR Vol. 9 page 232)

The new Boston turnpike through Coventry was made in 1798. Stages were put on this road in 1804 for the first time by Deodatus Woodbridge of Manchester and Asher Davenport (noted in Coventry 1804 Hartford Courant) (son of Captain Thomas Davenport) who then kept tavern in Coventry in the house afterward owned by Dr. Eleazer Hunt. (1857 map) (1) (7)

1804 John & Elizabeth Taylor lease to Asher Davenport for six years, the tavern house near the meeting house. (CLR Volume 11, page 334)

Hartford Courant September 1, 1807 "The annual meeting of Tolland County Medical Society will be holden at A. Davenport's in Coventry on Tuesday 22nd at 10 o'clock forenoon."

This evidence suggests the tavern was operating from 1797 to at least 1810.

XII. POMEROY TAVERN

Tavern and stage house built on the north side of the Boston Turnpike in 1801 by Eleazer Pomeroy (2nd). He acquired the land from Noah Porter. The stage house was originally in the Hunt house to the west, but the stages were moved to this location before 1810. Eleazer operated stages and purchased 72 acres south of the turnpike across from the meetinghouse where another house was built in 1833. (1) Eleazer Pomeroy 2nd and 3rd (1776-1867) have been proprietors of this establishment. (7)



#1804 Boston Turnpike ~ 1965

Hartford Courant, February 14, 1810 advertisement- "A well-known Tavern and Stage House in Coventry, North Society, with merchant store and barn, twenty rods west of the meeting house. One of the best stands for a public house east of the Connecticut River on the great Middle Turnpike from Hartford to Boston near the intersection of the Windham Turnpike. Large and convenient buildings with a supply of water from a well and aqueduct at all times."

Hartford Courant, March 1848- Delegates from several towns of the 21st Senatorial District assembled in convention at the hotel of Eleazer Pomeroy Jr., North Coventry on the 22nd. Also noted March 4, 1851.

Samuel Tracy Loomis (1819-1896) came to Coventry in 1842, lived on a farm on Silver Street until 1868 when he purchased this site. Here he embraced a farm and a hotel where he was successful both as a farmer and landlord until he removed to Andover in 1891. He was postmaster 1869-1891. (18)

1891 Coventry Directory (Price & Lee) listing- Farmers Hotel, S.T. Loomis proprietor, North Coventry.

XIII. JACOB WILSON TAVERN

The site located on the northwest corner of the Boston Turnpike and Bread & Milk Street was first settled ca1735 by John Wilson. At his death in 1773, his son William and grandson Jacob succeeded him. Here Jacob kept a tavern for some years. The house was rebuilt several times. (7) From the "Journal of Dr. Elihu Ashley of Deerfield, Massachusetts, 1773-1775. " Jacob Wilson operated a tavern in Coventry where Dr. Ashley stopped May 25, 1774, drank a bowl of punch and set out about twelve."



Jacob likely ran the tavern from 1773 to 1817 when he sold to Joshua Frink (CLR)

XIV. The **DANIEL WHITE TAVERN** on Hutchinson Road in Andover (Coventry before 1848) was on the old Hartford to Windham Road. It is also known as White's tavern at the sign of the Black Horse. The house was built in 1722 and opened as a tavern in 1773 by Daniel White. (13) Daniel was a Captain in the Revolutionary War. Rochambeau stopped there in September 1780 and 1781. Gurley Phelps is shown on 1857/1868 maps of Andover, and the 1860 census of Andover- age 56, a farmer.



A Resolution by the General Assembly incorporating the Hartford, New London, Windham and Tolland County Society, for the establishment of a turnpike from Hartford to Norwich dated October 1795 notes that the first meeting of that society shall be held at the dwelling of **Daniel White, Inn-holder**, in Coventry on the first Tuesday of January next. (14) The Hartford Courant notes on March 23, 1801 that a probate creditors meeting will be held at the house "of Daniel White, innholder;"

Bill Jobbagy, January 2015

REFERENCES:

1. J.R. Cole "The History of Tolland County", 1888, quoting from Mr. John W. Boynton, a prominent citizen in Coventry who remembered statements from the oldest inhabitants of the town.
2. "The Roots of Coventry, Connecticut", Betty Brook Messier, 1987
3. Coventry Land Records- Vol. 1 pg. 73 1712 Joseph Talcott to Nathaniel Rust, lot #59; Vol. 1 pg. 358 3/1726 Nathaniel Rust to his son Nathaniel Jr. 50 acres; 1761 Nathaniel Sr. died and wife Mary has life use.
4. Dr. John Porter's manuscript describing Coventry's history and residences, 1864 (Coventry Historical Society)
5. Town of Coventry, Town Meeting Minutes
6. Hartford Courant- February 26, 1798 and May 7, 1798
7. Rev. Marvin Root and Dr. John Porter manuscript- homes of the North Society, written 1844 and updated 1864. Coventry Historical Society.
8. The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, May 1775 to June 1776, Charles J. Hoadly, LLD, State Librarian, Publ. Hartford 1890, page 68.

9. 1919 and 1930 Willimantic and South Coventry City Directory

10. "Kimball's House of Entertainment" a paper by Betty Brook Messier, March 1996, Coventry Historical Society.

11. "Commemorative Biographical Record of Tolland and Windham Counties Connecticut", J.H. Beers & Co. Chicago, 1900.

12. Rev. L.H. Austin, lecture "In the Land of Nathan Hale", 1913, Coventry Historical Society.

13. "Norman White, His Ancestors and Descendants" compiled by Erskine Norman White, New York, 1905.

14. "Resolves and Private Laws of the State of Connecticut from the year 1789 to 1836", Volume II, page 1309. John Eldridge Printer, Hartford, 1837.

15. "The Turnpikes of New England" by Frederick J. Wood, Boston, Marshall Jones Company, 1919. Page 344.

16. "The Public records of the State of Connecticut, May 1778 to April 1780" Charles J. Hoadly, Hartford, 1895, page 37

17. "Acts and Laws of the State of Connecticut", Hudson and Goodwin, Hartford 1746

18. "Descendants of Joseph Loomis who came from Braintree England 1638 and settled in Windsor 1639", by Elias Loomis, Yale College 1875.

19. Account Book of Daniel Dimock 1813-1833, Connecticut Historical Society.

CLR- Coventry Land records