



Bucknam Tavern

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Case Study in Researching Old Homes
Supporting Historic Preservation in Falmouth

The Falmouth Historical Society

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Falmouth Heritage Museum



Bucknam Tavern

Among the older buildings in Falmouth
Tavern built and operated by one of our
town's more prominent and affluent families
Had fallen into disrepair
Now undergoing renovation

What is the story of the tavern?



Image: FHS

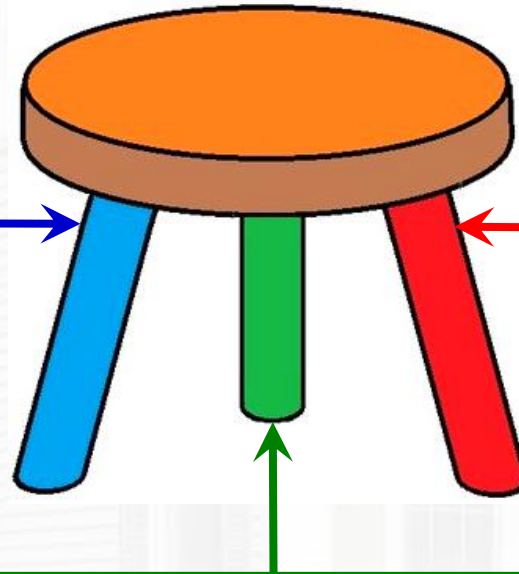
*Historical photographs, unless otherwise attributed
were obtained through the Wikimedia Commons*



Approach—The Three-legged Stool

Family History

- Stories of the people who lived on the property
- Standard genealogical research



Land History

- Stories of the land, its buildings, and its use
- More advanced genealogical research

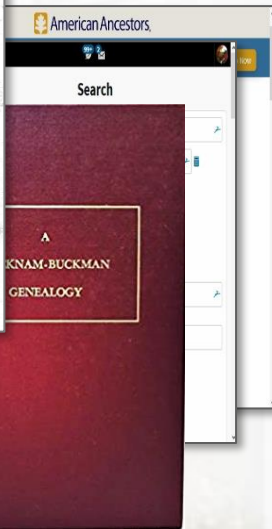
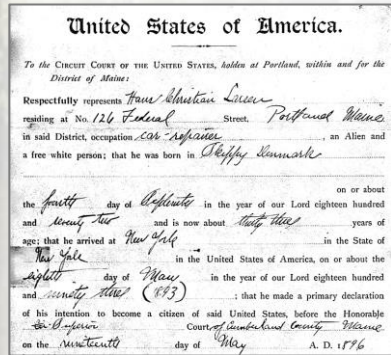
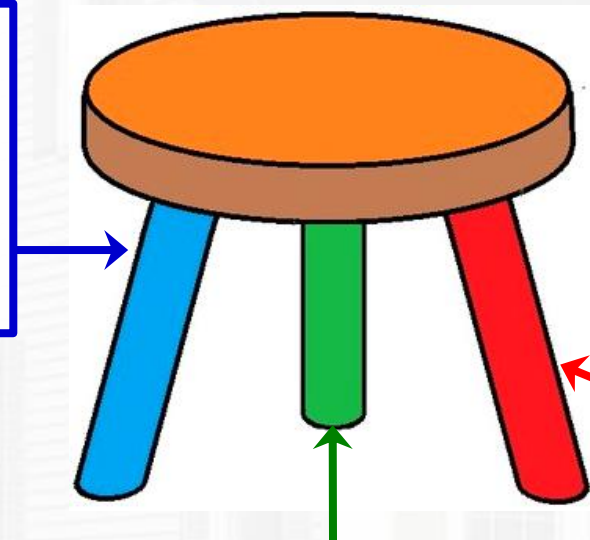
Local History

- Context—Where historical societies excel!



Resources

Vital records
 Census Records
 Immigration Records
 Genealogies



Local Histories
 Local Directories
 Local Cemeteries
 Local Newspapers

Maps
 Deeds
 Tax Records

Image: Ancestry.com, Genbank.com, Findagrave.com, Osbermaps.org, LOC.gov, Maine Historical Society



Result

Reconstructed Narrative

- Story of the land, buildings & people who lived there over 288 years
- Two families (Bucknam & Larsen) have owned the tavern for 175 years
- Chronicle of immigrants
 - English settlers of Ancient Falmouth in the early 18th century
 - Danish émigrés to modern Falmouth in the late 19th/early 20th century

Period	Owners	Period	Owners
ca. 1741-1858	Bucknam	1905-1912	Iversen
1858-1891	Williams	1912-1919	Carlisle
1891-1893	Iversen	1919-1927	Lund
1893-1905	Nielsen	1927-present	Larsen

Does not include Warren Drinkwater and any intermediate conveyances (ca. 1732-ca. 1741) before William Bucknam



The Story Begins...

...With grants by the Proprietors ca. 1732

- Landholders were inveterate wheelers and dealers
- Grants of 104 acres often included 60 acre lots in the hinterlands
- Two 60 acre lots were sold, carved up, recombined, and sold again
- Bucknam family ended up with more than 80 acres from the two lots
- Tavern was located in the upper half (above Falmouth/Middle Roads)

Bucknam Tavern



1732 Proprietors Map

- 60 acres (Blackstone)
- 60 acres (Drinkwater)



Overlaid on Town Plat

- Original grants
- 1788 deed



Bucknams at Falmouth Corners

William Bucknam

(1709-1776)

Prominent landowner in New Casco

- Acquired land at Falmouth Corners by 1741

Active in Falmouth town government

- Selectman, assessor, moderator, surveyor of highways, fence viewer, pound keeper, jury of trials from 1737-1768

Samuel Bucknam

(1752-1814)

Prominent landowner in New Casco

- 1776 Purchases 2 acres with house & barn (110 Bucknam Road, built about 1750)
- 1778 Expands land adjacent to house to 39½ acres
- 1788 Acquires 47 acres across the "County Road" (Middle Rd.) that was part of father's homestead

Among wealthiest in New Casco by 1798



Bucknam Tavern

How old is the Tavern?

Tavern was licensed by 1786

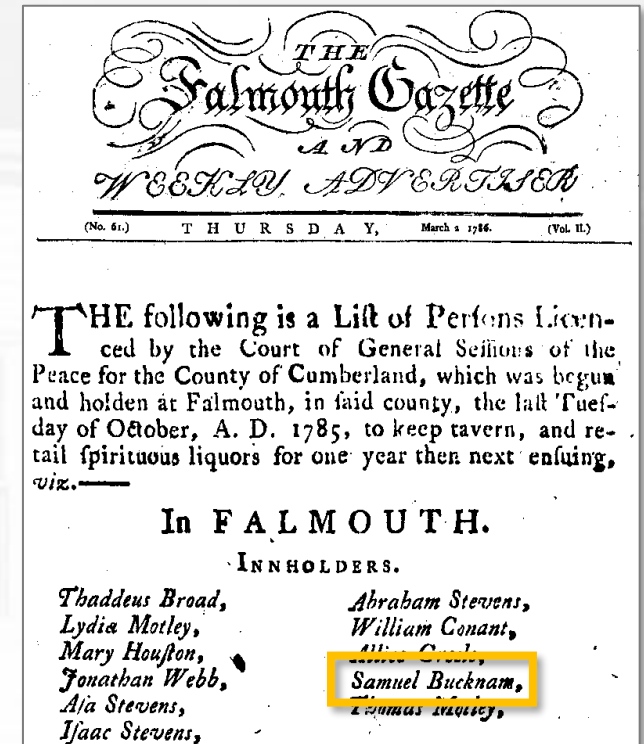
Tavern was built on land belonging to William

- Settled New Casco by 1737
- Landowner at Falmouth Corners by 1741 (lot described as “part of his homestead”)

Architectural details provide clues

- Probably built after 1770 but before 1790
- Major renovation ca. 1850

Best estimate is ca. 1780 (± 5 years)



March 2, 1786

Image: Genbank.com



Heyday of the Stagecoach

The County Road

- Today's Falmouth & Middle Roads
- Main artery from Portland to Brunswick
- Stagecoaches were safer than travel by sea
- Bucknam Tavern was a convenient stop

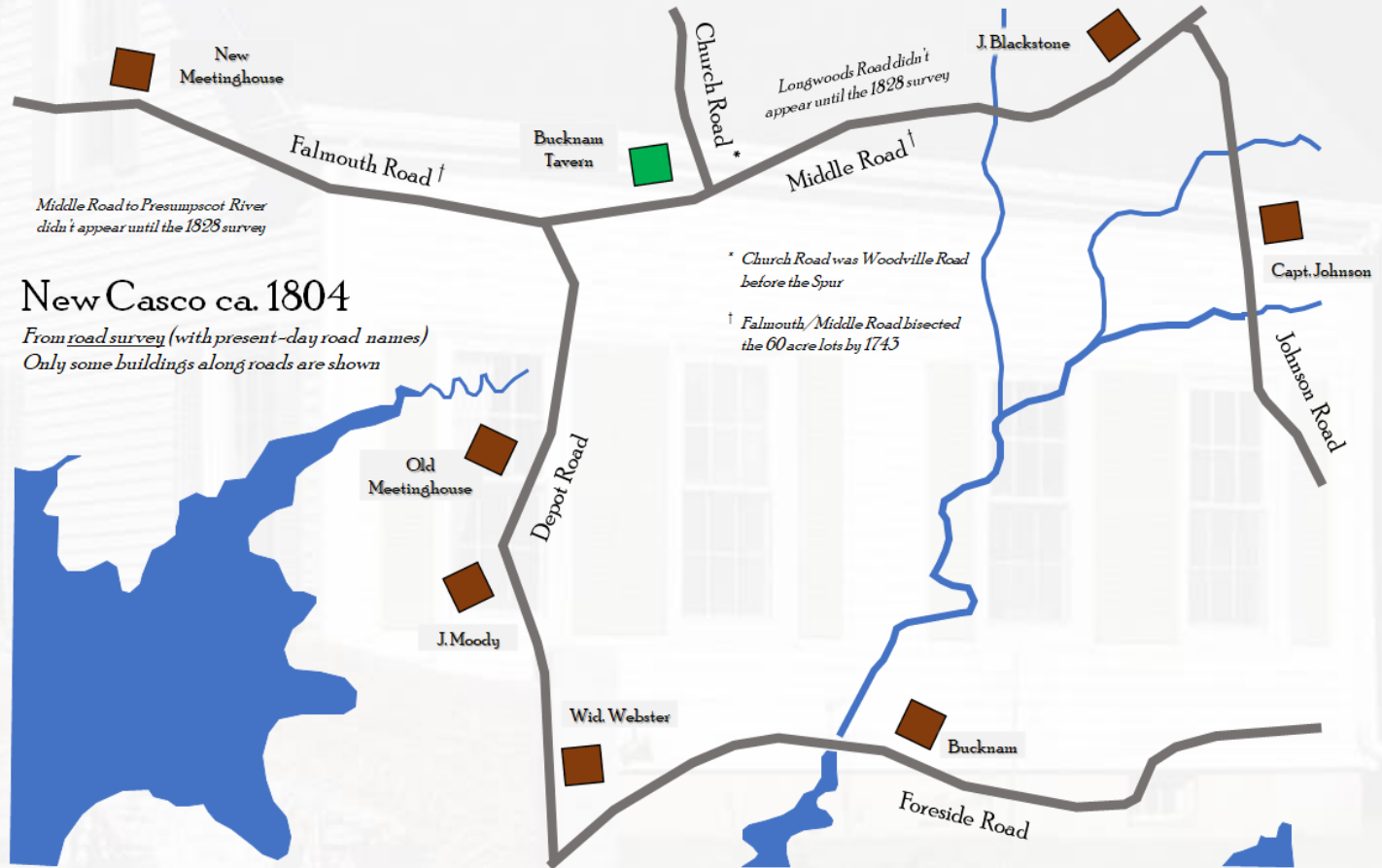


Image: FHS based on map at Osbermaps.org



New Owners

Decline of Bucknam Tavern

- Samuel Bucknam died in 1814
- Hulda, his widow, continued to run the tavern as demand declined until the 1830s
- Hulda died in 1856
- Family sold the tavern in 1858

Tavern underwent a major renovation

- Original features removed



*Samuel's headstone
at Pine Grove Cem.*

Image: Findagrave.com



Tragedy at the Tavern

Life of the next family was anything but peaceful

- Gruesome suicide with a sword-cane!
- Gruesome murder with beheading!
- Members of family declared insane!
- Stories about the supernatural!
- Exorcism!

Be prepared for surprises when delving into the past!





Arrival of the Danes

Five of the next six families to purchase Bucknam Tavern were immigrants from Denmark

- Owners 1891-present
- Exception was Walter Carlisle (1912-1919), a grocer from Boothbay
- Danes arrived in U.S. 1872-1911
- Maren Forsyth, the current owner, is the great granddaughter of Hans & Maren Larsen (1927-1945)



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The Future of the Tavern

“Full gut” renovation underway

- Partial restoration by stripping away “improvements” made over the years
- Appearance from road will be closer to original (minus the central chimney)

Focus now is on the exterior



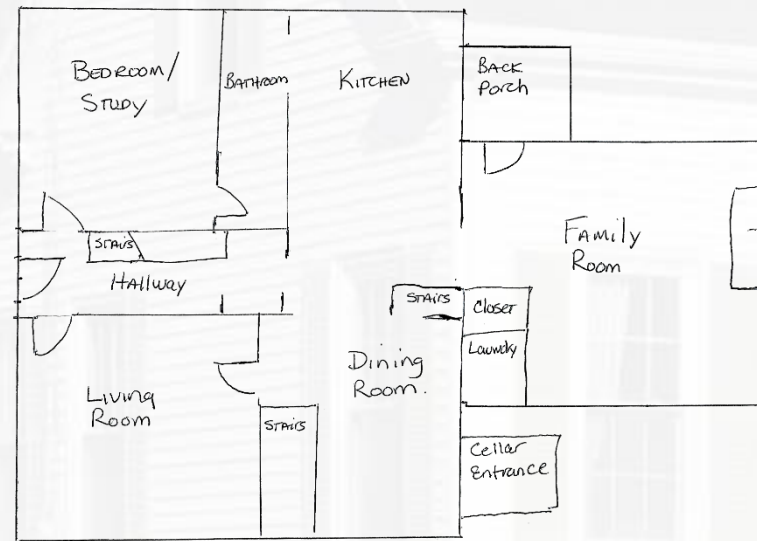
Image: FHS



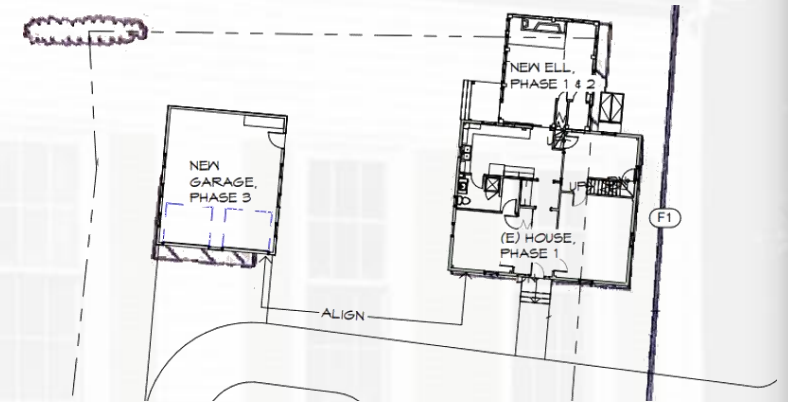
Plans for the Tavern



Before Renovation



Early Ideas



Site Plan

Image: FHS, M. Forsyth



Summary

Bucknam Tavern exemplifies preservation in Falmouth

- Historic home had become a “fixer-upper”
- Major renovation is making it livable again
 - Preserving part of our town’s history for years to come
 - Partial restoration harkens back to its origins

Possible to discover the story of old homes

- Takes some work but the information is there
- Your historical society can help



Image: FHS

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