

The Totoket Historical Society, Inc.

The 1760s – A Turning Point in Colonial Life

by

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September 1995

Transcribed and Digitized

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Accession # 1995-011-001

THE 1760s -- A TURNING POINT IN COLONIAL LIFE

The Beers ledger of 1740 to 1790 (with one entry of 1737) provides a graphic picture of colonial life in North Branford. Wheeler Beers (b. 2/14/1715, d. 4/26/1790) and his grandson, Pitman Beers (b. 10/22/1763, d. 4/5/1848) kept a ledger of transactions in their store. It was located probably on the east side of Twin Lakes Road between .3 and .4 miles south of Route 80. Subsequently, Pitman's great grandson, Ralph, "ran a dry goods store starting in 1883"¹ at the corner of North Street and Route 80.

This ledger demonstrates a parallel between the experiences of life in this very small, rural town and the Northern colonies during the lives of Wheeler & Pitman Beers. The English had been passing laws that inhibited our lucrative trade with the French in the West Indies and other laws that favored her own factories at the expense of those in the colonies. Resentment was expressed as early as 1763 in New Haven when " ... a town meeting took determined action on receipt of a letter from Boston urging ... the town take measures to encourage the ... produce and manufacture of this colony and to lessen the use of ... articles imported from abroad." By 1769 similar agreements had been made in all of the colonies except New Hampshire.

A quick review of the following tables shows that during the 1760s life in North Branford reflected the sentiments of New Haven in 1763, as well as those of the colonies

¹Bouley, Jane, *Beers Genealogy, 1686 - 1930*. Branford Historical Society.

²Hartley, Rachael M., *The History of Hamden, Connecticut, 1786 - 1936*. Quinnipiac Press, Inc., New Haven, 1943.

as a whole. Production of woven cloth more than doubled, the varieties of cloth, grains, vegetables, meat, staples and man-made products increased at an extreme measure while the costs of labor and goods dropped markedly. North Branford was a microcosm of rural colonial experience during the 1760s.

INCREASING PRODUCTIVITY

Woven Cloth

	1740s	1750s	1755	1760s	1765	1770s	1780s
Lining	522 yds	521 yds		1776 yds		1751 yds	563 yds
Check Lining	10	29		198		<u>415</u>	133
Woling	109	7		49	<u>268</u>	124	102
Flaniel	36	68	<u>192</u>	158		186	23
Carsy	96	105		167		153	<u>261</u>
Worsted	104	72		104	<u>241</u>	95	48
Ticking	23	24		103		<u>115</u>	91
Total	1027	865	1210	2789	<u>3341</u>	3037	1375

INCREASING VARIETY OF GOODS AND FOODS

Woven Cloth

	1740	1745	1750	1755	1760	1765	1770	1775	1780/90
Lining	x								
Check Lining	x								
Woling	x								
Check W oling	x								
Flaniel	x	Flannel							
Carsey	x	Kersey: Woolen ribbed fabric							

	1740	1745	1750	1755	1760	1765	1770	1775	1780/90	
Coverlid	x	Coverlet: Cover of bed or any furniture								
Worsted	x									
Ticking	x	Strong cover or case when filled with hair or feathers. Forms a mattress or pillow								
Blancitin	x									
Sail Cloth	x	Heavy canvas or duck for sails or tents								
Wosted Plad		x								
Check Flaniel				x						
Bed Ticking					x					
Camolit					x	Fine white linen first woven by Rev. Jonathan Merrick 8/26/1761.				
Purnel					x					
Lins & Wolsey					x	Coarse Linen				
Check Linin						x				
Linin						x				
Bedcord						x				
Hachiefs						x				
Druged		Drugget: woolen or mixed stuff for clothes					x			
Tining 3/4 W								x		
Sellone								x		
Drilling		A heavy linen with diagonal weave						x		
Burds Eye		Bird's Eye fabric in Bird's Eye pattern						x		
Rop(e)								x		
Hors Traces									x	
Tow Cloth									x	

Grains/crops

Maslin	x			
Whet		x		
Otts				x
Indian Corn				x

	1740	1745	1750	1755	1760	1765	1770	1775	1780/90
Hay					x				
Hops						x			
Buckwheat						x			
Ry Flower								x	
Flax									x

Vegetables/Fruit

Parsnip			x						
Apels				x					
Oynyons					x				
Turnup					x				
Beans								x	

Meat/Fish

Beef	x								
Pigs	x								
Poorck		x							
Veal					x				
Shad					x				
Tallow							x		
Osters							x		

Staples

Butter	x								
Chees	x								
Rhumb			x						
Milch				x					
Syder					x				
Malasses					x				
Sugar					x				
Solt						x			
Metheglin	Beverage of fermented huney and water-mead								x

Products, Man-made

	1740	1745	1750	1755	1760	1765	1770	1775	1780/90
Powder				x					
Shous				x					
Ax					x				
Hat					x				
Sythe						x			
Chain								x	
Broom								x	
COAL	(See sheet #177 - Beers Ledger)								x

DECREASING PRICES

Price of Labor

	1740 - 59	1760 - 1790
work 1 day	0-5-0	0-3-0
Carting wood - 1 day	0-6-0	0-3-0
Carting salt hay - 1 day	0-6-0	0-2-0
Hoing - 1 day	0-6-0	
Clearing - 1 day	0-6-0	
Framing - 1 day	0-7-0	
Pulling flax - 1 day	0-6-0	

Price of Grain

Whet per bu.	0-14-0	0-5-6
Indian Corn per bu.	0-6-8	0-2-9
*Maslin per bu.	1-1-0	0-4-0
* A mixture of wheat and rye		

Price of Meat

~ Beef per lb.	0-0-7	0-0-2
Pigs per lb.	0-0-8	0-0-3

Price of Cloth

Note 1. Between 1740 and 1759 there are extreme variations in prices, possibly due to differences in quality. Beginning 1760, no price exceeded 1 shilling per yard.

Note 2. Prices of 1760 - 1790 are average.

	1740 - 1759	1760 - 1790
Lining	4-0-0 to 0-0-5	0-0-6
Check Lining	0-6-0 to 0-3-2	0-0-7
Woling	6-0-0 to 0-2-2	0-0-7 to 0-0-8
Flaniel	5-6-0 to 0-0-6	0-0-7
Carsy	4-0-0 to 0-0-6	0-0-8
Worsted	7-0-0 to 0-0-9	0-0-10
Ticking	5-0-0 to 0-5-8	0-0-10

Note that many entries in the ledger are not dated and frequently prices are not recorded and, when recorded are not consistent. Spelling is copied as written by Wheeler & Pitman. In spite of these incomplete, inconsistent and strange entries, the trends and conclusions are quite evident.

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September, 1995