

*Note: The following eight sources can help us to reconstruct the world of Lexington wheelwright John Parker. These sources and the accompanying texts and exercises are best used with reference to the following journal article: "From Sources to Stories: Reconstructing Revolutionary Lexington in the Classroom" by historian Mary Fuhrer. It appeared in the August 2009 edition of **The History Teacher** and can be accessed via the link on the National Heritage Museum's website ([www.nationalheritagemuseum.org](http://www.nationalheritagemuseum.org)).*

### **I. Vital Records for John Parker Family**

From Charles Hudson, *History of Lexington* Vol. II, 1913, a genealogy based on Hudson's vital records research.

#### Household of John and Lydia Parker of Lexington

Father: John Parker, born July 13, 1729, married Lydia Moore May 22, 1755, died Sept. 17, 1775.

Mother: Lydia Moore Parker, born Jan. 18 1731, married John Parker May 22, 1755, died 1829.

Children:

1. Lydia, born Nov. 8, 1756, died unmarried at Roxbury about 1810
2. Anna, born Jan. 11, 1759, married Ephraim Pierce 1780
3. John, born Feb. 7, 1761, married Hannah Stearns 1785.
4. Isaac, born May 12, 1763, married and moved to S.C. in 1820.
5. Ruth, born Dec. 1, 1765, married David Bent 1787.
6. Rebecca, born June 28, 1768, married Peter Clark 1803.
7. Robert, born April 15, 1771, died 1841.

Questions:

1. How many family members were living in the Parker household in April of 1775? Had any died or married and moved away?
2. Who else might have been living with the family at this point?



## II. Tax Rates for John Parker Family

Each year, Lexington assessed value of their residents' the real and personal property. Real property included land and buildings; personal property included all other possession. (The most valuable personal property was usually livestock). These tax assessments allow us to determine where a household ranked relative to other households in comparable wealth.

In 1774, John Parker assesment resulted in tax of 2 shillings on personal property and 4 shillings 7 pence on real estate. This assessment reveals that he owned more property than 80% of his fellow townsmen. He was among the wealthier of Lexington's residents. Note however, that tax assessments do not consider offsetting debts.

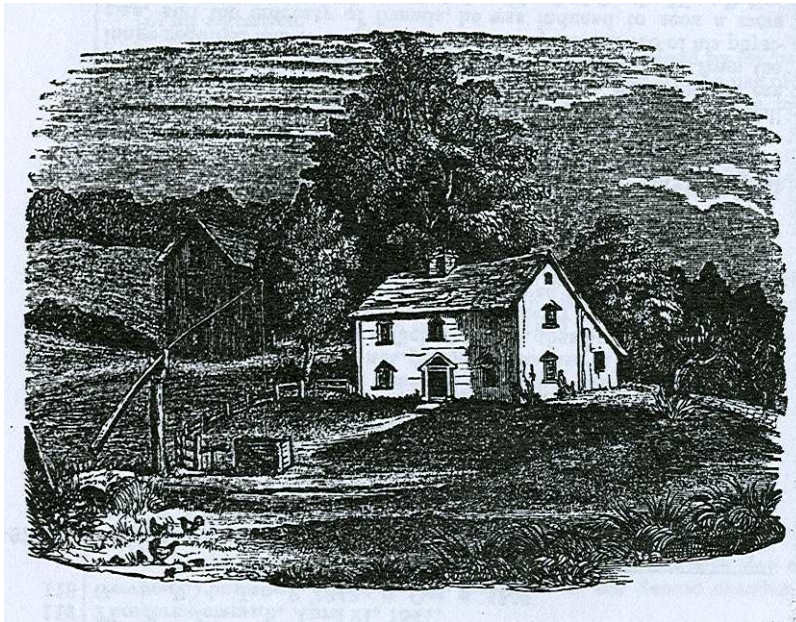
	Personal	Real	Sum	Total	Town	Rate	Rank
Grace Bowman	3-4	2-8-0	11-08-0	17-08-0	1-19-10-2	1-07-02-2	
Benja Smith	0-8-3	1-05-2	1-09-5	10-04-00-3	0-02-08-0		
A. Ebenezer Fish	1-8	2-07-0	4-09-2	9-00-2	1-00-04-0	0-14-00-1	
Quert John Bond	1-8	1-07-1	3-01-3	6-11-0	0-15-08-3	0-10-07-2	
Ebenezer Smith	1-8	0-11-1	0-00-0	2-07-1	0-05-11-0	0-03-11-2	
Benja Cutler	0-10	1-00-0	2-02-1	4-00-1	0-09-00-0	0-06-02-0	
James Maricom	0-10			0-10-0	0-02-00-1	0-01-03-0	
Joseph Bridge	1-8	0-07-0	2-11-0	5-02-0	0-11-08-0	0-07-11-2	
Joseph White	1-8	0-09-2	2-07-1	5-00-3	0-11-05-2	0-07-09-2	
Dea Jos. Lovings	3-4	1-09-2	5-00-0	10-01-2	1-02-09-2	0-15-07-1	
Saml Bridge	1-8	3-07-3	6-00-2	11-04-1	1-05-06-3	0-17-05-2	
William Munro	0-10	0-02-2	0-10-0	1-10-2	0-04-03-1	0-02-10-1	
Capt Thad: Bowman	5-0	2-07-3	6-00-2	13-08-1	1-10-10-2	1-01-00-2	
De: Jonas Stone	1-8	1-11-1	6-01-3	9-09-0	1-02-00-3	0-15-00-0	
A Jonath Smith	3-4	2-04-0	4-04-2	10-00-2	1-02-07-0	0-15-05-3	
Marrett Munro	1-8	0-10-3	3-05-1	6-00-0	0-13-06-0	0-09-03-0	
Josiah Smith	3-4	1-01-3	2-09-3	7-03-2	0-16-05-1	0-11-02-3	
Mary Bridge		0-06-2		0-06-2	0-01-03-2	0-00-09-3	
Wido Lydia Mulliken		2-05-3	1-09-1	4-03-0	0-09-07-1	0-06-06-2	
Wido Anna Smith		0-02-0	1-00-2	1-02-2	0-02-09-0	0-0-1-10-1	
Ensi Rob: Hearington	3-4	4-01-1	5-02-2	12-07-3	1-08-07-2	0-19-05-1	
James Robbins in		2-00-3	6-05-2	8-06-1	0-19-01-2	0-13-01-0	
Saml Hastings	3-4	1-09-1	5-07-0	10-01-1	1-02-08-1	0-15-06-2	
John Parker	3-4	2-07-1	2-03-2	7-08-3	0-17-05-1	0-11-10-2	
John Parker	1-8	2-00-2	4-07-0	8-03-2	0-18-07-3	0-12-09-1	
Joseph Benson	1-8	1-07-1	2-07-1	5-10-2	0-13-02-2	0-09-00-1	
Benja	3-4	2-11-2	2-11-0	9-02-2	1-00-08-2	0-14-02-1	



### III. Theodore Parker's Description of John Parker's Farmhouse

The Parker family farmhouse was built before 1712, when Parker family ancestors first moved to Lexington. It was a saltbox, with an east and west room on the first floor, two chambers above, and a kitchen in the one story shed-like addition in the rear.

Nearly 100 years after the family took possession of the ancient house, a descendant sketched the Parker homestead. He wrote of the old house, "It faced as near the south as the rude science of the owner or builder could make it, and so was a perpetual sun dial. It had but one chimney, that a huge one in the centre of the building. The large bricks, made a half a mile off, were laid in clay as far as the ridge pole, while the part of the chimney above the roof was pointed with mortar. ... The rooms were few but large and airy, the windows not numerous, of various size, but all small. Originally all the latches, except that of the 'fore door,' were of wood with wooden thumb pieces... The house... had been built at different times, the eastern end being considerably younger than the western, and not furnished with the massive oak beams which everywhere stuck out in the older parts..."<sup>1</sup> In mid-18th century Lexington, homes of more than one-story with rooms of generous size and finishing touches such as molding and trim work, qualified as "mansions." The Parker home was such a mansion house.<sup>2</sup> One Lexingtonian remembered that "...the Parker mansion ... faced due south, which was the general custom of the day. The chimney was built so that when the shadow of it fell on the roof, it was said to be 12 o'clock. There were two wooden brackets over the kitchen door for the gun to hang on."<sup>3</sup> The house did not stand on the main thoroughfare, but was reached by a small lane that ran off of the road to Concord.



<sup>1</sup> Parker, *Parker Genealogy*, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> The deed for the sale of the property to John Parker in 1712 specifies that it included "one mansion house and a barn" in addition to the acreage.

<sup>3</sup> "Kite End," in *Proceedings of the Lexington Historical Society*, Vol II, pp. 101 -1.



IV. An Inventory of the Real and Personal Estate of Capt. John Parker Late of Lexington  
taken June 1776, Middlesex County Probate Court

Subscribed to a Warrant from the Honorable Oliver  
Bridges Esq. Judge of Probate of and for the County  
of Middlesex, of the 2<sup>d</sup> of October last, Authorizing us the  
Subscribers to take an Inventory of the Appraisement lawful  
Money, all the Estate wherof Thomas Parker late of Newton  
Esq. died seized, in said County; have Appraised the  
Same as contained in the following Inventory, and sworn  
us by the Executors of the last Will & Testament of J<sup>o</sup>. Parker

The wearing Apparel of said Deceased	L 2 <sup>1</sup> 3 <sup>1</sup> 8
Best Feather Bed, Bedstead & Bedding Belonging	4 <sup>1</sup> 9 <sup>1</sup> 6
a Feather Bed in the Chamber, Coverlet, under Bed Bedstead & Bed	1 <sup>1</sup> 15 <sup>1</sup>
a Feather Bed & under Bed in the Parlet	1 <sup>1</sup> 4 <sup>1</sup>
3 Sheets 10/ 5 Pillow Cases 2/6 a set of Valence 2/	16 <sup>1</sup> 6 <sup>1</sup>
a Table Cloth of a Case of Drawers 10/	1 <sup>1</sup>
a Chest with a Drawer of a looking Glass 4/	10 <sup>1</sup>
a Maple oval Table 7/ Small Table 9/	7 <sup>1</sup> 9 <sup>1</sup>
a great Chair & 8 small Chairs 12/ Books 10/	1 <sup>1</sup> 2 <sup>1</sup>
a large Cuviers 14/ a small Ditto 3/	17 <sup>1</sup>
an Iron Pot & Hooks 4/ a high Kettle of a small Ditto 4/	4 <sup>1</sup> 9 <sup>1</sup>
a Tea Kettle of a Kettle of Long Iron 4/ a Spider 1/6	5 <sup>1</sup> 11 <sup>1</sup>
a Gridiron 1/ Fire Shovel & Tongs 2/6 2 Trammel 4/6	8 <sup>1</sup>
a Braze Kettle 20/ a Bellows 1/6 a Lad Iron 2/6	1 <sup>1</sup> 6 <sup>1</sup> 6 <sup>1</sup>
a Tea Pot 1/6 Coffee Pot 9/ Beuter Dishes Plates &c 12/	1 <sup>1</sup> 1 <sup>1</sup> 3 <sup>1</sup>
a set Curtain Rod of a warming Pan 1/	4 <sup>1</sup>
Carried Over	L 47 <sup>1</sup> 15 <sup>1</sup> 10 <sup>1</sup>



## Transcription of John Parkers Inventory

	<b>L=s=p</b>
His best blew coat at 40s/ Black Velvet Jacket at 14s/ His next best coat at 14s/and blew Jacket at 8s/	3=17=0
His old red coat 3s/. Brown camblet d.o. 3s/ his great coat 9s/6 Old Brown coat 3s/ Blew jacket partly made up 11s/	1=10=0
His Best Leather Breeches 12s/ two pair of white thread stockings 3s/ One pair white woolen d.o. 3s/4 a pair of blew d.o. 3s/4	1=1=8
Four pair of old stockings 4s/8 two pair of woolen mittens 10p Two pair new coloured gloves 1s/6 six pair old d.o. 2/	0=9=0
His best hat 10s/ wig 9s/ crimson cap 2s/ two Linen caps 1s/ Two white bands for the neck 8p	1=2=8
One fine Shirt 4s/ one cotton d.o. 3s/ two old d.o. 1s/4 one Silk Handkerchief 1s/8 three pair old trowsers 8p	0=10=8
Seven yards and _ of all wool cloth at 45s/ one pair Silver Shoe Buckles and one pair of knee d.o. 12s/ one sleeve buttons 4p	2=17=4
One pair of black shoe buckles one pair knee d.o. 1s/ one pair of Specticles 3s/ two tobacco boxes 11p	0=4=11
One gun 2L8s powder ball & flints 2s/6p three Powder horns 1s/ A knapsack 1s/ an eight day clock 8L one case of drawers 32s	12=4=6
One old chest 3s/4p two Looking glasses 10s/ one round table 6s/ Six joiners chairs 16s/ one great chair 3s/4 ten small d.o. 4s/2	2=2=10
A pair of money scales & box of wafers 1s/ a pen knife 8p An old warming pan 1s/ nine stone plates 2s/7p one stone dish 1s	0=6=9
Cups and saucers 3s/ a number of glass beakers, vials, etc 2s/ Bread trough 6s/ dry cask & meal chest in the east chamber 2s/4	0=7=10
Chest and trunk 5s/ one brass kettle 8s/ a frying pan 1s/6p One dish kettle 2s/	0=16=6
An Iron Spider 2s/ an iron spit 2s/ a toasting iron and gridiron 1s/4p A fire --?— and tongs 4s/ two trammels 4s	0=13=4
Meat fork and chopping knife 1s/4p two candlesticks and a pair of	0=4=10



Snuffers 8p old Brass and small brass skillet 2s/10p	
A Leden glew pot 1s/ a large pewter dish 4s/ four pewter platters 12s/	1=5=0
Seven pounds old pewter 6s/ a tankard 2s/	
A number of small tin vessels 2s/4 ten knives & forks 3s/	0=8=4
Two raisors 6p a horn 6p a lanthorn & slate 1s/10	
Twelve pewter plates 12s/ fourteen earthen vessels 3s/6p	1=0=6
One pair of Steelyards 4s/ three sickles 1s/	
Two pair of old andirons 9s/ eleven glass Bottles 1s/10p	0=12=4
A small stone jugg 8p two pair of shears & cane 10p	
A Large bible 10s/ one small d.o. 1s4p a small Book of Letters	0=13=11
Wilson on the Sabbath 1s/3p a no. of pamphlets 1s/4p	
A teapot 1s/ a stone mug 6p one chest and cupboard 3s/4p	10=12=2
Two tables in the West room 3s/4p a small Desk 4s	
One cheese tub 1s/4p four butter Boxes 2s/ a pickle tub 1s/4	0=8=4
Three small tubs 1s/ three small keilers 8p four cheese hoops 2s/	
Two cheese presses 6s/ a cheese mill 2s/ a saddle & bridle 15s/	1=15=0
A cheese basket & pigens 1s/ eleven pounds wool 11s/	
Two foot wheels 10s/ one churn 5s/ sixteen pounds sheeps wool 1L4s/	2=18=4
One barrel of soap 16s/ five dry casks 3s/4	
Two woolen sheets 6s/ three bushels malt 15s/ twenty six bushels Indian	5=7=8
Corn at 3s/4p per bushel 4L6s8p	
Two meal bags 3s/4p one sheeps pelt 8p one bushel salt 3s/	2=7=6
Cart rope 3s/ thirty wt cheese 12s/6p fifty weight hogs fat 1L5s/	
Nine barrels of cyder 3L3s twenty two cyder casks 3L7s4p	12=4=4
Three hundred weight of pork 7L one barrel vinegar 12s/	
Forty pounds of tobacco	0=13=4
The best bed bolster & pillow 2L14s underbed, bedstead & cord 9s	5=1=8
Second bed and bedstead 1L18s8p	
Third bed and bedstead 2L5s one riddle for grain 1s/ two bread sieves 1s/	2=9=4
Five yards wire 10s/ one new cheese hoop 1s/6p	



A calico bed Quilt 6s/ a new coverlid 19s/ three other coverlids 1L4s Best cotton sheets 16s	3=5=0
One pair tow sheets 6s/ pair d.o. 2s/ two pair d.o. 12s/ pair of small d.o. 3s/4p	1=3=4
Two pair cotton pillow cases and one pair Linen d.o. 8s/ Five tow d.o. 3s/ a linen head cloth 2s/4	0=13=4
Six diaper napkins 4s/ one d.o. 1s4p nine d.o. 4s/6p A diaper tablecloth 3s/ one Linen d.o. 8p/ a diaper d.o. 2s	0=15=6
One yard of ticking 3/one suit green print curtains 18s/ an engine to cut cyder mill screws 12s/ twenty rake stakes two fork d.o. 3s/6	1=16=6
The remainder of the Lumber in the shop chamber 8s	0=8=0
Shop tools [carpenter's, turner's, joiner's, mechanic's tools – detailed]	3=13=4
A chalk line & marking iron 1s/2p a half peck 8p Two ox yokes, staples, & rings 6s/	0=7=10
A stub scythe 1s/ a marking iron J Parker 1s/ old Lumber and old irons in the shop 5s/ screw and plates 6p new hoe 2s8p	0=10=2
one breaking hoe 8s four old broad hoes one broad ax 6s/ four narrow d.o. 9s/ a stone hammer 1s/4p horse traces collar & harness 9s	1=6=0
one pair of ring hamer(?) 1s/ beetle & wedges 4s6p a froe 1s/ one ploughshare 4s/ one d.o. 3s/p one d.o. 6s/8p cart & wheels 30s/	2=10=6
one timber chain 18s/ a draught d.o. 6s/ ox sled 2s/ a grindstone 10s/ one iron Bar 10s/ five pitchforks 6s/ one dung d.o. 1s/4	2=18=4
one iron shovel 1s/4 fourteen pounds candles 7s/ a note of hand Bearing date March 3, 1773 upon interest 12L5s4p	12=13=0
a Bay mare 13L6s8p a cyder press 18s a yoke of Brown oxen 13L6s8p	27=11=4
The old red cow with her calf 4L13s4p The pale red cow with a star in her 4L13s4p	9=6=8
The Brown cow 4L13s4p the pied cow 4L12s8p The Brindle cow 4L the Brindle fallow cow 3L12s0p	16=12=0
The Brindle heifer 3L16s the old sow & two Barrow Hogs 6L6s Three pigs at 1L4s	11=6=0



Seven sheep & seven Lambs 3L10s0p	3=10=0
One pair of steers 3 years old 7L10s two heifers two years old 4L	11=10=0
Two yearlings 2L13s4p two calves 1L12p	4=5=4
Total Personal Estate 182L12s5p	182=12=5
The Real Estate 500L	500=0=0
The total sum of the foregoing inventory	682=12=5

### Analyzing Inventory

An inventory is a record prepared as part of the *probate* process, which occurs when a person who dies either owns property to be distributed to heirs, or has debts to be paid to creditors. Probate records may include a *will* (a statement of the deceased's will for how his or her property should be distributed), an *inventory* of possessions (goods, lands, investments, etc), and sometimes documents of *administration* discussing the care of minors, the payments of debts, expenses of settling the estate, etc.

An inventory was not always prepared, but when it was, it created a rich historical document. This is particularly true for the 18<sup>th</sup> century because most of the wealth of most of the people was not in banks or the stock market, but in their household goods and their land. Neighbors were appointed as *appraisers* to come into the deceased's house on a certain day and walk room-to-room writing down *everything* of value the deceased owned. In a time when people owned far fewer things, almost everything they owned had some value, so inventories tend to be a fairly complete listing of their clothing, linens, household furniture, utensils for housekeeping, farm and craft tools, food supplies, and livestock, as well as lands. Sometimes the appraisers took down the items in exact order as they walked from room to room, helping us recapture where and how household goods were placed and used. With careful analysis and some imaginative interpretation, we can recreate the homes and possessions of average people whose lives were not recorded in narratives and whose goods were not saved for posterity.

#### 1. Context

Before turning to the inventory, you should try to place the decedent in community, life span, and family context. Using the 1774 tax assessment, determine where he ranked in relative wealth to his neighbors in 1774. Consider: Will his possessions be typical of his neighbors, above average, or below? Then, using the vital records you compiled, find out when the decedent died. How old was he? Consider: How would age at death affect ownership of goods? Also from the vital records, record what kin survived. Calculate who might have been in his household at the time of death. This will help you estimate room use and arrangement.

Tax Decile \_\_\_\_\_

Age at death \_\_\_\_\_



Survivors:

Possible household at time of death:

## 2. Clothing

Inventories of personal possessions often begin with the deceased's wearing apparel. This is because clothing was *valuable*; producing textiles was costly and time-consuming. List the deceased's clothing, if it has been itemized.

Estimated value of clothing \_\_\_\_\_

Consider what the decedent had to wear on a daily basis. How did his wardrobe compare to ours?

## 3. Other textiles.

Now look for linens. Like clothing, these textiles were also very valuable. Identify sheets, pillowcases, blankets, coverlets, towels, tablecloths, napkins, bed curtains, curtains, and any other textiles. How many beds can the decedent outfit? What linens are missing? Why might that be? Roughly estimate their value. \_\_\_\_\_

Now, estimate its total value of all textiles (clothing and linen) relative to the whole of the personal estate. Ratio of textiles to whole \_\_\_\_\_ What does this reveal?

## 4. Beds

The bedstead and bed were often the most valuable pieces of "furniture." The bedstead was the wooden base, usually with ropes; the "bed," however, referred to the mattress and its stuffing. Since feathers were most luxurious, a fully stuffed feather bed was a costly item.

How many beds & steads are there in this household? \_\_\_\_\_

How many people per bed? \_\_\_\_\_

## 5. Room type, arrangement, and use.

Now, go through the inventory as if you were the appraiser, assuming that he had written down each item as he had seen it. Try to separate the contents of the house into the rooms you believe your decedent owned. Do not include barn or shop items at this point.

Room A.



Room B.

Room C.

Room D.

Room E. (if applicable)

Caller and/or Garret

From this, can you guess how the rooms were likely used? What is your interpretation?

#### 6. Household tools

Now, go back and look at tools or products of household production. What sorts of activities can you document (cooking? washing? spinning? weaving? dyeing? soap or candle making? pickling/preserving/storing meats/vegetables? dairying? Other?)



## 7. Barn and Barnyard, and Outbuildings

Here you will evidence of the farmer's stock, farm tools, vehicles and possibly tools of craft production.

Itemize the stock:

Estimate the value of the stock: \_\_\_\_\_ How does that compare to the value of the household goods?

What sort of farm or craftwork can you document from tools in the inventory? (Beware: just because a person *owns* tools does not mean he himself *uses* them.)

## 8. Land – if included

Real estate was usually a man's most valuable possession. What was the value of the deceased's real estate? \_\_\_\_\_ How many acres did he own? \_\_\_\_\_ (We will discuss farm size and use tomorrow.) How does the value of the decedent's land compare to the total value of his other goods?

## 9. Notes at hand.

In colonial New England, there were no banks. When a person needed money, he had to borrow from neighbors. The lender usually wrote out on a piece of paper the amount owed and the interest charged if any; these "notes at hand" were early investments. Obviously, only well-off men had the reserve cash to lend. Does your decedent have any notes at hand in his estate? What is their value? \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Luxuries

Some items, as you will see, though expensive relative to the whole, are not essential to survival. Common luxury items that were beginning to appear in the countryside in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century include clocks, looking glasses, tea tables or tea equipment, luxury fabrics, silver, specialized furniture, and other "display" or "conspicuous consumption items. Does your decedent own any of these items? What behaviors or values do they suggest?

If decedent owned luxury items, imagine where they are from, how he acquired them, and what they might mean to him?



11. All of these inventories, like the majority of those that survive, are for men. What evidence can you find for women's presence, work, values, tastes, etc.?

12. Finally, ask yourself: are there any surprises here? Do any of the items make you ask, "why did he have this," or "how did he get this," or "what was the use of this?" Is anything missing that you would have thought essential? And finally, how typical is this household for its time?



## V. Tax Valuations

Names. 1735	polls Rateable	polls non-rateable	houses	mills	Orchards	mowing	Pasture	Tillage	Real Estate	Slaves	Oxen	Cows	horses	sheep	swine	Personal Estate
Dea: Jos Brown	4	0	2	0	1	07	10	04	31..10	0	2	06	2	00	1	17..08
Dea: Jos: Cattabrod	2	0	2	1	1	12	12	06	33..00	0	2	10	2	16	0	25..08
Amos Murry	2	0	2	0	2	25	15	05	30..00	0	4	04	1	04	1	17..00
Thomas Cutler	1	0	2	0	1	10	10	10	30..00	1	2	03	2	10	0	29..00
Thom: Fehington:se	1	0	2	0	1	10	10	04	27..00	0	2	05	1	00	0	13..10
Sagr & Winship:se	1	0	2	0	0	12	20	06	33..00	0	2	04	2	00	0	14..00
Fran: Whitmore	1	0											1			02..00
Edward Winship:se	1	0	2	0	1	06	05	04	15..00	1	2	02	1	00	0	24..00
James Russel	1	0	2	0	0	04	00	04	12..00	0	2	04	1	03	0	12..09
Phillip Russel	1	0	2	0	1	06	03	08	16..00	0	2	03	1	06	0	11..08
Ens: Willi: Munroe	2	0	2	0	1	10	05	06	21..10	0	4	04	1	10	1	17..18
George Munroe:se	3	0	2	0	2	15	08	08	34..10	0	4	06	2	24	1	25..00
Daniel Munroe	1	0	2	0	1	06	03	05	12..00	0	2	03	1	06	1	11..16
Jon: Herrington	2	0	2	0	1	05	20	08	30..00	1	2	05	2	00	0	35..10

Image of a Lexington Tax Valuation Showing Taxable Categories

Taxable categories were: Polls rateable, Polls non-rateable, Housing, Mills, and acres each of different types of land: Orchard, Mowing (meadow), Pasture, Tillage, Total value of Real Estate; Slaves, Oxen, Cattle, Horses, Sheep, Swine, Total value of Personal Estate



### Tax Valuations: Farm Acreage by Usage in Lexington in 1771

We can use data from the 1771 Massachusetts Tax Valuation for Lexington to determine how much land/livestock John Parker owned on the eve of the Revolution. “Basic Subsistence” represents the minimum holdings of each type of land for meeting an average family’s needs:

<u>Land Usage</u>	<u>Lexington Average</u>	<u>Basic Subsistence</u>	<u>John Parker</u>
Tillage	5.1 acres	3 to 7	6
Pasture	12.5 acres	6 to 14	14
Meadow (fresh & upland)	14.7 acres	6 to 14	19
Total Improved Acres:	32.3	15 to 35	39

Rule of Thumb: Double number of “improved” acres to estimate the untaxed “unimproved” acres of woodland:

Unimproved (Woodland)	32.3	20 to 30	39
Total Acreage (est.)	64.6	35 to 65	78

### Stock Holdings in Lexington in 1771

<u>Livestock</u>	<u>Lexington Average</u>	<u>Basic Subsistence Requirement</u>	<u>John Parker</u>
Horses	1.1	1	1
Oxen	1.4	1 to 2	0
Cows	5.1	1	9
Goats/Sheep	3	6 to 10	6
Swine	2.2	1 to 2	2
Cider (barrels)		2 barrels/person	20

A subsistence farm produces most of the meat, grains, vegetables, fruit, dairy, herbs, leather, clothing fibers (wool & flax), tallow, fuel and building materials to sustain a family. Farmers still have to purchase salt, iron goods, and the craft services of local specialists such as tanners, shoemakers, housewrights, millwrights, wheelwrights, gunsmiths, etc. If they want imported goods such as glassware,



china, cotton, tea, or spices, they need a surplus of some produce to trade for these goods. They also need a surplus to pay their taxes.

Will Parker's farm produce enough to satisfy basic subsistence needs? What will be his shortfalls? How might he meet those shortfalls?

Will he have any potential excess products that he can use to trade or purchase non-farm goods? What will he trade for?

Does he have enough *male labor* to work your farm (average farm required the work of at least 2 adult males)? Does Parker's wife have enough *female labor* (average farm required the labor of at least two adult females) to turn the raw materials of the farm into food and clothing? Does Parker have enough *draft labor* (at least two oxen for plowing)? Does he have *transportation* to town and to market (at least one horse)? If there is a shortage of any of the above, how might he meet his need?

How does Parker compare to other farmers in town in land holdings? Does he have more or less land than others on average?

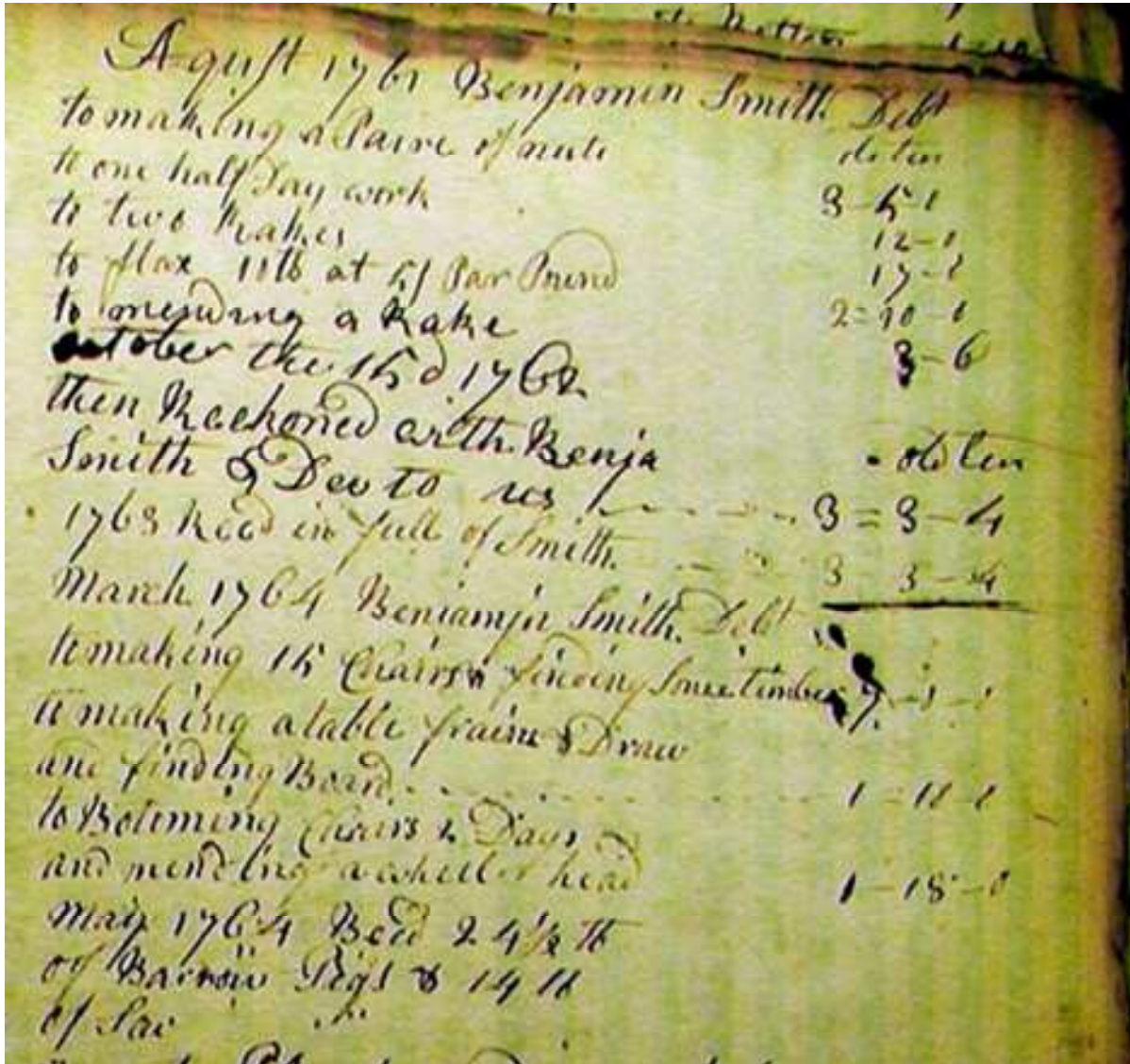
Now, imagine this farm. What sort of work would it require by men, by women, by children?

How big a role do you think farming played in shaping this family's life? In what ways?

Does Parker own enough land to create sustainable farms (60 acres each) for each of his sons? What do you think he plans to do to provide for the next generation?



VI. A Page from John Parker's Account Book



Transcription of a Page from John Parker Sr.'s Account Book

August 1761 Benjamin Smith, Debtor

- To making a Pair of nuts [wooden mechanical nuts for a cider or cheese press]
- To one half Day's work
- To two Rakes
- To Flax 10 lb at 5sh/ per pound
- To mending a Rake

October the 15, 1762

Then Reckoned with Benja. Smith – due to us



March 1764, Benjamin Smith Debtor

To making 15 Chairs & finding some timber  
To making a table frame & drawer and finding board  
To Bottoming Chairs 2 days [work]  
And mending a wheel head

May 1764

Received 24 ½ lbs of Barrow Pigs @ 14/lb

June [1764]

To Plank, mending a wheel, and nails  
To 2 Rakes  
To a barrel of cider

February, 1765

Debt to a Linen wheel

April, 1765

Then Reckoned with Benja. Smith and due to us without the linen wheel

February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1768

Then Reckoned with Anna Smith, Administrix to Benja. Smith and due to us

March the 17<sup>th</sup>, 1769

Then Received in full of Anna Smith

#### Questions

1. What sorts of goods is John Parker trading? Is he trading only items that he makes in his workshop?
2. How is John Parker paid? Is he paid in cash? Is he paid when he delivers his goods? When is he “paid in full?” What sort of relationship must develop between Parker and Benjamin Smith?
3. What major life event do you think might be going on in the Smith household in March of 1764? How might you confirm that in other primary sources?
4. What major event happened in the Smith household between April 1765 and Feb. 1768?



## VII. The World of Goods: Newspaper Advertisements

### A. Image of an Advertisement:

very low for the CASH.

IMPORTED

In the ship *Betsy*, Capt. *Thomas Robson* from London,  
and are sold at the lowest Rates for Cash only, by

# Nathaniel Langdon

At his shop opposite Mr. *Hew's* the *Tinman*, near  
the Mill-Bridge;

*All sorts of Goods, Chip Hatts,*  
*in the Upholster's way, Colour'd Threads, Tapes,*  
*among which are, Irish Linens of all widths*  
*from a quarter of a Dol-*  
*lar to a whole Dollar per*  
*yard, Ferrits, Qualities,*  
*Sewing Silk, Alameda,*  
*Delong Sattins,*  
*Black Taffies,*  
*A neat Assortment of*  
*Ribbons, Dowlat,*  
*Sheeting Hollands,*  
*Russa Linens, Diapers,*  
*Packet Lawns,*  
*Bone, Ebony and Ivory*  
*Stick Fans,*  
*Newest fashion plated do.*  
*Silk and Warsted Mitts,*  
*Womens Hose,*  
*Shoe Binding,*  
*Broad Cloths low priced,*  
*Half-Thicks,*  
*Smalls'd Serges, &c.*

*Best Harrateens, Chans,*  
*Prints, Blankets, Rugs,*  
*Coverlids, Bed Tick,*  
*Bed Trimmings,*  
*Looking Glasses, &c.*  
*And also other Goods,*  
*such as,*  
*Tawnies, Durants,*  
*Flower'd Meelinburgs,*  
*Callimancoes,*  
*Strip'd Gamblets,*  
*Black Ruffels, Bengals,*  
*Cotton and Wool Cards,*  
*Pins, Needles,*  
*Newest-fashion Necklaces,*  
*Fancy Collars,*  
*Strip'd Tapes,*  
*3-4, 7-8 & yd-wide Checks,*  
*Apron width ditto,*  
*Dainies, Dresdens,*

He also sells Curtains and Vallens ready-  
made, and does all Sorts of Upholster's



## B. Transcription of an Advertisement

### Transcription of *The Boston Evening-Post*, Jan. 2, 1775, Excerpt, Page 4.

TO BE SOLD, at the usual Prices,  
As the Seller is not desirous of taking any Advantage of the Scarcity of any Goods, at

*Jackson's Variety Store*  
Next the Town-House

Scarlet & other colour'd Broad Cloths,  
Bath Beavers, Kersies, Cotton Velvets, Baizes, Duffils, Linnens, Lawns, Cambricks, an Assortment of Silks for the Ladies, English & India Taffeties; &c. Yard wide and half ell(?) Silk Crapes -- & -- Irish Camblets, Cambleteens, Denmark Eustre(?), Draw-Boys, Shalloons, Tammies, Durants, &c extream Neat broacaded Shoes and Clogs, black Russel ditto, With a general Assortment of English & India Piece Goods, too expensive for Enumeration. ----

Pewter of all Sorts, Brass Kettles made and Unmade, English Steel, Locks, Hinges, &c. ----  
Cutlary and Hard Ware of all Kinds. ----

English treble refin'd Sugar, 6 by 8 and 8 by 10 Windows Glass, a neat Assortment of Looking Glasses, China and blue & white Stone Cups & Saucers, 15 And 18 Inch Pipes, blue & white Chimney Tile, Cinnamon, Mace & Pepper, Playing Cards, Writing, Bonnet & Cartridge Paper, Papers for Rooms, &c

*N.B.* The above Goods will be sold Wholesale  
And Retail and if any Person inclines to purchase  
The whole Stock in Trade, reasonable Timew will  
Be given for Payments, on security, and the  
Store Let them for a Term ----  
CASH given at said Store this Season for all Kinds  
of Small FURS.



## The World of Goods: Newspaper Advertisements

Read the transcription of the *Boston Evening Post*, Jan. 2, 1775 advertising excerpt.

1. Judging by this ad alone, what are the most commonly desired goods in colonial Boston? Where do they come from?
2. Enumerate the other types of goods that are available at Jackson's Variety Store.
3. On what terms will Jackson sell his goods? What effect does this have upon farm families?
4. Where are these items from? (Remember that British economic policy towards the colonies was mercantilist.)
5. Consider the readers of these ads. To whom do you think most of these ads would appeal? What effect would reading these ads on a weekly basis have upon the farm folk of Lexington?
6. Finally, what proportion of these advertised items are essentials and what proportion are luxuries? Thinking back to your study of your family's probate inventory, what proportion of these advertised items appear in the inventories? What does this suggest to you about the farm folk of Lexington? What does this tell you about their society on the eve of the Revolution?



**VIII. Comparison of the Tableware of Robert Fiske (d.1752) and his son Joseph Fiske (d. 1804)  
Excerpted from their Probate Inventories**

<u>Robert Fiske (d 1752)</u>	Six pewter dishes Eight pewter plates Old pewter Earthenware Eight knives and forks
<u>Joseph Fiske (d. 1804)</u>	Lot of crockery Lot of china & server Nine pewter plates Four pewter plates Two pewter teaspoons Two pewter porringers Four pewter platters Two silver tablespoons Three silver teaspoons Jug Coffee pot One pair brass candlesticks One pair tin candlesticks

