



“What Did Rev. Clarke Eat?” Grade Range: 3rd- 5th

Overview of Lesson

This lesson gives participants an opportunity to construct history from primary sources—excerpts from Jonas Clarke’s probate inventory and his almanac diary. It serves as an excellent preliminary activity to the virtual Hancock Clarke House tour.

Massachusetts Frameworks

- **Standards for History and Social Science Practice:**
 - Standard 3: Organize information and data from multiple primary and secondary sources.
- **Grade 3 Content Standards**
 - 3.T5.3: Using visual primary sources such as paintings, artifacts, historic buildings, or text sources, analyze details of daily life, housing, education, and work of the Puritan men, women, and children of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, including self-employed farmers and artisans, indentured servants, employees, and enslaved people.

Background

Jonas Clarke: Jonas Clarke (b. 1730, m. 1757, d. 1805) served as Lexington’s minister for fifty years. Clarke lived with his wife Lucy and family of ten children in a parsonage, now referred to as Hancock-Clarke House. He succeeded the Rev. John Hancock who built the house and was influential in separating the town of Lexington from Cambridge. Clarke married a granddaughter of Hancock, Lucy Bowes. Lucy’s first cousin Patriot John Hancock actually lived at the parsonage with his grandfather when he was a young child. This familiarity allowed both John Hancock and Sam Adams to stay with the Clarkes while the Provincial Congress met in Concord can be explained with both political and familial reasons.¹ Clarke lived for thirty years after the start of the American Revolution. Although his primary job was that of minister for the town, he was clearly involved in politics and the care of the community. He also had fifty acres of land that he farmed to support his large number of children. (He finally had 12.)

¹ Charles Hudson, *History of the Town of Lexington, Vol. II Genealogies* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913) 112.

What was it like to be Jonas Clarke in the year before he died? When Jonas died and an inventory of his possessions was taken, he was an old man of 75, so most of his children no longer lived at home. His wife Lucy had raised 12 children in the house and cooked in the kitchen for 32 years before she died in 1789. Jonas Clarke did not remarry after his wife died but lived for another 16 years. Since he did not remarry, either or both of his daughters Elizabeth and Sarah, neither of whom ever married, probably would have lived with him and “kept house” as no man, especially a gentleman like Mr. Clarke, would have been expected to cook or do the work in the house by himself. Nor would any unmarried daughter consider living on her own, unless she had no parents or brothers or sisters.

Sources: Probate inventories are legal documents detailing the appraised personal property and real estate in a person’s possession at the time of death. They were created to ensure that the deceased could cover his debts and that his heirs received their fair portion. Often neighbors or people practicing the same trade served as appraisers, working in pairs or in threes. Appraisers are normally listed at the bottom of the inventory. Historians have found probate inventories to be a goldmine for learning about relative wealth, material culture and colonial life. Clarke’s almanac diary included very brief entries since its format placed an entire month to one page. But it is the best record we have of farming in Lexington in the 18th century.

Food: While beer was the principal fermented beverage in the 17th century, by the 18th it had been replaced by cider. Cider required less labor to keep an orchard than harvesting and sowing barley for beer. Also, farms in the settled areas during the 18th century were reducing in size due to the practice of partible inheritance. In the face of decreasing arable land, apple trees could grow on hills and bread grains could be planted where barley had grown. The chief grain of English origin by this time had become rye. This was often mixed with Indian corn to make brown bread. Vegetables grown in the kitchen garden, usually close to the house became increasingly important. By 1750 potatoes, turnips, carrots and cabbages found their way regularly onto the family table. Meat (cows, oxen, pigs) was slaughtered during November, December and January to be salted for later use. Jonas Clarke also trapped pigeons for meat. The beehive oven, often found in New England kitchens, was used to bake many foods although vegetables were often boiled.

Miscellaneous terms in the documents:

Cannister: a type of container used to store food, typically dried food.

Cider Mill: a device that extracts juice from apples to make apple cider

Bushel: unit of measurement for dry goods. 1 bushel = 64 pints

Peck: unit of measurement for dry volume. 1 peck = 2 dry gallons

Indian Corn: variety of corn where the kernels are different colors (brown, black, orange) rather than the normal yellow kernels of sweet corn.

Pre-Activity Preparation

Children can be introduced to the idea of an inventory and asked to make a partial inventory of their own kitchen with a parent’s help, listing all the things they have in their house for preparing food, cooking and eating. Make sure they include appliances, and the source of the heat in the stove. Spend time discussing their results before beginning the activity.

Lesson and Activity Plan

Introduction of Activity:

- Introduce what the children will be doing and accomplishing during the activity
 - We are going to be using primary sources to learn what life was like for Rev. Clarke and his family during the Revolutionary Era. We will also be learning about what they would have eaten during that time period.
- Introduce Rev. Clarke
 - What was his job? – Reverend Clarke was a reverend. Have children explain what a reverend is.
 - Did Rev. Clarke have any other jobs?- Yes, he was a farmer
 - Short discussion about why he needed to farm.
 - Why Farm?- No local grocery store around at that time, so people had to grow their own food to feed their families.
 - How do we know what Rev. Clarke and his family ate?
 - From studying primary sources- have children explain what a primary source is and give some examples.
 - Examples: diary entry, letter, newspaper article, etc.
 - Explain that children will now become history detectives as they study the diary and probate inventory of Rev. Clarke to figure out what his family would have eaten.
 - Explain what a probate inventory is
 - Listing of belongings made at the time of a person's death.
 - A great connection to modern day times is to ask if children have ever heard of an inventory before. Most children will be familiar with an inventory from playing Minecraft.
 - Show examples of Rev. Clarke's inventory and diary (*Document #1 and Document #2*)
 - Have children read a section of each one for understanding.
 - Ex: If Rev. Clarke had a cider press, what food did he probably have on his farm?
 - Ex: If he killed a pig, what food could he get from it?
- Explain the goal of the activity: To create a breakfast and dinner menu for the Clarke family using the diary entries and probate inventory of Rev. Clarke
 - Breakfast must include: 2 Beverage Options and 1 Meal Option
 - Dinner must include: 2 Beverage Options, 1 Appetizer Option, 1 Meal Option (including 2 sides) and 2 Dessert Options.
 - Encourage children to be creative when they make their meals.
 - Ex: What kind of eggs are they having, use different ingredients to make something, etc.

Activity:

- Explain worksheets and handouts
 - Children will select items from the diary entries and probate inventory and then tell what foods are associated with those items (*Show Worksheet #1*)
 - Example: On November 24, 1774, Rev. Clarke killed a cow. What food could he get from a cow?

- Children will then use those foods to develop a menu for the Clarke family (*Show Worksheet #2*)
- As the children work, check in with them to see if they have any questions. Explain what different items/food are. Give encouragement that they are doing a great job.

Conclusion:

- Once the children are done, have them read the menus that they developed.
- Clarify any questions that might have come up while the children were working.
- Congratulate them on a job well done.
- Prepare them for the virtual tour of Hancock-Clarke.

Document #1: Rev. Clarke Inventory (Original)

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Inventory of Rev. Jonas Clarke's Estate
 Lexington Decr. 12th 1803

Kitchen & sitting room		\$	¢	
One large Iron Pot	50.	1 small d.	40. 1 d. 75	1. 65
1 small dish Kettle	30.	1 old d.	10. 1 bake Kettle	50. - 90
2 large Skillets	60.	3 small d.	40. 2 Spiders	50. - 1. 50
1. Frying pan	75.	1 gridiron & Toaster	1. 10	1. 85
1. Spit & Drip Pan	1. 35.	1 baister	35.	1. 00
3 tin Coffee Pots	60.	3 pudding Dish	50. and	1. 30
3 Canners	1 Tea pot	1 Egg spoon	1. 20.	1. 30
1 bot	1 oiler	and one pot	75.	75
2 down. Plates	4. 40.	8 Dishes	24. 4. 80	9. 30
12. old Pewter	2. 3 basins	1. 40.	1 paint Stand	2. 50
1. W. brass Candelstick	60.	2 odd d.	40. 1 W. Ch. Dish	1. 60
1 large brass skillet	1. 75.	1 small d.	1. 20. 1 d. 90	3. 85
2. Stone Jug	60.	1 self-dish	2 bowls	1. 30
1. Tumbler	50.	2 W. Salt	25. 14 Wine glass	70. 1. 80
3. Pitcher	40.	42 plates	1. 75. 5 small dishes	3 butter boats
1 Coffee Mill	60.	2 flat Iron	55. 4 patty pans	16. 1. 31
2. Candle sticks	2 lamps	50.	1 pestle & mortar	25. - 75
3 W. Iron dog	1. 75.	1 W. Tong	1 shovel	60. 2. 95
1. W. Tobacco Tong	40.	1 chair	1. 40. 1 Arm d.	40. 1 Child d.
2. Siver	50. 1. 00.	1 large Tub	5. 00.	1. 90
4. Pails	40. 2 bowls	2 noggins	12. 1 old tray	1. 60
5. Wooden box	25. 1 Bench	25. 1 desk	1 ink stand	1. 40. 2. 00
6. Knives	25. 7 Knives	20. 1 Salt bot.	20. - 65	
4. Maters	1. 00. 3 Croch	4 dishes	90. 5 bowls	29. - 2. 12
1 Oval Table	1. 24. 1 Mahogany d.	6. 00. 1 Tea	50. 1. 12	37
Total		56. 54	in this house	4. 50. 57

Document #2: Rev. Clarke Inventory and Diary (Transcribed)

Probate Inventory of Reverend Jonas Clarke's Estate: December 12, 1805 (edited excerpts)

Kitchen & sitting room

1 frying pan 75. 1 gridiron and toaster \$1.10
3 tin coffee pots 60¢ 3 pudding dishes 50¢. ...
3 cannister. 1 tea pot. 1 egg spoon.
2 dozen pewter plates \$4.50 & dishes 24 & _____ \$4.80
2 stone jugs 60¢
6 knives & forks. 7 knives & forks 1 salt box

Barn articles and utensils

1 cider mill and press 6\$
22 bushels of corn \$1 each
10 bushels of rye \$1.50 each
10 cider Barrels 20¢ per barrel
3 young pigs \$6. Each 2 cows \$33

From Jonas Clarke almanac diary

Oct. 1768: Cabbage seed sowed ...

November 24, 1774: Killed a cow.

January 10, 1775: Cloudy, a little Snow. Killed hogs.

May 9, 1775: Pleasant. Planted potatoes.

May 17, 1775: Planted corn etc.

December 19, 1776: Digging Carrots

1788 notes Lent Mr. Joseph Lock at one time ½ peck of Indian and ½ peck of Rye Meal. At another Times ½ a pudding pan full of Indian and ditto of Rye.

Worksheet #2:

**WHAT WOULD REVEREND CLARKE AND HIS FAMILY HAVE
EATEN?**

BREAKFAST

Beverage (2 Options):

Meal:

DINNER

Beverage (2 Options):

Appetizer:

Main Course (Must include 2 sides):

Dessert (2 Options):