



This packet contains materials that educators can utilize in class before and after your visit to the Fairfield Museum and History Center. Materials include background historical information, guiding questions, a graphic organizer and other pre and post activities that are linked with the state of Connecticut curriculum.

A Brief History of Fairfield and the Town Green

In 1639, Roger Ludlow purchased land from the Pequonnock Indians stretching between the Sasqua (Mill) and Pequonnock Rivers and roughly eight miles inland. Natives also agreed to pay Ludlow an annual tribute of furs, wampum and corn. Ludlow was initially attracted to this area because the Native Americans had cleared much of the land for crops and the area was in close proximity to Long Island Sound.

An area of land was divided into four squares with sections for residential, community, religious and commercial districts, including the town green. Town greens are a unique tradition of colonial town planning. These large, open spaces usually originated as the shared “common” set aside for the meetinghouse of the Congregational Church, which acted as the local governing authority. This important building, used for worship and town business alike, usually stood in or beside a crossroads. The green space around it—whether a sheep meadow, marketplace, parade ground or even a town dump—was the heart of the community.

The early settlers used peat from the swamp for fuel and seaweed from the Sound for fertilizer. The salt marshes produced natural hay, perfect for livestock. Many early settlers lived in “cellars” -- square pits six to eight feet deep -- possibly lined with rushes or other vegetation and an improvised roof overhead. This served as home until they could find time and money to build regular (crude) houses. Life was difficult, yet Fairfield became a prosperous farming community in the 1700s. Important ports were established in Black Rock and the Mill River. Ships used the waterways to trade with Boston and New York.

The American Revolution – Burning of Fairfield

On July 7, 1779, the people of Fairfield awoke to a warning from the fort at Black Rock. A British fleet had been spotted and was anchoring off the coast. With feelings of dread and uncertainty, residents prepared to defend the town. Livestock was driven to safety. In haste, people gathered their possessions, hiding their valuable silver in wells and stonewall crevices. Some loaded wagons with household goods and food, and took refuge inland. Others stayed to defend the town. A few remained in their homes, believing the British would not harm them. No one predicted the extent of destruction that was about to occur, and with it, the downfall of the town’s prosperity. The British burned 97 houses, 67 barns, 28 shops, 20 storehouses / outbuildings, 2 schools, 3 churches, the jail and the courthouse.

What Makes a Community Walking Tour

In this walking tour, students will understand how a colonial society was built in Fairfield, Connecticut. In the museum, students will view a model of the town green in 1779, right before the British invasion that destroyed many of the buildings in the original four squares. During the walking tour, students will have the opportunity to view the important elements of a community, including several buildings built after the burning that still stand today. Students will go inside the Old Academy school, view the signpost, the tavern, the old burying ground and listen to the stories of colonial citizens.

The Changing Size of Fairfield - Movie

This short, four-minute movie is an excellent introduction to how a community changes over time. Learn about how the size of Fairfield has changed since its founding in 1639. *Created by Jennifer Morrison, Fairfield University, Spring, 2007.* Click or paste the link below to view the movie (opens in QuickTime):

<http://www.fairfieldhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/ChangingSizeFfld.mov>

Guiding Questions & Pre / Post Activities

I. Elements of a Community

What are the elements of a colonial town? Have students imagine that they are settling a colonial town. What buildings would be built first? Why? Next, have students describe their community today and then predict the community of the future.

Elements of a Colonial Town	Elements of Your Community Today	Elements of a Community in the Future
meetinghouse jail burying ground town hall courthouse signpost school Town Green tavern / inn fields bridges roads shops		

II. Wants & Needs

In colonial times, every family was a self-sufficient unit and they worked very hard to survive. They had to:
build their own house using trees from the surrounding woods and forest.
grow their own food by planting gardens.
make their own clothes by growing flax to make linen and keeping sheep for wool.

Most families had sheep and usually the children would take care of the sheep. For each person, two sheep were needed to make enough clothes. There were strict penalties for any dog or person who killed a sheep.

Can students think of anything that they make at home for their own clothing, food or shelter?

III. Graphic Organizers – Four Squares Maps

When your group visits the Fairfield Museum, students will view a large model of the four squares in Fairfield in 1779. Property owners are shown and also miniature structures representing houses, etc. A copy of the map is provided below. The map is from the Andrew Sherwood Huntington manuscript collection of the Fairfield Historical Society, [1936]. Educators may utilize the map in several ways, for example:

1. What makes a colonial town? Have students write or describe the elements of a colonial town. On the map, have students identify where they would locate these things. Where would they live?
2. Post-visit: What makes your community today? Have students write or describe what they learned on the walking tour. Have students plot these things on the map.
3. How will your community grow and change in the future? Have students use the blank map to plot the community of the future. What elements would be included in this map?



Fairfield Museum AND HISTORY CENTER Build a Community





Schedule

Class 1:	Class 2:	Class 3:	Class 4:
Wolf Swamp	Old Burying Ground	Academy/Pond	Tavern
Map (inside museum)	Beach Road	Tavern	Wolf Swamp
Green	Academy/Pond	Beach Road	Old Burying Ground
Academy/Pond	Green	Wolf Swamp	Map (inside museum)
Tavern	Map (inside museum)	Green	Beach Road
Beach Road	Tavern	Old Burying Ground	Green
Old Burying Ground	Wolf Swamp	Map (inside museum)	Academy/Pond

