



Fairfield Museum

EXPLORE *the past*, IMAGINE *the future*
370 Beach Road, Fairfield, CT | 203-259-1598
www.fairfieldhistory.org

American Revolution & Colonial Life Programs **Pre and Post Lesson Plans & Activities**

Colonial Life and the 1750 Ogden House in Fairfield, CT

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Ogden House is a typical mid-18th century farmhouse, providing a glimpse into the life of a middle-class colonial family. This saltbox house was built in 1750 for David Ogden at the time of his marriage to Jane Sturges. For the next 125 years it was home for the Ogden family in the farming and coastal shipping town of Fairfield.



In 1750, 22 year-old David Ogden married Jane Sturges, who was 20 years old. David and Jane moved into their saltbox house. They were lucky, they came from families that provided the land and the means to live in their first and only house together. David's family gave them the house and land, and Jane's family gave a large **dowry**, which is money, goods, or property that a bride brings to the marriage. Members of the Ogden family lived in the house for the next 125 years.

By 1756, Fairfield was the fourth-largest town in Connecticut with a population of 4,455 people. **Most people were farmers**, including David and Jane Ogden. They had over **75 acres** of farmland in the Mill River area of Fairfield; their land reached all the way to present-day Riverfield Elementary School. Jane's parents and David's brother also lived close by.

The **saltbox house** is a special type of house found mostly in New England. It is called a saltbox house because it looks like a saltbox, which was a small wooden box with a lid that was used to store salt during colonial times. The lid on the box slants downward, like the roof of a saltbox house. Sometimes a small structure called a lean-to was added on to the house after it was built. It made an extra room that could be used as a closet or small bedroom. A lean-to built on the second floor was called a garret. The Ogden House has a garret that shows how the house was built. It was built with small strips of wood that were glued together with plaster. In this area, because it is close to the beach, the plaster often contained crushed seashells.

In 1775, when David Ogden was 48 years old, he died. We do not know how he died; there are no letters, diaries, or other artifacts that explain what happened. But many of David's papers, including his **will** and his **estate inventory**, can tell us what life was like for him and his family. A will is a document that someone writes before they die to tell their family what to do with their belongings. An estate inventory is a list of a person's belongings, including land, buildings, and animals.



Fairfield Museum

EXPLORE *the past*, IMAGINE *the future*
370 Beach Road, Fairfield, CT | 203-259-1598
www.fairfieldhistory.org

David Ogden had a house, a barn, outbuildings, animals, and over 75 acres of land. Because of his property, David's family was considered "well-to-do", which means they had more than most people but were not rich.

David and Jane had 10 children, but only seven of them lived to adulthood. Two of their sons fought in the Revolutionary War for the Patriots. After David died, Jane never remarried. She worked as a nurse after she was widowed and died in 1807.

The Garden

There is an eighteenth-century style herb garden behind the Ogden house that grows herbs which were typically used in colonial times. The garden is maintained by the Fairfield Garden Club.

More about The 1750 Ogden House

View a 360 degree photo of the interior and exterior of the Ogden House:

<https://www.fairfieldhistory.org/visit/ogden-house/>

The Ogden House, located at 1520 Bronson Road, is open to the public on Sundays in the summer.

MINI LESSON PLAN: The Ogden House Gazette

Objective:

Students will learn what life was like for colonists in Fairfield during the 18th century through studying the Ogden family and their home. At the end of the lesson, teachers may also project a panorama view of the Ogden House from the Fairfield Museum website:

<https://www.fairfieldhistory.org/visit/ogden-house/>

Materials:

- Ogden House Teacher Guide
- The Ogden House Gazette newspaper (11 x 17" double-sided, 1 per group)
- Questions for the Ogden Gazette (1 per student)

Activity:

1. Provide background knowledge about the Ogden House by either reading the Teacher Guide to the students, or distributing it and having students read it individually.
2. Divide students into 10 groups (pairs if necessary) and assign each group one article from the Gazette.
3. Give each group a copy of the Gazette and the question worksheet.
4. Students will work with their group to read their assigned article and complete the questions about their specific article.
5. Each group will share with the class a brief summary of their article and the answers to the related questions. Students will review the questions together for each article.
6. Conclusion: Ask students to share if they would have liked to live in Fairfield during colonial times, and explain why or why not.



Questions for the Ogden Gazette

1. According to the article “Mr. Ogden Dies”, what is the cause of Mr. Ogden’s death?
 - a. Heart Attack
 - b. Old Age
 - c. Flu
 - d. It is unknown.
2. According to the article “Mr. Ogden Dies”, what were Mr. Ogden’s possessions worth?
 - a. 2,365 pounds
 - b. 4,455 pounds
 - c. 1,515 pounds
 - d. 985 pounds
3. According to the article “The Ogden Family,” how many of David’s and Jane’s kids lived to adulthood?
 - a. 10
 - b. 7
 - c. 5
 - d. 2
4. According to the article “The Ogden Family”, what are five things that farmers grew in Fairfield?

5. According to the article “The Ogden’s Saltbox House”, what was used to build the Ogden’s house?

6. According to the article “The Ogden’s Saltbox House”, what kind of style of house did the Ogden’s live in? _____
7. According to the article “The Kitchen Garden”, what chores did the Ogden children have to do in the garden? _____
8. According to the article “Colonial Air Freshener”, how often did the Ogden family take baths?
 - a. Once a week
 - b. Once a month
 - c. Every day
 - d. Almost never



9. According to the article “Colonial Air Freshener”, what did the Ogden family make to help their house smell good? How did they make them?

10. According to the article “Beekeeping in the Colonies”, why were bees important in colonial times?

11. According to the article “The Ogden Animals”, what animals did the Ogden family own?

- a. Chickens, pigs, sheep, oxen, ox, bulls, steers, horses,
- b. Goats, chickens, sheep, dogs, horses
- c. Pigs, sheep, ox, goats, lions
- d. Sheep, goats, cats, dogs

12. According to the article “Wool is from Sheep!”, how many sheep did it take to make one piece of clothing?

- a. 5
- b. 1
- c. 2
- d. 10

13. Describe the process of making clothes from wool.

14. According to the article “Flax Makes Linen”, why was the plant flax important to the town of Fairfield?
