



Raleigh Tavern in  
Williamsburg is named for Sir  
Walter Raleigh. Raleigh had  
tried to start the first colony  
on Roanoke Island in 1585.

**9.5 Social Life: Raleigh Tavern**  
People in the colonies worked hard. But they also enjoyed  
visiting with one another, sharing news, and relaxing after a  
long day's work.  
A favorite gathering place for colonial men was a local  
tavern. Taverns were places that served food and drink. Many  
taverns also rented bedrooms so that travelers could stop to rest  
during their journey.

Dinner at a Williamsburg tavern might start with peanut  
soup. This tasty dish was made with peanut butter, celery, and  
cream. A popular main course was shepherd's pie, a lamb stew  
with a potato-and-egg topping.  
After dinner, guests often drank wine or beer. They might  
also sing songs. Some taverns hosted balls, or fancy dances.  
Others had game rooms, where men played cards, dice, and  
board games. A favorite board game was *The Royall and Most  
Pleasant Game of the Goose*.

The tavern that a man visited depended on his status in  
the colony. Lawyers and rich planters would gather at certain  
taverns. Craftsmen such as shoemakers and blacksmiths would  
meet at other taverns.  
One famous colonial tavern was the Raleigh Tavern in  
Williamsburg. It opened for business in about the year 1717.



Raleigh Tavern was a popular  
meeting place for important  
men in Virginia. Here they  
discussed business and  
politics.

It was named for Sir Walter Raleigh, an English explorer. In  
1585, Raleigh had tried to start the first colony on Roanoke  
Island, which was part of Virginia at that time.  
When the leaders of Virginia came to the capital, they  
often spent time at Raleigh Tavern. They ate meals in the  
dining room. They attended balls in the Apollo Room. They  
held business meetings. Most important to the history of our  
nation, these powerful men came to discuss **politics**. George  
Washington and Thomas Jefferson spent time at Raleigh Tavern  
with other men who were active in politics. It became a center  
for meetings of those who wanted independence from British  
rule in the years before the American Revolution.

**politics** the activities  
of governments and  
the people who work in  
them