



## Reliving History, Inc.

*Supporting the ca. 1751 Peter Burr House  
The oldest wood frame house in West Virginia*

[www.RelivingHistoryInc.org](http://www.RelivingHistoryInc.org)

Contact us for upcoming events and to arrange presentations at your school or organization.

## Talk like a Colonist

The English Colonists spoke in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>-century English, not 21<sup>st</sup>-century modern English. Here are a few examples of English words, greetings, and phrases that might be used back then. Practice them at home and you could talk like a colonial!

Instead of:	Say:
<i>Hi, how are you?</i>	<i>Good Morrow How now? How do you fare? What cheer?</i>
<i>Excuse me</i>	<i>Pray pardon me</i>
<i>Congratulations!</i>	<i>Huzzah!</i>
<i>Goodbye</i>	<i>God bye to you Fare thee well Pray remember me</i>
<i>Fireplace</i>	<i>Hearth</i>
<i>Cat</i>	<i>Mouser</i>
<i>Stew or porridge</i>	<i>Pottage</i>
<i>Pants</i>	<i>Breeches</i>
<i>Skirt</i>	<i>Petticoat</i>
<i>Backward</i>	<i>Arsy varsy</i>
<i>Pillowcase</i>	<i>Pillowbere</i>

Hear these words and phrases spoken at:  
<http://www.plimoth.org/kids/talk.php>

## Vocabulary

- **Adjutant:** An officer who acts as military assistant to a more senior officer.
- **Allies:** People connected by an agreement for a mutually beneficial reason. The Wampanoag and English colonists signed an agreement that helped both cultures. They were considered allies.
- **Anvil:** A heavy steel faced iron block where metal is shaped.
- **Apprentice:** Someone who works for a Cooper, Silversmith, etc. for a period of time until he is trained enough to become what ever he studied in this time.
- **Arithmetic:** The mathematics of solving addition, multiplication, subtraction, and division.
- **Beetle-headed:** Dull, Stupid.
- **Break our fast:** To eat the first meal of the day. To breakfast.
- **Breeches:** Trousers ending above the knee.
- **Brown Bess:** A soldier's fire-lock (musket). "To hug Brown Bess" is to carry a fire-lock, or serve as a private soldier.
- **Bulrush:** This swamp plant has a rounded stalk and was harvested, processed and dried and later woven by Native Americans into useful mats. The English colonists also used Bulrush to make the roofs on their houses.
- **Card:** A wire-toothed brush or a machine fitted with rows of wire teeth, used to disentangle fibers, as of wool, prior to spinning.
- **Chamberpot:** A container to go to the bathroom in during the night or during bad weather. In the days before indoor plumbing, people usually went to the bathroom outside.
- **Chicken-hearted:** Fearful, cowardly.

- **Cholera:** An acute infectious disease of the small intestine, caused by the bacterium *Vibrio Cholerae*.
- **Ciphering:** Transforming a message into secret code via math. 18-21-14 = R-U-N
- **Cod:** A kind of ocean fish.
- **Commissary notes:** A Commissary is a store or market for military personnel, so a Commissary Note is a certificate given in lieu of currency for use in the store.
- **Courtesy:** Or curtsy. A show of respect made by bending the knees and lowering the body.
- **Craftsman:** A workman in any skilled occupation
- **Cur:** A cut or curtailed dog, disabled from chasing game. Figuratively used to signify a surly fellow.
- **Curds:** A soft cheese, like cottage cheese.
- **Drover:** One that drives cattle or sheep to market.
- **Dutch oven:** A cast iron usually a three legged kettle with a thigh cover, where coals may be heaped that is used for baking in an open fire.
- **English burgundy:** Porter (wine).
- **English corn:** Grains that were grown in England, such as wheat, rye, and oats.
- **First Thanksgiving:** A myth associated with the 1621 harvest celebration at Plymouth. Historians at Plimoth Plantation do not use this name because what happened in 1621 wasn't a part of how our modern Thanksgiving was started.
- **Flax brake:** A tool used to take off the outer shaft of flax
- **Flint and steel:** A piece of hard stone called flint, and a piece of metal that are struck against each other to make a spark.
- **Flip:** Small beer, brandy, and sugar.
- **Forage:** The act of looking or searching for food or provisions.
- **Fortnight:** Two weeks.
- **Fusillade:** A discharge from a number of firearms, fired simultaneously or in rapid succession. A rapid outburst or barrage: a rapid outburst or barrage: a fusillade of insults.
- **Gill:** One gill is equal to 1/2 cup of liquid. Soldiers were allowed a gill of Rum per day when on fatigue, and at no other time.
- **Goodwife:** A title of address used like we use "Mrs." A child would call a married woman "Goodwife" to show respect. A married man would be called "Goodman."
- **Grog:** Rum and water. "Groggy" or "Groggified" is to be drunk.
- **Ground arms:** To stack firearms on the ground.
- **Hardtack:** A hard biscuit or bread made with only flour and water.
- **Harvest:** To cut and gather a plant for food, medicine or shelter.
- **Hearth:** A place on a house floor where the fire is. Used for cooking, warmth and light.
- **Historian:** Someone who studies the past; a history detective. Historians gather evidence and use that evidence to make their best guesses about what really happened in the past.
- **History:** A branch of knowledge that records and explains past events.
- **Hogshead:** A large barrel that holds from 63 to 140 gallons. Any of various units of volume or capacity ranging from 63 to 140 gallons.
- **Hook:** To steal. "My shirt was worn so I headed out of camp to hook one."
- **Hornbook:** A wooden paddle that has a piece of paper attached to it that says the alphabet and possibly a verse from the Bible.
- **Hundredweight:** 100 pounds.
- **Husbandmen:** Men who make their living through agriculture, or farming the land.
- **Huzza:** Said to have been originally the cry of the huzzars or Hungarian light horse; but now the national shout of the English, both civil and military; to give three cheers being to huzza thrice.
- **Indian corn:** Corn (maize) that is native to the Americas. Native People in this country called this grain by its name in their own language. The English colonists called it "Indian corn" because it was so different from the types of corns (or grains) they were used to eating in England, such as wheat, rye, barley and oats.
- **Indian:** Lots of people use the word "Indian," but it is not a word that many Native People like. It is respectful to use the name of the particular Native Nation or People. "Native People" is also a good choice.
- **Jack tar:** A sailor.
- **Jerked beef:** Long slices or strips of beef dried in the sun or near a fire.
- **Johnny cake:** Cornmeal bread usually shaped into a flat cake and baked or fried on a griddle.

- **Keg:** A small barrel having a capacity of 30 gallons or less
- **Kindled:** Set fire to.
- **Leggings:** Tight, form-fitting trousers that extend from the waist to the ankles.
- **Lobster or lobsterback:** A British soldier, from the color of his clothes (Red).
- **Loft:** A low space or attic directly under a roof. Unpartitioned room overlooking another room.
- **Loggerhead:** A blockhead or stupid fellow, also a double-headed, or bar-shot of iron.
- **Maize:** Another name for Indian corn. However, maize is not a Native word, but was popularized by the Spanish when they referred to corn in this country.
- **Marjoram:** An herb (plant) used for cooking and medicine.
- **Master:** A title of address given to someone respected like the Governor. Also, the wife of the Governor would be addressed as "Mistress."
- **Myth:** A popular belief that is false or unsupported by facts.
- **Neck weed:** Hemp. Used as rope in the time period.
- **Oral history or tradition:** History and ways of life that are passed on by speaking and listening. Some village had a Keeper of the History and it would be related and told each year by this person to the rest of the village.
- **Oxen:** An ox is a neutered (or "fixed") male cow, which has been carefully trained to pull heavy loads and follow commands. Two working together is called a team or pair of oxen. Oxen are often used to turn over the soil or "plow" to prepare the ground for planting.
- **Pallet:** 1. A fire shovel; 2. A bed of straw
- **Papist:** A Roman Catholic
- **Period slang:** Used in Everyday Life
- **Persecuted:** Punished with pains and penalties for holding a certain belief or opinion.
- **Physic:** Medical treatment.
- **Pilgrims:** This is not a name that the English people at Plymouth called themselves, but one that became popular many years later. Historians at Plimoth Plantation call these people English colonists.
- **Plantation:** A place of planting. The colonists at Plymouth (and other colonies such as Jamestown in Virginia) were farmers. They called their settlements plantations. They sometimes called themselves "planters."
- **Plowshare:** The cutting blade of a plow.
- **Populace:** The general public; the masses. A population.
- **Pottage:** A thick soup or stew made with Indian corn or some other kind of grain, like oatmeal. Sometimes herbs and bits of meat, chicken or pork were added to give it flavor.
- **Pound:** Unit of money- equivalent to twenty shillings sterling
- **Powder horn:** Where you kept your gun powder; made from the horn or an animal such as an ox.
- **Rhetting:** The process of taking off the outer part of flax by laying flax in water
- **Rod:** A measurement of width, 16.5 feet is a rod.
- **Sabbath:** A day of rest and worship; for the English colonists it was Sunday.
- **Salamander:** A metal disk or plate heated and held over a food to heat the food item up
- **Sallied:** Usually means to breakout or depart.
- **Salt or to salt:** To dry and preserve meat or fish by rubbing salt into it.
- **Samp:** A Eastern Native word for a thick porridge made from coarsely ground Indian corn. Samp could be cooked with nuts, berries, or vegetables.
- **Scaly:** Mean, sordid.
- **Scour:** To clean, polish, or wash something
- **Scrip:** A piece of paper representing or acknowledging value, such as a receipt or certificate, given in lieu of currency.
- **Seining:** To catch or fish with a net.
- **Shear:** To cut off the sheep's wool
- **Shilling:** A coin worth one twentieth of a pound.
- **Silversmith:** Someone who works with silver and makes silverware, plates, bowls, etc.
- **Sloth:** Aversion to work or exertion; laziness.
- **Spit:** A long wooden stick that is turned to have all sides of the food item cooked
- **Staddle:** A base or support, especially a platform on which hay or straw is stacked.)
- **Statement:** A short expression of a idea or act
- **Stereotype:** An mistaken idea that many people have about a culture different from their own. Stereotypes are often hurtful and damaging.

- **Surly:** Unfriendly, crabby, grumpy. Used to describe someone of that nature: "Major Williams was a surly fellow."
- **Sutler:** A sutler or victualer is a civilian who sells provisions to an army in the field, in camp or in quarters.
- **Tallow:** The fat of animals that is white and is tasteless
- **Tattoo:** A beat of the drum, or signal for soldiers to go to their quarters, and a direction to the sutlers to close the tap.
- **Tavern:** An inn
- **Thatch:** A house roof made with a plant material (such as straw).
- **Thatched roofs:** Roofs made of layers of straw, reeds, or other grassy materials.
- **Trencher:** A plate or dish hollowed out to hold food for eating; more than one person would often eat out of the same trencher.
- **Threshed Grain:** Grain that is beat with a flail so as to separate the grain from the husk
- **To stand watch:** To guard the town. A group of men would take occasional military training so that they could defend their town from attack.
- **Trainband:** Local Militia. Volunteer soldiers formed to protect townships.
- **Vanguard:** The foremost position in an army or fleet advancing into battle.
- **Wash tub:** A tub that colonists would wash in
- **Weary:** Very tired.
- **Weave:** To make a fabric by interlacing threads or yarns on a loom
- **Willful:** Stubborn.
- **Yoke:** Used to fetch water. A piece of wood that goes over the shoulders, with a bucket hanging on each side.

## Visit the circa 1751 Peter Burr House

170 E. Burr Blvd., Kearneysville, WV 25430  
(at Burr Industrial Park in the far right back corner)

See website for directions: [www.RelivingHistoryInc.org](http://www.RelivingHistoryInc.org)