

## PROPOSAL

**Title** – Reviving the Past: The Cultural Importance of Mead’s Tavern

**Program of Study** – History

**Presentation Type** – **Choose one of the following:** Print Poster

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**Category** – **Choose one of the following** - Textual

This project employs Mead’s Tavern as a catalyst to trace the change over time of New London, Virginia. Built by William Mead in 1761 it was licensed as a tavern in 1763. This tavern was once the center of society in the prosperous town of New London but now sits empty awaiting it’s time to once again impact the surrounding area. During the late-18<sup>th</sup> and early-19<sup>th</sup> centuries, New London was a crossroad which facilitated travel from the North to the South and from East to West. This travel was significant because of New London’s location and King George’s Proclamation of 1763. This town, founded around 1750, on the edge of the Appalachian Mountains provided a place for settlers to obtain supplies before crossing the mountains and breaking the British law. New London also played an influential role during the American Revolution due to the armory located in the town. Despite its prosperous past, New London began to decline by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Today the town does not even have a postal code and is home to only a few people. Through studying the tavern and the events which took place there, the cultural significance of New London will be traced throughout the past two-hundred fifty years. Also, this study should begin to reveal the reasons for New London’s decline. Besides simply exploring New London’s past, this project will propose a plan to revitalize Mead’s Tavern and New London. Mead’s Tavern will act as the epicenter for the

revival of New London. Once this structure is restored to its Colonial standard, it can be used as a museum to preserve and teach the history of New London. After this is complete, other historic structures can be reconstructed and restored, creating a historic village. This historic village will facilitate living history and provide an opportunity for the community's history to be preserved and taught. Overall, this project will explore change over time and the importance of Mead's Tavern and New London as well as exploring their future.

New London's history has been lost to some extent, but one aspect that has remained is that the town used to be defined by immorality. In addition to New London, Lynchburg possessed a similar reputation. Both towns were considered a mission field to ministers who would travel the country. Numerous circuit preachers frequented the area including Stith Mead, Lorenzo Dow, Conrad Speece, and John Springer and their numerous personal records provide a wealth of resources for understanding New London and the surrounding area. Mead's Tavern was one of at least three taverns in the town which lends to the stories of the ministers and the immoral reputation of early New London. Stith Mead, son of William Mead, worried about his father's spiritual wellbeing because of the presence of dancing within the community. Today both New London and Lynchburg are known for their Christian influences and their many churches. Two churches which were constructed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century still stand in New London and provide a unique perspective into the transition from the reputation of immorality to an oasis of morality. The decline of prosperity in New London coincided with the increase in morality in Central Virginia. This is unusual, especially from a Christian worldview, because towns and civilizations typically decline when the morality of their citizens decline. Although, this aspect of the town will not be the focus of this project, it has prompted interest in the town and its history.