

Museum Objects



Unit 6: Museum Objects of Cape Cod National Seashore

It's your job! Be a Curator while exploring the museum at Salt Pond Visitor Center.

This unit has three activities:

1. *Caring for museum objects,*
2. *Organizing museum objects,*
3. *Interpreting museum objects.*

Do these activities in the museum at the Salt Pond Visitor Center.

Time: 60 minutes

Career Profile:

What does a curator do?

- Cares for a museum's collection of objects.
- Researches museum objects.
- Plans exhibits that interpret the significance of the objects.
- Displays the objects for viewing.
- Maintains collections that are not for public viewing but are used for education and research.



Hope Morrill, Curator
Cape Cod National Seashore

What kinds of objects are found in a museum?

According to the American Association of Museums, a museum makes a “unique contribution to the public by collecting, preserving, and interpreting the things of this world.” That means museum objects can be anything! Usually, however, a museum only collects those objects that contribute to its function (the museum at Salt Pond Visitor Center, for example, collects objects that tell the story of Cape Cod).

Some museum objects are natural, like a shark's tooth from the beach. Others are human-made, like a piece of jewelry. Simple hand-made objects which represent a particular culture are called “artifacts.”

Some objects are original to their time in history—the Liberty Bell, for example. Others are reproductions that have been specially made for an exhibit, like a plaster version of a skull. Still others are replaceable specimens, such as dried plants and taxidermy animals (endangered plants and animals, however, are not replaceable).



Museum Objects



ACTIVITY 1—CARING FOR MUSEUM OBJECTS

An important part of the curator’s job is to preserve and protect museum objects. How to care for an object depends upon what material(s) the object is made of. Paper documents, for example, need to be kept out of bright light (it fades them).

Search the museum exhibits to find examples of objects made from each of the materials listed below.

Material	Object Made from the Material
Paper	
Bone and Ivory	
Textiles (cloth)	
Ceramics	
Leather	
Wood	
Metal	
Stone	
Glass	
Animal specimen	
Other material:	



Wood



Ivory



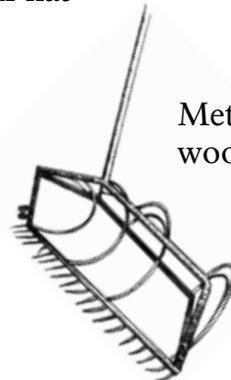
Beaver fur hat



Animal specimen



Stone



Metal rake with wooden handle



Museum Objects



As a curator, you've been asked to inspect the museum to see if the park has resolved the preservation challenges of caring for their objects. For each of the challenges listed below, see if you can find what solutions have been implemented. Feel free to recommend your own solutions. The first one has been done for you.

Preservation Challenge	Materials affected	Solution(s)
Sunlight: causes fading	Paper, artwork, book covers, textiles	No windows to allow sunlight inside the exhibit area
Artificial light (light bulbs): causes fading	Paper, artwork, book covers, textiles	
Dust	Any and all	
Biological (insects, mice): they eat or gnaw at things	Textiles, leather, paper, wood, animal specimens	
Humidity: too much causes mold, rot, rust; too little causes drying, cracking	Paper, leather, textiles, wood, metal, animal specimens	
Fire damage	Any and all	
Theft	Any and all	
Touching: breakage, scratch-marks, boogers	Any and all	

Beside each object below, write a preservation challenge and a solution to the challenge.



Mrs. Penniman's journal



Animal skins

Challenge: _____

Challenge: _____

Solution: _____



Solution: _____

Museum Objects

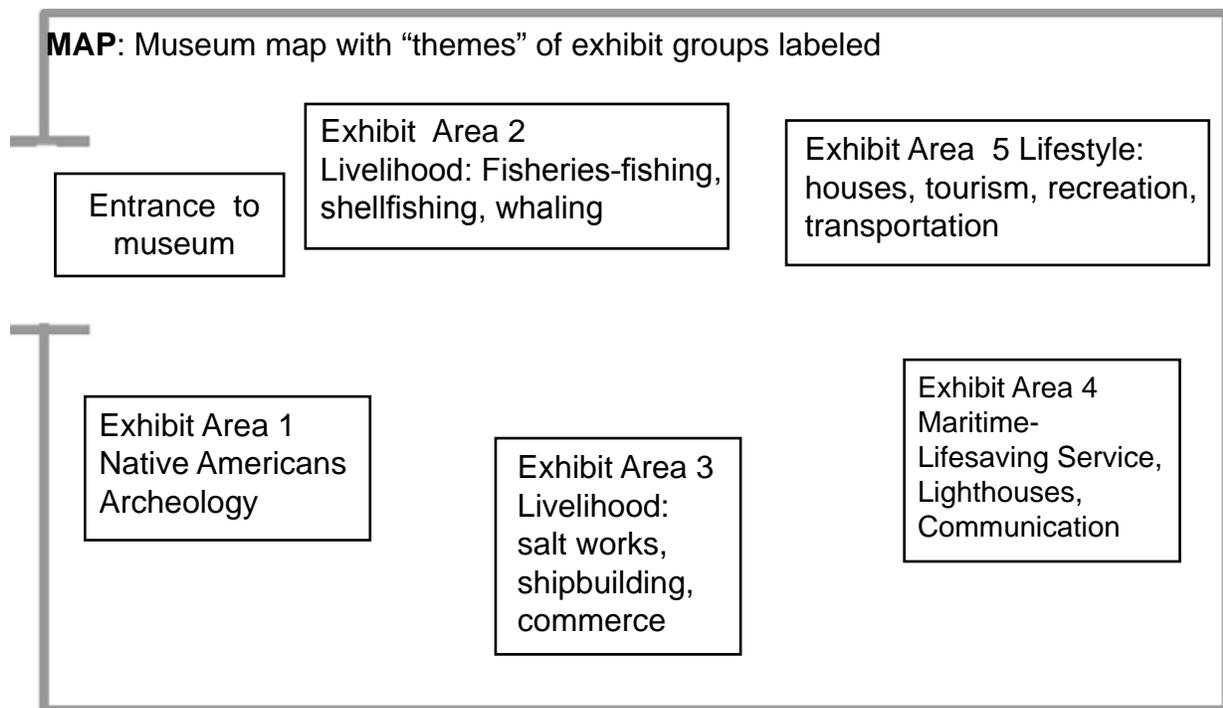


ACTIVITY 2—ORGANIZING MUSEUM OBJECTS

Exploring the Salt Pond Visitor Center Museum

A curator organizes museum objects in a way that helps visitors follow the story being told. Often, that means grouping objects according to common themes. In most cases, a group of related objects tells a better story than an object by itself. For example, a baseball bat that was used to hit a historic home run has more meaning if it is displayed with the jersey of the player who hit the home run.

As a curator, you were asked to identify Cape Cod themes for five exhibit areas in the museum. The map below gives a rough layout of the areas. Look at the exhibits and their themes because the next activities in this workbook are matched to this map.



Now- go explore the museum. Use the map to find each themed exhibit . Each exhibit has the answers to the questions. Be a history detective to find the answers!



Museum Objects

Exhibit Area 1: Native Americans- The Wampanoag



List 3 tools 1. 2. 3.	List the uses for each tool 1. 2. 3.	List materials the tools are made from 1. 2. 3.
List 3 foods 1. 2. 3.	List a tool used to harvest, or cook each food 1. 2. 3.	Is this food still eaten today? yes or no 1. 2. 3.
List 2 food storage objects 1. 2.	2. List 2 foods stored in objects in the museum exhibit 1. 2.	List materials the storage objects are made from 1. 2.

Listen to the audio recordings. Which recording was your favorite? Why?



Draw a tool, a storage container, and a food of the Wampanoag,



Clay pot



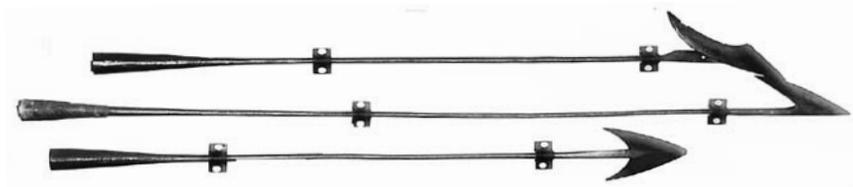
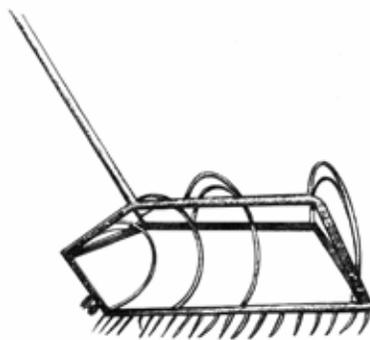
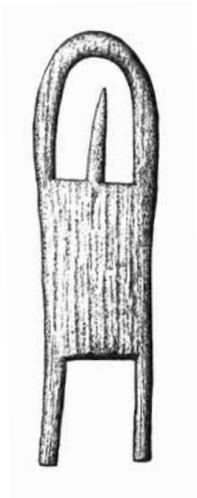
Museum Objects

Exhibit Area 2: Livelihood: fisheries: Match each way people have earned a living from the sea with an object, what it's made of, and how it might be done today.

Livelihood: Fisheries	Museum Object:	Object Material	Done today the same way?
Fishing			
Shellfishing for Quahogs			
Whaling			

Fact: In Exhibit 2 the fish are not specimens, they are another category of museum objects called reproductions. They are specially made for the exhibit.

Locate these objects in the museum fisheries exhibit area. Then label each object drawing with its museum label.



Museum Objects

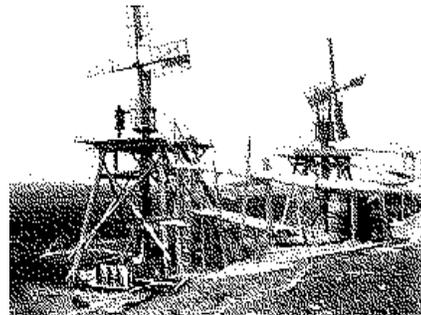
Exhibit Area 3: Livelihood: industry and ship building. Match each industry with a tool or structure.

Livelihood/Industry	Tool: name and sketch a device, structure or tool	Done today the same way?
Salt Works		
Salt Hay farming		
Cranberry farming		
Shipbuilding shipwright (Shipbuilder/ repairs)		

Write the name of the industry or product that used the tools or objects depicted in the images on the lines.



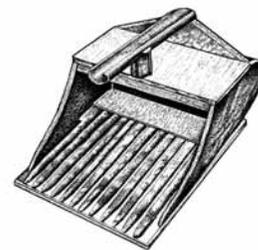
Caulking irons were used by:



Windmills were used to pump sea water to make:



This large rake was used to:



This wooden scoop was used to collect:

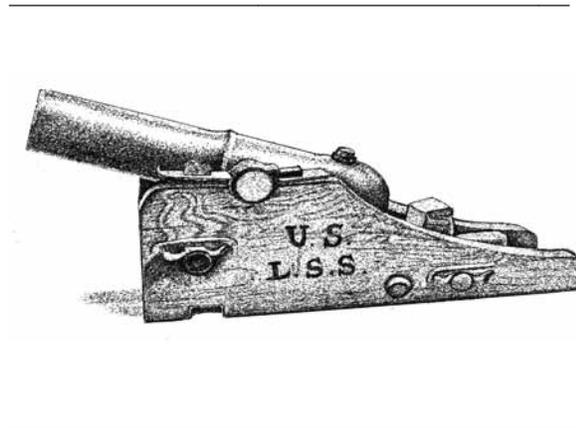


Museum Objects

Exhibit Area 4: Maritime: lighthouse keepers, life savers, wireless radio communication

Device, structure or tool	Used by which maritime service or communication service	Still in use today?
Lyle gun, faking box, lantern, hawser cutter		
Lamps, lights with magnifying glass, prisms		
Antennas, headphones, inked tape		

Label the objects below found in exhibit area 4- lighthouses, life savers, and Marconi's wireless communication



Museum Objects

Exhibit Area 5: Lifestyle: ways people live and have fun on Cape Cod.

Architecture:

Sketch the front of a “full” Cape Cod house: the 4 windows, door, and chimney. Use the exhibit pictures as a guide.



List three materials were used to build the house? Do you think the materials came from the natural resources of Cape Cod or were they imported from off Cape Cod?

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Which direction did a Cape Cod House usually face? _____

Why? _____

Tourists and Recreation: Look at the images on the “Playground on the Cape” exhibit panel. List two recreational activities that tourists of the past and tourists today still do.

1. _____ 2. _____

Transportation: “The Railroad” exhibit panel. List 3 ways that people used to travel to and around Cape Cod in the past other than walking.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Write a description of the transportation methods you used to get to Cape Cod National Seashore and then list ways you get from place to place in your neighborhood. Do you walk, bike or take public transportation like a bus or train to conserve energy?





Museum Objects

Evaluation

Do you think the curator did a good job of selecting objects that represent the themes of Cape Cod's history?

Yes No

List two or more objects that you think should have been included in the museum displays.

Rate how you think the museum has cared for and displayed its objects. Circle your choice and explain why.

Good fair poor unknown

Please write any suggestions you have to make the museum better.



Museum Objects



ACTIVITY 3—INTERPRETING MUSEUM OBJECTS

To interpret an object means to study it, determine its significance, and then create an exhibit that shares this significance with visitors.

As a curator, you've been asked to interpret a museum object of your choice. Observe the object carefully for clues to help describe it.

What is the object? _____

Is it an original or a reproduction? How do you know? _____

Who could you ask? _____

COMPOSITION OF THE OBJECT:

Circle the material(s) that the object is made from:



Paper Bone Textiles Ceramics Leather Wood Metal
Stone Glass Other: _____

What might be some of the concerns in displaying the object?

QUALITIES OF THE OBJECT:

Sketch the object in the box on the right.

Include its shape, its texture, anything written on it, and any other details you think are important.

Make notes of its color, its size, its estimated weight, and which of its parts, if any, are movable.

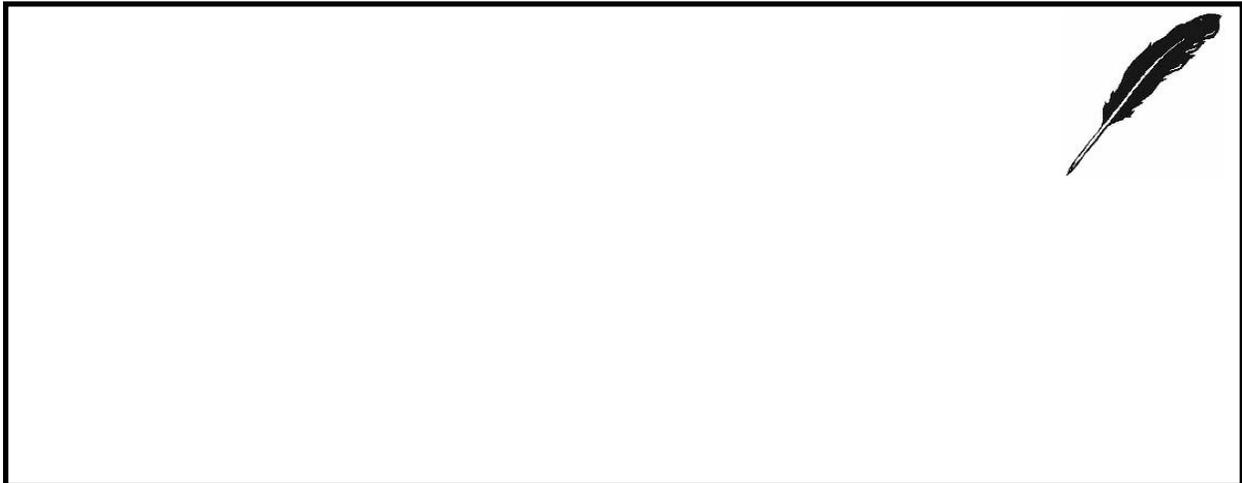


Museum Objects

USES OF THE OBJECT:

- What might it have been used for? _____
- Who might have used it? _____
- Where might it have been used? _____
- When might it have been used? _____

In the box below, sketch a scene in which the object is being used as it might have been during its original time period.



MEANINGS OF THE OBJECT:

- What does the object tell us about the lives of the people who used it?
- Do people use this type of object today or has technology changed?
- Does the exhibit that displays the object help you to understand the object's significance?
- What recommendations would you make to improve how this object is exhibited?

Activity 3 is based on an activity designed and developed by the Education Staff, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC 20408.



Museum Objects

EXPLORE FURTHER:

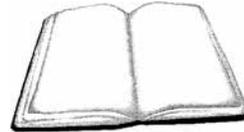


Visit your local historical museum. Check to see how that facility is caring for its museum objects.

Design your own exhibit for Cape Cod National Seashore's 50th anniversary. Create exhibits about why you think the park plays an important role in the whole community.

RESOURCES:

Try searching these websites:



www.nps.gov/history Click on the Kids box to enter the WebRangers website. Or click on Teachers for fun learning materials.

www.cr.nps.gov/museum Website for the National Park Service's Museum Management Program. Click on For Teachers to get to "Teaching with Museum Collections" lesson plans. Or click on Exhibits to see virtual museum exhibits.

<http://www.aam-us.org> Website of the American Association of Museums.





Museum Objects

Notes Page

Take your own notes, draw sketches to remind yourself of ideas you think are important.

