



PRIMITIVE PIECES

The Newsletter of The Museum of Primitive Art and Culture

1058 Kingstown Road, Room 5

Peace Dale, R.I. 02879 ♦ (401) 783-5711

www.primitiveartmuseum.org

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Roles of men and women in Native American culture

Among the early colonists who were the first to come into contact with the Native peoples of New England, a frequent observation was that Native men treated Native women almost as if they were slaves. Until recently, that seemed to be the conventional wisdom about Native culture in 17th century New England. After all, the history was written by the Europeans, the Natives having no written language. Most of the Europeans had their own firmly-held beliefs about how society should work, and those ideas often were at odds with the Native way of looking at the world. Native ways must have seemed strange, if not incomprehensible, to those first settlers. But the truth was that in Native culture, women were held in high regard as givers of life and nurturers.

Dana Benner, a Penobscot/Piqwacket/Micmac and a lifelong student of Native culture, will discuss the traditional roles of women and men in Native society on Thursday, May 31 at 7 p.m. in the Museum Gallery.

Unlike their white counterparts, Native women could hold leadership roles. There is

documented evidence that in some southern New England groups, women were chosen over men to hold leadership positions. There were at least three such leaders in Connecticut, two in Rhode Island, and two in Massachusetts. And even if they were not leaders, women wielded political power, with their voices being heard in tribal council.



The Wampanoag Homesite at
Plymouth Plantation

Native women could own or control property, unlike their European counterparts in New England. The wigwam and everything in it, except for the men's tools and weapons, belonged to the woman of the family. Women were firmly in control of the household and everything related to it.

Native women, like their European counterparts, were in

charge of the cooking, cleaning, making clothing, growing and gathering food, and the care of children and the elderly. But unlike many of their colonial counterparts, they lived in very close proximity to one another, enabling them to share many tasks and work efficiently.

Mr. Benner, who grew up in Hudson, N.H., earned a bachelor of arts degree in U.S. history and Native culture from Granite State College in Concord, N.H. and is working toward a masters of education degree in heritage studies at Plymouth State University. His research has taken him throughout the Northeast and to Alaska, the Plains and Hawaii. He has given seminars at schools and to civic groups on the Native history of New Hampshire.

The program is in the Museum Gallery on the second floor of the Peace Dale Office Building, 1058 Kingstown Road, across from the Peace Dale Library.

Refreshments will be served. Admission is free for Museum members; a donation by non-members is appreciated.

Our Spring Lecture Series Begins on Thursday, March 27th

Thursday, April 12

The Rise and Fall of Fish Farming in Carolina Village

In 1877, John W. Hoxie established one of the first trout farms in the United States near the village of Carolina on land leased from Rowland Hazard II. Two years later, Hoxie's brother Charles started his own trout farm nearby. In 1903, the Hazard family, which had invested in the ventures, bought both farms and eventually merged them to form the American Fish Culture Company.

By the 1920s, it was the largest fish farm in the United States, and remained profitable even during the Depression of the 1930s. But by the 1950s, the once-innovative company began to decline, and in 1997, the State of Rhode Island bought it to use as a hatchery for the fish the Department of Environmental Management used to stock brooks and streams.



Why was the American Fish Culture Company so successful, and what were the factors that led to its decline? Michael A. Rice, Ph.D., a professor in the Department of Fisheries, Animal and Veterinary Science at the University of Rhode Island, has studied the American Fish Culture Company to discover what lessons it can teach us. On Thursday, April 12 at 7 p.m. in the museum gallery, Dr. Rice will share the fascinating history of this ambitious venture.

Thursday, April 26

A Rhode Island Potter in China

In the fall of 2009, Jay Lacouture, a professor of art at Salve Regina University, spent six weeks in residency at the West Virginia University-Jingdezhen Ceramic Institute International Ceramics Program in Jingdezhen, China.



"Jingdezhen Bottle with Plate" (2011)

Jingdezhen, the "Porcelain Capital of China," has been the site of porcelain production for almost 2,500 years. One of the city's natural resources is kaolin, used to make the highest quality porcelain in China. Today, more than half of the city's 1.5 million citizens work in the porcelain manufacturing industry.

On Thursday, April 26 at 7 p.m. in the museum gallery, Professor Lacouture will share his impressions of Jingdezhen's ceramics and China's culture.

Professor Lacouture has been making pottery for almost forty years. He is a Fellow and former President of the National Council on Education for the Ceramic



Old Shanghai

Arts, and has also been an artist in residence in Kamioka, Japan, and at the Archie Bray Foundation in Helena, Montana. Here in Rhode Island, he works at the Carolina Pottery, where he fires his work in a two-chamber wood-soda kiln.

Each program begins at 7 p.m. in the Museum Gallery on the second floor of the Peace Dale Office Building, 1058 Kingstown Road, across from the Peace Dale Library. Refreshments will be served. Admission is free for Museum members; a donation by non-members is appreciated.

The Museum of Primitive Art and Culture

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Beth Hogan, Museum Administrator

Louise Weaver, Administrative Assistant

Mary Brown, Educator

The Museum Gallery is open Wednesdays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and by appointment.

From the Curator's Desk

By Sarah Peabody Turnbaugh

Our enthusiasm for longer, warmer days and thawing earth generally does not change much from year to year. With spring on its way, it soon will be time to get out those gardening tools—trowels, shovels, and hoes—and start polishing them up. As you do so, notice the materials from which they are made. And check out their shapes. These days metal, wood, and durable plastics and resins dominate. But shapes are fairly standard.

In earlier times, prehistoric people living here in the Northeast must have felt the same enthusiasm and relief that we do as winter waned and days grew milder. Unlike us, however, Native peoples fashioned tools of stone, which have lasted archae-

ologically, and of other organic materials (wood, shell, vines, etc.) that usually have not survived the passage of time. The forms of their remaining tools closely resemble ours, however, when they served similar functions.



Here in the Northeast, many of the archaeological stone tools date from the Woodland Period (roughly 1000-500 years ago). During this time, Natives relied on hunting and fishing as they had in

earlier times. But they were beginning to fashion low-fired pottery from clay.

By about 800 years ago, squash, corn, and beans were being cultivated periodically in southern New England and further west. Charred remnants of early corn kernels and squash and bean seeds have been excavated from cooking features. As people increasingly adopted agricultural practices, their way of life changed. They wandered less often in search of game and food, and they became more and more sedentary. Soon they often were living in small villages for much of each year.

The museum has many arrow and spear points, as well as other tool types, that date from this later

period. Among our holdings are a number of stone hoes that come from the westernmost reaches of the Eastern Woodlands: Illinois and Missouri, in particular. The chert and flint blades pictured here are from various locations in Missouri. Museum records reveal that the notched hoe (lower right) is particularly special. In December of 1901, it was used as the official ground-breaking spade for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1903-1904, in St. Louis, Missouri.

Today, it takes a well-deserved rest in the museum collection, though it still looks polished up and ready to go. These hoes are something different to think about as we prepare our own tools for gardening again this spring.



The Nine Rites of the Munay-ki

On five evenings this spring, the museum will offer a course in the Nine Rites of the Munay-ki, a series of ceremonies derived from traditional Peruvian spiritual practices. The rites are intended to foster spiritual development and enlightenment. Karen Bruscini, R.N., a Certified Healing Touch Practitioner, Integrated Energy Therapy® master instructor and medical and spiritual intuitive, will be the instructor. Classes are on Monday evenings from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on March 26, April 2, April 9, April 16, and April 23.

The five-part series costs \$120. To register, call Mary Brown at (401) 338-4740.

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Return Service Requested



SAVE THE DATE!
Our annual "Trash or Treasure" Fundraiser
featuring professional appraisals of your
"treasures" by Stuart Whitehurst will be on
Sunday, September 16, 2012

The Museum of Primitive Art and Culture is a member of **The Culture Coalition** (<http://www.culturecoalition.com/>), an Arts & History Collaborative of Southern Rhode Island. The coalition's mission is to draw on southern Rhode Island's rich and diverse culture assets in order to create a strong identity and establish the arts and history as highly visible elements of the region's identity.