

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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Are cougars living in Rhode Island?

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The eastern cougar (*Felis concolor cougar*) was once common in New England. But the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service declared the subspecies extinct in 2011. Federal wildlife experts admit that some people in the east have seen cougars in recent years. But they say those are escaped captives or western cougars who wandered out of their range. As recently as last June, the Wildlife Service said cougars are "extremely rare" in the east.

Try telling that to the hundreds of people who have seen cougars in New England, eastern Canada, and the mid-Atlantic.

Try telling that to the DEM employee who investigated a deer kill in Matunuck in April 2011, interviewed five people who saw or heard the predator, and was convinced the predator was a cougar. (DEM's official position is that there is no credible evidence of cougars in Rhode Island and

that the Matunuck deer was road kill, despite the symmetrical puncture wounds on its neck.)



And try telling that to Bill Betty. Since 2000, when he saw a cougar twice in two weeks at his home in Richmond, Betty, a retired defense industry worker, has spent a large part of his waking hours studying cougars, talking to people who have seen cougars, and gathering evidence of cougar populations in the east.

There isn't any doubt in his mind that cougars are returning to New England.

Cougars, also known as catamounts, pumas, panthers, or mountain lions, once were the most widely distributed land mammal in the Western Hemisphere.

Early settlers perceived the cougar as a danger to livestock and humans and a competitor for wild game. States put bounties on them, causing them to be hunted and trapped relentlessly. Habitat loss also contributed to their demise. Cougars were gone from much of the east by the late 1800s.

But their habitat is returning, and their favorite prey, deer, have experienced a population explosion.

Come to hear Bill talk about close encounters with these predators and learn why they're returning to New England.

The program will take place at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 21 in the museum gallery.

Our Spring Lecture Series begins on Thursday, April 21

Thursday, May 5th

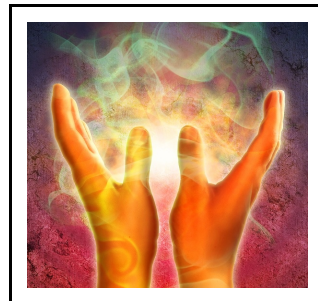
Do you believe in universal energy?

Practitioners of energy therapies such as Reiki, Integrated Energy Therapy® and Healing Touch® believe that they are sensitive to the energy field that surrounds the body and that they have the ability to manipulate that energy field to help a person achieve or maintain wellness.

Critics say these therapies are pseudoscientific— not supported by empirical scientific evidence. But energy therapies are now recognized by professional nursing associations as a legitimate treatment method and taught in dozens of nursing programs.

Karen Bruscini, a registered nurse who is also an intuitive and medium, a Healing Touch® practitioner and an Integrated Energy Therapy® instructor, believes that these energy therapies have the power to help a person manage pain, alleviate grief or anxiety, and lower blood pressure. On Thursday, May 5 at 7:00 p.m., she will talk about her own experience with universal energy and discuss different types of energy therapy, and explain how they work. Please join us for this thought-provoking presentation.

Karen Bruscini, R.N., is the owner of Hands of Wisdom II Holistic and Wellness Center in Hopkinton.



Thursday, May 19th

South County's beautiful salt ponds

The salt ponds of southern Rhode Island are a regional treasure. They support diverse wildlife, provide ideal settings for public recreation, and enhance local property values. They also contribute substantial revenues to two of Rhode Island's largest industries: tourism and fisheries.



But the ponds have sustained a great loss of species and habitat diversity. Thirty years ago, they supported healthy populations of scallops, oysters, flounder, eels and blue crab. Today, these species are greatly diminished, and in the case of oysters and scallops, all but gone.

The Salt Ponds Coalition (<http://www.saltpondscoalition.org/>) has been working since 1985 to protect and enhance the health of southern Rhode Island's six major salt ponds— Winnapaug, Quonochontaug, Ninigret, Green Hill, Potter, and Point Judith— and the coastal ponds watershed that spans the south coast of Rhode Island from Westerly to Narragansett. The coalition teamed up with photographer Vic Dvorak to create a thirty-minute video presentation that tells the story of this beautiful area and how the coalition works to preserve it.

Please join us on Thursday, May 19 at 7:00 p.m. to watch this presentation. Alicia Eichinger, executive director of the Salt Ponds Coalition, will be on hand to answer questions.

Each program in our Spring Lecture Series begins at 7:00 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

1058 Kingstown Road, Room 5 • Peace Dale, Rhode Island 02879 • (401) 783-5711

www.primitiveartmuseum.org

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

When guests come to the museum gallery to view our exhibits, they often are surprised that the museum has objects from around the world, in addition to New England. Our objects from Asia have been receiving more attention lately. Some, such as a few of the museum's textiles, have been added to our collection relatively recently, in the past decade or two. But other Asian objects have been in our collection almost from our beginnings in 1892.

One intriguing object is an Ainu tobacco box, toggle (or netsuke), and moustache lifter from northern Japan. The Ainu, the aboriginal or indigenous people of northern Japan, were given Japanese citizenship in 1899. This artifact was collected in the early 1900s. The native Ainu language, which is unrelated to Japanese, is now almost extinct. Within the past decade, researchers have analyzed Ainu mtDNA. Based on their findings, Ainu lineage appears to trace back to early populations in Tibet, Siberia, and Mongolia.

Traditional Ainu culture and customs also differed distinctly from Japanese culture. Ainu men customarily have had very long, heavy beards and moustaches. This carved wand-like moustache lifter enabled an Ainu man to lift his remarkable beard away from his lips when eating or smoking.

Together with the lidded tobacco box, it hangs from a short piece of cordage. The assemblage likely was suspended originally from the

gentleman's sash closing his robe. The relative placement of the moustache lifter or the tobacco box could be adjusted easily, when in use, by sliding the carved Eurasian water chestnut seedpod toggle (or netsuke) along the cord. (Incidentally, the profile of the natural seedpod resembles a flying bat, symbolizing good fortune in some Asian cultures.)



Each object displayed in our gallery has an intriguing story and history. When you come to visit the gallery, we hope you will take an extra minute or two to seek out your favorite item. Please let one of us know what it is. We look forward to telling you more about it in a future newsletter entry.

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Return Service Requested

Save that date!



**Our annual "Trash or Treasure" Fundraiser
is on Sunday, October 2 at The Dunes Club in Narragansett**