

# 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](http://www.primitiveartmuseum.org)

Vol. 29, No. 2

Spring 2017

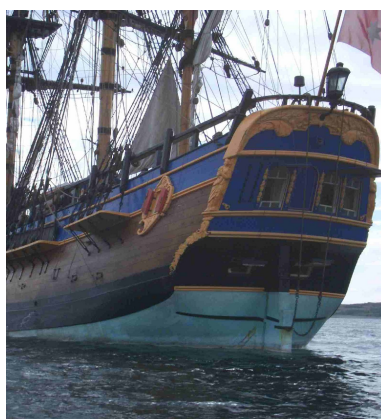
## The Search for Captain Cook's *Endeavour*

In early August of 1778, the British who occupied Newport nervously awaited the arrival of a French squadron under the command of Comte d'Estaing. The French were coming to help the rebellious colonists retake Newport. As the French approached, several British officers intentionally beached their vessels and cut the masts or set the ships on fire to prevent them from falling into enemy hands. On August 5, British Navy Capt. John Brisbane ordered five British transport ships to be sunk in Newport's outer harbor, off the Point, to prevent the French from reaching the North Battery. Those ships were among thirteen British transports scuttled to protect the city in the days leading up to the Battle of Rhode Island.

In 1998, after the transports had been at the bottom of Newport Harbor for 220 years, research by members of the Rhode Island Marine Archeology Project (RIMAP) confirmed that one of the thirteen, the *Lord Sandwich*, was actually the H.M.S. *Endeavour*, the iconic ship that British Navy Lt. James Cook commanded on his 1768-1771 voyage of discovery to the Pacific.

Captain Cook was responsible for the first recorded European contact with the eastern coastline of Australia,

and his was the first recorded circumnavigation of New Zealand. Many Australians of European descent consider him the founding father of their country. The discovery that his ship may be in Newport Harbor was major news there.



Australia's Endeavour replica

Last year, RIMAP research disclosed that five of the thirteen transports were scuttled in one area opposite the North Battery and that the *Lord Sandwich ex Endeavour* was one of them. RIMAP has now located the wrecks of all five ships. But figuring out which one is *Lord Sandwich ex Endeavour* will require recovery and examination of material from all five sites, a slow, painstaking, expensive job that could take

many years.

Rhode Island has the largest number of Revolutionary War shipwrecks in North America. RIMAP, a nonprofit founded in 1992, has investigated more than 90 historical and archaeological sites in Rhode Island, not only underwater but on land, because maritime history and marine archaeology study not only ships but the industries that supported them.

In October of 2000, D.K. (Kathy) Abbass, RIMAP executive director and principal investigator, gave a presentation here about the group's studies of the Ocean State's submerged cultural resources.

Since then, RIMAP has investigated many more archeological sites. On Thursday, May 11, Dr. Abbass will return to give us an update on the work of RIMAP's trained volunteers and professional archeologists, including their progress in identifying Captain Cook's *Endeavour*, and to talk about how RIMAP provides opportunities for the public to learn about our state's marine heritage.

The presentation will be in the Museum Gallery at 7:00 p.m. Refreshments will be served. It is free and open to the public, but donations from non-members are always appreciated.

Thursday, April 27

## Art from Shells

When the Narragansett people spoke to Roger Williams, they called it poquauhock. Carl Linnaeus, the Swedish botanist, called it *Mercenaria mercenaria* because its shell was a form of currency. But if you grew up near the water in Rhode Island, you call it a quahog.

For centuries, Native Americans have used the beautiful purple parts of the quahog shell to make what we call "wampum." Allen Hazard inherited from his Narragansett forbears his respect for the hard-shell clams that produce the purple shells, as well as his ability to fashion those shells into stunning jewelry.

On Thursday, April 27, Allen will tell us about the quahog's life-sustaining importance and wampum's cultural significance.

*Allen and his wife Patricia operate The Purple Shell, a shop at 5219 Old Post Road in Charlestown.*



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Thursday, May 25

## What is Wicca?



Jasmin Roy is on a mission to educate the uninitiated about Wicca, a contemporary Earth-based religious movement based on ancient pagan beliefs. Although Wiccans do not believe in Satan, Wicca is often mistaken for Satanism. Jasmin believes that each of us is in charge of our own happiness, and is capable of manifesting hopes and fears in the physical world.

She also believes that what we do will come back to us—that the energies we send out into the universe will be returned to us.

If you'd like to learn more about this often-misunderstood spiritual practice that embraces the cycles of nature and life, please listen to Jasmin speak in our Museum Gallery on Thursday, May 25 at 7:00 p.m.

Jasmin is the owner of The Blue Fairey, a book and gift shop located in the Stagecoach House Inn in Richmond.

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 from non-members is appreciated.

## **The Museum of Primitive Art and Culture**

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

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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*

Late winter days are growing longer and milder. Early blooming witch hazel, winter aconite, and snowdrops are starting to show. My family already has seen our first robin—in fact, a whole flock of fat and sassy, newly-arrived robins, and soon spring peepers will awake.

For me, though, robins and returning songbirds and raptors always herald the actual return of spring.

Birds have long been important to people from all around the world. Wild and domesticated birds are hunted or raised for meat, or for their eggs, and even for their feathers. African herdsman have relied on birds to keep flies and bugs and parasites from their precious cattle.

Customs and beliefs in more than a few societies consider birds as intermediaries between people and the spirit world. After all, birds live both on land or water and in the sky. In the American Southwest native potters are known for their figurines of powerful owls and other special birds.

Puebloan katchinas intervene for humans, carrying their prayers aloft to sky spirits. West African wooden headrests, masks, and flutes carved with bird images also carry messages from people to ancestors in the other world.

The phoenix in Asian art, and parrot-like Quetzalcoatl depicted in glyphs and treasured Aztec objects from Mexico are other examples of birds that hold special cultural significance.

Next time you visit our gallery, look around. Notice how many of our exhibits include items representing birds and their importance to the people who have been making and using them. And keep your own eyes and ears tuned to the sky for this spring's avian arrivals.



*This item from our collection  
is an owl effigy vessel.  
(Southwest, ca. 1880-1900)*

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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Oakwoods, Rowland Hazard's Peace Dale estate, was built in 1855 and enlarged in 1887. It was demolished in 1948 to make way for construction of the Oakwoods subdivision.