



SCOPE OF COLLECTIONS SUMMARY

Purpose of Scope of Collection Statement

This scope of collections statement serves to define the holdings, present and future, of museum property that contribute directly to the mission of the Natick Historical Society, Natick, Massachusetts. With this data as a foundation, NHS will be better able to determine what story lines can be supported by the collection, identify future collecting goals and develop the intellectual framework for the collection.

Natick Historical Society's Mission

To inspire an interest in Natick's rich and varied history from its unique origins as a Praying Indian Plantation to the present day. The Society will:

- Acquire artifacts, papers and materials important to the origins, development and ongoing life of the town and preserve and conserve our collections in accordance with current professional museum standards to insure their availability to future generations
- Provide educational experiences based on authentic objects, primary sources, stories and lives that engage senior, family and school group audiences and the public through programs, exhibitions, collections and publications
- Encourage use of our archives and library for genealogical, scholarly and other research

Legal Authorities and Statutes Applicable to Current Holdings

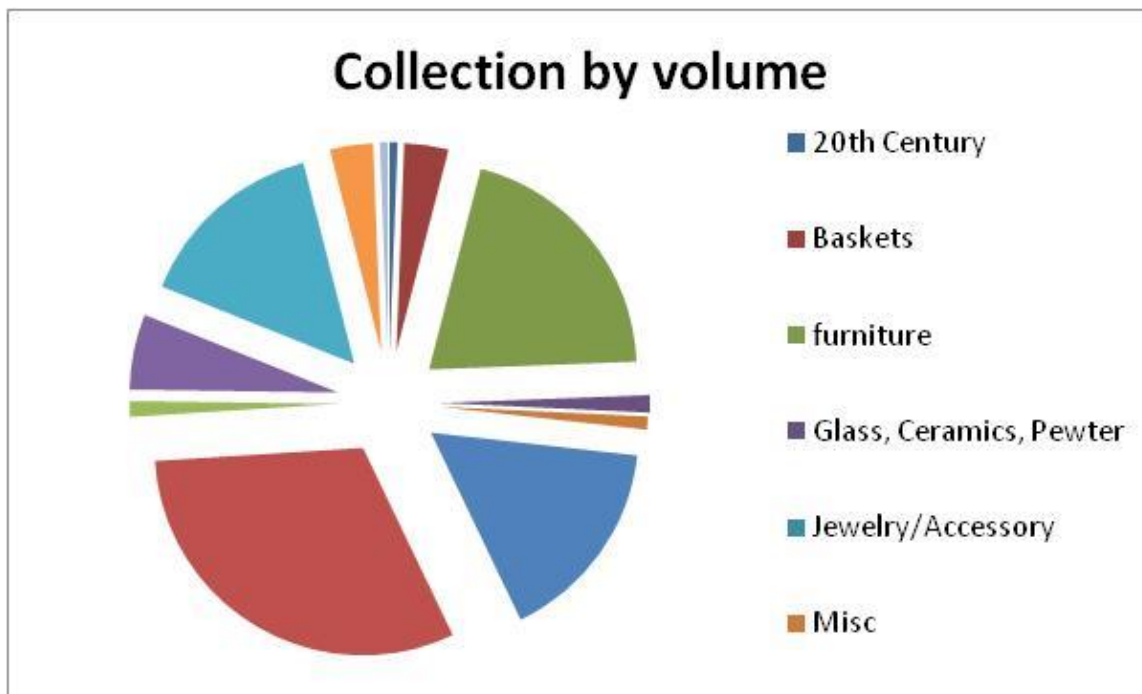
- Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, (16 USC 470aa-mm) as amended
- Act for the Preservation of American Antiquities, June 8, 1906 (16 USC 431-433)
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, (16 USC 470-470t, sec. 110) as amended
- Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990, (25 USC 3001-13)
- the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 USC 1531-1543):
- the Bald Eagle Protection Act of 1940 (16 USC 668-668d)
- the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (16 USC 703-711)
- the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 (42 USC 1996)

- the Lacey Act of 1900 (18 USC 43-44)
- The 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (implemented in the United States by 19 USC 2601 et seq.).
- Natick Hazardous Waste Disposal regulations

Current Holdings

Current holdings are documented in the Collections Survey conducted as part of a project to develop the Collections Master Plan of which this document is a part. The collections survey conducted in 2009 documented the quantity, type and condition of the objects in the NHS Collections. Because they are already well documented, the survey did not extend to cover the archives stored in the file cabinets or the books in the book cases. Archival materials stored elsewhere in the museum were included in the survey.

The survey results are summarized by the following chart:



Based on the amount of space occupied, the predominant collections are papers, books, photos and ephemera (excluding the contents of the book shelves and file cabinets) (31%); furniture (20%); natural history (16%); and tools (15%). Interestingly, collecting priorities focusing on 20th century material culture will need to be intensified as 20th Century collections currently represents less than 1% of the collection.

Types of Materials

NHS Collections consist of materials in several media grouped around subject areas and donor collections. The descriptions below include the materials in the book cases and file cabinets.

a. NHS Archives: Papers, Journals, Newspapers, Ephemera

Papers include manuscripts, newspaper clippings, printed pamphlets, advertisements, some letters and personal papers. Journals include diaries, photo albums, autograph books, day books, account books. Newspapers include rare newspapers, Natick Citizen, Natick Bulletin, and the Natick Observer. Ephemera include greeting cards, valentines, calling cards, and post cards.

Papers are categorized into more than 400 subject headings including Natick businesses, town institutions, families, streets and houses, wars and conflicts, deeds and wills and many other categories. These categories are being organized into broader topics to improve access to information in the archives. The project to develop a final finding aid is underway.

Many documents and images are also stored in the Digital Archive, a public folder on the NHS computer containing electronic versions of photographs and documents. Most handwritten documents have been transcribed. The transcriptions are filed with the original as well as in the subject files and digital archive. Rare newspapers and the Natick Citizen have been inventoried on spread sheets. Roger Casavant has surveyed and summarized the Natick Citizens and Mr. Casavant's notes are stored in the digital archives. Any items received electronically are placed in the digital archives,.

b. NHS Photograph Collection

The NHS Photograph Collection contains roughly 12,000 images of several types of media including printed color and black and white photographs, digital photographs, tintypes, daguerreotypes, glass plate negatives, glass slides, ambrotypes and 35mm slides.

Photographs are categorized by subjects which include Natick businesses, police and fire, family portraits, celebrations and other events, and locations around Natick. Images span from the earliest photography to the present day, with concentrations in late 19th and early 20th century images.

The Photo Inventory Project in spring 2007 began the monumental task of digitizing and describing these photographs and over 600 photographs in 10 subject areas are recorded in Past Perfect. Tintypes have been scanned into the digital archive and are listed in an excel spread sheet index. Copies of these images have been placed in the subject files. Potter glass slides and other collections have been listed in an excel spread sheet index in the digital archive.

c. Library

The library consists of over 500 volumes of published books, booklets, and pamphlets including the 1685 edition of the Algonquin bible, books related to John Eliot and New England Indians, Horatio Alger first editions, Harriet Beecher Stowe first editions, local histories, vital statistics and residents' lists, military records, and year books. Books have been organized by subject and inventoried in excel spread sheets. Books include rare editions along with recent publications.

d. Museum Objects

Objects have been organized into a number of artificial subject collections, as described below:

i. Native American Collection

The Native American collection contains stone tools from the archaic and woodland periods through to the contact period. The collection is particularly strong in Praying Indian culture from the founding of Natick in 1651 through the dissolution of the Praying Indian Plantation in 1721. The collection includes the Takawampbait pulpit, baskets, bows & arrows, toys, moccasins and textiles. Many of these items are unique and of national importance. All grave goods were repatriated following guidelines from NAGPRA in 1995.

ii. Henry Wilson (1812-1875)

NHS holds the largest collection of personal effects of Henry Wilson, Senator from Massachusetts and Vice President under US Grant. Wilson moved to Natick at age 21 to work in the shoemaking trade. He eventually built a house on West Central Street and is buried in Old Dell Park Cemetery. Items in the collection include military gear, personal items, a plaster bust, a chair from his home, and books from his personal library. In addition, the collection includes personal letters, original papers, and bound copies of the Whig newspaper that Wilson edited for several years. This collection is fully described in a finding aid available in the subject files and in the digital archive.

iii. Natural History: Birds, Animals & Herpetology, Geology, Shells

The natural history collection contains over 450 birds from North and South America, many collected by A.L. Babcock for the Natick Historical Society in 1872. Animals & herpetology include an otter, anteater, snakes, turtles, alligators, skeletons and skins. The geology collection and the shell collection are currently in storage and were not reviewed in detail as part of the collections survey. However, in past reports, the geology collection was described as a collection with value having widespread variety and representation. These items have fallen out of interpretive fashion and no longer meet our educational mission. Many objects are likely unprovenanced. Most of the specimens date from the late 1800's.

iv. Africa & Pacific Rim

Artifacts from Africa and the South Sea Islands represent the collections of missionaries and others from Natick. The roughly 30 objects include body armor, masks, spears, tools, pottery, jewelry, textiles, and a drum.

v. Business, Industry and Farming

Business, industry and farming in Natick are represented in the collection by the products manufactured, tools used in manufacturing and promotional and advertising materials. Most prominent are the baseballs and softballs manufactured at the Harwood factory. From the shoe making industry, NHS holds hand tools, a factory whistle, clamps and benches. Hat making is represented by hat making molds, a straw break, braided straw, straw splitters and hats.

NHS holds dairy & pharmacy glass bottles, Carling brewery cans, and Grandmother's Mincemeat jars. Farming related implements include scythes, a wind driven scare crow, a bog shoe and a hay rake. More recent businesses are represented by promotional items such as mugs, buttons, pens and rulers.

vi. Household goods

The household goods collection includes mostly items from the colonial era and the early 1800's. The collection includes china, glass ware, silver, kitchen utensils, spinning wheels, lamps and lighting devices, and wood

working and other hand tools. Some of the china is from the china trade, and the highlight of the collection is Governor Hutchinson's knife box.

From more recent eras, NHS possesses cameras, a sewing machine, and writing implements.

vii. Military

The military collection showcases six firearms with technologies ranging from flint lock through to World War I era. Firearms are supplemented by powder horns, cartridge cases and belts, and munitions. There are several swords in the collection including a confederate sword and presentation swords.

The collection includes a red wool coat said to have been taken from a dead soldier at the battle of Lexington and Concord April 19, 1775 as well as a muster jacket from the early 1800's.

viii. Measuring devices

Measuring devices include roughly 20 objects including surveying equipment used by early surveyor John Jones along with clocks, barometers, scales and sextants.

ix. Children's Life

The toy collection includes roughly 100 objects such as dolls & doll clothes, marbles, puzzles, playing cards, ice skates, sleds, a toy piano, and a model ship. The toys date primarily from the late 1800's. Many of the toys have provenance from prominent Natick families.

x. Clothing and textiles

Dresses, military uniforms, undergarments, quilts, unstitched clothing, Mason's regalia, band uniforms, samplers, purses and bags, jewelry and accessories, hats, and shoes. Most clothing dates from the second half of the 19th century. Highlights include a dress worn to a ball for Abraham Lincoln, a Worth gown from Paris in the bustle style, a World War I uniform and silk shoes worn by Parson Badger's wife. Recently, the Society acquired three police uniforms and a World War II navy uniform. Most of the textiles come from Natick families.

xi. Furniture

The furniture collection contains 24 pieces including chairs, desks, beds, cradles, a child minder, a lady's side saddle, trunks and boxes. Several chairs belonged to famous people such as Horatio Alger and Eldridge Gerry. The Bigelow family cradle dates from the 1690's. The school desk dates from the early 20th century and is from the Bacon School. The slant top desk belonged to Hezekiah Broad who fought in the Revolutionary War.

xii. Sports

Sports memorabilia forms the newest collection at the NHS. Many of the items on display are on loan from Natick High School. After a focused effort at collecting, this assemblage now includes hockey sticks, pucks, jackets and sweaters from the Natick Comets, shirts and buttons from the Red Men controversy, photographs, trophies, ribbons, letters and jackets.

xiii. 20th century culture

The 20th century is the newest collecting area for the Society. The collection contains things from the World War II home front such as an Air Raid Warden's helmet and rationing coupons. Inventions are represented by the All Cut lawn mower and a clock from Electric Time.