



THE GRISTMILL

Early Industries of Amesbury MA

acm amesbury
carriage
museum
community stories start here

Amesbury Carriage Museum

community stories start here

WHO ARE WE

The Amesbury Carriage Museum is a small history organization in Amesbury, Massachusetts. Our mission is to champion the history of Amesbury's industry and people through programs and events for adults and families.

JOIN US

If you enjoy these materials, we invite you to join other community members in supporting our vital, growing organization.
Become a member or make a donation!

CONTACTS

John Mayer, Executive Director, Amesbury Carriage Museum
jmayer@amesburycarriagemuseum.com
978-834-5058

Office location: Suite 101, 5 Market Square, Amesbury, MA 01913
Mailing Address: PO Box 252, Amesbury, MA 01913

Time Travel

Hey kids:

Are you ready to time travel 300 years into the past?

Amesbury was very different then. The distant hills were covered with thick forests. Deer, bears, birds, and other wild animals roamed the land. The clean Powow and Merrimack River waters were full of fish. And people settled here in small villages.

Of course, kids played, learned, grew, and helped their families.... Just like you.

And, like you, they were hungry! Often hungry!

Our focus today is on food. We'll learn about the kinds of food the Natives and Settlers in this area ate.... Bread, in particular.

Stay tuned!

Your friends,
Eileen and Ben Dover



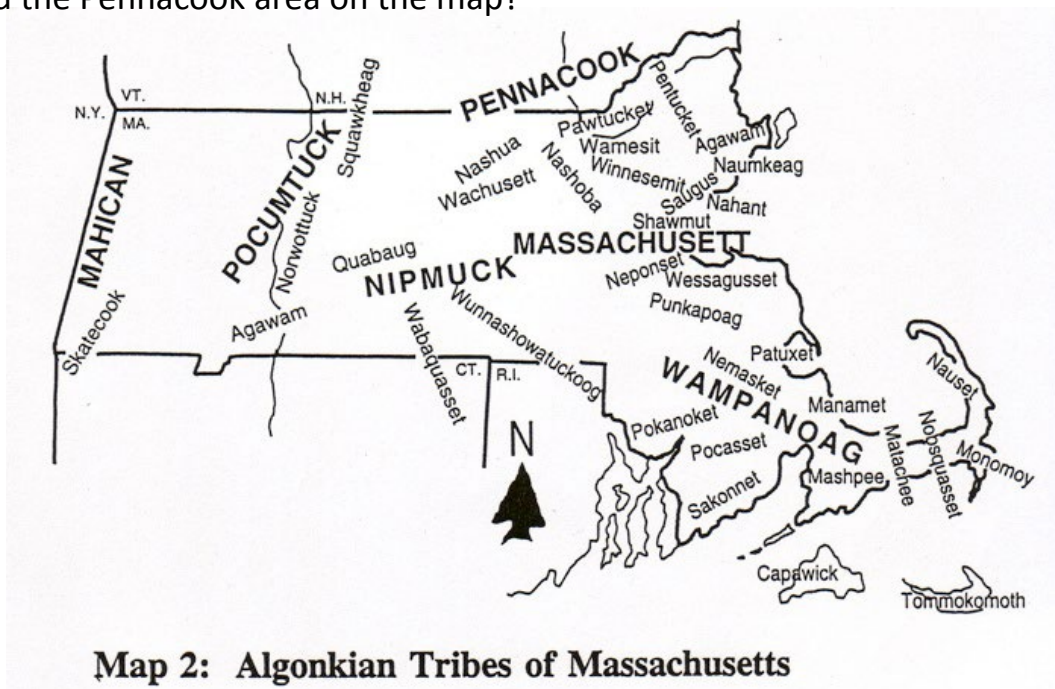
Home Sweet Home

Who lived here first?

Native people lived in separate tribes all across North America. Their life was guided by the seasons and where they could find their next supply of food.

Did you know that Natives lived in this region for thousands of years? The Pennacook Nation fished, hunted, farmed, and lived in villages in the Eastern Woodlands of North America, in the area we now call Amesbury.

Can you find the Pennacook area on the map?



When did the colonists arrive?



People from England settled here nearly 400 years ago. Like Native peoples, they wanted to be close to dependable water supply, like the Powow and Merrimack Rivers.

The colonists set up a village on land that the natives had cleared. They built homes and used their skills to create a town.

Cooperation Works Best

The early English settlers cooperated with each other. Here are some of the chores they did to start a village in what we now call Amesbury.

ACTIVITY: Can you draw a line from the chore to the picture?
There are 6 matches.



Chopped wood into logs.

Raised farm animals for meat, milk, wool, and labor.

Built a gristmill, where grains were ground into flour for baking bread

Built a sawmill to cut wood into lumber.

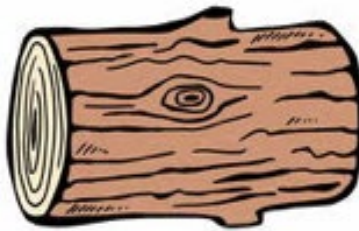
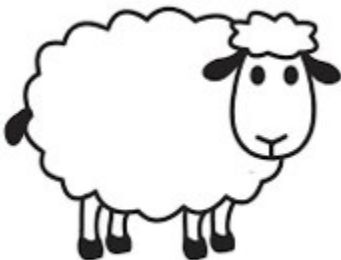
Built a blacksmith forge to make horseshoes, tools, and nails.

Built boats to transport people and items.

Built homes, shops, and fences with local lumber.

Grew corn, wheat, barley, and oats as well as squash and beans

Relied on each other to survive. Traded work and food and products.



Time to Eat!

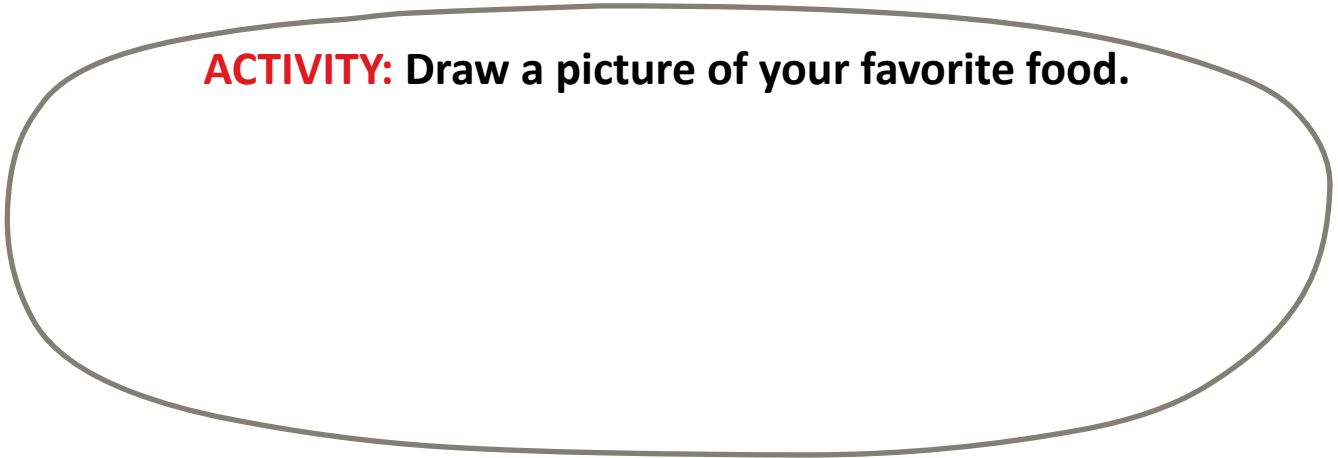


What did local people eat many years ago?

The Native People relied on hunting, fishing, and trapping food. They had a supply of nutritious food that they found in nature. The Native People also cultivated many types of corn, beans, and squash to add to their diet. Women and children collected nuts, berries, roots, wild vegetables, fruits and seeds. Maple syrup was tapped.

When the Europeans arrived, they adapted to this area too. Just as the natives did, the settlers depended on their environment for food. They also planted seeds for new crops, and relied on their own farm animals (pigs, cows, sheep, goats), which they brought on the boats from England.

ACTIVITY: Draw a picture of your favorite food.



ACTIVITY: The Native people and Colonists had to work very hard to get their food. How about your favorite food?

QUESTION	CIRCLE THE BEST ANSWER
Where did your food come from ?	The store • The forest • Your farm
How much time did it take to prepare your food?	No time • Less than an hour • Many hours
Who prepared your food?	You • Your parent • A sibling • The whole family
What season is your food available?	Anytime • Only summer or fall • Only when Amesbury's had enough rain

Bread, bread, and more bread!

A food that both the Natives and the Settlers had in common was **bread**.

The native people ate corn (maize) at almost every meal in stews, hominy, and **bread**. **Cornbread, fry bread, and bean bread** were favorites.

The settlers carried from England their favorite seeds and bread recipes, and ate bread with every meal. They grew crops of barley, rye, and corn (and some wheat) to harvest the grains for bread.



Can you imagine?



To make bread, the natives planted seeds in the spring, harvested in the fall, and then **ground corn into cornmeal with a mortar and pestle** made from either rock or wood. To the cornmeal, they added a few other ingredients before cooking. Whew! That's a lot of work!

The early settlers did the same. But because it took hours to grind enough flour for just a few meals, bread was usually baked only once a week.

The colonists replaced the mortar and pestle with the quern. Basically, two flat stones were used to crush grain between them. This still took a lot of time.....until a time-saving gristmill was built!

Hurray! The gristmill was built in Amesbury

By 1700 four water-powered grist mills were built in the Amesbury area. Powered by the Powow River, the grist mills **used huge millstones to grind grain (corn, oats, barley, rye) into flour**.

This saved so much time in making bread.



SEE FOR YOURSELF!
A colonial gristmill!

Search on YouTube:
19th Century Technology at a Grist Mill
for a great video of a working gristmill.



Amesbury's gristmill stone

Have you seen the gristmill stone in Amesbury's Upper Millyard?
See how big it is!



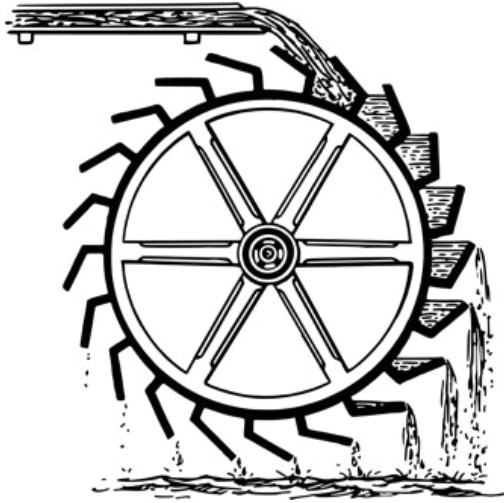
ACTIVITY: Grinding Grain

1. Examine the two grain samples in the baggies. What differences do you see?
2. Get two stones and try to grind the unprocessed grain.
3. Write about what you discovered.

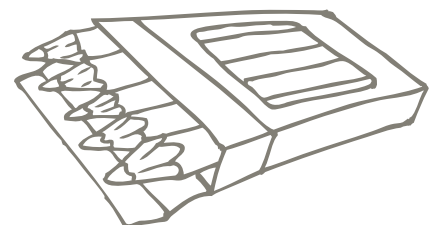
my discoveries



ACTIVITY: A waterwheel powered the gristmill. Below you can see how two different artists drew an image of a waterwheel.



WHY DON'T YOU TRY DRAWING ONE?



ACTIVITY: Make Yummy Gingerbread

Sometimes Amesbury's early families made gingerbread for a special treat. They used flour that had been ground in the gristmill. They used molasses and spices that had been shipped up the Merrimack and Powow Rivers. Other ingredients were added in as available....Our recipe today uses modern, store-bought ingredients, so it will taste different from colonial bread.

Why don't you ask a parent to help you make this recipe,
adapted from thegingeredwhisk.com?

Ingredients

In kit

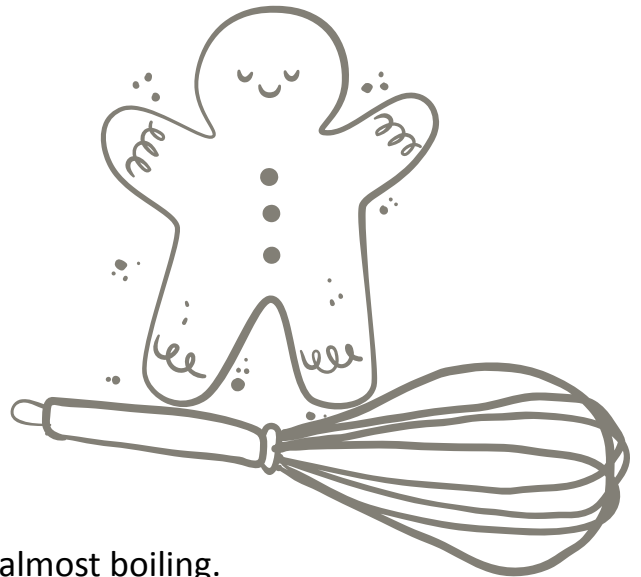
- 1 bell jar (includes ½ cup sugar, 2 cups flour, 1 ½ tsp ground ginger, 1 tsp ground cinnamon, ⅛ tsp ground allspice, ⅛ tsp ground nutmeg)
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 whisk

You supply

- 1 cup whole milk
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup molasses
- ½ cup butter, room temperature

Do this!

1. Preheat the oven to 375 F.
2. Grease an 8 or 9 inch square baking pan.
3. In a small saucepan, warm the milk until almost boiling.
4. Pour the milk into a cup and add the baking soda. Stir and set aside.
5. In a large bowl, whisk the molasses and eggs together.
6. Add in the butter.
7. Whisk in the dry ingredients from the bell jar until smooth and thick.
8. Pour in the warm milk, and stir until combined.
9. Pour into the baking pan. Bake for 30-35 minutes, until a toothpick inserted comes out clean.
10. Cool on a wire rack in the pan for 20 minutes.
11. Cut into pieces and enjoy! YUM!



Take a picture of your gingerbread and email it to
amesburycarriagemuseum@gmail.com.

A Story for You

Gideon looked out at his fields, and knew what had to be done. Two and a half weeks of rain and clouds had caused his corn seeds to rot in the ground. The family had done their planting in late May, so the corn would be “knee high by the Fourth of July,” but the weather had not cooperated.

“This is why we put away four times as much seed corn as we think we will need,” he thought to himself.

Last fall, Gideon’s family had taken their dried corn to the grist mill in town. There had been a brief temptation to bring it all to be ground into flour. But every farmer knew the folly of eating their seed corn. It left a family vulnerable to the whims of nature. They always needed to save some seeds.

The fact was, if the planting and harvest were successful, that was the time to mill and eat the remaining seed corn. The family always waited until fall because you never knew, and if the region had a bad year, the price of seed could go sky high.

Three days of sunshine with a northwest breeze had dried the fields enough for the family to get the second planting done.

Time moved on.



AUTHORS

This booklet and activity kit were created by the Amesbury Carriage Museum's Youth and Family Committee: Ruth Boehl, Pat Boyle-Steed, Greg Noyes, and Lindsay Pouliot. These volunteers collaborated with John Mayer, Executive Director of the Museum.

We developed these resources for the Early Industries of Amesbury Program, September 2020. Our goal was to excite children's interest in the life and work of Amesbury's early settlers through information and hands-on experiences.

JOIN US

Additional parents or educators are warmly welcomed to join this creative, dedicated group in connecting Amesbury's history and community to today's families.

SOURCES

We consulted a number of resources for this booklet including *Water Power* by Tea Benduhn, 2009; *Early American Villages* by Raymond Bial, 2004; *Colonial People. The Carpenter* by Michael Burgan, 2015; *Life in a New England Mill Town* by Sally Isaacs, 2002; *Mill* by David Macaulay, 1989.

Many online resources helped with our research including *Native American Tribes in Massachusetts* by Rebecca Brooks, 2019; *Native American Tribes in Massachusetts* by History of Massachusetts; *Colonial America's Pre-Industrial Age of Wood and Water* by Penn State University NEH Project; *Early Sawmills of New England 1600-1900* by Ledyard Sawmill; *New England Colonies and the Native Americans* by National Geographic; *Massachusetts Forests* by UMassAmherst; *Eastern Woodlands Peoples* by Wikipedia; *Massachusetts* by Wikipedia; *Early America* by Alicia Spooner; *Northeastern Coastal Forests* by World Wildlife Foundation; and many more.

Amesbury Carriage Museum's website was a much used source of valuable information including *Powow River Industries* by Charles Pettingell, *Essex Institute Historical Collections, 1946*; *Amesbury History from 1836*, by Essex Memorial Report; *Amesbury's Industrial History—A View from the Millyard*, by Gray Fitzsimons and John Mayer; *Five Artist's Views—The Amesbury and Salisbury Millyard from 1792 to Today*, by John Mayer, 2019; and *A Chronological Record of the Principal Events that Have Occurred in Amesbury, Massachusetts from 1638-1930*, by Township of Merrimack, 1901.

Design services contributed by DesignsByShannon

Share with Us

Take a picture of your gingerbread and email it to
amesburycarriagemuseum@gmail.com.

We'll post your image in a gallery on facebook or our website.

Let us know how you enjoyed our kit.
Your comments will help us create more at-home activities for you.