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The Craft Center Backgrounder 2013

When the Pilgrims set sail from England in 1620, London was a major manufacturing center where cloth, leather, soap and glassware were made. It was also a leading European port where these and other products flowed out of the country as exports. Imports were also part of the common commerce, and the average Londoner was accustomed to having wine from France, linens from Holland, brass from Germany, tar from Russia and pepper from the East Indies.

Therefore when the Plimoth colonists emigrated to America and needed to concentrate all their efforts on basic survival, it was natural for them to look to London for the goods they needed, but did not have the time or resources to create in New England. Free hours that they would have used to create goods like candles, woven cloth and furniture were devoted wholly to building houses, farming and doing what was necessary to survive. For this reason the making of craft items is not represented in Plimoth Plantation's 17th-Century English Village. Meanwhile, the Native Wampanoag used advanced technologies to create their own homes, tools and craft items like jewelry, pottery and textiles.

In order to represent the origins of these Colonial and Native 17th-century items, Plimoth Plantation has the Craft Center, a modern living exhibit where visitors can see these Native and European reproduction goods being created by hand. Guests can ask contemporary questions of the colonial and Native artisans, something that is not possible in the 17th-Century English Village, where interpreters never step out of their period characters.

The exhibits in the Craft Center change constantly. Depending on the day, a potter might be making earthenware cups, dishes and cooking pots to be used in the Village or on *Mayflower II*. Meanwhile, a joiner could be preparing wood to make period style chairs, beds, cupboards and other furniture for use in the Village houses. Native artisans are on hand to demonstrate making stone tools, weaving baskets, making clay cooking-pots, or creating decorative pieces such as wampum jewelry and headdresses made of deerskin and porcupine quills for the Wampanoag Indigenous Program.

After watching the artisans, guests are encouraged to walk into the adjacent museum shop to browse the variety of goods available for purchase, or place a custom order for specific products. Books on subjects ranging from furniture making to horticulture are available, along with how-to craft books and periodicals written by museum staff members. The shop also carries off-site handcrafted objects like herbal salves, soaps, pewter porringers and children's toys.

In 2013 Plimoth Plantation announced the Craft Center Renovation and Expansion Project. Funded by a grant from the Amelia Peabody Foundation, Plimoth seeks to expand the exhibits in the Craft Center through an extensive redesign. As the new hub of the Museum experience, critical renovation and

essential expansion will add hands-on activities, baking facilities and craft apprenticeships. Renovating the Craft Center will provide essential visitor rest services, such as comfortable seating, updated lavatories, air conditioning and an inviting outdoor space where guests can rest. The plan will add a bakery to the Craft Center where guests can view demonstrations of 17th-century baking techniques, and people of all ages will be able to learn about the process of bread making step-by-step.

Augmenting the Craft Center interior redesign is an open-air pavilion. This multi-purpose outdoor space adjacent to the Craft Center will be used for demonstrations and hands-on activities. The pavilion will have movable seating and a weatherproof sound system. On busy days, this area will provide a place for school groups to eat bag lunches out of the sun or rain. This will also be a natural place for further orientation and outdoor learning experiences in addition to being a perfect spot for guests to simply relax and enjoy the view.

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