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Wampanoag Homesite Backgrounder 2013

From the establishment of the Museum in 1947, founder Henry Hornblower II's vision included plans for a Native exhibit at Plimoth Plantation. He believed that it was essential for a complete and accurate representation of Plimoth Colony history. In 1959 Jim Deetz, an American anthropologist often referred to as one of the fathers of historical archaeology, was hired to design and install a Native exhibit. It opened in 1959 with a single wigwam situated near the Fort/Meetinghouse of the 17th-Century English Village. The next year an expert arrowhead knapper was hired to demonstrate stone tool making, but there was no Native presence on staff.

In 1969 the Museum moved the Native exhibit to its present location along the banks of the scenic Eel River. In 1973 the Native Studies Program was founded and Native interpreters from a variety of northeastern indigenous nations staffed the exhibit, now called the Algonquian Summer Camp, that featured wigwams and a cornfield. It was a landmark moment in the Museum's educational legacy since the history of New England's Native homelands and their relations with the Pilgrims was now being told from Native perspectives.

Eventually the Native Studies Program became the Wampanoag Indigenous Program. In 1990 the Summer Camp evolved into Hobbamock's Homesite. Hobbamock was a Pokanoket man who lived in Patuxet/Plymouth Colony in the 1620s. He and his extended family lived just across the brook on the south side of the Pilgrims' fortified town, and they were the only Native People known to have lived alongside the Pilgrims.

Hobbamock was a councilman to Ousamequin the *sachem* (leader) known by his title, Massasoit. He served as a liaison between the Wampanoag and English. To the English Colonists, Hobbamock was an interpreter, guide and advisor in their dealings with the Native People. He and his family lived adjacent to the English village from 1621 until his death sometime before 1643.

Information used in creating the Wampanoag Homesite was gathered from oral tradition handed down among the Wampanoag people in addition to early histories of Plymouth Colony in which Hobbamock was frequently mentioned.

The Wampanoag Homesite at Plimoth Plantation sits on an archaeological site where Wampanoag artifacts dating back 8,000 years have been found. However, the real homesite of Hobbamock and his family was south of Town Brook, in downtown Plymouth, Massachusetts on what is now known as Watson's Hill.

The Wampanoag Homesite at Plimoth Plantation is a re-creation of the houses, gardens and artifacts of Hobbamock's extended family. At the Wampanoag Homesite, contemporary Native men and women

work as interpreters and wear traditional deerskin clothing. Guests visiting the Homesite discover how Native Wampanoag people in the 1600s lived from season to season. On display are three types of *wetus* (houses), including a *puttuckakuan* (round house), a *nushwetu*, (long house of three fires covered in tree bark) and a *neskwetu* (house of two fires.) Guests can step inside these structures to see a furnished dwelling complete with hand-woven grass mats lining walls and fur-covered benches. Guests are invited to sit and interact with Native interpreters who use modern English to speak with guests about Wampanoag history and culture from both the 17th century and today.

The roles of 17th-century Wampanoag men and women were clearly defined, and traditional Wampanoag men's and women's activities occur throughout the site. Often men are burning a *mishoon* (dugout canoe) or constructing a *wetu*, while women create beautiful pottery or demonstrate twining, a type of finger weaving used to make storage bags. On any given day fish or corn may be processed outdoors, while a variety of seasonal seafood, fowl, or *sobaheg* (stew) may be roasting over the fire at the cooking arbor. In the Homesite garden Native interpreters plant, weed and harvest corn, beans and squash while explaining age-old traditional gardening techniques to Museum guests.

Mishoons are built each year and are on display along the banks of the Eel River. A *mishoon* is created by burning out the core of a log with a closely tended fire. The burnt wood is then scraped out with stone tools. Using traditional methods of burning the wood around the clock, a *mishoon* can be completed within one to two weeks. On occasion, guests will get a glimpse of Plimoth Plantation's Native interpreters paddling *mishoons* on the Eel River.

In 2006, the Wampanoag Homesite experience grew with the addition of a woodland pathway. This project allowed the Homesite visit to begin along a natural, winding path from just outside the Henry Hornblower II Visitor Center to the Homesite. Over the past seven years the borders of the accessible pathway have been enhanced with indigenous plants typical of the 17th century. In May 2011, thanks to the generosity of the Plymouth Industrial Development Corporation, a second woodland pathway opened that leads Museum guests from the Homesite to the Craft Center and on to the 17th-Century English Village.

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