





# The Active Collections Project

Leaner Collections with Greater Impact  
[activecollections.org](http://activecollections.org)



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# ACTIVE COLLECTIONS

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RAINEY TISDALE AND TREVOR JONES





# Climate Collapse

Boston Climate March, 2019



# Systemic Inequality

Lenard Hinds, artist  
Hands Up Don't Shoot:  
Artists Respond exhibition  
organized by Alliance of Black Art  
Galleries, Ferguson, MO, 2014



# Hyper Consumerism

Life at Home in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,  
Arnold et al., p. 45

## EXCERPT, OYSTERPONDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, NEW COLLECTING SCOPE STATEMENT, 2018

We collect objects that help residents see their place in a long continuum of people who, for hundreds of years, have found this place special.

- Belonging: how we claimed “this secluded place,” and how it in turn claimed us
- Living close to the land and the sea: the fields, the marshes, the stone beaches and the bay, the weather, the views, the light, the smells, potatoes and vegetable farming, oysters, clams, scallops, fishing, cooking
- The patterns and rituals of our community: the four seasons and their derivatives (fishing season, the return of the ospreys), the Memorial Day parade, the ferry, Wednesday dinners at the Congregational Church and Thursday dinners at the yacht club, annual events
- Our families: the old families, the new families, “families of choice,” the ways families experience this place and commit to it, Oysterponds’ family tree

# Poetic Collecting Scope Statement

# Kentucky Historical Society Tier Chart

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4	Tier 5
Significant to Kentucky AND nationally or internationally significant	Significant historical value to Kentucky; strong provenance	Historical value to a location in Kentucky; limited provenance	Historical value to other locations; no Kentucky connection	Limited or no historical value; limited or no provenance
Few, if any, duplicates in this or other collections and/or of high monetary value	Few similar examples in this or other collections	Similar examples are held in this or other collections	Common in this or other collections	Not applicable
Rare, likely irreplaceable	Uncommon and difficult to replace	Moderately difficult to replace	Not applicable	Not applicable
Could be used to tell multiple powerful stories about Kentucky and its place in the nation	Could be used to tell multiple powerful stories about the state	Plays a supporting role in telling stories about the state	May play a supporting role or illustrate a concept, but is not the focus	Plays a minor role
<i>Example:</i> Portraits of Dennis and Diademia Doram	<i>Example:</i> The coat Governor William Goebel was wearing when he was fatally shot	<i>Example:</i> Copper still	<i>Example:</i> Flapper dress	<i>Example:</i> Woodworking planes

# Collections Tier Chart





Watch later



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MORE VIDEOS

Film Still, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives overview video





MORE VIDEOS

Film Still, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives overview video





Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamshala, India, photo by Kristian Niemi via Flickr



Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamshala, India, photo by Darren and Brad via Flickr



Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamshala, India, photo by Darren and Brad via Flickr







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
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te on the market and unscrupulous dealers sometimes try to substitute.

## Active Collections

In the interest of ensuring that our collecting practices and collections care always reflect upon our mission, the Board of Directors voted to adopt “A Manifesto for Active Collections” on May 24, 2016. Informed by the philosophy of Active Collections, we hope to ensure the healthiest possible collection, and one that truly serves the people of Framingham.

[Read the Manifesto](#)





Framingham History Center - Costume Collection Deaccession Review



Framingham History Center - Educational Programs



Sample of Objects - Smith Collection



[The Museum](#) | [The Village Hall](#) | [The Research Library](#) | [The Museum Shop](#)

August 12, 2017

Dear Friend:

This is an exciting time at the Framingham History Center and we want to tell you about some major steps forward we are taking with our "Smith Collection."

Mr. William H. Smith (1853-1923), a Framingham resident and owner of the original Wadsworth Funeral Home was a prolific collector during the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was drawn to the aesthetics of objects spanning three popular fields at the time – the natural world, the colonial revival, and the arts of Japan.

William and his wife, Harriet Wadsworth Smith, had no children and, before his death in 1923, Mr. Smith bequeathed his personal collections to the Town of Framingham, to be in the custody and care of the Trustees of the Town Library. He added that if the Trustees declined, "I then give the remaining Framingham Historical and Natural History Society."

In 1950, the Framingham Public Library was housed at Edgell Memorial Library where they opened a small exhibit in a second floor room showcasing pieces from the Smith Collection. After the library moved out of the building in 1966, the Library Trustees formally transferred the collection to the Framingham Historical Society. Some of the collection was exhibited until 1989 when it was appraised and 60 pieces were sold at auction. The remaining 626 works were packed up and largely remained in storage for nearly three decades.

Today the FHC has over 15,000 objects including art, artifacts, textiles, furniture, and more. Our goal is not simply to collect and preserve things, but rather to inspire, enlighten and engage our members and the community. We believe some objects support our mission better than others based on the stories they tell and the ideas they illuminate.

The majority of the Smith Collection consists of "high need" Japanese objects that require special storage and proper climate control. We do not have the staff capacity for the research and conservation necessary for exhibit preparation for all of these items without taking away resources needed for other parts of our collection. Artifacts from the Colonial era, the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, Shoppers World, or Dennison Mfg. Co., for example, more broadly reflect Framingham's history and should receive our financial and human resources.

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## Framingham History Center Scope of Collections

We collect artifacts, tangible and intangible, that are *quintessentially* Framingham. Our collections hold up a mirror to the community while answering the question “What makes this place special?” Our collections tell the stories of:

- Our Special Places: villages, neighborhoods, and communal spaces
- Industry and Business: The evolution from cottage industries to global corporations and their impact on the community (straw bonnets, mills and manufacturing, biotech...)
- The Creative Spirit: moments of invention, innovation, and art
- The Land: Its variety, its beauty, and its natural resources
- The Changing Built Environment: the coexistence of rural, urban, and suburban development
- A Regional and Cultural Crossroads: The intersection of railroads, highways, and diverse communities
- The Volunteer Spirit: serving community and country (The Heart Study, Civil War enlistment, Peter Parker in China, the Military Girls’ Club...)
- The Lived Experience of Framingham: attending its schools, building its houses, working in its factories
- Families: Old families, new families, and families of choice; the ways they direct and drive the community ...

The FHC does not collect:

- Artifacts based solely on aesthetics
- Artifacts that have no specific tie to Framingham
- Artifacts with no provenance or story

Such objects may serve as exhibit props or as part of the hands on/education collection, but should not be formally accessioned.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Provenance</b> (1: known Framingham provenance, 2: known non-Framingham or undocumented Framingham provenance, 3: none)			
<b>Condition</b> (1: excellent/good, 2: fair, 3: poor)			
<b>Relates to Mission/ Collections Scope</b> (1: most, 3: least)			
<b>Fills a Gap</b> (1: most, 3: least)			
<b>Storage</b> (1: easy, 3:hard)			
<b>Significance</b> (1: Local + Nat'l/Int'l, 2: Local, 3: None)			
<b>Rarity</b> (1: rare, 3: common)			
<b>Research/Exhibition Value</b> (1: high, 3: low)			
<b>Total Score</b>			
<b>Final Tier (Circle one)</b>			
Tier 1: 8-12		Tier 2: 13-19	Tier 3: 20-24
<b>Automatic NOs (Circle all that apply)</b>			
Duplicate		Size	Hazardous Material
Human Remains			

## FHC Tiering Worksheet



## HELP CO-CURATE OUR NEXT EXHIBITION!

The Framingham History Center is mounting an exhibition of our "Top Ten," the ten items from our collection that the people of Framingham HAVE to see, but our short list is still too long. Choose your three favorite objects from the list below. The three items that get the most votes will be "Framingham's Picks" in our upcoming exhibition. After you vote, please feel free to leave your thoughts, memories, poetry, artistic inspiration, or anything at all that these objects spark in your mind and we may incorporate your words into the exhibition!

Already slated for the exhibition are the Shopper's World sign, Dennison products, and our two suffragist "Jailed for Freedom" pins. We can't wait to find out what Framingham picks to join them!



**Gookin and Howe Map**

This map, dated to 1661, was drawn up for the court in connection with a lawsuit brought against land speculators Samuel Gookin and Samuel Eaton, who purchased 200 acres around Indian Head Hill from the Native "Popping Indians" in 1661, and proceeded to sell off that much land to several persons. The same establishment is being honored between Framingham and Natick.



**Thomas Nixon's Turnbook**

Dating back to 1778, this book took its form of a notebook from the Revolutionary War. Thomas Nixon, Jr. enlisted as a soldier at the young age of 13 and added 62 pages of both narrative and recipe memorabilia by hand to his thingy repertoire.



**Diplomatic Uniform of Peter Parker**

Rev. Dr. Peter Parker was a medical missionary who helped open China to the West, and served there as a U.S. diplomat in the 1840s and 50s. He set up a hospital in Canton, Guangzhou, China and over two decades treated more than 30,000 patients. His incredible Diplomatic Uniform is currently undergoing extensive restoration.



**Bust of General Gordon**

General G. Gordon (1827-1885) was one of Framingham's greatest war heroes, rising to the rank of Brigadier General in the Union Army during the Civil War. This monumentary marble bust was carved by Daniel Chester French, the sculptor famous for the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC.



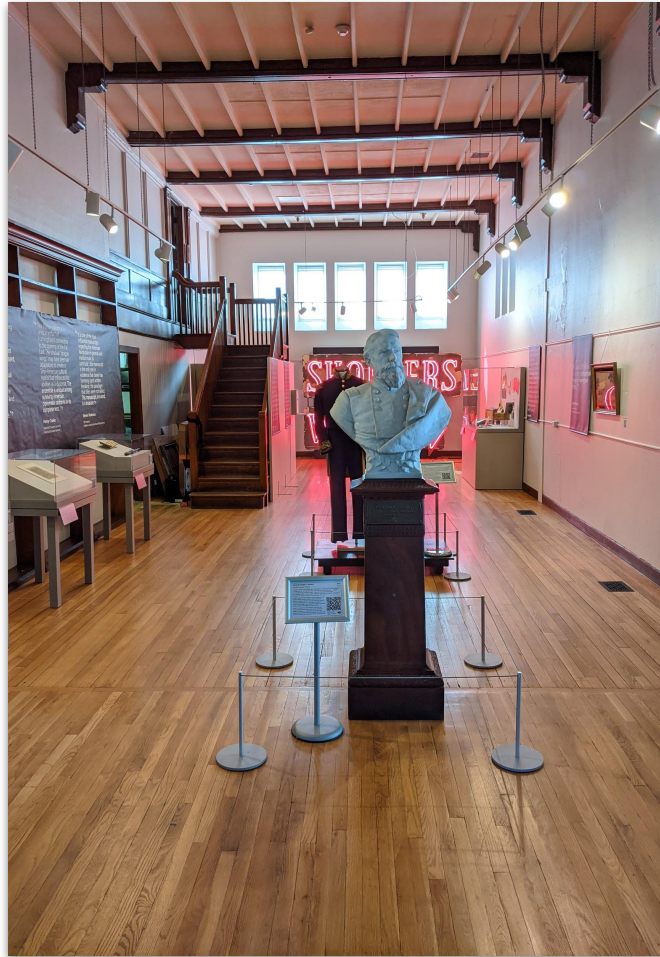
**Native American Deed**

The earliest deed known to Framingham was granted on May 15, 1650, between early settler, John Boscawen, and five Native Americans for about 10-15 acres in present day Squamville at the falls of the Sudbury River. All but one Native American were great English squire and signed their mark next to said name on the deed.



**Straw Bonnet**

Although Framingham has a reputation as a factory town, it was largely agricultural until the development of its first industry: straw bonnets. In the first half of the 1800s, several straw bonnet factories were established in South Framingham manufacturing products like this very early example from 1805-1815.



## Framingham's Top 10 In person (left) and digital exhibition (below)

### FRAMINGHAM'S TOP 10

This is a common refrain we have heard over the years, not only about Framingham's history, but about our collection: The 10 COOL artifacts under our care include precious objects rarely seen in other museum collections. But very few know what's here. "Framingham's Top 10" is our way of bringing a selection of these items to light.

All first, there seems to be little connection between these 10 disparate artifacts. This exhibit spans three centuries and contains an incredible variety in type, story, medium, and size, but every object we choose has one thing in common. Each is a rare or important item that reflects Framingham's role in moments of greater regional, national, or international importance.

Ultimately, we've created our list from the past to speak to our current moment, proving that the most important historical artifacts are, in fact, timeless.

We have invited our community to participate in this process by putting a short list of items up to a vote and guaranteeing space in the exhibition to the 3 items that were chosen as "Framingham's Picks." We have solicited public comment from FHC members, local historians, and experts to include outside each object. Finally, we have integrated technology to reflect the latest research into the exhibition.

We are very excited to bring you these extraordinary artifacts all in one place. It is our hope that you'll soon answer to "Framingham, who knew?" will be "Everyone."

select a number to learn more about the artifact



Online poll,  
Framingham's  
Top 10



Before



After



# Top 10 Strategies:

1. Learn about Active Collections
2. Get institutional buy-in
3. Educate your community
4. Train your collections committee
5. Create a poetic collecting scope
6. Create a collections tier chart
7. Create an education collection
8. Place a moratorium on collecting
9. Make your top tier sing with poetic interpretive techniques
10. Stop being afraid! Rely on people to be reasonable





Q&A

Stacen, Annie, Rainey