



Mabee Farm Historic Site

History Mysteries Student Packet

This packet belongs to: _____

Are you ready for your visit to Mabee Farm? The farm site is a great place to see the history of New York through the eyes of one family. The Mabee family lived in the same house for hundreds of years, from the original Dutch colony through English occupation to the birth of America and beyond. You will get to see that house, and visit the room where one family of up to twelve people lived, worked, and played.

During your visit, you'll be asked to think about more than just the general history of the family. It is one thing for our educators to tell you the family bought the land in 1705, but how do we know that? The History Mysteries program will help you explore not just what we know, but how we know it. The museum's curators and educators use primary source materials, including artifacts and the historic buildings, to tell this family's story, and during your visit you will learn how you can do the same.

In this packet, there are three activities to complete before you arrive, and three to complete after you get back to school. Your teacher might ask you to do one or two of these, or all of them. These activities will help you better understand what you see at Mabee Farm, and why it is important to your life.

Background Information

The Mabee Farm Historic Site is a special place where you can learn the story of one family across many generations. The story begins with a man named Jan Mabee. His parents were from The Netherlands, and immigrated to America. Jan was born in New Amsterdam in the year 1654, and moved north to Schenectady. There, he met a girl named Annjette, and around 1681, they married and started a family.

In 1705, Jan bought land from his old neighbor, Daniel Van Antwerpen, eight miles away from Schenectady along the Mohawk River. Daniel had a fur trading post, and sold Jan the western half of the property so he could build his family home. Jan built a house out of stones from the river, a home where his family would live for generations to come. From that point until the year 1999, when the Mabee family gave the land to the Schenectady County Historical Society, it never left the family.

During the years in between, the family built new buildings, tore down old ones, and made many changes to those they left standing. Today, if you walk through the 1705 stone house, you can see many of the changes the family made. These include things like holes for stovepipes, an indoor toilet, and even light bulbs. At the same time, you can still see what the house might have looked like when it was first built, because the beams and the floor are still the originals, and the big fireplace looks very similar to what it did in 1705.

Connected to the stone house by a 19th Century porch is the Inn the family built to attract customers traveling along the Mohawk River. It was built before the Erie Canal, and in fact, the men who helped plan out the canal, like Phillip Schuyler, even stayed in the Mabee Inn. Today you can see what the tavern room of the inn might

have looked like around 1800.

Next to the stone house is the brick house. This building was used as a summer kitchen. This meant that you did not have to heat up your whole house during the summer when you cooked food over the fireplace. The upstairs was also a room for several different mother in laws of the family, after their sons married and moved into the stone house.

Across the site from the houses sits our big Dutch barn. It is not the original Mabee barn, but it is very similar to what the family used. The Nilsen family in Johnstown, New York, built it and we brought it here so visitors could see what the family's barn probably looked like. It has big beams called h-bents stretching across the middle, and has a wide-open floor. That is where the family would remove the kernels of wheat from the chaff, a process called threshing.

What is special about the Mabee Farm is that the Mabee family was just like most families today. They were not a big political family, they were not rich, and they were not anyone famous. They were just a regular family, much like the rest of us. Most homes that belonged to regular families from the early 1700's have not survived. If you were someone famous, people probably worked to save your home so future generations knew who you were. For regular people, that rarely happened. That is why this home is so special. It shows you what life for a regular family, a family like your family, was probably like over 300 years of American history.

When Jan Mabee purchased the land in 1705, he and his wife Annjette had ten children. Two of those children are the focus for the Colonial Kids tour; Abraham and Maria. In 1705, when the family moved from Schenectady to the land called Woestina, which means wilderness in Dutch, Abraham was 10 years old and Maria was 5. This program will give your students the chance to step into their shoes, try a hand at their chores, and learn more about the history of the area through the eyes of the Mabee children.

What's the Mystery?

History may seem like a fixed set of dates and names in a dusty book, but in reality it is constantly changing and updating as historians and curators learn new information and find new ways to explain the information we already have. New letters and papers are uncovered in someone's attic, a new artifact is donated to the site that reveals more information about the people who used it, or a new photograph is discovered.

These pieces act as clues to the past, just waiting for someone to put them all together to form a story. Sometimes a new perspective on a particular clue leads to a completely new understanding of how people in the past lived. Individually, these clues are interesting, but it is when they are placed side by side that we start to solve the mystery of the past. The work of people like curators and historians is not only to continue to uncover those clues, but also to find the best way to share those clues with you.

The mystery, then, is how the clues of the past are laced together to tell a story. During your visit to the Mabee Farm Historic Site, some of those clues will be obvious, some will be harder to find. It is up to you to decide how well you think the clues you see tell the story of the Mabees, and to help the museum continue its search for more information.

We are also always happy to have student volunteers at the Mabee Farm Historic Site. If you are interested in learning more about volunteering, please contact us at educator@schenectadyhistorical.org or 518-887-5073 x 104.

Pre-Visit Activity #1: Primary Sources

How do the people who work in museums know all of the information they tell you? A lot of it comes from reading the letters, receipts, and official documents left behind by people like the Mabees. Here is your chance to do the same thing.

This inventory, although later than the Colonial Period, still contains similar objects to what one would have found in the earlier Mabee home. This is a list of all of the items that Jacob Mabee had in his house in 1824, and their prices. Inventories like this were commonly made after the passing of a family member, and were used to help determine who received what when items were given to the surviving relatives. Today, they help historians and curators recreate what items were in a family's home, and sometimes even the order that things were arranged in.

Read the document through carefully, then answer the following questions:

Context:

1. Who wrote it? What do you know about this person?
2. Where and when was it written?
3. Why was it written?
4. Who was it written for? This is called the "audience." What do you know about this audience?

Understanding:

1. What are the key words and what do they mean?
2. What point is the author trying to make?

Evaluate

1. Is this document similar to others from the same time period?
2. How widely was it circulated?
3. What problems, assumptions, and ideas does it share with other documents from the time period?

An Inventory of the goods, chattels and credits, which were of Jacob Mabe late of the town of Rotterdam in the County of Schenectady deceased, indented and taken by the said Mabe Administrator of the Estate of said deceased by ~~the aid and in the presence of John W. Beck & John C. Pratt~~ ^{annexed} the Last will and Testament of said Deceased, with the aid and in the presence of John W. Beck & John C. Pratt two sworn appraisers, whose names are hereunto subscribed.

In the year of our Lord 1824. ^{27th} March.

	\$	C
one black mare - - - - -		
one black mare - - - - -	70	00
one bay mare - - - - -	70	00
one bay mare - - - - -	25	00
one bay colt - - - - -	15	00
nine cows at 12 ^{<u>00</u>} each - - - - -	108	00
two steers - - - - -	28	00
seven head of two year - - - - -	42	00
four calves of one year - - - - -	12	00
thirteen head of sheep - - - - -	26	00
one fan in mill - - - - -	12	00
one cuttin bench - - - - -	1	00
four forks - - - - -	1	00
one shovel - - - - -	00	37
one two horse waggon & harness & cover - - - - -	40	00
one one horse waggon & harness - - - - -	40	00
one cart - - - - -	2	50
one pleanni sled - - - - -	25	00
one lumber sled - - - - -	3	00
	520	87

Two plows - - - - -	\$14 00
one wheel plow - - - - -	3 00
one corn plow - - - - -	1 00
one harrow - - - - -	4 00
one dragg - - - - -	2 50
one brake & hetchel - - - - -	2 00
one plow share - - - - -	00 50
one lot of old Iron - - - - -	1 75
one log chain - - - - -	1 50
one log chain - - - - -	1 50
four haws - - - - -	1 25
four axis - - - - -	2 12
one beetle & wedges two wedges & two rings - - - - -	00 75
Carpenters tools - - - - -	1 75
one spade - - - - -	00 87
four shoats - - - - -	6 00
two cradels - - - - -	1 50
three sixth snaths - - - - -	1 25
two sets & three mat hooks - - - - -	1 25
two edges - - - - -	00 37
two trembles - - - - -	1 25
one saddle - - - - -	00 50
rope makers tools - - - - -	1 00
two bells - - - - -	00 50
two brand Irons - - - - -	00 75
two pair of hand Irons - - - - -	2 50
fourteen bags - - - - -	5 00
one brush hook - - - - -	00 75
one brush sixth - - - - -	00 75
one gun - - - - -	04 00
nine chairs - - - - -	2 50
one gun - - - - -	1 00
	<hr/> 69 36

two muskets - - - - -	\$ 07 50
one stove & pipe - - - - -	25 00
one stove & pipe - - - - -	03 00
one clock & case - - - - -	16 00
twelve winnow & chain - - - - -	09 00
six chairs - - - - -	01 50
two cherry tables - - - - -	05 00
one looking glass - - - - -	02 50
one family table - - - - -	01 00
one tea stand - - - - -	00 75
spits & kettles - - - - -	05 25
frying pan - - - - -	00 25
two tea kettles - - - - -	01 00
two pair of hand Irons - - - - -	01 25
fire tongs - - - - -	00 25
four pails - - - - -	03 50
three spinen wheels - - - - -	05 00
two large spinen wheels - - - - -	05 00
one pair of smothering Irons - - - - -	00 50
one lot of oats - - - - -	32 00
one lot of corn - - - - -	47 00
one lot of wheat - - - - -	04 00
wearing apparel - - - - -	30 00
one suit of regimentals - - - - -	21 00
sword & belt - - - - -	14 00
boots & shoes - - - - -	02 00
two quilts - - - - -	10 00
twenty two pair of pillow cases - - - - -	11 00
nineteen sheets - - - - -	19 00
two dyper table cloth - - - - -	02 50
two coverlads - - - - -	12 00
of six quilts - - - - -	17 00
	304 28

Pre-Visit Activity #2 - Reading Objects

Some of the artifacts at our museum are several hundred years old. Because of this, we need to be very careful with them and make sure they are kept safe. Some of these objects are very sturdy, and can be touched, but others have to be examined by your eyes alone. If you see something interesting, ask the museum staff and volunteers if you can look at it. If they say no, don't feel bad. It is probably because it is too fragile to move. If that is the case, you can look with your eyes!

To practice examining museum artifacts, pick an object from your home or classroom. Maybe it is a picture of your family, your favorite stuffed animal, or a good book. Fill in the table below to describe your object. Don't worry if you can't answer all of the questions!

Purpose
What is it?
What is it called?
What is it used for?
Physical Features and Design
What does it look and feel like?
What is its shape, smell, color, and sound?
Has it been changed, fixed, or worn down?
Are there any markings or writing on it?
Materials and Construction
What is it made of?
Who made it?
What is it made out of?
Context
When and where was it made?

When and where was it used?
Who used it?
Value
Why is it important to the people/person who made it?
Why is it important to the people/person who used it?
Why is it important to the people/person who keeps it?

Was this activity easy to do, or hard? The curators at our museum do this every day with the artifacts in our collection. Although they are trained to do this, sometimes we don't know all of the answers. When you visit Mabee Farm, think about these questions as you see some of our collection. Remember, you can't touch all of the objects, but there will be some that our museum teachers will be able to let you hold and examine more closely.

Pre-Visit Activity #3 – What is in Your House?

At the Schenectady County Historical Society's Grems-Doolittle Library, there are many documents written by or about the Mabee Family. One of these documents is the 1824 Inventory of Jacob Mabee's home from activity #1. Documents like these give us a window into the lives of this family. The contents of a farmers house were likely different than the house of a blacksmith.

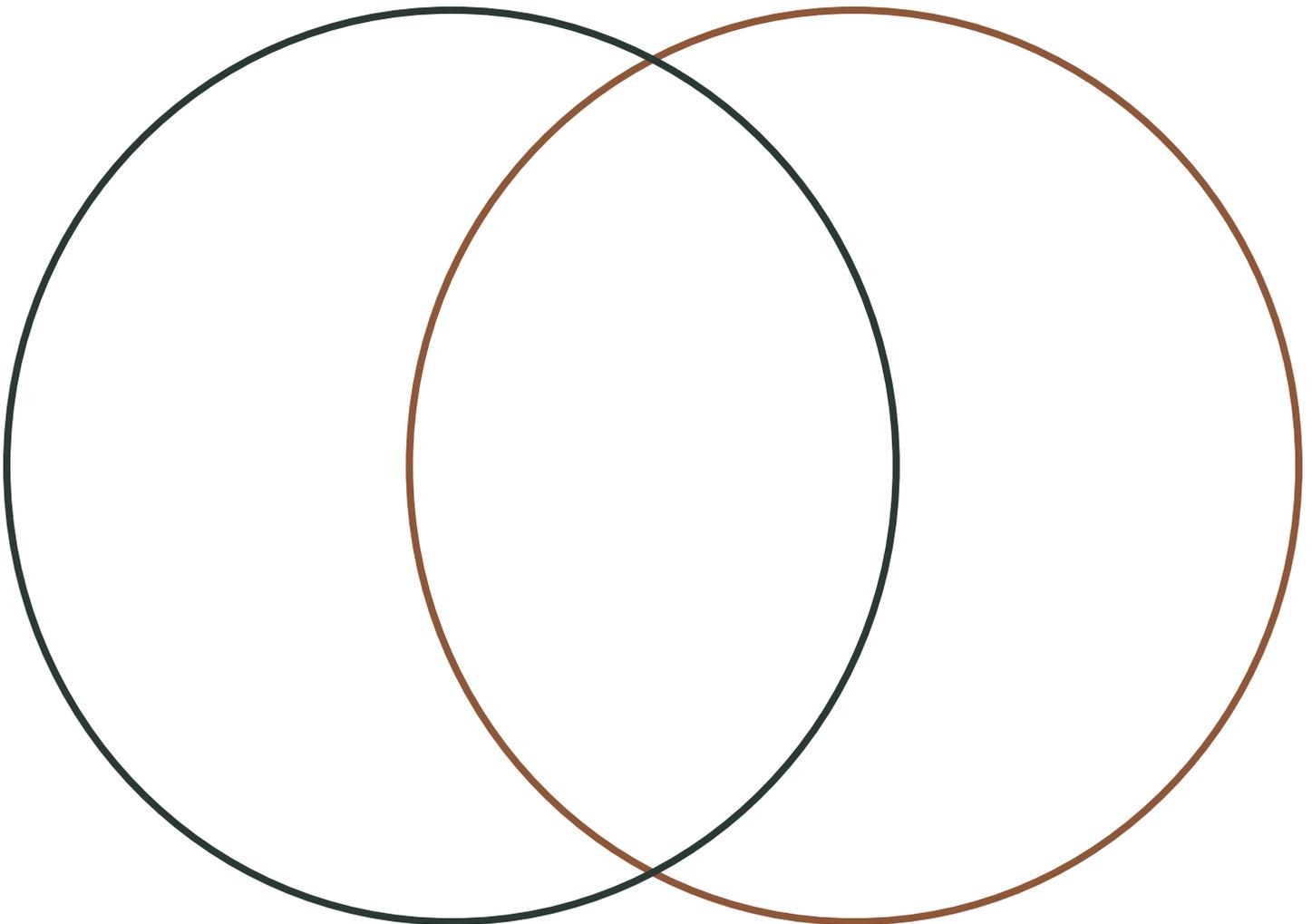
Make a list of some of the items on the inventory. If you need to, look up what some of the items were with the help of a teacher or a parents. What do you think was Jacob Mabee's job? If you guessed farmer, you guessed correctly. Would any of the items on this list be different if Jacob Mabee had a different profession?

Think about your own house. Make a list of some of the things in your house. Do any of those items depend on the jobs that people in your family have? Use that list, and the list from the Jacob Mabee inventory, to fill in the Venn diagram below, and see whether or not your life is anything like the life of the Mabee family.

My Family

Both Families

Mabee Family



Pre-Visit Activity #4 – Know, Want to Know, Learned Chart Part 1

Before visiting Mabee Farm, brainstorm about what you've already learned about New York's history during the Colonial Period (1492-1763). Who lived here, what were their lives like, and what was going on around them? This can be what you have discussed in class, read in a book, or seen during a trip.

Once you have completed your first column, make a list of the things that you hope to learn during your time at the historic site under the "What I Want to Know" section. When you visit Mabee Farm, remember what you wrote down and be sure to ask these questions.

Post Visit Activity #1 – KWL Chart Part 2

Look back at your KWL Chart, and fill in the final section. What did you learn while you were at Mabee Farm? After your trip, come back to this sheet and fill in what you learned. Compare this column back to the "What I Know" column.

Colonial New York		
Before Visiting Mabee Farm		After Visiting Mabee Farm
(K)now	(W)ant to Know	(L)earned

Post Visit Activity #2 – Colonial Trades and Professions

As you saw during your visit, there were many different jobs that the people living on or near Mabee Farm had. Some jobs provided goods to other people, and some provided different services. Answer some of the following questions:

What jobs do you remember hearing about while you were at Mabee Farm? What are other jobs that likely existed in that time period?

What goods or services did these different jobs provide?

If you had lived in the Colonial era, which of these jobs would you have done? Why?

What do you think you would have enjoyed about your job?

What would have been the difficult parts of your job?

Write a short paragraph about what a day would have been like in your job.

Post Visit Activity #3 – Make Your Own Museum

Now that you've seen our museum, think about what a museum about your life would look like. If you could only put four things from your life into an exhibit, what would those four things be? In the boxes below, draw a picture of the four artifacts that would be in a museum about you.

Why did you pick the four things that you did?

After looking at these four objects, what will a visitor to your museum know about you?

Is that what you want them to know, or would a different object in your life help them see you in a different way?

Recommended Reading List

The following books make excellent companions to your visit to the Mabee Farm Historic Site. These books will supplement the experiences you have while on the grounds, and will help further your understanding of life in the Colonial period.

Cooney, Caroline B. *The Ransom of Mercy Carter*. : New York: Laurel Leaf, 2002. Grades 7-12.

This historical fiction novel depicts the attack in 1704 on the English settlement of Deerfield, Massachusetts. Eleven-year-old Mercy and her family and neighbors are captured by Mohawk Indians and their French allies, and forced to march through bitter cold to French Canada, where some adapt to new lives and some still hope to be ransomed.

Edmonds, Walter D. *Drums Along the Mohawk*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997. Grades 9-12.

This classic novel, originally written in the 1930's, depicts the lives of a Mohawk Valley couple during the American Revolution. Made famous by a number of movie retellings, the original book is dated yet shows an interesting perspective on the area.

Gibson, Karen Bush. *New Netherland: The Dutch Settle the Hudson Valley*. Newark, DE: Mitchell Lane Pub Inc, 2006. Grades 3-8.

A short concise overview on the Dutch and how they settled New Amsterdam. A good overview of the beginnings of New Amsterdam, i.e. New York.

Hakim, Joy. *From Colonies to Country*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. Grades 4-8

Covers American history from the French and Indian War to the Constitutional Convention. Includes chapters on women and children during the Revolution and ideas leading to the framing of the federal Constitution. Includes maps, illustrations, prints, quotations, and a chronology. A Teacher's Guide is available.

Miller, Brandon. *Dressed for the Occasion: What American Wore 1620-1970*. Minneapolis: Lerner, 1999. Grades 4-8

Using material culture studies, sociology, and anthropology as a springboard, the book describes the reciprocal relationship between what colonial people wore and how they viewed themselves and others.

O'Conner, George. *Journey Into Mohawk Country*. New York: First Second, 2006. Grades 7-12.

Based on the original diary of the 23 year old Dutch fur trader Harmen Meyndertsz van den Bogaert, this graphic novel makes the story of the fur trade in North America come to life through striking illustrations and first-hand accounts.

Saari, Peggy, ed. *Colonial America: Primary Sources*. Detroit: UXL, 2000. Grades 4-8

Reference/anthology work of twenty-four period documents. Consists largely of diary entries, poems, and first-person narratives.

Swerling, Beverly. *City of Dreams: A Novel of Nieuw Amsterdam and Early Manhattan*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002. Grades 9-12.

This novel tells the early story of New York's transition from Dutch to British to American through the perspective of two rival families over their first 100 years.

We are also always happy to have student volunteers at the Mabee Farm Historic Site. If you are interested in learning more about volunteering, please contact us at educator@schenectadyhistorical.org or 518-887-5073 x 104.