



Yale-New Haven
Teachers Institute®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1978 Volume IV: Colonial American History and Material Culture

Introduction

The three units that follow were prepared for a seminar entitled “Colonial American History and Material Culture.” Joe Montagna’s unit on early Connecticut history was designed to be taught as part of the required sixth grade course on state history. Valerie Polino’s unit on colonial architecture and Ben Gorman’s unit on the architecture and material culture of colonial Connecticut were written for use in their eighth grade social studies classes.

Our discussion sessions were held in the Yale University Art Gallery, where Fellows had access to the library and slide collections of the Garvan Office of American Arts. We also had two “hands-on” sessions, one in the Garvan Collection and the other in the Harrison House (1680) in Branford.

The units that follow, I think, suggest a number of ways that teachers can use “things”—old tools, houses, utensils, etc.—to teach history. While most of us know how to interpret written documents, few of us have the knowledge or visual literacy to interpret material artifacts as historical evidence. Material objects contain a wealth of information we have only begun to exploit. The following units provide a start.

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