



Internship Reflections with Matt Pickarski

I am, at heart, a romanticizer. When applying for the internship position here at the Penobscot Marine Museum, I had delusions of grandeur; images of curating entire exhibits, providing life-altering tours of our gorgeous campus to our guests, and discovering long-lost letters in our archives filled my head. When I finally arrived here at the museum, I was confronted with the realities of museum work; more specifically, the season of field trips. For the first month of working here, most of my days were spent working with various visiting school groups, taking small groups of children through the realities of life at sea, guiding them through the making of intricate fish prints, and ensuring the safety of our artifacts as they maneuvered throughout our campus. Day after day of this cemented my love of working with the public in a museum setting, and also confirmed my suspicion that I am, in fact, not meant to be a teacher.



After the season of field trips ended, my internship here at the museum seemed more similar to the idyllic one I had built in my head. Now, my responsibilities involved helping our curator with our wonderful exhibits, cataloguing pieces in our archives, and giving tours to the general public. All of this was great... and then summer camp arrived.

With this new challenge, myself and the other full-time intern were to each take a week, and make “lesson” plans revolving around a central set of themes. Take note

of the quotation marks around the word “lesson”, as this was yet another thing I had to learn about working with children in a museum setting; unlike the school field trips, where

the purpose of our activities was to learn, the main objective here was to have fun. With themes for each day revolving around letter writing, boats, life at sea, E.B. White, and Maine industries, I had to curate sets of engaging crafts and games that revolved around our themes. Crafts varied from weaving “spider webs” on popsicle stick looms to sewing shark eggs, aptly named “mermaid purses” for more whimsy, out of felt. Making active games around the themes was a little harder, and along with the crafts, I found that the attention of six children is difficult to keep for long. Across my time with this museum, and with all of the tasks I have been assigned, I seem to have identified that the ability to adapt and be flexible is essential to success here in the field. When a camper doesn’t want to hand sew, when an interpreter calls out sick, and when an artifact on the campus is found to be potentially explosive, it is vital that one can adapt. My week with the campers was as fun and rich in learning experiences as it was exhausting, and I have countless garments now covered in paint stains and the remnants of hot glue to remind me of the lessons learned.



And, while my time with the museum has not followed the fairy tale I constructed in my internal narrative, as I near the end of my time here I have to say the reality of it has been all the more rich. I came here as a naive archaeology student from the State of Vermont, and leave here a lover of the Maine coastline, carrying a newfound interest in the maritime history of the North East, and a passion for all things museum.