

Inventory

An inventory is defined as a list of objects in one's view or possession. In past centuries, people took inventories of their homes when the head of a household passed away. Today historians use these inventories to learn about what types of things people owned, what was in fashion, and how they used the different rooms of their houses. Look at the inventory of the Pierce House on the next page with your students. Can they determine what activities took place in the different rooms? Are there any surprises? What kind of work did Samuel Pierce do?

Explain to students how to take an accurate and detailed inventory using the method described on page four. For homework have them inventory their bedrooms. What does their inventory say about them? As a follow-up assignment, have them discuss their inventories with an older relative, comparing what they have in their rooms today to what their relatives had when they were the same age. What has changed and what has stayed the same?



Selections from the 1768 inventory of the Pierce House
Samuel Pierce (1702-1768)

East Chamber:

Best bed & Furniture with China Cur-
tains

The 2d Bed and Furniture

Seven Sheets

Bed and Furniture

East Lower Chamber:

a Bed and Furniture

a Desk

a large round Table

Six blk Chairs

a Chest with two draws

looking Glass

Five Table cloths

Six best pillow cases

eight small spoons

a side Saddle

a clock or Time piece

Three brass Kettle

three iron skillets

two brass Candlesticks

West Lower Room:

Spear & large Iron Spoon

Andiron, three trammels, Gridiron &
chafin dish

Bread Toaster

five Iron Potts, one kettle

Stone Ware, Earthen Ware, frying pan

Trays, Pails, churns, & cheese press

Out door Moveables:

Broad ax and adze

Two Hoes & Spade & Shovel & Iron
bar

Chain Yokes & Horse Tackling the
Shop Tools

Carts & Wheels & Plows

a Canoe

a Horse saddle & Bridle

a Yoke of oxen

Five cows 4 Young Cattle

Four swine £5:10: a Grind stone

The Mansion House

The Barn Corn House and Shop

Hay in the Barn

The Home lot containing twenty acres



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Inventory Method

1. Choose the boundaries of the space to be inventoried.
2. Enter the room through a doorway and look to the right. Record every object that rests directly on the floor. Be descriptive. Remember that someone reading this inventory a hundred years from now should be able to understand what the object is. For example: do not write "rug" instead, write "dark blue and white striped area rug."
3. Continue to move around the room, listing this first layer of objects, until you are back at the beginning point. This first "loop" often includes rugs and large pieces of furniture.
4. Once you are back to the beginning point, move around the room a second time recording the things that sit on the objects you just listed. The second loop often includes tablecloths and things on shelves.
5. Once you return to the beginning, list everything hanging on the walls, or things above the things that rest on the floor. This loop often includes curtains and pictures.
6. Finally, list the things that hang from the ceiling.



Inventory

Historians can learn a great deal about people's lives by studying the things they owned. Carefully survey your bedroom, or another room of your house, and record as many objects as you can. Start at one side of the room and move around until you are back at the beginning point.



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