

Long Island Long Ago

What should my class do before we visit?

1. **Discuss.** What do we mean when we say “the 19th century”? When was the 19th century?
2. **Brainstorm.** What might have been different about daily life in the 19th century? What might have been the same?
3. **Imagine.** Read excerpts of the following poem together. What did life on Long Island look like in the 1800s?
4. **Sketch.** Make a sketch of what you imagined when you read the poem. Include as many details as you can.

The Shepherd's Calendar - September

By John Clare

That farm and cottage yard surrounds
The creaking noise of opening gate
And clanking pumps where boys await
With idle motion to supply
The thirst of cattle crowding by
The low of cows and bark of dogs
And cackling hens and wineing hogs
Swell high-while at the noise awoke
Old goody seeks her milking cloak
And hastens out to milk the cow
And fill the troughs to feed the sow
Or seeking old hens laid astray
Or from young chickens drives away
[...]
Hogs trye thro gates the street to gain
And steal into the fields of grain
[...]
Where blushing apples round and red
Load down the boughs and pat the head
Of longing maid that hither goes
To hang on lines the drying cloaths
Who views them oft with tempted eye
And steals one as she passes bye
[...]
Where morns sunbeams early fall
By the barn or stable wall
Basking hens in playfull rout
Flap the smoaking dust about
In the barn hole sits the cat
Watching within the thirsty rat

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[...]

The dog beside the threshold lyes
Mocking sleep with half shut eyes
With head crouched down upon his feet
Till strangers pass his sunny seat

[...]

Full soon the harvest waggons sound
Rumbling like thunder all around
In ceaseless speed the corn to load
Hurrying down the dusty road
While driving boy with eager eye
Watches the church clock passing bye
Whose gilt hands glitter in the sun
To see how far the hours have run

[...]

Then comes the harvest supper night
Which rustics welcome with delight
When merry game and tiresome tale
And songs increasing with the ale
Their mingled uproar interpose
To crown the harvests happy close
While rural mirth that there abides
Laughs till she almost cracks her sides

Now harvests busy hum declines
And labour half its help resigns
Boys glad at heart to play return
The shepherds to their peace sojourn
Rush-bosomed solitudes among
Which busy toil disturbed so long
The gossip happy all is oer
Visits again her neighbours door

[...]

Thus harvest ends its busy reign
And leaves the fields their peace again

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What should my class do after the visit?

Activity One

1. **Review** the following painting, which you may have seen on your visit.
2. **Discuss.** What is happening here? What aspects of this painting can you relate to your visit at LIM? How does this painting reflect 19th century life on Long Island?
3. **Draw.** Imagine you are an artist in the 19th century. Sketch a picture of a scene from Long Island in the mid-1800s. Who would you include? Where are they? What are they doing? Add as many details as possible.



Dance of the Haymakers, William Sidney Mount, c. 1845

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Background Information: William Sidney Mount

William Sidney Mount (November 26, 1807 – November 19, 1868) was an American painter best known for his genre paintings, although he also painted landscapes and portraits. He was a contemporary of the Hudson River School. William Mount was born in Setauket, Long Island, New York, on November 26, 1807 to Julia Ann Hawkins and Thomas Shepard Mount, her husband. He trained at the National Academy of Design in New York City, and in 1832 was made a full academician. He died in Setauket on November 19, 1868.

Although he started as a history painter, Mount moved to depicting scenes from everyday life. Two of his more famous paintings are *Eel Spearing at Setauket* (1845, New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown) and *Bargaining for a Horse* (1835, New-York Historical Society, New York City). The largest collection of his works is located in the Long Island Museum of American Art, History, and Carriages.

Mount's *Dance of the Haymakers* is a joyous celebration of country life and community. Two dancers celebrating the completion of the harvest have partaken of a smoked ham and cider and are now inside the barn performing a free form style of dance, perhaps a jig. A fiddler plays eagerly. One dancer, glances over his shoulder to assess the performance of the other. It is a completion of skill and stamina. The others in attendance take pleasure in comparing and judging the abilities of the dancers. Underneath, the dog and cat stare each other down waiting for the first move that will end their staring contest. Meanwhile, just outside the barn a young African American child uses a pair of rough drumsticks to beat time to the fiddlers tune.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long_Island_Museum_of_American_Art,_History,_and_Carriages
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Sidney_Mount

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Activity Two

1. **Discover.** Review the photographs that show farm life on Long Island.
2. **Discuss.** Does it look like you imagined? What aspects of these photos can you related to your visit at LIM? Would you want to be part of a Long Island farm family in the 19th century? Why or why not?
3. **Write.** Imagine you are a child living on a farm on Long Island in the mid-19th century. Create a journal entry from a day in the life of that child. What are some things you would have done on the farm? Inside your house? Who would you have spent time with? What would your farm have looked like?



Photograph from the digital collection of the New-York Historical Society. c. 1902

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The East Hampton Library, Long Island Collection

c. 1902