

Curating in Context

Souvenir spoon collecting was all the craze at the turn of the last century. Mary Cowgill Corbit Warner (1848–1923), or “Mollie” as she was known among her family, traveled two continents to acquire keepsakes of her adventures. She owned a round display case with a hinged glass lid to exhibit her collection of souvenir spoons. A curator at heart, Mollie had many other collections, including family heirlooms, which she displayed in her home and at the David Wilson House.



Photograph of Mary Cowgill Corbit Warner

The Assignment

In general, curators manage collections of objects at museums. They make selections from the objects to create exhibits and interpret the objects in an educational manner. Your home is probably filled with personal collections of objects that you never really thought about; such as kitchen utensils, toys, action figures, travel souvenirs, shells, and things associated with your family. Collections of objects don't necessarily have to strictly match, such as all Hummel figurines, but rather could be all objects that are made of a certain material, have the same color, or numerous other associations.

- Select objects around your house to make a collection of things for a museum exhibit.
- Research the objects on the internet so that you will be able to describe and interpret each object and its association with the others.
- Make labels for the objects either by writing them creatively on index cards or type and print them. Include the a. object name, b. maker/company name, c. materials used to create the object, d. approximate year of the object, and e. a detailed description of the object. Don't forget to create a catchy title for the collection and make a sign to announce the exhibit.
- Create an exhibit on the dining room table or any other alternative display area such as a card-table, fold-up table, bench, counter, or shelf. Organize the collection in an appealing and interesting way.
- Remember to guide your family members through the exhibit. Take pictures of your exhibit and submit them to the Historic Odessa Foundation and/or create an online exhibit through a preferred social medium.

From Our Collection



Mary Cowgill Corbit Warner's Souvenir spoon

Mollie acquired many keepsakes during her travels, including a collection of family heirlooms. In 2008, Mollie's collection of nearly 200 spoons was exhibited at the Historic Odessa Foundation.

Help us document your house! Take a picture of your finished artwork and post it with the hashtag **#historyathome**.

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