



ACTIVITY 1

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

The Captain Salem Avery Story

Activity Description

Students will explore the life of a 19th century Chesapeake Bay bay boat captain. They will read his biography and analyze historical documents (a census, family tree data, and an estate inventory) to learn more about the migration of his family and everyday life in a 19th century waterman's home.

Materials

Generations of a Waterman's Family

- Wall map of United States
- World map
- Student worksheet

Analyzing Captain Avery's Inventory

- Calculators
- Inventory of Salem Avery's personal estate
- Student worksheet

Teacher Background

Student Reading

When reading the Captain Avery story with your class, you may want to trace Salem Avery's journey from Long Island, New York, to Shady Side, Maryland (then known as "The Swamp"), on a United States map. Many children may not be familiar with all the geographical locations. You can also do this with a world map when talking about the generations in the activity "Generations of a Waterman's Family." Information for this activity came from the book *Captain Salem Avery House: Its History*.

Generations of a Waterman's Family: Use of the Census

A census counts the number of people who live in a particular area and records selected information about them. The U.S. Census gives a picture of the entire population at a given point in time. Since 1790 America has carried out a census every 10 years; the results are used to determine how many Representatives each state will have in the U. S. House of Representatives.



The information recorded varies from census to census. Initially, the census listed only heads of household. In 1850 all free people living in the household were enumerated. At that time, census-takers recorded information on slaves on a different form or schedule.

When students visit the Captain Salem Avery House for the *Seasons of a Chesapeake Bay Waterman* field trip, they will take on the role of a member of the Avery family in 1876 and will have the opportunity to look at census data to find out more about their individual.

Analyzing Captain Avery's Inventory:

Use of an Estate Inventory for Research

When carrying out the lesson, talk with students about what an inventory is and why it is an important document for historians to examine.

Students will discover what they can learn about Captain Avery through looking at his inventory.

When an individual died, the government would appoint two neighbors to go through the individual's house and make a list of everything that belonged to the person who died. Both those who were to inherit and those who were owed money from the deceased would sign the inventory to signify their agreement on what was included in the estate. To learn more about the economy and distribution of wealth in the past, historians compare several inventories from the same time and place. The inventories show the kinds, value, and placement of things that people have in their homes, and reveal choices people made about how to spend their money.

Note: The total value of Captain Avery's Estate Inventory was \$1290.25.

Extension Ideas for Teachers

Ask student to use Captain Avery's inventory to estimate (with a parent's help) the value of similar items owned by their family. On a copy of the inventory, record the approximate value of a present-day item in their home next to the value of a similar object belonging to Captain Salem Avery. Compare the value today with the value in the late 19th century.

Name _____

Date _____

STUDENT READING

Captain Salem Avery

A 19th Century Oysterman and Buy Boat Captain

If you take a trip to Shady Side, Maryland, and turn into the tree-shaded parking lot at 1418 East West Shady Side Road, you will come upon a pale yellow two story house. This simple wooden structure was once the family home of a 19th century waterman, Captain Salem Avery.

Salem was born into a well-established family on Long Island, New York, in 1831. As he grew to adulthood, Salem hoped to follow in his family's footsteps and earn his living as a sea captain. But over-harvesting had dramatically decreased the number of oysters in northeastern oyster beds, and it was becoming harder and harder to make a living on the water there. Some of the northern watermen and seafood packers were moving to the coastal states to the south, where oysters were still plentiful. So Salem, like many of his neighbors, came to the Chesapeake Bay looking for a better life.

At the time that Salem came to Anne Arundel County, he was only in his twenties. Being a good businessman, he decided to purchase the oysters that were caught by other watermen, and haul them on his two-masted schooner to sell in the city of Baltimore. On each return trip from the city, Salem's buy boat, the **Golden Rule**, would be filled with supplies needed at home. Because of his success, Captain Avery persuaded Joshua Hallock, one of his watermen friends from New York, to come to Shady Side to work in the oyster business.

Soon after arriving in Maryland, Captain Salem Avery met and fell in love with a local widow, Lucretia Weedon Andrews. They were married in 1857, and three years later they purchased an eight acre

piece of property on a peninsula of land known as “The Great Swamp,” situated on the West River near where the river meets the Chesapeake Bay. Here Salem and Lucretia lived and worked and raised their large family of seven children, many of whom stayed in the area and continued to make their living on the water.

The Averys also purchased a 70 acre farm nearby, on which they grew crops and raised animals for the family’s use. Salem continued to work as a buy boat captain on the rivers and the Bay until his death in 1887.

Today, part of Captain Salem and Lucretia Avery’s original eight acre home site has become a museum dedicated to telling the story of the Shady Side peninsula and the people who lived and worked the water here.



Courtesy – Lynn Abercrombie