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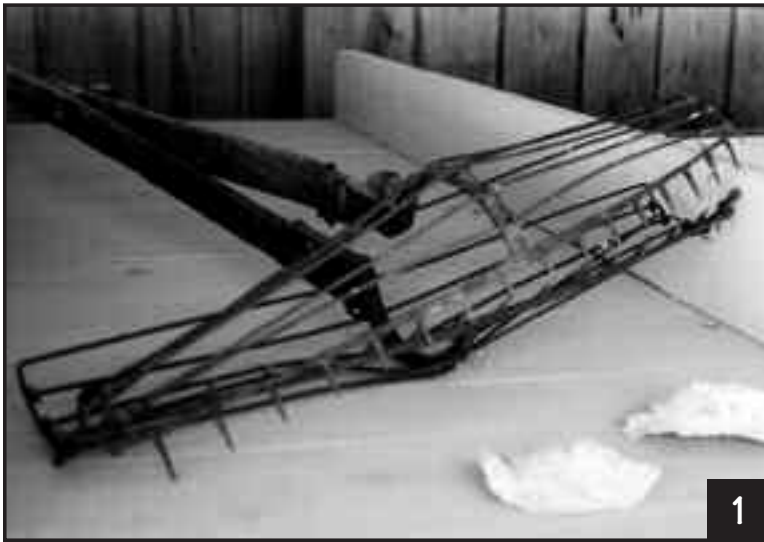
OBJECT PAGE

Picture Prediction

An Historic Waterman at Work

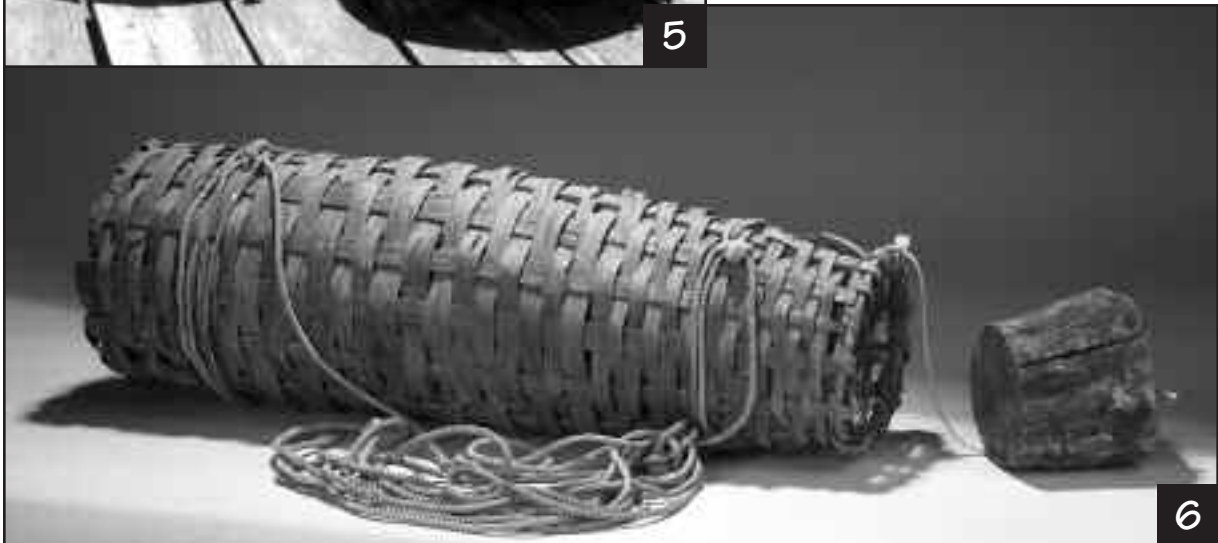
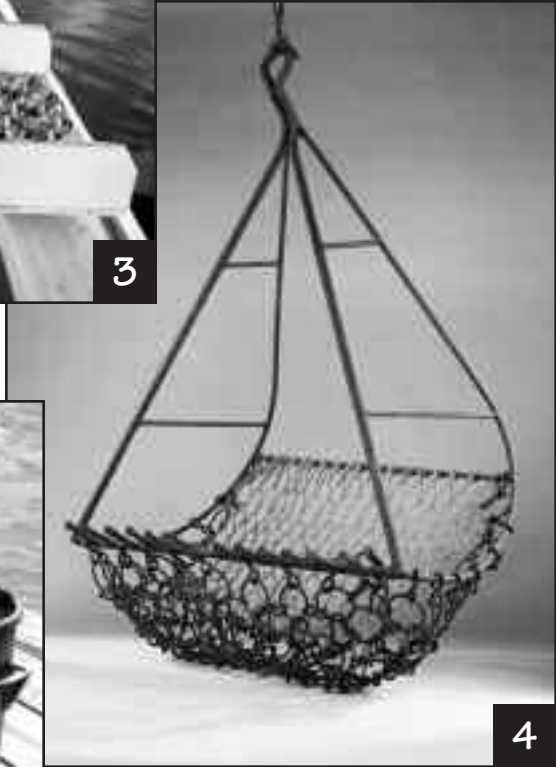
Directions: If you could peek inside a 19th century waterman's boat, what kind of equipment would you find? Take a look at the pictures below! Watermen still use many of these items today. Use the "Picture Prediction Chart" to make a prediction about the following objects. You will see many of them if you visit the Annapolis Maritime Museum,

the waterman's shanty at Pickering Creek Audubon Center, the boat shed at the Captain Salem Avery House, or, if you go sailing on the skipjack, the *Nathan of Dorchester*!



Courtesy – Calvert Marine Museum





Courtesy – Calvert Marine Museum

Courtesy – Calvert Marine Museum

Courtesy – David G. Maher



7



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Courtesy – Calvert Marine Museum

Courtesy – Adam Hewison



9



10



PICTURE PREDICTIONS – TEACHER KEY

Objects of an Historic Waterman at Work

1. HAND TONGS OR SHAFT TONGS

Made of: wood (shafts) and iron (head). Tongs were often made from yellow pine.

How they worked: To hand-tong, the waterman stands on the side of the boat, and thrusts the tongs into the Bay, feeling the bottom for the oyster bed. The tongs make a ringing sound when they hit oysters. Working against the tides to keep the tongs straight up in the water, the oysterman moves the tongs like scissors to loosen the oysters from the bed below, then pulls the poles together to close the tongs and scoop the oysters. The catch (weighing up to 100 pounds) is lifted above the water, shaken to remove debris, and then emptied onto the culling board. Tongs vary from 16 to 30 feet long – the deeper the water where the waterman tongs, the longer the tongs. Tongs might be shortened but were never thrown away. The local blacksmith would repair the iron “heads” of the tongs.

2. PATENT TONGS

Made of: metal

How it worked: Patent tongs lightened the tonger’s load and allowed him to tong in waters too deep for hand tongs. Watermen used a hand winch, power winder, and, by the late 1950s, hydraulics (a block and tackle, or air-cooled engine) to open and close patent tongs and lift the load of oysters into the boat. Invented in 1887 by a Solomons Island blacksmith, patent tongs were very efficient, although some watermen felt they damaged the oyster beds.

3. CULLING BOARD

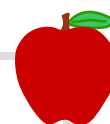
Made of: wood

How it worked: A waterman sets the culling board across his workboat. He brings his tongs up out of the water and empties them onto the board. Then culling begins, a job often done by boys. Cullers toss empty shells, debris, and undersized oysters (less than 2 1/2 inches in Captain Avery’s day) overboard. They knock or shave off dead oysters and mussels with a “culling hammer.” Seafood buyers paid close attention to which oysters were “handled well” by the cullers – the better they were culled, the more oysters the buyer got for his money, and the better price the oysterman got for his catch.

4. DREDGE

Made of: iron, cotton cord netting, and fiber rope

How it worked: A dredge is a large rake with a bag attached. Pulled by a boat, the dredge drags across the Bay bottom, “raking” the oysters in its path into the bag. Watermen use rakes with long teeth on muddy bottoms and almost toothless ones if it is rocky. Dredging is more efficient than tonging as most of the oysters in its path end up in the bag. The waterman uses a winder to bring the dredge to the surface and empty it on deck.



5. MARYLAND AND VIRGINIA BUSHEL MEASURES

Made of: metal

How it worked: Bushel tubs are used to measure the catch. Watermen shovel their oysters into the buyer's bushel tubs and then hoist them ashore or onto the buy boat. Bushel measures often had holes at the bottom to allow water to drain, sides flared for stacking, and a place to attach a rope for hoisting. Virginia and Maryland had different-sized "bushels" – the official size set by law.

6. EELPOT

Made of: wood (oak) and cotton cord

How it worked: Baited and used to trap eels, eelpots were built with long funnels. An eel would swim in and could not escape. With care, eelpots might last three seasons. Oak splint eel pots were used into the 1920s when galvanized-wire pots replaced them. Chesapeake watermen mainly catch eels to use as trotline bait, food for crabs not people.

7. POUND NET

Made of: wooden stakes and a net trap coated with tar

How it worked: Inspired by weirs used by Native Americans, pound nets are fish traps staked into the Bay bottom. As fish swim in the water, the "leader" funnels them into the "pound head" and traps them. Watermen leave pound nets in place for months and fish them daily. Bringing their workboat inside the net, they close the "funnel" so fish cannot escape, and then pull up parts of the net to scoop trapped fish. In 1870, George Snediker of Long Island brought the pound net to the Chesapeake, more than doubling fish harvests and turning many farmers into fishermen.

8. FYKE NET

Made of: wooden hoops and netting made of tarred cotton twine

How it worked: Fyke nets are funnel-shaped, portable fish traps. Watermen anchor or stake the fyke net in shallow water to catch fish. They check it daily, lifting it onto the boat to empty out trapped fish. In the late 19th century, fyke nets were more widely used in Maryland than in any other state.

9. GLOVES

Made of: cotton flannel or wool, dipped in tar, rubber, or now vinyl to waterproof them.

How it worked: Gloves protect the waterman's hands from many things: the elements – the cold and wet; the creatures – the sting of the nettle, the pinch of the crab, or the jagged oyster shell; and his lines and equipment.

10. ANCHOR

Made of: iron

How it worked: A waterman ropes or chains the heavy anchor to his boat and then throws it overboard to keep his boat from drifting. Fred Bast, a buy boat captain like Salem Avery, used this anchor on his bugeye, the *Gunnbee*, more than 100 years ago. Once anchored, the buy boat captain hoisted a flag to announce he was ready to buy. The workboats lined up behind the buy boat, awaiting a turn to sell their oysters.