

Worksheet 2: Historical Clues

Group 1: Artist

Charles Willson Peale was born in Maryland in 1741. He completed this painting in 1822. How old is he in the painting?

Peale was an artist.

Before Peale created his museum, he painted portraits of many famous Revolutionary War figures (He painted George Washington 14 times).

He displayed his portraits in a gallery which later became the location of his museum (Independence Hall, Philadelphia).

Group 2: Scientist

He was a scientist and avid [eager] collector.

One of Peale's greatest achievements in his museum was rebuilding the skeleton of a mastodon that was unearthed in New York and placing it on display.

He was the first person to think of displaying animals in their natural environment at museums.

He pioneered ways to preserve animals who had died to display them to the public to study (art of taxidermy).

He loved both investigating old things (artifacts) and inventing new things (steam bath, chimney, better false teeth, for example).

Group 3: Teacher

Peale was a teacher at heart, who believed learning was exciting and should be shared with everyone.

Peale was the founder of America's first museum in 1786.

Peale co-founded the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. This institution has an equal interest in educating future artists and displaying art to educate the public. What in this painting shows Peale was interested in educating the young?

Peale was a bit of a showman who felt learning should take "center-stage" and be a process of discovery.

Group 4: Events of the Time Period

His museum was where Lewis and Clark (famous men who explored west of the Mississippi) placed the flower and animal examples (floral and fauna specimens) they brought back from their trip.

Charles Willson Peale wanted his museum to become our official national museum and he tried to convince the government to make it so.

When Peale painted this picture America was still young. The country was trying to establish its identity, separate from England. It also wanted to show other countries that, despite its young age, it was still smart.

Peale was friends with Benjamin Franklin who thought the national bird should be the turkey. The turkey is a native bird to our country. What is our national bird? Do you see it in the painting anywhere?

He believed in an orderly American society with men as heads of family.