

**Maui Historical Society  
Bailey House Museum**

**In-school Training**

**What are artifacts?**

Artifacts are a product of human workmanship, especially primitive workmanship. The Hawaiians fashioned their tools and implements out of stone, wood, bone, or shell. Since they had no metals, these artifacts took many hours of tedious labor as they chipped stone upon stone or carved on wood with shell and teeth tools.

**What do artifacts teach us about the past or about how the Hawaiians lived?**

Artifacts provide us with insights into a peoples everyday activities including work and play.

1. **Food:** Hawaiians primarily farmed and fished for their everyday existence. Their most important food was poi, which is made from the corm of the kalo plant. The tool that was used for pounding poi is the “pōhaku ku’i ‘ai” or poi pounder. They were made of hard close-grained basalt rock and were chipped to the desired shape. They varied in size ranging from small pounders which were 5 inches high and weighing 2 ½ pounds to large ones over 8 inches high and weighing over 9 pounds. Young boys were taught to pound poi as soon as they were able to handle the “pōhaku ku’i ‘ai”. Food preparation was men’s work so cooking in the imu and pounding poi were done by the men and boys of the community.

Hawaiians were also excellent fishermen and did in-shore as well as deep-sea fishing. Their hooks and lures were made of bone and shell and their nets and lines were usually made of “olonā” fiber. It is therefore understandable that fishing was called the most varied and elaborate means of food getting in Hawai’i. The vast knowledge known to expert fishermen was handed down from the experienced elders to the interested youth. The head fisherman knew a great deal about his gods, the weather, stars, fish, tools and many other things.

2. **Shelter:** Since the Hawaiians had no metal; their most important cutting tool was the stone adze or “ko’i”. It was made of basalt and was shaped and used by tying a wooden shaft to it and using it much like an axe.

With this “ko’i” the builder could cut down trees to be used in houses, canoes, wooden images and many other uses. The adze came in many sizes some only 2 inches long and others more than a foot long.

The two best areas for the quarrying of the stones to be shaped into adze were on Mauna Kea on Hawai’i and on Pu’u Moiwi on Kaho’olawe. It took many hours of work to chip the stone to its rough shape and then grinding and smoothing it on rocks and stones to its final shape.

3. **Clothing and adornment:** Since Hawai’i has such a mild climate; the Hawaiian basically needed clothing to protect them from rain, wind, and colder temperatures.

Their clothing was made from bark cloth from primarily the “wauke” or paper mulberry plant. This cloth is usually called “kapa” in Hawai’i.

The making of Hawaiian kapa, was done by women and were their finest craft and they accomplished it with creative artistry. Hawaiian kapa is of finer quality and more delicately decorated than any of the other Polynesian islands. The Hawaiian women dyed their kapa with natural vegetable dyes of red, yellow, orange, pink, and blue as well as gray, brown, and black. In addition they sometimes scented their kapa with crushed maile and mokihana.

A great variety of ornaments for adornment was made by the Hawaiians, more so than in any other part of Polynesia. Some of their adornment were made of leaves and flowers and were for temporary use. Those of a permanent nature were made of feathers, shells, seeds, ivory and the teeth of various animals.

4. **Recreation:** All ages and all social classes enjoyed games, amusements, and relaxing pastimes. The games sometimes were used to keep the young warriors trained for hand-to-hand combat. Sometimes they were just for the fun of it.

“Ulu Maika” was one of the most popular sports in early Hawai’i and was played much like bowling. Originally it was played by men only, but now played by children and adults of both sexes.

As a test of strength the players would roll the discs as far as possible down a smooth course or playing field.

Sometimes they would test for strength and accuracy by having players stand on opposite sides of the playing field and rolling the disc toward each other. If the discs struck each other and one broke, the remaining unbroken disc would be the winner.