Historical Objects Buying Guide

Starting your own collection of historical items can seem like a daunting task, but with the investment of a little time and money you can create own collection in no time. Start by looking around your school. If you are in an older building, there is probably some storage closet hiding treasures from the past. You might also want to reach out to friends, neighbors and family members to see if they have any items they would part with. A trip to your local antiques or thrift stores may also help you locate some inexpensive items. Any event that involves historic reenactors will likely have dealers selling reproduction or vintage items as well. If you are looking to create collections for specific time periods, the lists below may help. Each list has suggested items for the time period along with prices and links for shopping. Note: Prices are subject to change.

Colonial Era Items

Pot Hooks (2) $3.50 each Jas Townsend & Sons
Flint and Steel $14.50 Jas Townsend & Sons
Pot scrubber $7.25 Jas Townsend & Sons
Jaw Harp $8.50 Jas Townsend & Sons
Pipe Tamp $6.00 Jas Townsend & Sons
Ink Pot $5.00 Jas Townsend & Sons
Ladies garters $15.00 Jas Townsend & Sons
Pieces of Eight $6.50 Jas Townsend & Sons
Carding Combs $25-35 on ebay
Pipe $ 15.00 Jas Townsend & Sons
Sugar Cone $5.00 Jas Townsend & Sons
Civilian broadsides $5.00 Sullivan Press
Betty Lamp $35-$50 on ebay

Civil War Era

Pharo playing cards $7.95 The Regimental Quartermaster
Razor strop $12.95 C&C Sutlery
Button polishing board $1.95 C&C Sutlery
Wooden louse comb $4.95 C&C Sutlery
Hardtack $19.95 The Regimental Quartermaster
Cap Pouch $16.95 Crescent City Sutler
Lace fan $14.95 The Blockade Runner
Daguerreotype $20-?? Prices for these vary widely on eBay. Be patient and you should be able to get a good deal.

Railroad Passes of the Civil War $2.95 Sullivan Press
Soldier’s Pocket Hymnal $8.00 Sullivan Press

Industrial Revolution/ Immigration

Many of the items below can be found on eBay. Remember to limit your search to the antiques category. Also some sellers allow you to make an offer that is less than the listed price. I always let the seller know that I am a teacher and plan on using the item in my classroom. I don’t know that it helps, but it can’t hurt!

Miner’s Lamp $35-$50 on eBay
Wooden spools $10-$20 on eBay
Railroad Spike $5-10 on eBay
Railroad Police Badge $15.95 Crescent City Sutler
Sears Catalog (Reproduction) 1890s-1920s $10-$25 Prices vary on Amazon depending on year selected and shipping costs
Button Hook $10-$25 on eBay depending on the materials used. Buttonhooks were used at Ellis Island to flip up immigrants’ eyelids to check for eye disease.
Hair Crimper $10-20 on eBay.
Flat Iron $12-?? Depending on style on eBay
Blue glass canning jars with zinc lids $5-20 on eBay.

The Tenement Museum has some excellent primary source documents that you can download and print for free.