

THESE 10 WEIRD MUSEUMS ARE DEDICATED TO HOUSEHOLD OBJECTS

Penny Musco | April 1, 2021

PHOTO: Lee Maxwell

Greetings from the land of the odd and the home of the strange.

The U.S. is chock full of quirky little museums reflecting the diverse and sometimes nutty passions of its inhabitants. Since you're reading this, well, you may be one of them.

But that's okay. Now more than ever, we could all use some lighthearted diversions.

Check out the list below to find one that might tickle your fancy.

Due to the coronavirus, museum hours are subject to change.



PHOTO: RUBEN M RAMOS/Shutterstock

1 OF 10

Nail It

WHERE: Haines, Alaska

Forget sea-kayaking or wildlife-viewing or even mountain-trekking when you're in Haines because where you *really* need to go is the [Hammer Museum](#) on Main Street. Perhaps you're under the mistaken belief that a hammer is merely a commonplace tool, but you should know it has a "complex history," according to the museum's website. Two thousand of these deceptively simple tools are showcased to drive home that very message, including a rock hammer from around 2500 B.C.

INSIDER TIP

Carrie Nation didn't actually wield a hatchet during her Prohibition crusade, but a Crandall hammer. It's a texturizing tool made of sharpened spikes held together with a frame and wedge, usually used by stonemasons.

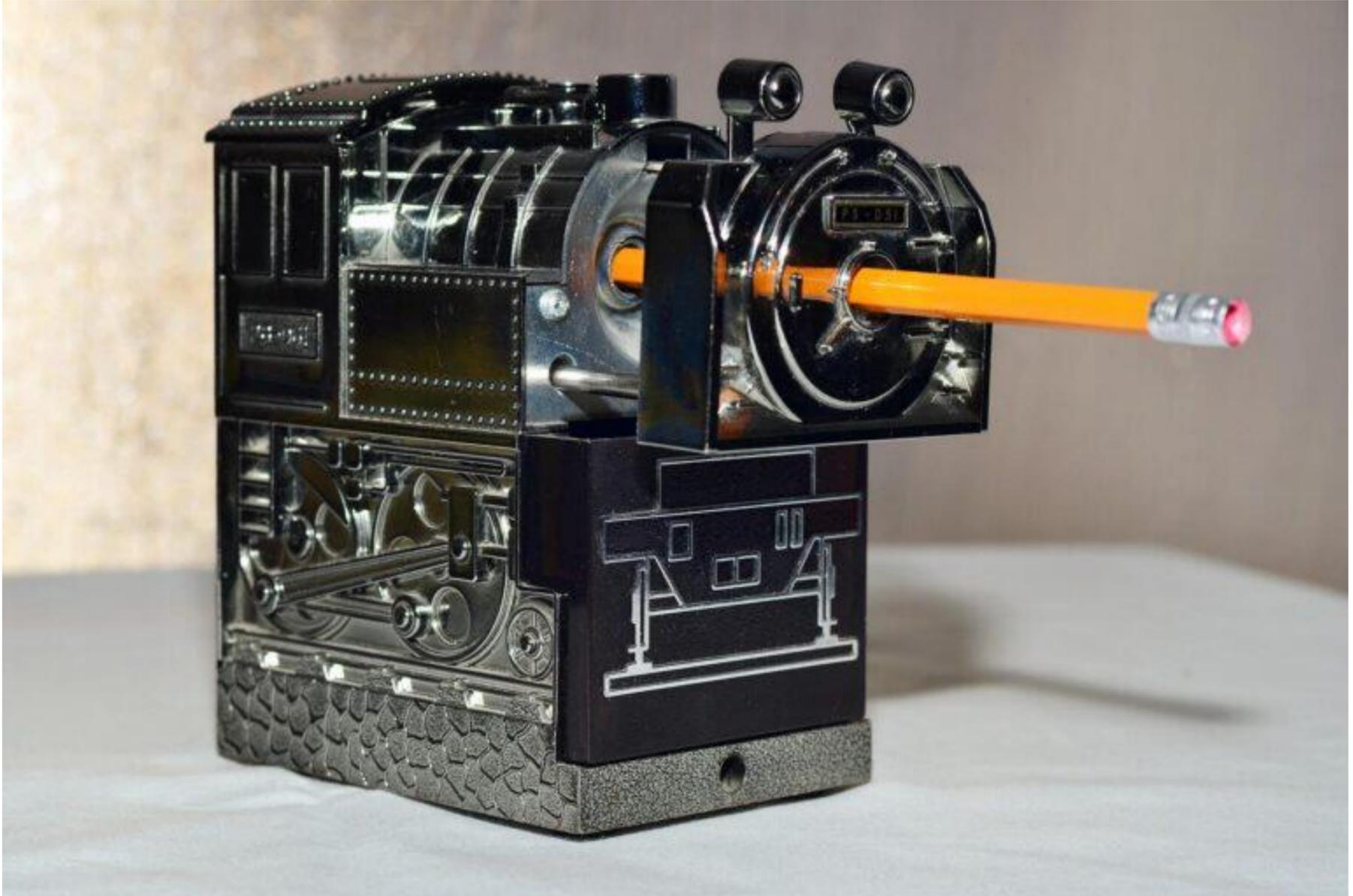


PHOTO: Rod Zadeh/Shutterstock

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Here's the Point

WHERE: Logan, Ohio

Welcome centers are usually pretty utilitarian places—leg stretch, bathroom break, and snack re-up—but not the one run by the Hocking Hills Tourism Association. Around back, you'll find a wooden structure housing the [Paul A. Johnson Pencil Sharpener Museum](#). Here, the humble, everyday implements—close to 4,000 of them—are elevated to diminutive works of art amassed by the man for whom the place is named. Think of a shape and you'll likely find it here, including a beast who burps after snarfing down the shavings.

INSIDER TIP

Logan is likewise home to the Columbus Washboard Company, which presents factory [tours](#) by reservation only. The town's June [Washboard Fest](#) celebrates the musical instrument made from the same.



PHOTO: Haverstraw Brick Museum

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For Blockheads Only

WHERE: Haverstraw, New York

Are you a fan of the Science Channel's *How It's Made*? If so have we got a place for you! Unearth the mysteries of the “vibrant industry” of brickmaking at the [Haverstraw Brick Museum](#). Peruse dioramas and artifacts related to brick history in this northern Rockland County village long known for its brickyards where brick-art also is on display. The gripping tale of the Great Landslide of 1906, an avalanche of clay created by careless excavation, is another highlight.

INSIDER TIP

To the north of Haverstraw is a pair of New York state parks with great trails and views—[Bear Mountain](#), on the Hudson River, and [Harriman](#).



PHOTO: Visit Columbus GA

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Chow Down

WHERE: Columbus, Georgia

When you were an adolescent, chances are you brought your lunch to school and what you carried it in made a huge difference in your status—cool kids always had a container featuring the hottest TV star, pop idol, or cartoon character. Relive those days of social angst at the [Lunchbox Museum](#) inside the River Market Antique Mall. Inside is row upon row of metal and plastic lunch boxes, many paired with their matching thermoses. Duplicates are for sale, so maybe now you can make up for your deprived childhood and finally acquire the one you yearned for but never got.

INSIDER TIP

Historic Columbus offers several self-guided [tours](#). The Black Heritage Trail takes you to the house of native Gertrude "[Ma Rainey](#)" Pridgett. And on the Soft Drink Heritage Trail, you can discover the town's links to Coke, RC Cola, and Nehi.



PHOTO: Lee Maxwell

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Ye Olde Appliances

WHERE: Eaton, Colorado

You just may kiss your modern-day machines in gratitude after visiting [Lee Maxwell's Washing Machine Museum](#) north of Greeley. It holds the [Guinness World Record](#) for having the most (1,400 and counting) of these pieces of equipment from around the world, some of them quite torturous-looking. Other domestic appliances of yesteryear are also crammed in among them. The guided tour (by appointment only) takes about two hours. One thing's for certain: these relics testify to the fact that the olden days weren't necessarily the golden days. Lee Maxwell's Washing Machine Museum is currently closed, but in the meantime, a 17-minute video tour can be viewed [here](#).

INSIDER TIP

On the outskirts of Greeley are two squat stone pillars, all that remains of a WWII POW [camp](#) where over three thousand German POWs were held during World War II. The [Greeley History Museum](#) fills in the details.



PHOTO: Robert Kimberly [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0]/Flickr

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Potty On

WHERE: The Colony, Texas

Don't park your keister at the Truck Yard Biergarten and restaurant until you take a stroll around its expansive grounds. The Toilet Seat Art Museum was transplanted from its former setting in a San Antonio garage to this very restaurant. In 2019, 98-year-old Barney Smith passed on his 1,400+ creatively designed commode covers to the eatery so the collection would live on. Sure, the display's been the butt of many jokes, but still, it's what you might call his posterior posterity.

INSIDER TIP

Truck Yard also has locations in Dallas and Houston, but the only toilet seats there are in the bathrooms.



PHOTO: Hans Manshoven

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The Sheath Shed

WHERE: Peaks Island, Maine

Seriously, who keeps the sleeve an umbrella comes in? Apparently, Nancy 3. Hoffman (yes, her middle name is Three). One day back in 1996 she realized she had some lying around and, just like that, she got the idea to open an Umbrella Cover Museum! Hoffman is also the director, curator, and tour guide at this seasonally-open institution, “dedicated to the appreciation of the mundane in everyday life...knowing that there’s always a story behind the cover.” Hoffman achieved a Guinness World Record for 730 wrappers in 2012; today she’s gathered over 2,000 from all around the world.

INSIDER TIP

To reach the isle, take a [ferry](#) or choose from several [water taxi services](#) leaving Portland.



PHOTO: Courtesy of Missouri Meerschaum Company

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Put That in Your Pipe and Smoke It

WHERE: Washington, Missouri

This Corn Cob Pipe Capital of the World, set beside the Missouri River, traces its nickname back to 1869. Despite its moniker, the Missouri Meerschaum Company is the only survivor from those heady days before smokers became pariahs. And when you visit its museum, you'll discover what goes into the crafting of its corn cob pipes, using materials harvested from the business's 150 acres of specially modified product. Tours of the factory aren't offered on a regular basis, but the website gives a sneak peek of one conducted for its 150th-anniversary celebration.

INSIDER TIP

*The word "meerschaum" means "sea foam" in German.
More expensive meerschaum pipes are created with a soft white clay primarily found in Turkey.*



PHOTO: Liz Lawley [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0]/Flickr

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Lighten Up

WHERE: Bradford, Pennsylvania

You gotta ignite your pipe with something, so the perfect companion to the above-mentioned spot—albeit 900 miles east—is the [Zippo/Case Museum & Flagship Store](#), featuring the eponymous lighters and knives. It's hard to miss: Zippo-shaped streetlights lead up to the building, its entrance topped with a brightly-flamed Zippo and a giant Case pocket knife. Inside, the company promises a survey of the “rich history of these two American icons” with exhibits that will “spark your interest.” And if the zip has gone out of your own Zippo, a repair center is on hand.

INSIDER TIP

Opera buff? While in Bradford, stop by the tribute to a native daughter and famed mezzo-soprano, the [Marilyn Horne Museum and Exhibit Center](#).



PHOTO: Aludden1 [CC BY-SA 4.0]/Wikimedia Commons

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The Spice of Life

WHERE: Gatlinburg, Tennessee

There are any number of places to go in this city that's the gateway to Great Smoky Mountains National Park, but the Salt and Pepper Shaker Museum is undoubtedly the cheapest—with just a \$3.00 entry fee—and most eye-boggling. An astounding 20,000 salt and pepper shaker sets from across the globe reside here, dating from the 16th century to the present. Here you can find the answer to the question that has confounded humankind through the ages: Which shaker has more holes?

INSIDER TIP

A sister museum is in Castell de Guadalest, Spain. Eccentricity, it appears, knows no boundaries.
