Ben Hartman worked as a molder in a factory. He created objects by pouring hot liquid metal into molds. In 1932, during the Great Depression, Ben lost his job. To keep himself busy, he began creating art in his yard using concrete, stone, and anything else he could find. Ben used the skills he learned as a molder to help create his art. He was not trained as an artist. As Ben was outside of the art world, his art is often called Outsider Art. Others call it Folk Art. We just call it art! Ben used three major themes in his garden:

**Patriotism:** Ben was a proud American and included many patriotic images in his garden, including flags and scenes from American history.

**Religion:** Ben was a Christian and included many religious symbols and biblical stories in his garden.

**Education:** Ben understood the importance of a good education and included many educational stories in his garden. He also built several miniature schools.

Now, on your own or with a friend, walk around the garden and find the next five objects using only the outlines provided. Hint: the first one is in the row next to the house.
Betsy Ross House

Ben created this miniature version of the Betsy Ross House from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in the fall of 1932. It was one of his earliest objects in the garden. Popular history says that Betsy Ross sewed the first American flag for George Washington in 1776. In the large picture-window, Ben placed an image of Betsy Ross sewing the flag with friends. Ben also flew a tiny flag from the third story window. What theme best fits this object?

**LOOK** closely at the stone that Ben used to build the Betsy Ross House. This is red granite. It is different from the stone used in nearby objects. Why do you think he selected this stone?
The temple, outlined above, is part of what Ben’s wife Mary called God’s Gift to the World. These four connected objects illustrate the key events in the life of Jesus. The temple focuses on his teachings. In the arched windows, Ben originally placed color images behind pieces of glass. The images were likely cut from old magazines and books. God’s Gift is an excellent example of the religion theme.

**WALK** around this area of the garden. What other objects fit into this theme? Be sure to check out the largest religious object in the garden, the Cathedral, before you leave. It is attached to the shed.
This miniature one-room school is the second object that Ben built in 1932. He attended a similar school when he was a child. Thinking back to those times, he wrote “Good Old School Days” with glass and concrete in front. If you look inside the school, you can see rows of miniature desks. Ben often placed Native American figures next to the school. On his tours, he would say the rhyme “Where we go to school each day, Indian children used to play.”

**THINK** about where you go to school. How is your classroom similar to this classroom? How is it different?
Tree of Life

The Tree of Life is the most famous object Ben created. It was also one of his favorites. This tree, which looks like a cactus, stands about 7 feet tall. It is the only object in the garden that includes all 3 themes. The branch on the left holds a schoolhouse and the branch on the right holds a small church. In the middle, Ben placed a shield decorated like an American flag. Above, a bald eagle perches on a globe. Can you read the two letters that Ben placed on the globe?

LOOK closely at the small rounded stones Ben used on the tree's trunk and arms. He collected these stones from a nearby stream. Ben claimed that he used approximately 20,000 stones in the construction!
Ben’s castle stands about 12 feet tall. He claimed that it was built with about 100,000 stones! The Castle includes a drawbridge, moat, and over 100 windows. According to Ben, the castle took only 14 days to build! The design is based on a large stone house in Berkeley Springs, West Virginia. To make sure that you do not confuse it with a European castle, Ben created a stone American flag that he placed on top.

**COUNT** the number of white stars on the Castle's American flag. Ben used a small white stone for each star and dark blue stones for the background. Now count the number of stripes. How does this compare with a real flag?
DRAW
FIND your favorite piece of art in the garden. WALK around the object if possible. What do you like about the object? SKETCH the object in the space provided. Focus on a detail or draw the whole object. WRITE a few sentences explaining what you like about the object.
Ben Hartman included hundreds of symbols and everyday objects in his garden. Can you **FIND** the twelve listed below? He used many more than once! Hints are below.

**Hints:**
- White Dove: Tree of Life
- Soldiers: Fort Dearborn
- Camel: Cathedral
- American Flag: Castle
- Cross: Near Cathedral
- Coffee Cup: Circle Planter Bed
- Basket: Near Pond
- Cactus: Circle Planter Bed
- Eagle: Tree of Life
- Canoe: Near School House
- Deer: Back Gate
- Bell: Near God's Gift
In the sidewalks around the castle, Ben used ceramic tiles, glass, and small rocks to spell out popular phrases and song lyrics. Can you **FIND** the missing words?

Lead ______________ Light

Let Us _____________

Keep on This ___________

Seek the _____________ in Life

Somebody _____________ for You

Baby Your _____________
Not sure what to do with the adults that you brought along? Get them involved in the experience! Below is a series of activities that you can do as a family or group. Have fun!

★ Choose a topic or theme for your visit. Here are a few ideas: American Landmarks, Religious Sites, Rocks and Gems.

★ Play “I Spy” and see if your group can identify the correct object using colors or shapes... I spy with my little eye something blue.

★ The Cathedral windows are filled with things to discover. Ask your group to describe what they see. Be sure to share what you find as well.

★ Find an object that is off the beaten path or hidden from view. What can you learn about the object just by looking at it? Share this object's story with your group.

★ Write a short story that includes one of the objects in the garden. Is someone lost in the desert? Do the concrete animals come alive at night? Who lives in the castle?

Interpretation and Design by Kevin Rose
More Kids Activities Online at HartmanRocks.org
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