HOPS HARVESTING

Historical Literacy Guide: Behavioral Sciences
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Object Literacy: *Learning from Objects*

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Thinking Like a Historian: Rethinking History Instruction and Common Core State Standards Initiative

*Thinking Like a Historian: Rethinking History Instruction* by Nikki Mandell and Bobbie Malone is a teaching and learning framework that explains the essential elements of history and provides “how-to” examples for building historical literacy in classrooms at all grade levels. With practical examples, engaging and effective lessons and classroom activities that tie to essential questions, *Thinking Like a Historian* provides a framework to enhance and improve teaching and learning history.

*Thinking Like a Historian: Rethinking History Instruction* (TLH) inquiry-based educational theory provides a common language for educators and students. The theory allows for the educational process to be combined with categories of inquiry which promote historical literacy.

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Background Information

In the late 1860s, a “hops craze” swept through Dane County, Wisconsin. The popularity of this cash crop corresponded with the growth of the brewing industry in Wisconsin. The hop harvest was a festive occasion. During the last week of August, wagonloads of young girls and boys came to pick in hops fields, earning 50 cents per box. By 1879, Knudt Heimdal was the only farmer in Deerfield still growing hops. According to local lore, he lost money on every crop except the first, in 1874.

The image Hop Pickers, 1879 (WHi Image ID: 1955) is part of a larger collection of images created by Andreas Larsen Dahl, a Norwegian immigrant photographer who worked in Dane County, Wisconsin throughout the 1870s and early 1880s. Dahl was, by his own words, an “artist.” His early photographs are similar to that of other landscape photographers who traveled the countryside in horse-drawn darkroom vans. Dahl lined up families in front of rural and urban houses. He induced his subjects to haul their parlor possessions out onto the front lawn, creating a family leisure scene in front of their house. Through the course of his career, he chronicled both rural and urban life of Norwegian immigrant families in Dane and surrounding counties. In 1883, he left photography to join the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Seminary where he was ordained as a minister.
Images for the Classroom

Hop Pickers, 1879 (WHi Image ID: 1955). Hop harvesters, mostly female, stand with hops; probably on the farm of Knudt Heimdal. Many of the harvesters have hop wreaths on their heads. Two men with hats lie in front of the group. The brim of the man on the left is decorated with hops. Note the shadow of photographer Andreas Larsen Dahl in the foreground.
Hops Field, 1874 (WHi Image ID: 26259). Group of men, women and children gathered in a hops field, possibly that of Paul Saavles. The women wear bonnets.
Images for the Classroom

Map of Hops Cultivation, 1860—1865

Hops Cultivation in Wisconsin, 1860-1865

Source: *History of Sauk County* (Chicago, 1880), pp. 365-366.
Images for the Classroom

**Canfield Hop House** (WHi Image ID: 28988). Old Canfield Hop House, exterior of building.
CRAZE FOR HOPS HELD WISCONSIN; DISASTER CAME

Growers and Pickers, Too, Made Easy Money and Spent Royally.

BY FRED L. HOLMES.

MADISON, Wis.—One of the most interesting chapters in Wisconsin history is the period of the hop craze, which swept the state between 1860 and 1870. It was stimulated by introduction of the brewing industry.

A disastrous year in about 1860 practically ruined the industry, however. Prices dropped. Hundreds of farmers were ruined and the business was generally discontinued in Wisconsin.

“The profits held out to hop growers were extraordinary,” said Frederick Merk in his story of economic conditions in Wisconsin following the war. In 1865 numbers of growers in Sauk county said they had realized from their crop $500 to $1,000 per acre, and one farmer was reported to have sold the product of thirteen-sixteenths of an acre for $1,600. In 1867 the Wisconsin State Journal contained an account of a farmer who was reported to have raised on a single acre $1,000 pounds of hops worth 85 cents per pound. Cases are numerous,” declared the secretary of state agricultural society in 1868, “in which the first crop has paid for the land and all improvements; leaving subsequent crops a clear profit, minus the cost of cultivation and harvesting.

Profit of $1,200,000 in one County.
The Milwaukee Sentinel in 1867 estimated that $2,000,000 paid to the hop growers of Sauk county during the year 1866 was clear profit.

“Hop growing developed into a veritable craze,” gathering renewed force with every new hop planted in the county of Sauk where it may be said to have originated, and where the crop of 1865 was over half a million pounds, it spread from neighborhood to neighborhood, and from county to county, until by 1867 it had hopped the whole state over; so completely revolutionizing the agriculture of some sections that one in passing through them found some difficulty in convincing himself that he was not really in old Kent, England.

“In 1867 the product in the state was between 6,000,000 and 7,000,000 pounds, valued at $2,000,000; by the next year it had leaped almost to 11,000,000 pounds. Sauk county alone produced in 1867, upon 2,548 acres, approximately 4,000,000 pounds, or one-fifth of all the hops raised in the entire country.

Great Army of Pickers.

“Harvest time in the hop district was a season of unusual and picturesque animation. Far and near from the surrounding country girls and women of every class and condition, in response to the call for pickers, streamed into the hop gardens. The railroad companies were unable to furnish cars for the accommodation of the countless crowds who daily find their way to the depots to take the cars for the hop fields,” said a contemporary account.

“Every passenger car is pressed into service, and freight and platform cars are used for transportation of pickers. Every train has the appearance of an excursion train, on some great gaiety day, loaded down as they are with the myriads of bright-faced, young girls.

“In 1868 the Wisconsin Mirror estimated that 30,000 girls were picking hops in the region tributary to Milwaukee, of whom 20,000 had been brought from outside.

Harvest a Merry Time.

“The girls, in addition to receiving their board, were ordinarily paid at the rate of 50 cents per ten pound box, which permitted industrious workers to earn from $1.75 to $2.50 per day. The picking season was a time of feasting and merrymaking. Each night when darkness put an end to labor, the well used fiddle was fetched from its case and to its merry strains, under the mellow autumn moon the unwearyed tripped the jovial steps of the hop dance.

“The inventive Yankee mind was at work upon the problem of substituting machinery for the costly labor of the pickers. In 1868 the Harrow Reformer listed nine such machines invented during the year by men residing in the Wisconsin hop region. None of these mechanical hop pickers, however, was ever successful.

“The profits realized by hop grower...
Student Activity

Introduce students to hops harvesting by using the teacher background information. Then project or share photocopies with students Hop Pickers (WHi Image ID: 1955), Hops Field (WHi Image ID: 26259), Map of Hops Cultivation, Canfield Hop House (WHi Image ID: 28988), and the Milwaukee Sentinel, January 16th, 1921 excerpt. Ask students to review the images, brainstorm, and write a response. Give students plenty of time to respond before introducing the discussion questions.
Teacher-led Student Inquiry and Analysis Questions

1. What do you think the connection of hops was to the success of brewing in Wisconsin?

2. In reviewing Hop Pickers (WHi Image ID: 1955) and Hops Field (WHi Image ID: 26259), what do you observe about the hops pickers? What about the season? What about the time period?

3. Do workers today do similar jobs during a harvest time? How do you think their modern experience compares to that of the hops harvesters in the 1860s and 1870s?

4. If time allows, have students participate in a shared reading of the Milwaukee Sentinel excerpt from January 16, 1921, “Craze for Hops Held Wisconsin.” How was the experience of the hops harvest remembered by author Fred Holmes 57 years later?
Bibliography and Additional Resources

Images and objects shared in this document can be found on the following Wisconsin Historical Society webpages:

Wisconsin Historical Images  www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi/
Curators’ Favorites  www.wisconsinhistory.org/museum/artifacts/

Additional information can be found at:
Wisconsin Magazine of History Archive
http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/u/?wmh,10003

Wisconsin Historical Society Reference Maps
www.wisconsinhistory.org/reference/maps/

Six Generations Here: A Farm Family Remembers By Marjorie L. McLellan with an essay by Kathleen Neils Conzen

Norwegians in Wisconsin: Revised and Expanded Edition By Richard J. Fapso

Cream City Chronicles: Stories of Milwaukee’s Past By John Gurda
Reflection

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Background Information

**Living Room, 1928 (WHi Image ID: 73882)**
This photograph is of the living room in the home of William Llewellyn and Zona Gale Breese, with a fire in the fireplace. There is a spinning wheel near the hearth and bookcases along the far wall. The sunroom is visible through the French doors. This house, at 804 MacFarlane Road and built in 1912, was the home of Zona Gale from the time of her marriage to William Llewellyn Breese in 1928 until her death in 1938. The house was donated to the city of Portage in 1942 and served as the city’s library until 1994. Since 1996 it has housed the Portage Historical Society’s Museum.

**Interior of a Modern Home, 1955 (WHi Image ID: 37111)**
This photograph, taken on October 4, 1955, shows a living room with a television. It was taken by Arthur M. Vinje, who was employed by the Wisconsin State Journal. The majority of his images date from 1940-1961. Vinje was the first photographer for this newspaper.

These two photos are pictures of living rooms in two separate time periods. They illustrate examples of style changes that occur over time. Changes and continuity are recurring themes throughout history. A discussion of changes and continuity can lead students to analyze current trends and help them think about current changes and possible trends of the future.
Images for the Classroom

Living Room, 1928 (WHi Image ID: 73882).
Images for the Classroom

Student Activity

Project or share photocopies with students of the images entitled Living Room, 1928 (WHi Image ID: 73882) and Interior of a Modern Home, 1955 (WHi Image ID: 37111). Ask students to review the images and share with a classmate similarities or differences to the two rooms in relation to their own living rooms. Give students plenty of time to respond before introducing the discussion questions.
Teacher-led Student Inquiry and Analysis Questions

1. What are the similarities between these two living rooms from 1928 and 1955? What are the differences?

2. How do you think technology helped change the feeling of the two rooms?

3. How does the living room of today reflect changes in technology since 1955?

4. How is today’s living room similar to these two?

5. How do you think the living room as a space for family gathering changed over time? Why do you think those changes took place?
Bibliography and Additional Resources

Images and objects shared in this document can be found on the following Wisconsin Historical Society webpages:

Wisconsin Historical Images www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi/
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Reflection

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Background Information

In early human societies, people paid for goods and services with objects of physical value, such as bartered goods. Over time, governments began issuing uniform coins made out of precious metal which were easier to carry around and exchange. Their uniform shape and size meant that each piece could easily be assigned a value, unlike randomly-shaped chunks of gold and silver which would need to be weighed and appraised individually. Eventually, coins came to be made of non-precious metals like copper and nickel, but could still be redeemed for their equivalent value in gold. Paper money, called “notes,” was often used as well, especially for larger denominations. Although the coins and paper notes themselves were physically worthless, they represented value. In the United States, the first national currency was issued by the First Bank of the United States, formed in 1791. The First Bank was allowed to expire after its 20-year charter was completed and was replaced by the Second Bank of the United States in 1816.

President Andrew Jackson strongly distrusted the Second Bank of the United States and refused to renew its charter. The bank was converted to a regular private bank in 1836 and went out of business in 1841. Because there was no longer a federal banking authority, state governments took over the job of supervising banks. This supervision often proved inadequate. In those days banks made loans by issuing their own currency. These “bank notes” were supposed to be convertible, on demand, to cash—that is, to gold or silver. It was the job of the bank examiner to visit the bank and certify that it had enough cash on hand to redeem its outstanding currency. Because this was not always done, many bank note holders found themselves with worthless paper. It was sometimes difficult or impossible to detect which notes were sound and which were not, because of their variety.

By 1860 more than 10,000 different bank notes circulated throughout the country. Commerce suffered as a result. Counterfeiting was epidemic. Hundreds of banks failed. Throughout the country there was an insistent demand for a uniform national currency acceptable anywhere without risk. In response, Congress passed the National Currency Act of 1863. In 1864, President Lincoln signed a revision of that law, the National Bank Act. These laws established a new system of national banks and a new government
agency headed by a Comptroller of the Currency. The Comptroller’s job was to organize
and supervise the new banking system through regulations and periodic examinations.
Ultimately, the national banking legislation of the 1860s proved inadequate due to the
absence of a central banking structure. The inability of the banking system to expand or
contract currency in circulation or provide a mechanism to move reserves throughout the
system led to wild flows in the economy from boom to bust cycles.

As America’s industrial economy grew and became more complex toward the end of the
19th century, the weaknesses in the banking system became critical. The boom and bust
cycles created by an inelastic currency and immobile reserves led to frequent financial
panics, which triggered economic depressions. The most severe depression at that point
in U.S. history came in 1893 and left a legacy of economic uncertainty.

On December 23, 1913 President Wilson signed into law the Federal Reserve Act of
1913. The purposes of this was act were “to provide for the establishment of Federal
Reserve Banks, to furnish an elastic currency, to afford means of rediscounting
commercial paper, to establish a more effective supervision of banking in the United
States, and for other purposes.”

In the United States today, the Federal Reserve Bank regulates the amount of currency
that is made and distributed by the Bureau of Printing and Engraving. We usually call
these Federal Reserve Notes “dollars.” All Federal Reserve Notes in the United States
have emblems indicating that they are issued by the Federal Reserve. The values of
these notes are also clearly printed, and they include security features to reduce the
risk of forgery. While bank notes are no longer considered legal currency, they may have
acquired numismatic value; this means that they are valuable to collectors because of
their history and because they are so rare.
Wisconsin Bank Notes, 1852 (WHi Image ID: 38558). Proof sheets of five- and ten- dollar bills of the Wisconsin Bank of Madison. Among other illustrations, the notes include an engraving of Leonard J. Farwell, Governor of Wisconsin in 1852, and a variation of the State Seal.
Student Activity

Introduce students to bank notes by using the teacher background information. Then project or share a photocopy with students of Wisconsin Bank Notes (WHi Image ID: 38558) with students. Ask students to review the image and share with a classmate similarities or differences to current US currency. Give students plenty of time to respond before introducing the discussion questions.
Teacher-led Student Inquiry and Analysis Questions

1. Why do you think people would prefer to use paper bank notes instead of coins?

2. Name one similarity and one difference between a US dollar and a bank note from 1852?

3. If time allows, have students research the National Currency Act of 1863. How did the National Currency Act of 1863 transform the way banks and citizens do business?

4. Why is a national currency important to a nation?
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Curators’ Favorites www.wisconsinhistory.org/museum/artifacts/

Additional information can be found at:

Comptroller of the Currency Administrator of the National Banks
www.occ.treas.gov/index.html

National Bank History
www.nationalbankhistory.com
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Background Information

Harvested in the early autumn, wild rice has long been an important commodity to Native Americans, including the Ojibwe, who lived in areas where it grew abundantly. This improvised wild rice threshing machine was made and used by Duane Poupart, Sr., a Lac Du Flambeau Ojibwe. The barrel at the top of the frame, made of PVC pipe closed off at both ends with plywood, allows only a small space at the top through which to insert rice. Once filled, a motor rotates the barrel and the hulled rice then drops out of the lower end of the barrel. Box fans then supply the wind needed to completely separate the grain from the husk.

Machines such as this one save time and energy. The traditional harvest of wild rice could take days or weeks and involved a great deal of manual labor. To harvest the rice, one person would push a canoe slowly through the water in the rice fields, using a forked stick to grip the roots of the rice. The partner ricers, using pairs of wooden sticks, bent the rice stalks over the canoe and knocked the kernels off. Historically, harvesters used a trademark binding to tie together bundles of rice stalks a few weeks before harvest, allowing them to distinguish their property; each family or group only gathered the portion of rice that belonged to them. Gathering the rice would continue through the day until the canoe was full.

Once back to shore, the processing of the rice began by spreading it out on sheets of birchbark or blankets, and cleaning it of twigs, pieces of stalks, small stones, and worms before leaving it to dry in the sun. The rice was then placed in a big iron kettle or galvanized iron washtub and parched over an open fire, where the processor stirred it constantly with a wooden paddle to keep the rice from scorching. This parching process cured the rice and also helped loosen the outer husks.

The next step was threshing, jigging, or “dancing the rice”, which further separated the husks from the grains. The rice was placed in a depression in the ground that had been lined with deerskin or into a wooden tub sunk in the ground. The “jigger” was usually a man who wore special moccasins with high cuffs wrapped around the ankles to prevent the rice from getting inside. Stepping into the pit and leaning on a post for support, he tramped on the rice, further loosening it from its husks.
Finally, the processors had to separate the rice grains completely from their husks. They usually accomplished this, with the help of a strong breeze, by putting the rice kernels into large birchbark winnowing trays and then tossing them into the air. The husks blew away and the heavier grain fell back to the bottom of the tray.

While the wild rice harvest has retained its importance in many Indian communities, the traditional harvesting process has evolved over time with mechanization taking over at least two of the most laborious steps: parching and hulling. Hulling machines or thresheres, like the one featured here, replaced the arduous task of jigging, which separated the rice from its husks manually. Parched rice is put through a door in a rotating “thresher” that has sticks or pegs inside at many different angles. A belt-driven motor or engine rotates the entire barrel and the weight of the rice falling against the sticks removes the husks. Processors often constructed these homemade inventions with salvaged mechanical parts, so no two are exactly alike.

The increasing popularity of mechanized wild ricing has had effects on traditional Ojibwe culture. The seasonal wild rice harvest is not only a source of sustenance but also has important social aspects. Traditionally, entire communities moved to the lakeshore for several weeks during the fall harvest, which allowed people to visit with family and friends and also created opportunities for courtship. While harvesters spent their days gathering and processing rice, dancing and socializing filled the evening hours. The mechanical processing equipment allows the Ojibwe to process their rice in a fraction of the time, but now they often do so at home rather than by hand at the lakeshore, reducing the traditional opportunities for social interaction.
Images for the Classroom

Images for the Classroom

Images for the Classroom

*Harvesting Wild Rice, 1941* (WHi Image ID: 34567). Joe Stoddard of the Chippewa tribe harvests wild rice on the Bad River Indian Reservation.
Student Activity

Introduce students to wild rice harvesting by using the teacher background information. Then project or share a photocopy with students of Wild Rice Threshing Machine (WHi Museum Object: 1999.61.5), Parching Wild Rice (WHi Image ID: 25055) and Harvesting Wild Rice (WHi Image ID: 34567). Ask students to review the images, brainstorm and write down what they are looking at. Give students plenty of time to respond before introducing the discussion questions.
Teacher-led Student Inquiry and Analysis Questions

1. Using the images, how would the creation of a Wild Rice Threshing Machine change the process of harvesting wild rice?

2. What aspects of the traditional method of harvesting are missing from the mechanized harvest?

3. What possible effect has the change of harvesting from hand to machine had on the community life of the Ojibwe?

4. Why might some Ojibwe people prefer the traditional methods of harvesting wild rice? What is so important about these traditional methods?

5. What other technologies do we use today that change the way we interact with our peers?
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Additional information can be found in:

*Indian Nations of Wisconsin: Histories of Endurance and Renewal* by Patty Loew
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• Student-directed learning following paths created by the students
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Background Information

Land speculator James Duane Doty was largely responsible for the selection of Madison as the capital of Wisconsin. Born in Salem, New York, in 1799, Doty studied law and came west to Detroit in 1818. As a protégé of Michigan Governor Lewis Cass, Doty served as secretary to Governor Cass on an exploratory expedition to Wisconsin in 1820.

Doty served as a member of the Michigan Territorial Council from 1833 to 1835, where he began petitioning Congress for the division of Michigan into two parts. He argued that the growing number of residents in Wisconsin was not adequately served by the territorial government in Detroit. In 1836, the Wisconsin Territory was officially created. Doty had hoped to be appointed governor, but President Andrew Jackson appointed Doty's rival, Henry Dodge, instead. Dodge picked Belmont to be the territorial capital because it was in the lead-mining district, yet many lawmakers thought Belmont was too far from Green Bay and Milwaukee. Doty agreed and wanted to find a more central location.

Doty dreamed of building cities. He bought land between two of the four lakes in south-central Wisconsin. Then he had a surveyor diagram a city, which he named “Madison.” In November of 1836, Doty successfully lobbied the territorial Legislature, meeting in Belmont, Wisconsin, to select his proposed city as the capital and to name him its building commissioner—even though at the time, there was no city there at all!

Later as territorial governor, Doty tried and failed four separate times to get public support for statehood. When his term ended in 1844, Doty moved to Neenah and promoted the town site of Menasha. He returned to politics again in 1846 as a delegate to Wisconsin's Constitutional Convention, and after Wisconsin achieved statehood on May 29, 1848, he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. There Doty worked to get government aid for the construction of railroads in Wisconsin. He lost his seat in 1853 and returned to his home on an island between Neenah and Menasha.
Image for the Classroom

*Original Madison Plat Map, July 1, 1836 (WHi Image ID: 38589).* Original plat map of the town of Madison on the four lakes.
Student Activity

Resources:

**Wisconsin Magazine of History Archives Volume 34, number 4, summer 1951**
http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/u/?wmh,18768

**Dictionary of Wisconsin History: Dodge, Henry 1782 - 1867**
www.wisconsinhistory.org/dictionary/index.asp?action=view&term_id=2380

Share with students the Dictionary of Wisconsin History excerpt on Henry Dodge, then have students participate in a shared reading of the Wisconsin Magazine of History Archives article on James Duane Doty. Ask students to review the **Original Madison Plat Map** (WHi Image ID: 38589), brainstorm, and discuss what they are looking at. Call on groups of students to share with the class their observations. Give students plenty of time to consider the image and articles before introducing the discussion questions.
Dictionary Entries

Term: Dodge, Henry 1782–1867

Definition: Frontiersman, soldier, politician, territorial governor, U.S. Senator, b. Vincennes, Ind.

He spent his boyhood in Kentucky. In 1796 he moved westward with his family to the present Ste. Genevieve, Mo., where he engaged in lead mining, farming, and trading. In 1806 he made an effort to join the abortive Aaron Burr expedition to the Southwest, but turned back upon hearing of Burr's arrest. He served as sheriff of Ste. Genevieve County (1805-1821). During the War of 1812 he served with the Missouri militia, and rose to the rank of brigadier general. In 1827 he moved with his family of 9 children and his slaves to the lead-mining region of the Upper Mississippi. He settled first at Galena, Ill., and then on the lands of the Winnebago Indians, near Dodgeville. Quickly rising to leadership on the rough mining frontier, he took the initiative in pressing the miners' claims to the land against both the Indians and the federal government. He gained prominence during the Black Hawk War in 1832, when, as Colonel of the Iowa County militia, his leadership and tactics turned the tide against the retreating Sauk and Fox Indians. From 1833 to 1836 he commanded a contingent of U.S. dragoons to protect the U.S. frontier against the Indians, and made several expeditions to the western plains. Dodge was interested in territorial politics from his arrival in the area, and, with the solid support of the lead-mining Democracy of southwestern Wisconsin and the aid of interested Missouri Democrats, he was able to secure the appointment as first territorial governor in 1836. During his first term, the problem of locating a permanent site for the capital of Wisconsin dominated all other issues. Dodge's temporary location at Belmont was rejected in favor of Madison. The decision was largely the result of the smooth political maneuvering of Dodge's primary antagonist in Wisconsin politics, James D. Doty (q.v.). Although reappointed governor in 1839, he was removed from office when the Whigs came to power in 1841. But in the same year he was elected territorial delegate to Congress. In 1845, with the Democrats back in power, Dodge again became territorial governor. In 1848, when Wisconsin became a state, he was elected U.S. Senator, and in 1851 was re-elected to a full term. His senatorial career was not particularly impressive; largely, it reflected the twilight years of the Democratic party's power in Wisconsin. In 1857 he retired from public life and moved to Burlington, Ia. Dict. Amer. Biog.; L. Pelzer, H. Dodge (Iowa City, 1911); J. Schafer, Wis. Lead Region (Madison, 1932); WPA MS.
Teacher-led Student Inquiry and Analysis Questions

1. How might present-day life in Wisconsin be different if Madison was not the state capital?

2. Who do you think benefited the most from the capital moving from Belmont to Madison? Who do you think benefited the least?

3. After reading the Dictionary of Wisconsin History entry on Henry Dodge, how did President Jackson’s appointment of Henry Dodge as the first territorial governor shape the early history of our state?

4. Looking at the 1836 original plat map of Madison and after the museum visit, reflect on which ways Doty’s vision of the city of Madison were fulfilled. Which ideas of his never came to be?

5. Why is a state capital so important to the citizens of the State of Wisconsin?
Bibliography and Additional Resources

Images and objects shared in this document can be found on the following Wisconsin Historical Society webpages:

Wisconsin Historical Images www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi/
Curators' Favorites www.wisconsinhistory.org/museum/artifacts/

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Wisconsin Magazine of History Archives Volume 34, Number 4, Summer 1951

Dictionary of Wisconsin History Dodge, Henry 1782—1867
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PESHTIGO FIRE: BEFORE AND AFTER

Historical Literacy Guide:

Geography
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Background Information

On the night of October 8th, 1871, the Pestigo Fire destroyed a swath of forest 10 miles wide and 40 miles long in two hours. It remains the deadliest recorded forest fire in American history.

Long overshadowed by the Great Chicago Fire (and the colorful story of Mrs. O’Leary’s cow tipping over the lantern) that occurred the same day in 1871, the fire in Peshtigo consumed more than a million acres of land and claimed more than 1,200 lives. Although the fire burned 17 towns, the damage in Peshtigo was the worst, killing more than 800 people and destroying most of the town.

The night of October 8th seemed like any other to residents of the area. A long summer drought had provided some benefit to settlers and loggers who took the opportunity to clear more land. Lumbering practices of the time created large piles of sawdust and waste in the forests that loggers and settlers removed by setting small fires. Unfortunately, the fires this night proved far different as hot blasts of wind from a storm the previous evening laid the foundation for the inferno that resulted.

Often described as a “tornado of fire,” the Peshtigo Fire consumed all available oxygen, creating internal winds of more than 80 miles per hour that ripped the roofs off houses, knocked down barns, and uprooted trees. The speed of the flames left many people surrounded with no means of escape. A considerable portion of the survivors huddled in a low, marshy piece of ground on the east side of the river. The number of dead in the blaze in the town of Peshtigo has been variously estimated at from 500 to 800.

In all, the fire burned more than 280,000 acres in Oconto, Marinette, Shawano, Brown, Kewaunee, Door, Manitowoc and Outagamie counties. The human toll was 1,152 known dead and another 350 believed dead. Another 1,500 were seriously injured and at least 3,000 left homeless. The property loss was estimated conservatively at $5 million and this did not include 2 million valuable trees and saplings and scores of animals.
Images for the Classroom

*Bird's-eye Map of Peshtigo, 1871 (WHi Image ID: 2209).*
Images for the Classroom

Images for the Classroom

Aftermath of Peshtigo Fire (WHi Image ID: 1859). Aftermath of Peshtigo fire on October 8, 1871. Devastated landscape with deer carcass in foreground. The Peshtigo fire razed the small town of approximately 2000 people. More than 1,200 people perished in the conflagration that consumed more than 1.25 million acres of forest in what was, at the time, a booming lumber town.
Daily Democrat: Peshtigo Fire (WHi Image ID: 2824) A portion of a page from the Madison Daily Democrat which gives an account of the Peshtigo fire.
Images for the Classroom

Map of Peshtigo Fire (WHi Image ID: 6783). Map of the district of the Peshtigo fire, approximately 1,280,000 acres, in Wisconsin and Upper Michigan.
**Student Activity**

Ask students to tell what they know about the fire and have them review the account of the Peshtigo Fire from the October 8th, 1871 article in the *Daily Democrat*. Divide students into groups of four and pass out or share on a projection screen the other images. Give students plenty of time to consider the images and the discussion questions.
Teacher-led Student Inquiry and Analysis Questions

1. Look at the photos and maps of Peshtigo. Describe how those and the headline from the Daily Democrat from help you understand the immediate impact of the fire on the citizens of Peshtigo.

2. Locate a present-day map of Peshtigo, at an online site (Google Earth). Does Peshtigo look the same as it did in 1871? 1881? What physical features does the city still retain from the rebuilding period after the fire?

3. In what way was the fire a likely turning point in this community? Beyond this community?

4. From looking at the birds-eye map of Peshtigo, describe the community as it existed in September 1871 before the Great Fire. Be sure to name prominent buildings and give as accurate a physical description as you can. What questions do you have about the community? List those separately.

5. If time allows, have students participate in a shared reading of The Great Peshtigo Fire: An Eyewitness Account, Second Edition. How was the experience of the Peshtigo Fire remembered by Reverend Peter Pernin?
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History
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Background Information

“Americanization” is a term used to denote attempts made by officials and social workers to introduce an American lifestyle to immigrants and Native Americans. Schools, settlement houses, and other service programs encouraged minority groups to adopt the values and practices of mainstream, English-speaking Americans.
Images for the Classroom

Americanization Pageant, 1919 (WHi Image ID: 5348). Scene from Poale Zion Chasidim, an Americanization pageant, held in a Milwaukee auditorium to welcome Milwaukee's new citizens.
Student Activity

Resources:

*The Dictionary of Wisconsin History: Americanization*
  
  www.wisconsinhistory.org/dictionary/index.asp?action=view&term_id=9110

*The Dictionary of Wisconsin History: Bennett Law*
  
  www.wisconsinhistory.org/dictionary/index.asp?action=view&term_id=831

Ask students to brainstorm an explanation of what they think “Americanization” means. Select students to share these definitions with the class. Then share Dictionary of Wisconsin History entries for Americanization and Bennett Law. Ask students if they would change their definition based on the information. Project or pass out a photocopy of *Americanization Pageant, 1919* (WHi Image ID: 5348) with students and share photograph background information. Give students plenty of time to consider the image and articles before introducing the discussion questions.
Dictionary Entries

Term: Americanization
Definition: A term used to denote attempts made by officials and social workers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to mainstream immigrants and Native Americans; through schools, settlement houses, and other service programs, it encouraged or attempted to compel minority groups to adopt the values and practices mainstream, English-speaking Americans.

Term: Bennet Law
Definition: An 1889 law that required all Wisconsin schools, public and parochial, to teach certain subjects only in the English language. Viewed by German Catholics and Lutherans as an attack not only on their parochial schools but also on their language and culture.

The full text of the law is given in chapter 519 of the 1889 Wisconsin session laws. Section 5, the most controversial section, reads, “Section 5. No school shall be regarded as a school, under this act, unless there shall be taught therein, as part of the elementary education of children, reading, writing, arithmetic and United States history, in the English language.” The full text is available at Google Books.
**Teacher-led Student Inquiry and Analysis Questions**

1. Why might people want to leave the country they were born in and move to America? What opportunities might be in Wisconsin that would pull newcomers to the state?

2. Who would want the immigrants pictured to become more American? Why?

3. Why might immigrants want to become more American?

4. How did the pageant express the immigrants' feelings for their new country? What symbols of America did they use to express their hopes? How do you think they might have viewed becoming citizens?
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A Short History of Wisconsin by Erika Janik

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Background Information

The cranberry, Wisconsin’s official state fruit, grows on vines in peat or sandy marshes. Originally called “crane berries” because the cranberry plant’s stem and blossoms resembled the neck, head, and beak of a crane, cranberries are one of only a few commercially-available fruits native to North America. Some Native Americans believed that the tart berry had special powers to calm the nerves, and the fruit was a staple in their diets. Native Americans ate cranberries fresh and created cranberry poultices used to treat wounds. They also used cranberries in making pemmican, a mixture of dried meat and fruit pounded to a powder and mixed with melted fat.

Once introduced to the cranberry, Europeans also grew to appreciate the fruit. Early French voyageurs who explored Wisconsin’s waterways often bartered for cranberries with Native Americans. Sailors began to take barrels of cranberries to sea with them to provide vitamin C for the prevention of scurvy. Wild cranberries were considered such a valuable commodity, in fact, that an old Wisconsin law doled out a penalty of $50 for the offense of picking or having in one’s possession unripe cranberries before the 20th of September.

In the early days of cranberry harvesting, the berries were picked from the vines by hand, a time-consuming and expensive task. In 1872, one Berlin, WI cranberry marsh alone employed 1,500 pickers at a cost of $52,000. That same year an engineer by the name of W.T. Cosgrain suggested a new method: flood the cranberry marshes until the berries floated on top of the water, and then use rakes to remove the fruit from the vines. In “raking the flood” the cranberry hand rake is swung in a back-and-forth motion, the teeth of the rake combing the cranberries from the vines. Using this new method, each worker harvested 15-20 barrels a day instead of the usual eight or ten.

The early models of harvesting rakes were patterned after small scoops used by growers in the eastern United States. The first cranberry hand rakes were constructed entirely of wood. Later, to make the rakes more durable, the teeth were covered with metal. Through the years additional minor modifications in structure and design were made, until the use of hand rakes began to decline in the 1950s in favor of even more-efficient harvesting techniques.
Flooding marshes to harvest cranberries is still in common practice today. While cranberries can be either dry- or wet-harvested, the most prevalent method is the water harvest. To harvest in this “wet” manner, the growing beds are flooded and a “water reel” agitates the water, dislodging the fruit from the vine. The floating fruit is then corralled and loaded onto trucks for delivery to a receiving station. Wet-harvested fruit is used for processed cranberry products like juice and sauce. It takes about 4,500 cranberries to produce just one gallon of cranberry juice.

Dry harvesting uses mechanical harvesters which were developed by Wisconsin growers, with teeth that lift the berries from the vines. The berries are then loaded into bins and shipped to receiving stations to be cleaned and packaged as fresh fruit.

Cranberries are still big business in Wisconsin, with about 150 cranberry marshes occupying a total of 110,000 acres in eighteen counties. Wisconsin marshes produce more than half of the cranberries consumed by Americans each year, making Wisconsin the top cranberry producing state for many years running. Cranberry festivals, which often include tours of harvesting operations, are held across Wisconsin each fall.
Images for the Classroom

*Cranberry Harvesting Rake* (WHi Museum Object: 1973.121)
Images for the Classroom

Cranberry Pickers Wanted, 1884 (WHi Image ID: 45749)
Images for the Classroom

*Harvesting Cranberries, 1895* (WHi Image ID: 24507)
Images for the Classroom

Harvesting Cranberries (WHi Image ID: 1950)
Images for the Classroom

Cranberry Harvest, 1984 (WHi Image ID: 43240)
Student Activity

Project for students Cranberry Harvesting Rake (WHi Museum Object: 1973.121). Ask students to review the image, brainstorm, and write down on a piece of paper what they are looking at.

Then give small groups of students packets of additional images and ask them to discuss. Give students plenty of time to consider the image and articles before introducing the discussion questions.
Teacher-led Student Inquiry and Analysis Questions

1. From looking at the artifact and the images, how do you think cranberry harvesting has changed? Who benefited most from the new methods of harvesting? Who might have been hurt by these changes?

2. How did the jobs of cranberry pickers change with the new technologies?

3. Compare the images of cranberry harvests. With which do you think the cranberry rake goes? List the reasons for your choice and be prepared to defend that choice!
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Wisconsin Cranberry Discovery Center
[www.discovercranberries.com]

Wisconsin Magazine of History Archives
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*Thinking Like a Historian: Rethinking History Instruction* (TLH) inquiry-based educational theory provides a common language for educators and students. The theory allows for the educational process to be combined with categories of inquiry which promote historical literacy.

It is the intent of the Wisconsin Historical Museum that this guide serves educators and students in providing object-based lessons to be used after visiting and experiencing the museum on a field trip. Our field trips support *Common Core English Language Arts Standards* for Reading: Informational Text and Speaking & Listening standards as well as CCSS for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies.

Educators should use this guide as a post-museum visit activity. It will continue to challenge students to “Think Like a Historian” by encouraging them to think critically, make personal connections with history, and to evaluate information by asking “why”, “how”, and most importantly, “How do you know?”
Background Information

During the Depression of the 1930s, many young, unmarried and unemployed men jumped at the opportunity to join the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). President Franklin Roosevelt created this New Deal agency in March 1933 to combat the destruction and erosion of the country’s national resources and to put men to work. One such man, Werner Brunner of Monticello, Wisconsin, joined the CCC the very next year. The agency gave him this trunk, which he had stenciled with “Werner F. Brunner/ Monticello, Wis./D.R.” The trunk was made in Stanley (Chippewa County), Wisconsin by the Tronck-McKenzie Company, which specialized at the time in “CCC and Army Lockers.”

Born in Green County, Wisconsin in 1915, Brunner was the son of Swiss immigrants. In 1914, his parents Arnold and Ida Brunner and their five children moved to Green County to farm, living first in Sylvester and then in Washington Township. Monticello, the town name mentioned on his trunk, is also located in Green County.

Brunner joined the CCC during August 1934, a few months after graduating high school, when he realized “a kid out of high school had no chance of getting a job.” The agency sent Brunner to Fort Sheridan, Illinois for training. Once trained, the CCC assigned him to Company #601, a racially-integrated unit, and dispatched him to West Salem in La Crosse County during May 1934, to work on drought relief (the “D.R.” on his trunk refers to “Drought Relief”). His company worked on project PE-96, which focused on preventing erosion on private land. In retrospect, Brunner called the members of his company “nature’s surgeons.” They “helped nature heal gashes in the landscape [i.e. deep gullies], the result of poor stewardship of the land and torrential rain.” Their job was to build an earthen dam made of trucked-in soil at the deepest end of each gully.

Brunner wrote about his experience with these words, “The loose soil…needed to be tamped into a hard and stable surface. This is where we came into the picture. Dozens of us were the tampers. The tamping tool…was a 10” diameter piece of tree trunk about 18” long, to which two boards were nailed for handles. You picked it up and dropped it hundreds of times to pack the soil. If you diligently worked at the job and didn’t do a lot of ‘gold bricking’ (loafing), you would be promoted to a more interesting job.” Brunner was quickly promoted and spent the rest of his time planting trees “up the walls of the
gully.” His company planted nut trees, primarily hickory and walnut, and what Brunner calls “weed trees,” anything that would “grow fast, establish roots, and stabilize the soil.”

Brunner remembers the government paying him $30 a month, of which he received five dollars. The other $25 was sent home. In the description of his CCC adventures, Brunner recalled making extra money on the side: “With one of my $5 I bought an ironing board and an electric iron. I pressed shirts and pants for 25 cents. The shirts had to have a sharp crease down the middle of the pocket. After accumulating enough money, I paid someone to letter [stencil] my footlocker.”

Many consider the Civilian Conservation Corps President Roosevelt’s most successful initiative. A Chicago judge praised the agency by noting that crimes committed by young men in his city had dropped fifty-five percent by the CCC putting idle men to work. Most people, however, were more impressed with the CCC’s tangible accomplishments. During its nine-year existence the Corps built 3,470 fire towers; 97,000 miles of fire roads; devoted over four million man-days to fighting fires; performed erosion control; developed recreational facilities in national, state, county, and metropolitan parks; and planted more than three billion trees. Not surprisingly, some affectionately referred to the CCC as “Roosevelt’s Tree Army.”

Beginning in 1940, however, the Corps began to suffer. In many ways the agency remained as popular as ever, but the possibility of the United States entering World War II and the election of anti-New Deal congressmen threatened the CCC’s existence. By late summer 1941, the Corps was in serious trouble. With a general economic upturn and its associated increase in jobs, the CCC no longer filled one of its main purposes. Once America entered the war, Congress declared the CCC a non-essential agency and recommended it be abolished on July 1, 1942 (technically the CCC was never formally abolished, but Congress eliminated its funding).

Brunner left the CCC late in the spring of 1935 when his sister’s neighboring farmer offered him a position as a hired hand. Several decades later Brunner returned with his wife to the dam site he worked on. He found the area “truly beautiful.” In his words, “I saw several acres of level land and again experienced the sweet smell of a newly-mown hay field.”
Images for the Classroom

Images for the Classroom

**Civilian Conservation Corps Poster, 1939** (WHi Image ID: 5762). Poster used by the CCC to recruit enrollees, 1939.
**Student Activity**

Resources:

**Dictionary of Wisconsin History: Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in Wisconsin**


Introduce students to the CCC by using the teacher background information. Share with students the definition of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in Wisconsin from the Dictionary of Wisconsin History. Then project or share a photocopy with students of **Museum Object CCC Trunk** (WHi Museum Object:1990.165.26) and **Civilian Conservation Corps Poster** (WHi Image ID: 5762). Ask students to review the images, brainstorm, and write a response. Give students plenty of time to respond before introducing the discussion questions.
Dictionary Entry

Term: Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in Wisconsin

Definition: This New Deal work program established by the federal government on May 5, 1933, employed more than two million men aged 18-25 to conserve natural resources. In Wisconsin, they cleaned forests of slashings left by lumber companies, planted new trees, controlled forest fires, and helped build state parks. The program officially ended on July 30, 1942, by which time most of its participants had enlisted to fight in World War II or had found other wartime employments.
Teacher-led Student Inquiry and Analysis Questions

1. After reviewing the background information, why did Brunner decide to join the CCC? Aside from a steady job, what other benefits did he get out of working for the CCC? How does his trunk preserve these memories?

2. How does Brunner's story reflect the larger CCC experience in Wisconsin? What opportunities exist today for young people to participate in service-learning programs like the CCC?

3. With the information from The Dictionary of Wisconsin History: Civilian Conservation Corps in Wisconsin, how did the United States government action of creating agencies like the CCC transform the lives of individuals? Describe how states and communities where CCC projects took place were transformed?

4. How was Brunner's experience in the 1930s similar or different to the economic downturn since 2008? Why were many programs like the CCC eliminated? Do you think they may be reinstated some day? How?

5. Review the Civilian Conservation Corps Poster (WHi Image ID: 5762). What do young graduates do today? Why were programs like the CCC so important?
Bibliography and Additional Resources

Images and objects shared in this document can be found on the following Wisconsin Historical Society webpages:

Wisconsin Historical Images www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi/
Curators’ Favorites www.wisconsinhistory.org/museum/artifacts/

Additional information can be found at:

The History of Wisconsin Volume V: War, a New Era, and Depression, 1914-1940
by Paul W. Glad
Reflection

The Wisconsin Historical Museum is interested in hearing memories of favorite experiences or exhibits. Have students use the next page to illustrate and describe what they enjoyed most. Please return to:

Museum Education
Wisconsin Historical Museum
30 N Carroll Street
Madison, WI 53703
Please illustrate your favorite exhibit in the space below.

Please describe why you enjoyed this exhibit the most.