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Teacher's Guide: Plum Grove

Goal

Through experiencing the atmosphere of Plum Grove, students will examine three main themes: Robert Lucas and the Territory of Iowa; everyday life during the 1840s; and using a historic home as a tool to learn about history.

Objectives

- Identify Robert Lucas as the Territory of Iowa's first governor
- Learn how Plum Grove's architecture and furnishings represent the period
- Recognize the role of an archaeology as a research tool
- Recognize everyday activities of the 1840s and compare them to life today
- Describe a home of 150 years ago and compare it to a home of today; and explain what can be learned from examining a historic home

Site Summary

Plum Grove is located in the center of a seven-acre haven of trees and wildlife in the heart of Iowa City. Because of its relative separation from the rest of the neighborhood, Plum Grove gives the visitor a sense of being transformed to the Iowa City of 150 years ago.

Plum Grove was the retirement home of Robert Lucas, who served as the first governor of the Territory of Iowa from 1838 to 1841, and his wife Friendly Lucas. Built in 1844, Plum Grove features period furnishings and artifacts, some of which belonged to Lucas and his family. In addition to getting a taste of early Iowa City, visitors to Plum Grove also experience the personal side of one of Iowa's important public figures. Lucas lived in the house until his death in 1853; Friendly remained at Plum Grove until the late 1850s.

Robert Lucas was born in 1781 in Shepherdstown, Pennsylvania, to descendants of Quakers who had settled in Pennsylvania in 1679. His early schooling included mathematics and surveying, subjects that would later serve him well when he moved westward in 1800 into the Northwest Territory.

Despite his pacifist Quaker background, Lucas began a military career in 1803 when the Governor of Ohio commissioned him to enlist volunteers for the Ohio militia. He rose in rank until he became a major-general in the militia and a colonel in the U. S Army. When the War of 1812 began, Lucas helped organize a battalion of volunteers from his militia. He served as an officer in General Hull's disastrous campaign around Detroit. Lucas's daily journal during that fiasco reveals courage and resourcefulness Concurrent with his rise in the military, Lucas was successfully engaged in a political career beginning in 1805, when he was a political career beginning in 1805, when he was appointed justice of the peace for Union Township in Scioto County. In 1808, he was elected to the lower house of the Ohio legislature. Between 1814 and 1830, Lucas served all but two years as a state senator. In 1830, he was

nominated for Ohio governor by the Democrats, but was defeated. He ran again in 1832 and won. He was reelected in 1834. His most notable service to Ohio during his four years as governor was his victory in the Ohio-Michigan boundary dispute.

In 1838, President Martin Van Buren appointed Lucas governor of the Iowa Territory. Lucas's agenda included organizing an efficient militia and a strict economy, and passing legislation on education, the criminal code, and the suppression of gambling and intemperance. He oversaw Iowa's victory over Missouri in the so-called Boundary War. He also laid the corner stone for the new state capitol (now Old Capitol) in Iowa City in 1840. With the election of a Whig Party president, Lucas was removed from office as governor in 1841.

Soon afterwards, Lucas and his wife, Friendly, decided to spend the remainder of their lives in Iowa City. In 1844 they purchased 80 acres just south of town, and built a house reminiscent of their home in Ohio. Nestled among a grove of plum trees, the house was dubbed Plum Grove.

Vocabulary

Students should become familiar with these vocabulary words before visiting Plum Grove.

Archaeology: The recovery and study of material evidence, such as graves, buildings, tools and pottery, remaining from past human life and culture.

Historic site: A place that provides insights into local history by its association with significant people or events.

Legislator: A person who creates or enacts laws as part of an established government

Museum: A building, place or institution devoted to the acquisition, conservation, study, exhibition, and educational interpretation of objects having scientific, historical, or artistic value.

Territory: Area of the United States not yet admitted as a state, but administered by a governor and having a legislature.

Pre-Visit Activities

Before your visit, set aside some classroom time to try one or more of the following activities:

Activities/Discussion: Museums & Collections

- Talk about museums and collections. Explain that a collection is a group of items assembled in a logical order and gathered because they have some kind of significance. Museums have collections that they study and exhibit to the public. The collections are used to interpret the past, present, and sometimes the future.

- Explain that museums use both two-dimensional and three-dimensional materials (called artifacts) to interpret history or natural history. An artifact can tell us much about the people, the time, and the region from which it came. It can reveal what materials it is made from, and when and where it was used. Sometimes its color and style tell us about popular trends. All of this helps us determine its relative value within the "material culture."

- A historic site - such as Plum Grove - is one type of museum that represents a particular individual, place or event. Make a list of places in your town or county that you would make into historic sites, and give reasons why each should be a historic site.

Activities/Discussion: Locating Plum Grove

For these activities you'll need: circa 1840-1860 maps of Iowa City and the United States; and current maps of Iowa City, Iowa, and the U.S. The goal is to help students locate Plum Grove, introduce the concept of a territory, and place Plum Grove and the Iowa Territory on the 1840s frontier.

- Use the maps to compare the size and boundaries of the U.S. and Iowa in the 1800s to their dimensions now. Discuss the definition of a territory and the fact that Iowa was on the nation's frontier in 1840.

- Have students locate Iowa City and Plum Grove on the Iowa and Iowa City maps.

Activities/Discussion: Introducing Robert Lucas

For these activities you'll need photographs of Robert and Friendly Lucas.

- Show the class photos of them. Discuss their clothing, and the stern nature of the photographs.

- Introduce the topic of territorial governor. Ask students who the governor of Iowa is today, and how he achieved his position. Explain that Lucas was not elected but appointed governor. Using the map to emphasize the lack of roads, railroads, and communications, discuss the kinds of problems Lucas would have faced as territorial governor.

Using a Historic Home as a Historical Tool

You'll need photographs of Plum Grove, other historic homes, and examples of today's home (interior and exterior). The goal is to introduce the idea that Plum Grove is a home -not just a building- reflecting a specific time in history.

- Discuss what a home is. Have students look at a photograph of a home today (a bedroom, if possible). Have them discuss what they can determine about the people who live there based on the "evidence" they find in the photograph.

- Look at images of historic homes. Why is it important to preserve them? Have students name some famous homes they've heard of. Relate the discussion to the visit to Plum Grove. Instruct students to look for evidence of the Lucas' life during their tour of the home. Point out particularly revealing artifacts, such as tools, furniture, and kitchen utensils.

On-Site Activities

Because Plum Grove is a small home, talk with the Plum Grove manager before your tour to devise the best way to divide the group and conduct the tour. Here are some suggested activities.

Plum Grove Scavenger Hunt

The following is can be incorporated into the tour or offered to students as an independent activity:

Entry Way

- This house used to be a part of a farm. Why do you think it was called Plum Grove?

Parlor

- Look at the front room. This is a parlor. Is it a formal or casual room? What kinds of activities do you think the Lucas family did here?
- Find the red chair. Do you see an animal's neck and head in it? What is the animal? (a swan)
- Do you see a musical instrument? It is a melodeon. Do you play an instrument?
- Did this house have electricity? The two glass items on top of the melodeon are called camphene lamps.
- Name two other light sources in this room.

Dining Room

- Find the fireplace. There are many fireplaces in the house. Count them as you go through the house. How many are there? In the middle of winter what would you use a fireplace for?

Library

- Find the Painting of Robert Lucas. What does the painting tell you about his personality? Find the basket on the floor. What is in the basked (knitting materials)?

Kitchen

- Find the room where Friendly Lucas would have cooked. How is different from your own kitchen?
- The Lucas' had many chores to do. Many were done in the kitchen. Find the tools used for chores including a butter churn, dry sink, candle molds, coffee grinder and irons.

Upstairs

- Find the middle bed. Look under the bed. The fancy pot is called a chamber pot. How do you think it was used? What is the mattress made of (straw)?
- Find the lye soap (the Lucases made their own). Where did people wash up?
- Do you sew? A 12-year-old girl sewed the sampler above the fireplace. Why was it important to know how to sew in those days?
- Find the old clothes. How are they different from your clothes?

- Would you have liked living in this house? Why or why or not?

Try to arrange with the site manager to do hands-on activities including, rug beating, coffee grinding, butter churning, quilting, playing games, washing clothes, carrying buckets of water and writing with quill pens.

Visit the archeology exhibits on the Plum Grove grounds. Archaeological excavations were undertaken at Plum Grove in the late 1970s. The sites of these excavations have interpretive markers.

Plum Grove's exterior has been altered many times. Walk around the outside of the house and look for evidence of elements that have been removed or changed.

Post-Visit Activities

Discussion

Ask some of the following questions of your students after visiting Plum Grove. After each question we give some suggested answers. Have your students expand on these answers.

- Compare Plum Grove with your own house (consider the number of rooms and what the rooms are used for). Draw a picture of your room. Draw a picture of the room that would have been yours at Plum Grove. What do the drawings tell you about each time period?

- If you had lived at Plum Grove in the 1840s what chores would you have done? (name the chore-related artifacts you saw at the house)

- Describe how living at Plum Grove then would be different from your typical day now.

- Imagine you are Plum Grove's historic site manager. What would you be concerned about? What would your daily routine be like? (Consider: the possible effects of large numbers of people in the house; how you would handle tours and maintaining the grounds).

- If you Jived at Plum Grove now what would you want to change? What things would you keep the same? (Consider: electrical outlets.)

- If you were a settler in the Iowa Territory would you support Robert Lucas as governor?

- Plum Grove started out as a farm, but is now in the middle of the city. How do you think it was able to survive in the face of rapid urban growth? (Consider: only parts of the farm were sold as lots.)

Detective Work

Here are suggested themes for student research. Their results might be presented in both written and oral reports.

- Interview your parents, grandparents, or friends. Ask them: What were their chores? What was their room like? Find 3 or 4 major differences between your life and the person whom you interview.

- There were many new settlements in the Iowa Territory. Pick one to learn more about. It can either be a town that has survived until today or one that has vanished. Where is it located? When was it settled and by whom? What jobs did the people have? What cultural and educational organizations developed? Why did the town grow or not grow? What were the common customs and games?

- Robert Lucas's wife's first name was Friendly. Today, that sounds like an unusual first name, but back then names such as Friendly, Charity, and Felicity were common. Do some research on other names common during Friendly's life. What do the names mean? Why were they used? How do they compare with names used today such as Jennifer, Scott and Jamal?

- If your parents and grandparents own their home, look at the abstract for the property. The abstract tells who owned the property in the past and what land divisions it was part of. What can you find out about the place where you and your family live? (To the teacher: Please consider bringing your abstract if you own a house, or ask to borrow one from another teacher.)

Doing History

These activities may be used to pursue ideas inspired by your visit to Plum Grove. You may want to adjust the activities to the students' interests and abilities.

- Friendly Lucas had a reputation for being a very good cook. One of her recipes, for plum butter, is reprinted on the last page (from the spring 1992 issue of the Palimpsest). Try this recipe as it is written. Does it work?

- What music would have been popular between 1838 and 1873, when Robert and Friendly Lucas lived in Iowa? See if you can find sheet music or recordings of any popular songs from the period; play them in class. Do you like the music? Which do you prefer, today's music, or that of the mid- 19th century. Why?

- Image you are Robert Lucas. Write a letter back to friends in the East describing your new life in Iowa.

- Take a walking tour of the neighborhood around Plum Grove. Compare the styles of architecture of nearby houses with the architecture of Plum Grove.

- Create an archaeological dig in your classroom. Take a box about 18 inches deep and fill it with dirt. While you do that, place in the box artifacts to represent a group of people. (Consider: broken pottery, animal bones, toys, toothbrushes, etc.) Students can excavate and assemble the artifacts. What do the artifacts tell you about the people the dig represents?

Resources

These materials will help you find out more about the Lucas Family, Plum Grove, and the Iowa Territory.

Books and articles: 4th-8th Grade

"Capitols and Capitals." The Goldfinch, Vol. 5, No. 4, April 1984.

"Homes in History." The Goldfinch, Vol. 15, No. 1, Fall 1993

"The Iowa Territory's 150th Birthday." The Goldfinch, Vol. 9, No. 1, September 1987.

"The Shape of the State." The Goldfinch. Vol. 4, No.3, February 1983.

Videotapes and Filmstrips: 4th - 8th Grade

Iowa Heritage: The Path to Statehood. Iowa Public Television.

Starbird, Robert S. and Daniel Rainey. American History: It's Beneath Your Feet. Media, Inc. 1990.

Books and Articles: 9th Grade-Adult

Allen, Anne Beiser. "Friendly's Frontier: Images from the Life of Friendly Lucas, Iowa's First 'First Lady'. Palimpsest 73 (1992): 18-31.

Charleton, Thomas H. A. Guide to the Exhibits, Plum Grove Farm 1844-1943: 100 Years of Life in a Changing Society. Iowa City: University of Iowa, 1984. (Available at Plum Grove)

"Historic Plum Grove," Iowan 8 (August-September 1960): 32-37, 53-54. Palimpsest. Volume 69, No. 2, Summer 1988.

Parvin, Theodore Sutton. "As Robert Lucas Became Iowa's Territorial Governor." Annals of Iowa 34 (1957): 112-20.

Petersen, William J. "Iowa in the Days of Lucas." Palimpsest 44 (1963): 221-84.

Sage, Leland L. A History of Iowa. Iowa State University Press, 1974.

"Teaching with Historic Places." Cultural Resources Management (CRM), Vol. 16,No. 2, 1993.

Thompson, Linda K. "Mrs. Harold Avery Donates Lucas Treasure to Department of History and Archives." Annals of Iowa 41 (1971): 681-84.

Van Tassel, Valentine. "When Friendly Lucas went to Iowa." Antiques Journal (June 1956): 14-15,30.

Friendly's Plum Butter

As recorded by Margaret Lucas Henderson a great-granddaughter of Friendly and Robert Lucas.

Plum Butter or Jam

Sneak up on plums & get as many as you can. Wash well (a few worms give it a meaty flavor so do not be squeamish). Cover with boiling water and cook till tender. Take potato masher and mash - skins and all. If you are short plums and want to use all the bulk available - put skins and all into a colander - use potato masher and mash, mash, mash. Take pits out with your fingers.

Put through as much of the skins as you can. For each cup of pulp you have to use 2/3 cup of sugar. I cook mine in the oven - slowly - testing for consistency. A small portion in a saucer - put in refrigerator will tell you when the jam or butter is just right. Put in jars and seal. Call an armored truck and take to your safe deposit box before anyone becomes aware that you have such a treasure in your possession.