How To Relate the Materials of Local History to Learning Activities

One agreeable feature of the study of the local community, as has already been pointed out, is the many opportunities provided for pupil activities. These activities carried on both in and out of the classroom help students to learn history by actually planning and doing things related to their study. Many of the activities are exceedingly valuable for broadening student interests and increasing student experiences.

The learning activities and experiences that are planned, or in general anticipated by the teacher, fall into one of three classifications. They are either initiatory, developmental or culminating activities.

Initiatory activities. The purpose of initiatory activities is to arouse interest, to provide the tools necessary for the initial assault on a problem or area, and to generate enthusiasm for the task ahead. Suppose that a class in junior or senior high school American history is about to develop a unit of study on the effect of the automobile on American social and economic life. Initiatory activities within the framework of local history might include a visit to an elderly man who once worked in a carriage shop. The preparation for the activity might include: the decision to interview someone whose means of livelihood was affected by the automobile: the identification of such a person; the securing of permission or the making of an initial contact; the selection of a committee to interview the persons for an entire class should never, or at least seldom, attempt to interview an elderly person; the planning of the interview, that is, figuring out the questions that will have to be asked in order to obtain the information the class needs; the discussion of the interview by the committee, the report to the class; the letter of thanks to the elderly person; the making of a permanent record of the interview.

An initiatory activity of a different nature yet applicable to the same unit of instruction might be an attempt to discover when the last local blacksmith shop went out of existence. This might involve research in local newspapers, interviews, even an examination of the old blacksmith shop or its ruins; it might involve an attempt to locate the site of the shop if it was not commonly known. It certainly should lead to a discussion of economic displacement, and of the attitude of people toward technological change which affects them.

Developmental activities. As study of a particular unit or segment of work continues, there can be times when the introduction of an activity in local history will serve to sharpen the focus of the class on the ultimate objectives, or help to retain the interest that was originally aroused. Perhaps a class is studying the American Revolution. It does not matter on what grade level this is taking place. After a fine start and discussion of the events which preceded the actual outbreak of hostilities the teacher finds that the class has bogged down. There seems, for example, to be little comprehension of the intellectual climate of the period, of the reasons why some good men became Patriots and other equally good men became Tories. Perhaps one student remarks that the Tories should have been put in concentration camps, or all hanged.

A good teacher will recognize this as a danger point. It is important that young people develop a sense of value; it is equally important that they recognize that there is such a thing as honest difference of opinion. Furthermore, there can be no real understanding of the significance of the Revolutionary period, at least on the maturity level expected of junior-senior high school pupils, unless they have talked about and thought about this matter of difference of opinion.

Yet understanding motives and analyzing the thinking of people is the most difficult aspect of history. The teacher in the above situation might find assistance in the content of local history. Perhaps the community was one that was divided in its loyalty in 1861. Or there may have been bitterness and dissension in the community in the years between 1939 and 1941, with a division of sentiment between those who favored the Administration's policy of aid to Britain and those who remained completely neutral. An investigation of this local situation, and an analysis of the reasons and results of the differences, might well serve to quicken interest in the Tory-Patriot controversy of the 1770's and to renew vitality and interest in the unit.

Sometimes the developmental activity is not designed to clear up a trouble spot or to renew interest in the course work, but is rather used to give a new direction to the activity of the class. A senior class in Problems of Democracy may be studying juvenile delinquency. After an examination of the extent of the problem and a discussion of the efforts that have been made to control delinquency, the teacher may feel that some attention to the weakening of the home as a social institution and its effect on the entire social climate of our age is necessary to a real understanding of the problem. He needs, therefore, to direct the attention of his class in another direction. Local history may well be the successful medium. Turning to the community in which the students live, the teacher may inaugurate the examination of the changes in home and family life during the years since the community was formed. Population figures, economic trends and developments, tastes in housing and home-furnishing, these are but a few of the possible subjects of investigation and analysis.

Culminating activities. The culminating activity may serve a variety of purposes. It sometimes brings together into a meaningful whole the separate aspects of previous study. Especially where groups of students have been at work on different aspects of a general topic, the

ing areas for study in the general field of transportation. Where and when were the first roads in town? Why were they thus located? Of what materials were they made? When were the village or city streets first paved? What changes have come in street paving? Canals, bridges, automobiles, airplanes all offer avenues for research. How is transportation related to the economic life of the community? What changes have come with the railroad? the trailer-truck?

Communication. Here again the possible areas are rather apparent. The post office, post road, telephone, telegraph, radio, television can all be examined for the when? the why? the where? the how? and what results? Many boys and girls are deeply interested in stamps. The use of stamps in the local community, the changing costs of sending mail, the role of the post office in the community's growth, are all topics of examination that may be expected to arouse enthusiasm among some students in any class.

Land values. An examination of local land values, whether urban or rural, can be of real value. The prices paid for pieces of property at different periods will reveal economic changes within the community and changing economic conditions throughout the country as a whole. At the senior high school level the matter of the purchasing power of money, of "real" wages and of comparative values might easily grow out of this area of examination and study.

Professional services. The professional services offered by residents of the community offer a multiplicity of topics for investigation. Some will be as simple as, who was the first doctor in town? Others will be as complicated as, when and under what conditions did the local clergy first cooperate in a community project? Attempting to establish the growth of professional services in the community in chronological order can be extremely revealing in terms of the growth of both the community and the nation. The arrival and increase in the numbers of doctors, ministers, lawyers, librarians, social workers, and public health officials offer fertile ground for examination.

Occupational development. Regardless of whether the community is rural or urban, large or small, old or young, there have been changes in occupational development through the years. The completely rural town has witnessed shifts in agricultural specialization. For example, a small Vermont town was settled by people whose chief income came from the sale of pot-ash. The children or grandchildren of those settlers raised Merino sheep and Morgan horses. The present farmers rely on their dairies and the income from milk shipped to industrial cities.

In industrial towns and cities the changes may be even more frequent and interesting. One small New York State city that was once the hub of the wagon-making history now contains a firm that manufactures large motor trucks, another that makes overhead doors for garages, and a third that manufactures pleasure boats.

New towns that have grown up around recent huge public or private industrial projects or enterprises are making history and have roots that radiate out in space, although they are not yet deep. Traditions and customs are being formed from the ideas brought by the new settlers and an exploration of these can be rewarding. Besides it is interesting for the newcomers to investigate the way the area had been utilized by man before they arrived on the scene.

The changing occupational patterns are as varied and as interesting as the changes in basic industry. The blacksmith's son becomes an automobile mechanic and his grandson an airplane mechanic or a television repairman. The "aristocrat" of the wagon-making industry, the man who received the highest pay and had the greatest occupational security, was the "striper," the man who painted the stripes on the wagon bodies, the hubs and spokes, and the whiffle trees. Who has the greatest occupational security in the community today? Why? What has mass production done to the skilled laborer of a former day?

Other areas of investigation. The above areas represent just a brief sampling of the possible ones. A few others that can be developed in the same way are the ethnic history of the community, the religious history of the community, educational changes in the community, government of the community, and scientific ideas that have changed community life, agriculture, medicine, religious practice, industrial growth.

How To Use Local History in Developing Skills in Critical Thinking

That the use of local history develops critical skills has been shown in preceding sections. When students are brought face to face with primary sources, questions arise that have to be critically examined. Historical records are used to impress students with the need for carefully evaluating statements and developing original, creative ideas and sound conclusions. Documents are sources of information yet they require careful and correct interpretation.

Gradually and cumulatively, but none the less definitely, pupils learn that history is a way of work as well as a body of information. A genuine notion about historical method can be supplied at an early stage of schooling; but it needs to be subjected to analysis and application in order to become fully understood and functional. Aspects of the historical method have to be stressed and repeated under different circumstances and the use of the local community in this connection cannot be overemphasized.

initiated investigations or devised by teachers, questions and exercise along these lines develop skills in historical analysis or critical evaluation.

The personal quality of local history makes it a valuable teaching tool. Ancestors of pupils provide direct contact with the past. What they did, where they were, what they were, and how they lived are vital topics for consideration. Family history also illustrates historical continuity. Three or four generations of a family are sufficient to trace the history of many communities, and the sequence of tombstone dates in a single cemetery can be a useful introduction to the community pattern of historical development.

Turning the eyes of young people toward their own backgrounds, that is, to the development and uniqueness of their own community, gives them a feeling of pride, responsibility, and belonging that makes not only for depth of understanding of the social studies treated in the classroom but for alert, active citizenship. Thus the availability of the materials of local history: the interest that can be brought forth from exposure to realistic historical evidence; the development of desirable interests, attitudes, and understandings; and an unparalleled opportunity to develop skill in critical thinking all urge the widespread use of local history in the learning process.

The use of local historical materials generally falls into one of two basic patterns. Either the materials are organized into a separate course or they are incorporated into the subject of world history, problems of democracy, American history, or the work of the elementary grades. Many people who are active and effective in promoting the use of local history urge that the latter pattern be used.

How To Discover and Use Materials

Many people including teachers believe that the best place to look for local history is in a book and numerous towns and counties have provided them with the necessary volumes. These town and country histories vary widely in quality and in completeness. All of them, the poor as well as the excellent, can be useful for they provide the logical points of departure in the study of the local past and if they are well and accurately written they contain much that a class can use. If they are poorly and inaccurately written, the study of their errors can be valuable in the stimulation of critical thinking.

Teachers who discover that there is no printed history of their town or county need not bemoan the fact. Many a social studies teacher has earned recognition and even salary increases and promotions because of the local history book or pamphlet that he and his pupils have compiled. The preparation of this material is among the most valuable outcomes of local study and can be done on any level. Therefore the absence of a printed history may slow down the original search into a community's background but it is no serious handicap for there are other and equally vital sources of information in every community.

Records. The official records of town or county, village or state, provide sources of information about the local past. Many teachers have discovered that the records in the office of the County Clerk or the Registrar of Deeds yield fascinating data. There must, of course, be preparation. The teacher must know about the records that are available, how to use them, and what he wishes his students to realize from their examination. As with all other sources of information mentioned a few teachers will not be able to use them effectively: their school or local library will not contain the printed reports; the offices of the county officials are too far away to be used; or local officials are uncooperative.

Exactly the same values, however,—realism, interest, critical skill, understanding of the development of history—can be realized from examinations of other types of institutional records. Perhaps the community once had four different churches and three of them have now been combined into a Union Church. What has happened to the records of the old churches? They could reveal much about the social and economic, as well as the religious, life of the early settlers. The arguments about the formation of the new Union Church would mirror the thinking of former residents. Again, what about the new central school? Is it possible to locate some of the old records of the former school districts? What better way to illustrate the differences between primary and secondary sources, or the methods of historical criticism?

The organizations that exist in any community are rich sources of information. The Village Improvement Society, the First Ward Republican Club, the Drama Association, the Home Bureau unit, the local Rotary.—the list of organizations that can be used in this connection is a long one. Do these organizations have record books that go back into the past? The organizations that formerly existed can be even more important. Did the community have a Lyceum? Why isn't there one now? What happened to it? What modern clubs have replaced the old Lyceum or Debating Society? Here we see a means of establishing values, of evaluating the institutions of the past, or appraising progress or the lack of it. The task of ferreting out the records of dead organizations resembles the work of a detective: many young people who fail to get excited about the information given on a textbook page will bubble over with genuine enthusiasm as they try to trace the whereabouts of the records of the old Temperance Society.

Business records offer tremendous possibilities for research into the past, for comparison with the present, and for examination of historical change. Why did the

old Excelsior Creamery fail? What happened to the Central City Livery Stable? What was the result of the failure of the railroad to build through the town? Why, in 1915, did Sam Jones stop making harnesses and begin to manufacture leather-topped automobile seats?

The question and the problems for examination that grow out of the study of records can be as difficult and mature as students can handle. It is the responsibility of the teacher to guide pupils in selecting suitable questions or subjects for investigation. In every case he considers the capacities and interests of his pupils as well as the adequacy and availability of the materials required "to solve" them.

Freddy Bertolmi lives in a small town that has little in the way of organized sports. He can surpass every boy in school on the baseball field but neither reads, thinks, nor makes any real effort to learn in the classroom. It is quite possible that Freddy might become excited over the story of the Dunkville Tigers, a baseball team that represented his town forty years ago. From this interest the teacher might well work with Freddy on the why's and wherefore's of the change in community attitude toward sport.

There is frequently a personal element to local history. Susy Smith may dislike history. But if Susy discovers that on her father's farm, directly back of the cow stable, there was once a brickyard, it is even money that Susy becomes interested in the making of brick, the selling of brick, what happened to the brickyard, and she may even gain interest in the general subject of history.

Newspapers. Almost every community either has a weekly or daily newspaper, or is served by a newspaper published in a nearby or larger community. A social studies teacher, conscious of the importance of local data, will undertake to learn the nature of the news coverage, both present and past, for it provides one of the most important of the printed sources of information about the community's past. Many communities where there is no newspaper today once supported a newssheet and determining the reasons for the disappearance of the local paper will frequently furnish an excellent opportunity to analyze community change; that is, historical change. The teacher may discover that a fairly complete file of the discontinued local paper is collecting dust in the attic of the local library. Some times the young people themselves make the discovery, or are referred to the file by a local resident as they go about gathering information on the news resources of the community.

Regardless of where they are found or how they are used, newspapers remain one of the more valuable sources of information about the local past They are crowded with information. They combine the significant with the trivial, a fact which increases their usefulness for the wide-awake teacher. News items are of all sorts and varieties; an occasional editorial may prove to be a mine of information on local developments, but the teacher cannot afford to overlook the advertisements as additional sources of information about the local past. It is true that the complete file in the local library may be guarded by a zealous lady of good intentions and firm mind who will allow only limited use of it. However, there are ways of overcoming this difficulty. More and more teachers and school authorities are learning the relative inexpensiveness and great usefulness of the photostat. New duplicating or copying devices are inexpensive and easily operated and can be used to reproduce parts of valuable old newspapers or rare records.

Letters, diaries, travel guides, atlases. In this day of small apartments and urbanized living young people are fast losing the touch with reality that came from the visit on a rainy day to the attic and the old boxes and trunks that were piled there. Yet in almost any community there exists the possibility of finding a few old letters, diaries, travel guides, gazetteers or atlases that will reveal considerable about the past. It is true that the rural teacher has an advantage over his city colleague in this respect. But by way of compensation, the city teacher more frequently has access to a really fine library or museum. There is not, admittedly, the same thrill in looking at an old letter under a glass case that can be had by finding an old letter and bringing it to school.

Buildings, monuments, utensils. The local community contains innumerable evidences of the constructive activity of former residents. There are public buildings, homes and monuments, roads and canals, sidewalks and sewage-disposal plants. All of these physical evidences can be used as springboards into the study of the past. For example, a park in a small New Hampshire village contains three monuments. The one for the Civil War is made of granite, the World War I memorial is made of iron, and the tablet listing the names of World War II servicemen and servicewomen is made of wood. An examination of the Civil War monument reveals that only the men who gave their lives are listed, and yet there are more names on it than on the entire roster of World War I personnel. What conclusions can be drawn about the wealth of the town, the historical consciousness of the town, or the population of the town, at different periods? How can such conclusions be tested for accuracy?

The broken or discarded remnants of the past, whether housed in a museum or in the possession of a private family are often exciting to young people who are beginning to relate the past to themselves. A boy who has picked blueberries by hand is intrigued by the old yet clever gadget for doing this work that he finds among the old agricultural implements in a museum. Under

the skillful guidance of an interested teacher, and when tied to the experiences of the learners, the old butter churn, the half-filled cellar hole, the candle moulds, the ruins of the old sawmill, the collection of arrowheads are not only symbols of an earlier way of life but have meaning and arouse curiosity. Who lived in the house that stood over the cellar hole? Why did the family move away? What changes in family life are represented by the contrast between the butter churn and the package of oleomargarine on the table, between the candle moulds and the electric light bill?

Historical societies and museums. Many counties, towns, and cities have local historical societies. These societies and their museums vary a great deal in quality. Some of them are little more than dust-covered collections of unsorted and unclassified antiquarianism; others regardless of their size are intelligent guides to an understanding of the past. If the teacher finds the latter type in his community he is thrice-blessed; if his community has the former, he had better join and get to work. If there is no local society at all, he may well use his own students as the nucleus for the formation of one. Local museums started by school children, whether in the elementary or the high school, are numerous, and the results of such enterprise have often been exciting and stimulating to the teacher and the community as well as to the students involved.

The cooperative assistance of historical societies is an encouraging aspect of the present trend toward the use of local materials. Numerous local and county historical societies have made provision for junior members and have invited the schools to contribute to their activity.

In several states the state historical association sponsors a state-wide organization of junior historians Pennsylvania, Texas, New York, Wisconsin and Minnesota have set standards for other states. The central office undertakes the publication of a magazine written for, by, or with, the juniors; with numerous illustrations, these periodicals are more elaborate undertakings than any local group could prepare.

Junior historians undertake a wide range of activities; in fact, there is scarcely a limit to the types of historical work in which they engage. Projects and activities are all planned locally, but the connection with a central authority makes it possible to know what others have accomplished.

The museum "writ large" is the complete restoration of an old community or the creation of one. While of interest to many adults these restorations have great value to pupils who have studied about them or the period when they were at their height. Williamsburg, Virginia, is the actual local community of only a relatively few of the young people who study and enjoy it, while Sturbridge, Massachusetts, can be no pupil's home town. However both kinds of restorations help pupils either to visualize their own localities as they once were or to make descriptions they have read or pictures they have seen come to life.

Personal recollections. Many communities have officially appointed local historians. These people devote much of their spare time to collecting, preserving, and making available to other people materials on local history. Although there may be no such officially appointed person, there are in almost every community one or more persons who as a hobby or avocation collect items and materials of local historic interest. The aid of these persons should be sought.

Moreover, every large or small community contains people who are interested in the local past, as well as elderly people who are a part of that past. Thus social studies teachers and their students should be on the watch for people who have studied, even if superficially, the community and for those who have lived there long enough to have been a party to the changes and the institutions of the locality.

There are dangers and problems in the use of personal information. Perhaps old Mrs. Spaulding remembers when Lincoln's funeral train went through the town, the first automobile entered the town, the argument over the establishment of the local airport. What are the teacher and his students going to do with that information?

A discussion of Mrs. Spaulding's recollection of the Lincoln funeral train could have many results, among them these: when do we accept the uncorroborated testimony of a witness? What is the difference between a reliable and an unreliable witness? Under what conditions is Mrs. Spaulding most likely to remember, with accuracy, the Lincoln funeral train which she saw at the age of seven, the first automobile which she saw at the age of forty-seven, or the airplane ride which she took at the age of eighty? Does Mrs. Spaulding recall how people felt about Lincoln? Can she help the class to figure out what there was about the personality or the leadership of Lincoln that induced loyalty and almost reverence?

The countryside. Finally, the geography of the community is an important part of its history The streams and the hills, the swamps and the clay pits, all played a role in the development of the community. Where were the first roads? What do they indicate about problems of communication and transportation? What is the relationship between the depletion of the old clay banks and the lack of industry in modern Peakstown? If the Big Swamp had been drained, would the railroad have come to Freetown? What is the relation between the many steep hills, the decrease in population, and the depletion of the soil?

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culminating activity frequently provides the only means by which all the students become aware of the total picture. It may, in addition, be an evaluative device, or a means of pupil review. It may take the form of the publication of a booklet, the setting up of a class room museum, or a dramatization. Especially in the lower grades it may take the form of a "program" to which parents and friends are invited.

Putting the basic facts of history in a dramatic form affords training in a particular type of expression. The need for accuracy in dress and settings involves careful historical research. School pageants on historical subjects may involve the entire school body, faculty as well as students, in a project of widespread historical importance and popular appeal. The culminating activitiy may also take the form of a radio program, a TV show. or the celebration of an anniversary. Regardless of the particular purpose or form of a culminating activity, the materials of local history frequently can be used.

Let us suppose that a group of sixth graders have been studying the medieval guild system and the economic life in the European towns of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. That is very far removed from the experience of an eleven-year-old boy or girl. It is difficult to give realism to the study. and it is equally difficult, at least with the less capable students, to guarantee any real understanding. To overcome these handicaps a culminating activity might involve the study of local labor unions, with comparisons made between working and employment conditions in sixteenth-century France and their twentieth-century town.

What Areas in Local History Can Be Studied

There is almost no limit to the areas for possible study in local history. These areas for study should not be confused with the raw materials already discussed. such as newspapers, records, or recollections. Areas are broader and in their study all or part of the materials can be used.

The inexperienced teacher is apt to underrate the richness of his community as a field for study. Because he is located in a smal, town. or a relatively "new" city, or in a section where no nationally significant political or military events transpired. the teacher frequently feels that his community is of little importance. This is a false conclusion and the many areas of study suggested below should help him to correct it.

Public opinion. Few areas of study are more productive of an understanding of historical change and development than the matter of public opinion. An examination into this area. at the local level. may take the form of a study of changing opinion over a relatively long period of time: what changes took place in local thinking in regard to America's responsibility in Europe, or in regard to the threat of Hitler between December 6, 1941, and December 8, 1941?

Perhaps a class might investigate two successive elections, at the village or state level, and attempt to discover why the people apparently changed political allegiance in this short interval. Such an exercise requires careful advance preparation by the teacher. He must be sure that there was change, and also he must be sure that from the available data the students can discover the answers or clues to the answers.

Architecture. History classes seldom pay more than cursory attention to architecture. Yet genuine understanding of the past and of changing economic and social conditions can be derived from an examination of the houses in almost any American town or city. In communities settled before 1810 or 1820, for example, a group of third or fourth graders can make a study of the chimneys in their town. Where are the big, square chimneys found? What do they tell about the age of the house? Why were the chimneys large? What do they show about changing methods of heating houses?

A group of high school students can be introduced to the basic form of Georgian architecture. Again if their area was settled by 1800 it is quite possible that there are examples of Georgian architecture available for study. From an initial search for examples of the Georgian, the class may move along to a discussion of the classical Republican style. Why were Americans interested in Roman and Greek civilization at the end of the eighteenth and in the early years of the nineteenth centuries? What does that show about a fundamental American attitude of mind? How was the Greek Revivalism frequently a mere adaptation of the Georgian? And what does the latter fact show about the artistic limitations of a new society?

If the community is along the Eastern coast, and there are seventeenth- or early eighteenth-century houses available. perhaps there is an example of the "saltbox" house. Why were these houses built? What do they reveal about a common American attitude toward taxation?

What do the ornate houses of the latter part of the nineteenth century and the functional architecture of recent years show about the people who adopted them? Are there zoning ordinances in the community? Have they affected the type of house that has been. built? How has modern building design affected habits of entertainment? family life? the preservation of records of the past?

Are the homes part of a housing development? Why was this type of building construction necessary? Who is responsible for the design? In what ways can the dwellers be creative? How does the home reflect industrialization?

Transportation. No teacher will have difficulty in find-

ing areas for study in the general field of transportation. Where and when were the first roads in town? Why were they thus located? Of what materials were they made? When were the village or city streets first paved? What changes have come in street paving? Canals, bridges, automobiles, airplanes all offer avenues for research. How is transportation related to the economic life of the community? What changes have come with the railroad? the trailer-truck?

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Land values. An examination of local land values, whether urban or rural, can be of real value. The prices paid for pieces of property at different periods will reveal economic changes within the community and changing economic conditions throughout the country as a whole. At the senior high school level the matter of the purchasing power of money, of "real" wages and of comparative values might easily grow out of this area of examination and study.

Professional services. The professional services offered by residents of the community offer a multiplicity of topics for investigation. Some will be as simple as, who was the first doctor in town? Others will be as complicated as, when and under what conditions did the local clergy first cooperate in a community project? Attempting to establish the growth of professional services in the community in chronological order can be extremely revealing in terms of the growth of both the community and the nation. The arrival and increase in the numbers of doctors, ministers, lawyers, librarians, social workers, and public health officials offer fertile ground for examination.

Occupational development. Regardless of whether the community is rural or urban, large or small, old or young, there have been changes in occupational development through the years. The completely rural town has witnessed shifts in agricultural specialization. For example, a small Vermont town was settled by people whose chief income came from the sale of pot-ash. The children or grandchildren of those settlers raised Merino sheep and Morgan horses. The present farmers rely on their dairies and the income from milk shipped to industrial cities.

In industrial towns and cities the changes may be even more frequent and interesting. One small New York State city that was once the hub of the wagon-making history now contains a firm that manufactures large motor trucks, another that makes overhead doors for garages, and a third that manufactures pleasure boats.

New towns that have grown up around recent huge public or private industrial projects or enterprises are making history and have roots that radiate out in space, although they are not yet deep. Traditions and customs are being formed from the ideas brought by the new settlers and an exploration of these can be rewarding. Besides it is interesting for the newcomers to investigate the way the area had been utilized by man before they arrived on the scene.

The changing occupational patterns are as varied and as interesting as the changes in basic industry. The blacksmith's son becomes an automobile mechanic and his grandson an airplane mechanic or a television repairman. The "aristocrat" of the wagon-making industry, the man who received the highest pay and had the greatest occupational security, was the "striper," the man who painted the stripes on the wagon bodies, the hubs and spokes, and the whiffle trees. Who has the greatest occupational security in the community today? Why? What has mass production done to the skilled laborer of a former day?

Other areas of investigation. The above areas represent just a brief sampling of the possible ones. A few others that can be developed in the same way are the ethnic history of the community, the religious history of the community, educational changes in the community, government of the community, and scientific ideas that have changed community life, agriculture, medicine, religious practice, industrial growth.

How To Use Local History in Developing Skills in Critical Thinking

That the use of local history develops critical skills has been shown in preceding sections. When students are brought face to face with primary sources, questions arise that have to be critically examined. Historical records are used to impress students with the need for carefully evaluating statements and developing original, creative ideas and sound conclusions. Documents are sources of information yet they require careful and correct interpretation.

Gradually and cumulatively, but none the less definitely, pupils learn that history is a way of work as well as a body of information. A genuine notion about historical method can be supplied at an early stage of schooling; but it needs to be subjected to analysis and application in order to become fully understood and functional. Aspects of the historical method have to be stressed and repeated under different circumstances and the use of the local community in this connection cannot be overemphasized.

In addition to these important skills, local history can promote several others. No local history study will have maximum effectiveness without the use of maps. Proficiency in reading maps and interpretating map symbols are essential skills that local history can promote. Orienting the pupils to the community of the past in relation to the community of the present is an important aspect of map skills.

In the same way, local history can aid in acquiring skills in interpreting pictorial materials. The landscape by a local artist; the post card view of Main Street with its trolley tracks and horse-drawn carriages; the dignified portraits; wood engravings of a country farmhouse; photographs of the high school class of '24; and snapshots of the fireman's carnival are all historical documents. But the pictures, whether paintings, prints, or photographs, do not stand alone: there must be information about them. Who or what is the subject; where and when was the scene made? Complete information must accompany the view if it is to stand as historical evidence. Moreover, students should acquire experience in recognizing artistic conventions; they should learn to look for the artist's point of view and understand his reasons for making a picture show what it does.

Charts and graphs also have to be interpreted. Pupils need to understand that their accuracy is dependent on the quantity and quality of the data collected and its manipulation. Many critical skills are required and nothing will aid more in their development than the construction by the class of a chart or graph about a particular local condition or situation based on the data they have gathered. Population adjustments and changes in the cost of government are only two of many items that can be presented graphically. Collecting, evaluating, and interpreting the local data will enable pupils to understand the limitations of pictorial materials and also provide them with the skills and insights necessary for critical thought about them.

Conclusion

There is considerable evidence that local history is being given increasing emphasis in American schools for its values have been recognized and demonstrated. The materials of local history are available and all that is needed are teachers who have eyes to see them and the will to use them.

Devoted teachers urge a greater use of this local historical data. As a result of experience and observation these materials can be used in social studies teaching from kindergarten and lower elementary grades, through college and graduate school. Teachers of history or social studies who use local history are increasing their efficiency in teaching for that understanding of the past and present which leads to improved citizenship.

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