



Grand Junction's Museum of Western Colorado comes alive each spring as 800 or more students experience educational programs during Re-Enactors Day. Photo from Museum of Western Colorado.

Take A Trip To A Special Place

- Description:** Example of how a field trip can be used to explore local history and traditions.
- Grades:** K – 12
- Author:** Bea Roeder
- Materials Included:** Sample Activities—Four Mile Historic Park
<http://www.fourmilehistoricpark.org/>
<http://www.wcmuseum.org>
- Materials Needed:** Identify an appropriate site for a field trip.
 Transportation and permissions needed to take class on a field trip.

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Take a Trip to a Special Place!

Many places offer students an opportunity to explore the history and traditions of our part of the world. You might be able to set up a field trip to visit a wonderful regional museum or historic place. Contact the organization first to make a reservation and to find out if people working there can arrange special experiences for students. You may find that they offer activities like the ones mentioned in this lesson plan. Look at a listing of Colorado Museums and Historic Sites to find out where you and your students might be able to go.

Here are two samples from Denver's Four Mile Historic Park, featuring Denver's oldest standing house (built in 1859), a twelve-acre rural setting along Cherry Creek and a portion of the Cherokee Trail. The Park's Education staff pride themselves on providing fun, hands-on activities for visiting school (or home-schooled) groups of ten or more.



Exhibits, presentations and demonstrations by artists, crafts people and historical interpreters make even the parking lot a special place teeming with history and culture during the Museum of Western Colorado's annual Re-Enactors Day. Photo from Museum of Western Colorado.

Buttermaking at Four Mile Historic Park

Pioneers made their own butter and used a churn. Using the churn would take about three hours, so your students will use a shortcut. Cream used to make butter would normally have come from the family cow; however, you will use heavy whipping cream.

Directions

Pour 1/2 inch of heavy cream into each of two jars. Tighten lids and have the students take turns shaking each jar *Vigorously* (about 10-12 minutes). Shake the cream past the whipped cream stage, even though it doesn't seem to move. The buttermilk will separate from the butterfat (it will all separate at once, making a slushing sound). A light, watery liquid (buttermilk) separates from the ball of light yellow butter when it's ready. Pour off the buttermilk into the bowl. With a fork or spoon spread some butter on a cracker for the children to taste. Children who finish early may play jump rope.

Notes of Interest and Fun!

Women and children did this chore. Cream was used from room-temperature milk which had just begun to sour. Butter was rinsed to remove the buttermilk still stuck to it. Then it was pressed into squares with paddles, or molded into shapes and/or designs. Sometimes salt was added. The color could be enhanced with some water from boiled carrot shavings. The color could also vary depending on what the cows had eaten!

Use this old-time chant while the students are shaking the jar:

Come butter come, come butter come.
Peter's standing at the gate,
Waiting for a butter cake,
Come, butter, come.

Try this tongue twister while “churning”

Betty Botta bought a bit o’ butter.
“But,” said she, “this butter’s bitter.
When I put it in my batter,
It just made my batter bitter.”
So Betty Botta bought a bit o’ better butter
And put it in her bitter batter,
Which made Betty Botta’s bitter batter a bit
better.

Cherokee Trail at Four Mile Historic Park

Your students will be grouped into “families” and given a role to play. Each family will be presented with a series of situations pioneers encountered along the way. Each family will discuss alternatives and make choices, some of which test math skills. Activities include:

Packing the Wagon

Each student may climb into a covered wagon, one at a time, to see how little space is available, as park staff lead discussions about what each family might take and how these pioneers packed.

For example: How could you pack your valuables and fragile dishes to keep them safe while traveling over rough and rocky trails? (Available for inspection: a barrel full of dishes packed in corn—seed corn for farming in a new place.)

Wagon Ride

You will meet another wagon for a ride around the park on the road between the house and the barns. You will be traveling on a portion of the actual Cherokee Trail! Encourage students to look around them as they ride and try to picture what this wagon ride might have looked like in 1860. The teamsters will tell you about Four Mile’s team of Percheron horses and tales of covered wagon travel.

Setting Up Camp

(A) Open Fire cooking

Early travelers enjoyed simple foods on the trail. Ask children what they think a typical meal might have been while traveling in a covered wagon (beans, biscuits, corn bread, dried meat). A simple food called “Mock Oysters” or corn fritters might have been a rare treat cooked out over the open fire. Remind children that the discomforts caused by dust, heat, smoke and bugs were all part of covered wagon life! While mixing the corn fritters, ask students if any of them know where their own great grandparents emigrated from. Possibly, they are in Colorado today because their relatives traveled west enduring the hardships and difficulties of covered wagon travel, back in the 1800s! Each group finds a basket with recipe and supplies on a picnic table near an open fire. One adult leader stays with the fire at all times, adding wood as needed. Children do all the measuring and mixing; an adult cooks. All sample and enjoy their efforts!

(B) Wood gathering, hunting, and grinding coffee
Gathering fuel for the fire on the open plains could be especially challenging with little or no wood in the area. Can students think of a creative alternative to burning wood? (Hint: buffalo were plentiful on the prairie. What did they leave behind? Buffalo chips!) Children will take turns gathering wood from around the immediate area and stacking it near the fire pit (and then re-scattering it for the next group!), grinding coffee beans (a drink that both children and adults enjoyed) and practicing hunting wild game by throwing bean bags at our “make believe” prairie animals. Each child should get three tosses and will be rewarded with a taste of real pioneer food: beef jerky.

Celebrations: Music and Dance

Our pioneer ancestors enjoyed a good celebration as much as we do today! Half the children will add their own rhythm section to taped fiddle and banjo music, while others invent steps to go along with the music; half the group at a time dances in a large circle.

Clogging is an authentic American folk dance that has developed and evolved over time.

Authentic clogging is the art of hammering out a lively rhythm with your feet to the beat of the music. Like most American art forms, its origins are complex, including English factory workers in heavy shoes, African slaves, Irish emigrants, and others. With its shuffles, taps, chugs and stomps, this dance reflects the “melting pot” aspect of American culture.

Other Cherokee Trail activities include Gold-panning, Tipi Activities, and Animal Tracks.

TIES THAT BIND

Folk Arts Lesson Plan - Take A Trip To A Special Place

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