

Becoming Kansas: The People and the Struggles That Built the State

Territorial Capital Museum

Getting Started: A New Life on the Kansas Frontier

Primary (K-3) Lesson Plan



History, Government, and Social Studies Standard(s)

Standard #1: Choices have consequences.
Benchmarks:

- 1.1 The student will recognize and evaluate significant choices and consequences that have impacted our lives and futures.
- 1.2 The student will analyze the context and draw conclusions about choices and consequences.
- 1.3 The student will investigate and connect examples of choices and consequences with contemporary issues

Standard #2: Individuals have rights and responsibilities.
Benchmark:

- 2.1 The student will recognize and evaluate the rights and responsibilities of people living in societies.

DOUGLAS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY-WATKINS MUSEUM OF HISTORY NEH AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN GRANT PROJECT: UNITED STORIES: REVITALIZING HERITAGE FIELDTRIPS IN DOUGLAS COUNTY, KANSAS



Overview



This plan is designed to support classroom instruction in history, government, and social studies at the K-3 level. It can be completed in 1-3 hours depending upon how many pre and post activities and which displays you choose to include. The specific theme of this lesson is: *Getting Started: A New Life on the Kansas Frontier*.

Prior to arriving at the museum, review the key vocabulary with the class. Follow that by reviewing the foundation information with students. Key concepts that students need to understand are:

- Choices cause change.
- Every choice comes with a cost.
- We make choices for many different reasons.
- We don't always know what will happen when we make a choice.

Foundation Information:

Settlers often left notes scrawled on boards, rocks, or animal bones for settlers who were following them. The messages could range from advice on good campsites to more ominous messages, such as "For God's sake, don't drink this water."

Many families brought along household pets on their journeys. During one 1850 wagon train, a cat saved its owners from starvation by providing it with a freshly killed rabbit each morning.

The classroom teacher should review the information in the Overview prior to arriving at the museum. Ensure that students understand the terms choice and consequence as well as how they are connected.

Key vocabulary to front load for primary students:

- pioneer – someone who is the first to settle in a new country or area
- crucial – extremely important
- durable – something that lasts
- frontier - a region beyond settled or developed territory
- schooner – a ship with masts and sails
- tallow – the fat from animals
- homespun – made by hand not in a factory
- spokes - the connecting rods between the hub and the rim of a wheel; pioneers often measured the distance they traveled each day by tying a ribbon to a spoke and assigning someone to count individual revolutions of the wheel

In the mid-1850s, many people made the decision to make the dangerous, and sometimes deadly, trip to the Kansas Territory. For some, it was a matter of principle — a way to halt the advancement of slavery in the United States. Others went to Kansas for a chance to own land, a chance to provide a new start, or a chance to provide a better life for their families. When packing for their journey, Kansas pioneers had to abandon many of their possessions, say goodbye to family and friends who they may never see again, and pack supplies that would last the long journey ahead and the first few months in their new home. Crucial for the trip was a rifle or pistol for hunting and protection. In addition, pioneers took durable, warm clothing, and blankets. Many tried to load books, furniture, and other treasured belongings, but these were often left behind on the road when the animals pulling the wagons became tired. Spare wagon parts -- such as spokes, axles, and wheels -- were often tied under the wagon, and water buckets and water barrels were strapped to its sides.

The most common transportation for Kansas pioneers was the covered wagon. Those wagons were often known as "prairie schooners," because the white covering over the top of the wagon looked like the sails on a ship. The canvas top, or "bonnet," of the wagon, was a homespun cotton that was treated with linseed oil or tallow to make it waterproof. Settlers carried most of their food in the wagon. Items included flour, bacon, sugar, coffee, tea, dried fruit, corn meal, and rice. Utensils for cooking were often only a skillet, a coffee pot, tin plates and cups, a camp stove, and a few sets of flatware. Because the wagons were so full, and because they traveled at the speed of two miles per hour, many settlers -- men, women, and children -- walked beside their wagons across the continent.

Student Support

Watch for this icon for opportunities to use materials to make activities more meaningful.

Getting Started: A New Life on the Kansas Frontier



DISCUSSION/TOUR

Do a quick knowledge check by reviewing the Overview information with the students. Be sure that they understand what a pioneer is and that settler is a synonym for pioneer. Discuss what they know about how pioneers traveled to Kansas and what they brought with them. Review the vocabulary words with them to ensure they understand how they relate to life on the frontier. Follow that discussion by asking the leading questions below and then move to the activity listed on the right.



LEADING QUESTIONS

What would you take with you if you were moving to a new city tomorrow?

How is your list different from the items that the pioneers were able to bring with them to Kansas?

Why did the pioneers leave the cities to make their new homes on the frontiers?

What kinds of choices did the pioneers have to make in preparing to come to Kansas?



HANDS ON ACTIVITY

Divide students into groups of 2 or 3. Provide each group with a copy of slides 6 thru 18. Allow them a few minutes to look at the pictures. Tell them to discuss what they think the item circled in red is, what it does or what it is used for.



LEADING QUESTIONS

Did you recognize all of the items pictured?

Do you think they are all items the settlers on the frontier would use?

Do you recognize the building on picture 1?

Student Support



One set of images for each group of students.

Getting Started: A New Life on the Kansas Frontier



DISCUSSION/TOUR

Lead the students through a tour of the museum that focuses on items from the time period when settlers were moving into Kansas. Since these are young students, they have shorter attention spans so a complete tour of the museum would be overwhelming.

By 1850, America's population was growing, and people were looking for new sources of land. In 1854 Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which authorized removal of the Native Americans living there and opened the territory to settlement. Lured by cheap land, people from all places and economic conditions came to Kansas. Because the frontier was far from "home" for many settlers, it became a lonely place, especially when the husband and wife were separated for weeks or even months when the husband went on a hunting trip or to a major town many miles away. Water, timber, and good land were oftentimes hard to come by; those who couldn't build a log cabin had to make do with sod houses made with bricks carved from the very land itself. Fire, tornadoes, floods, droughts, blizzards, and even grasshopper infestations were constant sources of worry. Corn was the chief crop and the staple of the frontier diet. Cow and buffalo manure, called chips, were used as fuel. As you move into the exhibits ask students the leading questions below..



LEADING QUESTIONS

Why is it important to have items like these in the Lecompton museum?

What items do you see in this area that you think would have been brought to Kansas by the pioneers?



HANDS ON ACTIVITY

The students will continue to work in their groups. Each group will carry the display pictures with them.

Tell the students that when they spot one of the items from their cards, they should hold up that card. Ask at least one of the questions below before leaving each display.



LEADING QUESTIONS

Does this artifact tell you something about life on the frontier?

What do you think the item is, what was it used for and how it was used.

What observations can you make about the item. i.e., needed to survive; compared to similar modern item, etc.

Are there other items in this display area that you think may have come from the pioneer days?

Student Support

One set of images for each group of students.



Wrap Up Activity

Remind the students of the exhibits on their tour today.

Ask which item that they saw was their favorite.

Show the students the photos on slides 18 – 20. Explain that these are photos of early settlers to the Lecompton area and images of a family log cabin and a house built by the family members a number of years after the original settlers arrived.



Leading Questions

What do you notice about the photos of the settlers?

How do the photos differ from a picture of you and your family or friends?

How do the pictures of the log cabin and the house differ?

Why do you think they are so different?



1



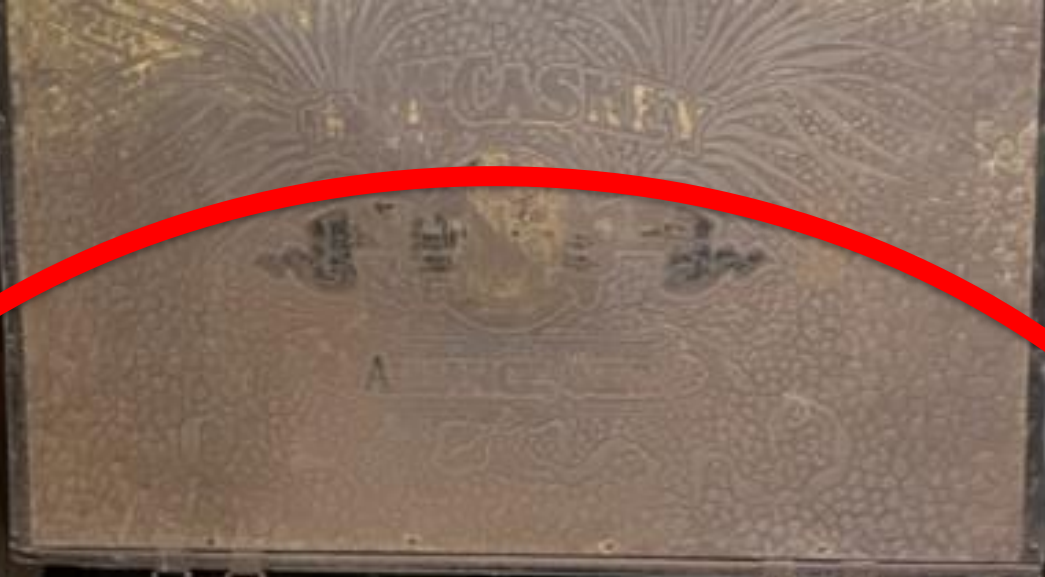
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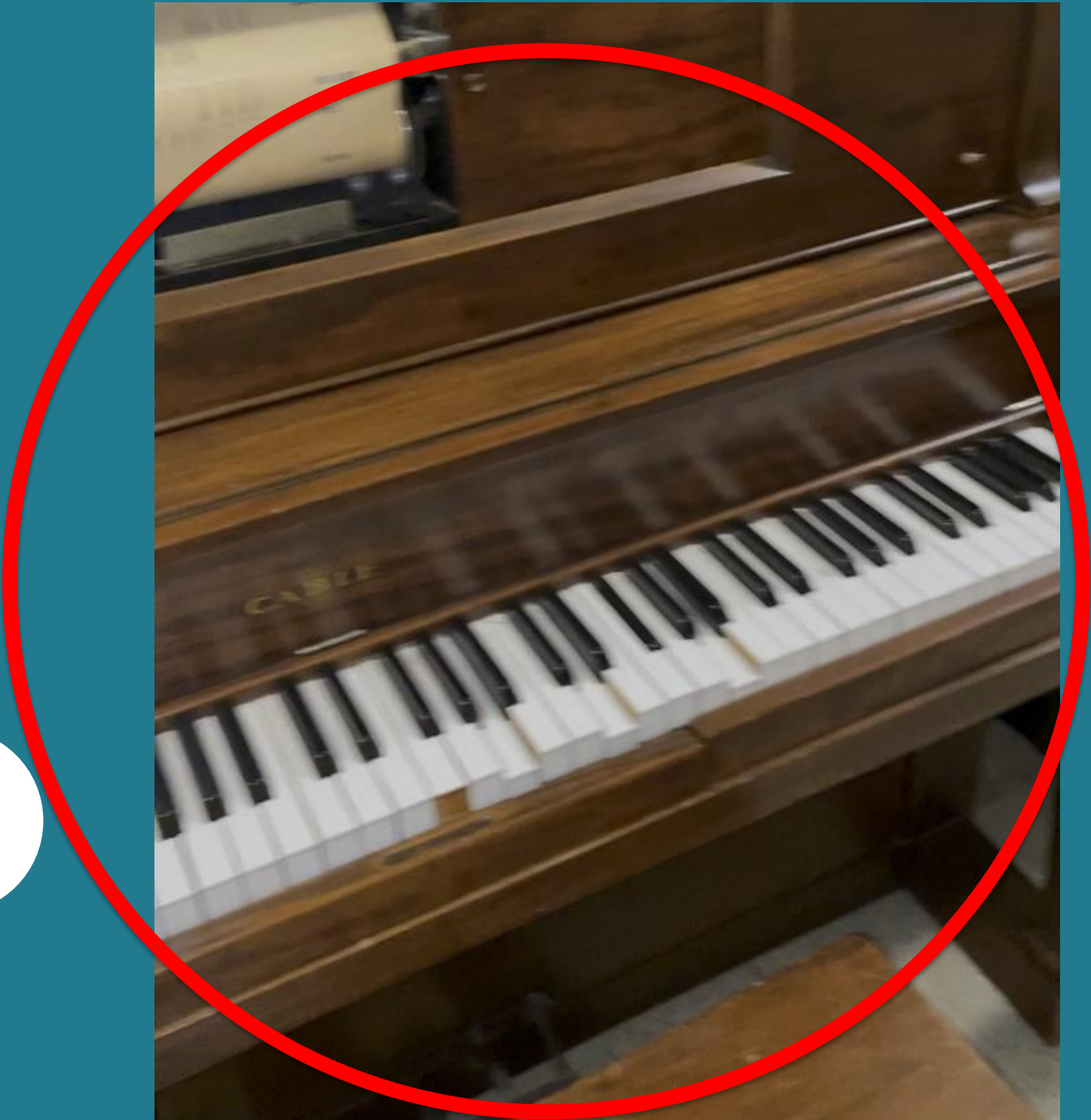


Small text on a card at the bottom of the display, likely providing information about the dolls or the dollhouse.

5



6



7



8



8



9



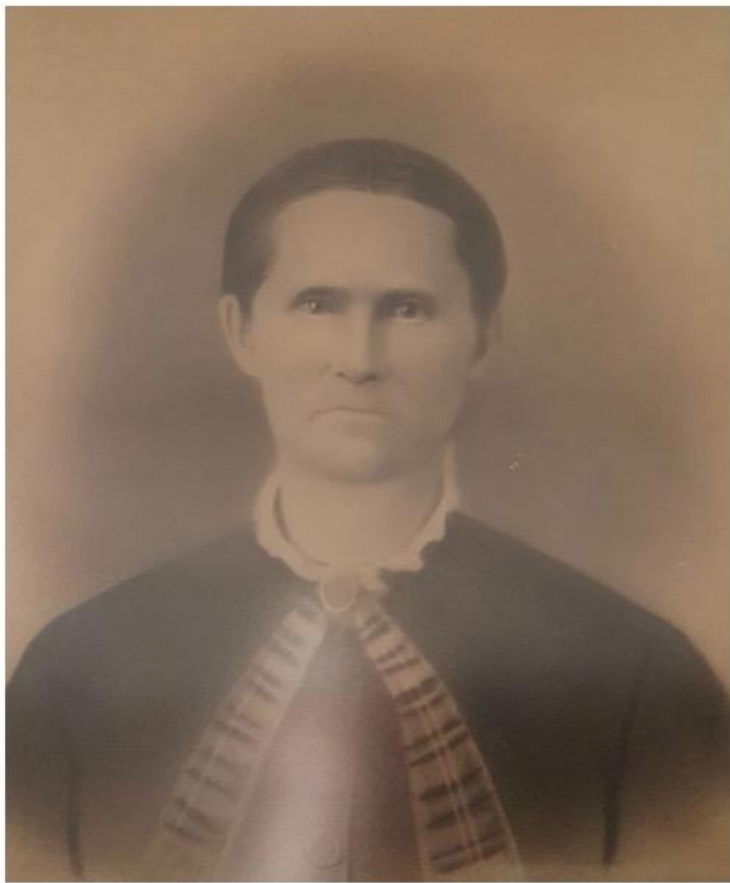
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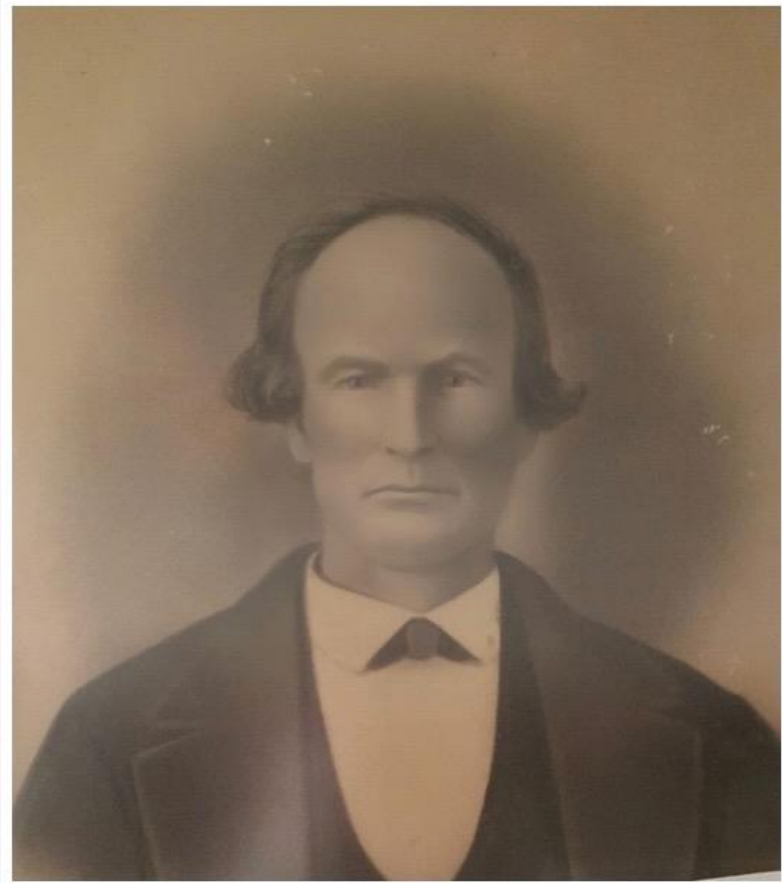
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Pioneers of Leocompton



MARY ANN ZINN MCCLANAHAN, EARLY SETTLER TO THE LECOMPTON AREA. PHOTOGRAPH AT THE TERRITORIAL CAPITAL MUSEUM IN LECOMPTON, KANSAS.



JOHN GREEN MCCLANAHAN, EARLY LECOMPTON SETTLER. PHOTOGRAPH AT THE TERRITORIAL CAPITAL MUSEUM IN LECOMPTON, KANSAS.



Log Cabin on the McClanahan Farm
One of the first in this part of the country



Grandma McClanahan in front of her home built in 1881 near Lecompton, Kansas. Painting at the Territorial Capital Museum in Lecompton, Kansas.