

## Footsteps in the Past – Walking the Trail of History in Bedford

This program explores Colonial Life and was written to augment the New York State fourth grade social studies curriculum. Using a pre-visit packet at school, students explore primary source documents, such as the Hopp Ground Deed of 1680 and early maps to gain an understanding of how some early American towns originated and grew. Research has shown that students get much more out of field trips if they have some knowledge of what they are going to see before they get there.



During the on-site portion of the program, students assemble on the Village Green. When they come off the bus, the town crier beats a drum and explains that in colonial times, the residents would be called to a town meeting or religious service, or alerted to an attack by a drum beat. After describing the original use of the Village Green or Town Common and pointing out the historic buildings and the graveyard, the students are divided into three groups of 15 to 20 students.

One group proceeds to the 1829 one room School House where, as the school bell rings, the students are separated and the girls enter single file through the front entrance followed by the boys who enter through the side door. All remain standing until the teacher enters and is seated. The school marm begins by pointing out the features of the School House such as the coal stove with the stovepipe running the length of the room for heat, the traveling library, the dunce's cap, and the desk inkwells. Then, the teacher involves the students by having them stand and read from a McGuffey reader. They also discuss the rules by which both the teacher and the students had to abide in a 19th century one-room school.



*The Schoolmistress demonstrates the Dunce Cap.*



*Students examine Native American Artifacts*

The second group walks to the Bedford Store (home of the Historical Society, where they participate in a session entitled "Artifacts through the Centuries." Students view and have an interactive discussion of Native American artifacts from the collection of William H. Lewis, representing life prior to colonization. Students then play a game of "Guess and Tell" where they are shown artifacts from the 18th and 19th centuries and guess what they are or how they were used. The session concludes with an opportunity to sketch something of interest that the students have seen in The Bedford Store.

The third group proceeds to the 1787 Court House where they receive a brief history of the 1787 Court House and its role in early life. They then have an opportunity to participate in two to three mock trials which are presided over by a Justice of the Peace who is played by a retired lawyer. Also present are a Constable and a Jailer. When the trials conclude, the students go upstairs to release one of their classmates who has been sentenced to time in jail. One student is always sentenced so the students can see the original Jail Cell and take a brief tour of the museum.



Each portion of the tour is given three times so that all students have an opportunity to participate in each part.

Back at school, students have an opportunity to work on a post-visit packet which furthers the learning that began on-site. This packet includes additional arithmetic problems and excerpts from the McGuffey reader, historical essays about the life of the early settlers and why Bedford remained a town while some areas grew into cities. Also included is a copy of the Town of Bedford seal and a template to enable each student to create his or her own personal seal.

Since colonial life is part of the New York State curriculum for the 4th grade level, this tour is customized for that level. We are able to amend the tour for other age groups as well.