Building a Community

Teaching with Historic Buildings

in Washington County
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Utah Heritage Foundation fulfills its mission through a wide range of programs and activities which reach communities throughout the state, including: the annual Historic Homes Tour, tours and classroom programs for school groups, the Heritage Awards program, our news magazine, Heritage, the Revolving Fund Loan Program, and stewardship of the historic Memorial House in Memory Grove Park. As a private, non-profit, membership-based organization, the foundation is mainly supported by private resources, including memberships, gifts, grants, and proceeds from special events.

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Why does almost every school in the United States teach history to its students? Why do we include the history of our own town and our own state? Because that is where the students live. That is their community. And community is crucial in the life of everyone. Community is us, and appreciating community enlivens it.

Here in Washington County our history almost screams at us from the red hills, the straight streets, and especially from the heroic structures that first generation of pioneers gave us.

The problem is that each generation has to discover this heritage anew. One can drive past the St. George Tabernacle, the Old Courthouse, or the Opera House and not even think about them. You can see the water in the ditches and not even know why it is there. Each generation has to discover the original glass windows in the Tabernacle, the movable floor in the Opera House, the cupola (with its alleged gallows) in the Courthouse, and the irrigation system that we still use. Without adventurous teaching many will never know that in Washington County we live amid some of the best-preserved history in America.

What delights me about these lessons is that they are action-oriented. They encourage teachers and students to move beyond the classroom, explore some of Washington County’s most exciting historic places, and experience history first-hand. It is one thing to tell the students the story of Peter Nielsen giving money to purchase the glass for the Tabernacle windows; it is another to go into the building, discover the original glass, and understand what it took to get this glass to St. George.

We live in the presence of the determined pioneers who settled Washington County. We know their offspring. We use their buildings and streets and ditches and dams. The things they constructed connect our lives to theirs. They link past, present, and future generations.

But every generation has to learn it anew.

And it can be best done if we can touch things and experience them and not just hear about them.

*Dr. Douglas D. Alder*

*St. George, Utah*

*February 2003*
Washington County has a rich and fascinating history filled with stories of perseverance, resourcefulness, and sacrifice. This history is embodied in the county’s historic buildings. From beautiful religious structures to humble homes, these buildings reflect the culture, economy, technology, and aesthetics of the people who constructed them.

Studying these buildings can bring history to life for your students. Historic buildings are powerful teaching tools because they are a tangible connection to the people and events of the past. In an historic building, students can see, touch, and experience history firsthand. While textbooks tell students “History happened,” historic buildings exclaim, “History happened here!”

To encourage you to take advantage of the exciting educational resources offered by local historic buildings, Utah Heritage Foundation developed Building a Community: Teaching with Historic Buildings in Washington County. Building a Community contains six engaging lessons, a variety of primary historical documents, and a timeline of Washington County history to help you use historic buildings as a window onto the past.

Utah Heritage Foundation hopes that in addition to enhancing your teaching of Washington County’s history in the classroom, these lessons will be a springboard for a visit to one or more of the buildings featured in this guide. Building a Community includes a lesson on the St. George Opera House that fourth grade teachers can use to enrich their students’ visit to the building through the St. George LIVE! program. The guide also includes lessons on the St. George Tabernacle, the Washington County Courthouse, and the Jacob Hamblin Family House along with contact information for arranging guided tours of each of these buildings.

Teaching the Core Curriculum

The lessons in this guide support the Utah State Board of Education core curriculum for fourth and seventh grades, but can be adapted for other grade levels. Each lesson features a key listing the specific core curriculum objectives it addresses. Refer to Appendices A and B for a complete list of the fourth and seventh grade core curriculum objectives in social studies, language arts, and visual arts met by lessons in the guide.

About the Lesson Plans

The Building a Community lesson plans foster critical thinking skills by involving students in analyzing and interpreting primary historic resources. The lesson activities allow students to apply new concepts and skills in authentic performances. The lessons use readily available materials and require little preparation to teach. Each lesson is organized in the following format:

Tour Information
For lessons about a specific building, this section provides the address of the building, information about the availability of tours, and a contact phone number for arranging a tour.

Fourth and Seventh Grade Core Curriculum Objectives
Lists the subject areas in which the lesson addresses Utah State Board of Education fourth and seventh grade core curriculum standards and the numbers of the specific objectives the lesson supports.

Lesson Objectives
Highlights the concepts and skills to be taught in the lesson.

Duration
Lists the approximate amount of time required to complete the lesson activities.

Instructional Materials
Lists all the student handouts and graphics needed for the lesson. These materials follow the lesson in the guide and can be duplicated for classroom use.

Supplies
Lists the art, writing, or other classroom supplies needed for the lesson.
Teacher Background
Some lessons include background information to assist you in preparing to teach these lessons.

Setting the Stage
Step-by-step instructions for a brief activity that relates the lesson topic to subjects already familiar to students and/or assesses students’ prior knowledge of the topic.

Student Instruction
Step-by-step instructions for introducing students to the concepts and skills listed in the objectives.

Student Activity
Step-by-step instructions for an activity that allows students to apply new concepts or skills to meet the lesson objective. Some lessons include two student activity options from which you can choose.

Extensions
Some lessons include additional activities that address the objectives.

Utah Heritage Foundation hopes you and your students will find studying Washington County through its historic buildings an exciting and rewarding education experience. We are always striving to improve the education programs we offer Utah students. We welcome your questions, comments, and suggestions at:

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1849 Parley P. Pratt leads a group to explore southern Utah, including areas in Washington County.

1852 - c. 1930 Isolation
Washington County is isolated from the rest of Utah and the nation. No rail lines and few good roads exist in the county. The economy is largely based on subsistence agriculture, including fruit growing, cattle ranching, and raising alfalfa. Very little outside capital is invested in the area. It remains one of the poorest regions in Utah.

1852 February 3 The territorial legislature officially creates Washington County. There are no non-Indian settlements in the county yet.
Spring Fifteen families build a fort at Harmony in Washington County.

1853 Settlers abandon Fort Harmony during Walker War.

1854 Settlers construct a new Fort Harmony under leadership of John D. Lee. Jacob Hamblin establishes LDS Indian Mission at Santa Clara.

1855-1862 Several new towns established: Pine Valley (1855), Gunlock (1857), Washington (1857), Toquerville (1858), Virgin (1858), Grafton (1859), Rockville (1861), Springdale (1862)

1861 LDS Church President Brigham Young calls 300 families to establish new community of St. George.

1861-1862 Terrible winter floods cause great damage and force towns of Harmony, Santa Clara, Washington, Grafton, Virgin, and Rockville to relocate to higher ground.

1861-1880 Citizens of Washington County undertake numerous important building projects largely with donated materials and labor.

1861-63 St. George Hall - Building used for many community social functions until its sale in 1875.

1863-75 St. George Tabernacle

1865-68 Washington Cotton Factory

1867-70 Washington Co. Courthouse

1871-77 St. George LDS Temple

1877, 80 Additions made to Gardener's Club Winery to create St. George Social Hall/Opera House.

1863-c.1910 Numerous local theater companies produce plays and musicals starring local citizens.

1876-1888 Silver Reef mining operations at their peak of activity.

1891 Washington Field Dam completed. This is the first dam to withstand the area's seasonal floods and opens some of the best land in the county to farming.

1893-1906 Construction of the Hurricane Canal. This incredible project opens 2,000 acres to farming.

1909 President Taft designates Mukuntuweap National Monument in Washington County.

1917 Mukuntuweap National Monument becomes Zion National Park.

1923 Union Pacific Railroad begins offering tours of Zion National Park through the Utah Parks Company.
1930-1945 Transition

Some of the important groundwork has been laid for Washington County to become a tourist destination, but the economic catastrophe of the Great Depression and the demands of World War II put further development on hold. New research, some of it conducted in Washington County, leads to the discovery of methods for growing sugar beet seed in warm climates. Sugar beet seed production becomes an important part of the local economy.

1930  Zion Tunnel completed, greatly improving bus and automobile access to Zion National Park.

1931  The first oiled road, the Arrowhead Trail route (US 91) from Salt Lake City to Los Angeles, is completed through Washington County.

1930-39  The Great Depression hits Washington County very hard. Declining agricultural prices are disastrous for the local economy. Because the county is so poor, it receives assistance from many New Deal programs, including WPA building projects, numerous CCC projects to improve roads, flood control, and facilities at Zion National Park, and a FERA project to improve sanitation.

1940-45  During World War II one in nine Washington County residents enlists or is inducted into the armed services. Virtually all the healthy young men in the county are gone. They come back with new ideas and plans. At home, residents face food and gas rationing and worry about loved ones. Zion National Park is closed for a time to support gas rationing.

1945-1973 Destination

Washington County emerges as a tourism destination as the automobile becomes widely available to Americans. New restaurants and motels are built in St. George and other towns to serve a growing number of tourists attracted to the county’s stunning scenery and sunny climate. Air conditioning makes summers in Washington County more comfortable.

1950s  Nuclear testing in Nevada desert sends clouds of radioactive fallout over Washington County.

1959  Snow Canyon State Park established.

1965  Red Hills Golf Course completed. St. George city government undertakes the project as an economic development measure.

1968  Development begins on Bloomington, the first subdivision of “luxury homes” in Washington County. Other condominium and luxury home developments soon follow. By the mid-1970s many retirees are moving to the county for the mild winters.

1973  Interstate 15 is completed and connects Washington County to the rest of the state and the nation as never before. The population of the county increases from 14,000 in 1970 to 26,000 in 1980 to 48,500 in 1990 to 91,000 in 2000.