



Fairfield Museum

EXPLORE *the past*, IMAGINE *the future*

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www.fairfieldhistory.org

Activity Title

This Historic House I: Using Photographs to Explore the Past & Present

Search Terms

Historic houses, saltbox, New England, preservation

Historical Background

Drive through some towns in Connecticut and most often you'll see very old houses, buildings or structures from the beginnings of our communities in the 17th and 18th centuries. What can these historic structures tell us about the past? How do we decide what to preserve for future generations?

This activity complements a historic house tour of the 1750 Ogden House in Fairfield, CT. Pre and post activities utilize photographs, maps, and primary sources to encourage students to develop questions. On the field trip, students should come prepared with questions on how the objects in this house compares and contrasts with their own home life. Finally, a post-activity set of photographs shows how antique dealer Mary Allis lived in this house, recreating a home inspired by the past.

Compelling Questions from CT Social Studies Frameworks (CSSF)

#1: How does our town/city contribute to Connecticut's history?

#2: What is significance of Connecticut's contribution to America's story?

Potential Supporting Questions from CSSF

Why were specific individuals or events in your community honored through historic properties / historic preservation, and how did they affect the history of your town, state, and country?

How has our town changed and/or stayed the same over time?

What attracts a person to a town or city today? How is that different from what may have attracted them in the past?

Tool Kit of Resources

1) PDF Document: Historic House Model

2) Use the Library of Congress Primary Source Analysis Guide for Photographs:

http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing_Photos_and_Prints.pdf

3) Another model is on the Teach It website for Connecticut resources:

<http://teachitct.org/grade-3-kids-in-connecticut-history-image-analysis-skill-builder/>

4) Pre-activity:

PDF Document: Historic House Primary Source Set 1

PDF Document: Historic House Questions Hand-Out

- 5) Optional Field Trip to a historic home
6) Post Activity:
PDF Document: Historic House Primary Source Set 2

Inquiry Activity

Step 1:

Ask the students where they live: is it an old home/building or a new home/building? Ask the students if they've noticed any buildings, houses or places in your town or area that may have a history or an interesting story, such as different types of homes. What have they noticed about the buildings in your town?

Some buildings are kept preserved so that we can learn about the past. We're going to learn about one in Fairfield.

Use the first photograph to model the photo analysis activity.
Ask students to OBSERVE/LOOK, REFLECT/THINK, and QUESTION/WONDER.

OBSERVE/LOOK: What do you see? What is the setting? What things are in the image? What details do you notice?

REFLECT/THINK: What do you think is going on here? Who do you think took this picture and why? Are there clues about when this picture was taken? If this picture was taken today, how would it be different?

QUESTION/WONDER: What does this picture make you wonder? How could you find out more?

Step 2: Pre-Activity

Print two copies of the Primary Source Set 1 photographs and images.

Divide your class into groups of 4 – 5 students. Each student group should receive print-outs of the primary sources and photographs in the groupings below.

Student groups will probably receive duplicate sets, which will encourage the students to formulate different viewpoints.

Print out copies of the accompanying questions for the students to complete as a group.

At the end of the lesson, have the students report back on their findings and conclusions.

What discussions did they have? What conclusions can they draw? What other questions do they have?

Feel free to project the images from the groups so that the whole class can view them together.

Group 1: Maps - #1 – 4

What do these maps have in common?

Which maps are primary sources, why? What does Map 2 tell us about David Ogden? List 3 things.

Where is the Ogden House on Map 3? Where is Mill River?

What do you notice in these maps? Write 3 things for each map. What else do you want to find out, based on these maps?

Group 2: Photographs #5 – 8

Photo 5: What do you notice about photograph #5? Who do you think is the man in the photograph? What is surrounding the house?

Photo 6: What do you notice about this photograph? Photo 7: Compare Photos 5 & 6, what is similar? What is different? What do you notice about this photograph? What do you wonder about? List 3 things.

Group 3: Photographs #9 - 12

Photo 9: What do you think this space was used for? What was kept in there? Compare this photo to the drawing on image 12.

Do you have a pantry or storage area in your house? How do the two compare?

What do you think is in the barrels and sacks in the corner?

Photo 10: Why did the Ogden's use wood to build their house? What do you think is a "tree nail?"

What tools and other materials besides wood do you think they used to build the house?

Compare the outside of your house to the outside of the Ogden House. What is different? What is the same?

Photo 11: Why do you think people started building a "saltbox" house?

Step 3: Field Trip

Arrange a field trip to the 1750 Ogden House or other historic home in or near your community.

Step 4: Post-Activity

Utilize the PDF Document: Historic House Primary Source Set 2 to generate additional questions about historic homes. The teacher has the option of printing the photographs for students to work in small groups, or to project the images to discuss the images as a class.

Communicating Conclusions / Discussion

Are there any buildings or structures that need saving in your community?

Do you think it has any significance?

Why should some buildings be saved and others not saved?

If you saved a historic house, how would you pay for its upkeep and repair?

Is it sometimes better to replace the past with more modern conveniences? Why or why not?

Background Information:

Mary Allis (1899 - 1987), a well-known antiques dealer, first saw the Ogden House while on a trip to visit a friend. Realtors referred to the house as a tumble-down shack, but the house captured Mary's heart. She resolved to save it from destruction, restore it, and eventually occupy it. She purchased the property in 1931 from Annie B. Jennings.

First, Mary Allis had to chase out the rats which were "big as footballs." Then, with the help of friends, she started pulling out the roots and vines that had grown up from the cellar, and replacing steps in order to get from one floor to the next. For almost ten years Mary Allis used the house only in the summer since it lacked "the essentials" - heat and indoor plumbing. Gradually, she restored the entire Ogden House and furnished it with fine antiques, reflecting the prevailing "Colonial" taste in interior design, though not what the Ogden Family would have

owned. Visitors came from afar to see the impressive restoration and furnishings, and the home was featured in magazines and books, including an article from *Antiques* magazine in December, 1949.

Mary Allis established herself in the antiques business in the early 1930s when she opened a store in Southport. Over the years she worked with many museums including Winterthur, Shelburne, Cooperstown, Williamsburg, Sturbridge, and the Museum of American Folk Art. Under her guidance, the American Museum in Bath, England was created. Mary Allis was also instrumental in forming many private collections. In 1944 Mary Allis sold the property to Lillian Wadsworth, retaining the right to life tenancy. She lived there for another thirty years, after which Ogden House was given to the Fairfield Historical Society.

Additional Resources

11 Houses in Connecticut to Visit

<http://www.onlyinyourstate.com/connecticut/historic-houses-ct/>

CT Explored Magazine

Saving Hartford's Historic Amos Bull House

<http://ctexplored.org/saving-hartfords-amos-bull-house/>

Accessed 3/1/2017

Historic Houses in Connecticut

<http://www.visitconnecticut.com/state/historic-homes-and-sites/>

National Historic Landmarks in Connecticut

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_National_Historic_Landmarks_in_Connecticut

The National Historic Preservation Act

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, signed by President Lyndon Johnson, gave the federal government a major role in the management of our country's historical resources. Two key provisions of the law were the establishment of a historic preservation office in each state to represent federal interests and the creation of the National Register of Historic Places to recognize buildings, districts, and archaeological sites that were worthy of preservation.

The first building in Connecticut nominated to the National Register was the endangered Amos Bull House at 350 Main Street, the oldest brick house in downtown Hartford. The story of its survival and transformation has many twists and turns, the involvement of many committed individuals, bureaucratic entanglements, and cliff-hanging denouements.

The 1750 Ogden House in Fairfield, CT

<http://www.fairfieldhistory.org/visit/ogden-house/>

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Ogden House is an exceptional survivor of a typical mid-18th century farmhouse and provides a glimpse into the life of a middle-class

colonial family. This saltbox house was **built in 1750** for David Ogden at the time of his marriage to Jane Sturges. For the next 125 years it was home for the Ogden family in the farming and coastal shipping town of Fairfield.