

Extension Lesson Plans #2

A Barn Guide to History

This lesson plan is courtesy of the Barn Again! Museum on Main Street—Smithsonian Museum

Lesson Objectives

Investigate the history of their county using historic barns as primary resources.
Analyze the historic significance of barns.
Interpret the history of barns in their county for the public.
Develop history research skills.

Suggested Grade Levels

4-8

Time Frame

Approximately eight 45-minute periods over four to five weeks.

Hand-outs

Sample Barn Guide Entries #1 and #2 (one set per student)

Barn History Resources (one copy per student) If possible, ask your school or local librarian to obtain these books and keep them on hold for students to use in the library.

Supplies

Camera (at least one)
Notebook sleeves
Binder

Setting the Stage

1. Tell students: We can learn a lot about people by looking at the buildings they construct and use. For example, my house has a kitchen with appliances for storing and preparing food. This would lead you to believe that cooking is an important activity at my house. What other things could we learn by looking at a family's house? Students brainstorm ideas.
2. Ask students: Now think about barns. What could we learn about the way people live by looking at barns? Students brainstorm ideas.
3. Explain that your class will be examining historic barns in your county to discover what they tell us about the people who settled and lived there. The class will share what it learns by creating a guide to historic barns that will be displayed with the Barn Again! exhibition.

Activity Procedure

1. Explain that the first step in writing the guide is creating a master list of all the barns the class wants to include in the guide. Begin by brainstorming a list in class. Assign

students to ask their families and neighbors for additional ideas. Your Barn Again! hosts will also be able to help you identify local barns. In addition, students can consult the local or state historical society for information. Your State Historic Preservation Office may have conducted a survey of barns in your county containing much valuable information. Find your State Historic Preservation Office online at www.sso.org/ncshpo/shplist.htm.

2. Next the class will develop a standard format for entries in the guide. Distribute one set of Sample Barn Guide Entries #1 and #2 to each student. Divide students into groups of three or four. Assign groups to read over the entries carefully and make a list of the types of information they contain. (If needed, provide students an example, like date of construction or description of the barn's appearance.) Groups can add their own ideas if they think of other types of information people using their guide would like to know. Record students' ideas on the board.
3. As a class, decide on the types of information you will include in each entry in your barn guide. Also, create a standard format for the entries (e.g., 1. Name of barn, 2. Address, 3. Date of construction, 4. Description) and set an approximate length for each entry (200-300 words works well). Decide whether you will use photos or student drawings as graphics in your guide. Tell students to use the standards developed by the class when writing their barn guide entries.
4. Explain that the Sample Barn Guide Entries are from a guide to Wasatch County in Utah. Ask students to re-read the entries to discover as much as they can about the history of Wasatch County. Ask students to share what they discovered. The list might include: type of agriculture prominent in the county, local building materials, national origin of settlers, etc. Ask students to brainstorm a list of ideas about how their own county's history might be reflected in barns. Record these ideas on the board. Require students to show how the barns in your county relate to the history of your area in their entries.
5. Divide class into teams of two or three people. Allow each team to select two barns to research and write an entry about. If there are more barns on your list than the class can tackle, select the most interesting and accessible barns to include in your guide.
6. Review history research skills with students (e.g., keeping organized notes, writing down sources, using a variety of sources, checking credibility of sources, weighing evidence, searching for causality, deciding what is most important to include in limited space). Focus on the skills most appropriate for the age and experience of your students.
7. As a class, brainstorm possible research resources. List might include interviewing the owner or former owner of the barn, examining books on local history and consulting your local historical society or State Historic Preservation Office.

8. Set a deadline for teams to turn in the first draft of their barn guide entries. Remind teams that they will need to either photograph or sketch their barns. Meet with teams during the time they are researching for progress reports and to provide assistance.
9. When first drafts are complete, assign teams to exchange their entries with another team. Teams will carefully review their classmates' work for spelling and grammatical errors, clarity of writing, and conformity with the entry format developed by the class. Upon receiving their peers' suggestions, teams will prepare a final draft of their entries.
10. After students submit their final entries, explain that the guide needs a few more things to make it complete: 1) a title and cover; 2) an introduction that gives some general background on barns in your county and the barn guide project; 3) a map showing the location of each barn and a suggested route for seeing all the barns; 4) instructions on how to use the guide (e.g., an explanation of the format and map); and 5) an acknowledgments list to recognize all the people who helped make the guide possible. Divide students into four groups and assign each group one of the tasks above. Meet with each group briefly to insure they understand their task. Students in the map group may be able to request a map of your area from the county recorder's office. Monitor the groups' work and provide assistance as needed.
11. When all the components of the guide are complete, provide students with plastic notebook sleeves for their entries. Compile the sleeves in a binder in the order corresponding to the route developed by the map group. Submit the guide to your teacher and prepare for your oral presentation to the class.
12. Ask students to imagine that a friend who is very interested in history is coming to visit. She has asked you to help her learn more about your county during her stay.

Assign students to write an essay explaining how they could use the class's barn guide to help her understand some of the important aspects of your county's history.

Lesson Extensions

1. Publish your barn guide.
2. Host a barn tour. Organize a day when people in the community can visit the barns listed in the barn guide. Students can serve as docents at the barns they researched.

A Barn Guide to History | Barn History Resources

Arthur, Eric, and Dudley Witney. *The Barn: A Vanishing Landmark in North America*. New York: Galahad Books, 1972.

This book contains extensive photo essays on a variety of historic barn types. It also includes examples of floor plans and an illustrated glossary of barn architecture terms. Its focus is largely on barns in the eastern United States.

Leffingwell, Randy. *The American Barn*. Osceola, WI: Motorbooks International, 1997. This “coffee-table”-type book with many beautiful color photos contains a general overview of the history of barns in America and includes a photo essay on a modern Amish barn raising.

Noble, Allen G., and Richard K. Cleek. *The Old Barn Book: A Field Guide to North American Barns and Other Farm Structures*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1995.

This book is the one to be sure to get! It will help you determine the styles of barns common in your region of the country as well as learn about their features and significance.

A Barn Guide to History | Sample Barn Guide Entry #1

John Peter Anderson Barn

Address: Little Sweden Road, Daniels, [Wasatch County, Utah]

John Peter Anderson and his wife, Eva Sophia Wahlquist Anderson, came to Utah in 1883 from Sweden where Mr. Anderson was a fine carpenter. Conditions in Sweden had made it impossible to make a living for his family so Mr. Anderson borrowed money and brought his family to America.

When they arrived in the valley, they lived with Eva’s mother, Anna Cathrina Wahlquist, while they built their own cabin. The large barn was built by Mr. Anderson prior to 1894. Mr. Anderson also built barns for neighbors in the area.

The barn is made of rough-cut red pine, probably from local mills. There are square headed nails in the construction. To insulate the horse stalls, Mr. Anderson used old newspapers that came from Sweden. These were placed between the boards on the walls to cut the wind for the animals.

There are several areas in the barn. There are a tack room, horse stalls, milking room, carriage/wagon alley, machinery storage, as well as lofts for hay storage. The barn is now owned by Larry Anderson, a great-grandson of John Peter Anderson. It is still used for farm equipment and hay storage.

Sequential ownership of this barn was John Peter Anderson, Charles John Edwin Anderson and Julia Morse, Morse Edwin Anderson, and now Larry Anderson.

Information from Lucille Anderson Nielsen

Address: 681 E. Little Sweden Road, Daniels, [Wasatch County, Utah]

From *Barn Again! Celebrating an American Icon: Representative Barns of Wasatch County, Utah*, 1998.

A Barn Guide to History | Sample Barn Guide Entry #2

Edward Durtschi Barn

Edward Durtschi was an immigrant from Switzerland, near the turn of the 20th century, to Midway, Utah. He purchased the property upon which this barn was built from Anton

Anderson on November 21, 1908. Mr. Durtschi then built this barn, with the help of his sons, shortly thereafter. It was used for his cows and hay storage.

The process of building the barn was arduous, because Mr. Durtschi and his sons had to make many wagon trips up Snake Creek to cut red pine timbers for the construction and haul them to Moroni Blood's sawmill. Mr. Moroni would then cut the timbers and lumber into the desired dimensions. Then they would haul the material on down to the farm. Mr. Durtschi's talent and industrious nature are reflected in this barn building and the fact that he persisted until they had it finished.

The Swiss practice of herding, pasturing, feeding and milking cows for family income was part of the life of Edward Durtschi in the old country, so it was natural for the family to pursue this type of livelihood in their new country, which was very similar to their homeland.

The barn still has the stalls, hayloft and lean-tos and is as sturdy now as the people who built it. It is located just north of the "Homestead" entrance, opposite the open hot pots nearby.

Informant and photographer: Lucinda Jensen

From Barn Again! Celebrating an American Icon: Representative Barns of Wasatch County, Utah, 1998.