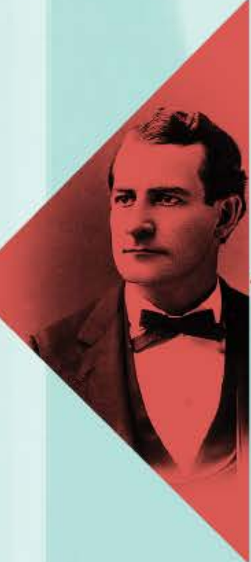
Illinois Humanities



Community Conversations

TOOLKIT

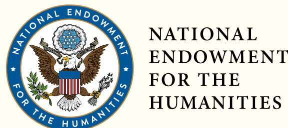
History Belongs to All of Us

***Illinois Humanities** is a statewide nonprofit organization that activates the humanities through free public programs, grants, and educational opportunities that spark conversation, foster reflection, build community, and strengthen civic engagement for everyone in Illinois.*

We provide free, high-quality humanities experience throughout Illinois, particularly for communities of color, individuals living on low incomes, counties and towns in rural areas, small arts and cultural organizations, and communities highly impacted by mass incarceration. Founded in 1974, we are the state partner for the National Endowment for the Humanities and supported by state, federal, and private funds.

Learn more at ilhumanities.org or find us on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn @ILHumanities.

Find additional lesson plans at bit.ly/LessonPlansCC.



Welcome!

This guide is designed for host organizations that are planning activities for this year's Community Conversations programming.

Community Conversations: History Belongs to All of Us supports Illinois-based communities in creating space for shared conversation, activity, learning, and connection.

These community conversations:

- Center curiosity and active listening;
- Encourage us to embrace fresh perspectives, de-familiarize the familiar, and re-discover each other in a new context;
- Invite us to remember and retell our own stories and the stories of our communities; and,
- Remind us of the wealth we have and gain from remaining connected.

Community Conversations: History Belongs to All of Us commemorates the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and the founding of the United States through the lens of the history of Illinois. Its emphasis is on the joy of investigating history in its rawest form: the primary document and the artifact. Activities will encourage participants to ***investigate and interpret*** primary documents from our state's archives and ***visit and examine*** our material history in the form of collected objects and historic sites.

A primary objective of **History Belongs to All of Us** is to uncover histories that reflect the diversity of Illinois's people and perspectives at the moment of the American Revolution and as the revolution unfolded over the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. Diversity is a key component of our approach because, as historians of colonial North America and the Early Republic have demonstrated, the United States has been a polyglot and ethnically, racially, and religiously diverse nation from the start. Illinois is no exception and we know the archives and material culture of our state are crucial elements in more comprehensively representing our peoples' dynamic histories.

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Getting Started

As with all things, the hardest part of **Community Conversations: History Belongs to All of Us** is getting started and getting clear in your mind the outcomes you hope to see. As you consider the theme and overall objectives of this program, remember that these conversations will take place in communities across Illinois. We suggest you start with considering which activities might feel especially relevant to your town or neighborhood. The planning guide below can support you in this process and will also be discussed further during the virtual orientation session.

REFLECT

- What is your own reaction to the commemoration of the founding of the United States? What other reactions might people have? How might it be relevant to your organization and community?
- What topics or primary documents or sub-themes do you think people in your community will be most interested in? Why?
- What topics or sub-themes might be unfamiliar or challenging? Why?
- How might this theme intersect with or amplify programming you are already doing or planning?
- What challenges to implementation can you foresee?
- What might success look like for your organization as you bring people together to engage in conversation and activities?

IDENTIFY

- **Guiding Question** — Consider the guiding questions provided for each sub-theme (Landscape & Territory, Freedom & Equality, Migration & Immigration, Revolutionary Visions, and How We Remember). Adapt or compose a question that synthesizes your reflections above and identifies what you hope participants will be able to explore through this program series.
- **Potential Partners** — What other organizations may help you explore your guiding question? Who do you want to designate as your conversation facilitator?
- **Metrics for Success** — How will you measure progress towards your goals or vision for success? These metrics can be both quantitative and qualitative. Consider aligning your goals and metrics with those of your organization.

CURATE

- Based on your community's needs and desires, review and select one to two (or more) activities that may best support an exploration of your guiding question. The activities were designed to be independent events that take place in between an opening facilitated dialogue (Declaration of Independence, 1776) and a closing facilitated dialogue that will conclude the series. We recommend selecting an activity from the How We Remember section to serve as the closing facilitated dialogue.
- Each activity begins with a brief discussion around a given humanities text. *(When we use the word "text", we include a lot of things we can examine closely, including a painting, a landscape, a video or film, and a more traditional written piece, like literature, articles, primary source documents, and poems.)* Participants then engage in a shared project where they can explore, connect, and create together.

PLAN

(See Activity Overview, including a helpful list, starting on P. 7)

- Set tentative dates and times for your Community Conversations series.
- Opening Facilitated Dialogue: ______________________________
- Activity 1: ______________________________
- OPTIONAL: Activity 2, 3, 4...: ______________________________
- Closing Facilitated Dialogue: ______________________________
- Based on the activities you selected, what resources will you need to lead these activities? How might you allocate your budget accordingly?
- What additional supports do you anticipate you will want or need?

FACILITATE

(See the Opening Dialogue Guide on P. 10)

The first event in the Community Conversations series is a facilitated dialogue that introduces this year's theme and will help frame the activities that follow. Your designated facilitator will lead this conversation. Further implementation resources and practice opportunities will be provided during the 2-day facilitator training in Chicago.

How to Use This Toolkit

This **History Belongs to All of Us** toolkit contains 18 activities that support you and your communities in exploring the rich and complicated histories that have contributed to the contours of our lives in Illinois today. While all history might be told through the lens of power and resistance, revolution and stasis, struggle and triumph, it is critical to recognize that history is made by humans just like us. And humans are never just one thing or another. Historical people, like contemporary ones, are flawed and dazzling, brutal and wonderful — all at the same time. History shares these traits too.
As you explore these activities, we encourage you to practice some of the historian's "tools of the trade" to flex your own powers of inquiry.

- → **Approach with curiosity:** All strong relationships begin with curiosity and your relationship to historical materials and events should start the same way. We all carry particular frames of reference that come from experience, identity, and past study. Try to pause these frames for a moment as you get to know each artifact. Then use your critical skills deftly as you investigate further.
- → **Investigate authorship:** While authorship is emphasized in a few activities more than others in this toolkit, it is an important element in all historical research. We want to understand who created an artifact and what motivated them. Then we want to assess the degree to which we can trust their authority. For example, was an artifact created through coercion, as part of a contract or commission, as a form of free expression, or as a corrective to other artifacts that were misleading? Was the artifact intended to stir up feelings or actions? Why might the creator or author of the artifact have these intentions?
- → **Consider audience:** Similar to the question of authorship is the question of audience. Nearly every item in the toolkit was intended to be read, heard, used, or exchanged between the author/creator and an audience/receiver. Who might that audience have been and how do you imagine they reacted? How might unintended audiences respond and what does this tell us about circumstances like inclusion and exclusion?
- → **Pay attention to change over time:** Historians are interested in what preceded and followed events, not just the event itself. Snapshots in time can be interesting and revealing, but they leave you stuck in the moment. Historians move through an arc of rising and falling (and rising and falling again). See you if you can follow the changes in the activities you explore. Hint: a timeline can help a lot.

- → **Try to identify context:** Have you ever heard the phrase "context is everything"? If you have, you know that historians are not the only ones interested in context. But they are definitely big fans of it! Understanding when, where, why, how, and who were involved in an event or in creating or receiving a document helps explain its meaning and relevance.
- → **Look for multiple sources:** Most of the activities in our toolkit examine a single document or artifact. However, we know that one item can never tell a full story! It is true that one item can tell you many stories (and we hope that you will experience that as you engage with the activities), but the only way to edge toward objectivity is to verify your source against multiple other sources. Even then, objectivity should be considered an ever-distant horizon — one we can strive toward, but never actually reach.
- → **Walk away with questions:** If you are "doing history" right, you will walk away with more questions. It is inevitable. You may reach greater understanding and confidence, which are very worthy results. But you will also find endless new research questions, which include filling in the details on something you have just read or wandering off in a totally new direction. Continued curiosity is the highest form of success for a historian. Be proud of your questions!

Our final piece of advice as you flip through the toolkit is to find your own, new connections between the activities we have created. We have made some thematic connections for you, but you will undoubtedly find others. Determining how the activities work together to support relevant conversations in your communities is a challenge you are best suited to take on. These are the connections we have made, some of which are loosely organized around chronology:

- → **Landscape and Territory:** How do we tell history through the ways we depict, adapt to, and change the landscape?
- → **Freedom and Equality:** Do freedom and equality mean the same thing to everyone who was and would be impacted by the Declaration of Independence? What are other ideas of freedom and equality that those who lived in Illinois might have had? What are some ways we can talk about unfreedom and/or inequality?
- → **Migration and Immigration:** Illinois transformed tremendously once it became part of the Northwest Territory and then a state. Who settled in Illinois and why? How did they describe this land? How did they establish "American" homes? How did those who already lived in Illinois reconcile or conflict with newcomers?

→ **Revolutionary Visions:** How did the ideals of the Revolution, catalyzed by the Declaration of Independence, continue to influence movements for freedom and equal citizenship in Illinois? How did Illinoisans think about their American-ness in the first 250 years of the nation?

→ **How We Remember:** How has Illinois commemorated the Declaration of Independence, Revolution, and United States history through celebrations, commemorations, and monuments?

The 20+ artifacts and documents you will discover just scratch the surface of the tens of thousands of items you can find in Illinois's archives, collections, historical societies, and museums. And those do not account for the personal and community archives that exist in attics and basements throughout the state. We hope this toolkit will energize you to learn more about our state's resources and start digging through the mysteries in your own backyards!

Community Conversations: History Belongs to All of Us

Opening Dialogue Guide: Declaration of Independence, 1776

INTRODUCTIONS AND ICEBREAKER

[You can choose your own or try one from a web site like this: bit.ly/smallgroupsicebreaker.]

SUGGESTED INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your participation in Illinois Humanities's 2026 **Community Conversations: History Belongs to All of Us**. This year's theme commemorates the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and the founding of the United States through the lens of Illinois history. Its emphasis is on the joy of investigating history in its rawest form: the primary document and the artifact. Activities will encourage participants to *investigate and interpret* primary documents from our state's archives and *visit and examine* our material history in the form of collected objects and historic sites.

The opening dialogue for this program will focus on the Declaration of Independence. The goal is not only to reacquaint us with the founding document of the United States, but to consider the ways it asserts a form of government that empowers a free and equal citizenry in contrast to a "tyrannical" monarchy.

Note: For this activity, Illinois Humanities will provide you with a large, printed version of the Declaration of Independence to affix to a wall.

Please have sticky notes and writing implements available for your participants. Please also have an individual copy of the document available for each participant. The document is available at bit.ly/doi250.

Read aloud the Declaration of Independence.

Invite participants to take a few moments to reflect on what they have heard and begin writing comments or questions about the document on sticky notes. After 5-10 minutes, participants should affix their sticky notes to the printed version of the Declaration on the wall next to the appropriate phrases.

When everyone has had a chance to add their notes, allow time for the participants to review each other's notes and reflect.

Have an initial discussion.

Prompts:

- What phrases or ideas emerge for you?
- What surprises you about what you have read and/or what others have highlighted in their notes?
- How does this reading compare to what you remember from reading the Declaration at other times in your life?
- Are there any ideas or points made here that resonate with your experiences today?

If there is time and participants are interested in digging deeper, consider the following prompts as well.

- On July 4, 1776, the State of Illinois was yet to be defined and was not yet part of the emerging United States. How do you think people who lived in what is now Illinois understood the Declaration of Independence at the time? What hopes, expectations, or apprehensions do you think they might have had?
- Among the complaints that form the main body of the Declaration of Independence, the writers identify some specific behaviors that they associate with tyranny. Can you find any of these in the text? Do you agree or disagree that they constitute tyrannical rule? Why or why not?
- One of the major concerns of the Declaration of Independence is that the King was disconnected by miles and by sentiment from the colonists' everyday experience. Yet, at the same time, he restricted them from governing or making decisions that would allow them to thrive. If the King had been more tuned-in to the colonists and allowed them to make more independent decisions, but still remain part of the British Empire, do you think there would have been a Revolution? Why or why not?

- The Declaration of Independence wasn't just a letter sent from the Continental Congress to the King in an official communication. It was also printed on huge posters called "broadsides" and pasted all over the colonies. If Americans felt the need to submit a new Declaration of Independence in 2026, what do you think would be the best way to notify the public and get their focused attention?
- It is important to read the Declaration of Independence as a document that is anchored in the belief that all people have natural, undeniable rights. This is in contrast to a tyranny in which rights are bestowed upon people by an absolute ruler. However, many people living in the United States would argue that, throughout history, our country has toggled between these ideas of natural rights vs. those bestowed upon (or withdrawn from) the people by a ruler. With this in mind, do you think the American Revolution has ever been completed? Why or why not?

CLOSING REFLECTION

After the discussion has ended, ask participants to revisit the wall and make note of a word, phrase, or idea that will linger with them. Ask participants to go around the room and share what they have chosen, if they wish.

Landscape and Territory

How do we tell history through the ways we interact with, adapt to, and change the landscape?

The Edwards Trace, circa 1000 B.C. to the Present

Intended audience [Adults/Youth/Family]: Middle School to Adult

Estimated length of activity: 90 minutes to 2 hours

Objectives: In this activity, participants will learn about The Edwards Trace, a 3,000-year-old trail that traverses a portion of Illinois from near Cahokia in the south to near Peoria in the north. They will also learn about how a local history enthusiast and librarian was able to enhance our contemporary knowledge of the trace by researching her own community. Finally, the activity will offer tips to participants who would like to begin their own place-based research projects.

Anchor Text: Anna Sielaff's "Relive the True Mother Road: The Edwards Trace." While this web site is not a primary document from the past, it is a collection of primary documents, analysis, and reportage that we will explore together through the activity below.

It would be most helpful for each participant to have access to a computer for this activity, but tablets or smartphones can work too.

INTRODUCTIONS AND ICEBREAKER

[You can choose your own or try one from a web site like this: bit.ly/smallgroupsicebreaker.]

INTRODUCE THE EDWARDS TRACE & ANNA SIELAFF, LOCAL HISTORIAN

Introduce The Edwards Trace using this description by Anna Sielaff.

> "The Edwards Trace is an ancient trail that dates back over 3,000 years, traversing through Illinois and marking the migratory path of various animal herds. Native Americans used this trail to track the seasonal migrations of herds, leveraging it for hunting, trade, and warfare. The Edwards Trace was the main pathway connecting Kaskaskia and Peoria, covering roughly 250 miles. Various sections of the trail have distinct names for specific purposes, including the Kaskaskia-Cahokia Trail, which was named by the French in the early 1700s, and the 'Old Indian Trail', which was named by European settlers and their descendants. Early settlers, such as the French, British, and Americans from parts of Eastern and Southern North America, depended on this trail for their travels, similar to the way Route 66 would later

function. Many towns along this historic route, such as Edwardsville, Bunker Hill, Springfield, Lincoln, and Peoria, were intentionally established by settlers migrating north from the river bottoms of Southern Illinois.

"Significant national events occurred along the 'Old Indian Trail,' including George Rogers Clark's mission to capture Kaskaskia from the British for the emerging United States [See Ties to Revolutionary War section on link], as well as Ninian Edwards' campaign during the War of 1812. (The Trace was named after him.) Sections of this historic trail remain visible today."

Anna Sielaff first started researching The Edwards Trace when she decided to learn more about this under-told history for her 7th grade school history fair. She won a prize from the Illinois State Historical Society for her project since The Edwards Trace's own history intersected with that of the War of 1812. More than a decade later, Anna and a team of fellow history enthusiasts decided to follow The Edwards Trace and document their journey.

Questions to consider:

- What are buildings, landscapes, plaques, parks, or monuments in your community that make you curious about their past? These could be anything from your own home to your local cemetery. Or they could be something that feels more significant, like a major, landmarked historic site or a park named after a person.
- What kinds of questions do you have about these places and things?
- If you were to discover something about these places and things that feels important, how would you want to share this information with others?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

The Edwards Trace gained significance because it connected different, important natural areas. Herds of animals migrated along the trace as the seasons changed. Native people who lived in synch with the rhythms of the natural world used the trace for similar reasons, but also for hunting, trade, and negotiating conflict. Finally, European colonists adapted the trace to their own needs, which included increased settlement, trade, and war.

Review the sections "A History Review...", "First Europeans....", "Ties to the Revolutionary War", "Kaskaskia-Cahokia Trail", "Ninian Edwards", and "War of 1812" from Anna Sielaff's "Relive the True Mother Road: The Edwards Trace."

You may wish to divide sections among the participants (i.e. each participant, pair, or small group takes one section and spends 10-15 minutes reading and discussing what they have read).

Consider the following questions as you reflect upon the history shared in these sections:

- What are some place names, words, and/or historical details in this section and among these maps that are familiar to you? Where and when have you heard of or experienced them in the past?
- What are some details in this section that are surprising to you or that make you wonder?
- What information, context, or perspective would you want or need to better understand The Edwards Trace given the information you have read in this section?

If there is time, groups can share a longer reflection with one another that includes a brief summary of the section they read. For more limited time, go to the *Reflection* section of this activity.

EXPLORING YOUR OWN LANDSCAPES

Anna Sielaff's video of Lincoln Memorial Park

In this video, Anna walks us around Lincoln Memorial Park, a major recreational spot in her hometown of Lincoln, Illinois. As Anna explains, both her parents and their families, who are also local to the area, spent a lot of time in this park through the years. And, historically, many people from rural Illinois used this park for major gatherings, most significantly for Chautauquas, or popular, community-oriented, day-long educational and entertainment fairs, in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Read more about Chautauquas in Lincoln and around Logan County at Dr. Leigh Henson's website.

Questions to consider:

- How does Anna know that this is a portion of The Edwards Trace?
- How did Anna know about the saplings and why do you think they were trained in this way by Native people?
- What kinds of sources would you consult to learn more about this park? Which do you think would be most useful? Which would you trust most?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Choose a landscape that you would like to understand better. Any landscape will do — a block, lot, park, field, group of buildings, industrial area, body of water. Whatever grabs your attention.

Start by visiting the landscape and writing down any features you notice. These could be trees, shrubs, sidewalks, buildings, signs, animals, etc. Remember that, in Anna's video, she points out a dip in the ground and a bent sapling. Are there any seemingly out-of-place features like this that you see? Make note!

Look at maps. Google maps can only get you so far, but they can be a place to start, particularly if you are looking for names of buildings or areas.

- You might also visit your local library or historical society where librarians and archivists can help you identify historical maps that are relevant to the landscape you are studying. Look at maps over time. What has changed over time and why? Why do you think these changes came about?
- Check out the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps if you are researching a town or city. The Library of Congress has a great collection, and these maps can tell you a lot about the economic activity and status of residents in the area.
- Some counties, towns, and cities share property information (usually for tax purposes) on their web sites. For example, McHenry County has this resource, Jackson County has this one, and the City of Chicago has this one. See what you can find where you live!

Look at photographs and drawings. Your local library or historical society is likely to have image collections that can tell you a bit more about the history of your landscape. If you noted any unusual geology, an image may be able to show you whether that geological anomaly has been there long, has changed, or is new.

Talk to people. When Anna first started researching The Edwards Trace, she spoke with Gillet Ransom, a resident of Elkhart, Illinois, who is considered by many to be the town's most trusted historian. Ms. Ransom is descended from the Gillet family (thus her first name), who, along with the Latham family, were some of the first settlers in Logan County, Illinois. They intentionally settled along the trace most likely to be close to trade routes and Ms. Ransom continues to live along the trace today. When doing your research, try to find out who knows something about the place you are researching. Is there a local historian or neighbor who can share what they have learned with you? Sometimes a simple conversation can lead to the best discoveries!

See if you can find any newspaper articles, books, or essays about your landscape. As you might have guessed by now, your local library or historical society is always going to be your best source for local history. This includes finding old local newspapers on microfilm or detailed research from local historians who asked the same questions you are asking — only decades or more before you. For "bigger" news stories, you may be able to find information through ProQuest U.S. Historical Newspapers (your library might have a subscription). For books and essays, try searching WorldCat, which is a repository for published work across the country.

Consult nature guides. Every landscape has some natural features even if they are pigeons, rats, and weeds. How can they tell us more about what we are seeing in the places we study? Several nature guides can help answer these questions. Consider Michael Jeffords and Susan Post's *Exploring Nature in Illinois: A Field Guide to the Prairie State* (2014); Kenn Kaufman, Kimberly Kaufman, and Jeffrey P. Sayre's *Kaufman's Field Guide to Nature of the Midwest* (2015); Beatrix Beisner, Christian Messier, and Luc-Alain Giraldeau's *Nature All Around Us: A Guide to Urban Ecology* (2012); and Joel Greenberg's edited volume, *Of Prairies, Woods, and Water: Two Centuries of Chicago Nature Writing* (2008).

Make your case. You have selected a place, researched it thoroughly, taken notes, and come up with a better idea of why this place is important. Now make your case to someone else, whether it's your friend, a family member, your historical society, a local government official, your facilitator, or us at Illinois Humanities. We want to know what places are meaningful to *you* and what brilliant under-told stories are in *your* landscapes. Drop us an email at conversations@ilhumanities.org!

CLOSING REFLECTION

This activity is intended to demonstrate that the main ingredient in historical research is our innate capacity for curiosity. Like a young Anna Sielaff, all one needs to get started is the desire to answer a burning question.

After completing some or all of this activity, ask participants to take 5 minutes to write down everything — historical or not — that piques their curiosity. After the time is up, ask participants to write down one or two resources they can consult to satisfy their curiosity. Please strongly encourage participants to identify resources that are NOT Google or AI-generated.

Invite participants to share back with the rest of the group, if they are comfortable doing so.

Fort de Chartres, 1720

Intended audience [Adults/Youth/Family]: All ages, although adults may appreciate it more.

Estimated length of activity: 60-90 minutes

Objectives: This short excerpt from the Illinois Humanities-produced "Kaskaskia and the Pursuit of a More Perfect Union, Part 2" explores French-Creole culture and historic preservation efforts in Southwestern Illinois. With a focus on Les Amis du Fort de Chartres, the excerpt covers topics such as: creolization (hybrid cultures developed through encounter and exchange between two or more cultures — with a special note that exchange is not always mutual or consensual); establishing and sustaining legal and administrative practices between colony and metropole; heritage preservation as economic development; and heritage landscapes as part of everyday life. The objective is for participants to acquaint themselves with the French colonial presence in Illinois during this period and for participants to be able to connect their own heritage to Illinois landscapes.

Anchor Text: "Kaskaskia and the Pursuit of a More Perfect Union, Part 2" on Fort de Chartres (from 18:12 to 22:47)

INTRODUCTIONS AND ICEBREAKER

[You can choose your own or try one from a web site like this: bit.ly/smallgroupsicebreaker.]

VIEW AND DISCUSS

Watch an excerpt from "Kaskaskia and the Pursuit of a More Perfect Union, Part 2" that explores Les Amis du Fort de Chartres State Historic Site, a French-Creole heritage site in Southwestern Illinois.

Have an initial discussion.

Questions to consider:

- Have you ever been to Fort de Chartres? Share your experience!
- Have you ever been to this area of Illinois and, if so, how does this story match up with your experience?
- What was most striking to you about the information shared here and why?

- What person, building, landscape, or idea in this excerpt was most compelling to you and why?
- Are there other ways in which you see French-Creole history and heritage in Illinois? Where and how?
- Do you see contemporary French or Indigenous language, practices, lifeways, or the like in Illinois? Where and how? What about those of other cultures in your communities or neighborhoods?
- What is your reaction to the idea of creating a symbiotic relationship between cultural sustainability and economic development that was shared in this video?

STORYTELLING

Ask each person in the group to formulate a story about their own heritage and where they see it in the landscape. Invite a few volunteers to tell their story to the rest of the group.

Volunteer storytellers might describe a house of worship, historic site, garden, monument, community center, specialty store, social club, etc. Each storyteller will have up to 5 minutes to share their story. The other participants can ask questions, but spend no more than 10 minutes per person.

CLOSING REFLECTION

After you have watched the video, discussed it, and shared stories within the group, take a moment for each participant to share one new thing they have learned about how Illinois places and people are connected to places and people (past and present) from around the world.

Nicolas de Fer, Map of the French Territory in North America, 1718

Intended audience [Adults/Youth/Family]: Middle School to Adult

Estimated length of activity: 60-90 minutes

Objectives: This activity can stand alone or be paired with the 1778 Thomas Hutchins map that can also be found in the *Landscape and Territory* section of the toolkit on P. 26. The objective of both activities is to consider the author, purpose, point of view, values, and spatial techniques that contribute to a map's meaning. As geographer Mark Monmonier writes in his book *How to Lie with Maps* (University of Chicago, 2018), "A good map tells a multitude of little white lies; it suppresses truth to help the user see what needs to be seen. Reality is three-dimensional, rich in detail, and far too factual to allow a complete yet uncluttered two-dimensional graphic scale model." In other words, how might we get to the truth behind the little lies and sleights of hand that a map contains?

Anchor Text: *Le cours du Missisipi ou de St. Louis fameuse riviere d'Amerique Septentrionale [The Course of the Mississippi, or the St. Louis, the famous river of North America],* Nicolas de Fer, 1718.

Pair this map with either a contemporary printed map of Illinois or one you find on-line. You can also have participants use their phones or laptops to use Google Maps. Whatever you use, please find a relatively detailed map so that participants can adequately compare the French map to a contemporary one.

INTRODUCTIONS AND ICEBREAKER

[You can choose your own or try one from a web site like this: bit.ly/smallgroupsicebreaker.]

UNDERSTANDING MAPS

While we often look at maps as objective representations of geography, they are, in fact, created by mapmakers who have their own points of view, biases, bosses, values, incentives, and limited knowledge. Like all primary documents, a map tells a story, but it cannot tell the whole truth.

Invite participants to consider different ways that maps can "lie." (Note: We are using the word "lie" to urge critical thinking, not to criticize the intentions or creations of all cartographers.)

Some possible answers might be:

- Sometimes scale is not applied evenly throughout a map. One feature may appear closer to another than it actually is, while other features might appear bigger or smaller than they actually are.
- Maps don't include everything worth recording.
- People often use different names for places than the map might use. For example, some areas of Chicagoland may be labeled "Forest Preserves" but people who live nearby might call that area "the woods" or "the forest" or "the park."
- Topography isn't always clear. For example, you might think Location A is three blocks away from Location B on a map that is not topographical, but, in reality, you might find that Location B is actually on a cliff overlooking Location A!
- Sometimes mapmakers have not surveyed land correctly and are drawing maps based on what they have heard or observed but not necessarily measured.
- Mapmakers can be hired by someone who has a particular idea to convey through the map, so elements that are not consistent with that idea might be erased or downplayed.

Refer to a contemporary map, which may be one you have printed or displayed or one participants are accessing on computers or mobile devices.

Ask participants to examine the map to try to identify the following:

- Who drew this map and what point of view might they have?
- What is the purpose of the map?
- What does the map show you? What does it *not* show you?
- Is there an idea, story, or set of values this map conveys? If so, what might those be?
- When was this map created and does that help you answer any of the questions above?

Discuss as a group.

EXAMINING NICOLAS DE FER'S 1718 MAP OF FRENCH TERRITORY IN NORTH AMERICA

Share *Le cours du Missisipi ou de St. Louis fameuse riviere d'Amerique Septentrionale [The Course of the Mississippi, or the St. Louis, the famous river of North America]*, Nicolas de Fer, 1718.

Begin by inviting participants to make and share any observations.

Possible observations may include:

- The map is in French.
- Rivers, lakes, the Gulf of Mexico, and other waterways are prominent.
- The largest name on the map is "La Louissiane" (or "Louisiana"), but it seems to cover most of the map, even the area we know as Illinois today.
- There is a lot of interesting iconography: ships, animals, hunters, people who may be Native American, some reference to topography (like hills and bluffs).
- There appear to be a lot of settlements, some of which are forts and some of which are labeled with the names of Native nations.
- There are no familiar state borders like we would see today.
- This is a colorful map.
- The ornate decoration (known as a cartouche) on the left side of the map lists several different names and includes drawings of Native people, animals, and priests.
- There are two coats of arms at the top of the map — one for "la compagnie" (the company) and one for "la province" (the province).

Using the same questions we used in the section above, try to identify the following:

- Who drew this map and what point of view might they have?
- What is the purpose of the map?
- What does the map show you? What does it *not* show you?
- Is there an idea, story, or set of values this map conveys? If so, what might those be?

Once you have completed this set of observations and questions, you can take one of two directions on the next page OR incorporate an activity or discussion of your own.

Option 1: Have participants use their computers or other resources to find out the answers to the questions above.

Option 2: Share the answers to the questions above as summarized below.

Nicolas de Fer was commissioned in 1717 by the Company of the West (Compagnie d'Occident) to draw this new map of a portion of New France focused on Louisiana, the Great Lakes, and the Mississippi River. The Company of the West, organized and led by the Scottish financier John Law, was formed in collaboration with France's Duke of Orleans, a long-time friend of Law.

Why did the Duke of Orleans want his friend to create such a company? In 1717, the Duke was the regent of France — in essence, he ruled France at a time when the King, Louis XV, was himself too young to rule. (Louis XV was only five years old!) France, meanwhile, was in deep economic debt. France had colonized parts of North America as early as 1604, but had not fully unlocked its economic potential. (Or, alternatively, it had not yet exploited its resources.) With the new Company of the West, the Duke of Orleans and John Law hoped to increase investment and draw France out of its economic rut.

Nicolas de Fer had been mapping France's North American territory for years by the time he was commissioned to make this particular map. However, this map would be one of the most influential throughout the 18th century. De Fer relied on the most recent memoirs and accounts from prominent Jesuit priests who had been part of French colonization in North America to try to accurately depict the landscape and territory. (These are the names you can read in the cartouche and they include some familiar ones, like Jolliet and de La Salle.) He also relied on maps produced by other cartographers, including one from a Spanish ship's captain who had navigated all along the Gulf of Mexico.

Ultimately, this map had a strong commercial purpose, which is apparent from who commissioned it and the features it makes most prominent, namely navigable waterways for trade, fertile hunting grounds, and friendly Native villages with whom trade might be lucrative. Moreover, its visual appeal, like the advertisements we see to this day, sparks excitement and imagination. The map was successful in bringing many eager investors to New France. Unfortunately, John Law himself was a little too greedy in his financial management of the Company of the West, giving way to the "Mississippi Bubble", one of the worst financial disasters in colonial North America.

Read more about John Law and the Mississippi Bubble at *Mississippi History Now*.

Read more about mapping and empire-building in North America through the American Philosophical Society's *Mapping a Nation* exhibition.

CLOSING REFLECTION

To close this activity, it might be helpful to reflect upon how we can ask questions of primary documents, like maps, in the future. As you will have noticed, reading such documents requires critical thinking and discernment. It almost never means throwing away the evidence altogether. Even a map created for commercial purposes like de Fer's tells us something about the path of rivers, for example.

Go around the room and ask each participant to share one takeaway.

Thomas Hutchins's Map, 1778

Intended audience [Adults/Youth/Family]: Middle School to Adult

Estimated length of activity: 60-90 minutes

Objectives: This activity can stand alone or be paired with the 1718 Nicolas de Fer map that can also be found in the *Landscape and Territory* section of the toolkit on P. 21. The objective of both activities is to consider the author, purpose, point of view, values, and spatial techniques that contribute to a map's meaning. As geographer Mark Monmonier writes in his book *How to Lie with Maps* (University of Chicago, 2018), "A good map tells a multitude of little white lies; it suppresses truth to help the user see what needs to be seen. Reality is three-dimensional, rich in detail, and far too factual to allow a complete yet uncluttered two-dimensional graphic scale model." In other words, how might we get to the truth behind the little lies and sleights of hand that a map contains?

Anchor Text: *A new map of the western parts of Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and North Carolina; comprehending the River Ohio, and all the rivers, which fall into it; part of the River Mississippi, the whole of the Illinois River, Lake Erie; part of the Lakes Huron, Michigan &c. and all the country bordering on these lakes and rivers,* Thomas Hutchins, 1778.

Facilitators should also provide pencils, pens, crayons, markers, paper, stickers, or any other creative supplies for the mapmaking portion of this activity.

INTRODUCTIONS AND ICEBREAKER

[You can choose your own or try one from a web site like this: bit.ly/smallgroupsicebreaker.]

GETTING TO KNOW THE MAPMAKER

Please read or share a printed version of the following two paragraphs with participants.

> Thomas Hutchins, the cartographer who drew *A new map of the western parts of Virginia, Pennsylvania....* and published it in 1778, was a skilled, creative, and wily character. Born in New Jersey around 1730, Hutchins was occupied with exploring and surveying the frontiers of British North America for much of his life. Until 1779, he did this on behalf of the British empire, even negotiating with Native people on behalf of British agents and participating as a British soldier in the French and Indian War, which took place between 1754 and 1763 around the Great Lakes and Ohio River Valley.

At the start of the American Revolution, Hutchins hoped to use his skill as a surveyor and frontier mediator, or a person with experience negotiating between different cultures in zones of potential conflict, to his advantage — particularly his financial advantage. Along with a business partner, he speculated on large amounts of land in French-controlled Louisiana territory between 1772 and 1779 and hoped to help the British empire seize the territory, which would increase its value. Unfortunately, his business partner's allegiance was with an independent United States after 1776, not the British empire. When the British learned of his collaboration with the now-enemy, they charged Hutchins with treason. While he eventually was released, Hutchins decided to side with the United States too. By March 1780, Thomas Hutchins was an American — but not just any American. Within 14 months, he was appointed by the United States Congress as the first "Geographer General to the United States."

Questions to consider:

- Now that you know a little bit about the mapmaker, what point of view do you imagine he might bring to his mapmaking?
- What purpose or purposes do you think Hutchins might have had in creating *A new map of the western parts of Virginia, Pennsylvania....*? Pay attention to the year it was created.
- To what degree do you think Hutchins's map is accurate? What evidence might you use to support your estimate?

READING THE MAP

Refer to *A new map of the western parts of Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and North Carolina; comprehending the River Ohio, and all the rivers, which fall into it; part of the River Mississippi, the whole of the Illinois River, Lake Erie; part of the Lakes Huron, Michigan &c. and all the country bordering on these lakes and rivers*, Thomas Hutchins, 1778.

Offer participants 10-15 minutes to examine the map, write down details they find interesting, and/or start Googling the answers to questions they have as a result of their exploration of the map.

Once the time is up, invite participants to share back what they have learned.

A few general observations might include:

- The area labeled as "Indiana" is not where we see the state of Indiana today. There is a fairly long account from the *Indiana Historical Bureau* that explains this. A very brief explanation is that "Indiana" on the map does not refer to the state, but to a land speculation company called the "Indiana Company", which controlled an area that is now part of West Virginia.

- There are many notes that refer to fertile features of the land.
- There are some state boundaries visible, but not all of the boundaries are related to states. Some are natural; some are connected to private ownership.
- Several forts are visible.
- Several names of Native nations are visible.
- Several French names are visible, especially on the Western side of the map.
- There are many roads designated as notable travel routes between important destinations. But not all roads are visible or labeled on this map.
- The present shape of Illinois is nearly visible, but what constitutes Illinois Territory does not match up with our state's boundaries today.
- On the western frontier, there are some notes about garrisons and forts controlled by the French and Spanish.

After everyone has shared what they have observed, the facilitator is encouraged to use this information to reiterate a few major points about mapmaking, such as authorship, point of view, values, purpose, and spatial techniques. The facilitator is not expected to know the reasons why the map represents geography the way it does or what the precise history of this era tells us. Rather, their role is to encourage critical thinking and further research.

The point should be reiterated that maps are representations of geography and can tell us many true things about space and land, but they cannot be fully objective.

MAKING MAPS

Participants will now have the opportunity to make their own maps. Facilitators should provide pencils, pens, crayons, markers, paper, stickers, or any other supplies that will support participants in being creative.

The assignment is open. Participants are encouraged to map a geography they believe they know well with as much detail as possible. This geography could be their block, neighborhood, town, state, favorite destination, or even an abstract space.

Some examples for inspiration are:

- Examples of Rebecca Solnit's *City Atlases*
- Esri Map Gallery
- A fun mapping blog (mental maps)
- Artist, Writer, and Poet Brendan Lorber's Maps
- A few free maps from the book *You are Here: Personal Geographies and Maps of the Imagination* by Katharine Harmon (Princeton, 2003)

This portion of the activity can take anywhere from 20 to 40 minutes depending on time constraints and interest. The main point is for participants to better understand mapmaking through the process of doing it themselves, which could spark new understandings of what we can and cannot know from a map.

CLOSING REFLECTION

In the reflection, we will return to the story of Thomas Hutchins and use it to make connections between the relative subjectivity/objectivity of maps, the mapmaking activity, and the ways we make sense of geography.

Unlike Nicolas de Fer who drew the French Map of 1718 in another activity in the *Landscape and Territory* section of this toolkit, Thomas Hutchins had actually been to, observed, and surveyed the area now known as Illinois. In 1766, Hutchins, then an Ensign in the British Army, was assigned to the British Fort Cavendish. Until 1765, Fort Cavendish had been known as Fort de Chartres. (See the Fort de Chartres activity on P. 19 in *Landscape and Territory* section of this toolkit.) While he was called back east shortly thereafter, he returned to Fort Cavendish in 1768 and remained there for three years. Once he became Geographer General of the United States, Hutchins was responsible for surveying the entire Northwest Territory of which Illinois was a part. During that time, he created a system that divided the land into parcels — effectively transforming land into a commodity — which is still used today as the Public Land Survey System. (In the *Migration and Immigration* section of the toolkit, on P. 55, you can find an 1817 land grant awarded to a man named Nicholas Welch. The precise dimensions of the land listed in the grant — 160 acres — were derived from the system that Hutchins created.)

After sharing this new information about Hutchins, ask participants to reflect on this, along with their own process of mapmaking. Ask them to share their answer to this question once more: To what degree do you think Hutchins's map is accurate? And why?

Do freedom and equality mean the same thing to everyone who was and would be impacted by the Declaration of Independence? What are other ideas of freedom and equality that those who lived in Illinois might have had? What are some ways we can talk about unfreedom and/or inequality?

Salt Kettles, circa 1720 to late-19th century

Intended audience [Adults/Youth/Family]: Middle School to Adult

Estimated length of activity: 60-90 minutes

Objectives: In this activity, participants will practice how historians engage with and interpret what is called "material culture", or the objects, architecture, and spaces that populate our everyday lives. They will also consider how the material culture of the saltworks in Gallatin County — particularly salt kettles — can tell the complicated story of both industrial growth and the persistence of slavery.

Anchor Text: Salt kettles in Equality, Illinois, Salt Kettle Monument in Oakwood, Illinois, and photograph of a man with a salt kettle near Big Muddy River in Southern Illinois.

INTRODUCTIONS AND ICEBREAKER

[You can choose your own or try one from a web site like this: bit.ly/smallgroupsicebreaker.]

HOW HISTORIANS READ OBJECTS

Share images of salt kettles with the group, *but do not identify the images as salt kettles initially*. Try your best to share ONLY the image, not the context provided at each link. However, feel free to share this contextual information and encourage further research once you have moved into the historical context section of this activity.

- **Image #1:** Salt kettles found and preserved at the Old Slave House in Equality, Gallatin County, Illinois.
- **Image #2:** The Salt Kettle Monument in Oakwood, Vermilion County, Illinois.
- **Image #3:** Sixty-gallon kettle owned by Conrad Will to mine salt at the Big Muddy River in Southern Illinois.

The following prompts are borrowed from "Twenty Questions to Ask an Object", a document produced at the American Studies Association's 2014 Conference. The full document can be found here.

You may wish to divide participants into pairs or small groups to work on the questions together and then share back with the larger group. Or you could leave time for individuals to free-write their answers and then share what they have written. For a small group, you can walk through these steps together.

While we are working with images of objects, rather than the object itself, ask participants to do their best to determine the answers through inspection only. Resist the temptation to quickly identify and categorize the object, and to make assumptions about its purpose or meaning.

- What are the object's physical properties?
    - Materials (wood, stone, plastic; note that identifying materials may not be possible through inspection alone)
    - Size (length, width, depth, volume)
    - Weight
    - Number of parts and how they are organized (symmetrical, asymmetrical, distinct, merged)
    - Inscriptions (printed, stamped, engraved)
- What is the object's purpose?
- What is your emotional response to the object? What might it evoke for others?
- Who made the object, and under what circumstances?
    - Was it made by one or more individuals?
    - Was the maker also the designer?
    - When was it made?
    - Where was it made?

Allow participants time to consider the meaning they might make of what they have observed and perhaps venture a guess as to what the object is.

SALTWORKS IN ILLINOIS

The next two sections offer context on Saltworks in Illinois and salt mining›s connection to slavery. Consider sharing this background knowledge with participants and/or share the audio and video resources below.

- Radio Story: This Week In Illinois History: Salt In Our State's Wounds (March 3, 1803)
- Video Clip: Slaves in the Illinois salt mines

Natural salt springs have existed along the Mississippi, Wabash, and Ohio rivers in present-day Illinois for millennia, and it is likely that Native people made use of them long before Europeans arrived. However, Europeans transformed the springs into a commercial opportunity almost from the moment they arrived. French cartographer Nicolas de Fer's 1718 map, which you can explore on P. 21 in the

Landscape and Territory section of this toolkit, notes the existence of at least one saline source on the west side of the Mississippi River not far from Ste. Genevieve, Missouri. This source supplied French settlements in present-day Missouri and Illinois for much of the 1700s.

The United States government took possession of Illinois salt mines in 1803 and promptly began the process of industrializing. While the French focused on the salt springs along the Mississippi, vaster salt springs could be found in present-day Saline and Gallatin Counties where the Saline river, a tributary of the Ohio river, provided a bounty of salt springs. The salt mines that developed in Saline and Gallatin Counties continued to grow well into the 19th century. Gallatin County saltworks produced more salt than nearly all others in Illinois and Missouri — an estimated 120,000 to 300,000 bushels annually by the 1810s. The production of salt brought migration, wealth, and a strong sense of pride to these areas of the state.

SALT MINING AND SLAVERY

Salt mining in Illinois is also deeply entwined with the state's history of slavery. Philippe Francois Renault, a Frenchman and agent for the Company of the West, brought the area's first enslaved laborers to Illinois from Saint-Domingue (now Haiti) in 1720. Renault was granted a large tract of land near Fort de Chartres to develop lead, gold, and silver mines, which were worked by his slaves. (See the Fort de Chartres activity on P. 19 in the *Landscape and Territory* section of this toolkit for more background and Nicolas de Fer's 1718 map activity on P. 21 in the same section for more on the Company of the West.) The town Renault founded, St. Philippe, was located across the Mississippi from the salt springs of Missouri and his slaves' labor activities likely extended to salt mining. By the 1740s, Renault had sold his business, as well as his slaves, and returned to France.

But slavery persisted, as did the backbreaking labor of salt mining. While the 1787 Northwest Ordinance (see the Northwest Ordinance activity on P. 36 in the *Freedom and Equality* section in the toolkit), prohibited slavery, it did not emancipate slaves owned by French, Canadian, or other inhabitants of Illinois Territory who were considered "possessions" protected by Section 2 of the ordinance. Moreover, Illinois Territory allowed slavery by a different name — "indentured servitude" — which it codified even further in the Act of 1807. In effect, any Black person could be forced into a labor contract for decades or more as long as the employer registered the laborer as indentured. Any laborer who refused could be brought to or sold into a slave state to be re-enslaved without penalty to the employer. Similarly, the Illinois Constitution of 1818 made a special allowance for slave labor at the salt works in Shawneetown, Gallatin County, Illinois, at least until 1825.

ANALYZING THE SALT KETTLE

Return to the "Twenty Questions to Ask an Object" and to the images of the salt kettles. As a group or in small groups/pairs, consider the following additional questions.

- What is the object's history? Who owned and/or used it? When? Where?
- How does, or did, possession of the object relate to individual and/or group identity?
- Does the object reflect and/or structure concepts of freedom and equality? If so, how?
- What is the object's contemporary context and relevance?
- How would you interpret it to others?

CLOSING REFLECTION

This discussion can bring up many different feelings for participants as it connects so closely to slavery and the ways American ideals of freedom and equality have been compromised in different contexts. Please allow time for participants to reflect and begin to absorb these meanings either through private free-writing or in community.

If there is time, invite participants to think about the process of analyzing an object and how they might apply it in other contexts. What does this methodical process offer? How might it fall short? In what contexts is it helpful and when is it not?

Phoebe, a woman of color v. William Jay, 1828

Intended audience [Adults/Youth/Family]: Middle School to Adult

Estimated length of activity: 60-90 minutes

Objectives: This activity relies on the landmark case of Phoebe, a young Black woman in Illinois, who sued for her freedom in 1828. Phoebe's case illustrates the different levels of freedom and unfreedom that were present in the first decades of Illinois's statehood even as its constitution declared the state free of slavery. Participants will closely read portions of the case, the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, and the Illinois Constitution of 1818.

Anchor Text: Phoebe, a woman of color v. William Jay, 1828 (no case number in original), majority opinion, Illinois State Archives.

- Manuscript version
- Transcription

We will read two excerpts from the case itself, as well as an excerpt each from the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 and Illinois Constitution of 1818.

INTRODUCTIONS AND ICEBREAKER

[You can choose your own or try one from a web site like this: bit.ly/smallgroupsicebreaker.]

CLARIFICATIONS AND CONTEXT

Clarify what is happening in the case:

Phoebe is indentured to Joseph Jay in November 1814 and the contract is supposed to last for 40 years. Around 1828, Joseph Jay passes away and his son, William, inherits his property. The question is: as an indentured servant, can Phoebe also be inherited by William? And can he compel her to serve him through violent means, such as whipping?

That year, Phoebe takes William Jay to court to sue for her freedom arguing that her indenture amounts to involuntary servitude, or slavery, under the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 and the Illinois Constitution of 1818, both of which prohibit slavery. However, an 1807 Act passed in Indiana Territory and adopted in Illinois Territory adds a layer of complexity. The court reviews the arguments and issues a decision.

Clarify the following terms:

Indenture: Indenture is a legal contract that is signed by both an employer and a laborer. In an indenture, the laborer agrees to provide services in return for certain provisions, such as food and lodging. An indenture is a limited contract, which means that it is not intended to last for a lifetime, but it also cannot be ended if the laborer is simply unhappy with the agreement. The laborer is free only when the agreed-upon, contracted time has come to an end. While a contract presupposes free-will on both sides of the agreement, laborers usually signed under circumstances of coercion and desperation.

Slavery: Slavery is a condition in which a laborer is treated as property without free will. It is intended to last a lifetime and is passed down to subsequent generations. Slaves do not work for compensation and are more often than not treated with brutality. Ultimately, slavery dehumanizes and denies people who are enslaved basic rights and freedoms.

"A woman of color": In early Illinois, a person "of color" typically denoted a person of African heritage, including those who may be of mixed heritage.

Northwest Ordinance of 1787: See the Northwest Ordinance, 1787 activity on P. 41 in the *Freedom and Equality* section of this toolkit for more in-depth discussion. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 created a new territory of the emerging United States that encompassed present-day Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and part of Minnesota. This allowed for the United States's form of government to be applied to a new area. Among the most important provisions were the prohibition of slavery in the Northwest Territory and the introduction of a bill of rights, which protected religious freedom, trial by jury, and basic civil liberties.

Act of 1807: In 1807, Indiana Territory passed a law concerning indenture that contradicted the Northwest Ordinance. It allowed slaveholders who moved to Indiana Territory, where slavery was considered illegal under the Northwest Ordinance, to transform their slaves' legal status to "indentured servant." This was a go-around that allowed a form of slavery to continue to exist in Indiana. It could be done easily, simply by going before a magistrate and agreeing to a contracted term of service. Illinois Territory adopted the act as well.

Illinois Constitution of 1818: See the Illinois Constitution, 1818 activity on P. 45 in the *Freedom and Equality* section of this toolkit for more in-depth discussion.
The Northwest Ordinance outlined a three-step process by which an area of the Northwest Territory could become a state. Among the steps were the creation of a representative government and the drafting of a state constitution. An important part of the state constitution was the prohibition of slavery and involuntary servitude, but the constitution did *not* prohibit indenture. The United States Congress ratified the Illinois Constitution in 1818.

DISCUSS

Read aloud Excerpt 1 from the case of Phoebe, a woman of color v. William Jay, 1828.

Excerpt 1 from Phoebe, a woman or color, v. William Jay:

> "This is an action of trespass, assault, battery, wounding, and false imprisonment, to which the defendant plead that the plaintiff, on the 26th day of November, 1814, before Wm. C. Greenup, clerk of the court of common pleas of Randolph county, Illinois territory, agreed to and with one Joseph Jay, the father of this defendant, and who is now deceased, to serve him as an indentured servant, for and during the term of forty years from and after the day and year aforesaid, and then and there entered into and acknowledged an indenture, whereby she bound herself to serve the said Joseph Jay forty years next ensuing said date aforesaid, conformably to the laws of the Illinois territory, respecting the introduction of negroes and mulattoes into the same; and defendant avers, that the said Joseph has since departed this life, leaving this defendant, his only son and heir at law, and who is also his administrator. That plaintiff came to his possession lawfully, after the death of said Joseph. That in order to compel plaintiff to attend to and perform the duties of an indentured servant, in doing the ordinary business of him, the said defendant, and remain in his said service, he had necessarily to use a little force and beating, which is the same trespass, &c."

Questions to consider:

- What is the complaint Phoebe is making against Jay?
- What are the terms of Phoebe's indenture?
- Are there any details in this description that leave you with questions? What are they? (You may want to make note of these as you read additional excerpts.)
- This summary of the case is written by the judge. Reading between the lines, can you hear Phoebe's voice in this excerpt? Can you hear Jay's voice? Whose has more prominence for you and why?

Read aloud excerpt from the Northwest Ordinance of 1787.

Excerpt from Northwest Ordinance

> "Art. 6. There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said territory, otherwise than in the punishment of crimes whereof the party shall have been duly convicted: Provided, always, That any person escaping into the same, from whom labor or service is lawfully claimed in any one of the original States, such fugitive may be lawfully reclaimed and conveyed to the person claiming his or her labor or service as aforesaid."

Questions to consider:

- What resonates with you from this excerpt?
- What does the Northwest Ordinance say about slavery? About indenture?
- Why do you think the Northwest Ordinance takes the position it does with regard to slavery and involuntary servitude?

Read aloud excerpt from the Illinois Constitution of 1818.

Excerpt from Illinois State Constitution

> "Art. 6., 1. Neither slavery or involuntary servitude shall hereafter be introduced into this state, otherwise than for the punishment of crimes, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted; nor shall any male person, arrived at the age of 21 years, nor female person arrived at the age of 18 years, be held to serve any person as a servant, under any indenture hereafter made, unless such person shall enter into such indenture while in a state of perfect freedom, and on condition of a bona-fide consideration received or to be received for their service. Nor shall any indenture of any negro or mulatto, hereafter made and executed out of this state, or if made in this state, where the term of service exceeds one year, be of the least validity, except those given in cases of apprenticeship.
>
> 2. No person bound to labor in any other state, shall be hired to labor in this state, except within the tract reserved for the salt works near Shawneetown; nor even at that place for a longer period than one year at any one time; nor shall it be allowed there after the year 1825: any violation of this article shall effect the emancipation of such person from his obligation to service.
>
> 3. Each and every person who has been bound to service by contract or indenture in virtue of the law of Illinois territory heretofore existing, and in conformity to the provisions of the same, without fraud or collusion, shall be held to a specific performance of their contracts or indentures; and such negroes and mulattoes as have been registered in conformity with the aforesaid laws, shall serve out the time appointed by said laws: Provided however, that the children hereafter born of such person, negroes or mulattoes, shall become free, the males at the age of 21 years, the females at the age of 18 years. Each and every child born of indentured parents, shall be entered with the clerk of the county in which they reside, by their owners, within six months after the birth of said child."

Questions to consider:

- What resonates with you from this excerpt?
- In terms of *slavery*, is the Illinois Constitution consistent with the Northwest Ordinance? If not, how is it different?
- In terms of *indenture*, is the Illinois Constitution consistent with the Northwest Ordinance? If not, how is it different?
- Why do you think Illinois was interested in preserving indenture?

Prior to reading aloud Excerpt 2 from Phoebe, a woman of color v. William Jay, ask participants what they think the outcome of the case will be and why. Then read the excerpt for clues to the answer.

Excerpt 2 from Phoebe, a woman of color v. William Jay:

> "Nothing can be conceived farther from the truth, than the idea that there could be a voluntary contract between the negro and his master. The law authorizes the master to bring his slave here, and take him before the clerk, and if the negro will not agree to the terms proposed by the master, he is authorized to remove him to his original place of servitude. I conceive that it would be an insult to common sense to contend that the negro, under the circumstances in which he was placed, had any free agency. The only choice given him was a choice of evils. On either hand, servitude was to be his lot. The terms proposed were, slavery for a period of years, generally extending beyond the probable duration of his life, or a return to perpetual slavery in the place from whence he was brought. The indenturing was in effect an involuntary servitude for a period of years, and was void, being in violation of the ordinance, and had the plaintiff asserted her right to freedom previous to the adoption of the constitution of this state, she would, in my opinion, have been entitled to it. But by the third section of the sixth article of the constitution of this state, 'Each and every person who has been bound to service by contract or indenture, in virtue of the laws of the Illinois territory heretofore existing, and in conformity to the provisions of the same, without fraud or collusion, shall be held to a specific performance of their contracts or indentures, and such negroes and mulattoes as have been registered, in conformity with the aforesaid laws, shall serve out the time appointed by such laws.'
>
> .... From the decrees of the constitution there can be no appeal, for it emanates from the highest source of power, the sovereign people. Whatever condition is assigned to any portion of the people by the constitution is irrevocably fixed, however unjust in principle it may be."

Questions to consider:

- What do you think is happening here?
- What are the different ideas that Justice Lockwood is weighing?
- What seems to be the outcome of the case?
- What questions still remain for you?

Note to facilitator:

PP. 102-103 of *The History of Negro Servitude in Illinois* help summarize the case more clearly. Ultimately, Justice Lockwood upheld Phoebe's indenture meaning that, despite the prohibition of slavery in Illinois, Phoebe was still forced to serve William Jay for 26 more years. Legal scholars often refer to this case in documenting the prehistory of the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery and involuntary servitude in the United States.

CLOSING REFLECTION

This is a complicated and emotional case. Participants may need to take a moment to breathe or write down their thoughts and feelings before entering into a reflective discussion.

In reflection, we suggest stepping away from the details of this case to more broadly consider Phoebe's struggle for freedom and equality.

- While we only know Phoebe from this moment in her life, what else might we imagine about her?
- What kind of person do you think she was?
- Does she tell us something about what it means to be American?
- What do you think happened after the case was decided?
- How do you imagine her descendants might remember her?

The Northwest Ordinance, 1787

Intended audience [Adults/Youth/Family]: Middle School to Adult

Estimated length of activity: 60-90 minutes

Objectives: During this activity, participants will examine select portions of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. Together, we will try to understand how the document helped establish American republicanism and westward expansion, as well as how it reshaped power relations and ideas of sovereignty among the population living in the area that would become Illinois.

Anchor Text: The Northwest Ordinance of 1787

INTRODUCTIONS AND ICEBREAKER

[You can choose your own or try one from a web site like this: bit.ly/smallgroupsicebreaker.]

THE NORTHWEST ORDINANCE OF 1787

Review the context below. Consider sharing this or the timeline with participants to prepare them for the thought experiment that follows.

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 preceded the United States Constitution in establishing the rights of citizens and defining what equality and freedom meant. The Northwest Territory itself more than doubled the size of the United States. For these reasons, it is one of the most consequential documents of the early years of the nation.

Prior to 1787, the area between the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to the west and east and south of the Great Lakes — known as the Northwest Territory — was occupied, traded, and ceded several times by different European colonial powers. Like other areas of North America, this one was also home to many Native nations with different relationships to one another and to European settlers. To demonstrate how complicated and fast-moving these shifting relations were, consider this timeline of who controlled the territory we now call Illinois in the 1700s:

- **1673-1717** — Controlled by France. Explored by French trader Louis Jolliet and Jesuit missionary Jacques Marquette and declared part of "New France" (i.e. Canada). In 1690, René-Robert Cavelier de La Salle, along with thirty French settlers established Fort Crèvecoeur in the area now named for him (LaSalle, Illinois). At that time, La Salle claimed as territories of New France all areas of North America not already claimed by Spain and Great Britain.

- **1717-1754** — Controlled by France, but now governed as part of Louisiana (not New France) and called "Upper Louisiana."
- **1754-1763** — Controlled by France, but involved in the French and Indian War. During this time, the Inohka (Illinois Confederation), Myaamiaki (Miami), Ojibweg (Ojibwe), Odawak (Ottawa), Shaawana (Shawnee), and the Mi'kmaq nations (among others) generally took the side of the French in the conflict, while the Iroquois Confederation mostly sided with Great Britain. Some nations remained neutral.
- **1763-1778** — Controlled by Great Britain. Great Britain won control over the Northwest Territory after defeating France in the French and Indian War. Note that the French and Indian War was known as the "War of Conquest" in France and the "Seven Years' War" in most of Europe, which better reflects that the war in North America was an extension of antagonisms over imperial expansion between France and Great Britain all over the globe.
- **1778-1784** — Controlled by the United States as part of Virginia. The United States won official control of this area as a result of the 1783 Treaty of Paris that ended the American Revolution, but its oversight began early in the American Revolution. Virginia ceded Illinois back to the federal government in 1784.
- **1784-1787** — No formal government structure existed in Illinois, although it was considered part of the United States.
- **1787-1818** — Controlled by the United States, first as part of the Northwest Territory, then as part of Indiana Territory (1800-1809), and finally as Illinois Territory (1809-1818). In 1818, Illinois established a constitution and became a state. See the Illinois Constitution of 1818 activity on P. 45 in the *Freedom and Equality* section of the toolkit for more information.

ESTABLISHING A GOVERNMENT

Before consulting the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, invite participants to join in a thought experiment. Read the following:

> Imagine you are a 75-year-old person on the day the Northwest Ordinance has gone into effect. This means you were born in 1712. If you have always lived in what we now know as Randolph County, Illinois, where Kaskaskia is located, you have been subject to six different colonial governments in your lifetime. If you are Native American, you are not only subject to those laws, but also negotiating the laws of your own nation, which may be compromised by the colonial government.

Ask: Now that a new government is being installed for the area where you live, what would you like its founding document, the Northwest Ordinance, to include?

Note that the thought experiment does not define the race, gender, or nation of origin/affiliation of the person whose role you are playing. As participants consider what they would like to see from a new government, you may want to remind them of this and encourage them to imagine different answers based on different identities. For example:

- How will laws be made? Who can participate in making those laws?
- Who will make decisions for the territory and how?
- How does the document define freedom? How does it define equality?
- Who has rights and what are they?
- How will disputes be managed and resolved?
- What do you want a new government to provide for you?
- What is the relationship between the territory and the central government (i.e. the U.S. Congress)?

Write down the group's answers on a whiteboard or pad of paper so that everyone can see what has been said. At this point, we can call these answers "must-haves."

As a group, choose 4 or 5 of the "must haves" to prioritize and investigate.

Now investigate!

You may wish to divide participants into small groups or pairs and assign each one a "must-have."

Refer to the Northwest Ordinance of 1787.

Ask each group, pair, or individual to take 10-15 minutes to read through the Northwest Ordinance together. After doing that, invite them to find whether their assigned "must-have" appears in some form in the document.

- If they find the "must-have", ask the group, pair, or individual to note its location and prepare to share it with the larger group.
- If they do not find the "must-have", please ask the group to make note and discuss among themselves why they think it might be missing. Ask them to share back their discussion when the group reconvenes.
- Ask everyone to note anything in the document about rights, laws, or other elements of governance that they think is important.

Reunite the group to share back what they have discovered. Take 15-20 minutes to discuss.

- What "must-haves" show up in the document?
- What "must-haves" do *not* show up in the document?
- What else is in the document that is important to note?

CLOSING REFLECTION

The Northwest Ordinance was one of the first documents to establish the United States and its form of government in the place we now call Illinois.

Take a moment to reflect on how the Northwest Ordinance resonates with your understanding of democratic ideals, such as "all men are created equal" and "are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights"? How does the Northwest Ordinance translate these ideals into government? Does it fall short or exceed expectation and how?

Illinois Constitution, 1818

Intended audience [Adults/Youth/Family]: Middle School to Adult

Estimated length of activity: 90 minutes to 2 hours

Objectives: The Illinois Constitution of 1818 was Illinois' first and a prerequisite for the United States Congress to recognize the state for admission into the union. After the Constitution was ratified by delegates representing different areas of Illinois Territory on August 26, 1818, Illinois was approved for statehood by United States President James Monroe on December 3, 1818. Considered one of the more liberal state constitutions of its time, this activity will focus on Article VIII of the Illinois Constitution of 1818, which outlines the "essential principles of liberty and free government" that would apply to Illinoisans. Participants will be encouraged to make connections between the provisions of this legal document and their own personal experiences through storytelling.

Anchor Text: Illinois Constitution of 1818

- Manuscript version
- Transcription

INTRODUCTIONS AND ICEBREAKER

[You can choose your own or try one from a web site like this: bit.ly/smallgroupsicebreaker.]

THE ILLINOIS CONSTITUTION OF 1818

Consider sharing the context below with participants to help them understand what made the Illinois Constitution of 1818 unique.

The Illinois Constitution of 1818, while important for Illinoisans, derived most of its form and content from other state constitutions and, of course, the United States Constitution. For this reason, a good deal of the text is devoted to creating an infrastructure for Illinois's government that replicates what one might see in other states and at the federal scale. Specifically, the Illinois Constitution establishes a governor; senators and representatives; age, citizenship, and residency requirements; term limits; election cycles; the three main branches of government (legislative, executive, judicial); and the functions of each governmental branch.

More unique to the Illinois Constitution of 1818 are nods to the growing population of this then-frontier state; provisions around slavery, which can be further explored in the Phoebe v. Jay activity on P. 35 in the *Freedom and Equality* section of the toolkit;

and an imbalance of power in favor of the legislature, which essentially hand-picked almost every statewide official except Governor and Lieutenant Governor. (This imbalance was corrected in subsequent constitutions.)

Perhaps also unique to the Illinois Constitution of 1818 was the fact that it was written, debated, and ratified over 3 weeks of meeting at a tavern (Bennett's) in Kaskaskia, the state's capital at the time.

CONSIDERING THE RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALS

While the entire Illinois Constitution of 1818 (and each one that followed) is worth reviewing, this activity will focus on Article VIII, which outlines the constitutional rights of individuals in Illinois. This is an important place to identify how the United States government at this time explained the mechanisms for ensuring "freedom" and "equality." Some rights listed here are what we call "positive" rights — that is, the freedom *to* do or have something. Others are "negative" rights, or freedom *from* something, such as persecution.

It must be noted that, in practice, Black, Native, and mixed-race people, as well as women, were not treated as if these provisions applied to them, which begs the question of what equality meant in this period.

Many of the provisions outlined in the 1818 constitution exist with slight alteration in the current Illinois Constitution, which has been in effect since December 15, 1970.

Read aloud Article VIII.

We recommend going around the room and having participants read aloud each of the 23 points from the Article.

Begin with a low-stakes discussion.

- What stands out to you from this list?
- Does any of this sound familiar? If so, where have you heard it in other contexts?
- Does anything on this list give you pause? If so, why?
- Are you surprised by anything you have read here and why?

Once you have shared initial feedback, ask participants to identify one or two points that resonate with them personally. For example, someone who feels strongly about faith might find a personal connection to point 3: "That all men have a natural and indefeasible right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences."

When participants have identified their resonant points, offer 10-15 minutes for them to free-write what each one means to them.

TELLING OUR OWN STORIES

After giving participants time to reflect and write their own stories, invite anyone who is willing to read or speak their story aloud.

Each storyteller should note which point or points from the constitution they used as a prompt. They should also explain, if it is not already clear, how the point connects to the story they have told.

Please leave room for fellow participants to ask questions and reflect on what they have heard. Some questions to consider:

- Are there some points that stand out more than others? Why?
- Are there any connections between stories?
- Are there rights outlined in this section of the constitution that are not evenly applied? In other words, is there a story that demonstrates the limits to the statements in the constitution either in how they are written or how one might experience them?
- In telling your stories, did you discover any points you think should have been included, but were not?

CLOSING REFLECTION

This activity is intended to help us see the connections between official, government documents and our lived experience. Even if our everyday lives can feel far removed from documents like the Illinois Constitution or even the Declaration of Independence, these texts can have a meaningful impact on what is and is not possible in our lives. The Illinois Constitution, like the United States Constitution, is intended to protect certain ideas of freedom and equality.

To close the activity, ask participants to reflect on the extent to which our constitution is an adequate way to protect such ideas. What are other ways in which we can protect freedom and equality?

Illinois transformed tremendously once it became part of the Northwest Territory and then a state. Who settled in Illinois and why? How did they describe this land? How did they establish "American" homes? How did those who already lived in Illinois reconcile or conflict with newcomers?

Morris Birkbeck's *Letters from Illinois*, 1818

Intended audience [Adults/Youth/Family]: Middle School to Adult

Estimated length of activity: 60-90 minutes

Objectives: Born in 1764 in Settle, England, Morris Birkbeck traveled to the emerging United States in 1817. He eventually landed in what would be known as the English Settlement in Edwards County, Illinois. In two texts, *Notes on a Journey in America, from the Coast of Virginia to the Territory of Illinois* (1817) and *Letters from Illinois* (1818), Birkbeck shared his story of emigration, impressions of the new nation and its inhabitants, and opinions about the American form of government. He also worked to persuade other English people to move to Illinois and help build his town. Together, we will examine two of his letters and explore the themes of immigration that resonate or contrast with our current moment.

Anchor Text: "Letter VII" and/or "Letter XXII" *Letters from Illinois*, Morris Birkbeck, 1818.

INTRODUCTIONS AND ICEBREAKER

[You can choose your own or try one from a web site like this: bit.ly/smallgroupsicebreaker.]

INTRODUCE MORRIS BIRKBECK AND *LETTERS FROM ILLINOIS*

For an excellent overview of who Morris Birkbeck was and his relationship to Illinois history, the Illinois History and Lincoln Collections at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign has a well-researched and detailed introduction on its website.

Letters from Illinois (1818) was a compilation of letters Birkbeck had written to convince other English people to settle in Illinois. He fervently believed that life was more abundant and the government more just in Illinois than it had been in England, particularly for those who labored and farmed. The book was well-received in England and translated into German, though it is difficult to know just how many of his readers took the plunge and moved to the United States.

Read aloud an excerpt or the entire text of "Letter VII."

Note that this letter is the shorter and least detailed of the two. In it, Birkbeck speaks to some of the differences between England and Illinois and the reasons he feels his life in Illinois is superior.

Questions to consider:

- What is happening in this letter?
- What reasons does Birkbeck cite for leaving England?
- How does Birkbeck describe his life in England versus his new home in Illinois? Pick out some details, if you can, and consider what these tell you about him.
- How does Birkbeck use the word "patriotism"? What does it mean to him? What does it mean to you?
- What, if anything, surprises you or gives you a new understanding when you read or listen to this letter?

Read aloud excerpts or the entire text of "Letter XXII."

Note that this letter is quite long and contains a letter within the letter. "Letter XXII" outlines Birkbeck's frustrations with the United States Congress and the ways its priorities and operations contrast with how Birkbeck himself believes the nation should be governed. In particular, he is disappointed that Congress does not support his efforts to build a "colony" of English laborers in Illinois. He also includes a brief commentary expressing his thoughts about slavery.

Questions to consider:

- What is happening in this letter?
- What is Birkbeck's "plan of colonising"? Why do you think he is interested in pursuing this plan?
- How, in Birkbeck's telling, does Congress respond? What do you think this says about the United States government's views on immigration at the time? What other values or principles seem to be part of the government's response?
- While they are not mentioned in this letter, Native people lived in the same area as Birkbeck. In particular, the Kaahkaahkia (Kaskaskia), Peewaalia (Peoria), Myaamiaki (Miami), and Oceti Šakowiŋ (Council of the Seven Fires) made homes in and around what became the English Settlement. What attitudes do you imagine Native people had to the changes they were witnessing? How do you think they might have responded?
- Clarify what Birkbeck means by "muscles and sinews" (i.e. laborers, but particularly those who are enslaved when he first uses the phrase).

- What are Birkbeck's attitudes toward slavery? (Note: It might be interesting to share that Birkbeck's good friend and fellow English immigrant, George Flower, was a strong advocate for the antislavery movement. He was also appointed by the U.S. government to help lead the American Colonization Society, which eventually led to the creation of the West African nation, Liberia. We make some reference to the American Colonization Society in the Colored Convention, Alton, 1856 activity on P. 62 in the *Revolutionary Visions* section of the toolkit.)
- Do any of the points in the letter leave you with additional questions for research? If so, what questions do you have?

CLOSING REFLECTION

While Morris Birkbeck's letters are testimonials to many different topics relating to the early days of the State of Illinois, they are first and foremost the words of a new immigrant.

In this closing reflection, ask the group to consider the ways in which Birkbeck's immigrant experience echo or contrast with the experiences of immigrants today. You might consider the image he draws of Illinois for his readers, the hopes he shares with his letters' recipients, and any evidence you might detect that not all aspects of immigration are as rosy as he often suggests. Invite participants to share their own stories of immigration or those of family and friends.

Letter to William Hodge and Family, 1839

Intended audience [Adults/Youth/Family]: Middle School to Adult

Estimated length of activity: 60-90 minutes

Objectives: In recent years, historians have begun to try to understand events not only through the study of "what happened", but by considering the emotional landscape in which the event occurred. This kind of history is called "affective", or related to moods or emotions, and aims to trace how people felt about events, as well as how they made sense of those feelings within the world in which they lived. This kind of historical investigation requires great empathy and curiosity. In this activity, we will practice "affective history" by reading and connecting with a circa 1839 letter to William Hodge and his family from relatives in North Carolina.

Anchor Text: Letter to William Hodge and Family from Rockingham County, North Carolina to Bloomington, McLean County, Illinois, circa 1839. Special thanks to Julie Emig and Bill Kemp at McLean County Historical Society for uncovering this item for us.

- Manuscript
- Transcription

INTRODUCTIONS AND ICEBREAKER

[You can choose your own or try one from a web site like this: bit.ly/smallgroupsicebreaker.]

LETTER-READING

Prior to the 20th century, communication between people was accomplished either in-person or in written form, primarily through letters. It can be difficult in an age when communication technologies shrink thousands of miles into mere seconds to imagine what it might mean to write or receive a letter in the 19th century. This is especially poignant when we consider that a letter may be the only contact available to loved ones who have migrated or emigrated to faraway locations.

Similarly — and this may come up in your discussion — letter-writing could be fraught with the challenges of literacy. In other words, not everyone could write a letter and not everyone could read one. Indeed, many letters were written by a scribe on behalf of someone else and many were read aloud to those who could not read themselves.

Letter-writing and letter-reading in the 19th century connected not only individuals, but whole families across distance. At first read, the letter to William Hodge and Family may seem to us fairly straightforward — just a list of important updates. When read with the above in mind, the letter takes on a new power, which we will investigate below.

Read aloud Letter to William Hodge and Family from Rockingham, North Carolina to Bloomington, McLean County, Illinois, circa 1839.

- Manuscript
- Transcription

Note: We recommend having participants do the reading, which you can divide into parts however you prefer. Please also note that we have edited the transcript of the letter slightly to include punctuation and capitalization. However, we have done our best to include original spellings. It may be illuminating to have participants view the image of the actual manuscript to get a better sense of the artifact.

Give participants a few minutes to jot down any thoughts or phrases that resonate with them. Then invite participants to share what they have written.

Questions to consider:

- Who is writing this letter? What can we discern about the person from the content of the letter? Where are they?
- Who is receiving this letter? Similarly, what can we discern about the person or people to whom the letter is addressed? Where are they?
- What are the circumstances behind writing the letter? Does this seem like a formal or informal letter? Does it seem like the letter was precipitated by an occasion or event?
- See if you can list or name aloud some of the important information being conveyed in the letter.

Now that we have identified the setting, characters, and content of the letter, ask participants to begin to develop the motivations, feelings, and concerns of the characters themselves.

Questions to consider:

- How do you think the letter-writer feels? What evidence would you point to from the letter that might help you answer this question?

  Some hints that might get you started: the letter often refers to the deaths of friends and relatives, but also uses the phrase "yet alive", which perhaps heightens the sense of the inevitability of death; the writer is addressing someone they have not seen in a while.

- How do you think the recipient of the letter feels? What evidence would you point to from the letter that might help you answer this question?

  Some hints that might get you started: the recipient is living far from their original home; the recipient is living in a new place; the recipient is hearing about life and death back home where some of their family still live.

LETTER-WRITING

After discussing the letter and the emotions one could imagine shaping the relationship between the letter's writer and recipient, invite participants to write a letter of their own. They can choose one of the following prompts or one you develop yourself:

- Write a letter to someone far away that you have not seen in a long time. What information would you want to convey? What feelings would you want to convey?
- Imagine you are the recipient of the letter addressed to William Hodge and family and you wish to write back. What would you write in your letter? What feelings would you want to convey?

Allow 10-15 minutes for participants to write. When the time is up, ask whether anyone would like to share with the group.

CLOSING REFLECTION

In your reflection, revisit the Letter to William Hodge and Family. You need not read it aloud, just take a few minutes to review it.

In this closing reflection, ask the group to consider how writing a letter in the second half of this activity may or may not add new understanding, meaning, or questions to the historical letter. Do you think your feelings are similar to those of the letter's writer and recipient? What makes them similar? What might make them different? Do you have a new sense of connection with either the writer or recipient or both?

Nicholas Welch Land Grant, 1817 and Autobiography of *Ma-Ka-Tai-Me-She-Kia-Kiak or Black Hawk* by Black Hawk, 1833

Intended audience [Adults/Youth/Family]: High School to Adult

Estimated length of activity: 90 minutes to 2 hours

Objectives: The War of 1812 had a dramatic impact on Illinois Territory, especially for those who migrated into the territory afterward and for those Native communities who were forced to migrate away from it. One way to understand the transformation the war precipitated is by contrasting a United States-issued land grant with a first-hand account from a Native American living in Illinois territory at the time. Land grants, also known as “bounty grants”, were awarded to Revolutionary War and War of 1812 veterans as compensation for their service. Large areas of what was then “the West”, which encompassed the territory of present-day Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, Tennessee, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois, were settled by Americans partly as a result of these grants. To make way for this increased settlement, Native residents of the territory were forcibly removed. In this activity, we will explore the many meanings we attach to land and how those meanings echo today.

Anchor Texts: Nicholas Welch 1812 Land Grant with transcription here if needed, and excerpts from *Autobiography of Ma-Ka-Tai-Me-She-Kia-Kiak or Black Hawk* by Black Hawk. You will want to have a current map of Illinois available for reference.

INTRODUCTIONS AND ICEBREAKER

[You can choose your own or try one from a web site like this: bit.ly/smallgroupsicebreaker.]

THE WAR OF 1812

Please read or share a printed version of the following two sections with participants.

According to the 1810 United States census, 12,282 people lived in Illinois Territory around the time the War of 1812 began. They established towns and villages mostly along the Mississippi, the present-day southern border, and Chicago, but left much of the prairie in the central part of the territory, as well as parts of the northwest, free of settlement. The prairie was not, however, uninhabited. Instead, it was home to many thousands of Native Americans who were not counted in the official census. For an emerging nation that had more than doubled in size with the acquisition of

the Northwest Territory in 1778 and then doubled again with the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the pressure to further populate "the West" with Americans and European immigrants, including Illinois, was strong. This was especially true because the lands inhabited peacefully by Native people in Illinois were also seen as abundant, fertile, and ready for the application of American-style farming. What had hindered prairie settlement by Americans and European immigrants was not just the relative insufficiency of timber for building and the sparse number of freshwater springs, although these were factors. It was the presence of the Native population. The War of 1812 would change that dynamic.

The War of 1812 in Illinois catalyzed an American population explosion and the removal of Native people from land they had called home for millennia. While, on the surface, the war was based on antagonism between the United States and Great Britain, it could not be fought without both sides collaborating with Native allies. And while the reasons the United States declared war on Great Britain in 1812 were that the latter continued to press American sailors into British service and interfere with trade, it was clear that the United States was also fed up with British alliances with Native people. The defeat of Great Britain in the War of 1812 affirmed, once and for all, that the United States was a sovereign and increasingly powerful nation of its own. At the same time, it emboldened the United States to carry forward its own version of empire-building: occupation of Native land and forced expulsion of Native people.

NICHOLAS WELCH'S LAND GRANT

Among the collections held at the Western Illinois Museum in Macomb, Illinois, is the museum's oldest item — a land grant, or "bounty grant", offered to Nicholas Welch who is listed on the document as a Private in McIntosh's Light Artillery. This regiment, led by Captain John N. McIntosh, likely fought at the Battle of Plattsburgh in New York state. The grant was issued to Welch in 1817 and signed by then-President James Monroe and Josiah Meigs, Commissioner of the United States General Land Office.

Read aloud Nicholas Welch's land grant. Note that you will want to have a map of Illinois available for reference.

Questions to consider:

- What information can you determine from what you have read? Please make special note of any handwritten details.
- How might you determine the location of the land Welch was awarded? Where would you start? (Don't lose too much time on this if everyone is stuck. We will give the answer in the next question!)

- We believe this tract of land was located in present-day Schuyler County, Illinois. Take a look at where that is. What do you think the land was like when Welch was awarded it? Pay attention to any natural features you see and use your own knowledge or educated guesses to imagine the answer to this question.
- Do you think Welch moved to Illinois as a result of receiving this grant? Why or why not?

In addition to the above questions, please take a moment to consider why the government decided to award land rather than some other kind of compensation. What does this tell us about the meaning of land in the United States at this time? Depending on whether or not you think Nicholas Welch decided to settle in Illinois, what meanings do you think Nicholas Welch would have assigned to the land he was awarded?

Note: Interestingly, while our team was researching the land grant to learn more about Private Welch and the battles in which he might have fought in the War of 1812, we found an administrative error in the land grant itself. It turns out that Welch did not fight in McIntosh's Light Artillery at all. Instead, he was part of Captain John Bergstresser's infantry, which was formed from an existing Pennsylvania militia. It is not clear where this regiment fought, but most Pennsylvania volunteers participated in battles around Lakes Erie and Ontario, at Niagara, and along Chesapeake Bay. Given that Welch, like all veterans, had to apply for the land to be granted and provide proof of his military service, the error may have been his, the Land Grant office's, or an incorrect listing in the muster rolls.

This little side journey shows that historical records are not infallible and that, like all information, accuracy depends on fact-checking, cross-checking, and the acknowledgement that humans made errors even in the past!

BLACK HAWK

Please read or share a printed version of the following two sections with participants.

Ma-Ka-Tai-Me-She-Kia-Kiak, or Black Hawk, was born in 1767 in or around a Thâkîwaki (Sauk or Sac) village named Saukenuk not far from present-day Rock Island, Illinois. For generations, Saukenuk was a center of Native life for Thâkîwaki (Sauk or Sac) and Meskwaki (Fox) nations. As Black Hawk himself described it, "Our village was healthy, and there was no place in the country possessing such advantages, nor hunting grounds better than those we had in possession."

Yet, Saukenuk's location along the Rock River and close to the powerful Mississippi meant that it was an attractive place for American settlement as well. In 1804, a Thâkîwaki (Sauk or Sac) chief named Quashquame and four other prominent leaders of the Thâkîwaki (Sauk or Sac) and Meskwaki (Fox) people signed a dubious treaty with Indiana Territory Governor William Henry Harrison (later the 9th President of

the United States). The treaty ceded 50 million acres of land, including all Thâkîwaki (Sauk or Sac) and Meskwaki (Fox) territory east of the Mississippi river to the United States. Only later did it become abundantly clear that Quashquame and his associates had not intended to relinquish their right to their homelands. The treaty soured the Thâkîwaki (Sauk or Sac), Meskwaki (Fox), and many other Native nations, such as the Kiikaapoi (Kickapoo), Myaamiaki (Miami), Hoocąk (Winnebago or Ho-Chunk), Shaawana (Shawnee), Bodéwadmik (Potawatomi), and Jiwere (Otoe), against the United States. By the time the War of 1812 broke out, these nations sided with the British. Black Hawk himself served on the side of British forces at Detroit (in present-day Michigan) and Prairie du Chien (in present-day Illinois).

After the War of 1812 ended with British defeat in 1816, a series of forty-four forced land cession treaties between the United States and Native people along the Mississippi followed. Through the 1820s, the population of American and European immigrant settlers increased tremendously in Illinois. By the 1830 United States census, nearly 160,000 people lived in Illinois — thirteen times the population counted twenty years before. Also, in 1830, the Indian Removal Act was passed by the United States Congress, which allowed then-President Andrew Jackson and Congress to offer land west of the Mississippi to Native nations in exchange for their homelands on the east side of the river. The Thâkîwaki (Sauk or Sac) and Meskwaki (Fox) were compelled to relocate to Iowa in 1831. In 1832, Black Hawk and 1500 followers attempted to regain Saukenuk, but were defeated and forced back later that year. Nearly 1000 of his followers died from battle and starvation during skirmishes against the United States, which culminated in the massacre of 400 Thâkîwaki (Sauk or Sac) and Meskwaki (Fox) men, women, and children at the Battle of Bad Axe in present-day Wisconsin. Black Hawk's attempt to regain Thâkîwaki (Sauk or Sac) lands on the east side of the Mississippi was known as Black Hawk's War.

Excerpt from *Autobiography of Ma-Ka-Tai-Me-She-Kia-Kiak or Black Hawk* by Black Hawk

Read aloud Excerpt #1

"I will here relate the manner in which corn first came. According to tradition handed down to our people, a beautiful woman was seen to descend from the clouds, and alight upon the earth, by two of our ancestors who had killed a deer and were sitting by a fire roasting a part of it to eat. They were astonished at seeing her and concluded that she was hungry and had smelt the meat. They immediately went to her, taking with them a piece of the roasted venison. They presented it to her, she ate it, telling them to return to the spot where she was sitting at the end of one year, and they would find a reward for their kindness and generosity. She then ascended to the clouds and disappeared. The men returned to their village, and explained to the tribe what they had seen, done ad heard, but were laughed at by their people.

When the period had arrived for them to visit this consecrated ground, where they were to find a reward for their attention to the beautiful woman of the clouds, they went with a large party, and found where her right hand had rested on the ground corn growing, where the left hand had rested beans, and immediately where she had been seated, tobacco....

"We thank the Great Spirit for all the good he has conferred upon us. For myself, I never take a drink of water from a spring without being mindful of his goodness."

Questions to consider:

- What details stand out to you in this story?
- How do the characters in the story interact with one another?
- In your opinion, is there significance to the items that the woman leaves as rewards? What significance do these items have?
- What meanings about land does Black Hawk relay through this story?

Read aloud Excerpt #2

"In a short time, we came up to our village, and found that the whites had not left it, but that others had come, and that the greater part of our cornfields had been enclosed. When we landed the whites appeared displeased because we came back. We repaired the lodges that had been left standing and built others. Keokuk [Thâkîwaki (Sauk or Sac) leader who advocated diplomatic relations with the United States] came to the village, but his object was to persuade others to follow him to the Iowa. He had accomplished nothing towards making arrangements for us to remain, or to exchange other lands for our village. There was no more friendship existing between us. I looked upon him as a coward and no brave, to abandon his village to be occupied by strangers. What right had these people to our village, and our fields, which the Great Spirit had given us to live upon?

"My reason teaches me that land cannot be sold. The Great Spirit gave it to his children to live upon and cultivate as far as necessary for their subsistence, and so long as they occupy and cultivate it they have the right to the soil, but if they voluntarily leave it, then any other people have a right to settle on it. Nothing can be sold but such things as can be carried away."

Questions to consider:

- What is happening in this excerpt? Who are the different characters and what are their motivations/positions?
- What does it mean that the white newcomers to the land had enclosed it? Why does this upset Black Hawk?

- Black Hawk describes what might be considered a “theory of property” or what people’s relationship to land and ownership ought to be? Can you identify what some of the elements of that theory might be? How might that theory differ from that of the white settlers?
- In what ways are Black Hawk’s theories visible in the land today? Or are they? In what ways are the settlers’ approach to land true today? Or are they?

CLOSING REFLECTION

Once you have concluded your discussions of the land grant and excerpts from Black Hawk’s memoir, it might be interesting to reveal a couple of details that are not immediately apparent.

First, Nicholas Welch never moved to Illinois. Indeed, there is no evidence he ever even set foot in Illinois. On the back of the land grant, there is a notation that Welch sold his land for $100 (about $2500 today) to James Sterling on June 17, 1818 — just over six months after Welch received the original grant. The sale was notarized by Samuel Jackson Prescott of Boston, which suggests that the transfer of deed was completed there. We know nothing more about Sterling. He may have moved to Illinois or resold the land himself.

Second, Black Hawk gained a complicated public presence after the Battle of Bad Axe in 1832. Having been captured after the battle, he was paraded as a political prisoner throughout the East Coast along with other Native captives. President Andrew Jackson, who ordered the tour, believed that it would serve both as publicity for his own leadership and a warning to other Native resisters. Black Hawk, however, achieved a kind of celebrity through the display that resulted in an eager audience for the memoir he would publish in 1833. The memoir itself was ghost written by a translator, Antoine LeClair, and then edited by newspaper editor John B. Patterson. Ever since it was published, scholars have debated whether the memoir expresses Black Hawk’s authentic voice. Most agree that the memoir’s critique of American values and treatment of Native people, as well as the stories of Thâkîwaki (Sauk or Sac) life, are accurate. But the fullness of Black Hawk’s character and self-representation are probably lost to translation and the passing of time.

In reflection, you may want to ask participants to share how these stories affirm, change, or differ from how they have understood migration and settlement in Illinois in the past. For example:

- How do they add context to the stories of western expansion we thought we knew?
- How do they give meaning to place names and geographies that are familiar to us?
- Are there aspects of this story that seem familiar to our world today?

Revolutionary Visions

How did the ideals of the Revolution, catalyzed by the Declaration of Independence, continue to influence movements for freedom and equal citizenship in Illinois? How did Illinoisans think about their American-ness in the first 250 years of the nation?

“Declaration of Sentiment and Plan of Action,” Colored Convention, Alton, 1856

Intended audience [Adults/Youth/Family]: Middle School to Adult

Estimated length of activity: 60-90 minutes

Objectives: Colored Conventions took place between 1830 and the early 20th century as gatherings to support Black political organizing and racial justice. More than 600 conventions took place during these decades and they served, in many ways, as the precursors to the Civil Rights movements of the 20th and 21st centuries, as well as organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In this activity, we will compare the language used in the “Declaration of Sentiment and Plan of Action” submitted by the attendees of the Colored Convention that met at Alton, Illinois in 1856 with the Declaration of Independence.

Anchor Text: Declaration of Sentiment and Plan of Action, Colored Convention, Alton, 1856 and Declaration of Independence, Philadelphia, 1776.

INTRODUCTIONS AND ICEBREAKER

[You can choose your own or try one from a web site like this: bit.ly/smallgroupsicebreaker.]

COLORED CONVENTIONS

Please read or share a printed version of the following section with participants to provide context on the origin of Colored Conventions in Illinois.

> The first enslaved African laborers were brought to Illinois from Saint-Domingue (now Haiti) in 1720 by French trader Phillippe Francois Renault. (Read more about this in the Salt Kettles activity on P. 31 in the *Freedom and Equality* section of this toolkit.) While slavery was officially prohibited in Illinois by the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 and the subsequent Illinois Constitution of 1818, it continued well into the 1860s. The last slaves in Illinois were likely emancipated with the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863. At the same time, free Blacks made their homes in Illinois as early as the 18th century and several free Black communities, such as Brooklyn in St. Clair County, Alton in Madison County, and New Philadelphia in Pike County, established significant roots. Despite “Black Laws” that restricted movement, public assembly, and legal standing, Illinois became an attractive destination for free Blacks seeking the ideals outlined in the Declaration of Independence and Constitution. By 1850, the population of Black Americans living in Illinois was 5,436, about 0.6% of the state’s population.

The First Colored Convention in Illinois met in Chicago in October of 1853. In the months preceding, Illinois has passed a law essentially prohibiting the migration of Black Americans to the state. If found staying in Illinois longer than ten days, a Black person visiting the state would be fined a large sum and, if they could not pay it, they could be imprisoned or auctioned into indenture. The new mandate was commonly called the “slave law” and was one of the harshest in the nation, prompting protest from Black Americans and their allies well beyond Illinois. Tapping into the institutions and voluntary associations they had built up over the years, including churches, schools, and service organizations, Black Americans nationwide began to organize against the Illinois “slave law” and others like it. In July of 1853, a national Colored Convention met in Rochester, New York with delegates from around the country, including Illinois, debating over a unified set of demands on behalf of Black Americans and developing a national organizing strategy. The convention in Chicago in October was a follow-up to the national one and resulted in numerous recommendations, including a call for the repeal of the 1853 Illinois “slave law”, the provision of a fund for private education for Black children, and opposition to all colonization or emigration schemes intended to relocate Black Americans to another country. (Read more about the American Colonization Society here. Minor mention of the Society is made in the Morris Birkbeck activity on P. 49 in the *Migration and Immigration* section of this toolkit.)

As the document we will review in this activity suggests, Colored Conventions continued to meet in Illinois (and nationally) in the years to follow. Among its delegates was John Jones, a prominent leader from Chicago, who was voted president of the State Repeal Association at the 1856 Alton convention, charged with having the “slave law” repealed. While he did not achieve that goal until February of 1865, Jones was considered a powerful advocate for the interests of Black residents of Illinois. In 1871, he was elected Cook County Commissioner, likely becoming the first Black elected official in Illinois.

READING THE TWO DECLARATIONS

In the years after the Declaration of Independence was written and disseminated, dozens of similar documents were created within the United States and beyond to affirm the equality of people, express grievances with existing regimes, and forge a path toward a democratic ideal. In the United States, the Declaration held a particular power for people who were explicitly and implicitly excluded from its statements asserting equality and rights. It is unsurprising, then, that many of the phrases and the format of the original Declaration of Independence found their way into subsequent Declarations.

In this activity, we will ask you to read aloud both documents starting with the Declaration of Independence. As always, we suggest having each participant read a section and then pass it on to the next reader until you have completed the document.

Read aloud the Declaration of Independence.

- What is the purpose of the Declaration of Independence?
- Make note of any sentences or phrases that refer to rights, equality, or the abuses of either one of these.
- Also make note of any language of exclusion you notice. In other words, who is not mentioned at all in this document? Who is mentioned, but not treated as if "all men are created equal" applies to them?

Read aloud the Declaration of Sentiment and Plan of Action. (Read through to the end of the signatures.)

- What are some sentences or phrases in this document that replicate or recall those you highlighted in the Declaration of Independence?
- In what ways does this document respond to the exclusions you discovered in the Declaration of Independence?
- In what ways does the Declaration of Sentiment and Plan of Action vary from the Declaration of Independence? Are there areas it emphasizes from the original Declaration more or less than others?
- What is the purpose of the Declaration of Sentiment and Plan of Action? How is it similar to and different from the Declaration of Independence in this way?

CLOSING REFLECTION

Please read aloud or share the text of the following.

The Declaration of Sentiment and Plan of Action we read together was not a final draft, or at least not quite. We cannot know how many drafts the Declaration of Sentiment went through, but we can see from the rest of the proceedings of the convention that debate and deliberation were an important part of its completion. This was true, as well, for the Declaration of Independence, which went through at least six drafts before it was signed by its 56 delegates. (In an early draft of the Declaration of Independence, for example, Thomas Jefferson condemned slavery as a "cruel war against human nature itself." But the passage was deleted from the final draft.)

The particular phrase from the Declaration of Sentiment and Plan of Action that drew debate was: "neither asking nor giving quarter, spurning all compromises." In context, the phrase is part of the sentence:

> "We the colored citizens of Illinois....do here...put forth our plan of action and declaration of sentiment...*neither asking nor giving quarter*, spurning all compromises, appealing directly to the wisdom, justice and magnanimity of the good and true of Illinois for the justness of our cause."

What do you think troubled some delegates about this phrase? Why do you think they hoped to strike it from the paragraph? Do you believe the phrase should have been kept or not, and why? (Note that the "yay" and "nay" votes at the convention were equal, which means the phrase was kept in.)

As you reflect together, consider as best you can what was at stake — and at risk — for the delegates and those they represented, particularly in the years before the Emancipation Proclamation. How do moments like these resonate with you today?

“Declaration of Indian Purpose,” 1961

Intended audience [Adults/Youth/Family]: High School to Adult

Estimated length of activity: 60-90 minutes

Objectives: In this activity, we will review how Native American life in Illinois changed dramatically between the 1830s and 1960s and how, by the 1960s, Chicago came to be a central location for Native American organizing. Together, we will read portions of the “Declaration of Indian Purpose” developed during the American Indian Chicago Conference in 1961 and consider the ways in which it recalls, contrasts with, and advances the ideals outlined in the Declaration of Independence.

Anchor Text: Declaration of Indian Purpose, American Indian Chicago Conference, 1961

INTRODUCTIONS AND ICEBREAKER

[You can choose your own or try one from a web site like this: bit.ly/smallgroupsicebreaker.]

INDIAN REMOVAL AND RELOCATION

Please read or share a printed version of the following two sections with participants.

During the 1830s, Native Americans whose ancestors had lived in Illinois for generations were forcibly removed to locations east of the Mississippi river as a result of Andrew Jackson’s Indian Removal Act of 1830. (Read more about this in the Nicholas Welch/Black Hawk activity on P. 55 in the *Migration and Immigration* section of this toolkit.) Since then, many tribes, such as the Bodéwadmik (Potawatomi) as in the Prairie Band Bodéwadmik (Potawatomi) Nation, have made homes in Kansas, while others, such as the Peewaalia (Peoria), Thâkîwaki (Sauk or Sac), and Meskwaki (Fox), live in Wisconsin, Oklahoma, Iowa, and Nebraska. In 2024, the Shab-eh-nay Reservation in DeKalb County was returned to the Prairie Band Potowatomi, making this land the only Native American federal reservation in Illinois.

While Native Americans were forced to migrate *away* from their Illinois homelands in the 1830s, many others were incentivized to migrate *to* Illinois in the 1950s — specifically to Chicago. In 1952, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) began pressuring Native people on reservations to relocate to cities like Denver, Los Angeles, and Chicago to seek better employment, housing, and social service support. Native people were offered bus tickets, relocation costs, and a modest fund to get settled. Once arrived in their new city, they were connected with a local relocation office and employment assistance.

Despite the allure of a more comfortable life — an image the BIA tried hard to sell — Native newcomers had few other options. The Indian Relocation Act of 1956, which cemented policies of relocation also implemented a policy of "termination." "Termination" ended federal trusteeship of Native tribes, which meant federal protections were also removed. Instead of the federal or a local tribal government settling jurisdictional affairs like criminal and civil trials, states gained control over reservation governance. Health, education, and other social services were moved to state control as well. Land, which had been placed in federal trust for the tribes, was also sold, often against the will of the people living on it. Without land and a secure social safety net, urban relocation was often the best way to survive.

As migrants in an unfamiliar city, Native newcomers sought community and connection as they struggled to build lives in an urban setting. Between 1950 when relocation efforts began, and 1970, the Native population of Chicago grew by 600%. People from all over the United States who identified with many different nations established homes in Chicago and built both intertribal alliances and systems of mutual aid. Founded in 1953, the American Indian Center, among other institutions like the St. Augustine's Center for American Indians, served as a meeting and organizing place for Native Chicagoans, many of whom settled in the Uptown neighborhood of Chicago. By 2018, Chicago had the third largest urban Native American population in the United States. To learn more about the Native experience in Illinois and Chicago over the centuries, we highly recommend the Newberry Library's Indigenous Chicago digital resources, some of which we have linked here.

THE AMERICAN INDIAN CONVENTION, 1961

At the 1960 convention of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) in Denver, Colorado, leaders announced funding for another convening to take place at the University of Chicago in 1961. Anthropologist and ally, Sol Tax, a professor at the university had gained the funding to host a national summit focused on developing a unified Native position on United States policy toward its Native population. The NCAI agreed to endorse the summit, which took place in June of 1961 and, according to historian Daniel M. Cobb, was later "seen as the beginning of the modern pan-tribal movement for self-determination." (Cobb argues in his book, *Native Activism in Cold War America: The Struggle for Sovereignty*, that a decade of prior activism was essential to laying the groundwork for the gathering.) The most important feature of the convention was its deeply intentional inclusion of Native perspectives from across the nation, including those who self-identified as Native and were not incorporated into federally-recognized tribes. The final "Declaration of Indian Purpose", first drafted by activist, leader, and educator D'Arcy McNickle (Salish Kootenai) and reviewed by more than 5,000 people in local group discussions

before being shared at the convention, was a tribute to the values of collaboration and inclusion. At the convention itself, more than 450 Native delegates from 90 different tribes were in attendance. Small working groups continued to review and revise the "Declaration of Indian Purpose", which culminated in the final draft we will review together in this activity.

Read "The American Indian Pledge" in the "Declaration of Indian Purpose."

- What stands out to you most in this pledge?
- What are some words or phrases in this pledge that remind you of other American founding documents, such as the Declaration of Independence?
- What do you think is meant by "promoters of any alien government" and why do you think this phrase is included in the pledge?
- Why do you think this pledge is the very first thing you read in the document?

Read the "Creed" (P. 5) and the "Concluding Statement" (PP. 19-20) in the "Declaration of Indian Purpose."

- What are some words and phrases that stand out to you? How are they used in alignment or in contrast to how you may have come across them in the United States's founding documents?
- What are some points that strike you as unique to the Native American perspective? Do you find any of them helpful in understanding how the United States government functions now or how you would like to see the United States government function in the future?
- As one might imagine, there were many dissenting views not only in the lead-up to the convention and at the convention, but in the drafting of the Declaration. What do you think was the substance of this dissent?

If there is time, ask participants to choose one or two other sections of the "Declaration of Indian Purpose" (i.e. Education, Health, Legislative and Regulatory Proposals, etc.). Together, consider the ways in which each of these sections express the values and ideas outlined in the "Pledge", "Creed", and "Concluding Statement."

CLOSING REFLECTION

We consider the "Declaration of Indian Purpose" an example of a revolutionary vision that draws at least some inspiration from the Declaration of Independence. As a group, discuss what the vision is and whether it has any similarity to what you know of the Declaration of Independence.

William Jennings Bryan, “Cross of Gold” Speech, 1896

Intended audience [Adults/Youth/Family]: High School to Adult

Estimated length of activity: 60-90 minutes

Objectives: The “Cross of Gold” speech has been called one of the most important political speeches in United States history. When it was delivered by William Jennings Bryan at the 1896 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, it was received with exhilaration and enormous fanfare. As the preface to the version we will share in this activity points out, people were so roused by the speech that “Some, like demented things, divested themselves of their coats and flung them high in the air.” Reading the speech today, it is difficult to imagine this dramatic reaction because so much of the language and references are arcane and the details so specific. In this activity, we will identify some of the most resonant elements of the speech and compare them to both the Declaration of Independence and similar issues that exist for us today.

Anchor Text: William Jennings Bryan, “Cross of Gold” speech, Democratic National Convention, Chicago, July 9, 1896.

INTRODUCTIONS AND ICEBREAKER

[You can choose your own or try one from a web site like this: bit.ly/smallgroupsicebreaker.]

THE PEOPLE’S PARTY

Review and share the information below to provide background information regarding William Jennings Bryan and context for the speech.

> Starting in the late 1870s and into the 1880s, a movement built on the power of farmers and rural Americans, took form through a group called The Farmers’ Alliance. The Alliance filled a growing need among Midwestern and Southern farmers for greater political advocacy and representation at a time when rapid, post-Civil War western expansion meant an explosion of farm settlement, but a decline in income. The Farmers’ Alliance eventually included an interracial and industrial coalition. By 1889, the Farmers’ Alliance and its allies transitioned into a national “People’s Party”, also known as the Populists. In 1896, William Jennings Bryan, a Populist and Illinois native who had served as a Congressman in Nebraska, gave the “Cross of Gold” speech at the Democratic National Convention, earning him the party’s nomination for President.

Two somewhat complicated issues were at the top of the Populist agenda during this time period: United States monetary policy and the widening wealth gap between the super-wealthy and the working poor. These were outlined in great detail in the inaugural document of the People's Party, "The Omaha Platform", which was released at the first People's Party convention on July 4, 1892. "The Omaha Platform" made ample reference to the Declaration of Independence as the heart of the populist political movement. It also formed the backbone of William Jennings Bryan's speech at the Democratic National Convention four years later.

The debate over monetary policy, in some ways, goes all the way back to Alexander Hamilton's creation of the United States Mint and first U.S. Coinage Act of 1792, which set the standard of U.S. currency against the value of silver. For a variety of reasons, including a desire to compete on the same footing with other countries who used the gold standard, the United States government moved to the gold standard in 1873. The pains of the transition fell squarely on farmers and industrial laborers. A more detailed explanation for why this was the case can be found here.

A quotation from "The Omaha Platform" best describes the concerns over the widening wealth gap and may resonate with public discourse today:

> "We have witnessed for more than a quarter of a century the struggles of the two great political parties for power and plunder, while grievous wrongs have been inflicted upon the suffering people. We charge that the controlling influences dominating both these parties have permitted the existing dreadful conditions to develop without serious effort to prevent or restrain them. Neither do they now promise us any substantial reform. They have agreed together to ignore, in the coming campaign, every issue but one. They propose to drown the outcries of a plundered people with the uproar of a sham battle over the tariff, so that capitalists, corporations, national banks, rings, trusts, watered stock, the demonetization of silver and the oppressions of the usurers may all be lost sight of. They propose to sacrifice our homes, lives, and children on the altar of mammon; to destroy the multitude in order to secure corruption funds from the millionaires."

Listen to and follow along with William Jennings Bryan, "Cross of Gold" speech, Democratic National Convention, Chicago, July 9, 1896.

- Recording
- Full text of speech

Most of the activities in this toolkit offer detailed questions for discussion. For this activity, we ask that you consider a few specific excerpts and, together, discuss just two things:

- How do these themes connect to the Declaration of Independence?
- How do these themes connect to our current political moment?

Excerpt #1:

“But we stand here representing people who are the equals before the law of the largest cities in the state of Massachusetts. When you come before us and tell us that we shall disturb your business interests, we reply that you have disturbed our business interests by your action. We say to you that you have made too limited in its application the definition of a businessman. The man who is employed for wages is as much a businessman as his employer. The attorney in a country town is as much a businessman as the corporation counsel in a great metropolis. The merchant at the crossroads store is as much a businessman as the merchant of New York. The farmer who goes forth in the morning and toils all day, begins in the spring and toils all summer, and by the application of brain and muscle to the natural resources of this country creates wealth, is as much a businessman as the man who goes upon the Board of Trade and bets upon the price of grain. The miners who go 1,000 feet into the earth or climb 2,000 feet upon the cliffs and bring forth from their hiding places the precious metals to be poured in the channels of trade are as much businessmen as the few financial magnates who in a backroom corner the money of the world.”

Excerpt #2:

“We do not come as aggressors. Our war is not a war of conquest. We are fighting in the defense of our homes, our families, and posterity. We have petitioned, and our petitions have been scorned. We have entreated, and our entreaties have been disregarded. We have begged, and they have mocked when our calamity came.

“We beg no longer; we entreat no more; we petition no more. We defy them!

“The gentleman from Wisconsin has said he fears a Robespierre. My friend, in this land of the free you need fear no tyrant who will spring up from among the people. What we need is an Andrew Jackson to stand as Jackson stood, against the encroachments of aggregated wealth.”

Excerpt #3:

“Mr. [John G.] Carlisle said in 1878 that this was a struggle between the idle holders of idle capital and the struggling masses who produce the wealth and pay the taxes of the country; and my friends, it is simply a question that we shall decide upon which side shall the Democratic Party fight. Upon the side of the idle holders of idle capital, or upon the side of the struggling masses? That is the question that the party must answer first; and then it must be answered by each individual hereafter. The sympathies of the Democratic Party, as described by the platform, are on the side of the struggling masses, who have ever been the foundation of the Democratic Party.

“There are two ideas of government. There are those who believe that if you just legislate to make the well-to-do prosperous, that their prosperity will leak through

on those below. The Democratic idea has been that if you legislate to make the masses prosperous their prosperity will find its way up and through every class that rests upon it.

"You come to us and tell us that the great cities are in favor of the gold standard. I tell you that the great cities rest upon these broad and fertile prairies. Burn down your cities and leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic. But destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in the country."

Excerpt #4:

"My friends, we shall declare that this nation is able to legislate for its own people on every question without waiting for the aid or consent of any other nation on earth, and upon that issue we expect to carry every single state in the Union.

"I shall not slander the fair state of Massachusetts nor the state of New York by saying that when citizens are confronted with the proposition, 'Is this nation able to attend to its own business?' — I will not slander either one by saying that the people of those states will declare our helpless impotency as a nation to attend to our own business. It is the issue of 1776 over again. Our ancestors, when but 3 million, had the courage to declare their political independence of every other nation upon earth. Shall we, their descendants, when we have grown to 70 million, declare that we are less independent than our forefathers? No, my friends, it will never be the judgment of this people. Therefore, we care not upon what lines the battle is fought. If they say bimetallism [allowing silver and gold standards to exist at the same time] is good but we cannot have it till some nation helps us, we reply that, instead of having a gold standard because England has, we shall restore bimetallism, and then let England have bimetallism because the United States have."

CLOSING REFLECTION

Please share the following with the group.

In this activity, you have had a chance to think across history about the ideas the Declaration of Independence put forth and the ways in which they re-merged in the late-nineteenth century under different circumstances. You have also considered the ways the issues of the late-19th century echo today.

As a group, we ask you reflect on whether the pieces you have read from Bryan's speech are either revolutionary or conservative. Do they offer a revolutionary vision for the future of the United States or do they conserve a vision outlined in the Declaration of Independence? Or is the "Cross of Gold" speech *both* revolutionary *and* conservative?

How has Illinois commemorated the Declaration of Independence, Revolution, and United States history through celebrations, commemorations, and monuments?

John B. Drake Centennial Address, 1876

Intended audience [Adults/Youth/Family]: Middle School to Adult

Estimated length of activity: 60-90 minutes

Objectives: The Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876 commemorated and celebrated the 100th birthday of the United States. Expositions, also known as world's fairs, were themselves an idiom — or a form of cultural expression — that was popular at the time, particularly in Europe. While there had been large exhibitions in the United States before 1876, the Centennial Exposition was the first time the United States had hosted a festival of its size and purpose. For this reason, there was a lot of pressure on its organizers to make it a smashing success. In this activity, we will read an address from prominent Chicagoan John B. Drake to the "citizens of Chicago" and "People of Illinois." Together, we will discern the purpose of the exposition, how it expressed a narrative of American history that grounded the event, and the ways in which the centennial celebration shines light on the semiquincentennial, or 250th anniversary, of the United States.

Anchor Text: John B. Drake, "Address to the People of Illinois, by some of her prominent citizens, on their interest in and duty toward the centennial celebration and international exhibition, to be held in Philadelphia, in 1876," 1875. Published by *Chicago Evening Journal*.

INTRODUCTIONS AND ICEBREAKER

[You can choose your own or try one from a web site like this: bit.ly/smallgroupsicebreaker.]

WORLD'S FAIRS, EXPOSITIONS, AND THE AMERICAN CENTENNIAL

Review and share the information below to contextualize John B. Drake's speech.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, cities around the world hosted large-scale public gatherings intended to display new advances in science, technology, art, and culture. These gatherings, known as expositions or fairs, lasted multiple weeks and sometimes months. In addition to celebrating ingenuity, they were also opportunities to send a clear message of national pride. In Illinois, the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 and the Century of Progress in 1933-34, both in Chicago, were major advertisements for the United States as a champion and leader in human progress.

When plans for the centennial of the Declaration of Independence in 1876 developed, the exposition model seemed most appropriate to the commemoration. Similarly, Philadelphia, the location where the Declaration of Independence was signed, was determined to be the perfect place to host the event. The resulting Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, managed by the United States Centennial Commission and initiated by an 1871 act of Congress, was the first world's fair on American soil and was organized around the contributions of 26 of the 37 states in the union at the time, as well as at least 22 countries. While it was linked in name and purpose to the 100th anniversary of the nation, it was also intended to celebrate American dominance in industry. All entities that participated in the international exposition were required to submit examples of their own industrial power and innovation for the exhibition; they were also required to pay for the privilege.

In Illinois, a State Board of Managers was appointed by Governor John Beveridge in 1875. The group promptly began soliciting contributions to exhibits from across Illinois. Among the exhibit submissions were those from the Centennial Committee of the Illinois Agricultural Board: "samples of seeds of wheat, Rye, barley, oats, buckwheat, flower, beans, flax, hemp, cotton, peas, beans, broomcord, and of other field crops....corn in the ear not less than six ears of each variety...tree seeds, such as hickory and walnuts, pecans, chestnuts, maples, elms, and other timber trees." In addition to this, children's drawings from grade schools across the state, mechanical models and architectural renderings from engineering schools, electrical and telegraphic tools, bronze sculpture and finely wrought furniture, and a new and improved McCormick reaper were also accepted for display.

The total cost of the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition was $6 million, less than a third of which came from the federal government. The remainder came from the City of Philadelphia, the State of Pennsylvania, and state-level fundraising via sales in stock managed by the Centennial Board of Finance. Among the directors of the latter was hotelier and prominent Chicagoan John Burroughs Drake who led the fundraising charge in Illinois. In addition to his efforts, Governor Beveridge's wife, Helen May Judson Beveridge, appealed to women across the state to host small-scale fundraisers to sell Exposition stock. It is unclear how much money Illinois ultimately contributed.

Historian Mila Kaut puts John B. Drake's address into context:

> "John B. Drake's address illustrates how Illinois elites used the national centennial anniversary to establish their state as a cornerstone of American democracy. Imploring Illinois citizens to buy stock to support the state's displays at the Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia, Drake articulated a vision of citizenship that included voluntarism in the form of investment and return. By committing their money to the cause, Illinois citizens could secure a favorable place for themselves and the state in the quickly modernizing nation and world."

Read John B. Drake, "Address to the People of Illinois, by some of her prominent citizens, on their interest in and duty toward the centennial celebration and international exhibition, to be held in Philadelphia, in 1876."

Note that this is a long address. If you wish, you can break it up into specific excerpts that you believe would be most interesting to your community.

Questions to consider:

- What stands out to you most from this reading?
- What are the elements of John B. Drake's narrative of American history? What does he emphasize? What does he mute or underplay?
- Why does Drake believe a world's fair is important to hold?
- This is a letter intended to persuade people to give money. What techniques does Drake use to convince his reader? Would you be convinced? Why or why not?
- Consider the list of other nations that Drake says have pledged to exhibit — and even give money — at the exposition. Why do you think these countries were interested in participating? Do any of the countries listed surprise you? Why or why not?

CLOSING REFLECTION

There has not been a world's exposition of this kind in the United States since 1984 when Louisiana celebrated the theme, "Fresh Water as the Source of Life." In the 1990s and first decade of the millennium, several planned world's fairs were canceled for a variety of reasons. Since 2010, however, the concept has been revived. The next world's fair (now called "Expo") is scheduled for 2027 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Invite participants to reflect.

As you reflect on the way John B. Drake described American history, we invite you think about what an ideal semiquincentennial (250th) word's fair or exposition in Illinois in 2026 might look like.

How might you tell the history of the United States and the purpose of an exposition today? Who do you think might want to participate in this kind of event? What might they share in their exhibitions?

Madonna of the Trail Monument, 1928

Intended audience [Adults/Youth/Family]: Middle School to Adult

Estimated length of activity: 60-90 minutes

Objectives: The Madonna of the Trail monument in Vandalia, Illinois marks one stop on the National Old Trails Road. Depicting a pioneer mother holding her children (evoking the pietá or Virgin Mary and Jesus sculptures of the Renaissance), the monument was dedicated in 1928 with strong fundraising, logistical, and design support from the Daughters of the American Revolution. (The Vandalia monument is one of 12 perched along the multi-state road.) In this activity, we will investigate the meaning of the monument using both observational skills via photographs and textual analysis via a report from the 1928 dedication ceremony.

Anchor Text: Madonna of the Trail monument and "Statue of the Madonna of the Trail Unveiled at Vandalia by Daughters of the American Revolution" by Mrs. Bess D. Moss, 1928.

INTRODUCTIONS AND ICEBREAKER

[You can choose your own or try one from a web site like this: bit.ly/smallgroupsicebreaker.]

BUILDING A TRANSCONTINENTAL HIGHWAY AND THE DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

With the invention of the automobile in the 1880s, rumblings for a transcontinental, paved highway equal to the scale of the mid-19th century transcontinental railroad began to stir. By 1902, nine auto clubs met in Chicago to form the American Automobile Association (AAA) and propose a route for such a highway, which would stretch from New York City to Sacramento, California, passing through Albany, New York; Cleveland, Ohio; Chicago; Omaha, Nebraska; and Denver, Colorado along the way. Within less than a decade, national organizing by AAA, automobile clubs, chambers of commerce, "Good Roads" advocates, and small-town governments, resulted in the identification of old roads that could be improved and eventually linked to create the envisioned highway. Among these was Boone's Lick Road linking St. Louis and Franklin, Missouri; the Santa Fe Trail from Franklin, Missouri to Santa Fe, New Mexico; and the National Road (also known as the Cumberland Road) linking Cumberland, Maryland with Vandalia, Illinois. In 1912, the United States Congress approved the creation of the National Old Trails Road, or Ocean-to-Ocean Highway, comprising just over 3,000 miles and connecting the Atlantic Ocean at

Baltimore, Maryland, with the Pacific Ocean at Los Angeles, California. The highway was not completed until the early 1930s. Large portions of the highway later became part of the historic U.S. Route 66 and U.S. Route 40, also known as "The Main Street of America." The Illinois portion, which passed through Marshall, Effingham, and Vandalia, Illinois, is part of the latter.

Among the most vocal proponents of the Ocean-to-Ocean Highway were The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), who formed their own National Old Trails Road Committee in 1911. In their interpretation, the highway was a testament to the American and European pioneers who had followed such roads in their settlement of the American West. The DAR was founded in 1890 with the purpose of preserving buildings and other historic artifacts, as well as supporting the creation of monuments that celebrated the history of the United States. Women could join the DAR only if they could prove a genealogical connection to soldiers or other pro-American helpers who aided the Patriot cause in the American Revolution. Over the course of its history, the DAR has supported scholarship funds, literacy programs, and voluntarism. It has also been criticized for having an exclusive membership policy and, to some, a racially biased perspective on both United States history and civic responsibility.

The Madonna of the Trail monuments, which were designed by DAR chairwoman Arline Nichols Moss in collaboration with sculptor August Leimbach, were placed in 12 states along the National Old Trails Road in the late 1920s. One of these Madonnas is located in Vandalia, Illinois's former state capital and the westernmost location of the National Road, which joined with the planned transcontinental highway.

Examine images of the Madonna of the Trail (or, if you are able, visit the monument!)

- Historical Marker Database
- Archival photograph from Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
- City of Vandalia Madonna of the Trail Description

Like all monuments, the Madonna of the Trail expresses meaning not only through inscriptions, which you can read in the link to the Historical Marker Database, but also through its design and material. Ideally, you would be able to visit the Madonna of the Trail yourselves to make observations about the monument. (Nothing beats in-person engagement!) However, you can discern a few of its characteristics by examining the images we have shared here. For this part of the activity, try to focus only on what you can observe visually.

Consider the following:

- How big do you think the Madonna of the Trail is? How much space do you think it takes up?
- What does the monument depict? In other words, who is represented and what details can you describe about them (clothing, proportion, gender, pose)?

- Where, or in what direction, do the figures in the monument look? What do you think this tells us?
- Are there any other details in the sculpture that you notice? Do you think they symbolize anything and, if so, what?
- Where is the monument located in relation to other elements of the landscape? Would you notice it or is it set far away from view? What meaning might you discern from this placement?
- What do you think the monument is made from?

Read excerpts from "Statue of the Madonna of the Trail Unveiled at Vandalia by Daughters of the American Revolution" by Mrs. Bess D. Moss.

Review or read aloud the following excerpts from the October 26, 1928 dedication ceremony for the Vandalia Madonna of the Trail.

Consider the following:

- How does each excerpt match up with your interpretation of the monument? How does each affirm or alter your interpretation?
- What other interpretation might you offer for the monument that varies from what the excerpts suggest? In other words, are there alternative interpretations one could apply to the monument that are perhaps separate from what was intended?

Excerpt #1 (Dedication Parade)

"A crowd of 10,000 people filled the streets of Vandalia, that historic old town, and fair weather smiled on the scene. The Vandalia Chamber of Commerce, headed by J. C. Burtschi, planned and executed a most colorful parade, pageant and dedication ceremonies.

"Once more the old covered wagons of pioneer days rumbled up from the eastern river bottoms and across the bridge over the old Kaskaskia into the city, bearing the immigrants leaving tidewater, to meet the Indian trappers, hunters and frontiersmen who rode in from the west to greet them. An old stage coach in which Lincoln and Douglas rode helped make up the parade and to make the affair more realistic was 'held-up and robbed' in view of the thousands of helpless spectators. Realistic indeed was the parade at 1:45 p.m., when colonies of immigrants met the Indian chieftain traders. Wampum and buckskin, knee buckles and wigs were greatly in evidence, as Vandalia men and women and school children decked themselves in the habiliments of another day. Patriots of '76 with fife and drum and statesmen with silk hats and puritan maidens helped make up the picture."

Excerpt #2 (Address by Mrs. Arline Nichols Moss, Chair of the Daughters of the American Revolution)

> "While is gone the last of the frontier, the last stage coach, the last wagon trail, that spirit in the heart of the trail blazer lives and will ever live in our heart of hearts, for the trail he took led him to the glorious west, which was a trail to home. It was the homing trail, the trail to a young nation.
>
> "From the east, from the Alleghany mountains, came the young men to build their homes in the great wilderness. This road was not built or laid out by engineers but was marked by the Indian and buffalo whose choice by instinct was always the quickest and best line of travel.
>
> "And through the days and nights, year after year, was heard the music of the creaking axle and the low of the oxen. Just why this mighty host of pioneers left their comfortable homes to plunge into the great unknown we do not know, and we never shall know. But no doubt that restless spirit of adventure gripped the hearts of those men as it does those of today. After the heat of warfare and the strife of Revolutionary days they seemed to have but one desire in their souls and that was to establish their own homes and live in peace and happiness the rest of their days. To come into this possession they were willing to forsake home and friends, to travel an unknown trail through the land of mystery, danger, hardship and romance. They brought not ammunition and shot and shell, but brought their cattle, farm implements and household necessities, and under a canopy of boughs there sprung permanent settlements and the peace of American homes.
>
> "These old trails tell a story of hardship we shall never know. And they tell the story of another group, that long horde of the pioneer mothers, who blazed the trail with an abiding trust, that great host of unknown mothers, who went forward with mother love in their hearts, with a mother's song on their lips, who represent the great spirits of service, sacrifice and adventure. These trails tell the story of the mother of covered-wagon days, who followed her man along the footpaths of poverty, whose constant companion was privation. For these pioneer mothers had clothed themselves with those sterling qualities of duty, sympathy, stern reality, romance, gentleness and severity, justice and mercy, and faith in God Almighty. With these attributes the Madonnas of the Trail entered the threshhold of their new-found homes and erected therein an altar to God, and dedicated it with the song, 'My Soul Doth Magnify the Lord.'
>
> ....
>
> "Let us dedicate ourselves to the great ideals of the past, to an abiding faith in our nation, to steadfastly upholding our institutions, as we dedicate this, our eighth link in our national shrine, we dedicate it to the honor and glory of our pioneer mothers of the past, in the name of God, Amen."

CLOSING REFLECTION

Please read the following to the participants.

Both the Madonna of the Trail monument and the text you have read from the Vandalia dedication ceremony mark and retell a particular version of United States history. Both also outline values that one might associate with the American character, such as the "pioneer mother's… sterling qualities" and the settlers' "restless spirit of adventure."

As you reflect on your version of United States history and/or the values that constitute the American character, what kind of monument do you think would well-represent these in your community?

Feel free to reflect on your individual vision or come up with an idea as a group.

Bicentennial Ephemera, 1976

Intended audience [Adults/Youth/Family]: Middle School to Adult

Estimated length of activity: 90 minutes to 2 hours.

Objectives: The bicentennial, or 200th birthday, of the Declaration of Independence took place in 1976, but plans for the commemoration started many years before. In this activity, we will look at an array of ephemera from Illinois's participation in the bicentennial and analyze the narrative, message, and relative success of each item in meeting its goal of marking the monumental occasion. We will also imagine the artifacts and events we might employ to express our current understanding of American history and values in 2026.

Anchor Text:

Bicentennial Ephemera, 1976:

- Channing School's Bicentennial Musical photo, Elgin, Illinois (featuring students Minerva Rodriguez, Mary Ann Diaz, Rogelia Sanchez, Theresa Williams, Juan Martinez, Christine Chapa, and Kelly Johnson), courtesy Elgin Area Historical Society
- Illinois Bicentennial License Plate
- Illinois State Fair Cookbook
- Covered wagon replica, Libertyville, Illinois, Libertyville Historical Society
- Freedom Train at Navy Pier Festivities, 1976, Chicago History Museum (image #1 and image #2)

INTRODUCTIONS AND ICEBREAKER

[You can choose your own or try one from a web site like this: bit.ly/smallgroupsicebreaker.]

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION BICENTENNIAL COMMEMORATIONS

Review the information below for context on past commemorations and the photographs of the ephemera selected for this activity.

Congress established the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission on July 4, 1966. With a ten-year lead-time, the Commission's original plan was to host an exposition, or world's fair, in either Boston or Philadelphia. The idea would have revived the way in which the centennial was celebrated in 1876. (See John B.

Drake activity on P. 74 in the *How We Remember* section of this toolkit.) However, conflicting visions over what such an exposition would look like or feature left the commission in a deadlock — so much so that it dissolved in 1973. Soon after, an American Revolution Bicentennial Administration (ARBA) was appointed, which oversaw subsequent celebrations. The first events managed by ARBA took place in April 1975 and involved then-President Gerald Ford visiting the historic sites that launched the Revolution: Lexington, Concord, and the Old North Church in Boston, where Paul Revere's signal lanterns were hung. Over the next 18 months, the bicentennial was celebrated at local, state, and national scales in a variety of ways.

Among the national events that directly impacted Illinois were the steam-powered American Freedom Train and the Bicentennial Wagon Train, both of which stopped in Illinois. The American Freedom Train, which comprised 26 train cars and three steam-engines, crisscrossed the nation starting from Wilmington, Delaware on April 1, 1975 to San Francisco, California and ending in Miami, Florida on December 31, 1976. Along the way, it stopped in Galesburg, LaGrange, Kankakee, Peoria, Springfield, Crystal Lake, Rockford, Aurora, and Chicago, Illinois. Like a traveling museum, the Freedom Train carried hundreds of objects and ephemera depicting United States history that visitors could view at every stop. Here, we have included two images from the Freedom Train's visit to Chicago in late-July, 1975, which was accompanied by speeches from then-Mayor Richard J. Daley, dance and musical performances, and a parade.

The Bicentennial Wagon Train started at several points in what would have been considered the frontier West in 1776 and terminated at Valley Forge Park, Pennsylvania, on July 4, 1976. Each state had its own official wagon and, in a train of up to six others, the wagons completed a reverse migration to the East led by a "Wagon Master." Wagon Masters were also responsible for "Rededication Scrolls", or papers on which visitors could pledge with their signature their rededication to the Declaration of Independence, particularly the lines, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." In Illinois, the Bicentennial Wagon Train stopped at multiple places in Illinois. Here we share one image from the April 1976 stop in Libertyville, Illinois.

EXAMINING THE EPHEMERA

Illinois' bicentennial celebration in 1976 was so widespread and expressed in so many ways that it is impossible to choose one artifact to analyze. What's more, even though there were significant and powerful critiques of the bicentennial and the ways the United States was seen as falling short of the ideals in the Declaration of Independence, the bicentennial was approached more as a celebration than commemoration. Having survived the tragic assassinations of the 1960s, the impeachment and resignation of Richard Nixon, and the end of the Vietnam War, Americans might have been especially primed for the relief of festivity. With that in mind, a collection of ephemera — rather than a single item — might help narrate how Illinois experienced the bicentennial and remembered the history of the United States.

In addition to the ephemera we share here, Illinois marked the occasion of the bicentennial in dozens of other ways. These included developing a Teachers Bicentennial Resource Guide and professional development workshops; special exhibitions on American ingenuity and expression at local museums; a photographic exhibition created by the Illinois Labor History Society and AFL-CIO; historic re-enactments; arts and crafts fairs; a rural Chataugua; preservation projects; walking tours; music and dance performances; and time capsules.

We have assembled five items to consider. You may wish to assign one item per person, pair, or team. Or you may wish to examine each item one-by-one as a group. If you have bicentennial ephemera in your own collections or your community's library, see if you can find and discuss those too. Here are ours:

- Channing School's Bicentennial Musical photo, Elgin, Illinois (featuring students Minerva Rodriguez, Mary Ann Diaz, Rogelia Sanchez, Theresa Williams, Juan Martinez, Christine Chapa, and Kelly Johnson), courtesy Elgin Area Historical Society
- Illinois Bicentennial License Plate
- Illinois State Fair Cookbook
- Covered wagon replica, Libertyville, Illinois, Libertyville Historical Society
- Freedom Train at Navy Pier Festivities, 1976, Chicago History Museum (image #1 and image #2)

For each item, discuss the following observations and questions:

- Whether they are or are not present in the image, who do you imagine is the audience for this artifact or event portrayed in the image?
- How does this artifact connect to either the Declaration of Independence, United States history, or the bicentennial itself?
- Does this artifact portray a particular perspective on the Declaration of Independence, United States history, or the bicentennial? What perspective might it exclude or downplay?
- Do you think this artifact is an appropriate and/or successful way of either commemorating or celebrating the birth of the United States?

CLOSING REFLECTION

Please facilitate the following activity.

Unlike many of the other reflections in our toolkit, this one is more active. We invite you to discuss how you would like to remember the Declaration of Independence and the birth of the United States in 2026 by curating a list of artifacts and program of events that would help you do that. (This can be imaginary, but, if you have the will and resources, it does not need to be!) You can do this as a group or as individuals, but we recommend taking at least 20-30 minutes to compile your recommendations.

To help you get started, you may want to start with a few guiding principles:

- What would you like the next 50 to 100 years of the United States to look like?
- What message about the present would you like to send to those in the United States of the future?
- What about the past and present would you want to preserve?
- What does the Declaration of Independence offer you today that you would like to pass on?

As always at Illinois Humanities, we would love to hear your ideas. If you feel like sharing what you have discussed in this activity, please tell us more at conversations@ilhumanities.org

Further Reading

Interested in reading more about any of the topics mentioned in these activities? Here we have compiled a list of many of the sources we consulted to develop the **History Belongs to All of Us** toolkit.

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