



**Arkansas Historic
Preservation Program
Education Program**

Lesson Plans for Arkansas Students

Be a Building Detective!

Learn more about your community's history

Learning from local and statewide historic places

Jeff Holder



Students from Valley View Intermediate School explore the Old State House.

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A Division of the Department of Arkansas Heritage

TEACHING THE “BE A BUILDING DETECTIVE” LESSON

GRADE LEVELS

5-12

FOR THE TEACHER

Buildings identify a place. Their style, design, age, history, materials, sophistication, and relationship to each other and to the landscape of the area identify your city, town, rural area or urban neighborhood as one specific and special place—unlike any other.

This activity invites students to learn more about a historic building in their neighborhood or city. Most students travel about their town without thinking about the architecture and history of the houses and buildings they encounter. An in-depth study of a historic building should foster an appreciation of that building. Hopefully, this will lead to an interest in both local history and historic preservation.

Your students will “adopt” a historic structure—a building with which they would like to become better acquainted. The entire class could choose the same building and take a field trip (or walk) to visit it, or students could choose a building on their own and visit it as homework or for extra credit.

For a listing of properties in your area that are on the National Register of Historic Places, visit our website at www.arkansaspreservation.org Go to the *History and Architecture* page, then click on *National Register of Historic Places* to search the database by county, town or property name. If there are no National Register-listed structures accessible to your students, have them choose a building that is at least 50 years old.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Students will sharpen their powers of observation and develop research skills.
- ✓ Students will learn to become “tuned in” to their local environment and will learn more about local history and architecture.
- ✓ Students will learn that each building is unique and has a story to tell.

ARKANSAS CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Social Studies, Grades 5-8

PPE.1.1: The student will explore the effects of human interaction with his/her environment.

PPE.1.5: The student will explore how architecture contributes to culture.

PPE.2.5: The student will analyze physical patterns in his/her local environment.

SSPS.1.1: The student will analyze social science concepts using *field study*.

SSPS.2.1: The student will use the social science tool of *field study*.

Social Studies, Grades 9-12

SSPS.1.2: The student will develop and enhance observation, questioning, and interpretive skills.

SSPS.1.4: The student will use creative thinking skills.

SSPS.2.6: The student will use the social science tool of *field study*.

Arkansas History, Grades 4-6

3.1.5: The student will explore how architecture contributes to Arkansas culture.

Arkansas History, Grades 7-12

3.1.13: The student will explore ways that Arkansas’s built environment interacts with culture.

Visual Arts, Grades 5-8

1.1.10: The student will generate art work from insights gained through the multisensory field study experience.

2.1.13: The student will critique an architectural work using description, analysis, interpretation and judgment.

Visual Arts, Grades 9-12

2.1.20: The student will formulate and apply judgments about an architectural work as it relates to the environment.

1.2.15: The student will create art influenced by the field study research

MATERIALS

- One copy of the *Student Worksheet* per student.
- One copy of the *Visual Survey* form per student.
- Two blank sheets of paper per student.
- Optional: Materials to make rubbings (see page 9).

PROCEDURE

1. Decide which building(s) the students will visit. If a field trip to a historic district is not possible, students can visit buildings individually as homework or extra credit.
 - Contact the AHPP or visit our website at www.arkansaspreservation.org to get a list of properties in your community that are on the National Register of Historic Places.
 - You may want to divide the students up and have them visit all of the buildings on a historic street.






PROCEDURE, Con't

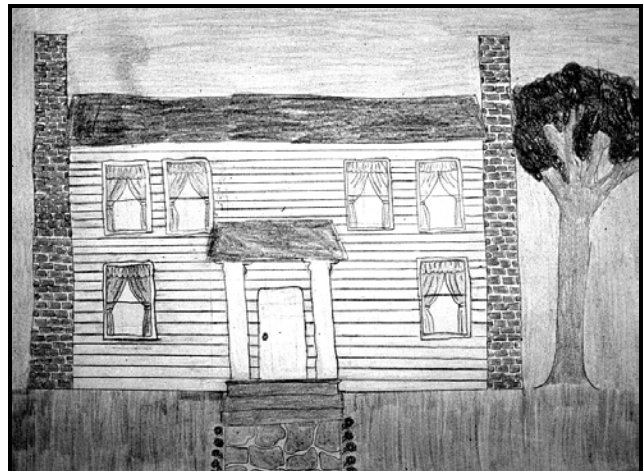
2. Determine whether or not students need to get permission from the buildings' owners before doing this activity.
3. Hand out copies of the *Student Worksheet*. Preview the worksheet with the students.
4. Give each student a *Visual Survey* form. Preview the *Visual Survey* form with the students.
5. Optional: Share the *How to Make Rubbings* information sheet with the students.
6. At the site of the structure, have the students answer the *Student Worksheet* questions and fill out the *Visual Survey* form. Optional: Students may take a rubbing of the building.
7. When the students return to class, let them discuss their findings.
8. Optional: Use the *Guide to Research Sources* to help the students research the history of their building.

EXTENSIONS

- Create a list of questions, and have the students interview senior citizens about their memories of your community's historic buildings and the community's past (see the AHPP lesson plan *Preserving the Past with Oral History*).
- Discuss the importance of preserving your community's historic buildings. What would your community lose if these historic buildings were destroyed?
- Invite an architect or builder to class to discuss his/her career.
- Invite a local historian or long-time resident to class to discuss the community's past.
- Create a bulletin board of the students' building sketches and rubbings.
- Write a play about a typical day in your community 100 years ago, trying to imagine how different life was before cars, malls and suburbs.
- Create a mural of your town as it looked 100 years ago, learning about it by studying old maps and photos. See the *Guide to Research Sources* for research information.
- Take a walking tour of your community's historic downtown or a historic neighborhood. Invite a local historian or the AHPP to lead the tour.

EXTENSIONS, Con't

-  If there is an interesting historic building in your community that is not on the National Register of Historic Places, contact the AHPP to find out how your class can nominate that building for the National Register.
-  The students may want to share their findings with the buildings' owners or your local city government.
-  Visit the *Teaching With Historic Places* website at www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp/ to download lesson plans about historic sites around the country. The site also teaches you how to write lesson plans about historic places in your own community. The lesson plans are classroom-ready, and cover a wide variety of themes such as African-American History, Science and Technology, Agriculture, Commerce and Industry, and Health and Medicine. *Teaching with Historic Places* is a program of the National Park Service.
-  The non-profit organization CUBE, Center for Understanding the Built Environment, produces an excellent curriculum called *Box City*. *Box City* is a great way to teach students about architecture, city planning and community. For the culmination of the *Box City* unit, students use their new knowledge to build a city from boxes. The curriculum, which includes boxes, is reasonably priced. For more information, call CUBE at (913) 262-8222 or visit their website at www.cubekc.org
-  Visit the AHPP website's Youth Education page for more architecture education websites: www.arkansaspreservation.org



Be a Building Detective!

Student Worksheet

Buildings identify a place. Their style, design, age, history, materials and relationship to each other make your community a special place, unlike any other in the world!

For example, the Golden Gate Bridge is located only in San Francisco, California. The only place you can visit the White House is in Washington, D.C. The state capitol of your state is different from the other 49 state capitols. The courthouse in your county is distinctive, too. The buildings around you—offices, schools, churches, farm buildings houses, and government buildings such as fire departments and libraries—make your community unique and special.

Begin your adventures in architecture by learning more about a historic building in your neighborhood or town.

Please answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

1. What is the name and address of the building?
2. With what materials is the building constructed?
3. What does the building feel like to the touch? What is the texture of the building?
4. Do you see any patterns or shapes repeated on the building? For example, spirals, circles, arches, curved lines, straight lines?
5. What adjectives would you use to describe the building's "personality" (fun, serious, scary, etc)?
6. If you are able to visit the inside of the building, describe the building's interior.
7. What makes this building different from or similar to other buildings in the neighborhood?
8. *You may skip this question if you have not studied architectural styles:* Can you identify the architectural style of this building? What clues help you determine the style?
9. Look at the area around the building.
 - a. What man-made objects do you see? Look for things such buildings, roads and train tracks.
 - b. What naturally occurring features do you see? Look for things such as trees, hills and water.
10. Do your observations from Question 9 give you any clues as to what this area was like in the past?
11. What do you think the future holds for this building?
12. How would the loss of this building affect the neighborhood and community?

On a blank sheet of paper, draw a sketch of your building.

On a blank sheet of paper, take a rubbing of your building.

Visual Survey Form

Circle the drawings that match your building or draw your own in the "other" space.

LOCATION

urban suburban rural

LANDSCAPING: sketch or describe the main features (fences, trees, bushes, etc.)

FORM

square rectangular L-shaped T-shaped irregular other

STORIES

one 1 1/2 two other

FOUNDATION

brick stone block other

ROOF SHAPE

gable hipped mansard flat other

DORMER WINDOW

gable hipped arched other none

CHIMNEY

central exterior one side exterior both sides flush gable other

CHIMNEY MATERIAL:

brick

stone

other

none

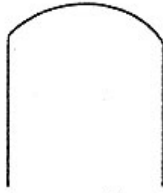
WALL MATERIAL

(sketch the pattern) brick clapboard board & batten wood other smooth rough stone other other material

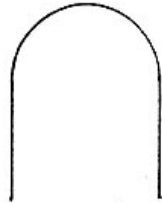
WINDOW OPENINGS



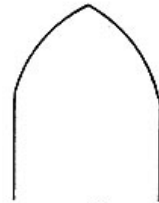
flat



segmental



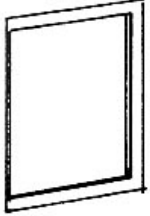
round



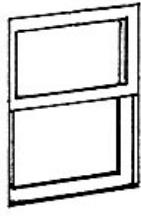
gothic

other

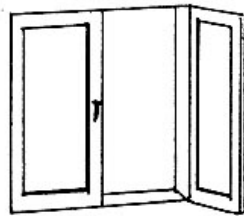
MAIN WINDOW DIVISION



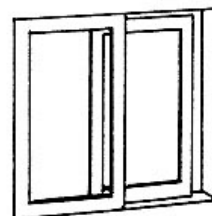
fixed sash



doublehung sash



casement



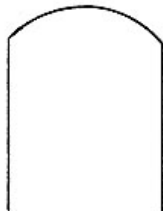
horizontal

other

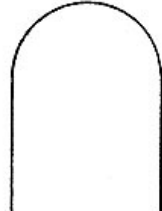
DOOR OPENINGS



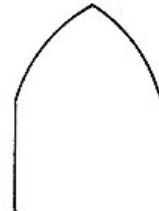
flat



segmental



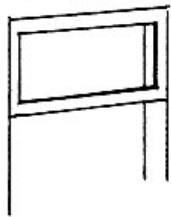
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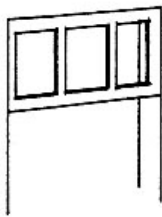
gothic

other

DOOR TRANSOM/SIDELIGHTS



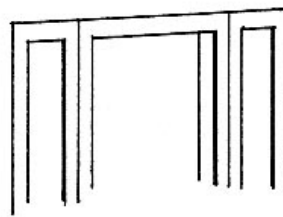
one light



multilight



fanlight



sidelights

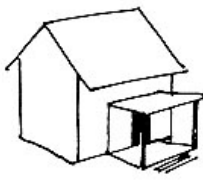
other

none

PORCHES



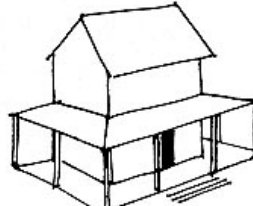
stoop



portico



verandah

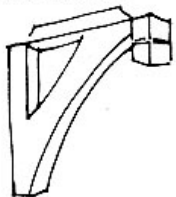


wraparound

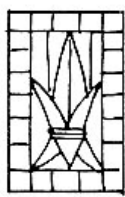
other

none

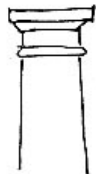
DECORATIONS



brackets



stained glass



Tuscan



Doric



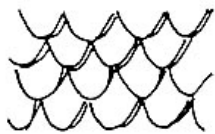
columns



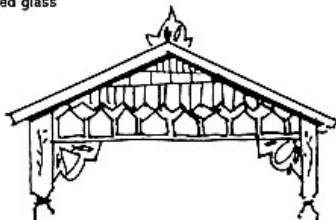
Ionic



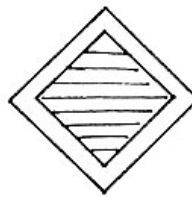
Corinthian



fishscale shingles



gingerbread



vent

others

Guide to Research Sources *

Material	Sources	Potential Information Yielded
Abstract of Title	Owner Office of attorney who did title search Title company files	Summary of relevant deeds, mortgages, wills, tax sales Names of owners Historic name of property Boundary descriptions
Architectural Drawings	Owner Architectural firm Recent tax assessor's records	Architect Built dates and alterations Materials and plans
Building Permits	Municipal building inspector City/County records office City/County/State archives	Identification of architect or builder Built dates and alterations Cost and date of work Contractor
Church Records	Parish Churches Diocesan offices	Biographical details of individuals associated with property
Community/County Histories	Local/regional libraries Historical societies Fraternal organizations	Information about people, structures and events: pertinent dates, locations, activities, biographical sketches, etc.
Deeds	Clerk of superior court, county courthouse State archives	Ownership or title Property value Construction date and any additions
Estate Records Wills Appraisals Administration of estate Annual return and sales	Office of the judge of probate County courthouse Historical societies State archives (prior to 1900)	Value of property Property changes Ownership changes Rental information Family relationships
Family/Personal Papers Letters Diaries Ledger books Bibles Published family histories	Present owners Past owners State archives Descendants Local/regional libraries Historical societies	Ownership Descriptions Architectural Plans Record of significant events Appearance of original building Photographs
Genealogical Records	Historical societies State and national archives Local/regional libraries "Vanity press" county and family histories Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, Genealogical Society	Biographies of individuals Family Histories Photographs of the building and family members

* This information originally appeared in: Eleanor O'Donnell, *National Register Bulletin: Researching a Historic Property* (U.S. Department of the Interior; National Park Service; National Register, History and Education; National Register of Historic Places, 1998)

Insurance Records	Owners (past and present) Insurance company offices	Floor plans Dates of construction Increases in premiums may indicate when a change was made to the structure
Interviews and Oral Histories	Current or former owners, occupants and observers	Personal recollections about property
Maps and Plats Town maps Property plats Private and family maps Land ownership maps "Bird's Eye View" maps Developer's town layouts Tourist maps Landscaping firm maps Sanborn or Baist Insurance maps	County courthouse City Hall Printed books Local/regional library University/college collections Surveyor general Library of Congress Architect's/landscape architect's firm records Sanborn maps can be found online with a keyword search for "Sanborn"	Location Boundaries Outbuildings Uses
Military Records	National Archives: Prior to WWI Federal Resources Center, St. Louis, MO: From WWI	Biographical details of individuals associated with property
Newspapers/Sunday Supplements	Local/regional libraries State archives Historical societies Newspaper morgues	Advertisements: names of occupant/owner, use of structure Society Pages: articles pertaining to local social events, weddings, births and meetings Obituaries: information about owners and architects Articles about local building efforts
Photographs and Postcards	Owners Historical societies Antique shops Flea markets Local/regional libraries State archives	Architectural and landscape features Alterations Associated structures Associated with people and events Appearance of original building Integrity of property
Tax Records	Judge of probate City/County courts Tax assessor State archives City/County clerk	Description of structures Dates Evolution of property in relation to city limits/county development Drawings and plans Increases in valuation may suggest improvements or construction

How to Make Rubbings

Objective

To make texture rubbings and become aware of the variety of detail and texture in the built environment.

Materials

- Some large pieces of paper, the thinner the better. Tracing paper works well. Ends of newsprint rolls from the local newspaper are also ideal.
- Fat wax crayon, with paper removed, a fat lead pencil, or an inexpensive stick of artist's charcoal.
- Tape
- A little whisk broom (optional)

Instructions

1. If you have one, use the whisk broom to remove dirt around the textured area you plan to rub.
2. Tape the paper directly over the textured surface.
3. Rub the paper with the crayon or chalk in sweeping strokes of equal pressure until the texture appears.

Be sure that you don't leave marks on the historic building itself while doing this activity!

Things you can rub...

Contractors' imprints on sidewalks

Designs on iron manhole covers

Cornerstones, cornice inscriptions, and designs around doorways of old buildings

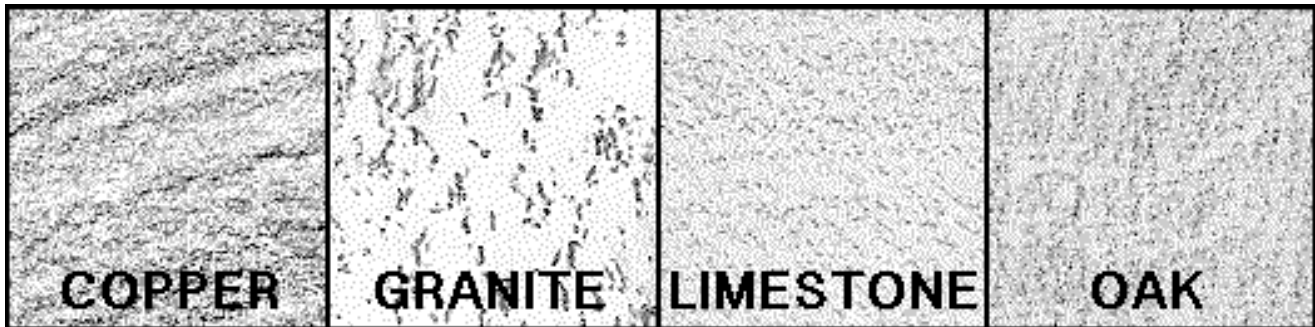
Ornamental ironwork on buildings and lampposts

Plaques on buildings and commemorative markers

Low-relief sculpture and engraving on buildings

Art and lettering on monuments or tombstones

Examples of Rubbings from Buildings:



You can practice by rubbing a coin:



NOTES:

NOTES:

We would like to know how this lesson plan worked in your classroom or group. Please share with us your experience with using this lesson plan and suggestions for improvement.

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