LOCAL HISTORY IN ENGLISH AND AMERICAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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LOCAL history may be made an important part of the history program in the schools, illustrating national history and making its study real and vital. In reading a stirring tale of an historic achievement in which our fellow townsmen have participated, we experience a glow of pride. When we admire a splendid edifice in our vicinity which represents the architecture of former ages or when we observe a nearby spot where a venerated personage tarried, life is breathed into the dead bones of the history textbook. The story of the past becomes alive; it fires our imagination; it opens new vistas of experience; and it relates the history program to the life of the community.

A study of the attention given to local history by English and American secondary school history programs and a comparison of the two might be a means of discovering needs that are not being met in one country or the other and might lead to the improvement of the program of each country. The writer of this paper has undertaken such a study and comparison. It is based on reports from twenty-eight teachers of history, who have taught in both countries, and on brief and detailed syllabi, textbooks, examination questions, notebooks and letters, obtained from fifty-six English and fifty-three corresponding American representative secondary schools.

Many teachers in England apparently have the gift of appealing to the imagination of their hearers by relating history dramatically as a series of fascinating tales. Not many Americans, however, display this skill. Knowledge of local history to illustrate national history is definitely mentioned as an aim in the formal program of the English schools and in the documents dealing with the history societies of both English and American schools. The formal statement of an aim, however, does not assure its attainment. For this, some provision that will contribute to the fulfillment of the aim must be made in the selection of content. The evidence studied indicates that the English schools show greater concern than do the American schools for including content that is related to the aim.

The history programs of the American schools cooperating in this study reveal no evidence that their content is concerned with local history. Instead, we find merely one or two incidental references to the local situation, but none to local history. In general, American schools of senior high school level neglect local history. Although local history is either recommended or legally required by approximately thirty-five states, it is taught usually in elementary schools and in junior high schools, except in the South and West, where it is offered in a few senior high schools. Historical societies in different parts of the United States are interested in the teaching of local history, but in spite of a great deal of discussion, little local history to illustrate American history is being taught in the American senior high school.

On the other hand, the data show that English schools recognize knowledge of local history in connection with the contribution of the locality of the school to the English history studied. Ample evidence of this kind is provided by the pupils' notebooks, by the syllabi in such phrases as "use of local history," "local history not a separate course, integrated with other history," and by the textbooks used in the history program.

A number of these schools note on their textbook lists that special editions of books on English history include significant aspects of local history. For example, Rayner's *Middle School History of England* provides special editions of English history for Devon and Cornwall, for Lancashire and Cheshire, for Yorkshire, for Kent and for Northumberland and Durham.
In these editions, national history is sometimes illustrated by local history in the citation of poetry referring to important events, e.g.,

Sir Walter Scott commemorates the incident [Battle of Flodden Field] in Marmion:
"Let Stanley charge with spur of fire,
With Chester charge and Lancashire,
Full upon Scotland's central host
Or victory and England's lost."

Other contributions of local history to the vitalization of national history in these editions are the references to ecclesiastical architecture found in the locality, e.g., churches which are good examples of Renaissance style, a memorial stained glass window, such as the "Flodden Window" in Middleton Church, and references to local domestic architecture. For example, in describing the type of dwelling used by the landed gentry in the Tudor period, the reader is told that the buildings were mostly timbered, two of the most picturesque—Little Moreton Hall in Cheshire and Wardley Hall in Lancashire—being cited. However, there were also brick and stone houses which are also represented by houses still existing in Cheshire and Lancashire. The reader is also informed where he may find traces of a moat. These histories show the effect of national movements upon the locality, such as the Renaissance, the foundation of early grammar schools, and the dissolution of the Monasteries and chantries. The growth of industry and trade in national history is illustrated by tracing the growth of the textile industry in Lancashire. The enclosure movement affected this region slightly because the physical conditions gave rise to very little conversion of arable to pasture.

Maps relating national and local history are specifically mentioned in the prefaces of textbooks by such authors as Rayner, and Marten and Carter. Exercises and questions at the ends of the chapters of textbooks, like Marten and Carter's Histories, show the relationship between the events of national history and the locality. Such questions are accompanied by a parenthetical suggestion to the pupil to consult a local history. For example:
Describe either the battle of Naseby or any battle or siege that occurred in your county. (Consult a local history.)

Other textbook exercises recommend that the pupil not only look up the history of a local institution, such as an old monastery, hospital or market, but that he visit these places during a weekend and write accounts, make sketches or take photographs as records of his visits. Here are some examples:

Week-end Task—Visit the ruins of the monastery nearest your home, or find one in a book. Sketch or photograph the most interesting portions. Describe what you see. Find out all you can why it is in ruins, what happened to its last inmates, what became of its property and lands.

Visit or find information about the Bank of England, the Royal Exchange, the Serpentine, Greenwich Hospital, and write notes on their historical significance.

Tell the story of the railways. (Include local references.)

Is there now, or has there ever been, a Market Cross in your town or district? If so, find out when the market began; who gave permission to hold it, and on what terms; what goods were originally sold there; if the market is still held on the same site; what dues were originally paid by the stallholders, and to whom they were paid; what dues are now paid by the stallholders, and to whom they are paid.

In contrast to the use of local history to illustrate national history in texts used by English schools, reference to local history does not occur in any American text studied, although one does suggest that the pupil study local conditions.

The English schools employ local history to illustrate national history by means of historical excursions to local landmarks belonging to the period studied. One finds accounts of these trips in reports from the exchange teachers and in syllabi both from schools which do not have a formal history society and from those which do. Some schools organize their excursions under the auspices of a “Rambling Club,” and “Explorers’ Club,” an “Antiquarian Society,” or a “Branch of the Town Historical Society.”
Magazines from some of the English schools are fruitful sources concerning excursions made by the history societies to places of historical interest. Groups of youngsters accompanied by their history master or mistress take walking or bicycle trips to places having an historical significance. They may visit a neighboring castle and walk along the battlements, and because of this activity vicariously relive the historical pageant presented to them in the history text.

When they visit a cathedral, their attention is called to its architecture, sculpture, stained glass, to the museum of its historical relics and to the beauty of its ecclesiastical furniture. One of the youngsters relating his "expedition," wrote: "We did not envy the monks who had to sit on the Miserere seats during the night services, for these seats fell forward and collapsed if one dozed."

The English practice of requiring the pupils to keep written accounts of their trips produces evidence that they have observed and learned facts contributing to their understanding of formal classroom work. In addition they have had healthful out-door exercise and a welcome change from the usual classroom routine.

Although documents from American schools reveal that an occasional program boasts of an interest in local history, in America local landmarks are visited only incidentally on occasional excursions. The English practice of vitalizing national history by relating it to local history deserves emulation in America, especially in localities rich in historical associations.

**PENNSYLVANIA BOUNTIFUL**

**A UNIT OF WORK IN THE FIFTH GRADE**

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EARLY days in America up to and including the Revolution is the history called for in the fifth grade by the Pennsylvania State Course of Study, while the geography for the grade is that of the United States with special emphasis on our own state of Pennsylvania.
In September, 1939 we read *Skippack School* by Marguerite de Angeli, a story of a little Mennonite boy recently arrived in Pennsylvania from Germany in the early days of our state. This book so delighted the children that it was followed almost immediately by *Henner's Lydia*, another story of Pennsylvania's plain people by Marguerite de Angeli. Next we read *The Little Amish Schoolhouse* by Ella Maie Seyfert. The children loved these little books and with them as a background soon became keenly interested in things Pennsylvanian. It seemed to be the natural thing to center our study on our own state.

By Christmas we were studying the early colonies of America in history and the Middle Atlantic States in geography. Children were bringing in Pennsylvania pictures and clippings of their own volition, so the suggestion was made that since they were so interested in their own state that we bend all our efforts to find out what we could about Pennsylvania. This was all that was needed to start them off. All about them were rich sources of material so that even the weakest members of the class derived great satisfaction from being able to make valuable contributions to the class' search for information.

Our history gave us a fine start. Did we not have for a foundation such thrilling stories as William Penn's coming to America and founding our own state, his treaty with the Indians, the Walking Purchase, stories of the Revolution, stories of such great men as Benjamin Franklin? Were we not near historic Philadelphia with our revered Independence Hall in its bounds? Had we not already discovered that in any direction we chose to go from our home town there were important points of historic interest?

Each day brought something new until our enthusiasm knew no limit. One thing brought on another. We couldn't talk about points of interest in history without talking of specific places, rivers, mountains, and people. Our history did not stand out alone as a set of isolated facts; it was bound up with people—who they were, where they lived, what they did. It was bound up with places—where they were, why they were located there, who founded them and why. That one subject was dependent upon another we learned and every subject in our curriculum made its contribution toward helping us know our state better.
The children ransacked our school library for stories and poems of Pennsylvania. Some even visited our town library for them. They found much material which was promptly shared by the whole class. During our weekly book club meetings we read or told these stories to each other, so the class came to possess a comparatively rich fund of Pennsylvania lore.

We decided to enlist the interests of fifth grade girls and boys in other parts of the state in our problem, so we corresponded with many, telling them of our study and asked their cooperation in sending us interesting facts about their counties and towns. Almost every fifth grade responded with a wealth of interesting material, maps, pictures, objects, and compositions of their own. These were greatly enjoyed and were most helpful.

Our own town and county interested us, and we wanted to know more about them. We learned a great deal from old pictures and books. Our source of greatest information was Dr. Robert Brown, supervising principal of the Stroudsburg schools. He is greatly interested in the history of Monroe county so he came one day and talked about it to us, and about our towns of Stroudsburg and East Stroudsburg. He told one story after another in such an interesting way that the children were fascinated. He made our early settlers live again for us, and the old familiar places about us took on a new significance.

These stories were retold by the children again and again for the joy of the telling. They afterward wrote them and placed them in the scrap books they were making in art. Some of these stories were Nicholas Depuy, First Settler; Daniel Brodhead; The Man who had a Name for Stroudsburg, etc.

We have visited places of historic interest around our towns and viewed markers placed by the Historic Society of the county. Our prize trip was by special bus to the Stroud Mansion where the Historical Society of Monroe county maintains a museum with objects of historic interest. Mrs. Clifford Heller was a helpful guide and made our trip an especially profitable one. A record of this trip, of course, had to be written to put in our scrap book. From models of Historic Buildings in Pennsylvania made by the WPA Art Commission, we have learned to recognize those most important.

The State Bureau of Information has sent us much valuable information. Our friends and relatives have been solicited to
keep eyes open for pictures and information that would be helpful to us.

Interest in the Red Man seems ever present with children, and the earliest inhabitants of our region, the Lenni-Lenapes, came in for very special attention. We read stories, enjoyed pictures, and studied Indian place-names of our region. Mr. Nathan Meyer, assistant superintendent of Monroe county schools, has been greatly interested in the Indians of this region and has made a study of them. One day he came to see us and brought some of his precious Indian relics found around here. He told us interesting stories of these Indians and of his findings. He loaned us a little book he had written in collaboration with Mr. J. Tunis Banks. This made things very real to us for did we not know and had we not been to the very places about which Mr. Meyer spoke? Had we not been to Hartman's Cave where an Indian skeleton, an arrow head, and a bullet had been found? These stories were written up for our scrap book. Our student teacher, Miss Marian Heffner of Lehighton, told us the story of Gnadenhutten. This, also, was written up by the children for their scrap books.

Early in the fall we had become interested in rocks, not as a study at first but because they were queer shapes or unusually pretty. This interest soon developed to include fossils and other rock formations. This region, being such a rich one for the study of geology because of the glacial deposits, provided us with an ever increasing interest which still continues. Our science class learned what we could with the aid of books, magnifying glasses, and microscope, but the crowning event was when Professor John Cartwright, principal of the Stroudsburg High School, brought his charts and some of his rock specimens and talked to us. He said he had not spoken to fifth grade children on this subject before and he didn't know how satisfactory it would be, but his own enthusiasm and that of the children soon found a common meeting ground and they were off to a good start. He explained some things to the children which they will never forget.

We have studied the trees of Pennsylvania and can identify at least twenty. Our Training School has a Nature Trail on our back campus. We have labeled the twenty trees we know so that other children may learn them too. We corresponded with Mr.
Jesse Flory of LeBar's Rhododendron Nursery in regard to the best ways of marking trees.

We planted with appropriate ceremony along the Nature Trail, a young five foot Canadian hemlock, Pennsylvania’s State Tree. Conservation of our forests and wild life has received major consideration in our study. The wild flowers of the region have been studied in science. We have carefully nourished a laurel plant, the state flower, in our room until planting time. Miss Wilson of the college geography department invited us to her class room and showed us slides of wild flowers of this region.

We can recognize the common birds of our vicinity and we know their habits. The ruffed grouse, Pennsylvania's state bird, has been given special emphasis.

Pennsylvania composers have been taught by our special music supervisor, Miss Florence Carpenter. We have had appreciation lessons based on the Indian music of Cadman. We have learned some songs by Nevin, but Stephen Foster has claimed most of our attention.

In geography we have become familiar with the general topography of the state, the places, products, industries, and people. We have corresponded with business concerns for information on their respective industries. Our student teacher, who was a miner, has made the work of mining very real to us. Other industries have come in for due consideration.

In art we have made our own scrap books (a real book-binding problem), and learned to letter so that we could print attractive titles on them. During this study each child had been collecting a wealth of material to paste in his own scrap book. A frieze, running the length of one side of our room was drawn and painted by five boys whom we call "Our Gang." They selected an Amish farm scene as their subject. We later needed a state flag for our program. Flags were too expensive for us to buy, so one of our boys drew free hand the seal of the state which he then painted on blue sateen, and the girls made the fringe for the flag. Our art supervisor, Miss Satterwhite, gave an appreciation lesson on pottery making and pottery designs employed by the people of the Plains. We are familiar with Benjamin West, artist of the early Pennsylvania scene. Mr. Cullen Yates, R.A., of our own community is known and his paintings of the Water Gap studied. Again, when we needed a wampum belt for Tam-
many to present to William Penn, two of our boys painted the necessary figures in purple on white silk.

We have needed arithmetic constantly in our unit. We have had many art problems involving its use, as well as some interesting science and history problems.

Now that the school year is at a close we have culminated our study of Pennsylvania with an exhibit of things Pennsylvanian which we have made, written and collected, and a program based on our findings, to which we invited our parents and the children in other grades of the Training School.

The student teachers in health education taught the dances for an Indian scene and the miners' scene. In English we wrote our own little playlets for the program and the comments for the announcers. We decided to call our program and exhibit, "Pennsylvania Bountiful" because the little publicity booklet tells us Pennsylvania "has everything" and we found this to be just about true.