THE USE OF AUDIO-VISUAL AIDS IN THE TEACHING OF PENNSYLVANIA HISTORY

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In the middle of the last century when little Johnny failed to satisfy the master with his recitation, he was subjected to severe treatment. He very probably received a paddling over the hands, his royal person was given a sound thrashing or he was placed in the corner with the dunce cap upon his head. Emphasis was upon memorization with little thought for understanding. The broader fields of method, critical thinking and character development were ignored, while real life experiences and the integrated personality were unheard of.

Fortunately, we have come a long way since that day. Yet the road ahead, to something approximating perfection, is up-hill and over difficult terrain. We are living in a rapidly changing world and in education as in every other field, we must accept the challenge of that change. Today, we stand upon the threshold of a new era. Does our profession have the leadership, the imagination and the courage to cross that threshold into the unknown?

For some years past we have heard considerable about visual education. Magazine articles, educators, university courses, all give obedient lip service to its worth. And yet, those outside the profession criticize the school for its hesitation in introducing visual services. We have been reluctant to spend the money necessary for film libraries with the result that those who pioneered in the production of education films have met with financial failure. We have been afraid of the expense incident to equipping schools for radio. Hence, splendid public service programs go unheard by those for whom they are intended. Where is the leader who has
the vision and the love of adventure sufficient to introduce to schools of all grades audio-visual aids as agencies for improving instructional techniques? To the present pioneering has been done by a few isolated but progressive teachers who work alone and unheralded in their little spheres, or by a large city system in its own individual style.

Pennsylvania happens to be in a fortunate position. We now recognize the importance of our own state sufficiently to require that its history be taught in the public schools. Pennsylvania has a permanent heritage which is inextricably woven into the development of our nation. Pennsylvania was settled under colorful conditions, played an important part in the Revolutionary War and within its boundaries the Federal Union came into being. The turning point of the Civil War was brought about by the victory at Gettysburg. With an unequalled heritage we turn with pride to a study of the history of our own state. Such a rich heritage demands the best. We, therefore, ask what skills, modern methods, and up-to-date aids are available in the audio-visual field.

It is almost trite to comment upon the value of a field trip. Through it the pupil sees in reality the setting as it was. His imagination is fired and a feeling of kinship with the past surges through his being. He has experienced actual contact with a bygone age. He is stimulated, moved emotionally, inspired to read and to find out more about the customs of another day, in order that he may appreciate, to a greater extent, the few remaining historical shrines. It is impossible to measure in terms of outcomes the exact value of such activity. Its influence is delayed. The memory of it will continue to grow and the appreciation of this experience will deepen with passing of the years.

Pennsylvania is particularly rich in such source material. We immediately think of: Presque Isle, The Block House—Pittsburgh, The Old Portage Railroad, Gettysburg Battlefield, Valley Forge, Brandywine, Old Swedes Church, Christ Church, Betsy Ross House, Independence Hall, Carpenters Hall, and the First United States Bank.

These are merely the high-lights. Every community has its own local shrine: The scene of an Indian attack, an old forge, a tavern or the birthplace of a famous citizen.

In approaching a study of Pennsylvania, we must first know
where it is and how it looks. Naturally, there are maps in all
textbooks but it is much more impressive to the learner if he
draws his own map. Are you looking for interest, enthusiasm,
originality? Then ask your pupils to construct their own maps.
One map might be prepared on topography, one on resources and
another on old trails and battlefields. You will be amazed at the
quality of work done and the learning which accompanies it.

The making of histograms, pictographs and charts develops in
pupils the power to impart information in a clear, concise manner.
Such teaching aids are particularly valuable in a study of local
government. Government, in itself, is devoid of interest to the
average youth, especially if information must be culled from old,
dusty, wordy volumes that line the shelves of the average school
library. What adolescent cares to read ten pages on the advan-
tages of the city-manager plan of government over the mayor-
council plan. Give him colored crayons, provide him with the proper
information and suggest that he show on paper a comparison of
the two types. His research will produce startling facts. Under
the city-manager form taxes are 11 mills, transportation fare 5
cents and city employees number about 4,000. But, under the
mayor-council form taxes are 19 mills, transportation 8½ cents
and city employees over 6,000. He will set to work with a will
for this is a challenging assignment. Out of his enthusiasm will
come a masterpiece of reds, greens and yellows. It is factually
correct and reveals at a glance which type of government is the
more efficient. While constructing this graph, his mind will not
be idle. He will draw his own conclusions as to the effectiveness
of each type. He will begin to question the inefficiency in his own
city. Thus, he learns by doing, he takes pleasure in what he is
doing and he develops a critical attitude that is invaluable in later
life.

In Pennsylvania history we have a fertile field of illustrative
material. In introducing a new unit, such as "Pennsylvania in the
Revolution," the instructor may bring in a few colorful pictures
to stimulate interest. Extra credit might be granted to those pupils
who submit pictures which, as shown in a floor talk, are related
to the unit. This will produce an amazing amount of splendid
material since pupils take keen delight in carrying out such an
assignment.
It is wise, at this point, to suggest that all pictures must come from magazines. This prevents the needless destruction of books. Periodicals such as *Life, Fortune* and *The Saturday Evening Post* have a considerable number of historical illustrations in their advertising. Calendars frequently have a series of historical scenes beautifully colored and accurate in detail. Enthusiasm and a spirit of friendliness and freedom from restraint will result in such an atmosphere. Learning will come without conscious effort and that is the kind of learning which prevents distaste for the subject because it is difficult and therefore tiresome.

The lantern slide is particularly useful because a picture can be held on the screen as long as necessary for explanation and questioning. The Department of Visual Education in the Philadelphia school system, under the direction of Dr. John Garman, has an extensive collection of lantern slides. The value of this material is attested by the fact that it is constantly in demand by local social, studies teachers. Such teaching aids are helpful since they include information which is generally omitted from textbooks. Among them are:

1. “The Coming of the Pennsylvania Germans.” In this series the background of the Germans, their recreation, mills and weaving, develop in the young mind an understanding of these people generally not found in textbooks.

2. “The Swedes” gives a glimpse of one of the neglected incidents of early Pennsylvania. A log house along Darby River, a brick house on Cobbs Creek, and an old mill from Norway, highlight this group of settlers who would otherwise pass unnoticed.

3. “The Indians of Pennsylvania” tell us of the Lenni Lenape, how they got their name, how they kept their records, and about their oval wigwams and their gardens.

In motion picture films, material on practically every subject treated in United States history can be obtained. Should the unit be “The Colonial History of Pennsylvania,” “Pennsylvania After the Revolution,” or “Industries of Pennsylvania,” there are excellent films to meet the demand. Films may be used for arousing interest, for supplementing information or for review.

In time, sound film will undoubtedly replace the silent film but at the present, because of cost, more schools are equipped with
silent projectors, and, therefore, the demand for the silent films is greater.

Let us assume a unit in a social studies class to be "Pennsylvania's Part in the Development of Freedom." Interest could be motivated by showing the sound film "The Story That Couldn't be Printed." This film tells the story of the trial of John Peter Zenger. The acquittal of Zenger was one of the first victories for freedom of the press. If the class is properly guided, a most interesting discussion on freedom of speech will follow. This should lead to the picture "The Declaration of Independence." It might then be possible to secure "Cavalcade of America" electrical transcriptions appropriate to the unit. More than one instructional procedure should be used for variety lends interest. A field trip to Independence Hall for those living in Philadelphia would serve to broaden the pupil's experience.

Radio, the youngest of teaching aids, has been slow to develop, partly on account of the war which placed restrictions on the purchase of essential equipment. For more than a decade broadcasting stations have been including varied educational programs, but classroom teachers generally have been handicapped because they have had sub-standard receiving sets. During the past few years the Radio Committee of Philadelphia has presented a series of historical and patriotic programs for the schools under the general title "We Philadelphians." This series re-created such notable figures and episodes in the history of the Commonwealth as the following:

"Billy Penn Steps Out" related to early life and character of the founder of Pennsylvania.

"The Gentle Quaker" portrayed William Penn receiving the land grant from King Charles and the subsequent settlement of the colony.

"Library Legend" dealt with the founding of the first free library in Philadelphia.

"A Friend In Deed" represented Haym Salomon raising money for Washington's Army at Valley Forge.

During the Spring Term 1945, two series of programs were broadcast. "What's in a Name," presented over radio station KYW, dealt with the persons for whom the various schools were
"Science Is Fun" was broadcast over radio station WFIL every Monday under the sponsorship of Franklin Institute. While this series dealt primarily with scientific achievement, it stressed local history wherever possible. "Let's Go To The Movies" told the story of the presentation of the first motion picture in the Academy of Music in 1870. "Let the Lights Go On" told of the first use of gas to light the streets of Philadelphia.

The results from the use of this type of material depends largely upon the calibre and attitude of the teacher who employs them. The Radio Committee pays high tribute to those teachers who have guided the listening pupils by saying: "The success of 'Science Is Fun' is due in large measure to its intelligent utilization by the teachers." The responsibility placed upon the teacher is, therefore, one of determining how the programs can be coordinated with the course of study. She must ask herself certain questions:

- Does it contribute to the maturing process of the pupils?
- Does it economize time in achieving goals?
- Are these materials organized in intimate relation to the whole job of teaching?
- What is the age of the group, their needs and interests?

Should the above considerations not be taken into account, much of the value to be derived from this type of teaching aid is lost. On the assumption then, that the teacher is alert, conscientious and intelligent, the following results should be expected. In the construction of their own maps, charts and graphs, the pupils are keenly interested in accomplishment. They are inspired and learning progresses at a favorable rate.

Sound films have made distinct contributions to the learning process, particularly through retention and recall.¹

In December of 1924, The Radio Committee of Philadelphia made a survey to determine the success of its programs. The results are enlightening:

Of a potential listening audience of 104,904, only 34,634 took an active part in this worthwhile activity. However, children older and younger than the age for which the programs were intended have listened with interest to the "Science Is Fun."

¹ Arnspiger, "Sound Pictures As Teaching Aids."
The suggested activities in the Manual were used as a stimulation for original projects in many schools. Requests for the Teacher's Manual have come from many parts of the United States. The librarians reported an increased demand for books listed as suggested reading in the Manual. During the "We Philadelphians" series, the visitors to the Letitia Street House, the locale of the broadcasts, increased twelve times. Frequent requests come to the Division of Visual Education for transcriptions of these Radio Programs.

And now we face the newest tool in education—television. It affords that double stimulus to the brain through sound and sight which psychologists tell us increases the speed of learning. Here is the greatest instrument for mass education ever yet devised. Television offers a challenge to the educational world to select the curriculum and to present it dramatically. To do this, instructors must somehow develop within themselves the spirit of the "old" entrepreneur. They must have his imagination, his courage to assume risks, his willingness to try out the new and the unknown. Above all else, teachers must refine themselves, they must make themselves versatile, informed and superior. They must be the experts who adapt television to the needs of schools, rather than adapt the schools to television. Are the schools going to use television or will television use the schools? A bright future unfolds before us. If we fail, then ours, and ours alone, will be the blame.

ORIENTING OUR PENNSYLVANIA HISTORY

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The article, "Why Not Teach American History?" by Henry F. Pringle in the January 20, 1945 issue of the Saturday Evening Post stirred memories of the fall of 1942 and the spring of 1943. At that time certain people were disturbed about the amount and quality of American history being taught in schools. One political party of our state embraced in its platform a plank calling for a law "requiring the teaching of American history in
all schools, colleges, and universities of the Commonwealth.” As one rereads the many articles which appeared in current publications during that period, he is clearly aware of the then existing feeling on the part of many that there is a direct relation between the survival of our way of life on the one hand and the understanding of history possessed by our people—particularly our young people—on the other.

“What a pity,” I heard a well informed citizen say, “that we should become so perturbed over the more intensive teaching of national and local history at a time when we are engaged in a world war which requires of our people a broad world view in order that our efforts may be directed toward world peace. What a time to become provincial!”

When one attempts to appraise the feeling of the people as expressed over the radio and in newspapers, he is aware that there is a greater need than mankind has ever before known for an understanding of history and what it can teach. Just what causes wars? Can peace machinery be set up and made to work? Wherein have previous attempts to create a world of peace been defective? Can nationalism and internationalism be made to live together in peace?

Confusion over the way we should go and the means which should be embraced is found not only among the pupils in schools who lack factual knowledge but also among many authors who with their myriad writings stress this set of facts or that precedent to prove that “their way is the only way.”

Just where does the classroom teacher fit into this picture? To whom should he turn for a hint as to “the way?” Just what facts should be presented in order that the pupil may understand the way and the why of it? Do we not need a common quality in our teaching? Quantity may and must exist in the various reservoirs from which we draw our examples for illustrating the experiences, and moods, and hopes of individual men. The common quality can be attained in the way each will focus his endeavors. Citizenship in a world at peace can be made meaningful and practical if teachers will present history’s facts, be they local, state, or national, as segments of a great arc whose composition is nothing more than similar facts concerning mankind everywhere.

We learn inductively. We understand only what we know and we know that with which we are associated. The boys and girls
who sat in our classes yesterday are today out in every corner of the earth. Many of them know little of Susquehanna, or Schuylkill, or Monongahela, as rivers of our state which decided where early settlers should plan, and build, and die. But many will return from a school where Mosell, or Markham, or Salween, have been taught in such a way as to have significance for the smallest hamlet in the United States. Soon their children will be in our schools, having heard of rivers, and mountains, and men, and philosophers from far away places, but who cannot place the largest bridge in their county or name the forces which brought settlers to their community or who realize that they themselves represent a bias, or attitude, or belief which had its roots in some local cultural pattern or economic setting.

Have our social studies ever had a better opportunity to fulfill their high aims? With men everywhere conditioned by war to seek in every corner for the piece yet needed to set together the puzzle pattern of life, dare teachers falter in working harder than ever before in making history fulfill its role? The casualty list in any daily newspaper ties every Pennsylvania town, every spot in the United States, with some world front. World history is local history and the story of each locality projected becomes the history of the world.

We have an ideal opportunity to combine every aspect of history from local to international in such a manner as to give it focus and meaning. Points which can be fixed only as the meeting place of parallels of latitude and longitude; oceans, rivers, mountains, and lakes; and land areas scattered round the earth become our very back yard. Reading to a class from a letter sent from an area located at approximately 39 degrees and 44 minutes north latitude will fix the Mason-Dixon Line in a way which a mere study of William Penn's charter from Charles II or a study of the boundary settlement between Pennsylvania and Maryland will never do. It is Rome and not Ardennes, for example, which has the same latitude as the northern boundary of Pennsylvania. Local settings projected onto a screen of world dimensions, which living relatives have turned into a real world for those who have been left back home, furnishes the instructor with many opportunities for teaching under motivated conditions.

When the Japanese of the West Coast become the Acadians who were scattered by the orders of Halifax in 1755, the act of
a colonial governor appears less cruel and the scattering of present
day Americans causes the pupil to ponder such abstractions as
rights and justice. The St. Lawrence River project which would
admit ocean going vessels to the Great Lakes area would give
Pennsylvania her second seaport. Such events as the purchase of
the Erie Triangle or Commodore Perry’s exploits on Lake Erie
presented against this background give the isolated past meaning
in the living present.

Expeditions like those of Braddock, Bouquet, and Sullivan pre-
sent early local problems in transportation which today find their
counterpart in Burma, Luzon, or the Ryukyus. Topography in
other lands, as it becomes meaningful through boys away from
home, conditions the pupil to sense the meaning of canals, rail-
roads, bridges, and roads as planned and constructed by pioneering
Pennsylvanians. As the dangers from Indians, French, or British
taught the colonists to temper their individualism through the
creation of larger units of government, so the threat of a World
War III gives significance to such problems in local co-operation
as those presented in China, Greece, Yugoslavia, or France. The
Philadelphia of 1787 becomes the Dumbarton Oaks, Bretton
Woods, and San Francisco of today.

One of the most difficult impressions to change is that there is
only one right or only one wrong way to solve a social problem
and to replace it with the understanding that solutions to any
problems may be numerous, each possessing merit. Note for
instance the constant plea of the frontier settlers for protection
by a powerful government equipped to send troops and supplies
and the refusal of these same people to accept the authority of a
central government in the collection of taxes necessary to furnish
soldiers and arms for defense. This inconsistency can be il-
lustrated by such situations as the Whiskey Rebellion, Stamp Act
Congress, Declaration of Independence, or Fries’ Rebellion. Today
we cry out for world peace but do we want it enough to accept
the compromises necessary to securing it?

Benjamin Franklin, David Rittenhouse, and William Findley
found their radicalism opposed by Benjamin Rush, John Dickin-
son, and Robert Morris. Current papers reveal this alignment in
the Titos and Mikhailoviches of Yugoslavia, Spain, France,
China, and Poland. Whigs, Tories, Federalists and Anti-Federal-
ists, Constitutionalists and Anti-Constitutionalists, are no longer
words to be memorized but synonyms for today's liberals and conservatives.

The pupil can be taught to sense the difficulty of learning the need for compromise. Early Pennsylvania farmers opposed the construction of railroads and state government supported the construction of canals when private owners would not do so. Here the pupil can see that the ideals for which each one of us prays—peace or better transportation—fail of fruition through man's inability to apply generalizations to local conditions.

And what an opportunity for presenting "oil" and the part it has played in putting an end to provincialism! Drake and Titusville are reached in the thunder of every aeroplane which cuts through the sky. Quislings and collaborators were present when Washington kept faith at Valley Forge while Howe held Philadelphia. At a time when the call goes forth for more nurses and there is talk of drafting for this service one might do well in reviewing the record which Pennsylvania made in hospital service during the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. If it is intolerance which one wishes to emphasize, a reading of how men acted under the banner of Native Americanism or Know-Nothingism could be reviewed. Philadelphia is a dozen Yaltas and Teherans rolled into one.

One need not enumerate further. Every spot upon this earth where men have lived and achieved is but another name for that locality where each one of us breathes and achieves. To fail in trying to get this concept before our young people is to fail at that point where education counts for most. All history is but the story of the unfolding of the multiplicities of the world's provincialisms into Wendell Willkie's "One World."