

A Child's Eye View: The Immigrant Experience in Pittsburgh
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Overview

A Child's Eye View: The Immigrant Experience in Pittsburgh is an interdisciplinary unit designed to be used with upper elementary school aged children (grades four, five and six). It uses a variety of activities to help students develop research and writing skills. Math skills in data collection and graphing are utilized. In addition, students learn to see themselves and their community as part of the great web of history. Children will see that history is all around them. They will be able to use acquired knowledge, and apply it in a creative way to produce a work of historical fiction based on historical research of their own neighborhood.

I designed this unit with the students of Roosevelt Elementary School in mind. My students are very aware of their neighborhood, and have a natural interest in other children.

A picture surfaced at our school of the original Quentin Roosevelt School Building. The photo was taken in 1912, and shows a large number of students (dressed in turn of the century style) holding trees that had been donated to the school children by a local business man. The Governor of Pennsylvania was there for the presentation.

My students were fascinated by the photograph, and it became a topic of conversation that night in many of their homes. The next day, several children returned to school with requests for copies of the photo, and stories about a parent or grandparent, great-aunt, uncle or elderly neighbor who had attended the school, their stories about attending the school, and even where some of the trees in the picture were planted (and still growing!)

I realized that this natural curiosity and interest in local history was not being addressed in the current fourth grade social studies (Geography) curriculum. I felt that students needed to be able to relate to history on a more personal level, and it was important to take advantage of their natural interest in the topic.

An interdisciplinary unit about local history also seemed like an ideal vehicle for prompting informational and creative writing, teaching research and computer skills, and using math skills such as data collection and graphing.

Background Information on Nineteenth Century Pittsburgh

By the 1830's, Pittsburgh was an industrial center with a population of over 12,600 --- the third largest city west of the Appalachian Mountains, behind New Orleans and Cincinnati. Nine glass factories, eight rolling mills, six textile mills and dozens of foundries, machine and tin shops, tanneries, rope and boat-building works made Pittsburgh a thriving city.(Reiser 107,213-214) The combination of available work and available land made our city a destination for many groups of immigrants. Railroad building in the 1840's and 1850's made Pittsburgh easily accessible from the ports of New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore. The railroad also served to fuel the growth of the area's industries, particularly iron-making. (Appendix 1)

The South Side of the Monongahela River consisted of the boroughs of South Pittsburgh, Birmingham, East Birmingham and Ormsby (present day Mt. Oliver/Carrick). By the late 1840's, the combined population of these areas was over 7,300, most of whom were Irish and German.

The flat bottom land between the river and the hills (the present day South Side flats) was a center for heavy manufacturing. Iron making employed nearly two-fifths of the area's workforce. Glassmaking and coal mining were the other major industries found there.(Manufacturing Manuscript Census Schedule, 1850) The South Side was well on it's way to becoming part of the Smoky City that was Pittsburgh's image until the closing of the steel mills in the late 1970's.

The hilly land beyond was still lightly populated, and consisted of small family farms, dairy farms and orchards. Brownsville Road was the main highway that began at the top of Eighteenth Street in the Ormsby Borough and continued as a heavily traveled route running to the south.

Reasons for Immigration

Europe in the early and mid nineteenth century was experiencing a population explosion. Unfortunately, countries did not have the economic resources to deal with these masses of people, and many, especially those in Germany, were faced with the choice of leaving home or starving.

“The reason for leaving Germany was quite simple...a chance to own some land, a chance for their children to escape their status under the feudal system which locked their children into the same level of society in which they were born. ...For instance a “knecht” (common laborer) in Germany could make one reichsthaler per month. In America, he could earn ten reichsthalers.

Beginning in about 1830, Neuenkirchen (Germany) lost almost half its population to emigration. It took almost 100 years before the population was restored to the level it had been before that time. a number of factors were responsible for this, but, quite simply, many of the people could not earn a living under the system in which they lived. They were starving, and they had no hope for the future” (Boke 18).

The costs of transporting a family from Europe to America were steep. However, the situation was so desperate that some governments actually helped their citizens emigrate.

“...in times of great economic distress, the authorities adopted an emigration-promoting attitude. Poverty and unemployment could be ameliorated if the population were reduced by migration. There were fewer poor to be a burden on the public welfare service. In the 1840’s and 1850’s, several south-west German governments went so far as to support emigration with public funds. The one-time payment of traveling costs to America for impoverished subjects was cheaper than relief that might possibly have been granted for years” (Moltman 38).

Nineteenth century immigration started slowly, but grew exponentially as the century wore on and economic conditions in Europe did not improve.

With the turn of the century and the end of the Napoleonic Wars in Europe in 1815, immigration rapidly accelerated: 150,000 arrived during the 1820’s, 1,700,000 in the 1840’s and a staggering 2,300,000 in the 1850’s. This so-called wave of immigration brought

a total of some five million newcomers to the United States between the Battle of Waterloo and the opening of Castle Garden (1855) (Novotny 58).

The Immigrant Experience

Traveling to America for the average European in the nineteenth century was arduous, dangerous and psychologically torturous. Ships were packed with people from every class in accommodations that were filthy, smelly, cramped and completely lacking in privacy. Sickness and death were commonplace. Robbery, rape and hunger were a fact of life on board. The length of the voyage could last anywhere from forty-five to over sixty days. It took physical and mental strength to survive.

Liwvat Boke, a young émigré from Bremen, Germany traveling to western Ohio described it thus in her diary (1835):

Day 12: We had a completely still wind the whole long day. The close association is getting us all now. Every day is detestable, with no satisfactions, and the feeling is contagious. I notice no decent conversations between passengers, and it takes a strong effort to start one with the other women; they lost their forwardness in Bremen. We think about our new fatherland, and discover in our minds a counterstream of thoughts about our abandoned homeland. The trip is costly, not merely in money, but also in these contrary feelings. We are alone yet mingled with unfamiliar people of every class. They are all different. Frequently the children are friendly, completely agreeable. People are stingy with their laughter, never light-hearted. Every face has a wrinkled forehead, vacant eyes and a gaping mouth. (Boke 40) (See Packing List, Appendix 2)

Rationale

I created this unit, [A Child's Eye View: The Immigrant Experience in Pittsburgh](#) with the intention of making history real and accessible to my students. Too often, our own rich local history is neglected in our school curriculums. Exposure to the diverse cultural and historical heritage of our Pittsburgh neighborhoods is important for our students. It gives them a greater appreciation for their hometown and history becomes something they can relate to themselves and to their neighborhood. As Emerson said in [Essays](#), "There is properly no history, only biography." This idea of history as a reflection of the lives of everyday people that lived in our local communities is the basis of this unit.

The skills necessary to complete this unit are geared to grades four, five and six. Research skills, writing, reading for specific purposes, and small group work are all used extensively throughout the unit. These skills are currently found in the Pittsburgh Public Schools Communications curriculum and standards. Data collection and graphing are skills that are currently part of the Everyday Math curriculum and are found in the fourth grade mathematics standards.

Objectives

Integrated units are most meaningful in terms of student learning. It provides an immediate response to the age-old questions of “Why do I have to learn this stuff?” and “How am I ever going to use this in the real world?”

A Child’s Eye View: The Immigrant Experience in Pittsburgh is an integrated unit incorporating research skills (Communications Standards 4-1 and 4-5), interviewing skills (Communications Standards 4-6 and 4-7), writing for different purposes (Communications Standards 4-3 and 4-4), organizational skills and small group work (Communications Standards 4-6 and 4-9) data collection (Math Standard 4-7), graphing (Math Standard 4-6), and technological skills such as the use of scanners, the internet, word processing and desktop publishing (Science and Technology Standards 3, 6 and 9) to create a piece of original historical fiction. Obviously, many standards can be met in an interesting, connected way, and students can take pride in their finished product.

This unit is flexible enough that it can be adapted to be used in any neighborhood(s), and can easily be modified for special needs students.

Strategies

This unit will be a successful and popular unit with upper elementary students because they have such a boundless natural curiosity. Researching the history of their locality, and applying information to create a finished product will give students experience in a wide spectrum of skill areas.

Students will achieve objectives in a variety of disciplines through the classroom activities designed for this unit. Communications Standards for the fourth grade that are met include: Research skills used in researching landmarks, toys, games, education and family life of the mid-1800’s (Communications Standards 4-1 and 4-5), interviewing skills used in taking oral histories of their

own families, neighbors, and specialists who may provide additional information for this project (Communications Standards 4-6 and 4-7), writing for different purposes, i.e. entertain and inform through a work of historical fiction (Communications Standards 4-3 and 4-4), organizational skills and working in a small group to prepare individual sections of the piece and then organize these pieces into a cohesive unit (Communications Standards 4-6 and 4-9). Mathematics Standards that are met include: data collection (Mathematics Standard 4-7) and graphing statistical information such as family sizes and immigration trends (Mathematics Standard 4-6). Science and Technology Standards that are applied include: the use of scanners (Standard 3), the internet as a research tool (Standard 6) and desktop publishing (Standards 6 and 9).

Classroom Activities

This unit will ultimately enable my fourth graders to research and develop a historical fiction book about the life and experiences of an immigrant child in Pittsburgh. Children will be working in groups, researching the Carrick/Mt. Oliver area during the mid-eighteen hundreds. They will then narrow the scope of their focus to family and everyday life for a fourth grade child of that era and neighborhood. School, church, holidays, games and other family and neighborhood activities would be covered, all from the point of view of a nine-year old living in that neighborhood at that time.

Students would use a variety of research sources (print, film, oral histories, electronic media, and field trips) to help them develop a better understanding of what life would be like for an immigrant child. The resources of the Senator John Heinz Regional History Center and the collections located at the Pennsylvania Room at Carnegie Library in Oakland will be utilized. They would develop a piece of historical fiction based on real events, people and places. Students would be responsible for researching, writing, illustrating, editing and word processing a finished product. The completed books would be shared with other classes, family and friends. Copies of these books would be kept in our school library for the use and enjoyment of other children in the school.

We begin the unit with students preparing a very basic family tree (see Appendix 4). Students would work at home with their families to prepare a tree going back (hopefully) two or three generations. Foster children and adopted children may choose to research the trees of their host/adoptive families. These trees would be presented and shared with classmates. Discussion from this activity should lead to some basic researching of the people listed in the trees

(Where were they born? What kinds of jobs did they have? Where did they live? How many children did they have?)

Oral histories could be compiled from guided interviews done by the students with relatives either listed in the tree, or that would have first-hand knowledge of people listed (see Appendix 5). Interview questions would include family size, religion, ethnic background, family stories, notable accomplishments, educational level attained aspirations, and information about personal qualities.

Data taken from the family trees and oral histories will be graphed in class to show students similarities and differences between the families. Places of origin, local residences, family size and occupations are all possibilities to be examined in this activity. The graphing will help to get students thinking about possible variables of personality and circumstance that could be used in their stories.

Research on historical events in the world and in Western Pennsylvania will begin after the graphing. The idea will be to determine why people would want (or need) to leave their homeland to seek out a new life in America. Connections will be made to the family trees and oral histories. The class will prepare a time line of important world events that might have an impact on immigration to the U.S.

As a next step, students will read both fictional and true accounts of children coming to America as immigrants. There are a variety of books to choose from, and each group will be responsible for reading four books (one per student) and reporting on them to the class.

Once basic selections have been discussed in regard to ethnicity and time period (in our case, a child of German ethnicity will be used, residing in the Carrick/Mt. Oliver area during the 1840's), we will spend the day at the Carnegie Library in Oakland, specifically using the resources of the Pennsylvania Room. An additional day for researching will be spent at the Senator John Heinz Regional History Center. This will enable students to see primary resources of the time, unique to the Pittsburgh area. Students will utilize microfiches of newspapers, advertisements, ship rosters and other pertinent records.

As a class, we will decide what information should be included in all group books (general topics such as family life, school, holidays, games, chores, etc.). Students will then break the categories down, decide who will be responsible for each section, and begin work on writing and illustrating. Each group will edit and word process their finished product. Covers will be made, and volumes laminated and bound.

Upon completion, all groups will present their books to the class.

Annotated Student Bibliography

Eiseman, Alberta. From Many Lands, New York, Atheneum, 1970.
Easy to read description of where immigrants to the United States came from, and why they came to America.

Wolfman, Ira. Do People Grow on Family Trees? Genealogy for Kids and Other Beginners, New York, Workman, 1991.
Basic guide on how to research family roots geared to young readers.

American Immigration.

Danbury, CT: Grolier International, 1999.
An Alphabetical reference work examining the background, statistics, reception and status of those groups who have immigrated to America throughout history.

Whitman, Sylvia, Immigrant Children. Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda Books, 2000.
Described the flood of immigrants into the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, focusing on the experiences of the youngest immigrants, both on their journeys and in their new country.

Annotated Teacher Bibliography

Collier, Christopher. A Century of Immigration, 1820-1924. New York: Marshall Cavendish/Benchmark Books, 2000.
Discusses the economic, social and religious reasons why immigrants, predominantly from northern Europe, and then from eastern and southern Europe, came to the U.S.

Moltman, Gunther, ed. Three Hundred Years of Germans in America 1683-1983. Stuttgart: Institute for Foreign Cultural Relationships, 1982.
Describes the role of the German immigrant in the U.S.

Boke, Liwwat. Liwwat Boke, 1807-1882 Pioneer. Minster, Ohio: Minster Historical Society, 1987. Personal diary kept by a young German immigrant to western Ohio in 1835.

Lorant, Stefan, ed. Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City. Lennox, MA, 1975. Collection of stories, articles, photos of Pittsburgh from its inception.

Manufacturing Manuscript Census Schedules, South Side Boroughs, 1850.
Washington, DC: Department of the Interior.
Gives statistics on manufacturing in Pittsburgh area for 1850.

Reiser, Catherine Elizabeth. Pittsburgh's Commercial Development, 1800-1850.
Harrisburg, PA, 1951. Provides information regarding major manufacturing and statistics on productivity in Pittsburgh for the first half of the nineteenth century.

Novotny, Ann. Strangers at the Door. Riverside, CT: The Chatham Press, Inc., 1971. Early immigration procedures and port entry points are covered.

Overland, Orm. Immigrant Minds, American Identities: making the United States home, 1870-1930. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000.
Includes homemaking and childcare in America, discusses foundations and refoundations- -dealing with "native" Americans and earlier settlers.

Greenleaf, Barbara Kaye. America Fever: The Story of American Immigration.
New York: Four Winds Press, 1970.
Discusses both early and later immigration to America, and motivating factors leading to migration.

The following sources were accessed through the Historic Pittsburgh site on the Digital Library at the University of Pittsburgh (<http://digital.library.pitt.edu/>):

Buck, Solon J. and Elizabeth Hawthorn The Planting of Civilization in Western Pennsylvania.pp125-127.
Provides information about early settlers of Pittsburgh.

Ambler, Charles Henry. A History of Transportation in the Ohio Valley, With Special Reference to its Waterways, Trade, and Commerce from the Earliest Period to the Present Time. Pp.167-170.
Gives information regarding immigration and occupations in Western Pennsylvania.

History of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania: including its early settlement and progress to the present time; a description of its historic and interesting localities; its cities, towns and villages.

Historic Pittsburgh, Vol. 22. Pp. 25-29.

Information originally from the Pittsburgh School Bulletin, May, 1928 about the early public schools of Pittsburgh.

Dahlinger, Charles W. Pittsburgh: A Sketch of its Early Social Life.
Notes prominent early German settlements and families.

Content Standards

The following are a list of Content Standards met within the study of this unit. All standards given refer to the standards established by the Pittsburgh Board of Education for fourth grade students.

Communications Standards

- 4-1: Using research skills
- 4-3 and 4-4: Writing for different purposes
- 4-5: Incorporating research skills
- 4-6: Interviewing skills
- 4-7: Using organizational skills and working as part of a small group
- 4-9: Organizing written material into a cohesive work

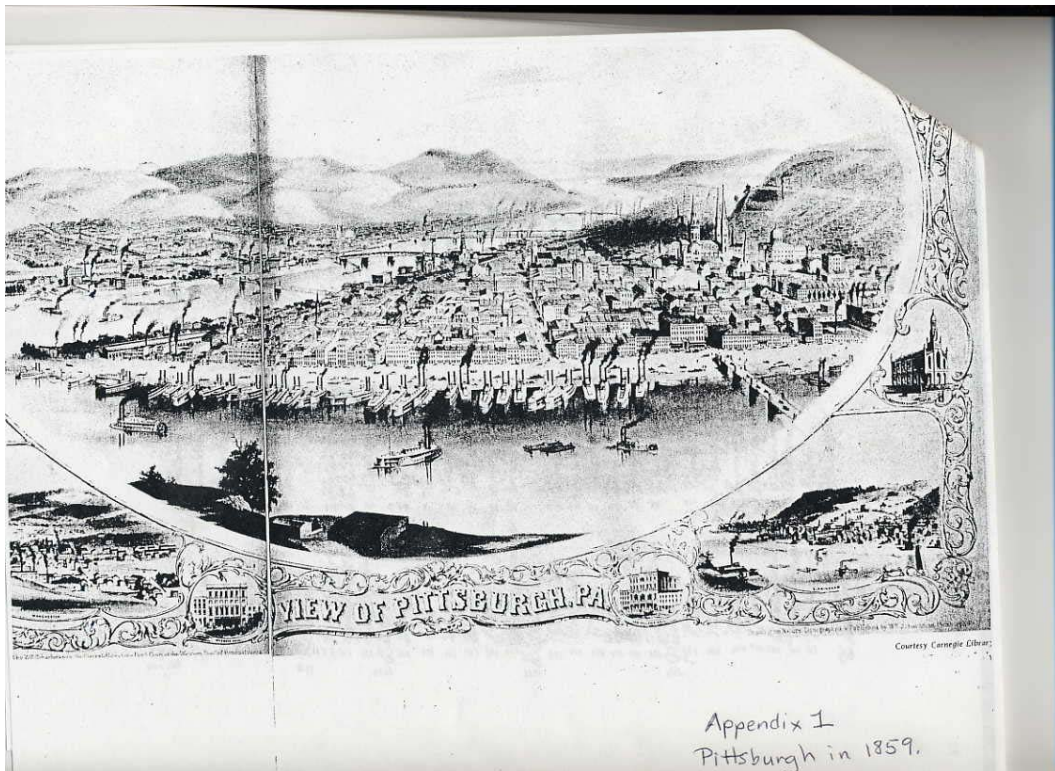
Mathematics Standards

- 4-6: Graphing
- 4-7: Data collection and interpretation

Science and Technology Standards

- 3: Being able to use technological equipment
- 6: Using the Internet as a research tool
- 9: Desktop publishing

Appendices



Packing List for the Trip to America

(Ed. - The three lists shown here - his list, her list and seed list - though not given a title by Liwwät, are almost surely packing lists for their journey to the new world. Such lists have rarely, if ever, been seen. They surely give additional evidence of Liwwät's methodical and thorough nature. It is known that Liwwät and Natz had hoped to make the passage together. Since they did not, perhaps the contents of the lists were modified slightly, but certainly the lists would still have been used.)

An - on (Ed. - wearing or carrying)

Unnerbuxen - underpants	Buxen - pants	Strumpt - stockings
Heimpt - shirt	Buxdräigäe - suspenders	Hoot - hat
Handook - towel	Karsen - candles	Nachtheimd - nightshirt
Hansken - gloves	Snäistoofel - snowboots	Vulrock - wool coat
Knabel - hardtack	Taskendook - handkerchief	Kautoback - chewing tobacco
Bautel - bag	Talge - tallow	Issnaodel - iron needle
Ränseel - satchel		
Krusifix - crucifix	Rosenkrantz - rosary	Biecker - drinking cup
Bäidbook - prayerbook	Buddel Wiehwater - bottle	Meese - salve, cream
Dööpschein - baptismal certificate	of holy water	Handook - hand towel
	Sepe - soap	
Kuffer - trunk	Köefall - cow hide	Reimer - strap
Böke - books	Ledderriemer - strap, belt	Huwwe - hood
Späigel - mirror	Holthammer - mallet	Tachnagel - tacks
Bedlaken - bed linen	Schreere - scissors	Prussenfiel - _____ file
Root - lamp black	bottle with stopper	Sägellachs - sealing wax
Enkert in Buddel mit Proffen - ink in	Bindfaden - twine	Saigel - seal
Knieptange - pliers		
Kuffer - trunk	Geschirr - silver & dishes	Heimden - shirts
Pottdecke - pot cover	Emmer - bucket, pail	Kieddel - kettle
Leppel - spoon	Medzin - medicine	Pööl - feather tick
Mess - knife	Bedlaken - bed linens	Schott - apron
Bettdecke - blankets	Teller - plate	Heimpten - shirts
Kussen - pillows	Lappen - cloths	Strumpten - stockings
Handooken - towels		
Puch - pouch	Spek - bacon	Schoh - shoes
Sucher - sugar	Fleisk - meat	Riis - rice
Müihl - flour	Braut - bread	Bauhen - beans
Grüssen - groats	Druggappeln - dried apples	Suermoose - sauerkraut
Soalt - salt	Swaogel - cracklings	Hannig - honey
Kakaowäffe - chocolate wafers	Wempt -	Schamiesken - half petticoat
Tuwelken - potatoes	Fett - lard	Buówerbett - bed spread
Rook - coat	Köärpin - pin for closing clothes	Krawättene - scarves
De Böke - the Boeke		

An - on (Ed. - wearing or carrying)	Vullenunerrock - woolen petticoat	Knapprock - button skirt
Knäupdräigirie - long underwear	Slippe - apron	Nachtheimd - nightgown
Strümpfe - stockings	Kleed - dress	Karsen - candles
Träiggbrimer - belt	Taskendook - handkerchief	Handook - towel
Jööl - jacket	Snäistoofel - snowboots	Knabbel - hardtack
Hansken - gloves		
Ränseel - satchel	Rosenkrantz - rosary	Biecker - drinking cup
Krusifix - crucifix	Buddel Wiehwater - bottle	Meesse - salve, cream
Bäidbook - prayerbook	of holy water	
Dööpschein - baptismal certificate	Sepe - soap	Handook - hand towel
Kuffer - trunk		
Böke - books	Papier - paper	Snäkip - snow cap
Späigel - mirror	Pose - quill pens	Bettdeche - blankets
Bedlaken - bed linen	Kussen - pillows	Föö - feather tick
Musselain - muslin	Schaimes - chemise	Vullen Bettdecke - woolen blanket
Enkert in Buddel mit Proffen - ink in bottle with stopper	Kleede - dresses	Strumpton - stockings
Fruwadlassen - sanitary napkins		Nachheimden - nightgowns
Kuffer - trunk	Schuotten - aprons	Fingerstöffel - thimble
Mess - knife	Naodel - needles	Knaupen - buttons
Leppel - spoons	Gaorn - yarn	Twärnsfahn - cotton thread
Gaubel - forks	Teller - plate	Siedenfahn - silk thread
Knappnaodel - hatpin	Fahn - thread	Schüeddeldook - dish rag
Kluen - ball of thread	Beutel - purse	Sköe - shoes
Handooken - towels		
Puch - pouch	Speck - bacon	Riis - rice
Sucher - sugar	Fleisk - meat	Bauhne - beans
Mäihl - flour	Braut - bread	Tuwellken - potatoes
Säolt - salt	Druggappeln - dried apples	Suerkraut - sauerkraut
Grüsse - groats		
Ruhpuckstarn -	Klösterbooken - cloister books	Klösterpapier - cloister paper
	Sähensriür - magnifying glass	Fair - feathers (Ed. - for quills)
Liwwät		

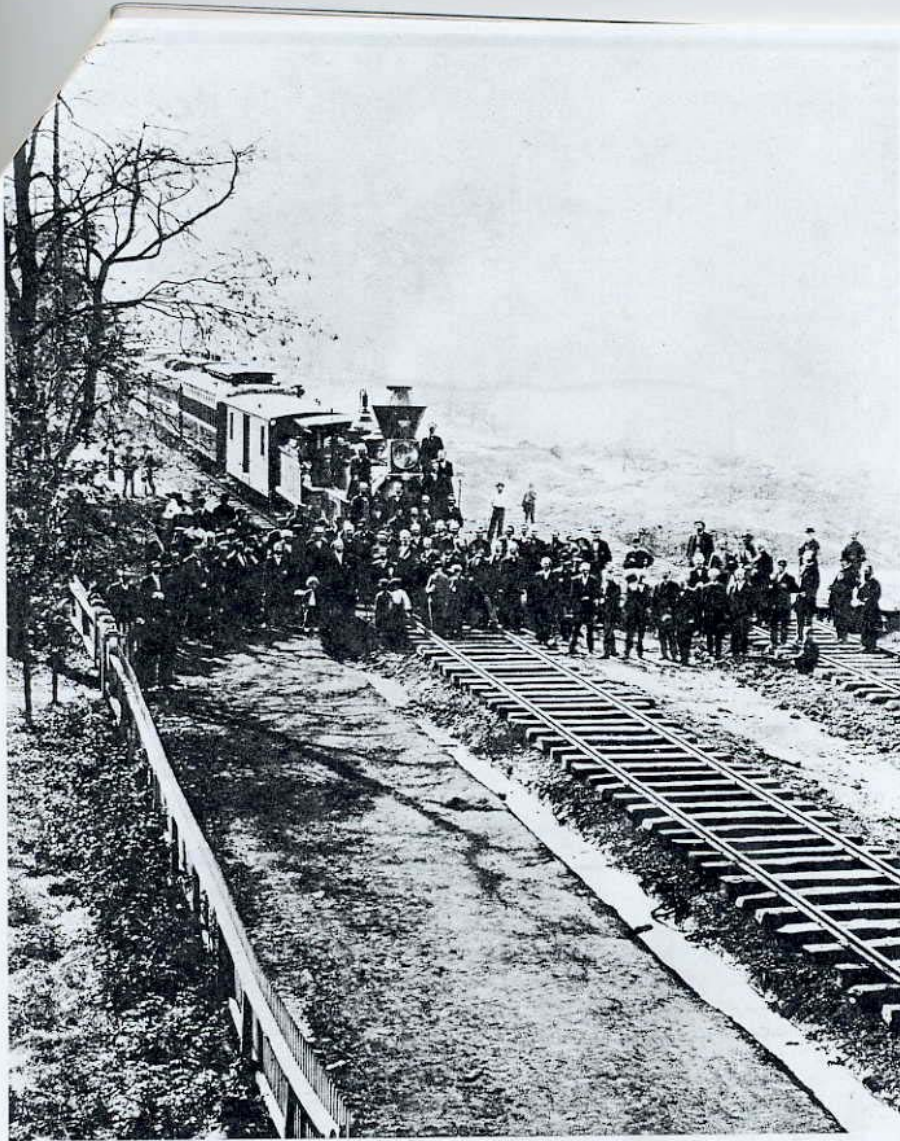
Saot - seed

(Ed. - Saodel - cloth seed bag; in Tuten - in paper bag or folder)

- 1) Saodel Iärften - peas
I frühe in Tuten - early
II gröne Warfett - green
III gröne Zwaige - green dwarf
- 2) Bauhne Saodel - beans
I Zwaige in Tuten - dwarf
II Tröhe in Tuten -
III Troahe Busk - bush
IV Fip in Tuten - string
- 3) Saodel Grube - turnips
I Mangel Wussel - mangel-wurzel
II Blot in Tuten - dark red
III L'Orange in Tuten - yellow
IV Steck Steck -
- 4) Saodel Rowe - beets
I Lange Witte Pasitinake - parsnip
II Brannate Rote in Tuten - red
III Hawer Pasitinake -
- 5) L'Wouttel Saodel - carrots
I Gäilbg Swedes - yellow Swedish
II L'Orange in Tuten - L'Orange
- 6) Saodel Siepel - onions
I Gäilbg in Tuten - yellow
II Witte in Tuten - white
III Rote in Tuten - red
- 7) Saodel Kabuus - cabbage
I Frohe in Tuten - early
II Witte in Tuten - white
III Rote in Tuten - red
- 8) Piekel Saodel - pickle
I Pokel in Tuten - pickle
II Gurfken in Tuten - gherken
III Lange Gurfken - long cucumber
- 9) Saodel Dus un Dat - this and that
I Spinaten in Tuten - spinach
II Rhübärbär in Tuten - rhubarb
III Koltrabie in Tuten - kohlrabi
IV Hoosluoke in Tuten - leek
- 10) Saodel Bäiren - berries
I Krätwen in Tuten - gooseberry (Ed.?)
II Hinge in Tuten - blackberry
III Rass, Aerb - raspberry, strawberry
twee Tuten - two bags

Samen - seeds

- 11) Saodel 1. Soat Käorn - seed corn 2. Haver - oats 3. Weissen - wheat
4. Klööver - clover 5. Giärst - barley 6. Röeggen - rye
alle in iähr Tuten - all in their bags
- 12) Saodel 1. Appeln - apples 2. Kirsken - cherries 3. Pfiärsig - peaches
4. Biärne - pears 5. Kuitte - quince 6. Prume - plum
7. Prume - plum 8. Prumkot - apricot
alle in iähr Tutken - all in their little bags
- 13) Saodel Blome - flowers
1. Rien - margarita 2. Snappen - snapdragon 3. Pönian - peonies
4. Holsken - lady slipper 5. Morgen - morning glory
6. Hulsk - tulip; crocus
alle in iähr Tutken - all in their little bags

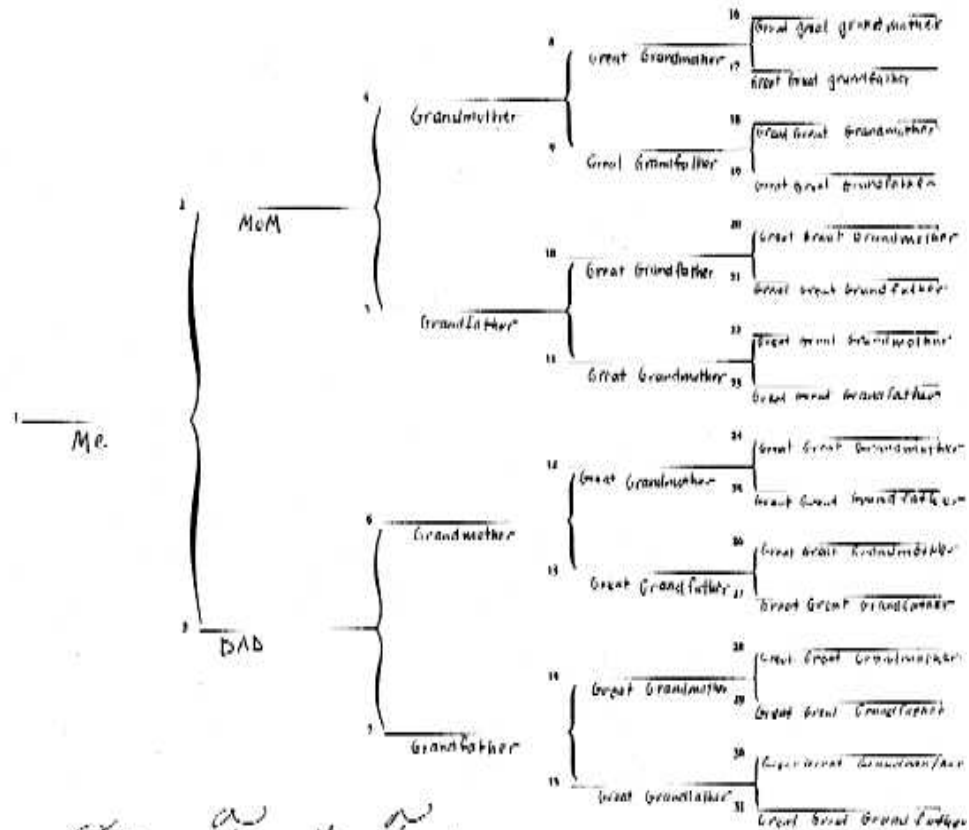


A HISTORIC EVENT. On December 10, 1852, a wood-burning locomotive of the Pennsylvania Railroad arrived in Pittsburgh with four cars, making the first all-

rail trip from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh. Two years later, after a tunnel had been built, *The Pittsburgh Gazette* jubilantly reported that the journey between the two

Courtesy Pennsylvania Railroad.
Pennsylvania cities could be made in no more than 15 hours.

Appendix 3



My Family Tree

Appendix 4

Appendix 5

Family History Interview

Name _____

Name of person being interviewed _____

Questions

How are we related? _____

Where were you born? _____

When were you born? _____

Do you have any brothers or sisters? If yes, what are their names? _____

What were your parent's names (including mother's maiden name)? _____

Are you married? If yes, what is your spouse's name? _____

How long have you lived in Pittsburgh? _____

What section of Pittsburgh do you live in? _____

What kind of work do you do for a living? _____

What do you like about Pittsburgh? _____

Where did you go to school (school names)? _____

Do you belong to a church? If yes, which one? _____