



SPRING

## LOG CABIN GROUP VISIT

An Experience in Pioneer Living in Wisconsin



*These visit materials are designed to help you extend learning from the classroom into the Log Cabin, and back into your students' daily lives. Inside you will find questions, modeled on "Thinking Like a Historian", to discuss before you arrive; things you can do during your free-play time at the museum; and activities that tie the visit to the curriculum standards and engage your students.*

*Local Treasures Learning Initiative  
at Madison Children's Museum*



Wisconsin Historical Society. Image ID: WHI-36380

*A child stands between a barrel and a fire outdoors as maple sugar is being made.*

<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi/fullimage.asp?id=36380>

Spring was an exciting time on the Wisconsin frontier. The longer days meant warmer temperatures, melting snow, and time for *maple sugaring*. In order to make maple sugar and syrup, the maple trees would be *tapped*, allowing the sap to run out into a bucket. That *sap* would be boiled in a kettle for many hours until it became a brown liquid or even longer until it became a hard cake. This was one of the few ways pioneers and Native Americans had for sweetening their food. *Maple sugaring* was done by the whole community, and so it was a time for fun and recreation with neighbors.

Planting would be done in the later spring when the ground was not frozen anymore. First, rows would have to be dug using a *plow*. Then people would walk up and down the rows with bags of seeds to be dropped into the rows and covered with a layer of dirt. Planting a large field required a lot of workers so children did not go school during this time and neighbors would come over and help each other. Even women and girls would help with planting.

Springtime was also the season for baby animals. Most animals have their babies in the spring because they need the whole summer and autumn to grow big enough to survive the next winter. Spring also meant it was time to *shear* the sheep. The wool would then be cleaned, dyed, *carded*, and *spun* into yarn so that it could be used for making clothes and blankets.

## Questions for the class to think about before the visit

### ★ Grades K-1

#### [Through Their Eyes, Change and Continuity, Using the Past]

- \* What was spring like for pioneers? What is it like for us? What has changed? What is still the same?
- \* How did pioneer children know when spring was coming? How do you know when spring is coming?
- \* What kinds of things did families do in the spring? What does your family do in spring? What kinds of tools did the pioneers use? Do you use the same tools?

### ★ Grades 2-3

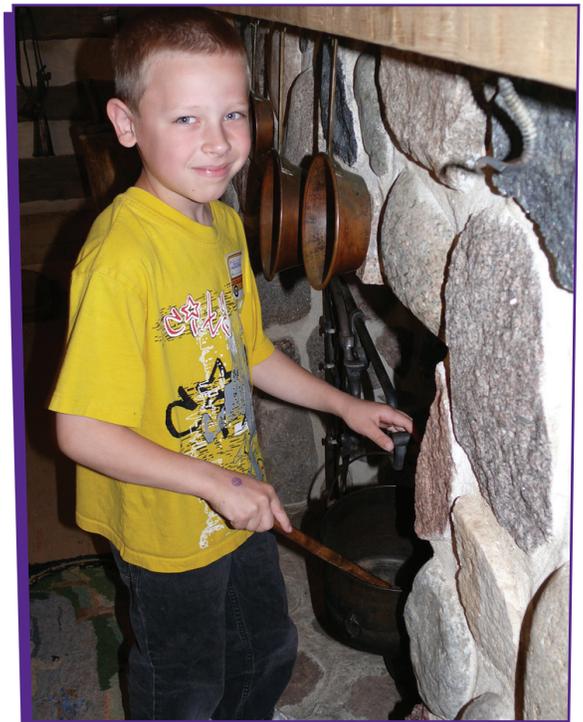
#### [Through Their Eyes, Change and Continuity, Using the Past]

- \* Why did pioneers get excited about the spring? Do you get excited about spring? Why or why not?
- \* What would pioneers do for fun in the spring? How are those activities similar or different from those we do today?
- \* What spring activities would you have enjoyed in the past? Why? What spring activities do you enjoy now? Why?

### ★ Grades 4-5

#### [Through Their Eyes, Change and Continuity, Using the Past]

- \* Think about Madison. What kinds of natural resources and human resources (work) do you think brought people to Madison while this was still Wisconsin Territory? What brings people here today?
- \* How do you think spring may have affected the daily lives in this very small and newly formed community?
- \* How do you think living in a frontier community like Madison in the spring was similar to and/or different than living isolated as a lead miner or farmer in southwestern Wisconsin?
- \* Compare the chores pioneer children did in the spring in frontier Wisconsin to the activities you do today. How are the tasks of the past similar to or different from those you do?
- \* How has spring recreation changed over time? Explain how your favorite spring recreation is similar to or different than it would have been a long time ago.



## During your visit, activities to try while at the museum

- \* Go to the rooftop and look at the gardens. What is different about what you see this time of year than in other seasons? How are these gardens different from the one at the cabin? How are they the same?
- \* Go into the Clubhouse on the Rooftop Ramble. Are there any baby animals? Can you think why it is important for most baby animals to be born in the spring?
- \* Go just inside the gate to the Wilderrest and turn left (don't go down the stairs). On the wall there are samples of the different kinds of wood used in the museum. All of these trees come from Wisconsin. Do you see any you recognize as being particularly important to pioneers in the spring time?



## After your visit, extended learning ideas for the classroom

- \* Thinking about the things you saw today, what did you like best? What did you find most unusual? What activity interested you? Explain to a partner why you liked it. Draw a picture or write a story about your favorite object, activity, or experience.
- \* Read the following excerpts from memories of some of the earliest non-native people in Madison. The first was written by George Stoner, who was a non-native boy growing up in Madison and remembers maple sugaring at Maple Bluff:

*“On this point was the finest maple grove in the state, comprising upward of two thousand sugar trees, from two to four feet in diameter and from eighty to one hundred feet in height. . . It was a favorite resort for Indians in the spring of the year, where they made large quantities of maple sugar for sale. The sap was boiled in large iron or copper kettles. . .”*

—From George Stoner’s Memories from the Madison Journal, June 6-7, 1895; April 7, 1897; November 26, 1905

*“When Rosaline Peck and her little family were moving to Madison in April of 1837, they were awakened to ‘a tremendous windstorm and howling of wolves and found snow five or six inches on the ground.’ Then the next day early, they made it into Madison. Rosaline wrote that they had been ‘sitting in a wagon under a tree with a bed quilt through over my own and little boy’s heads, with a tremendous storm of snow and sleet.”*

—“Reminiscences of the First House and First Resident Family of Madison,” Wisconsin Historical Collections, Vol. XI (1869-72), pp. 343-365

Imagine that you are the person who wrote one of those. Draw a picture or write about what it looked and felt like.

\* Look at the Wisconsin Territory Seal on the Historical Society website:

[http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi/fullRecord.asp?id=64629&qstring=http%3A%2F%2Fwww%2Ewisconsinhistory%2Eorg%2Fwhi%2Fresults%2Easp%3Fsearch\\_type%3Dbasic%26keyword%3Dplow%26Submit%3DSearch](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi/fullRecord.asp?id=64629&qstring=http%3A%2F%2Fwww%2Ewisconsinhistory%2Eorg%2Fwhi%2Fresults%2Easp%3Fsearch_type%3Dbasic%26keyword%3Dplow%26Submit%3DSearch)

Why do you think the artist included those particular pictures? What does that tell you about Wisconsin in 1836? Draw your official seal using images that represent you.

## Glossary

**Maple Sugaring:** The entire process for procuring (getting) sap from a maple tree and converting it into maple sugar

**Tap:** To get a substance from a particular place or object

**Sap:** A sticky, starchy substance found in plants and trees

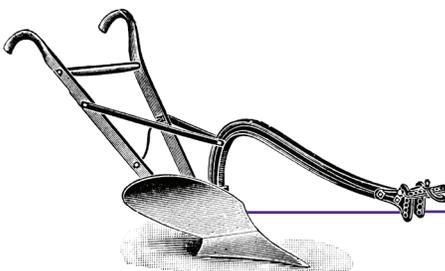
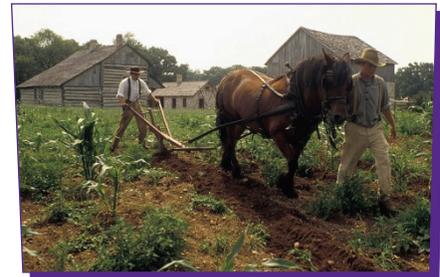
**Plow:** A piece of farm equipment used for turning over the soil before putting seeds in

**Kettle:** A vessel, usually made of metal and with a handle, used for boiling liquids or cooking foods; a pot

**Shearing (sheep):** Cut off (something such as hair, wool, or grass) with scissors or shears.

**Carding (wool):** Process by which fibers are opened, cleaned, and straightened in preparation for spinning

**Spinning (wool):** To draw out and twist (fibers) into thread



## Additional Activities and Resources

Activity to learn about land use and the decisions we make, “Learning from The Land: Wisconsin Land Use”:

<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/teachers/search.asp?id=103>

George Stoner’s recollections of being a boy in Madison:

<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/search.asp?id=942>

Image of one of the first cabins in Madison - the Peck cabin:

<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/search.asp?id=635>

