Alexander Ramsey House

Pre-Visit Materials  Grades 9 - 12

Minnesota Historical Society
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9th-12th grade pre-visit materials for the Alexander Ramsey House, Minnesota Historical Society

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Dear Teacher,

The staff of the Alexander Ramsey House welcomes you and your students! We hope you find our new classroom materials helpful and interesting. Your students' experiences at the Ramsey House will be more meaningful if they are prepared for their visit, and if they have the opportunity to reflect afterwards. With this in mind, we have created activities to extend learning in many subject areas, focusing on varied learning styles.

Our Educational Tours provide a more age-appropriate experience and engage multiple senses. We hope you and your students will enjoy the tours and ask that you take a few moments after you have toured the house to fill out a short survey. We will use the information you provide to further tailor our tours and classroom materials to fulfill your needs and preferences.

Please spend some time with your students and chaperones discussing museum behavior. Rules of etiquette were important to Victorian people, and we have some of our own. To preserve the house and its artifacts, please do not bring gum or candy, food or drink. Cameras and cell phones may only be used outside of the house. And of course, please refrain from touching unless otherwise instructed.

We want to encourage your students to ask questions and share their own ideas. We recommend reminding chaperones that our Educational Tours are tailored to the children, with the goal of involving them as much as possible.

If you have questions or requests not addressed in this packet, please contact us. We look forward to seeing you at the Alexander Ramsey House!

Sincerely,

The Alexander Ramsey House Staff
1. Which educational materials did you use with your students?

2. Were the materials helpful in preparing your students for their experience at the Ramsey House?

3. Are there other types of materials you would have liked?

4. What would have made you more likely to use the educational materials?

5. What did you feel was the most valuable part of the tour?

6. What part of the tour do you feel could be improved?

7. Do you have any other feedback for us?

Thank you so much! Please return this survey in the envelope provided. We hope to see you next year!
Alexander Ramsey was born in 1815 in Pennsylvania. Alexander married Anna Jenks in 1845. Four years later Alex, Anna, and their three year old son traveled by steamboat, stagecoach, and canoe to the new Minnesota Territory where Mr. Ramsey was to be the first governor. Mr. Ramsey's job was to buy land from the Dakota and Ojibwe Indians so that settlers could move to Minnesota. In 1860, Mr. Ramsey became the second governor of the state of Minnesota and held that position during the Civil and Dakota Wars. He showed his pride in Minnesota as the first President of the Minnesota Historical Society and as a U.S. Senator. He loved his family very much and lived with his daughter and grandchildren in what he called his "Mansion House" until he died in 1903.

Anna Jenks Ramsey was born in Pennsylvania in 1826. She was different from many girls at the time because she learned to read, write, and do math. When her husband told her in 1849 that they were moving to Minnesota, Mrs. Ramsey did not know what to expect. The first years in Minnesota were difficult. Two of their young children died, and Mrs. Ramsey told her husband she would "never want to winter again in St. P." She later came to love Minnesota as much as her husband did and was active in planning and building the present Ramsey House. Mrs. Ramsey bought all the furnishings in New York for the "Mansion House." Mrs. Ramsey traveled to Europe and to the American West before she died at 58 years of age.

Marion Ramsey Furness was the third child born to Alex and Anna and the only child to live to be an adult. When she was nineteen, her family moved into the present Ramsey House, and on her twenty-second birthday, she married Charles Furness in her home. Marion and Charlie had four children, but their second son died as a baby. Then Charlie became sick with a mental illness and had to live in an institution the rest of his life. Marion moved back to St. Paul and raised their three children in her parents' home. She was very active in St. Paul's social life and loved music. She lived in the Ramsey House until her death in 1935.

Anita, Ramsey, and Laura Furness were Marion and Charlie's children. Anita was born in 1876, and when she was six years old, her mother described her as "aggravating + then fascinating as usual." Ramsey, a year younger than Anita, was described by his grandfather as "a daredevil sort of fellow." Laura, born in 1882, described herself at thirteen as a "great sport" who rode a bicycle every night. When Ramsey grew up he moved to Missouri, but his sisters lived together in the Ramsey House until they died in 1956 and 1964. They chose to give their house to Minnesota Historical Society so we can learn about their family today.
**Alexander Ramsey's Family Tree**

Objective: To gain familiarity with the Ramsey family, to use a family tree.

Use this family tree to answer the questions on the next page.

You might want to work with a partner!

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thomas Ramsey</th>
<th>Elizabeth Kelker</th>
<th>Michael Hutchinson Jenks</th>
<th>Mary Ridgeway Earl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1784-1826</td>
<td>1791-1853</td>
<td>1795-1867</td>
<td>1798-1867</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alexander Ramsey</th>
<th>Anna Earl Jenks</th>
<th>Hannah Earl Jenks Crouch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1815-1903</td>
<td>1826-1884</td>
<td>1825-1902</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alexander &quot;Sonny&quot; Ramsey</th>
<th>William Henry Ramsey</th>
<th>Marion Ramsey</th>
<th>Charles Eliot Furness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1846-1850</td>
<td>1850-1851</td>
<td>1853-1935</td>
<td>1844-1909</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anna Ramsey Earl &quot;Anita&quot; Furness</th>
<th>Alexander Ramsey &quot;Ramsey&quot; Furness</th>
<th>Charles Eliot Furness, Jr.</th>
<th>Laura Furness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1876-1964</td>
<td>1877-1916</td>
<td>1879-1880</td>
<td>1882-1959</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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The Ramsey/Furness Family Picture
1. How many people in the Ramsey family were named Alexander?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

2. How much older was Alexander Ramsey than Anna Jenks Ramsey?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

3. When Alexander, Anna, and Marion Ramsey moved into the mansion, Marion was 19 years old. What year was that?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

4. Find all the people who died as children. What were their names, and how long did each of them live?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

5. Anita's full name was Anna Ramsey Earl Furness. Name all the people she could have been named for and their relationships to her.

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

6. Often "Aunt Hannah" took care of the Anita, Ramsey, and Laura. Whose aunt was she?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

7. What relationship would Hannah's children have been to Marion?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

8. How old was Laura's father when she was born?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

9. How old was the Ramsey House when Anita died?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

10. What would Ramsey Furness call Thomas Ramsey?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

11. One person was born the same year that someone else died. Who were these two people, and what was their relationship?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________
1. The Alexander Ramsey House library is 18 feet by 16.5 feet. How many square feet is the library?

2. Two of the servants' bedrooms in the Ramsey House are 17.5 feet by 13.5 feet, and the third servant's bedroom is 16 feet by 12.5 feet. How big are all the servants' bedrooms put together?

3. If we put together both of the bathrooms in the Alexander Ramsey House they would measure 210 square feet. One of the bathrooms is 11 feet by 11 feet. How big is the other one? Is it bigger or smaller?

4. How much hall space is there in the Alexander Ramsey House all together?

   First Floor:    Front Hall-10' x 37'
                   Side Hall-6' x 18'
                   Back Hall-11' x 3.5' and 9' x 9'

   Second Floor:  Front Hall-10' x 35'
                   Back Hall-10' x 14' and 10' x 4'

   Third Floor:   Front Hall-9.5' x 47'

5. In 1889 Alexander Ramsey paid 32 cents for 4 pounds of fish. How much would he have paid for 11 pounds of fish?

6. Two years later he paid $2.24 for a 14 pound turkey. How much did he pay per pound? How much would a 22 pound turkey have cost?
1. The library in the Alexander Ramsey House is 18 feet by 16.5 feet. How many square feet is the library?

\[ 18 \text{ feet} \times 16.5 \text{ feet} = 297 \text{ square feet} \]

2. Two of the servants' bedrooms in the Ramsey House are 17.5 feet by 13.5 feet, and the third servant's bedroom is 16 feet by 12.5 feet. How big are all the servants' bedrooms put together?

\[ 13.5 \text{ feet} \times 17.5 \text{ feet} = 236.25 \text{ square feet} \]
\[ 16 \text{ feet} \times 12.5 \text{ feet} = 200 \text{ square feet} \]
\[ 236.25 \text{ square feet} \times 2 \text{ rooms} = 472.5 \text{ square feet} \]
\[ 472.5 \text{ square feet} + 200 \text{ square feet} = 672.5 \text{ square feet for all 3 bedrooms} \]

3. If we put together both of the bathrooms in the Alexander Ramsey House they would measure 210 square feet. One of the bathrooms is 11 feet by 11 feet. How big is the other one? Is it bigger or smaller?

Bigger bathroom: 11 feet x 11 feet = 121 square feet

\[ 210 \text{ square feet} - 121 \text{ square feet} = the \ smaller \ bathroom \ is \ 89 \ square \ feet \]

4. How much hall space is there in the Alexander Ramsey House all together?

First Floor:
- Front Hall-10' x 37'
  \[ 10' \times 37' = 370 \text{ square feet} \]
- Side Hall-6' x 18'
  \[ 6' \times 18' = 108 \text{ square feet} \]
- Back Hall-11' x 3.5'
  \[ 11' \times 3.5' = 38.5 \text{ square feet} \]
  and 9' x 9'
  \[ 9' \times 9' = 81 \text{ square feet} \]

Second Floor:
- Front Hall-10' x 35'
  \[ 10' \times 35' = 350 \text{ square feet} \]
- Back Hall-10' x 14'
  \[ 10' \times 14' = 140 \text{ square feet} \]
  and 10' x 4'
  \[ 10' \times 4' = 40 \text{ square feet} \]

Third Floor:
- Front Hall-9.5' x 47'
  \[ 9.5' \times 47' = 446.5 \text{ square feet} \]

Total Hall Space = 1,574 square feet

5. In 1889 Alexander Ramsey bought 4 pounds of fish for 32 cents. How much would he have paid for 11 pounds of fish?

\[ .32 \text{ 4 lbs.} = .08 \text{ per pound} \]

6. Two years later he paid $2.24 for a 14 pound turkey. How much did he pay per pound? How much would a 22 pound turkey have cost?

\[ $2.24 \text{ 14 pounds} = $.16 \text{ per pound} \]
\[ 22 \text{ pounds} \times $.16 = $3.52 \]
Alexander Ramsey and Westward Expansion

Background Information

Alexander Ramsey arrived in Minnesota on May 27, 1849. As first Governor of the new Territory of Minnesota, Ramsey was entrusted with acquiring land for new settlers from Europe and the eastern states. At that time, Minnesota Territory stretched to the Missouri River, including parts of present-day North and South Dakota. The vast majority of this land was owned by the Dakota and Ojibwe people. Asking the legislature to purchase land from the Dakota, Ramsey said, "I feel a conviction that this country, once thrown open for settlement, would be peopled with a rapidity exceeding anything in the history of western colonization."

Ramsey enlisted the aid of fur traders such as Henry Sibley to help negotiate the treaties. Many Dakota were in debt to these traders, so Ramsey hoped the involvement of the traders would influence the Dakota to agree to the treaties. Ramsey met with the northern two groups of Dakota in June 1851 at Traverse des Sioux. With heavy pressure by the traders and others, the Sisseton and Wahpeton bands agreed to sell their land for cash, goods, and a reservation on the Minnesota River. After signing two copies of the treaties, the leaders were led to a third set of papers, which they signed. Many assumed it was another copy of the treaty, but by signing these Traders Papers, the leaders agreed to pay $275,000 to the fur traders for past debt. Within days the leaders attempted to disallow the Traders Papers, but ultimately they were enforced and the fur traders received payment directly from the government.

After the trouble at Traverse des Sioux, Ramsey found negotiating with the southern bands of Dakota more difficult. Meeting with the Mdewakanton and Wahpekute Dakota bands at Mendota, Ramsey pressured the Dakota leaders into agreeing to similar terms to sell their land. The influence of Henry Sibley and his trading partners was vital to getting the Dakota to agree to the treaty, but it was not enough. Ramsey used soldiers from Ft. Snelling to intimidate the Dakota, withheld food and supplies from them and even paid several Dakota leaders in gold in order to get enough signatures. In the end the Dakota agreed to sell the land in exchange for goods, annuities and a reservation. The United States purchased 25 million acres of land for roughly 10 cents an acre.

In 1851-1852 missionaries and other friends of the Dakota lobbied Congress to investigate Ramsey for his actions in negotiating the two treaties. The Senate Committee on Indian Affairs investigated Ramsey but found nothing wrong, declaring "that the conduct of Governor Ramsey was not only free from blame, but highly commendable and meritorious." Although unsatisfactory to the Dakota and Ramsey opponents, the treaties were ratified and the Dakota were forced to live up to the agreement.

As part of the treaty, the Dakota reserved land along both banks of the Minnesota River for themselves. The Dakota began moving to this strip of land in 1852. By 1858, the US Congress forced the Dakota to give up the land on the northern bank of the river to make room for more settlers. In 1861-1862 the Dakota were struggling to survive. Their traditional hunting land
was now being filled with farmers. They were unable to grow enough food on their 10-mile wide strip of land and a drought had destroyed crops the previous year. They relied on the annual payment of gold and goods promised to them in the 1851 treaties, but the payment in 1862 was delayed. By August 1862 hunger, resentment and anger boiled over into armed conflict.

Dakota soldiers first attacked the Lower Sioux Reservation and then spread out, attacking farms, the town of New Ulm, and Ft. Ridgely. Many Dakota did not participate in the attacks and attempted to warn and save settlers from the growing conflict. Governor Alexander Ramsey, speaking for many Americans who were horrified by the attacks, said "The Sioux Indians must be exterminated or driven forever beyond the borders of the state." He called upon Henry Sibley to lead troops against the Dakota soldiers and within five weeks, Sibley had defeated them.

Over 1,700 Dakota, both those who attacked the settlers and those who tried to save them, were in Sibley's custody. Sibley, responding to cries for quick justice on the Dakota, held trials and sentenced over 300 Dakota to death. President Abraham Lincoln reviewed the cases and reduced many of the sentences to time in prison. On December 26, 1862, 38 Dakota were hanged in Mankato in the largest government-sanctioned mass execution in American history. Most of the remaining Dakota spent the winter in a camp near Fort Snelling where scores died from disease and the harsh conditions. In the spring the remaining Dakota were sent to reservations in South Dakota. Although many Dakota eventually returned to Minnesota, this was the final act of the US-Dakota War of 1862.
Activity Ideas

~ Discussion Questions

( use as a whole group, in small groups, or individually through journaling)

- How do you think Ramsey handled his charge of purchasing land? What would you have done differently?
- Similar processes occurred across the country. Can you think of a plan to develop land that would have been fairer to the Indians?
- Did this article change the way you think about Alexander Ramsey or about Minnesota? In what ways?
- Do you think a government investigation of Governor Ramsey would have had the same outcome today? Why or why not?

~ In small groups research one of the people or groups in the article:

- Ramsey
- Wabasha
- The Legislature
- Fur traders
- President Lincoln
- Senate Committee
- Taopi
- Little Crow
- on Indian Affairs

- Write about and evaluate your group's role. How could it have been different, how was it justified?
- Pretending to be these individuals, conduct a class meeting. Choose a facilitator, and debate the issues in role. Try to come to a peaceful consensus.

~ Make a timeline incorporating dates from the article. Add other events you know about Ramsey's life and events from American and world history of the time. Write about the connections you see between Ramsey's career and the rest of the world during the mid to late 19th century.

~ Write a letter to one of the people or groups involved. Express your opinions about the way they handled themselves, with suggestions for what they could have done differently and why.
On August 18, 1880, Henry Hastings Sibley wrote a letter to his old friend, Alexander Ramsey. Henry regretfully informed Alex that neither he nor Anna Ramsey would be going on the cross-country trip with Alex, President Hayes, and Mrs. Hayes. He also had some words of warning:

“I can only wish you all a happy experience and safe return, albeit I fear that you have formed too extensive and laborious a plan for a man of your age however vigorous, and Mrs. R. shares my apprehension. Five days staging over the Oregon Mountains at the rate of sixty miles a day, to say nothing of the same mode of conveyance over hundreds of miles of the wilds of Arizona and New Mexico, would have been but sport for us a quarter of a century ago, whereas now it will severely tax your energies to perform the trip.”

1. How many miles would Ramsey cover "staging over the Oregon Mountains" all together? How long would that trip take someone in a car on a highway today?

2. What year was it "a quarter of a century ago"? How old would Henry Sibley have been? How old would Alexander Ramsey and Anna Ramsey each have been?
Apparently Alexander Ramsey was quite “vigorous” because he made the trip!

Later in his letter Sibley addressed the issue of population.

“When, in reply to your question, I placed the population of Minnesota at 800,000, you deemed me too sanguine, but the census shows 780,000 nevertheless. Minneapolis by a system of padding well understood, claims a larger number than St. Paul, but I do not believe there is a difference of a thousand in the two cities.”

1. What did the governors mean by "too sanguine"?

2. How much bigger is the population of Minnesota now than in 1880? If it grew at a constant rate, how much did it grow each year?

3. How much bigger is the difference between Minneapolis than St. Paul now than it was in 1880?
OFFICE OF THE
Saint Paul Gas Light Company,
NO. 92 EAST THIRD STREET.

Personal Saint Paul, Aug. 18th, 1880

Hon. Alex Ramsey,
Washington City, A.C.

My dear Sir,

I called to see Mrs. Ramsey two days since, and was surprised to find her decidedly improved. She showed signs of disappointment for the Presidential party in Sept. but, and I was not very reluctantly compelled to arrive at the conclusion, that it would not do for either of us to attempt to undergo the fatigue of so continuous a trip. I wrote at once just a note to Mrs. Ramsey toprocuring to join the party, and my own health is too precarious to justify me in accepting your kind invitation. I very much regret that such is the situation, for I had promised myself much enjoyment in the company of Mrs. Ramsey and yourself, and in renewing my long-standing acquaintance with President Mr. Hayes.

But I can only wish you all a happy experience and safe return, albeit I fear that you have joined too extensive and laborious a plan for a man of your age forever vigorous, and Mrs. R. Since my
OFFICE OF THE
Saint Paul Gas Light Company,
NO. 92 EAST THIRD STREET,

Saint Paul, 188

apprehensions. Five days staying over the Oregon Mountains at the rate of sixty miles a day, to say nothing of the same mode of conveyance over hundreds of miles of the hills of Arizona, and New Mexico, would have been but slight for a quarter of a century ago, whereas now it will severely test your energies to perform the trip.

We have nothing new here about. I have been communicating with some friends at White Bear Lake for a few days past, and come in to my office occasionally, to clear my desk. St. Paul continues to grow daily, the improvements in streets, and other buildings being beyond all anticipations.

When, in reply to your question of the population of Minnesota at 800,000, you deemed me too sanguine, but the census shows 750,000. Nevertheless, Minneapolis, by a system of

founding well understood, claims a larger number than St. Paul, but I do not believe there is a difference of a thousand in the two cities.

With kind regards to all friends, Col. Dan included,

believe me,

Yours sincerely,

H. H. Siddley
Victorian Houses

Name: ____________________

Background Information

Alexander and Anna Ramsey planned their house carefully according to their own needs, while remaining mindful of what was proper in their day. In the 1800s, it was customary to separate rooms for entertaining from work spaces because the home was meant to be a needed retreat from the industrial workplace.

Activity

Look at the blueprint for the Ramseys’ first floor.

How can you tell the Ramseys were interested in entertaining? __________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

How did the Ramseys use architecture to separate the servants from the family and their guests? __________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

Which rooms do you consider important for a house today? Why? __________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

Which rooms are not used for a new house today? Why? ____________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

If you were designing your own Mansion House, what special purpose room would you want that the Ramseys do not have? __________________________________________________________________________________________

Where would you put it? Why?
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

On the back of the Ramseys’ blueprint, draw the first floor of your Mansion House.
Do not forget to include doors and hallways!
Literature Activities

Objective: To experience nineteenth century school work and literature. To think critically about social lessons and values.

Choose one or more activities to use with *McGuffey's Reader* or *Struwwelpeter*

~ Discuss (in small groups, as a whole group, or individually through journaling) how you think children learn proper behavior. Hoffmann, the author of Struwwelpeter, and many in his day believed that frightening children with outrageous consequences was a good way to teach them. Do you agree? Explain.

~ Discuss (in small groups, as a whole group, or individually through journaling) what messages these stories sent to children with regards to gender roles.

  - How would you have responded to these messages if you were a nineteenth century child?
  - Are the same messages being sent today?
  - Where do we receive our messages about today's gender roles?

~ Write an updated story, teaching a lesson in which you believe. What will you do to warn children to be aware of their actions?

~ Illustrate the story you read. Remember to use nineteenth century clothing and surroundings!

~ Create and perform a skit that demonstrates the story you read or another lesson nineteenth century adults may have taught.

~ Write a poem using the same rhyming format that Hoffmann used. Is it easier or harder than writing in prose?
The Night Wanderer

When other children were asleep
Our Oswald down the stairs would creep,
And to the fields he'd steal away,
Quite slyly by himself to play.
Sometimes he took the powder-horn,
And with the powder burnt the corn;
Sometimes he hid behind a tree,
And rushing out quite suddenly,
Would make a loud and fearful cry,
And frighten all the passers-by.
Indeed, it was his chief delight
To run away from home at night.
His parents shook their heads, and said,
“Oh, Oswald, stay at home in bed,
For if you out at night do roam
A bat you surely will become.”
But all their talking was in vain;
Still Oswald would go out again;
But, oh! just as his friends had said,
One night, as round the fields he sped,
Upon him came a wondrous change;
“Ah, me!” he cried, "How very strange!
I feel that I become so small —
And now — I cannot walk at all.
I put my hands up to my head,
But find a bat's face in its stead;
And now — my hands are gone. Oh dear!
Instead of arms what have I here?
Such very, very curious things.
Why, can they be? Oh, yes, they're wings.
Alas! Alas! What shall I do?
My parents' words are coming true.
An ugly bat I have become,
And never more shall I go home.”

Oh! yes, my dears, it was too true;
An ugly bat away he flew;
His parents' tears streamed down like rain;
They never saw their child again.

-From Struwwelpeter
The Story of Romping Polly

“I pray you now, my little child,”
Thus once a kind old lady
Spoke to her niece in accents mild,
“Do try to be more steady.
I know that you will often see
Rude boys push, drive, and hurry;
But little girls should never be
All in a heat and flurry.”

While thus the lady gave advice,
And lectured little Polly,
To see her stand with downcast eyes,
You’d think she owned her folly.
She did, and many a promise made;
But when her aunt departed,
Forgetting all, the merry maid
Off to the play-ground started.
Now see what frolic and what fun
The little folks are after;
Away they jump, away they run,
With many a shout of laughter.

But fools who never will be taught,
Except by some disaster,
Soon find their knowledge dearly brought,
And of a cruel master.
This little girl, who in spite of all
Her good old aunt had spoken
Would romp about, had such a fall
That her poor leg was broken.

In sore amaze, the standers-by
Soon placed her on a barrow.
But, oh! to hear her scream and cry
Their inmost souls did harrow.
See how her brother bursts in tears,
When told the dreadful story;
And see how carefully he bears
The limb all wet and gory.
Full many a week, screwed up in bed,
She lingered sad and weary;
And went on crutches, it is said,
Ev’n to the grave so dreary.

-From Struwwelpeter
McGuffey’s Readers

Many school children in the nineteenth century learned to read using McGuffey’s readers. Social and behavioral lessons were also common in their readings.

SIXTH READER.

VI. HOUSE CLEANING.

Francis Hopkinson, 1737-1791. He was the son of an Englishman; was born in Philadelphia, and was educated at the college of that city, now the University of Pennsylvania. He represented New Jersey in the Congress of 1776, and was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. He was one of the most sensible and elegant writers of his time, and distinguished himself both in prose and verse. His lighter writings abound in humor and keen satire; his more solid writings are marked by clearness and good sense. His pen did much to forward the cause of American independence. His “Essay on Whitewashing,” from which the following extract is taken, was mistaken for the composition of Dr. Franklin, and published among his writings. It was originally in the form of “A Letter from a Gentleman in America to his Friend in Europe, on Whitewashing.”

There is no season of the year in which the lady may not, if she pleases, claim her privilege; but the latter end of May is generally fixed upon for the purpose. The attentive husband may judge, by certain prognostics, when the storm is at hand. If the lady grows uncommonly fretful, finds fault with the servants, is discontented with the children, and complains much of the nastiness of everything about her, these are symptoms which ought not to be neglected, yet they sometimes go off without any further effect.

But if, when the husband rises in the morning, he should observe in the yard a wheelbarrow with a quantity of lime in it, or should see certain buckets filled with a solution of lime in water, there is no time for hesitation. He immediately locks up the apartment or closet where his papers and private property are kept, and, putting the key into his pocket, betakes himself to flight. A husband, however beloved, becomes a perfect nuisance during this season of female rage. His authority is superseded, his commission suspended, and the very scullion who cleans the brasses in the kitchen becomes of more importance than he. He has nothing for it but to submit for a time, and run from an evil which he can neither prevent nor mollify.

The husband gone, the ceremony begins. The walls are stripped of their furniture—paintings, prints, and looking-glasses lie huddled in heaps about the floors; the curtains are torn from their tassels, the beds crammed into windows, chairs and tables, bedsteads and cradles, crowd the yard, and the garden fence bends beneath the weight of carpets, blankets, cloths, old coats, under petticoats, and ragged breeches. Here may be seen the lumber of the kitchen, forming a dark and confused mass for the foreground of the picture; gridirons and frying pans, rusty shovels and broken tongs, joint stools, and the fractured remains of rush-bottomed chairs. There a closet has disgorged its bowels—riveted plates and dishes, halves of china bowls, cracked tumblers, broken wineglasses, phials of forgotten physic, papers of unknown powders, seeds and dried herbs, tops of teapots, and stoppers of departed decanters—from the rag hole in the garret, to the rat hole in the cellar, no place escapes unrummaged. It would seem as if the day of general doom had come, and the utensils of the house were dragged forth to judgment.

In this tempest, the words of King Lear unavoidably present themselves, and might, with little alteration, be made strictly applicable.

“Let the great gods,
That keep this drearish pother over our heads,
Find out their enemies now. Twinkle, then wretch,
That hast within these untrodéd crimes
Unwhippéd of justice.
Close pent-up guilt,
Have your concealing continents, and cry
These dreadful summoners grace.”

This ceremony completed, and the house thoroughly evacuated, the next operation is to smear the walls and ceilings with brushes dipped into a solution of lime, called whitewash; to pour buckets of water over every floor; and scratch all the partitions and wainscots with hard brushes, charged with soft soap and stonecutters’ sand.
The windows by no means escape the general deluge. A servant scrambles out upon the poulthouse, at the risk of her neck, and, with a mug in her hand and a bucket within reach, dashes innumerable gallons of water against the glass panes, to the great annoyance of passengers in the street.

I have been told that an action at law was once brought against one of these water nymphs, by a person who had a new suit of clothes spoiled by this operation: but after long argument, it was determined that no damages could be awarded; insomuch as the defendant was in the exercise of a legal right, and not answerable for the consequences. And so the poor gentleman was doubly nonsuited; for he lost both his suit of clothes and his suit at law.

These smearings and scratchings, these washings and dashing, being duly performed, the next ceremonial is to cleanse and replace the distracted furniture. You may have seen a house raising, or a ship launch—recollect, if you can, the hurry, bustle, confusion, and noise of such a scene, and you will have some idea of this cleansing match. The misfortune is, that the sole object is to make things clean. It matters not how many useful, ornamental, or valuable articles suffer mutilation or clean under the operation. A mahogany chair and a carved frame undergo the same discipline; they are to be made clean at all events; but their preservation is not worthy of attention.

For instance: a fine large engraving is laid flat upon the floor; a number of smaller prints are piled upon it, until the superincumbent weight cracks the lower glass—but this is of no importance. A valuable picture is placed leaning against the sharp corner of a table; others are made to lean against that, till the pressure of the whole forces the corner of the table through the canvas of the first. The frame and glass of a fine print are to be cleaned; the spirit and oil used on this occasion are suffered to leak through and deface the engraving—no matter. If the glass is clean and the frame shines, it is sufficient—the rest is not worthy of consideration. An able mathematician hath made a calculation, founded on long experience, and proved that the losses and destruction incident to two whitewashings are equal to one removal, and three removals equal to one fire.

This cleansing frolic over, matters begin to resume their pristine appearance: the storm abates, and all would be well again; but it is impossible that so great a convulsion in so small a community should pass over without producing some consequences. For two or three weeks after the operation, the family are usually afflicted with sore eyes, sore throat, or severe colds, occasioned by inhalations from wet floors and damp walls.

I know a gentleman here who is fond of accounting for everything in a philosophical way. He considers this, what I call a custom, as a real periodical disease peculiar to the climate. His train of reasoning is whimsical and ingenious, but I am not at leisure to give you the detail. The result was, that he found the disturber to be incurable; but after much study, he thought he had discovered a method to divert the evil he could not subdue. For this purpose, he caused a small building, about twelve feet square, to be erected in his garden, and furnished with some ordinary chairs and tables, and a few prints of the cheapest sort. His hope was, that when the whitewashing frenzy seized the females of his family, they might repair to this apartment, and scrub, and scour, and smear to their hearts' content; and so spend the violence of the disease in this outpost, whilst he enjoyed himself in quiet at headquarters. But the experiment did not answer his expectations. It was impossible it should, since a principal part of the gratification consists in the lady's having an uncontrolled right to torment her husband at least once in every year; to turn him out of doors, and take the reins of government into her own hands.

There is a much better contrivance than this of the philosopher's; which is, to cover the walls of the house with paper. This is generally done. And though it does not abolish, it at least shortens the period of female domination. This paper is decorated with various fancies; and made so ornamental that the women have admitted the fashion without perceiving the design.

There is also another alleviation to the husband's distress. He generally has the sole use of a small room or closet for his books and papers, the key of which he is allowed to keep. This is considered as a privileged place, even in the whitewashing season, and stands like the land of Goshen amidst the plagues of Egypt. But then he must be extremely cautious, and ever upon his guard; for, should he inadvertently go abroad and leave the key in his door, the housemaid, who is always on the watch for such an opportunity, immediately enters in triumph with buckets, brooms, and brushes—takes possession of the premises, and forthwith puts all his books and papers "to rights," to his utter confusion, and sometimes serious detriment.

Movea.—Look.—The reference is to Shakespeare's tragedy, Act III, Scene 2.

Goshen.—The portion of Egypt settled by Jacob and his family. In the Bible, Exodus viii. 22, Goshen was exempted from the plague of the flies.
Etiquette of the Table

Objective: To examine table manners with an historical perspective, to build confidence and group cohesion through drama.

Background Information
In Victorian times table manners were extremely important, and children learned them from parents, governesses, and books of etiquette.

Activity
Brainstorm a list of table manners which modern children are expected to follow. Share the attached list of manners from Never Give a Lady a Restive Horse by Thomas E. Hill. Allow a few moments for the children to peruse them and ask questions about the confusing ones.

In pairs, have students choose a manner to act out, with or without words. Once the pair is ready, they perform their skits in front of the group. The rest of the group takes turns guessing until they discover the right manner.

Discussion Questions:
~ Which manners are we still familiar with today?
~ Which manners are different from today?
~ Which of the manners would be the hardest for you to follow if you were growing up in Victorian times? Why?
~ Would you like to attend a proper Victorian dinner party? Why or why not?

Try to eat a meal using proper Victorian manners!

Minnesota Historical Society
Etiquette of the Table

Don't pick up your fork or knife until you have been served.

Eat slowly to enjoy Better health, Greater wealth, Longer Life & More happiness.

Take what you are served even if you don't like it, because Eccentricity should be avoided at the table.

Try to keep the tablecloth clean.

We no longer put knives in our mouths, as was formerly the custom.

Punctuality is necessary.

Ladies sit down before the gentlemen.

Do not study or smell the food before you take it.

As you take the food, make no special comments or praise over it.

Do not talk with your mouth full.

Do not fill your mouth too full.

Do not open your mouth while chewing.

Do not leave the table with food in your mouth.

Do not put your hand in your mouth while eating.

Do not cut bread, break it instead.

Feel free to take the last piece, there is probably more.

Use your napkin frequently.

Don't wear gloves at the table.

Feel free to eat the corn off the cob.

Leave the table to sneeze or cough.

Remove bones or cherry pits from your mouth with your fork, not your fingers.

Don't curl your feet under your chair.

Don't stretch your feet out so far under the table that they touch someone else's.
Victorian Children’s Games

Anita, Ramsey and Laura, the children who grew up in the Ramsey House, played games like these!

Parlor Games (to be played indoors)

Quakers

This is a friendly morning greeting activity!

Setup: Players seated in a circle.

Method: One player turns to his/her neighbor, and chants: “Neighbor, neighbor, how are thee?”
   The response is: “Very well, I thank thee.”
   “How is neighbor next to thee?”
   “I don’t know but I’ll go see.”
   And so the play continues around the circle.

Shadow Verbs

Shadow Verbs is not only a fun excuse to do some acting, but is also a nice review of verbs! This dramatic game is called a “Quiet Game For Hot Weather” by The American Girls Handy Book, but can be played any time of the year.

Setup: For a truly Victorian feel, hang a white sheet, with a large lamp behind it, so that the action can be seen in silhouette. Or have the students simply act in front of the class.

Method: Two students, the “actors,” leave the room, and the rest of the class decides on a verb to mime, and a word with which it rhymes. They then call the actors back in, and tell them: “The verb we have chosen rhymes with __________.” The actors consult on what their first guess will be, and step in front of the class, (or between the lamp and the sheet, if being done in silhouette) and mime the action. For example, if the class had given them the word “lake” they might mime “bake.”

If the actors have guessed the proper verb, the class claps their hands and a new pair of actors is chosen. If not, the class clucks their tongues, and the actors consult on their next guess. (It might be a good strategy to choose guesses in alphabetical order!)

Earth, Air, Fire, and Water

Setup: Players sitting in a circle. One player, the Roller, sits with a soft, small ball in the center.

Method: The Roller rolls the ball to someone and calls out: “Water!” The player who received the ball must instantly call out an animal that lives in the water. If s/he cannot name a water animal before the Roller counts to 10, s/he becomes the Roller. If air or earth is called, one must name an animal living there, and in the case of fire, something that can exist in fire.
RING ON A STRING

Setup: Players in a circle, a string being held by all players with a ring or a washer on it, and one Guesser in the center.

Method: The Guesser must guess who has the ring. The players are constantly passing the ring around the circle and pretending to be passing it if they do not have it. The Guesser has 3 chances to find it, whomever is correctly guessed, or the last incorrectly guessed player becomes the Guesser.

KITTY WANTS A CORNER

Setup: Players standing in a circle, “Kitty” in the center.

Method: Kitty tells one of the players: “Kitty wants a corner,” and the reply is always: “Ask my neighbor,” and so Kitty must ask another. All the while, the other players are making silent deals with each other to swap spots in the circle, and are crossing the circle to do so. Kitty tries to take these spots before they are filled, and the player left without a spot is the new Kitty.

POOR KITTY

Setup: Players sitting in a circle, “Kitty” in the center.

Method: Kitty crawls around the circle, chooses a player, and “meows,” looking like a sad Kitty. The player says: “Poor Kitty!” (without smiling!) 3 times. If a smile appears, that player becomes Kitty.

CATERPILLAR

Setup: Enough chairs for each player in a circle.

Method: One player walks to the center of the circle, while the rest find seats. Once everyone is seated, players shift around the perimeter of the circle to fill whichever seat is vacant so that the middle person cannot sit in it. If the middle person does take the seat, the player to his/her left moves to the middle of the circle.

THIS IS MY EYE

Setup: Players sitting in a circle.

Method: One player points to his/her eye and calls it something else. The next player points to that body part and calls it yet another name.

Anita: (pointing to her eye) This is my chin, Ramsey.
Ramsey: (pointing to his chin) This is my thumb, Laura.
Laura: (pointing to her thumb) This is my nose, Minnie.
Minnie: (pointing to her cheek) This is my cheek, Nellie.

Minnie has made a mistake, and now must serve as a judge.
TEAPOT

Setup: 3 students in front of class.

Method: The 3 students secretly choose a common word to replace with an uncommon or old-fashioned word. For example, “pencil” is now “teapot.” They have a conversation in front of the class in which they substitute the word “teapot” for “pencil.” The rest of the class must try to guess which word had been substituted, and with what.

MARBLES

Setup: A 9-inch circle drawn on the ground, each player has one marble inside the circle, and one for shooting.

Method: Players stand 6 feet from the circle and take turns rolling their marbles into it. If a player hits a marble out of the circle, s/he shoots again.

Lawn Games (to be played outdoors or in a gym)

BLIND MAN’S BLUFF

Setup: Open field, one blindfolded player.

Method: The Blind Man is turned around 3 times, and then tries to tag the other players. Whoever is tagged becomes the Blind Man.

BLUE TOM

Setup: Open field, everyone standing in a line on one side, with It in the middle, facing them.

Method: It yells: “Blue Tom!” 3 times, and everybody runs to the other side of the field. It tags whom s/he can, and they join It in the middle. If It calls “Pink Tom” or “Blue James” and anyone makes a false start, they become It, and the game starts over. The same penalty applies if anyone It captured calls out “Blue Tom.”

CROSS TAG

Setup: Open field, an It, and a Runner.

Method: The Runner is given a short head start before It chases. Others try to cross in between the two. If this happens, It yells the Crosser’s name, and runs after him/her. Once a player is tagged, s/he becomes It.

BIRDS

Setup: Open field, a row of “birds” and It facing them.

Method: The teacher whispers a color in each player’s ear, being sure to have some repeated colors. It calls out “Blue Bird!” and anyone whose color is blue tries to cross the field without being tagged. The first person tagged becomes the new It. If It calls a color that no one has, the teacher calls out “I haven’t got any!” and chooses a new It.
**ST. PAUL**

**Setup:** Open field, 2 teams facing each other on opposite sides.

**Method:** Team 1 secretly agrees on an occupation, then Team 2 announces, “Here we come!” and marches toward Team 1.

Team 2: Where from?
Team 1: St. Paul!
Team 2: What’s your trade?

At this point both teams should be facing each other in the center of the field, and Team 1 mimes their occupation. Team 2 yells guesses, once someone guesses correctly, Team 1 shouts: “Yes!” and runs back to their start line, while Team 2 tries to tag them. Anyone tagged becomes part of the other team, and play is reversed.

**JUMP ROPE GAMES**

**Setup:** Long jump rope, 2 people turning the rope, rest of class in line to jump.

**Method:**

1) Jump rope from one foot to the other, singing:
   - *Mammy, Daddy jumped the gutter,*
   - *Loaf of bread and a pound of butter.*

2) Hold a stone in one hand. Jump 3 times.
   - Put the stone on the ground. Jump 3 times.

3) One by one, everyone runs under the rope, jumps once, runs out.

4) Raise the rope higher after each jump.

When somebody misses a jump or touches the rope, s/he becomes a rope turner.
Write a Thank You Note

Objective: To take part in an act of etiquette, to give the Alexander Ramsey House feedback on your experience.

Background Information

Proper Victorians knew the importance of writing to each other. It meant that they would be remembered and it expressed their gratitude.

Activity

Practice this area of etiquette by thanking the Ramsey House for your tour. In your note, include something you learned, something you enjoyed, and something you would like to know or experience.

Once you have written this note, think of someone else in your life who might appreciate a thank you note!