

Living History at Hillside

Pre-Visit Materials



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Here are a few activities to supplement what your students will experience during their field trip. These crafts, games, and puzzles are focused on some of the program's main themes, including the Merriman-Sharp family, farming in Michigan, and life and culture in the 1880s. We've also provided some ideas for historic costumes and lunches, in case you want to go all-out!

These materials aren't essential to your field trip—if you decide to use only one or two, or none at all, you'll still have a great time and learn a ton. If you do want to get a head start, though, this is an excellent place to begin!

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Calling Cards Craft

If you wanted to visit a friend at their house, how would you let them know you were coming? In the 1800s, you couldn't make a phone call, although the mail did arrive several times throughout the day. Instead of sending a letter, often times people would just stop by and leave a "calling card" if no one was home.

At first, calling cards looked just like business cards with a name on them. As printing became easier and more popular, calling cards became more and more elaborate. They would have the owner's name, decorations, and maybe a printed message. Some were even cut out in fun shapes.

If you came home and noticed a calling card by the front door, you would know to return the favor and visit your friend within the next week. Calling cards could also be left to say "congratulations," "get well," or "Happy New Year."

Use the templates provided to make your own calling cards using regular paper or cardstock.



Calling Cards Template:

Create-a-Character Activity

Teachers: The lists below contain common examples of traits, activities, and lifestyles from the 1800s. Cut out each item, and have students draw randomly from a hat to create their own character using the worksheet on the following page.

Names:

Boys:

Girls:

Abraham	Abigail
Alexander	Adelaide
Archibald	Alice
Augustus	Barbara
Bartholomew	Rebecca
Abijah	Obedience
Micajah	Arabella
Chauncey	Elizabeth

Types of houses:



Frontier cabin: This type of house usually had only one or two rooms, with a loft for children to sleep in. Your family might have built it yourself with help from some neighbors. If you lived here, your parents might be farmers, and you would get more from the earth and hard work than from stores.



Tenement: Factory workers and their families might live in a tenement in the city. This type of house was like an apartment, but lots of time too many people lived there to be comfortable. You would have many neighbors, and hear noise all the time.



Victorian Estate: This type of house is the kind Ella Sharp lived in. Victorian estates were owned by very wealthy families. They often had many floors and rooms, with space for servants and offices.

Foods:

Pickles Many families didn't have refrigerators, so they had to preserve things by pickling them. Today, we often have pickles made of cucumbers, but you can also "pickle" fruits and other vegetables.	Chicken and Dumplings This is a hearty meal for hard workers! It has chicken and vegetables, with bread or biscuits cooked in the sauce.	Huckleberry Biscuits A huckleberry is a lot like a blueberry, but smaller. These biscuits would be good warm from the oven with butter or jam!
Gingerbread Families in the 1800s built gingerbread houses at Christmas time, just like we do today! These walls probably would have been homemade, though.	Vermicelli Pudding Vermicelli is a type of noodle – have you ever had noodles for dessert before? It would be cooked in a sweet sauce with spices, and be served warm.	Mock Duck If you don't like the idea of eating duck, don't worry. "Mock Duck" is really just beef cooked like turkey or duck for fancy dinners with guests.

Etiquette:

Wait for parents to tell you to be seated at dinner.	Laugh quietly.	Bring a calling card when visiting friends.
Make no noise when you eat or drink.	Walk the same speed as others in my group.	Only make promises you're sure you can keep.
Make sure your nails, teeth, hands, clothes, and hair are clean before you leave your room.	Only put a little food on your fork at a time.	Never bite fruit- peel it with a knife and cut it before eating.

Hobbies:

Go hunting The rich could afford to hunt for fun, but many families also for food.	Go fishing All you need for fishing are a few tools, some bait, and a lake, pond, or river!	Make Crafts Magazines in the 1800s were full of ideas for things to make, cook, sew, and decorate!
Play charades Charades is a group game where actors try to get an audience to guess a clue by acting, rather than talking.	Play baseball In the 1800s you couldn't watch the games on TV, but you would have fun playing or watching in person.	Play Graces In the Game of Graces, two players take turns tossing a hoop using two sticks. You can try this game out during recess on your field trip!
Whittle Using a small knife, some people learned to make art out of small pieces of wood. You carve away small pieces until you get the shape you want.	Go to a vaudeville show Vaudeville was a type of entertainment where different groups came on stage and performed acts like comedy and dancing.	Sing Many families had some kind of musical instrument in their home. Even if they didn't you could make rhymes and whistle tunes to make chores go by faster!

Jobs:

Farmer Raising animals and growing plants is hard work, and you have to know your seasons and lots of math!	Seamstress/Tailor Many people in the 1800s made their own clothes, but if you wanted to make a new suit or dress, you would need a seamstress or a tailor.	Factory worker This job was very important- and often dangerous- in the 1800s. If you didn't want to live in the country, you might choose this job!
Shoe Maker Today there are many places to buy shoes, but in the 1800s you would visit a shoe maker to get new ones, and have them repaired over and over.	Doctor Visiting the doctor in the 1800s was much different than it is today, but doctors still needed lots of training, and they worked to make sure sick people got better.	Lawyer Mr. Sharp was a lawyer, who eventually became a State Senator. If you like to study and learn rules, this is a good job for you!
Shopkeeper How good are you at selling things? Shopkeepers would have to be smart, friendly, and know lots about the goods they sold.	Newspaper Publisher This would be a good job for people who like to write and share information. Newspapers were the main way to spread news in the 1800s.	Banker Bankers often worked in an office building, keeping track of numbers, and helping people make accounts and borrow money.
Chimney Sweep Chimney Sweeping is one dirty job! You would have to work inside the chimney and fireplace to clean out all the old soot.	Miner Gathering minerals from the earth is a dangerous job. Some miners worked underground with a light. Others used tools to chip away at the land from above.	Train Operator Train Operators got to do a lot of traveling! They would help people get to different places for work and vacation.

Create-a-Character

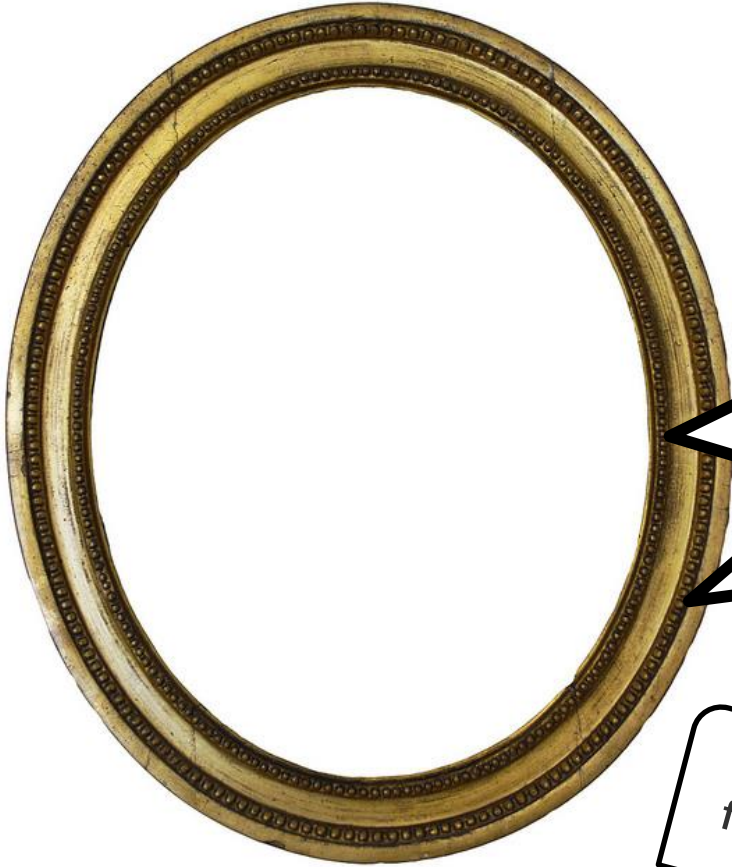
People in the 1800s had all different kinds of personalities and lifestyles, just like we do today. With the traits you picked in class, fill this sheet to create your own character. Use your imagination to write a story about what a day in their life was like!

How is your life similar? How is it different?

Hello, my name is:

_____ ,

and this is what my portrait looks like:



I have _____ brothers and sisters, and my family lives in a _____.

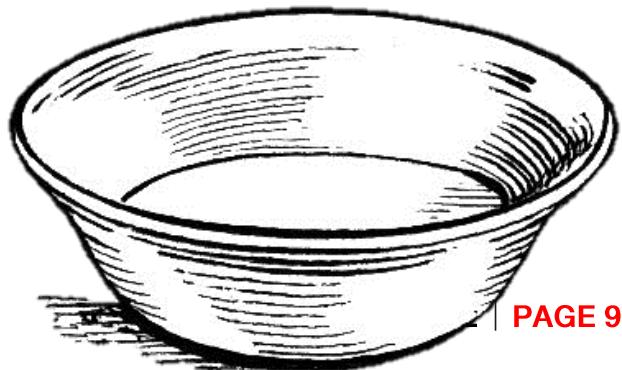
When I get older, I want to be a:

I try to be polite, but sometimes I forget to _____.

After my chores are done, I like to...

My favorite food is: _____

This is what it looks like:



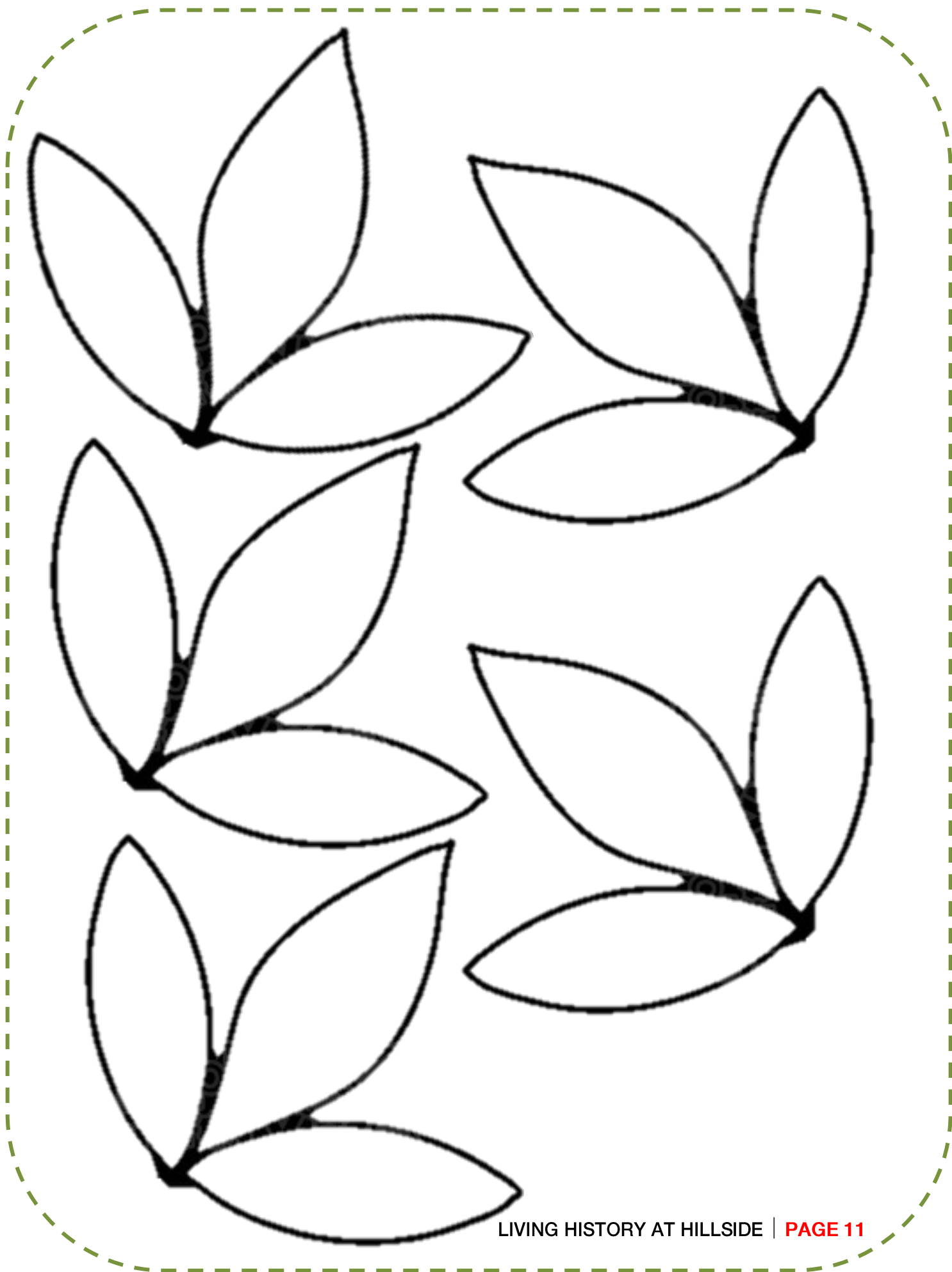
Wreath Craft

In their free time, many Victorians, especially women, liked to make crafts. Wreaths were one popular project, and Victorian crafters were very creative with the materials they used to make wreaths. In the Merriman-Sharp farmhouse, you'll see examples made of mica and seeds, and we even have some in the collection made of human hair (hair crafting was very common as a way to remember loved ones). For women and girls, being able to make things, both decorative and useful, was an important way to show your good upbringing.

1. Use the templates below to cut out (or have students cut out) leaves for your classroom wreath.
2. Decorate your wreath using embellishments of your choice.
3. Arrange the leaves in a circle or semi-circle, either attaching them to some kind of backing (cardboard, paper, etc.), or to each other with a sturdy tape or glue.

Here are some examples of 19th Century wreath styles:





Suggested Reading

All of the titles listed below are available through the Jackson Public Library

Books about America in the 1800s:

Farmer Boy by Laura Ingalls Wilder

While many Little House on the Prairie books focus on the pioneer lives of Laura Ingalls Wilder and her family in the West, Farmer Boy describes the life of Laura's future husband, Almonzo, growing up a little closer to Michigan—in rural Indiana. Grade level 3-7.

Caddie Woodlawn by Carol Ryrie Brink

Caddie Woodlawn is about an adventurous, free-spirited eleven-year-old growing up in 19th Century Wisconsin. Based on the real life of the author's grandmother, this book would be a great reference for the lives of the Stillson family members, who lived in the log cabin now located at the Ella Sharp Museum. Grade level 3-7.

Locomotive by Brian Floca

Transportation in the 1800s improved by leaps and bounds—and Ella Sharp would've taken the train to places all over the United States. This Caldecott Medal Winner is about the experience and mechanics of riding a train. Grade level K-4.

The School at Crooked Creek by Laurie Lawlor

Like Farmer Boy, this book is based in rural Indiana, but is a fictional account of one boy's experience in a one-room schoolhouse. Grade level 2-4.

A Little Princess Stepping Stone Book by Cathy East Dubowski

This book is a good introduction to a classic book at an earlier grade level. Ella Sharp was from an upper-class family, just like main character Sara Crewe. Good for contrasting with pioneer lives from a similar time period. Grade level 1-3.

Books Ella Sharp might have read (published 1800-1912):

Little Women by Louisa May Alcott (1868)

Fairy Tales by Hans Christian Anderson (1846)

The Jungle Book by Rudyard Kipling (1894)

Clothing and Lunch Ideas

Clothing:

The image below is a class photo from a one-room schoolhouse in Grand Junction, Michigan during the late 1800s.



Girls often wore their hair parted down the middle, in braids or curls—maybe with a bow for special occasions. Dresses or skirts were about calf-length, and worn with socks and shoes. Floral prints and sailor patterns were popular at the time. Aprons could be worn while playing or doing chores.

Boys wore their hair short, like many do today. They wore knickers that came to their knees, or full-length pants. Button-up shirts with suspenders were common, and boys could wear jackets to complete a suit.

Lunch:

Students used all sorts of things—tin pails, lard cans, baskets, etc.—to carry their lunches. They were often filled with things families could make or grow at home—like homemade bread with jam or butter, hard-boiled eggs, leftover pancakes, and occasionally meat. If families had fruit trees, they could bring produce like apples, or have lettuce on their sandwiches.

Sometimes students would bring a potato to school, but not for eating: instead, they would heat it over a fire before leaving in the winter, and hold it on the way to school to keep their hands warm!