

A Field Trip To
A Day in a One-Room School

At the Seneca Schoolhouse Museum
Seneca, Maryland
16800 River Road
Poolesville, MD 20837

A Living History Program

Historic Medley District, Inc.
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Welcome to a typical school day in Seneca, Maryland in 1880.

The Historic Medley District, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to historic preservation in western Montgomery County, leases and operates the Seneca Schoolhouse Museum in Seneca State Park. We are delighted that you will bring Maryland history to life for your students. During their “**Day in a One-Room School**,” your students will recreate the lives of the children of farmers, craftsmen, merchants, C&O Canal bargemen, doctors, and millers living in Seneca in 1880.

This Packet

Materials in the packet will help you prepare the students for the most memorable living history lesson. Included are:

Curriculum and games.
A newspaper article about the Seneca School.
Typical lunches and school clothes of the 19th century.
Rules for the Spelling Bee.
Appropriate manners and behavior.
Names and brief biographical profiles for role-playing

Fee Schedule and Payment

The fee is \$8.00 per student with a **minimum fee of \$200.00**. Add \$8.00 for each student for groups numbering more than 25. There is no charge for teachers or parents. Due to limited building capacity, you may have to split up your classes into more than one field trip if more than 28 students will be attending. This can be arranged when you book the trip.

Checks are payable to **Historic Medley District, Inc.** Please bring your check on the day of the field trip and give it to the schoolmarm. If booking more than one day, please bring a check for the full amount on the first day and note on the check the days for which payment is being made. Each class/group will receive one copy of *Country School Boy*, by Bess Paterson Shipe, as a memento of the day at the schoolhouse. Additional copies are available for purchase.

Hours

The school day begins at 10 a.m. and ends at 2 p.m. Please arrive on time as the session begins promptly at 10 a.m. If transportation difficulties will require that you arrive late or leave early, please let us know when you book the trip so the teacher can modify the program length or adjust the time of arrival and departure in advance.

Location and Travel Time

The Seneca Schoolhouse is located at 16800 River Road, Poolesville, MD 20837.

We are about 45 minutes driving time from Rockville, 20 minutes from Potomac and Germantown, 40 minutes from Gaithersburg, and 75 minutes from Silver Spring and Washington.

One hundred twenty-five years ago, the children typically traveled four to five miles to school in all types of weather, and were often on the road or walked for more than an hour.

Parking

Unless you arrive on horseback, in a buggy, or in a horse-drawn school bus, which you may tie up on the lawn behind the schoolhouse, please park on River Road in front of the school house.

Lunch

Please bring lunches in paper bags. Be sure each student brings a beverage. No food or drink is available on the premises. Lunch suggestions from the period are found on page 6.

Trash

We are a trash-free zone and ask that you check the schoolhouse and grounds to be sure that all trash has been cleared. **Teachers must take the trash with them**, for we have no way of disposing of it.

Facilities

There are outhouses (port-a-potties) on the school grounds and hand wipes for personal cleanliness. We do not have running water. Buckets of water used to be hauled by the students from the nearby spring.

Museum Shop

Our small museum shop, located in the cupboard in the vestibule, offers toys, games, books, and gifts very much like those enjoyed by students more than 100 years ago. For sale are Victorian-era toys and gifts, penny candy (leave no wrappers, please!), McGuffey's Readers, postcards, note cards, slates and slate pencils, etc. Also for sale is the child's novel, *Country School Boy*, a fictional re-telling of the misadventures of Lewis Allnutt and his friends.

Please assign an adult accompanying the group to supervise the sales. Simple instructions and prices are posted on the inside of the cupboard door.

The field trip is priced at barely a break even level so it will be affordable to as many students as possible. This means that proceeds from the shop are a major source of funds for upkeep of the museum. If you feel it is appropriate, we ask that the children's parents be informed of the nonprofit museum shop and its important fundraising role in time for them to send along some money for small purchases.

Party Rental

The Schoolhouse and two acres of surrounding parkland are available for rent for birthday parties, anniversaries, retirement parties, and family celebrations. Props as well as the services of a costumed teacher or docent are provided. For information on cost or scheduling, call (301) 972-8588.

Questions Answered

If you have any questions regarding the field trip, **please e-mail us at info@historicmedley.org or call the HMD office at 301-972-8588 and leave a message with your name, telephone number, the question, and when you may be reached.** We will attempt to answer your inquiry no later than the next business day.

Cancellation Policy

You must notify the museum five business days in advance of your scheduled field trip if you wish to cancel. Call and leave a detailed message or send an email; contact information is at the end of this packet. There is a waiting list of schools wishing to attend, but matching one up with your date is not always possible. You will be charged the minimum \$200 fee if you do not give five business days notice, and if we cannot find a replacement.

For Emergencies ONLY

The telephone number at the Schoolhouse is (301) 977-2430. Local calls may be made out from the schoolhouse. Incoming calls should only be made when absolutely necessary. Cell phones work sporadically in the area. We suggest you stand by the front gate to receive a signal if you wish to make a call. **Please turn off all cell phones before entering the schoolhouse. The schoolmarm does not like to have her classes interrupted and the 1880 atmosphere shattered.**

Role Playing

During the “**Day in a One-Room School,**” children will pretend to be the sons and daughters of farmers, tanners, bargemen, merchants, millers, and doctors. Please assign each student the identity of one of the Seneca students whose brief biography appears on the last three pages of this packet. We recommend that they read and prepare before they arrive. We also encourage students to come in costume, if they would like to. Local libraries should be able to help parents make costumes from material at home. See more information on page 9.

Curriculum

In one-room schoolhouses, children of all ages and levels were given various lessons at different times. On the field trip, the same lessons will be taught to all of your students, but may be adapted for individual students in mixed-age groups. The original school included children from ages 6 upwards and the work correlated to grades K-8. The visiting students will concentrate on the 3rd through 5th grade levels with some variation depending on the age and level of the students. Although the boys and girls are seated separately, they will take lessons together.

Traditionally, students and teachers worked with the most basic of supplies. Typically, only one textbook was used by each child for the entire year, with supplemental lessons taken from books kept in a small library. Books, purchased by the families, were often passed down within families until they were tattered and worn. Each child worked with a slate and a slate or soapstone pencil; a pencil cost the equivalent of two weeks wages for a grown man. Erasers for slates were pieces of cut up flannel. Older students also wrote with pen and ink, but paper and ink were used sparingly.

Materials used in the program and provided at the Schoolhouse: *McGuffey's Reader*, slate, soapstone pencil and flannel (eraser).

Course of Study

1. Reading: Read a lesson from *McGuffey's Reader*.
2. Spelling: Practice words from *McGuffey's Reader*.
3. Arithmetic: Practice various multiplication tables and do word problems.
4. Writing: Practice good penmanship when writing words and numbers on the slate.

5. American History: Learn the names of the original thirteen colonies and practice spelling the names. Students should know the difference between a state and a territory (such as Alaska in 1880), should understand that maps change over the years to reflect the evolving political scene, that colonies belonging to a country are the same color as the home country.
6. Spelling Bee

Games

Most rural one-room schoolhouses had only rudimentary equipment. Students of the mid-1800s were encouraged to be creative in their play. They climbed trees (five original trees still surround the schoolhouse), sledged in the winter, fashioned branches into baseball bats or hockey sticks and used rocks and walnuts for balls and pucks.

Students are encouraged to think up activities and games appropriate to a natural setting in the mid-nineteenth century. Some games and songs of this period include:

Games and Songs

Drop the Handkerchief
London Bridge
Charades
Leap Frog
Follow the leader
King of the Mountain
Simon Says
Hot Potato
Relay Races
Tag

Oh Susanna
Old Kentucky Home
Shoo Fly
Star-Spangled Banner
Yankee Doodle

Lunches

Around the turn of the century, country children carried their lunches to school. Although lunch boxes could be purchased for ten cents, most children carried their lunches in a lard bucket or syrup pails. These had tight fitting lids, which kept food from drying out. Students should bring their lunch in a paper bag.

Bread with butter or lard was the basis for the lunch. The bread was made of wheat or corn. Oatcakes were also popular. Meat and bread were usually packed separately instead of being made into a sandwich. Meat generally included beef, pork, and chicken. Many

poorer children did not have meat in their lunches. Some children had cheese or fish. A hard-boiled egg was a special treat.

Jelly, syrup, or sugar sandwiches made with homemade bread were also eaten. Peanut butter had not yet been invented. If fruit was included, it was usually an apple or a pear. Oranges were special treats for special occasions such as Christmas.

Dessert was usually homemade cake or cookies. Sugar and molasses ginger cookies were popular.

Costumes

The school is authentically restored to the Victorian period. It originally operated from 1867 to 1910, and the teacher will be in the tailored costume of the emancipated “new woman” of that time. Children are encouraged to come in costume if they wish.

In the 1870s and 1880s, girls wore cotton, wool, linen, organdy, gingham and taffeta dresses in deep colors often decorated with ribbons, embroidery, and other trimmings. Dresses came to just below the knee for young girls but were gradually lowered after the age of twelve to reach floor length by age 17 or 18. Petticoats were cotton, organdy, or cotton. Dresses were protected with cotton or linen aprons. To keep warm, girls wore wool or cotton flannel underclothing, hand knit shawls or wool jackets, mittens and hand knit hats. Stockings, often hand knit, were held up with garters. Shoes were usually buttoned high-tops or boots of leather, canvas, or felt.

Boys wore pantaloons or knickers, short jackets and soft muslin blouses. Towards the end of the 19th century, it became fashionable for both girls and boys to wear sailor suits or dresses. After 1900, knickers became popular for boys. Wool jackets, wool or flannel underwear, mittens and knit, felt or wool hats kept out the cold.

Making suitable costumes for the school visit need not entail great expense or effort. For boys, cutting off old pants just below the knee and adding some elastic will make satisfactory knickers. Removing the collar from an old shirt (leaving the collar band) and cutting off the tails will produce a smock-like garment. For girls, the Empire style dress introduced by Kate Greenway in the 1880's is still a popular party dress. The addition of an apron would be appropriate for school wear.

Spelling Bee Rules:

1. The schoolmarm will pronounce the word, the student will pronounce the word, spell the word, and then pronounce the word again.
2. Pupils missing a word will take their seats. Successful spellers will remain standing where they are.
3. The person left standing will be declared the winner and receive a small prize.
4. The words used for the spelling bee will be on the level of the visiting group.

Behavior and Manners

You may want to tell the students:

When you visit the Seneca School House, it will be just like being in a play. You are going to pretend that you are the boys and girls who attended the one-room schoolhouse more than 125 years ago. When the teacher rings the bell at the door of the schoolhouse, you are to form two lines. The head of the lines will be at the foot of the steps – girls in one line; boys in the other. Both lines will be from shortest child to the tallest child as the desks vary in size.

The teacher will give you instructions.

You will march very quietly into the school house (with your lunch) – first all the girls; then all the boys. Be sure you wipe your feet on the entry mats.

Leave your coats in the vestibule. Boys will hang their hats on the peg-rack.

Go into the classroom and stand by a desk (or bench) until the teacher says “be seated.”

Stay in your seats until the teacher calls on you.

If you wish to ask a question, raise your hand.

When the teacher calls on you, for any reason, it will be in your role name. You are to call her “ma’am.”

When she calls on you, stand up quietly by your desk to ask your question or to answer her.

Try to do whatever work is given to you, and at recess and lunch time, play the games the children used to play.

Discipline will be less stringent than that permitted in the 19th century – no student will be touched – but there is a dunce cap and dunce stool waiting in the corner for unruly boys and girls.

Like the children from ages past, you may be asked to help with chores at the schoolhouse such as bringing in wood and water, watering the horses if there are any tied up behind the school, older children helping the younger, and cleaning the blackboard or the erasers.

AND

Most important of all, have fun attending school as a real child who was in the same one-room schoolhouse more than one hundred years ago, and enjoy remembering your visit to the past when you return home.

A Final Word to Teachers and Parents

All work with the students before their day at Seneca Schoolhouse is optional, although their experiences will be enriched if they prepare for the day.

Please impress upon your students that the museum and many its furnishings are more than one hundred years old. Some of the equipment and furnishings used by the students including the desks and maps are irreplaceable antiques. We trust the students with these valuable pieces, but we ask that they treat the museum and its contents with care and respect. The carvings on the desk were put there by children who grew old and died long before your students were born. Please ask that the students not add any marks or carvings.

On behalf of the Board, members and staff of the Historic Medley District, Inc., we thank you for your choice of the Seneca Schoolhouse Museum as a living-history project. We look forward to your attendance, and hope that you will recommend our program to your colleagues. Please feel free to call Historic Medley if you have questions. Our number is 301-972-8588.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR YOUR FIELD TRIP:

Historic Medley District, Inc.

Telephone: 301-972-8588

Email address: info@historicmedley.org

Teachers and parents are to remain invisible and silent. Please instruct your students that you are not there. If children are allowed to jump out of their seats and run to you, or if you are correcting, instructing etc., then the experience of a true 1880 classroom is diminished. The schoolmarm will handle all disciplinary problems, in her role, as an 1880 schoolmarm. Please do not interject as this will not paint a true picture of what life was like in a one-room schoolhouse.

Seneca, Maryland in 1880

Before 1865, children in the Seneca area were taught at home by parents or tutors, or received no formal education. In 1865, just as the Civil War was ending, Mr. Upton Darby, a farmer and miller (whose white house still stands next to the Poole Store beside Seneca Creek) collected subscriptions from his neighbors to start a one-room school. Families contributed cash and skills. The Darby family provided two acres of land as well as the stone and wood for the building. Others offered to plaster and paint, or to dress the stone.

Families with more limited means cut and seasoned oak for the woodstove. Others offered to board the teacher who moved from family to family each month.

The teachers were generally young unmarried men or women who were paid a few hundred dollars a year. Two young men who taught at the school after college later returned to the Poolesville community as doctors. The teacher recruited new students as he or she was not paid when the class size dropped below 25.

Near the Schoolhouse is the C&O Canal. Grain was taken by a small train along the Seneca Creek from the mill (where Old River Road meets Seneca Creek) to the C&O Canal. There it was loaded on barges and taken northwest to Cumberland and south to Georgetown. The canal lies alongside the Potomac River.

Although most of the students were drawn from local farms and settlements, many came from the barge families who plied the C&O Canal. During those winters of the “mini Ice Age” over a hundred years ago, the canal and river often froze solid. Barge families, who were forced to tie up and wait for spring, sent their children to school rounding out classes reduced by epidemics.

At the juncture of Seneca Creek and Potomac River were a quarry and a stone-cutting plant, where beautiful red Seneca Sandstone was loaded on barges and wagons. The Smithsonian Institute’s Castle is built of the same Seneca Sandstone as the Schoolhouse.

Other interesting landmarks nearby include Montevideo directly across River Road from the Schoolhouse, and Rocklands on Montevideo Road. Montevideo was built in 1803 by George Custis Peter, stepson of George Washington. Rocklands, an exceptional Italianate house built of Seneca Sandstone, was the home of Mr. Lewis Allnutt who attended Seneca School as a young boy.

ROLES BASED ON CHILDREN WHO ATTENDED SENECA SCHOOL HOUSE

Please assign a name to each of your students prior to visiting the Seneca Schoolhouse. Students can rehearse their biographical information prior to the visit. Once they arrive at the Seneca Schoolhouse, part of the program requires that they read their biographical information for the schoolteacher.

BOYS

ADAM

My name is Adam. I live at the lock house while the canal is frozen. The lock keeper is my father's friend. I stay at the lock house so I can come to school. The rest of the year I live on a canal boat with my family.

ALEX

My name is Alex. I live in Washington, but I come here to school while my mother is visiting my aunt across the road at Montevideo. We come out from Washington on the canal boat.

ANDREW

My name is Andrew. I live in a cottage at the lumber mill. I can fish in Seneca Creek from my front yard. My father works for Mr. Upton Darby at the lumber mill.

ARTHUR

My name is Arthur. I live on a cattle and pig farm. My father and my brothers have a butcher shop next to Darby's Store. On Saturdays, I help in the shop.

BRUCE

My name is Bruce. I live about a mile down the road toward Georgetown. My father is a cobbler. He makes the best boots in the county. Of course, I only wear boots when the weather is very cold. The rest of the time, I go barefoot.

CHARLES

My name is Charles. I help my father on our farm. Our neighbors help us cut and bring in the hay in the fall. I like to harvest the apples and the pumpkins. My mother cooks chickens and makes apple and pumpkin pies when the harvesters come to help us.

CLEVE

My name is Cleve. I live next door to the blacksmith shop. It's near the grist and lumber mills. My father is a blacksmith. He makes more than horse shoes. He can make and repair farm tools, hinges and machinery.

ERNEST

My name is Ernest. I live on a tobacco farm. After the tobacco is dried, we pack it in big barrels called hogsheads. A round hole is cut into the top and bottom of the barrel, and a pole is pushed through the holes. Oxen pull the hogsheads down a rolling road to the canal. A canal boat carries the tobacco to market in Georgetown.

FRANK

My name is Frank. I live on a dairy farm. There are 40 cows. My father is the manager. Storekeepers come from Poolesville to buy our butter and milk for their customers.

GEORGE

My name is George. In the summer, I live on a canal boat. In winter, my mother and sisters live at Harper's Ferry. My father and I have a room in a house near the stone cutting mill while the canal is frozen. My father cuts the sandstone into big blocks that get sent down the canal to Washington City.

JOE

My name is Joe. I live on a farm near Seneca Creek. My brother and I help our father with the planting and the harvesting. I walk behind our mule and try to guide the plow blade straight down the row when we break up the ground in the spring. I talk to my mule, Sal, to help her behave. I come to school in the winter months.

JOHN

My name is John. My father is a canal boat captain. We live in a house down near the stone quarry during the winter. It is less than a mile away from the school.

LEM

My name is Lem. My father is a cabinet maker. He has his shop in the back of our house. The wood he works with always smells good. He made my grandmother a rocking chair.

MIKE

My name is Mike. I live in a house next to the canal that the coal company owns. As soon as the ice melts on the canal, my father will go to Cumberland to help load coal on the canal barges to be taken to Georgetown.

NED

My name is Ned. I live on a farm up the river. We've got a real haunted place near us. It's called Ghostly Bend. People think there are ghosts of soldiers there from the time of the Civil War. There isn't a captain on the canal brave enough to tie up there after dark.

PETER

My name is Peter. My father is a roofer. He makes wooden and slate shingles. When the old mill near Violette's Lock burned down, he took the slate shingles and put them on the new mill. They are as good as new.

RICHARD

My name is Richard. My father is a doctor. We live in a big house up River Road. I walk to school. In bad weather, my father brings me in his buggy.

SAM

My name is Sam. I live on a canal boat most of the time. Once when a canal boat owner lost all his money, my father and three other boat owners tied their boats together at Riley's Lock and had a square dance to raise money. Most canal boat people play an instrument, so we had lots of music.

STEVE

My name is Steve. My father and grandfather are weavers. We live in a house near the river. One room of our house has nothing but big looms in it. People buy woolen cloth from us.

WALTER

My name is Walter. I live near the big barn on River View Farm. My father is a tanner. He prepares leather for boots, saddles, reins, hinges and even book bindings. His leather is soft and pliable.

GIRLS

ANA

My name is Ana. I ride to school with my sister, Blanche, on our big quiet horse named Star. We tie her up out back by the spring and she grazes on the grass during the day.

BERTHA

My name is Bertha. Our house is on Seneca Road. My mother is a midwife and a nurse. She is often called to help when someone in the neighborhood is sick.

BETSY

My name is Betsy. My father uses the Seneca sandstone when he builds houses. He can make foundations and chimneys. He is a skillful builder.

BLANCHE

My name is Blanche. This is the first year I have been allowed to come to school. My sister says I am too small to hold the reins on Star, but I know I can control her.

CATHY

My name is Cathy. I live in a house on the farm called Oakland. There truly are large oak trees on this farm, and I like to climb into the one next to our house and read my book.

CINDY

My name is Cindy. I live near the C&O Canal. My father is a lock keeper, opening and closing the locks so the water will rush in or out allowing the barges to pass through the locks. I like to skate on the canal when it is frozen over in the winter.

DEBBIE

My name is Debbie. I live down near the creek and Darby's Store. Both my mother and my father help out at the store. If I visit the store, I can sometimes get a penny candy.

ELLA

My name is Ella. I live with my father, mother and three little brothers near the stone cutting mill. My father cuts the stone when it is wet and soft. It hardens as it dries. The Smithsonian Institution in Washington is built with Seneca sandstone. This school house is also built of sandstone.

EMMA

My name is Emma. My father has a tavern near Violette's Lock. The canal boats pull up to load or unload their goods. My mother prepares meals for travelers. I like to talk to the children who live on the canal boats. Someday I would like to go to Cumberland on one of those boats.

FRANCES

My name is Frances. My mother was a teacher before she married my father. We live near Darby's Mill. My mother helps grown-up people who want to learn to read and write. My father teaches school at Darnestown.

GRACE

My name is Grace. My mother is a dressmaker. She can make dresses and cloaks for ladies of all sizes. She makes clothes for children, too. We live in a house near where the Seneca Creek flows into the river.

HANNAH

My name is Hannah. My father brings me to school in his wagon. He is a carpenter who goes to people's houses to build furniture, staircases, mantelpieces and many other things. His wagon is full of tools.

HATTIE

My name is Hattie. I am named after my grandmother, Harriet. She makes gingerbread. My dad delivers the gingerbread to the store in Poolesville when he goes into town for supplies.

JULIA

My name is Julia. I live at a farm called Rocklands. My mother is teaching me to sew. I am working on a sampler with five kinds of embroidery stitches.

LENA

My name is Lena. I live one mile west on River Road. My father is a glazier. When people build their houses he cuts the glass and installs it in their windows. He put windows in at Montevideo when the owners added a wing to the house.

LUCY

My name is Lucy. I live on a farm. I help care for the chickens and collect the eggs. My sister and I earn money delivering the eggs to our neighbors or the Darby's store. Mother calls this our "egg money."

MARY

My name is Mary. My father has a livery stable on River Road near Seneca Creek. He has horses and wagons for hauling and carriages and fine horses. I like to pet the horse's soft muzzles.

MAY

My name is May. I live two miles from here at Sugarland. We tap our maple trees and collect the sap into buckets. We boil the sap in huge kettles until it turns into sweet maple syrup. We boil it longer, and it turns into maple sugar. We sell the syrup and the sugar to our neighbors.

ROSALIE

My name is Rosalie. I live at Oakland. There is a ghost in our house. People say she was a nanny for the children who lived in the house many years ago. Sometimes I can hear the sound of her rocking chair in the back room. I know she is a kind and friendly ghost.

SUZY

My name is Suzy. I live across the road at Montevideo. My father is the farm manager. He takes care of everything when the owners are away.