The Builders of Ulster County

A Curriculum on the History of Immigration

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with an introduction by Dr. Rose Rudnitski

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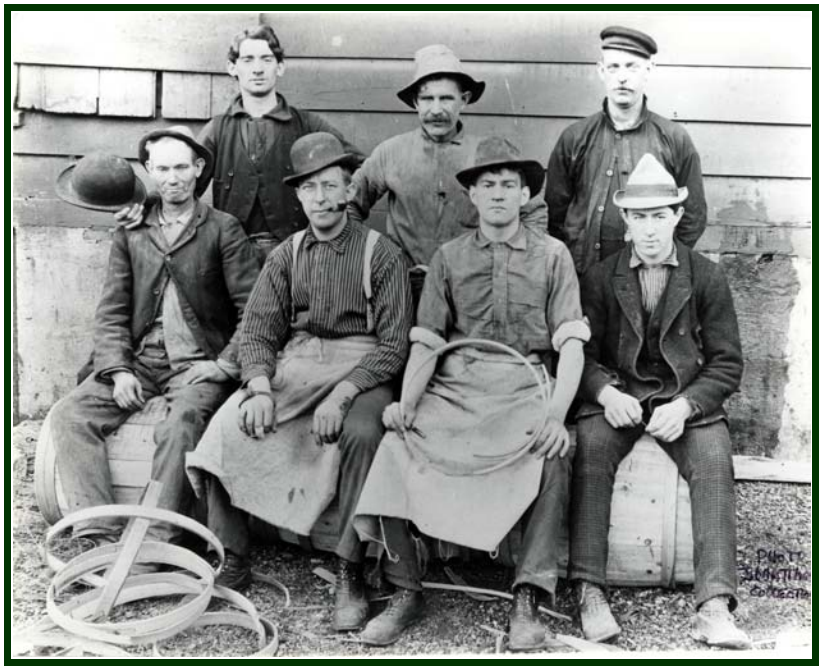

Coopers at Newark Lime & Cement Co., Kingston, NY
c. 1900
Courtesy of Jack F. Matthews Collection

Introduction

by Dr. Rose Rudnitski

Immigration is not only important to our country's history; recent demographic statistics show that our future population growth will come from immigration and not from native birth. Immigration deserves its prime place in our social studies curriculum; yet the social studies are being pushed aside in the curriculum by No Child Left Behind's heavy emphasis on testing in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics, leaving our children's civic and character education to fend for the brief periods of instructional time that many elementary classrooms can allot to them after focusing on the tested subjects through which schools are judged.

- This curriculum addresses the need to study immigration while developing ELA and mathematical skills in real contexts. Students use real documents to follow not only the collective history of the region, but also the unique journeys of individual people who came to this area seeking a better life. Literacy and analytical skills are developed using documents and records that students might encounter in life – and life is not divided into subjects. Charts and graphs that help with the 5th and 8th grade assessments are applied in deciphering the stories of people who lived in our region. All the activities are conducive to small groups and partner work, reflecting the real world experience of working cooperatively.
- The focus on local immigration and the stories of people in places with familiar names like Kingston and Gardiner grabs the students' interest. These stories happened here. These people lived and worked here. Their neighbors sometimes misunderstood them or they experienced prejudice and stereotyping. Some were not even considered important enough to include in the records. For instance, it was quite difficult to find records on women. These are issues that students need to discuss not only because they are part of our history, but because they are issues today in Ulster County just as much as they were in the past. Through this curriculum, students become historians, doing exactly what historians do – searching through documents that remain from the past, analyzing them, and trying to make sense of the puzzle they present. It is fascinating work, and as they delve deeper into it, they develop empathy for the people who were just names on paper. Character education does not have to come from separate character curricula that are disconnected from the students' lives and studies; it can be infused as it is here.

- This curriculum wastes no classroom time. Written with the New York State Social Studies tests in mind, it is built on the NYS Learning Standards and does not diverge from knowledge, skills and dispositions that help them to achieve high scores on tests while it emphasizes the interesting and personal stories that children and adolescents enjoy.
- Experiencing this curriculum will help students do well on the tests, but it by no means limits their creativity. It enhances their higher level reasoning skills with activities that require analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. There are many instances in which there is not a right or wrong answer, but an interpretation that requires justification. It also addresses different modalities and learning styles.

I urge you to try this curriculum and let us know what you think. What was good? What needs to be improved? The best went into this work, but now it is up to you to make it and the people whose stories are contained in it come alive for your students as they came alive for us.

New York State Elementary Learning Standards for Social Studies

Standards ***Lessons***

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Standard 1: The History of the US and NY																		
Key Idea 1																		
• PI - Know the roots of American culture and the ways different people played a role in creating it.			✔		✔	✔	✔	✔		✔		✔	✔		✔	✔	✔	✔
Key Idea 2																		
• PI - Distinguish between near and distant past.		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Key Idea 3																		
• PI - Gather and organize information about the important accomplishments of individuals and groups, including Native America Indians, living in their neighborhoods and communities.					✔	✔	✔	✔					✔				✔	✔
Key Idea 4																		
• PI - Consider different interpretations of key events and/or issues in history and understand the differences in these accounts.			✔	✔		✔			✔	✔			✔	✔				
• PI – Explore different experiences, beliefs, motives, and traditions of people living in their neighborhoods, communities and State.				✔	✔	✔			✔	✔			✔	✔				
• PI – View historic events through the eyes of those who were there.			✔	✔	✔	✔	✔		✔	✔			✔	✔				
Standard 2: World History																		
Key Idea 1																		
• PI – Explore narrative accounts of important events from world history to learn about different accounts of the past to begin to understand how interpretations and perspectives develop.			✔	✔							✔							
Key Idea 3																		
• PI - Interpret and analyze documents and artifacts related to significant developments and events in world history.		✔	✔	✔	✔					✔		✔				✔		
Key Idea 4																		
• PI– Consider different interpretations of key events and developments in world history and understand the differences in these accounts.			✔															
• PI – View historic events through the eyes of those who were there, as shown in their art, writings, music, and artifacts.										✔						✔		

New York State Elementary Learning Standards for Social Studies

Standards ***Lessons***

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Standard 3: Geography																		
Key Idea 1					✔		✔	✔					✔	✔			✔	
• PI – Study about how people live, work, and utilize natural resources.																		
• PI - Locate places within the community.						✔	✔											
Key Idea 2																		
• PI - Ask geographic questions about where places are located; why they are located where they are; what is important about their locations; and how their locations are related to the location of other people and places (Adapted from National Geography Standards, 1994).			✔				✔							✔				
Standard 4: Economics																		
Key Idea 1				✔	✔		✔	✔			✔		✔	✔				
• PI – Know some ways individuals and groups attempt to satisfy their basic needs and wants by utilizing scarce resources.																		
Standard 5 : Civics, Citizenship, and Government																		
Key Idea 1																		
• PI – Know the meaning of key terms and concepts related to government, including democracy, power, citizenship, nation-state, and justice.	✔										✔				✔	✔		✔
Key Idea 2																		
• PI - Show a willingness to consider other points of view before drawing conclusions or making judgments.				✔					✔			✔	✔					
• PI - Suggest alternative solutions or courses of action to hypothetical or historic problems.		✔											✔					