



# WISTARIAHURST

## THE IMMIGRATION EXPERIENCE AT WISTARIAHURST MUSEUM

Program Length: approx. 3 hours

Minimum: 20 students / Maximum: 60 students

Minimum adult chaperones 1:10 students

Appropriate for grades 3 – 5

Price per child \$9 non Holyoke Public Schools



The Wistariahurst Immigration Program is a great way for students to experience what it was like to be immigrant in America around the turn of the century and what they had to endure during their time in this new country. Students will be introduced to William Skinner and learn about his story as an immigrant. Focusing on Holyoke's major ethnic population, French Canadian, German, Irish, Polish and Puerto Rican, students will be immersed in several activities all of these groups were involved in. Students will not only be learning about these immigrants and their journey to the Paper City, but they will also be having a lot of fun.

### ELLIS ISLAND ACTIVITY

#### OVERVIEW

The Ellis Island activity introduces students to the largest period of immigration in American History. Students will understand the role Ellis Island played in American history, especially in regards to immigration. The students will assume the identity of an immigrant coming to America and go through a similar process that immigrants underwent once they reached Ellis Island. Example: students will be tagged, go through examples of medical and mental examinations, and register for entry.

#### ESTABLISHED GOALS AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The students will learn what function Ellis Island served in the immigration process and how people entered the United States in the early 1900's. The students will learn what a day in the life of an immigrant would have been like at Ellis Island and what difficulties they would have faced as they officially entered the United States.

### WRITING LETTERS HOME

#### OVERVIEW

Oftentimes immigrants to the United States came by themselves or with only parts of their family. Although there was opportunity abound, you can imagine how hard it could be for a young man or woman to embark on a new life without their parents in their life. To cope with the struggles faced in the new country many of these immigrants wrote countless letters home to share their experiences with their loved ones. This activity is meant to simulate what one of these letters might have been like. With most of the letter already written, it is up to the child to fill in the blanks with whatever they think will fit to best complete the story. Activity may be done in groups.

## WRITING LETTERS HOME CONTINUED

### IN THIS ACTIVITY STUDENTS WILL:

- ✗ Imagine what it was like for an immigrant to travel to America
- ✗ Write a letter from the perspective of an American immigrant
- ✗ Imagine they are writing a letter to send to someone back home
- ✗ Choose words that describe an immigrant's experience
  - ✗ Share the letters aloud with the group
  - ✗ Discuss

The letter will include:

- ✓ Description of the journey
- ✓ Country of origin
- ✓ Job opportunities
- ✓ Reactions to a new environment

## THINGS THEY CARRIED

### OVERVIEW

Most European immigrants came to America by boat with nothing but the clothes on their backs, possibly a trunk, and a small amount of money stashed carefully away. Read about five immigrants (reflective of the 5 major ethnic groups in Holyoke) and figure out what significant items would best suit them to pack for their trip to the United States. Assuming the identity of one of these immigrants, students will have the opportunity to examine a variety of items and choose objects specific to their person that reflects who they are. Just like these immigrants, some sacrifices will have to be made, although it may seem tempting to take everything students will only be able to take three of the best items that each sample immigrant might have chosen. There was simply not enough room on the boats to bring everything you owned, and many times you had to hide some items as well. (Activity may be done in groups)

## HOW TO READ A PHOTOGRAPH

### OVERVIEW

In their schoolwork, especially in their history and social science classes, students routinely encounter images of various kinds--photographs, paintings, drawings, and many other visual depictions of people, places, and events. Learning the right questions to ask themselves can help students in any content area "see" more and consequently learn more from any image they study.



After looking at a photo and answering questions together, students are put in small groups to study specific photographs of immigrants on ships, on piers and coming out of Ellis Island. After answering questions and choosing one character in the photo to bring to life, students are invited to select from provided props in order to recreate the image they've just studied. They must also come up with one or two sentences their character may have said, and recreate history in their own words!