TEACHING with PRIMARY SOURCES—MTSU
NEWSLETTER: MAY 2018

WELCOME!

Teaching with Primary Sources—Middle Tennessee State University, administered by the Center for Historic Preservation, engages learners of all ages in using primary sources to explore major issues and questions in many different disciplines.

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NEWS

• What was happening in Tennessee in the years leading up to the Civil Rights Movement that set the stage for Diane Nash, John Lewis, and other leaders? Join us for the annual TPS-MTSU Summer Institute “The Beginnings of a Movement” in Murfreesboro June 12th to 14th. For more information including the institute agenda, visit our website. To register, email Kira.

• Are you interested in learning more about National History Day? Do you want to challenge your students to become better researchers and writers? Join us as we partner with Tennessee History Day for our annual summer workshop series. We will be offering workshop in various locations throughout the summer. For a complete list, check out our Upcoming Workshops calendar.

“AWESOME” SOURCE OF THE MONTH:

Batmobile parked near Denali National Park, Alaska [2008]

Carol Highsmith, an American photographer, has taken hundreds of amazing pictures of our national parks. This one is—and I think you will agree with me—particularly awesome. Ask your students why they think a batmobile would visit Denali National Park.

THEME: NATIONAL PARKS VOLUME II

To coordinate with upcoming workshops at the Great Smoky Mountains National Park (see bottom of p. 2) and the Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site (see bottom of p. 3), we take another look at the National Parks. (Volume I was published June 2011.) Are you planning on visiting a national park this summer? Perhaps your students are? National parks are a great way to connect with sites of outstanding natural, cultural, and historic significance in the country. You can enhance the educational value of these sites through teacher resources available from many of the individual park websites by searching here, and through the NPS’s connection to Teaching with Historic Places. There are also teaching resources connected to the PBS series The National Parks: America’s Best Idea.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

• May 5 (Gatlinburg) - "The Creation of Great Smoky Mountain National Park" workshop in partnership with East Tennessee Historical Society and Great Smoky Mountain National Park at Twin Creeks Science and Education Center from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. ET. To register, email Lisa Oakley.

• May 8 (Chattanooga) - "Exploring the History of Tennessee" workshop at Booker T. Washington State Park from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. ET. To register, email Stacey Graham.

• May 10 (Milan) - "Examining Tennessee's Story: Resources and Strategies for Social Studies" workshop at the Polk Clark School in partnership with the East Tennessee Historical Society from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. To register, email Kira Duke.

• June 4 (Murfreesboro) - "Teaching History Today: Content and Strategies for World and U.S. History" mini-conference at MTSU Learning Resource Center from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information, click here. To register, email Kira Duke.

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LESSON IDEA—ENSLAVED GUIDES AT MAMMOTH CAVE

Mammoth Cave is the longest cave system in the world and has been recognized as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Mammoth Cave National Park was established in 1941, but the cave has a much longer history as a Native American site, saltpeter mine, tuberculosis hospital, and tourist destination. As such, it ties into many of the economic developments of American history—including the institution of slavery, which enabled cave owners to exploit the cave’s natural resources and tourism potential for much of the 19th century.

The African American men who served as cave guides before the Civil War demonstrate how varied the experience of slavery could be. They are largely responsible for the exploration, mapping, and guiding of the vast miles of underground tunnels, all while being at the mercy of wealthy white slaveholders.

Start off by showing students this newspaper clip about Stephen Bishop. How is he portrayed both in the illustration and in the text? What words or features stand out? Next, show students this video clip from Kentucky Educational Television. Ask students how the experiences of the enslaved guides (and their descendants in the Jim Crow period) seem different from the usual narrative of slavery and segregation in the South. Next, ask students how these guides contributed to the development of the park. Why do you think tourism was such a big development there? Have students browse these stereograph cards of Mammoth Cave and discuss why they would have been created.

This lesson idea meets state standards for 8th grade Social Studies (8.71).

LESSON IDEA—CREATION OF GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

The idea to create Great Smoky Mountains National Park began in the 1890s, but it would not be until 1934 before the park was officially established as one of the early national parks east of the Mississippi River. One of the challenges to creating a park in the eastern part of the country was that the land was owned by industry and private citizens. In the case of the Smokies, much of the land was owned by logging and mining companies, or many individuals whose families had lived in the mountains for generations. Boosters from Knoxville and Asheville spearheaded the campaign arguing that a national park would bring economic prosperity to the region largely through tourism. The environmental impacts of logging in the region added to the argument that it was important to preserve the region and to protect the larger regional watershed.

Begin by showing students a map of the southern section of the Appalachian mountains. Have them discuss how the park selection committee might decide what part of this region to designate as a national park. Record students’ ideas at the front of the classroom. What things might they want to consider in making their selection? Next divide the class into four groups. Each group will be given a different map (1925, 1926, 1935, 1940) that represents the proposed boundaries of the park at different stages of the park’s establishment. (These maps are best viewed online so that students can use the website’s zoom feature.) You may wish to have students use Google Maps to help compare their map with modern-day landmarks that will help them better analyze the historic map. Ask each group to determine what area is being selected for inclusion in the park. What are the key geographic features for their region?

After students have completed this initial analysis, jigsaw your groups so that students can compare all four maps. What conclusions can be drawn about how the park boundaries evolved between 1925 and 1940?

This lesson idea meets state standards in 5th grade Social Studies (5.50) and high school U.S. History & Geography (US.49).
Lesson Idea– The Natchez Trace

The Natchez Trace is a 444-mile route connecting Natchez, Mississippi, and Nashville, Tennessee. The area is classified under a unique State and National Park partnership. The Natchez Trace Scenic Trail includes over sixty miles of hiking trails which are managed by the Natchez Trace Parkway, a federal roadway that preserves the picturesque route used by Native Americans, European settlers, and others travelling through what is now Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama. Natchez Trace State Park, located in Carroll, Henderson, and Benton counties, is a 48,000-acre Tennessee state park, created during the New Deal era.

Project this map of the Natchez Trace, which provides an excellent opportunity to review map-reading skills since due north is not directly at the top of the map. Ask students to read more about the Natchez Trace Parkway, its topography, and cultural resources from these Historic American Engineering Record survey drawings.

How has use of the Natchez Trace changed over time? What roles have state and federal governments played in that change? How has the public interacted with the Trace throughout its history? Why would federal and state governments work together to preserve it?

Have students research the Natchez Trace to determine its significance in the region. Divide the class into groups and assign time periods or groups of people such as Kaintucks, European settlers, travelers, traders, soldiers, and modern day Americans. Each group should prepare a poster to present to the rest of the class which explains the Trace’s impact and how it was used at a particular time or by a particular group. Students can begin looking for information here, here, and here, in addition to viewing many photographs of the Trace at the Library of Congress and exploring articles from the Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture.

This lesson idea can be adapted to meet curriculum standards in 8th grade Social Studies (8.39).

Featured Feature– Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site

The National Park System has over a dozen designation types to classify historic areas around the country. These areas can be created by Congress or the president and may include parks, monuments, sites, battlefields, rivers, and more, all of which have equal legal standing within the system.

Built in 1795, Ulysses S. Grant’s homeplace, White Haven, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979. A decade later, White Haven’s status was changed and it became a facility directly managed by the National Park Service.

Located in St. Louis, Missouri, the park is open daily and provides free tours of the main house. If travelling to St. Louis with your class is not an option, check out available information and resources at the National Park Service. Students could learn more about preserving historic places by comparing these Historic American Buildings Survey photographs with photographs of White Haven today. Multimedia presentations help provide a more thorough view of life at White Haven by recreating conversations between slaves and using Grant’s letters to describe his familial relationships. Send students on a virtual tour via Google Arts & Culture where they can investigate the grounds including the Grants’ house, slave dwellings, and the farm.

For even more on White Haven, consider joining Teaching with Primary Sources—MTSU at the Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site this summer. Our two-day workshop, “Expanding Citizenship from Civil War to Civil Rights,” will focus on best practices in teaching, building historical awareness, and of course, using primary sources. Click here for more information.
The Battle of Gettysburg occurred from July 1-3, 1863, devastating the Pennsylvania town. Within days, part of the battlefield was purchased by the state for cemetery land. The following year, the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association (GBMA) was organized by David McConaughy and began preserving the battlefield. Students can learn more about the efforts of GBMA by viewing the Gettysburg National Military Park’s blog. In 1895, the battlefield officially became Gettysburg National Military Park and in 1933, management of the battlefield transferred to the National Park Service. Students can further explore the park and its history here and here.

Established in 1918, Acadia National Park is located near Bar Harbor, Maine, and encompasses much of Mount Desert Island. Have students peruse Acadia’s park brochure, trail maps, and tourist information. Ask them to share what they find. How is Acadia different than Tennessee parks closer to home? What do you notice about the maps? What can you learn about Acadia using the map keys? What activities are available for visitors? Why is it important for parks to have detailed maps?

Don’t kill our wild life [1940]

From 1936 to 1943, artists hired by the Works Projects Administration (WPA) created posters to publicize community programs and events across the country. Several posters, like this one attributed to John Wagner, were designed to promote national parks. See more National Parks posters from this era here. What is the message of this poster? Is it effective? Who is the audience? What directions do you think the WPA gave to John Wagner before he designed it? How might the poster change viewers’ thoughts about the NPS?

Presidents have a long history of visiting national parks. The photograph above shows President Coolidge at Yellowstone, the nation’s first national park, established during the Grant Administration in 1872. Since then, all but two U.S. presidents have visited Wyoming and many have made the trek to Yellowstone. Why is visiting national parks important to presidents? How do presidential visits affect individual parks? Read more about the presidents who pushed to preserve public lands at the U.S. Department of the Interior’s blog.