Big House on the Prairie Comes Alive

A series of short videos and follow up activities for ages 8 - 12

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A series of short videos and follow up activities for ages 8 – 12

Big House on the Prairie:
At Home With The Davises

The Davis Mansion has created short videos to introduce the Davis family and their home and life style to children ages 8-12. The videos can be viewed at home as well as in the classroom. They can be used as part of a study of Bloomington history, as preparation for a field trip to the Mansion or as a follow-up to a Mansion field trip. Extension activities accompany the videos. The videos are best viewed in sequence.

When students view the videos, they will be given a glimpse of a very different lifestyle from the way they live today. Experiencing life as Illinois residents lived it in the 19th century gives young people an intriguing and meaningful way to compare the differences between their own lives and those of people living in the past.

Videos

1). Introduction to the Family and Mansion

While looking through a family photo album, Mrs. Davis and her granddaughter Alice talk about the history of the family and the Mansion.

2). Tea Party

Mrs. Davis and Katie, the Irish maid, prepare for a tea party.

3). Tea Party Manners

Mrs. Davis teaches Alice and her friend Arthur tea party manners.
Videos and Extension Activities are based on the following Illinois Learning Standards for 2020-21.

**History Standards**

**2nd Grade**  
**Change, Continuity, and Context**  
**SS.H.1.2:** Summarize changes that have occurred in the local community over time

**Perspectives SS.H.2.2:** Compare individuals and groups who have shaped a significant historical change

**3rd Grade**  
**Change, Continuity, and Context**  
**SS.H.1.3:** Create and use a chronological sequence of events

**Perspectives SS.H.2.3:** Describe how significant people, events, and developments have shaped their own community and region

**4th Grade**  
**Culture**  
**Human-Environment Interaction: Place, Regions and Culture**  
**SS.G.2.4:** Analyze how the cultural and environmental characteristics of places in Illinois change over time.

**5th Grade**  
**Culture**  
**Human-Environment Interaction: Place, Regions, and Culture**  
**SS.G.1.5:** Investigate how the cultural and environmental characteristics of places within the United States change over time.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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**Make Your Own Calling Card**

A calling card is a card with your name on it. In the 1800’s, when paying a visit to someone, these cards were presented to the servant who answered the door. At first these cards were handwritten, later they were machine made. Cards were often decorated with pictures of hearts, birds and flowers in bright colors.

Use the outline below to make your own card. Cut it out and bring it with you on a visit to the Mansion.
Map Activity

You will be virtually visiting the David Davis Mansion. Find your school and the David Davis Mansion on the map. Use the map key to help. With a yellow crayon trace the route you would take from your school to the mansion. Then on the lines below, in the correct order, write the names of the streets you would take from your school to the David Davis Mansion.

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An Early History of Bloomington Illinois

Until the 1820’s, the land that was to become Bloomington was a large wooded area. The Kickapoo people lived there before the first settlers arrived. First named Keg Grove and then Blooming Grove, the name Bloomington was given to the town in 1830 when McLean County was created. James Allin donated 60 acres of his land for the new town. Land was sold to settlers at a big party on the fourth of July, 1831. Rich soil brought new farmers. People came from all over to trade and do business in the new town. That included lawyers like David Davis and Abraham Lincoln. In 1900 a fire destroyed most of the downtown. It started in a laundry across the street from the old City Hall. The burnt area was quickly rebuilt using local architects. Some of these buildings are still in use today.*

PRAIRIE TOWN

The first settlers came to Bloomington in 1822. Back then Bloomington was mostly prairie. The prairie is land covered by tall grasses. These grasses could grow to 10 feet tall. Yellow, pink, white and blue wildflowers were also found on the prairie. The prairie was home to many animals such as deer, the red fox, coyotes, ground squirrels, the long-tailed weasel and bison. Settlers first thought the prairie soil was not good for growing crops. They discovered, however, that it is very rich soil. They cut down the prairie to farm the land. The David Davis Mansion sits on land that was once prairie.

Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. What is the prairie?

2. What kind of animals lived on the prairie?

3. What was difficult about clearing the land for your farm?
Introduction to Photo Album

On the following pages is a photo album of the David Davis family. Having the children review this information before watching the videos may make them more meaningful. Feel free to copy these pages along with any other activity pages.
David Davis Family
Photo Album

Clover Lawn

Home to the David Davis family. It was completed in 1872. The house was part of a 1200 acre farm that sat on the edge of Bloomington.
David Davis was born in Maryland on March 9, 1815. His father died before he was born. When his mother remarried, he went to live with his Uncle Henry Lyons Davis. After college he went to Yale Law School and became a lawyer. In 1836 he moved to Bloomington and practiced law. Two years later he married Sarah Walker of Lenox, Massachusetts. They had two children, George and Sallie. Davis was elected judge of the 8th Judicial Circuit, where he became good friends with Abe Lincoln. Davis helped Lincoln become president, and then Lincoln appointed Davis to the U.S. Supreme Court. Davis stayed on the Supreme Court for 15 years. He went on to be a U.S. Senator from Illinois, and then Vice-President under President Arthur. He died in 1886 at the age of 71.
Sarah Walker was born in Lenox, Massachusetts on September 4, 1814. She attended a school for women, where she learned how to run a large household. She married David Davis in 1838, and they made their home in Bloomington. Sarah had 7 children, but only 2 of them grew to adulthood: George Perrin Davis and Sallie Worthington Davis. Since the Judge was often away in Washington D.C., Sarah had to make many of the decisions while the mansion was being built. She loved to entertain family and friends at Cloverlawn, treating them well. They often stayed long, since great distances had to be traveled. After becoming ill in November 1879, she went to the seashore hoping to recover. Instead, her condition got worse and she died on December 9, 1879 at the age of 65.
Sallie Worthington Davis was born in Bloomington in 1852. Sallie lived with her family in the mansion from 1872 to 1875. She married Henry S. Swayne, the son of a Supreme Court Judge. Her wedding took place in the parlor of the Mansion. After her first husband died, she married John T. Lilliard, a Bloomington businessman. She never had any children. In 1934 at the age of 82, Sallie died.
George Perrin Davis was born in Bloomington in 1842. He went to law school at the University of Michigan, graduating in 1867. He practiced law in Bloomington and managed his father's business interests. He married Ella Hannah, the daughter of his law partner, William Hannah. They had 3 children: Alice, David Davis III, and Mercer Davis. When Judge Davis died, George moved his family into the Mansion. In 1902 a fire destroyed most of the attic and tower, so much repair had to be done. George made sure electricity, two telephone systems, and an automobile garage were added to the Mansion. He died in 1917 at the age of 75.
Children may find it interesting to see a copy of a letter written by Judge Davis to his wife on January 29, 1862. It shows the style of his speech and handwriting.

Drank punch, but once since you left. Am you glad? Hope dear letter of Sunday, re received yesterday morning gladdened my heart. I have read it over three times. What is this world without a good wife, children & home? You are a dear, good, blessed wife, & our children are dear & good children. I think we have a great deal to be thankful for, in the midst of the sorrow & desolation caused by the wicked rebellion. I must call on Mrs. Cowens this forenoon. My best to you.
Lenox Oct 12
TH 1860

DEAR PAPA

I HAD MY
HAIRCUT DAY BEFORE
YESTERDAY. I HAVE
BEEN
MAKING A VISIT AT
AUNT
FANNIE’S. WRITE ME
SOON.

WITH MY LOVE

SALLIE DAVIS

Sallie's letter to her "Papa" might be interesting to children. She was 8 years old when she wrote this letter.
Create a Family Photo Album

Students will use family photographs to create their own photo album.

Writing a Letter

Students will write a letter to the mansion expressing their opinion of the videos. They might include their favorite part of the video, something special they remember, or something new they may have learned.

Story Activity

Draw a picture of your favorite part of the videos and write sentences about it.
The DAVIS Family TIMELINE

1814  (September 4)  Sarah Woodruff Walker is born in Lenox, Massachusetts. She attended Catharine Beecher's Seminary in Hartford, Connecticut, where she learned the skills necessary to run a large household.

1815.  (March 9)  David Davis is born in Cecil County, Maryland, on Mercer Plantation. His father died 8 months before he was born.

1820.  David Davis's mother married Franklin Betts. David was sent to live with his uncle, the Rev. Henry Lyon Davis, in Annapolis, Md.

1832.  Davis graduates from Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio.

1834.  Davis attended Yale Law School in New Haven, Conn.

1836  Davis begins his law practice in Bloomington, Illinois

1838  Davis marries Sarah Walker on October 30.

1842  Birth of son, George Perrin Davis, on June 3.

1845  Davis received the Jesse Fell farm east of Bloomington in payment for some law work. He remodeled the house and renamed it "Clover Lawn."

1848  Davis is elected judge of the 8th Judicial Circuit. Lincoln, a young lawyer from Springfield, also rides the circuit. They become good friends.

1852  Birth of a daughter, Sallie Worthington Davis

1860.  Lincoln becomes our 16th President of the U.S. Davis helped Lincoln as his campaign manager.

1861  The Civil War begins.

1862  Davis is appointed by Lincoln to the U.S. Supreme Court.

1875  Sallie marries Henry Swayne.

1877  Davis resigns as a Supreme Court Justice and is elected to the U.S. Senate.

1879  Sarah Davis dies.
1881  Davis, as head of the Senate, becomes acting Vice-President, after the assassination of President James A. Garfield.

1886  David Davis dies.

**TIMELINE ACTIVITIES**

1. Use the Timeline Teaser worksheet on the following page to answer questions about the Lincoln/Davis timeline or any other timeline.

2. Have students create their own timelines using the Timeline Activity worksheet. Example: their own family history.
TIMELINE TEASERS

1. What is the subject of this timeline? ________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________

2. How long is the period this timeline covers? ____________________________

3. What year was ______________________________________________________?
   ____________________________________________________________________

4. What happened in ___________________________________________________?
   ____________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________

5. Did ________________________________________________________________ happen before or after ________________________________________________?
   ____________________________________________________________________

6. Draw a picture for an event on the timeline.

7. Which event (date) do you think is most important? Why?
   ____________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________
**Timeline Activity**

Student Activity: Create your own timeline.

Name______________________________

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Fill in the Blank Worksheet

Choose words from the list below to fill in the blanks in each sentence.

1. The ________________ answers the door at the David Davis Mansion.

2. A visitor needs to present a ________________ ____________ upon entering the Davis home.

3. Children had fun looking at pictures in the ________________ ________________.

4. Guests were often invited to a ________________ ________________ in the parlor.

5. The person who serves the tea is called ________________ ________________.

6. A guest must wait to be served a ________________ ________________.

7. Do not put a treat in your ________________ ________________ for later.

8. The Davises first lived in a ________________ ________________ on this spot where the mansion is now.

9. In the old farmhouse there wasn’t an inside bathroom, so the Davis family used an outside ________________ ________________.

10. One of Judge Davis’s closest friends was ________________ ________________.

**WORD CHOICES:**

Mother  Calling Card  Photo Album  Farmhouse  Pocket

Privy  Maid  Abe Lincoln  Tea Party  Treat
TEACHER RESOURCES

Suggested Readings
(B= Bloomington Public Library, N= Normal Public Library, I= Interlibrary Loan)

Prairie Town
By Bonnie and Arthur Geisert (N)

Nick of the Woods: Adventures of Prairie Life
By Robert M. Bird (I)

Prairie Day: Adapted from the Little House Books
by Laura Ingalls Wilder and Renee Graef (B)

Sugar Creek, Life on the Illinois Prairie
By John Mack Faragher; Yale University Press; Book is a history of Sugar Creek, a rural Illinois community (B)

Prairie Girl: The Life of Laura Ingalls Wilder
by William Anderson (author) and Renee Graef (Illustrator) (B)

Prairie Willow
By Maxine Trottier (I)

Prairie Songs
By Pam Conrad (B and N)

Prairie Friends (an I Can Read Book)
By Nancy Smiler Levinson (B)

A Prairie Boy’s Winter
By William Kurelek (I)

Belle’s Journey
By Marilynn Reynolds (I)

Addie Across the Prairie
By Laurie Lawlor (B)

A Packet of Seeds
By Deborah Hopkinson (B)
Suggested Websites

The first and second websites deal with the life of Victorian children in London but would also apply to American children in the same time period.

**www.primaryhomeworkhelp.co.uk**

When you reach the site, scroll down and click on Victorians, then on the left sidebar for children. Many other informative subjects on Victorians are in the left sidebar also, if you want to explore more.

**www.museumoflondon.org.uk**

When you get to the website above, use the search query and type in : what was life for children in Victorian London. You will get to the pdf with lots of information.

(Victorian children lived very different lives to children today. Poor children often had to work to earn money for their family. Victorian children did not have as many toys and clothes as children do today and many of them were homemade. …)

**www.daviddavismansion.org**

This is the official website of the David Davis Mansion.
The Proper Victorian Tea

In the Victorian era, ladies served tea from elaborate silver services in the “drawing room”. (This is what we commonly call the living room.) It was customary to have tea in front of the hearth even when the hearth may have been located in the bedroom. The hostess was the one who did the pouring and serving. The tables were dressed and displayed formally.

Most likely the tables would be clad with the whitest crisp linens that could be found, sometimes accompanied with lace. The dishes made of delicate china with intricately painted flowers. Lace doilies placed on the serving tray, and each saucer and plate.

Elaborate decorated cakes on pedestal stands bringing the eye naturally to its quaint surroundings. The teapot is also used as a showpiece with surrounding teacups and saucers, the tiny spoons nestled within. Lemon slices placed on a filigree plate. The butters are sweet, sometimes flavored with dill or sage.

You would find attractive woven baskets lined with linens, filled with hot scones and muffins. There is a perfect balance of tiny sandwiches, cream cakes and cookies. But there is never to be a carelessness of having food overwhelming the tea itself.

The Victorian Tea is the one we think of when the custom of tea is mentioned. We think of women gathering with big feathered hats, long full dresses and gloved slim hands. We imagined the traditional tea as we played with our stuffed animals and dressed them for the part. This is one of the teas that definitely bring a smile to your face and a warm feeling to your soul.
Top Ten List of Tea Party Don’ts

1. Not placing your napkin in your lap.

2. Talking with your mouth full.

3. Reaching across others for any table item.

4. Slurping or smacking your lips.

5. Asking for seconds before being offered.

6. Not passing the salt and pepper together.

7. Doing all the talking.

8. Doing none of the talking.

9. Pushing food onto your fork with your finger.

10. Moving your plate away when you're finished.
Steps to Reading Tea Leaves

1. Make the tea correctly
2. Have the subject drink the tea properly
3. Learn the symbols
4. Predict when something’s going to happen
5. Determine each symbol’s importance

Successful Victorian Tea Reading begins with the selection of a fine loose-leaf tea. It provides better flavor than tea bags and the grounds can be used for tea readings. A tealeaf reading is a way of telling a person’s fortune. After participants have finished their tea, have each person swirl the remaining leaves in a clockwise motion several times. Allow the tea and leaves to settle. Gently drain the liquid from the cup. The tea grounds will form patterns and symbols at the bottom and along the sides of the teacup. The closer to the bottom of the cup the patterns are, the longer distance in time until the event will occur.

Following are a few of the many symbols and patterns you may find:

- Acorn – prosperity or good health
- Airplane – an impending journey or a rise in position
- Apple – achievement
- Baby – small worries
- Ball – variable fortunes
- Bell – unexpected news
- Birds – good news or a journey
- Boat – a visit from a friend
- Butterfly – fickleness
- Candle – help from others
- Cat – deception or a false friend
- Chain – engagement or wedding
- Circle – success, completion; can also mean a baby coming
- Coin – money
Crescent moon – prosperity and good fortune
Cross – suffering or a sacrifice
Cup – a reward
Dog – good friend; if at bottom, a friend needs help
Egg – good omen
Elephant – wisdom and strength
Eye – caution
Fan – flirtation
Feather – lack of concentration
Fish – good fortune
Forked line – a decision to be made
Gate – opportunity or future success
Glass – integrity
Grapes – happiness
Hand – open means friendship; closed means an argument
Harp – love, harmony
Hat – improvement, especially in a new job
Jewels – gifts
Kite – wish will come true
Knife – a broken friendship
Ladder – promotion
Line – straight means progress; wavy means uncertain path
Mountain – goals with obstacles
Mouse – theft
Necklace – unbroken means admirers; broken means danger of losing a lover
Parasol or umbrella – new lover
Pig – greed
Question mark – need for caution
Rose – popularity
Snake – an enemy, or wisdom
Spider – reward for work
Spoon – generosity
Square – news about money
Thimble – changes at home
Turtle – constructive criticism
Tower – disappointment
Triangle – an unexpected occurrence
Wings – messages
Teacher Evaluation Form
Big House on the Prairie

1. How many of the videos did you show to your students? _____.

2. For what purpose did you use the videos? (Ex: a part of Bloomington history.)

____________________________________________________________________

3. Which of the extension activities did you use with your class?

____________________________________________________________________

4. Did you use any of the Teacher Resources? _____ If so, which ones were helpful?

____________________________________________________________________

5. Would you use the video again? ___________. Why or why not?

____________________________________________________________________

6. Did the video create interest in a field trip to the David Davis Mansion? _______

Would you bring your class or leave it up to your students with their family members?

____________________________________________________________________