



Old Belmont, A Sense of Place and Time

First Capitol Educational Packet



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Educators:

The First Capitol Historic Site Educational Packet, Old Belmont, A Sense of Place and Time was produced by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and was funded in part by the Wisconsin Sesquicentennial Commission with funds from individual and corporate contributions and the State of Wisconsin.

The educational packet is designed for use by fourth grade students to enhance an on-site visit to First Capitol Historic Site. However, many of the activities can be done in the classroom and can also be adapted for use in other grade levels. The packet is designed in such a way that it can be copied and new activities can be added to it in the future. You are encouraged to share the information and activities with colleagues.

The packet matches a number of educational standards and benchmarks for the 4th grade social studies curriculum standards:

Content Standard: History SS2, A4

Know important events and famous people in Wisconsin and US history as they relate to the following topics and time periods:

- *the transition from territory to statehood, 1787-1848
- *immigration and settlement
- *mining, lumber, and agriculture

Content Standard: History SS2, B4

Know historical examples of cooperation and interdependence among individuals, groups, and nations as they relate to the following topics and time periods:

- *the transition from territory to statehood, 1787-1848
- *immigration and settlement
- *mining, lumber, and agriculture

Content Standard: Civics SS3, B4

Understand the basic purpose of local, state, and national government in American society.

Content Standard: Behavioral SS5, A4

Understand the contributions prominent Wisconsin Citizens have made to the state and the nation.

Content Standard: Behavioral SS5, B4

Understand the connections between the local community and other places in Wisconsin, the United States, and the world.

Old Belmont, A Sense of Place and Time

Introduction



First Capitol Historic Site: 1836 Birthplace of Wisconsin Territorial Government

Belmont was established as the capitol of the Wisconsin Territory in October 1836. As legislators arrived in the town, they found a lodging house, a boarding house, and the Council House. The new town contained places of business, too; Lobaugh's blacksmith shop, Dillon's store just north of the Council House, John Moore's tavern north of town, and John Coons's store approximately a half-mile to the east. Homes existed as well, including the governor's residence and about six frame houses. The post office sat about three fourths of a mile to the southeast and the Belmont Gazette was published from a small lean-to structure attached to the lodging house. Original sources do not mention the presence of a courthouse building in Belmont in 1836. The building often called the Court House was probably built as the lodging house and later nicknamed the courthouse when occupied by Chief Justice Dunn's family.

The Legislature met in Belmont from 25 October to 9 December 1836. After a long, acrimonious debate, the legislature decided that Madison would be the permanent seat of government for Wisconsin and that Burlington, Iowa would be the site of legislative sessions until 1839. These decisions had an immediate impact on the community of Belmont. Many people and several businesses left almost immediately. But not everyone moved on. Belmont maintained its post office, and several other businesses until 1867. At that time, railroad tracks were laid approximately 3 miles to the southeast of the Platteville branch of the Mineral Point Railroad. Residents of Belmont moved and began to set up a town along the Mineral Point Railroad tracks. This new community became Belmont, and what remained of Old Belmont came to be known as Grandview. In 1884, the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad established a station north of the cluster of government buildings at Old Belmont, and the small community was renamed Leslie.

Today, First Capitol Historic Site represents one of the earliest chapters of Wisconsin history interpreted by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. The site is located three miles northwest of the village of Belmont on County Road G in northwest Lafayette County. The site consists of two structures associated with the 1836 Territorial Legislative session, the Council House where the legislators met for 42 days and the lodging house for the legislators which later became the residence of territorial Supreme Court Chief Justice Charles Dunn. Both structures eventually were used as residences and later converted to livestock barns. In 1910 the Wisconsin Federation of Women's Clubs began raising funds for the restoration of the buildings. In 1924 the Council House was moved to the current site and restored. In 1956 the lodging house was moved to the same site and restored. Initially, the site was operated by the Department of Natural Resources. In 1994 the site became part of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Old Belmont, A Sense of Place and Time

Pre-visit Activities



Elvira Jane Moore Letters

Background:

Elvira Jane Moore was a real girl living in Belmont in the 1830s. Born in Tennessee in 1820, Elvira traveled with her parents, John and Nancy (Stalcup) Moore, to Missouri and Illinois before coming to Wisconsin. By the time the family settled in Belmont in 1833, Elvira had two younger sisters and a younger brother. The Moores came to Belmont to establish a hotel on the wagon road from Galena to Mineral Point. John Moore had previously operated a hotel at Prairie Springs, just south of Mineral Point and served as the captain of Fort Jackson at Mineral Point during the Black Hawk War. In the spring of 1836, 16-year-old Elvira married a neighbor, Moses Whiteside, and continued to live in Belmont.

These letters were created for this packet, written to Elvira's maternal uncle, John Stalcup who continued to reside in Sumner County, Tennessee. Although fictional, they are based on the outlines of the real Elvira Moore's life. They describe what she could have seen and experienced during the years just prior to, during and after the Territorial Legislative session in the fall of 1836. The last letter was written in 1880.

Procedure:

Students should read the letters and discuss the information that Elvira is sharing with her uncle. Ask students to consider the following questions. What is Elvira describing and why? Why has she chosen these events? Do Elvira's letters give you a feeling for what it would have been like to live in old Belmont? How is Elvira's life similar to or different from your own? Have students write a letter to Elvira telling her about life in their own communities today.

Letter #1

*Mineral Point, Michigan Territory
August 19, 1832*

Dear Uncle John,

There has been quite a stir this summer here in the southwestern part of the Michigan Territory. The Indians who used to live in these parts came back from their new lands on the west side of the Mississippi River. They attacked a few settlements, but have now been driven back across the River.

Last spring, Father decided to sell the tavern at Prairie Springs and move here to Mineral Point. We had just arrived when news of the Indian troubles came. A fort was quickly built just below the settlement at Jerusalem Spring. A militia of about 60 men was quartered at the fort. Father was chosen to be the captain of the militia.

Mother gave birth to another baby this summer. Her name is Mary. I have tried to help Mother as much as possible. Emily and Alphonso are still very young and there is much work to be done around the house. Each day I empty the ash from the wood stove. I help with the washing and cooking and sewing.

Father wants to return to the tavern business, but there are already several hotels operating in this town. He thinks it would be better to locate about a day's travel away. Mineral Point is the biggest town in the lead region. In just the five years since lead was discovered here, many settlers have come. There are stores, blacksmiths, and many miners. With the Indian troubles now over, everyone thinks that more miners will arrive soon.

I must close now, but I will write again with more news.

*Your niece,
Elvira Jane Moore*

Letter #2

Belmont, Michigan Territory
September 23, 1833

Dear Uncle John,

We have moved again. With the Indian troubles now behind us, it is safe to live away from town and forts. Father has decided to start up in the tavern business again. Our new home is about ten miles southwest of Mineral Point along the road from that place to Galena, Illinois. Every day, ox-carts loaded with lead from the mines travel on this road to Galena where the mineral is loaded on boats for shipment down the Mississippi River. Father believes that the oxcart drivers will stop to spend the night as we are about a day's travel from Mineral Point. He expects other travelers to stop as well.

Father has spent most of this summer building the tavern. It is now almost done. The foundation stones were quarried from a local mound. The frame was built of oak timbers cut from a local oak grove. The siding boards came from a lumber mill on the Platte River near the settlement of Platteville which is about six miles southeast of here. The tavern has a dining room on the first floor and sleeping rooms for the guests on the second floor. The kitchen is in a wing attached to the main building and our quarters are on the second floor.

Our land is surrounded by a broad prairie. The grasses grow very tall and are now well over my head. Mother tells us not to stray far from the tavern for fear that we will get lost in the grass and not be able to find our way home. The land hereabouts is gently rolling. There are two hills nearby called Platte Mounds. From the tops of them, I can see for miles. Father hopes that they will help travelers to find his tavern for they can be seen from anywhere in the lead region.

There are a few settlers in this area. The Welsh family has a small farm with a log house just north of here. The Kirkpatricks have a house and field at the base of the West Platte Mound about two miles to the west. The Eastmen farm is about a mile east, just beyond the East Platte Mound. A young man named Moses Whiteside has just moved to the area as well.

Although we are far away on the frontier, mother often tells stories of her childhood with you in Tennessee. Please write when you can, the nearest post office is at Mineral Point.

Please remember me to my cousins.

Your niece,
Elvira Jane Moore

Letter #3

Belmont, Michigan Territory
November 15, 1834

Dear Uncle John,

I now have another sister. She is named Sarah. We are now a family of seven, Father, Mother, Emily, Alphonso, Mary, Sarah and me.

Last week, I traveled to Mineral Point with Father for the land sale. The land where Father built the tavern was owned by the federal government as was all land hereabouts. A land office was established this year at Mineral Point with the first sale set for November 10th. Father was afraid that someone else might try to buy our land. Because we had already built on it, Father was able to buy 80 acres for the minimum price of \$1.25 per acre. With all of the settlers in town to buy land, Mineral Point was a very busy place. After buying our land and purchasing some supplies, we returned home.

A school has been started in this area. Some students come to school every day, but most come only when they can get away from the chores at the farm. Now that the crops have been harvested, students are coming regularly. Emily comes with me most days, but the other children are too young to attend. Mr. Boyer is our teacher. We study arithmetic, reading, and civics. The older children help the younger children with their lessons.

There have been many travelers stopping at the tavern this year. There seem to be more loads of mineral on the road every month. The miners must be very busy.

I wish I could see you, but the Michigan Territory is such a long way from Tennessee.

*Yours truly, your niece,
Elvira Jane Moore*

Letter #4

Belmont, Michigan Territory
August 2, 1835

Dear Uncle John,

Your nieces and nephews, Emily, Alphonso, Mary, Sarah and I are all well, as are Mother and Father. It has been a busy summer with many travelers stopping here as they pass on the lead road. We have a large garden this year and will soon be putting up vegetables for the winter.

This past spring one of our neighbors, Mr. Moses Whiteside, began courting me. He has a farm and digs for lead as well. Mr. Whiteside arrived in 1828 from Illinois, then went to St. Louis to work for a few years. He returned about two years ago, just as we came here. We get along very well and he has asked me to become his wife. He is 29 years old. Mother is concerned that I am too young to marry and that Mr. Whiteside is much older than I am. I have reminded her that she was 18 when she married Father and that he is 17 years older than she. She does not seem to be convinced yet. A good word from you might help.

A few settlers have taken up residence in the area this summer. Now that the lands can be purchased, people seem more willing to clear land and build houses. Many of the travelers who stop by the tavern ask about where the good land is and how far they still have to go for water. Mineral Point has grown to be quite a town and more people are settling along the Platte River near Mr. Rountree's place.

We have heard that the eastern part of the territory, the part east of Lake Michigan, may become a state soon. What will then become of this part of the territory I do not know.

Yours,
Elvira Jane Moore

Letter #5

Belmont, Wisconsin Territory
July 9, 1836

Dear Uncle John,

Although I still live in the same place, I now live in the new Territory of Wisconsin! On July 4th we all traveled to Mineral Point to celebrate the creation of the Territory of Wisconsin and the swearing in of our new governor, Henry Dodge. Everyone wants to know where the territorial legislature will meet. Governor Dodge has ordered a census to be made and says he will announce the date and place of the meeting when it is completed.

In April, Father sold 80 acres of land to John Atchison. Mr. Atchison hired Captain Craig, a surveyor from Galena, Illinois, to lay out the streets and lots for a town. The plat map has a large parcel which is for territorial buildings. It seems that Mr. Atchison wants Governor Dodge to locate the seat of the territorial government here. Mr. Atchison must think that the governor will do so because he has already begun to construct two buildings. One is for the legislature to meet in and the other is for lodging the legislature.

I was married to Moses Whiteside on May 3rd at Father's tavern. Several of our neighbors, the Gentrys, the Kirkpatricks, Mr. Holshouser, and the Welshes all came to celebrate with my family. My husband has purchased land for a farm about a mile distant from Mother and Father's home. I am very happy and hope to be a good wife for Mr. Whiteside.

Please remember me to my cousins, and write when you can. Letters can be addressed to Mrs. Moses Whiteside at the Mineral Point post office.

Sincerely, your niece,
Elvira

Letter #6

Belmont, Wisconsin Territory
November 29, 1836

Dear Uncle John,

Our little town of Belmont has become quite a place in the last few months. In early September, Governor Dodge announced that the first meeting of the Territorial Legislature would be held in Belmont. While Mineral Point, Green Bay, Prairie du Chien and Dubuque are all larger than we are, Belmont is now the most important place in the whole territory!

In no time people started coming here from all parts of the territory. Mr. Atchison has had to work very hard to have all of the buildings ready for use. Father and Mother put up as many supplies as possible for all of the people who are staying at the tavern. My husband spent several weeks this fall as a workman constructing buildings.

We have quite a town now. There are two dry goods stores with a selection of books, clothing and spirits. The store run by Mr. Coons also serves as a post office so we can now receive letters in our own town. There is a large building for the Legislature's meetings and another of similar design which is for lodging the members. A house has been built for the governor and his family. There is even a newspaper, the Belmont Gazette, which is printed here each Tuesday.

The legislative session will be ending soon. After much debate, it has been decided that the next sessions will be held in Burlington and then, once Judge Doty has it built, the permanent capital will be at Madison about 60 miles east of here. I hope that Belmont will continue to prosper.

Your niece,
Elvira Jane Whiteside

Letter #7

Belmont, Wisconsin Territory
July 20, 1837

Dear Uncle John,

Our town of Belmont is much quieter this summer than it was a year ago. There are no new buildings going up and a few buildings are empty. Dillon's store has closed. The Belmont Gazette stopped publication in April and the printing press has been moved to Burlington where the legislature will now meet. We still have a store and a blacksmith shop, but they are not doing much business. After being so busy last fall and winter, Father's tavern has grown very quiet.

Charles Dunn, the chief judge of the territorial courts, has purchased the lodging house that was built for the legislators and intends to use it for his family's home. Governor Dodge continued to reside here through the spring, but he too has returned to his home north of Mineral Point. There was an auction this spring of the tables and chairs from the meeting house. Several of the local residents now have new furniture.

My sisters and brothers continue to grow. Emily is now twelve and has taken on many of the chores of helping Mother raise the younger ones which I used to do. She is very helpful. My husband Moses and I are well. He broke several more acres of land on the farm this spring and we hope for good crops.

Please remember me to your children.

Your niece,
Elvira Whiteside

Letter #8

Belmont, Wisconsin
May 3, 1880

Dear Mr. Butterfield,

I understand that you are writing a book on the history of Lafayette County, Wisconsin and that you are seeking information on the history of the town Belmont at its original site, now called Grandview. Perhaps some of my memories of that place will help you.

I first moved to Belmont with my family almost 50 years ago in 1833 when I was 13 years old. My father, John Moore, started a tavern there to serve as a stopping place for travelers along the lead road from Mineral Point to Galena. As I am sure you have learned elsewhere, 1836 was quite a year in Belmont. That spring a man, I think his name was Atchison, bought a parcel of land from my father in order to lay out a new town. When the governor of the new Territory of Wisconsin, Henry Dodge, decided that the territorial legislature would meet at Belmont, Mr. Atchison had to work very hard to get all the buildings ready.

The year 1836 was also an important year for me. On May 3rd of that year (44 years ago today) I was married to Moses Whiteside. Mr. Whiteside had recently returned to the area after working in St. Louis for a short time. We lived in our home in Belmont until my husband died in 1870. I still own our 270 acre farm there and the 320 acres from my father's estate.

After the territorial legislature left Belmont following its session in 1836, the town began to decline. One of the stores closed right away and the newspaper stopped publishing the next spring. As settlers came to the area, they did not build houses in town, but started farms instead. The final end of the original town came when the railroad tracks from Calamine to Platteville were laid about three miles to the south in 1867. Soon after, a new town began to spring up along the tracks. At first it was called Belmont Station and then New Belmont, but now it is just called Belmont as most of the stores and residents of the old town site have moved to this place. I moved here after my husband died.

Some people have stayed in what is now called Grandview. Judge Dunn bought the old lodging house and has used it as his family's home now for more than forty years. In December 1849, when the State of Wisconsin was just in its second year, Governor Dewey married the judge's daughter Catherine in the house. That was the most important event since the Legislature left.

I hope that you find the information from my recollections helpful for your book.

Mrs. Elvira Whiteside

Old Belmont, A Sense of Place and Time

On-Site Activities

By the Outdoor Display Panels

Design a Seal

Background:

The Wisconsin Territorial Seal was designed in 1836 by John S. Horner, the first secretary of the territory, in consultation with Henry Dodge, the first territorial governor. It features an arm holding a pick and a pile of lead ore.

In 1839 a second territorial seal was designed and engraved by William Wagner of York, Pennsylvania and features resources of the territory including mining, agriculture, and commerce. Images show a farmer plowing, a sheaf of wheat, a pyramid of metal, an Indian, a steamboat, a sailboat, a flourmill, and the old capitol. The motto ACICILITAS SUCCESSIT BARBARUM is Latin meaning Civilization has taken the place of barbarism.

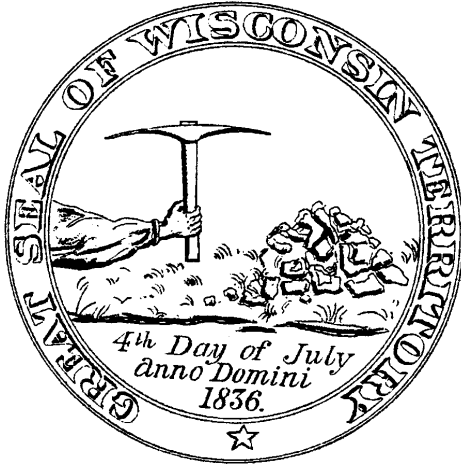
In 1848 Wisconsin became the 30th state in the Union and the first state seal was practically a reproduction of the 1839 Territorial seal. In 1851 Governor Nelson Dewey and Edward G. Ryan designed the coat of arms still used on the state seal today.

In 1881 the seal was modified by enlarging the size of the Wisconsin shield. At the top of the seal appear the words Great Seal of the State of Wisconsin; at the bottom are thirteen stars representing the original states of the Union. The Coat of Arms located in the center of the seal is divided into quarters showing a plow for agriculture, an arm and hammer for manufacturing, a crossed shovel and pick for mining, and an anchor for navigation. In the center is a smaller shield with the motto AE PLURIBUS UNUM, which is Latin meaning one out of many. On either side of the shield are two men. Dexter, meaning on the right, is a sailor holding a coil of rope representing labor on the water. Sinister, meaning on the left, is a miner with his left hand resting on a pick, representing labor on the land. Above the shield is a badger, for the Badger State, and over the crest is the word FORWARD, the motto of the state of Wisconsin.

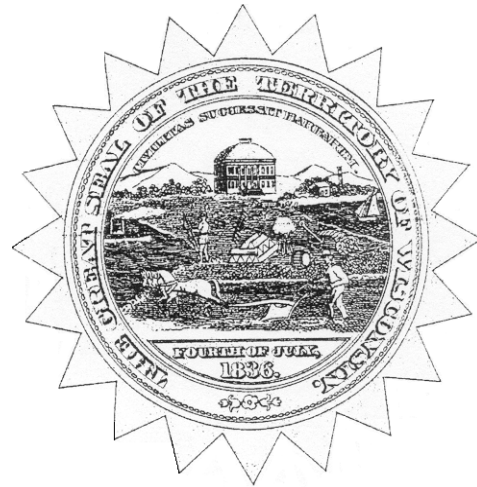
Procedure:

Students should examine the seals on the next page and design a seal for their community, school, family, or themselves.

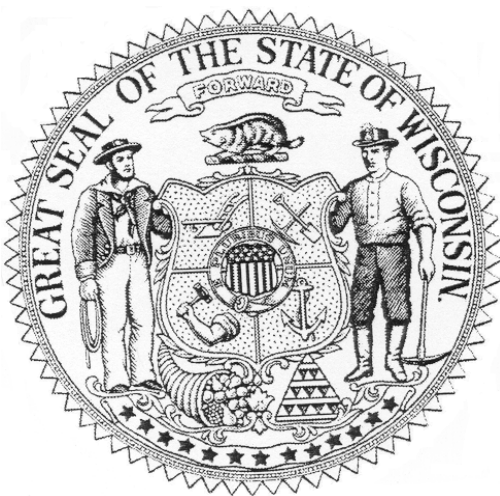
First Territorial Seal



Second Territorial Seal



Wisconsin State Seal



Wisconsin Historical Society



In the Council House

The First Laws

Background:

On November 12, 1836, Territorial Governor Henry Dodge signed the first law passed by the Legislature. Forty-two laws were passed during the session.

Procedure:

Examine the list of acts that were passed by the Territorial Legislature. Select two of the acts and discuss why they were important.

TITLES OF ACTS PASSED BY THE FIRST TERRITORIAL LEGISLATURE

Organization of Government in Wisconsin Territory:

- No. 1 AN ACT to authorize the legislative assembly to punish for contempt, and to privilege the members from arrest.
- No. 3 AN ACT to authorize the secretary of the territory to borrow money to defray the expenses of the first session of the legislative assembly.
- No. 4 AN ACT to amend an act entitled, "An Act to provide for the appointment of sheriffs, and to define their duties and powers," passed by the legislative council of the territory of Michigan, on the 23rd day of April, A.D. 1833.
- No. 5 AN ACT prescribing the duties of coroners.
- No. 11 AN ACT to establish the seat of government of the territory of Wisconsin, and to provide for the erection of public buildings.
- No. 16 AN ACT to amend the several acts hereinafter mentioned, to wit: an act, entitled an act relative to the duties and privileges of townships, approved 17th of April 1833, also an act, entitled an act to provide for the assessment and collection of township and county taxes, approved 22nd April 1833, also an act to provide for the defraying of the public and necessary expenses in the respective counties of this territory and for other purposes, approved March 6th, 1833, also an act, entitled an act to regulate highways, approved April 17th 1833.
- No. 17 AN ACT to incorporate the inhabitants of such towns as wish to be incorporated.
- No. 29 AN ACT to prevent trespass on school lands.
- No. 34 AN ACT to repeal "and act to authorize the secretary of the territory to borrow money to defray the expenses of the first legislative assembly of the territory of Wisconsin."

No. 35 AN ACT fixing the time for the annual meeting of the legislative assembly.

No. 41 AN ACT to amend an act entitled "act to provide for the assessment and collection of territorial taxes."

No. 42 AN ACT to provide for the compensation of the officers of the legislative assembly, and for other purposes.

Structure and Operation of the Judicial Branch:

No. 2 AN ACT to establish the judicial districts of the territory of Wisconsin, and for other purposes.

No. 6 AN ACT to authorize the judges of the supreme court to appoint clerks to the several courts of their respective districts in the first instance.

No. 9 AN ACT concerning the supreme and district courts, and defining their jurisdiction and powers.

No. 22 AN ACT to change the seat of justice in Brown County.

No. 24 AN ACT to provide for the admission of attorneys and counselors at law.

No. 39 AN ACT to amend and adopt the several laws of this territory for the several judiciary tribunals, for the purpose of giving said laws full force and effect according to the provisions thereof.

Internal Improvements:

No. 8 AN ACT to provide for the collection of demands growing out of contracts for sales of improvements on public lands.

No. 13 AN ACT to authorize the board of supervisors of the county of Crawford to build a bridge, and levy a tax to pay for the same.

No. 18 AN ACT to provide for the construction of a bridge across the Milwaukee River, in the town of Milwaukee.

No. 20 AN ACT to locate and establish a territorial road west of the Mississippi.

No. 27 AN ACT to lay out a territorial road east of the Mississippi River.

No. 30 AN ACT to locate and establish a territorial road from the town of Milwaukee to the Blue Mounds.

No. 32 AN ACT to locate and establish a territorial road from Lake Michigan to Rock river.

No. 37 AN ACT to provide for the construction of a bridge across Root River, at Racine.

No. 38 AN ACT to authorize Matthias Hamm and Horace Smead to establish a ferry across the Mississippi River.

No. 36 AN ACT to establish a university.

Incorporation of Businesses:

No. 7 AN ACT to incorporate the stockholders of the Miner's bank of Dubuque.

No. 10 AN ACT to incorporate the stockholders of the bank of Mineral Point.

No. 15 AN ACT to incorporate the stockholders of the bank of Milwaukee.

No. 12 AN ACT to incorporate the La Fontaine railroad company.

No. 25 AN ACT to incorporate the Belmont and Dubuque railroad company.

No. 14 AN ACT to incorporate the Fox River hydraulic company.

No. 33 AN ACT to incorporate the Wisconsin Mineral and Transportation company.

No. 40 AN ACT entitled, "an act to incorporate the Peketonica copper mining company."

Division of Counties:

No. 21 AN ACT dividing the county of Des Moines into several new counties.

No. 28 AN ACT to divide the counties of Brown and Milwaukee.

No. 31 AN ACT to divide the county of Iowa.

Fifteen new counties created east of the Mississippi River:

| | | |
|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| Walworth | Dodge | Manitowoc |
| Racine | Washington | Marquette |
| Jefferson | Sheboygan | Rock |
| Dane | Fond du Lac | Green |
| Portage | Calumet | Grant |

Seven new counties created from Des Moines County on the west side of the Mississippi River:

Lee, Des Moines, Muscatine, VanBuren, Henry, Cook, Louisa.

Miscellaneous:

No. 19 AN ACT to authorize the legal representatives of Robert Irwin, deceased, to convey real estate.

No. 26 AN ACT to make valid certain conveyances in the county of Crawford.

The Capitol Fight

Background:

Students should read the account of the rivalry among towns in Wisconsin in trying to become the state capitol and how Madison eventually was selected.

Procedure:

What points could you make to try to convince someone to make your community the State Capitol? List and describe six reasons why your community should be chosen.

Purchases

Background

List of purchases made by the Legislature for goods and services at the Belmont session.

Procedure:

Students should examine the list. What kind of information about the legislative session does the list of purchases provide? Create three word problems about the prices/amounts listed in the purchases made section.

PURCHASES MADE BY THE LEGISLATURE AT THE BELMONT SESSION

"Bot of Webster, Burgess & Morgan, Cincinnati, October 1, 1836":

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------|
| 40 Inkstands, glass | 08 ea. |
| 3 Inkstands, glass fine | 50 ea. |
| 1 Inkstand, glass very fine | 1.00 |

"Purchased from Fasset & Sherman, Du Buque, October 29, 1836":

- 10 Tin candlesticks
- 1 Snuffer
- 50 Yards of "Fine carpeting" @1.37
- 74 Yards of "Fine carpeting" @1.56
- 2 Pieces of carpet binding
- 3 Buckets
- 6 Iron candlesticks
- 4 Pitchers
- 12 Tumblers
- 2 Spittoons

"Purchased by House of Representatives from John R. Coons, Mineral Point, during month of November, 1836":

- 2 Stove basins

2 Small dippers
1 Manilla mat
6 Spittoons

"Purchased by Council from John R. Coons, Mineral Point, during Nov., 1836":

1 Stove basin
1 Tin cup
40 Yards of carpeting
2 Spittoons .75 ea.
6 Spittoons 1.50 ea.

Bill filed by John Atchison, December 8, 1836:

23 Tables furnished to the Legislative Assembly of W.T. 161.00
84 Chairs 210.00
9 Benches 36.00
2 Desks for President of Council and Speaker of House of Representative 50.00
1 Desk for Secretary of House of Representatives 20.00
1 Book and paper case 25.00
90 Cords of wood 360.00
100 Yards of green baize to cover tables, etc. 125.00
Rent of buildings (45 days at \$50/day) 2,250.00

According to Act 42 of Wisconsin Territory, the legislature compensated the following individuals for their purchases or services during the 1836 session:

To Loring Wheeler, agent for Fasset & Sherman per bill for furniture, stationary, and candles, & co., \$298.00.

To Loring Wheeler, agent for John Mayfield, for hauling furniture and stationary, \$20.00.

To P. F. Dillon as per bill rendered, \$28.50, for furniture, stationary, and candles.

To John R. Coons, as per bill rendered, for furniture, stationary, and candles, \$52.50.

To Meech & Dennis, for blank books for executive record, \$13.00.

To A. Julian, for engraving government seal for the territory of Wisconsin, \$40.00.

To Cyrus M'Keen, for screw and press seal, \$2.50.

To Samuel H. Davis, agent for Webster, Burgess & Morgan, for stationary, as per bill rendered and articles delivered, \$281.05.

To John S. Horner, secretary of the territory, for rent of office and furniture, \$500.00.

To John Atchison, as per bill rendered, for wood, rent, furniture, & c., \$3257.00.

To L. Wheeler and E. Childs, for expenses incurred in purchasing and furnishing furniture for the legislative assembly, in traveling sixty miles, \$9.00.

To Flost & Brown, for making a desk, \$16.50.

To George Messersmith, for hauling desk from Mineral Point, \$1.00.

To John P. Arndt, for transporting books and stationary from Green Bay to Belmont, \$30.00.

To John King, editor of the Dubuque Visitor, for papers furnished this house, \$30.00.

To Justus De Seelhorst, for candlesticks and candles, \$7.50.

To John B. Suydam, for making a map of the territory of Wisconsin, \$8.50.

In the Lodging House

A Place of Beginnings

Background:

The overall theme of this section is A Place of Beginnings. The theme is explored in the six subsections: A Place Called Belmont, The Tall Grass Prairie, The Mining Frontier, Culture in Conflict, A Rare Speculation, and Open for Business.

Procedure:

Ask the students to consider the question, “Who were some of the people connected to Territorial history and why were they important?” Some examples in the first two exhibit areas are Henry Dodge, Black Hawk, Charles Dunn, Catherine Dunn, Nelson Dewey, and John Atchison.

Discuss some of the ways people made a living in Belmont and the Wisconsin Territory. Some examples in the first two exhibit areas are lead miner, merchant, contractor, real estate agent, boarding house owner, blacksmith, general store operator, and farmer.

Digging Everyday Lives

Background:

Archaeological investigations were conducted on several occasions at First Capitol, most recently in the summer of 1998 as part of a project titled *Digging Everyday Lives*, which was funded in part by the Sesquicentennial Commission. A sample of some of the archaeological materials is displayed in the case titled *Digging Everyday Lives*.

Procedure:

How can archaeology help us learn about the past?

Students should examine the archaeological artifacts in the display case and select one artifact from each of the three categories (building materials, household goods, and personal items) to discuss. What can each artifact tell us about life at Old Belmont?

Preservation

Background

After the legislative session both the Council House and the lodging house were used as homes and eventually as barns. The use of a building for some purpose different from the original intent is sometimes referred to as adaptive reuse. Over time both buildings suffered the effects of age and neglect and were in various states of deterioration. In 1910 the Wisconsin Federation of Women's Clubs began raising funds for the restoration of the buildings. In 1924 the Council House was moved to the current site and restored. In 1956 the lodging house was moved to the same site and restored. Initially, the site was operated by the Department of Natural Resources. In 1994 the site became part of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Procedure:

Have students examine the Adaptive Reuse panels and describe the efforts to preserve the two buildings.

Ask students to describe a building in their own community that has been saved from destruction. Who helped save it and why did they want to save it? How were funds gathered to save the building? How is the building being used today?

Some examples of other buildings in this area that have been preserved but are being used for functions different from their original use include the Don Q Restaurant in Dodgeville (barn) and the Round Barn Restaurant in Spring Green (barn) Some examples of buildings that have been preserved and have retained much of their original appearance and/or function include Iowa, Lafayette, and Grant County Courthouses and many area churches. Other buildings have been preserved as museums interpreting the past for visitors including Pendarvis State Historic Site in Mineral Point (homes), Villa Louis Historic Site in Prairie du Chien (home), and Taliesin in Spring Green (home and school).

Old Belmont, A Sense of Place and Time

Post-Visit Activities

A Look Back: First Capitol Historic Site

Background:

Reflections on the class visit to the site.

Procedure:

Ask students to think about their visit and try to answer these questions.

Why is the First Capitol Historic Site important?

What were some of the reasons for Old Belmont's early growth and later decline?

Why were the Council House and lodging house considered important enough to be preserved?

What kinds of evidence helped historians learn how the area around Old Belmont has changed over time?

Have students discuss something they learned from their visit to the site.

Telling Your Own Stories: Exploring Your Community

Background:

Every community has sites connected to local heritage which also provide links to the region, the state, the nation, and the world. These sites provide a sense of place and time that is unique to each community and can help students make connections to their own lives. Everyone has a story to tell and these stories are the essence of local history.

Procedure:

Numerous places can be used in the study of a community: schools, cemeteries, individual homes, neighborhoods, and downtown areas. The following questions can be used as a starting point for students to begin exploring their own community and telling their own stories:

What were some of the reasons that your community was located where it is? What were some factors that caused either growth or decline in your community? Why did your community develop in one direction rather than some other?

How is your community connected to transportation systems? Where did the names of your community streets, parks, and public places come from?

Are there any sites in your community that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places? If so, why were they listed?

Are there historic places in your community that are in disrepair, threatened by neglect, or by redevelopment? What are the pros and cons of saving these places?

How would you change your neighborhood? What would you keep the same?

Next time you are downtown, look at the upper stories of the building. Are there any architectural details or decorations? Are there any names or dates?