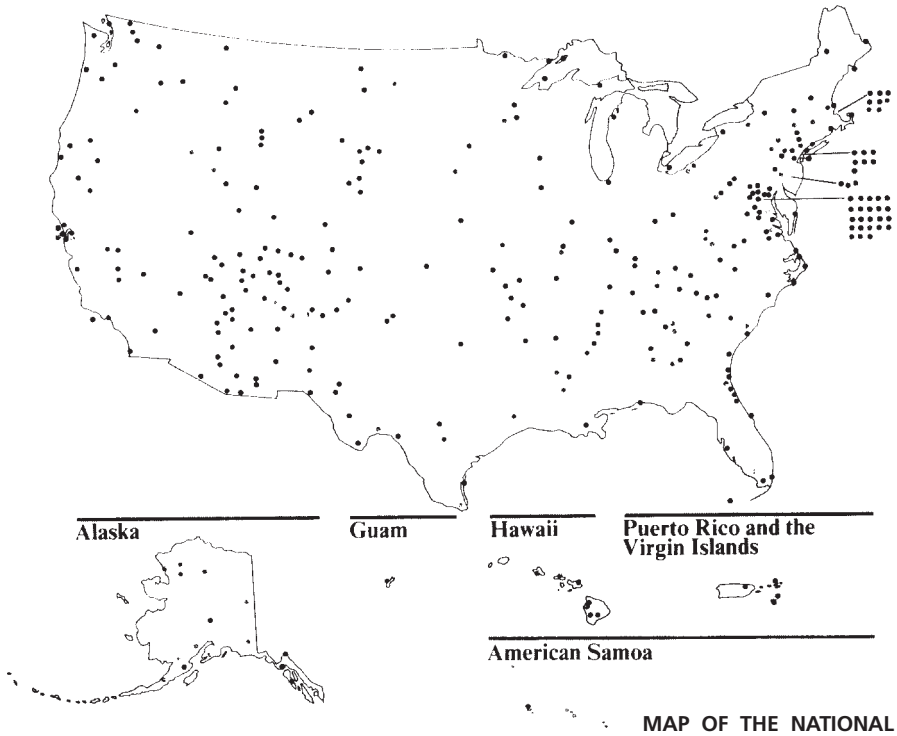
The National Park Service is "the largest university in the world, with 367 branch campuses."

Robin Winks
Yale Historian, 1992

As of 2002, the number of National Park units extended to 385, all of which are here for you.



MAP OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Any questions or comments on this Teacher Activity Guide are welcome. Contact the Director of Education at:

Jefferson National Expansion Memorial
11 North Fourth Street
St. Louis, MO 63102
(314) 655-1600

Produced by the Division of Museum Services and Interpretation: 1995, revised 2004.

Dear Teacher:

Thank you for your valuable suggestions. You requested activities specific to each program topic that can be used before and after your museum visit. We listened and have designed this Teacher Activity Guide (TAG) especially for you. It is an investigative, hands-on approach to history.

The activities are based on curriculum guidelines for the states of Missouri and Illinois; they integrate cooperative learning, conflict resolution, and are relevant to real world experiences. In addition, suggested activities extend across the curriculum, providing an interdisciplinary approach, thereby enhancing the learning process.

We are also excited to introduce you to the National Park Service through an integrated theme concept. In addition to our basic program format, sections on career education and enrichment activities provide a multifaceted guide that can be used for a variety of student levels and subject areas.

We hope you find this guide "user-friendly" and look forward to hearing from you again. We appreciate your feedback and ask that you complete the enclosed Program Evaluation. If you have any questions or need further information, please call us at (314) 655-1600.

Sincerely,

Margaret G. O'Dell
Superintendent

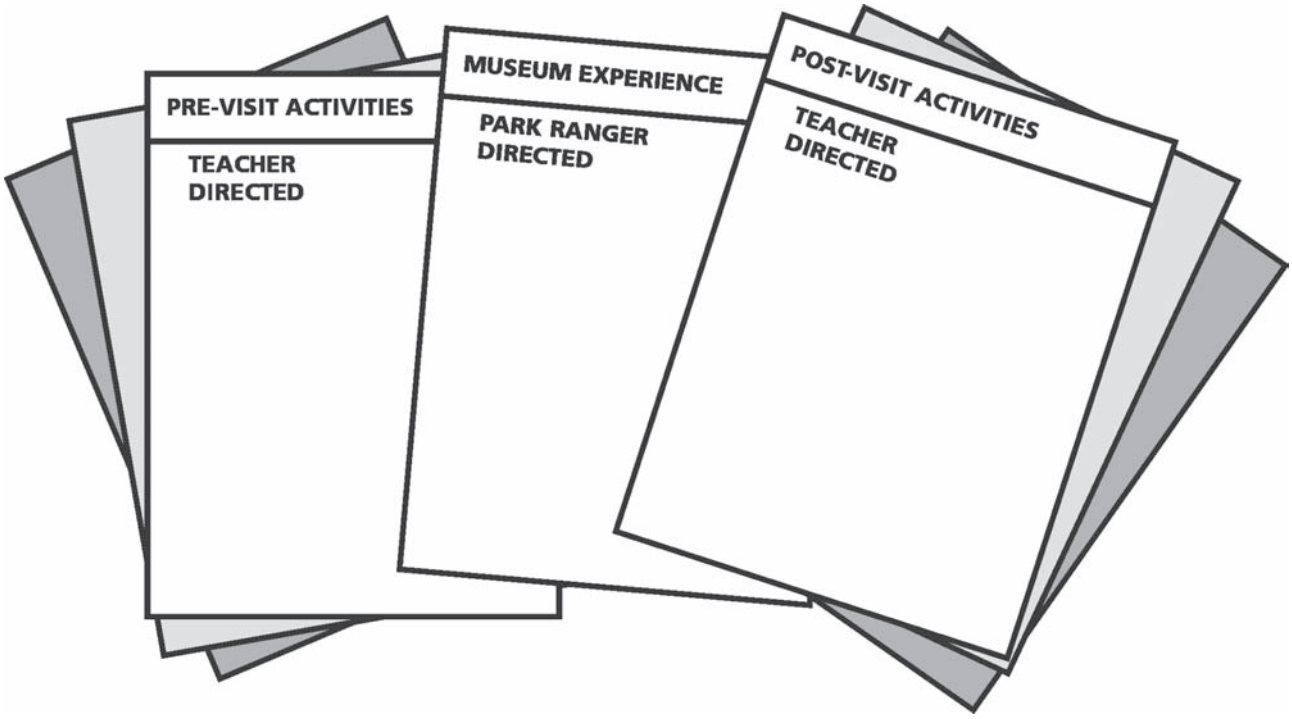
"USER FRIENDLY" FORMAT

The activities in the TAG follow a simple format.

• Three PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES prepare your students before the MUSEUM EXPERIENCE. We suggest you use all three activities in sequence as access strategies. Depending on the performance level of your students, however, you may wish to move ahead to the REQUIRED activity.

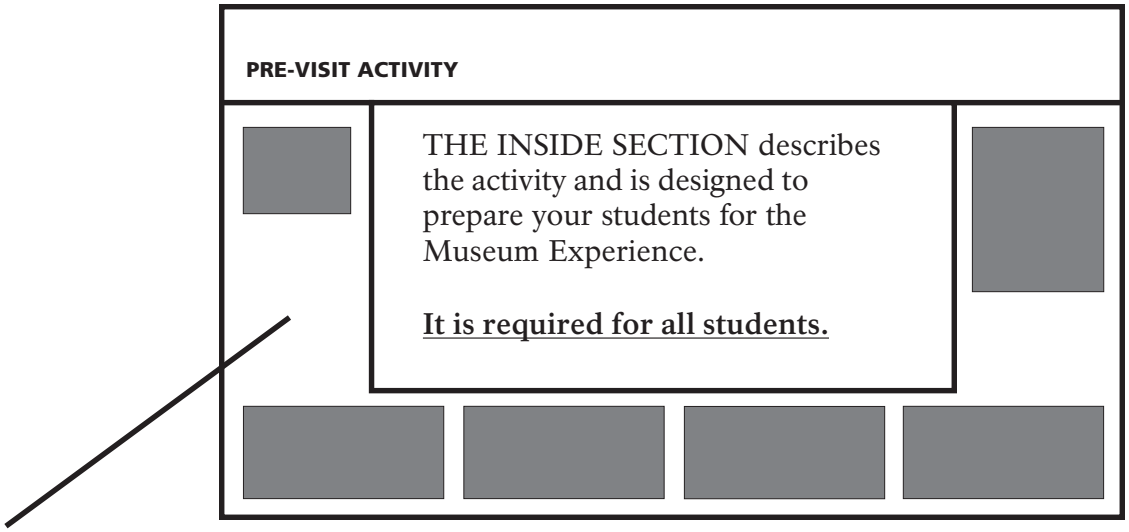
• The MUSEUM EXPERIENCE briefly summarizes the program in which your students will participate at the Museum of Westward Expansion or the Old Courthouse.

• Three POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES complement each of the three PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES and are designed for you to use after the MUSEUM EXPERIENCE. They are designed in sequence, yet also provide the flexibility to accommodate the specific needs of your students.



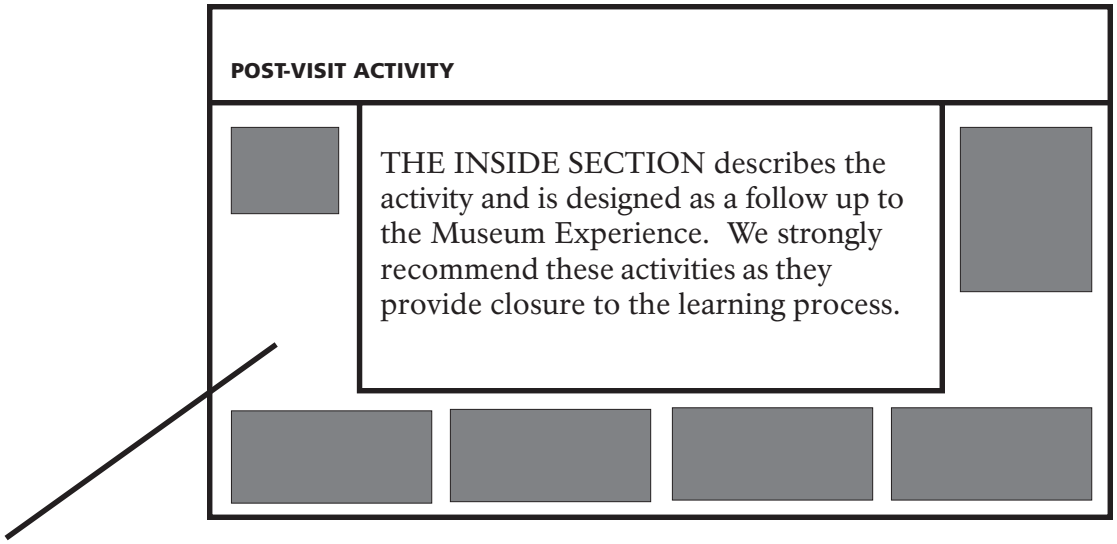
Each activity is designed in a wrap-around format to provide flexibility in your lessons and provide enrichment for a variety of student abilities.

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY



THE WRAP-AROUND MARGIN conveys a relevant real world connection with extension activities in Language Arts, Math, Science, Art and Music. Related site information provides an enrichment opportunity that encourages internet exploration and a greater sense of the National Park Service. This sectional is optional; however, it can reinforce the lessons in the main activity.

POST-VISIT ACTIVITY



THE WRAP-AROUND MARGIN enhances the carry-over of real world connections by extending the lesson across the curriculum into Language Arts, Math, Science, Art and Music.

INTRODUCTION

"The South, in reducing the slave to the status of a possession, a thing, deprived him of his human voice. In the West, the black man could express himself in court and expect to be heard. Indeed, the burden lay not so much with the black man to justify his freedom, but with the slave owner to justify slavery. As a result, a number of black people did pass from slavery to freedom, engaged in a variety of activities, and so took their place among all the people who settled the West."

- —W. Sherman Savage, "Slavery in the West"
from African Americans on the Western Frontier

With the passing of the Homestead Act in 1862, Americans began moving west in unprecedented numbers. Lured by the promise of free land, young men and their families packed up their belongings in hopes of fulfilling the American dream of "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." Even women and immigrants intending to become U.S. citizens were eventually entitled to own property under this new act.

But not African Americans. Though the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery in 1865, many free blacks were still uncertain about their legal rights. They faced institutionalized opposition to their right to vote, own property, and receive an education. Freedmen in Kentucky were required by law to leave the state, and segregation was spreading through the south. It seemed clear that the self-evident truth, "All men are created equal," still did not apply to African Americans.

Not until Congress ratified the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868, did the term "citizen" apply to African Americans. Men like Moses Speese were finally free to pursue their dreams of owning a homestead in the west. Unable to read or write, Speese suspected his former owner of contriving debt against him in order to retain his family as sharecroppers in North Carolina. After working off the debt, Speese and his family moved west, where all of his children learned to read and write. Working hard to "prove up" their Nebraska homestead, the Speese family met with success in farming and soon became known as leaders in their community.

While the Speese family was among thousands of African Americans joining the rush for freedom and economic opportunity on the frontier, they were not the first to pass that way. Slaves often accompanied their owners traveling through, or working in western states and territories. Many western states opposed slavery, and their courts gave voice to slaves suing for their freedom. In 1846, Dred Scott sued his owner in a St. Louis court. His bid for freedom, and its subsequent defeat in the U.S. Supreme Court, fanned the flames of the American Civil War.

In a less volatile time, a slave named York accompanied his owner, William Clark, on an historic expedition through the newly-purchased Louisiana Territory. His role as explorer helped to pave the way for the westward expansion of the United States. Other explorers, though not slaves, came later to hunt, trap, and live among the Native American Indians. Mountain men, like James Beckwourth and Edward Rose, earned their living by guiding travelers through the Rocky Mountains after the twilight of the lucrative fur industry.

Some slaves were able to purchase their freedom, like Clara Brown. As a slave, Clara was powerless to prevent the sale of her ten-year-old daughter, Liza Jane. After buying her own freedom, Clara traveled west, driven by the desire to find her daughter. She worked as a laundress in the goldrush town of Central City, Colorado. Saving money and buying land, she always kept an eye out for Liza's familiar face. Her generosity and assistance to free blacks after the Civil War earned her the respect and admiration of many people in her community. None of it; however, meant as much to her as being reunited with her daughter.

During the Civil War, Union forces enlisted emancipated slaves to help fight against the south. These troops proved to be good soldiers, which led the army to form several all-black units of infantry and cavalry after the war. Dubbed "Buffalo Soldiers," they patrolled the west, protecting American interests and fighting Native American Indians resisting settlement. Their units were known for having low desertion rates and performing their duties in exemplary fashion. Buffalo Soldiers went on to fight in both World Wars and the Korean conflict before the army integrated in the 1950s. Before the National Park Service was developed in 1916, Buffalo Soldiers patrolled public lands, like Sequoia and Yosemite.

For the most part, the African American experience in the west mirrored that of many other Americans. They earned their living in the mining, cattle, and farming industries, and made their mark on history and the landscape. Upon establishing themselves in the west, African Americans sought to build communities that would reflect their values and beliefs. They built churches and schools, opened hotels and restaurants, printed newspapers, and operated a number of business enterprises. While they often faced the additional challenge of discrimination, African Americans in the west sought the same opportunities as other Americans. They also encountered similar struggles.

After Reconstruction ended in the south, groups of African Americans migrated west to escape oppressive Jim Crow laws and racial violence. Known as Exodusters, these men and women established their own towns and communities throughout the states of Kansas and Oklahoma. In towns like Nicodemus, Kansas, they were assured an education, the right to vote, and freedom to exercise their rights as American citizens. After a brief prosperity, many of these towns followed the same pattern of decline as other agricultural centers in the early twentieth century. Several exist to this day. Their members persisted through harsh conditions, enduring heat, wind, insects, drought, and low crop prices.

The western landscape is often romanticized in literature, art, and drama—rugged mountains, arid deserts, tallgrass prairies, and always, the vast expanse of open sky. No one figure has embodied the myth of the west more than the cowboy. In reality, the life of a cowboy was strenuous and isolated. The monotonous round of daily ranch chores was periodically broken by several hazardous months on the trail, driving long lines of cattle to distant towns. Even on the range, African Americans were not able to escape discrimination, but those who worked as cowboys enjoyed a degree of equality not available in other jobs. Many showed a knack for working with horses and livestock, and their grueling work brought them shoulder-to-shoulder with their peers. Others, like Nat Love and Bill Pickett, distinguished themselves through boasting or rodeo feats.

In 1890, The U.S. Census Bureau reported that the western frontier had been settled. With the last territory passing into statehood in 1912, the American vision of Manifest Destiny was a reality. African American groups and individuals could be found engaged in every pursuit contributing to westward expansion. Indeed, they "took their place among all the people who settled the West." Today's west reflects the changing face of the rest of America. Though the frontier may be settled, African Americans continue working for equal opportunities and the right to exercise their rights as citizens of the country they worked alongside others to build. The "African Americans of the West" program at Jefferson National Expansion Memorial remembers the challenges and successes of African American pioneers in the 19th century.