**The First Session of the Circuit Court Readers Theater**

Sheriff: Hear ye! Hear ye! The honorable Justice Edward Savage presiding. (Judge takes center.)

Judge: What is our first case?

Sheriff: We have Mr. John Price. He is a horse thief and stole several horses from local farmers.

Thief: You can’t prove it!

Sheriff: Your honor, we found Mr. Price riding one of the horses stolen.

Judge: (Speak to the audience or students) You are the Grand Jury. You are a group of landowners in this area, peers of Mr. Price. The charge is horse thieving and the case has been presented. Do you find Mr. Price guilty or not guilty? Take a moment to discuss the case among yourselves. When you have reached a verdict or decision choose a spokesperson to tell me. I want to remind the people in the jury that you have an important decision to make. What you decide can effect this man’s life forever!

Spokesperson: (Engage the students in a discussion about the case. Have them vote if the man is guilty or not. Make them defend their choices and explain that the punishment is bad!) We have found the defendent, Mr. Price, guilty!

Judge: You have been found guilty by the Grand Jury! You will receive 39 lashes from the whip and your left ear will be cut off!

Student: There were 19 cases tried at the first session of court. 17 were found guilty and received similar sentences. In colonial times, it was common to cut off an ear for certain crimes. That way, everyone knew that a person had been found guilty of theft.