

## **Grosse Pointe Historical Society**

[www.gphistorical.org](http://www.gphistorical.org)

### **Series of Activities for Second Graders for the Pre-trip. During trip and post-trip of the field experience to the Grosse Pointe Historical Society Provencal-Weir House Entitled:**

## **Did You Ever Hear a House Talk?**

**Activities Designed by Marjane L. Baker,**  
bakerconsultant@sbcglobal.net 248-446-0805

The development of the school curriculum was generously donated by the Louisa St. Clair Chapter, DAR of Grosse Pointe.

### **Standards and Benchmarks that are addressed in These Activities Grosse Pointe Public Schools English Language Arts Curriculum Standards Met**

Narrative: Identify and describe drama and realistic fiction.

R.FL.02.01 Read aloud using intonation, pauses and emphasis.

R.NT.02.02 Identify and describe Drama.

R.NT.02.03 Identify and describe Characters' Actions and Motivations, Setting(time and place), Sequence of Events

R.NT.02.05 Respond to multiple texts read by discussing, illustrating, and /or writing to reflect, make connections, and share understanding.

R.IT.02.04 Compare/contrast multiple texts.

R.CM.02.02 Connect personal knowledge, experience and understanding of others to ideas in texts through oral and written response.

R.CM.02.05 Compare and contrast relationships among characters, events and key ideas within and across texts to create a deeper understanding.

R.CM.GP.02.07 Make meaningful and credible predictions.

S.DS.02.02 Tell/retell stories from drama using elaborated information about characters, characters' actions and motivations, and Setting sharing understanding.

L.CN.02.05 Use effective listening and viewing behaviors in large and small group settings using eye contact, attention and support.

### **Michigan State Social Studies Curriculum Goals**

V.I,2 Acquire information from observation of the local environment.

I.1,3 Distinguish among the past, present and the future.

I.2,2 Describe the past through the eyes and experiences of those who were there as revealed through their records.

I.1,1 Use a variety of records to construct a narrative about their personal or family histories.

I.1,1 Measure chronological time by centuries.

**Objectives of These Lessons for the Provencal-Weir Field Trip  
and the Drama entitled: Did You ever Hear a House Talk?**

**The students should be prepared to:**

1. Understand that through Grosse Pointe History, the Provencal-Weir House had many different people living there and it served many different purposes.
2. Compare the Provencal-Weir House and the way people lived there to their own house and the way that he or she lives there.
3. Use the information that they gained about the Provencal-Weir House and its inhabitants to, as a class, compose a short historical fiction story or a short biography of someone who lived there or something that happened in the Provencal-Weir House.
4. Make predictions about what might have happened in different rooms in the Provencal-Weir House after touring the house and listening to the docent's talk about the house and their short trip through the house.

The students will practice oral reading by participating in the play, "The Timeline of the Provencal-Weir House.

5. Interview their parents and learn about the oral history of the house where they live.
6. Bring their oral history Interviews to school and their class will compile the information on a large class chart.

**Provencal-Weir House Tour for Second Graders**  
**LETTER TO PARENTS**

Date Due back to school by \_\_\_\_\_.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parents of \_\_\_\_\_,

We have planned an exciting trip designed especially for Second Graders to the Provencal-Weir House on \_\_\_\_\_. This trip will help us meet many of the standards put forth in the Grosse Pointe Public Schools and the Michigan State Standards and Benchmarks. The goals of the trip are set forth in the list preceding this letter. We will be doing activities before and after the trip to enhance our learning. Thank you for your enthusiastic cooperation.

Departure Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Mode of Transportation \_\_\_\_\_

Time to return to school \_\_\_\_\_

Lunch will be eaten at (location) \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock.

The schedule is as follows:

- I. Leave School: time \_\_\_\_\_
- II. Arrive at Provencal-Weir House: time \_\_\_\_\_
- III. Tour of House
- IV. Perform the Drama: *Have You Ever Heard a House Talk?*
- V. Go up to the One-Room school for reading, writing and recitations.
- VI. Visit the log cabin before preparing to leave.
- VII. Return to School: time \_\_\_\_\_

We will need two parent chaperones.

We give our second grader, \_\_\_\_\_, permission to accompany the class to the Provencal-Weir House.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will be able to help chaperone this exciting trip.

Parent's or Guardian's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Provençal-Weir House Tour for Second Graders  
ACTIVITY SCHEDULE (FOR TEACHER )**

**Before Trip:**

1. Teacher makes trip request to the Grosse Pointe Historical Society:
2. Teacher finds packet of these materials on internet at [www.gphistorical.org](http://www.gphistorical.org) Teacher makes copies of all needed materials:
  - A. Second Grade Oral History Family Project (for each student)
  - B. Permission slip to parents.
  - C. The Historical Timeline Drama of the Provençal-Weir House called DID YOU EVER HEAR A HOUSE TALK? You must decide if you want the students to have the whole play, or just the page with their part. “\$”
3. Three weeks before: Send home permission slip to parents. Include a due date.
4. Two or three weeks before: Send home Second Grade Oral History Family Project. Include a due date. Some special needs students may need the Oral History paper shortened. Adjust all assignments so that they fit your kids.
5. Two weeks before: Hand out scripts for the play. Assign parts.
6. Start putting information from the Oral History Family Project on your large classroom chart.
7. Work on scripts with students daily. This would be a great Individual Reading Conference activity. You might want to send them home for extra help. You know your kids and parents.
8. Day before the trip.
  - a. Read the play aloud for practice. Try not to pause too much. Theater people call this a dress rehearsal. They are their own audience, so no need to be nervous.
  - b. Read schedule of “at house” activities.
  - c. Remind students about proper clothes, manners, lunch, etc.
  - d. They may bring inexpensive cameras.
9. There will be a Neighborhood Walk so appropriate dress is important.

## **At the Provencal-Weir House**

- I. Docent will give a tour of the Provencal-Weir House giving some information about its history.
- II. Students will sit in a group and be asked to make predictions of what they think might have happened in the house. If this house could talk, what would it tell us about what happened here? What were the people like? Etc.
- III. Students will put on the play in the parlor. Give them a couple minutes to prepare. Explain to them that we will be sitting in a class group on the floor and that each one will stand when it's near their part and they will read their script.
- IV. Student will go to the One-Room school for reading, writing on slates and recitations.
- V. Ring a bell, for them to gather back together in the parlor.
- VI. Student will visit the log cabin in small groups and compare and contrast of life today.
- VII. Encourage them to respond to each other. John, when you said that you saw... I saw something like that. It was a ..... Or, I heard a conversation. The docent might tell what she heard or saw.
- VIII. Talk about the possibility of writing a historical fiction story about several of the characters or writing a biography about Pierre Provencal or Catherine Weir, etc.
- IX. There are suggestions for activities back in the classroom. This trip should be inspiration for many discussions throughout the year. It should build prior knowledge for much of their reading about the past.

# **An Historical Timeline Drama of the Provencal-Weir House**

## **THE HISTORY OF A HOUSE**

### **DID YOU EVER HEAR A HOUSE TALK?**

#### **Activities**

- I. Oral or Spoken History: Fill out the Second Grade Oral or Spoken History Family Project. Go over the form together. Give them answers from your life. Give the students at least a week to fill out the form. Make a big chart to tabulate the information that is accumulated by the students in their Oral History Project. Chart Titles: Neighborhoods Likes about Old House, Likes about New House, Favorite Spot in the House, Dislikes about Old House/New House, Why did you move here? Why did you leave your old house? Etc.

Dates moved: Reason for Moving: Like about old home? Like about new home? How is your new home different from Old home? How did you feel on moving day? What do you remember from moving day?

- II. Pre-trip Activities: If your house had a name, what would it be? We are going to visit a very old house. It is named after the first two families that lived in the house. Write a story as if you were your own house talking and telling a story. What would your house say about the people living there and what these people do in their house? How do they feel? How do they act? What do they do? Which is your favorite spot in the house and why is it your favorite spot? Draw a picture of your house.

- III. Provencal-Weir House Drama: The Talking House

When students arrive at the Provencal-Weir House, the docent should tell them about the Provencal-Weir House and give them a brief tour of the house explaining the rooms and what they were used for.

Docent should lead a question and answer discussion. If this house were to talk, what do you think it would tell you about? Possible answers. Accept their reasoning and ask them how they came up with the idea.

- A. The people who lived in the house
- B. The things that happened in the house
- C. The lives of the people in the house
- D. Fun things that happened in this house
- E. Accidents that happened in this house

- IV. Next, the students should take A Neighborhood Walk. Perhaps Jerry's, 381 Kercheval, a Lakeview farmhouse and the log cabin should be included on the walk. Tell them about the history of the buildings. Also, explain ribbon farms and tell them where the ribbon farms started at the lake.
- V. The students should read the play. DRAMA TIME
- VI. After the Play is Over: Students should go to their favorite spot in the house. Try not to go where there is another person. While there, don't talk to anyone, but think about what might have happened in the room. You know better now that you have had all these experiences. When the bell rings gather back in the living room. Share what you discovered.
- VII. Provencal-Weir House Drama: To prepare for the drama, the teacher should have run off the script and given out the parts several days ahead of time so that the students could practice their reading at home/ or in the classroom. The teacher should demonstrate how to project the voice so that everyone can hear. She may want the child to read the part to her privately as a practice the day before the trip. Or, you may have them read through the entire script so that it goes smoothly during the trip. If they wanted to dress up, or bring a prop that tells the class something about the character, that would be fine, but not necessary. For example: Pierre Provencal could wear a farm hat or get a picture of a barn from the internet. Charlotte could bring ice skates or a picture of someone riding a horse. Mr. Scotford could have a toy car or a toy violin. If the museum has costumes to share, that would be fine. If possible, all characters could have at least one prop depicting their character.

In the Living Room of the Provencal-Weir House, the students can sit on the floor as a class. When their part comes, they should read their speech. If they want to dress up, they can. Perhaps the docent could be the house and the teacher could be Pierre Provencal. A French accent would be appropriate for his part. Or, if you have terrific readers and natural actors, the students could read all the parts. The French accent is not a necessity. It seems that all classes love to do plays.

Suggestion for Using this Timeline: All classrooms should have a timeline in the room where students can put up what happened in a particular period. This timeline could be a catalyst for your timeline. Have the students draw a picture of each of the events, write a title for it and put the date. Then you, the teacher, can put these up. For pictures of the Provencal-Weir House, turn to the Grosse Pointe Historical Society's Web page at [www.gphistorical.org](http://www.gphistorical.org)

## **PROVENCAL-WEIR HOUSE, c. 1823**

(teacher information)

Historical Timeline for what is believed to be  
Grosse Pointe's Oldest Surviving Residence

**1823:** The Provencal-Weir House, c. 1823- built in now Grosse Pointe Farms by Detroit, Pierre Provencal, on a site near Provencal and Lake Shore Roads. Pierre Provencal was a blacksmith, and Indian Agent turned farmer. It was the home of his wife, Euphemia, their daughter, Catherine, and at least 24 orphan children from Detroit's Cholera Epidemic.

**1830:** Before the church was built, Father Gabriel Richard was given permission to hold Sunday Church Services, a mass, in the living room in the house.

**1831:** Pierre Provencal married Euphemia St. Aubin. The ceremony was performed by Father Gabriel Richard in St. Anne's Church in Detroit.

**1830, 1832, 1849's:** Cholera Epidemic caused numerous children to be orphaned and the Provencal's took them into their home. There were at least 24 children raised by this generous couple.

**1869:** Pierre Provencal died at his mother-in-law's house at the corner of St. Aubin and Jefferson Avenue.

**1872:** Euphemia Provencal died.

**1872:** The Provencal-Weir House became a summer cottage for Catherine and her husband, Judge James D. Weir.

**1886:** Judge Weir died. His widow, Catherine and her daughter spent many summer days sitting on the porch watching the waves splashing up on the Lake St. Clair shore.

**1900:** The house was acquired by the Country Club of Detroit when they purchased the Provencal-Weir farm. The original plan for the Club was to have water access and sports.

**1912:** The house was sold for \$400 to John LaBelle.

**1913:** City of Detroit Directory said that John LaBelle used part of the building as a grocery store.

**1914:** According to the Baist's Atlas, the house was moved by John LaBelle to its present location at 376 Kercheval Avenue in Grosse Pointe Farms.

**1915:** LaBelle added the kitchen and dining room to the house.

**1926:** The City of Detroit Directory said that the building was used as the Murphy Land and Building Company, a Real Estate Office.

**1930:** LaBelle's daughter, Margaret and her husband Thomas Pigott moved into the house and again had a grocery store next door.

**1941-1952:** Rental property rented by the Stanley Scotford. Mr. Scotford had worked as a chauffeur for the James Turner family. During World War II, Mr. Scotford worked for a number of years for the Ford Motor Company, eventually becoming a supervisor. A violinist, he was one of the founders of the Grosse Pointe Symphony Orchestra.

**In 1952:** John LaBelle died and the house passed to his daughter Mary.

**In 1955:** Mary LaBelle sold the property to Albert H. Trowbridge, the grandson of Detroit lawyer, General Luther S. Trowbridge. His wife, Margaret was the daughter of Charles W. Matheson. Mr. and Mrs. Trowbridge had five children.

**1955 and 1962:** During these two years, there were two fires in the house. The Trowbridges hired an architect, John Pottle to repair and make improvements on the house.

**1960s:** Mr. Trowbridge died and Mrs. Trowbridge lived in the house with her children and grandchildren until her death.

**1972:** Mrs. Trowbridge became Mrs. Francis Robinson. Mr. Robinson was the curator of Ancient and Medieval Art at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

**December 1, 1987:** After her husband died, Mrs. Robinson sold the Provencal-Weir House to the Grosse Pointe Historical Society. She was permitted to live in the house until April, 1993.

**1993:** The Grosse Pointe Historical Society took control of the House. This group is dedicated to preserving and teaching the history of the Provencal-Weir House and the cultural heritage of Grosse Pointe.

# **An Historical Timeline Drama of the Provencal- Weir House DID YOU EVER HEAR A HOUSE TALK?**

**Each character could read their own description before the play starts. Or that could be done in the classroom so that everyone knows who's who?**

## **Cast of Characters:**

**Provencal-Weir House:** a historical talking house. (This part could be read by the docent at the Provencal Weir House Museum.)

**Pierre Provencal:** an Indian Agent and blacksmith, turned farmer who was very kind. He wanted to help children. (Give him a French accent if you can.)

**Chief Pontiac:** an Indian leader who tried to unite the tribes against the English in the 1700's.

**Euphemia Provencal:** Pierre's wife who had a kind heart and always wanted to help those who are in need.

**Benjamin Vincent, Adolf Vincent, and Isadore Vincent:** Three adopted orphan children that were Pierre Provencal's brother's children. His brother died in one of the cholera epidemics in Detroit.

**Catherine Provencal:** Pierre and Euphemia's daughter who is adventuresome and friendly to all she meets.

**Father Gabriel Richard:** Catholic Priest who married the Provencal's and held Sunday services in their home.

**Judge James D. Weir:** Catherine's husband who was known for his fairness.

**John LaBelle:** grocer and person responsible for moving the house away from the waterfront and adding the kitchen and dining room.

**Mary LaBelle:** John's wife who sold the house.

**Margaret Labelle:** married Thomas Piggott and moved into the house.

**Mr. Murphy:** took advantage of the land that was available by selling land and building houses.

**Mr. and Mrs Scotford:** a proud Scottish family that rented the house. He was a chauffeur for the James Turner family, worked for the Ford Motor company as a supervisor and was a violinist who was one of the founders of the Grosse Pointe Symphony Orchestra.

**General Luther S. Trowbridge:** a Detroit lawyer's, grandson,

**Albert H. Trowbridge** and his wife Margaret moved into the LaBelle house. They had five children.

**Margaret Trowbridge:** They had to repair the damage done by the two fires in the house. She sold the house to the Grosse Pointe Historical Society.

**John Pottle:** An architect who repaired and made improvements to the house, because of the fires.. He was responsible for the parlor bay window, the kitchen as it is now, the enclosed breezeway, and the two dormers.

**Mr. Francis Robinson:** married Mrs. Trowbridge and was a curator of ancient and medieval art at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

**Mrs. Francis Robinson:** When her husband died she sold the Provencal House and they allowed her to live the house until 1993.

**Some extra parts if needed. Non-reading.**

Someone to:

1. Hold the beaver fur to show the class.
2. Hold the beaver hat to show the class.
3. Hold the Ribbon Farm Map to show the class
4. Hold the Map of the Great Lakes to show the class.

**DRAMA BEGINS HERE:**

**A Historical Timeline Drama of the  
Provencal-Weir House  
DID YOU EVER HEAR A HOUSE TALK?**

**Setting:** In the Living Room of the Provencal-Weir House today.

**Provencal-Weir House:** Hello, I'm the Provencal-Weir (Pro-vawn'-shul We're) historical talking house. You probably haven't met too many talking houses before, so I'm sure that I'm a house you won't soon forget. Provencal-Weir are two French names. Of people who lived in my house. Let's pronounce it together. (Pro-Vawn-shul We're) Have you ever thought, "If that house could only talk, I bet it would have some great stories to tell us." Well, that is what I'm going to do, today.

You're going to meet many of the people who lived in me, the oldest surviving house in Grosse Pointe. Who is the oldest person that you know? How old is this person?

Now let's figure out how old I am. I was built in 1823. Can anyone tell us how many years ago, that was? (Leave plenty of time for them to figure it out. If no one can get it, help them as a class.) From 1823 to 1923 is how many years? That's right! It's 100 years which we call 100 years a **century**. Now, from 1923-1925 is two more years. From 1925 to 2000 is how many years? 75. Our total so far is 177 years. Now add \_\_\_\_more and we have a total age of \_\_\_\_\_ years.

(While the house is talking, show the map of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway for this part)

When people first came to the Grosse Pointe area, they came by boat from the Atlantic Ocean, up the Saint Lawrence Seaway, to the Erie Canal, across Lake Erie, up the Detroit River and finally to Lake St. Clare.(Use a map that you can show this route to Grosse Pointe.) This is important for you to know. Why do you think people wanted to live close to the water? (Pause for answers. Accept transportation, scenery, source of food, etc.) Everyone wanted to settle along the lake shore, because that was their main way of transportation and getting supplies. People from France came to this area. They traveled by sailboats across the Atlantic Ocean which were the ships with the tall wooden masts called the tall ships.

Long before that, the Native Americans came to this area by homemade canoes and by walking across Canada from the area that is now Russia. When the French came here, they became friendly with the Indians. The English stayed off by themselves.

Do you know why the European people came to this area? The French came to collect furs, at first. They were called Voyageurs. They were given a lot of money for the furs back in France, for the beaver furs, especially. They used the beaver furs to make very handsome hats. Here is an example of one of them. (If possible, show the students a beaver fur and a hat made from beaver furs.) Now back to the story of my life.

I was built on a ribbon farm on what is now the corner of Provencal and Lake Shore Roads on the shore of Lake St. Clare in 1823. (Show the Ribbon Farm map, again.) A ribbon farm is a long skinny farm with a narrow strip at the lake for transportation and then it goes up to three miles inland. Here is a map that shows some of the first Ribbon Farms. (Show the children the map and explain what Ribbon Farms were like.) My builder was a French Detroitter called Pierre Provencal. Here is where his farm was located on the map. (Show the map.)

I would like you to meet Mr. Provencal. This is Pierre Provencal, a very important man with a generous heart in the history of Grosse Pointe. Remember this story and try to decide why he is so important as you listen to our play.

**Pierre Provencal:** I had been an Indian Agent and blacksmith in the Detroit area which was a very hard job. I couldn't make everyone happy.

**Chief Pontiac:** Pierre, we always knew that you had our interests at heart. We Native Americans have been known for our generosity. One of the things that we like to do is give

away things to others. You have shown the same generous spirit. That is why we trusted you so much.

**Daughter Catherine:** Papa, I've heard you say that you were an Indian Agent. What do Indian Agents do?

**Pierre Provencal:** Since I spoke the Native American Language, I was the person that the Indians would come to when they're having trouble with the traders and farmers. Also, I spoke French and English, so I was the person that the traders or farmers would come to when they're having trouble with the Native Americans. I always felt right in the middle, a very uncomfortable place for some people to be.

**Provencal-Weir House:** In other words, people trusted you to be honest and fair. I can see what happened, you decided to leave the busy mercantile or trading business and get some fresh air away from the city, working on your own farm.

**Pierre Provencal:** Yes, I'm afraid that's right. I started to have trouble with my health, so I decided that I would go into farming. I bought one of the Ribbon Farms and that's when I built you. I bought a large parcel of land that was covered with forests, except on the shore of Lake St. Clair. Along the lakeshore, there were few trees, where we wanted to build the house, but farther in, we had to clear the land for farming. Most of these farms had the house near the lake, then the garden and the barn for the animals; horses, sheep, cows, pigs, chickens, ducks, turkeys and goats. Fruit trees were planted and grain was grown on the acres of cleared farmland. We were well known for our Pear trees. There was usually a well for fresh water. I lived in this house for eight lonely years.

When I met Euphemia St. Aubin, I knew who I wanted to marry. We were Catholic and Father Gabriel Richard performed the ceremony for Euphemia and I in the St. Anne's Church in Detroit. How many of you have been to a wedding? How many have been in a wedding? (Take time for them to tell about it and go on) Since there was no church in Grosse Pointe, Father Richard would come down from Detroit to Grosse Pointe on Sunday and hold services in our living room.

**Father Gabriel Richard:** It was always a pleasure to see you and Mrs. Provencal. You were so generous and thoughtful of others. Also, Euphemia could really cook and I enjoyed the wonderful dinners and the pleasant conversation.

**Euphemia:** There probably aren't many houses that can say they held church services, a mass no less, in their living room. Many people gave money to build a church.

**Father Gabriel Richard:** We were so happy to be able to start building the church. It was really needed.

**Pierre:** During the 1830s and 1840s, in Detroit, there had been a cholera epidemic and many children's parents died and they were left to be orphans. Three of these orphans were my

nephews, Benjamin, Isadore, and Adolf Vincent. We took them in, provided them with a home and proper schooling. One by one, we adopted other children until we had helped at least 24 orphans to reach adulthood. They all turned out to be fine respectable citizens.

**Benjamin Vincent:** When my mother and father died in the Cholera Epidemic, it was a sad time for my brother, Adolph my sister Isadore and myself, but Uncle Pierre came and took us to his house, so that we could be a part of his family. He even built a room for a school on the back of his house.

**Isadore Vincent:** At first, we wondered what it would be like to live with our aunt and uncle, but soon found that they were kind and generous to us and treated us as if we were their very own children. We filled their home with fun and games. No day passed without some excitement. Aunt Euphemia taught me how to make corn husk dolls and I loved playing marbles with my brothers.

**Adolph Vincent:** In the Provencal home, we were taught to be honest and trustworthy members of the family. We all had our chores to do and we tried to do them carefully to thank our kind aunt and uncle. We milked the cows, gathered the eggs, fed the chickens, cut wood and still had time for fun. Thinking about baseball, swimming, fishing, checkers and ice skating on Lake St. Clair were all fun and games that kept us going when we were doing our chores. Of course, we were taught to be faithful in doing our school lessons.

**Euphemia:** The whole community was aware that Pierre Provencal was a generous and honest man, who let no needy person leave his door empty handed. If they needed something, Pierre would always help in any way that he could.

**Pierre:** Finally, one Christmas morning, we were blessed with a beautiful daughter, Catherine. Catherine was the delight of the family; happy, loving and carefree.

**Catherine:** And I had plenty of sisters and brothers to play and work with on our farm. We all loved to swim, ride horses and ice skate. When I became old enough to be married, I married a Detroit Judge called Judge James D. Weir. By now, my parents were getting up there in age and having trouble with their health. My father died first and later my mother. They were buried in the Mt. Elliot Cemetery.

**Judge Weir:** My wife, Catherine was very sad about her parents passing. To help her feel closer to them, I asked if she would like to live in their home. She said yes right away. The house became our summer home and then the house became known as the Weir Farm.

**Catherine:** We had many wonderful summers there. I was blessed with several daughters. One was named Isabel. Also, we had one son, John. After Judge Weir's passing in 1886, Isabel and I liked to sit on the porch at the Provencal-Weir farm to watch the windmills along the shore and listen to the waves of Lake St. Clair splashing and dancing on the shore.

**Provencal-Weir House:** When Catherine died, her only son had already died and none of the girls married a wealthy enough man to own the farm. The farm was sold to the Country Club of Detroit who later sold the house to John Labelle, a Grosse Pointer in 1912 for \$400.00.

**John Labelle:** I thought, “Next to the lake, that house was very cold and windy. I couldn’t see living in it until we moved it to a less windy location. So, with a great deal of help, in 1914, I had it moved to 376 Kercheval Avenue in Grosse Pointe Farms. Moving a house is not an easy job!

**Mrs. Mary LaBelle:** I told John that it wasn’t necessary to move the house. It was so much work. We could make do by the lake. I guess he was worried about my cough with all the wind from the lake and he thought a grocery store would do better inland.

**Provencal-Weir House:** I had overheard when the moving day was going to be. Wow, was I nervous. This is what happened. First, fifteen men drove their teams of horses to my front door. I was not feeling very good about this. Using levers, they raised my near 100 year old frame from my stone foundation. I creaked and groaned as they rolled the logs until they were under my main beams. I was pulled down the street by four teams of horses. I could see that we were coming near a new foundation and I could hardly wait until they put me back down.

**John LaBelle:** I knew my wife would like a new kitchen and a proper dining room. So we had them built for her.

**Mrs. Mary LaBelle:** John, you are so good to me. I love the new kitchen and dining room. It will give our family privacy when you’re busy in the grocery store. Also, our house will be so much warmer away from Lake St. Clair’s wind.

**Provencal-Weir House:** John Labelle’s grocery store did very well, so the LaBelle family was able to move where they would have more privacy. Then I was rented to Stanley Scotford’s family. I love music, so this was a great time for me.

**Stanley Scotford:** When we arrived here from Scotland, I was proud that I was able to take care of my family as a chauffeur for the James Turner family. During World War II, I worked at the Ford Motor Company and worked up to the job of supervisor. Henry Ford was very fussy and we had to follow strict rules to keep working for him. My life’s greatest love was playing my violin. So I was lucky to be one of the founders of the Grosse Pointe Symphony Orchestra.

**Mrs. Scotford:** I am so proud of my Stanley. I have him play his violin for me and my family every night. He is such a good man and he takes good care of his family.

**Mr. Murphy:** When the Scotford’s moved, I decided to try my luck at a Real Estate and Building business. I called my business the Murphy Land and Building Co. and I ran it from the Provencal-Weir farm house. There was a huge amount of land that needed to be sold and many people didn’t have time to supervise the building project. So, I decided to try my best at this business where many people were able to get rich. Things didn’t work out for me, so I had to sell out the company and go into another business.

**Mrs. Margaret LaBelle:** When my father, John LaBelle died, I inherited the Provencal-Weir House. My husband, Mr. Piggott and I lived there for some time, but I had to sell it because of money problems. I sold it to the Albert H. Trowbridge family who had five children.

**Mrs. Trowbridge:** While we were in the house, there were two fires. My husband hired an architect, John Pottle to make improvements on the house. Mr. Pottle was a good choice for this important work.

**Albert Trowbridge:** I looked far and wide to find the best architect and builder around. I knew that this was hard work and it was very important that the job be done right.

**Mr. Pottle:** Those fires had left a mess, but because of them I was able to make some fine improvements to the house.

**Provencal-Weir House:** I was looking pretty fancy after John Pottle finished working on me.

**Mrs. Trowbridge.** My husband died in the 1960s so I lived in the house with my children and grandchildren. I met this wonderful intelligent man, Francis Robinson, who was the curator of Ancient and Medieval Art at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

**Mr. Frances Robinson:** I liked the Greek architecture of the house and was glad that we were able to live in this house.

**Mrs. Robinson (formerly Mrs. Trowbridge):** After my husband died, there were too many memories in our house so I sold the house to the Grosse Pointe Historical Society in 1987. They allowed me to live in the house until 1993.

**Provencal-Weir House:** When the historical society took control of me, I knew that all would go well. They were very happy to study about my history and try to preserve me as I once was. That brings me to today. Children, what part of my history was the most interesting to you? (After discussion continue with the speeches.)

As you can tell, since 1823 when Pierre Provencal first built me, I have had many interesting people living here. My favorite time was when all the orphans came. There was never a dull moment.

**Pierre Provencal:** As each of the orphans grew up, I made sure that they had enough money and goods to have a good start in life. They were grateful and turned out to be fine citizens. I was very happy that I could be a part of their life.

Perhaps when you return to your classroom, your class would like to write a group story about one or all of the three children that were Mr. Provencal's niece and nephews.

**Provencal-Weir House:** Maybe your story could be that scene in history where he gave each one of them enough money to make his or her way in the world. Because you must make up the conversation, you will be writing historical fiction. Historical fiction is based on some historical

truth, but much of it is made up by the author, because it happened so long ago that no one who was there is still alive or available to tell about it. When you interview someone about something they experienced, that is called spoken or oral history. You are making history today when you tell your parents about what you learned.

Now, take another trip through the house and think about what happened in each room. Don't talk. Just think. Sit down in a corner and imagine that you're living here. Think about all the meals that were cooked in the kitchen. How do you think they managed feeding all those orphans? What were their sleeping arrangements?

### **THE END OF DRAMA**

Docent gathers the students back together. Ask them what new ideas they had about the Provencal-Weir house? How did their thinking change?

## **Post Trip Activities: Back in the classroom**

Each student should draw a picture of the Provencal-Weir House. It could be of the inside or outside; their favorite spot, an artifact or a piece of furniture.....something that they would like to remember.

As a group, the class could dictate a story that the teacher would write on chart paper from the point of view of one of the orphans and tell about your life at the Provencal-Weir House.

### **For Example:**

Describe the scene where Mr. Provencal gives you money to make your start in life. Where in the house would you be? How would you feel? What would you say? What would Mr. Provencal say? What would happen when you left his home?

Or write a story about someone who is having hard times who comes to ask Mr. Provencal for money. They say that “no one left his office empty handed if there was a true need.” You’d have to come up with the name of the person and the situation. Try to base the situation on something historical like the Cholera Epidemic, Trouble on the Farm, A Storm on Lake St. Clair, The House Fires, etc. Working together with the teacher writing on a chart, compose a short biography of Mr. Provencal’s life using the information from this play.

Use the Provencal-Weir Timeline (for teacher’s information) and make a timeline for the classroom. Each child or group of children can draw a picture of an event from the timeline, put a title on it and put the date on it. You don’t have to feature every event. Choose the 10 most important dates. Make a timeline with dates on it and put it up in your classroom. This can be used throughout the year to place, books read on the timeline, famous events in history, or celebrations in the classroom.

Due Date for this Paper: \_\_\_\_\_

## Second Grade Oral History Family's House Project

Sponsored by the  
Grosse Pointe Historical Society

Oral history is gathering information by asking people what actually happened to them in a neighborhood or a community or era of history. Some children will be able to fill this out by themselves. Others will need help from family. *Some of it may have happened before you were born or before you can remember.* Answer what you can. **Please print.**

1. Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is your address? \_\_\_\_\_

3. How long have you lived in the house where you live? \_\_\_\_\_

4. From where did you move? \_\_\_\_\_

5. How many people live in your house? \_\_\_\_\_ How many rooms are in your house? \_\_\_\_\_ What is your favorite place in your house? \_\_\_\_\_ Why do you like it? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Do you share your bedroom with someone? \_\_\_\_\_ With whom? \_\_\_\_\_ What do you like or dislike about your bedroom?  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. What is your favorite activity that you and your family do together?  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. If you have moved in your lifetime, what did you like or dislike about your old house? \_\_\_\_\_

9. How did you feel the day you moved? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. Why did your family move to Grosse Pointe? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. What do you like about where you live now? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. How is your new house different from your old house? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

13. Which home do you like better and why? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

14. Who was your first friend in your new neighborhood? Tell how you met and what made them special to you. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

15. If you have pets, tell how you handled them for your moving day.

\_\_\_\_\_

If you have never moved, pretend like you have and write about where you would like to move? What would happen that would be exciting? Would there be anything that would make you nervous? Write your ideas in story form.

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

If I had my choice, I would move to:

\_\_\_\_\_

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## Grosse Pointe Historical Society

[www.gphistorical.org](http://www.gphistorical.org)

