

Grade Level **5-12**

Class Periods **2**

Goals/Objectives/Student Outcomes:

By experiencing the atmosphere of Plum Grove through slides or an on-site visit, students will examine three main themes: Robert Lucas and the Territory of Iowa; every-day life during the 1840s; and how to use a historic home as a tool to learn about history.

Students will:

- Identify Robert Lucas as the Territory of Iowa's first governor.
- Learn how Plum Grove's architecture and furnishings represent the period when the Lucases lived there.
- Recognize the role of archaeology as a research tool.
- Describe a home of 150 years ago and compare it to a home of today.
- Explain what can be learned from examining a historic home.

Materials:

1. Iowa maps (historic and current)
2. Photos of historic homes

Background:

Plum Grove is located in the center of a seven-acre haven of trees and wildlife in the heart of Iowa City. Because of its relative separation from the rest of the neighborhood, Plum Grove gives the visitor a sense of being transported to the Iowa City of 150 years ago.

Plum Grove was the retirement home of Robert Lucas, who served as the first governor of the Territory of Iowa from 1838 to 1841, and his wife Friendly Lucas. Built in 1844, Plum Grove features period furnishings and artifacts, some of which belonged to Lucas and his family. Thus, in addition to getting a taste of early Iowa City, visitors to Plum Grove also experience the personal side of one of Iowa's important public figures.

Lucas lived in the house until his death in 1853; Friendly remained at Plum Grove until the late 1850s.

Robert Lucas was born in 1781 in Shepherdstown, Pennsylvania, to descendants of Quakers who settled in Pennsylvania in 1679. His early schooling included mathematics and surveying, subjects that

would later serve him well when he moved westward in 1800 into the Northwest Territory.

Despite his pacifist Quaker background, Lucas began a military career in 1803 when the Governor of Ohio commissioned him to enlist volunteers for the Ohio militia. He rose in rank until he became a major-general in the militia and a colonel in the U.S. Army. When the War of 1812 began, Lucas helped organize a battalion of volunteers from his militia. He served as an officer in General Hull's disastrous campaign around Detroit. Lucas's daily journal during that fiasco reveals courage and resourcefulness.

Concurrent with his rise in the military, Lucas successfully engaged in a political career beginning in 1805, when he was appointed justice of the peace for Union Township in Scioto County. In 1808, he was elected to the lower house of the Ohio legislature. Lucas served all but two years from 1814 and 1830 as a state senator.

In 1830 he was nominated for Ohio governor by the Democrats, but was defeated. He ran again in 1832 and won. He was reelected in 1834. His most notable service to Ohio during his four years as governor was his victory in the Ohio—Michigan boundary dispute.

In 1838, President Martin Van Buren appointed Lucas as governor of the Iowa Territory. Lucas's agenda included organizing an efficient militia and a strict economy, and passing legislation on education, the criminal code, and the suppression of gambling and intemperance. He oversaw Iowa's victory over Missouri in the so-called Boundary War. He also laid the cornerstone for the new state capitol (now Old Capitol) in Iowa City in 1840. With the election of a Whig Party president, Lucas was removed from office as governor in 1841.

Soon afterwards, Lucas and his wife, Friendly, decided to spend the remainder of their lives in Iowa City. In 1844 they purchased 80 acres just south of town and built a house reminiscent of their home in Ohio. Nestled among a grove of plum trees, the house was dubbed Plum Grove.

Vocabulary:

Archaeology: The recovery and study of material evidence, such as graves, buildings, tools, and pottery, remaining from past human life and culture.

Historic site: A place that provides insights into local history by its association with significant people or events.

Legislator: A person who creates or enacts laws as part of an established government.

Museum: A building, place, or institution devoted to the acquisition, conservation, study, exhibition, and educational interpretation of objects having scientific, historic, or artistic value.

Territory: Area of the United States not yet admitted as a state, but administered by a governor and having a legislature.

Procedure:

Before your tour by visit or slides, set aside some classroom time to try one or more of the following activities.

1. Talk about Plum Grove Historic Site as a museum. Discuss museums and collections. Explain that a collection is a group of items assembled in a logical order and gathered because they have some kind of significance. Museums have collections that they study and exhibit to the public. The collections are used to interpret the past, present, and sometimes the future.
2. Explain that museums contain both two-dimensional and three-dimensional materials (called artifacts) to interpret history or natural history. An artifact can tell us much about the people, the time, and the region from which it came. It can reveal what materials it is made from, and when and where it was used. Sometimes its color and style tell us about popular trends. All of this helps us determine its relative value within the "material culture."
3. A historic site—such as Plum Grove—is one type of museum that represents a particular individual, place, or event. Make a list of places in your town or country that you would make into historic sites, and give reasons why each should be a historic site.
4. Use maps to compare the size and boundaries of the United States and Iowa in the 1800s and today. Discuss the definition of a territory and the fact that Iowa was on the nation's frontier in 1840. Have students locate Iowa City and Plum Grove on the Iowa and Iowa City maps. For these activities you will need: circa 1840-1860 maps of Iowa City and the United States and current Iowa City, Iowa, and United States maps. The goal is to help students locate Plum Grove, introduce the concept of a territory, and place Plum Grove and the Iowa Territory on the 1840s frontier.
5. For these activities you'll need photographs of Robert and Friendly Lucas. After the students have examined the photos, discuss the clothing worn by the Lucases and the stern nature of photographs from that time period.
6. Introduce the topic of territorial governor. Ask the students who the governor of Iowa is today, and how he achieved his position. Explain that Lucas was not elected but appointed governor. Using the mid-19th century map to emphasize the lack of roads, railroads, and communications, discuss the kinds of problems Lucas would have faced as territorial governor.
7. Using photographs of Plum Grove, other historic homes, and examples of today's homes (interior and exterior, introduce the idea that Plum Grove is a home—not just a building—that reflects a specific time in history.

Discuss what a home is. Show students a photo of a home today (a bedroom, if possible). Discuss what they can determine about the people who live there based on the "evidence" they find in the photograph.

Look at images of historic homes. Why is it important to preserve them? Ask students to name some famous homes they've heard of.

Relate the discussion to the visit to Plum Grove. Instruct students to look for evidence of the Lucas' life during their tour of the home. Point out particularly revealing artifacts, such as tools, furniture, and kitchen utensils.

8. The following is a Plum Grove "Scavenger Hunt," which, at the discretion of the teacher, can be incorporated into a tour or slide show and offered to students as an independent activity:

Entryway—This house used to be a part of a farm. Why do you think it was called Plum Grove?

Parlor—Look at the front room. This is the parlor. Is it a formal or casual room? What kinds of activities do you think the Lucas family did here? Find the red chair. Do you see an animal's neck and head in it? What is this animal? Do you see a musical instrument? It is a melodeon. Do you play an instrument? Did this house have electricity? The two glass items on top of the melodeon are called camphene lamps. Name two other light sources in this room.

Dining Room—Find the fireplace. There are many fireplaces in the house. Count them as you go through the house. How many are there? In the middle of winter what would you use a fireplace for?

Library—Find the painting of Robert Lucas. What does the painting tell you about his personality? Find the basket on the floor. What is in the basket? (knitting material)

Kitchen—Find the room where Friendly Lucas would have cooked. How is it different from your own kitchen? The Lucases had many chores to do. Many were done in the kitchen. Find the tools used for chores: butter churn, dry sink, candle molds, coffee grinder, and irons.

Upstairs—Find the middle bed. Look under the bed. The fancy pot is called a chamber pot. What do you think it was used for? What is the mattress made of? (straw) Do you sew? A 12-year old girl sewed the sampler above the fireplace. Why was it important to know how to sew in those days? Find the old clothes. How are they different from your clothes? Would you have liked living in this house? Why or why not?

Visit the archaeology exhibits on the Plum Grove grounds. Archaeological excavations were undertaken at Plum Grove in the late 1970s. The sites of these excavations have interpretive markers.

Plum Grove's exterior has been altered many times. Walk around the outside of the house and look for evidence of elements that have been removed or changed.

Assessment of Outcomes:

Ask some of the following questions of your students after your visit (whether tour or slides) to Plum Grove. After each question we give some suggested answers. Have your students expand on these answers.

Compare Plum Grove with your own house (consider the number of rooms and what the rooms are used for). Draw a picture of your room. Draw a picture of the room that would have been yours at Plum Grove. What do the drawings tell you about each time period?

If you had lived at Plum Grove in the 1840s what chores would you have done? (Name the chore-related artifacts you saw at the house.) Describe how living at Plum Grove then would be different from your typical day now.

Imagine you are Plum Grove's historic site manager. What would you be concerned about? What would your daily routine be like?

(Consider the possible effects of large numbers of people on the house. How would you handle tours and maintain the grounds?)

If you lived at Plum Grove now what would you want changed? What things would you keep the same? Consider, for instance, electrical outlets.

If you were a settler in the Iowa Territory would you support Robert Lucas as governor?

Plum Grove started out as a farm, but is now in the middle of the city. How do you think it was able to survive in the face of rapid urban growth? Consider for example, the fact that only parts of the farm were sold as lots.

Extensions and Adaptations:

Here are several suggested themes for student research. Their results might be presented in both written and oral reports.

Interview your parents, grandparents, or older friends about their childhoods. Ask what chores they had to do as children. What was their room like? Find three or four major differences between your life and the person you interview.

There were many new settlements in the Iowa Territory. Pick one to learn more about. It can be a town that has survived or one that has vanished. Where is it located? When was it settled and by whom? What jobs did the people have? What cultural and educational organizations developed? What were the common customs and games? Why did the town grow or not grow?

Robert Lucas's wife's first name was Friendly. Today that sounds like an unusual first name, but back then names such as Friendly, Charity, and Felicity were common. Research other names common during Friendly's life. What do the names mean? Why were they used? How do they compare with names used today, such as Jennifer, Scott, and Jamal?

If your parents or grandparents own their home, look at the abstract of the property. The abstract tells who owned the property in the past and what land divisions it was part of. What can you find out about the place where you and your family live? (To the teacher: Please consider bringing your abstract if you own a house, or ask to borrow one from another teacher.)

Friendly Lucas had a reputation for being a very good cook. One of her recipes, for plum butter, is reprinted on the last page (from the Spring 1992 issue of *The Palimpsest*). Try this recipe as it is written. Does it work?

What music would have been popular between 1838 and 1873, when Robert and Friendly Lucas lived in Iowa? See if you can find sheet music or recordings of any popular songs from the period. Play them in class. Do you like the music? Which do you prefer, today's music, or that of the mid-19th century? Why?

Imagine you are Robert Lucas. Write a letter back to friends in the East describing your new life in Iowa.

Take a walking tour of the neighborhood around Plum Grove. Compare the styles of architecture of nearby houses with the architecture of Plum Grove.

Create an archaeological dig in your classroom. Take a box about 18 inches deep and fill it with dirt. While you do that, place in the box artifacts to represent a group of people such as, broken pottery, animal bones, toys, and toothbrushes. Students can excavate and assemble the artifacts. What do the artifacts tell about the people the dig represents?

Resources:

4th-8th Grade

"Capitals and Capitols." *The Goldfinch* 5 (April 1984). "Homes in History." *The Goldfinch* 15 (Fall 1993).

"The Iowa Territory's 150th Birthday." *The Goldfinch* 9 (September 1987).

"The Shape of the State." *The Goldfinch* 4 (February 1983).

"The Path to Statehood." Video, Iowa Heritage Series, Iowa Public Television.

Robert S. Starbird and Daniel Rainey. *American History: It's Beneath Your Feet*. Media, Inc., 1990.

9th Grade-Adult

Anne Beiser Allen. "Friendly Frontier: Images from the Live of Friendly Lucas, Iowa's First Lady." *The Palimpsest* 73 (1992): 18-31.

Thomas H. Charleton. *A Guide to the Exhibits, Plum Grove Farm 1844-1943: 100 Years of Life in a Changing Society*. Iowa City: University of Iowa; 1984. (Available at Plum Grove.)

"Historic Plum Grove." *Iowan* 8 (August-September 1960): 32-37, 53-54.

The Palimpsest 69 (Summer 1988).

Theodore Sutton Parvin. "As Robert Lucas Became Iowa's Territorial Governor." *Annals of Iowa* 34 (1957): 112-20.

William J. Petersen. "Iowa in the Days of Lucas." *The Palimpsest* 44 (1963): 221-84.

Leland L. Sage. *A History of Iowa*. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1974.

"Teaching with Historic Places." *Cultural Resources Management* 16, No.2, 1993.

Linda K. Thompson. "Mrs. Harold Avery Donates Lucas Treasure to Department of History and Archives." *Annals of Iowa* 41 (1971): 681-84.

Valentine Van Tassel. "When Friendly Lucas went to Iowa." *Antiques Journal* 11 (June 1956): 14-15,30.

Friendly's Plum Butter

Margaret Lucas Henderson, a great-granddaughter of Friendly and Robert Lucas, recorded this recipe:

"Plum Butter or Jam: Sneak up on plums and get as many as you can. Wash well (a few worms will give it a meaty flavor so do not be squeamish). Cover with boiling water & cook till tender. Take potato masher & mash— skins & all. If you are short of plums & want to use the bulk available put skins & all in to a colander—use potato masher & mash. Take pits out by your fingers.

"Put through as much of the skins as you can. For each cup of pulp you have to use 2/3 cup of sugar. I cook mine in oven—slowly—testing for consistency. A small portion in a saucer—put in refrigerator will tell you when the jam or butter is just right.

"Put in jars & seal. Call an armored truck & take to your safe deposit box before anyone becomes aware that you have such a treasure in your possession."