Village Map:
To help students find their way around the village, we have provided a map inside the front cover. The numbers on the map will correspond with the headings on the pages where they can find the answers to their questions.

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Suggestions for Starting
Depending on the size of your group and the number of chaperones you have available, we suggest starting with the Township meeting as a large group activity, as sometimes more adults to help with finding answers and searching on the maps is better, and you can all help each other out. The Map in the front of this book is numbered with a table listing the numbered buildings below. Each building is followed with a page number that will take you to the history and activities for each building in this book.

Restrooms
Are located behind the village pavilion and hotel. They are ADA accessible modern restrooms with hot water and drinking fountains.

Emergency/First Aid Kit
If you need emergency or first aid assistance (Band-Aids, ice packs, etc.), there will be a staff member at the Visitor Center who can help you.

Critical Emergencies (911)
If you have a critical emergency requiring EMS or emergency response and cannot leave your area, do not hesitate to call 911. The Ushers Ferry address to provide to emergency service dispatchers is 5925 Seminole Valley Tr. NE, Cedar Rapids, 52411. If you know which building or area you are at or near on the village site that will also be helpful.

As soon the emergency dispatcher has released you from the call, or if you have an additional person with a cell phone in your party, please contact the Village office at 319-286-5763 or use the guide cell phone number provided to you by staff so that we may provide immediate assistance.

Using this Book:
If your students have had time to watch any of the videos about the village homes and buildings before coming to Ushers Ferry, they will already have received some of the history about the buildings. We also have gray audio boxes in some of the buildings that will play a recording of information. However, each section of this guide will start with a brief history you can read to the students or refer to help answer questions. (Answers they will need are underlined!). That’s ok! You can still read the building histories to them, and we also have some group discussion questions and activities you can use directly from this guide.
Township Meeting & Mapping Exercise
#9 on the Village Map, pages 3-4 in student Journal
Activity Time: 20-30 Minutes

Guide/Chaperone/Teacher Instructions
If you have been with us in past years, you will notice that we have moved the location of the Township meeting from the old township hall to the new Saloon exhibit next to the General Store. It was common in some communities that did not have township halls for township meetings to be held at a church, school house, or local store where everyone could gather and vote.

The Town Hall pages of the Student activity packet include a 1907 map of Clinton Township, where Ushers Ferry is now located and the Usher family once lived. This map contains section numbers, markings for school houses and churches, and names of prominent land owners such as Dyer Usher. By carefully studying the map, students should be able to answer the questions on the first page.

Mounted on the wall in the Saloon is an original 1869 Map of Linn County. Labels have been added to the map to explain geographical units such as Townships, Ranges, and Sections. This map is useful for explaining the difference between Congressional Survey Townships used to define property ownership, and the later civil or political townships that were grafted over them to create districts of local government. Questions on the second page of the Town Hall student activity must be answered by studying this map. In order to answer question two on this page, students must find both the Range numbers printed on the bottom of the map and Township numbers on the right and left sides of the map and use them to plot the location of the land they are looking for. (They usually require adult assistance for this activity). This map also has larger labels to explain ranges and sections and can be useful for showing students the parts of a Township map.

Township History: What is A Township?
A Survey Township is a small geographic area. Historically, there are two kinds of townships. Survey Townships are simply geographic references used by the Government Survey Office to define areas and location of land for property deeds and ownership. A standard township was six miles square and divided into 36 sections of land. Each section was one square mile. This system of measuring and mapping the land left an indelible mark on Iowa that can be seen from outer space. All of the land in Iowa and a great deal of the Midwestern and Great Plains states that were obtained through the Louisiana purchase were measured from a starting point called the 5th Principle Meridian (actually located somewhere in a swamp in Arkansas!) From this point, Land Surveyors essentially divided this vast swath of the United States into a grid of Survey Townships spreading North and West, making easily definable plots of land for pioneers to settle on.
Civil Townships are units of local government. As Iowa was settled and became a state, it was easy to establish these small local governments based upon the boundaries set by the government survey. That is why so many of Iowa’s counties are rectangular in shape! However, you will note that some Civil Townships are not rectangular, these boundaries were usually changed later by the people who settled in those areas as certain natural land features or transportation routes often made it difficult for them to connect with other settlers within their survey township, so they changed the geographic area to suit their political needs. You can see this on the big Linn County Map mounted on the wall of the Saloon. Some Townships, like Linn and College are perfectly rectangular and fall along the original survey lines, while others like Bertram, Putnam or Monroe have irregular boundaries that had to be adjusted where people could not cross the river.

What is a Township?  Mapping Exercise
Student Journal page 3

1. What Section of Land does Dyer Usher live on?

2. Ushers Ferry Boat Location

3. Ushers Ferry Village Location

4. Sections of the Townships that have Churches:
   29, 27

5. School Houses in Clinton Township: There are 8 school houses, located on sections: 1, 8, 10, 18, 23, 21, 29, 27
1869 Linn County Map Exercise:
Student Journal page 4

1. Townships that are not rectangular:
   Bertram, Putnam, Monroe, Fayette, Washington, Rapids

2. Civil Twp. 82, Range 5 West is named: Franklin and contains the towns of Mount Vernon and Lisbon.

Township Meeting Minutes:
Student Journal page 5

Guide/Chaperone/Teacher Instructions
On the table in the front of the room is a wooden box with laminated cards. Students may draw from the box for a Township office. On the back of each card is a written explanation of what their role in Township government was. Depending on the amount of time you want to spend on this, you can either have them stand up (By office), and explain their role, or you can have them break into groups (committees) to discuss various township problems.

For a short group exercise/discussion on the day of the tour, you can pick either one or both of two Township discussions. For cold and rainy days, you may want to consider doing “The School Teacher Problem,” which gives some perspective on gender inequality and ways in which wider community needs might win out over educational needs.

1. Were you appointed to a Township Office? What was it?
   Draw from wooden box for offices. See Township Offices next page, or read information about their office from the back of the card.

2. Did you serve on a Township Committee to solve a problem for the Township? If so, what was it? What did you decide?
   See Group Discussion question, “The School Teacher Problem” on page 8 of this book.

3. The Case of the Naughty Goat: On the table with the wooden chest of Township Office cards, you will find a laminated sheet with instructions for the Naughty Goat Court case. Pick out the people involved in making the decision and go up to the Usher House fence line where the fence must be viewed to determine the outcome of the case.
   This activity is only offered with an Ushers Ferry guided, or partially guided village tour. If you have selected the self-guided village option, you may disregard this question.
Township Offices (Group Activity)

**Trustees** are the legal guardians of the public interests of the township who make laws, divide the township into road districts, open roads on petition, select jurors, build and repair bridges and town halls, purchase and care for cemeteries, act as judges of elections, and have charge of the poor not in the county charge.

**The Clerk** attends the meetings of the trustees and makes a careful record of the meetings. Keeps the poll (voting) lists and township records. Administers oaths and notifies new officers of their election.

**Treasurer:** Taxes collected from township citizens are paid to the Treasurer. He receives all fines, forfeitures and license fees paid to the township. He is the keeper of Township funds, and pays out money upon the written order of the Trustees and witnessed by the Clerk.

**The Assessor** makes a list of all of the names of all persons subject to taxation, estimates the value of their real and personal property, assesses a tax and delivers the list to the Auditor or Tax Collector. In some states there is also a poll-tax of $1-3 laid upon all male inhabitants more than 21 years of age.

**School Directors:** Have charge of the public schools of the township. Number of directors varies from 3-5. Directors levy taxes for school purposes, visit and inspect the school buildings, adopt text books, regulate the order of studies and length of term, fix salaries, and purchase furniture and equipment.

**Constables** are the police officers of the Township. There are usually 2-3 in each Township. They wait upon the Justice’s Court, and are subject to his orders. Constables keep the peace, serve warrants, and in some states act as tax collectors.

**Justice:** Elected by the citizens of the Township, the Justice is the judge who presides over small offenses and civil suits for small amounts. They are responsible for settling small legal disputes between citizens of the Township. Justices may be called to act as coroners, determining whether or not a person died of natural causes, accident, or if their death should be investigated as a crime.

**Collector:** Elected or appointed by the Township Trustees, the Collector is responsible for collecting the taxes of the Township and reviewing the books of the Treasurer and Auditor to make sure they are correct and in order. Collectors occasionally take on other duties like viewing fence lines in dispute, or seeing that stray livestock or animals are collected and cared for until their rightful owner is found and has paid for their keep.

**Road Commissioners,** or surveyors of highways, have charge of the construction and repair of highways, summon those subject to labor on the road, and direct their work. In some Townships, Commissioners have the right to require two days of labor from each farmer in the township to help grade and maintain the roads.

**Supervisor:** The Township representative of the County Board of Supervisors
1. **The School Teacher Problem...**

Two people have applied for a job as teacher of the Cherry Valley School House. Both have recently graduated from the 8th grade and obtained their teaching certificates. The first person is a girl, who was an excellent student, is very good with children, and who everyone agrees would be an excellent teacher. The second applicant is a young man who might not be as good of a teacher, but who is planning on attending college to become a lawyer. Some people on the committee want to hire the young woman, because she will be a better teacher, even though they know she may get married in a couple of years and they will have to hire a new teacher all over again. Other people on the committee want to hire the young man, even though they know he also will be leaving in a year or so. They want to hire him because Ushers Ferry does not have a lawyer, and they are hoping that after he finishes college, he will come back to Ushers Ferry and open a law practice. You have the deciding vote.

Which one would you hire? Why?

Although today we would probably hire the young woman, who seems to be the better teacher, chances are very good that the Township school board would actually have hired the young man instead. In that time, women rarely held jobs outside of the home (unless they were helping their husband in his own business, such as a store). Teaching was one of the few acceptable jobs a woman could have, but well into the early 20th century it was forbidden for a woman to get married and still teach school. That meant that as soon as a woman married, she had to give up her teaching job. (As Laura Ingalls Wilder did).

When it came to choosing between a young woman or a young man for a teaching position, many Township School Directors might choose the young man, particularly if it was known that he was intending to pursue further studies and go away to college to become a skilled professional, such as a Doctor or a Lawyer. –Remember Doctor Miller? This is exactly how he was able to put himself through High School and pass the entrance exams for college. Often times, Township school boards hired men teachers over women, as a way to support their pursuit of a professional career. Doctors and Lawyers were essential services to a newly developing town, and if that young man went off to college and came back to set up either a medical or legal practice, it was good business for everyone in the Township.
Touring the Village Homes...
If you have more chaperones, you may want to break up into smaller groups to tour the village homes. This does make it easier for each student to make sure they see “their building,” and then they can tour the rest of the buildings at their leisure. Using the map and the table of contents at the front of this book, you may tour the buildings in any order you wish.

Usher Family (Henry A. Usher Home)
Building #3 on the Village Map, Page 6 in the Student Journal

History
This house was the home of Henry Aaron Usher, first cousin to Dyer Usher who settled in this valley in 1839. In the early 1850s, Henry followed his family from Ashtabula County, Ohio to Iowa. Henry and his father Joseph settled first in Iowa City, where they established a blacksmith shop and worked on the construction of the Old Capitol building.

In 1855, Henry moved his household to join the rest of the Ushers, who had settled along the river north of Cedar Rapids. He purchased two claims from his cousin Dyer: a timber claim located upon this land where the village stands today and a smaller claim farther up river beside Dyer’s ferry.

Henry and his brother Seymour operated a saw mill, and with the lumber logged and milled from this land, he built this simple salt-box farmhouse. The wide oak floor-boards and “cut nails” used throughout the house are a testament to its pioneer construction. As industry flourished and transportation routes improved in the latter half of the 19th century, houses were built from softer woods, such as pine or fir floated downriver from the forests of Minnesota or Wisconsin. In the 1850s, however, settlers wishing to build a finished house had to make do with the native timber that grew here in the valley.

The difficulty of building with oak can be seen in the original beams and floor joists which have been left exposed in the butter room. As you look through the glass door, you will see the trapdoor that once led to the old spring trough in the cellar where the family cooled their butter and cream. The small “porthole” in the ceiling of the bedroom shows another of Henry Usher’s construction tricks, as he under-layed each joint of the original tongue and groove oak flooring with the “skimmings” off the logs that he ran through his sawmill.

In 1867, Henry moved to land he owned on the west side of the river near Covington. Instead of building another house, he decided to move this one. In the middle of the winter Henry loaded the house onto skids and used teams of horses to pull it across the frozen river.

Although family tradition holds that Henry cut the house in half to move it, and put it back together on the other side, architectural investigation of the house during the extensive restoration revealed that the house was much smaller, with the kitchen and “butter room” being added after it was moved to Covington.
The house returned to this side of the river in 1980 to become one of the first buildings in what is now Ushers Ferry, and has only ever been lived in by members and descendants of the Usher family.

Journal Questions (page 6)

1. What important natural resources made the Ushers want to settle here? How did they use those resources to make a living?
   
   A. (In the Usher House Video) - Timber and Water (streams) and the Cedar River. The Usher family settled close to the river because of the plentiful timber that grew here and the close access to the Cedar River. Before there were good roads, the Cedar River served as a major transportation route, connecting Cedar Rapids and those who lived along it to other major communities such as Waterloo and eventually the great Mississippi River. Timber was important, as the Usher Family owned a sawmill and cut and sold their timber as lumber for people to build their homes and businesses. The Cedar River also provided the Usher family a steady income, as they shuttled people back and forth across the river for a fee.

2. What is a ferry boat?
   
   A. See the lithograph print of the ferry boat in the front parlor of the Usher House. Ferries were used to take people and goods back and forth across the river before bridges and roads were built.

3. Mr. Usher got a road built to his ferry by serving in one important office for Clinton Township. What was that position?
   
   A. (In the Usher Ferry Road Video). Dyer, Henry and Seymour Usher each took a turn serving as Road Supervisor of Clinton Township. In Township government, Road Supervisors were responsible for the grading and maintenance of all the rural roads in the township, but also had the power to petition the county for the construction of new roads through the township. By working together and each serving terms as Roads Supervisors, Dyer Usher and his cousins were able to construct a road from Spring Grove across the Cedar River at the ferry landing and all the way to what is now Blairs Ferry Road.

4. Does this house seem big or small to you? How many people do you think could live here comfortably?
A. Answers may vary, depending on student perspective. In reality, this house once housed six people at one time when Henry A. Usher’s son, Joseph Perry Usher lived here with his wife and children. Joseph and his wife Emily had the bedroom downstairs off the parlor, while daughters Alta, Mamie, and Pearl shared the upstairs loft and the small butter room off the kitchen was made into a bedroom for son Henry Perry Usher.

5. What very important room is missing from this house that we all have in our houses today?

A. The bathroom! – Students may look out into the back yard to find the outhouse, which was used year round, but you may also point out the very large chamber pot under the corner of the bed which was used in the event that someone was sick or it was bitterly cold outside. The wash stand beside the bed served as a sort of bathroom sink, with fresh warm water being poured from the pitcher into the basin for basic sponge baths, shaving and washing of hair. Once a week, usually on Saturday night, the big tin bathtub would be brought in and placed in the kitchen behind the stove for the family to take turns at the weekly bath.

6. Where did they wash their dishes?
A. The dry sink is the big “box on legs” underneath the kitchen window by the stove. Dishwater could be heated on the stove, but would be poured into wash basins in the dry sink so that water wouldn’t splash on the floor and table while dishes were being washed. A drain hole is bored in the corner, and a slop bucket would be placed underneath to catch any water that might spill and drain out.
The Hired Hand’s House
Building #4 on the Village Map, page 7 Student Journal

Although the house is not open to tour at this time, you can pretty much see it all from the outside! In the days before automobiles and tractors, all farm work that couldn’t be done with horses and horse-drawn machinery had to be done the old fashioned way, with hard-working people and hand tools! In families where children were not yet old enough to help with the farm work, farmers often had to employ “hired men” to help harvest and plant the crops. Hired men were day, the month or the year, and the benefits offered to them increased with the length of time they were hired for. A man hired only for a day or perhaps a few consecutive days to help with tasks like threshing, or bringing in the hay could expect to be fed a good hearty meal along with their wages. A man hired for a month or so for seasonal work, such as tending to newborn livestock during lambing or calving season, or perhaps hired to harvest or plant crops, would be offered private quarters, a place to graze or stable his horse, meals with the farmer’s family, as well as the offer of having his clothes washed on laundry day. A married man with a family, who was fortunate enough to contract with a larger farmer for a year, could expect a small farmhouse and shelter for his horse, as well as his own garden and rights to use fruit from the farmer’s orchard to help feed his family.

1. Do you think the hired man who lived in this house was married or single?
   A. In this house, likely single. Since the distance between farms was often quite far in horse and buggy days, it was easier to offer the hired man a place to live on the farm as part of his wages – but you didn’t want a stranger living in your house with you, so you built a smaller house out back where he could sleep and take his meals. This house would have probably been for a monthly or seasonal hired man, single and unmarried, but would not have been offered to a day laborer.

2. How many people do you think could live comfortably in this house?
   Probably one, although Mary Ditch, (granddaughter of the Snobles), recalled starting out her married life in a house this tiny when she and her husband were first married and he was still working as a hired man. The house was so tiny, there was nowhere for guests to sit except on the bed!

3. Would you like to live in a house this small? What would be good about it? What would be bad?
   A. Today, this cottage, which is only 198 square feet, would be considered a “Tiny House.” Tiny houses and the concept of “micro-living” are not new ideas by any means. In the early 20th century, many two- and four-room houses were built in among larger homes and used as quarters for servants or hired men, and later as “grandparent homes” for aging parents who still needed privacy, but could not handle living in a great big house on their own. They were a practical solution for older or single people, as they were very efficient to heat and light, they cost very little to repair and take care of, and best of all they were quick to clean! However, they didn’t have much room for a lot of possessions, and you probably couldn’t have a lot of people over for dinner....
The Oak Hill Free Methodist Church (Thompson Family)
# 5 on the Village Map, Student Journal Page 3

Church History
This building was constructed in 1878 in the Oak Hill Area of Cedar Rapids on the ground that is now Viola Gibson Park. The Free Methodist movement took root in Iowa largely due to the work of pioneer missionaries such as the Reverend Warren C. Thompson. The founding congregation of this church was organized in 1877 when Reverend Thompson was invited to preach at the home of one Oliver Johnston. As Reverend Thompson wrote:

“Brother Johnston and some others wanted me to preach for them, which I did, and left for another appointment. But I had to preach in the street the next time; the house would not hold all the people; and continued to preach in the streets and in open lots until cold weather set in.

It was supposed at some of these street meetings there would be fifteen hundred people to hear the word of God; and there were altar services, and souls converted at almost every meeting.

In the fall we rented a large building, and held meeting in that until spring, and then erected a church building – the motto of its members, “Holiness to God.”

Free Methodists were known to be expressive and energetic in their worship, yet they kept their clothes and buildings plain, focusing instead on good character and their relationship with God.

The “Free” in Free Methodist was coined from several historical issues. It referred to freedom of the spirit, freedom from slavery, freedom from secret societies, and also symbolized freedom for all to worship, including the poor. In a time when many church congregations charged a “pew rent,” the Free Methodists did not.

In 1916, the Free Methodists moved their congregation to Northwest Cedar Rapids and this building became their mission Sunday School. Shortly afterward, the building was sold to Christ’s Holy Sanctified Church, an African American Pentecostal congregation led by the Reverend George W. Willis and later the Reverend Clarence M. Darden. Reverend Darden’s daughter, Mrs. Viola Gibson, took over her father’s congregation upon his death. The church closed in 1973, and was moved in 1974 to become the very first building in Ushers Ferry.

Parsonage History
The church Parsonage was not actually Reverend Thompson’s real home. In fact, Reverend Thompson’s house and one of the first churches he built still stands today just north of Oak Shade cemetery in Marion. In reality, Reverend Thompson and most Methodist ministers of the time were known as “circuit riders,” and traveled
many long miles every week on horseback to serve multiple congregations in different towns. Many ministers served more than one church, and would spend their entire weekends in the saddle riding from church to church to serve their congregations.

Their week days were not exactly filled with idle free time either. Unlike today’s churches, where ministers dedicate most of their time serving only their own congregations, ministers on the early Iowa frontier worked a great deal outside of their own church and tended to be regarded as common property of the community. Local ministers often served as a member of the school boards and examining committees. They were expected to make appearances at county fairs and make temperance speeches, abolition speeches, and were expected to attend all public meetings. They were foremost in all public enterprises, sat with the sick (sometimes regardless of whether the invalid was a member of their church) and made themselves generally useful. As learned men, they occasionally offered their tutoring skills in preparing young men for college, and in the absence of teachers for the newly established public schools, the minister’s wife was sometimes allowed to serve as substitute — the only allowable exception to the rule preventing married women to serve as teachers. Ministers wives often were expected to serve the community right along with their husbands, providing comfort to the sick and the poor, and organizing charities and ladies aid groups.

The minister’s home was open to all seeking assistance or counseling, and often hosted a variety of activities. It was not unusual for scripture readings, bible studies and even small, quiet wedding ceremonies to be held in the front parlor.

Student Journal Questions (page 3)
1. What Four Freedoms did Free Methodist’s believe in?
   - Freedom of the spirit
   - Freedom from slavery
   - Freedom from secret societies
   - Freedom for all to worship

2. What kinds of important services did Reverend Thompson provide to the community?
   - Served on school boards and examining committees
   - Made appearances at county fairs and spoke at community events, temperance and abolition speeches and attended all public meetings.
   - Provided aid to the sick and the poor.
   - Offered tutoring to young men bound for college
   - Weddings
   - Funerals

3. How might Mrs. Thompson have helped in the community?
   - Provided aid to the sick and the poor
   - Served as substitute teacher in the local schools
   - Organized and served with ladies aid and charitable groups
The Tokheims:
#6 on the Village Map, page 8 Student Journal

Although this house was not the Tokheim’s actual home, the house is very much like those the Tokheim family would have found to live in when they came to Cedar Rapids in 1911. Like most homes in the Cedar Rapids area, it had indoor plumbing, electricity, and central heat, which would have been considered luxuries for people coming from small towns like Thor, Iowa, where the Tokheims first started.

Mr. Tokheim would have considered himself a self-made man. Coming to America from Norway as a very young man, he took advantage of every educational opportunity he could find. Starting with the one room country school, he spent a year there learning to read, write, and speak English in between working on his brother Jorgen’s farm to repay his brother for his passage to America. With that debt repaid, and now able to communicate in English, he quickly found a job in a local hardware store in the town of Thor, Iowa, sweeping and cleaning the shop at night and working about the place in the day time. Mr. Tokheim was very good with his hands and liked to take things apart, fix them, and even build things of his own invention. At night, after his work was done, he studied mechanical drafting and drawing from sheet metal workers magazines and took classes by mail to improve his knowledge. Eventually, he saved enough money to attend a business college in Des Moines, then moved to Chicago where he found work in a factory as a tinsmith and machinist. In Chicago, he met and married his wife Senva, and they eventually returned to Iowa, where he purchased the hardware store he had first worked in.

Part of the hardware business involved selling kerosene and gasoline, which was often stored in wooden barrels in the back room of the store, close to the wood burning stove that heated the building. Mr. Tokheim didn’t like the way these flammable liquids were handled, as the spills were smelly and dirty, and he was always worried about the possibility of his store catching fire. As he also sold well pumps as a part of his business, Mr. Tokheim came up with the idea of burying steel tanks to store the kerosene underground outside of his store, and then using a modified well pump to pump the flammable liquids out of the underground tanks and dispense them inside the store for his customers. He patented his first visible pump for kerosene and gasoline in 1901, and then sold his store in Thor to move to Cedar Rapids and open his own business making pumps, tanks, gauges and valves for the safe handling and storage of flammable liquids.

Many of Mr. Tokheim’s inventions are on display here in his office including an antique Visible Gasoline pump, tank gauges and floats, dry-cleaning equipment and even a bottle capper! The framed panels on the walls tell the story of Mr. Tokheim’s company and the challenges he faced over the years. If you look very closely, you will even find a picture of Agnes!
1. What country did Mr. Tokheim come to America from? *Norway.*
2. How did Mr. Tokheim teach himself to become an inventor and businessman? Where did he study? How did he learn the skills he needed to build his inventions? *Country school to read and write English, reading magazines and studying through mail/correspondence courses, business college and eventually on the job training working in a factory.*
3. There are pictures of many of Mr. Tokheim’s inventions on his desk and framed in the displays around the office. Name three of Mr. Tokheim’s inventions. *Gasoline pump, Floating Tank gauges, Dry Cleaning System, bottle capper…*
4. When Mr. Tokheim died, his daughter Agnes became the owner and manager of his company. Do you think it would have been common for women to own and run their own companies in that time? –And to run the kind of company that would make industrial equipment? *No. A few women did manage to build and own their own companies, but it was largely in areas that were considered to be “women’s work,” such as fashion or clothing, cooking or manufacture of household items. Agnes started out working for her father as a book keeper, but by the time of his death, she knew the business so well she was able to take over and continue operating it, manufacturing the items her father had invented.*

**Telephone Exchange (Hoover Family)**

#7 on the Village Map, page 9 student journal

**History (How early Telephones worked)**

This building was originally an 1860s farmhouse located near Springville. In 1990, the house was relocated here to the Village and restored to depict a typical early Telephone Exchange.

The switchboard in the corner of the front parlor was the heart of the Telephone operator’s home. This particular switchboard came from the Robins Telephone company and served customers from the Robins and Toddville area from 1910 until 1957. At the height of its operation, the Robins Telephone Exchange served over 200 customers. Although this switchboard served 200 subscribers in its busiest years, by the time the Northwestern Bell Company took over all patrons on April 1, 1957 only fifty-five patrons and eleven lines remained.

Placing a call in the early 1900s was more complicated that it is today. Early telephones were powered by a combination of batteries for talking and magneto cranks to ring the phones. Phones were linked together in a series of small networks known as “party lines.” To place a phone call, the caller would lift the hand set and turn the magneto crank on the side of their phone. This crank sent enough current down the line to ring a bell either
on the operator’s switchboard or on other phones on their line. Every person’s phone was assigned a unique combination of long and short rings to identify them, and if a person wanted to place a call to another phone on their line, they could do so simply by using the crank on their phone to turn out the appropriate combination of rings.

To place a call outside of one’s own party line required the assistance of the operator. When a caller rang for the operator, a small switch would drop down on the switchboard, letting the operator know who was calling. She would then connect her headset into their line and ask them who they wanted to call. The operator could then connect them manually to a caller on a different party line, or in some cases to a different operator who would then complete the connection. Long distance phone calls could be particularly complicated, as the calls had to be patched manually from operator to operator across the country. A call placed from Los Angeles to New York could take as long as 23 minutes to connect.

When both parties were finished talking, they would “ring off” or turn the cranks on their telephones to alert the operators that they were finished so the line could be cleared for other users.

**Hoover Family History (What Telephones meant to the community)**

Mr. Hoover’s many years of service as a Township official eventually led to his appointment as manager of the Telephone cooperative. Like many of the residents of Monroe Township who lived between Robins and Toddville, the Hoovers were members of the German Baptist Church of the Bretheren, and firmly believed that treating others well and serving their larger community would provide a better life for everyone. In addition to being a rather successful farmer who raised sorghum, hogs, and other common crops of the period, Mr. Hoover was also a skilled carpenter. This proved to be useful in his long-time service as an elected officer of Monroe Township. Serving as a school director, his carpentry skills came in handy as he personally built the Robins school house with the first classes being held there in 1912. During his tenure as Township Assessor, his carpentry and construction experience also would have been quite useful in estimating the value of residents homes and buildings for tax purposes. Eventually, he served as a Township Trustee, overseeing the laws and government business of the Township.

In the early 1900s Telephone Manufacturers started publishing catalogs and pamphlets marketed to farmers and rural residents that taught them how to set up their own rural telephone companies. Known as “Telephone Cooperatives,” farmers worked together to set telephone poles, string lines and install their own telephones in their homes and businesses. They paid a monthly subscription fee that covered the costs of their switchboard and local telephone operator who connected them to larger telephone lines in other towns and across the country. It was not long before the local residents of Robins and the surrounding area wanted to form their own Telephone Cooperative, feeling it would serve an important need for rural citizens who might need to call for help in the event of a fire or storm, or call for a doctor if they were sick. Farmers supported the idea of a new telephone company, as it would allow them to call into town for market prices to know when to buy or sell their crops and small town businessmen knew it would grow their business as they took orders over the phone for delivery.

In 1900, the residents of Robins took action and a call bell exchange was set up in the Rosenberg store. This first telephone system operated until 1910, when Mr. and Mrs. Hoover purchased the exchange, and Mr. Hoover traveled to Chicago to purchase this switchboard. Mr. Hoover managed the Telephone Cooperative with his wife Charlotte, and later his daughter Pearl, serving as switchboard operators in the decades that followed.
Longtime Robins resident, Marie Maxfield remembers using this old telephone system when her family’s garage caught fire while her parents were away in the 1930’s. Running to her family’s telephone, she called the operator. When Pearl answered, she told her there was a fire and she needed help. Pearl then sent out the “General Call” or three very long rings that rang every telephone subscriber in the area alerting them to an emergency. As people picked up their phones to see what was going on, Pearl told them that there was a fire at Marie’s house, and help was needed. In no time at all neighbors from all around the township began showing up with buckets and pumping water to throw on the fire, helping to put it out. This was a common system for putting out fires or alerting people in the community to fires, tornadoes or other dangers.

**Group Discussion Questions:**

1. There is an antique telephone on top of the switchboard. What is different about this phone from the ones you use today? *Let them observe and discuss among themselves*

2. What important thing is missing from this phone that we would need today to dial a phone call? How did they place a call without it? *It doesn’t have any numbers to dial a phone call. If you were calling someone on your line, you had to turn the crank for the correct number of rings to ring their number. If they weren’t on your line, you had to call the operator to connect you.*

3. Who did residents call back then to report an emergency like a fire or a tornado? Who responded to help them? How is this different from what we do to report an emergency like a fire today? *Residents used the “General Call” emergency ring, to contact the operator. They would tell her what was wrong. If it was a medical emergency, she would call the doctor. If it was a criminal matter, she would ring the constables and the sheriff. If it was a fire or a tornado, she would call every single subscriber. As people picked up their phones, she would keep repeating her message about a fire someone needed help with and everyone in the community would grab their buckets and report to the place of the fire to help put it out. Today we dial 911 and dispatchers send the appropriate medical, police or fire personnel. But even today many rural fire departments are still made up of community volunteers who leave their day jobs to rush to a fire and help someone in need. These fire departments are still managed by township officials and trustees.*

**Activity:** Play a game of “Operator.” *–Instructions in the student journal (page 9).*

1. Would you have liked the job of Operator? Why or why not? What if you were able to listen to everyone’s phone conversations? *–Would that change your answer?*
The Snoble House

History:
Except for the Henry Usher home, this small four room house is the only other building to come from the Seminole Valley area. It stood on a small 12-acre farm at the intersection of 42nd Street and Morelle Road, and was moved to Ushers Ferry in the spring of 2000.

The house was built in 1919, and was sold in December of 1920 to Frantisek Snoble, a Czech immigrant and farmer, who lived in the house until his death in 1944. His story is not very different from the thousands of Czech immigrants who settled in Cedar Rapids during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and whose influence is still strongly felt in our community today.

Frantisek Snoble was born in 1862 in a small village in Bohemia located about 25 miles north of Prague. He married Marie Nesvera in 1884 and all of their nine children were born there.

The country which is now known as the Czech Republic was then under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Czech people were required to pay heavy taxes. Although he owned a small ten to twelve-acre farm, raising cattle, hogs and wheat, Frantisek also operated a small store as well as a dray line hauling freight between Austria and Germany in order to support his family. Service in the Austro-Hungarian Army was mandatory, and World War I was looming on the horizon. With their oldest son James already serving and their second son, Frank soon due to go, the family decided to leave for America.

James went first, deserting from the army in the winter of 1908-1909, and traveling to Spain, where he boarded a ship bound for Galveston, Texas. With money his parents had given him, he was able to purchase a small farm for the family near the town of Lovelady. His younger brother Frank, then sixteen, soon followed with their sister, Marie and much younger brother, Joseph, arriving in Galveston in March of that year. Frantisek and Marie, after selling off their business and their farm in Bohemia, sailed from Bremen, Germany with the rest of their children in July of 1909.

They spent the next few years in Lovelady, working in the coal mines and operating their small farm until the influenza epidemic of 1918 forced them to move on. They settled for a time in the small town of Olivia, Minnesota, but they were not happy there. Hearing about the large Czech community in Iowa, they came to Cedar Rapids in the winter of 1920, where Frantisek purchased the small twelve-acre farm on 42nd Street to which he would retire.
The 42nd street farm provided them the opportunity to live a lifestyle very similar to the one that they’d had in Bohemia. The land and climate here in Iowa was very much like that of the old country, and it was easy for them to farm and grow crops they were familiar with. Frantisek was an excellent gardener, and was able to raise a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, cultivated an orchard of ten to twenty fruit trees, kept a hundred hives of bees for honey, and raised chickens, goats and pigs. Every week, he would load his horse-drawn wagon with fresh produce, eggs and honey and haul it into Cedar Rapids to sell. His small produce farm, one of many that operated in the Seminole Valley area at this time, generated a small income of perhaps a thousand dollars a year—which Marie stored in old lard pails in the cellar.

Frantisek was never known to speak English. He subscribed to the two Czech language newspapers and sold most of his produce to the Czech-speaking servant girls who worked for the wealthy families that lived along Bever and Grande Avenues. In the rare events where an English translation was required, he relied upon Marie, who was fluent in German, and a nearby neighbor who spoke both German and English.

Frantisek Snoble and Marie died in the 1940s. Frank Jr. owned his own shoe store for a while in Texas before moving north with his wife and children to take over his parents’ house and farmstead. Anna grew up and became a women’s prison guard for the Cedar Rapids jail. Joe served the United States Army in World War 1 and went on to become a blacksmith, opening his own blacksmith shop in Missouri.

Student Journal Questions: (page 10)

1. Why did the Snoble family decide to leave Bohemia and come to America? Can you think of a country today where life is so hard that people are willing to emigrate to another country where they don’t even speak the same language? They left because their sons were being drafted into the Army, war was coming and they were worried that Frank and Jim would be killed. Times were also very hard for the Czech people. They paid very heavy taxes and were having a hard time making a living. Other countries that are having similar problems today: Syria, South America, Immigrants from Africa, Sudan, Uganda, etc...

2. Why did the Snobles decide to settle in Cedar Rapids? They chose Cedar Rapids because of its large Czech speaking community, which they knew would make them feel at home. They also chose Iowa because the climate and farmland were very much like where they had come from in Bohemia, and it would be easier for them to farm and grow crops they were familiar with.

3. Like many Czech immigrants, the Snoble family brought many traditional Czech and German foods, customs and entertainments with them. Some of them became so common that we now consider them as part of our American culture as well. Can you identify the traditional Czech or German foods that we still eat in Iowa today?

   APPLE PIE  KOLACHES  SODA BREAD  SAUERKRAUT  HAMBURGERS
   POPPYSEED CAKE  CROISSANTS  HOT DOGS  BRATWURST  CHILI
The General Store
# 9 on the Village Map, page 11 in the Student Journal

History

The General Store was usually the first, and sometimes the only store in town, so it had to carry a little bit of everything – kind of like the Walmart of 1900! In the days before credit cards like Visa and MasterCard, customers often had to make some other kind of payment arrangements with the storekeeper. The large cash file on the counter to the left was filled with account books, for customers who had set up specific charge accounts with the store keeper. Other customers were occasionally able to barter and trade with the store keeper, trading fresh produce like garden fruits and vegetables, or eggs, milk, butter and cream from their farms for ready made goods they might wish to buy, such as shoes, bolts of fabric and such. On the front door of the General Store, the store keeper posted a list of commodities, or items he was looking to buy to restock his store. There is also a grocery list of items the average family would have bought in 1900, along with how much that would have cost. Using the Shopping and Commodity lists, answer the questions in the student journal.

1. Commodity prices are the “wholesale” prices, or what it costs the storekeeper to buy the goods he resells in his store. Sometimes he is willing to buy from you or trade with you in order to get the goods he needs to serve his other customers. What items on this list might you be even be able to raise in town if you had a back yard?
   Apples, potatoes chickens, eggs. People frequently raised chickens and small farm animals such as goats in town (even in Cedar Rapids) well into the early 20th century until urban nuisance laws were passed banning them. Today, however, backyard chickens are making a comeback!

   What would be raised out in the country on an Iowa farm?
   Pork, Beef, Butter and Milk all come from large animals which would require a lot of pasture and grain and would have to be raised out on the farm.

2. What cannot be grown in Iowa that the storekeeper will likely have to import from somewhere else?
   Coffee, Rice, Sugar (White Sugar, that is. Brown sugar can be made from Maple syrup, which can be made in Iowa).

3. Compare the Commodity list to the Shopping price list. If you sell a dozen eggs to the storekeeper, how much money will you make?
   The storekeeper will pay you 18¢

4. If the storekeeper in turn sells that dozen eggs to someone else, how much money will he make?
   If the storekeeper pays 18 cents for the eggs, then he will make 18 cents when he resells them, following the old salesman rule of thumb for price setting: “Cost x 2”
The Saloon
#10 on the Village Map, page 12 in the Student Journal

History
Saloons in this time operated under Iowa’s unusual “Mulct Law.” Technically, Iowa was a dry state, but when lawmakers passed state prohibition in 1855, they had underestimated three ethnic groups: the Irish, Germans and Czechs. All three had a long tradition of village taverns, so illegal saloons were common. To remedy the political pressure, legislators quickly passed the “Mulct Law.” Although the sale of alcoholic beverages remained illegal, saloons were allowed to operate if the barkeeper paid a tax of $600 a year for the privilege of breaking state law. Barkeepers supported Mulct saloons and local options, which gave individual cities the power to vote for liquor sales. The years between 1894-1915 were the only time in Iowa’s early history when saloons ran openly, for Iowa had been a Prohibition state almost from the beginning.

With a strong Czech, German and Irish population, Cedar Rapids voted solidly for allowing the sale of alcohol under the Mulct Law, and Cedar Rapids was even home to several breweries including the Star, Magnus and Eagle breweries all located not far from where the Quaker Oats factory is today. In fact, a recent survey by the Iowa DOT rediscovered some of the original Cedar Rapids beer caves dating to the 1850s. Beer eventually became available for sale in Iowa after the repeal of Federal Prohibition Laws in 1934. However, liquor did not become legal in Iowa until 1963. Even then hard liquor was not readily available and could only be purchased from state owned stores until legislation ended this system in 1987.

Student Journal questions, (page 12)

1. How much was the fine a Saloon owner had to pay if he wanted to sell alcohol under the Mulct Law?
   $600 per year

2. Thinking through all the families represented here at Ushers Ferry, which families do you think would have favored the temperance laws (supported the alcohol ban)? –Who do you think would have wanted to be able to buy alcohol at the Saloon? Why?
   Reverend Thompson would certainly have been a strong supporter of temperance and the ban on alcohol. Free Methodists, along with their belief in freedom of the spirit, freedom from slavery and secret societies, also believed in freedom from vices such as alcohol, which caused much misery in 1800’s American life. In his personal testimony and history, Reverend Thompson wrote of his own struggle with alcohol, of the hardships it had caused in his family, and of his desperate turn to God and prayer as a method of overcoming it.
The Snobles, in contrast, came from the Czech and Eastern European culture, where beer was considered a staple of the working class diet. Often considered as “Liquid Bread,” beer had many carbohydrates in it, and was a filling drink that helped working class people feel less hungry when paired with their often small meal portions. Fermenting and brewing were also time honored methods of food preservation, and grains brewed into beer would not spoil and would last much longer than grain simply ground into flour and baked. Over time, beer and wines had become an important part of their food culture, and many Czechs, Germans, and Irish were angry at laws which forbid them to have drinks they’d consumed for generations.

3. Why do you think people wanted to make the sale of alcohol illegal in Iowa?

By the 1850s America was producing more whiskey than ever before, but was largely unprepared for the social consequences. Almost nothing was known about the disease of alcoholism in that time, but many people in society quickly started to feel its effects. Temperance Societies formed, promoting the ban of alcohol and liquor as a way to combat its impact on many working class families, and many cartoons depicted the evils of alcohol with images of a factory worker taking his weekly pay check and spending it all at the bar while his family went hungry at home...

4. What is the big brass container on the floor at the end of the bar called? What was it used for?

A spittoon was used for men who chewed tobacco to spit into. Chewing tobacco tends to make them salivate more, and it also made their spit pretty brown and yucky, so emptying the spittoon would not have been a pleasant job!

**Blacksmith Shop:**

Unfortunately our Blacksmith shop is not open this season as we are making some changes and improvements around the village, but we hope to have it open soon! The blacksmith was kind of a combination of a mechanic and repairman in any small town. Most tools and equipment of the time were made out of metal, and blacksmith was capable of not only making new tools or parts out of metal, but repairing metal pieces or parts that had been broken or were worn out and needed to be replaced. See if you can guess what these basic blacksmith tools would have been used for!

File: used for smoothing or sharpening metal edges.

Vise: Used to hold metal work in place.

Hammer, used to bend and shape hot metal.

Anvil: heated metal is hammered on the surface of the anvil to flatten or round the piece.

Tongs: used to hold hot metal, or take heated metal out of the forge.
The Business District

Due to excessive flooding and facility changes the southern end of our business district has been indefinitely closed, however their signs still give an idea of what types of businesses a town like Ushers Ferry might have had in this time.

This is a good opportunity to discuss with students exactly what kinds of businesses and services are essential to the establishment and survival of a town. –Exactly what does a town need to have to make it a community people want to live in?

1. What are the different businesses represented in Ushers Ferry?
   General Store, Telephone Cooperative, Saloon, Hotel, Blacksmith Shop, Railroad Depot

2. What kinds of important businesses and buildings does your town have that are missing from Ushers Ferry?
   Hospital, Fire Department, Police Station, Nursing Home or Care Center…

3. What businesses does Ushers Ferry have that your town does not have?
   Blacksmith Shop, Railroad Depot? Any others?

4. What businesses do you think are the most important to have in your town so that people will want to live there?
   School and Church were usually the first community buildings built, as they served as central gathering places for the local neighborhood, and provided essential social services like education and/or care of the poor.
   Stores, Blacksmith Shop, Train Depot (Today this would be the equivalent of an airport), Hotel

Additional Activities:
If students finish their tour early, they may complete the village wide “Scavenger Hunt” on page 15 or play some of the old fashioned games listed on page 16 of their student journals.