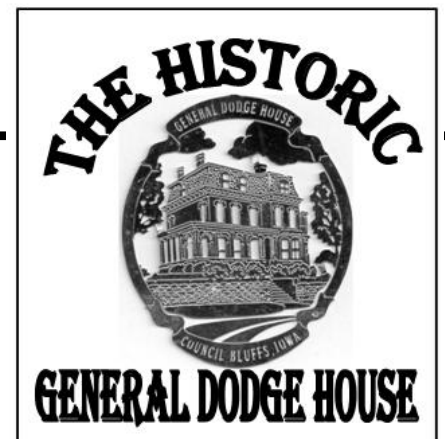


A Teacher's Guide to "A Servant's Life"



The Historic General Dodge House

605 Third Street
Council Bluffs, IA 51503
(712) 322-2406
www.dodgehouse.org



A Servant's Life Activities and Discussion

2nd - 3rd grade

- 1) Make a list of tasks that a servant would be asked to complete. Who completes these tasks now? At your house? In public places?
- 2) Using the Venn Diagram provided contrast and compare the role of a "servant" and a "slave".
- 3) Research and discover why women during the Victorian era (1850-1895) would work for other families.

After visiting the Dodge House

- 1) Discuss why The Dodge House had servants at all? What did the family do?
- 2) Pretend you were a servant in the Dodge House. Using your character card and the six traits of writing, write about your job and your life making note of the easiest and hardest parts of your day.
- 3) As a servant during this time, what modern inventions would have made your jobs easier? Write a commercial selling modern convenience to a Victorian servant. Make sure you say what it is, what it does and why it will make your work easier.
 - a) Design your own invention that would help out your character at the Dodge House. Draw a picture of your invention and write a paragraph about why you need it and how it would help you with your daily tasks as a servant.

4th-5th grade

Extension....

- 1) Many of the servants at the Dodge House came from Europe. What were their possible motivation to come to the U.S. and where were immigrants during this time period (1850-1910?) coming from? Pretend you are a person trying to decide whether or not to immigrate to America. Make a list of pros and cons to help you to decide.

After visiting the Dodge House

- 1) Looking at a world map, track the routes that immigrants would have to have taken to get to Council Bluffs in 1870. Discuss what their trip would have been like and what obstacles they may have faced. (Ellis Island, train travel, ship travel, etc..)
- 2) After doing your research, write a letter as an immigrant writing home to tell them about your trip and what your new life was like working in Council Bluffs, IA at the Dodge's House.

6th-8th grade

Extension...

- 1) In the Victorian era, servants relied heavily on "references" to move from one job to the next. In researching Victorian society what were some of the pitfalls for a young servant if "references" were not given? How does this equate to today's society and our use of references?
- 2) Create a mock court in your classroom. A servant (you choose) is accused of stealing from the family. What rights would such a person have had? How was this different from England to the US? Was the servant's word considered as "good" as the family's?

After visiting the Dodge House

- 1) Compare and contrast the difference experiences the servants had at the Dodge House. For your character, write a "help wanted" ad to fill your position. Imagine yourself as interviewing prospective servants. What qualities would they have had to possess?
- 2) Discuss: As people moved West, the divisions between socioeconomic classes became less well defined. Why, and what do you think caused these changes? Would this "more equal" status have appealed to people of this time period? And Why?

Mrs. Prassey

You are the head housekeeper for the Dodge's family home at 605 Third Street. You are so lucky to work for this family because you actually have a whole room all to yourself on the third floor of the house. The family travels so much, that you often have the house to your self, but when they are home, you have to be ready to entertain Presidents!

Mrs. Jacob Spencer (Anna)

You are the head cook for the General and you are so proud to work in a kitchen with so many modern amenities. Your husband works as the Carriage Driver for the Dodges, and you both live above the Carriage House which is certainly an nice arrangement.

Mr. Jacob Spencer

You are the Carriage Driver for the Dodges. You live with your wife Anna in the carriage house. Each day you walk down from the Carriage House to the livery stable downtown because the Dodge's kept the carriage at their house but the horses at the stable.

Bridgette

You are the laundress for the Dodges and your job is to wash, iron and maintain all of the Dodge's clothes, bed lines and table linens. You work in the laundry in the basement of the house,. But you share a room with Antoinette on the Third Floor.

Antoinette

Maid. You are a maid at the Dodge house. You share a room on the third floor with the laundress, Bridgette. It can be very hard work getting up before any one else to lay the fires and to keep the house clean. If any one needs anything they always call for you first!.

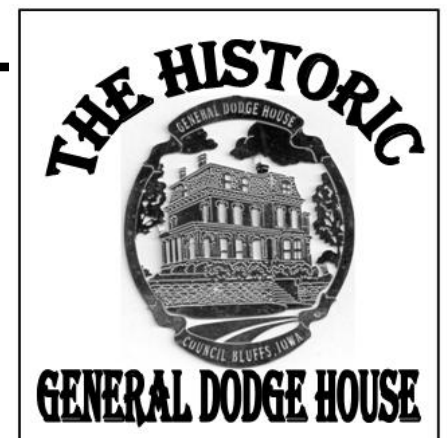
Helga

I have a beautiful room on the third floor of the house but I am not often there! I am the Cooks Assistant and it falls to me to wake up at 4:30 in the morning to start the fire in the stove so that everyone can have hot tea and coffee in the morning!!

“A Servant’s Life” lesson objectives:

Students will:

- 1) be able to hypothesize about the lives, feelings, plans and dreams of people coming to Council Bluffs to be servants during the Victorian era and how their lives contrasted and compared with people from other socioeconomic statuses.
- 2) be able to contrast and compare life and culture in Victorian America to that of current day.
- 3) be able to contrast and compare employment, and employment practices in Victorian times and today.
- 4) develop an understanding of the different expectations of life on the frontier and understand that Council Bluffs was on that frontier during the 1870’s.
- 5) analyze and understand the activities of women in the servants classes of Victorian society as is typified by those employed in the Dodge’s home.
- 6) contrast and compare the different jobs in a Victorian household, typified by the Dodge’s home.
- 7) know the difference between a servant and a slave.
- 8) contrast and compare the motives of immigrants to come to the US and seek out work in other people’s home.



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Perkins, J.R. *Trails, Rails and War: The Life of General Grenville M. Dodge.* Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1929

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http://www.sciencetech.technomuses.ca/ENGLISH/schoolzone/Domestic_Technology1.cfm#children

<http://www.angelfire.com/ok/hoddies/victoriana.html>

www.ourwardfamily.com/victorian_servants.htm

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_the_Victorian_era

<http://www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/en/>

A site with amazing information and interactive. Good for student research and extensions.

<http://kclibrary.nhmccd.edu/19thcentury1860.htm>

An overview with many links about the changes in American life and cultural in the 19th Century.

http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=422

This has information and lesson plans about the Industrial Revolution from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

<http://historywired.si.edu/detail.cfm?ID=502>

This site explores the history of the sewing machine.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_the_Victorian_era

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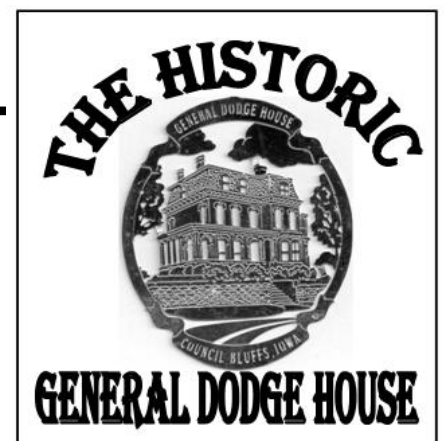
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www.ourwardfamily.com/victorian_servants.htm

For more information, please contact :

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What's in a name?

Servant or slave?

Servants are:

Servants and slaves both:

Slaves are:

