

MY TOWN, YOUR TOWN



EXHIBIT GUIDE FOR TEACHERS



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FORWARD

The purpose of this Teacher’s Guide for “My Town, Your Town” is to provide teachers with information and activities as they prepare students for a field trip to the Chippewa Valley Museum. The guide allows educators to better understand the history of the 1920s, as it pertains to the workings of a local community set in that era. The guide also helps educators explore the exhibit’s community-related themes of “Learning to be a Citizen,” “Building a City,” “Making a Living,” and “Making a Difference” with their students.

As teachers prepare students for their visit, they can engage them in reading, researching, and writing about their own community. Students can begin to discover and explore the history of their own town. They can draw comparisons between 1920s’ landscapes, happenings, experiences, and events to those of today.

These activities can help students begin to understand and appreciate the story of how their town and its citizens have changed and grown over the last eight decades, and how these changes will continue into the future. Students can consider how the citizens of a town become actively involved in the life of their community, and how they *personally* are able to contribute to the life of their town.

My Town, Your Town is designed for a primary audience of children between the ages of six to ten. Secondary audiences may include middle and high school-aged students and adults. Information may be adapted for age-appropriateness.

The material in this packet is not intended to be all inclusive, but is presented as a framework for teachers to use in ways that will best meet the needs and interests of their students. For more in-depth information, please refer to the resource/reference list included at the end of this packet.

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1920s HISTORY

The 1920s was a decade marked by change and visitors experiencing the *My Town, Your Town* exhibit are provided with many important and exciting examples.

Radio, including commercial broadcasting, was born and quickly evolved into a crucial form of communication for the public. For the first time, families, in the comfort of their own homes, could “tune-in” for news, music, and entertainment. One station made history by managing to air the results from the 1920 presidential election. NBC and CBS were the first national networks.

Eau Claire had its own broadcasting station, WTAQ, run by the Gillette Rubber Company. An employee won a contest to name the radio station. The call letters WTAQ stand for “Where Tires Are Quality.” From 1927 until 1937, employees and Eau Claire residents could tune into WTAQ and hear local musicians and singers over the airways.

Other famous inventions, like the car and airplane, were becoming standard in the field of transportation. More and more people began to own automobiles in the 1920s. Road trips became a popular pastime. The first motel opened in 1926. Charles Lindbergh’s 1927 solo flight across the Atlantic helped to fuel a 400 percent increase in air travel by 1928.

New vaccines for tetanus and whooping cough saved many from illness or death. Alexander Fleming’s discovery of penicillin helped people stay healthy, too.

Chain stores like J.C. Penney and S.S. Kresge Company’s Five-and-Dime opened nation-wide. Penney’s averaged 100 new store openings a year during this decade. Kresge’s expanded from 184 stores in 1920 to 597 stores in 1929.

Kresge’s opened and operated a store in downtown Eau Claire during the 1920s. It was located at 212 South Barstow Street

Meanwhile, workers in large companies enjoyed new benefits like the 5-and-1/2-day work week. Employees of Ford Motor Company grew to have even more leisure time, due to their new 5-day work week. International Harvester gave its workers two weeks of paid vacation time.

Gillette Rubber Company was one of Eau Claire’s largest employers during the 1920s.

“In 1927, Gillette was a desirable place to work. The production workers were paid by the piece. If they hounded, they could earn a dollar per hour. At the time, the going rate at other places like New Dells Lumber Company, was 30 or 35 cents per hour, the furniture factory 16.5 cents per hour. Tradesmen were earning 40-60 cents per hour. . . .”

— *Eugene Dickerson, Gillette Tire Company Worker*

The 1920s was a decade filled with frivolity and fun. Flappers were in fashion. They made it possible and popular for girls and women to wear “daring” new styles, such as short, bobbed hair, and dresses with hemlines soaring almost as high as the knee. They listened to the new sound of jazz and danced the Charleston.

Other forms of leisure and entertainment included attending the theater to see a vaudeville show, or movie. The silent film era ended during the twenties when “talkies” were invented. The circus coming to town was always a major event, too.

On January 19, 1926, city residents eagerly awaited the grand opening of the State Theater in downtown Eau Claire. The 1,200-seat theater was billed as “an amusement house” that featured silent movies, vaudeville acts, feature films, and live entertainment. Many popular acts stopped in Eau Claire for a performance between Minneapolis and Chicago. A billiard hall, bowling alley, and cafe in the theater provided for more fun.

Organized sports like baseball and boxing were popular in the twenties. Many now-legendary stars like homerun king Babe Ruth and prize fighter Jack Dempsey were born. Female swimming sensation Gertrude Ederle made history when she became the first woman to swim across the English Channel in 1926.

Voting rights in the 1920s extended to include both women and immigrant voters. For years, suffragists had worked to help women gain the right to vote. By 1920, women were finally able to vote in their first presidential election. With their mission accomplished, The National Woman Suffrage Association disbanded, and the new League of Women Voters formed. This organization’s focus became, primarily, one of educating women about their elected officials and the election process. The League also supported female candidates running for office.

Eau Claire had its own chapter of this organization, called the Eau Claire Women’s Club. In September, 1920, the Eau Claire Women’s Club held a “Mock Election” just before the Primary, in which over 200 women learned exactly how to vote. The city furnished the voting booths, and the regulation ballots and the regular election inspectors took charge of the women to see that it was properly done.

Due to an increase in immigrant populations in the 1920s, many civic groups dedicated their time to helping newcomers become citizens. Immigrants had to attend classes and pass a citizenship test in order to become citizens and gain the right to vote. Not everyone welcomed these newcomers, as evidenced by the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan in the mid-1920s. One source cites KKK membership numbers growing to four million by 1924.

There were branches of the KKK operating in the Chippewa Valley during the 1920s. In the Eau Claire area most Klan activity was directed at Catholics and recent immigrants. Most of the Klan activity in the area occurred in Chippewa Falls. In 1924 and 1925, the Eau Claire Leader reported on several incidents of cross burnings and rallies in the Chippewa Falls area.

By 1925, people’s opinion of the Ku Klux Klan had become very negative, and activities stopped in this area. In 1924, there were 38,000 Wisconsin members of the KKK, but by 1928, only 800 members were recorded in the state. In January of 1924, the Chippewa Daily Gazette ran an article and cartoon making fun of the Klan.

The decade of the 1920s ended with the stock market crash in October 1929. The ruined financial situations of Wall Street brokers and investors alike carried over into mainstream life. The business of everyday living transformed itself again, as the next era marked by the Great Depression unfolded.

EXHIBIT BACKGROUND

My Town, Your Town is a 550-square-foot exhibit that asks visitors to consider how citizens, organizations, businesses and government work together to make a town a good place to live.

My Town is set in 1920s Eau Claire and uses specific examples from that time to illustrate how active citizens can affect the character and future of their community.

Communities need **good citizens** in order to thrive and grow. Good citizens make a difference in the communities in which they live. They obey the laws of their town. They help one another solve problems and create spaces and places for people to enjoy. They work together to make decisions that will affect the future of their community.

The exhibit features a group of thirteen real-life people from 1920s Eau Claire who have made a difference in the community. The group includes ten adult and three child citizens. The names, photographs, and occupations of these citizens are printed on laminated cards entitled “Who Am I?” Visitors can select a Who Am I? card of their choice, and take on the role of that citizen. Cards can be worn around the neck or clipped to one’s clothing.

The Who Am I? citizens include:

- Jennie Shoemaker, a civic leader and president of the Eau Claire Women’s Club
- H.C. Midelfart, a doctor, owner of Midelfort Clinic
- Kate Alderman, a teacher, taught at 7th Ward School
- Marie Ressler, a grocery store clerk, employed at the G.V. Ressler store
- Eugene Wright, a barber, had a barbershop at 410 Water Street
- Irene Halbleib, a stenographer, worked for Wisconsin-Minnesota Light & Power Co.
- Alex Blum, a fireman, was a pipeman for Hose Company #2
- Orrin Kent, a factory worker, employed at Gillette Rubber Company
- Fred Stussy, a cigar manufacturer and the mayor for the city of Eau Claire
- Julia Anderson, a homemaker
- Jack Fasching, a child
- Marion Glenz, a child
- David Owen, a child

Communities need **industries and businesses** in order to provide residents with places to work and earn money. The Gillette Tire Company, for example, employed hundreds of people in their giant factory.

Residents need businesses to provide them with **services**, also. In Eau Claire, the Union Savings Bank loaned people money so they could buy a house. The Midelfort Clinic gave people a place to go to receive health care. The fire station employed firefighters to help protect people and their property.

Other businesses are important because they sell **goods** that people need, or want to buy. The Eau Claire Kresge's Five and Dime Store was a place where people could go to shop for a variety of items, including essentials like flashlights, pocket knives, and patterns for sewing clothes to novelties like China penny dolls and Uncle Wiggly Board games.

The State Theater provided people with a place to go for entertainment. They could see a show or movie. There was also a bowling alley attached.

Communities need **land** for residential, agricultural, commercial, and industrial use. Land is set aside in order for the people in a town to have room for parks, ball fields, and other places of recreation. Residents need space to build new houses, streets, schools, and churches in their neighborhoods. Farmers need space to plant crops and have pastures for their animals to graze in. Factory owners need space to expand or build new industries, so more jobs can be available to people. Business owners need space to expand or build new stores to sell more, or different, merchandise to satisfy their customers.

In the exhibit, a **1927 map** of Eau Claire shows the locations of several interesting buildings in or near the downtown area. A magnetic wall inside the exhibit allows visitors the chance to plan their own town. People, car, and building magnets can be manipulated to a desired area or zone.

Communities need **local government and leaders** to represent a town's interests and help make tough decisions with fairness to all. Citizens have **rights, roles, and responsibilities**; they take part in the life of their town by voicing their opinions about issues that are important to them. They vote to decide answers to solve problems in their town, or to choose (elect) new or different leaders.

During the 1920s, the citizens of Eau Claire and their leaders were faced with many **challenges and opportunities**, both big and small. One important issue was immigration. Newcomers were settling in Eau Claire and oftentimes needed help adjusting to their new life here. Many went to citizenship classes to learn how to become "American" which included lessons in reading, writing, and speaking the English language.

Another important issue involved keeping My Town clean! Garbage was being dumped into the Eau Claire River and other inappropriate spots around town. Citizens and their leaders had to figure out the best ways to stop the pollution and avoid similar problems in the future.

Visitors can enter My Town's City Hall to take a citizenship test. They can also role-play the part of a city council member to vote on the garbage issue.

At the conclusion of the *My Town, Your Town* tour, visitors can spend some time further exploring the exhibit's interactives. There are puzzles to try, books to read, and several writing, mapping, and mathematical activities to investigate.

EXHIBIT TOUR OBJECTIVES

Students will learn that

- **Immigration** was an important part of life in My Town during the 1920s, and continues to have significance in communities today.
- **Citizenship** involves having rights, roles, and responsibilities within the place where you live.
- **Participation** of citizens in their community makes a difference in determining the type or character of the community in which you live.
- *Active versus passive participation* in the life of your community is encouraged and can help to shape a community's future in many positive ways.
- **Voting** is one form of active community participation. Joining organizations like 4-H, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts is another way to get involved in the life of your community and help to make a difference.
- A community's **government** is made up of local leaders elected into office (or hired) by local citizens. Community leaders may include many, or all of the following individuals: mayor, city manager, city planner, city alderman, city council member.

Additional Objectives:

- A community's **industries** and businesses provide jobs for area residents. The two main types of work in a community involve: 1) producing goods and 2) providing services.
- **Goods** are items that can be made in a factory and sent to stores for people to buy or sell. (Some famous Chippewa Valley goods from the past and present include: Uniroyal tires, Mason shoes, Cray (SGI) supercomputers, Chippewa Springs bottled water, Silver Springs horseradish condiments)
- **Services** are the many useful things people or organizations do to help others, or companies do to satisfy their customers. (Restaurants, hotels, theaters, libraries, hospitals, schools, and museums all provide services to their customers, guests, patients, students, and visitors. Waiters serve food; housekeeping keeps hotel rooms clean; ushers take tickets at movies; librarians help you find and check-out books; doctors and nurses care for sick or injured patients; teachers teach students; museum workers, like designers, build new exhibits for you to see!)
- *Communities vary in size.* Some are small villages; some are medium-sized towns; some are large cities. Many can be built or divided into zones. Each zone has a special use or purpose.

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- **Residential zones** are spaces created for people to have a pleasant place to live. Houses, apartment buildings, duplexes, sidewalks, yards, driveways, cars, bicycles, playgrounds, parks, ball fields, schools, and churches are usually found in this zone.
 - **Industrial zones** are spaces created for factories to operate where goods can be made and sent to stores, both nearby and far away. Mills, granaries, assembly plants, smokestacks, semi-tractors/trailers, barges, trains and railway yards can often be found in this zone.
 - **Commercial zones** are spaces for stores and other businesses to run, so people can come to shop for the things they need or get the services they want. Grocery stores or supermarkets, post offices, libraries, hardware stores, medical or dental clinics, gas stations, gift shops, restaurants, department stores, and parking lots can be found in this zone.
 - **Agricultural zones** are spaces for farms to exist, so the land can be used for growing food. Farmers plant crops and raise livestock. Farmhouses, barns, silos, pastures, fields, combines, tractors, manure spreaders, hay balers, cows, horses, chickens, pigs, goats, and other farm animals can all be found in this zone.
 - *Communities change over time.* They can grow, shrink, move, and even die or disappear. They can be famous, or well-known only to the people who live there. Every community has its own history that is important to share!

VOCABULARY

community - a place where people can live, work, play, worship, and make a difference together; may also include the buildings, landmarks, and other physical features that form a village, town, or city

citizen - a member of a community

citizenship - involves citizens in a community understanding their government and history, and actively participating in community life and problem-solving

immigrant - foreign-born; a person who leaves their home community to travel and settle in another community, normally a far distance away

naturalization - the process an immigrant goes through in order to become a citizen of their “adopted” or new community

government - an organization of people working together to make decisions about how a community should operate; its leaders establish the rules or laws for a community’s citizens to follow

city hall - the building in a community where members of the government and citizens meet

city council - a group of citizens who are elected by voters to do the work of the government on behalf of the whole community. They, along with the mayor or city manager, decide how to help their community succeed

mayor - the leader of a community; heads the city council

city manager - in larger communities, this person does the job of the mayor

city alderman - a person who is a leader in their neighborhood; reports to the mayor at city council meetings; may be elected to serve on the city council

city planner - a person who works for the government in their community to help plan the changes/growth of their city (i.e. where to build a new road, shopping mall, school, etc.)

voting - how citizens let their opinions be known, and help make decisions in their community (i.e. their vote tells who they want to be the next mayor, or whether or not they want to pay for a new school to be built in their town)

election - held for the citizens in a community to exercise their right to vote and elect new leaders to office

industry / industrial - the areas in a community zoned or planned for the building of factories, assembly plants, and other manufacturing enterprises. (Enough land is set aside for the operation or storage of large machinery, tools and related equipment)

residential - the areas in a community zoned or planned for the building of homes, schools, and churches. (Enough land is saved for the building of houses, garages, driveways, sidewalks, yards, playgrounds, cemeteries, etc.)

commercial - the areas in a community zoned or planned for the building of businesses that provide or sell goods and services. (Enough land is allotted for grocery stores, banks, libraries, post offices, and more)

agricultural - the areas in a community zoned or planned for farms. (Land is used for the planting of crops, the grazing of animals, and the building of barns, silos, farmhouses, etc.)

goods - items made for people to buy or sell (Uniroyal tires, jewelry from Fleming's, toy planes from Kresge's Five and Dime Store, etc.)

services - assistance or help provided to people for a fee (a doctor's checkup at Midelfort Clinic, a loan from the Union Savings Bank, etc.)

EXHIBIT THEMES

Note: The activities tied to the four exhibit themes can be found in the following resource books, which are cited on the resource/reference page included in this guide.

Key:

- OT = *Our Town: A Guide for Studying Any Community*
 N & C = *Exploring Our World: Neighborhoods and Communities*
 C/T = *Create-a Town Simulation*

Theme #1 : Learning to be a citizen

Visitors to *My Town, Your Town*, will enter the exhibit through the facade of a 1920s bungalow based on a home in Eau Claire's East Side Hill neighborhood. From the house, they can see other aspects of the city, including downtown and City Hall.

As visitors enter the living room of the bungalow, they will be asked to consider the rights, roles, and responsibilities of a citizen. They will be asked to think about what it was like to be a citizen in the 1920s. They will have a chance to see photographs of some real Eau Claire residents of this era, as well as listen to a recording (on a 1920s replica radio) of one resident's memories of growing up as a child in the twenties.

They will discover that many people living in this area were immigrants, or foreign-born. The two largest ethnic groups to settle in Eau Claire in the twenties were Norwegian and German. In order to become citizens, these people had to attend classes and pass a citizenship test. Visitors will "listen in" on a telephone conversation between "Sven and Johann" discussing their parents expected attendance at a locally-sponsored citizenship class.

Visitors can then venture to City Hall to take a version of the citizenship test themselves.

List of Recommended Theme-Related Activities:

- * Rules Activity (OT pg. 26)
- * Good Citizens Activity (OT pg. 38)
- * Citizenship requirements (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Web Site)
- * Resolving Differences in the Community (N & C pg. 49-50)
- * Historic People (OT pg. 46)

Theme #2 Building a City

Visitors step into City Hall. Here, they will be invited to learn about the duties of local government leaders, as they tackle an important issue of the day. Visitors can role-play the job of a city council member forming an opinion on this issue and preparing to vote.

Through local governments, people make rules so that the place where they live will be safer and better. They pay taxes so that these governments can provide fire and police protection. Local

governments also provide roads and parks and help support institutions like libraries and museums. Through voting, citizens elect representatives to make sure these activities happen.

During the 1920s, Eau Claire residents elected a mayor and two city council members to the City Council. These representatives had to make important and sometimes difficult decisions.

List of Recommended Theme-Related Activities:

- * “Design Your Own Town” Activity (C/T pg. 5-13)
- * “Becoming a Town” Activity (C/T pg.6)
- * “Going and Growing Activity (OT pg. 52)
- * “Town Meeting (C/T pg. 150-151)
- * “Government Activity” (OT pg. 44)

Theme #3 Making a Living

In My Town, Your Town, visitors walk through a three-dimensional representation of buildings and businesses found in downtown Eau Claire in the 1920s. They can find places of employment and learn about some of the jobs that were available in Eau Claire at this time.

Visitors can “shop” at the S.S. Kresge Company store. They can “check their bank account” at the Union Savings Bank. They can learn more about the Gillette Tire Company that employed hundreds of people in Eau Claire during the 1920s.

They can stop at the State Theater to discover the many forms of entertainment that were available in the twenties for area residents to spend their money on.

List of Recommended Theme-Related Activities:

- * “Goods and Services” / Kids’ Economy Activity (OT pg. 47)
- * “Learning About Jobs” (OT pg. 36)
- * “Jobs” Activity (OT pg. 50)
- * “Have I Got a Problem” (OT pg. 42)

Theme #4 Making a Difference

All communities need good citizens. People often create private “voluntary” organizations to help their members and their community. In the 1920s, the Sons of Norway group encouraged its members to celebrate their Norwegian heritage and also give time to improve Eau Claire. Parent-Teacher Associations were active at area schools. In 1923, the Eau Claire Women’s Club created a Girl Scout Council to help young girls become better citizens.

There are many ways to be a good citizen. How do you make a difference in the town where you live?

List of Recommended Theme-Related Activities:

- * “Community Contributor’s Quilt” Activity (N & C pg. 42)
- * “Wall of Honor” Activity (N & C pg. 48)
- * “Be a Community Star” Board Game Activity (N & C pg. 51-55)
- * “My Community Pledge” Certificate (N & C pg. 56)

RESOURCES & REFERENCES

Our Town: A Guide For Studying Any Community. By Dianne Draze. Dandy Lion Publications, 1988.

Exploring Our World: Neighborhoods and Communities. By Kathleen M. Hollenbeck. Scholastic Professional Books, 1997.

Create-a-Town Simulation. By Mary Beatty Sanders. Teacher Created Materials, Inc., 1999.

From Flappers to Flivvers...We Helped Make the '20s Roar! From the readers of Reminisce magazine. Edited by Bettina Miller. Reiman Publications, L.P. 1995.

This Fabulous Century: 1920-1930. By the Editors of TIME-LIFE BOOKS. Time Inc. 1969.

Web Sites:

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services web address

<http://uscis.gov/graphics/services/natz/faq.htm>

Government Printing Office

<http://www.access.gpo.gov/>

National Archives and Records Administration

<http://www.nara.gov/>

The U.S. House of Representatives

<http://www.house.gov/>

The Library of Congress presents America's Story

<http://www.americaslibrary.gov>

U.S. Department of Justice: Justice for Kids and Youth

<http://www.usdoj.gov/kidspage>

HISTORY LAB

Visitors to the “My Town, Your Town” exhibit will have access to “History Lab,” an interactive computer station with two virtual exhibits.

The first virtual exhibit, “My Family Story,” introduces visitors to three families and encourages visitors to discover and preserve their own family histories.

The second, “My House,” introduces visitors to a dozen local homes, gives basic information about architectural styles and details, encourages visitors to research a structure, such as a home, and connect it with local history.

Two history lab research assignments, suitable for classroom use, are included in this guide for your convenience. The first assignment, entitled “My Family Story,” teaches students the steps involved in tracing a family history, including creating a family lineage chart and conducting an oral history interview.

The second assignment, a “HomeWork Worksheet,” subtitled *Discovering the Story of Your House*, provides students with a set of eight instructions for learning about the history of their homes. Directives include studying historic maps, and researching architectural surveys.

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