

The 1814 Goff and Spencer Survey

The following documents all come from the 1814 Goff and Spencer Survey of the Township of DeKalb. The 1814 survey of the town of DeKalb was carried out to equitably divide the land in the township between the investors (proprietors) following the death of Judge William Cooper.

The survey was carried out between the first of June and the thirty first of October in 1814. The two survey crews were headed by Potter Goff and Silas Spencer hence the name of the survey. The surveyors were paid \$667.27 for their five months work.

The survey was compiled in the format of the classic Colonial New England survey. It consisted of a detailed map of the township divided into 100 acre farm lots and a book of detailed survey notes. These survey notes were designed to help the absentee landlords decide whether to allow the current occupants to stay. Thus the notes give detailed descriptions of the homesteads including; buildings, land cleared, stock kept, and notes on the personal character of the settlers. The survey notes end with general notes about the physical characteristics of the lots such as; general drainage, types of trees and future potential.

The survey documents show how people were living in the township at the end of the War of 1812. A scan of the entire 1814 map of the township of DeKalb is included on the disc. A smaller portion of the map is also include that can be printed out for the lessons. The included survey descriptions center around a one-mile section of the current US Route 11 near the Hermon-DeKalb Central School. These lessons are designed to bring this 1814 neighborhood back to life in the classroom. The original "1814 Goff and Spencer Survey Map of DeKalb" is part of the DeKalb Town Historian's collection. The survey notes, "Classification of the Township of DeKalb" is part of the St. Lawrence County Historical Association collection.

Measurements of buildings, where indicated, are in feet. Measurements on the map are in chains and links (a chain is 66 feet and a link is 1/100 of a chain ie. .66 feet). Ages of houses are all calculated from 1814, hence if a house was listed as 4 years old, it was built in 1810.

Suggested Lessons:

Disciplines: Social Studies, Math, and Language Arts

Grade Levels:4-8

Time Frame: 3 class periods

Materials Needed:

- Copy 1814 Survey Booklet p. 3,4,5,11,66, 71, 80,81 (provided)
8 by 14
- Transcriptions of the above pages (provided)
- Map of 1814 DeKalb Survey selected area (provided)

- 3 worksheets (provided)
- Construction paper and art supplies.

Learning Objectives:The students will:

1. Gather, label, categorize, and analyze information from a survey document.
2. Define pertinent vocabulary including survey, dwelling and premises.
3. Create a model of an 1814 pioneer neighborhood.
4. Identify archaic usage of the English language.
5. Gather information on a presettlement ecosystem.

Procedures:

Lesson one

1. Distribute copies of the “Who is your settler?” worksheet, Survey pages 3, 4, 5, 11 and 66, transcripts of the above as needed, and the survey map of the selected area. (There are 8 homesteads included in the material.)
2. Introduce the students to the concept of a survey. Give the children background on the Goff and Spencer Survey i.e. when it was made and why.
3. Write the vocabulary words: survey, dwelling and premises on the board. Define them as a group.
4. Assign 3 students to work on each settler for their worksheet. (They can work individually or in groups at your discretion.)
5. Help any student who may need extra assistance with interpreting survey data. (Use transcripts if necessary.)
6. At the close of the lesson, collect the settler worksheets for use in lesson two.

Lesson Two

1. Organize the children into working groups based on the settlers they researched. Distribute the survey worksheet from lesson one. (You may want to write directions for building a homestead model on the board based on the materials you choose to use.)
2. Review the survey data and directions for building the homestead models together. An eighteen by eleven sheet of paper makes a good base for each homestead. Houses can be flat forms to cut out and paste to the base or milk cartons covered with construction paper. Use your imagination.

3. Have the students illustrate the animals included on their homestead. These can be drawn on the base or be copies of animals from a coloring book to cut out.
4. Have the children write the name and a description of their settler on a separate piece of paper and attach it to their homestead model.

Lesson Three

1. Pass out the survey maps of the area your class has recreated.
2. As a group locate where each of the homesteads is on the original map.
3. On a large table or counter arrange the homestead models in the same order that they appeared on the original map.
4. Have the children write the name and a description of their settler on a separate piece of paper and attach it to their homestead model.

Lesson Four

1. Pass out pages 71, 80 and 81 of the survey and the ‘General Observations’ worksheet.
2. Instruct the students to read through the three pages and answer the questions.
3. Go over the answers as a group, especially #1.

Follow Up Activities:

Further research and discussion of Survey data and your area. Arrange a field trip to the county clerks office and use the map collection to compare changes over time in your community. Compare a recent land survey with those of the 1814 survey. Look at a different portion of the Goff and Spencer 1814 survey. (Contact the author for access to more pages.)

Suggested readings:

A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard based on her diary 1785-1812 by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich Has excellent passages about her husbands experiences surveying land in Maine.

My Place by Nadia Wheatley (Kane/Miller 1994) A 200 year journey through one Australian neighborhood. Includes maps every ten years.

NYS Social Studies Standards correlation:

Standard 1: Key Idea 4

- Consider different interpretations of key events and /or issues in history and understand the differences in these accounts.
- Explore different experiences, beliefs, motives, and traditions of people living in their neighborhoods, communities, and State.
- View historic events through the eyes of those who were there, as shown in their art, writings, music and artifacts.

-Consider the sources of historic documents, narratives, or artifacts and evaluate their reliability

-Describe historic events through the eyes and experiences of those who were there.

Standard 5: Key Idea 4

-Explain the role that civility plays in promoting effective citizenship in preserving democracy.