Plymouth Notch Historic District

President Calvin Coolidge Birthplace

Teacher's Resource Packet

Revised Summer 1994

Teachers' Resource Packet
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Note to the Teacher

This packet has been designed to help prepare your students for a visit to the Plymouth Notch Historic District, birthplace of President Calvin Coolidge. Enclosed you will find information about the village of Plymouth Notch, Vermont, and the Plymouth Notch Historic District, an historic site owned and operated by the State of Vermont's Division for Historic Preservation. Also, there is information about President Calvin Coolidge and his family, and material concerning agriculture in Vermont. Along with the information you will find a detailed bibliography noting sources for further research. Finally, you will find a list of questions related to each area of study that you may consider as you develop activities for your students.

The Plymouth Notch Historic District and the Calvin Coolidge Birthplace provide a rich context for study for students of all ages. The site is multifaceted; though it principally commemorates the life of Calvin Coolidge and his boyhood home, it lends itself to the study of many related topics such as Vermont history, biography, agricultural history, and social history. You the teacher will of course determine which topics will be explored and what objectives and goals you would like to meet as you prepare your students for the visit, accompany them on site, and conduct follow-up activities.

On the day of your visit, we suggest that you bring at least one adult chaperone per six students. We encourage you to provide the chaperones with some background information about the historic district so that they may both help supervise and be a resource as well. We've found that students who arrive prepared and focused, with definite learning goals,

take away more from their visit than if they come merely on a "field trip." These materials will facilitate that preparation.

If you would like to use our one-room schoolhouse for class activities or discussions, please reserve it in advance with the site administrator. It would provide an excellent "period" environment for learning. The schoolhouse is also available for lunch on rainy days.

This packet was compiled by the State of Vermont Division for Historic Preservation. Although this material is under copyright, feel free to copy any of it for your own classroom use. Please call us with any questions or comments at (802) 672-3773. We hope you have a very enjoyable and productive visit!

Part 1

Plymouth Notch, Vermont

and the

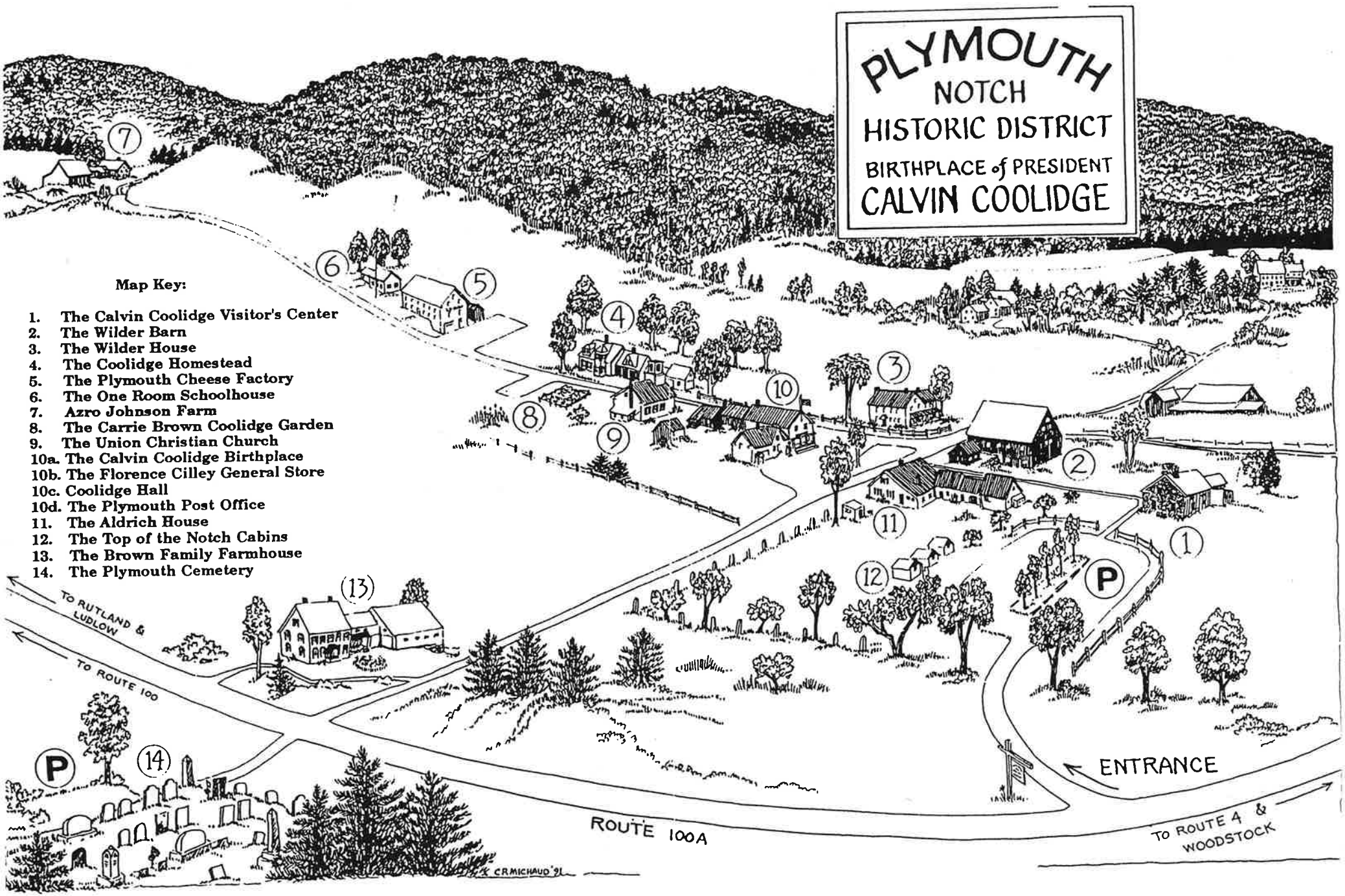
Plymouth Notch Historic District

Plymouth Notch, Vermont

Overview for the Teacher

The Plymouth Notch Historic District is the birthplace and boyhood home of Calvin Coolidge, the 30th President of the United States. This rural Vermont village appears much the way it did during Calvin Coolidge's presidency, 1923-1929. The homes of Calvin Coolidge's family and neighbors, the community church, cheese factory, one-room schoolhouse, and general store have been carefully preserved, and many have their original furnishings. The historic district, a National Historic Landmark, is owned by the State of Vermont and is administered by the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation. It encompasses over 1,000 acres and includes over two dozen structures.

The landscape itself is also virtually unchanged. It is still agricultural in nature, with fields and woodlands surrounding the village appearing much as they did in Calvin Coolidge's youth. In this information packet you will find a descriptive sheet about the village itself and each building in the Plymouth Notch Historic District. Please feel free to utilize this information in any way that will increase your students' appreciation of the site.


PLYMOUTH
NOTCH
HISTORIC DISTRICT
BIRTHPLACE of PRESIDENT
CALVIN COOLIDGE
Map Key:
1. The Calvin Coolidge Visitor's Center
2. The Wilder Barn
3. The Wilder House
4. The Coolidge Homestead
5. The Plymouth Cheese Factory
6. The One Room Schoolhouse
7. Azro Johnson Farm
8. The Carrie Brown Coolidge Garden
9. The Union Christian Church
10a. The Calvin Coolidge Birthplace
10b. The Florence Cilley General Store
10c. Coolidge Hall
10d. The Plymouth Post Office
11. The Aldrich House
12. The Top of the Notch Cabins
13. The Brown Family Farmhouse
14. The Plymouth Cemetery
TO RUTLAND & LUDLOW
TO ROUTE 100
ROUTE 100A
ENTRANCE
TO ROUTE 4 & WOODSTOCK
C.R. MICHAUD '91

The Village of Plymouth Notch - General

Plymouth Notch is one of the villages in the Town of Plymouth (Plymouth Union, Tyson, Five Corners, Plymouth Kingdom, and Frog City are the others). All were settled in the late 1700s after the Revolutionary War had ended. Settlers were able to travel here along the Crown Point Military Road, a road built by General Jeffrey Amherst, which ran through the southern part of the town. Plymouth Notch is so named because it is located on the northern side of a row of high hills dividing the watersheds of the Black River and the Ottauquechee River. The road connecting Plymouth Union and "The Notch" runs through a steep notch in those hills, then northward to Bridgewater. The notch is easily seen on the southern horizon from anywhere in the historic district.

Most early settlers were farmers. Calvin Coolidge's great-great-grandfather, John Coolidge from Bolton, Massachusetts, was one of these. They cleared the Vermont hillsides and raised crops for their own use as well as for an income. Potash, potato starch, limestone, marble, granite, and lumber were popular exports to market. In the early nineteenth century, sheep farming and wool production were widespread and profitable. The villages were the center of social life, anchored by the church and supplemented by dance halls, public gathering places, and even bar rooms. Each village had its own cheese factory, grist mill, saw mill, and store as well as other enterprises. Most people lived on farms away from the villages. In the early 1800s, there were 17 one room schoolhouses in Plymouth to educate a widely scattered rural population. Plymouth Notch had one, the District #9 school, just west of the cheese factory. The number of schoolhouses dwindled to three as farmers moved away; now

there is only one.

Plymouth's population peaked in 1840 at 1,497 people. With the development of the railroad and the decline of sheep farming in Vermont, farmers abandoned their property to move west, where farming was easier and land was plentiful. It was said that in the late 1800s "Plymouth's sons and daughters were her largest export". The villages in Plymouth have changed much over the past 100 years. Because of the political success and good fortune of one of its native sons, Calvin Coolidge, Plymouth Notch has seen its share of change as well.

Buildings in the Plymouth Notch Historic District

1. The Calvin Coolidge Visitor's Center

This stone building was built in 1972 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Calvin Coolidge's birth and to accommodate the thousands of visitors to the site each year. It consists of a main stone portion with a smaller wing to the left (north) covered in wooden clapboards. The building's rough stone masonry is similar to stone buildings built in this region of Vermont during the 1840s and 50s. The mica schist used in the building's construction was quarried in Plymouth. The roof is slate. The Visitor's Center houses an introductory exhibit, a museum area, displays, a gift shop, rest rooms and lounge for our visitors' convenience.

The displays in the Visitor's Center change on a regular basis. The exhibits feature some of the gifts presented to President and Mrs. Coolidge from world dignitaries and other admirers. The introductory exhibit examines Coolidge's life and career and features period photographs accompanied by quotes from Coolidge's autobiography. Several portraits of the President and his family are displayed in the Visitor's Center, including one depicting the swearing in ceremony that took place in the family homestead on August 3, 1923.

2. The Wilder Barn

The Wilder Barn is a "bank barn" sheathed with weathered vertical board and batten siding with a wood shingle roof. The barn was built c. 1875 and originally consisted of a main structure, which exists today, and an ell along the road to the right (south), that is no longer extant. The site of the ell is now occupied by a blacksmith's shop which was moved from its original location across from the Coolidge Homestead.

A "bank barn" gets its name because it was built into the side, or bank, of a slope so that it could be entered on two levels. (Note that the barn is 2 and 1/2 stories high in the front, 3 1/2 stories high in the rear.) Typically hay was stored overhead in the third level, livestock, especially the dairy herd, on the second level, and the basement was for other livestock and manure storage.

This barn was part of the Wilder farm. The farmhouse, just across the street, was the home of Calvin Coolidge's mother, Victoria Josephine Moor, and later of Gratia and John Wilder, Calvin's aunt and uncle (Victoria's sister and brother-in-law). Both the Moor and Wilder families used this barn for their various farming operations.

The barn houses a collection of farming tools and equipment from Plymouth and the surrounding area. Various display areas of the barn focus on farming activities such as sugaring, cheese making, and haying. There is also a collection of sleighs and carriages. The artifacts in the barn are typical of those used on New England hill farms in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The interior beams of this barn are hand hewn and pegged together without the use of nails. It is an excellent example of a timber frame post and beam structure.

3. The Wilder House

The Wilder House is a two story "L plan" structure across the road from The Wilder Barn. This building was probably built around 1830 and originally served as a tavern for travelers on the road from Ludlow to Bridgewater. It had a bar room and an upstairs dance hall, where public meetings were held. Hiram and Abigail Moor purchased the building c. late 1830s and converted it to a single family home where they raised their family. The house has been extensively reconfigured both inside and out and today functions as a restaurant. It is a good example of Vermont's vernacular architecture, as shown by its asymmetrical window and door placements and lack of any popular "style" characteristics.

Victoria Josephine Moor, Calvin Coolidge's mother, was born (in 1846) and raised in this house. She lived there while courting her future husband, John Coolidge. She married him in the parlor in 1868. During Calvin's childhood the house belonged to Gratia (Moor) and John Wilder, Calvin's aunt and uncle.

4. The Coolidge Homestead

The Coolidge Homestead is a white clapboard structure consisting of four distinct parts. The section of the house with the front porch is the oldest portion, which might be referred to as the "little house." Originally this portion was a one story Cape with an attached woodshed to which the "big house" was added to the left (west). When Colonel John Coolidge, Calvin's father, bought this house in 1876, he added the horse barn to the far right (east). (John Coolidge served in the Vermont General Assembly as Representative and Senator, at the top of his public career he was given the honorary title of "Colonel" while serving on Governor Stickney's staff. He relished the distinction and enjoyed having folks refer to him as "colonel".) The bay window on the front of the big house was added by Colonel John around 1890. At the same time the "little house" was changed to its current appearance with the addition of the porch and second story gable wall dormer. The asbestos shingle roof was put on by Colonel John in 1925. The shed roof dormer windows on the far left of the building were added in 1931 when Calvin Coolidge built an addition to the house for his summer use. This last addition, which contained modern conveniences such as electricity and indoor plumbing, was moved to another location in the 1950s as part of the restoration of the Homestead. The Homestead now appears as it was in 1923, the year Calvin Coolidge assumed the Presidency.

Calvin Coolidge's family moved into this house in 1876 when Calvin was four years old. Calvin lived in the house for 14 years until he left for Amherst College in 1890. He was raised in this house, just up the street from his father's store and across the meadow from his grandfather's farm.

It was to this house that Calvin returned each summer during his college days and that his family returned each summer while he was living in Massachusetts and in Washington, DC. It was here that Calvin Coolidge took the oath of office at 2:47 a.m. on August 3, 1923.

The furniture and accessories in the Coolidge Homestead are completely original, with most objects in their original location. The Bible, kerosene lamp and pen in the sitting room remain as they were at 2:47 AM on August 3, 1923. The carriage in the barn adjoining the house was built by Calvin's father. In the shed bedroom is a frock belonging to Calvin's grandfather Calvin Galusha Coolidge, which Calvin wore around the farm - many photographs of him as Vice-President portray him in this frock. Also in this bedroom is a quilt that Calvin pieced when he was 10 years old and a small chest of drawers that he made. The rest of the house contains other Coolidge family belongings, including tools, dishes, kitchen utensils, clothes, furniture, laundry equipment, photographs, etc.. Most of these remain as they were on the night that Calvin became president.

5. The Plymouth Cheese Corporation Factory

This large white building sits on the hill near the western edge of the village. The Cheese Factory was built around 1890 as a cooperative enterprise among five area dairy farmers. Colonel John Coolidge, Calvin's father, was one of the founders. The factory provided an outlet for locally produced milk. It operated until the early 1930s when a shortage of milk forced it to close down.

Calvin's father left his share of the business to Calvin. He in turn willed it to his widow, Grace, who gave it to their son John. John Coolidge bought out the other shareholders' interests in the factory, refurbished the plant, and reopened it in 1960. Mr. Coolidge still oversees the daily operation of the factory.

Plymouth Cheese is still made using the original 1890 recipe. It is a granular curd cheese made by pressing the curd into molds. This was the first cheese making technique used in this country and it is still practiced here. The cheese making process can be viewed by the public several days per week during the summer season. The original equipment from the factory is now displayed in the Wilder barn.

6. The Plymouth Schoolhouse

The original one-room schoolhouse in Plymouth Notch was a stone building erected in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. It was the District #9 school, one of 17 one room schoolhouses in the town of Plymouth. The stone was quarried locally. Its gable end faced the road and it was smaller than the school seen today. The existing white clapboarded structure was built around 1890. Stones from the earlier school were used in the foundation. This one room school served the children of Plymouth Notch until 1956.

Calvin Coolidge attended the one room stone school. The current building was constructed in the year that Calvin Coolidge began his college years at Amherst College. The flagpole in front of the school was given to the school by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, where Coolidge had been Governor prior to being elected Vice-President in 1920.

This building is not normally open to the public but it is used by visiting school groups.

9. The Union Christian Church

The Union Christian Church is in the center of town opposite the Coolidge Homestead. It was originally built in 1840 as a meeting house and was dedicated as a Congregational church in 1842. One hundred years later it was rededicated as a Union Christian Church. It was one of four churches in the Town of Plymouth. This church, and the Congregational Church in Tyson, are still active today. The church is owned by the Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation.

The exterior of this building is in the Greek Revival style. The cast iron thresholds of the front doors were made at the Tyson Iron Works in Plymouth. The interior of this building originally had box pews typical of most early New England churches and meeting houses. These pews were removed when the church was remodeled in the 1890s. The Carpenter Gothic interior was designed and built by a West Bridgewater master carpenter Clarence Coates and his assistant Willie Pierce. The hard pine was harvested in Plymouth Union and sawn at a local mill. Money for the remodeling was raised by ice cream socials, baked bean suppers, and the like at 10 cents a plate. From 1842 until the mid-twentieth century this church was the center of the Notch's social and religious activities. The church boasts perfect acoustics.

Calvin Coolidge attended this church while he was growing up in Plymouth, and later when he came to visit his family. He went to Sunday school here, as did other children from the Notch. The Coolidge family belonged to this church; the family pew is marked with an American flag and brass plate and is still used by the family today. In the foyer, a marble tablet is inscribed with Coolidge's famous "Vermont is a State I

Love" speech.

Next door to the church is the Carrie Brown Coolidge garden, originally planted and maintained by the President's stepmother. Some of the perennial flowers are descended from the original plants. This garden was designed by Primavera of Barnard, Vermont, in 1986, and is not intended to be an accurate reproduction of the one established by Carrie Coolidge. Carrie's design was considerably less formal, used more annual varieties, and had a grass strip around the four sides. The garden is now maintained by dedicated area volunteers and the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation.

10a. The Calvin Coolidge Birthplace

This small unpainted clapboard house was constructed around 1845. Sometime in the mid-1850s the general store was built to adjoin the house as it does today. In 1924 the house was enlarged - a second story and large enclosed porch were added. These additions were removed in the early 1970s to restore the house to its 1872 appearance, the year Calvin Coolidge was born. Most of the clapboards on the exterior of this building are not original, but are of the same time period.

This was the home of Colonel John Coolidge and his wife, Victoria Josephine, from 1868 to 1876. Calvin Coolidge and his sister Abigail were born in this house and lived here until 1876, when the family moved across the street to the Homestead. This house contains many Coolidge family effects. Calvin Coolidge was born in the bed in the downstairs bedroom. The doll on the bed belonged to Calvin's sister, Abbie. The child's boots near the kitchen stove were Calvin's. The desk in the main room was used by Colonel John Coolidge for keeping his store accounts. The chairs in the kitchen were made in Frog City (a village of Plymouth) by Josiah Coolidge, a distant cousin of Calvin Coolidge, in the 1840s.

10b, c, d. The Florence Cilley General Store, Post Office, and Coolidge Hall

The General Store in the center of town was constructed during the 1850s adjoining the small one and one-half story Cape built the previous decade. The store appears today as it was during Coolidge's presidency. The US. Post Office operated inside the General Store until 1976, when it moved to its new quarters in the former carriage barn section of the building. Above the store is Coolidge Hall, which was used as a dance hall and meeting room for local organizations including the Grange. President Coolidge established his "Summer White House" office here in 1924, and with only two aides ran the affairs of the country.

The store was operated by Colonel John Coolidge from 1868 until the late 1870s, when he sold the business to his brother-in- law, Franklin Moor. He continued to own the building (he rented the store space to his brother-in-law for $40 a year) until 1917, when he sold it to Florence Cilley. It was she who enlarged the living quarters at the rear of the store. Calvin Coolidge probably helped to build the store counters during the winter of 1890 when he was too sick to attend school.

In the store are post office boxes that served the town of Plymouth until 1976. The bird's-eye maple and cherry wood counters are believed to have been made by Calvin Coolidge and his father. The lamps, coffee grinder, kerosene pump, old store merchandise on the top of the shelves, and cash register are original to the time that Florence Cilley operated the store. In August of 1923, the town's only telephone was located in this store.

The tables upstairs in Coolidge Hall were built for the President's use in 1924 when he used the space as the "Summer White House" office. Also

notice the instruments of the Plymouth Old Time Dance Orchestra in the far corner. This band, made up of friends and neighbors of the president, went on a national tour in 1926.

11. The Ruth Aldrich House

This white house across from the general store was built c. 1820 and is an example of Vermont (or New England) continuous architecture. The various sheds and barns were added on to the main structure as needed over time. The front section of the house is believed to be the oldest. Carrie Brown lived in this house until she married Colonel John Coolidge in 1891 and became Calvin's step-mother. Eugene Aldrich, who was brought to Plymouth Notch as the first cheese maker of the new cheese factory in 1890, lived in this house with his wife and daughter Ruth. Ruth Aldrich ran a tea room and gift shop in the house from the time of Coolidge's presidency until 1942. A small roadside stand, still on the property, also sold gift items to the visiting public. Miss Aldrich deeded the property to the State of Vermont.

The Aldrich House is currently used as the regional administrative office of the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation. It is open year round with changing exhibits for the benefit of visitors coming to the village during the winter months when the rest of the site is closed.

12. The "Top of the Notch Cabins"

These three small prefabricated cabins were purchased in 1927 by Ruth Aldrich, who operated them as rental cabins for tourists. Plymouth Notch became a tourist destination when its most famous son, Calvin Coolidge, became President, and accommodations were needed for the many visitors coming to see his boyhood home. It is believed that President Coolidge's chauffeur and secret service agents were housed in these cabins when the President visited Plymouth Notch.

The middle cabin is open to visitors and looks as it would have in the 1920s and 30s. The furnishings are simple and Spartan by today's standards. Furnishings would have been changed depending on the needs of the guests.

14. The Plymouth Cemetery

This cemetery has headstones dating to the late 1700s. It is said that this plot of land was used as the town cemetery because it was too steep to farm. The stone stairs and retaining wall were built after the President's death to accommodate visitors to his gravesite. The cemetery is maintained by the Plymouth Cemetery Commission.

Calvin Coolidge is buried in this cemetery with five generations of his ancestors as well as his wife, Grace, and son, Calvin Jr. His gravestone is very simple compared to those of other presidents. It is a pinkish granite and reads simply "Calvin Coolidge - July 4, 1872 - January 5, 1933." The fact that he was President is indicated only by the Presidential Seal and the four stars of the Commander-in-Chief carved on top of the stone.

Questions to consider about the village of Plymouth Notch and the Plymouth Notch Historic District

1. What was it like living in a small, rural, quiet farming community such as Plymouth Notch in the late 1800s? It what ways did it differ from growing up in a similar place in the late 1900s? Was it better? Was it worse? Why?

2. What progress has taken place in the one hundred years between the late 1800s and the late 1900s.? Has it all been "change for the better"? Have we lost anything that we now wish we had?

3. Why do people like to visit birthplaces of presidents and famous people? Why are these places important to us? Why are they venerated?

4. Is there any correlation between how a person is brought up, and where a person is brought up, and their behavior and personality as an adult? If so, in what way are Calvin Coolidge and Plymouth Notch related?

5. What is a "one room schoolhouse"? Who taught in these schools? Why were all the grades mixed together, and why were there so many schools in just one town? Why isn't that done now? What changed it?

6. Why did the physical setting of Plymouth Notch attract the first settlers? What about its topography made it an attractive place to settle?

7. Looking around Plymouth Notch for evidence, what were the most abundant natural resources used by the people here? (The land, wood, iron, stone, etc.) How were these resources used? Can we find evidence of this? (granite fence posts, wooden buildings, wooden implements, iron wagon wheels, sleigh runners, stone foundations, etc.)

8. What does Calvin Coolidge's speech "Vermont is a State I Love" say about him as a person?

9. How was it possible for President Coolidge to run the affairs of the country from the room over the general store with only two assistants? What does this tell us about how times have changed in the 70 years since he had his "Summer White House"?

10. How does the design of the interior of the Union Church compare with other churches you have seen? How would you describe it? What makes

it special? What was the role of the church in the lives of the people in a farming community like Plymouth Notch?

11. How is Plymouth Cheese made? What makes it unique? Why is this cheese factory part of the Historic District? What part has it played in the history of the town?

12. The accommodations offered by the tourist cabins in the 1920s may seem Spartan and inadequate by today's standards. Why the difference in our expectations?

13. Why is the President's gravestone rather simple and not extravagant? What does this tell us about Calvin Coolidge?

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* Recommended for Children

Part 2

Calvin Coolidge - Biography

Calvin Coolidge - Overview for the Teacher

Following you will find a selection of information about Calvin Coolidge: a summary of Calvin Coolidge's life, a Coolidge family tree, a chronology of Coolidge's career, and a bibliography for further reading and study.

We encourage teachers to examine The Autobiography of Calvin Coolidge and use it to design additional activities for your class. The autobiography is not difficult to read and contains a good deal of information about Plymouth Notch and provides valuable insight about Mr. Coolidge.

Calvin Coolidge Chronology

1872 - July 4: Born John Calvin Coolidge in Plymouth Notch, VT.

1875 - April 15: Sister Abigail Grace Coolidge born in Plymouth Notch, VT.

1876 - Coolidge family moves to new home across the street.

1877 - Calvin Coolidge started school.

1885 - March 14: Mother Victoria Moor Coolidge died.

1887 - Enrolled at Black River Academy in Ludlow, Vermont.

1890 - March 6: Sister Abigail died.

- May 23: Graduated from Black River Academy.
- Fell sick during entrance examinations at Amherst College.

1891 - Studied at St. Johnsbury Academy in St. Johnsbury, VT, to receive entrance certificate to Amherst College.

- September 9: Father Colonel John Coolidge marries Carrie Brown
- September 23: enters Amherst.

1895 - June 26: Graduated Cum Laude from Amherst College.

- Began to read law in the firm of John C. Hammond and Henry P. Field in Northampton, Massachusetts.

1897 - July 2: Admitted to Massachusetts bar.

1898 - February 1: Opened own law office in Northampton.

- December 6: elected to Northampton City Council.

1900 - January 18: Elected City Solicitor.

1901 - January 17: Re-elected City Solicitor.

1902 - January 16: Re-elected City Solicitor.

1903 - June 4: Appointed temporary Clerk of Courts for Hampshire County, Massachusetts.

1904 - Named to Republican City Committee.

1905 - October 4: Married Grace Anna Goodhue in her home in Burlington, Vermont.

- December 5: Lost Election for School Committeeman.

1906 - Rented half of two-family house on Massasoit St. in Northampton

- September 7: Son John born.

- November 6: Elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives.

1907 - November 5: Re-elected as Representative.

1908 - April 13: Son Calvin Jr. born.

1909 - December 7: Elected Mayor of Northampton, Massachusetts.

1910 - December 6: Re-elected Mayor.

1911 - November 7: Elected to State Senate.

1912 - November 5: Re-elected to State Senate.

1913 - November 4: Re-elected to State Senate. President of Senate.

1914 - November 3: Re-elected to State senate. President of Senate.

1915 - November 2: Elected Lieutenant Governor under Samuel W. McCall.

1916 - November 7: Re-elected as Lieutenant Governor.

1917 - November 6: Re-elected as Lieutenant Governor.

1918 - November 5: Elected Governor of Massachusetts.

1919 - Gained national attention in settlement of Boston police strike.

- November 4: Re-elected Governor.

1920 - May, 18: Stepmother Carrie Brown Coolidge died.

- July 12: Selected as Republican Vice-Presidential candidate.

- November 2: Elected Vice-President.

1923 - August 2: President Warren Harding died in San Francisco.
- August 3: At 2:47 a.m. takes the Presidential Oath of Office administered by his father in his home.

1924 - June 12: Nominated Republican Candidate for President with Charles G. Dawes as Vice-Presidential running mate.
- July 7: Calvin Coolidge Jr. died of blood poisoning.
- November 4: Elected by largest plurality in history.

1925 - March 5: Inaugurated by Chief Justice William Howard Taft.

1926 - March 18: Father Colonel John Coolidge died.

1927 - August 2: Issued statement "I do not choose to run in 1928" at Rapid City, South Dakota.

1929 - January 17: Signed Kellogg-Briand Pact outlawing war.
- March 4: Hoover inaugurated. Coolidges returned to rental home in Northampton.

1930 - May 17: Coolidges move into a new home in Northampton called "The Beeches."

1933 - January 5: Died at The Beeches of a heart attack.
- January 7: Buried in Plymouth Notch, Vt.

A Brief Biographical Sketch

Calvin Coolidge was born in Plymouth, Vermont, on July 4, 1872, in his parents' home behind his father's store. His mother was Victoria Josephine Moor Coolidge and his father was Colonel John C. Coolidge. Both of Calvin's parents were born in Plymouth and were from families who had helped to settle the town shortly after the Revolutionary War.

Three years after Calvin's birth, his sister Abigail (Abbie) was born. In 1876 the family moved across the street to a bigger house ("The Homestead") where Calvin spent his boyhood years. Most of Calvin's relatives lived nearby. His Aunt Gratia (his mother's sister) and Uncle John Wilder lived next door and his grandparents lived just across the field on the farm where Calvin's father had grown up. Calvin's grandfather, Calvin Galusha Coolidge, raised Arabian horses and kept peacocks on his farm. Although Calvin's grandfather died when Calvin was six years old, his grandmother, Sarah Almeda (known to most folks as "Aunt Mede"), lived on the farm for many more years and helped to raise Calvin after his mother passed away.

Calvin started school when he was five years old in the one room school house just up the road from his house. At that time it was common for all grades to be together in one room. The older children were responsible for helping the younger ones with their lessons. For "upper school" (high school) Calvin attended the Black River Academy in Ludlow, twelve miles away. He boarded with a family there but would frequently return home to spend the weekends. During Calvin's time at Black River Academy, his sister Abbie died of appendicitis. Abbie had also been at school in Ludlow at the Academy, but was taken home when she became

ill. She died in Plymouth Notch in 1890.

Calvin's boyhood in Plymouth Notch was typical for a young man growing up in the late 1800's. He had to help out around the house, at his father's store, and on the farm. He had chores assigned to him. He had to go to school. But besides these responsibilities, he also had time to play and enjoy life. He liked to fish, to ice skate, to play baseball, and to ride his pony around the fields. Though it was hard living in those days out in the country, without the modern conveniences that people today enjoy, Calvin thoroughly enjoyed the time that he spent in Plymouth. (His Autobiography describes these years thoroughly.)

After graduating from Black River Academy in 1890, he went away to Amherst, Massachusetts, to take his entrance exams for Amherst College. He got sick and had to return home to Plymouth. He spent the winter of 1890-91 helping his father remodel the general store. It was during this time that Calvin helped make the striped counter tops in the store. In the spring Calvin went to St. Johnsbury Academy, a preparatory school, for one term and then went on to Amherst College in the fall of 1891. It was about this time that his father, Col. John Coolidge, was married to Carrie Brown, a schoolteacher who had grown up in Plymouth Notch, and whom Calvin greatly admired.

Calvin Coolidge spent four years at Amherst College and after graduation joined a law firm in Northampton, Massachusetts. Calvin began to run for local offices in Northampton in order to promote his legal practice. He discovered that he enjoyed politics and eventually was elected to the state legislature, became the Mayor of Northampton, and in 1918 was elected Governor of Massachusetts. It was during Coolidge's time as governor that he gained national attention by settling a Boston

Police strike. This national reputation eventually led to his nomination for the Vice Presidency in the campaign of 1920.

While still a young lawyer in Northampton, Calvin Coolidge met his wife, Grace Anna Goodhue, who was from Burlington, Vermont. She was a teacher in Northampton at the Clarke School for the Deaf. In 1905 they were married and later had two sons, John in 1906 and Calvin Jr. in 1908.

In 1920 Calvin Coolidge ran as the Vice-Presidential candidate on the Republican ticket with Warren Harding. They easily defeated their Democratic opposition. While Vice President, Calvin was often photographed at Plymouth Notch, many times dressed in the wool frock that belonged to his grandfather. The media played up the fact the Calvin Coolidge was from a rural Vermont town.

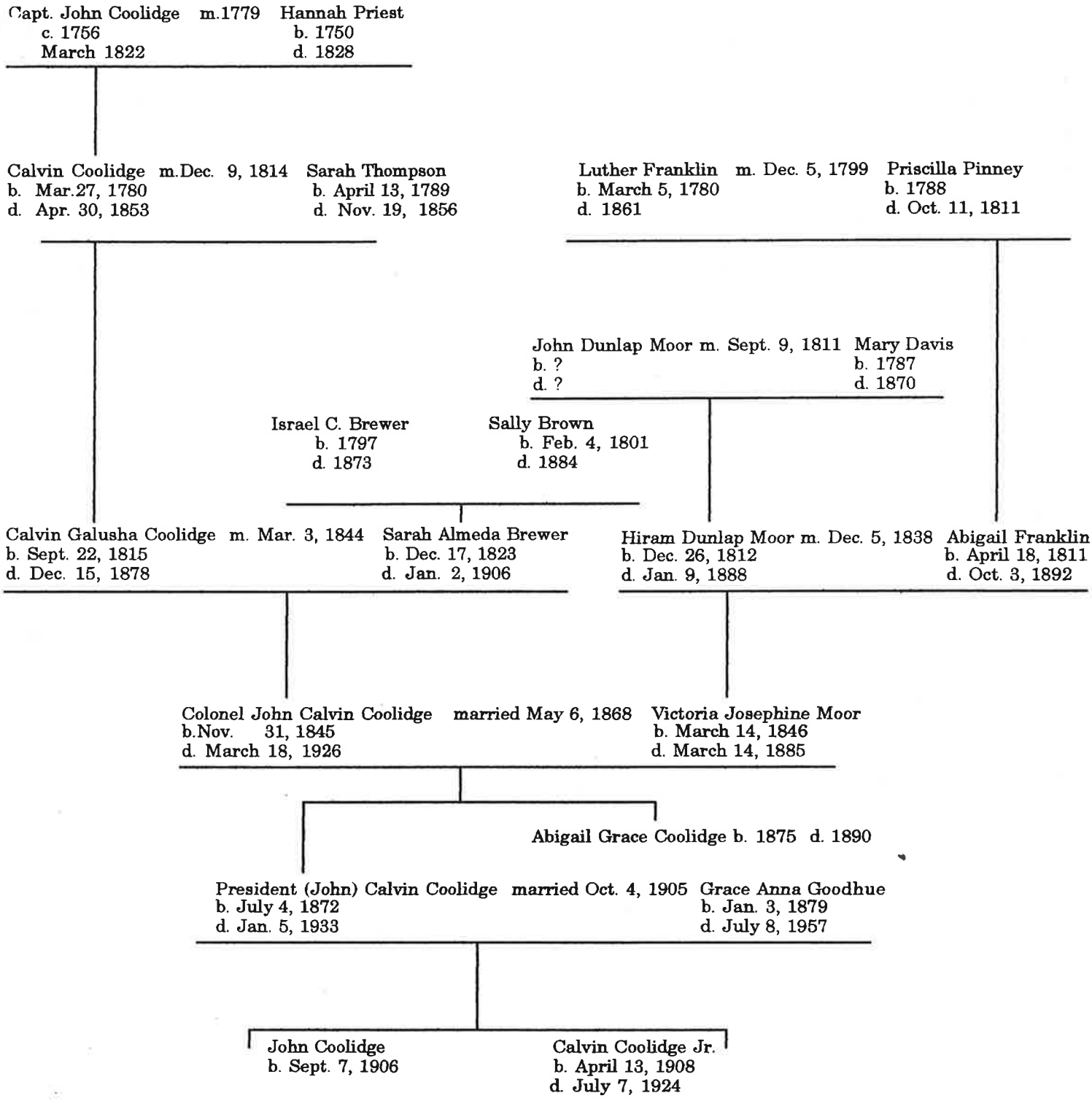
In 1923, while Calvin was visiting his father in Plymouth, word came in the middle of the night that President Harding had passed away while on a trip to the west coast. It was Colonel John Coolidge who woke Calvin to tell him that President Harding had died. Everyone got dressed, prayed, and went downstairs to decide what to do. All agreed that it was important to make Calvin Coolidge president as soon as possible. After calling Washington D.C., they determined that Colonel John, who was a notary public, was qualified to administer the Presidential Oath of Office. So, by the light of a kerosene lamp (the house did not have electricity), Calvin Coolidge became the thirtieth President of the United State in his father's sitting room. Calvin Coolidge is the only president to be sworn in by his own father and in his own home.

As Governor of Massachusetts, Vice-President, and as President, Calvin Coolidge returned to Plymouth Notch often to visit his father and other friends and family. In the summer of 1924 while he was President

he actually spent part of the summer there. He established his "Summer White House" office in a room called Coolidge Hall - a dance hall above the general store. From this room he ran the entire country with only the help of a stenographer and a secretary. This was a very sad summer for President Coolidge. His son, Calvin Jr., died on July 7 from blood poisoning contracted through an infected blister on his foot. Calvin Jr. was only 16 years old. It was a cruel blow to the President and his family.

Coolidge was a popular president. He was known throughout Washington as a quiet, industrious man whose nickname was "Silent Cal." This nickname is somewhat of a misnomer, since he actually held more press conferences than Franklin Roosevelt, a president noted for his "fireside chats" and his ability to communicate. He easily won reelection in 1924 with his Vice-Presidential running mate Charles Dawes. Calvin Coolidge was president during an exciting time in American history known as "The Roaring 20s." During this time the country prospered.

Calvin Coolidge decided not to run for reelection in 1928. He retired from public life to his home, "The Beeches," in Northampton, Massachusetts. In the summers Calvin continued to return to Plymouth Notch. When Calvin's father died in 1926 Calvin was left a great deal of property in Plymouth, including the homestead where he grew up. Calvin added an extra wing to the homestead in 1931 and planned to make it his summer home. Unfortunately, he and Grace enjoyed only one summer there. Calvin Coolidge, 30th President of the United States, died of a heart attack at his home in Northampton, Massachusetts, on January 5, 1933. He was sixty years old.



The Coolidge Family Tree

Questions to consider concerning the biography of Calvin Coolidge

1. What was Calvin Coolidge's boyhood like in Plymouth Notch? What were his responsibilities at home? At the store? On his grandfather's farm? At school?

2. What is the relationship between how and where a person grows up and the values that they have as an adult? Which of Calvin's values could be attributed to his beginnings in Plymouth Notch? How did these values help him in his political life?

3. What were Calvin Coolidge's accomplishments as President of the United States?

4. In what way was fate or destiny responsible for events in Calvin Coolidge's life? In what way did fate and destiny determine his place in history?

5. What is Calvin Coolidge's legacy as President?

6. Why does Calvin Coolidge have the nickname of "Silent Cal"? Is this nickname deserved? Why or why not?

7. What is The Home Town Coolidge Club? How did it raise money for Calvin Coolidge's election? What does it say about Calvin Coolidge's relationship with the people in Plymouth Notch?

8. Calvin Coolidge has been compared to Abraham Lincoln in his background and origins. In what way were the two men similar?

9. Which people in Calvin Coolidge's life had the most influence and effect upon him?

10. What was Calvin Coolidge like as a son? A brother? A father? A husband?

The following pages contain materials pertaining to the Hometown Coolidge Club. This club was formed by Coolidge's friends and neighbors in Plymouth Notch. Membership could be had with a contribution of $1.00. The money was used to promote his election and support the Republican National Committee.

"KEEP COOL AND KEEP COOLIDGE"

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

HON. REDFIELD PROCTOR
GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF VERMONT
HON. FRANK W. AGAN
PRES'T VERD MONT MILLS CO.
HON. ERNEST E. MOORE
WINDSOR CO. JUDGE OF PROBATE
HON. EARLE S. KINSLEY
NATIONAL COMMITTEEMAN FROM VT.
MRS. GEORGE ORVIS
NATIONAL COMMITTEEWOMAN FROM VT.
COLONEL JOHN E. PIDDOCK
CHAIRMAN STATE REPUBLICAN COMMITTEE

WILLIAM S. TUTTLE
DIRECTOR OF PUBLICITY

HOME TOWN
COOLIDGE CLUB
PLYMOUTH, VERMONT

PRESIDENT
EDWARD J. BLANCHARD
PLYMOUTH, VT.
FIRST VICE PRESIDENT
CLARENCE L. KEITH
PLYMOUTH, VT.
SECOND VICE PRESIDENT
GEORGE W. FRINK
PLYMOUTH, VT.
SECRETARY
DICK P. BROWN
PLYMOUTH, VT.
TREASURER
MRS. LAURA JOHNSON
PLYMOUTH, VT.

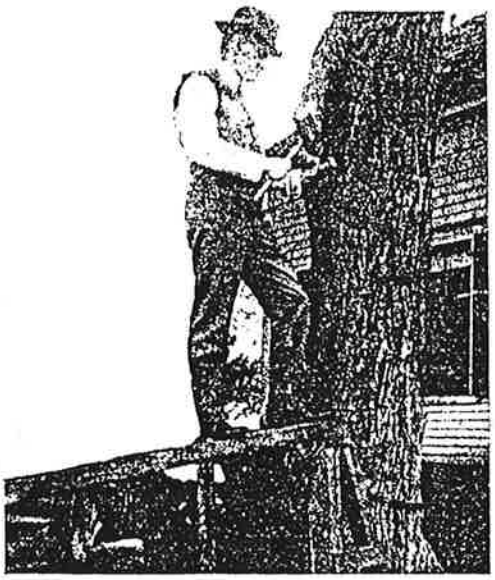
TO THE MEN AND WOMEN OF OUR COUNTRY:

In the early spring of this year in the building where President Calvin Coolidge was born, in a hall just above the room where he first saw the light of day, about fifty residents of Plymouth met and organized THE HOME TOWN COOLIDGE CLUB.

These pictures show the story of his life from the farm to the White House. It is a wonderful story of progress and development. This remarkable career had its origin in the homely virtues implanted by the simple life of the Vermont home which constitutes the background of his career.

In 1920 Speaker Gillette in presenting him as candidate for President said:

"A boyhood on a lonely farm in Vermont bred in him frugality and self-reliance. The granite hills seem to have moulded his great indomitable character. Family self-denial gave him a college education at Amherst which broadened his native talents. His neighbors recognized the value of this quiet, sagacious man, and drafted him into public service, and he glided from one useful station to another, until he reached the highest office of our State. He is not showy or spectacular, but he never disappoints. The limelight attracts him less than the midnight oil. He is patient as Lincoln, silent as Grant, diplomatic as McKinley, with the political instinct of Roosevelt. His character is as firm as the mountains of his native State."



Calvin Coolidge was repairing his mother's favorite tree in front of their home in Plymouth, Vt., on Aug. 2, the day President Harding died. He took the oath of office on August 3 and left for Washington, and his father, Col. John Coolidge, completed the repairs.

Would it not be inspiring to have several hundred thousand men and women join a HOME TOWN COOLIDGE CLUB, paying one dollar for the privilege? The membership fee will be used to promote his election and assist the Republican National Committee.

Sign the application below and mail today. We will send you membership certificate showing the President's home in the Green Mountains, HOME TOWN COOLIDGE CLUB emblem and booklet "Calvin Coolidge, Vermonter", with other Coolidge literature.

Yours for Coolidge,

Edward J. Blanchard

President Home Town Coolidge Club.

Calvin Coolidge and Grace his wife opening family mail at the Coolidge homestead in Plymouth, Vermont.

Cut on this line. Sign your name and address and mail with membership fee.

Charter Membership

Secretary HOME TOWN COOLIDGE CLUB, Plymouth, Vermont.

Please enroll me as a Charter member in the Home Town Coolidge Club of Plymouth, Vermont. Send me Membership Certificate, Club Emblem, and Booklet—"Calvin Coolidge—Vermonter."

I enclose membership fee of ($1.00) one dollar.

Name .....

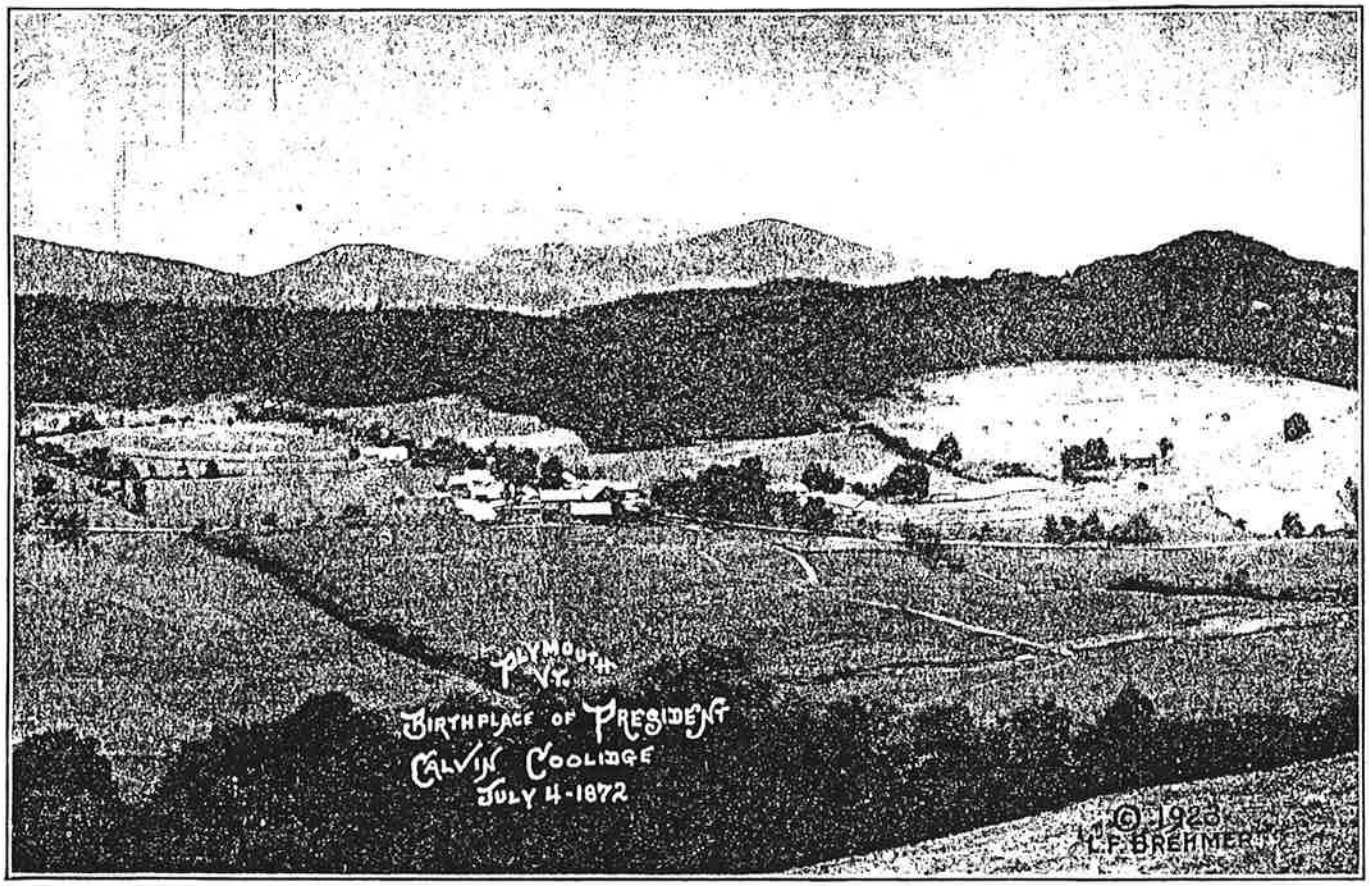
Address .....

.....

Calvin Coolidge was born in this town (Plymouth, Vermont) July 4, 1872, and this club is organized by his friends and neighbors for the purpose of promoting his candidacy and election as President

Cut on this line

Home of Col. John Coolidge. Father of the President. Plymouth, Vermont. The Summer White House.



Home Town Coolidge Club

PLYMOUTH, VERMONT

This certifies that_____ is a regularly approved member of the Home Town Coolidge Club of Plymouth, Vermont,

Given under our hands and the seal of the Club this FIRST day of JUNE, 1924.

Edward J. Blanchard
President.

Dick P. Brown.
Secretary.

Keep Cool and Keep Coolidge

The Official Campaign Song of the Home Town Coolidge Club of Plymouth, Vt.

1

In a quaint New England farmhouse on an early summer's day,
A farmer's boy became our Chief in a homely, simple way.
With neither pomp nor pageantry he firmly met the task,
To keep him on that job of his is all the people ask.

REFRAIN:

So, "keep cool and keep Coolidge" is the slogan of today,
"Keep cool and keep Coolidge" for the good, old U. S. A.,
A lot of politicians cannot do a thing but knock,
But Calvin Coolidge is a man of action and not talk;
So just "keep cool and keep Coolidge" in the White House four years more,
We have a chance to do it in this year of "twenty-four,"
He's been tried, he's never wanting, he is giving of his best,
"Keep cool and keep Coolidge" is our Country's mighty test.

2

With a private life of virtue and a public record clean,
He stands upon the summits with a countenance serene,
Defender of the righteous and a juggernaut to wrong,
We'll make him stay in Washington—a hundred million strong.

REFRAIN: (as before)

Copyright 1924

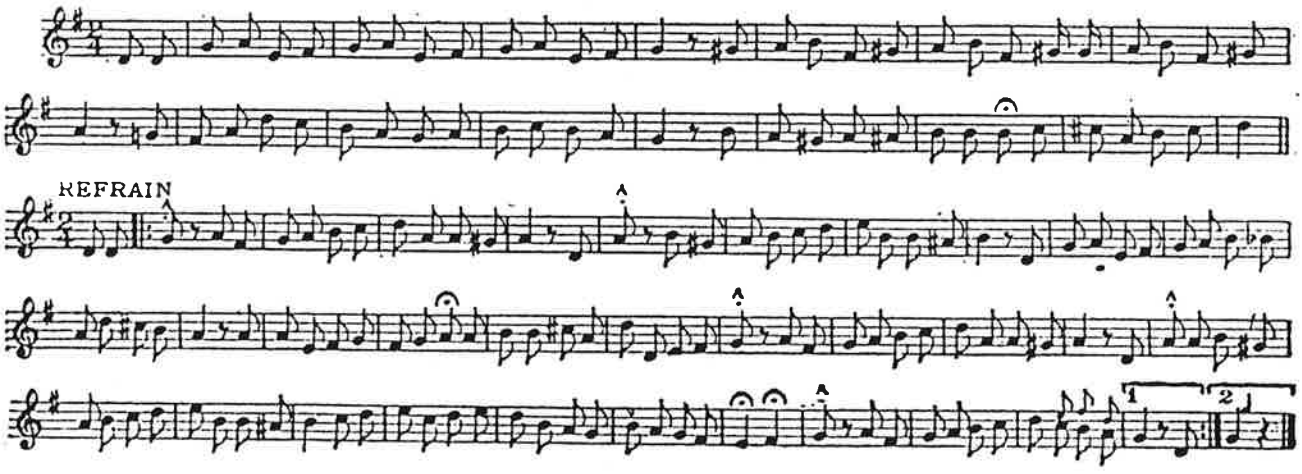
This song, words and music, published by
Home Town Coolidge Club,
Plymouth, Vermont.

IDA CHEEVER GOODWIN
and
BRUCE HARPER

Keep Cool And Keep Coolidge

Words by
IDA CHEEVER GOODWIN

Music by
BRUCE HARPER



Copyright 1924 by W. S. Tuttle.
International Copyright Secured. All rights, including broadcasting by radio, reserved.

(You may extend opportunity of charter membership to friends and relatives in other States by filling in the blanks below:)

Home Town Coolidge Club, Plymouth, Vermont

I PROPOSE FOR CHARTER MEMBERSHIP IN THE HOME TOWN COOLIDGE CLUB OF PLYMOUTH, VERMONT, THE PERSONS WHOSE NAMES AND ADDRESSES ARE GIVEN BELOW:

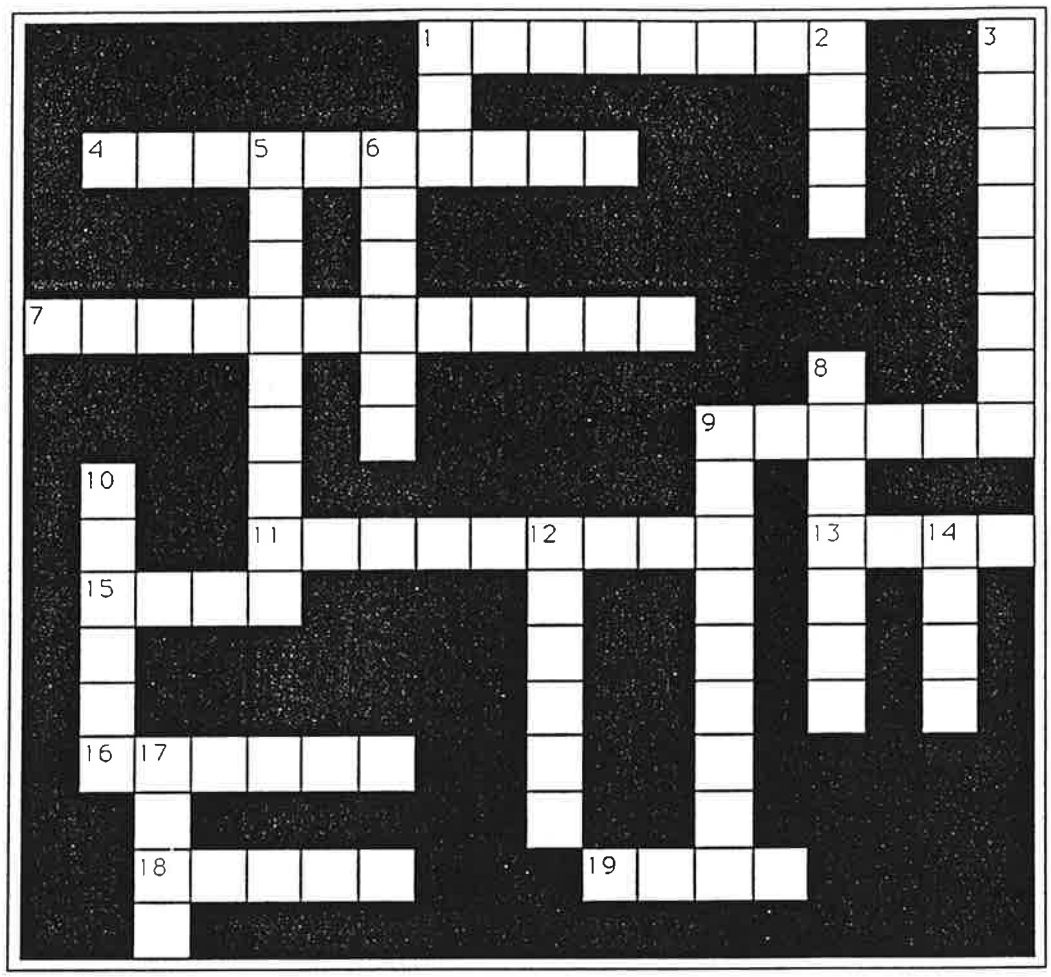
(Use other side if necessary.)

Signed .....

.....

93 ? ? ?

CALVIN COOLIDGE CROSSWORD



Across

1. Six generations of the Coolidge family are buried in the Plymouth _____.
4. The back of the General Store where Calvin Coolidge was born
7. This was a good place to see friends and buy supplies the farm didn't produce.
9. Calvin Coolidge's age when his mother died.
11. This modern invention was temporarily installed in the Coolidge Homestead when Coolidge became President
13. Used to make cheese
15. Coolidge took the _____ of Office on August 3,1923.
16. Used to deliver mail, it had a stove in it.
18. The last name of Calvin Coolidge's Vice-President
19. President Coolidge was born on the Fourth of _____.

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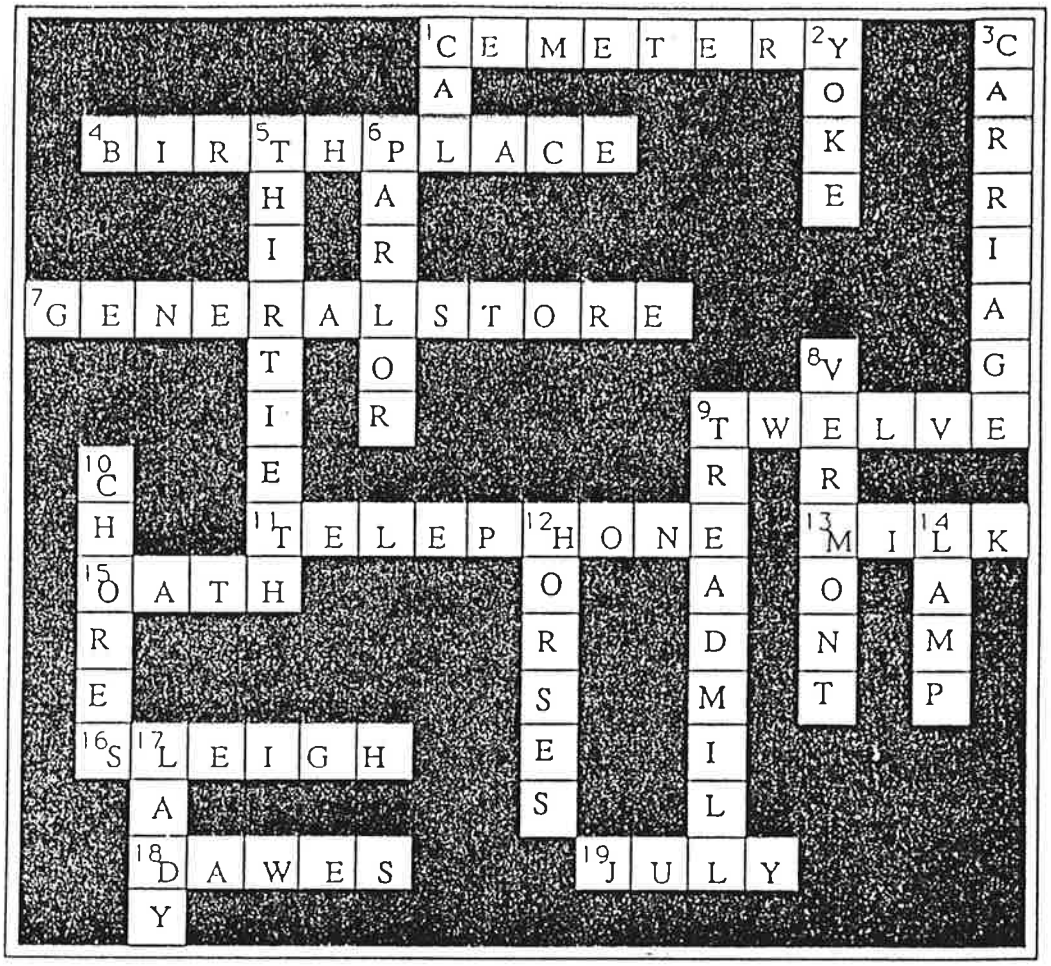
Down

1. Calvin Coolidge's parents nicknamed him this.
2. A type of harness for oxen
3. Pulled by horses, there is a fancy one made by Col. John in the Coolidge barn.
5. Calvin Coolidge was the _____ President of the UnitedStates.
6. Often the best room in a Victorian home, the Coolidge's kept a piano in theirs.
8. President Coolidge once gave a speech about this state, saying he loved its people.
9. Horses or dogs would walk on one to power farm machinery.
10. Filling the woodbox was one of young Calvin Coolidge's _____.
12. Animals that helped with farm work and transportation.
14. Calvin Coolidge became President by the light of a kerosene _____.
17. Grace Coolidge was a well-liked First _____.

SOLUTION SHEET



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12. Animals that helped with farm work and transportation.
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17. Grace Coolidge was a well-liked First _____.

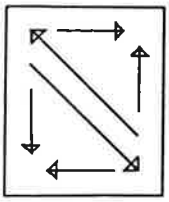
PLYMOUTH NOTCH WORD SEARCH

R	E	P	U	B	L	I	C	A	N	W	I	O	S	P	A	B
S	W	G	G	M	A	N	V	P	A	G	A	L	U	S	H	A
Z	M	R	P	N	D	H	U	S	K	I	N	G	B	L	X	F
B	L	A	C	K	R	I	V	E	R	A	C	A	D	E	M	Y
T	V	C	W	H	M	U	T	H	P	L	O	W	I	N	G	G
K	M	E	S	A	E	K	F	P	E	R	G	P	L	O	N	C
R	I	G	B	Y	G	E	A	R	A	B	I	A	N	I	I	O
A	L	O	J	I	V	R	S	A	C	A	F	B	R	D	W	L
M	K	O	Z	N	O	X	B	E	O	P	M	A	N	E	O	O
R	I	D	S	G	J	L	H	T	C	Z	G	M	I	E	R	N
E	N	H	C	T	I	Z	A	V	K	U	Y	J	C	N	R	E
H	G	U	L	A	S	P	R	E	S	I	D	E	N	T	A	L
T	X	E	G	W	C	O	D	R	H	U	S	Z	G	S	H	J
O	D	I	A	S	H	S	I	L	E	N	T	C	A	L	P	O
M	B	D	G	H	E	I	N	A	K	Q	I	E	Q	D	A	H
A	Q	O	I	A	E	H	G	O	V	E	R	N	O	R	S	N
G	E	N	E	R	A	L	S	T	O	R	E	F	S	U	O	T
D	R	P	A	H	C	T	O	N	H	T	U	O	M	Y	L	P

Words to Find ...

REPUBLICAN
MOTHER
HAYING
MILKING
PLYMOUTH NOTCH
GALUSHA
HARROWING
HARDING
ABIGAIL
CHEESE
GOVERNOR
ARABIAN
GENERAL STORE
SILENT CAL
HUSKING
COLONEL JOHN
PRESIDENT
PLOWING
GRACE GOODHUE
BLACK RIVER ACADEMY

And Ways to Look ...



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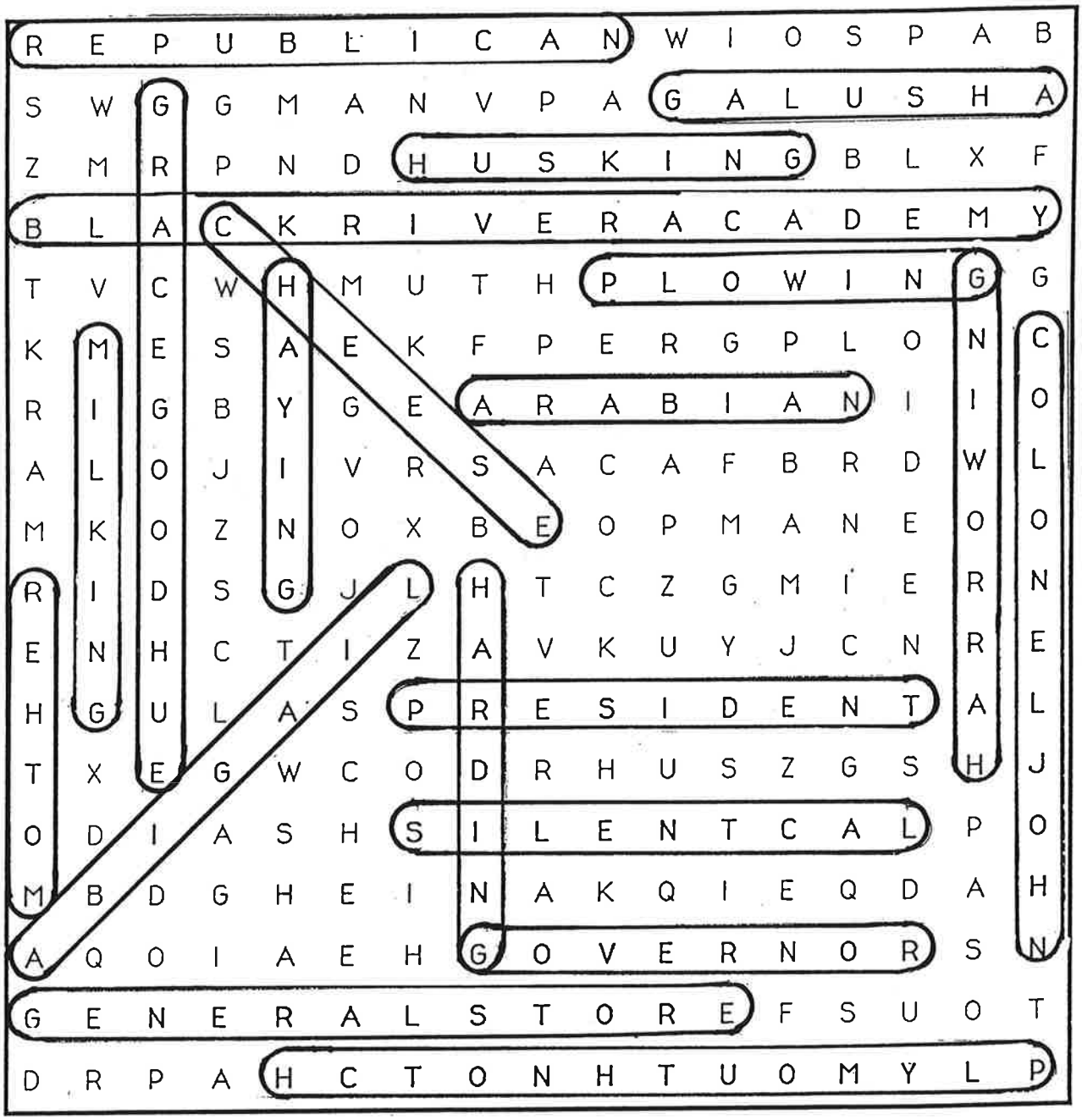

Words to Find ...

REPUBLICAN
MOTHER
HAYING
MILKING
PLYMOUTH NOTCH
GALUSHA
HARROWING
HARDING
ABIGAIL
CHEESE
GOVERNOR
ARABIAN
GENERAL STORE
SILENT CAL
HUSKING
COLONEL JOHN
PRESIDENT
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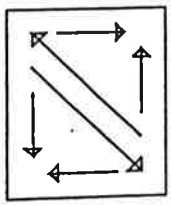

And Ways to Look ...

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CALVIN COOLIDGE: FIGURE HIM OUT

1. Calvin Coolidge attended school in Ludlow, Vermont which was twelve miles from Plymouth Notch. Sometimes he would visit his family in Plymouth Notch for the weekend. How many miles would he travel round trip? _____

2. In 1924 Calvin Coolidge was elected President of the United States by 15,718,789 voters. 8,378,962 people voted for the Democratic candidate John W. Davis. The Progressive candidate Robert La Folette received 4,822,319 votes. Did more people vote for Calvin Coolidge than the other two candidates combined ? _____ If yes, how many more ? _____

3. Calvin Coolidge became President when President Warren G. Harding died in 1923. Coolidge was then elected President in 1924 and finished his term in 1928. How many years was he President of the United States? _____

4. President Coolidge was born on July 4, 1872. He married Grace Goodhue in 1905. She was very proud of her husband when he was elected President of the United States on November 4, 1924. How old was Calvin Coolidge when he was elected President ? _____

5. Calvin Coolidge thought maple sugaring was one of the most interesting chores on the farm. One year the Coolidges produced 900 pounds of sugar. If they sold this sugar for 9 cents a pound, how much would all of the sugar be worth? _____

6. Calvin Coolidge liked to go fishing. If he caught 10 fish on Tuesday, twice as many on Wednesday, and half as many on Thursday as he caught on Tuesday, how many fish would he catch? _____

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SOLUTION SHEET

1. Calvin Coolidge attended school in Ludlow, Vermont which was twelve miles from Plymouth Notch. Sometimes he would visit his family in Plymouth Notch for the weekend. How many miles would he travel round trip? **24**

2. In 1924 Calvin Coolidge was elected President of the United States by 15,718,789 voters. 8,378,962 people voted for the Democratic candidate John W. Davis. The Progressive candidate Robert La Folette received 4,822,319 votes. Did more people vote for Calvin Coolidge than the other two candidates combined ? yes
If yes, how many more ? **2,517,508**

3. Calvin Coolidge became President when President Warren G. Harding died in 1923. Coolidge was then elected President in 1924 and finished his term in 1928. How many years was he President of the United States? **5**

4. President Coolidge was born on July 4, 1872. He married Grace Goodhue in 1905. She was very proud of her husband when he was elected President of the United States on November 4, 1924. How old was Calvin Coolidge when he was elected President ? **52**

5. Calvin Coolidge thought maple sugaring was one of the most interesting chores on the farm. One year the Coolidges produced 900 pounds of sugar. If they sold this sugar for 9 cents a pound, how much would all of the sugar be worth? **$81.00**

6. Calvin Coolidge liked to go fishing. If he caught 10 fish on Tuesday, twice as many on Wednesday, and half as many on Thursday as he caught on Tuesday, how many fish would he catch? **35**

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This is a drawing for you to color. The photograph was taken in March 1925 in the Plymouth Notch General Store. The man seated on the left is Calvin Coolidge's father, Colonel John Coolidge. Colonel John is surrounded by his Plymouth Notch neighbors.

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* Recommended for Children

Part 3

Agriculture in Vermont and Farm Life in Plymouth Notch, c. 1880

Vermont Agriculture and the Plymouth Notch Historic District - Overview for the Teacher

Plymouth Notch, Vermont, is in many ways a time capsule of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The village appears as it did in the late 1920s. The birthplace has been restored to its appearance in 1872. The agricultural landscape has remained in pristine condition on the outskirts of the village. In many ways, the Plymouth Notch Historic District is a monument not only to Calvin Coolidge, but to his life and times in a Vermont agricultural setting.

Farming is an integral part of Vermont's heritage. Generations of individuals, Calvin Coolidge included, were raised on farms in the Green Mountain State. Farmers have made many contributions to the character of the state and to the character of the individuals who lived here. The following information provides a short history of Vermont agriculture and an overview of farm life in Plymouth Notch. It is hoped that by using Plymouth Notch as a model students will come away with an appreciation of rural life and an understanding of what it was like to be part of a farming community in the late nineteenth century.

A Brief History of Vermont Agriculture

During the earliest years of settlement, the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the farm provided most of a family's food. Farmers were self-sufficient. What was not grown or produced on the farm was traded for. Farmers sold surplus goods such as apples, butter, cheese, maple sugar, turkeys, and beef cattle in order to buy what they could not grow or make themselves. Cash crops such as wheat and potash (made from wood ashes obtained while clearing the land for fields) were the leading exports from Vermont farms during this early period. Large-scale potash exports lasted only as long as the land was being cleared, and large-scale wheat raising in Vermont ended by the 1820s because of declining wheat yields (a blight killed most of the crop in Vermont) and growing competition from farms in western New York and Ohio. Because the Erie Canal and the Champlain Canal had opened in the early 1820s, these farms "out west" could raise wheat in large quantities and get it to eastern markets very cheaply.

In the early 1800s a new kind of farming developed in Vermont - sheep raising. Vermont's commercial wool growing era began in 1811 when a flock of prize Merino sheep were imported to Vermont from Spain by William Jarvis. By the 1830s, the Vermont sheep industry was prospering because of the combined stimuli of the 1824 tariff on imported woolens, the rise of the wool processing industry (many mills were being built), and the opening of the Champlain Canal in 1823 that connected Lake Champlain with the Hudson River. At one time there were more sheep than people in Vermont - a national distinction. However, this boom was short-lived. By the 1840s western competitors had once again

captured the market, this time on wool. While some Vermont farmers turned their attention to the breeding of sheep for stock, most gave up sheep farming and diversified their operations. Raising cows for milk became the most important farm business.

Although dairying had always had an important place on the Vermont farm, it was not until the late 1800s that it developed into a large-scale commercial operation. Two things accounted for this boom in dairying - a large population in the urban areas that provided a market, and the railroad which extended into Vermont in the 1850s and provided a fast way to get perishable dairy products to market. The invention of the "iced butter car" in 1854 was especially helpful in keeping the product fresh as it was shipped out of state.

Cheese was the first dairy product to be produced on a large commercial scale. Vermont was one of the leading cheese producing states by the 1860s, along with western states like Wisconsin. Cheese was less perishable than butter or milk. With the refrigerated railroad car, things changed. By 1870, butter began to replace cheese as the leading commercial dairy product. By 1900 Vermont was the leading butter producer in the country. When western markets threatened to compete with Vermont's butter production as well, improved transportation methods during the 1910s allowed farmers to shift to fluid milk production, an area in which there was no immediate competitive threat. Dairy farming for the production of fluid milk is still a major part of Vermont's agriculture today, though the number of farms is decreasing,

Source: Vermont Historic Preservation Plan: Our Architectural Heritage.
Vermont Division for Historic Preservation.

Farm Life in Plymouth Notch

The following discussion of farm life in The Notch is divided into various activities, occupations, and practices that took place on the farms at the end of the nineteenth century. Statistics from the Brown Farm, Plymouth Notch's largest farm, taken from the Vermont Agricultural Census, are cited as examples.

Each topic discussed below is referenced to artifacts on display in the Wilder Barn, the agricultural life museum at the Plymouth Notch Historic District. Further exploration of these topics, using the displays in the Wilder Barn for reference during your visit to Plymouth Notch, is encouraged.

Activity: Dairying (Butter and Cheese)

Artifacts to see in the Wilder Barn: vats, presses, milk pans, butter workers, milking equipment, pails, milk separator, milking machine, etc.

From the beginning, the family cow played an important role in subsistence farming for early settlers in Plymouth providing them with milk, butter, cheese, and occasionally meat. After the farmers saw a commercial market for their dairy surplus, they increased the size of their herds. In the 1860s Vermont was one of the nation's largest cheese producers. Later, production shifted to butter and by 1890 Vermont made more butter than any other state. The modern fluid milk industry developed in the 1910s, assisted by pasteurization techniques and improved refrigeration and transportation.

In 1869, three years before Calvin Coolidge was born, about 80% of

Plymouth's milk was turned into butter. In that year the farm of Calvin Galusha Coolidge, his grandfather, sold 500 pounds of butter and 200 pounds of cheese. James Brown, another Plymouth farmer living just down the road from the Coolidge farm, sold 2,200 pounds of butter and 600 pounds of cheese.

In the 1870s local farmers switched almost entirely to making butter. According to the Vermont Agricultural census, in 1879 farmer Brown made 2 tons of butter and no cheese. Cows at the Brown farm and at all farms were milked twice daily by hand. Butter was made in the house mostly by women while men often helped out with the physical work of churning.

In 1890, dairying in Plymouth Notch took a dramatic turn with the construction of the cheese factory. It was built by John Coolidge, the President's father, James Brown and three other farmers. It provided a convenient market for the increasing amount of milk produced on the farms, relieved the families of the work of making butter, and formalized the rural tradition of sharing labor. The plant continued to operate until the 1930s. It was renovated and reopened by John Coolidge, the President's son, in 1960.

Activity: Planting

Artifacts to see in the Wilder Barn: two-wheeled garden row marker, corn planter, hoes, cultivators, plows, harness.

The late nineteenth century, before the era of large specialized dairy farms, was a time of diversified agriculture in Vermont. As soon as the fields dried out in the spring, hillside farmers prepared the ground to plant

a variety of crops for their families, their animals, and for commercial sale at market if there was a surplus.

Fields needed to be cleared of rocks and plowed, grass sod had to be broken, manure and wood ashes spread and turned in, the soil loosened, smoothed, and marked for rows. Seeds were sown individually by hand or using a hand-held tool, or were dispersed from an ox or horse drawn device which also covered them up with soil. Vegetables were grown in the fields and in kitchen gardens. After the crops came up, weeds were cut by machine cultivating and hoeing by hand.

James Brown's farm was typical for Plymouth in the variety of crops grown, but larger than most in volume. In 1880, according to the Agricultural Census, Brown's farm included 12 acres of buckwheat, 6 acres of oats, 4 acres of apple trees, 3 acres of wheat, 3 acres of Irish potatoes, and 2 acres of Indian corn.

Activity: Harvesting

Artifacts to see in the Wilder Barn: hay wagon, flails, hay knives, grain measures, bagging machine, grain cradle, horse rake, apple ladders, hay forks.

Farm families spent long summer days in the labor intensive cutting, drying, and gathering of foods. The most time-consuming was hay grown for livestock. On hillsides men cut it with scythes and on more level ground with horse drawn mowing machines. After cutting it was dried in the fields by being stacked in conical hay cocks, raked out in the sun, and tedded (turned over). Then it was pitched onto a wagon, taken to the barn, and tossed loose into the hay mow.

Similarly, corn was cut off at the ground and "stooked" in the field to dry. (Stooking inspired the modern New England decorative tradition of displaying bundled corn stalks in autumn.) Kernels were ground into meal at the grist mill. Every other part of the corn plant except the root was chopped and stored to be fed to livestock as fodder.

The Brown farm's crop production totals for 1879 are testimony to that season's labors: 400 bushels of buckwheat, 62 bushels of wheat, 350 bushels of oats, 80 bushels of corn, 400 bushels of potatoes, 100 bushels of apples, and 80 tons of hay.

Activity: Crop processing

Artifacts to see in the Wilder Barn: treadmills for horse and small animals, winnowing machine, threshing machine, flails, corn and straw cutters, vegetable cutters, corn husker, cider press.

Getting crops in from the field was only the first step in processing them for storage and use. Corn required husking and shelling and then grinding into meal. Wheat and beans and oat grains needed to be separated from their shells, stalks, or vines, then dried. Apples had to be pressed for cider. Men, women and children all worked together on some tasks, creating social occasions. Neighbor helped neighbor, sharing machinery and sometimes tedious, dusty hard work. Mechanical threshers were run by belts connected to treadmills, sometimes known as "horsepowers". Smaller treadmills, powered by walking sheep, were used to churn butter.

In the fall, at the end of the growing season, days and evenings were spent putting up crops and foodstuffs for winter. The survival of the

animals and the people depended upon this work.

Activity: Sugaring

Artifacts to see in the Wilder Barn: Gathering tank, gathering pails, sap buckets, covers, spouts, sap yoke.

Vermont settlers learned from Native Americans that in spring the sweet sap of the sugar maple trees may be gathered when it begins to rise up from the roots into the branches. By the time Calvin Coolidge was growing up in Plymouth Notch, maple sugaring was a vital part of the farmer's yearly routine.

Sugaring time came when the deepest cold of winter was over but before the fields were thawed of snow. Sap collected from holes drilled in maple trees was boiled for hours over wood fires to eliminate most of the water and concentrate its sweetness. Men walked through deep snow to tap the trees, hang the collecting buckets, and collect the sap. A gathering tank was often towed into the sugarbush (the stand of maple trees being tapped) by oxen. When Calvin Coolidge was a young man, most sap was boiled down into soft sugar and poured into molds for home use or sale. When white cane sugar became widely available abound 1890, most sap was canned as syrup.

The sugaring season is a relatively short one and the success of it depends entirely on the weather. For example, in 1869 James Brown made 125 pounds of maple sugar, in 1879 he made only 80 pounds.

Activity: Household/Domestic Chores

Artifacts to see in the Wilder Barn: wash tubs and machines, loom,

spinning & flax wheels, apple parers and coring machine, pickling crocks, molasses jugs.

The nineteenth century farm family divided work according to gender. Generally, men were responsible for buildings, fields, crops, and livestock. Women were responsible for the kitchen garden (where vegetables for the household were grown), tended the flocks of chickens and turkeys, and ran the household. They cooked and preserved food, made, washed, repaired, and ironed clothing, fabricated furnishings, cleaned the house, and made cheese and butter in the home. Children were expected to help the adults with the chores; the boys worked alongside the men and the girls with the women.

One particular women's task was soap making. To make soap, fat from beef, pigs, or other animals was reduced to liquid in a large kettle on a fire outside. Water dripped through wood ashes produced lye, a caustic substance, which was stirred into the fat. Once the mixture thickened it was poured into molds to cool and harden. This process produced "cakes" of soap to be used for laundry and bathing.

Spinning and weaving wool sheared from the family's sheep was another time consuming occupation. The Brown farm had 58 sheep yielding 400 pounds of fleece in 1869, they cut back to just 4 sheep yielding 50 pounds in 1879. That same year, Maria Brown's 50 chickens produced 125 dozen eggs.

Activity : Cool weather chores

Artifacts to see in the Wilder Barn: Drag saw, log hooks, shingle-making items, ice markers, ice saws, meat hoist, smoke box.

Autumn brought cool weather suitable for slaughtering pigs, chickens, turkeys, and cattle for home use and commercial sale. Because there was a lack of adequate refrigeration, meat was variously smoked, salted, dried, or made into sausage in order to preserve it. In the 1880s, the Brown farm raised as many as 30 pigs in one year, a considerable asset for sale or barter.

All farms used wood for fuel to cook food year-round and to heat their homes in winter. Before and after the growing season, much labor was expended in the farm's woodlot felling trees, cutting them into short lengths, splitting them with axes, and stacking to dry. Most of the work was done by hand with saws and axes, sometimes the time was shortened by the use of saws connected to horse powered treadmills. In 1879 the Brown farm cut 25 cords of wood, equivalent to a stack 4 feet high, 4 feet wide and 200 feet long.

In the coldest winter months ice was harvested from local ponds. It was cut into blocks which were layered with insulating sawdust and stored in ice houses. Packed properly the ice would last through the summer. In warm weather the ice was brought out to use in the kitchen ice box and to chill food products like butter.

Activity: Transportation

Artifacts to see at the Wilder Barn: Snow roller, mail sled, winter hearse, sleighs, coaches, wagons.

Before automobiles, travel in Plymouth Notch was accomplished on foot, on horseback, or in horse or oxen drawn wagons and coaches. Wagon

wheels were shod with iron to preserve their wood frames from damage on the rough roads of the period.

In winter, the snow was not plowed aside as it is today, but rolled and packed down. Sleds and sleighs with runners were brought out and wagons were stored for the season. In spring, the packed, icy snow was chopped and shoveled away. During the summer, men satisfied a civic duty by improving and grading the roads.

Plymouth Notch looked south to Ludlow as its nearest railroad connection for long distance travel. It was there that farmers like James Brown took their produce for local sale or shipment by rail to Boston and New York, returning home with needed goods and supplies made elsewhere. The road to Ludlow was the main transportation route out of town; it was to Ludlow that young Calvin Coolidge set out when he left home to attend Black River Academy, a boarding school.

Activity: Rural Self-Sufficiency

Artifacts to see in the Wilder barn: the farmer's workbench with its hand tools, vises, etc..

Being a Vermont farmer meant having many skills, for he was responsible for producing, maintaining, and repairing everything associated with the farm. In addition to being an agronomist and animal herdsman, a farmer needed to be a mechanic and carpenter capable of maintaining and repairing his buildings and equipment. He had to be familiar with iron, wood, stone, steel, leather, wire, lead, and canvas as well as the tools for working them. It was a matter of daily concern that all moving machinery parts be greased or oiled, and all cutting edges keenly

sharpened. Everything had to be kept in good repair and in operating condition.

Activity: Social Life

Although 19th century farm life was relentless in the hard work it demanded, residents of Plymouth Notch took time to enjoy themselves and each other's company. In addition to assembling for work bees (like husking bees, apple-paring bees, and quilting bees), they met to worship at church, sing, play games, and visit friends and family on Sundays and holidays. There were events like singing schools and public dances to attend. Plymouth Notch had it's own dance hall over the general store where Saturday night dances were held. There were parties for young people and an occasional dramatic exhibition by local talent. In the summer a traveling circus came to Plymouth, and in the autumn the county fair was held in nearby Woodstock.

The holidays were all celebrated in some fashion. The Fourth of July offered a break from haying and an opportunity for frivolity and patriotic displays. In Plymouth Notch, it meant rolling out the cannon and firing it early in the day to start the day's festivities. The cannon, made in the 1830s, is on display on the second floor of the Wilder Barn.

Questions to consider regarding Vermont's Agricultural History and Farm Life in Plymouth Notch c. 1880

1. What was it like to be a young man or a young woman growing up on a farm in the 1880s? What would the responsibilities be? How would these responsibilities change with the seasons?

2. How is farm life related to the seasons? In what ways is it a cycle?

3. How were the following products produced in the 1880s? What tools, implements, and machines were used in their production? a. milk b. cheese c. butter d. hay e. soap f. maple sugar g. cordwood h. grain

4. How are these same products produced today? How have inventions of the last 100 years changed the process?

5. What are the similarities and differences between life on the farm today and life on the farm in the 1880s?

6. In what ways were specific jobs on the farm gender related? Why is it that jobs were gender related? Is this true today?

7. What jobs were men and young men responsible for? What jobs were women and young women responsible for?

8. If you were a young person living and working on a farm in the 1880s, how would you describe your daily routine in a journal or diary entry? What would your day be like, in general? What would you do? What would your chores be? How would this routine change with the time of year?

9. What household and farm tasks have been made easier by technology?

10. What is self-sufficiency? Why did rural farmers have to be self-sufficient?

11. Would you consider farm life in the 1880s to be boring and tedious compared to life today? Or was it more challenging and exciting? Why are there different opinions about "the good old days"?

12. What did farm families do for fun back in the 1880s? Could people today do the same things for fun and be satisfied? Why or why not?

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*Recommended for children

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