

Kansas City Young Audiences

Teacher Program Guide

Kansas Cultural History

Artist: The Kansas Settlers Band

Performance Description

Inside this guide:

Performance Description
Educational
Artist Bio
Vocabulary
List of Resources
Post-Performance Activities

Contact KCYA for more information on this and other programs.

816-531-4022
www.kcya.org

Just as droughts, floods, and tornados affect our lives today, the environment was an even greater influence on the lives of pioneer Kansans in the 1800s.

Using songs, stories, and a captivating set, the four members of the Kansas Settlers Band explore their own histories

to teach students how people came to settle in Kansas.

The Kansas Settlers Band, accompanying themselves on fiddle and guitar, sing folk songs that reveal a great deal about pioneer life. These songs tell stories about hard-

ships (*Little Old Sod Shanty on the Claim*), westward expansion of the railroad (*John Henry*), and Kansas' promise of freedom (*In Kansas*).



These songs also tell us what pioneer Kansans did in their leisure time, such as play-party games and square dances.

Members of the Kansas Settlers Band bring these stories to life by sharing tales from their own family histories, and encouraging students to learn how their families came to Kansas.

Educational Objectives and Standards

Students will:

- Develop an appreciation of those who made our lives in Kansas possible
- Explore Kansas history as something that happened to real people

History:

- Understands the broadly defined areas of state and local historical events

Music:

- Identifies (by genre or style) music from various historical periods and cultures

Special Points of Interest:

Three distinct political groups occupied Kansas in the 1850's: pro-slavers, free-staters and abolitionists. These factions fought until 1861 when Kansas became a free state. This era became forever known as "Bleeding Kansas".

Special REQUIREMENTS:

Large, open space, gym or auditorium preferred; electrical outlet; space should be available 45 minutes before performance for set-up and 30 minutes after performance for break-down.

Artist Bio: The Kansas Settlers Band

The Kansas Settlers Band consists of Rebecca Dempsey, Michelle Cotton, Chris Hudson, and Sam Wright.

Rebecca Dempsey is a professional actor who has performed in television and radio commercials, corporate training videos, films and live theater. An accomplished musician as well, she combines her love of teaching children with her joy in performing through her KCYA programs.

Michelle Cotton is an actor/singer/songwriter who has been performing for over 10 years in the Kansas City area. She is thrilled to be part of KCYA, enriching young minds through the arts. Michelle earned her BA in Theatre at UMKC in 1995.

Chris Hudson received his Bachelor's degree in 1996 from the UMKC Conservatory of Music. A talented guitarist and instructor, Chris has played

at the Kemper Museum, Eden Alley and currently teaches private instruction at KCYA's Community School of the Arts.

Sam Wright earned his BFA in Theatre from Emporia State University in 2002. Since graduating, he has acted for The Coterie Children's Theatre and Wyandotte Players. When not performing, Sam spends his time waiting tables in Westport, recording music and playwriting.

Vocabulary

Government claim: a piece of land bought from the government at a low price (usually in sections of 160 acres) in exchange for which, the buyer agrees to care for and live on the land for a period of years

Plains: flat, short-grass lands, stretching from Mexico to Canada and including the western half of Kansas.

Prairie: treeless and mostly flat grasslands, found in the eastern half of Kansas where native tall

grasses once flourished

Settler: one who moves to a new, usually unsettled area to live

Sod house: settlers' house made out of the top layer of soil and the grass attached to it



List of Resources

BOOKS

Home on the Range: The Kansas Pioneers and Their Music
by Kelly Werts,
Sara Quinn (Illustrator)
Wichita Eagle and Beacon Publishing Co.
Inc. (September, 1996)
ISBN: 1880652153

Children of the Wild West by Russell Freedman
Clarion Books; Reprint edition
(October 1, 1990)
ISBN: 0395547857

The Laura Ingalls Wilder Songbook : Favorite Songs from The Little House Books
by Eugenia Garson, Garth Williams
Harpercollins; Reprint edition
(October 1, 1992) ISBN: 0060219343

Post-Performance Activities

1. Talk about the program you saw. How was the settler's lifestyle different from our own? Was it harder? Easier? How was life back then similar to ours?
2. Compare the geographies of Kansas and Missouri. How are they similar/different?
3. Interview a family member about how they came to Kansas. Who was the first in the family to come to Kansas and when? Write down your findings, as well as a family story that relates to Kansas cultural history. Share with the class.
4. Make up some tall tales about our lives today in Kansas.
5. Look at some other important historical events of 1861, the year Kansas became a state. Who was President? What war began that year?