



UNIT FOUR

EARLY WESTERN VIRGINIA SETTLERS



The Everlasting

by Louise McNeill

*Peppermint and spearmint, and bitter cress and balm
To cure us, inure us, and soothe us all with calm --*

*Sassafras and pepper grass, and plantain leaf and rue
To heal us, anneal us, to comfort and renew --*

*Penny "rorrel" and sour sorrel, and yellow root and dock
To mend us, or end us, or send us into shock --*

*But, of the plants that roam the hills, the one that I will take:
The pearly bloom that cures our ills and mends us where we ache...*

(McNeill 1979:6)

Pricketts Fort provides great insight into how early settlers survived on the rugged frontier of western Virginia. The Fort itself demonstrates the cooperation and ingenuity the settlers used in order to protect themselves from the threat of attack from Native Americans. The historical interpretations within the Fort today give visitors an opportunity to experience everyday life on the frontier of present-day West Virginia. The Job Prickett house in the park gives an example of Civil War era architecture and day to day life in 19th century rural America. Teachers may want to review pages 78-82 of the textbook, *West Virginia: The History of an American State* or other resource materials to give an overview of settlement in western Virginia. Specific, detailed descriptions of 18th century clothing, blacksmithing, gunsmithing, and architecture are included in *A Guide to Pricketts Fort*.

People on the frontier worked from dawn to dusk. Men cleared the land, harvested the crops, and built fences and homes. Women were in charge of caring for the children, as well as performing all of the household chores. Young boys worked with their fathers in the fields and learned at a very young age how



to catch small animals with the use of a snare. There were numerous chores to perform on the farm. A boy worked with his father in the corn patch and helped with clearing and fencing. It was also a boy's job to keep the fireplace supplied with wood and to bring in the cow for milking.

It was extremely important for boys to have the ability to use a gun. Therefore, most boys received their first rifle at the age of twelve or thirteen. Guns were not toys. They were an indispensable piece of equipment for every man on the frontier. At about the age of fourteen a boy was considered a man and would be assigned his post at the fort during rebellious times. He would probably be married by the time he was sixteen to a girl his own age or a year or two younger.

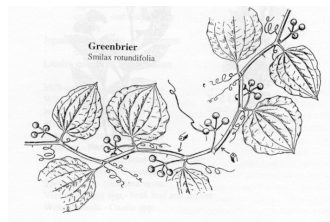
While boys were learning marksmanship, girls were learning to grind meal, cook, spin and sew, make soap, milk cows, and any other household tasks that her mother might perform. The only dolls she ever owned would have been made at home out of cornhusks. Still, she would receive lots of practice caring for babies. It was not unusual for frontier families to have as many as twelve to fifteen children. Therefore, girls had plenty of brothers and sisters to care for before they started a family of their own.

By the time that settlers arrived to the region west of the Allegheny Mountains, the split rail fence (also known as the snake fence, worm fence, crooked rail fence, and rickrack fence) had become a familiar site on the American Frontier. Gordon Barlow's article, "The Split Rail Fence: An American Innovation" in *Wonderful West Virginia*. (66:2) elaborates. This is just one unique architectural feature you may want to explore with your students.

SUGGESTED UNIT FOUR ACTIVITIES

PRE-VISIT

- Discuss settler family roles and work habits and the roles of young boys and girls.
- Research food, diet, and clothing.
- LOG ENTRY: If you had to move to another area and could take only one possession with you, what item would you choose and why would this be your choice?
- Unit 6 of *In the Mountain State* provides an interesting section dealing with some of the nature lore of the region. Included are home remedies, recipes, superstitions, and weather predictions.





UNIT FOUR

- Discuss frontier schooling (Review textbook pages 187-190) Schools are known to have existed in the Pricketts Fort area as early as 1786. How would school have been different from today?
- Unit 3 of *In the Mountain State* explores the regional language of Appalachia through historical context, dialect and accent, and colorful expressions. Which expressions originated with the settlers?
- LOG ENTRY: Write a story using examples of the dialect that appears on page 3.3 of *In the Mountain State*.
- Childhood games, music, and dancing are discussed in Unit 9 of *In the Mountain State* and the *Guide Pricketts Fort*. Which games still exist today?
- Take a look at other refuge forts built in the same time period as Pricketts Fort. See list and map of the map of forts built in western Virginia region in the *Guide to Pricketts Fort*.
- Interview members of your family and complete the My West Virginia Family History (4-A) activity sheet.
- A timeline in the *Guide to Pricketts Fort* traces the life of Jacob Prickett and includes important dates and information concerning the Fort. Complete the Comparative Timeline of Pricketts Fort History (4-B) activity sheet that compares the timeline of the Prickett family to important events in the history of the United States.
- LOG ENTRY: Why would settlers move west of the Allegheny Mountains?
- Review the vocabulary list for this unit and complete the Early Settlers Word Search (4-C).

ON-SITE

- Conduct a Photo Scavenger Hunt (4-D).
- Examine the split rail fences. Talk about how and why those were used.
- Using a guide to architectural styles, identify the various styles of architecture you see.

LEARNING TRUNK

- Explore the learning trunk period clothing, tools, and games. Can you identify which are 18th century items and which are 19th century items?

POST-VISIT

- Create a Class Quilt. Each student will design a section of a quilt that will be put together to form the class quilt. The project can be completed by using an actual fabric quilt squares or by using paper sections to create a large class poster. Designs can be based upon family history or something personally meaningful.



- *In the Mountain State* includes several simple pioneer recipes that can be prepared in class, as a homework assignment, or in a cross-curricular project in a science class. Some suggestions can be found on pages 1.4, 6.11, and 6.15.
- LOG ENTRY: Describe what your life would have been like as a teenager in the late 1700s.
- LOG ENTRY: Describe life as a teenager in the 1860s.
- Explore the rich folk traditions of the Appalachian Region *In the Mountain State*. Included in Unit 7 are proverbs, rhymes, riddles, jokes, and folktales.
- LOG ENTRY: Compare what the pioneers would have carried in their pockets and pouches as compared to what you might carry in your pockets, purse, or backpack.
- Explore your own family history by tracing your roots. Use the reproducible family tree on page 1.18 in *In the Mountain State*.
- Complete Prickett Fort Family History (4-E).

The diagram is a multi-generational family tree for the Prickett family. It is organized into several columns and rows, with names and dates written in a cursive or handwritten style. The tree includes names such as Richard Prickett, Elizabeth Prickett, Jacob Prickett Jr., Rebecca Prickett, and Amos Prickett. Dates and locations are provided for many of the individuals, such as '1792', '1800', '1810', '1820', '1830', '1840', '1850', '1860', '1870', '1880', '1890', '1900', '1910', '1920', '1930', '1940', '1950', '1960', '1970', '1980', '1990', '2000'. The tree is framed by a decorative border with floral and leaf motifs.

EXTENDED LEARNING

- Create an art project depicting some aspect of Pricketts Fort, pioneer life, or Native American life for possible publication in *Hillchild*.
- Do a writing project on Pricketts Fort, the Prickett family, pioneer life, or Native American life for possible publication in *Hillchild*.
- Research the important people and events in the settlement and history of your hometown.
- Extend your interest in Pricketts Fort or a particular aspect of early western Virginia culture into a social studies fair project.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

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1999 *In the Mountain State.* West Virginia Humanities Council.
- Cresswell, S. ed.
1993 *We Will Know What War Is: The Civil War Diary of Sirene Bunten.* West Virginia Wesleyan College Press.
- McNeill, L.
1979 *Elderberry Flood.* Elderberry Books.
- Wood, V.
1998 *West Virginia: The History of an American State.* Clairmont Press.
Golden Seal and *Wonderful West Virginia* magazines

HUMAN RESOURCES

- County Historical Societies
- Senior citizen groups
- Museums such as Pricketts Fort and Fort New Salem
- Family members
- Professors from local colleges and universities
- Local libraries

INTERNET SITES

- www.dmssoft.com/pfort/
- www.ohwy.com/wv/p/prtfrtsp.htm
- www.history.org/
- www.library.advanced.org/J001587
- www.coax.net/people/wf/wf_forts.htm
- www.rootsweb.com/~wvbrooke/forts.htm
- www.rootsweb.com/~varusse/other/forts.html
- www.wvculture.org/history/inland.html
- www.fortedwards.org/history.htm
- www.ancestry.com/main.htm
- www.pbs.org/wnet/frontierhouse
- www.geocities.com/naforts/wv.htm

VOCABULARY

- Archaic Speech** - oldest form of existing language no longer in common use
- Autoharp** - musical instrument adapted from the German Zither with chord buttons
- Balms** - ointment to help soothe
- Contract** - a formal agreement between people or groups
- Denomination** - a religious group such as Episcopal, Presbyterian, or Roman Catholic
- Dialect** - a regional form of a language
- Fauna** - the animal life of a region
- Flora** - the plant life of a region
- Folk Speech** - an archaic language for a given region
- Frontier** - an area just beyond or at the edge of a settled area
- Genealogy** - the study of family ancestral and relationship information
- Generation** - persons of the same era (example-brothers and sisters are of the same generation)
- Granary** - building used to store grain, oats, wheat, buckwheat, etc.
- Linsey-Woolsey** - cloth made from a mixture of flax and wool or cotton and wool
- Lore** - something that is taught or learned
- Maize** - Indian word for corn
- Monologue** - long speech by one individual
- Personify** - to conceive of or represent as a person or as having human qualities or powers
- Poultice** - dressing of salves and herbs applied to an inflamed area of the body
- Privy** - outhouse, toilet
- Settler** - a person that moves into a new area or region
- Siblings** - brothers and sisters
- Subscription Schools** - early schools on the frontier where parents paid a fee to a schoolmaster to teach their children
- Subsistence Farmer** - a farmer who raises only enough crops to feed their family
- Surname** - usually a last name or family name
- Transverse** - lying or being across
- Vernacular** - language use of a particular region