

Ride into History Workshops



**Creating Legacy,
Inspiring Community**



Why Ride into History?



- Ride into History has conducted over seventy-five workshops, many of them humanities council-funded
- The Kansas-Nebraska Chautauqua contracted with Ride into History to provide Youth Chautauqua Camps to a total of twelve communities in June 2008, 2009, and 2010
- Ride into History has conducted four artifact-based workshops, one each for the Santa Fe Trail Center in Larned, Kansas, Fort Caspar Museum in Wyoming, the John Brown Museum and Historic Site in Osawatomie, Kansas, and LaCygne, Kansas Library and Museum



- Ride into History is a widely recognized historical performance touring troupe



- Ride into History is on the theatre roster of the Kansas Arts Commission's Kansas Touring Program and both members have received KAC fellowships for the quality of their work
- Ride into History has been conducting workshops for adults and youngsters since 1997
- Joyce Thierer, PhD American History and founding partner of Ride into History, is on the history faculty at Emporia State University and has Chautauqua experience with the Kansas Humanities Council, serving on the Kansas Humanities Council's History Alive! roster since 1992.
- Ann Birney, PhD American Studies and partner in Ride into History, was on the Kansas Humanities Council History Alive! roster from 1994 until its recent demise
- Ride into History knows that history can be made accessible by telling stories that are both accurate and interesting.



Five Decisions for the Workshop Sponsors

Once you have decided that a Ride into History Workshop will help you build community, create legacy, and enhance the experience of your visitors, there are five basic decisions that you will make:

- 1) **Format** will depend in part on the kind of legacy you want to create:
 - A. Tours with costumed docents using first person to interpret individual artifacts: "Night at the Santa Fe Trail Center Museum," Osawatomie, and Fort Caspar II model
 - B. Individual first person narratives on stage followed by group question-and-answer, first as the historic figures, then as the scholars: Youth Chautauqua Camp model
- 2) **Participants**
 - A. Middle School Youth?
 - B. Adults?
 - C. Open to Fourth Grade through Adult?
 - D. Specific Group, i.e. Girl Scouts? Other?
- 3) **Partners**

Such as museums, libraries, middle schools, archives, assisted living centers, parks, individuals with memories of your community, individuals who know people with memories, local foundations, individual donors, motels, grocers, pizza vendors, media, local, state, and regional humanities and arts commissions
- 4) **Dates**—usually five half-days; intensive week-ends for adults
- 5) Will there be **shoulder events** during the week, such as evening performances by Ride into History?



In 2007 Leavenworth County, KS, Courthouse had three floors of performers, all adults, including two 90 year olds portraying their own mothers a year after Pearl Harbor. Younger women solicited their help in making wartime decisions while the public listened in!



Girl Scouts of Medicine Lodge, KS made up most of this troupe.



Osawatomie, KS troupe includes high school students through seventy-somethings, artifact-based museum tours and stage performances



Sharing the stage with Doug Watson, aka Will Rogers, was awesome for Falls City, NE Historian/Researcher/Scriptwriter/Actors during the Kansas-Nebraska Chautauqua!

A Sample Proposal

History Comes Alive at Your Museum with Costumed Young Docents Interpreting the Collection through First Person Narratives

Have you seen *Night at the Museum*? The displays come alive at night. While the public does not actually witness the magic, there are signs that it is happening. Word gets out and suddenly a place that was going under financially is inundated with the public. We leave the theatre feeling good, and wishing that the story could be true, that history could come alive, but knowing confidently that it cannot.

But it can!

The Experience:

An adult docent leads a group to a display case. And then, something shifts. Suddenly a youngster in period clothing runs up, exclaiming, "That's my top! My grandfather made it for me for Christmas." The magic begins. The artifact (whatever it is) begins "glowing" as its story is told.

Objectives:

- 1) Enhance the experience of museum visitors
- 2) Increase on-going youth involvement in the Museum
- 3) Increase local visitors and visitors from outside the immediate area
- 4) Create an on-going program involving youth and adults

Why this program?

This program will inspire:

- Community **pride** in a common history and common knowledge of that history
- A local **speakers bureau** telling local stories
- Lifelong **interest** in history
- Lifelong historical **learning**
- On-going **creativity** in historical programming
- An understanding that **history is created by the decisions of people like us**
- Museum involvement by **young families**

How do we get there?

1) Identify Objects with Provenance (although we *can* do a script based on generic knowledge of such objects, to tie it to specific people and places is exciting—the young people can interview donors and others to include in their research)

2) Young Docents Camp

When shall we do it? Generally 5 consecutive days in summer, but other dates can be negotiated.

What will Ride into History do?

- "Morph" youngsters into "historian/researcher/scriptwriter/actors"
- Provide a historian's toolkit (a binder, worksheets, pencils, post-a-notes) for each young historian
- Provide a basic assortment of costumes
- Identify and explore local themes with young historians
- Help young historians determine which of the many historic figures they have previously researched would best explore those themes
- Help young historians determine who would best portray which figures
- Determine which stories about those historic figures would convey the themes in an interesting manner

- Coach youngsters in enacting first person narration
- Consult about other local uses of first person narratives, including adult performers and young docents
- Provide sample assessment tools

What does the community/sponsor provide?

- Promotion and registration for workshop (we have sample registration forms and flyers)
- Up to 20 participants, usually out of 4th through 8th grades (or extend through adults)
- A local resource, ideally a museum educator or librarian, someone who enjoys people, and, hopefully, history, who will be on hand during the workshop
- Meeting space with tables and chairs
- Blackboard or dry eraser board (if possible—or we'll bring flip chart—let us know!)
- Photocopier and a maximum of ten copies per participant
- Local history resources
- One adult volunteer/staff member for every four registrants, should be familiar with local history resources, including human sources; would not have to attend every session
- A healthy snack (peanut butter and apple slices is one of our favorites), and access to water
- Simple meals during tours

What will it cost?

Only \$5,000 for five days. Travel expenses (mileage, meals, lodging) will be additional; local lodging is often donated as an in-kind match for grants.

A WEEK-LONG YOUTH CAMP AND SOME OTHER ALTERNATIVES ARE REPRESENTED IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES

Researching Their Person and Their Eras

Using primary sources: sometimes it takes a village . . .



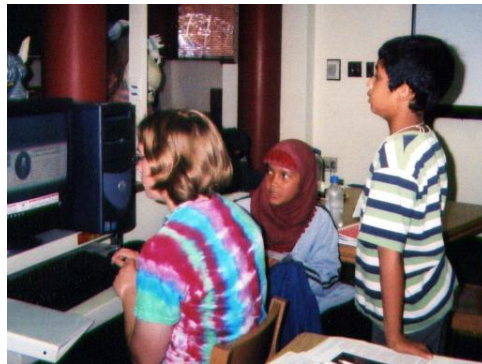
"Dr. Bingesser" meets her sons, who share memories of her Lake Waconda sanitarium near Beloit, KS



What was this Beloit, KS, clothing store like when "I" owned it?



Learning about the thirties in Lawrence, KS



Hitting the books and the computers in Baldwin City and Manhattan, KS, and Hastings, NE

Adult resources ready to lend a hand or an ear in Larned, KS



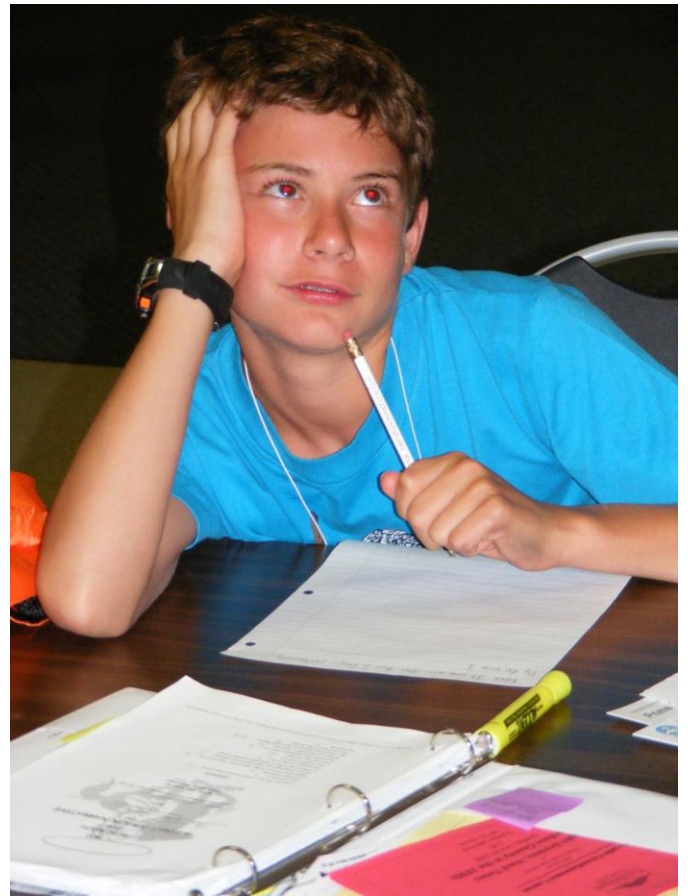
Which Stories



Baldwin City, KS , hard at work



Getting help from a colleague in Hastings, NE



Imagining how it will feel on stage in Falls City, NE

Finding “The Look”



Trading tennies for boots helps make the transition to the U.S. cavalry in Baldwin, KS



Hats are crucial, and the green room is where Baldwin historian/performers can find them

“Wardrobe mistress” with soon-to-be local historic figure in Ride’s “green room”



Colleagues help each other—a youth workshop axiom practiced in Hastings, NE



A proper and dignified crew in McPherson, KS



It's a good fit in Beloit, KS



Casper, WY youngsters are almost ready!

Enthusiastic troupes in Lawrence and Junction City, KS





Kearney, NE and
Larned, KS
youngsters are rarin'
to educate and
ENTERTAIN!



Learning Stories/Writing Scripts



Sometimes being in costume helps when writing in first person, whether in Baldwin City or Larned, KS



And having Joyce Thierer or intern Alicea Wisneski listen to ideas helps in Larned and in Medicine Lodge, KS

Performance!



Trash hauler in Hastings, NE was credited with ridding the dump of rats—and exemplary entrepreneurship



The public has gathered in Leavenworth, KS



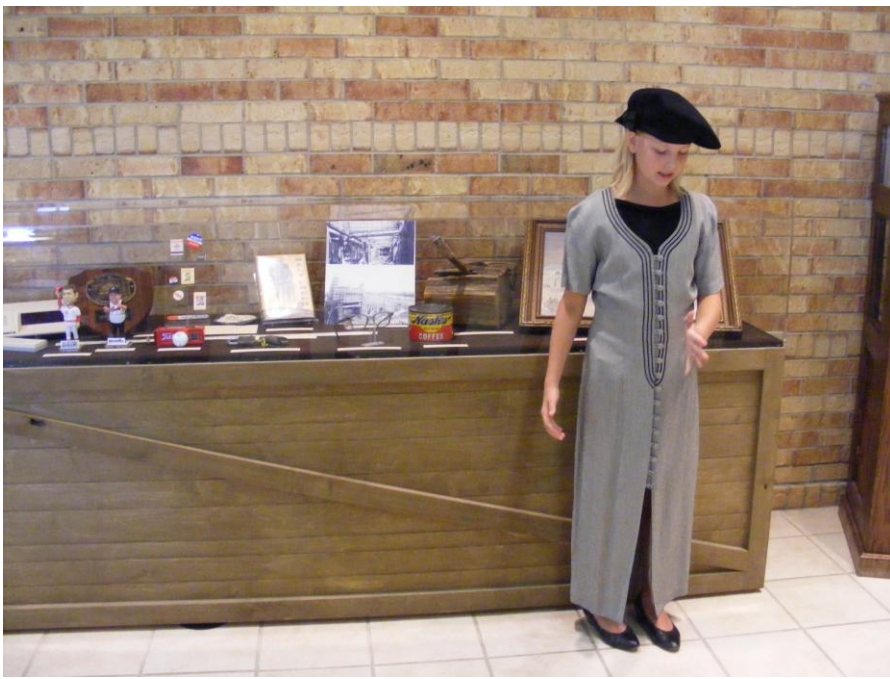
A founder of Basehor, KS shares his story in the courthouse



Buffalo hunting explained in Liberal, KS



Sharing stories of early days in Manhattan, KS



Interpreting a wrought iron chain on a trader's wagon in Larned, KS

The artist explains her work. The Casper, Wyoming historian/researcher/scriptwriter/actor almost fled out of fear before the first tour, but after the fourth tour asked, "Aren't there any more?!"



An early Wyoming settler explains daily life



A World War II veteran describes what he did before the war (portrayed by the vet's nephew in Osawatomie, KS)

Inspiring Community



After two years of workshops and multiple performances, Leavenworth has formed a troupe to tell Kansas's "First City"'s stories



Her historic figure farmed near Liberal, KS, which at that time did not allow black residents; when Marissa discovered that she had had no children, she honored her by decorating her grave, and vowed to keep doing so



Surveyor, attorney, and town founder follows up with Leavenworth County, KS Commissioner after his performance

In Junction City, KS, Dorothy BramlagePublic Library partnered with the city, school district, historical society, and Kansas Humanities Council to celebrate with a Youth Chautauqua





It's an on-going process, not a one-time event: after telling the story of a murder from the side of the murdered man's family, a young researcher learns from both sides that the man may be dead, but the history is not.

Sample Schedule
Young Docents Camp: Night at Your Museum!

Monday 1:00-5:00

- Introductions
- Our mission: make artifacts come alive, learn to do museum research, learn and tell the stories behind the artifacts, encourage the public to wonder about the stories behind all artifacts
- Historian/Researcher/Scriptwriter/Actor
- First person interpretation--a play with the audience on stage with you
- Hat scenario
- Historians' toolkits
- Two responsibilities
- Tour the museum, including places the public just does not get to go, and including a surprise
- Choose an artifact
- Begin to research your artifact

Tuesday 1:00-5:00

- Historian/Researcher/Scriptwriter/Actor
- Page by page through the toolkit
- Research historical context and more about your artifact
- Tell us something about your artifact
- Who should interpret your artifact? (interpretation)
- Cacophony (first person)
- Build the "house": take flyers, encourage audience

History is:

Wednesday 1:00-5:00

- Historian/Researcher/Scriptwriter/Actor
- What makes a good story
- Audience (it's not about you; it's about the audience!)
- Write script
- More research
- Costumes
- Practice script in dyads

Thursday 1-5:00

- Historian/Researcher/Scriptwriter/Actor
- Rehearse in order
- Revise scripts
- Rehearse individually in place
- Dress rehearsal
- Critique, discuss changes for public tours
- Revise
- Rehearse individually

If you want to reach us

Ann 620-344-0314

Joyce 620-344-0896

We are staying at the _____ Inn

Friday 1:00-8:00

- Partial costume
- Rehearse individually in place
- Full costume
- Rehearse in order
- 3:00 public performances begin; Tours also at 3:30, 5:30, 6:00, 6:30 (45 mins. each—scheduling depends on layout of museum and number of young docents)
- Tours end at 7:15; discuss process with audience, answer questions, and have refreshments

Saturday more tours!