

sofēznu nuāpsnu  
izglības metodes  
kultūras tautas  
inovācijas un radošas

# CEĻOJUMS TĀIKĀ

MUZEOLÓĢIJAS BIBLIOTĒKA

MUZEOLÓĢIJAS BIBLIOTĒKA

MUZEOLÓĢIJAS BIBLIOTĒKA



MUZEOLÓĢIJAS BIBLIOTĒKA

# TIME TRAVELS

Innovative and Creative  
Methods of Historic  
Environment Education  
in Modern Museums



Tukums museum

## Time Travels

Innovative and Creative  
Methods of Historic  
Environment Education  
in Modern Museums



Tukums

ISBN 978-9984-9594-6-7  
UDK 069:930.85(063)  
Ce 402



Editor: Agrita Ozola  
Literary editor: Kārlis Streips  
Translation into English: Marianna Auliciems  
Design: Jānis Bārdiņš  
Cover photo: Birger Ohlson  
Photographs from Kalmar County museum, Tukums museum and Archive of Jon Hunners

2007

Copyright ©Tukums museum

## Content

Ebbe Westergren Time Travels as a Component of Historic Environment Education: Educational Methods for Museums and Schools	8
Jon Hunner Historic Environment Education: Bringing History to Life in the Classroom	20
Lena Fritzén and Birgitta Gustafsson Now and Then: The Similar and the Different	31
Agrita Ozola Time Travels: A Method of Historic Environment Education: Implementation of the Social Role of Museums	46
Examples of Time Travels	
Helen Eklund May 1900 at a Dairy in Råby, Not Far From the Ljungbyskolan school	84
Helen Eklund, Ebbe Westergren Eketorp in the Iron Age, 425 AD	87
Ebbe Westergren, Ansie van Vuuren Bain's Kloof Pass, 1853	90
Agrita Ozola, Ilze Papparinska "Time Travels" The 1 <sup>st</sup> Song Festival of the Tukums District 1928	94



“Time Travel”. The Great Depression in Las Cruces, USA, 1900

Jon Hunner

## Historic Environment Education: Bringing History to Life in the Classroom

The teaching of history is a process which is facing serious challenges in the present-day world. Schools are marginalizing history to teach subjects that are considered to be of greater importance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Teachers are overworked, and they ignore history as they fulfil mandates to teach languages, science and math. Technologies which allow students to explore the World Wide Web and to send instant messages to their friends can distract young people from thinking about history and understanding it. Educators are seeking out innovative methods to bring history to life in the classroom, and one method which has been attractive for teachers and other educators in Europe, Africa and North America is Historic Environment Education.

Imagine taking your students on a trip where they experience living history and meet characters from 200 years ago. Students can be taught to interview older people in the community. They

might well discover that a grandparent or neighbour took part in an historical event. Perhaps students can help to document and preserve a nearby historic site or structure. Such activities are used in various countries to invigorate learning and to enliven instruction.

Historic Environment Education (HEE) utilises oral history, historic preservation and living history to connect students to nearby history and to encourage them to look more intensively at the past. By focusing on the past of their families and their community, students can learn that history is not abstract, it is not something which happened to someone else at some other location. No, the past is all around them. The past makes them who they are, it contributes toward their identity, it creates the present, and it helps students to prepare for the future.

In 2004, an international network of museum educators and historians created an organisation that is called “Bridging Ages”. This is an organisation which explores various aspects of Historic Environment Education in Sweden, Latvia, Estonia, Italy, Turkey, South Africa and the United States. Educators, museum professionals and heritage preservationists have experimented with innovative methods which are aimed at engaging the interest of students and adults alike. In this paper, I shall review the Public History Program at New Mexico State University, which incorporates HEE in its courses and in relations with the public. We shall also explore how “Bridging Ages” is creating new ways of teaching history and interpreting the past.<sup>1</sup>

Even if history is marginalized in the classroom and not taught as well as it should be, the fact is that societies are deeply committed to their past. The historians Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen have conducted a study and found that “almost every American deeply engages the past, and the past that engages them most deeply is that of their family.”<sup>2</sup> If students focus on their families first, they can often get excited about interviewing an older family member or researching the history of their community. It may well turn out that a family member has taken part in a major historical event such as combating the ills of society or serving in the military during a war. This connects students to broader issues, and that can serve as a stimulus for exploring the relevant aspects of history to a deeper extent.

The question is how best to spark this interest. Rosenzweig and Thelen suggest this: “The people we interviewed wanted to

approach the broader past on their own terms. Only by getting close to the experience could they see the ambiguities, multiple perspectives and transformative potential they had learned to expect in their intimate worlds.”<sup>3</sup> If teachers can create direct experiences related to the ambiguous and complex past by using familiar history as the point of entry, then students often do find themselves connected to the past. They see that the past is relevant in their lives, that history is not something that has happened to other people far away. Just by living, we shape a present which connects us to the past, to other people, other events and other places. We are all linked to history, and this fact can be used to engage the students who are studying the past.

One way for students and the public to connect to the past is to make use of cultural and historical markers which are all around them. When people see or touch an artefact with which they are in some sense familiar, when they hear stories from family members, or when they study a building in their neighbourhood, they can interweave personal experience with the historical past. These markers signify a local past which is accessible to people from the relevant community. They signify language, architecture, fashion, beliefs, customs, material culture and ways of life, making clear the way in which a society lived at a specific time and place. These markers illustrate the way in which societies work, offering a wealth of information to researchers about that group of people at that particular point in time.

We socially construct the past for reasons which are imbedded in the present. We all know something about the past, but, as Greg Dening has noted, “it is the present with which we are in touch. The past is mediated to us by all the inventions that happened in between.”<sup>4</sup> We filter the past through the lens of the present. Dening again: “History is not the past. It is a consciousness of the past used for present purposes.”<sup>5</sup> To explore the past, we must start with the present. The present surrounds us, and it is close to our lives.

A key component in Historic Environment Education is the so-called zone of proximal development. The Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky proposed this idea: “Psychologists have recently shown that a person can imitate only that which is within his or her developmental level. For example, if a child is having difficulty with a problem in arithmetic and the teacher solves it on the blackboard, the child may grasp the solution in an instant. If, however, the teacher were to solve a problem in higher

mathematics, the child would not be able to understand the solution, no matter how many times he or she imitated it.”<sup>6</sup> The point is that a student cannot learn something that is beyond his or her developmental level. With sufficient levels of maturation, however, students can solve problems today which they could not solve on their own yesterday.

Vygotsky observed that “an essential feature of learning is that it creates the zone of proximal development; that is, learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in co-operation with his peers.”<sup>7</sup> For Vygotsky, “play creates a zone of proximal development of the child. In play, a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behaviour. Play containing all developmental tendencies in a condensed form [...] is itself a major source of development.”<sup>8</sup> The point for Vygotsky is that play is an important step in learning.

When applied to Historic Environment Education, the zone of proximal development helps students to build up a foundation for understanding the past in a way which goes far beyond the mere memorisation of names and dates. Students can better understand and address the problems of the past: Why are we who we are? How did we get here? Where are we going? How does the past impact my present?

This means that students embrace the learning process as their own, as opposed to something that is mandated by a teacher in terms of memorising names and dates. When students become engaged in a period of time in the past, they form direct connections with the past and the problems which existed at a particular period of time. Young people assimilate the experience through their senses and intellect. They come to understand the period of time from the perspective of their own zone of development, and then they are ready to encounter the past in a more complex and integrated manner.

Historic Environment Education allows students to utilise their knowledge about local places and history to hook them up with the heritage of the community. Young people can then move on to more difficult topics, more complex concepts about the past, and broader contexts and themes in history. Students can also engage the past through play, which, according to Vygotsky, makes the student “behave beyond his average age, above his daily behaviour.” Students can experience a quantum leap forward in

developmental ability by engaging directly with the past through the process of HEE.

There are several proximal zones which affect the learning environment. First of all, there is the individual's zone of knowledge and abilities as a student. One who knows nothing about algebra will not be able to pursue calculus. Someone who does not play the violin will never join an orchestra to perform in a symphony. The second proximal zone involves local geography. Our neighbourhoods and communities overflow with local history, and it is often more accessible than national or international history. HEE directly taps into the accumulated knowledge which students have about their surroundings. The final proximal zone is that which exists between teacher and student. Teachers push students to the limits of their abilities and then guide them beyond that comfort level and toward new levels of understanding. When a teacher shows the student how to solve a problem the first time, this very much helps that young person to move ahead in his or her learning. Later, the student can be apart from the teacher and still solve or understand a problem or issue. It is the first time which often entails the direct and proximal link of instruction.<sup>9</sup>

Historic Environment Education utilises local history because we inhabit the history which surrounds us. Indeed, it is our proximal zone. Consequently, HEE is place-specific and time-specific. In order to engage the interests of students, we tap into their own connections to the past. This is done through familiar and community zones with which students are already familiar. When students conduct an oral history of a grandparent, tour an historic local building, or research and role-play a moment or event from the local past, they easily see that history is not an abstract person or distant event from a textbook. No, it is full of people, places and events of which the student is already aware.

Another pedagogic aspect of HEE relates to experienced history and multiple intelligences. Students learn in diverse ways, and not all students learn effectively through readings and lectures. Students who engage in direct experience about how people lived in the past gain a better grasp of the issues and problems of the past. When interviewing an older person, surveying or preserving an historical building, or cooking tortillas over a fire made of cow dung and lighted with flint and steel, students learn about how people lived in the past. These are direct experiences in history, and students are involved at multiple levels – through their senses, as well as through their intellectual curiosity. They get a better grasp

of the fact that the past is, in a sense, a foreign country – one that can be very different from their experiences of the present day.

As history competes with the media and with technologies, it is an area of instruction which creates even greater challenges in terms of the attention of our students. As the essayist and globalist Pico Iyer has observed, "The average American, by age of forty, has seen more than a million television commercials; small wonder that the very rhythm and texture of his mind are radically different from his grandfather's. [...] Yet none of this is enough to suggest that we should simply burn our books and flood the classroom with TV monitors. Just because an infant cannot speak, we do not talk to him entirely in 'goo's' and 'gaah's'; rather, we coax him, gradually, into speech, and then into higher and more complex speech. That, in fact, is the definition of 'educate': to 'draw out', to teach children not what they know, but what they do not know; to rescue them, as Cicero had it, from the tyranny of the present."<sup>10</sup> The fact today is that students are often more comfortable with audio-visual, as opposed to textual learning, and HEE presents opportunities for new experiences and hands-on learning.

Oral history, historic preservation and living history are the HEE techniques which we use at the Public History Programme in southern New Mexico. Each method offers vibrant ways of bringing history to life, and they can be utilised individually or in combination. What follows here is an exploration of these methods as they are used by schools and museums.

Oral history allows students to get in touch with the past in a familiar way – familiar because students are asked to interview family members or neighbours. This method is easy to implement and is the foundation for public history work in many communities. Students as young as 11 or 12 can benefit from preparing oral histories of older people in their neighbourhoods.

Oral history offers a hands-on method to conduct historical research and analysis, and it also offers a direct link to the past. Historian Paul Thompson has written that while working on oral history, "students can share in the excitements and satisfaction of creative historical research of intrinsic worth. At the same time, they gain personal experience of the difficulties of such work. They formulate an interpretation or theory and then find exceptional facts which are difficult to explain away. They find that the people whom they interview do not fit easily into the social types presented by the preliminary reading."<sup>11</sup> It is important for students to understand that those people who do not easily fit into a specific

social type could be their own grandparents or relatives. Consequently, students can address the historical marginalisation of their race or community.<sup>12</sup>

At an elementary school class in my community in southern New Mexico, a 12-year-old talked about how his grandfather fought in the Vietnam War. Another student discussed her uncle and his participation in the civil rights movement in the 1960s. At the Alma d'Arte High School in Las Cruces, New Mexico, a class of 15 and 16-year-olds learned about oral histories from a local oral historian. They then went to the oldest neighbourhood in their community and interviewed elderly people there. Later, the students produced a booklet on the history of the community, featuring stories from the interviews that had been conducted.

One of the interviews was with a man called Pablo Rodriguez Montoya. Here's what he told the students: "I was born on April 8, 1936. I had fifteen brothers and sisters. My dad was a hay bailer, he would bail hay for the farmers. He never got paid in money, just maybe a cow or a hog. My mom was a *curandera*, a healer who used herbs. My mom is full Mexican. She learned English all by herself. She knew how to write in English and in Spanish. I used to see my mom healing people in my very own kitchen."<sup>13</sup> Full of stories like these, the booklet offers a rich account of the hardships and joys which interviewees experienced at various stages of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Another way of enlivening the learning of history is through historic preservation. Young people can identify, document and preserve historic buildings and locations, and this is a great way to connect students to their local history. Many teenagers have intimate knowledge about places in their neighbourhoods, and they can help to direct historic preservationists to important buildings or sites. The National Park Service, for instance, asked the Public History Program from New Mexico State University to survey the historic district of Las Trampas in northern New Mexico. This is an area which dates back to the 1750s. Members of the community were concerned about the idea that outsiders would be directing the survey, and Park Service historian Robert Spude suggested that we hire local teens to accompany us as we did our work. With their help, we did complete a survey of this historic community. The teenagers directed us to different places and told us stories which are not recorded in archives but are part of the rich oral tradition of the village. For instance, we learned where an old horse-racing track was located in the woods. Students

from the Public History Program could survey and document physical structures, but the local residents were the ones who could tell stories about people who had lived there. This, of course, served to animate both the buildings and the survey.

Of the three fields of public history which compose HEE, historic preservation is possibly the one in which it is hardest to involve young people. Historic preservation requires familiarity with architectural styles and the language of construction. The work of filling our survey forms is highly detailed, and this is often beyond the skills and interests of teenagers. Nevertheless, young people can be a local asset in a historic preservation survey, because they often have in-depth knowledge about their neighbourhoods.

The third HEE method is living history, and this also energises the way in which history is taught. If students assume the role of a character from the past, this gives them direct experience with history. There are several ways to incorporate living history in HEE. Students can research historical figures or events and then role-play these in a classroom setting. In my classes on New Mexico history, we often hold a trial of some notorious person from the past – Billy the Kid, for instance. On other occasions, we've debated the decision to drop an atomic bomb (one that was made in New Mexico, by the way) on Japan during World War II. These are activities which allow students to engage with the past in multiple ways. Students must conduct detailed research and then think about the past differently – not from the perspective of the present, but rather in terms of how people thought and acted in the past. Role-playing in the classroom expands the students' zones of learning.

Another pedagogical technique which makes use of living history is called Time Travels. Begun in Sweden in the 1980s at the Kalmar County Museum, the Time Travels project has now spread to many museums and schools in Europe, Africa and the United States.<sup>14</sup> Time Travels recreate periods of time in the past, immersing students in that area for an active dose of experienced history. Students don costumes, engage in activities, and face some of the challenges and issues which people in the relevant era had to resolve. During Time Travels, everyone plays a role from the period. Living history museums call this "first person interpretation".

Ebbe Westergren has developed Time Travels with assistance from museum professionals and educators in southern Sweden. There are seven steps in creating a meaningful Time Travels

experience. First choose a suitable historic site close to the school or museum. Second, have teachers and museum staff conduct research at the site to determine the time period that should be used in the Time Travels. Third, interpret the landscape. Survey the surroundings for clues as to what might have happened there in the past. Build up your activities on the basis of the landscape. Fourth, train the participating teachers in the necessary skills and historical knowledge so that they can provide information to their students before the event itself. Fifth, teach the students about the period of time and the technique of Time Travels. Sixth, take the trip. Students, teachers and personnel from the relevant museum or historic organisation are involved in the Time Travels. They go to the historic site, engage in role-playing vis-à-vis the time period that is being studied, and pretend that they know nothing about what happened after that particular period in time. Finally, evaluate what has happened.

At New Mexico State University, we have time travelled to several eras – the Spanish colonial period in 1776, the Wild West in 1889, and the Great Depression in 1937. The “Time Travelling Through New Mexico’s Past” course combines lectures, research, writing, acting exercises and role-playing. University students research a specific period in time and find a character to portray. Over the first half of the course, students engage in acting games and improvisational exercises to build up trust and to become comfortable in interaction with everyone else in the class. Early in the semester, each student is asked to tell a story from his or her own life to the rest of the class. Later, the story is shifted to the time travelling character, and the student performs once more for the class, this time in character. Students are also required to perform an activity which their historic character would have known.

For the latter part of the semester, we bring in local classrooms to join us in recreating the past. Since 2003, we have time travelled with more than 1,500 students aged 10 to 18. The classes are prepared beforehand by someone from the university course and by their teachers. The New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum is the site for the Time Travels. We greet the students, put them in costume, and then bring them out to our sites on the museum grounds. University students set up stations around the site, offering various activities, working with younger students, and role-playing our characters. For the Spanish colonial era in 1776, we ground corn by hand, cooked tortillas over a fire of dried cow dung, shot arrows with a bow with a string made of

yucca leaves, and traded with a dishonest tradesman. For the Wild West in 1889, we made adobe bricks, washed clothes, churned butter, and learned about Billy the Kid. For the Great Depression in 1937, we built a “Hooverville” of shacks, cooked, organised a soup line, made adobes, wrote letters to Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of US President Franklin Roosevelt, made quilts, and traded with disreputable hoboes. At the end of the event, a sheriff ran us out of our shanty town.

Experienced history has a great impact on students, and it stays with them longer than information which they read in books or hear in lectures. Time Travels allow us to integrate an historical environment into the student’s own experience, and that is a great way to learn. For instance, students have now watched a mother in colonial times striving to decide whom her daughter should marry. This teaches about courtship, love and marriage, and how these have changed over the last several centuries.

Another strength to Historic Environment Education is that it allows adults and children to preserve their own heritage. By recreating the customs and ways of life of their ancestors, some participants keep their own heritage alive. Several students in the university course brought heritage activities to our Time Travels. One woman made hot chocolate like her Hispanic grandmother had done. It was the way in which people made hot chocolate during Spanish colonial times. Another woman wore traditional clothing and used a yucca plant to make soap and string, just like her Apache Indian ancestors once did. During the Great Depression event, several students portrayed their own ancestors. Re-enactment of such activities in Time Travels does not bring people back to live, but it does honour a living culture.

Finally, Time Travels simply bring magic into the classroom. History comes alive in a unique way if students put on costumes, pretend to live in the past, and engage in activities from the relevant period of time. Here are a few comments from students who recently participated in a Time Travels event focused on the Great Depression:

“I really enjoyed myself in Hooverville. I enjoyed making corn cakes, producing something sort of like butter, and eating that all right soup. It must have been hard in 1937 during the Great Depression. If we had another chance to go back to Hooverville, I would, instantly.”

“I want to thank you for showing me how people were so poor and tried their hardest for everything they had, and how nice and sharing and also caring to others they were, even though you all had nothing, really. There are still people in the world like that now, so thanks for what you’ve taught me today.”

A teacher: "As you know, most of this student population has been drawn from a larger group typified by social/cultural deprivation. They're unfamiliar with the experience of having strongly positive interaction with adults – this was a real eye opener for them!"

Historic Environment Education at New Mexico State University uses nearby history to focus on important periods in New Mexico's past. Working with museum professionals, local historians and schoolteachers, we will continue to train educators and public historians in the techniques and methodologies of HEE. Through the Bridging Ages network, we will also share ways of enlivening the teaching of history among our members in various countries. Through oral history, historic preservation and living history, we will keep on making history come alive for our students.

### References

- 1 The "Bridging Ages" Web site can be found at [http://www.kalmarlansmuseum.se/bridge\\_m/bridge/index3.htm](http://www.kalmarlansmuseum.se/bridge_m/bridge/index3.htm).
- 2 Rosenzweig, R. and D. Thelen. *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life*. New York: Columbia University Press (1998), p. 22.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 90.
- 4 Dening, G. *Performances*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1996), p. 162.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 72.
- 6 Vygotsky, L.S. *Mind in Society*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press (1978), p. 88.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 90.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 102.
- 9 Daniels, H. *Vygotsky and Pedagogy*. London: Routledge (2001), pp. 56-60.
- 10 Iver, P. *Tropical Classical*. New York: Knopf (1997), pp. 255-256.
- 11 Thompson, P. *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (1988), p. 10.
- 12 There are numerous sources of information as to ways in which oral history can be taught to students. See Heath, S.B. *Ways With Words: Language, Life and Work in Communities and Classrooms*. New York: Cambridge University Press (1983). Also Hoppes, J. *Oral History: An Introduction for Students*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press (1979). Also Lanman, B.A. and G.L. Mehaffy. *Oral History in the Secondary Classroom*. Provo: Oral History Association (1988). Also Martin, R. *Oral History in Social Work: Research, Assessment and Intervention*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publishers (1995). Also Mercier, L. and M. Buckendorf. *Using Oral History in Community History Projects*. Waco: Oral History Association (1992). Also Perks, R. and A. Thomson. *Oral History Reader*. New York: Routledge (1988). Also Thompson, P. *The Voice of the Past*, *op. cit.* Also Rosenbluth, V. *Keeping Family Stories Alive: A Creative Guide to Taping Your Family Life and Lore*. Point Roberts: Hartly and Marks, Inc. (199). Also Sitton, T. *Oral History: A Guide for Teachers (and Others)*. Austin: University of Texas Press (1983). For an online guide about oral histories, visit <http://web.nmsu.edu/~publhist/ohindex.htm>. That is the New Mexico State University Public History Web site.
- 13 Alma d'Arte Charter High School. "The Oral History of the Historic Mesquite Street Neighborhood", spring inter-curricular project, 2006.
- 14 The Web site: [http://www.kalmarlansmuseum.se/site/hem/eng/hem\\_pedagogics.asp](http://www.kalmarlansmuseum.se/site/hem/eng/hem_pedagogics.asp).



"Time Travel". Eketorp, Iron Age. Sweden. 425 AD

Lena Fritzen and Birgitta Gustafsson

## Now and Then: The Similar and the Different

Time Travels Bring Schools and Museums Together

### Introduction

Time travels are educational events during which qualified experts take people back in time to learn about historically significant places, times and events. This travel through time represents an encounter between now and then. It encourages people to relate the present to the past and to reflect upon their own lives in encounters with the unfamiliar "Other", and the unfamiliar time. The goal is to replace an "us and them" attitude with an approach which unites people and highlights what they have in common. This is a type of encounter which can create