

The Blackburns' Escape

Note to teachers: This supplement includes a discussion guide, lessons and Michigan Content Standards to use with the *Michigan Time Traveler* page published in the *Lansing State Journal* on February 11, 2004. You may reproduce the pages in this supplement to use with students.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION (*SOC I. 2 Comprehending the Past; SOC I.4. Judging Decisions from the Past*)

- **The Blackburns—in the United States.** Why did the Blackburns migrate to Michigan? (to escape slavery, fearing being sold further south where treatment would have been harsher) How was Lucie Blackburn freed? (Two women visited her in prison. One swapped clothes with her and pretended to be Lucie. Friends escorted Lucie Blackburn across the Detroit River.) How was Thorton Blackburn freed? (Sheriff Wilson led him out of jail in chains. Protestors attacked the deputy and took Blackburn to freedom across the Detroit River.)
- **Louisville Public Advertiser Notice** According to the notice in the *Louisville Public Advertiser*, what did Thorton Blackburn look like? (5 feet, 9 or 10 inches tall; stout; yellow complexion; light eyes) What did he wear? (blue cloth coat and pants, boots and black hat.)
- **The Blackburns—in Canada.** Why did Canada refuse to return the Blackburns to Michigan? (Canadian Law could send a slave back only if the slave had committed a crime. Escaping slavery was not a crime in Canada.) What is an abolitionist? (a person who wants to end slavery.) What business did Thorton Blackburn start in Canada? (a taxi cab company)
- **A Letter from the Canadian Government to the Michigan Government.** If Canada had returned the Blackburns to the United States, what would have happened to them? (The Blackburns would have been returned to slavery.)

ACTIVITY ONE: Who Are Your Heroes and Heroines? (*SOC VII. 1. Responsible Personal Conduct; ELA 6. Voice*)

A hero is a male person admired for his character and accomplishments. A heroine is a female person admired for her character and accomplishments. The two stories *The Blackburns—in the United States* and *The Blackburns—in Canada* have many heroes and heroines.

- First, have a discussion about heroes and heroines whom the students admire—those whom they know in their personal lives and those whom they have read about or seen in the movies. Ask students to explain specifically why the people they chose are heroes and heroines. What personality traits do these people have? They need to support their opinions concretely.
- Then, have students identify all the characters in the two stories. (the Blackburns, Lucie's friend from the Baptist Church, Sheriff Wilson, Sheriff Wilson's deputy, Acting Governor Stephens T. Mason, Upper Canada's Lieutenant Governor, John Colborne) Who are the heroes? Heroines?

ACTIVITY TWO: Act It Out! (*Arts 1. Performing*)

Divide the class into two groups. Have one group develop a skit based on *The Blackburns—in the United States* and one group develop a skit based on *The Blackburns—in Canada*. Then have each group perform for the other group.

ACTIVITY THREE: The Blackburns and Core Democratic Values (*SOC III. 3. Democracy in Action; SOC II.4. Judging Decisions from the Past*)

The Core Democratic Values are the foundation for American society. Based on historical events and major documents throughout American history beginning with the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution, they have evolved over time. The Blackburns' case from the 1830s provides an opportunity for students to explore the meaning of Core Democratic Values.

Copy and pass out the chart with four of the Core Democratic Values (page 3). Discuss the meaning of each of these values with students and have them answer the questions. Have a discussion with students about whether or not they think Michigan's government supported the Core Democratic Values as we know them today. Do they think Blackburns' experience could happen today or not? Why? (See more about the CDV at www.michigan.gov/hal/0,1607,7-160-17451_18670_27147---,00.html.)

ACTIVITY FOUR: Write an Editorial: (*SOC I.4. Judging Decisions from the Past; SOC III. 3. Democracy in Action, SOC VI .3. Persuasive Writing; ELA 9. Depth of Understanding*)

An editorial is an article in a newspaper or magazine in which the editor gives his or her opinion. This differs from an article based strictly on facts and research.

Part I: Ask students to find the opinion page in the *Lansing State Journal*. Read one of the editorials and have a discussion with the students about why it is an editorial. Ask students where in the article the author expresses an opinion. What kinds of words are clues that the author is stating an opinion or a belief rather than a fact? (**We** believe. Someone **should** or **should not do** something.)

Part II: Ask students to imagine they are an editorial writer in 1833. Ask them to use their work in Activity Three to write an editorial about what they think of Michigan's request to Canada to return the Blackburns or what they think of Canada's response not to return the Blackburns to America. Remind students to support their opinion with logic and facts. Do they agree with the Canadian position? Do they agree with Michigan's request?

ACTIVITY FIVE: Map Your Community (*SOC II.2 Human/Environment Interaction; Arts 1. Creating*)

Copy and pass out copies of the map of Detroit (page 4) showing where the jail was and where the Blackburns were to be placed on a boat to return them to slavery.

- Have students write directions for the trip the Blackburns did not take. They should name streets and tell whether to turn right or left on them. (Several routes are possible.)
- Next have students list the streets and important buildings they pass between home and school. Ask them to map the route from memory.
- Find a map of your community and make copies for all the students. Have them mark the same route on the map.
- Then have them compare and contrast the two maps they have made. Ask them to explain which map was harder to do and why? Which one did they prefer doing? Why? Which would be easier for someone else to follow?

The Blackburns and Core Democratic Values

Liberty

Were the Blackburns free in the United States? Why? Why not?

Pursuit of Happiness

Were the Blackburns allowed to pursue happiness? Why? Why not?

Justice

Were the Blackburns treated fairly in the United States? Why? Why not?

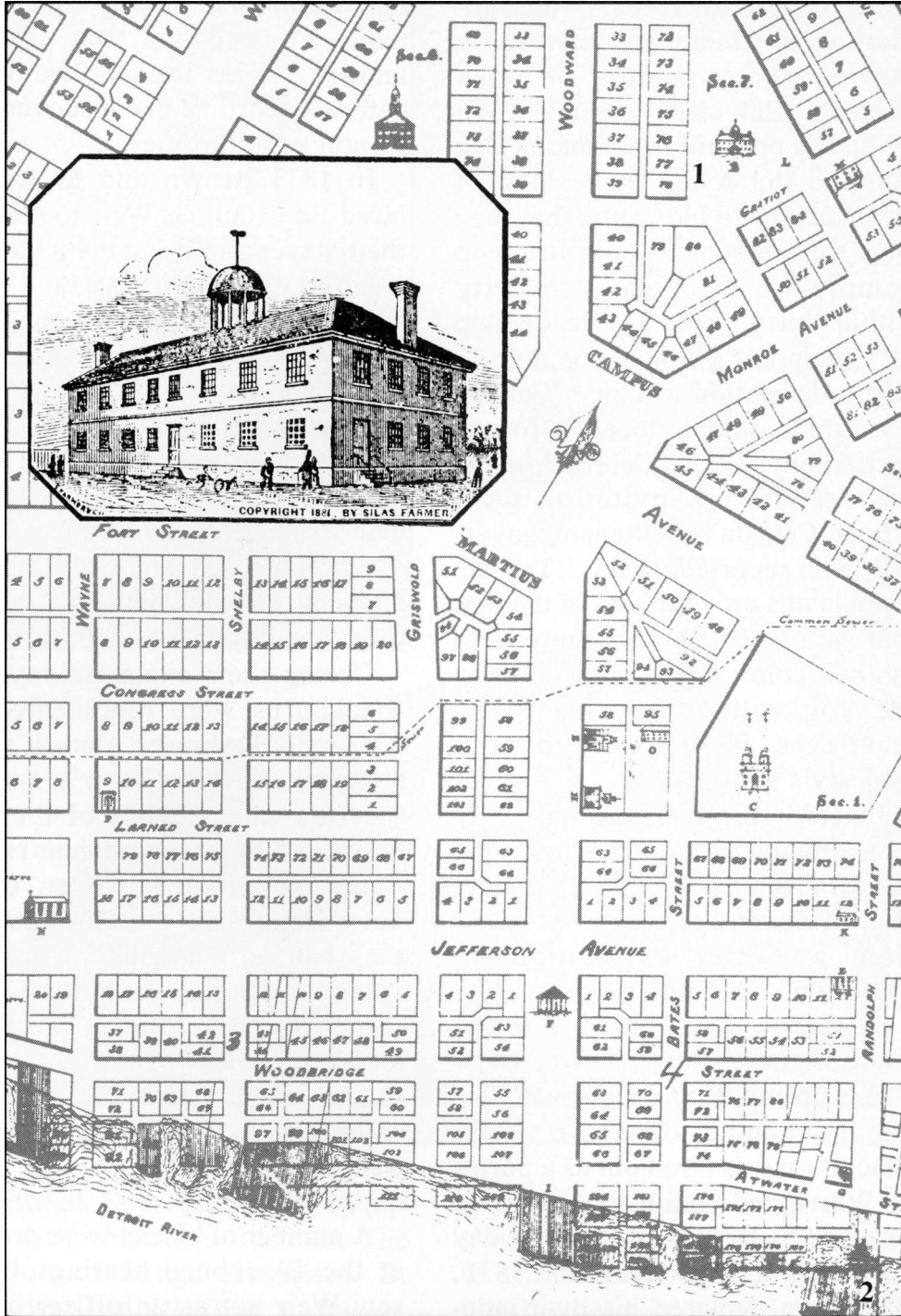
Diversity

Were the Blackburns appreciated for their diverse backgrounds? By everyone? By Some people?

The Jail in Detroit

The jail that housed the Blackburns was at Gratiot, Farmer and Farrer (1). They were to be taken to the dock at the foot of Randolph Street (2) whence they were to board the *Ohio* for Cleveland.

(Farmer, *History of Detroit*; State Archives)



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