



**Historic Crail Ranch Homestead Museum**  
**2110 Spotted Elk Road PO Box 161315**  
**Big Sky, Montana 59716**



## **Museum Curriculum Lessons**

### **Lessons Available At The Museum**

**\*\*\* signifies background researched articles can be found at**  
**[bscomt.org/crail-ranch-homestead-museum/collections-and-publications/](https://bscomt.org/crail-ranch-homestead-museum/collections-and-publications/)**

**An Introductory Activity called Scavenger Hunt.** This activity takes approximately 60 minutes. Students must locate items specified, and then we discuss how they worked. This activity can be modified (and it has been done successfully) for young non-reading students, by having fewer hunt items and providing a picture of the item.

**The Changing Landscape of the American West.** Using a recording sheet, students tour the museum exhibits to determine what had changed in our community from 1902 to 1950 (while the Crails ranched here) and 1950 to the present (after the Crails left the area).

**A Day In The Life of a Homestead Woman.** This activity takes about two hours, and groups, such as the summer camps or school groups, often combine this with the scavenger hunt and have the students there for a full afternoon. Visitors form groups that explore how they would accomplish a task using the items in the kitchen (for example: wash clothes or make breakfast). The children are allowed to touch and use the non-glass/ceramic artifacts they need to accomplish the task. They record the steps in the process, and then they pantomime to the other group how they undertook the task.

The group then debriefs with a discussion that takes us many places: amount of time elapsed to complete tasks on a homestead; energy expended; danger of women's clothing; purchasing "appliances;" growing food, the path of coffee from origin to Bozeman. This discussion may be tailored according to a teacher's curricular needs.

There are follow-ups to this that include actually making butter and using copies of pages from a 1902 Sears and Roebuck catalog to "order" items (and we compare to Internet shopping today). These can be done in the classroom as a follow up. One group actually made the butter during the return bus trip!

**Harvesting Hay.** This class takes place in our small cabin. We use a video produced by Grant-Kohrs Ranch and a hay harvesting poster that has photos from the Historic Crail Ranch archives. The small cabin has many ranching implements: guns, saddles, etc. Under close supervision, students may touch and "use" the implements. The guns remain locked in the cabinet and are not used. (This lesson can be done in classrooms.)

**From Sheep To Blanket.** A short video about hand-shearing sheep introduces the topic. Students see how a spinning wheel works (using a 200-year old spinning wheel on temporary loan that unfortunately is missing some parts). Students view the antique wool carders and then card wool, using small wool carders. In another video they see dyeing the wool and then working on a loom. Students are able to touch (some wrap themselves in) a sheep pelt. They then can see and touch the museum's woven blankets.

**Reading A Brand\*\*\*** As Ivan Doig said, "Brands are the classic language of the West." We are surrounded by brands here in Big Sky, and there is much talk in companies about brands and branding. We discuss what a brand is and their purpose in the Old West. Using 3 brands at the museum, and place mats from Buck's T-4, we begin to see the unique styles. Students then design their own brand and display it to their peers with an explanation of what it says about their self identity.

**Homestead Construction\*\*\*\*** During this lesson, students explore the exterior construction of the two museum buildings. The discuss power, materials used and durability of the construction. Answering the question, "Why are these 120 year old buildings still standing?" after students view photos of the structures, the sawmill, and rudimentary architectural renderings of joints.

**Vegetable Gardening.** An irrigated garden on-site is the setting for an extended experience. Conservators plant hard-necked garlic in the fall that can be harvested in the late summer. Our campers tend the garden and harvest the garlic and then learn to crush it. When done in conjunction with making butter, and the kids suddenly discover that they love garlic! We also can grow onions and hill potatoes (I don't know if you remember Emily Herlihy's students hilling the potatoes).

**Flower Gardening.** A native grasses and flowers garden is on site with identifications. Garden is a collaborative among Historic Crail Ranch, Gallatin Invasive Species, Gallatin River Task Force, and Big Sky Water and Sewer. Lessons can be designed, as desired.

Not recommended for school groups. Gardening presents logistical problems for school groups because of the summer break.

**Old-Fashioned Games.** If the ground is not muddy from rain, we play old-fashioned games (tug-of-war, sack races, bean bag toss, etc.) We talk about the historical origins of these games.

**Picnic tables are on-site so that students can eat lunches and snacks. In the event of rain or snow, seating for dining can be found under the main home porch, the eaves of the small cabin or the porch of the shed. For critter control, we do not allow food inside the museum buildings.**

## In Classroom Experiences

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**Indian Study\*\*\*\*** A conservator comes to the classrooms and shows some items that Indians used and discusses artifacts that have been found in this area.

**Indians In Big Sky** - We discuss with the students how the Indians (particularly Shoshone) used trails to pass through this area during the summer. With upper elementary students, this lesson is conducted through discovery strategies using Forest Service topographical maps.

**Ledger Art Exploration** – Students learn the history of Ledger Art, review examples of Indian Ledger Art narratives, create their own picture stories, and relate those narratives to their peers.

**Ophir School Buildings History\*\*\*** Through a poster that displays photos, the history of local school buildings from 1908 to present is discussed.

**Homesteads To Huntley\*\*\*\*** This movie about that chronicles the transformation of our community's economy from ranching to tourism, can be accessed for classroom use at [www.homesteadstohuntely.com](http://www.homesteadstohuntely.com). The director and screenwriter of the film can come to the classroom, Grades 4 and older, to discuss the film content and the process of making this particular movie.

### For Younger Students:

**Indian Crafts. (Recommended for pre-school and kindergarten classes)** a Conservator reads appropriate books about the craft and discusses the Indian's use of natural items to fashion their clothing and housing materials. The Conservator then helps students build a corn-husk doll and/or make an Indian headband.

**Making Donuts. (Recommended for pre-school through Grade 1)** A Conservator carries cast-iron kitchen implements to the classroom so that students may touch them and pantomime their use while "making donuts" with PlayDoh and child-sized rolling pins.

**From Ranches To Resort.** A slide show with photos and text about the transition from homestead ranching to our resort community can be tailored to the needs of younger students **(up to Grade 3)**.