

The Echo House/ Welch House

Subject Area: Social Studies

Grade Level: 6-8

New York State Learning Standards

New York State Social Studies Learning Standards

Standard 1

History of the United States and New York

Students will:

- Use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States and New York.
- Distinguish between near and distant past and interpret simple timelines,
- Investigate key turning points in New York State and United States history and explain why these events or developments are significant.
- Gather and organize information about the important achievements and contributions of individuals and groups living in New York State and the United States,
- Prepare essays and oral reports about the important social, political, economic, scientific, technological, and cultural developments, issues, and events from New York State and United States history,

Overview

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Niagara Falls experienced its first real housing boom. Along the residential streets, a large number of houses were constructed in a wide range of architectural styles. Some of the buildings from the turn of the century can still be seen. The house at 341 Portage Road Street was the home of a member of the Thomas Welch family. The first superintendent of the Niagara Reservation, Welch was known has been as “the Father of the Niagara Reservation.”

Built in the Shingle Style, it was noted for its impressive scale and blending of stone and wooden shingling. It is one of best local examples of the Shingle Style, a form of domestic architecture popularized in the 1880s by Richardson and McKim, Mead and White. With its use

of large boulders for the ground floor, the house recalls Richardson's architecture. The house at 341 Portage Road is now the quarters of the Echo Society.



The Echo Club/Welch Home

Source: *The Echo Building* at <http://wakeupniagara.weebly.com/echo-club.html>

.The land on which the building is located was once the property of John Stedman. Stedman was a leading figure in Niagara Falls history. He started a farm at Schlosser, at the head of the portage. The operator of the portage for the English, Stedman was leading a wagon train on the portage when the Devil's Hole Massacre occurred in September of 1763.

Peter B. Porter was another owner of the property. He served with distinction and fought in many battles of the War of 1812. Porter also served as President John Adams Secretary of War. Also, he was a member of Congress and served in the New York State Assembly.

Thomas Welch, a businessman, politician and first superintendent of the Niagara Reservation, had the Echo building constructed. In 1883, he bought the land bordered by Portage Road, Falls Street, 19th Street and Niagara Street (then called Plank Road).

In 1889, a newly formed company called The Niagara Falls Power Company, started to dig a canal 250 feet wide and 12 feet deep. From this excavation of the power tunnel, stone was unearthed for the building the house, the fireplaces and the carriage house .Welch had the stone

structure built as a duplex in 1892. He occupied one side and his relatives the other. In 1899, there were a dozen members of the Welch family living there.

Made of Lockport dolomite stone, the building's foundation is nearly two feet thick. Glacial stone was used for the porches and exterior walls. The second and third floors are wood frame.

The building was sold in 1920 to Alexander Zaliski, a Polish immigrant who became a prominent businessman. Among other enterprises, he opened the Falls National Bank on the corner of Portage Road and East Falls Street. Zaliski and his brother and sister lived on one side of the Echo building. The other was rented to Dr. Nicholas Rozan.

On May 1, 1931, the Echo Society purchased the building. Over the last eight decades, members have made many renovations and improvements over for nearly a century. The Echo has served as the center of Polish-American activities in the Niagara Community.

Mrs. Jean Dojka, a longtime member and chairwoman of the Echo Board, Mrs. Jean Dojka, prepared the historical information several years ago when the building's centennial was celebrated. On March 3, 2003 The Echo was officially recognized as a Historical Landmark.

Activity:

Students will:

- Acknowledge that the Echo Society was founded to honor the culture, traditions and achievements of Polish-Americans,
- conduct research on the lives and achievement of outstanding Polish-Americans,
- write brief essays about an individual Polish-American,
- Create a display of pictures of outstanding Polish-Americans



[Casimir Pulaski](#)



[Tadeusz Kościuszko](#)



[Zbigniew Brzezinski](#)



[Kesha](#)



[Matt Urban](#)



[Kirstin Gillibrand](#)



[Tim Pawlenty](#)



[Edmund Muskie](#)



Alexander Vershbow	Martha Stewart	Pola Negri	Jane Kaczmarek
			
Mike Krzyzewski	Steve Wozniak	James Pawelczyk	

Outstanding Polish-Americans

Read more: <http://www.answers.com/topic/polish-american#ixzz2Sbte0hrp>

Source: *Polish American* at <http://www.answers.com/topic/polish-american>

Extension Activity 1:

Students will:

- Access a description of Polish-American immigration that is available at *Polish American* at <http://www.answers.com/topic/polish-american>,
- Read about four centuries of Polish-American immigration,
- Create a timeline of Polish-American Immigration.

Extension Activity 2:

Students will plan and implement activities to celebrate October as Polish American Heritage Month by

- Making posters about Polish-American history and culture that can be displayed throughout the community,
- Making and displaying Polish flags,
- Arranging for performances of Polish-American music and dance,
- Learning to count to ten in Polish,
- Learning simple greetings in Polish,
- Completing selected activities in Polish Heritage Curriculum Resource Guide Grades 6-8 at <http://www.olce.org/pdfs/MC%20Polish%20PDFs/Polish%20Heritage%20Curriculum%20Resource%20Guide%20-%20Section%201d.pdf>

Extension Activity 3

Students will compile recipes of traditional Polish American food.

References

The Echo Building at <http://wakeupniagara.weebly.com/echo-club.html>

Intensive Level Historic Resources Survey – Downtown Neighborhood City of Niagara Falls: Phase I: City of Niagara Falls, New York: Architectural Overview at <http://www.buffaloah.com/surveys/nf/4.pdf>

Polish American at <http://www.answers.com/topic/polish-american>

Polish Heritage Curriculum Resource Guide Grades 6-8 at <http://www.olce.org/pdfs/MC%20Polish%20PDFs/Polish%20Heritage%20Curriculum%20Resource%20Guide%20-%20Section%201d.pdf>