



Sheldon Peck Letter Project Information for Teachers

Peck Family Background

Sheldon Peck is a famous early American artist who lived in Lombard (then called Babcock's Grove) from 1837 until his death in 1868. Sheldon Peck painted ordinary people's portraits in a time before cameras were prevalent. Peck's paintings hang in art museums; the record price for a Peck painting sold is \$820,000. He is considered one of the most important folk art painters in the United States. View copies of Sheldon Peck portraits at the Sheldon Peck Homestead – his pioneer home – at 355 E Parkside.

Sheldon married Harriet Corey at their Vermont birthplace. Later they moved to Jordan, New York, and left there to come to Chicago – a town of 5,000 people. When economic times were hard and two of their children died from cholera, they left Chicago for Babcock's Grove. Sheldon Peck and his family built their house at Grace Street & St. Charles Road (now the oldest house in Lombard) where they raised merino sheep and farmed land. President Zachary Tyler signed their land deed.

Sheldon and Harriet had 10 children who lived in this house. Harriet became known as a cheese maker and local healer; she set aside a room in the house for the ill. Sheldon started the first school in this house and he paid the teacher's salary. In 1848, the Pecks sold a corner of their land for the first railroad through town.

The Pecks helped people travel to freedom using a secret escape route called the Underground Railroad (UGRR). Before the Civil War, Illinois was a Free State prohibiting slavery. Many escaping slaves came through Illinois to find freedom. They traveled the long journey north going from one "station," such as the Peck house, to another - usually at night. UGRR was a secret group of people who helped move freedom seekers from one station to another station (if you've heard stories about using quilts as markers, those stories aren't true). Where did freedom seekers hide at the Peck Homestead? LHS research found a Peck family journal that says they hid in a barn (which no longer exists). The diary also mentions slaves staying in the house, but it doesn't state exactly where. That diary proves that the Peck Homestead was one of many Underground Railroad stations in our country.

Contacts:

For more information about the contest, contact **Contest Chair Leslie Sulla** at relsulla@comcast.net or 630-916-7783.

Class tours, pioneer programs or history events for a school group can be arranged with **Kim White** at education@lombardhistory.org or 630-629-1885. Museum staff can come to schools to speak to teachers for staff events, to talk to students in single or multi-classrooms on local history topics, provide educational pioneer demonstrations, show exhibit materials, and share ideas about local history.

Sheldon Peck Homestead: 355 E Parkside. Free (donations accepted). Open Tuesdays/Thursdays from 1 – 4 pm and Saturdays from 10 – 2 pm. Arrange group visits (6 or more) or special pioneer programs by appointment at 630-629-1885. Sheldon Peck Homestead visits are encouraged but not required to enter this local history letter writing project. For more details, visit lombardhistory.org.

Additional Teacher Information

Examples of Common Core Standards that may Apply

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.1.A

Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to support the writer's purpose.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.7

Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

Letter Deadline: February 28

The history letter project runs from February 1 to February 28.

All letter entries must be received by the Lombard Historical Society at 23 W. Maple, Lombard, either by mail or hand delivered **no later than 4 pm on Feb. 28, 2018**.

Teachers may choose to send a package of multiple letters. Please have each student attach a personal entry form to their own letter.

Guidelines for Judging – 100 points total possible:

25 points – Interesting & Timely

Letter shows the student writer's ability to create a hand written, interesting letter that Lincoln could have read and Peck could have written in **1848**. Letter must be original, handwritten, and created by the student. (Note: there were no typed letters written in 1848.)

25 points – Peck Details

Letter uses various details about Sheldon Peck's life: his life as an artist, the abolitionist movement, the Underground Railroad, his family, and/or as a community leader.

25 points – History Details

Letter shows student's ability to research, find, and use accurate 1848 historical information about Lincoln, Peck, Babcock's Grove, and Illinois history in a personal way.

25 points - Readability

Letter has correct spelling, accurate word use, and is handwritten, in a readable, letter format. Letters should be 250 to 400 words on 1 or 2 pages (8 ½" x 11" paper).