



Students Restore and Preserve a Historic Cemetery

Created by Katherine Potocki, Howard County Public Schools

Subject Area: U.S. History

Grade Level: 8

The Restoration and Preservation of Historic St. Paul's Cemetery Project is a school-based service-learning model which enables 8th graders to perform service and enjoy educational experiences that are mutually related. It has been an on-going project since the Fall of 1990 and in 1993 was awarded the Maryland Excellence Award in Social Studies and the U.S. Capitol Historical Society Award.

Students research the lives of people buried in an historic mill town cemetery dating from 1841. Students go to the local historical society to locate original documents regarding their person, e.g. deeds and census records. Students photocopy the original document and then it is laminated to become part of a permanent collection on the cemetery at the school. Students complete a photo document of the cemetery in its pre-restoration phase which shows others how to proceed prior to restoration. Students plot and line pathways through the three acre site. They identify and remove trees to provide proper sunlight for low-growing non-maintenance ground cover which they plant to prevent erosion.

Other activities could include producing a film to air on local television to educate county citizens and testifying before county governments on the preservation of historic cemeteries. Students who have done this project before have been very effective in passing such state and local laws. National Recognition for this Model Program This project has been presented nationally for the last two years at the National Middle School Association Convention in Portland, Oregon and Cincinnati, Ohio and attracted Ralph Nader's interest due to its emphasis on student involvement in the governmental process. It has math, science, and language connections and has unit lessons for American History (Native Americans - 1877).