

Education today

History regains favor

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

High school history classes are reputed to be as dry as the sands of time. But teachers are slowly chipping away at the endless lists of dates, names and battles to reveal the societies and personalities behind those events.

Instead of isolating each event, teachers aim at relating the incidents to other developments in the world, according to Norm Dickson, head of the social science department at North Farmington High School, Farmington Hills.

Part of the reason for this movement can be found in the aftermath of the Vietnam war. The war shook up history departments and made teachers examine the way in which they taught the subject, says Dickson.

"Here were real people as soldiers and civilians being killed," he said. After that, the good guy-bad guy vision of history changed. United States history is no longer based on the assumption that every decision the country made was infallible.

The kids are too pessimistic. The sharp kids won't let you get away with it anymore," Dickson said.

PART OF this attitude is reflected in the fact that many of the history classes at North Farmington don't have one

set textbook. The old-fashioned book report and research project have merged as tools to encourage students to examine different sides of an issue.

Even events which are basic to the country's history have undergone a bit of a classroom facelift.

In Ed Davis' American Revolution class, students recently debated over the death of five men in the Boston Massacre, March 5, 1770. The massacre was an uprising of a local mob against British troops. The troops shot five members of the local crowd.

Students were asked to determine if the deaths were done in self-defense. If they found the British to be guilty of shooting for reasons outside of self-defense, their discussion then studied if the action was premeditated and deliberate, just deliberate or manslaughter.

The British army isn't painted totally as oppressive representatives of an even more oppressive absentee government. And the American revolutionaries aren't held up as representatives of the feelings of all the colonial residents.

Across the hall in Jerry Maxwell's Civil War class, abolitionists aren't the saviors of the country.

THE SOUTH'S situation is discussed beyond the limits of slavery.

John Brown isn't portrayed as the fiery protector of human rights. The fact that Brown is responsible for the

deaths of several persons years before the Harper's Ferry incident is brought out in class.

And in Mary Ellegood's Minority History class, the gleaming cavalry racing to the rescue has been stripped of some of their glory.

The Indians have emerged as a separate interest in American history instead of a faceless savage intrusion upon the westward movement.

The class is shown that the same situation can look very different from another perspective. The winning of the west can look like the losing of it to an Indian group.

But the class is generally more aware of minorities from the media today, according to Mrs. Ellegood.

"These kids haven't seen the cowboy and Indian movies we did," she said. "They're more aware of minorities than I was at that age."

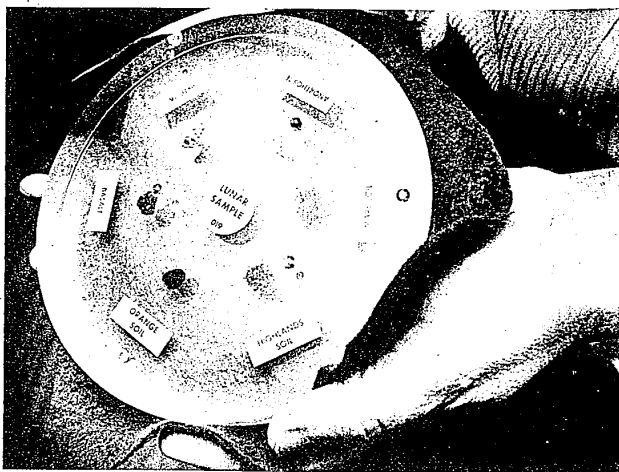
She aims at bringing to light the roles minorities have played in shaping the country. Women in history are a concern of the class.

"I wanted to know who else was in the Revolution besides Martha Washington," she said of women in high school history courses.

SOMETIMES the perspective of the students is shaped by their age.

"Kids here weren't born when Kennedy was inaugurated. They don't remember when he was shot," Davis said.

The flavor of recent times is recaptured through tape recording and slides. Watergate is relived through old newspaper clips and tape recordings.



Lunar pebbles

Connie Mason, a teacher at Eagle Elementary, viewed the rocks all week long. They are encased in lucite. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

space center in Houston. Students at the school

Obituaries

WILLIAM W. LANDACRE

Mr. Landacre, 67, of Farmington died Oct. 20 in Ann Arbor.

He was a guard at Guardian Industries Corp.

Survivors include: wife Wanda L.; daughters Diana Wilson, Linda; sons William, Michael, Richard, Christopher, sisters Elva McNatt, Edith, Faye Hertz, Ruth Hader, brother John H.; even grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

Services were Oct. 22 at Thayer-Hock Funeral Home, Farmington. Rev. J. Kenneth Hoffmaster conducted the service. Burial was in Oakland Hill Memorial Gardens, Novi.

ANNIE LAWSON

Mrs. Lawson, 90, of Highland died Oct. 22 in Livingston Care Center, Howell.

A native of Scotland, she was a bus attendant for the Detroit Board of Education.

Survivors include: James W., Sharon Maly of Howell.

Services were conducted at Heeneys-Lundquist Funeral Home, Farmington and at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Livonia on Oct. 23. Rev. R. Scott Kroger. Burial was in Grand Lawn Cemetery in Detroit.

ALLEN G. GROH

Mr. Groh, 81, of Farmington Hills died Oct. 17 in Allen Park.

He was retired from the Detroit Police Department. Mr. Groh was a member of DAV Post 114, Livonia.

Survivors include: nieces Marie Kerbyson, Helen Sanders, Margaret Wittsie; nephews Robert, Earl and Groh, Ivan Horton.

Services were Oct. 22 at Thayer-Hock Funeral Home, Farmington. Rev. J. Kenneth Hoffmaster conducted the service. Burial was in Glen Eden Memorial Park.

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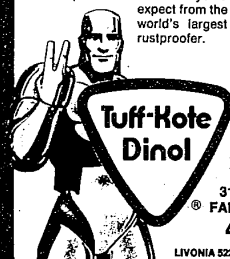
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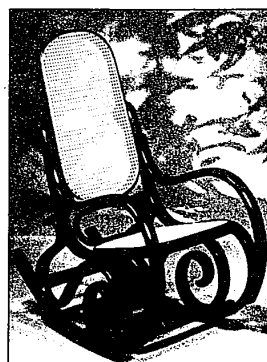
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