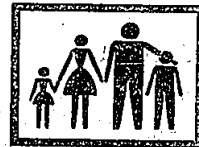


Suburban Life

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When rockin' little baby was a rest

By Kelley Parrish
Staff writer

HISTORIANS say, living

was tough. You really don't realize how tough until you've peeled, chopped, kneaded and stirred for a whole morning. And lunch is done just in time to start dinner.

"Well, I'm gonna rock the baby for awhile," sighed one weary 20th-century schoolteacher after churning butter for what seemed like hours in the dimly lit kitchen of Greenfield Village's Clinton Inn.

Determined to find out for themselves—and their students—what life was like in early America, 33 area teachers are

studying at the Dearborn site. Meeting in the historic homes, members of the Edison Institute's "Edison Education" class learn about early transportation, food and shelter. Then they try their hands at skills like fireplace cooking, candle dipping, spinning and soap making.

"Most history is just out of a textbook. It's too bad," said Jim English, who teaches social studies, American and world history at Livonia Franklin High School.

"If they could do this, even high school kids would really come alive."

SINCE 1972, more than 450 college students have taken the graduate course geared toward teachers. The course is never



Preparing the ingredients is a great deal of the work.

advertised, but word of mouth fills each section.

The unusual program grew out of a desire to make teachers aware of Edison Institute's many resources.

"Teachers were taking kids there, but without a focus," said education professor Roderic E. Righter, who supervises O.U. student teachers.

"Field trips there were just a day away from school."

Working with David T. Glick, Edison Institute's vice president for education, the O.U. professor set up a program that offers lectures, study groups and even field trips. Students travel to



Preparing old fashioned burgoo over an open fire takes the whole morning. Redford resident Margaret English and fellow Hazel Park

teacher Violet Cox carefully add ingredients to the veal and chicken dish.

Detroit Harbor Terminal, the Norfolk and Western Terminal in Bellevue, Ohio, Meadow Brook Hall and Willow Run.

MOST TAKE the classes for graduate credit (which will bring them higher salaries) or because history is their teaching field. But about half are post-master's students who just want to take the course.

"How they use the information is entirely up to them. Teachers are professionals there to get information and they can use it as they see fit," Righter said.

Most students praise the course, especially the opportuni-

ty to try things like weaving, candle dipping and molding and soap making.

"You're not just reading a book. You're walking through the book," said Mary Ann Bekesch, a third grade teacher on maternity leave from St. Paul Lutheran School in Farmington Hills.

"That's what learning is—experiencing things."

Bloomfield Hills resident Evelyn Buchanan, who teaches business and basic education in Pontiac, takes the class for recertification to teach in elementary school. And she passes ideas from it on to co-workers.

"You never know the way they switch teachers what you'll be doing next," she said.

A FAVORITE ACTIVITY is the day-long fireplace cooking session run by Margaret Taylor Chalmers, a longtime village employee who helps them prepare lunch from scratch. A native of Scotland, whose mother and grandmother both were professional cooks, Chalmers works with her daughter Kerry.

"Where's the garbage disposal?" is a typical concern as the teachers trade microwave ovens for a fire they need to fan themselves.

"Get your hands in there, ladies. You can't feel dough through a wooden spoon," instructs Chalmers as the students make cloth pudding. Many have already used some of the projects in their own classrooms.

Birmingham teacher Diane McDaniel made applehead dolls and Moravian stars with her fourth-grade students at Quanton School.

"We don't need to write research papers anymore," said McDaniel, who is working on a master's in elementary education.

"We need things we can use with kids."



In charge of kneading the bread was Birmingham resident Rosemary Righter, who teaches social studies and physical education at Akiba Hebrew Day School in Eastview Village.



Redford resident James English, removes pudding which he cooked over the fire.

Photos by Rick Smith