



Lesson One: A Mansion Is A Home



Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Make observations from examining historic photographs
- Develop questions for historical inquiry
- Research answers to questions
- Observe and explain how clues help in identifying a room's purpose or use in a home





Pre-tour Activity 1: Mansion Defined

Materials

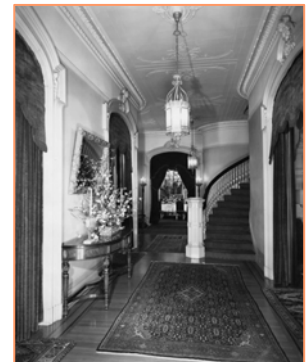
- ☑ Transparencies made of each of the mansion photos: exterior front, front entry hall, informal parlor (living room), formal dining room, kitchen, governor's bedroom. Multiple copies of the photos may be made for student use.
- ☑ Large paper or chart paper
- ☑ Notebook paper

Instructional Procedures

1. Display the transparency of the mansion's exterior front. Discuss with the students how people perceived buildings as symbols of their identity and purpose many years ago. Have them think of buildings within their community. Do characteristics of the selected building identify its purpose? For example: a firehouse with its large doors and bell demonstrates its purpose; a public building is usually solemn and official looking; and a home should show hospitality.
2. Draw their attention to the transparency. Ask the students what they think is the purpose of a mansion. Usually very large and highly decorated, a mansion is the home of a wealthy person or family. A mansion's purpose is to show hospitality and flaunt social status.
 - Why do some people need or want to live in a mansion?
 - Have you ever seen or visited a mansion? How could you tell it was a mansion?
 - What did it look like on the outside? On the inside?
 - Who lived there?
 - Are there mansions in our community that you have wondered about? Where are they located?Record students' responses on the large paper for future reference.
3. For this next discussion about the mansion interior, either work as a class or divide the class into groups. If the students are working in groups, assign one photo to each group and have them answer the following questions. Each student should have a role in the group (presenter, recorder, facilitator, etc.) and be prepared to present their findings to the rest of the class. For each photograph answer the question:
 - What do you think this room is? What is it used for?
 - Are there clues in the photo that reveal how the room is used? What are those clues?
 - What does this room tell you about the families that lived here?
 - What does this room tell you about the culture at the time?
 - What else would you like to know about this room?



Mansion Exterior



Front Entry Hall



*Informal Parlor
(living room)*



Formal Dining Room



If time permits have each group answer these questions for each photograph. Compile on the large paper the kinds of clues and questions they will research and answer when exploring the Governor's Mansion.



Kitchen



Governor's Bedroom

Note: *Keep the clues and questions posted in the classroom until the students return from their visit. It is not advisable for students to take lists of questions on the tour. Instead, encourage students to think about these questions as they observe and listen during the tour.*



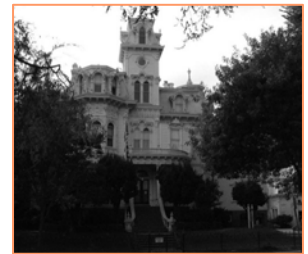
Pre-tour Activity 2: A Changing Role

Materials

- Transparency of the exterior front of the mansion
- “Brief History of the Governor’s Mansion” handout
- Research materials
- Lined paper

Instructional Procedures

1. Display the transparency of the front of the Governor’s Mansion. Ask the students: Have you seen this building before? What do you think the building is used for? Does the building look old or new? What clues tell you this? Record the students’ observations for later use.
2. Have students read the handout “Brief History of the Governor’s Mansion.” Based on the students’ reading ask them to describe the mansion’s three distinct purposes or roles. (It has been a private residence, the executive mansion for the governor, and a historic house museum under California State Parks.)
3. Explain to the class that museums tell specific stories about the history of a particular area. They use artifacts and documents to share these stories with visitors. The Governor’s Mansion is a historic house museum. This special type of museum can be defined as a historic building, formerly lived in but now open to the public, showcasing its original furniture and other artifacts that tell the stories of its former inhabitants. Why are historic houses preserved? How can they tell us about the people that lived in them and about the culture at the time? Are there more houses named for men or for women? Why do you think that is?
4. Why has the Governor’s Mansion been preserved as a historic house museum? How is the Governor’s Mansion important to Sacramento’s history? How is the Governor’s Mansion important in California’s history?
5. Are there any historic houses in your community? Have students conduct research to find a historic site/house in their community that is associated with a specific person. Ask students to investigate the following questions and prepare a written report:
 - What did the person do to achieve distinction?
 - How are the site and the individual related?
 - How and why was the site preserved?
 - Was a local or state organization responsible for preserving the site, as is the case with the Governor’s Mansion? How, why, and when did that organization get started?



Mansion Exterior



Have a few students read their reports aloud and then hold a classroom discussion on whether or not students feel it is important to preserve historic sites that are associated with important persons of the past. Encourage students to discuss how the important persons today might differ from those of the past in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, etc.

Extended Activity

Divide the class in half. Select five or more students to be the jury. As the teacher you will be the judge. Explain to the class that Governor and Mrs. Reagan have just moved out of the Governor's Mansion claiming it is a firetrap, the traffic noise is too loud, and the neighborhood is bad. The state is now trying to decide what to do with the mansion and its furnishings. One side of the class will argue for preserving the mansion as a historic house museum. The other side will argue for selling the mansion and its furnishings so the money could be used to build a new house for the governor. Each side will present their argument to the jury. Their argument should be supported by facts from the "Brief History of the Governor's Mansion" handout and additional research.

Brief History of the Governor's Mansion

California's executive mansion, popularly known as the Governor's Mansion, was built in 1877 for Albert and Clemenza Rhodes Gallatin. Albert made his fortune as a partner in the Sacramento hardware store of Huntington and Hopkins. The Gallatins hired architect Nathaniel Goodell to design the mansion. Uriah Reese built the house. Once it was completed, the newspapers claimed the mansion was "one of the most imposing and attractive residences in Sacramento."

In 1887 the Gallatins sold the house to Joseph and Louisa Steffens who had four children: the famous journalist and author Lincoln Steffens, Lulu, Lottie, and Laura.

The State of California purchased the house for a governor's residence from Mr. and Mrs. Steffens in 1903 for \$32,000. Victorian architecture was then somewhat out of style, but the house was suitably impressive, conveniently located, and comfortable. A small wing was added to house the governor's office and the home was furnished, bringing the total price to \$56,000.

George Pardee, the twenty-first governor, his wife Helen, and their four girls, Florence, 15, Madeline, 14, Carol, 12, and Helen, 8, were the first residents of the "new" Governor's Mansion in 1903. During the next 64 years it was home to the families of 12 other governors, including Earl Warren, who later became Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, and Ronald Reagan, who later became President of the United States.



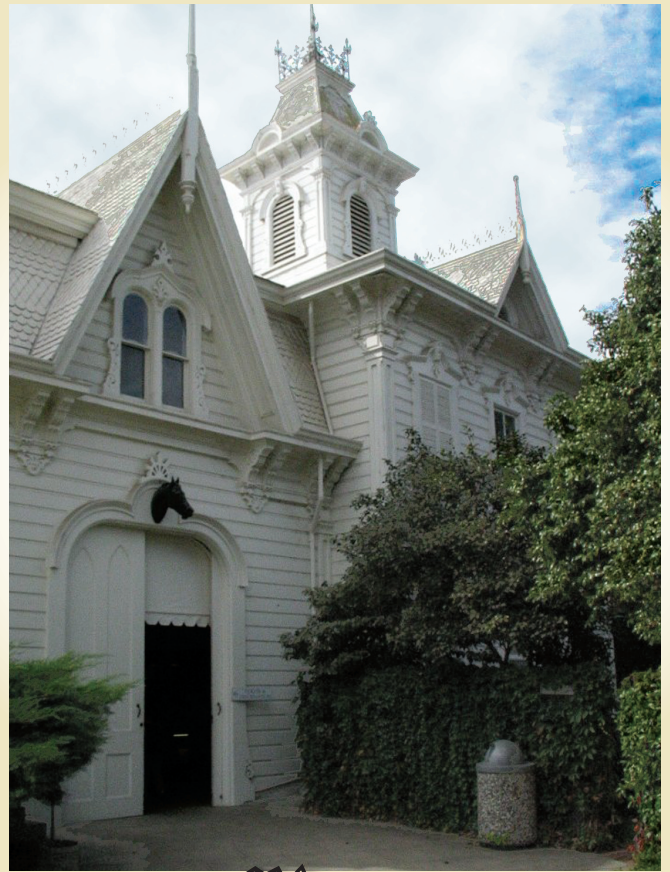
While the governors left their mark on the political history of the house it was usually their wives who made the decorating and furnishing decisions for the mansion. All the rooms are furnished with items purchased by the first families. These include the 1902 Steinway piano purchased by Helen Pardee, and the plum velvet sofa and chairs purchased by Minnie Johnson in 1911. Nina Warren added the hand-tied Persian carpets in 1943, and Virginia Knight selected the official state china in the late 1950s. Each family altered the furnishings or decoration of the mansion to meet its needs.



Outside the mansion is the original carriage house, used for horses and buggies, and later for automobiles. The swimming pool was built and presented to Governor Edmund G. Brown in 1959. Flowers, shrubs and trees complete the mansion's landscape. Some, like the camellia trees and the palm trees, date back to 1877.

In 1967 the Reagans, the last governor's family to live in the mansion, moved out due to the threat of fire. The Governor's Mansion was turned over to the California Department of Parks and Recreation and opened to the public as a museum that same year.

The mansion is unusual among museums in that it is not a replica or a restoration. It stands much as it did when vacated by the Reagans in 1967. In spite of the twentieth century furnishings, the mansion still reflects its Victorian origin with seven Italian marble fireplaces, five gold framed mirrors from France, and numerous exquisitely detailed brass hinges and doorknobs.





Post-tour Activity: The Governor's Mansion and You

Materials

- Lined paper/journal

Instructional Procedure

As part of a class discussion or an essay assignment, have the students answer the following: *If the State of California let you move into the Governor's Mansion, what changes or remodeling would you do? What part of the mansion do you think was important to the governors' families and should remain unchanged?*

