

THE MOUNTAIN HOME AND TOOLS

Grade Level: First-
Fourth Grade

Subject Area: History

Activity time: 30 minutes

Setting: Home or
classroom

Skills: Comparing,
Contrasting, Describing

Vocabulary: adze; broad
axe; community; crosscut-
saw; drawknife; events; froe;
history; maul; natural
resources; settlement; wedge

Objectives: To introduce students to the tools and buildings used by early European settlers.

Materials:

- Narrative and student worksheets
- Family member interview worksheet

Background:

Great Smoky Mountains National Park offers an unique opportunity to witness the panorama of Southern Appalachian history and culture. So tied to a sense of place, this history is embodied in a wide variety of preserved historic structures, cultural landscapes, cemeteries, archaeological sites, museum objects, and archival documents. The Park is the keeper of intangible resources as folklore, literature, and music contribute to tell the stories of both Native American and Euro-American peoples. These treasures enable us to connect one generation to another.

The following information will assist students to visualize a working farm from the 1800's. When visiting the park you may see a few of the buildings shown here. Many of the buildings were moved, burned or disassembled during the establishment of Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Read the background information to students describing the mountain farmstead and use the background sheet on the garden and surrounding out buildings for discussion.

THE MOUNTAIN HOME AND TOOLS - NARRATIVE

Early Settlement:

European Settlers moved into the Southern Appalachians in search of freedom and land in the late 1700's. They found abundant water teeming with fish, wildlife of unexpected variety, and a vast unbroken forest. They also encountered the Cherokee Indians, a people who already inhabited this incredible wilderness. The early European settlers stayed and built their homes, and for them home was not simply a cabin. Home was the complete farmstead.

Water:

The location of a bold spring- a good year-round source of water- determined the site of a farmstead. The early European settlers searched out the clear, cool flow of a bubbling spring. Assured of pure water from a natural supply, the European settlers could then turn their thoughts to other matters.

Shelter:

Once the European settlers found a water source, they needed shelter. This meant warmth and protection for themselves and their animals against the wild creatures along with the cold of the surrounding wilderness. For shelter, the European settlers used two available materials: wood and stone. Foundations and chimneys were built of stone. Families warmed themselves and cooked for themselves at the stone fireplace. Wood made everything else. Logs of yellow-poplar, sometimes four feet wide, were smoothed on one side and made into puncheon floors. Straight poplar and chestnut logs formed the walls of the buildings. White oak shingles, split rail fences, and logs for the fire- were all important uses of wood in the life of the settler.

Basic Needs:

The farmstead had to be self-sufficient. A woman found it impossible to borrow a cup of sugar; there was no sugar. A man could never turn to town for things he wanted; there was no town. As the Cherokee had done earlier, the European settlers provided for themselves. In this land of "make do or do without," they worked with what they had in order to satisfy their basic needs. Farmsteaders got most of their food from hunting, fishing, or farming. The forest provided the farmstead families with food and a home. But there were other things that people needed to survive. Many children got sick with very bad fevers. Doctors were very far away and traveling wasn't easy. It took two days just to get to town because no one had cars, and roads were very rough, even for horses. So the European settlers had to learn how to take care of themselves. They learned to use plants and other things they could find in the forest as medicines. The forest became the drugstore.



THE MOUNTAIN HOME AND TOOLS - NARRATIVE (CONTINUED)

The Meat House

An entire building was used to preserve and store meat. Shortly after the first frost, always in cold weather, the winter supply of meat was put away. Fattened hogs were butchered and cured, the meat was arranged in layers on shelves, and was covered with a thick layer of valuable imported salt. After curing, the meat was hung from the rafters to keep it dry and out of the reach of “varmints.”

Corn Crib:

Corn, in addition to keeping the livestock alive was by far the chief item of the early settler’s diet. Besides roasting ears and the ever-present corn meal that made hoe cakes, corn bread, and corn meal mush, corn was frequently converted into a liquid which came to be known as moonshine. The corn crib was an important storage area on the farmstead.

Garden:

The garden, a central part of any farmstead, provided corn, beans, cabbage, lettuce, onions, peppers, cucumbers, beets, potatoes, turnips, pumpkins, and other vegetable crops. It was said that a farmer would harvest two crops each year. First, the food crop that was planted for the family and livestock. Second, stones and rocks that were moved to the surface due to farming techniques and soil erosion were removed. A woman and her children had to take good care of the garden so that everyone could eat come winter. One of the main activities in the fall was drying the seed for the following year. Originally brought from the lowlands or secured from the Cherokee, good dry seeds were almost as important to the settlers as water itself. A picket fence surrounding the garden was a must in order to keep out deer and other animals, but it failed to keep all the rabbits from the lettuce or crows from the corn. The family yard dog- a different breed from the hunting dogs used for hunting- earned his keep around the garden by chasing pests away.

Barn:

The barn was the first signal of growing prosperity for the European settler a sign of his conversion into a farmer. He used his barn as a headquarters in the battle for food. If the barn was the headquarters, farm animals were the troops. Oxen, tamed with gigantic yokes and important in logging because of their sure-footedness, were also the European settlers earliest beasts of burden. These oxen, along with cattle, sheep, and a horse or two, produced work, food, transportation, and companionship. Of all the farm animals, the milk cows were perhaps the most treasured. Most farms kept two milk cows so that they would produce at different times, therefore always supplying milk for the family.

Pig pen:

As corn became more plentiful in the mountains, hogs became a more reliable part of the European settlers’ diet. European settlers normally let their pigs range in the mountains, fattening themselves by feeding on a natural “mast” of acorns and chestnuts. The European settlers put the wilderness and its own brands of food to good use; this way, they didn’t have to waste any corn.

Springhouse:

The springhouse protected the European settlers’ valuable water source. It was also the European settlers’ refrigerator and spigot. Evaporation, the oldest form of refrigeration, together with the cold running water, kept melons, sweet milk, and crocks of buttermilk fresh for many days. A cooling trough made from a hollow log or built in the soil and lined with stones, held containers in cold water.



THE MOUNTAIN HOME AND TOOLS - NARRATIVE (CONTINUED)

Tools

Broad Axe:

The American-style broad axe had a squarish head more than twice the size of a felling axe. The cutting edge was often only sharpened on one side and had a short bent handle protruding outward from the sharpened side of the axe head. A person would walk along the side of the log hewing the log flat or smooth.

Adze:

The adze was a sharp tool with its blade at a right angle to the handle. A person would walk along a log that had been hewed with a broad axe and strike the log lightly to smooth out the surface.

Wedges:

Rails or logs were split with wedges. Iron wedges or wooden wedges called gluts were driven into the wood with a heavy maul.

Froe:

To split shingles, laths, staves, and clapboards, a knife-like tool called a froe was struck with a short maul. The blade of the froe was dull and never sharp in order to separate the wood fibers rather than cut across them. The clapboard-maker struck the maul away from himself and twisted the froe handle to split the board with the grain.

Drawknife:

This two handled knife blade was utilized to taper the sides of shingles; to fashion axe, rake, and other tool handles; and to make stool legs and wheel spokes. The woodworker pulled the drawknife towards himself as he carved the piece of wood.

Crosscut Saw:

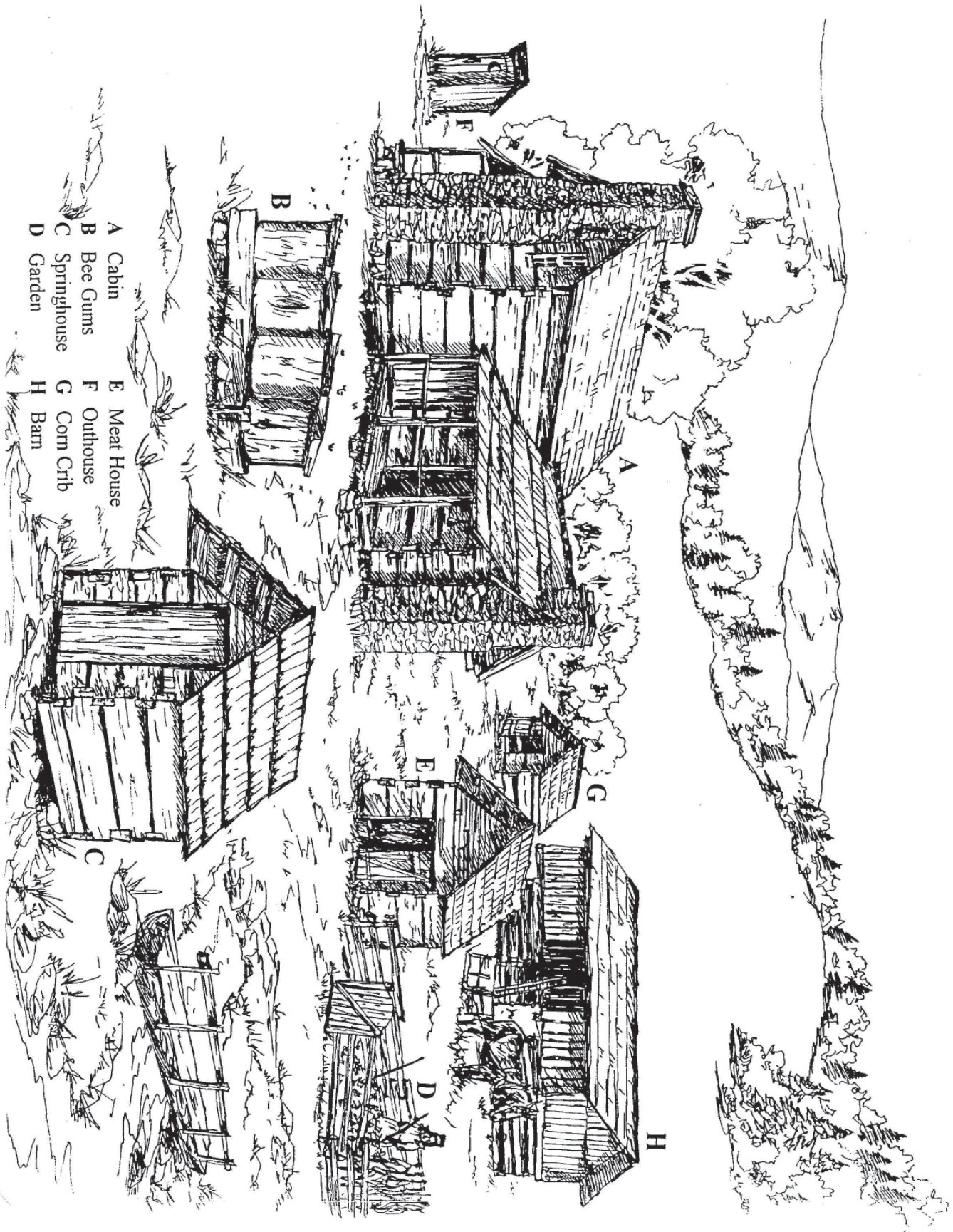
The crosscut saw, or two-man saw, was used to cut down trees and to saw the logs into the desired length for construction. Two people would hold the handles of the saw and take turns pulling the saw toward them to cut “across” the log.

Maul:

Mauls were made of dense hardwood, like dogwood, and looked like a short, fat baseball bat. A person would strike the large cylindrical head of the maul on a wedge to split logs, or on the froe blade to split shingles from a large block of wood.



THE MOUNTAIN HOME AND TOOLS - HOMESTEAD



THE MOUNTAIN HOME AND TOOLS - MATCHING



Wedge

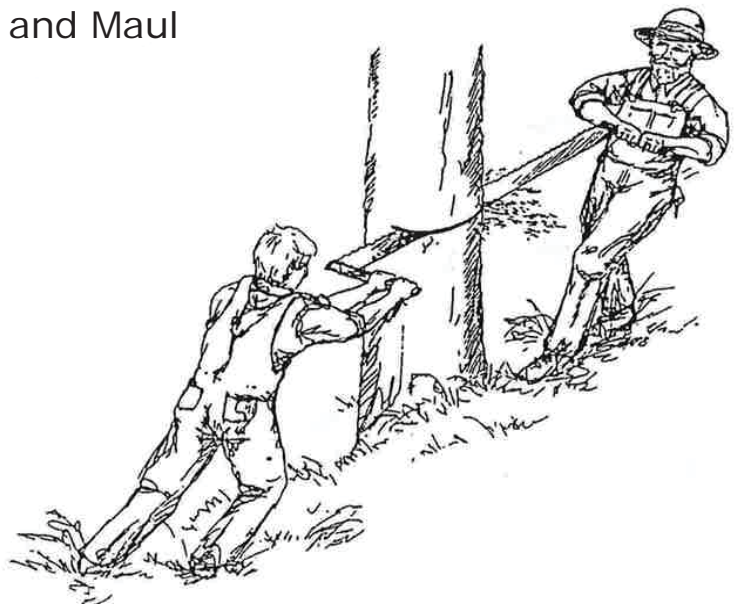
Broad Axe

Crosscut-saw
(two-man)

Adze

Drawknife

Froe and Maul



THE MOUNTAIN HOME AND TOOLS - MATCHING KEY



Wedge

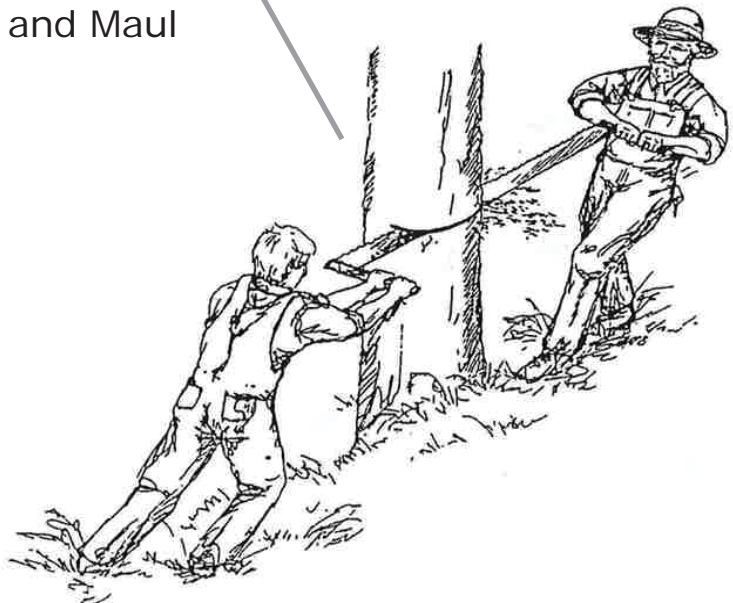
Broad Axe

Crosscut-saw
(two-man)

Adze

Drawknife

Froe and Maul



Comprehension Quiz

Name _____

Fill in the blanks with the correct word from below.

food

shelter

crosscut

National Park

medicine

clothing

1. The mountain people gathered plants from the forest to use as _____ when they were sick.
2. Great Smoky Mountains _____ is protected for all people to visit and enjoy.
3. The _____ saw was used to cut down trees and saw logs to build a log home.
4. The mountain people gathered _____ in the streams and forests, made their _____ from trees in the forest, and traded things from the forest, like animal furs, for _____.

Draw a line to match items from the past with those items used today.

Rabbit



Trees



Springhouse



Crosscut
Saw



Medicinal
Plants



Chainsaw



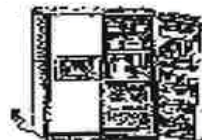
Prescription
Medicine



Hamburger



Lumber



Refrigerator



Comprehension Quiz Answers

Fill in the blanks with the correct word from below.

food

shelter

crosscut











National Park

medicine

clothing

1. The mountain people gathered plants from the forest to use as medicine when they were sick.
2. Great Smoky Mountains National Park is protected for all people to visit and enjoy.
3. The crosscut saw was used to cut down tree and saw logs to build a log home.
4. The mountain people gathered food in the streams and forests, made their shelter from trees in the forest, and traded things from the forest, like animal furs, for clothing.

Draw a line to match items from the past with those items used today.

Rabbit			Chainsaw
Trees			Prescription Medicine
Springhouse			Hamburger
Crosscut Saw			Lumber
Medicinal Plants			Refrigerator



Reflecting on the Past

Grade Level: First-
Fourth Grade

Subject Area: History

Activity time:
Unlimited

Setting: Indoors

Skills: Comparing,
Contrasting, Describing,
Gathering Information,
Interviewing, Listening,
Presenting, Recording Data,
Researching, Reporting,
Writing

Objectives: To give students an opportunity to learn about family history.

Materials:
• Interview worksheet

Background:
Families in the early 1900's depended on community resources and family members, during a time where few modern conveniences existed. For entertainment families handed down traditions through music, stories, and games. This activity provides an opportunity for students to help save a piece of their own history by recording family interviews.

Procedure:
Have each student interview someone in their family, using the following sheet.



Family Member Interview

1. My Name: _____

2. Family Member's Name: _____

3. What year were you (family member) born in? _____

4. Where did you (family member) grow up? _____

5. What did you (family member) do for fun when you were in the second grade?

6. What were your (family member) favorite toys and games?

7. Did you (family member) have any chores?

8. How did you (family member) get to school?

9. Did you (family member) have a pet?

10. What was your (family member) favorite candy?



RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

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Great Smoky Mountains Association. Hiking Trails of the Smokies. Great Smoky Mountains Association, 2003.

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