

## Pre-Camp Training for Living History Staff Members

## Chapter 4

**“LIVING THE PROGRAM”**

Greetings staff! I hope you are all having a great spring and are excited about your upcoming summer at Philmont.

As Scout participants and leaders read the Guidebook to Adventure and discover a few pages addressing program themes, they quickly discover that they are in for a treat when visiting your Living History Camp.

There are three distinct categories of staffed camps at Philmont. Skill camps teach sports or skills such as Rock Climbing, Mountain Biking, Land Navigation and several others. Service camps provide a supply station for food pickups, trading post and showers. Living History or "Interp" camps create a window to the past as participants experience what it was like to live and work in by gone days.

Skill camps usually operate on a schedule, where crews book times to climb rocks, shoot shotguns and so forth, Living history camps are much more realistic as **there is no set schedule other than the natural rhythms of family life and work tasks**. At homestead camps cows had to be milked morning and evening, animals had to be cared for and fed at certain times of the day. The animal waste had to be disposed of. Cool mornings or early evenings might find one tending the garden.

The **PROGRAM** is what has to happen as a part of your everyday activities. This is also what makes these camps so very interesting and popular. It takes kids and adults into a style of life not experienced today! And, what a great way to learn history! They become a part of it.

The number of tasks that you can work into your “program” is limited only by your imagination. Here are some examples:

- Mountain Man camps can build accoutrements, make jerky, mold bullets, sharpen tomahawks, prepare tender and firewood, look after and explain their trade goods, and engage visitors in shooting contests.
- Logging camps do the work of loggers as they make railroad ties and teach “new loggers” to climb spar polls.
- Mining camps are panning for gold, searching the tunnels for the mother load and repairing tools at the blacksmith forge.

Every living history camp has daily or weekly chores that must be done. Don’t hide these from the campers. They are "the program". **Cut the words "doing program"** out of your

vocabulary and instead involve the campers as you clean and fill lanterns, make candles or soap, wash clothes on a washboard. Every camp should have a clothes line by the way -- with clothes hanging out to dry regularly. What great atmosphere! Like walking into a movie set. Aim for that kind of realism.

If your camp has a garden, use campers to help keep it weed free and productive. Keeping up the home place was a never-ending task as buildings needed repairs and painting, fences were built. The people's homes didn't look old and worn because they were not then. The homes and out buildings were new when your characters lived there

Early homesteaders, loggers, miners, trappers as well as Waite Phillips employees at Rayado and Hunting Lodge, all knew the value of shared responsibility as a way of getting the most work done. Everyone did their part, and most visitors offered their help in return for a meal or lodging for the night. Involving your guest campers in the activities you do is a great way to teach the values that your characters believed in and demonstrated.

Maintaining this sense of natural flow rather than scheduled "program" activities applies to all camps. Avoid setting a certain hour for crews to come to the shooting range, blacksmithing forge, pole climbing and such. Give a general time and have the area staffed so that these activities are a part of what is happening and crews are invited to participate.

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Were people who lived in 1831, 1875, 1900 or 1914, (some of the time periods we use) different from folks today? Surely not. They cared about their families, practiced their religion, worked and worried about making a living and dreamed about the future.

Their speech was more polite and formal. Even when husbands and wives spoke of each other, it was as Mr. and Mrs. rather than by their first names. Most slang terms that we recognize now came about after 1900. Attached with this chapter are two files containing dictionaries: one of words and phrases used from 1840-1940 and the other with those specific to the "wild west". Look them over to find period specific expressions that you can incorporate into your character's vocabulary. If you like, print them out and bring to Philmont training or to the backcountry as a resource.

Most people had to be frugal and economically conservative, some were also politically conservative, and almost all were real champions of human rights. Most people, out West especially, respected individual freedoms and honesty. A person's word was his bond! They respected the land and were extremely resourceful about its use. As a pioneer woman from Oregon Territory reported once, "I spent many an hour in an out building plucking the ducks. It was frontier times, you know, and we made our pillows as well as our stockings."

It was a long trip to the doctor, if one was available at all; so pioneers practiced and taught their children safety and common sense. They were careful around livestock, took care when using tools, always keeping them sharp and used weapons correctly. One mistake could, and sometimes did, cost a life. We too must be always vigilant for our own and our guests' safety. Pioneers keep themselves as clean as they could. They knew the relationship between filth and disease. Being seen as dirty was extremely embarrassing!

If your camp does a legacy project make it one that adds to the authenticity of the site and its purpose.

If your camp has a campfire be sure that its period correct. Sing songs that were popular for the day and play authentic music -- authentic to the type of camp as well as the time period. Mining camps had a completely different repertoire from homesteaders, mountain men, loggers or Phillips employees and guests. Research the music and stories now. Tell captivating tales "in character". This is one of your very best opportunities to really showcase your characters and time period. Every campfire or evening program at Philmont should be completely unique and specific to that place, its history and characters.

I hope that you are beginning to see how much fun you will have being your character, and sharing his or her life with the thousands of campers who visit your camp.

### **Assignments:**

- Make a list of the kinds of activities and skills that you wish to do that will enhance the historical accuracy of your camp, i.e. knitting, wood carving, washing laundry, whatever.
- If your camp has a campfire, find at least one piece of music, story, song, or anecdote that is suitable and fits with the camp's date and theme.
- Read through the attached files and make notes about the words and expressions that you can use this summer at Philmont.
- Look back to Chapter 1 and the six principle of interpretation. How do principles one through four relate to this chapter?

Email us with questions, comments, and assignments, whatever. We really enjoy hearing from you.

Keep those **size surveys** coming in ASAP!

That's all until Chapter 5 ...

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