

Outdoor Ed
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Students step back in time

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C. Roy Carmichael third-graders stepped out of their classrooms and back in time Friday, Sept. 21, at White Sulphur Springs.

They learned how to craft wooden fruit boxes and how to scrub clothes in a washtub. They watched a blacksmith at work and made little dolls from cloth remnants.

The day was designed to teach the students what life was like when the ranch was a stagecoach stop.

The Mohawk Valley Stewardship Council hosted the field trip as part of its community outreach service. The council is the group that is working to restore White Sulphur Springs.

Teachers Ruth Hintz and Brenda Ross used the field trip as an opportunity to inject local flavor into their California history curriculum.

Janice Cross, a former third-grade teacher, taught children at one of the stations.

"I always thought there weren't enough opportunities for third-graders," Cross said, so she was pleased with this event.

Sugie Barker, who is writing the history of local lodges and is a lodge owner herself, opened the day with a talk about White Sulphur Springs and the early families who settled in the area.

"It was a wonderful, well-planned day," said Ross, and added that it was a great opportunity for the children to learn about how the first settler families in the area lived.

Ross said that when she asked some of her students what they enjoyed most about the day, they said, "Just everything."

She said they particularly liked making the dolls — "even the boys" — and washing clothes by hand.

Of the former, Ross said that she learned a new term: "leavings." That was the term that early families used to describe fabric remnants. Each of the students carefully folded cloth according to a pattern and made little dolls.

As for hand-washing clothes, Ross said that the students hauled water from the hot springs in buckets, then scrubbed the clothes on a washboard, wrung them out and hung them on a line to dry using wood clothespins.

While Ross said that the students enjoyed it, 8-year-old Olivia Simone said, "I don't know about that." She preferred taking the hike to the area where Native American grinding stones were located and making fruit boxes.

Each of the children made a small box using little pieces of wood, a hammer and nails. They placed fruit stickers on the end, just like the original fruit boxes. Olivia said that hers read "Summit Mountain Apples" and "Blue Archer California Fruit."

Students also watched a blacksmith at work and studied pond life using a microscope and stereoscope.