

The Story of Pittsburgh (Briefly)

A script for students and teachers about
the building of Pittsburgh, created by the
Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation.

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NOTES TO TEACHERS and PROGRAM ORGANIZERS:

1. Before you begin the play, do the following:

- Use cereal boxes to construct the following buildings that are featured in this play:
 - Fort Pitt Blockhouse
 - Burke's Building
 - Factories, mills, and hillside houses
 - Your school
 - Allegheny County Courthouse
 - City-County Building
 - Smithfield United Church
 - Heinz Hall
 - Grant Building
 - Gulf Building
 - US Steel Building
 - One Mellon Center
 - PPG Place
 - a bridge
- Cover the floor with white paper and mark the streets and rivers on it. Loosely crumple large pieces of paper to create the hills (Mt. Washington and Grant's Hill—see *the script*). Use the attached PDF map as a reference for the streets.

- Set each building in place on the white paper when it is announced in the play (see blue highlights in script).
2. Before you present the play, have students use their math skills to **fill in the red blanks in the script** by figuring out how old the buildings are.
 3. Add information about your school to this script (see *below*).
 4. Divide your students into the following categories with the following responsibilities:
 - **Stage crew team:** about 8 students can be responsible for placing each building properly on the map. (Encourage them to go through the motions of first digging a hole and then placing the building. Students can work in pairs.)
 - **Announcers:** 12 or more students can be responsible for reading the following script in clear, strong voices. Assign each student a section of the play.
 - **Actors/Dancers:** 6 or more students can be responsible for choreographing dances for the beginning and ending of the play.
 - **Drummers:** 6 or more students can be responsible for creating a drum rhythm at the beginning and end of the play, and elsewhere if desired.

PLAY BEGINS—Together, everyone says:

Hello and WELCOME to _____ School.

We're glad you're here to listen to our
story about Pittsburgh. First, let us
introduce ourselves.

DRUM BEAT

I'm _____; I'm _____; I'm_____,
etc....through all students.

Student: This year we have been learning about Pittsburgh. We wanted to bring our city's story to life, so we used cardboard boxes to construct a model of Pittsburgh. Doing this has helped us understand how our city has grown and changed over time.

Student: Building this city was not all that easy. But we persevered: we worked together, learned to be more patient, listened to each others' ideas, solved problems, and worked through some pretty frustrating moments. We kept on working and now are proud of what we have created. This is OUR story of OUR city.

Student: Our story begins with the land at the Point, and with the rivers and hills beyond. The hills were formed 300 million years ago and are made of sedimentary rock: coal, limestone, shale, and sandstone.

The land at the Point is a mixture of loose soil and gravel.

Student: And did you know that the rivers have been in their present courses for 12,000 years? The names of our rivers--the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio--all come from Native American words. The rivers were our first roads, bringing settlers and traders to the area and sending them on their way to other places. The Monongahela River flows north to the Point from West Virginia. It has a mud bottom, which is why it looks brownish sometimes. The Allegheny River flows south to the Point from Northern Pennsylvania. It has a rock bottom, which is why it looks bluer. The Ohio River is the longest of the three rivers. It flows 981 miles west to the Mississippi River.

DRUM BEATS

Student: Native Americans lived in this area for more than 10,000 years. More than 250 years ago, French and British explorers, traders, and Colonial settlers started coming to this region in noticeable numbers. The French and British fought against each other for control of the land at the Point. Some Native Americans sided with the French; and some Native Americans sided with the British.

Student: After a four-year struggle, the British beat the French and took control of the Point. In 1758--that's _____ years ago--British General John Forbes named this place Pittsburgh, in honor of William Pitt the Elder, who was a leading member of the British government and the person responsible for planning the successful military strategy that resulted in British victories against the French empire around the world, including at the Point. The British Fort Pitt was built at the Point and completed in 1761.

Student: The Blockhouse was built in 1764 to help protect Fort Pitt. It still stands today in Point State Park. You should definitely go see the Blockhouse. It has five sides and is made out of red brick and timber. When Fort Pitt was no longer needed and the town grew beyond Fort Pitt, the Blockhouse was turned into a house! Neville Craig, who became Pittsburgh's FIRST historian, was born in the Blockhouse.

Student: Twenty years after the blockhouse was built, a pattern (or grid) of streets was laid out for Pittsburgh in 1784. But this was only a plan on a piece of paper. It took time to actually create all the streets. It took years for the city to grow. One thing we learned through this project is that it takes a lot of work, a lot of people, and a lot of time to create a city.

Student: In the street plan, Penn and Liberty streets were laid out parallel to the Allegheny River. Other major streets (First through Seventh) were laid out parallel to the Monongahela River. When those two street grids were connected by cross streets (like Wood and Grant streets), triangular-shaped lots were created along Liberty. That's why we have triangular-shaped buildings along Liberty Avenue in Pittsburgh!

Student: Did you know that there used to be several ponds in the area that is now downtown Pittsburgh? Well, there were some ponds. The biggest pond was called Hogg's Pond, because a Mr. Hogg probably owned that area of land long ago. So, the ponds had to be filled in before the streets could be made.

Student: And there used to be a huge Hill, or hump, in the area where Grant Street is now. It was called "Grant's Hill

or Grant's Hump," because Major James Grant was defeated there by the French and Indians before Fort Pitt was built.

Workers scraped away at Grant's Hill for years until it was finally leveled. Then, we were able to have fairly level streets from the Point all the way past Grant Street.

Student: Once some of our streets were laid out, more buildings were built. In 1836--that's years ago--an English architect designed Pittsburgh's first office building. Amazingly, the Burke's Building still survives on Fourth Avenue next to PPG Place. Here's an interesting fact: because this building was made out of stone, it survived the GREAT FIRE of 1845 that swept through 24 blocks of Pittsburgh. More than 900 buildings were destroyed. If you walk up the main stairs of the building to the attic, you can still see the charred timbers.

Student: After the Great Fire, Pittsburgh started to re-build and expand. Our city became famous for its industries. Thousands of people came here from all over the world to work in glass factories, iron mills, and later steel mills. All kinds of buildings needed to be built. Pittsburgh expanded up hills, and took over independent boroughs-- and even a city--across the rivers. Houses were built on the flat land, right near the factories, and also on the hillsides and hilltops, where the views and the air was better.

Student: Allegheny County was growing too, and the city and county needed a new courthouse and jail. The Allegheny County Courthouse and Jail, designed in 1884 by Boston-architect Henry Hobson Richardson, is our city's most famous building, from an architectural point-of-view. Judges and members of the jury still meet in the Courthouse, but Richardson's old jail has been renovated to house the Family Division

of the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas. A portion of one of the cell blocks has been saved as the "Allegheny County Jail Museum." You can visit the Museum on Mondays around noontime.

Student: And of course, the growing city and county needed schools. Our school was built in _____. (NOTE: insert this paragraph CHRONOLOGICALLY so it fits in the story of building Pittsburgh. Add text to describe your school; let people know for whom your school is named; mention the name of the architect; mention if your school has a Historic Plaque or any other "awards." Contact the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation for information: 412-471-5808, ext. 537.)

Student: In 1917 a new building was built on Grant Street for our Mayor and for people who worked for the City of Pittsburgh and for Allegheny County. Our new City-County Building was constructed

out of steel and faced in stone. The City-County Building has three great entrance arches. There is a long hallway inside the building with "row" offices on either side. In the middle of the hallway is a statue of William Pitt, for whom Pittsburgh is named. It's an awesome building.

Student: Many different kinds of churches, synagogues, and temples were also built in Pittsburgh so the people who came to this city from many different parts of the world could continue their religious and cultural traditions. The Smithfield United Church was the fifth building built for the German immigrants who worshipped there. It was completed in 1926 and is _____ years old. The spire is made out of a light-weight metal called aluminum, and it was one of the first times aluminum was ever used in architecture.

Student: People worked very hard in Pittsburgh. But, as the city grew up, some

places were built so people could watch movies or enjoy musical events. Heinz Hall was completed in 1926, in the same year as the Smithfield Church. However, it was not called Heinz Hall at first. It was called the Lowes-Penn Theater, and people went there to watch "silent" movies. The Lowes-Penn Theater closed in 1964 and there was talk of tearing down the building. BUT fortunately, Pittsburghers realized they could recycle the building as a performance hall for the symphony. Heinz Hall opened in 1971-- years ago. It is one of Pittsburgh's most beautiful buildings.

Student: Soon after Heinz Hall and the Smithfield Church were built, the Grant Building was completed in 1930. Did you know that the beacon on top flashes Pittsburgh in Morse Code? Airplane pilots always know when they reach Pittsburgh, because they see the beacon flashing our name. The Grant Building was the tallest

building in Pittsburgh for two years

UNTIL...

Student: ...the Gulf Building was completed in 1932. Then the Gulf Building became the tallest building until the US Steel Building was built about 40 years later. When the top of the Gulf Building is lit at night, it is a weather beacon for our city. Steady orange means fair and rising temperatures. Flashing orange means fair and falling temperatures. Steady blue means rain or snow and rising temperatures. Flashing blue means rain or snow and falling temperatures.

Student: Over the years, downtown Pittsburgh has become a place occupied mostly by office buildings. Three buildings in particular are quite noticeable on our skyline. These last three buildings that we had time to construct really help make our cardboard-box city LOOK like Pittsburgh.

Student: Our tallest building was completed ____ years ago in 1971. The US Steel Building is made out of steel and has a triangular shape. It reminds everyone that Pittsburgh was once the "Workshop of the World." Steel made in Pittsburgh was used across America to build bridges, buildings, cars, ships, and railroad rails. Pittsburgh steel was even used to make paper clips, bicycles, nails, refrigerators, pipes, and washing machines. The US Steel building is 841 feet tall--that's twice as tall as Mt. Washington!

Student: One Mellon Bank Center, located on Grant Street near the US Steel Building, is just a little shorter than the US Steel Building. It is 723 feet tall. It's only ____ years old, and was completed in 1983. It is also built out of steel and is filled with offices. One of downtown Pittsburgh's four subway stations, or "T" stations, is located in the basement of the building.

Student: PPG Place was built in 1984 and is years old. The 40-story glass tower is surrounded by five smaller buildings and overlooks a plaza. There is a fantastic water feature in the plaza when the weather is warm. In the winter, the water-feature area is converted into an ice-skating rink. Another neat fact about this new skyscraper is that it is right next to Pittsburgh's first office building. Do you remember the name of that building? It was called the Burke's Building.

Student: Of course the city is made up of so many more buildings and places: there are hospitals and fire stations, all kinds of stores, hotels, inclines, bridges, tunnels, parking garages, parks, parklets, and so much more. We didn't have time to make all the buildings and neat places in our city, but we did have fun building and learning about a few of them.

Student: As our city grows older it is important to take care of the older buildings that connect us to our past history and that were designed by famous architects. Our city has so much character and personality because of our historic buildings.

Student: We also learned that our city is a work in progress. There is always something new being constructed, or something old being fixed up. And we began to understand that WE are works in progress too! We are growing up and growing older, just like our city is. And the older we get, the more character we have. And people, just like cities, are most fascinating when they have lots of character!

Student: We'd like to end our play with a few dances and drum solos, just to remind you that our city is full of action and energy and has a rhythm of its own!

Student: Well, we hope you enjoyed our show about Pittsburgh. Thank you for coming! And when you go outside our school and see downtown Pittsburgh in front of you, remember all that we have told you about our city, its history, and its landmarks.

**EVERYONE COMES FORWARD
AND TAKES A BOW!**

LS: Downtown Pgh Play 2008