

History at Home for Teens

Weekly Project 6: Exploring Chicago's Neighborhoods--Pullman

Located on Chicago's South Side, the neighborhood of [Pullman](#) is one of the most famous planned communities in the US and notable for its role in American labor history. [George M. Pullman](#) was looking to build a new factory for his Pullman Palace Car Company, which manufactured sleeping cars that were becoming increasingly popular with those traveling on the country's growing railroad system. Pullman wanted to attract workers by providing housing so they could live closer to their jobs. He also wanted to avoid hiring the types of workers whom he believed participated in the turbulent [Railroad Strike of 1877](#)—those he considered to be discouraged and “morally corrupted” by urban poverty and social dislocation. Even before Pullman's first residents settled in 1881, visitors came to admire its beauty. Pullman workers lived in brick row houses, and they and their families had access to schools, parks, a library, a theater, educational programs, and many other activities provided by the town. But not all observers viewed Pullman from the same perspective. In 1885, an exposé was published in *Harper's Monthly* stating that the town and its design were un-American and a way for Pullman to exert total control over his workers.

When Pullman workers went on strike in 1894, protesting cuts in their wages while rents remained unchanged, the event captured a national audience and the strike went nationwide. Commentators debated the proper relationship between employers and employees, as well as the political, social, and economic rights of working-class men and women. George Pullman died in 1897, and in 1898, the Illinois Supreme Court ordered the company to divest itself of residential property in Pullman.

By the late 1910s, Pullman had officially become another Chicago neighborhood. In subsequent years, the Pullman community experienced changes similar to other neighborhoods: demographic changes, the aging of housing, and changing employment opportunities that pushed residents into jobs outside of the community. Neighbors maintained strong ties with each other and to their predominantly Italian and Polish ethnic communities. Pullman is now a predominantly African American community.

Pullman was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1971. It retains much of its original architecture and layout and attracts thousands of visitors each year. If you could plan, design, and build your own community, what would it look like? What services would it offer its residents? What current issues or problems would your community attempt to address?

Instructions:

- ◆ Using blank paper or a computer, plan out your community. See the community planning guide to help you think through your designs.
- ◆ You could also use everyday items around your home to create a physical model of your community, get creative!
- ◆ Share your designs on social media or on our [Google Classroom](#) page.



Pullman workers in uniform in front of clock tower. 1880.
Chicago History Museum

To share with us, upload your creations using your phone, computer, or other device using the Google Classroom app. You can also share your story on social media (Twitter and Instagram @chicagomuseum, Facebook @chicagohistory) tagging us and using #historyathometeens!

[All activities can be done from your phone! Just follow the blue hyperlinks to the materials/pages!](#)

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Additional Activities

A Closer Look at the Pullman Sleeper & Parlor Cars

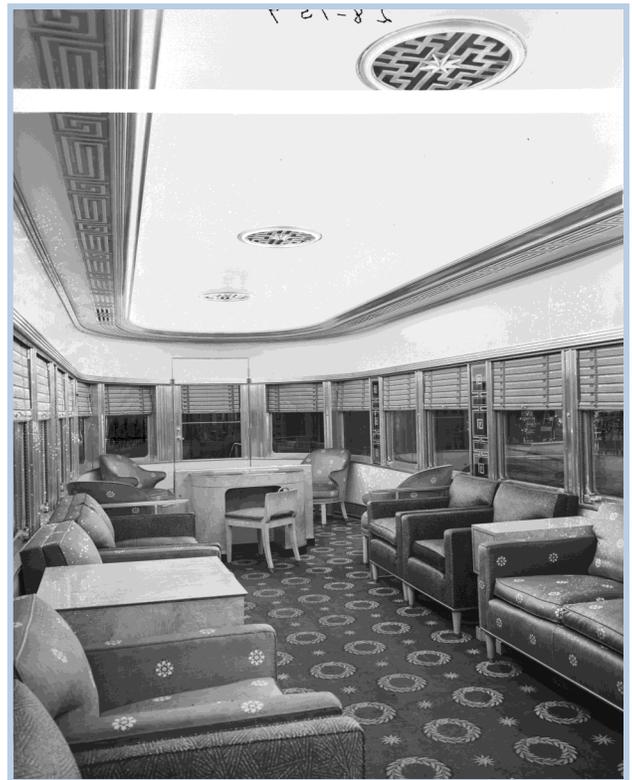
We've all seen images or social media posts about celebrities' luxurious private jets, but how did the wealthy travel in the past? Well George Pullman sought to provide plush travel accommodations for wealthy clients with his Pullman sleeper and parlor cars. But these luxurious accommodations often meant exploiting others for their labor.

Pullman hired thousands of African Americans to work as porters, who would serve the wealthy, mostly white, clients traveling on his private cars. Even though the work of a porter was often better paid than other jobs available to African Americans, porters would still be faced with constant racism and discrimination.

Pullman Porters went on to organize the first black union in the US. Led by [A. Philip Randolph](#), the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) fought for over a decade for porters. They finally came to their first agreement that raised porter wages and limited their working hours to 240 a month, or about 60 a week.

Although they were often underpaid and overworked, Pullman Porters had a prominent role in US history, from the Great Migration to the Civil Rights Movement.

Both the Pullman Porters and A. Philip Randolph are recognized for their achievements by the [National A. Philip Randolph Pullman Porter Museum](#) in the Pullman neighborhood.



View inside one of the Pullman Parlor Cars. 1933.
Chicago History Museums

Instructions:

- ◆ Check out this [article](#) with more details on these luxurious train cars and some more images, as well as this video with more info on [Pullman Porters](#).
- ◆ Think about the following questions after reading through the resources on this page:
 - ◆ What are some of the problems with hiring African Americans as porters, serving mostly white, wealthy clients?
 - ◆ Based on all the resources shared, why do you think that being a porter was such a coveted job?
- ◆ Share your thoughts with us!

Journaling

Journaling is a great way to record events as they are occurring and are often used by historians when they are conducting research. Keeping a journal is also a great way to share your own thoughts, reactions, feelings, and observations of your surroundings and the things you are learning about!

Consider keeping a journal of your experience during this pandemic, to not only record your experiences with the pandemic, but also of all the exciting, fun, and new things you may be doing and learning! You can use a notebook, your notes app on your phone, and/or a document on your computer.

Feel free to share any of your entries that you are comfortable sharing! Or share with us your thoughts on keeping a journal during these times and how you are journaling, so as to inspire others!

Share With Us!

To share with us, upload your responses from your computer or from your phone through the Google Classroom App, through the submit assignment button. You can also share your creations on social media (Twitter and Instagram @chicagomuseum, Facebook @chicagohistory) tagging us and using the hashtag #historyathometeens!

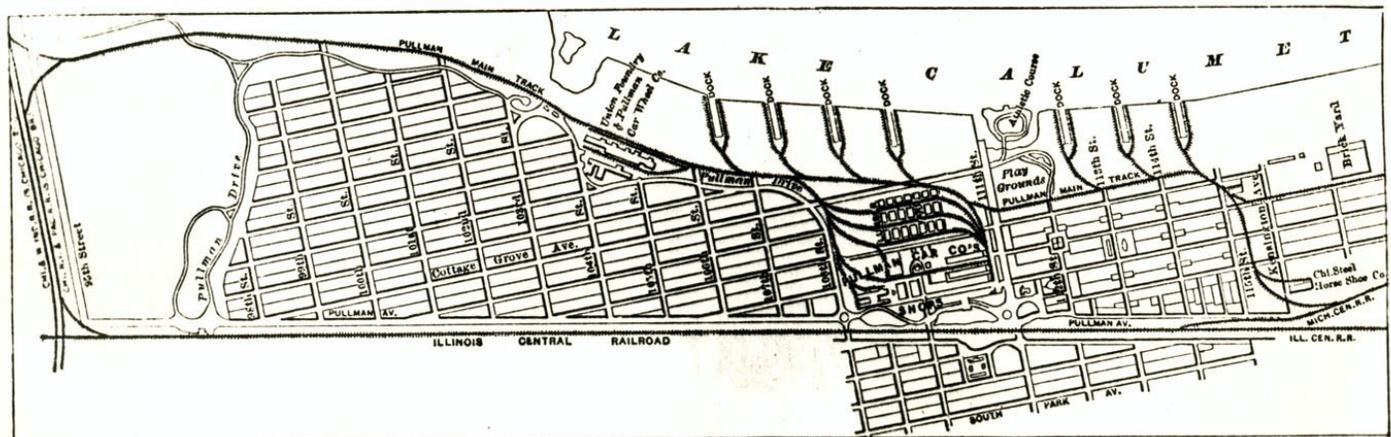
Design Your Own Community

When designing your own community, think about the following questions:

- What will housing look like?
 - Individual homes
 - Apartments
 - In close proximity? Spread out?
- What are the public services available?
 - Parks
 - Libraries
 - Schools
 - Other public recreational activities
- What are people doing for work?
 - Industrial/manufacturing
 - Small shops
 - Offices
 - Public services (teachers, firefighters, etc.)
- What does the layout look like?
 - Is it a grid system like Chicago?
- How are decisions made that affect the whole community?
 - How do community members resolve their disputes and concerns?
 - Is there a group of people who decide, does the whole community decide? What does it look like?
 - How will these decisions be communicated to the community and abroad?

Big picture question to think about:

How will you know if your community is successful? How is it being evaluated/judged?



PLAN OF PULLMAN CITY.