

The History of Danville –

A Play for Third Grades By Kathie Petrie

Cast of Characters:

Narrator 1
Narrator 2
Narrator 3
Narrator 4
Narrator 5
Mayor
Secretary
Paleontologist
Tatcan 1
Tatcan 2
Tatcan 3
Pedro Fages
Father Juan Crespi
Gabriel Moraga
Senora Pacheco
Senor Bartolome Pacheco
Senor Mariano Castro
William Meese
R.O. Baldwin
Daniel Inman
Andrew Inman
Aunt Sally
Clarence Close
Pioneer 1
Pioneer 2
Pioneer 3
Robert Love
Dr. Victor Vecki
John Halverson
John Hartz
Engineer 1
Engineer 2
Charlotte Wood
Citizens 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

SETTING:

Office of the mayor (My students painted large butcher paper showing bookcases, paintings hanging from a wall, windows with a view, lamps, anything that looks like an office. These were hung in the background to depict an office) The secretary is busy in the office. The mayor is sitting at a desk reading from a large book, **The History of Danville** (create a book big enough with letters that can be seen from the audience.)

Secretary: (directing her speech to the audience as if she just noticed that the audience was there) Hello there. I was so busy getting ready for our Town Council meeting that I didn't see you. The mayor can see you now. He has been reading that large book of his on the history of Danville.(looking to the Mayor) Mr. Mayor, people are waiting to see you.

Mayor: (Facing the audience) I am sorry to keep you waiting. I've been reading the most interesting book on the history of Danville. Danville has had such an interesting past.(yawn)

Reading makes me sleepy, so if you don't mind I'll take a short nap.....(The mayor puts his head down on his desk and starts to snore)

Narrator I: The mayor closed his eyes and fell into a deep sleep. He started to dream of Danville as it was a million years ago. His dream started with chapter one of Danville's past.

ENTER STUDENTS WITH ANIMALS (My students painted a very large butcher paper painting of Mt. Diablo that two students carried out and held up. The action of this prehistoric scene takes place in front of this. Students with large cardboard drawings of prehistoric animals in front of them wander about the stage. The Mayor now goes to this scene and acts as if he is puzzled by what is happening.) The Mayor looked around and all he could see for miles and miles were rolling hills covered with green grass. There was a large mastodon and a rhinoceros grazing, while a large tree sloth and a camel (*alticamelus*) munched leaves from a tall tree. The mayor had to jump out of the way as a saber toothed cat was about ready to pounce on an unsuspecting horse (*esohippus*), (The horse runs off stage with the saber toothed cat following.)

The Mayor was a little confused when he saw a person in a white coat coming towards him.

ENTER PALEONTOLOGIST (carrying a basket of rocks, or real fossils if you can get them)

Paleontologist: Hello, Mr. Mayor. Are you enjoying prehistoric Danville?

Mayor: Is that where I am? This is certainly a strange dream. Who are you?

Paleontologist: I am a paleontologist who has unlocked the mysteries of Danville's unwritten past. Would you believe that the first citizens of Danville were clams?

You see Mr. Mayor, Danville used to be under water and the proof is these fossils (show fossils) that we found in the surrounding hills. When the water receded, the prehistoric animals that you see here today started to graze and live in the area.

Mayor: But where did they come from?

Paleontologist: It is believed that they crossed a land bridge between Asia and North America. They walked until they found this wonderful place to live.

Mayor: Very interesting, but how do we know they lived here?

Paleontologist: We know because we have found many fossils in the Blackhawk area.

EXIT ALL PREHISTORIC ACTORS.

Narrator 2: The mayor was enjoying his dream. It seemed so real. He rubbed his eyes, and his dream changed. He still saw the green grassy hills with beautiful Mt. Diablo in the distance, but now there were short, dark-haired people with dark skin walking about the oak trees.

ENTER INDIANS Carrying bundle homes or any other props needed. (They add to the set, and then they set about doing tasks related to the Tatcan Indians.) A woman is grinding acorns on a rock and others are working, building or hunting. These are the Tatcan Indians that lived in our Danville area.

Tatcan 1: Our people have been living in this area for almost 5,000 years. We are the proud Tatcan Indians. We use everything that grows naturally in this area to live on. We use the acorns from the mighty oak tree to grind and make into pancakes. We hunt bear and deer in our hills to eat for our meals. We make tea from the bark of the Madrone tree. We waste nothing. Mr. Mayor, would you like to taste an acorn pancake?

Mayor: Well, I had an early lunch, so a nice acorn pancake might taste pretty good right now.

(The mayor accepts an acorn pancake and he puts it in his mouth and starts to chew. He makes a face.) He says: "I think I will stick to my peanut butter and jelly sandwich, but thank you. By the way tell me about your house."

Tatcan 2: We use willow branches that we bend for our houses called bundle homes. We tie grass on the branches to keep the cold and wind out.

Mayor: Very interesting. I think I need to tie some grass on my house, because sometimes it gets really cold. By the way what else do you eat besides acorn pancakes and bears?

Tatcan 3: We trap small animals, and birds and we fish from our creeks. We also eat wild berries and seeds. LOOK, who are those strange people?

ENTER PEDRO FAGES, FATHER JUAN CRESPI, AND GABRIEL MORAGA.

Narrator 3: The Indians are terrified because they have never seen horses before. The Spaniards try to assure the Indians that they come in peace.

Pedro Fages: Peace Tatcans. I am the explorer Pedro Fages. I am from Spain looking for different routes through this land. I know you have never seen white men and horses before. Don't be afraid.

Father Juan Crespi: I am Father Crespi, I've kept a journal of our trip. Someday we will build a mission close by and we will call it Mission San Jose. We will invite you to come and live at our mission. You will wear clothes like ours and eat food like ours. We will baptize you and teach you a new religion. We will teach you how to grow crops and make adobe bricks. You will like your new life at the mission.

Gabriel Moraga: I am a Spanish explorer too. My name is Gabriel Moraga and I have decided to name this beautiful mountain, Mt. Diablo because I think the devil lives there. (He points toward the poster of Mt. Diablo)

EXIT INDIANS, FOLLOWING SPANISH. I found that these actors exiting through the middle of the audience was an effective way to exit. All the classes chant "The Tatcan Chant" found in the back of this play. (The Spanish should act as if they are herding the Tatcans off stage.)

ENTER CASTRO, PACHECOS (They can be pretending to garden, or setting a table. I had Senora Pacheco carrying a basket of flowers that was added later to the fiesta dance.)

Narrator 4: The mayor blinked his eyes and everything changed. (a poster of an adobe ranch-style house is put on the stage. There is a table and three chairs in front of the house Drawings of cows are put on the hills.) There are two men and a woman sitting at a wooden table in the courtyard. The adobe building was on a ranch with wheat growing in the fields and cattle grazing on the hillsides under the shade of old giant oak trees. These people are from Mexico. They are Mariano Castro and his uncle Bartolome Pacheco and Senora Pacheco. They were given the land by the Mexican government because they had been faithful soldiers and helped settle California. The missions were closed and many Indians went to work on the Ranchos.

Senora Pacheco: We are so fortunate to be granted this land, but I am afraid to live here because the Indians were so upset after Mission San Jose closed that some of them are living in the foothills of Mt Diablo, and sometimes they steal my cattle. I have hired some of them, but some are stealing. Until things settle down I think it is best that we live elsewhere.

Senor Castro: Life was hard for the Indians at the mission, but when they tried to leave the soldiers would not let them. The work was hard, and it was difficult for them to change all of what they had known. And, the worst part was that many of them died from diseases that the Spaniards had brought from Spain. I agree I think it is best that we live

elsewhere and only come back here for roundups.

Senor Pacheco: We also have another problem. Our land is so large that people are moving onto our land and we can't really do anything about it. These people are called squatters. Some of them came out for the Gold Rush and now they want to farm, so they have decided to use our land.

Senor Castro: Perhaps we should have a fiesta and invite some of the squatters to come. We need to know who is living on our land.

Senora Pacheco: Yes, let's have a fiesta. I will barbecue some beef and we can serve some of the wonderful corn that we grow here.

ENTER MEESE AND BALDWIN

William Meese: I am William Meese. My friend R.O. Baldwin and myself came for the Gold Rush and are squatters. We are living on your land, improving it and building homes. We are raising our families and planting grain..

R.O. Baldwin: We will farm and ranch your land. We will grow wheat, and raise cattle and horses on these good hills. We will take good care of this land. We will raise good families here.

MORE PEOPLE ENTER. It is fun to have them carrying baskets of flowers that can be set in the front of the stage to add color to the fiesta dance.

FIESTA SONG (in the back of the play)**AND PEOPLE BEGIN TO DO THE MEXICAN HAT DANCE** (or your own version of something for the period)

EXIT ALL PEOPLE EXCEPT THE MAYOR (I had the Spanish actors dancing off the stage for a different exit)

Narrator 5: More and more people came to live in the valley of San Ramon. Rancho San Ramon was divided into smaller pieces of land owned by more pioneers. In his dream the mayor sees an important part of Danville's history—the actual beginning of a village.

ENTER PIONEERS. Posters of wooden buildings come in and one pioneer comes in carrying a sign for Front Street. All pioneers enter as if strolling on an afternoon. They walk to the stage through the middle aisle of the audience. This is accompanied to the song, "Danville You're My Town" Pioneers enter in wagons being pulled by horses. (Use a sheet and paint a horse on it and two students can get under it and walk in or make a cardboard cutout of a horse and have a student walk in behind it.) The **mayor** saw buggies and wagons being pulled by horses, and women bustled about in long dresses and high top shoes. The men are ranchers and farmers. Danville was beginning to grow

Once the pioneers are on stage, position them and sing the song "Sitting on Front Street"

Each pioneer steps forward when he/she gives their line.

Daniel Inman: I'm Daniel Inman. I like this land. I'll use the money I got from prospecting for gold to buy some property. I'll plant wheat too.

Andrew Inman: I'm Daniel's brother Andrew Inman. Daniel and I will also build this areas first blacksmith shop. We will I build it close to the creek and call the road Front Street. Front Street is part of the long County road now.

Aunt Sally:(Sitting in a rocking chair, and helped to the center) I am Aunt Sally Young . I think I will name this growing town Danville after my old home in Danville, Kentucky.

Clarence. Close: I deserve credit for building the several stores in Danville. We will make Front Street our main street. Our store will be called Close's Store, after me, Clarence Close.

All Pioneers: We will build many stores.

Pioneer 1: Let's build a post office.

Pioneer 2: Let's build St. Isidore Church on the main road.

Pioneer 3: Let's build many stores. Danville will prosper.

ALL AGREE (looking at each other and nodding their heads)

Robert Love: I will raise more cattle at the end of my street. I will name my street Love Lane, after me – Robert Love. Maybe my house will last forever.

Dr. Victor Vecki: I am Dr. Vecki. I will fix your teeth with my foot drill. My house will be here for a long time at 169 Front Street.

John Halverson: I am John Halverson, and I will build a livery stable to repair wagons. Maybe someday there will be a restaurant named Faz on my site.

ALL PIONEERS TALK EXCITEDLY.

ALL PIONEERS HUSH.....IN WALKS JOHN HARTZ

Pioneer 1: Here is John Hartz. He has a lot of land here.

John Hartz: I will change Danville greatly. I will move the main part of town to the street named after me – Hartz Avenue. (say it proudly) I will also change Danville history by selling my property to this man.....

ENTER RAILROAD ENGINEERS (carrying a cardboard cutout of the train and holding it in front of them as if they are in the train). They walk in to the song "She'll Be Coming Around Mt. Diablo"

Engineer 1: Thank you Mr. Hartz. I will make this town grow with my Southern Pacific Railroad. You can now move people, cattle, crops, and lumber faster than with wagons.

Engineer 2: You can build a hotel next to the railroad to house people who will come to Danville on business.

ENTER CHARLOTTE WOOD (all pioneers gather around her feet and look up to her as she gives her lines)

Charlotte: I have come to teach your children. Maybe someday they will name a school after me.

Mayor: The town of Danville sure got big fast. The railroad really made the town grow. Farmers and ranchers could get their crops and animals to market much faster and the train also brought many people to Danville to live. I can remember when the last train ran in 1978.

Pioneers all position for the song, "Danville Promenade," and dance. The dance can be like a square dance.

ENTER MODERN CITIZENS (carrying cardboard cutouts of modern cars. They can hold these in front of them as if they are driving the car.)

Narrator 6: The mayor's dream has changed to the year 1982. Danville is a much larger town now. The horse-drawn buggies and the Southern Pacific Railroad are long gone, and cars dot the paved roads. The new 680 freeway has made it easier to live and work in Danville. The mayor sees a group of citizens who seem to be having a meeting. He joins them and learns that they want to incorporate Danville. That means that Danville will have its own town government that will make important decisions for the new city.

Citizen 1: It is 1982, Mr. Mayor. We should have a special vote that will allow the people of Danville to decide that they want to incorporate.

Citizen 2: We want to make our own decisions about our growth and many of the things that affect our town.

Mayor: Do you vote to become incorporated?

Citizens: We do. (The people jump up and down)

Mayor: Tell me what is so great about living in Danville?

Citizen 1: I like living in Danville because of all the great shopping and the wonderful restaurants.

Citizen 2: I like living in Danville because my children can go to good schools.

Citizen 3: I like living in Danville because there is so much to do. I love the Fourth of July Parade and the chili cook-off. And we always go to the Christmas tree lighting with Father Christmas.

Citizen 4: And don't forget about the Devil Mountain Run and the Primo to Primo Run.

Citizen 5: My family likes hiking at Mr. Diablo State Park and at Las Trampas Regional Park. There is just so much to do that sometimes we have a hard time deciding what we want to do.

Citizen 6: You forgot all about Danville's many parks. My favorite is Osage Station because there is something there for every member of my family. My grandmother always wants me to take her up to Tao House because this is where Eugene O'Neill lived and where he wrote some of his great plays.

Citizen 7: And my family loves to visit the Farmers Market on Saturday and then we usually stop by the Museum of the San Ramon Valley to check out their latest exhibit.

Mayor: Wow, you people are really proud of your city. If I didn't live in Danville I would probably move here after hearing what you had to say.

ALL: We will see you later.

CITIZENS WALK OFF (waving). THE SECRETARY WALKS OVER TO THE SLEEPING MAYOR.

Secretary: Mayor—Mayor—Wake-up. We have a meeting in a few minutes.

Mayor: My goodness. I fell asleep. I dreamed about the history of Danville. It was all so real. Danville is the best town in the world.

ALL COME ON STAGE, and shout "Yes it is!"

As a class, sing another Danville Song, then bows are taken.

Note:

Many of my classes at Greenbrook School have performed this play, and I have heard from previous students that this was one of the highlights of their third grade. The students enjoy the acting and remember the history of Danville through participating in the re-creation of all the periods of Danville's becoming the great town it now is. There are many roles, and I have found that doubling up with another class is more successful than assigning roles, but the choice is yours. Have fun, and let your creative side take over.

Kathie Petrie Sept. 2004

Dear Teachers:

This play has been given by Kathie Petrie and her third grade class for many years. The students have created sets that can be saved and used year after year. Students have written songs for different parts of the play. Kathie Petrie often invites the Mayor of Danville and often he or she comes. It is a wonderful play and has been enjoyed by the students of Greenbrook for many years. Good luck and have fun.

Sets: Actually sets would not be needed, but they are a nice addition to the play. You could paint a background with hills dotted with trees and shrubs. As you go along in the play the following things could be added: Mt. Diablo, Indian houses, Adobe houses, cattle, and early buildings of Danville.

Script: You could turn this into a writing project and the students could do some of the writing. For instance, they could write about why they like living in Danville. They could write songs for each group that comes on stage: prehistoric animals, Indians, explorers, ranchers and settlers. Your class could take the basic outline of this play and with some creativity it could become unique to your school.

Script: This play could be done with one class or you could have all of the third grades in your school participate. Each class could take one historic period and they could add parts and do the scenery for their historic period. Two classes could share the play. If one class does the play students will have to do more than one part. Perhaps the part of the mayor could be shared. I have done plays for years and I find it amazing how much a student can memorize.

Have fun and good luck!

Gail Kameron