



## Grace French in Context: A Team Project

Historians combine research about the times a person lived in with “primary” sources like letters, notebooks and newspaper articles. For the Grace French website pages at [www.journeymuseum.org](http://www.journeymuseum.org), we need more research about the years Grace and Abbie French lived in New England (1858-1885) and in South Dakota 1885-1942).

1. Each team may choose one of the following topics:
  - a. Choosing a Living: women’s occupations, social roles, marriage
  - b. Having a Voice: right to vote and opinions on alcohol (temperance movement)
  - c. Paying the Bills: economic trends, yesterday’s bills in today’s dollars
2. Read the Grace French resources online at [www.journeymuseum.org](http://www.journeymuseum.org) (Breaking New Ground: Women Artists in the American West, 1843-1943 by Lynda K. Clark provides a context for Grace French and her accomplishments by exploring the challenges and opportunities presented to women artists in similar circumstances. “Pursuit of Art: Grace French, Pioneer Artist and Teacher” by Donna Fisher and Reid Riner provides detailed research.) After Dec. 31, 2007, a 32-illustrated booklet and a DVD will be added to these resources.
3. Skim the suggested websites, adding your own research if you wish, and create a one-page summary that can give fellow students a “context” to help

them understand the conditions Grace French experienced. How might these events and conditions have shaped how she made a living and what she may have believed about issues?

4. Submit your finished “context” page to Minnilusa Museum director Reid Riner at [minnilusa@earthlink.net](mailto:minnilusa@earthlink.net) for possible inclusion on the Grace French web pages. List your team members, your school, and your teacher. Document your findings by listing your web sources in the MLA format used in the papers on the website.

### **Choosing a Living: women’s occupations, social roles, and marriage**

The Changing Nature of Women’s Education and Employment  
<<http://www.baas.ac.uk/resources/pamphlets/pamphlets.asp?id=20#ch7>>

<<http://www.pbs.org/sunriverhomestead/index.htm>> tells story of single women coming west. How does their story compare with that of Grace and Abbie French? Esther taught normal school—Grace trained normal school teachers when she taught at a college in Hot Springs.

### **Having a Voice: right to vote and opinions on alcohol (temperance movement)**

Chronology of Woman’s suffrage Movement:  
<<http://content.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=4929>>

History of Women's Suffrage in SD up to 1904 appears in Chapter CII of "History of South Dakota" by Doane Robinson, Vol. I (1904), pages 597-604  
<<http://ftp.rootsweb.com/pub/usgenweb/sd/women/suffrage.txt>>

Suffragists; <http://www.thewildwest.org/interface/index.php?action=376>

Grace French was an early organizer of the WCTU in the Black Hills. For basic history see <http://www.wctu.org/earlyhistory.html>.

### **Paying the Bills: economic trends, yesterday’s bills in today’s dollars**

Women in the Work Force Before 1880 & Women’s Changing Role Between 1880 and 1920  
<<http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1981/cthistory/81.ch.07.x.html#c>>

Measuring Worth: <http://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/compare/> Use a page from Grace’s ledger to trace how much she charged for lessons over the years. Compare the prices with today’s dollars.

Here is a timeline <[http://www.sdhistory.org/soc/soc\\_hist.htm](http://www.sdhistory.org/soc/soc_hist.htm)> that may give you some ideas:

**1860** Lincoln elected, South Carolina leaves the Union

**1883** Buffalo Bill Cody's *Wild West Show*, RR divide country into time zones.

**1886-1887** Droughts bring the prosperity of the Great Dakota Boom to an end.

**1889-1897** A depressed national economy in the early and mid 1890s led to this period being called the Great Dakota Bust. The flow of settlers dropped off greatly. Some settlers left South Dakota to return to their previous homes. The state's economy slowed down, but recovered as the nation came out of the depression in the late 1890s.

**1889-1890** Many women and men, especially in the temperance organizations like the Women's Christian Temperance Union [WCTU] fought for women's right to vote, but the new SD Legislature rejected the right in 1890.

**1893**

The famous catalog order company Sears, Roebuck and Co. was officially formed.

**1908** Ford produces its first Model-T automobile.

**1906-1907** Both the Chicago & North Western and the Milwaukee Road build west from the Missouri River to Rapid City. Development of western South Dakota was greatly aided by the establishment of two direct rail links with eastern South Dakota and eastern markets.

**1918** Women could vote in school elections but now they have full suffrage (the right to vote) and hold all offices.

**1919** 18th Amendment (prohibition) ratified,

**1930s** South Dakota is hit hard by the Depression. Drought and dust created severe problems for agriculture. The Civilian Conservation Corps and the WPA provided many jobs. The CCC was instrumental in providing much forest conservation work like road building in the Black Hills

This activity offers practice in supporting skills  
in History, Economics and government  
for the SD Social Studies Curriculum.