

Tank Town: A Good Place to Live

**Teaching Unit
For Third Grade Students**



Water Tank for the Railroad

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www.matthewsheritagemuseum.org

Dear Teacher:

The Matthews Heritage Museum has been conducting research on an area in Matthews originally known as Tank Town and now known as Crestdale. While this community emerged after the Civil War, settled by former slaves and freedmen, the specifics of its history has basically gone unrecorded. For virtually 100 years this area remained a separate entity from Matthews. Only in 1988 was the area annexed by Matthews becoming a part of the town.

The Museum has focused research on the institutions of this neighborhood as well as the people who lived and worked here. By using census records, deeds, minutes of the Charlotte Mecklenburg School system, and oral history, the museum has been able to unearth much of the history of this area. The exhibit *Tank Town: A Good Place to Live* is a culmination of this research and documentation.

The Matthews Heritage Museum is delighted that you are interested in our newly developed tour on Crestdale, and our accompanying teaching unit. We hope you will be able to schedule a tour of the museum sometime from February 16 to August 17, 2019 when the exhibit will be open. The tour will compare the growth and development of Matthews and Crestdale as places to live.

The unit is based on satisfying Curriculum Standards for the third grade. It uses primary sources to analyze lifestyles, jobs, schools and organizations of the two communities.

A hard copy of the unit *Tank Town: A Good Place to Live* can be ordered for \$7.50 per copy. It also can be downloaded from our website www.matthewsheritagemuseum.org for FREE.

We hope that this specially designed tour and teaching materials will be a tremendous asset to your teaching this year. We look forward to working with you and your students.

Sincerely,

Barbara E. Taylor
Director

Scheduling a Tour

If you are interested in scheduling a tour of the museum and this exhibit, we are available to give tours to 20 children per hour, on Thursday and Friday mornings from 10 to 12 and Thursday and Friday afternoons from 1 to 4 p.m. Non-school groups can also be scheduled on Saturdays. Please call the museum at 704-708-4996 or email info@matthewsheritagemuseum.org and be prepared with the following information:

Name of school
Number of Children
Preferred dates and times
Contact information

Please call or email a minimum of 2 weeks in advance. Select alternative dates in case your first choice is already taken.

What is a museum?

A museum is an institution that cares for a collection of artifacts and other objects of artistic, cultural, historical, or scientific importance. Many public museums make these items available for public viewing through exhibits that may be permanent or temporary. The largest museums are located in major cities throughout the world, while thousands of local museums exist in smaller cities, towns and rural areas.

The Matthews Heritage Museum focuses on the history of the Matthews area from the settlement of the native Americans to the mid-twentieth century. It examines the formation of the area and town, how people made a living, how they lived in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and where and how they gathered together. In its hands-on approach, visitors meet the people who lived and worked in Matthews.

Appropriate Museum behavior

1. To keep our museum objects clean and safe, please do not bring food and drink into the galleries, or touch the artifacts. The oil on your fingers can be detrimental to an object. Touch only if you are invited to.
2. Do not chew gum.
3. Parents and teachers stay with your children. If a child is disruptive, please handle them quietly.
4. Ask if you can take a photo in the museum.
5. Speak in a quiet voice.
6. If on a tour, pay attention to the guide. Do not talk to others in the group. Questions and comments are great! Please raise your hand when you want to speak and listen quietly when others are talking. Use your polite "inside voice."
7. Follow the directions given to the group.

Why this exhibit on Tank Town?

The reason the Museum undertook research on Tank Town was to dig deeper into its history: its beginnings and its growth, as a neighboring community to Matthews. Over the years, it was implied that the community was formed when 130 acres were “set aside”, leading many to believe its establishment was assisted by the Freedmens’ Bureau. This happened very rarely. However, if that was true why did a white man, Dr. J. S. Gribble, own property in this area in 1879 only fourteen years after the Civil War? This evidence seemed to contradict what had been said of the early settlement. The Museum felt the need to discover the truth.

Lengthy research has led us to believe that Dr. J. S. Gribble purchased 143 acres from W. S. Stephenson on December 1, 1857, and was the area that would become known as Tank Town. It is likely he would have farmed this property for a while. The first sale of property we found within this area was in 1878 from Gribble to a white person. The following year he sold property to both blacks and whites, including property that would be occupied by the Matthews Chapel Presbyterian Church and Mt. Moriah Primitive Baptist Church. By mapping all the land he sold, it becomes evident that he owned the entire area.

The second reason the Museum undertook this research was simply to document the development of this area that had gone unrecorded. Along the way, certain beliefs, such as the South was a segregated society after the Civil War have been disproven. The 1880 Census shows that of the 41 families living in the “Town of Matthews”, thirty were white and 11 were black! Historians have also found this true of Charlotte and other areas.

By studying primary resources and analyzing data we can sometimes find that what we have “always been taught” is only what one person has chosen to record. Sometimes there is a different story. I hope this teaching unit allows your students to explore the “record” to learn about Crestdale. With these tools, you will begin to see new ways to learn history.

Tank Town: A Good Place to Live

Third Grade Teaching Unit

Working with Primary Sources

Read Find out First Hand: Using Primary Sources by Fontichairo with the school students.

Ask the students what can people in the future use to learn about them in 2019. What primary documents are they leaving behind? Selfies, Facebook entries, diaries, letters written to others, school records.

Objectives:

Students will:

- Understand that primary source documents can help us understand people, places, and events from the past.
- Think critically about historic records.
- Explore change over time.
- Explore the strengths and limitations of using primary source documents as a research tool.

In this unit we will use census records, photographs, objects and a floor plan as our primary resources

A. Census Records: Primary Source Activity

By studying the census records there are many things that can be learned about individuals and communities. An example page from the 1940 census is included (Document A). With the class, review the document.

In researching Tank Town, the museum looked at the census for each decade. By comparing the information from decade to decade we could trace the families that settled in Tank Town. Some of the census records recorded if the family owned or rented their house. The listing of names one after another also can be an indication of who lived next to each other.

1. Discuss why the government might ask some of the questions that are asked.
2. Why list all the members of the family?
3. What can be understood from knowing: age, sex, race, and highest level of school attended?
4. Do most people own their own homes? What does this say about the economy?
5. Other questions

Rosenwald Schools -- Information

In the 1910s a gentleman named Julius Rosenwald created a foundation that gave money to support the construction of schools for African Americans in the South. (Review Curriculum Link for Julius Rosenwald)

- B. **Rosenwald Activity:** Plans were drawn for each type of school. A copy of a 4 – teacher school house is included in this unit (Document B). By looking at the floor plan can you list things that your school has that this school doesn't have? Why do you think the plan says for the school to face east or west only?

The 4-teacher Rosenwald School in Tank Town cost a total of \$6100. Do you know what your school cost to build? How many classrooms does your school have? This school was used until 1966.

Rosenwald school :

- No indoor toilets. Boys would use one out house, and girls another.
 - No cafeteria. Children would carry their lunches to school. No hot lunches were served.
 - No gym. Children ran around outside to play. If it rained, they stayed inside.
 - No library. There were not many books.
 - No water fountain: A bucket of water with a ladle was provided for everyone. If you needed more water someone would walk to the nearest creek.
 - There was a room to hang coats on hooks, though there were no lockers.
 - There was no auditorium.
 - There was a wood or coal heating stove. It would need to be given more wood or coal during the day, generally by an older student. Children sitting near the stove would be warm or hot, children away from the stove much cooler.
 - Light came from either a gas lamp which only lit a small space or from the windows on one side of the room.
 - Probably one teacher for several grades.
- Discuss with the class if they would like to have attended school in the 20s and 30s.

C. Classrooms Then and Now: Primary Source Activity

With your students study the 6 photos of school classrooms. (Documents C. 1 - 6)
The first three pictures are from approximately the 1930s and the second three are contemporary. You might want half the class to review the 1930s photos, and the other half the present photos. List the number of differences and similarities between the two.

Similarities of both:

1. Students
2. Teacher
3. Special space for classroom
4. Heat
5. Desks
6. Black Board
7. Lighting
8. Other?

Differences:

1930s

Coal or wood burning stove – need to replenish
Gas lighting, small windows on one side of room

Slates

Black board

No bulletin boards

No desks

No Computers

Coats and hats hung on nails

Few books

Some children have no shoes

Would have walked home

Present

Heated classroom

Electric, overhead lights, large windows

Paper and notebooks and pencils

Chalk Board, White board

Bulletin boards

Desks

Computers

Probably lockers to store coats

Lots of books

Everyone wears shoes

Generally picked up by parents, or ride the bus.

D. Seal of Mecklenburg County Activity (Document D)

Harvey Boyd, resident of Crestdale, won a design contest at the age of 19 for drawing the seal of Mecklenburg County. In order to get good training in art, he attended West Charlotte High School, and had to hitch a ride every day to school. The Seal has been used ever since by Mecklenburg County. Seals often contain symbols that are meaningful to the community. Below, the symbols and their meanings are described.

What do the symbols in the seal represent?

- May 20, 1775 -- Signing of Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence
- The inkwell, quill pen and paper – Our early interest in Education
- Hornet's Nest – Nickname of Charlotte attributed by British General Cornwallis as he marched into town because of the intense resistance his army met: "that hot-bed of rebellion, that hornet's nest" as his lordship afterward named it.
- Farm Buildings -- Charlotte started as an agricultural area
- Skyline – Now Charlotte is a modern City
- The bottom left branch represents the County's traditional times and the right branch represents modern times.

The students might like to color the seal. Perhaps they would like to design a seal for your school, or classroom.

E. Photo Activity: Everyday Objects (Document E)

Look at the six photos in the photo packet. These items would have been used or familiar to the folks living in Tank Town around the 1920s. Can you identify these items?

Train Lantern

Communication device and source of light

Iron Pot

Cookware, Washing Machine

Clothes Pin

Electric clothes dryer

Slate

Paper and Pencil

Jukebox

Record player

Skillet

Cookware

Link the following items to businesses or activities in Crestdale. Who would have used these items?

Package of materials:

- A. 1940 Census record
- B. Floor plan for Rosenwald School
- C. Photos of classrooms, 3 in black and white, 3 in color
- D. Seal of Mecklenburg County
- E. Photos of objects (6)

State North Carolina Incorporated place _____ Ward of city _____ Unincorporated place _____
(Name of unincorporated place having 100 or more inhabitants)

County Mecklenburg Township or other division of county North Block No. _____ Institution _____
(Name of institution and list on a leaf, where one is made)

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE—BUREAU OF THE
SIXTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES
POPULATION SCHEDULE

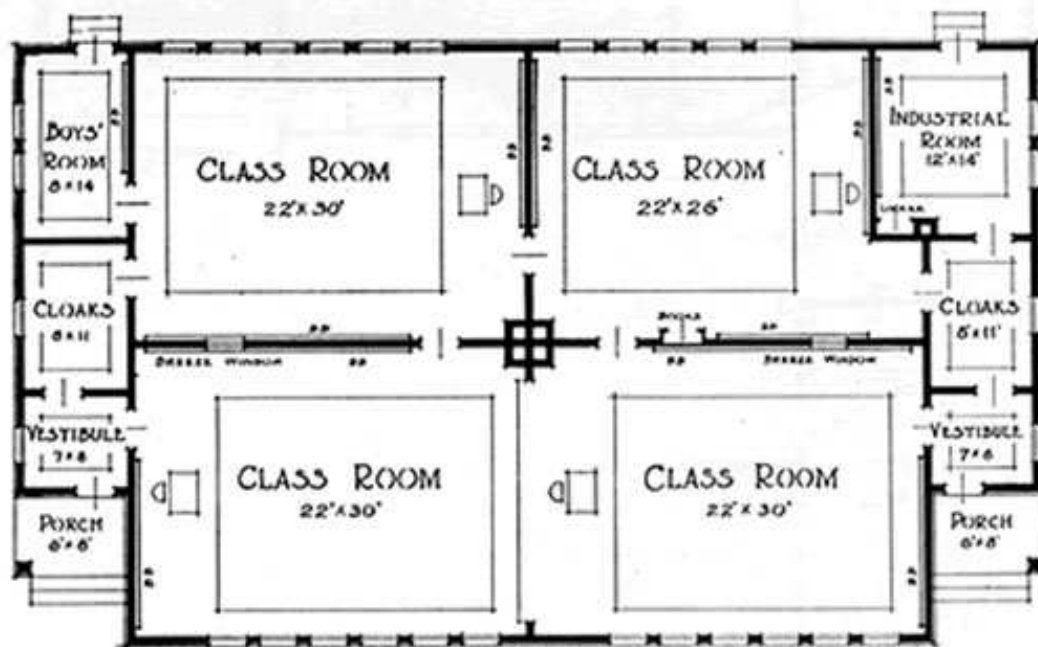
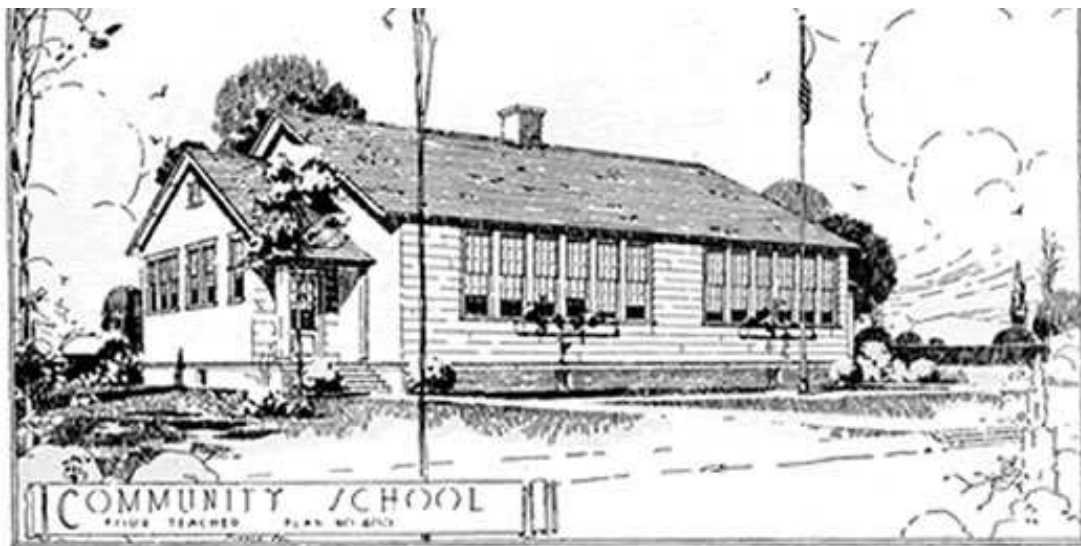
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Partial Census Record

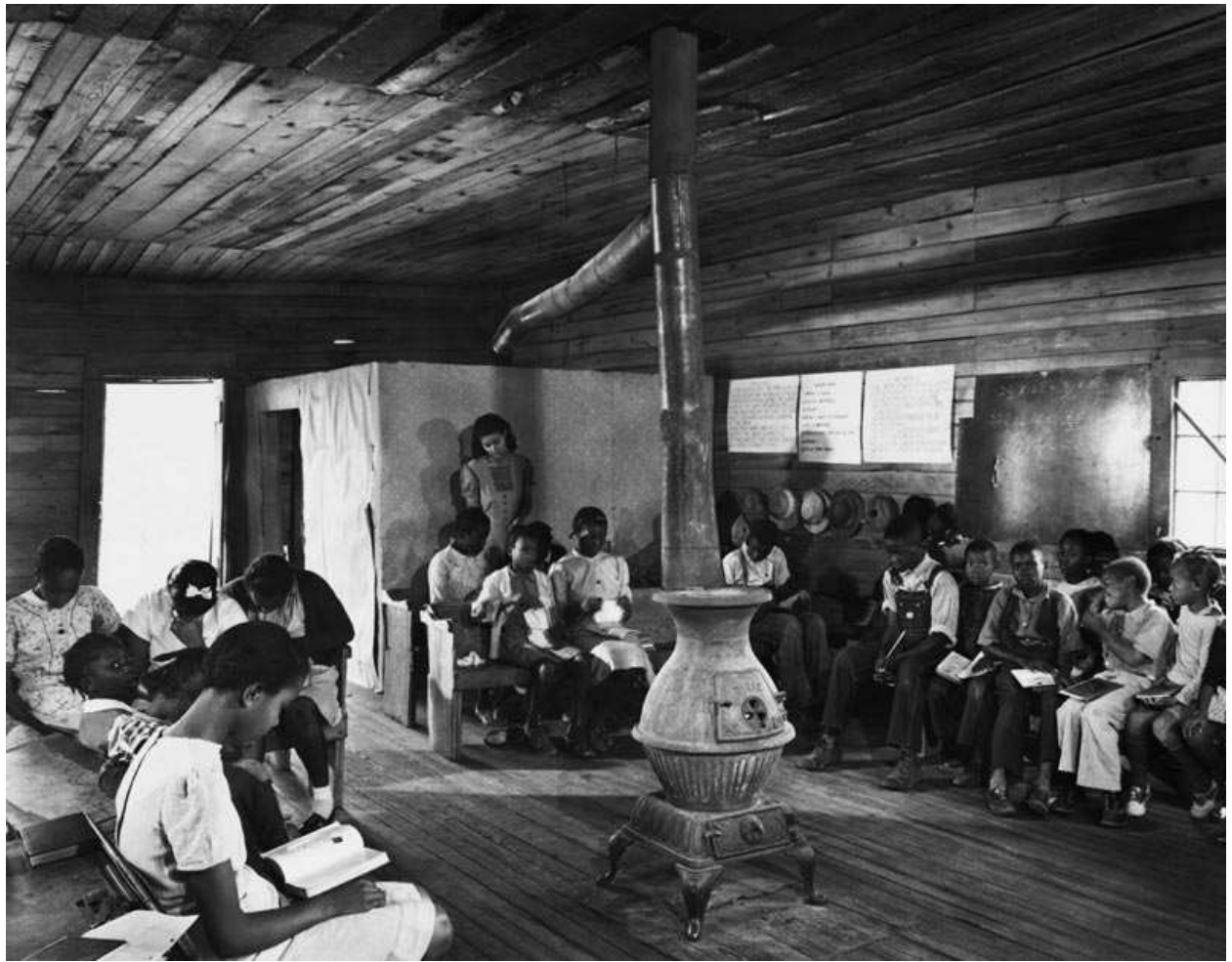
B.



FLOOR PLAN No 400
FOUR TEACHER COMMUNITY SCHOOL
TO FACE EAST OR WEST ONLY

C.









D.



Seal of Mecklenburg County, designed by Harvey Boyd, resident of Crestdale. He won a design contest at the age of 19. In order to get good training in art, he attended West Charlotte High School, and had to hitch a ride every day. The Seal has been used ever since.

E.



Railroad Lantern



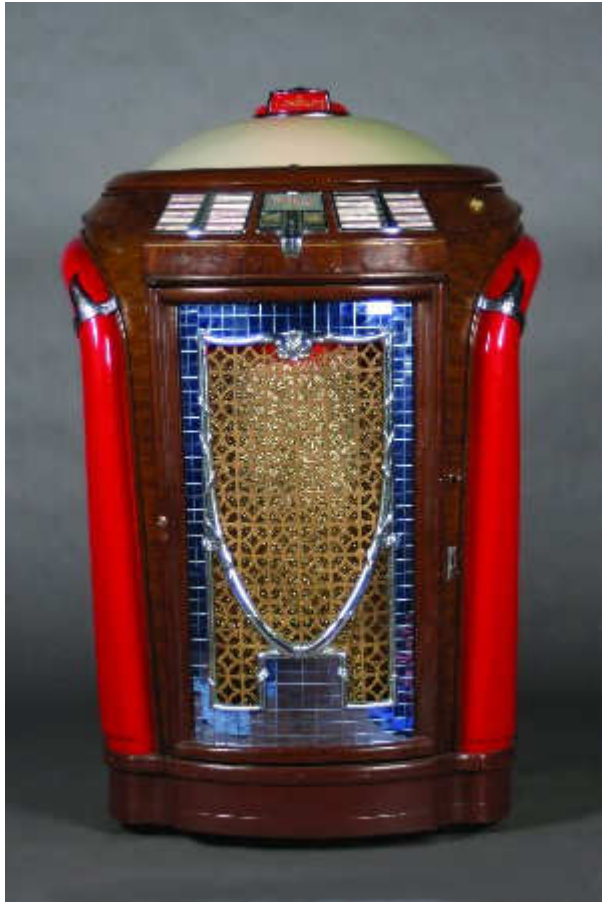
Iron Pot



Clothes Pin



Slate



Jukebox



Skillet or Spider