



The Rise of Charlotte: Coronation of the Queen City

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Bain Elementary School

This curriculum unit is recommended for:
Social Studies/Grade 3-5

Keywords: Charlotte, textile industry, New South, Levine Museum, cotton, Loray Mill, banking

Teaching Standards: See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

Synopsis: This curriculum unit focuses on the transformation Charlotte experienced within the century following 1870 mapping its evolution from a focal point for the cotton industry to the southern hub of finance and banking. During the "New South" decades, Charlotte's population continued to grow at a rapid pace. Many Charlotte residents found themselves working in the occupations of sharecroppers or mill workers with cotton serving as the common thread between the two laborious occupations. In the years immediately following the Civil War and the freedom guaranteed to them by the 13th Amendment, many black residents continued to feel enslaved as sharecroppers of cotton, corn, or tobacco. The activities within this unit will engage students in a virtual time machine by developing a better understanding of how Charlotte has changed over the last century and the impact segregation played on the rich history of the "Queen City." The activities will encourage integration of the material and inspire learning by incorporating historical photographs, web technology, and the imagination to place students in the role of someone living within the "New South" during the time period of 1850-1900. Each activity uses a combination of observational assessments, research, and writing methods to appeal to all learning styles while efficiently assimilating the national common core state standards.

I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 23 students in Social Studies/Grade 3.

I give permission for the Institute to publish my curriculum unit and synopsis in print and online. I understand that I will be credited as the author of my work.

The Rise of Charlotte: Coronation of the Queen City

Jennifer Dalesandro

Overview

Some of my earliest childhood memories of Social Studies in elementary school mainly involved the use of a textbook and worksheets. This clinical form of learning did not ignite the love I currently have for Social Studies, especially history. An elementary school field trip to historic Fort New Salem in Salem, West Virginia brought history alive for the first time in my life. History became a focal point in my life so much so that I began my college career as a Secondary Education major with a focus on history before ultimately changing my major to Elementary Education.

As an elementary school teacher, I strive to make Social Studies engaging to my students. By connecting the content to their lives, I hope to spark curiosity in my students, which will give them the desire to research topics on their own. I truly believe if we do not learn from our past we are doomed to repeat it.

Teaching the history of Charlotte is important because it is relevant to the lives of the students in the area. By developing a deeper understanding for the city in which they live, students will feel connected to the events of the present and of the past. The study of history also promotes awareness of other cultures and traditions, which help to shape an area.

Background

I am a National Board Certified, third grade teacher at Bain Elementary School in the Charlotte suburb of Mint Hill, North Carolina. I have been a professional teacher for 10 years, the first of which was teaching 3-year-old pre school in West Virginia. This is my tenth year of teaching for the urban school system known as Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, which is the second largest school district in North Carolina and the nineteenth largest school district in the nation. I teach on a team of seven third grade teachers, which affords me a vast support system from a diverse group of education professionals with varying backgrounds.

The demographics of my school differs in comparison to the Title 1 school category as my school has a low percentage of students on free or reduced lunch and a high percentage of parent involvement. Parent volunteers are a regular part of my classroom environment on any given day giving support to the students and enriching the learning experience. Bain Elementary is considered an Honor School of Excellence for high growth on standardized testing with a rich history dating back 120 years ago when John Bain founded the original Bain Academy in the Town of Mint Hill, NC. Since then, the

school has grown to its current size of 1,000+ students, reflecting the corresponding growth in the town of Mint Hill. During the 2013-2014 school year, Bain Elementary moved into a new, state of the art building. This begins a new era in Bain's long history by providing all teachers access to new technologies such as mounted projection systems, Apple TV, and classroom Ipads for students.

In my classroom, I use an economy-based system for rewards and consequences. My students earn Dalesandro Dollars (DD) for completing classroom jobs and weekly homework. They also earn DD for good behavior. To the contrary, students lose DD if they fail to complete homework, their job, or are not on their best behavior in and out of the classroom. I will tie my classroom economy into the student activities I have prepared for this unit by compensating students based on the time period of Charlotte we are studying at the time. Pay will vary from student to student based on race and socioeconomic status. Thus students will experience first hand the financial difficulty experienced by Charlotteans during the New South decades. To develop a deeper understanding of how segregation affected the lives of black residents, several white students will be paid as black residents during the 1870s.

Rationale

To enhance the Social Studies curriculum in my classroom, I have been attending the “Charlotte as a New South City, Using the Collections of the Levine Museum of the New South” seminar at the Levine Museum of the New South instructed by Dr. Shepherd W. McKinley, a college professor, at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Under the guidance of Dr. McKinley, I am experiencing the rich history of Charlotte using the collections of the Levine Museum of the New South. Dr. Thomas Hanchett, the curator of *Cotton Fields to Skyscrapers: Reinventing the New South* exhibit, has served as the staff historian at the Levine Museum of the New South since 1999. Hanchett has curated numerous award-winning exhibits and has written several books about Charlotte's rich history. Our seminar group had the pleasure of discussing Hanchett's book, *Sorting out the New South City*, with the author himself during one of our weekly meetings.

Throughout our seminar we have also branched out into the outlining communities of Charlotte to experience the New South era firsthand. Touring both the site of the Loray Mill, also known as the Million Dollar Mill, in Gastonia and Highland Mill #3 in the current NoDa neighborhood in Charlotte, CTI fellows were transported back in time to the days of child labor, extreme working conditions, and deadly strikes.

I chose to attend this particular seminar because it relates directly to my students' lives as Charlotte residents. Since relocating to Charlotte ten years ago, I have not had the opportunity to study in depth the extensive history of the Queen City. Now that I call Charlotte home, I feel it is important to learn the history of our great city. Through the readings and historical artifacts I have studied for this seminar, I have learned Charlotte is

a city rich in both culture and history. So many historical landmarks have been renovated and preserved for future Charlotteans to experience. The historical strike at the Loray Mill in Gaston County made international headlines and has thus intrigued me, as I would love to further research the mysterious murder of Ella May Wiggins, who was considered a balladeer for the strikers, and the murder of the chief of police during the time of the Loray Mill strike.

Content Objectives/Essential Questions

My curriculum unit will seek to explain the following North Carolina Essential Standards:

- Understand how events, individuals and ideas have influenced the history of local and regional communities.
How did the building of train tracks play a key role in the growth of the textile industry in Charlotte?
- Explain key historical events that occurred in the local community and regions over time.
Which events of the 1850s and 1860s played the most pivotal roles in transforming Charlotte into the center of banking and finance of today?
- Analyze the impact of contributions made by diverse historical figures in local communities and regions over time.
Compare and contrast the contributions of DA Tompkins and Stuart Cramer to the textile industry. How did Tompkins and Cramer participate in the growth of Charlotte's textile mills?
- Exemplify the ideas that were significant in the development of local communities and regions.
*Explain Charlotte's rise in population over the decade following the boom of the textile industry. *Charlotte experienced a 78% increase in population in just ten years. Why were so many people relocating to Charlotte?*
- Use historical thinking skills to understand the context of events, people and places. Explain change over time through historical narratives (events, people, and places).
Design a timeline to depict the growth of Charlotte from 1799-1880. How did John Reed's discovery of gold lead to the building of railroad lines in Charlotte? How did the building of railroad lines play a vital role in the growth of the textile industry? Relate the growth of the textile industry to the current state of Charlotte as the center of banking and finance for the Carolinas.
(State Board of Education 2010)

Teaching Strategies

In my curriculum unit entitled, *The Rise of Charlotte: Coronation of the Queen City*, my students and I will use various artifacts and resources to develop a deeper understanding of the rich past of our beloved city. Focusing on the transformation Charlotte experienced within the century following 1800, Charlotte evolved from a focal point for the textile industry to the southern hub of finance and banking. This curriculum unit will engage my students in a virtual time machine to develop a better understanding of how Charlotte has changed from an isolated region to the buzzing metropolis of today.

I will use a variety of teaching strategies including the integration of technology to guide students through a virtual tour of Charlotte in the 1850s. Addressing the changes in the modes of transportation in Charlotte during the New South era, trains made it possible for people to travel in a more time efficient manner. Train tracks also paved the way for growth in many areas of the economy. The ability to move products from place to place in a timely manner played a vital role in the growth of both the textile and banking industries.

To introduce my curriculum unit to my students, I will use the photographs of Lewis Hine; students will visually experience life as a child during the era of farming and textile mill working in Charlotte. Both adults and children risked their lives on a daily basis in order to support their families. Children today find it difficult to grasp the meaning of hard work, let alone possess the maturity to perform the job of an adult day in and day out. Child labor laws were not in existence during this time in history, thus children worked in mills and farmed the fields for hours on end. I further plan to hone in on the reasons why workers chose to leave the fields for jobs in the textile mills. Using a Venn diagram, students will compare and contrast the daily life of a farmer and a textile mill worker.

Our second graders take a walking tour of uptown Charlotte every year. Therefore, my students enter third grade with prior knowledge of the city in which they reside. Many of the old neighborhoods in our beloved city have existed since the days of transformation. Much of Charlotte's farmland has been transformed into subdivisions for houses and shopping malls. So much of the queen city's history has been replaced with new, state of the art skyscrapers and a light rail transportation system.

The Town of Mint Hill is home to the Carl J. McEwen Historic Village. The village was established after twenty one citizens discovered a 'For Sale' sign hammered into the front lawn of the old country doctor's building in 1985. This motivated the citizens to restore the doctor's building and to move others to the property with the purpose of preserving the history of the area. Each year, my third graders tour the various building, including the assay office where they learn about Charlotte's role in the national gold rush. The assay office was established as a place for miners to bring their

ore to determine if they had struck it rich! Visitors may also walk through the restored Country Doctor's Office, the Ashcraft one room schoolhouse, and the Ira V. Ferguson Country Store. The rural nature of early Mint Hill is reflected in the other outbuildings in the village like the blacksmith shop, hen house, and meat curing buildings. As a teacher, I found excitement and enchantment as I stepped back in time in the village, especially in the one room schoolhouse.

In addition to the Mint Hill Historical Society, students will also explore The Levine Museum of the New South's exhibit, "Cotton Fields to Skyscrapers," via photos taken from my personal explorations of the artifacts. The exhibit consists of over 1000 artifacts, video clips, images, and other historical memorabilia illustrating the significant changes in Charlotte and its surrounding counties. Visitors to the museum experience a hands-on, interactive experience while touring the 8,000 square foot exhibition.

Background Information

During the "New South" decades, Charlotte's population continued to grow at a rapid pace. Many Charlotte residents were sharecroppers or mill workers. Cotton was the common thread between the two laborious occupations. Although black residents could vote beginning in 1868, many continued to feel enslaved as sharecroppers of cotton, corn, or tobacco. Black farm workers continued to experience racial prejudice by being paid lower wages than their white counterparts. Most mills didn't allow black men and women to work there and in 1900 blacks were no longer permitted to vote.

Timeline of Charlotte/Transportation reforms the Textile Industry
Use this timeline with classroom activity two.

1799

Farmer John Reed discovered a seventeen pound gold nugget on his Cabarrus County farm. He used it as a doorstep until 1802 when a jeweler recognized it as gold, setting off an important local gold rush.

1834

Branch of North Carolina Bank opened in Charlotte.

1835

The U.S. Treasury opened a branch mint in Charlotte to coin more than \$5 million in gold pieces. After the Civil War, the building reopened as an assay office, much like the one my students experienced during their tour of the Mint Hill Historical Village.

1852

The arrival of the railroad secured Charlotte's place as a trading town during the gold rush and cotton boom. Two of the richest gold mines, Rudisill and St. Catherine, were located in the heart of what is now downtown Charlotte.

1855

Annual cotton sales were less than 3,000 bales. By 1860, the market had increased to 12,000 bales and 40,000 bales by 1874. The dramatic growth in the wholesale of cotton was directly connected to the influence of the railroad lines.

1872

Charlotteans recognized how much their future prosperity relied on the linking of railroad ties. The Carolina Central became the fifth railroad and connected Charlotte directly to the port city of Wilmington, NC.

December 15, 1874

The last stagecoach carried mail from Charlotte to Wadesboro as railroad lines now linked major cities throughout the Carolinas and the South. There was now a distillery to make liquor in Charlotte and four dealers who sold the intoxicating spirits.

Latta Empire 1876

Edward Dilworth Latta opened a clothing store in Charlotte. Soon, this South Carolina descendent of Mecklenburg planter James Latta would become known as one of the Queen City's most influential men. He began the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company, called the "4Cs." E.D. Latta introduced the concept of suburbs, and developed trolley transportation that made suburban growth possible.

1879-1913 Industrial South Era

A new industry of textile mills was on the rise in Charlotte. Entrepreneurs D.A. Tompkins and Stuart Cramer revolutionized the textile industry with technical advancements. Tompkins built more than 100 textile mills throughout the country. As more textile mills branched out to the surrounding counties in Charlotte, the Queen City's focus shifted to finance and distribution.



D. A. Tompkins

1880 First Cotton Mill

Until 1880, cotton grown in Mecklenburg County traveled north to be made into cloth, or milled. At West Fifth and Graham streets, R.M. and D.W. Oates began the Charlotte Cotton Mill. They employed 70 people, mostly women, to clean, spin and weave the cotton thread into cloth. The building still exists in Charlotte today. This is rare in a town known for tearing down buildings to build new structures.

1885 Buford Hotel

The Buford Hotel opened in the Queen City. At Fourth and Tryon streets, the hotel would host inventor Thomas Edison and his wife when they visited Charlotte. Other prominent Charlotteans made homes at the Buford hotel, including industrialist D.A. Tompkins. The Buford Hotel operated until 1915, when its lower floors were converted to storerooms for the Union National Bank.

1897

Charlotte National Bank opened in Charlotte. This bank is a direct descendent of the present day, Wachovia
(Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County 2002)

Classroom Activities

Activity One:

To introduce this unit, I will display pictures of children working in the cotton fields and inside the textile mills via Lewis Hine's website. <http://www.lewishinephotographs.com/>
Lewis Hine was an American photographer and sociologist. Hine used his photographic

talent to fight the social injustice of child labor. Many children worked long hours and risked their lives daily working the fields of farms and inside textile mills.

After viewing the photographs, I will leave 2 images up on the projection screen; one of a child working in a farmer's field and another of a child working in a textile mill. Students will compare and contrast the two child labor positions using a Venn Diagram. Upon completion of the graphic organizer, students will reflect on the photographs in their Writer's Notebook and respond to the following questions:

- *Imagine you lived during the time of the children in the photographs, which job would you prefer to work?*
- *Why would you choose this position over the other?*
- *What were your weekly wages?*
- *How many hours do you work per day?*
- *Do you think your job is dangerous?*
- *If so, what dangers do you face each day?*

Next, I will show various Lewis Hine photographs from The Loray Mill in Gastonia, North Carolina. The Loray Mill is best known as being the site of a deadly strike in 1929. Today the Loray Mill is currently being revitalized into state of the art loft apartments, retail shopping, and restaurants. (Leonard 1997)

Activity Two:

This activity will focus on cause and effect as it pertains to change in Charlotte. Begin this lesson by reviewing the definitions of cause and effect with students. A cause is the reason an event happens the effect is what happens. List several examples of cause and effect, as they pertain to the events in the timeline of Charlotte's history, on the board using the following chart.

| Cause | Effect |
|--|---|
| A local gold rush began with John Reed's discovery of a 16-pound nugget in nearby Cabarrus County. | A branch of the US Mint opened in Charlotte to support the amount of gold production. This would later lead to the first banks opening in the Queen City. |
| Cotton became a valuable cash crop. | Railroads were built to support the cotton trade. |
| Cotton was shipped to New England to be milled into clothing. | Textile Mills opened in Charlotte and surrounding cities. "Bring the mills to the cotton" |
| Charlotte's population doubled from 1850-1860. | Charlotte became known as a town instead of a village. |

After discussing the events on the timeline and the cause and effect chart above, students will draw and illustrate their own Charlotte timelines to present to the class. Students may use classroom Ipads to look up different images of Charlotte during the time periods discussed in the history of Charlotte timeline.

To conclude this activity, discuss how the element of change was the common thread connecting the timeline of events, which shaped our city into the Charlotte of today. Analyze the following historical local changes as they pertain to present day Charlotte:

- *How did the local gold rush in Charlotte contribute to the establishment of banks in the area?*
- *Explain how the cotton trade spurred Charlotte to build more railroads in the area.*
- *Why were many textile mills built around the Charlotte area? Which of the mills are still standing today? What is their purpose in present day Charlotte?*

Activity Three:

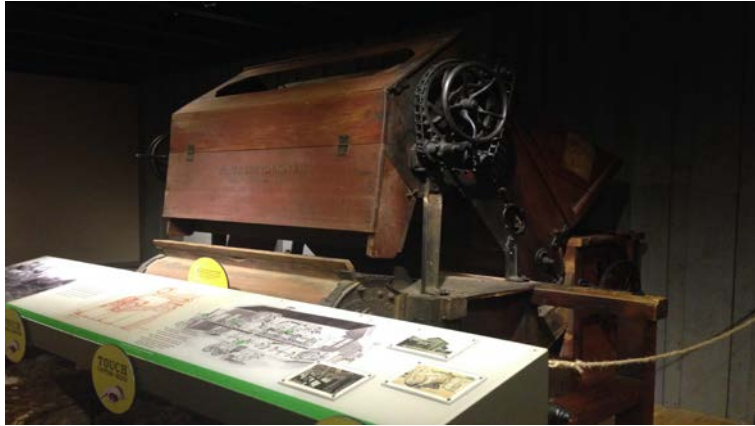
Using the photos below, students will experience the Levine Museum exhibit, *Cotton Fields to Skyscrapers: Reinventing the New South* in their own classroom.

As students view the photos of the exhibit, they will use their imaginations to envision themselves travelling back in time to the 1880s and be transformed into a textile worker subject to period specific socio-economic conditions. Students will do a random draw determining the social stratum (race, gender, etc.) they will assume during the written activity.

By doing this, students will complete a journaling activity from the viewpoint of the person they drew, applying the knowledge gained from the unit to describe a day in the life of this period-specific individual. This will allow students to expand their synthesis of the unit material, better understand the cultural context of the time period, and traverse the society depicted in the exhibit from a viewpoint different from their own. Students will be "paid" through the classroom economy via their socio-economic status based on criteria used during the time period. Students will answer a series of discussion questions following the completion of the journaling activity.

- How did the role you assumed during this activity differ from your current classroom position?
- Would you have wanted to live in Charlotte during the New South time period? Why or why not?
- In comparison, is your life easier now than the person's life you assumed? Why or why not?

The Levine Museum of the New South's exhibit, Cotton Fields to Skyscrapers, and The Loray Mill:



Cotton Gin, made by the Eagle Company 1880



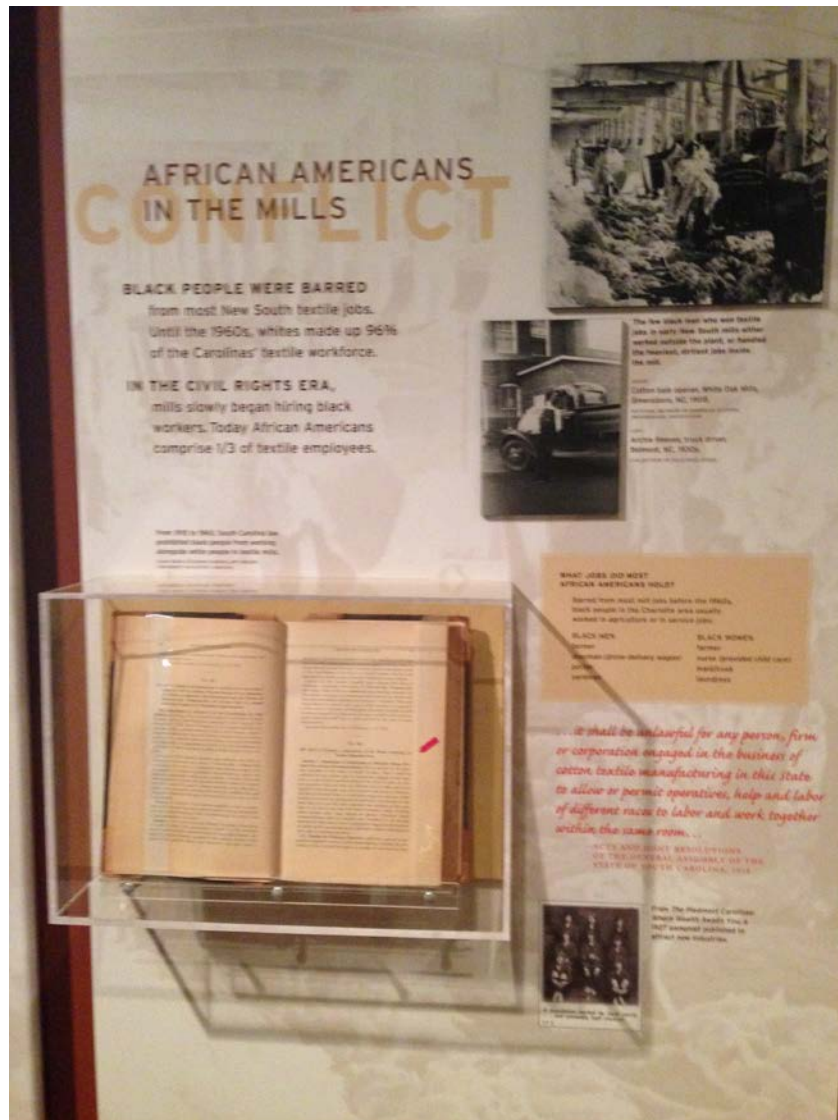
Map showing the geographical distribution of the textile industry



Whitin Carding Machine 1880s



The Loray Mill in Gastonia, NC (present day)



Black residents were barred from most New South textile jobs. In the 1960s, whites made up 96% of the Carolinas textile workforce.

Photos Courtesy of: "Cotton Fields to Skyscrapers" permanent exhibit, Levine Museum of the New South

List of Materials for Classroom Use

- Student Writer's Notebooks
- Projection system or document camera
- Photographs of exhibit (included)
- Charlotte Timeline
- 12x18 white construction paper
- Colored pencils
- Crayons
- Markers
- Pencils
- Ipads
- Index cards
- Copies of classroom "money"
- Venn Diagrams for each student

Appendix 1: Implementing Common Core Standards

This curriculum unit will seek to explain the following North Carolina Essential Standards/Common Core Standards:

- Understand how events, individuals and ideas have influenced the history of local and regional communities.

How did the building of train tracks play a key role in the growth of the textile industry in Charlotte?

- Explain key historical events that occurred in the local community and regions over time.

Which events of the 1850s and 1860s played the most pivotal roles in transforming Charlotte into the center of banking and finance of today?

- Analyze the impact of contributions made by diverse historical figures in local communities and regions over time.

Compare and contrast the contributions of DA Tompkins and Stuart Cramer to the textile industry. How did Tompkins and Cramer participate in the growth of Charlotte's textile mills?

- Exemplify the ideas that were significant in the development of local communities and regions.

*Explain Charlotte's rise in population over the decade following the boom of the textile industry. *Charlotte experienced a 78% increase in population in just ten years. Why were so many people relocating to Charlotte?*

- Use historical thinking skills to understand the context of events, people and places. Explain change over time through historical narratives (events, people, and places).

Design a timeline to depict the growth of Charlotte from 1799-1880. How did John Reed's discovery of gold lead to the building of railroad lines in Charlotte? How did the building of railroad lines play a vital role in the growth of the textile industry? Relate the growth of the textile industry to the current state of Charlotte as the center of banking and finance for the Carolinas.

Resources

Bibliography for Teachers

Hanchett, Thomas W. *Sorting Out The New South City: Race, Class, And Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875-1975*. Charlotte, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998. This book provides an extensive history of Charlotte as it progressed through the New South decades.

Leonard. *Strike At Loray Mill*. June 12, 1997. <https://blogs.newsobserver.com/pasttimes> (accessed October 20, 2013). This is a local newspaper blog written about the historic Loray Mill strike of 1929.

Mint Hill Historical Society. *Carl J McEwen Historical Village*. January 1, 2013. www.minthillhistory.com/Surface_Hill_Gold_Assay_Office (accessed October 20, 2013). This website showcases the various renovated buildings of the Mint Hill Historical Society.

Noda.org. *NODA*. January 1, 2013. www.noda.org/about.html (accessed October 29, 2013). This website showcases the NoDa neighborhood of Charlotte. NoDa is Charlotte's historic arts district which is dedicated to promoting art and entertainment.

Public Library of Charlotte-Mecklenburg County. *The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Story*. January 01, 2002. www.cmstory.org/history/timeline (accessed October 01, 2013) This website provides a vast amount of Charlotte history presented in reader-friendly timeline format with many time specific photos.

State Board of Education. *North Carolina Essential Standards Third Grade Social Studies*. December 2, 2010. www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/acre/standards/new-standards/social-studies/3-5.pdf (accessed September 28, 2013). This is the official website for the State of North Carolina Department of Public Education and defines the Common Core and Essential Standards objectives.

Reading List for Students

Mint Hill, North Carolina (Images of America Series) by The Staff of The Mint Hill Historical Society 2005. This book was written by the staff of the Mint Hill Historical Society and provides extensive history of Charlotte and its surrounding suburbs including the story of John Reed's 16-pound gold nugget.

Charlotte, North Carolina: A Brief History by Mary Kratt 2009. This book outlines Charlotte's rich heritage and the people who made the Queen City what it is today.

Golden Promise in the Piedmont: The Story of John Reed's Mine by Dr. Richard F. Knapp 1999.

Reading List for Teachers

Sorting Out the New South City by Thomas W. Hanchett 1998. This book showcases Charlotte's growth during the New South decades. The Queen City transformed from a leader in the textile industry to the hub of banking and finance.