TEACHING with PRIMARY SOURCES—MTSU
NEWSLETTER: August 2018

WELCOME!

Teaching with Primary Sources—Middle Tennessee State University, administered by the Center for Historic Preservation, engages learners of all ages in using primary sources to explore major issues and questions in many different disciplines.

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NEWS

• Are you interested in learning more about quality PD offered throughout the state? Are you searching for more primary sources and supporting materials to teach Tennessee history? If so, check out Discover Tennessee History, a consortium of the leading statewide organizations working with Tennessee’s primary source materials. Be sure to scroll to the bottom of the page for our complete PD calendar so you never miss a great workshop in your area!

• When did American Indians gain U.S. citizenship rights including the right to vote? Our newest lesson plan “Citizenship for American Indians” explores this question in a one-day activity that can be adapted for U.S. History, Government/Civics, or English Language Arts.

“AWESOME” SOURCE OF THE MONTH:

[Lewis and Clark map, with annotations in brown ink by Meriwether Lewis, tracing showing the Mississippi, the Missouri ...]. [1803]

The detail above shows a detailed, handwritten map made by Nicholas King in 1803 and thought to have been used by Lewis and Clark on their famous expedition. The light brown ink was added by Meriwether Lewis on the journey.

THEME: MAPS

We at TPS-MTSU have been using maps as primary sources in our lesson plans, newsletter ideas, primary source sets, and workshop activities from day one. Maps are wonderful primary sources to use because they engage students in a combination of text and images, and they connect math, geography, art, and science so easily. "Reading" a map is just as much a skill as reading a printed text. You can help your students learn to analyze maps using this specific guide from the Library of Congress Teachers Page.

To search on your own for maps from the Library of Congress, try going to the digital map collections first. Or, filter a search from the main search box by selecting “maps” instead of “all formats.” To get to some of our previous newsletter ideas using maps, go to our newsletters page, click Control-F, and type “map.”

UPCOMING EVENTS:

• September 14 (Murfreesboro) - "Causes of the Great Depression" in partnership with the Federal Reserve Branch of Atlanta, Nashville Branch at MTSU from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. To register, email jackie.morgan@atl.frb.org.

• September 21 (Knoxville) - “Addressing Social Studies Practice Standards through Inquiry” workshop at the East Tennessee History Center from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. ET. To register, email Lisa Oakley.

• September 26 (Nashville) - Tennessee Council for History Education conference at the Scarritt Bennett Center. For more information, click here.

• September 28 (Memphis) - "Examining Tennessee’s Story Using Social Studies Practices” workshop with the East Tennessee Historical Society for Shelby County Schools from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Open to Shelby County teachers.

• September 29 (Brownsville) - "Examining Tennessee’s Story: Resources and Strategies for Social Studies Teachers” workshop with the East Tennessee Historical Society at the Dunbar Carver Museum from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. To register, email Lisa Oakley.

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Growing up with parents who loved to travel, I had maps at my disposal from a young age and learned to follow our route from the backseat of a car. Studying geography for school was always more fun for me than other homework. But it was not until my college years when I saw a Michelin road travel guide indicating locations of Roman ruins all over the south of France that I began to visualize “missing” historical places in the contemporary landscape.

Years later, I had the opportunity to write two regional cultural travel books: one on Kentucky-Tennessee and one on Nashville for John Muir Publications, Santa Fe, NM. It was the mid 1990s, before widespread recreational use of the Internet. Simple single purpose maps were vital to the project.

As I was revising the Kentucky-Tennessee book for a second edition, I came across Tennessee’s Historic Landscapes: A Traveler’s Guide by Carroll Van West. The book is organized as a series of detours from Tennessee’s major interstate highway routes. What West (the director of MTSU’s Center for Historic Preservation) did so brilliantly in this book was to lay out routes in different geographic divisions of the state, such as the “Great Valley of Tennessee” in the east, the Cumberland Plateau, and southwest Tennessee’s “Mississippi River Country,” providing the historical background for strange and familiar structures and sites in the order one encounters them while driving.

But what of the places and place names mentioned in historical sources or novels or shown in historic photographs? Many no longer exist on current maps. The Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) allows queries by place name but it no longer draws from the older U.S. Geological Survey quadrangle maps (some dating back to the 1880s), which contained the names of rural post offices, schools, and towns. Many may soon be completely lost to history. While the newly available National Map is an exciting online tool that allows users to electronically peel back the layers of current geography to reveal the historic maps below and see old place names, it will likely never be comprehensive.

Maps as Primary Sources for History

My first exposure to using maps as primary sources for history came during my dissertation research, when I realized that one of the few published sources of information on the Tennessee marble industry (my subject) was in geological bulletins, which were often accompanied by maps. Outside of such fields as mineralogy and mine engineering, very little had been published about what was once a major economic sector of the East Tennessee economy. By 1850, Tennessee’s variegated brown and white marble was the material of choice for interior architectural elements such as mantelpieces, wainscoting, window surrounds, wall cladding, and grand staircases as in the U.S. Capitol. By the turn of the twentieth century, Tennessee’s durable light pink (buff colored) marble was in demand by architects for exterior construction as at the Morgan Library in New York City. Many buildings across the United States and Canada contain Tennessee marble, yet the remains of what were once as many as eighty quarries in East Tennessee, stretching from Blount to Hawkins Counties, are barely noticeable today.

Historic maps can be sources for a wide variety of information, as in the case of mineral deposits and marble quarries, or as indications of the original topography of an area that might have been inundated by a river dam, or altered by a natural disaster or human-made activity such as strip mining.

Creating Maps as Visualizations of Historical Information

One of the outcomes of my East Tennessee marble industry research was a map to show the sheer number of former quarry locations in the whole of East Tennessee. Our purpose in making this map was just to get the point across.

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Since we knew the names as well as the locations of many of the quarries from geologist’s maps, we were also able to place them onto contemporary geography by transferring locations from the historical maps to a current day map using GIS (Geographic Information System) software. The result is a virtual restoration of historic places to the landscape, which allows present-day residents of Knox County to see how land-use has changed over the past one hundred years.

Maps as Analytical Tools for History

Historic sources that include actual addresses, like city directories; church, civic, or professional organization membership rolls; or U.S. Census Records, seem custom tailored for mapping projects. If those sources are updated on a regular basis, historians can observe change over time reflected in the data. Recently, the Center for Historic Preservation was a partner in a statewide research project based on the “Negro Traveler’s Green Book,” an annual travel guide for African Americans published from the late 1930s to the early 1960s. From the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture at the New York Public Library, we downloaded state-by-state listings of places to stay and eat, and other needed services for automobile travelers during the Jim Crow era. From these we created a data table recording the types of information included (name, type of establishment, address, city or rural town name). For each yearly issue of the “Green Book,” we recorded the listings. The result was a chart showing how long each place lasted. The natural next step was to put them on the map. While we can still see a few locations of businesses that have survived, we quickly recognized how many roadside places vanished when bypassed by new roads and interstate highways. We also noted remarkable stability in African American neighborhoods, several of which are now historic districts, where private residences had functioned as “Tourist Homes.” Lastly, we found many African American establishments and business districts that were “disappeared” by urban renewal projects in Chattanooga, Knoxville, and Nashville. By extending the Tennessee “Green Book” project into mapping, and creating a narrative featuring both existing and missing places, we were able to demonstrate the power of a “Story Map” to underscore our observations and also present “missing history.”

LESSON IDEA—PROBLEMS OF A DIFFERENT SCALE

Maps are an effective and powerful tool for understanding the past. They allow the viewer to track the ways that a specific geographic location has changed over time. However, just like any primary source, a map can also reveal much about its creator and the circumstances of the map’s creation. Through an in-depth analysis of a map one can discern its purpose as well as author bias.

This lesson idea will have your students explore these skills in addition to problems of scale and orientation. Provide each student with two sheets of graph paper, a ruler, and a pencil. Instruct your students to draw a map of a specific area. Make sure that this is an area that all of your students will be relatively familiar with. For example, the map could be of the school’s campus, the interior of the school building, or the downtown square of the town where your school is located. To provide some variation, you can divide the class up into different groups to work on distinct areas. After you have decided on the area to be mapped, instruct your students to draw a map with all of the important features in that area represented on the map. They should also be instructed to provide a scale at the bottom of the map and orient the map correctly. This doesn’t have to be perfect, but it should be done to the best of their ability. Note that this should be done by each student individually. After they have completed their maps, have your students share with either their groups or a partner. Alternatively, you could have your students present to the class. This project also makes for a great exhibit, and you can display your students’ maps on the wall or in the hallway.

What were some of the challenges you had when drawing this map? How does your map differ from your peers? What did you emphasize in your map? What did you not emphasize in your map? What was the reasoning behind this? What can this exercise tell us about the ways that maps are created?

This lesson meets high school World Geography Standards W.G. 1, W.G. 4, and W.G. 7.
The English expedition which led to the establishment of Jamestown in 1607 was far from the first attempt by a European country to colonize the New World. Have students analyze this map and discuss how colonial boundaries changed over time. How did the French and Indian War change the map of North America? What role did American Indians play in this history? What European characteristics remain to this day in parts of North America?

Click these links for more Colonial and Early American primary sources and information.

This 1946 map, published by Hagstrom Co. in New York, depicts songs, instruments, and singers from across the continental U.S. Students can learn more about the culture of various regions by analyzing the way the vignettes are drawn, the way the singers are dressed, and what song lyrics are included (which are labeled in the “Key to Musical Classification on Map”). For example, “Keep a inchin along” and “Frankie and Johnnie” represent the Tennessee Valley. Visit the American Folklore Center for more examples, photographs, and stories about “Folk Music and Song.”

From December 16, 1944, to January 25, 1945, German troops made their last major offensive as the Allied troops sought to defend the Western Front. Remembered as a turning point in the war, “The Battle of the Bulge” was the largest and one of the bloodiest battles for the United States.

This map is part of the Library of Congress’s collection of WWII situation maps, which includes hundreds of maps, documents, and photographs related to the European theater. By viewing this printable timeline depicting “The Battle of the Bulge,” students can better understand the decision-making processes involved in the battle.

Immigration has always been an important part of U.S. history. In recent years, however, it has become a hot-button political issue, especially when considering migration from Central America. A 1979 survey available through the Library of Congress offers over 200 images of ports of entry on the U.S.–Mexico border. Consider using these resources to teach students more about immigration. Discuss how immigration has changed in recent decades and how the experience of people in 2018 might differ from those traveling through the ports of entry shown in the 1979 survey.