Teaching with Primary Sources across Tennessee

Newsletter: November 2010

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

Contact: Stacey Graham or Kira Duke at (615) 898-2947 or www.mtsu.edu/tps

Feature Article: “Agriculture in Tennessee”
By Caneta S. Hanksins, Director, Tennessee Century Farms

What was the occupation, other than President, that George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Andrew Jackson all had in common? They were farmers. Many of the founding fathers, and mothers, of our nation and state were first and foremost farmers—planting crops, raising livestock, and improving their land. Before the earliest European settlers, Native American tribes practiced agriculture. It was these native farmers, you will recall, that shared their food with the Plymouth settlers, teaching them about crops that would grow in Massachusetts so that the following year’s harvest was bountiful enough to support the colony.

(continued on next page)

“Awesome” Source of the Month:

Pumpkin pies and Thanksgiving dinner at the home of Mr. Timothy Levy Crouch, a Rogerine Quaker living in Ledyard, Connecticut [1940]

How does this photo capture the traditions of Thanksgiving? What is the focal point?

Upcoming Events:

- November 2 (Clarksville)-Clarksville-Montgomery County Schools Gifted Education, 12 p.m.—3 p.m.
- November 3 (Nashville)-Presentation, Tennessee Council for History Education conference, 12—1 p.m.
- November 6 (Murfreesboro)-TPS-TN—Oaklands Historic House Museum workshop, 9 a.m.—3 p.m. Participants click here for info; workshop full!
- November 8 (Murfreesboro)-Presentation, Tennessee Association of School Librarians conference, 11:40 a.m.—12:40 p.m.
- November 15 (Greeneville)-TPS—Tennessee History Day joint workshop, Lincoln Memorial University, 9 a.m.—3 p.m. EST. To sign up, email Kelly Wilkerson.
- November 18 (Murfreesboro, etc.) Webcast, “Teaching Environmental Science with the Library of Congress,” MTSU Instructional Technology Support Center. For viewing options and more info, click here.
- November 25—Thanksgiving holiday

News

- The Tennessee Farmland Legacy Conference will take place on November 11-12 at the Music Road Hotel and Convention Center in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. Farmers, landowners and community leaders will have the opportunity to learn about protecting and growing today’s farms for tomorrow’s families and communities. For a brochure or more information, call 615-898-2947. You may also go to www.farmlandlegacy.org where you can register online or by calling 865-974-0280.
- New tool! TPS-TN has created “Resources for Researchers,” which can be found on the Tools page of the TPS-TN Web site. This 1-page PDF is loaded with links to get the online researcher started on the Library of Congress reference pages, and also links to useful pages about saving, citing, and copyright.

Teaching with Primary Sources is a program of the Library of Congress, and is administered in Tennessee by the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University.

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Most of the immigrants who came into what would become Tennessee had common goals—to own good land and build a better life for their families by farming. One of the first crops planted was corn, still grown across the state, which is a staple for both humans and animals. Potatoes and squash were easy to plant and quick to grow in areas that had yet to be cleared of trees and stumps. Cattle for beef and milk, and swine, which grazed in the forests and required little care, were the primary meat sources along with chickens which also provided eggs for the table and for sale or barter.

Agriculture, traditionally the number one industry of Tennessee, shaped the landscape and the lives of residents, influencing society and culture, for more than 200 years. Today, Tennessee farmers continue to produce corn, grains, vegetables, milk, fruits, meats, poultry, and many other products, though in much smaller quantities than even the early twentieth century. Though fewer people farm, agriculture continues to be a basic economic driver in rural communities and counties and generates more than $60 million in total economic activity and accounts for more than 500,000 jobs for Tennesseans.

As more and more people are concerned about a safe, affordable, and abundant food supply, farms and farming are the answer. However, less and less land is being farmed each year. Tennessee loses 1700 family farms and 60,000 acres of farmland annually. Many farmers can no longer make a living because of high overhead costs and low market prices for their products. Land that was once farmed is now residential, industrial, and commercial development. Once it is reshaped for these purposes, it can rarely be used for farming again.

If you like to eat, support local farmers and help conserve farmland. That is the one thing that every Tennessean can do. Use farms to teach across the disciplines in science, math, social studies, economics, history, art, music, and literature. Learn how items get from farm to market. Explore the possibilities of planting, maintaining, and harvesting a garden at your school or in a nearby neighborhood. Urban gardens are appearing on rooftops and vacant lots and the food is both cheap and nutritious. Farmers are great teachers and many make it a part of their business to invite students and teachers to come to their farm and learn about agriculture. From them you can learn how farms and farmers are vital to the future of our state’s sustainable economy, our health, and our overall quality of life that comes from conservation and good use of the rich and productive land of Tennessee—the very commodity that brought the settlers and has sustained the state for more than two centuries.

To get started, visit the Tennessee Century Farms (see p. 3) and Pick Tennessee Products Web sites. These will direct you to interactive and historic farms in your area, and provide ideas on how to integrate farming and farm visits into classroom learning.
For many students, ideas of agriculture are shaped by the things they see around them, which in the U.S. would include barns, silos, and tractors. Though the basic work of agriculture remains the same around the world, the equipment and methods used by farmers is as diverse as the plants they grow. The process of improving agriculture through new tools and methods has been one of the cornerstones of human development and continues today.

“Agriculture Around the World” is a new Lesson Activity on the TPS-TN Web site that will introduce your students to different methods of farming through historic photographs. This activity is designed to offer teachers ready-to-print worksheets and primary source images for students. An instruction sheet at the beginning and a bibliography page at the end offer further help to teachers.

The activity shows students some of the diverse and creative ways people use animals and machinery to aid in agriculture, from Mexico to the Middle East to the Philippines. As students examine the historic photographs, have them discuss which scenarios look familiar, and which are a surprise. This activity encourages critical thinking about mechanized and non-mechanized agriculture by asking students such questions as, “What is the role of animals and machinery in agriculture?” Students can work individually or in groups, and can expand the lesson by mapping the places represented in the photos, studying how the photos demonstrate physical principles, and comparing world farming to practices in Tennessee.

This idea can be modified to meet curriculum standards for grade 6 Social Studies (Standard 1.0 Culture, 2.0 Economy, and 3.0 Geography) and Grade 6 Science (Standard 10, Energy).

Do you know of a farm near your community that’s been in the same family for over 100 years? If so, it may be one of Tennessee’s 1,343 Century Farms. The Tennessee Century Farms program brings recognition to farming families and their importance to our state’s history, culture, and economy. These farms, located in every one of Tennessee’s 95 counties, have been the backbone of Tennessee life since the state’s founding in 1786.

Students can visit the Century Farms Web site and look for Century Farms in their counties. Just click on your county and up pops a list of farms registered there. Read the farm descriptions to learn what kinds of crops are grown or animals are raised there. Now click on the “Preliminary agricultural map of Tennessee” below. Zoom in using the “zoom view” feature to get a closer look at the geological formations in your part of the state. Check the key at the bottom of the map to interpret the map’s colors. Then look at Century Farms in counties in different geological zones. How do the products of farms reflect the geology of the areas the farms are located? (Also zoom into this striking geological map from 1866 for comparison.)

If you plan to visit one of the many farms in your area, check out the resources for visiting historic farms on the TPS-TN Web site. These resources incorporate ideas for Art, Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies.

This idea can be adapted to meet curriculum standards for Science grade 3 (standard 7.0) and grade 8 (standard 5.0); Health Education grades 3-8 (standards 5.0 and 14.0); Social Studies grades 3-8 (standard 3.0), grades 3-4 & 6-8 (standard 2.0), grades 3-4 & 7 (standard 5.0); and Career Technical Education: Agriculture, grade 8: Exploring Agricultural Science.
**State Seal of Tennessee**

Tennessee [Pictorial envelope] [detail, n.d.]

Look at this copy of the state seal drawn during the Civil War. What two words are written inside? Now look at a copy of the current state seal at [http://www.tennesseeanytime.org/about/symbols.html#seal](http://www.tennesseeanytime.org/about/symbols.html#seal).

What are the differences between the Civil War-era seal shown above and today’s seal? What are the similarities? What do the symbols stand for?

**New Farming Practices**

Knox County, Tennessee (Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)). Cows are milked by electricity on the Broadacre Dairy Farm, [1942]

How has technology changed how farmers work? Do you think this has made their jobs easier? Why or why not? What technology is used today to help dairy farmers?

**Farmer’s Compleat Guide**


This agricultural guide, written by George Washington, contains chapters on various topics such as plowing, manure, and specific crops (“turn to image” 29-141). Does his advice seem useful? Expert? What does it say about a nation whose most prominent citizens are primarily farmers?

**Tobacco Farming**

Tobacco barn, showing how it is dried. Location: Winchester [vicinity], Kentucky [1916]

What is the process for growing tobacco? Listen to a Greeneville, Tennessee woman discuss the many steps involved in tobacco farming. What type of equipment would you need? What role would buildings such as the barn above play in the process? What are tobacco farmers doing this month with their crops?