



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2008 Volume III: Pride of Place: New Haven Material and Visual Culture

Pride of Place: New Haven circa 1750

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Introduction

Everyday life during the Colonial Period is difficult for today's children to understand or embrace. Much of colonial history is still taught through political and military events and significant leaders. Resources that inform students about daily life have not been made available to them, or those that have been presented are not interesting to the children. This unit will be a window into the past of New Haven so that the students will be able to learn, understand, and appreciate the rich history and culture that the city has to offer them. The lessons designed will engage and connect each student to the past through a focused exploration of New Haven circa 1750. I teach Social Studies at MicroSociety Magnet School, a small inter-district urban pre-kindergarten to 8th grade school. The students I teach are unfamiliar with the history of their great city New Haven. They do not realize or even comprehend that New Haven has a unique and fascinating history, with a lively and ever growing present, which in turn promotes a future that will afford many educational and professional prospects for them.

New Haven's fifth grade curriculum objective is to teach the students about their community by presenting precise examples of New Haven's development through planning, architecture, and buildings as well as explanations detailing their inceptions and how each of them has grown and changed throughout history depending on religious, political, and personal desires in the local community. Students must be able to demonstrate an in-depth understanding of major events and trends in local history. I teach students to appreciate their surroundings by learning to visualize and to investigate all that they have encountered. I have forty-five minutes each day to introduce New Haven's rich culture to a class of nine and ten year old eager students. My task is challenging, for many of them, it is their first introduction to any formal instruction in social studies.

Although this unit will focus mainly on fifth graders, it can be modified to teach sixth, seventh and eighth graders as well. Students of any age can grasp the concepts within this unit with appropriate age and learning modifications.

Rationale

I am designing this unit to teach my students about the look of New Haven in 1750 and how its layout has been determined by plan rather than growing organically along the geography of the location and how people interacted with one another. Also, students will gain a greater understanding of how the town grew from a beginning plan. Many students cannot conceptualize that New Haven didn't just appear one day and suddenly became a vast city with a lot of interesting places and things to visit. This unit will also provide a visual and tangible beginning for each student by exposing them to the 17th century map which depicts the city. The use of maps, builder's drawings, probate inventories, and other primary resource documents, in conjunction with secondary sources such as photographs and architectural drawings, will allow students to form personal connections in the planning, designing, and constructing of houses that may still be present in some of their neighborhoods. Students will also be able to strengthen their map skills along with their research skills. Their exposure to probate inventories will definitely be challenging; however, an appreciation for original documents will be gained. I want my students to achieve an understanding and an admiration for structures that were built during the mid 1700's in New Haven. Students will be able to research and explore how people shaped New Haven in the mid 18th century.

This unit will explore New Haven in three distinct but relative aspects. We will begin with the Wadsworth Map of 1748 which will be explored and researched. The map will be used as a starting point as well as a springboard that will lead to the introduction of the "Marketplace," which later became known as the "Green" and where the meetinghouse was located. The third focal point will be the homes surrounding the town center and their inhabitants in the mid-18th century. These three perspectives will provide the fifth graders with a real connection to life in colonial New Haven.

My unit will be taught in ten to twelve forty-five minute sessions with my 5th grade students. Instructional lessons can be adjusted to compliment the specific needs and concerns of the each class. For instance, block scheduling would require a reduction in session time.

Topography

According to Denis Wood, author of "The Power of Maps", "Maps are the ceaseless reproduction of the culture that brings them into being." ¹ He goes on to pose the question. "What do maps *do* when they work?" ²

"They make present-they represent-the accumulated thought and labor of the past... about the milieu we simultaneously live in and collaborate on bringing being. In so doing they enable the past to become part of our living...now... here. (This is how maps facilitate the reproduction of the culture that brings them into being.)" ³

In Wood's answer lies the reason why I am starting my unit with the Wadsworth Map. The Wadsworth map illustrates the enduring legacy of the town's original layout. The new colony, settled in 1638, was laid out in an organized grid of nine squares between the East and West Creeks. Each of the squares was about 830 to 860 feet on each side. Eight of the nine squares were divided into smaller lots for homes, shops and barns. Your wealth determined where your lot would be located as well as the size. Settlers who, invested the most money into the colony and had the biggest families lived on the biggest house lots.

"The colony was a joint stock undertaking. Each person who was admitted as a planter in the colony paid in the amount he wished to invest, stated the number in his family and received a proportionate amount of land. For every hundred pounds of estate which a man invested he was allowed five acres of land and an equal quantity for every two persons." ⁴

For example, a man with a wife and two children gave a hundred pounds of estate; in return he would receive fifteen acres of land. This land would be used for a house with a garden in the town plot and the rest of the land would be in the outlying area.

General James Wadsworth depicted New Haven's nine squares in a map in 1748 (and included representations of each house with its owner's name). This version will be blown up and shown to the class I want them to look at this primary document and get the sense that the founding fathers started this settlement with a preconceived notion that New Haven would become a vast and prosperous city. Students will be able to analyze the city of New Haven on a broad scale. They will be able to look closely at the map and be able to record pertinent information. Students will also have the opportunity to look at a current map of New Haven and they will be able to envision the tremendous growth of the city and still see the foundation of the map. They will compare and contrast the Wadsworth map with a current map of New Haven. The students will then look at the mid-18th century map overlaying a current map and determine the similarities and differences.

The shareholders established a social order of the "haves and the have more." The families living on and surrounding the Green often were the wealthiest. Laborers and skilled workers who did not pay to help to settle the town but provided services were given lots outside of the Nine Squares which was across the West Creek. This area of land was called the "suburbs." There were farms, shipping, and more houses beyond the grid. This practice established a social order of the "haves and the have more." The families living on and surrounding the Green were the wealthiest. The students will be able to determine which families had the most power by looking at the Wadsworth map. The students will pay special attention to the social classes which were quite evident on the map. They will examine the three established social orders. First, they will investigate those families representative of the upper class. The current Yale President, a lawyer, and a merchant will make up this group. Next, a clockmaker, a joiner, and yeoman farmer will make up the middle class. Lastly, day laborers, fishermen and artisans make up the lowest of the classes. "The various strata possessed clearly defined rights and duties, and a man's position was readily recognizable by the clothes he wore." ⁵ Maintaining this type of social order was upholding the political tradition of the colony. The fifth

graders will be able to see that settlers wanted New Haven to be a prosperous town so they chose to build along the harbor. They thought this would be good for trade and business.

The ninth and center square was reserved for a common area and was known as the market place. In the mid-18th Century, the old market place became known by the more dignified name of "The Green".⁶ The most important place in any established city has always been the center of town. "The Green was a public common place and used for all public purposes. It was unfenced, but the eight squares surrounding it were fenced at the cost of the proprietors."⁷ New Haven's Green functioned as a place where goods and services were brought and sold. It was also used as the city's first burial grounds, and as history records, it is estimated to have over 10,000 bodies underneath the vast grass surface. Sometimes, cattle were turned out for pasture. Located on the map one can see the schoolhouse behind the existing burial grounds and the first court house which had been built in 1717.

By studying the Wadsworth map, the students will be able to determine that the Green and the Meetinghouse were two very important elements, the main focus in the lives of the colonists. The center of a community can also be considered the heart of the community. If the heart in the body stops working, then the rest of the body can no longer function properly and it will die. Well, the same can be said for the center of town. This is where the people gathered on a daily basis. All the important events in their lives were happening on the Green. The colonists created their community in the center of town. They lived and worked there. They all shared religious sacraments and ceremonies such as worship, weddings, baptisms and burials. Their political interests were addressed through speeches, rallies, and elections. They were also able to fulfill their civic duties by attending town meetings and court proceedings. Every aspect of life was centered on the Green. The men went to Yale College across from the upper Green and the young boys were able to go to the schoolhouse which was on the Green. And, for those who did not obey the laws of the colony, a jail house was built along with a stockade and whipping post. Having this historical preview, students will then begin to imagine what the New Haven Green looked like and how it functioned as a daily resource for the colonists.

As the students look at the map they will be able to compare and contrast the 1750 Green with present-day Green. The students will examine the map to see if they can locate any identifiable landmarks, buildings, or points of interests that still exist today. By looking at the two maps students can begin to make historical as well as cultural connections. The students will also be able to question whether the function of the Green has changed over the last 260 years. Students will then begin to realize how important the Green was to the development and expansion to the city of New Haven.

"Functionally, New Haven began in effect with two centers. The lower town along the creeks and harbor was the center of daily activity and economic energy, while in the upper town square reserved as common land became the institutional center. Called the Marketplace, it was used for the meetinghouse, town meetings, military drill, and other public functions."⁸

Meetinghouse

The settlers wanted a central location for religious and political purposes. So they placed the meetinghouse in the center square of the nine squared grid. The next segment of the unit will focus on the importance of the meetinghouse, an essential part of a colonist's everyday life. Peter Benes provides a more concrete definition of the early meetinghouse.

“To its builders, therefore, the meeting house was an architectural expression of the Reformed point of view that the “house of God” was not a sacred place. At the same time, it represented an expedient, if temporary, joining of a number of secular buildings: powder house, court house, school house, meeting hall, town house, parsonage, and fort.”⁹

I feel that it is imperative for the students to know that social order was pertinent and maintained in colonial New Haven. It affected every aspect of their lives; moreover, their wealth and lack thereof was evident in everything they did, even attending church. The students will be able to access actual church records showing the seating arrangements the colonists were proud to enforce. The higher your political status the closer you were to the pulpit. There was also gender bias; women were required to sit behind the men. The colonists were required to pay for their seats; the closer one sat to the front of the church the more money one had to pay. The fee on a pew could cost as much as \$ 218.00. The seating of the meetinghouse was a matter of court record and the many uses of the meetinghouse made great profit. Even the great Yale College Professors had to pay for a seat, they were charged “two shillings and a six pence per year” until the year of 1752, when it was increased to five shillings (the equivalent to the wages of a day's work today).¹⁰ Yale College, as it was known in the early years, had to seek special permission from the First Ecclesiastical Society in order to hold Commencement Exercises in the meetinghouse.¹¹ This consent had to be voted on by the House committee. In later years, this same House committee granted Yale College authorization to build a separate pew for the exclusive use of its Presidents. Although, Yale had the approval to build their special pew; they, of course, had to pay a fee. Yale's designated seat was northeast of the pulpit.¹²

The great details in town records combined with meticulously kept church ledgers document how the meetinghouse was a vital part of colonial life. Outside of their businesses and homes, the caretaking and handling of this structure was crucial to their religious, political and communal culture. The community gathered at least four times a week: twice on Sundays with a morning and afternoon service, then again on Tuesday and Thursday. The students will be able to see evidence of these accounts and use them to compare and contrast their own worship experience if they have any. Also, looking at the actual seating list that was mandated in a court of law will provided an excellent opportunity for classroom discussions on the colonial structure of politics and religion.

Students will then take a field trip to the Center Church on the Green, a later structure but one that preserves some of the similar religious and communal functions, and they will be able to visualize the seating plan. Prior to their visit, the students will be put into groups and with the help of the tour guides; they will research specific families which are located on the Wadsworth Map. The students will be able to determine the social class of each given family and their status within the church. I believe students will have great interest in witnessing the oldest church in New Haven which was formerly used as a meetinghouse. The students will be able to take ownership of the history that is in New Haven. This lesson will culminate with the students drawing their own designs to build their meetinghouse. They will be required to use floor plans that are consistent with the architectural designs of the mid-18th century. Resources for this activity will be provided at the end of unit.

Family Homes

Homes are the extension of one's wealth, occupation and personality. During the 1750's, many colonist were enjoying an architectural style called Georgian. This method was named after King George I-IV of England and used in America during the colonial period.

“Georgian was a style based on classical principles. It is almost always symmetrical (and the exceptions are nearly symmetrical). It has windows and doors lined up in horizontal and vertical rows. It usually has a side gable or gambrel roof, especially in New England. In New England, Georgian buildings are usually wood-framed with clapboards or shingles. Georgian buildings often have panel doors, pedimented dormers, central chimneys, sash windows, and Classical molding.”¹³

This section will be quite technical and it is a good time to incorporate some vocabulary. This will allow students to expand their knowledge of words. Mastering many of these words will enable the students to be able to give accurate description of the houses that they will be required to construct at the end of this unit.

1. Architectural style- an architectural fashion used in a particular time.
2. Artisans - craftsman; someone who is skilled at a particular craft.
3. Clapboards - a long, narrow board that is nailed to the outside of a building in overlapping rows with other clapboards. Clapboards are nailed parallel to the ground.

4. Classical styles - architectural style associated with the art and architecture of ancient Greece and Rome.
5. Dormer - a small structure with a gable roof and a window that sits over an opening in a building's roof. Dormers help get light and air into upper stories.
6. Dormitory - a building where students live and study when they are at school and away from home.
7. Gable roof - a pitched roof that slopes downward in two parts from a ridge so as to make a gable on each end.
8. Gable - the triangular end of a pitched roof.
9. Gambrel roof - a pitched roof that slopes partway down from the center ridge and then changes pitch so as to slope more steeply.
10. Joiner - a woodworking craftsman; the main person involved in the construction of buildings.
11. Panel doors - a door with rectangular panels set within a mortised and tenoned frame.
12. Pediment - a wide, low pitched triangular gable outlined on all three sides by a molded edge. Pediments may top doors, windows, dormers, and porticos.
13. Pedimented dormer - a dormer with a pediment at the top.
14. Sash windows - a window that consist of two or more sections and that opens by raising or lowering one of the sections. Usually sashes consist of six to twelve small rectangular panes of glass.
15. Symmetrical - balanced, even or equal in its shape and form as well as detail; a mirror image of parts.

Students will research and analyze the homes of the following people: Thomas Clapp, President of Yale College; Jared Ingersol, lawyer; Isaac Doolittle, clockmaker, Joseph Talmidge, joiner; Jethro Blackman; yeoman farmer, William Dinslow, laborer; Samuel Miles, mariner; and Munson, widow.

Students will work in collaborative groups and use town records and probate inventories to determine what type of house each of these people would have more likely owned. The students will be able to strengthen their critical thinking investigative skills. Once they have gathered all of the necessary information, then the

students will be able to within their groups begin to plan to build their houses. Students will focus and take in to consideration the following: They must have an occupation, a floor plan, a size of house in mind, and exterior details.

Strategies

This unit will be effective for the auditory, visual, and tactile/kinesthetic learners, and it will be an appropriate instructional tool that will address diverse strengths, weaknesses, cognitive abilities, and learning styles. MicroSociety has such a diverse student body that I attempt to engage and teach to every type of learner. Information and materials will be presented in various ways to incorporate and to stimulate each type of learner about the unit subject. For example, cooperative learning, independent study, guided instruction, peer and self critiques, presentations and rubrics will be used to promote growth and understanding of the unit.

Objectives

The goal of the unit is for students to appreciate colonial architecture and structures during the mid 18th century in New Haven which still exist today. The objectives attained in this unit are aligned with district, state, and national standards.

Students will be able to develop critical thinking skills to help them connect to the past and present.

Students will be able to read and decipher maps and drawings.

Students will be able to research and analyze primary resource documents such as church records, probate inventories, and tax lists.

Students will be able to collect historical data from multiple sources.

Students will be able to identify the many ways cultures record their past.

Students will be able to compare and contrast past and present events.

Students will be able to compose oral, written, and visual presentations of historical information.

Students will be able to assess how planning and developing a city contributes to its success or failure in society.

Procedures

Lesson # 1 (Two class sessions)

In order for students to master the unit objectives, they will start the learning process by reading and analyzing the plans for the Society of New Haven. The students will be given the Wadsworth map and a current map of New Haven then required to compare and contrast both maps. Then, the students will use the modern day map of New Haven to record the major and significant changes that have occurred over the years.

Materials

Several blown up versions of the 1748 Wadsworth map, several blown up versions of a current map of New Haven (two copies for each group), pencils and markers, handout with questions pertaining to the maps.

Opening

Teacher will introduce the lesson by providing brief background information on the Wadsworth map and the importance of the Green in 1750 in colonial New Haven.

Activity # 1

Students will work in cooperative learning groups as they analyze and evaluate the two distinctive maps.

Procedures

- a. Maps will be displayed for each group of students. Each group will have their own maps. Student will be given a chance to observe the two maps. (Wadsworth and a current map of New Haven)
- b. Students will locate any and all familiar places on each map.
- c. Students will compare and contrast information by using a Venn diagram.
- d. Students will determine what is unique and significant about each map.
- e. Students will identify points of interest on each map.
- f. Students will write about five new things that they have learned about New Haven in their journals.
- g. Students will record in their journals ten things that are the same in the Wadsworth map and current map. Also, describe the changes that have taken effect since 1748 if any.
- h. Students will develop their own version of a town map for New Haven. They will record and explain the changes they have made.

Closure

Have students share their findings and discuss what new things they have learned about New Haven.

Materials

Photographs, books, and articles illustrating meetinghouses in the mid 18th century, drawings and floor plans of mid 18th century meetinghouses, church, town, and court records of seating in the meetinghouses, pencils, pens and journals, and construction and tracing paper.

Opening

Teacher will discuss the magnitude and significance of the meetinghouse and how it helped determine social status and order in the colony.

Activity # 2 (4 class sessions)

Procedures

- a. Students will look at original floor plans and drawings of mid 18th century meetinghouses in New Haven.
- b. Students will focus on the central location and the importance of the meetinghouse.
- c. Students will identify the religious, political, and professional hierarchies associated with power in the colonies.
- d. Students will name the many craftsmen that participated in the designing and constructing of buildings.
- e. Students will go on a field trip to visit the Center church on the Green to help them develop a visual connection to their project.
- f. Students will view church, town, and court records to determine and analyze the social standings of families within the church.
- g. Students will develop and compile their own social class order based on current occupations.
- h. Students will write in their journals the difference between a church and meeting house.
- i. Student will then create and develop their own meetinghouse following the guidelines of a mid-18th century building plan.

Closure

Students will present and explain their decisions made in the development of their meetinghouse to the class.

Materials

Probate inventories, drawings of homes, floor plans, photos and books on mid 18th century homes, construction and tracing paper, pencils, markers, pens and journals.

Opening

Teacher will explain the connection between home and work for the colonist. A mini lesson on the significance on how work was an extension home and how one's occupation played a very important role in the type of house one owned.

Activity # 3 (3 class sessions)

Procedures

- a. Students will be given probate inventories, drawings of homes, floor plans, and photos to research and analyze.
- b. Students will create, plan, and design their own homes based on previous research with an occupation in mind.
- c. Students will document their plans and keep notes as changes and adjustments occur.
- d. Students will be given a rubric to help them to stay on task and to assess their progress.

Closure

Students will present their drawings and give an oral report on their research and reflect their understanding and appreciation for their historic built environment.

Conclusions

There are many facets to this unit where the students can be creative. This unit is designed to give them a personal connection to the historical and architectural buildings in New Haven. This course will teach them that there is a story behind everything. If you just stop, look, and listen, then the buildings will reveal these stories. Students will be able to look at structures and buildings in a fresh new manner. As a result they will be able to articulate the cultural changes and developments that have shaped New Haven over the years. These activities will stimulate the students' creativity and give them hands on experience on the beginning stages of planning and building structures and an understanding of the vision the colonists had for this great city of New Haven.

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End Notes

1. (Wood 1992), 1
2. (Wood 1992), 1
3. (Wood 1992), 1
4. (Woodward 1912), 18
5. (Osterweis 1953), 107
6. (Osterweis 1953), 75
7. (Woodward 1912), 18
8. (Brown 1976), 11
9. (Benes and Zimmerman 1979), 1
10. (Kelly 1948), 8
11. (Kelly 1948), 9
12. (Kelly 1948), 9
13. (Sanko 2001), 162

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