

Pre-visit lesson plan: Crossroads and Transitions (3rd Grade)

Essential Question: *What did the Upcountry look like in the days of Vardry McBee?*

Objective: Students will read and answer questions about maps of Greenville and the Carolina Piedmont in the Days of Vardry McBee.

SC Social Studies Standards

- 3-2.3 Summarize the contributions of settlers in South Carolina under the Lords Proprietors and the Royal colonial government, including the English from Barbados and the other groups who made up the diverse European population of Early South Carolina.
- 3-2.4 Explain the transfer of the institution of slavery into South Carolina from the West Indies, including the slave trade and the role of African Americans in the developing plantation economy: the daily lives of African American slaves and their contributions to South Carolina, such as the Gullah Culture and the introduction of new foods; and African acts of resistance against white authority.

Background Information

From the Museum:

Heart of the Upcountry

People and roads connected at Greenville during the mid-19th century, turning the enterprising young town into the busy center of the Upcountry. Entrepreneur Vardry McBee from Lincolnton, North Carolina, purchased in Greenville “all those plantation tracts or parcels of Land herein after mentioned lying and being in the District of Greenville and State aforesaid on the waters of the Reedy River,” in 1815 from Lemuel Alston for \$27,500.

By the 1850s, McBee had helped turn the fledgling village into a thriving metropolis. Residents from all over the Upcountry came to conduct their court business. Passing drovers led herds of animals through town on their way to coastal markets. All roads intersected at this pulsing heart of the Upcountry, where educators, preachers, and politicians gathered, and Lowcountry summer visitors mingled with farmers and merchants.

Benjamin F. Perry

A native of present-day Oconee County, Benjamin Perry arrived in Greenville to attend the Male Academy in 1823. He pursued a career as a lawyer, but his passion for a united country drew him into politics. During South Carolina’s Nullification Crisis in 1832, Perry staunchly defended the Union as editor of his newspaper, *Greenville Mountaineer*. His political views put him against Nullifier Waddy Thompson, whom Perry accused of orchestrating an attempt on his life.

Elected to the state legislature in 1836, Perry remained a constant champion of the Union. When the South finally did secede, Perry, a loyal Southerner, quickly and generously

supported the Confederate Cause. After the Civil War, he served as South Carolina's governor and later returned to live north of Greenville in his mansion, Sans Souci.

Waddy Thompson Jr.

A lawyer, politician, and diplomat, Waddy Thompson, Jr., came to prominence as a Nullifier fighting federally imposed taxes. Originally from Pickens County, in 1832 Thompson found himself at political odds with fellow Greenville and newspaper editor, Benjamin Perry. Thompson found a man to edit the *Southern Sentinel*, a Nullification newspaper that opposed Perry's Unionist *Greenville Mountaineer*.

Thompson defeated Perry in an 1834 run for Congress. Retiring from politics in 1841, he was called into diplomatic service as a liaison between the United States and Mexico in 1842. When Southern politicians called for secession during the 1850s, Thompson supported the Union. He joined forces with his old political adversary, Benjamin Perry. They established the *Southern Patriot*, whose Unionist ideology clashed with the now Secessionist views of Perry's former newspaper, the *Greenville Mountaineer*.

The Mansion House

The Mansion House, built adjacent to Greenville's courthouse in 1824, was a luxurious hotel that catered to Lowcountry planters and their families during the summer. A description of the hotel said that "the floors were laid of heart pine, the roof of tin, and the circular stairs...[were] considered a rare piece of workmanship. The parlor...was large as to require the unique feature of having two fire places." When it first opened, the Mansion House could boast that it had the only sofa and one of only two carpets in town. Lowcountry guests arrived in their own horse-drawn carriages or by stagecoach. Stagecoach drivers blew bugles to alert the hotel that they were coming. They then raced down Main Street and turned with a flourish in front of the hotel. After 1853, the new Greenville and Columbia Railroad brought even more visitors to the Mansion House and to Greenville.

Summer Visitors

The Upcountry became the destination of choice for some Lowcountry residents, who sought milder summer weather and escape from coastal outbreaks of malaria. Visitors first traveled through Greenville to picturesque destinations like Flat Rock, but later on Greenville itself grew to be a worthy attraction. Guests from Charleston arrived, bringing news and interesting stories that soon circulated around the town. Balls at the Mansion House became grand social occasions. The hotel's famous circular stairway provided the background for ladies and gentlemen as they glided across the dance floor. Other summer visitors could be less genteel. As one Greenville resident noted, many were quite fond of drinking, gambling, and womanizing.

Upcountry Slaves

There were slaves in the Upcountry, although not every farm had them. They often came from Lowcountry plantations, leaving behind friends, family, and a rich slave culture. In the Upper Piedmont, or northern Upcountry, slaves led difficult, isolated lives. Farms eked out a living, earning little extra money to feed and clothe owners, their families, and their slaves. Most farms employed fewer than six slaves. Without a strong community,

slaves suffered from the lack of physical and emotional support. Slaves in the Lower Piedmont, or southern Upcountry, often lived better. Farms in this region participated in the cotton economy. The greater wealth allowed for more slave workers and often better treatment.

Upcountry Farming

Small Upper Piedmont (northern Upcountry) farms had few slaves and grew more food crops than cotton, while Lower Piedmont (southern Upcountry) farms resembled Lowcountry plantations.

In the Upper Piedmont, in Anderson, Greenville, Lancaster, Pickens, Spartanburg, and York, small farms abounded. The red clay soil of the region was not very fertile. The farmer grew crops for his family first, then, if he could, cotton for sale. These “yeoman” farmers generally had six slaves or less. They often worked out in the field, side by side with their slaves.

The Lower Piedmont grew cotton, tying it into the South's cotton economy. Abbeville, Edgefield, Laurens, Newberry, Union, Fairfield, and Chester all participated, taking advantage of their rich, loamy soil and the new invention of the cotton gin. With the spread of plantation agriculture came slaves. Plantations in the Lower Piedmont generally employed around 20 of them. Cotton was an extremely profitable crop. In good years, the plantation owners re-invested their extra cash, buying more land and more slaves.

Going to Market

An Upper Piedmont farmer grew a variety of fruits and vegetables and transported them to market in his rugged farm wagon. With the right weather and a lot of hard work, an Upper Piedmont farmer could yield a good harvest of corn, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, beans, peas, barley, apples, pears, or peaches. His crops fed the family or he sold them to supplement the family income. When going to market, the farmer, helped by his family and slaves, loaded the produce onto a sturdy farm wagon like this one, made during the mid-19th century by Greenville’s own Gower, Cox & Markley.

Retail Revolution

Revolutionaries in retail, Vardry McBee and Col. E. S. Irvine refined their mercantile operations and changed the way business was done in Greenville. Most merchants in Greenville during the 1820s purchased goods from as far away as Charleston and Baltimore. They then marked up their prices from 100% to 150%.

McBee and Irvine’s mercantile store worked differently. An experienced retailer, Vardry McBee brought marketing know-how into his business partnership with Col. E. S. Irvine. McBee was a firm believer in cottage industry. He never traveled far for what he could get locally. An innovative merchant, he saw the business value of attractive window displays and was a pioneer in the “chain” concept with his stores in North Carolina, Spartanburg, Conestee, and Greenville. McBee and Irvine provided locally produced goods at moderate prices, which a growing, successful community demanded. Merchants who could not compete with their partnership closed their shops. Others adopted their retail style.

Goods for Sale

McBee & Irvine provided Greenville customers with goods at reasonable prices. Their general store resembled today's modern department stores, selling everything from candles to hammers to shoes. On the shelves of the store, a shopper might find: Blankets, buttons, cheese, cloth of all kinds, coffee, coffee mills, corsets, cutlery, dye stuff, fire screens, hairbrushes, hardware, knitting pins, ladies' hair combs, medicine, molasses, nuts, overcoats, paints, pantaloons, pencils, perfumery, razors, red clover seed, rope, scissors, skirts, sugar, thread, twine, yarn from Mr. McBee's own cotton factory...and more.

Mr. McBee's Railroad

Vardry McBee was a pioneer in railroads as a new form of transportation. In 1832, McBee and several prominent contemporaries promoted the construction of a railroad from Charleston to Cincinnati. They saw it not only as an economic boon but as an instrument of political union and North-South understanding. Despite fierce local disagreements over the route, McBee's vision ultimately prevailed. His own investment of \$50,000 in the Upcountry segment, the Greenville and Columbia Railroad, was the largest individual investment in a United States railroad to that time. The Greenville branch was completed in 1853 and increased the value of goods sold in Greenville by 45%.

Vardry McBee

Called the "Father of Greenville," Vardry McBee moved to town in 1836. Two decades earlier, the prosperous merchant, farmer, and industrialist had expanded his operations into Greenville. For him, the town's wagon roads offered access to western states, while its river provided waterpower to run machinery. His successful business ventures included a sawmill, ironworks, brickyard, stone quarry, flour mill, general store, and railroad. As McBee grew rich, and so did Greenville. He helped develop his adopted hometown, donating land for two schools and four churches.

School Days

In 1820, Vardry McBee gave land for the construction of Male and Female Academies. Between 1820 and 1860 the Greenville area was home to more than thirty-four schools. Furman University finally settled in Greenville in 1851, after calling three other places — Edgefield, High Hills of the Santee, and Winnsboro — home. The trustees purchased land for new buildings that same year. In 1854, the institution moved to its new campus, with James C. Furman as faculty chair. In July of 1854, the State Baptist Convention met in Greenville to discuss formation of a women's college. Greenville offered property, \$5,000, and a pledge to raise an additional \$20,000 if the new college were located in Greenville. The Convention accepted the offer, and the Greenville Baptist Female College opened in 1855. James Petigru Boyce, Furman University professor, announced that he could raise \$100,000 in South Carolina if \$100,000 could be raised elsewhere. Donors met Boyce's challenge and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary opened its doors in October of 1859 with Boyce as its president.

Worship in Greenville

Greenville's first four churches, built on land donated by Vardry McBee, laid the foundation for today's active religious community. Before Greenville's first churches were built, congregations often held services in the courthouse. As the town grew, parishioners looked to build their own churches. Vardry McBee's land donations, given between 1825 and 1851, allowed for the establishment of the town's first four churches: Christ Episcopal Church, Greenville Baptist Church, Greenville Methodist Episcopal Church, and Presbyterian Church of Greenville Courthouse. Religion remains an important component of Greenville life. In the year 2000, the city boasted over 300 churches in the city proper and more than 500 in Greenville County. Although white Protestant Christianity remained a strong force, 22 other religious communities also called Greenville home. Today, the city welcomes a work force from around the country and the world and Greenville's large religious community accommodates a growing and diverse population.

James C. Furman

James C. Furman, born in Charleston, considered a career in medicine before receiving his call to the Baptist ministry. He studied at Furman Theological Institution, which was named for his father. After preaching for many years, he joined the staff. The educator accompanied the Institution on its move to Greenville in 1852 where it was renamed Furman University after the addition of a liberal arts college. He became its president in 1859. In the years before the Civil War, James C. Furman, as a slave holder and ardent anti-abolitionist, turned the tide of Greenville opinion in favor of secession. He delivered the opening invocation at South Carolina's Secession Convention in 1860 and signed the Ordinance of Secession along with 123 other delegates.

The Second Great Awakening

A Protestant revival movement brought spirituality and order to the Upcountry and influenced a growing Greenville community.

The Second Great Awakening arrived in the Upcountry in the early 1800s. Religious camp meetings attracted thousands of frontier residents. As Protestantism spread throughout the region, so did social order. The church prescribed behavior and imposed discipline, compensating for the region's lack of law and law enforcement.

Before the Second Great Awakening reached Greenville, a Methodist bishop named Francis Asbury visited the district. He noted in 1801, "I cannot record great things upon religion in this quarter, but cotton sells high. I fear there is more gold than grace—more of silver than of 'that wisdom that cometh from above.'" Soon afterwards, residents embraced the Protestant movement and religion merged with other driving forces in Greenville community life—business and politics.

Shape Note Singing

Shape note singing was a system of teaching music that swept across the Upcountry with the religious fervor of the Second Great Awakening. Spartanburg resident William Walker promoted shape note singing in the Upcountry with the publication of *Southern*

Harmony in 1835. Shape note songs combined favorite old tunes with lyrics that expressed warmth, hope, repentance, and saving grace. Early shape note singing involved learning [four] different shapes — triangles, diamonds, crescents, and squares — placed on a staff. These represented different syllables of music. Once singers mastered a tune, they sang the “poetry,” or lyrics. Today shape note singing remains popular in the [region], providing a unique sound and musical experience for its audience.

Business, Religion, and Politics

Strong ties between business, religion, and politics have shaped the society that emerged in Greenville and the rest of the Upcountry. Within the Upcountry, the coming together of many European settlers to a new land allowed them to shape society with their own view of traditional ideas; their ideas traced back to Puritanism and Calvinism, where two strong beliefs held: hard work is a religious duty and hard work will be rewarded by God’s grace and material gain. The region’s early Protestantism downplayed secular concerns and placed strong emphasis on devotion, but, nonetheless, good Christians had a responsibility to elect pious men to political office, and business success was an indication of God’s favor. As time went on, business, religion, and politics became more entangled. During the late 19th century, Methodist Bishop Francis Asbury curtailed his anti-slavery position to promote his religion; later a slaveholding Baptist minister, James C. Furman, fought for secession. Many heralded the fight for slavery as a fight to convert slaves and save souls, but it would also, conveniently, save plantation agriculture. After the Civil War, textile mill owners paid preachers who spoke to employees about the Protestant ethic of hard work. In modern Upcountry politics, the Christian right often dominates, promoting values that helped form the region over 200 years ago.

Other detailed background information about these topics can be found in:

Scott Foresman, Social Studies, South Carolina
Chapter 7 *South Carolina Between Wars*

The History of South Carolina in the Building of the Nation by Archie Vernon Huff, Jr
Chapter 16 *Life in the Antebellum Years*

Greenville The History of the City and County in the South Carolina Piedmont by Archie Vernon Huff pp. 63-126

The South Carolina Encyclopedia

Primary Activity: Mapping Greenville and the Carolina Piedmont in the Days of Vardry McBee

Materials

- Map of Greenville in the Days of Vardry McBee (attached)

- Map of the Carolina Piedmont in the Days of Vardry McBee (attached)
- Greenville Map Questions sheet (attached)
- Piedmont Map Questions sheet (attached)

Procedure

1. Print out the maps Greenville in the Days of Vardry McBee and the Carolina Piedmont in the Days of Vardry McBee (one of each map per student).
2. Print out the map questions sheet for each map (one of each sheet per student).
3. Lead the students through the map questions giving time for searching and answers and for discussion about these fascinating maps drawn by Roy McBee Smith.

Assessment

For each map, each question is worth 10 points for a total of 100.

Cross-Curricular Activities

Social Studies

- * Construct a T-chart to compare and contrast the life of a slave on a Lowcountry plantation and an Upcountry farm.
- * Famous Faces – Choose one of the following people to research: Vardry McBee, Benjamin Perry, Waddy Thompson, Jr., Col. E.S. Irvine, James Petigru Boyce, Rev. James R. Rosemond, Mary Camilla Judson, Bob Jones, Sr., James C. Furman, Joel Poinsett or others. Using a white paper plate, markers, and yarn make this famous face to go along with your short biography.
- * Construct a Venn Diagram comparing and contrasting Greenville now and Greenville in the 1800s. What modes of transportation, buildings or businesses or entertainment venues would you have seen in Greenville (or your town) at the time of Vardry McBee? What do you find now? Is there anything that overlaps?

Research & Language Arts

- * Research the history of the early churches in Greenville (or your town). Draw a picture and write up a brief narrative.
- * Research education in Greenville County (or your county). What is the history of your school? (Stories of Our Schools – compiled by Debbie Willingham)
- * Research the early universities that came to Greenville in the 1800's. Are they still here? What schools of higher education can be found in Greenville today? Make a list.

Writing

- * Print out the information (attached) about hotels in the Upcountry. Design and write a brochure about a hotel in Greenville aimed to the residents of the low country. Include the weather, the landscape, a description and drawing of the hotel, room rates and menus. Some hotels are: The Mansion House, Chick Springs hotel, Altamont Hotel, Otteray, Poinsett Hotel, Exchange Hotel.

Art

* Using boxes, construct a model of a building that would have been found in Greenville (or your town) in the 1800s. Examples would include various mills, the churches, the livery, the courthouse, the shops, the hotels, the schools or the train depot. Decorate the boxes to resemble these old buildings. Put them all together to form a model of early Greenville.

Music

* Are you interested in learning more about shape-note singing? Visit smithsonianeducation.org for a lesson plan on shape-note singing for grades 3-8

Greenville in the Days of Vardry McBee
Map Worksheet

This map shows what Greenville might have looked like during the early to mid-1800s through the eyes of Roy McBee Smith.

1. What street is the Baptist church on? _____
2. Which church is at the corner of Richardson and Washington Streets?

3. Which two churches sit on or near Church Street? _____

4. The railroad comes in at the northwest corner of the map. The railroad depot is located near the junction of which two streets? _____

5. Name the 4 factories located along the Reedy River. _____

6. What other structure is located at the Reedy River? _____
7. What two schools are located on College Street? _____

8. What university is located southwest of downtown? _____
9. Prospect Hill or Vardry McBee's House is located at the top of what street?

10. Many business are located along Main Street. Name the business where:
you can find a lawyer. _____
you can rent a hotel room. _____
you can purchase goods. _____
you can see a trial. _____

Map Worksheet

This map shows what the upcountry might have looked like during the early to mid-1800s through the eyes of Roy McBee Smith.

1. Monadnocks are mountains or rocky masses that have resisted erosion and stand isolated in an essentially level area.

Name one near the city of Greenville _____

Name two near the Poinsett Turnpike _____

2. Name 5 Upcountry rivers you see on this map. _____

3. A creek is a small stream, often a shallow tributary to a river.

Which creek runs into the Reedy River? _____

Which creek runs into the Pacolet River? _____

4. In what direction are the rivers flowing? _____

5. In which direction would you travel to get from Spartanburg from Greenville?

6. What Rivers would you cross on the way? _____

7. What town lies due north of Spartanburg? _____

8. What direction would people go in to travel from Spartanburg to Lincolnton?

9. What is the name of the Road that would take them there? _____

10. Name two other towns north of Greenville and Spartanburg.
