

**Living History:
A Curriculum Guide to the
Matheson Museum
Grades 3-5**

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

Welcome to the Matheson Museum! Your class tour will explore many exciting sides of Gainesville and Alachua County history. Students will learn about the saga of the Matheson family, a family that played a key role in the development of the area from the Civil War to the 1990s. They will explore the Matheson home and observe how history has shaped this landmark. They will visit a replica of an 1880s general store and see how shopping in Gainesville used to be very different. Inside the museum and in the park, students will interact with interpretive displays relating the milestones in regional and local history over more than 12,000 years.

This curriculum resource is designed as a companion to a Matheson Museum guided tour led by a knowledgeable docent and to complement an activity booklet that each student will be given. This curriculum guide assists teachers by supplementing a touring experience to turn lessons in local history into demonstrated knowledge. It is divided into four main themes: Family & Community, Mapping Places, Collecting Special Memories, and Daily Life & Commerce in Alachua County. Each theme has background material that you can use to introduce the topic to your class for discussion, group work, and activities.

The activities are designed primarily to follow your visit to the Matheson Museum, but may be adjusted for pre-visit assignments. Several activities for each theme are included to give teachers a range of suggestions suitable for grades 3-5. When combined with a broader unit on Florida history, they become fun and useful tools for illustrating local impact. All are aligned with the Sunshine State Standards and Benchmarks for grades 3-5. While they meet standards and benchmarks primarily for social studies, some of the activities meet visual arts standards and many meet language arts standards, with suggested writing prompts for both narrative and expository practice as well as research topics. This approach provides you with flexibility to incorporate the Matheson experience into existing curriculum units.

WHAT IS THE ALACHUA COUNTY HISTORICAL TRUST: MATHESON MUSEUM, INC.?

The Alachua County Historic Trust: Matheson Museum, Inc. is dedicated to understanding and preserving the history of our local area. We try to tell the story of the region's land, people, and events by collecting and presenting artifacts and stories. The Matheson Museum was founded in 1989 by a group of Alachua County citizens dedicated to remembering the history of Alachua County and Gainesville. It was originally named for the home of Sarah H. Matheson, a founder of this group. The museum complex includes a park and several buildings: the main building houses the museum and archives; the Matheson House is where the Matheson family lived in Gainesville from 1867-1996, and is the second oldest house in Gainesville; the Tison Tool Barn houses a myriad of different tools from the past century and an old US Post Office front. Outside the museum, Sweetwater Park includes *A Walk Through History* where twelve educational panels trace our local history from pre-historic times to the present. These panels are located on the pathways that line the park. The park is being constructed in several phases and will eventually include a nature trail and a native plant garden. Through our visit to the Matheson museum complex we will learn about local history and special characteristics of the City of Gainesville and Alachua County.

FAMILY & THE COMMUNITY

Let's look at one person and his family who were important to the development of the Gainesville community. Christopher (Chris) Matheson was born in 1874, when Gainesville was a very young town. Chris' father, James Douglas Matheson, was originally from South Carolina, where his relatives were prominent farmers and merchants. He moved to Gainesville at the end of the Civil War and began his own career as a successful merchant. Soon after arriving in Gainesville, James met and married Augusta (Gussy) Steele, whose father, Judge Augustus Steele, was the founder of Cedar Key, Florida. Chris was the second of their four children.

Chris Matheson learned the importance of being an active community member from his family. His father was a well-respected businessman and an elected official. The entire Matheson family was also active in a local church. Chris was a very good student and as an adult became a lawyer and later, a minister. In 1905 he helped persuade the Florida legislature that the University of Florida should be in Gainesville and not Lake City. Chris also entered local politics and served as mayor from 1910-1917. During his term of office many significant events happened that shaped Gainesville: the city's first power plant opened and the electric streetlights were turned on downtown for the first time; a new post office building opened--the building that is now the Hippodrome State Theater; the city saw its first motorized fire truck and a new law required all vehicles to drive on the right side of the street.

Later on, Chris married a young woman named Sarah Hamilton when he was in Oklahoma serving as a minister. They returned to Gainesville when he retired from the ministry. Even though Sarah was new to Gainesville she enjoyed being an active community member by volunteering in her church, the Gainesville library, and the University. When Sarah Matheson gave the house she lived in, the house where Chris Matheson was born and raised, to the Matheson Museum, it became a part of a historical center that honors the roles all residents have played in Gainesville's history.

Discussion Themes: Roles in the Community

Communities are made up of many different kinds of people. What is your definition of a good community member or citizen? What are some ways people make an impact on their community? (police officer, doctor, teacher, student, etc.)

Activities

1. Writing Prompt:

- a. Do you know someone who is a good citizen or community member? Write a short biography of that person showing how they have contributed to the community.
- b. How do you contribute to your community? List and illustrate your roles in the community, such as student, scout, etc.

**Meets Standards LA.B.1.2.1-3, LA.B.2.2.3-4, LA.B.2.2.6,
SS.C.2.2.1-2**

2. Creating a Family Tree:

- a. Show the students Chris Matheson's family tree. Have them create their own family tree noting siblings, parents, grandparents, etc. Interview primary sources (family members) to understand how they came to be in Gainesville/Alachua County/Florida – did relatives come here for college, a job, etc. If they were raised here, when did their ancestors locate to this region.

Meets Standards SS.A.1.2.2, SSA.6.2.1.

- b. Have the students organize significant dates and relationships in their family such as births, marriages, etc. (Different students will be able trace their genealogy to different lengths – be sure to foster a non-competitive environment.) Students for whom this is a sensitive subject may need may need additional help.

Meets Standards LA.A.A.2.2.5

- c. Have the students design the “tree” and encourage them to be creative with the pattern, whether using the traditional tree background, a linear approach, or adding photos or other media, etc. (We've used an orange tree for the Matheson's.) The tree should include a key that identifies symbols, shapes, or colors used in the pattern.

Meets Standards VA.A.1.2.1-4.

Collecting Special Memories

In our visit to the Matheson Museum, we find many special **artifacts** on display. These are all part of the Matheson's collection of local history. They are organized into smaller collections of like items, such as maps, ancient arrowheads, Coca-Cola bottles, post cards, paintings, etc. The Matheson staff keeps track of all of the artifacts by giving each a unique identification number and storing them in an organized way. Then they arrange the items in displays for visitors to see and enjoy. Sometimes the displays mix different types of objects that are related by a common theme.

Not all of the Matheson's collection is on display at all times. Many objects, such as newspapers, are in an archive (storage for primary source material). When a collection has many similar objects, space may limit how many can be on view for the public at once. In order to decide which ones to put on display, museum staff looks for the most important, interesting or relevant items. Sometimes, they change the placement or order of the display, or switch items from the display and storage. So each time you visit the Matheson you might see something different.

Discussion Themes: Preserving Fragile Memories

Many of the objects you see at the Matheson are fragile due to their age. It is the staff's job to take care of these pieces so they will last a long time and visitors in the future can also enjoy them. To do this, they ask that no one touch the artifacts in the museum. Why do you think this is? (could get broken, could get misplaced) Has anyone ever seen how dirty fingerprints can make objects dirty too? (walls, windows, paper) Even clean hands can transmit tiny amounts of oil and dust on the surface of anything they touch. Over time, oil and dust from fingerprints can cause materials to become brittle or change colors. Has anyone ever seen this? (photos, copper pots, etc.) When museum staff handle or carry artifacts they wear special white gloves to keep them clean. Sometimes, to be extra careful, they put items on display behind glass.

Activities

1. Writing Prompt:

- a. What do you collect and why? Explain the theme of your collection. Describe how you organize, store, or present your collection.

- b. Imagine you have been given a special artifact to preserve. What is the object, and why is it important? Describe in detail how would you take care of it so that it lasts a long time.

Meets Standards LA.B.1.2.1-3, LA.B.2.2.3-4, LA.B.2.2.6.

2. Show & Tell Presentations: Present your collection to the class. Choose two objects to bring that represent your collection and explain why you collect those items. Describe how you organize and take care of you collection.

Meets Standards LA.B.2.2.2, LA.C.1.2.1, LA.C.1.2.4, LA.C.3.2.1-4.

Mapping Places

At the Matheson Museum, visitors can see many local and regional maps from different time periods. Maps help us trace a route from one location to another, find a certain place, and locate where we are in relation to a larger world. Maps come in many different formats. Sometimes they are very detailed but only show a very small area, as in a street map. Other times they are more general, with just major thoroughfares (or none at all) and show a large area, like a map of a country, continent, or the world.

Maps have tools that help you read them. A **scale** tells you how the proportions on the map relate to the real world (for example, one inch equals one mile). A **key** tells you what symbols on the map mean (for example, a blue line is a river, or a black line is a road). A **compass rose** shows you the **cardinal directions** (north, south, east, west). A three-dimensional map is the shape of a ball and called a **globe**.

Discussion Themes: Comparing Gainesville Yesterday and Today

As historical documents, maps show us how an area changes over time. When you saw old maps of Gainesville and Alachua County at the Matheson, what did you notice that was different from the Gainesville you know today? What do you think has caused these changes? How might our area look different in the future?

Meets Standards SS.B.2.2.3.

Activities

1. **Map Labeling:** Provide blank outlines of the Southeastern region of the United States (or outlines of the entire U.S.) and have the students work in groups to share an atlas or other map source.
 - a. Ask students to locate, and label on their own maps, Gainesville and other places that played a role in the Matheson family's history: Tampa; Cedar Key, Tallahassee; Fernandina; and Camden, South Carolina; as well as the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean.
 - b. Ask the students to locate, and then label on their own maps, an additional place of interest to them outside of Alachua County, such as another city they

would like to visit or previously lived, a city where a relative lives, or the location of a beach, park or special attraction. Have them draw the general route from Gainesville to this place. Next, they should use the source map's scale to determine the approximate distance from Gainesville and label that amount on their map.

- c. Writing Prompt: Write a paragraph describing why this place is special to you, why would like to go there, and what would you like to do when visiting there.

Meets Standards SS.B.1.2.1, LA.B.1.2.1-3, LA.B.2.2.3-4, LA.B.2.2.6.

2. Creating A Map: Have the students design and embellish an original map that traces the route from their home to another location (friend's house, store, school, etc.). The locations may be close, but the map should be at least three streets by three streets. Streets and landmarks should be labeled, and the map should include a compass rose, key, and scale.

Meets Standards SS.B.1.2.1, VA.A.1.2.1-4.

3. Poetry Practice: Have students write a poem about a favorite local place, in the form of haiku, cinquapin, or other specific structure (or using techniques such as alliteration).

Meets Standards LA.D.2.2.2

Daily Life and Commerce

Life in Gainesville when Chris Matheson was a young student was very different from today. Many modern conveniences that we enjoy today were not yet invented. There were no air conditioners, refrigerators, or cars. Suggest that the students imagine how hot it must have been in the summer, when they couldn't just drive to the store to get frozen ice cream. (Actually, the family would have to churn that ice cream at home, just as they would have produced most of their own food products.

Medicine and sanitation were not nearly as advanced as they are today. Diseases, such as yellow fever, could strike the town and cause dozens of people to die. It was not uncommon for young people to perish from poor health, as did two of Chris' sisters.

On the other hand, orange groves lined the streets of Gainesville, since this was one of Gainesville's most important crops. And when Chris was nine gold was discovered during the drilling of a new well downtown. (The excitement of searching for more gold was probably as exciting as going to "Disney World" today).

Discussion Themes: Changes Reflected in our Daily Surrounds

How did the Matheson general store reflect the late 1800s? How would such a store be different today? (Consider the items for sale, the credit system, the medicine, and the quantity of items sold, etc.) What has created these changes?

How did the architecture of homes reflect the time when Chris and his family lived? (Consider broad porches, high roofs, location, the number of outside rooms, etc.) Are these elements common in homes today? Why or why not?

Activities

1. Have the students draw their own house and a house from the 1800s and compare the differences.

Meets Standards SS.A.5.2.1, LA.B.1.2.1-3, LA.B.2.2.3, LA.B.2.2.4, LA.B.2.2.6.

2. Writing Prompt: Imagine the year is 1884 (Chris is 10 years old) and you have just arrived in Gainesville. How old are you? Where have you come from? Did you come here with your family? Now that you are in Gainesville, where will you live, and where will you go to school? What is your house like? What is your town like? What will you do for fun? Write a letter to a friend back home about how it feels to be in this new town.

Meets Standards LA.B.1.2.1-2, LA.B.2.2.3-5.