

# **A Past and Present Look at Overbrook**

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## **Overview**

History is essential to understanding the world we live in. Whether we study it from a local or global perspective, our investigation of data helps us to determine the significance of events, and helps us to better understand our human experiences. History also fosters a sense of identity. As a nation, state, city or community, our past heritage influences our sense of self. With that in mind, I have planned this curriculum unit to help students dig deeper into the history of their school neighborhood and have fun while identifying with its rich history,

I am a computer teacher at Overbrook Elementary School, a K-5 school located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. My teaching assignments include working with individual classes on projects and school-wide initiatives. Next year our school will be 100 years old. This milestone provides a wonderful opportunity for enhancing the third-grade social studies curriculum which focuses on Philadelphia, a City of Neighborhoods and, correspondingly, for inviting the school community to peek into its past in preparation for the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the school.

A Past and Present Look at Overbrook is presented in a framework that engages third graders in a learning process, inviting them to reflect on the history of their school neighborhood while encouraging them to take an active stance in learning history. This unit will integrate technology with the third-grade social studies curriculum and provide ample opportunities for inclusion of language arts activities. Each week part of the lesson will be conducted in the third grade classroom with corresponding follow-up lessons in the computer lab. As the students investigate the history of their neighborhood, they will observe the factors that contributed to the growth of West Philadelphia, particularly the vicinity of Overbrook. Consequently, they will form opinions about what is needed to keep a neighborhood vital, what community involvement is needed to sustain growth, and what agencies exist to provide services to their neighborhood.

## **Rationale**

This four-week curriculum unit is designed for third grade students and will be conducted in the fall as the school prepares for celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The class consists

of thirty inner-city students in a self-contained classroom. They will have basic understandings of the beginning of Philadelphia as the city founded by William Penn in 1662, the role of communities as places where people live, work and play, and the distinction between urban and suburban communities. They will also have experience using the computer and most of the software applications mentioned in this unit.

The unit provides a lens for looking at the history of a school neighborhood through ward maps, census data, architecture, photographs and transportation trends. Lessons will include presentations in the third grade class, neighborhood walks, whole group and small group explorations, individual research in the computer lab, and a culminating podcast celebrating aspects of the past and present history of the Overbrook School Neighborhood.

My reasons for focusing the unit in this direction are threefold. First, I want students to have experience using primary source materials to pique their interest in learning history directly. Secondly, I want them to be more attentive to their surroundings, to question how and why things came to be, and to evaluate the changes that occurred over time. Last but not least, I want them to use technology productively as they make connections between the past and present, enhance their research skills and learn a new technology, podcasting, to publish their work.

This unit fits into the School District of Philadelphia's Social Studies curriculum for third graders, part of which is entitled, "Philadelphia: a City of Neighborhoods." The intents of this module of the curriculum are: to illustrate how settlements that existed on the edge of the original city incorporated themselves, making a collection of towns and districts that eventually merged into the City of Philadelphia; to deepen students' understanding of the many neighborhoods that shaped the rich history of the city of Philadelphia; and to appreciate the contributions of African Americans and immigrant groups to the economy and culture of Philadelphia.

## Background

Overbrook Elementary School, established in 1906, is located in the Overbrook section of West Philadelphia. The Overbrook neighborhood contains an assortment of housing, from large, old homes to row homes to apartment buildings. Overbrook contains the sub-neighborhoods of historic Overbrook Farms and Overbrook Park. The school stands at the intersection of 62nd Street and Lebanon Avenue and its boundaries extend to Overbrook Farms, a residential high-income neighborhood with large homes and Overbrook Farms East (sometimes called Overbrook or Overbrook Hills), an area with middle-class residents, row homes and several large apartments buildings. Overbrook Farms contains Overbrook Station, the historic train station at 63rd Street and City Line Avenue, and Overbrook Hills contains the historic Monte Vista Apartment complex at 63rd Street and Oxford Avenue. Nearby Sixth-Third Street is an attractive thoroughfare with residential homes and small clusters of retail. Wide tree-lined streets adorn both sections of the Overbrook neighborhood adding to the charm of this urban/suburban community.

Some of the features of the Overbrook area are unique both in their inception and in their progress to date. However, in many ways the story of Overbrook is also the story of other neighborhoods across the city whose landscapes have evolved from wooded areas and farmland to residential neighborhoods. I am providing background that can be used as introductory scripts, key points for a PowerPoint presentation, or material for a timeline. The historical background is intended to give the students a sense of land acquisition and ownership, urban planning, transportation and change.

### *Growth Factors*

The growth of the Overbrook section of West Philadelphia neighborhood resulted primarily from three significant and interrelated factors: large tracts of available farmland, convenient rail transportation into the city, and the engineering will and skill of changing the natural landscape. Overbrook Farms was the first section of Overbrook to be converted from farmland into residential housing and makes a good starting point for understanding the changes made in the original topography of the neighborhood during the course of its development.<sup>1</sup> The development of Overbrook Farms marked the beginning of the process of growth for the surrounding area.

### *Available Farmland*

Before European settlers arrived, the Overbrook area was considered a well-watered wooded area, providing good hunting grounds for the local Native Americans.<sup>2</sup> “Coaquannock” or “The Grove of Tall Pines” was the name applied to the land. On April 25, 1683 Indian Chief Wingbone deeded his land to William Penn. “Of all his land lying on the west of the Schuylkill River from the Falls of the same name up the said river and backward so far as the rights goeth.”<sup>3</sup> This land, west of the Schuylkill across from the “Great Towne” was part of the “liberty lands” that Penn set aside to fulfill his original idea of gentleman farmers surrounding the commercial center of the city. In order to make good on his original but then impossible promise of an additional ten acres of city property for every 500 acres of country land purchased, this free land was established without municipal control. It was open to development and gave way to small, independent villages isolated from the center of the city due to the difficulty of crossing the river in the 18th Century.<sup>4</sup>

The Welsh were the first to take advantage of Penn’s proposal to settle in a land where they could establish homes and enjoy religious freedom. Their total purchase of 5,000 acres from William Penn in London in May of 1681 was known as the “Welsh Tract.” Their homes were built as walled caves, roofed with tree branches. Log cabins were later erected often using the caves as their foundation. The names of Merion, Cynwyd, Bryn Mawr and Haverford are reminders of their early presence.

In 1693 William Edward, from the First Company of Welsh Quakers, purchased 207 adjoining acres of liberty lands from other original purchasers and it was from this tract of land that the community of Overbrook Farms was developed. William Edward’s home

was located on Drexel Road and City Avenue, a two-story log cabin with stairs on the outside to reach the upper story. William cleared enough land for crops, first corn than wheat and other grains. Before long a wilderness became a farmland. The property remained in the Edward's family until it was subdivided when William Edward's grandson died thus leaving each of his three daughters an equal share. Rebecca married Amos George who later bought the other two shares. The property remained in the George family until the death of John George in 1887. In 1893, Drexel and Company bought the property and Wendell and Smith, real estate operators, undertook the development of Overbrook Farms.<sup>5</sup>

Much of the early history occurred while the area was known as Blockley. The George farmland, which is now Overbrook Farms, was in the Blockley Township. William Warner, the first settler to "penetrate the wilds of Blockley" arrived in this area as early as 1677 before the Welsh and English Colonists. He named his farmland "Blockley" for his native home and built a house about the location of 46th and Lancaster Avenue. The Old Lancaster Road was called "Blockley Turnpike," and a portion of what is now 63rd Street was known as "Blockley Avenue."<sup>6</sup>

### *Transportation*

The success of the planned suburban development was due in part to the rise of finances and technology in Philadelphia. The steel, coal and gas industries accumulated wealth and the industrialists and/or their chief executives took up residence in Overbrook Farms. Professional people traveling outside the area to work fulfilled the goals of the developers.<sup>7</sup> As early as 1840 a rail station had been constructed and the Overbrook train station, originally known as "City Line," served the needs of the local residents. It was part of the Columbia Railroad system and was originally a rural flag station. A traditional chant held that "Columbia's iron rails lay on Indian trails." A station house built in 1858 served the local farmers and estate owners. In 1867 a new station was built and a culvert erected to carry the waters of the little stream under the tracks. Hence the name was changed to "Overbrook."<sup>8</sup>

Drexel and Company, a banking firm with investments in the Pennsylvania Railroad, saw the commuter system to the suburbs as a potential for building capital. If communities were built along the train route, commuters would use the trains for traveling to and from work in center city. Overbrook Farms was advertised as a "new town" with residential, commercial, educational and religious facilities. Rail transportation had the potential to convert the liberty lands of William Penn to a model suburb! Overbrook's suburban living became the talk of the town offering such amenities as sparkling water from underground springs, a central steam-heat plant and electric lighting.<sup>9</sup> By 1896, trains were transporting executives to Center City, as well as ferrying their laundry to the John Wanamaker store for cleaning and pressing.<sup>10</sup>

In 1895, the trolley line was extended to Overbrook. Prior to this, the nearest trolley was the horse-car, which ran from Sixty-third Street and Haverford Ave to the Delaware River. The trip took an hour and a half.<sup>11</sup>

## *Changes in Landscape*

Cutting and filling were two major undertakings for the construction of Overbrook homes and streets. There were many trees that had to be cut down for construction work to begin but every effort was made to preserve original trees or plant young trees as soon as streets were put through. Little streams ran through the farmland and had to be drained and filled in. The natural creek system and the efforts to re-engineer them point to the changing needs of the times. Mill Creek, which ran through the heart of Overbrook, was buried underground and incorporated into Philadelphia's sewer system in the 1890's. The city paid the expense for building the sewers to carry these streams, and for filling the streets above the pipes to a proper grade. The city engineers justified this expense by calculating the revenue that would eventually be returned to the city in property taxes. In the areas of Overbrook outside the immediate development of Overbrook Farms, it took many years to fill in some parts of the valleys. This depended on either the real estate market or a particular landowner's urgency in developing the property.<sup>12</sup>

Quarries in the area provided about 80 percent of the stone used for the development of Overbrook. The building of homes followed road construction immediately and some roads were even built before roads went through.<sup>13</sup> Sixty-Third Street was called the South Side and considered by some prospective buyers to be still too much of a "wilderness" requiring them to put "bars at the windows."<sup>14</sup> An article from the Evening Bulletin mentions how in the mid 1890's "Old Philadelphians" went to look at the new section as "explorers."<sup>15</sup> Growth of West Philadelphia took time. Overbrook Farms marked the beginning of a developmental process that in greater Overbrook would continue for decades.<sup>16</sup>

## *Architecture*

The developers, Wendell and Smith, commissioned well-known architects to design residential and commercial buildings. They used a variety of styles to avoid monotony. Architectural styles included a number of historic revivals, such as: Colonial, Federal Gothic, and Tudor, as well as late Victorian, Queen Anne, Italian Villa, and Arts and Crafts homes.<sup>17</sup> Most of the materials used were stone, brick and stucco. The buildings had one or more architectural elements including carvings, gargoyles, columns, tracery windows, and lead and stained glass.

The steep prices of Wendell and Smith's Overbrook homes preserved the high quality of the neighborhood. They made every effort to avoid the possibility that a "handsome mansion may be destroyed by a red and yellow structure next door."<sup>18</sup> The Philadelphia Athenaeum retains twenty-one drawings for the homes designed by William Price. They range from twin homes to mansions. When more homes were built in a second wave of development in the 1900's, they were not as grand but retained a look consistent with the earlier homes.<sup>19</sup> Architectural landscaping incorporated sweeping lawns, abundant trees and ornamental vegetation to create the restful and quiet surroundings that the developers envisioned for their suburban city-town.

Overbrook School Historical Facts

The Overbrook School was built in 1906 and the building opened on March 1, 1907. The location was the northwest corner of Sixth-Second Street and Lebanon Avenue with the street address as 6201-6231 Lebanon Avenue. The original school was a two-story brick building with granite stone front trimmings and wood construction. It was built in the Colonial Revival style. It had six classrooms, a cement yard, paved sidewalk, and detached unheated toilets. The total cost was \$40,929. The architect was Lloyd Titus and the builder was William Smith. On July 8, 1913, an addition containing twelve classrooms was completed. The architect was H. deCoursey Richards who designed the addition to match the original. The total cost of the addition was \$98,961.<sup>20</sup>

When the Overbrook High School was opened in 1924, the name of the Overbrook School was changed to the Overbrook Elementary School and the street address was recognized as 2032 North 62 Street. The school is part of the Philadelphia Public Schools Thematic District. On November 11, 1988 Overbrook Elementary was listed on the National Register of buildings for historic preservation, # 88002304.

In the mid 1970's the Overbrook Elementary School closed. It was leased to Wynnefield Academy in 1975 and later used for a West Philadelphia Regional High School. In 1996 it reopened as a K-3 school and added grades annually until it reached its present capacity of a PreK-5 elementary school with an enrollment of 360 students.

### **Objectives.**

The Social Studies curriculum for the third grade looks at neighborhoods in Philadelphia to illustrate the concept of continuity and change. In this unit students will have opportunities to learn about the history of their school neighborhood through the interplay of technology, human interaction with the environment and the movement of people. The main objectives are:

- To interpret maps in order to locate and derive information about a specific place
- To construct a timeline representing the settlement of a community
- To analyze the interaction of people with the environment
- To compare and contrast characteristics of urban and suburban living
- To learn architectural terms pertaining to construction of school and nearby homes and buildings
- To sequence and discuss a series of pictures that reflect the historic continuity and/or change, namely, in architecture and transportation
- To use a variety of technological and information resources to gather and synthesize information
- To construct and communicate knowledge

### **Standards**

The unit will help students fulfill the Pennsylvania Academic Standards in the following areas: Social Studies, Science and Technology, and Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening. Details for each are in the appendix.

## Academic Skills and Knowledge

By examining the early history of the Overbrook neighborhood and the history of the Overbrook School, students will explore different types of texts to synthesize information and construct meaning. For many it will be their first time using primary sources. By dealing with primary sources, the third grade students will develop critical thinking skills, to interpret events from their past and present history.

To see the connection between history and geography, students will observe the physical environment in their immediate school community. There is much to learn from observing streets, homes, bridges and tracks, verbal evidence on signs, and patterns of street names. As students gain experience in nudging these two perspectives, they can better understand the past and evaluate the present landscape of their surroundings.<sup>21</sup>

Students will be introduced to the importance of maps as a type of text for recording and interpreting historical data. They will learn how maps give us specific information about a particular place at a particular time and how they show change over time. Additionally, the students will be introduced to the census and discover what kinds of information can be learned from the particular year the census was taken in their neighborhood.<sup>22</sup>

Students will also use photographs to learn about the changes that occurred over time for a specific location. Photographs from the early 1900's found on Internet databases will be compared to the same site, as it exists today. Students will also record history by creating a photo album of places around the school neighborhood.

## Strategies

The unit will be taught by partnering social studies and computer classes. In the social studies classes, the students will begin by using maps, census material and photographs to discover the early history of Overbrook. I have printouts of pictures taken from the West Philadelphia District's Detailed Property Atlases of the City of Philadelphia's 34<sup>th</sup> Ward for the years 1900, 1905, 1911, 1918 and 1927. The students will trace the ownership of the property at the northwest corner of 62<sup>nd</sup> Street and Lebanon Avenue on each of these maps. They will use a worksheet to guide them as they note the ownership of the property and observe the progression of homes built as well as the types of homes. They will generate their own questions from working with the maps. These questions will be listed and displayed for future reference.

The students will work in small groups using printouts from the censuses of 1930 and 1920 to find information about the number of children living in the homes on the 2000 block of 62<sup>nd</sup> Street, the education and occupation of adults, the status of ownership, and the use of land. They will use a worksheet to help them answer the questions. They will record their findings in an AppleWorks spreadsheet. These findings will be used for follow-up discussions and writing activities.

Students will read books to help them build background knowledge about architecture. The books will help them become familiar with terms such as: architecture, appearance, function, and materials. They will view photographs of homes and locations in the neighborhood in a “then and now” format. Subsequently, they will take a walking tour of the neighborhood to explore the buildings in the community. They will use a graphic organizer to guide their observations. They will record the function, the materials used and appearance of such places as: school, church, house, apartment building, fire station, train station, store, office, medical center, and SEPTA depot.

Students will engage technology in the classroom to help them preview information, conduct research and communicate with written and oral texts. The podcast will be the culminating project during which students will create audio and visual content for an audience that can access it online and listen on a computer or download it to a mobile player like an iPod.<sup>23</sup> Communicating with the school community and beyond will help motivate students to improve writing and speaking skills, increase vocabulary and to enjoy a rich learning environment.

### **Classroom Activities**

#### Lesson I: Landscape as a Primary Document

##### Part A: A Present Look: Observations at an Intersection

Objective: To use the landscape of an intersection as a primary document.

Procedure: Students will be divided into 3 groups and asked to record all that they see at the following locations:

- 62<sup>nd</sup> Street and Lebanon Avenue
- 62<sup>nd</sup> Street and Lancaster Avenue
- 63<sup>rd</sup> Street and Lebanon Avenue

In this activity students will consider the landscape as a primary document as they observe, speculate, analyze, and evaluate.<sup>24</sup>

- Observation: Students will start with the obvious and categorize their findings: homes, businesses, landscape, transportation, and other observable aspects of their view from the sidewalk. They will be guided to look for names, dates and signs of change.
- Speculation: Students will return to the class and discuss findings. How do these structures help/hinder life in the neighborhood? What does or doesn't make sense? Were these structures always here? Are there any questions? What else would you like to know?
- Analysis: Students will record dates found, names of places, and questions for further research on chart paper around the room. They will brainstorm ways for learning more about the places and things in their neighborhood. They will be



instructed about primary and secondary documents and the wealth of information available in libraries and museums. They will also be encouraged to seek out family and community members for learning about changes in the neighborhood.

- Evaluation: Are the intersections you observed used to maximum benefit for the community? Did you notice any changes (old store signs, unused tracks, remodeled buildings, abandoned buildings?) Are there any other uses/changes you can recommend?

Assessment: Students will reflect on this activity by responding to one of the following prompts in their e-journal:

- How do the features of this landscape help people live, work and play in this community?
- Write a personal narrative about an event that occurred at one of the above locations we studied. (This will become a primary historical source of information for future students studying their neighborhood)

## Part B: A Look into the Past: Using Ward Maps

Objective: To interpret maps in order to locate and derive information about a specific place

Procedure: Students will be introduced to the concept of a ward map. They will view an iMovie presentation showing the 34<sup>th</sup> ward with a zoomed-in view for the block of the school. They will be asked to pay special attention to the symbols on the maps and the legends describing them. Each student will then receive a map outline and be asked to label the following street names on the map: 62<sup>nd</sup> Street, 63<sup>rd</sup> Street, Lebanon Avenue, and Lancaster Ave.

Students will then rotate around the room in small groups to view printed versions of sequential 34<sup>th</sup> ward maps of the property at the northwest corner of 62<sup>nd</sup> Street and Lebanon Avenue. They will observe ownership of land and development of property. They will take turns labeling a map for the years 1900, 1905, 1911, 1918 and 1927 so that each group has a complete set. The students will record when the Overbrook School was built, when the annex was added, when the homes adjacent to the school were built, and how these homes were different from homes across the street from the school.

Assessment: Students will use an online tutorial to review and check their understanding of making sense of maps. The exercises are designed to explore how maps serve as historical evidence. (<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/maps/try.html>)

## Lesson II: A Look into the Past: Early History of the Area.

### Part A: Overbrook: Influences on its Development

Objective: To construct a timeline representing the early settlement of a community

Procedure: In the computer room students will view a PowerPoint presentation about the early history of Overbrook. They will have a printout of the slides so they can take notes or raise questions.

They will then be guided through several bookmarked links to learn additional information about the growth of the Overbrook area. Some students will research the landscape, others roads and transportation, and others the building of homes. They will then create a timeline using the software, *Time Liner*, to represent the important dates and events pertaining to the development of the Overbrook area. When applicable, students will import a graphic from the bookmarked link about the history into their timeline. Possible events might include: purchases of land by the Welsh, purchases of land by Drexel and Company, construction of the railroad station, construction of homes by Wendel and Smith, change of railroad station name to Overbrook, extension of trolley service into Overbrook, building of the school, annex added.

Assessment: Students will be asked to include at least six sequential relevant items in a clear format. They will have the option of converting the timeline into a slide show with pictures and text.

#### Part B: Census: Our History in Numbers

Objective: To understand the purpose of the census

Procedure: I will begin by asking children if they know how many students are in our school, how many adults work at the school, and how they could find out those numeric facts. Next I will ask them how we could find out the population of our neighborhood, city, state, and country. Students will use Google to obtain the figures and we will record them on chart paper. This will segue to learning about the census: what it is, what it records, who records the data, and how the data is important for learning about the past, figuring out the present and planning for the future.

I will direct students to the Kids' Corner of the US Census Bureau Website. (<http://factfinder.census.gov/home/en/kids/kids.html>) Interestingly, the homepage includes a counter with a population estimate that will probably change as they are navigating. Students will have time to explore the links that tell what a census is, the history of the census, and why counting counts. We will then list and discuss the categories of information available on the census: social characteristics, housing, employment, population and income.

Assessment: Students will take the census quiz at the above website to evaluate their data literacy and check their understanding of a census. They choose their level of difficulty and receive bonus fun facts as they complete the quiz.

#### Part C: Census: Neighborhood Data

Objective: To use census data as a source of neighborhood history

I will begin by showing the students a blank enumeration page from the 1930 census. These forms are available online (<http://www.ipums.org/usa/voliii/form1930.html>) and divided into left, middle and right sides of the form. There is a zoom function that enables a clear view and makes it easier to read.

Students will then receive a printed form of the 1930 census for the 2000 block of North 62<sup>nd</sup> Street. They will be introduced to the types of questions asked for the 1930 census, which can be printed from the above site. Students will work with a partner and complete the data for three places of residence on the census sheet. They will use a worksheet to answer specific questions about:

- Place of abode: address, number of occupants
- People: name, age, sex, race
- Home: owned or rented, farm, radio
- Education: school attended, able to read and write
- Citizenship: place of birth, year of immigration or naturalization, ability to speak English
- Employed: yes or no
- Occupation: trade, profession or particular kind of work

Assessment: Students will complete an evaluation by responding to the following prompts in their e-journals:

- Name two things you learned from the census data
- List two questions you still have about the data

### Lesson III: Architecture: The Built Environment

#### Part A: Introduction to Terms and Concepts

Objective: To learn architectural terms pertaining to construction of school and nearby homes and buildings

Procedure: Students will brainstorm the built environment in our school neighborhood. A list of buildings and structures will be compiled on chart paper. Students will try to name the materials used for each building and group them according to their function.

Students will then be guided to use the “archKIDecture” website<sup>25</sup> to learn about structures and materials. They will learn the types of materials used for structures; discover the reasons for each choice; and view examples of ordinary, unusual and incredible structures. The interactive labs section of the PBS “Building Big” Website will follow this.<sup>26</sup> Here they will discover the relationship between shape and strength, experiment with the common shapes, and see real-life examples.

Students will use a worksheet activity to learn basic terms: columns, cornice, dome, frieze, pediment, and lintel. This will include a sketch of a building on which they will

label each term with a corresponding element. The activity will be a springboard for discussing where they might see some of these architectural details: school, houses, or churches in the neighborhood. The worksheet is available online.

([http://www.laconservancy.org/kids/broadway\\_teachers.php4](http://www.laconservancy.org/kids/broadway_teachers.php4)).

Assessment: Students will use a “Fun Facts About Architecture” pamphlet to review terms and concepts. This is available on line and can be downloaded as a PDF file.

([www.timelessarchitectural.com/pdf/Fun%20Facts.pdf](http://www.timelessarchitectural.com/pdf/Fun%20Facts.pdf))

Part B: Be a Building Watcher

Objective: To identify residential and commercial architectural styles

Procedure: I will begin this lesson with an oral quiz on the “Fun Facts about Architecture.” Students will identify images in the pamphlet in the format of an “I Spy” game. I will model a few questions and then have students make up their own.

- I spy vertical architectural supports for a porch (column)
- I spy a horizontal beam above a door opening (lintel)
- I spy a triangular section above the columns (pediment)

I will provide students with a booklet of architectural styles. The booklet, “On the Street where You Live,” is available online.

(<http://www.historiclandmarks.org/help/classroom.html>) Students will be instructed to highlight the styles that are prominent in the Overbrook area. These will include: Colonial, Federal Gothic, Tudor, late Victorian, Queen Anne, Italian Villa, and Arts and Crafts homes.

Students will be divided into three groups for the walking tour. Each group will have a digital camera to take pictures in the school neighborhood. They will use their handout to help them identify the architectural styles, elements of design and materials used in the buildings of the school neighborhood.

Assessment: Students will have one week to complete a building survey.<sup>27</sup> They will be required to find five unique buildings in the neighborhood: homes, apartments, offices, stores, churches, garages, schools, train station house, etc. For each building they will complete a worksheet guiding them to record information, such as:

- A drawing: Part or whole
- Function: Purpose of the building
- Materials – What is it made of?
- Appearance/Style – Name the style if known – What does it look like? How old is it?

In conclusion they will write a summary about the school neighborhood. The following prompts will guide them in their response:

- Does it fulfill the needs of the people who live there?
- Is it easy or difficult to travel through?

- What is the oldest and newest building you observed?
- Have changes been made for the better?
- What would you like to remove or add to the neighborhood?

#### Lesson IV: Sights and Sounds of the Neighborhood.

##### Part A: Reading a Photograph

Objective: To use photographs to interpret the past and observe the present

Procedure: Students will be directed to a website that includes images of local houses. The black and white photos are taken from an advertising book by the developers, Wendell and Smith. Along with these, the database includes a colorful current photograph and the street address. Many of the children will recognize these homes. Several of the children live on these blocks.

After navigating through the site, students will select one set of photographs to observe. They will use the photo analysis sheet from the National Archives to guide the activity.<sup>28</sup> They will each complete one form for the “then” and one for the “now” home of their choice. On a three-columned paper the students will list:

- Characteristics of the house (size, shape, proximity to next home)
- Objects around the home (shrubs, doghouse, cars, garage, mailbox, etc) and
- Activities that are occurring (parking a car, walking a dog, doing yard work, etc)

Assessment: Students will work with a partner who selected the same set of photos. They will share with each other what they learned about the home in the photo. Then they will complete the inference and question section of the analysis form.

##### Part B: Recording a Podcast

Objective: To use information from previous activities to write and record sound bytes telling about the Overbrook’s past and present.

Procedure: I will begin by sharing a podcast about Philadelphia from the *Learning in Hand* website. (<http://www.learninginhand.com/OurCity/>) I will ask students what they noticed about content and presentation of facts. We will brainstorm what kinds of information we could include in publishing an Overbrook Podcast. After categorizing the results, I will give students worksheets downloaded from the above site to help organize content. Students will be reminded of the activities we worked on in learning about our neighborhood: history, landscape, geography, architecture, and transportation, use of maps, census, and photographs.

Students will work in pairs to pull together interesting content and ways to present it. The information will be written into a one-paragraph script . Some possibilities are:

- Hear our History
- The Train Comes to Town

- Architecture: Then and Now
- The Little School that Could
- Fun Facts
- People and Places

Students will have time to revise, edit and practice their scripts. Parent volunteers at our school will be invited to help with this project.

I will work individually with students as they record their segments. The students with help of older students from Grade 5 will prepare audio clips using *Garageband* to play in-between the segments. (*Garageband* is a software application installed on the computers in the lab.) A student will be chosen to be the host. The podcast will be uploaded to a forthcoming server hosted by School District of Philadelphia.

### **Teacher Bibliography**

D'Apéry, Tello. (1936). *Overbrook Farms: Its Historical Background, Growth and Community Life*. Philadelphia, PA: Magee Press. The author provides a glimpse into the past of Overbrook Farms area. He offers historical and antidotal materials in a very pleasant and informative way.

Edmunds, Franklin. (1933). *Public School Buildings of Philadelphia: 1900-1907*, Philadelphia, PA: School District of Philadelphia.

Levine, Adam (2005). "Changes in the Natural Landscape: Overbrook History: The Creeks." Retrieved May 16, 2006, from A Brief History of the Overbrook Neighborhood of Philadelphia Web site: <http://www.phillyh2o.org/backpages/OverbrookHistory.htm>. This site is part of a much larger project and it focuses on the first section of Overbrook to be converted from farmland to residential housing. It pays special attention to the original and then changed topology of the area.

Salter, Charles. (1990). "How to Read a City," *OAH Magazine of History*. 5, 68-71. An excellent framework adaptable for any grade level to hone observation and analytical skills. Available online at <<http://www.oah.org/pubs/magazine/urban/salter.html>> accessed on May 8, 2006.

Vincent, Tony (2006) "Our City Podcast" at <<http://www.learninginhand.com/OurCity>> accessed on June 6, 2006. This site has steps for designing, creating and publishing a podcast as well as other handheld educational resources.

Willoughby, Edith (2005). "Architecture & History." Retrieved May 16, 2006, from Overbrook Farms Club Web site: [http://www.overbrookfarmsclub.org/HTML/state\\_significance.htm](http://www.overbrookfarmsclub.org/HTML/state_significance.htm) accessed on May 10, 2006. This article presents the significance of the history and architecture of the Overbrook Farms area.

Zelinsky, Wilbur. (2002). "Geography," in *Pennsylvania: A History of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*. Randall Miller and William Pencak, eds. University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 2002. This chapter offers insightful ways to study history through the lens of geography. Other pathways to history are presented in subsequent chapters of the book.

## Web Resources

*Historic Landmarks* <<http://www.historiclandmarks.org/help/classroom.html>>. This site offers publications for classrooms to help teachers with lessons on historic architecture. "On the Street Where You Live" was used for this unit.

*IPUMS Website* (Integrated Public Use Microdata Series <<http://www.ipums.org/usa/voliii/tEnumForm.html>> accessed on May 15, 2006. This website contains samples of enumeration forms including text of the questions.

*Los Angeles Conservancy* < [http://www.laconservancy.org/kids/broadway\\_guide.php4](http://www.laconservancy.org/kids/broadway_guide.php4) > The link for teachers contains activities and worksheets for learning about architecture. Number 6 is used in the unit.

## Student Bibliography

Alotta, Roberta. *Mermaids, Monasteries, Cherokees and Custer*. This book is a great resource for looking up information about the street names and patterns of naming streets in Philadelphia. The author provides short explanations making it easy for students to use.

Burton, Virginia (1942) *The Little House*. New York: Houghton Mifflin. This delightful tale illustrates the growth of a country town into an urban area with the advantages and disadvantages of each.

*Cobblestone* (2003) Cobblestone Publication: Volume 24, Number 6. This issue of the magazine explores the resources of the National Archives for students.

Isaacson, Philip (1988) *Round Buildings, Square Buildings, Buildings That Wiggle Like a Fish*. New York: Alfred Knopf. This book explores architectural styles of buildings and other structures. The author includes a reference list for obtaining more information for each photograph in the book.

Korman, Susan. (2005) *P is for Philadelphia*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press. This ABC book is a wonderful resource. Each letter gives very detailed information about aspects of the city: ethnic groups, buildings, bridges, and

transportation. Students can use this book to compare the aspects of their neighborhood to other parts of the city.

Wilson, Forest (1988) *What It Feels Like To Be A Building*. New York: John Wiley and Sons. The book presents in simple terms and graphics how different parts of a building function to support weight and stress. A very good companion piece to the websites mentioned in Lesson III.

## Web Resources

*archkitecture* <<http://www.archkitecture.org/index.html>> is an independent architecture education project that encourages children to explore and participate in the built environment.

*Building Big* <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/buildingbig/index.htm>> This site gives students a look into large different structures in their environment and what it takes to build them..

*History Matters Website* <<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/maps/try.html>> This site includes grade-leveled resources and activities for learning about using maps as historical evidence.

*U.S. Census Bureau Website* <<http://factfinder.census.gov/home/en/kids/kids.html>> This site provides a Kids Corner section for students to learn about the census, get facts about their state and take a fun quiz.

## Appendix

### Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening

Students will have opportunities to read and understand essential content of informational texts and documents; use, understand and evaluate a variety of media; and use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes

- 1.1 Learning to Read Independently (A, B)
- 1.2 Reading Critically in all Content Areas (A, B, C)
- 1.6 Speaking and Listening (A, D, E)
- 1.8 Research (A, B)

### Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Science and Technology

Students will use a variety of technological and information resources to gather and synthesize information, and to create and communicate knowledge

- 3.6 Technology Education (B)
- 3.7 Technological Devices (C, D, E)



- 3.8 Science, Technology and Human Endeavors (A, C)

### Pennsylvania Academic Standards for History

The following academic standards will be addressed as students understand and explain basic

- 5.2.3 Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship (E)
- 7.2 Physical Characteristics of Places and Regions (A)
- 7.3 Human Characteristics of Population and Culture (A)
- 7.4.3 Interactions Between People and Places (A and B)
- 8.1. Historical Analysis and Skills Development (A, B, C)
- 8.2.3. Pennsylvania History (B, C)

### **Materials/Resources for Lesson Plans**

- Clip boards for “Observations at an Intersection’ activity
- Chart paper for brainstorming activities
- One-to-One computing for e-journals
- Internet access per student
- Presentation system (over-head projector, white screen, speakers)
- Ward maps from Atlas of the 34<sup>th</sup> Ward of the City of Philadelphia converted to an iMovie. Available from The Free Library of Philadelphia,
- Software: *iMovie*, *Garageband*, *TimeLiner*, Microsoft *Word*, *Excel*, and *PowerPoint*
- Microphone
- Worksheets: census: photo analysis
- Pamphlet: architecture

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## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Adam Levine, “A Brief History of the Overbrook Neighborhood of Philadelphia, focusing on Changes in the Natural Landscape: Overbrook History: The Creeks” JASTECH Development Services, 2005 at <http://www.phillyh2o.org/backpages/OverbrookHistory.htm> accessed on April 17, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Levine, “Overbrook History: The Creeks.”

<sup>3</sup> Tello J. d’ Apery, *Overbrook Farms: Its Historical Background, Growth and Community Life* (Philadelphia: Magee Press, 1936), 2.

<sup>4</sup> d’ Apery, 6.

<sup>5</sup> d’ Apery, 4-8.

<sup>6</sup> d’ Apery, 36-38.

<sup>7</sup> Edith L. Willoughby, “Architecture & History,” Overbrook Farms Club, 2005 at <[http://www.overbrookfarmsclub.org/HTML/state\\_significance.htm](http://www.overbrookfarmsclub.org/HTML/state_significance.htm)> accessed on May 6, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> d’ Apery, 58-61

<sup>9</sup> Willoughby

<sup>10</sup> United Transportation Union Daily News Digest, Pennsylvania: “The little train station that could nearly finished at Overbrook,” September 19, 2000 at <[http://www.utu.org/depts/PR-DEPT/NEWS/ndigest/2000/Sept2m/919/919\\_toc.htm](http://www.utu.org/depts/PR-DEPT/NEWS/ndigest/2000/Sept2m/919/919_toc.htm)> accessed on May 18, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> d’ Apery, 73

<sup>12</sup> Levine, “Overbrook History: From Farmland to Residential Development.”

<sup>13</sup> Levine, “Overbrook History: From Farmland to Residential Development.”

<sup>14</sup> d’ Apery, 71.

<sup>15</sup> Levine, “Overbrook Farms.”

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<sup>16</sup> Levine, "Overbrook Farms."

<sup>17</sup> University City Historical Society, "Overbrook Farms," at < <http://www.uchs.net>> accessed on May 15, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Wendell, Herman and Walter Smith. "A Little Chat with Home Seekers." Overbrook, PA: 1899 at < <http://www.brynmawr.edu/cities/archx/05.600/proj/p2/pfas/OverbrookHistory.html>> accessed on May 15, 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Wendell and Smith/Developers of Overbrook at <<http://www.brynmawr.edu/cities/archx/05-600/proj/p2/pfas/OverbrookHistory.html>> accessed on May 15, 2006.

<sup>20</sup> Franklin Davenport Edmunds, *Public School Buildings of Philadelphia: 1900-1907*. (Philadelphia: School District of Philadelphia, 1933).

<sup>21</sup> Wilbur Zelinsky, "Geography," in *Pennsylvania: A History of the Commonwealth* (Part II: Ways to Pennsylvania's Past), 389, 406-409.

<sup>22</sup> A thorough discussion of using maps as primary sources can be found at <<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/maps/what.html>> assessed on May 8, 2006

<sup>23</sup> Visit Apple's Education Resources for a three-part video series on creating and publishing podcasts in classrooms. It is located at <<http://www.apple.com/education/solutions/podcasting>> accessed on May 29, 2006.

<sup>24</sup> Charles Salter, "How to Read a City" A Geographic Perspective," *OAH Magazine of History* 5 (Fall 1990: 68-71 at <<http://www.oah.org/pubs/magazine/urban/salter.html>> accessed on May 22, 2006.

<sup>25</sup> "Architecture for Children" is an independent architecture education project that encourages children to explore and participate in the built environment. It is located at < <http://www.archkidecture.org/index.html>> accessed on May 13, 2006.

<sup>26</sup> "Building Big" was produced for PBS Online by WGBH © 2000-2001 WGBH Educational Foundation. It is located at <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/buildingbig/index.html>> accessed on May 13, 2006.

<sup>27</sup> Mary Beth Bauernschub, "Community Buildings," ArtsEdge at <<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2362/>> accessed on May 16, 2006.

<sup>28</sup> National Archives Website, Worksheets: Photographs at <<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/index.html>> accessed on May 16, 2006.