



University District Early Settlements and Growth The Civil War and the Morrill Act

Historical Context and Overview

When Columbus was created on the east bank of the Scioto River by the state legislature in 1812, most of the land was still covered with dense hardwood forest. On the west bank of the river, the village of Franklinton, established in 1797, was settled by families from Virginia and Kentucky. To the north of Columbus, along the High Trail Indian path (later High Street), the village of Worthington was founded by New Englanders in 1803. Positioned between these early villages, the area of North Columbus became a popular trading center in central Ohio. By the 1840s, Columbus entrepreneur William Neil owned at least part of all of the stagecoach lines that ran through North Columbus and the rest of Ohio as well.

When the Civil War began in 1861, Columbus became Ohio's main mobilization and training hub for Union soldiers. Camp Thomas was established in North Columbus to train new regiments for service in the Western Theater. A year later, General Lew Wallace (later the author of *Ben Hur*) established Camp Wallace near Camp Thomas.

Another important development during the Civil War permanently changed the city of Columbus: the Morrill Act. Signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln on July 2, 1862, the Morrill Act authorized each state to receive federal land to be used to support colleges of agriculture and mechanical arts. The Ohio General Assembly accepted the offer in 1864 and in 1870, the Ohio Agricultural and Mechanical College (later renamed the Ohio State University) received its charter. Classes began in 1873 on the new campus, erected on the site of the old William Neil farm.

Standards Alignment

Ohio's New Learning Standards: K-12 Social Studies

Grade 3, Content Statement 2: Primary sources such as artifacts, maps and photographs can be used to show change over time.

Grade 3, Content Statement 3: Local communities change over time.

Grade 3, Content Statement 5: Daily life is influenced by the agriculture, industry and natural resources in different communities.

Grade 3, Content Statement 7: Systems of transportation and communication move people, products and ideas from place to place.

Grade 4, Content Statement 3: Various groups of people have lived in Ohio over time including prehistoric and historic American Indians, migrating settlers and immigrants. Interactions among these groups have resulted in both cooperation and conflict.

Learning Objectives

- Explain why the location of North Columbus made the area a popular trading center.
- Analyze the impact of stagecoach transportation on the early growth of Columbus, especially North Columbus.
- Describe the role of North Columbus in the Civil War.

- Analyze the impact of the Morrill Act.
- Compare the characteristics of the University District in the past to the area now.
- Discuss the influence of The Ohio State University on the city of Columbus and beyond.
- Compare photographs, maps, and buildings to analyze change over time within the community.

Discussion Questions

1. What was the area of North Columbus like around 1803?
2. Why did the location of North Columbus make it a popular trading center?
3. How did stagecoach transportation impact the growth of North Columbus?
4. What role did North Columbus play in the Civil War?
5. What was the Morrill Act? What was the impact of this act on Columbus and Ohio?
6. How did the development of Ohio State University affect the growth of North Columbus?
7. How did the Ohio State University play a role in shaping North Columbus and the University District as it appears today?

Extension Activities

Have students participate in a scavenger hunt of the oldest buildings in Columbus (e.g. David Beers' log cabin house). Students can plot these buildings on a map of the city or they can build a timeline showing the years of construction of the houses.

Students compare old maps of Ohio that may show American Indian trails, stagecoach routes, etc. with maps of today that show interstates, freeways and main arteries. Students should discuss how they may or may not match and the reasons for this.

Additional Resources

Ohio National Road - <http://www.ohionationalroad.org/TravelersGuide/TravelersGuide.pdf>

- This 52-page online book discusses the history of the National Road, the early days of the stagecoach in Ohio, and identifies early stagecoach stops in central Ohio.

The Columbus Dispatch -

http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/home_and_garden/2012/02/12/208-years-logged.html

- This article features the David Beers house and other homes in Columbus of notable age.

Teaching Columbus: University District - <http://www.teachingcolumbus.org/neighborhoods11.htm>

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