

Texana McClelland and Her Community



Lesson Plan

OBJECTIVE:

To understand the impact that Texana McClelland had in founding the largest African American community in the Smoky Mountains of North Carolina.

Resources / Materials:

- Biographical sketch of Texana McClelland
- *A Walk Across America*, Chapter 13
- The Appalachian Regional Commission <http://www.arc.gov>

Procedure:

- Read the biographical sketch and discuss the life of Texana McClelland
- Complete the activities of the teacher's choosing

Activities:

- Read chapter 13 from *A Walk Across America* and discuss Peter Jenkins' journey into Texana. Have students write a journal entry discussing the following: With whom does Peter end up living? Why? Do you think people during the 1970s thought it was strange for a young, white man from Connecticut to be living with African Americans in the South? Would you allow a stranger to live with you? What does this say about the welcoming spirit of the Texana community?
- Look at statistics about Cherokee County, North Carolina, on the Appalachian Regional Commission Web site (<http://www.arc.gov/index.do?nodeId=56>). What are some stereotypes about the population of Appalachia? Is diversity recognized on this Web site? If so, how?
- Write a definition of the term "Affrilachian." Do some people really identify as Affrilachians? Is this a useful term? Look at the Coal Black Voices Project online (<http://www.mwg.org/production/documentary/voices/frank.html>) and read the poem "Affrilachia." Discuss its themes of African American identity and regional identity. Have students write their own poem about who they are and where they grew up.

■ Use map skills to find the distance between Dare County and Cherokee County (the beginning and end of the North Carolina scenic highway). What counties in North Carolina are parts of Appalachia? Students may use the Appalachian Regional Commission Web site (<http://www.arc.gov>) to find this information.

■ **NCFMP:** If the NC Freedom Monument ended up being a big map of North Carolina made of one big piece of stone set flat on the ground, what would be some of the key sites where important moments in African American history have taken place? Do some research and make a list of as many sites as you can. Using a large roll of Kraft paper, draw a map of North Carolina large enough to run from one side of your classroom to the other. Invite the class to position themselves on the map at sites of significance and mark each site with notations and dates of people, places, and events. Be sure to include locations east, west, north, south, and in the center of the state. You may want to post the map and add to it as you continue your study of *The African American Experience in North Carolina*.

Evaluation:

- Participation in class discussions
- Poem about personal identity
- Map identification
- Journal entry about life in the small community of Texana

Bibliography

Appalachian Regional Commission.
<http://www.arc.gov>

Coal Black Voices Project.
<http://www.mwg.org/lindaba>

Jenkins, Peter. *A Walk Across America*. Perennial Press, 2001.

A Pictorial History of Cherokee County.
Cherokee County Historical Museum, 1995.

Texana McClelland and Her Community



Biographical Sketch

Texana, a small community located high on a mountain about a mile from Murphy, North Carolina, was named for Texana McClelland. Her real name was Texas, but her father called her Texana. Texana was the daughter of Isaac and Lucy McClelland. During the 1850s, when Texana was a teenager, she met and married Henry McAdams. They were the first settlers on the mountain and they named the community Texana. This became the largest African American community in the Smoky Mountains of North Carolina.

One of the first things that community members did when they settled Texana was build a church. The First Baptist Church in Texana was built of logs, hewn by the women who had moved into the settlement. In 1881, the community tore down the first church and built Mt. Zion Baptist Church, which is still the church of the community today.

School was traditionally very important to members of the Texana community. Since African Americans were not allowed to attend school with white children in the early 1900s, classes for African American children were held in the church until a small one-room schoolhouse was built. In the 1920s, a two-room school building was built. During this time, when children finished the seventh grade they had a choice of whether to continue their education or work. Because education was so important to the African American community most children chose to go to high school, which meant that they had to leave home to continue their education. Often this meant living nearly two hours away in Asheville, North Carolina. Even as late as 1958, Cherokee County did not have a high school for African

Americans. But in September 1965, the Texana School and Murphy schools were integrated. The African American students who were in the elementary grades went to Murphy Elementary School. Those who were of high school age went to Murphy High School.

Today, Texana has about 153 residents, most of whom live along Texana Road on the same mountain hillside where Texana McClelland first lived. The only difference today is that you can now find both white and African American people living in the community. Everyone who lives in Texana considers each other to be friends and family, and the community welcomes outsiders like Peter Jenkins, a white man who spent a considerable amount of time living in Texana in the 1970s. Experiences like those of Peter Jenkins underscore the welcoming and family-oriented nature of this community.

Although they live in the Great Smoky Mountains of Appalachia—an area that is primarily white—the residents of Texana have not forgotten about the diversity that Texana McClelland brought to her mountain community. Each year at homecoming, community members gather at the church to read the biography of Texana and recount stories of early life in the community. Residents have always viewed Texana as a strong African American community, and a few years ago community members began an oral history and quilt project in order to preserve stories of kinship and history in the community. Texana residents are proud to live in or come from Texana.