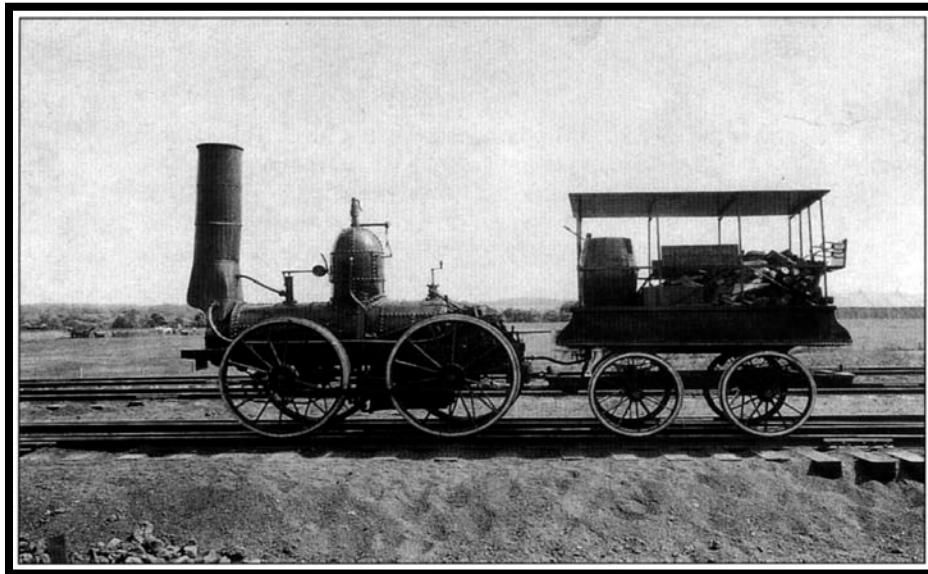




Tuscumbia, Courtland & Decatur Railroad Educator's Resource Packet



Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area

University of North Alabama
One Harrison Plaza
UNA Box 5231
Florence, Alabama 35632-0001
256.765.5028
msnha@una.edu

Tuscumbia Depot

Tuscumbia 204 West 5th Street
Tuscumbia, Alabama 35674
Open: Tuesday-Saturday 10:00am-5:00pm
Sunday 1:00pm – 5:00pm
(256) 383-0783

Decatur Train Depot

701 Railroad Street
Decatur, Alabama

Courtland Heritage Museum

Courtland 252 College Street
Courtland, Alabama 35618
Open: Friday-Saturday, 10:00am - 2:00pm
(256) 637-2710

Sam Keiser, Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area Graduate Assistant



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Introduction

This research packet is designed to give fourth grade students basic knowledge of the Tuscumbia, Courtland & Decatur Railroad (TC&D Railroad). The packet includes visual aids, along with hands-on-activities in accordance with the National Curriculum on Social Studies.

This packet and the accompanying PowerPoint presentation will give the student an understanding of the history of the TC&D Railroad from the early 1800s until the latter half of the nineteenth century. The educational resources highlight the early beginnings of the railroad. The railroad is of exceptional significance both in the history of Alabama and U.S. history. The TC&D Railroad was the first railroad built west of the Allegheny Mountains and was the fourth railroad constructed in the U.S. The TC&D Railroad allowed people to travel more easily across the state as well as opened up new trade opportunities in north Alabama.

This packet is designed to give students basic information about the TC&D Railroad prior to visiting three historic sites and museums along the TC&D Railroad's route: the Tuscumbia Depot and Roundhouse Museum, the Courtland Heritage Museum, and the Decatur Railroad Depot Museum. The packet can also be used as a standalone teaching tool to educate students about the history and significance of the TC&D Railroad.

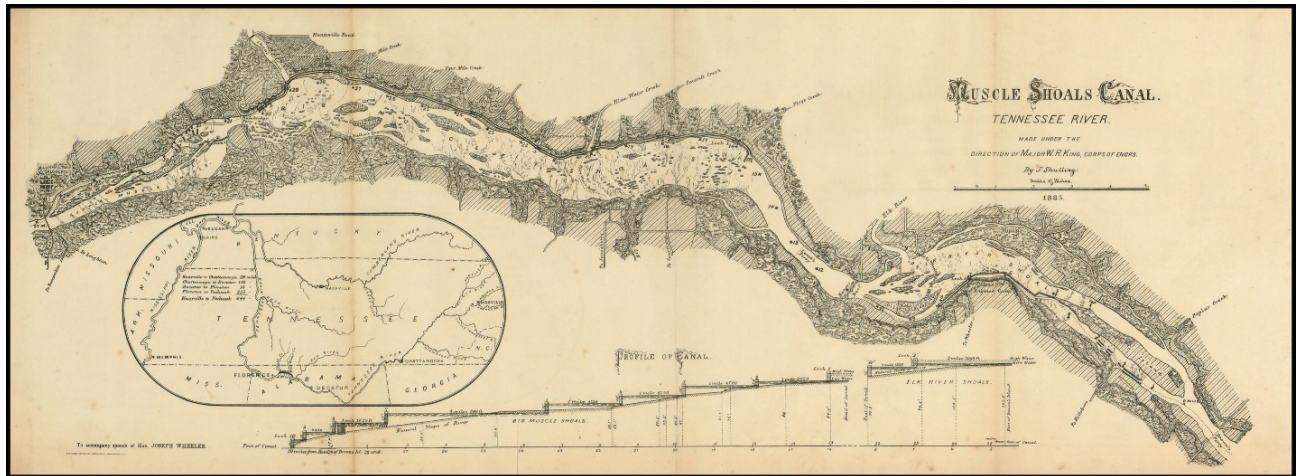
The Muscle Shoals



It is impossible to talk about the TC&D Railroad without first talking about the impact the shoals of the Tennessee River has had on the development of the Tennessee River Valley. The shoals, a shallow, rocky stretch of the Tennessee River, created rapids that made the river largely impassable for almost forty miles between Florence and Decatur. It is from this stretch of the river that the name Muscle Shoals comes from, although there isn't agreement on the exact origin of the nickname. The Muscle Shoals could have possibly received its name from people who had to navigate the treacherous rapids and joked that it took a lot of muscle in order to cross.¹ The Muscle Shoals was also known as, "Mussel Shoals," because of the numerous types of mussels that lived in the water. These mussels had provided a major source of food for Native

¹ Gail King, Historic Document Research, Geophysical Survey, Mapping, and Archaeological Inventory at Tuscumbia Landing, A Trail of Tears National Historic Trail site in Colbert County, Alabama (August, 2011), 33.

Americans who lived along the banks of the river.² Other smaller shoals in the stretch between Florence and Decatur included the Elk River Shoals, Little Muscle Shoals, and Nancy Reef.³



(Map of the shoals on the Tennessee River <http://www.raremaps.com/gallery/enlarge/21861>)

In order to trade goods along the Tennessee River, traders developed several methods to bypass the shoals. One of these methods was the use of keelboats, which began to appear on the Tennessee River at the turn of the nineteenth century. The keelboat was long and slender, pointed or rounded at bow and stern, and built on a heavy keel that was capable of withstanding the impact of collision with submerged rocks and logs, which was essential for traveling through the dangerous shoals.⁴ Keelboats could carry between ten and fifty tons. Planks attached along the gunwales provided a walkway which the crew member crossed as they pushed long poles to navigate the boats against the river current. Keelboats required one man for every 3,000 pounds of freight. The time and labor involved caused this method of transportation to be expensive.⁵ In spite of this expense, keelboats remained the best method for transporting freight upstream until the advent of the steamboat.⁶ Keelboats could carry more freight than other types of boats and had strong hulls, meaning the dangerous rocks of the shoals did less damage to them.

² King, *Historic Document Research*, 33.

³ King, *Historic Document Research*, 30.

⁴ TVA, *A History of Navigation on the Tennessee River System* (University Press of the Pacific), 50.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁶ The information for the section on keelboats appeared in: Jeremy Britten, "Tuscumbia Landing – Boats," 2016.

Even before the establishment of towns along the Tennessee River in the early 1800s, the federal government was working on the question of how to make the shoals passable. The solution the government and residents of the Muscle Shoals region came up with was a series of canals that would allow boats to bypass the most dangerous portions of the shoals. Construction of the canal system began in 1824 but was not completed until 1890. From the beginning, the canals were plagued with problems. Canals work by raising or lowering the amount of water in a series of locks to allow boats to navigate stretches of water of different levels. However, at certain times of the year in the shoals, water levels were too low to raise the water to a sufficient level for boats to pass through the canal locks. The Elk River Canal, for example, often suffered difficulties due to the water being too low in the canal for boats to navigate it.⁷ The Little Muscle Shoals Canal was **crooked**, making it very challenging to navigate.⁸ In the twentieth century, the problems the canals created for trade in the Tennessee River Valley pushed the government to look for other solutions to the problem of the Muscle Shoals, leading to the construction of Wilson Dam (1918-1925).

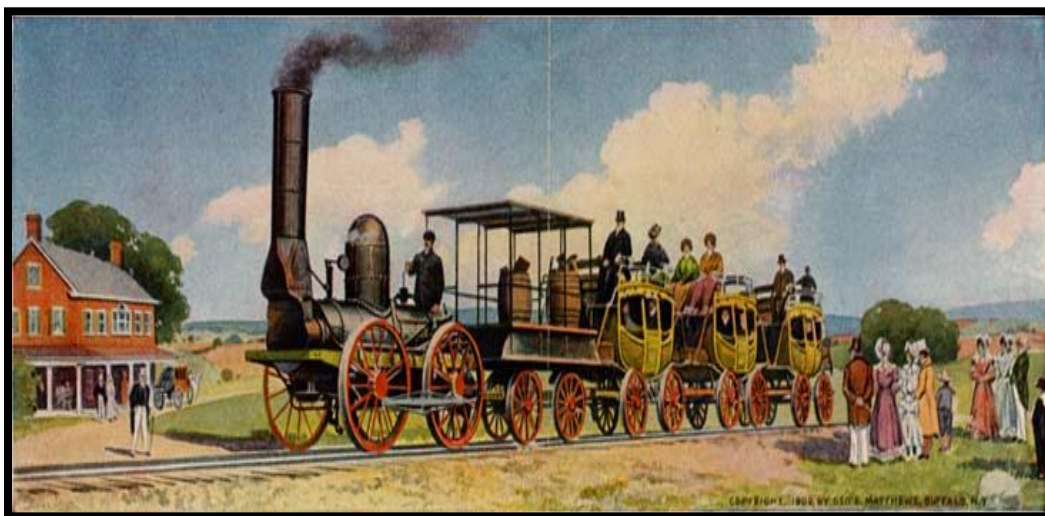


(The Colbert Shoals Canal Lock in Riverton, Alabama)

⁷ King, *Historic Document Research*, 33.

⁸ *Ibid*, 33.

Tuscumbia, Courtland & Decatur Railroad



(This image shows what the early trains on the TC&D Railroad would have looked like)

Railroad construction began in earnest in the United States in the 1820s.¹⁰ Courtland businessman David Hubbard heard about an innovative system for hauling coal in Pennsylvania and made the long, arduous trip north to observe its operation. He wanted to know if this new invention might be adapted to haul cotton around the shoals.¹¹ Hubbard found that the railroad proved to be of great advantage in hauling freight. One horse walking down a graveled path alongside the track could pull a car containing 40 bales of cotton.¹² Hubbard returned home determined to launch a railroad project in Alabama. Recognizing the ability the railroad would have to change business in the Shoals region, the Alabama Legislature acted on January 16, 1830, to incorporate the Tuscumbia Railway Company, giving the company the power to construct a railroad from Tuscumbia to Tuscumbia Landing on the Tennessee River. The route stretched just over two miles long.¹³

⁹ Much of the information in this section was compiled by Jeremy Britten in "Tuscumbia Landing-Trains," 2016.

¹⁰ Kenneth Johnson, "Tuscumbia, An Early Railroad Center." *The Journal of Muscle Shoals History Vol. 17* (Tennessee Valley Historical Society), 74.

¹¹ Wayne Cline, *Alabama Railroads* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 10.

¹² Cline, *Alabama Railroads*, 11.

¹³ Nina Leftwich, *Two Hundred Years at Muscle Shoals* (Tuscumbia, Alabama, 1935), 87.

Construction work on the new railroad project began on June 5, 1830, and was completed in two years. The iron for the 2.1 mile track was sourced from Russell Valley Iron Works; the first iron foundry in Alabama, as well as from the Napier Iron Works in Tennessee.¹⁴ Workers also constructed Alabama's first railroad depot. The depot was a three-story structure, measuring seventy-five feet long and sixty feet wide. It was built on a hillside that overlooked the Tennessee River at Tuscumbia Landing.¹⁵ The first of its three stories was built of strong rubble masonry, while the other two were built out of brick. The upper floor was level with the railroad and utilized an inclined plane that worked via horse power. The plane elevated freight from a floating wharf in the river through the depot to the railroad on the bluff above.¹⁶

The quick construction and successful start to the Tuscumbia Railway energized cotton planters and farmers in the area to build a railroad to connect Tuscumbia with Decatur. The stretch of river between Decatur and Tuscumbia was only navigable during high water, and as such, the profit made off the local planters' 87,000 bales of cotton annually still depended on the whims of the river. The result of this was the organization of the Tuscumbia, Courtland & Decatur Railroad Company on January 13, 1832.¹⁷

The first section of this expanded railroad connected Tuscumbia to Leighton and was completed on August 20, 1833. The remaining section to Decatur was completed in December 1834. The tracks consisted of wooden stringers about five inches square laid down upon cross ties of red cedar and thin bar iron about three inches wide laid on and spiked to the stringer. In the middle of the tracks was the graveled horse path. Mules or horses constituted the motive power for the railroad during the first few years of its operation.¹⁸

The horse-powered method of locomotion used in Tuscumbia was only temporary. As construction of the railroad began, David Hubbard went to Baltimore to purchase steam engines. The company ordered three engines from the Stephenson Shops in England. The "Fulton" was the name to the first of these locomotives built for the TC&D Railroad. The Fulton traveled through New Orleans up the Mississippi, the

¹⁴ Ibid., 87-88

¹⁵ Cline, *Alabama Railroads*, 11.

¹⁶ Leftwich, *Two Hundred Years At Muscle Shoals*, 87-88

¹⁷ Ibid., 89.

¹⁸ Ibid., 90.

Ohio, and the Tennessee Rivers to reach Tuscumbia Landing. The Fulton began its inaugural trip across the tracks on December 1834.¹⁹

David Deshler was perhaps the most important figure surrounding the building of the railroad. In 1830, Deshler was on the board of directors for the Tuscumbia Railway Company and, beginning in 1832, devoted 15 years to building and supporting the TC&D Railroad.²⁰ David Deshler and the TC&D Railroad made significant contributions to railway science and instituted a number of railroad “firsts.” Among these was a fundamental improvement in locomotive design. In 1836 Deshler came up with an innovative proposal for improving the standard four-wheeled engines. He suggested “putting her on eight wheels, carrying the front part on four small wheels, and using four adhesion or driving wheels, by means of outside cranks and connections.”²¹ This original idea from David Deshler would ultimately be adopted by railroads across the world.

¹⁹Ibid., 91.

²⁰ King, *Historic Document Research*, 45.

²¹ Wayne Cline, *Alabama Railroads* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 15.

The TC&D and the Trail of Tears



(Trail of Tears Memorial in Spring Park Tuscumbia)

The TC&D Railroad played a major role during Indian Removal in the 1830s. The relationship between Native Americans and settlers in Alabama and other southern states had long been a troubled one. As more settlers pushed westward, Native Americans found themselves confined to smaller areas of land through treaties that defined the boundaries of their nations. By 1830, the federal government made the decision that removing Native Americans to territory west of the Mississippi to what is now Oklahoma was in the best interest of the settlers. This decision resulted in the Trail of Tears, which was the forced relocation of Native Americans tribes to reservations. The TC&D Railroad was used to transport members of both the Cherokee and Creek nations as they moved westward. The first group from the Cherokee Nation, who largely lived in present-day Georgia, were forced to march to Decatur in 1837, where the group then boarded the

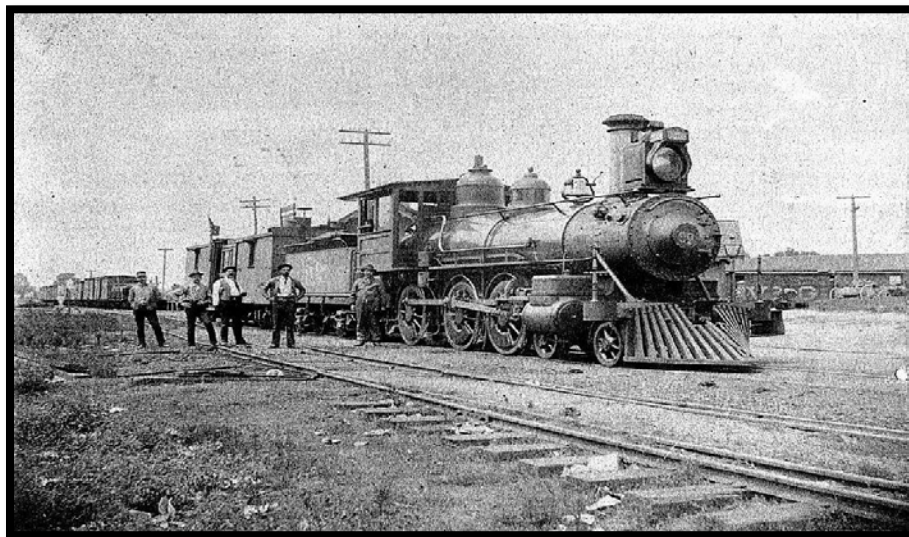
TC&D Railroad. They then traveled to Tuscumbia Landing, arriving between March 9 and 10.²² Forced removal of the Cherokee using the TC&D Railroad continued until December of 1837. Beginning in 1827, members of Creek Nation also came through Tuscumbia Landing, even before the Indian Removal Act was passed. Early groups did not travel on the railroad, though as the Creeks continued to move through the area until August 1837, it is likely later contingents did so.



(Map showing Trail of Tears removal routes)

²² Gail King, *Historic Document Research*, 119.

End of the TC&D Railroad



(This picture is of the Memphis & Charleston Railroad which would absorb the TC&D Railroad in 1852)

The man who is most responsible for keeping the TC&D Railroad operational in its early years was Benjamin Sherrod. He was born in January 16, 1777 in Halifax County, North Carolina. After receiving his education at Chapel Hill, Sherrod moved to Georgia where he served with the US Army during the War of 1812.²³ In 1821 he moved to Alabama, where he became a plantation owner. Sherrod was involved with the TC&D Railroad from its inception. Sherrod served two terms as the president of the TC&D Railroad; his first term lasted from 1832 until 1841 and again in 1843 to 1847. Sherrod was primarily responsible for keeping the TC&D Railroad afloat financially. He took care of many of the railroad's debts by paying them off or donating his own money to the railroad. This practice came to light during a lawsuit that was brought against a board member who had not paid his part of a loan provided by Sherrod. After Sherrod's death in 1847, the railroad was sold to the TC&D Railroad vice president David Deshler on the condition that he reincorporated the railroad as the Tennessee Valley Railroad Company. Deshler would not keep control of the railroad for long, as the Memphis & Charleston Railroad Company acquired the line in 1852. This

²³ "Benjamin Sherrod." *Find A Grave*. <https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=44245240> (accessed October 23, 2015)

expanded railroad connected the Mississippi River to the Atlantic Ocean. This sale officially marked the end of the TC&D Railroad.²⁴



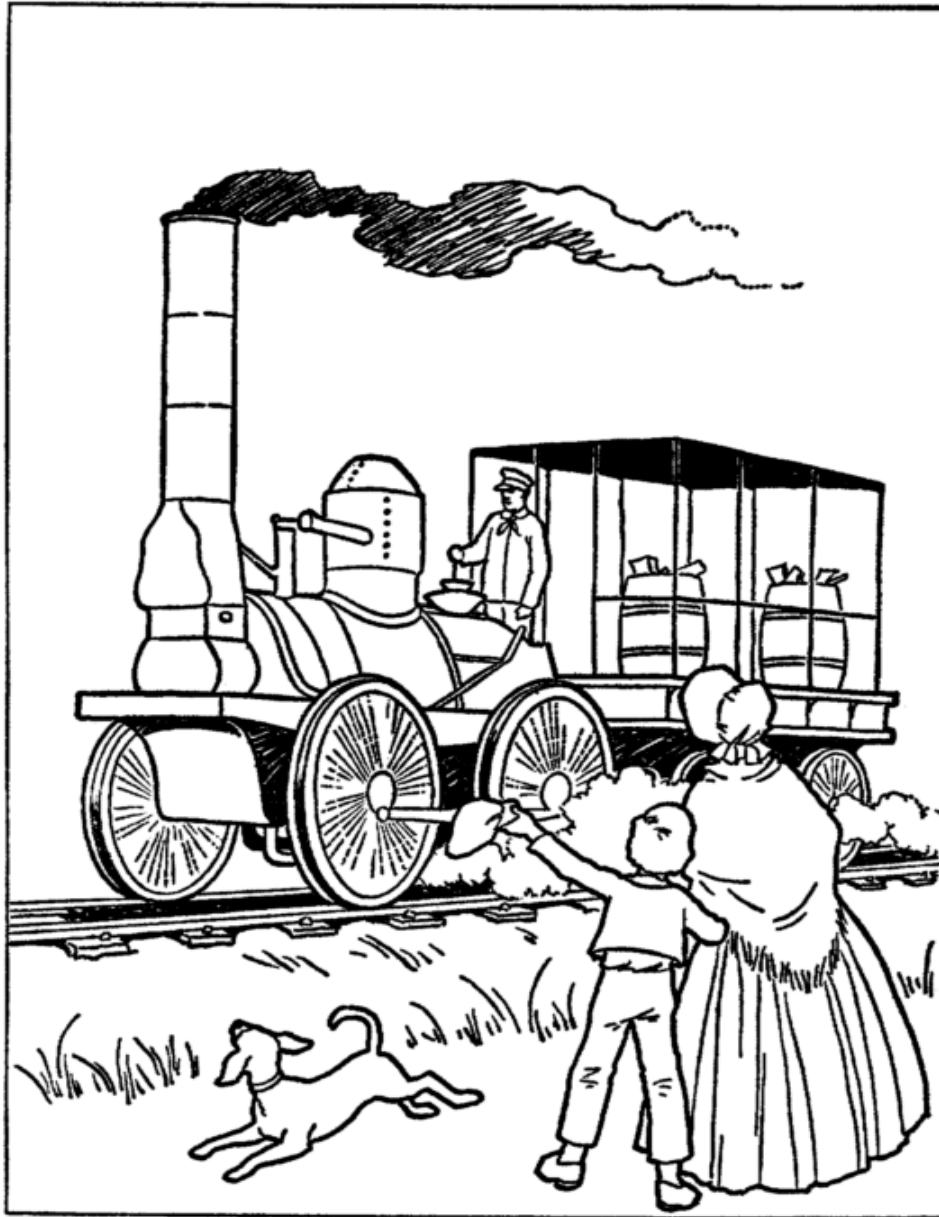
(Railroad Cars at Tusculumbia Railroad and Depot Museum)

²⁴ King, *Historic Document Research*, 48-61.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Coloring Activity



The De Witt Clinton engine came into use in the early nineteenth century.

http://www.activity-sheets.com/coloring_page/vehicles/04-Trains/train-04-001.htm

Name: _____

Date: _____

Word Search

TC&D Railroad

A D H L O T F T N J X C M L A
T I E B S Q N P B W J A R T V
R R B C Z T A O B V E D N A R
O T O M A Q G Y Q T P E B U C
P R R P U T E E S S E N N E T
X N D A M C U J Y H D S S P T
E H N C C I S R Q A A H C T C
O E A A C K J U O T O F L O U
O N L N J F V R T A T R A I N
R G T A J J L R L N O T T O C
Y I R L O I I S F K P U E V G
C N U S A V E V S H E R R O D
T E O R E X K S P X Z W Y T Z
F C C R H T E P P J V P H S S
F P R O P W Q Q Y M A U S V M

BOAT
COTTON
ENGINE
RAILROAD
SHOALS
TRACK

CANAL
COURTLAND
EXPORT
RIVER
STEAM
TRAIN

CAR
DECATUR
IMPORT
SHERROD
TENNESSEE
TUSCUMBIA

Definitions

1. **Railroad** - a road made up of tracks with the purpose of allowing locomotives to travel.
2. **Tuscumbia** - the city in Alabama where the TC&D railroad was started. County seat of Colbert County.
3. **Native Americans** - the first people to inhabit America, also known as American Indians.
4. **Tennessee River** - a river flowing from east Tennessee through north Alabama, west Tennessee, and southwest Kentucky into the Ohio River.
5. **Lumber car** - a railroad car used to carry lumber.
6. **Steam engine** - an engine worked by steam.
7. **Benjamin Sherrod** - The president and primary benefactor of the TC&D railroad.
8. **Canal** - an artificial waterway developed for navigation purposes.
9. **Cotton** - the primary crop in the south.
10. **Steamboat** - a steam-driven vessel, especially a small one or one used on inland waters.
11. **Import** - to bring/buy goods in from other areas.
12. **Export** - to send/sell goods to other areas.
13. **Shoals** - shallow fast moving rapids that made transport difficult.
14. **Tuscumbia, Courtland & Decatur Railroad** - The first railroad west of the Allegheny Mountains which was developed to bypass the shoals in the Tennessee River.
15. **Trail of Tears** - The forced emigration of the Cherokee west to Indian Territory after the passage of the Indian Removal Act of 1830.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Fill in the Blank

Tuscumbia	Steam	Tennessee	Courtland	Imports
Shoals	Dewitt-Clinton	Canal	Decatur	Exports
Animals	Riverboat	Cotton	Lumber	

1. The _____ railroad was the first to be built in Alabama
2. The railroad was created so _____ wouldn't have to travel over the _____.
3. The first railroad was powered by _____.
4. _____ were used to help boats traverse the _____ River.
5. _____ was the main crop that was transported on the railroad.
6. _____ engines helped the train move faster
7. The _____ was the first model engine the TC&D Railroad used.
8. _____ and _____ became a part of the railroad in 1834
9. Goods that are coming into a town are called _____.
10. Goods that are leaving a town are called _____.
11. A _____ car carried wood.

Fill in the Blank Answer Sheet

Tuscumbia	Steam	Tennessee	Courtland	Imports
Shoals	Dewitt-Clinton	Canal	Decatur	Exports
Animal	Riverboat	Cotton	Lumber	

1. The Tuscumbia railroad was the first to be built in Alabama
2. The railroad was created so riverboats wouldn't have to travel over the shoals.
3. The first railroad was powered by animals.
4. canals were used to help boats traverse the Tennessee River.
5. cotton was the main crop that was transported on the railroad.
6. steam engines helped the train move faster
7. The Dewitt-Clinton was the first model engine the TC&D Railroad used.
8. Courtland and Decatur became a part of the railroad in 1832
9. Goods that are coming into a town are called imports.
10. Goods that are leaving a town are called exports.
11. A lumber car carried wood.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-visit: What do you know about the TC&D Railroad?

Pre-visit: What do you want to learn about the TC&D Railroad during your visit to the museum?

Post-visit: What did you learn about the TC&D Railroad during your visit to the museum?

Jeopardy Review Game

A custom Jeopardy creator may be found at this site. (<https://www.superteachertools.net/jeopardyx/>)

Using the custom Jeopardy creator, you can develop a series of questions with the TC&D Railroad as the focus using the information found in the resource packet.

In order to play the game, divide the students into two different teams. Each team will rotate who will attempt to answer the question. Students will pick a topic and answer a question related to the topic. Before answering students are allowed to confer with one another. If the team cannot answer or gets the answer wrong the other team has a chance to steal that answer. The team with most points at the end of the game wins.

Below is what a sample of what the game will look like.

Sample Game

States and Capitals	Government	US History	History	Geography
<u>10</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>20</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>30</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>30</u>
<u>40</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>40</u>
<u>50</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>50</u>
<u>Final Question</u>				

Classroom Discussion Questions

1. Why was the TC&D Railroad important to the Muscle Shoals region?
2. How do you think railroads helped create America?
3. Do you think railroads are still important today? Why or why not?
4. What do you think life was like for the people in Tuscumbia before they got the railroad? Was it hard for them to get things they needed?
5. How did the railroad affect trade? Did it make it easier or harder?
6. Why did the railway use animals first to transport goods? How effective do you think the animals were at speeding up the transportation of goods?
7. Were the canals effective for bypassing the Shoals? Why or why not?
8. How did Tuscumbia get its name?
9. How did Indian Removal impact the lives of both Native Americans and settlers in Alabama?
10. How did the TC&D Railroad play an important role in the Trail of Tears?

Tuscumbia Depot and Railroad Museum



Rules and regulations

No food or drink

No photography

\$2.00 admission fee

What you can expect.

Participants will be taken on a 30 to 45 minute tour of the depot.

Participants will learn the history of the TC&D Railroad

Participants will be able to view artifacts from the nineteenth century

Participants will be taken through a rebuilt depot with separate waiting rooms, a ticket room, and the roundhouse.

The roundhouse offers visitors an opportunity to watch a video regarding train safety.

Address

Tuscumbia Depot

204 West 5th Street

Tuscumbia, Alabama 35674

256-383-0783

Open Tuesday-Saturday 10:00am-5:00pm and Sunday 1:00pm – 5:00pm

Courtland Heritage Museum



Rules and regulations

No specific rules on photography or food

Be respectful to the guides, artifacts, and exhibits

What you can expect

Participants will be taken on a 30 to 45 minute tour of the museum

Participants will see a panel on the history of the TC&D Railroad

Participants will learn about Courtland and the surrounding area from the nineteenth century onwards.

Participants will be able to view nineteenth century artifacts related to the town of Courtland.

Address

252 College St.

Courtland, AL 35618

(256) 637-2710

Open 10:00am - 2:00pm Friday and Saturday

Decatur Depot Museum



Opening Soon!

701 Railroad Street NW

Decatur, AL 35601

Alabama Course of Study: Social Studies²⁵

4th Grade: Alabama Studies.

4.1.2 Students will practice:

Describing types of migrations as they affect the environment, agriculture, economic development, and population changes in Alabama

4.3.2 Students will practice:

Explaining the impact of the Trail of Tears on Alabama American Indians' lives, rights, and territories

4.4.2 Students will practice:

- Recognizing natural resources of Alabama during the early nineteenth century
- Describing human environments of Alabama as they relate to settlement during the early nineteenth century, including housing, roads, and place names

4.6.1 Students will:

Describe cultural, economic, and political aspects of the lifestyles of early nineteenth-century farmers, plantation owners, slaves, and townspeople (Economics, Geography, History, Civics and Government).

4.6.2 Students will practice:

Describing major areas of agricultural production in Alabama, including the Black Belt and fertile river valleys

²⁵ <http://teachinghistory.org/teaching-materials/state-standards/alabama/4>

For More Information

For more information about the TC&D Railroad and the surrounding communities, please visit:

Alabama Railroads: <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-2390>

Courtland, Alabama: <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-3469>

Decatur, Alabama: <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-2143>

Tuscumbia, Alabama: <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-2164>

Cherokee Indian Removal: <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1433>

Creek Indian Removal: <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-2013>

Gail King, *Historic Document Research, Geophysical Survey, Mapping, and Archaeological Inventory at Tuscumbia Landing, A Trail of Tears National Historic Trail site in Colbert County, Alabama* (August, 2011)

John McWilliams, ed., *Tuscumbia America's First Frontier Railroad Town*. (Tuscumbia Main Street Project, 1989)

Photographic sources as they appear

<http://www.onlyinyourstate.com/zalabama/trains-al/>

http://www.bamanews.com/uploaded_images/Muscle-Shoals-728169.jpg

<http://www.raremaps.com/gallery/enlarge/21861>

<http://www.schenectadyhistory.org/railroads/trolleytrips/dewittclinton-100.jpg>

The Colbert Shoals Canal Lock in Riverton, Alabama, UNA Archives and Special Collections, William Lindsey McDonald Collection, Image Collection, Volume 14B: Wilson Dam & Powerhouse Construction

<http://mw2.google.com/mw-panoramio/photos/medium/26633000.jpg>

https://www.google.com/search?q=trail+of+tears+water+route&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjLi8WDvK7TAhVFLSYKHQJcBxMQ_AUICSgC&biw=1920&bih=922#imgrc=zdSMW-ouJ8qNaM:

<http://www.legendsofamerica.com/photos-east/Memphis%20and%20Charleston%20Railroad.jpg>

<http://www.decaluralabamausa.com/decat-ur-and-ddra-receive-main-street-2015-16-award-of-excellence-for-adaptive-historic-preservation-for-restoration-of-the-decat-ur-union-depot/>

Special Thanks To:

Dr. Carolyn Barske

Judy Sizemore

Cathy Wood

Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area

Tuscumbia Depot and Roundhouse Museum

Courtland Heritage Museum

Decatur Railroad Depot Museum