

Matthews History Mural

Located in the Town Hall/Library

a. Years before the Town of Matthews incorporated, the area was unspoiled rolling woodlands. Nearby lay the trading trails and hunting grounds of the Waxhaw and Catawba Indians. The **Waxhaw Indians** were of Sioux descent and distinguished among other Indians by their flat heads. During infancy, sandbags were placed on their foreheads to achieve this flat bone structure. They believed the wide-set eyes that resulted from the harmless practice gave them excellent eyesight. These Indians were friendly and by 1600 trade had developed between the Europeans and these natives. Historians speculate that by 1702, close to 2,000 natives lived in the Waxhaw area. By 1720 most had perished from the dreaded 'white man's diseases'. The remaining few Waxhaws are believed to have joined the Catawba tribe in South Carolina.

b. Our early settlers, mainly farmers, were attracted to this rich land. These farmers began clearing the land for planting around 1800. Cotton grew well and soon became the primary cash crop. As the land was cleared for planting so many tree stumps were left standing that the early settlement was unofficially known as **Stumptown**.



c. Postal Department records show that on July 12, 1825, John Miles Fullwood was appointed area postmaster. Mr. Fullwood operated a stagecoach, depot, store and post office from his home. The mail was addressed to Fullwood Station and Stumptown became known as **Fullwood**.

d. Soon after the Civil War a **sawmill** was established in the Fullwood area. Houses and stores continued to be built and from a fledging community emerged a town.

e. By 1870 more businesses and homes began to appear. The stagecoach era faded in 1874. Amid much excitement, the first train pulled into Fullwood December 15, 1874. By 1875 mail was addressed to **Matthews Station** and the name Fullwood gradually disappeared. The water tank (painted near the depot) was actually located one fourth mile down the tracks in the area called Tank Town, now the Crestdale area. The depot, which is located to the right of the library, was constructed in the late 1880s by the Carolina Central Railway.

f. The **Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist Churches** all were organized in 1877. They still flourish in Matthews along with churches representing many faiths.

g. In 1879 Matthews was incorporated as a municipal corporation in the state of North Carolina. Jeremiah Solomon Reid headed a committee to secure the town charter. The town's official name became Matthews,

in honor of **Edward Matthews**, a director of the Carolina Central Railroad. The 1880 official Matthews census lists 191 residents.

h. The charming **Reid House** is a Queen Ann Style Victorian. Built in 1890 by Edward Solomon Reid, and home to Dr. T.N. Reid and family. It remained in the Reid Family for almost 100 years and is now owned by the Matthews Historical Foundation.

i. By 1901 the first **telephones** were installed when a privately-owned switchboard was brought to Matthews. It served about twenty subscribers.

j. Matthews' modern brick **school** opened in 1907. A building of up-to-date design, it was named by NC General Assembly as one of the only two Mecklenburg County schools designed as a rural public high school.

k. The **Matthews Drug Company** relocated to its new location at the corner of Trade and John Streets in 1910. The center of town activities, it served the citizens' needs with fountain service, doctor's offices, dairy products, ice delivery and bus tickets. It was destroyed by fire in 1972.

l. In 1925 the **Rosenwald African-American School** opened in Tank Town, now Crestdale, serving local students. It closed in 1966 with integration and the building burned in 1975. Crestdale dates to the 1860s and is one of North Carolina's oldest African-American communities.



Matthews African-American School - est. 1918



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BANK of MATTHEWS-1909



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MATTHEWS PUBLIC SCHOOL ESTABLISHED - 1907
COMMUNITY CENTER-200



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A Walking Tour of Matthews



1 196 N. Trade St. Weaver, Bennett & Bland

Formerly the Heath & Reid Building it was constructed in 1888. An impressive two-story building with all the modern innovations at the time; earthquake bolts and a freight elevator. The building's bricks were made from the clay on the property.



2 188 N. Trade St. **Renfrow General Merchandise & Hardware** was established in this location before 1900 by Capt. Thomas Jefferson Renfrow. Originally in two sections an addition, hosting many different businesses, was completed in 1909 making it the size it is today. The Renfrow Cotton Gin, no longer standing, was located behind the main building. The only remaining link to the Cotton Gin is the little building on Cotton Gin Alley where folks waited while their cotton was ginned, which is now part of the Farmer's Market. Capt. Renfrow was politically active, serving in the NC General Assembly, Chairman of the Matthews School Board and as a member of the Matthews School Board for forty years.



3 156 N. Trade St. **Renfrow Annex** was originally the two front rooms you see today, dating to 1892. It was located in the green lot between Renfrow's and Heath & Reid. At that time it was

the Matthews Drug Company. It was relocated to this lot in the early 1900s, serving as a Post Office. The remainder of the building was added and it became living quarters for the postmaster and his family.

4 106 N. Trade St. **Sam's Shoe Fixery/Cleaners** was built in the 1950s as retail rental property by the Renfrows.



5 100 N. Trade St. The former Matthews Drug Company was originally a two-story brick building erected in 1910. The drug store and a meat store occupied the first floor and apartments were on the second. This business was the hub of Matthews with doctors' offices, soda fountain, fresh dairy products and a bus stop all available here. The building was completely destroyed by fire in 1972. The present single-story building was erected on the original foundation from the remaining bricks.

6 134 W. John St. Historic Reid House

The Reid House was built in 1890 by Edward Solomon Reid. A prominent businessman in Matthews, Mr. Reid sold the house to his sister Ellen in 1893, the year she married Dr. Thomas Neely Reid (not related to the Matthews Reid family). Dr. Reid began practicing medicine in 1889 and was one of the first people in Matthews to trade his horses for an automobile. The Reid House is considered unique because it is one of the few Victorian Queen Anne style homes in Mecklenburg County.



7 Trade & W. John Streets

On the corner was a small frame building that, over the years, various general stores occupied. This is now the parking area by Matthews Marketplace, which is the original 1st floor of the A. J. Williams Hotel, 107 N. Trade Street.



Built in 1901, the impressive 2-story brick hotel had the only public dining room for miles around. Next

to the hotel was the Funderburk Livery Stable, built in the early 1900s. This was also a two-story brick building providing stabling, grooming, and feeding. By 1912, the Sinclair home was built by the stable grazing lot. In 1918 the small Sinclair home was destroyed by fire which spread to the Livery Stable and A.J. Williams Hotel. The second floor of both buildings was destroyed.



They were remodeled to single-story buildings. The hotel building was remodeled to house different businesses. In 1978 the Livery Stable was razed to make way for BB&T at 157 N. Trade St., which is now **Café 157**.



along with the Livery Stable, to accommodate a new bank building. The Funderburks also had a cotton gin, which they operated next to the railroad tracks. Behind the Funderburk buildings was the Grist Mill and Blacksmith Shop, which has been renovated and is still a vital part of downtown.



9 165 N. Trade St. **Santé Restaurant** Formerly the Matthews Barber Shop, circa 1898, was owned by the Funderburks and used as rental property. The Barber Shop occupied this location for 30 years before moving to 107 N. Trade St.

10 189 N. Trade St. **Planet Ballroom.** The Orr Building was erected circa 1900. It is the only two-story building remaining on the west side of N. Trade St. It was built for commercial use and has earthquake bolts on the side.



11 195 N. Trade St. **Temple Mojo Growler Shop Beer Garden** the former Matthews Post Office was built in 1939 for use as a post office. Its neoclassical revival style makes this building stand out on Trade Street. It served as the post office until 1962. Over the years, it has been the home of various retail businesses.



12 232 N Trade St. Matthews Heritage Museum

Former Massey-Clark House circa 1880. Home to the Massey and later the Clark families, it is now the Town museum, displaying local history from the 1800s to the 1950s. Open for visitors Thursday – Saturday.

13 210 Matthews Station St. Matthews Train Depot & Visitors Center

is open Monday – Friday. It now houses the Matthews Chamber of Commerce and Seaboard Airline Railroad artifact display. The Depot building was constructed in the late 1880s and served as a social and economic beehive for years. In 1958 passenger service ended but the depot remained in operation for freight until 1966. The depot was eventually sold and relocated. It housed several different businesses as part of the Depot Shopping Center. In 1999 the Town of Matthews purchased the Depot. It was restored and returned to its original location and is now a focal point of the Town Green. A Seaboard caboose, adjacent to the Depot, is available for the public to visit.



14 232 Matthews Station St. Town Hall/Library

The Matthews Branch Library and the Town Hall share the same building that anchors the Downtown. Since the train was such a large part of Matthews history, a train theme can be found in the library. The Matthews History Mural is also found here. Special features include a children's computer area in a larger than life toy train, original artwork, a cozy sitting area by the fireplace, and Matthews history displays.

