By the early 1920s Matthews was surrounded by cotton fields. Cotton was king and growing was big business. The Reinforce’s and Funderburks operated gins in Matthews. Both early merchants in town, Reinforce started their gin in 1906 and eventually had four gins working in the same building.

Matthews Livery Stable and Bank of Matthews

Built by the Funderburks in the early 1900s, they survived fire, the depression and a robbery. In 1976 BB&T located in the Town Hall/Library. The Bank of Matthews merged. The decision was made to demolish those landmarks to accommodate a new bank building.

By 1926 electric service had come to Matthews. Many citizens worked diligently to acquire a rights-of-way and permission for lines and poles.

The Matthews School was remodeled in 1912 and again in 1928 to fit the growing needs of the community. On November 12, 2000, after complete renovation and another addition, it reopened as the Matthews Community Center offering performing arts instruction, education classes and conference rooms. It boasts a 358 seat performing arts theater, an expansive stage, dressing rooms and a light and sound control room.

The Matthews Library is a branch of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library (CML). The present location is the fifth home for the Library. In the late 1920s, the first Library opened in a room on the second floor of the Matthews Drug Store Building, 100 North Trade Street. When it outgrew the room, the Library moved to larger quarters in the basement of the building. In 1933, the Library moved to rooms on one side of the Livery Stable. It remained in this location until 1957, when a new Library opened at 124 West John Street. Pushed by growth in the Matthews community, an addition to this building was completed in 1985.

On March 8, 2014, Matthews celebrated its 135th year as a town. Matthews has grown from 191 citizens in 1880 to a population in excess of 32,000 in 2016.
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.

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.

Years before the Town of Matthews incorporated, the area was an unspoiled rolling woodlands. Matthewwsc.gov
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 Renfrows 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 NC Prison Board and as a member of the Matthews School Board for forty years.

106 N. Trade St. Sam’s Shoe Fixxery/Cleaners was built in the 1950s as retail rental property by the Renfrows.

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 heart 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.

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. In 1909 the Funderburk brothers constructed a two-story brick building next door to their existing store to house the Funderburs Bros. Grocery and Meat Stone and the Bank of Matthews. The second story of this building was destroyed by fire in the mid 1950s. The Bank of Matthews merged with BB&T in 1976 and in 1978 this building was razed, 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 Funderburg buildings was the Grist Mill and Blacksmith Shop, which has been renovated and is still a vital part of downtown.

189 N. Trade St. L&M Home & Studios In 1909 the Funderburks constructed a two-story brick building next door to their existing store to house the Funderburg Bros. Grocery and Meat Store and the Bank of Matthews. The second story of this building was destroyed by fire in the mid 1950s. The Bank of Matthews merged with BB&T in 1976 and in 1978 this building was razed, 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 Funderburg buildings was the Grist Mill and Blacksmith Shop, which has been renovated and is still a vital part of downtown.

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 Renfrows 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.

196 N. Trade St. Weaver, Bennett & Brand 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.

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 1800s and served as a social and economic hub 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.

223 Matthews Station St. Downtown 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.