The Stories and Histories of Diamond Hill

Waddell Elementary – 4th Grade VA Studies
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Starter Questions

What is Local History?

How does it relate to 4th Grade VA Studies?

How will it help me in 5th-6th Grade US History? 11th Grade?

What’s History really good for?
Poll Questions:

Raise your hand if **YES**.

You can answer YES for **more than one**.
Starter Questions

Who likes reading books?
Starter Questions

Who likes writing stories?
Who likes movies?
Who likes taking pictures?
Who likes listening to music?
Who likes to dance?
If you raised your hand for one of those...

Raise your hand ... AGAIN!!
Stories
Histories
Visual Arts
Performing Arts

Researching is Searching
Searching is Curiosity
So where are we going?

**State:** 4th Grade Virginia Studies  
**City:** Streets of Lexington  
**Neighborhood:** Diamond Hill  
**Sites:** Church, Home, Social Hall and Store
Where is Diamond Hill?

Main St. ➔ Lewis St.
Diamond St. ➔ Washington St.

the areas of neighborhoods change over time
(Diamond Hill, Green Hill, Mudtown ... VMI buys up land)
One Place, Many People:

Lived Histories
Lively Stories

“The House of Fun”
Knights of Pythias Hall
(On North Main Street, Diamond Hill behind)
Knights of Pythias Hall
also known in the day as …
“THE HOUSE OF FUN”
These Musical Stars
Internationally Celebrated,
Performed at the foot of Diamond Hill in …
The House of Fun!!
Duke Ellington – Pianist

Duke Ellington in the Twenties

The Duke Steps Out
Duke Ellington – Time’s “Man of the Year” -- 1956
Count Basie – Pianist and Orchestra Conductor
Count Basie – Pianist and Orchestra Conductor
Cab Calloway – Singer and Conductor
Cab Calloway – “Hi-De-Hi-De-Hi-De Ho !!!”
Louis Armstrong – Trumpeter and Band Leader – “King of Swing”
Louis Armstrong – aka ‘Satchmo’ with his Big Blowin’ Cheeks
Singer of “What a Wonderful World”
Louis Armstrong – another TIME “Man of the Year”
All Played for Local Audiences at Knights of Pythias Hall… aka “THE HOUSE OF FUN”
What did folks dance to???
The Lindy Hop

1930s-1940s Dance Craze

Imagine this at Pythias Hall, ‘House of Fun’
The Lindy Hop

Hip-Swiveled Swirling, Leaping, Athletic Pairs

To Rotating Sequence of Pairs: ‘Dance Battles’

To Chubby Checker’s solo-swivel, foot-grounded ‘Twist’

... to the Beatles’ “Twist and Shout”
The Lindy Hop

Costumed Movie Sequence (1941)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahoJReiCaPk

“Keep Punchin’” (1948)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyRMuCFxePw
The Twist

“The Twist”: Chubby Checker:

Around the world, adults take a run at the 1960s Dance Fad and add their own twists.

Do you think you can Twist like THIS??
Or **THESE** Moves?!?!

Hips Keep Movin’, Kids Keep Hoppin’....

... and Art and Music and Dance and History Keep Evolvin’!!
Now ... the local buildings you’ll soon draw ... 

... and walk to, Downtown, next Wednesday.

Try to imagine how people lived and learned there how they wrote and played and prayed there.

And ask yourself: how you might use such spaces differently if you could choose
Buildings You’ll See

Knights of Pythias: Social Hall
Blandome: Private Home
First Baptist: Church
Willson-Walker House: Store and Restaurant
Where is Diamond Hill?

Main St. ➔ Lewis St.
Diamond St. ➔ Washington St.

the areas of neighborhoods change over time
(Diamond Hill, Green Hill, Mudtown ... VMI buys up land)
Diamond Hill is the story of people. It is the story of African-Americans, such as William Hayden Holmes, Harry Lee Waller, John B. Thompson, and Zach and Afena Franklin. It is also the story of European-Americans like Irish immigrant and Civil War veteran John Sheridan, who lived on Diamond Hill and helped in its development.

Diamond Hill is also a lesson in 19th and 20th century architecture, from the elegant “Blandome,” an Italianate villa built in the late 1820s, to numerous vernacular styles of the early 20th century. Additionally, the neighborhood and nearby North Main Street is home to several late 19th century churches and a National Register designated building constructed in the late 1920s as Lexington’s “Colored School.”

Following the Civil War in 1865, nearly 4,000 African-Americans in Rockbridge County had been freed, and they joined several hundred others known as free blacks. Many came to Lexington to seek work and an education. They settled mainly along north Main Street and eastward along Randolph Street. Across from VMl lay a largely open hill that became known as Diamond Hill. The origins of its name is unknown.

In 1883, a street from North Main to the top of the hill was called Diamond Street. Other streets followed. Fuller Street had begun as an alley where Jacob Fuller, a classical scholar and librarian at Washington College, built a large brick house, later known as “Blandome.” In 1883, Maury Street, named after oceanographer Commodore Matthew Fontaine Maury was also laid out. On top of the hill, Lewis Street, named for attorney William C. Lewis, was recognized in 1912 as the town’s northeastern boundary.

John Sheridan, local land speculator, who owned most of the upper hill, created the Green Hill Subdivision in 1925. With its fifty lots, it became the nucleus of the town’s black community. Other African-Americans also lived on Davidson and Moore Streets and along North Main Street. After World War II, most of Diamond Hill’s lots were filled.
Where is Diamond Hill?

From 2014 → 2016

_Your_ School was Part of the Diamond Hill Community

WHERE OTHER SCHOOLS HAVE COME BEFORE...
WHERE OTHER BUILDINGS HAVE **CHANGED** AND **EVOLED**
Lylburn Downing School (1946)
Founded in 1927 for Lexington’s African-American Students,
Now recognized as a National Landmark
YOU will be part of a growing tradition when you become LDMS Trojans too
Rev. Lylburn L. Downing
Presbyterian Minister and Educator (1863-1937)
Born in Lexington to enslaved parents who attended Stonewall Jackson’s “Colored Sunday School”
Lexington Colored School – S. Randolph St.  
1865-1920s
Lexington Colored Graded School Diploma

LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA

Robert Lee Clark having completed the prescribed Course of Study for Grammar Grades in this School is hereby declared a Graduate of the Lexington Colored Graded School.

In testimony whereof this Certificate is now presented to him

Given at Lexington, Virginia, this 12th day of May, 1914

W. N. P. Harris, Principal.
Lylburn Downing School (1946)
Founded in 1927 for Lexington’s African-American Students, Lylburn Downing Middle School opens after de-segregation in 1965.
Lylburn Downing Baseball Team – 1948
Will YOU want to play on an LDMS Trojans Sports Team too?!?
Lexington High School  1927-1960
Waddell Elementary School  1970 - 2014
Seth Eastman – 1849 (looking South to Lexington)
Diamond Hill will develop on the hill at left
Lexington from VMI

(Late 1800s, photo by Michael Miley: look for his sidewalk stone next week)
VMI from Diamond Hill
(can you figure out where the photographer is standing??)
1867 – Two Years After the End of the Civil War, Four Years after Emancipation Proclamation
Lexington’s First Baptist Church, now a State Landmark
This is an 1877 Map of Lexington: Where is First Baptist Church?
First Baptist Church, N. Main Street
2009
The First Church Met in a Tobacco Barn

When the Brick Church and Steeple were built, the wooden planks from the congregation’s first church building were used to build a house on the corner of Fuller and Massie Streets.

You can still see this house, and those boards.

If you were to re-use one building to make another, what would you make?

WHY??
First Baptist Church – N. Main
Brick Church Built 1896
First Baptist Church, N. Main Street
2009
First Baptist Church, N. Main Street – 2015
After Steeple Renovation (supported by HLF and City of Lexington)
First Baptist Church, N. Main Street -- 2015
After Steeple Renovation (supported by HLF and City of Lexington)
First Baptist Church, N. Main Street -- 2015
After Steeple Renovation (supported by HLF and City of Lexington)
First Baptist Church, N. Main Street -- 2012
As painted by Beverly Tucker
Across from First Baptist Church, 1894
Main Street Parade with Elephant and Camel
Knights of Pythias Hall -- 1926
Recently wheeled a half-block down Main Street, 2014
(VMI Construction at Bottom, First Baptist Spire, at Right)
Knights of Pythias Hall
(On North Main Street, Diamond Hill behind)
Knights of Pythias Hall
(Dedicated 1926, one year before Lylburn Downing School is built)
Knights of Pythias Hall
also known in the day as …
“THE HOUSE OF FUN”
Knights of Pythias Hall -- 2012
2nd Floor Dance and Music Hall
Knights of Pythias Hall -- 2012
Lights are Gone Out...
Knights of Pythias Hall – Basement 2012

What Next???
Knights of Pythias Hall – Moved, 2015

To Build, or Not to Build?

WHY?
Blandome

101 Tucker St.
National Historic Register Photo
Jacob Fuller (1816–1890) is remembered primarily as a classical scholar, teacher, and librarian at W & L. Born in Lexington and educated at Washington College, he spent his first few years after graduation as the head of the college’s preparatory department. Then he established his own classical school that was designed to tutor young men who hoped to enter college but first needed to improve their knowledge of the classics. Fuller’s school, which still stands just east of the old Catholic Church on Henry Street, remained an educational institution until the early 1880s, and the Lexington Gazette regularly reported its special activities and annual closing exercises, treating them as time-honored institutions in Lexington. Fuller was a remarkably successful teacher as well as an earnest scholar, and he won the admiration of many of the students he guided safely into college.
John Randolph Tucker

Bought Blandome in 1872
(Tucker Street named for him in 1912)
Can you find where Mr. Tucker’s House on Henry Street?
Main Street at Henry Street looking Uphill
From ‘Sheridan Livery’ and First Baptist Church to Blandome
Harry Lee Walker
Successful Lexington Businessman
Purchased “Macado’s” Building in 1911 for his Butcher’s Shop and Store
Purchased Blandome in 1917
Walker & Wood Brothers Store  @1910s
Among the most successful local African-American Businesses
Supplied meat from their farm on Buena Vista Road, to feed VMI Cadets
Walker & Wood Brothers Store  @1910s
Among the most successful local African-American Businesses
Supplied meat from their farm on Buena Vista Road, to feed VMI Cadets
Blandome

Purchased by Harry Lee Walker in 1917
The family of his daughter, Mrs. C.M. Wood was important in the founding of Lylburn Downing School in 1927 for the City’s African-American Children
“I have spent one of my happiest summers at Blandome…

Hurrah for Blandome”

Rosa Johnston Robinson, Sept. 1, 1896
Inside ‘Cupola Window’ on top of Blandome
“Willson-Walker House”:
Built in 1812 by Robert Willson as a family Home
100 years later: Harry Lee Walker buys to use as a Store
Eliza Walker writes from here to Build and Orphanage, Better Lexington Schools
100 years later still: Macado’s serves Lexington as a Restaurant
Eliza Bannister Walker
Social Reformer, Poet, Singer
1921: VA Federation of Colored Women Meets at Blandome
Eliza Bannister Walker: Building an Orphanage

1) Violet, born without hands 2) Virginia, cannot walk 3) Annie, cannot talk
If you owned this building in 20 years…
What would you do with it?

WHY???
I’m lucky to see so many wonderful smiles at Lylburn Downing & Waddell each day. But every day that I teach, I look at this smile, and it always makes me glow.
Imagine for a second…
What’s making him so happy at his school??
In his neighborhood?
And what makes you feel that good … in your neighborhood…. and in your school?
Let’s Explore!!!

Thank You, Bulldogs!!
Weinberg’s Store – 1909
across from Lexington Hotel (R.E. Lee Hotel)
Elephants on Parade