


250 YEARS OF



THE UNITED STATES OF

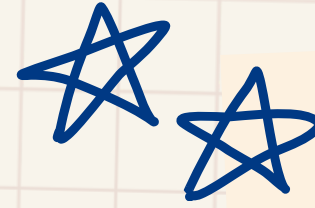
AMERICA

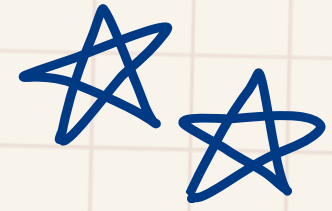


The Moore-Morris
History and
Culture Center
WILLIAMSON COUNTY, TN

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

- July 4th, 1776
- Primary Author: Thomas Jefferson
- 56 signers representing the 13 states with their signatures arranged northern states to southern states





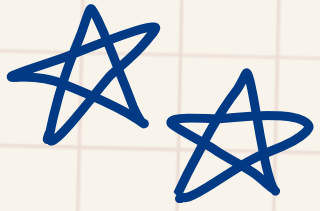
THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE



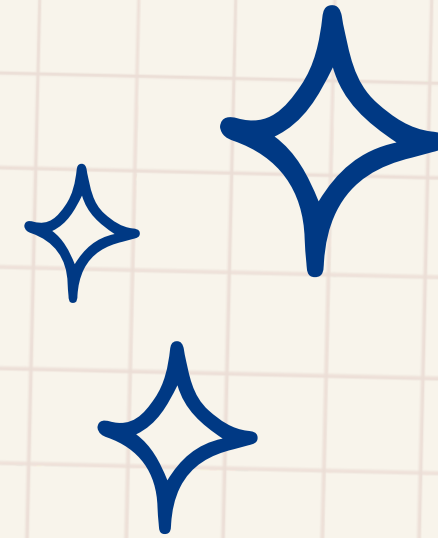
"...Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

The phrase “pursuit of happiness” is an important part of American history. Over time, what “happiness” means has changed. How has the idea of happiness changed in different time periods? Compare these three examples:

- Frontier era: happiness meant owning land and being able to take care of yourself
- Gilded Age: happiness meant having money and showing material success
- Main Street era: happiness meant strong families, stability, and a connected community



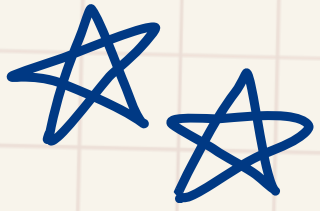
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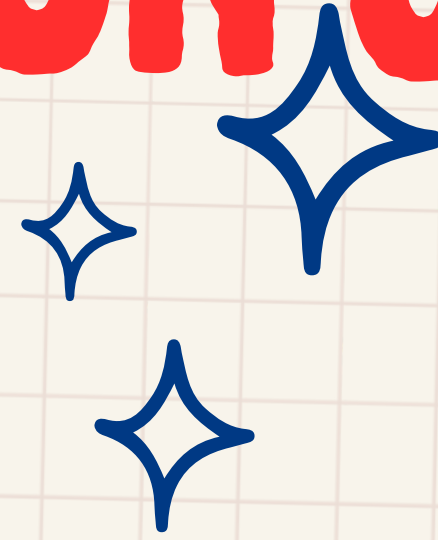
"Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes..."

During the Industrial Revolution or the Progressive Era, society went through major changes. Using examples from one of these time periods, think about the balance between wanting stability (things staying the same) and needing change (things improving or evolving).

- Why is it often hard for societies to change direction, even when change is needed?
- What are some signs or behaviors that show a society might be ready for big changes?



THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE



"...it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security."

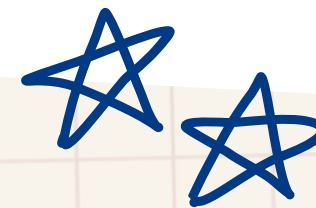
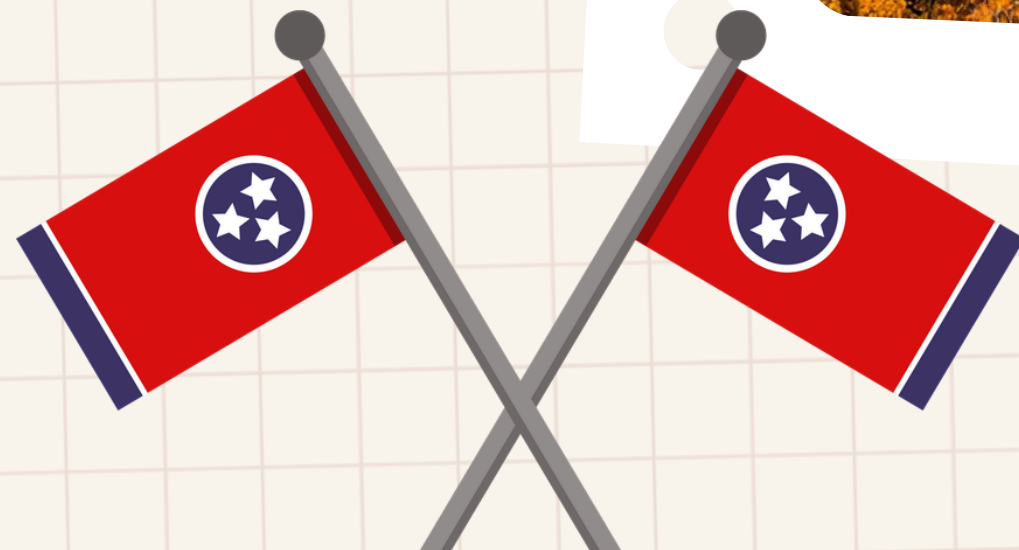
The Founders believed that “security” was an important goal of a new government. Over time, the meaning of “security” has changed. How has the idea of security changed across different time periods?

- 1700s: protection from a king or crown
- Great Depression: economic security (jobs, money, basic needs)
- Modern day: digital and data security (privacy, online safety, identity protection)

How might a person’s behavior change when they feel their future security is threatened? Give examples if you can.

TENNESSEE'S STATEHOOD

- Tennessee becomes the 16th state on June 1st, 1796
- The land that would become TN was known as the Southwest Territory governed by William Blount
- Tennessee comes from Cherokee word "Tanasi"



TENNESSEE'S STATEHOOD

Tennessee's 1796 Constitution was revolutionary because it moved away from the "poll tax" (taxing a person just for existing) and instead implemented a system based on land value.

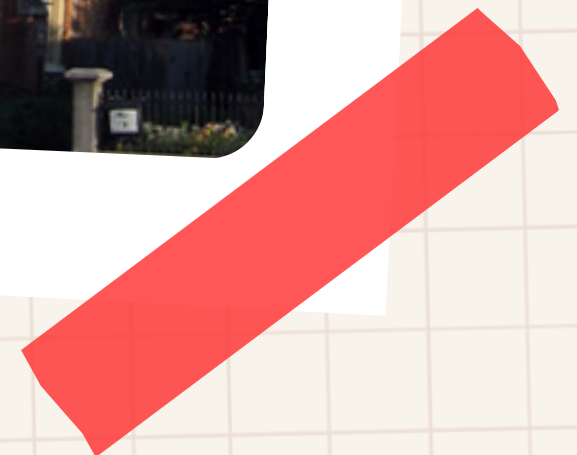
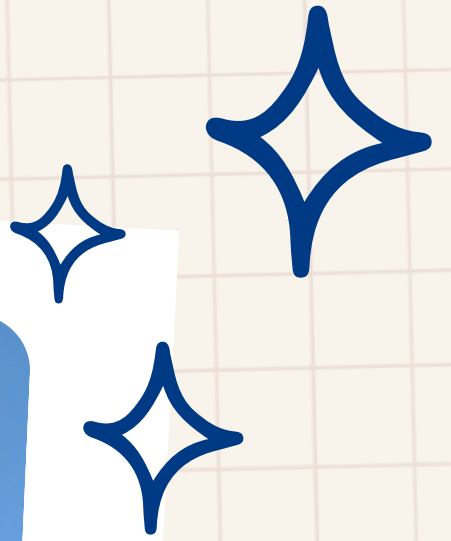
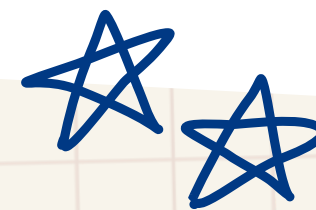
If settlers were taxed based on how valuable their land was, how might that change the way they treated it?

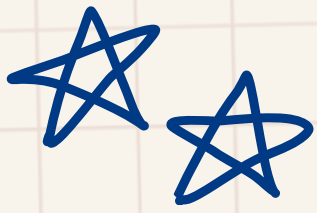
- Would it encourage them to improve the land (build, farm, develop it)?
- Would it make land ownership feel more like a shared responsibility with the government?

1. Now compare this to Indigenous perspectives, where land was often viewed as having spiritual and communal value, rather than something to be owned, measured, or taxed.
2. How did introducing a land-value tax system change the way settlers connected to the land in Tennessee?
3. In what ways was this different from the seasonal or nomadic movement patterns of Indigenous tribes who lived there before?

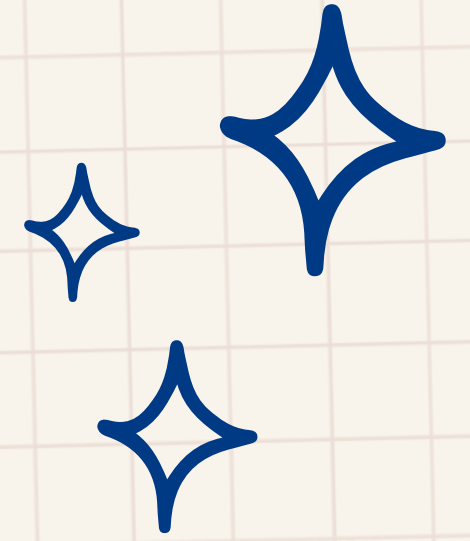
THE ANTEBELLUM PERIOD

- Franklin is founded by Abram Maury upon his purchase of 640 acres from Major Anthony Sharp in 1799.
- Abram created the town's first map that includes 192 lots that would become downtown Franklin
- Franklin would quickly become a central hub of trade and wealth between 1820-1860.



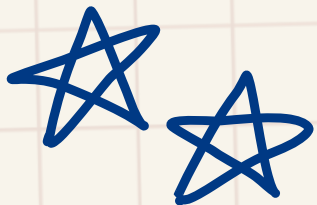


THE ANTEBELLUM PERIOD

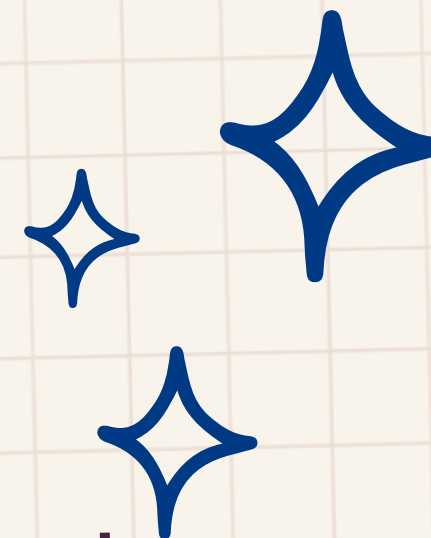


During this time, Franklin changed from simple log cabins to more formal Greek Revival-style buildings.

- Why do people use buildings and architecture to show success or importance?
- What do these changes in building materials and style suggest about how town leaders wanted Franklin to be seen?
- What message were they trying to send about the town's stability, wealth, or permanence?
- How is this similar to the way people today use branding or social media aesthetics to show identity or status?



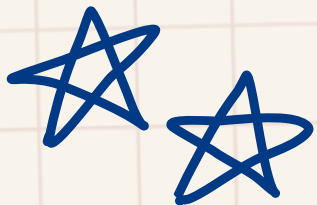
THE ANTEBELLUM PERIOD



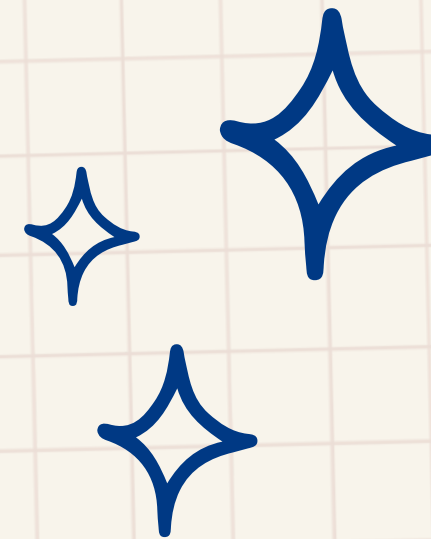
In Middle Tennessee, many enslaved people were not only field laborers. They were also skilled blacksmiths, masons, carpenters, and domestic workers who helped build much of the town's infrastructure and historic buildings.

This situation shows a kind of contradiction: many of Franklin's most important and beautiful buildings were created by enslaved craftsmen who had advanced skills, but they were not recognized as citizens or given basic rights.

- How can a community depend on the skills and expertise of a group of people while also denying them freedom and equal rights?
- How might people justify or “separate” these two realities in their minds?
- What does this reveal about the human tendency to compartmentalize—accepting two conflicting ideas at the same time?



THE ANTEBELLUM PERIOD



In the late 1850s, the Tennessee and Alabama Railroad reached Franklin.

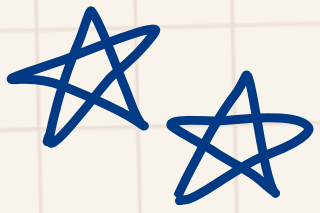
The railroad was like the “internet” of the 19th century—it made communication and travel much faster and connected places in new ways.

- How does a town change when it suddenly becomes connected to other places by rail?
- What is life like in a self-contained farming town where most people rely on local trade and nearby resources?
- How is that different from a connected trade town that can quickly send and receive goods, people, and information?
- Did the railroad make Franklin feel bigger (more connected to the world) or smaller (easier to reach and more closely tied to other places)? Why?

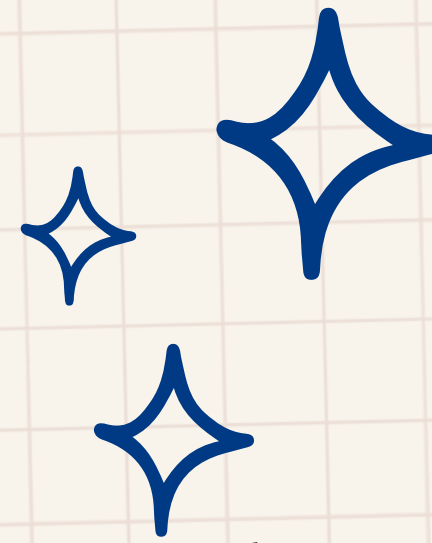
THE CIVIL WAR

- First shots fired: April 12th, 1861 at Fort Sumter by the Confederates
- Battle of Franklin: November 30th, 1864
- The Union wins: April 9th, 1865
General Lee admits defeat to General Grant



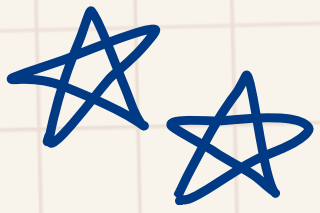


THE CIVIL WAR

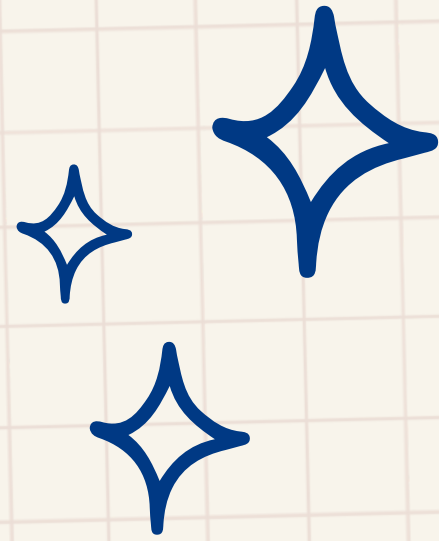


A large part of this war was a fundamental disagreement over what the United States actually was.

- The Union Perspective: The Constitution created a "permanent" bond that could not be broken. If a state could leave whenever it disagreed, the "Experiment" would fail.
- The Confederate Perspective: The Union was a voluntary agreement between sovereign states. If the agreement no longer served a state's interests, they believed they had the right to "withdraw their consent."
- Analyze the behavior of a "contract." In any partnership (a business, a marriage, a government), what happens when one side believes the agreement is permanent and the other believes it is temporary? How does this difference in "definitions" lead to a total breakdown in communication?



THE CIVIL WAR

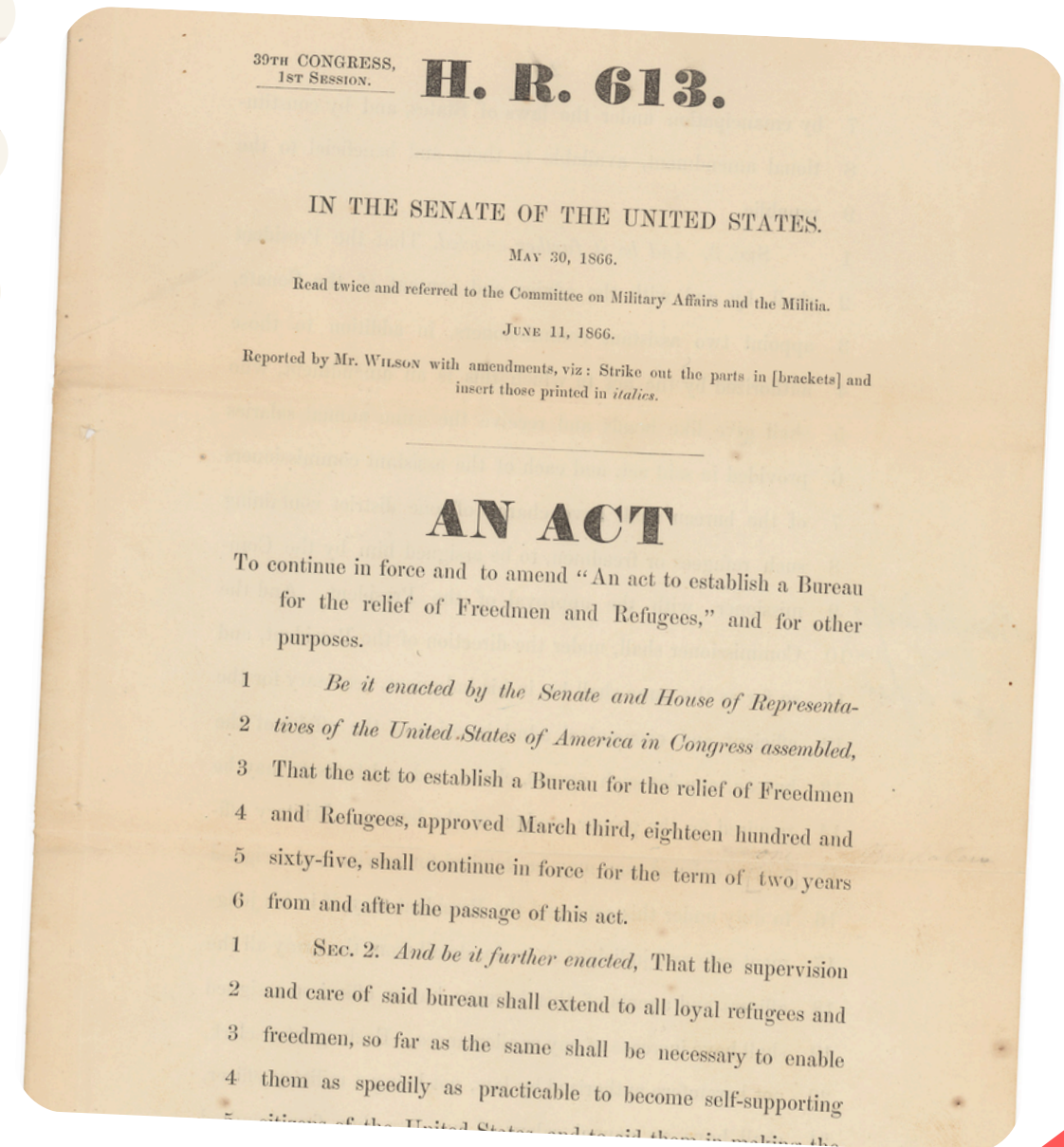


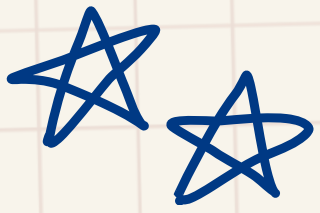
Before the Civil War, many of the “barriers” that had kept the United States loosely connected—physical borders like rivers, legal rules like the Fugitive Slave Act, and even shared ideas about morality and facts—began to break down.

- How did the removal or weakening of these barriers change the way people thought and behaved toward slavery and westward expansion?
- Why were people more likely to ignore slavery when it felt “far away,” but reacted more strongly when it moved closer to them
- What happens when laws force individuals to act against their personal beliefs
- How defining people as “property” versus “persons” shaped everyday behavior and moral choices
- Why did the breakdown of these physical, legal, and moral “barriers” make compromise harder and increase the likelihood of conflict?

RECONSTRUCTION

- 1865-1877+
- March 3rd 1865: The Freedman's Bureau was a U.S. government agency created after the Civil War to help transition formerly enslaved people into freedom.
- December 6th 1865: The 13th Amendment abolished slavery
- April 9th 1866: The Civil Rights Act said that everyone born in the United States was a citizen regardless of race



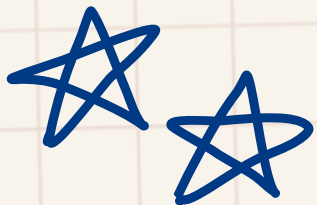


RECONSTRUCTION

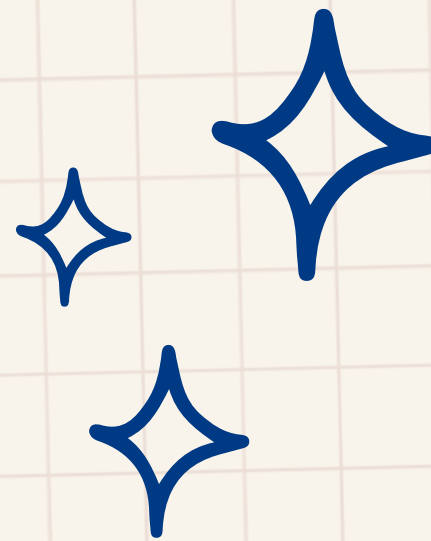


For generations, the domestic slave trade had separated parents from children and husbands from wives. One of the very first "behaviors" of freedom was the "Great Search"—thousands of people walking across state lines to find lost relatives.

- Consider...
 - How word of mouth, travel hubs (like rail stations and river ports), and the Black church functioned as powerful communication networks
 - Why some people spent time and sparse money placing ads in newspapers, sometimes decades after being separated from family
 - What the physical act of walking long distances to search for loved ones reveals about resilience and determination
 - Why family became an “anchor” for rebuilding life during Reconstruction, and how these reunifications shaped identity across generations
- Why do humans feel such a strong need to preserve family stories and pass them down through generations? How does knowing the story of the “search” change how families understand their history and identity today?



RECONSTRUCTION

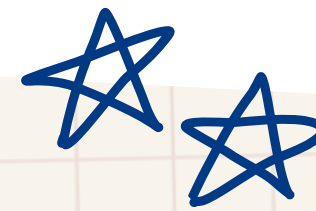


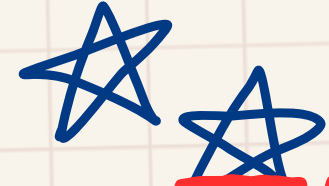
Upon emancipation, many people chose new surnames. Some took the names of former presidents (Lincoln, Washington), while others took names that reflected their trades or their desire for a fresh start.

- Analyze the behavior of Self-Naming. Why is the act of choosing your own name a powerful statement of "ownership" over your own body and future?
- What does it tell us about the human spirit that the very first thing many people wanted to do was erase the verbal "brand" of their former status? How does a name function as a "mental boundary" between who you were forced to be and who you chose to become?
- In the antebellum era, their skills belonged to the plantation. In Reconstruction, their skills belonged to them. Why would a person want their name to reflect their work? How does a "trade name" act as a resume and a statement of dignity in a new, competitive economy?
- When a person returns to their true family name upon freedom, they are stitching together a history that was intentionally torn apart. Why is the "recovery" of a lost name such a powerful emotional event?

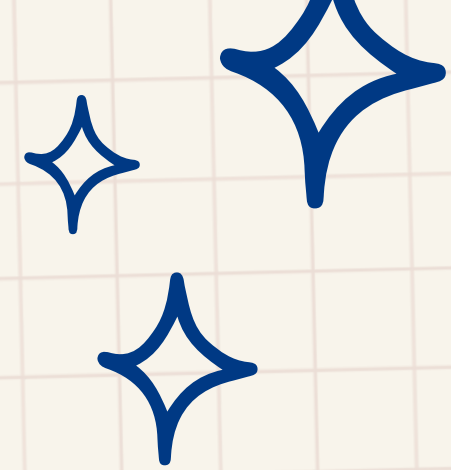
THE INDUSTRIAL BOOM

- 1870-1914
- Second Industrial Revolution marked by steel, oil, and electricity
- Overlaps with the Gilded Age known for big business and wealth



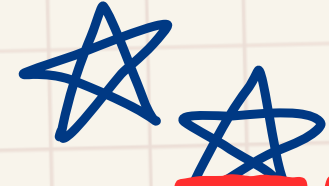


THE INDUSTRIAL BOOM

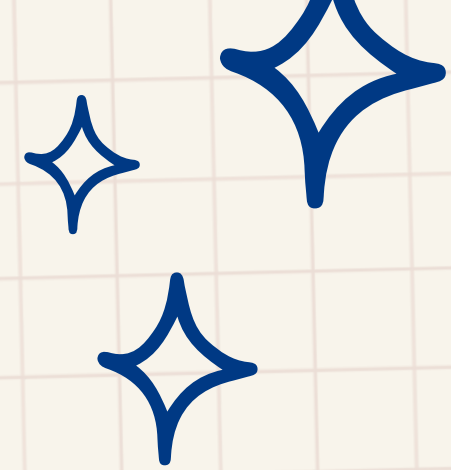


Factories like the Lillie Mills Silos began to reshape the economic landscape, moving the county away from a purely agricultural focus. In an agricultural economy, your life is dictated by the seasons and the sun. In an industrial economy, life is dictated by the "clock" and the "whistle."

- What are the psychological effects on a community when it shifts from working the land to working in a factory? How does the "behavior of time" change for a family in Franklin during this transition?
- Analyze the behavior of patience. On a farm, you must wait months for a crop to grow, teaching a certain kind of long-term patience. In a factory, you are expected to produce items every minute.
- How did this shift in the speed of work change the way Americans viewed "success"? Does working by the clock make a person feel more or less productive than working by the season?
- Before this era, the "physical barrier" to work was darkness. When technology removed that barrier, how did it change the human behavior of rest?
- Discuss the behavior of uniformity. When everyone in a town like Franklin is on the same "clock," how does it change the way the town functions? (e.g., traffic on Main Street, the timing of meals, the "rush hour" of the 19th century).



THE INDUSTRIAL BOOM

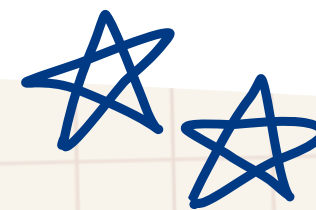


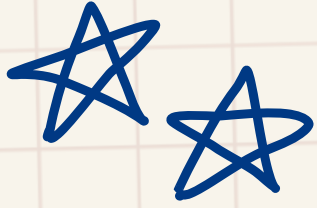
The Gilded Age saw the rise of a new social group in Williamson County: the merchants who ran the flourishing storefronts on Main Street. Unlike the antebellum plantation owners whose wealth was tied to land and labor, the Merchant Class built wealth through trade and consumerism.

- How does the behavior of a town change when its "leaders" are shopkeepers and business owners rather than farmers? How does the "Main Street" flourish when people start buying goods instead of making them at home?
- How does the introduction of "luxury" goods change the way people view their own happiness? Trace the pattern of how we moved from a culture of "Utility" (Does this tool work?) to a culture of "Identity" (What does this item say about me?).
- How does a community's trust change when it shifts from trusting a neighbor who can "fix anything" to a merchant who "knows the best brands"? How does this change the way people view their own skills (on sourcing internationally).
- How did the behavior of "Window Shopping" change the way people interacted with their town? Does having a beautiful "Main Street" create a stronger sense of civic pride, or does it create a new kind of social pressure to "keep up" with the latest trends?

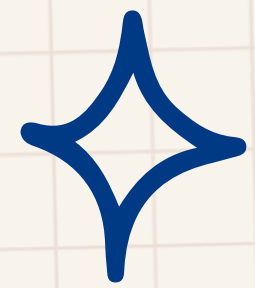
THE ROARING TWENTIES

- 1920-1929
- Post- WWI brought an economic boom, new music, new fashion, and the new role of pop culture and trends
- See Main Street Franklin in 1926 to your right



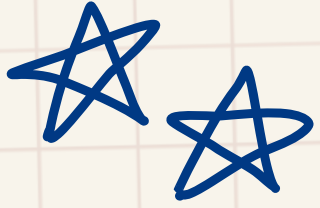


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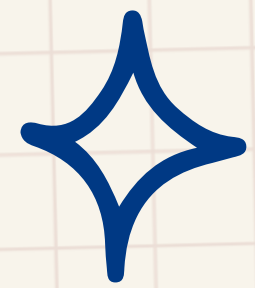


While the region remained largely agrarian, Franklin's Main Street began to flourish with new storefronts and the rapid rise of car culture. Before the 1920s, most people's "world" was limited to how far a horse could walk in a day. With the rise of the automobile, that world expanded to dozens of miles in an hour.

- How does the behavior of "exploration" change a community?
- When people can easily leave their small town for the weekend, does it make them value their "Main Street" more or less?
- Discuss the pattern of how mobility affects a person's sense of "home."

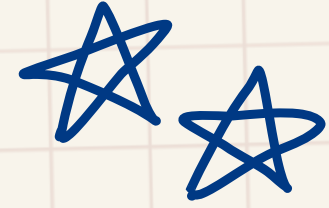


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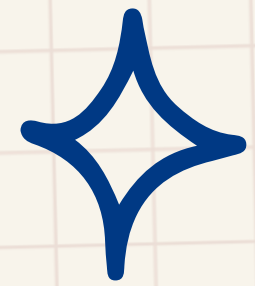


Main Street flourished with new storefronts designed to be "modern" and "sophisticated". In the 1920s, "looking the part" became a major cultural behavior. Fashion changed radically, and storefronts were designed to look like they belonged in a big city.

- Discuss the behavior of aspiration.
- Why do people in a small town often try to mimic the "style" of a larger city?
- How does changing the "face" of a building or a person's outfit change the way they are perceived by their neighbors?
- How does a community's behavior change when they are in a "boom" versus a "bust"?
- Looking back, are there signs in the 1920s that suggest people were living beyond their means, or was the "Roaring" spirit a necessary response to the end of World War I?



THE ROARING TWENTIES



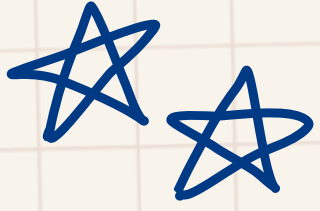
Despite the "Roaring" changes on Main Street, Williamson County remained a largely agrarian region during this decade.

- Imagine a family where the parents still work the land by the seasons, but the children want to drive a car to Nashville for a movie.
- Analyze the generational gap created by technology.
- How do families maintain their bond when one generation is rooted in "Old Tennessee" traditions and the other is chasing "Modern Day" excitement?

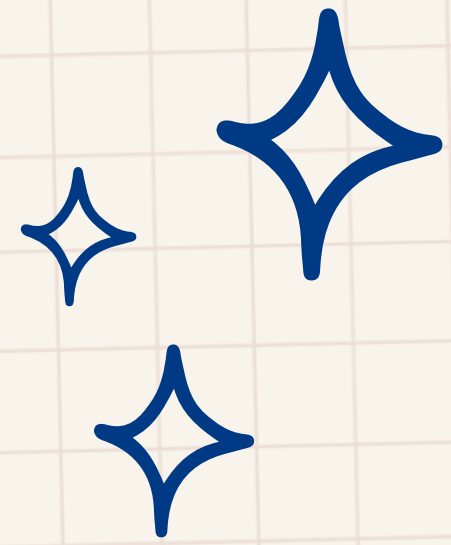
THE GREAT DEPRESSION

- The Great Depression began with the Wall Street Crash of 1929
- This stock market crash would abruptly change the party of the 20s and replace it with soup kitchens, closed businesses, unemployment, and makeshift housing
- The American people would begin to see some economic relief in the 1940s before the start of WWII.



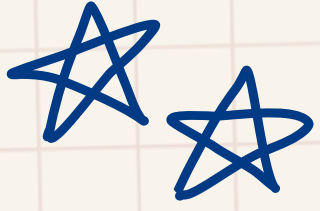


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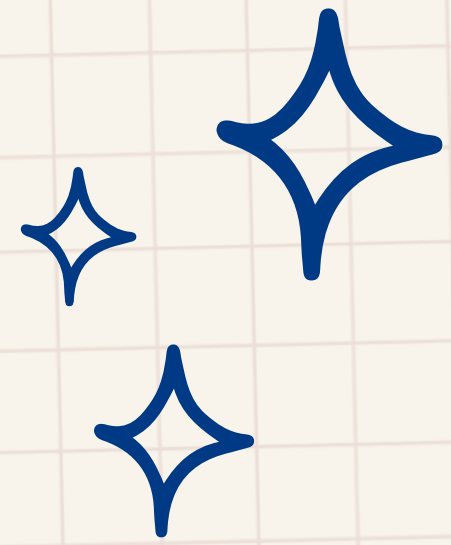


**In the 1920s, the "Merchant Class" had encouraged people to buy for "desire" and "sophistication".
In the 1930s, behavior shifted back to strict survival and utility.**

- Compare the behavior of a consumer in 1926 versus 1932.
- How does "scarcity" change the human brain's definition of a "need"?
- Discuss the pattern of resourcefulness—the ways families "made do" by repurposing items (like flour sacks for clothing).
- How does a decade of scarcity change a generation's behavior for the rest of their lives?

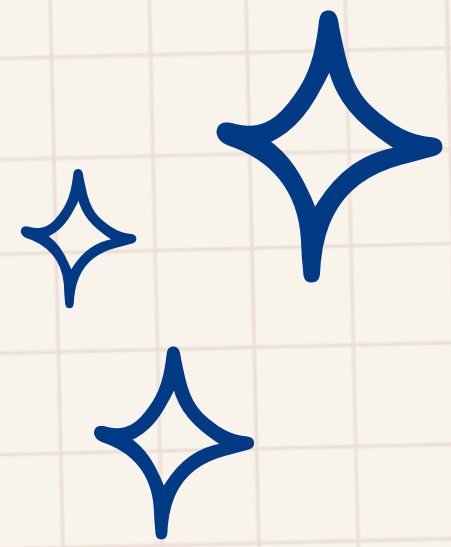
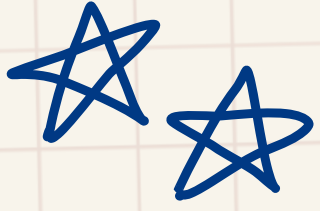


THE GREAT DEPRESSION



During the Depression, many residents faced widespread poverty, yet the physical structure of Main Street—the storefronts built in the 1920s—remained standing.

- Explore the concept of nostalgia as a survival tool.
- When life becomes difficult, why do humans find comfort in the "look" of a stable past?
- How did the permanent architecture of Franklin's downtown help residents maintain a sense of "normalcy" and hope even when their bank accounts were empty?



THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Much of the "coping" behavior of the 1930s happened inside the home—the "Domestic Science" and "Home Demonstration" clubs from the Progressive Era likely shifted their focus from "sophistication" to extreme budgeting and preservation.

- Analyze the behavior of hidden management.
- While the headlines focused on factory closures and bank failures, how did the daily habits of families (preserving food, mending clothes, bartering) act as the "invisible foundation" that kept the county from collapsing?

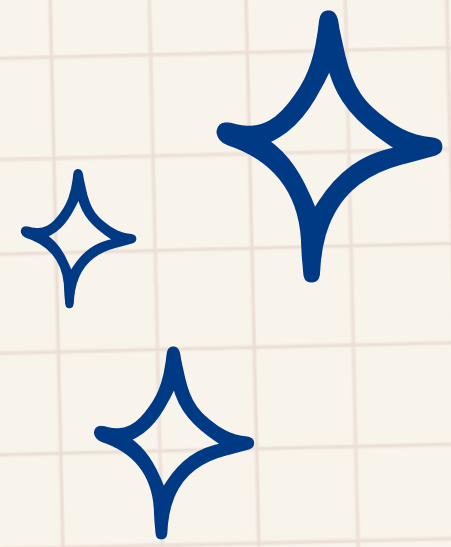
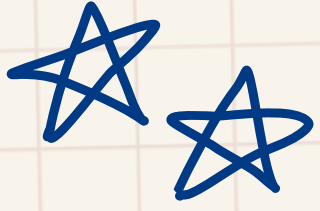
THE NEXT 250 YEARS

The eras we've studied are made up of individual people's stories woven together over time. The next 250 years will be no different—your choices, actions, and path will help shape the future.

When you look ahead to your future, what kind of person do you want to see reflected back at you?

History isn't just something you study—it's something you help create.

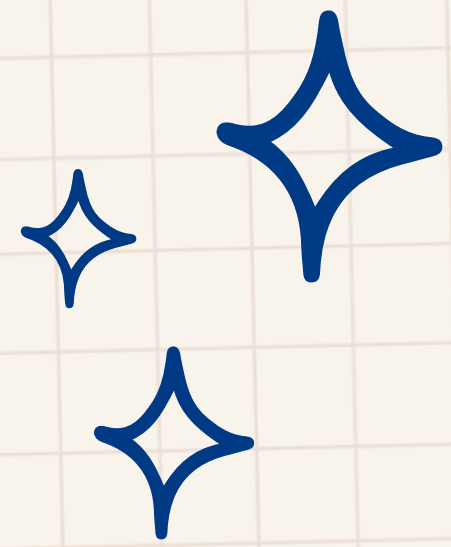
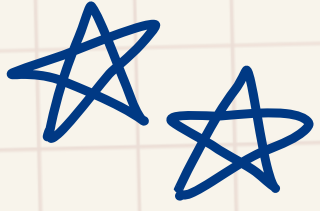




THE NEXT 250 YEARS

In the 1960s, the completion of I-65 shifted the county from a quiet farming community to a "bedroom community" where people lived in Williamson County but worked in Nashville. Today, we are a hub for the healthcare and music industries.

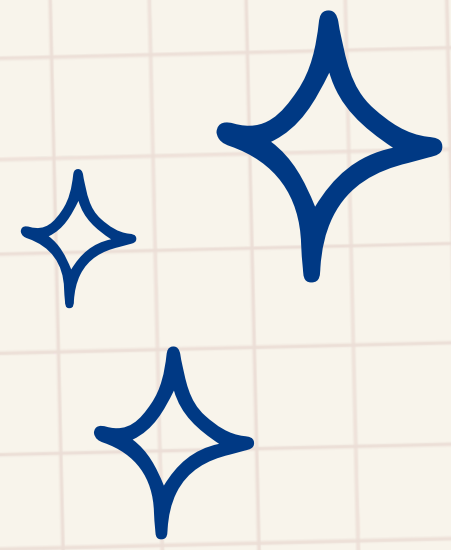
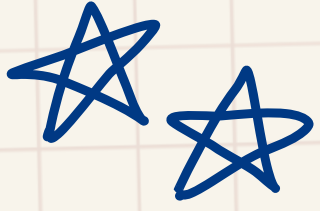
- As more people work remotely or in digital industries, does the physical location of a "home base" like Franklin become more important or less?
- How will the behavior of "commuting" change when our connections are digital rather than just asphalt?
- How does the theme of "working from home" post-Covid play into this idea?



THE NEXT 250 YEARS

In 1967, residents made a conscious choice to create the Heritage Foundation of Williamson County in order to preserve the historic places, stories and culture of Williamson County.

- As the population continues to grow, the community faces a recurring choice: how to balance the "new" with the "old."
- Why do humans in rapidly growing areas feel a stronger urge to protect the architecture of the past? In the year 2176, which "modern" buildings of today do you think your descendants will fight to preserve, and what will those buildings tell them about our "2026 behavior"?

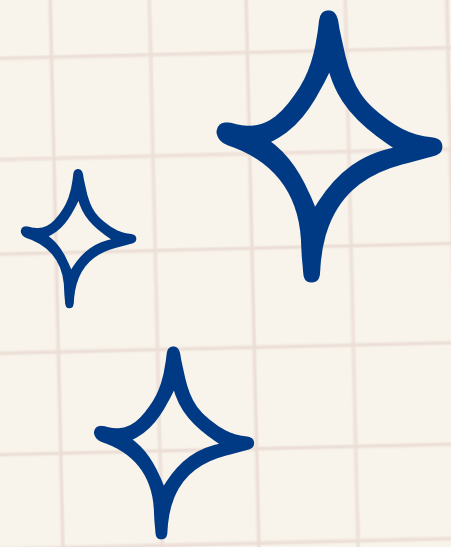
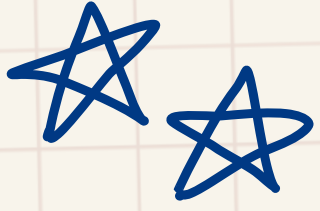


THE NEXT 250 YEARS

For over 250 years, Williamson County has been a crossroads—a place where people, goods, and ideas move and connect. From early trade routes to railroads to interstates, each era has made life faster and more connected. Today, that “crossroads” is becoming less physical and more digital, as information and technology (like artificial intelligence) connect people instantly across the world.

PART ONE:

- How has increasing speed and connectivity—from early America to today—changed the way communities make decisions, live, and define themselves?
- In 1776, news took weeks to travel; today it takes seconds.
- How does instant information affect decision-making?
- Does faster communication make people more unified or more impatient?

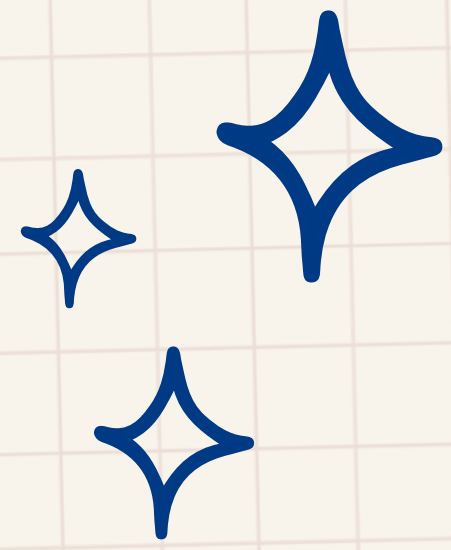
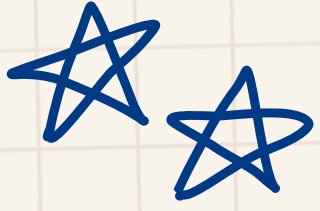


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PART TWO:

- Today, people can live in Williamson County and work with others across the world.
- If you can work from anywhere, why choose to live in a specific place?
- How might a town’s history and identity become more valuable in a digital world?



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PART THREE:

- If technology can recreate places digitally, why do people still want to experience them in person?
- Will the value of authentic places and history increase or decrease in the future?

250 YEARS OF



THE UNITED STATES OF

AMERICA



The Moore-Morris
History and
Culture Center
WILLIAMSON COUNTY, TN