



YONKERS
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

YONKERS HISTORY DAY

**Empowering Students through the
History of the City of Yonkers**

2018-2019

Learn from the Past - Live in the Present - Create a better Future





History is the story of incredible people, places and events that shape our world, county, community and ourselves.

“Nonviolence is a powerful and just weapon. Indeed, it is a weapon unique in history, which cuts without wounding and ennobles the man who wields it.”

– Martin Luther King, Jr.

“People make history and not the other way around. In periods where there is no leadership, society stands still. Progress occurs when courageous, skillful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better.”

– Harry S. Truman
33rd President of the United States of America

“Remember, remember always, that all of us, and you and I especially, are descended from immigrants and revolutionists.”

– Franklin D. Roosevelt
32nd President of the United States of America

INTRODUCTION

Evolution of Yonkers History Day

To instill greater pride and appreciation for the community in which Yonkers children live and learn, Mayor Mike Spano and Superintendent of Schools Dr. Edwin M. Quezada conceptualized Yonkers History Day in the fall of 2018. Yonkers educators through the Social Studies Department concretized this mandate as the Yonkers History Project.

The fourth grade Social Studies curriculum centers on local history offering the ideal platform to showcase quality teaching and learning across the District. While students' historical inquiry begins at this grade level, it is relevant throughout their education. The study of history and government starts with student investigations of their communities. This is their foundation to understanding worldwide history and government.

The overarching goal of the Yonkers History Project is for students to conduct historical investigations on the City of Yonkers facilitated by fourth grade teachers. These investigations are curriculum-based and incorporate learning standards in both the New York State Social Studies Framework (2014) and the National C3- College, Career, Civic Life - Social Studies Standards. To direct the students' inquiry and increase their engagement teachers will use driving questions in learning activities. These driving questions operationalizes the challenge, which is part of the learning plan for students to investigate the history of their city. The annual culminating activity is Yonkers History Day.

"Our young people can learn they are taking the same steps that some of our founding fathers might have taken – right in their own backyard. We are fortunate to have Philipse Manor and the Sherwood House still standing, providing us a glimpse into our past. History doesn't have to be just another passage in a text book – it can be tangible and real to our students, we just have to show them."

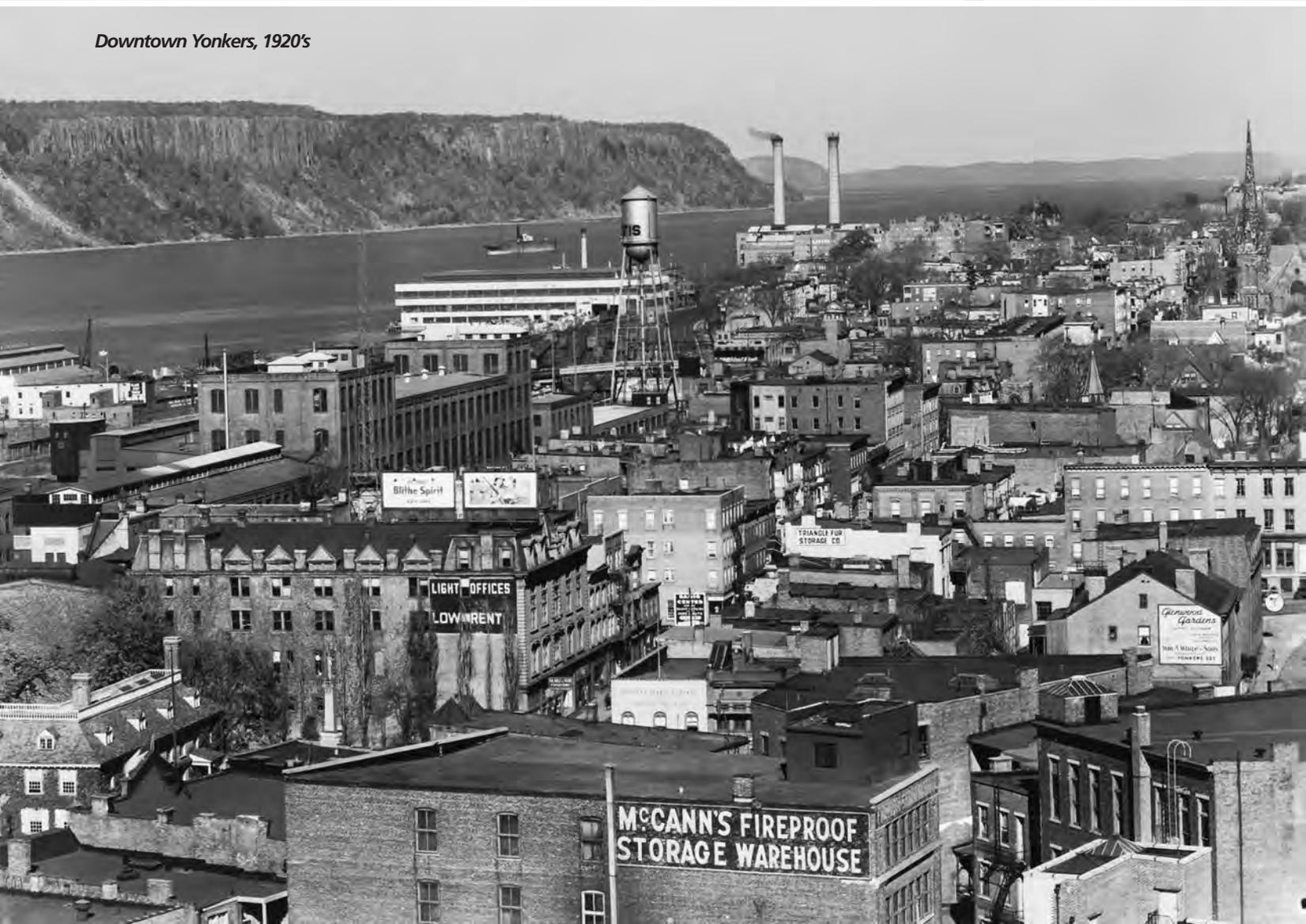
– **Mayor Mike Spano**
City of Yonkers

"Through historical knowledge, our students are empowered to understand the triumphs and tragedies of humankind that have shaped our society and the world. It is then up to them to take actions that will transform our community, country and the world towards peace and harmony leaving it a better place for future generations."

– **Dr. Edwin M. Quezada**
Superintendent of Schools



School 25 circa 1950's



Downtown Yonkers, 1920's

Excerpts from "Significance of History for the Educated Citizen," published by University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) National Center for History in the Schools

The reasons are many, but none are more important to a democratic society than this: knowledge of history is the precondition of political intelligence. Without history, a society shares no common memory of where it has been, what its core values are, or what decisions of the past account for present circumstances. Without history, we cannot undertake any sensible inquiry into the political, social, or moral issues in society. And without historical knowledge and inquiry, we cannot achieve the informed, discriminating citizenship essential to effective participation in the democratic processes of governance and the fulfillment for all our citizens of the nation's democratic ideals.

Finally, history opens to students opportunities to develop a comprehensive understanding of the world, and of the many cultures and ways of life different from their own. From a balanced and inclusive world history students may gain an appreciation both of the world's many peoples and of their shared humanity and common problems. Students may also acquire the habit of seeing matters through others' eyes and come to realize that they can better understand themselves as they study others, as well as the other way around. Historical understanding based on such comparative

studies in world history does not require approval or forgiveness for the tragedies either of one's own society or of others; nor does it negate the importance of critically examining alternative value systems and their effects in supporting or denying the basic human rights and aspirations of all their peoples. Especially important, an understanding of the history of the world's many cultures can contribute to fostering the kind of mutual patience, respect, and civic courage required in our increasingly pluralistic society and our increasingly interdependent world.

If students are to see ahead more clearly, and be ready to act with judgment and with respect for the shared humanity of all who will be touched by the decisions they as citizens make, support, or simply acquiesce in, then schools must attend to this critical field of the curriculum.

View of Yonkers Pier from ferry





CITY OF YONKERS A RICH HISTORY

In the 1640's Adriaen Van der Donck received a grant of land from the Dutch East India Company which he called Colon Donck, and built one of the first saw mills in the New World at the junction of the Hudson and Nepperhan Rivers. Van der Donck was referred to as Jonk Herr ("young Gentleman" or "young Nobleman") by reason of his status in Holland, and these words evolved through several changes to The Younckers, The Yonkers and finally to the present Yonkers.

The area acquired by Van der Donck passed into the hands of the Philipse family in the latter part of the 17th century, and Philipse Manor Hall was built at the juncture of the two rivers in the early 1680s. Yonkers' strategic location fostered its development into a major trading center and its early settlers (including Native Americans, English and Dutch) created a diverse community. Yonkers was a small farm town in the 1700s but many businesses soon began to emerge: the saw mills and grist mills multiplied, land development increased, and blacksmith shops, taverns, and general stores came into being.

Yonkers Train Station Yonkers has long been the home of innovators and inventors. The breathtaking views of the Palisades and majestic Hudson River have inspired creativity for more than 150 years. Elisha Otis invented the safety elevator here in 1854 and built his first factory in Yonkers. In 1867 Charles Harvey of Yonkers built the first elevated train line on Greenwich Street in Manhattan, which paved the way for the subway system and mass transit. Edwin Armstrong invented FM radio in 1912, building

his antenna on the Palisades across the river from his Yonkers home. Just six years earlier Yonkers resident Leo Baekeland invented the first plastic, a good thing since all those radios would need cases.

In 1888, John Reid and a few friends laid out America's first golf course, naming it St. Andrew's after the famous course in Scotland. Yonkers is home to famous cultural icons, including Ella Fitzgerald, Gene Krupa, Jon Voight, W.C. Handy, Sid Caesar, and Mary J. Blige.

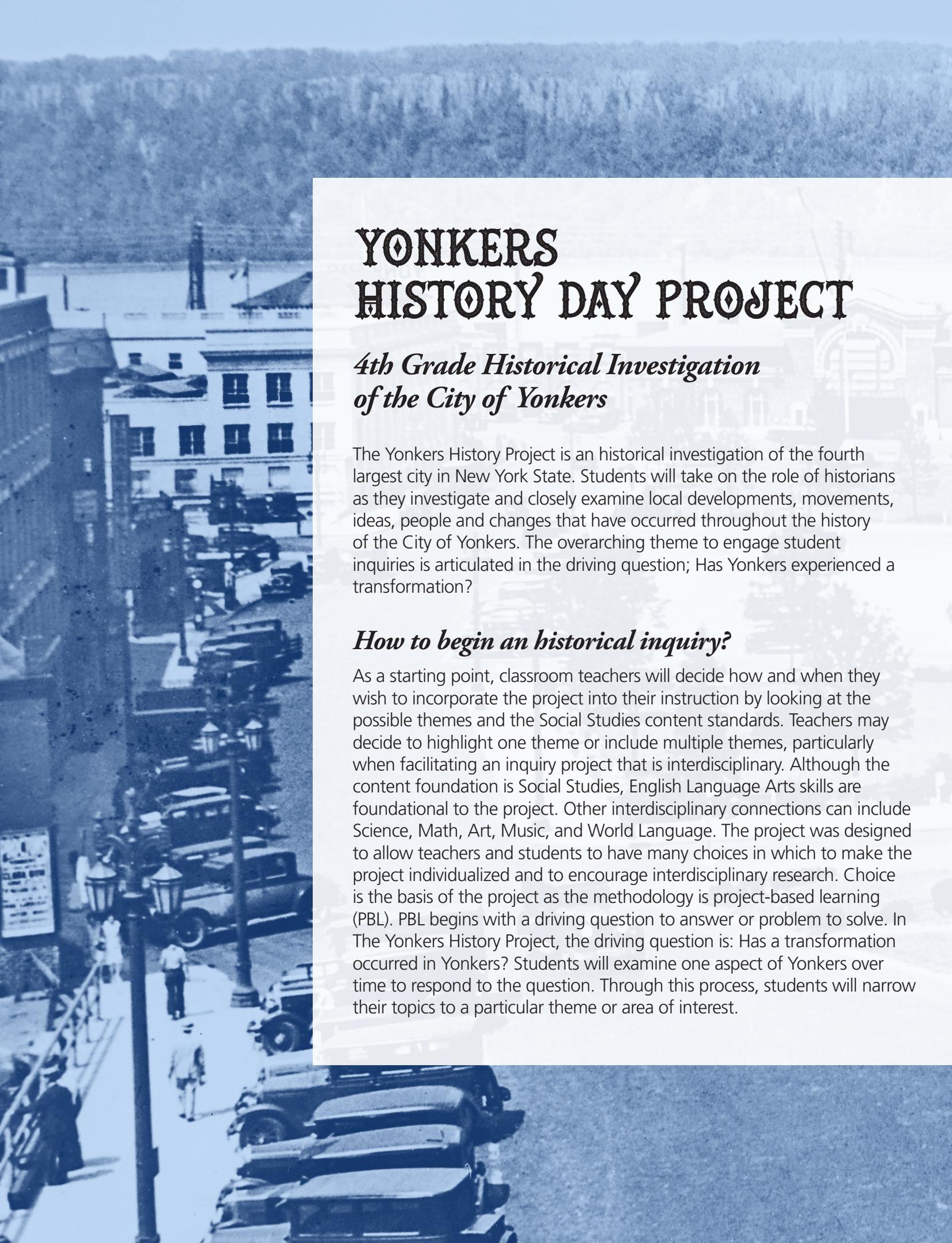
Yonkers developed as an industrial powerhouse during the 20th Century. Not only did Otis continue to build elevators here, but the largest carpet mill in the world operated in the Nepperhan Valley. As times and the economy changed, so did Yonkers. Today, the Otis Elevator factory is home to industry leaders such as Kawasaki, which builds rail cars for the MTA, Metro North, Long Island Railroad and transit systems around the world; Mindspark, one of the leading app developers on the web; and the bio-engineers of ContraFect Corp. The carpet mill is home to dozens of artists, artisans, musicians and new media professions who make up the YoHo Artist Studios.

Our story continues into the 21st Century and we want you to be a part of it.

Source: yonkersny.gov



Edwin Howard Armstrong, Engineer, invented the FM radio



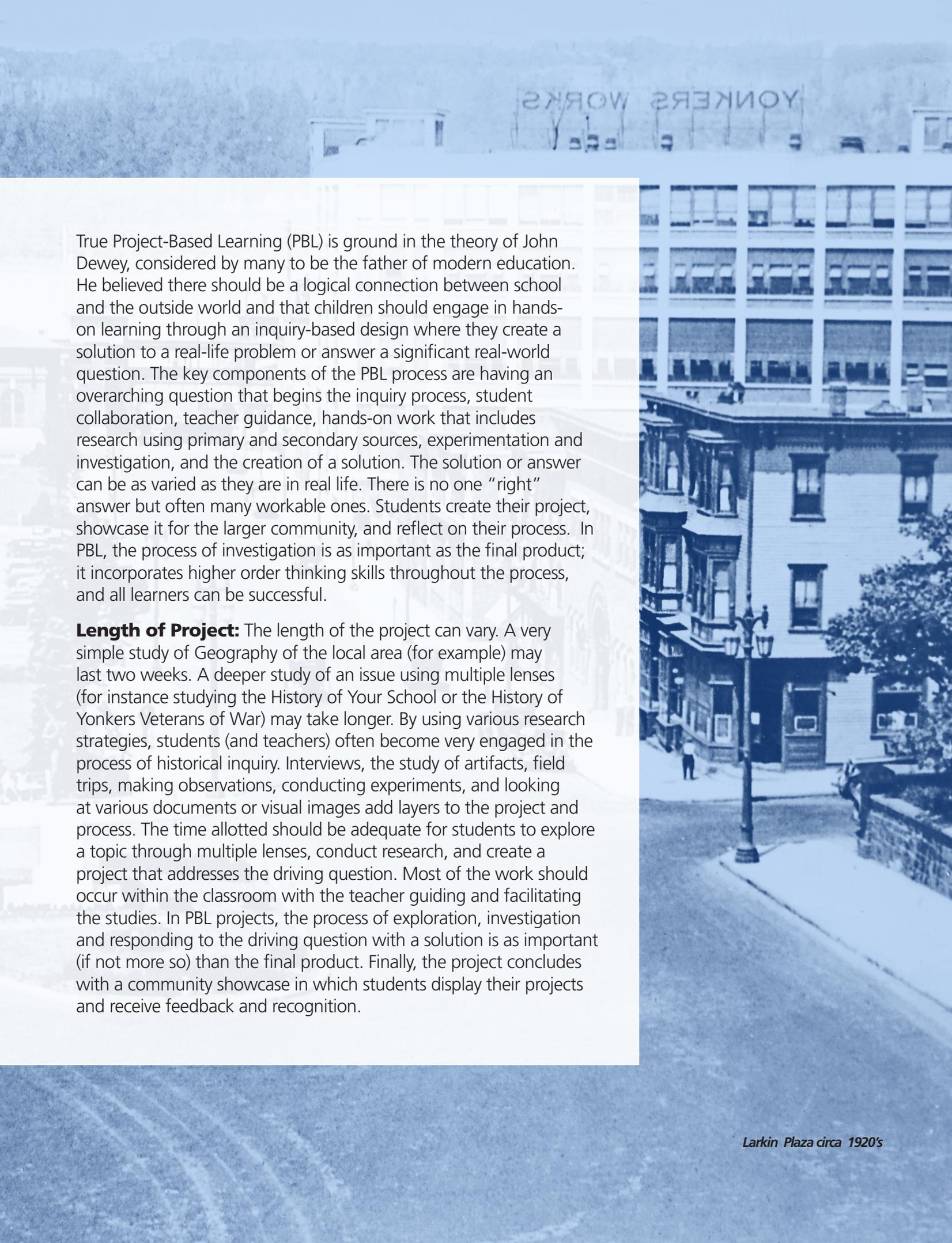
YONKERS HISTORY DAY PROJECT

4th Grade Historical Investigation of the City of Yonkers

The Yonkers History Project is an historical investigation of the fourth largest city in New York State. Students will take on the role of historians as they investigate and closely examine local developments, movements, ideas, people and changes that have occurred throughout the history of the City of Yonkers. The overarching theme to engage student inquiries is articulated in the driving question; Has Yonkers experienced a transformation?

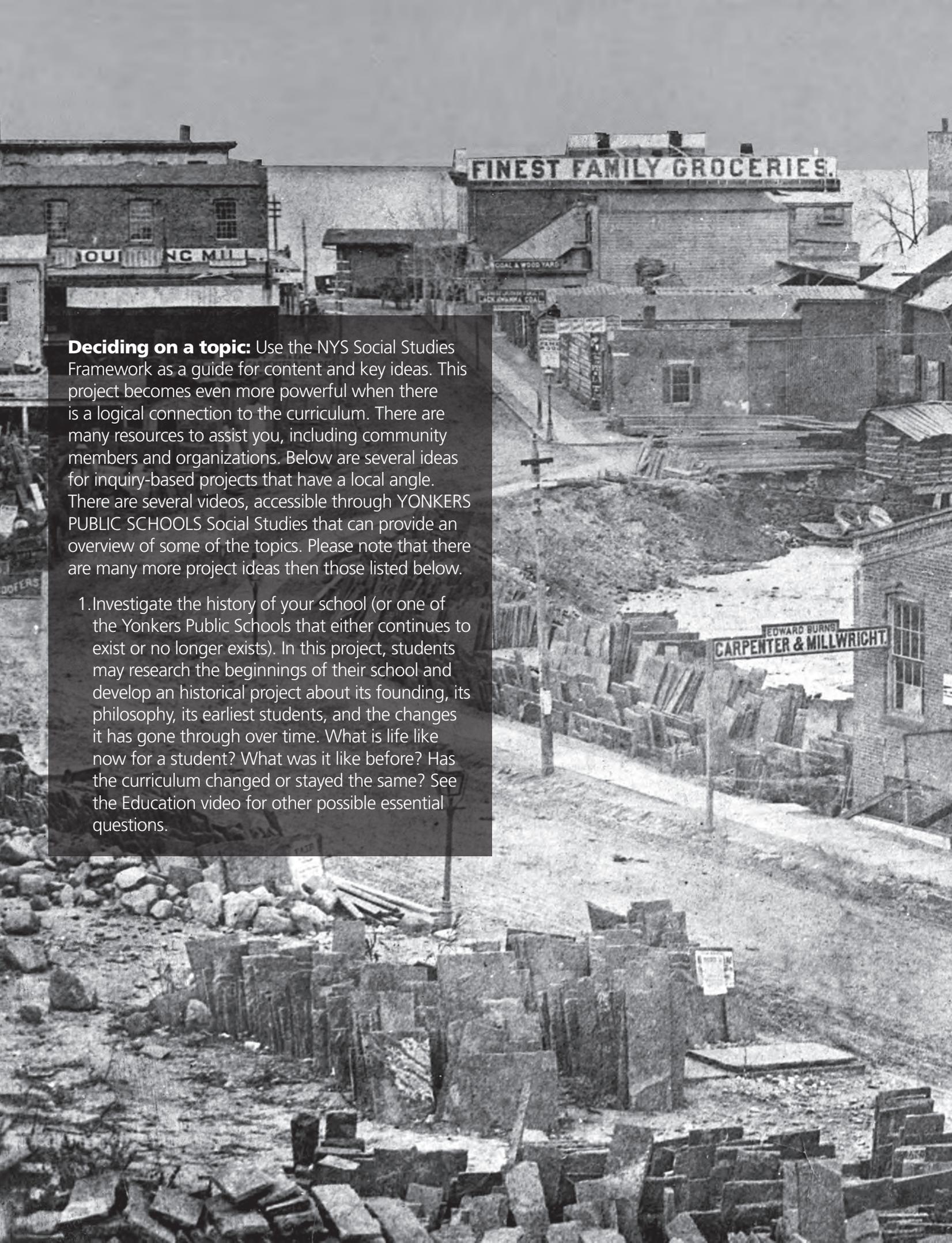
How to begin an historical inquiry?

As a starting point, classroom teachers will decide how and when they wish to incorporate the project into their instruction by looking at the possible themes and the Social Studies content standards. Teachers may decide to highlight one theme or include multiple themes, particularly when facilitating an inquiry project that is interdisciplinary. Although the content foundation is Social Studies, English Language Arts skills are foundational to the project. Other interdisciplinary connections can include Science, Math, Art, Music, and World Language. The project was designed to allow teachers and students to have many choices in which to make the project individualized and to encourage interdisciplinary research. Choice is the basis of the project as the methodology is project-based learning (PBL). PBL begins with a driving question to answer or problem to solve. In The Yonkers History Project, the driving question is: Has a transformation occurred in Yonkers? Students will examine one aspect of Yonkers over time to respond to the question. Through this process, students will narrow their topics to a particular theme or area of interest.



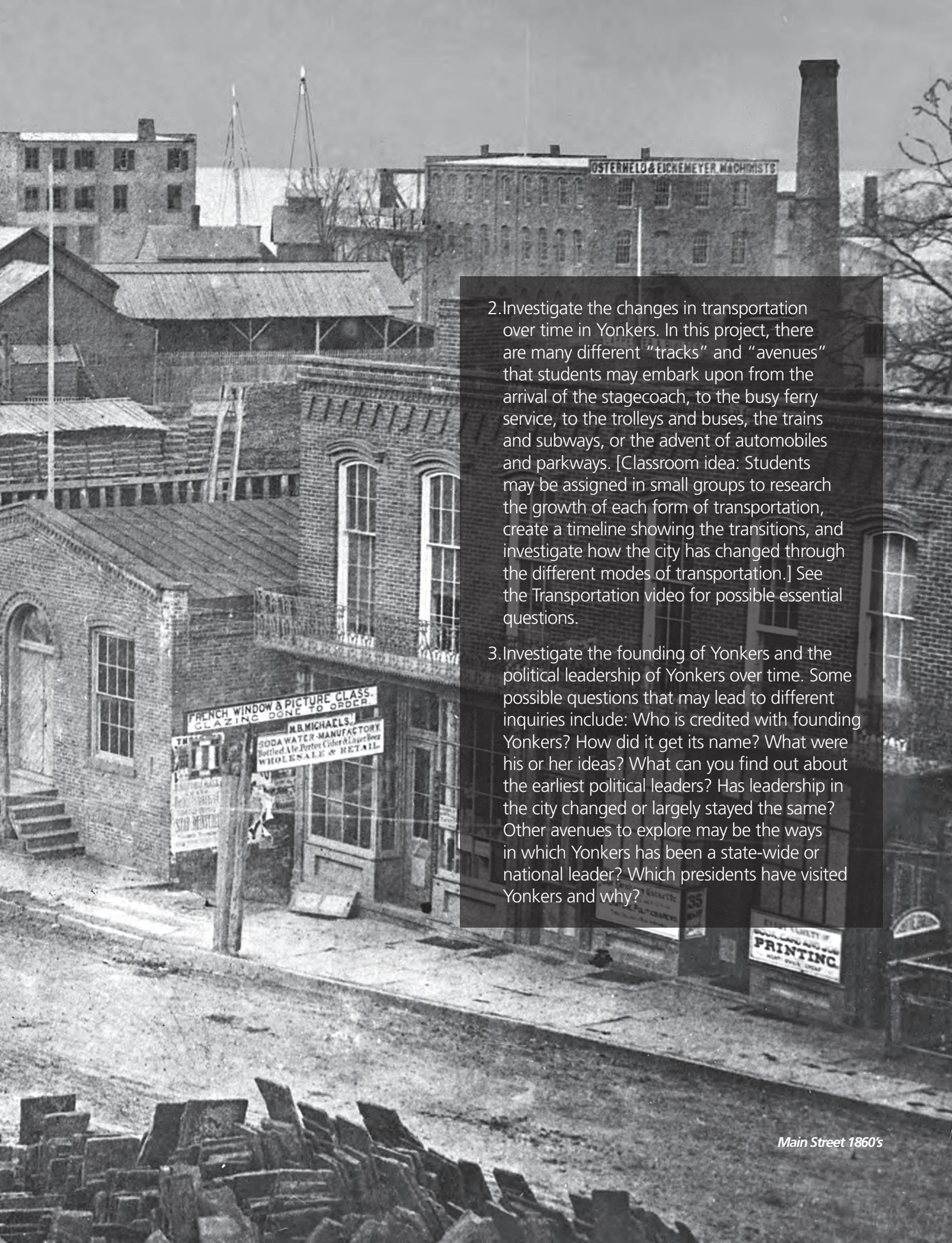
True Project-Based Learning (PBL) is grounded in the theory of John Dewey, considered by many to be the father of modern education. He believed there should be a logical connection between school and the outside world and that children should engage in hands-on learning through an inquiry-based design where they create a solution to a real-life problem or answer a significant real-world question. The key components of the PBL process are having an overarching question that begins the inquiry process, student collaboration, teacher guidance, hands-on work that includes research using primary and secondary sources, experimentation and investigation, and the creation of a solution. The solution or answer can be as varied as they are in real life. There is no one “right” answer but often many workable ones. Students create their project, showcase it for the larger community, and reflect on their process. In PBL, the process of investigation is as important as the final product; it incorporates higher order thinking skills throughout the process, and all learners can be successful.

Length of Project: The length of the project can vary. A very simple study of Geography of the local area (for example) may last two weeks. A deeper study of an issue using multiple lenses (for instance studying the History of Your School or the History of Yonkers Veterans of War) may take longer. By using various research strategies, students (and teachers) often become very engaged in the process of historical inquiry. Interviews, the study of artifacts, field trips, making observations, conducting experiments, and looking at various documents or visual images add layers to the project and process. The time allotted should be adequate for students to explore a topic through multiple lenses, conduct research, and create a project that addresses the driving question. Most of the work should occur within the classroom with the teacher guiding and facilitating the studies. In PBL projects, the process of exploration, investigation and responding to the driving question with a solution is as important (if not more so) than the final product. Finally, the project concludes with a community showcase in which students display their projects and receive feedback and recognition.

A historical black and white photograph of an industrial street scene. In the background, a large brick building has a prominent sign that reads "FINEST FAMILY GROCERIES." To the left, another building has a sign that says "TOU... NC MILL." Below this, a sign for "COAL & WOOD YARD" is visible. In the middle ground, a sign for "EDWARD BURNS CARPENTER & MILLWRIGHT." is attached to a building. The foreground is dominated by a large, messy pile of lumber and wooden planks. The street is unpaved and appears to be a busy industrial area.

Deciding on a topic: Use the NYS Social Studies Framework as a guide for content and key ideas. This project becomes even more powerful when there is a logical connection to the curriculum. There are many resources to assist you, including community members and organizations. Below are several ideas for inquiry-based projects that have a local angle. There are several videos, accessible through YONKERS PUBLIC SCHOOLS Social Studies that can provide an overview of some of the topics. Please note that there are many more project ideas than those listed below.

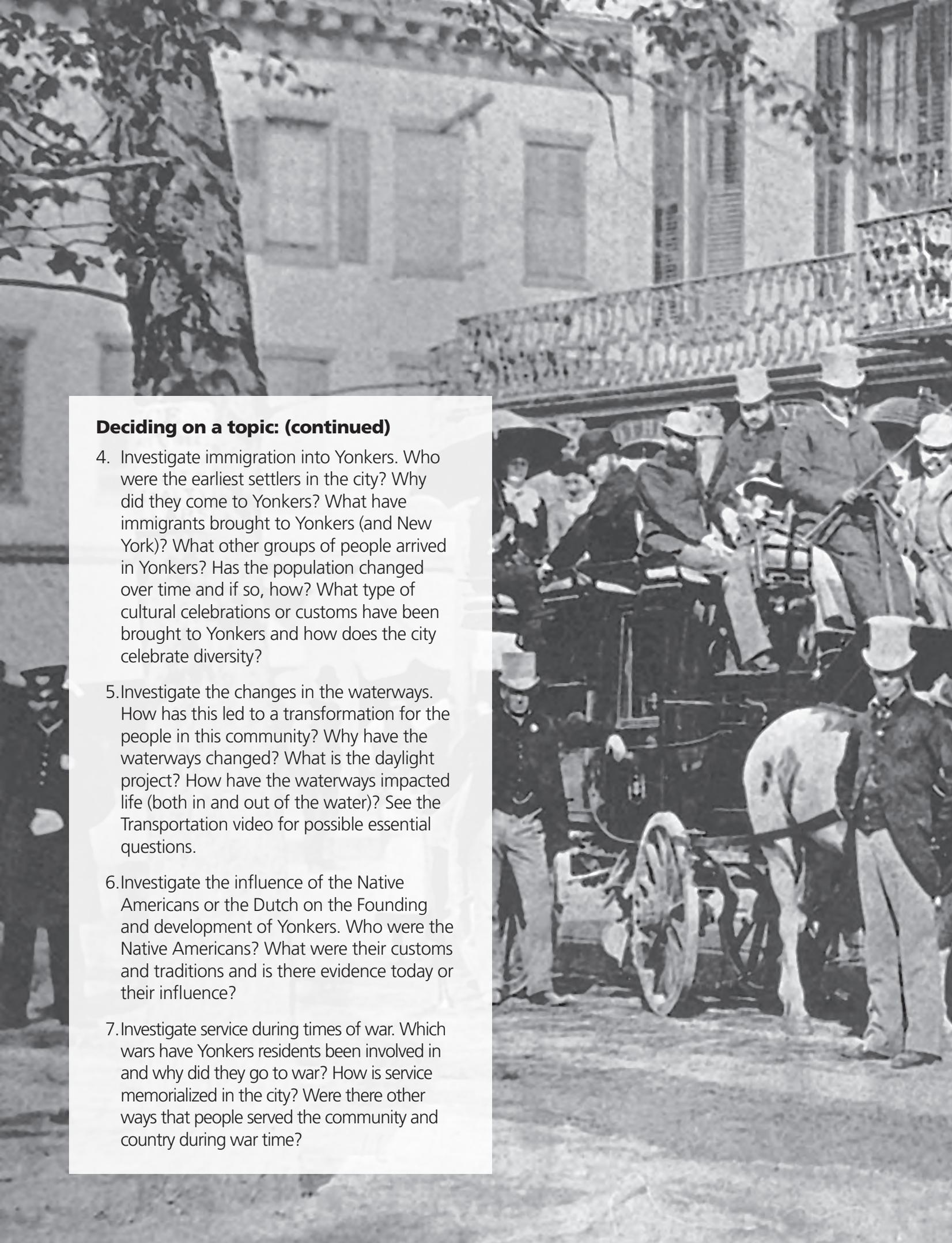
1. Investigate the history of your school (or one of the Yonkers Public Schools that either continues to exist or no longer exists). In this project, students may research the beginnings of their school and develop an historical project about its founding, its philosophy, its earliest students, and the changes it has gone through over time. What is life like now for a student? What was it like before? Has the curriculum changed or stayed the same? See the Education video for other possible essential questions.



2. Investigate the changes in transportation over time in Yonkers. In this project, there are many different “tracks” and “avenues” that students may embark upon from the arrival of the stagecoach, to the busy ferry service, to the trolleys and buses, the trains and subways, or the advent of automobiles and parkways. [Classroom idea: Students may be assigned in small groups to research the growth of each form of transportation, create a timeline showing the transitions, and investigate how the city has changed through the different modes of transportation.] See the Transportation video for possible essential questions.

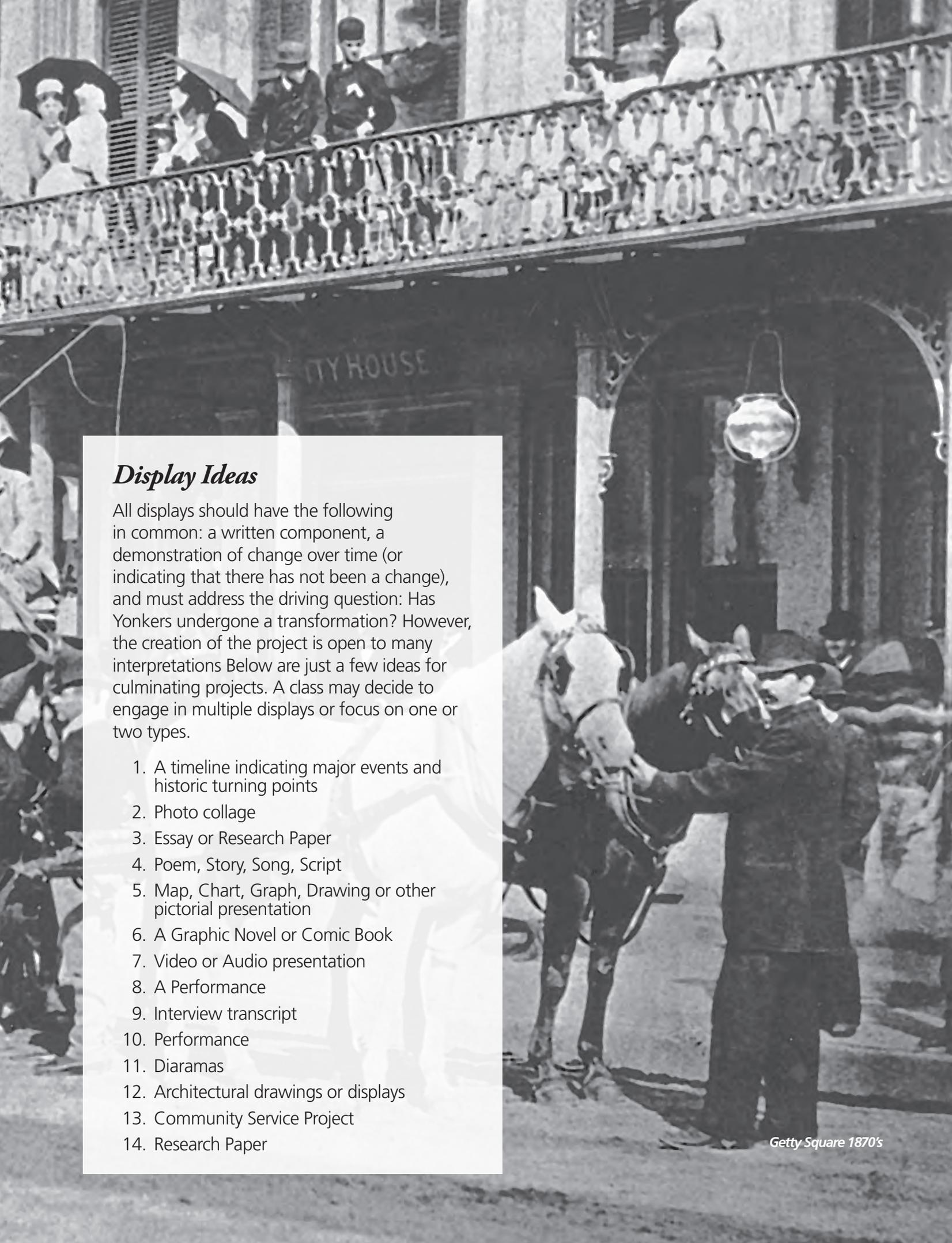
3. Investigate the founding of Yonkers and the political leadership of Yonkers over time. Some possible questions that may lead to different inquiries include: Who is credited with founding Yonkers? How did it get its name? What were his or her ideas? What can you find out about the earliest political leaders? Has leadership in the city changed or largely stayed the same? Other avenues to explore may be the ways in which Yonkers has been a state-wide or national leader? Which presidents have visited Yonkers and why?

Main Street 1860's



Deciding on a topic: (continued)

4. Investigate immigration into Yonkers. Who were the earliest settlers in the city? Why did they come to Yonkers? What have immigrants brought to Yonkers (and New York)? What other groups of people arrived in Yonkers? Has the population changed over time and if so, how? What type of cultural celebrations or customs have been brought to Yonkers and how does the city celebrate diversity?
5. Investigate the changes in the waterways. How has this led to a transformation for the people in this community? Why have the waterways changed? What is the daylight project? How have the waterways impacted life (both in and out of the water)? See the Transportation video for possible essential questions.
6. Investigate the influence of the Native Americans or the Dutch on the Founding and development of Yonkers. Who were the Native Americans? What were their customs and traditions and is there evidence today or their influence?
7. Investigate service during times of war. Which wars have Yonkers residents been involved in and why did they go to war? How is service memorialized in the city? Were there other ways that people served the community and country during war time?



Display Ideas

All displays should have the following in common: a written component, a demonstration of change over time (or indicating that there has not been a change), and must address the driving question: Has Yonkers undergone a transformation? However, the creation of the project is open to many interpretations. Below are just a few ideas for culminating projects. A class may decide to engage in multiple displays or focus on one or two types.

1. A timeline indicating major events and historic turning points
2. Photo collage
3. Essay or Research Paper
4. Poem, Story, Song, Script
5. Map, Chart, Graph, Drawing or other pictorial presentation
6. A Graphic Novel or Comic Book
7. Video or Audio presentation
8. A Performance
9. Interview transcript
10. Performance
11. Diaramas
12. Architectural drawings or displays
13. Community Service Project
14. Research Paper

Local Resources: Those classrooms participating in The Yonkers History Project may take advantage of transportation grants through Yonkers Public Schools Social Studies to New York State historic sites and places. For instance, for projects on the founding of Yonkers, the first landowners, and early government, a trip to Philipse Manor Hall. Studying changes in the waterways and innovation can occur through the Old Croton Aqueduct. Colonial life may be better understood through a trip to the John Jay Homestead. To study the art and exploration of Yonkers, classes may visit the Hudson River Museum in the new Portraiture program.

Several community groups are also available to speak with students in classrooms. These include some of our museum educators, local politicians, community organizers, research librarians, historical society personnel, members of the Veterans Affairs organization, and journalists.

Resources and assistance with grant funded trips and guest speakers is available through Yonkers Public Schools Social Studies Department Director Dawn Bartz, (914) 376-8272 or dbartz@yonkerspublicschools.org.



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4th Grade Teacher
William Boyce Thompson School

Thank you to our partners in this collaborative project. The following sites and personnel have created engaging field experiences and learnings to bring authenticity to the work being done in the classrooms.

- *Philipse Manor Hall State Historic Site*
- *Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park*
- *New York State Parks, Recreation and Historical Preservation Department*
- *New York State Connect Kids to Parks Transportation Grant Program*
- *Hudson River Museum*
- *City of Yonkers Veterans Affairs Organization*
- *City of Yonkers Planning Office*

Graphic Design: Joe Panella, City of Yonkers

"History honors the Fathers and teaches the Youth. It has great office to make the past intelligent to the present for the guidance of the future."

Rev. Charles Elmer Allison
The History of Yonkers, 1896

