

Curiosity

Corner

Treasures from the
FCS Archives

Welcome to *Treasures from the FCS Archives*, a repository of resources for teachers and history enthusiasts! Every month, we are sharing photos, artifacts, documents and other treasures for you to review, discuss and discover. We encourage you to click the links, scan the photos and dig deeper into these treasures, all of which can be found in the Fulton County Schools Archives. Enjoy!

THE SPINNING WHEEL: A HISTORY OF MAKING FIBER INTO FABRIC



Spinning Wheel ("Great" or "Walker" Wheel), circa 1760s, Maker Unknown. Courtesy, Joanna Gillespie, Dahlonega, GA

The process of making simple [fibers](#) into complex fabrics has undergone centuries of improvement aimed at creating the most efficient (if not the fastest) way to produce [textiles](#). Not long ago however, producing such indispensable items—clothing, blankets, and towels, among many others—was one of the most painstaking, tedious tasks a human could endure. And it all started with transforming fibers—the building blocks of textiles—into usable thread.

This edition of *Curiosity Corner* features a [spinning wheel](#), part of the Teaching Museum's textile technology collection. With this seemingly simple, wooden apparatus, people—traditionally, women—engaged in the lengthy process of producing fabric from fibers, a task that textile producers have endured for centuries using various types of spinning tools. The artifact depicted here, known as a "Great" or "Walker" Wheel, has European origins and is thought to have been produced in the 1760s.

But spinning wheels go back much further than the 18th century; many historians credit Ancient India as the site where the first wheel (known as a *charkha*) was invented. Whatever its true origins, by the time the spinning wheel was introduced to the American South, a relatively new crop was already growing there; one that produced a long, usable fiber, ready to be spun into yarn. The crop, of course, was [cotton](#), the single most important commodity in the South's pre and post-war past.

Curiosity in the Classroom: *A Closer Look*

Click on the image above for a higher resolution jpeg. Ask students to carefully and quietly study the image.

Ask students:

- What do you see?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What is it used to make?
- Where would this device have been used and by whom?

After prompting student observations and curiosity, provide a bit of [background](#) on this historic device, including this [video](#) of it in action. Now ask students to consider again:

- Who might have used this spinning wheel when it was first created?
- What can this artifact tell us about textile traditions over the last two centuries?

Lesson Ideas & Links:

[Elementary School Connections](#)

[Related Primary Sources](#)

[Middle School Connections](#)

[Ask the Teaching Museum](#)

[High School Connections](#)

[Additional Online Resources](#)

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This publication is sponsored in part by the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources Eastern Region Program, coordinated by Waynesburg University.

TEACHING MUSEUM
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