

N.C. Transportation Museum

News Release

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Grant puts railroad history in N.C. school libraries

SPENCER, N.C. — Middle school students in North Carolina will now have access to the story of Southern Railway's Spencer Shops, thanks to a grant from the Mary Duke Biddle Semans Foundation.

The North Carolina Transportation Museum, located in the former Spencer Shops, where Southern Railway's steam locomotives received repairs and maintenance for more than half a century, is using the \$3,500 grant to distribute 223 copies of "Southern Railway's Spencer Shops: 1896-1996" to middle school media centers in the Piedmont region of the state.

The 105-page book, written by Duane Galloway and Jim Wrinn, tells the story of the shop workers who repaired the giant locomotives, depicts life in the town that grew up around the shops, and details the evolution of the site from a booming repair facility to a museum preserving the history of transportation in North Carolina.

The book is the story of "unsung heroes," according to its introduction—the workers who kept the railroad operating smoothly.

"For every thundering freight train wheeling textiles, tobacco and furniture out of North Carolina, hundreds labored in the cavernous Spencer back shop," the introduction reads. "So many steam-era railway shops have closed, as Spencer did, only to be forgotten."

But the preservation of Spencer Shops as a museum ensures this oft-untold story will be told.

"At Spencer, visitors stand in awe of the size of this complex that dwarfs many modern industrial facilities," the introduction continues. "In preservation, Spencer Shops remind us... of an America before the computer, before robotic assembly lines, before automated workplaces, when the story was one of men and machines."

The 25 counties receiving books are: Alamance, Alexander, Anson, Burke, Cabarrus, Caldwell, Catawba, Cleveland, Davidson, Davie, Forsyth, Gaston, Guilford, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Montgomery, Randolph, Richmond, Rowan, Stanly, Stokes, Surry, Union and Yadkin.

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The North Carolina Transportation Museum, located in historic Spencer Shops, the former Southern Railway repair facility for steam locomotives, is part of the Division of State Historic Sites, a division of the Department of Cultural Resources. The museum offers free admission and is conveniently located just a few minutes off I-85 in Spencer, N.C., and about an hour from Charlotte, Greensboro or Winston-Salem.