

Wages at North Carolina tobacco mills, 1880

From U.S. Census of 1880, Volume 20, Report on the statistics of wages in manufacturing industries; with supplementary reports on the average retail prices of necessaries of life, and on trades societies, and strikes and lockouts, p. 46.

An establishment in North Carolina.

Classes of employés	Unit of payment	Dates.										
		1880	1879	1878	1877	1876	1875	1874	1873	1872	1871	1870
<i>Plug tobacco.</i>												
Sorter	Day	\$0.80	\$0.75	\$0.75	\$0.80	\$0.80	\$0.75	\$0.75	\$0.90	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$1.00
<u>Stripper</u>	do.	.48	.48	.48	.48	.48	.45	.45	.48	.50	.50	.50
Caser	do.	1.12 ½	1.12 ½	1.12 ½	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.50	1.50	1.50
Plug-maker	do.	2.00	2.00	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.50	2.50	2.75	2.75	2.75
Pressman	do.	1.12 ½	1.12 ½	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.37 ½	1.50	1.50	1.50

Packer	do.	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.12 ½	1.12 ½	1.12 ½	1.12 ½	1.12 ½	1.25	1.25	1.25
Laborer	do.	.87½	.87½	.87½	1.00	1.00	.87½	.87½	.87½	1.00	1.00	1.00
Twister	do.	2.25	2.25	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.75	2.75	3.00	3.00	3.00

REMARKS. —

At this establishment all the employés are colored.

There are some opportunities for extra earnings. Over-time is paid for at 5 per cent. additional to regular rates. In case of failure on the part of the firm to provide a full day's work, employés are always paid for full time.

As is the custom at most establishments making cigars and tobacco, the employés are supplied with chewing tobacco for their own use without charges.

The average number of months worked for the last ten years has been 8½. Though this establishment is in North Carolina, the chief cause of the irregularity is the cold weather. Winter-made goods are not profitable. Labor also is hard to control in winter months. The closing month of the busy season is much dreaded by the employer. It is difficult to secure full time from the workmen, and an average yield is impossible. This will doubtless continue while living in this climate remains so cheap. The negro is fond of holidays and the leisure months are eagerly looked forward to. He is said to be inclined to regard a full year's work as an encroachment upon his liberty.

The following are prices for the grades of tobacco made in the month of March, 1880, the internal revenue of 16 cents per pound being included:

Grade.	Per pound.
Common tobacco	\$0.33
Medium tobacco	.36
Low medium tobacco	.40
Flue tobacco	.540
Select fancy tobacco	\$0.75 to \$1.00

The average labor cost per pound on all grades is 5½ cents. It is estimated that 1½ cent per pound will cover all additional expenses, wear and tear, taxes other than internal revenue, etc., leaving the balance for cost of material and profit.

An establishment in North Carolina.

Class of employees.	Unit of payment.	Dates.																
		1881	1882	1883	1884	1885	1886	1887	1888	1889	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897
		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
		8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
		8	8	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	6	6	6	6	6
		1	0	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	9	8	7	6	5

Cigarettes.

Maker	Per 1,000	\$ 0.60 — .80
Assorter	Daily	.50
Packer	Per 1,000	.10
Cutter	do.	.05

Smoking-tobacco.

REMARKS. —

This establishment began the manufacture of cigars in 1881; prior to that it had made smoking tobacco. In the years covered by the schedule there has been no change in the rates of wages, which, it will be noted, are extremely low. The employés are chiefly colored, and to a large extent are boys and girls.

At these works 10 per cent of the wages is paid in firewood and extra provisions, and the balance in cash.

The selling price of smoking tobacco is stated to be from 25 cents to \$1 per pound, and cigars from \$5 to \$6 per M. The labor cost of smoking-tobacco is given at 1 cent per pound; of cigars, \$1 per M.