

Reform ^[1]

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David Swain (left) and William Gaston led the push to amend North Carolina's constitution in the 1830s.

In the 1830s, a wave of reform swept the United States. A new political party system brought greater participation in democracy. In North Carolina, reformers gained power in the General Assembly, amended the state constitution, and established free public schools. Private reformers, particularly women, worked individually and in “societies” or associations to help the poor and improve society. In this chapter, we’ll evaluate the work of these many reformers — their reasons for wanting change and what they accomplished for North Carolina.

Section Contents

- [Whigs and Democrats](#) ^[4]
- [Reform Movements Across the United States](#) ^[5]
- [1835 Amendments to the North Carolina Constitution](#) ^[6]
- [Ratifying the Amendments](#) ^[7]
- [North Carolina's First Public School Opens](#) ^[8]
- [Criminal Law and Reform](#) ^[9]
- [Dorothea Dix Hospital](#) ^[10]
- [Dorothea Dix Pleads for a State Mental Hospital](#) ^[11]
- [The Raleigh Female Benevolent Society](#) ^[12]

User Tags:

[Chapter Cover](#) ^[13]

[democracy](#) ^[14]

[history](#) ^[15]

[North Carolina History](#) ^[16]

[public schools](#) ^[17]

[reform](#) ^[18]

[Students](#) ^[19]

[Teachers](#) ^[20]

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Links

- [1] <https://ncpedia.org/anchor/reform>
- [2] <https://ncpedia.org/media/david-swain>
- [3] <https://ncpedia.org/media/william-gaston>
- [4] <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/whigs-and-democrats>
- [5] <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/reform-movements-across>
- [6] <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/1835-amendments-north>
- [7] <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/ratifying-amendments>
- [8] <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/north-carolinas-first-public>
- [9] <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/criminal-law-and-reform>
- [10] <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/dorothea-dix-hospital>
- [11] <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/dorothea-dix-pleads-state>
- [12] <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/raleigh-female-benevolent>
- [13] <https://ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/chapter-cover>
- [14] <https://ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/democracy>
- [15] <https://ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/history>
- [16] <https://ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/north-carolina-6>
- [17] <https://ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/public-schools>
- [18] <https://ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/reform>
- [19] <https://ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/students>
- [20] <https://ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/teachers>
- [21] <https://ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/creative-commons>
- [22] <https://ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/learn-nc>