

Branchhead Boys ^[1]

Branchhead Boys

by Wiley J. Williams, 2006

In his gubernatorial campaign of 1948, [W. Kerr Scott](#) ^[2] strongly appealed to voters whose roots were in the soil. Scott called them "Branchhead Boys," referring to people who lived at the head of the branch of a creek in other words, rural people isolated in the backwoods. They were the "[farmers](#)" ^[3] and townspeople who know the bust of day, coffee that's sauced and blowed, folks who made a good stagger at honest toil and plowed to the end of the row." Scott campaigned to "get the farmer out of the mud," he said, "so farmers could get to church and farm children to school."

These so-called Branchhead Boys became a political force, backing Scott in a surprising victory over Charles M. Johnson and supporting the new governor's populist and [progressive](#) ^[4] legislation. Scott implemented a range of new programs under his "[Go-Forward](#)" ^[5] plan, astonishing the state by proposing a \$200 million bond issue (more than \$1.5 billion in 2005) to pave rural roads in North Carolina. Additionally, his programs advanced [rural electrification](#) ^[6] and improved state schools and health facilities.

References:

John W. Coon, "Kerr Scott, the Go Forward Governor: His Origins, His Programs, and the North Carolina General Assembly" (M.A. thesis, UNC-Chapel Hill, 1968).

Roy Wilder Jr., "Unrest among the Branchhead Boys," in Jack Claiborne and William Price, eds. *Discovering North Carolina: A Tar Heel Reader* (1991).

Additional Resources:

Christensen, Rob. "[Chapter 3: Branchhead Boys](#)" ^[7], *The Paradox of Tar Heel Politics: The Personalities, Elections, and Events That Shaped Modern North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010.

Grafton, Carl. "Branchheads," *Encyclopedia of Alabama*. <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-1636> ^[8].

Sanford, Terry. "North Carolina's one-party system increased gubernatorial power," Oral History Interview with Terry Sanford, May 14, 1976. Interview A-0328-1. Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) in the Southern Oral History Program Collection, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. https://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/A-0328-1/excerpts/excerpt_9568.html ^[9]

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[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[16]

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