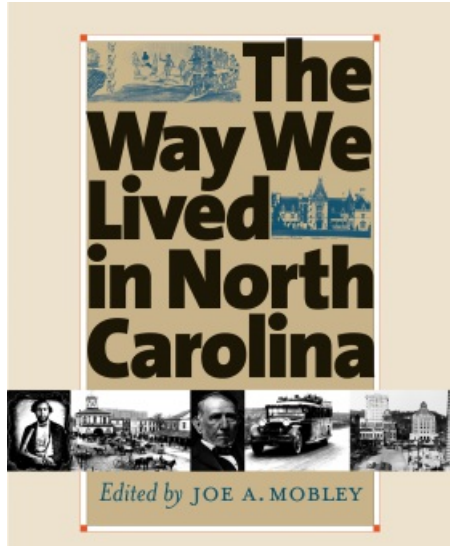


The Way We Lived in North Carolina: Introduction ^[1]

The Way We Lived in North Carolina: The Social History of North Carolina

By Elizabeth A. Fenn, Peter H. Wood, Harry L. Watson, Thomas H. Clayton, Sydney Nathans, Thomas C. Parramore, and Jean B. Anderson; Maps by Mark Anderson Moore. Edited by Joe A. Mobley. From *The Way We Lived in North Carolina*, 2003; Revised by Government and Heritage Library, January 2023. Published by the North Carolina Office of Research and History in association with the University of North Carolina Press. Republished in NCpedia by permission.



Cover art to the print publication of *The Way We Lived in North Carolina*, published 2003 by UNC Press with the N.C. Office of Archives and History.

The Way We Lived in North Carolina is a collection of short essays in NCpedia that tell the social history of the state from the history of its first peoples through the early 2000s. The content in this collection has been excerpted from the original single-volume print book publication, published by the North Carolina Office of Research and History in 2003.

The narratives cover a range of topics in the state's social history from rural and daily life throughout eras to the development of industry, transportation, energy and infrastructure that changed the state from a rural state of small family farms to the industrial, business, technology and science and educational hub it is today. It provides an overview of these changes in brief and broad brushstrokes for a general audience. The collection includes numerous images and maps that lend deeper context to the historical overviews, as well as links to other NCpedia content to delve further into a variety of historical topics.

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Part I: Natives and Newcomers, North Carolina before 1770 ^[2]

Natives and Newcomers describes North Carolina's Indians and the dramatic changes that occurred when Europeans and Africans entered their land.

Even before Raleigh's "lost colony," Europeans had explored the coast and the mountains. The first permanent newcomers were English migrants from Virginia, followed after 1715 by planters and enslaved people from South Carolina.

In the next half-century, thousands of German, Scotch-Irish, and Scottish settlers came by boat from Europe and by wagon from the North. Those who carved out farms in the piedmont had little in common with coastal planters or the backcountry elite of lawyers, judges, and merchants. By the late 1760s, western farmers organized as Regulators to protest unjust taxes, corrupt courts, and threats to private property—issues that would soon reappear as part of the

patriotic rhetoric of the American Revolution.

Part II: An Independent People, North Carolina 1770-1820^[3]

When the shooting of the American Revolution died away, North Carolinians continued to work out the meaning of independence in the fabric of their daily lives. An Independent People describes how these efforts toward independence left their marks on public and private life.

Early republican North Carolina was no egalitarian utopia. Most Black people in North Carolina were enslaved, members of various American Indian tribes were more threatened than before the war, and all women remained subordinate to men. In the years after the Revolution, however, free North Carolinians wrote their first constitution, opened the first state university, and transformed their churches in a stirring revival of religion. Women, members of American Indian tribes, and most Black people would not enjoy these freedoms until later.

By 1820, North Carolinians were facing the insistent reality that one cycle of adjustment would not be enough. The demands of independence would call for repeated bursts of wrenching transformations.

Part III: Close to the Land, North Carolina 1820-1870^[4]

North Carolinians of the nineteenth century dwelt in an agrarian world. Close to the Land details the lives of antebellum Carolinians from the tobacco field to the grist mill, the courthouse to the schoolyard, and the camp-meeting arbor to the enslaved person's quarter-stoop.

The farm, whether of ten acres or ten thousand, or with zero or 100 enslaved people, was the basic unit of economic production and social organization in antebellum North Carolina. The Tar Heel town, whether port city or backcountry village, was intrinsically tied to agriculture. Even budding industry and improved transportation facilities were essentially the outgrowth of efforts to process agricultural products and to reach markets efficiently. Although war and industrial expansion were to revolutionize society and transform the economy, the state's continued commitment to agriculture linked North Carolina with its rural traditions.

Part IV: The Quest for Progress, North Carolina 1870-1920^[5]

Few would have guessed in 1870 that within fifty years, North Carolina would be the most industrialized state in the South. The Quest for Progress recounts that half-century of turbulent change and growth.

An accelerating pace of life was evident everywhere in North Carolina at the turn of the century, from mill villages to mushrooming towns. Skyscrapers and suburbs, country estates and mountain resorts testified to the state's new wealth. But new conflicts marked the era as well. Farmers plagued by debt fought back in a Populist movement that carried its cause to the nation. Working men and women fought to keep their independence on the factory floor. Black North Carolinians, despite violence and disenfranchisement, built the churches, colleges, and businesses that prepared the next generation to reclaim its rights. By 1920, North Carolina was a state transformed.

Part V: Express Lanes & Country Roads, North Carolina 1920-2001^[6]

Express Lanes and Country Roads interprets the most dynamic century in North Carolina history.

After 1920, North Carolina made great strides in industrial development—most notably in tobacco, textiles, and furniture—but labor problems remained an issue. A sound government ensured progress in education and highway construction, preservation of natural resources, and development of cultural opportunities. Civil rights and social reforms came too fast for some, too slowly for others.

By 1970, confrontation and compromise had resulted in major accomplishments, but North Carolinians found themselves questioning how they should define progress in the years ahead.

At the beginning of the new century, North Carolinians lived in a state undergoing profound change. Gains by minorities included the election of two African Americans to the U.S. House of Representatives. Women assumed leadership roles at all levels of society. The influx of newcomers, particularly Hispanics, crowded school systems but undergirded the workforce. Foreign competition placed unforeseen pressures on the state's traditional industries.

Today, information technology and the rise of the knowledge economy are having a major impact on the social fabric of everyday life in North Carolina.

Keep reading - Part I: Natives and Newcomers | North Carolina before 1770^[2]  ^[7]

References:

Fenn, Elizabeth Anne, and Joe A. Mobley. 2003. *The way we lived in North Carolina* Chapel Hill, NC [u.a.]: Published in association with the Office of Archives and History, North Carolina Dept. of Cultural Resources, by the University of North Carolina Press.

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