

Headrights ^[1]

Headrights



Headrights enticed people to bring new settlers to NC with gifts of land. Image courtesy of NC Office of

by [William S. Powell](#) ^[2], 2006; Revised October 2022 Archives & History.

^[3]

Headrights, or landrights, was a term applied in the [colonial](#) ^[4] period to the system of granting unclaimed land to persons who imported new settlers to the Carolina colony. In 1663 the Crown divided territory that included North Carolina among eight [Lords Proprietors](#) ^[5] to dispose of as they chose. As early as 1681 the Proprietors made grants, varying in size, to individuals who brought in settlers. The size of the grant depended on the number of settlers, even though all the land belonged to the importer. The grant usually, but not always, comprised 50 acres per individual, counting the importer himself as well as each individual such as a spouse, child, relative, servant, or enslaved person. William Symons, for example, "proved 5 rights": for himself, Robert Smith, Emanuel Altooy, "Maria a negro transport," and Hannah Symons.

The headrights system required that a certain portion of the issued land be cultivated, and an annual fee (based on acreage and called a [quitrent](#) ^[6]) was levied. After the [American Revolution](#) ^[7], however, the system of headrights was no longer used.

Additional Resources:

North Carolina Headrights: A List of Names, 1663-1744, Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2005364001/> ^[8]

Image Credit:

Mountain farm east of Green Mountain, Yancey County, NC, c1900s. From the H. H. Brimley Photo Collection, PhC.42, North Carolina State Archives, call #: PhC42.Bx26, Raleigh, NC. Available from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/north-carolina-state-archives/3329433926/> ^[3] (accessed September 25, 2012).

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From:

[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[13]

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