

# North Carolina State Research Guide

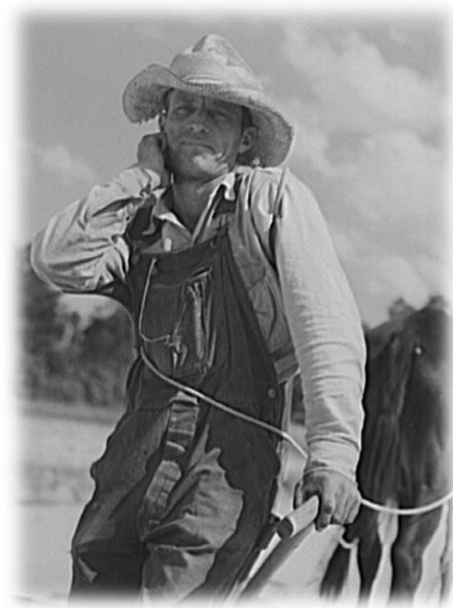


## Family History Sources in the Tar Heel State

### North Carolina History

The first permanent English settlers in North Carolina were Virginians who heard glowing reports of fertile bottomlands, abundant timber resources, and an excellent climate. They moved into the Albemarle Sound area about 1650, purchasing land from the local Indian tribes.

Two factors heavily influenced the development of North Carolina. Its stormy coastline, known as the "graveyard of the Atlantic," does not include a natural harbor to promote commerce. Except for a few Highland Scots, immigrants to North Carolina generally arrived by overland routes. Second, influencing North Carolina's development was the presence of approximately 35,000 Native Americans. They taught the European settlers important agricultural techniques and how to fight in the wilderness war. But the presence of the whites eventually destroyed the native civilization through disease, forceful removal to reservations, and war.



*Library of Congress, "North Carolina tobacco farmer. Near Farrington, Chatham County," digital print from black and white negative.*

In the early 1700s, North Carolina was the most sparsely settled English colony in America. A steady stream of Scots-Irish and German immigrants traveled over the Great Wagon Road from Pennsylvania through the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia to North Carolina. The only significant migration that sailed directly to North Carolina was a small group of Highland Scots. The Moravians purchased nearly 100,000 acres in present-day Forsyth County from Earl Granville in 1753 and settled the tract they called "Wachovia."

In 1789, North Carolina ratified the United States Constitution and ceded its western lands, now known as Tennessee, to the federal government. The site for North Carolina's state capital was located and named Raleigh three years later. Dissatisfaction with the state constitution of 1776, which heavily favored the eastern counties and towns, resulted in the constitutional convention of 1835 and the adoption of a new state constitution.

North Carolina was not ardently secessionist in 1860, but when the federal government requested troops to quell the Southern rebellion, Governor John W. Ellis refused and North Carolina soon joined the Confederacy. North Carolina supplied about 125,000 troops to the Confederacy, more than any other southern state, and around 30,000 North Carolinians were died in the war. After the Civil War, North Carolina rapidly developed as an industrial state. Governmental support fostered the growth of the textile, tobacco, and furniture industries for which North Carolina is known.

*This section is from [History of North Carolina](#) in the Ancestry.com Wiki, and was originally published in [Red Book: American State, County and Town Sources](#).*

### Significant Dates (through 1930)

**1586** – Sir Walter Raleigh made a second attempt to establish a second English colony on Roanoke Island; Virginia Dare was born the first English child to be christened on American soil.

**1590** – White returned to Roanoke to find no settlers and only the word “Croatoan” carved into a tree. The settlers were never found.

**1705** – Bath was the first town to be established in North Carolina.

**1712** – The Carolinas were divided into two colonies.

**1715** – Marriages were to be recorded by either the Secretary of State or in the county register of deeds.

**1718** – Blackbeard the pirate was killed off the North Carolina Coast.

**1719** – South Carolina became a Royal Colony.

**1729** – North Carolina became a Royal Colony.

**1776** – The Battle of Moores Creek Bridge was the first American Revolution battle to be fought in North Carolina; North Carolina was the first state to vote in favor of Independence.

**1780** – Battle of Kings Mountain was waged with the Patriot Militia defeating the Loyalist Militia.

**1781** – British general Cornwallis 2,100 men defeated American general Greene’s 4,500 men at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse; however, the British suffered such severe injuries it was a strategic victory for the Americans and stopped the British recruitment hopes in the state.

**1789** – North Carolina became the 12<sup>th</sup> state and one of the original 13 colonies; University of North Carolina received its charter and became the first public University in the U.S.

**1794** – The capital moved from New Bern to Raleigh.

**1799** – The border between North Carolina and Tennessee was established.

**1830s** – The Cherokee Indians are forced from their homes by the U.S. government in what is known as the “Trail of Tears”; many of the Cherokee hid in the mountains of North Carolina.

**1840** – The Wilmington and Weldon and the Raleigh and Gaston Railroads were completed.

**1851** – Ministers were required to file a marriage return and have it recorded in the county marriage register; Adam Crooks and Jesse McBride who were antislavery preachers were run out of the state.

**1856** – Running from Goldsboro to Charlotte, the North Carolina Railroad were completed.

**1861** – North Carolina left the Union by vote to “undo” the act that brought them into the U.S; around 30,000 North Carolinians were killed during the war.

**1866** – Over 9,000 former slaves recorded their marriages in county records; marriage bonds are abolished, replaced with licenses and certificates; dower rights were reinstated.

**1868** – North Carolina is readmitted back into the Union.

**1872** – Parents names were required on marriage certificates.

**1878** – A Cherokee reservation was formed in Western North Carolina.

**Late 1800s** – The textile and furniture industries grew rapidly in North Carolina.

**1897** – A bill that would have given North Carolina women the right to vote was proposed, but is sent to a committee on insane asylums and was never passed.

**1903** – The Wright brothers made their first successful flight at Kitty Hawk.

**1929** – The Loray Mill strike in Gastonia did not achieve its goals, but it caused controversy propelling the labor movement.

**1920** – 19<sup>th</sup> amendment gives women full suffrage.

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## North Carolina Census Records

Federal census records for North Carolina began in 1790. The 1790 enumeration is missing for Caswell, Granville, and Orange counties; the 1810 is missing the counties of Craven, Greene, New Hanover, and Wake, (though the information has been substituted in most publications with tax lists); and the 1820 is complete except for Currituck, Franklin, Martin, Montgomery, Randolph and Wake counties. The only surviving portions of the mostly destroyed 1890 census are South Point and River Ben townships in Gaston County, and Township No. 2 in Cleveland County.

In 1784 the North Carolina General Assembly requested that a list of inhabitants be taken. Compliance was slow and apparently incomplete, with some counties not responding until 1786. Tax lists may be used to substitute for other early censuses.

### Related Censuses Available on Ancestry.com:

- [North Carolina, Compiled Census and Census Substitutes Index, 1790-1890](#)
- [North Carolina, State Census, 1784-1787](#)
- [North Carolina Heads of families at the first census of the United States taken in the year 1790](#)
- [State census of North Carolina, 1784-1787](#)
- [Census records and Cherokee muster rolls](#)
- [North Carolina, Native American Census Selected Tribes, 1894-1913](#)

## North Carolina Vital Records

North Carolina began requiring statewide registration of births and deaths in March 1913. Compliance was considered full by 1920. Marriage records were recorded with the Register of Deeds in each county after 1868. Earlier marriages could be solemnized by numerous authorities, so records were sporadically kept. Marriage bonds are available for about half of the counties, and some marriages may be found at the county level.

- [North Carolina Division of Vital Records](#): Holds records of births from 1913; deaths from 1930; marriages from 1962; divorce certificates from 1958.

<i>Population</i>	
<b>1790</b>	<b>393,751</b>
<b>1800</b>	<b>478,103</b>
<b>1810</b>	<b>556,526</b>
<b>1820</b>	<b>638,829</b>
<b>1830</b>	<b>737,987</b>
<b>1840</b>	<b>753,419</b>
<b>1850</b>	<b>869,039</b>
<b>1860</b>	<b>992,622</b>
<b>1870</b>	<b>1,071,361</b>
<b>1880</b>	<b>1,399,750</b>
<b>1890</b>	<b>1,617,949</b>
<b>1900</b>	<b>1,893,810</b>
<b>1910</b>	<b>2,206,287</b>
<b>1920</b>	<b>2,559,123</b>
<b>1930</b>	<b>3,170,276</b>
<b>1940</b>	<b>3,571,623</b>
<b>1950</b>	<b>4,061,929</b>



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## Family History Sources in the Tar Heel State

### State Vital Records on Ancestry.com

- [North Carolina, Birth Indexes, 1800-2000](#)
- [North Carolina, Death Indexes, 1908-2004](#)
- [North Carolina, Marriage Index, 1741-2004](#)
- [North Carolina Divorce Index, 1958-2004](#)
- [North Carolina, Death Certificates, 1909-1975](#)
- [North Carolina, Deaths, 1906-1930](#)
- [North Carolina, Marriage Bonds, 1741-1868](#)

### North Carolina Military Records

- [U.S. WWII Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947](#)
- [North Carolina, Confederate Soldiers and Widows Pension Applications, 1885-1953](#)
- [North Carolina Revolutionary War Soldiers](#)
- [North Carolina Volunteers, Spanish American War](#)
- [Roster of North Carolina troops in the war between the states](#)
- [Roster of the North Carolina volunteers in the Spanish-American War, 1898-1899](#)
- [Colonial Soldiers of the South, 1732-1774](#)
- [Roster of soldiers from North Carolina in the American Revolution](#)
- [North Carolina, 1780-'81 : being a history of the invasion of the Carolinas by the British Army under Lord Cornwallis in 1780](#)

### Other Collections

- [North Carolina, Naturalization Records, 1872-1996](#)
- [Directory of Scots in the Carolinas, 1680-1830](#)
- [North Carolina, State Supreme Court Case Files, 1800-1909](#)
- [North Carolina and Tennessee, Early Land Records, 1753-1931](#)
- [North Carolina Wills and Inventories](#)
- [North Carolina, Will Abstracts, 1760-1800](#)
- [U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989](#) (Use the browse box in the upper right corner to determine what directories are available for your ancestor's area. If they lived in a rural area, check to see if that area was included with a larger city in the vicinity.)

### Help and Advice

- [North Carolina Family History Research](#)
- [Counties of North Carolina](#)
- [Cumberland and Atlantic States Research](#)
- [The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands](#)

### Other State Resources

The organizations listed below provide information about North Carolina history and genealogy. In addition to these state-level resources, many counties and towns maintain important genealogical collections in local libraries, genealogical societies, or historical societies, so check for a local resource when researching.

- North Carolina State Archive: The [Archives' online projects](#) include collections of particular interest to genealogists, including searchable images of North Carolina family records, newspapers, and maps.
- [State Library of North Carolina – genealogy page](#): The Library's collections include the [Digital Repository](#), which contains "North Carolina Family Records Online".
- [North Carolina Collection - University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#): Information on the collection holdings at the Wilson Library.
- [DigitalNC](#): This digital heritage site contains a growing collection of newspapers, city directories, scrapbooks, and photographs.
- [North Carolina History Project](#)
- [North Carolina Genealogical Society](#)
- [North Carolina GenWeb](#)
- [The National Archives at Atlanta](#): This facility maintains records from federal agencies and courts in North Carolina, including census, military, naturalization, court and immigration records.

[View all North Carolina collections on Ancestry.com](#)