

WHAT MOLDED TODAY'S NORTH CAROLINA?

Selected viewpoints from some esteemed North Carolina historians



DAVID BROOK

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There's the obvious, such as separation of colonial Carolina into North and South in 1712. Less known? The first private banks, Bank of Cape Fear and sister Bank of New Bern, were chartered in 1804. The Raleigh *News & Observer* appeared in 1880, and was bought by Josephus Daniels in 1894. He did a lot of positive things, even though he's denigrated now for supporting segregation and Jim Crow. WBT, one of the South's first radio stations, started in 1920, about the same time that air conditioning arrived. Don't know how people survived without it, in those petticoats and wool clothes.



GARY FREEZE

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Lack of deep-water port access and navigable rivers hampered early development, though a rail system unified the state. The railroad altered North Carolina more profoundly than in many states. Industrialization in mill towns meant large cities such as Charlotte and Winston-Salem emerged slowly. James B. Duke linked electric power development to tobacco and cotton factories. Big-city banks opened branch offices in smaller towns, aiding Charlotte's banking boom. And the artistic brilliance of the *Andy Griffith Show* changed the state in lasting ways. It's the greatest North Carolina thing ever, unless you prefer Michael Jordan's jump shot.



TOM HANCHETT

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After a relatively quiet Reconstruction, whites overthrew Wilmington's biracial government in 1898, and Jim Crow surfaced in a 1900 constitutional amendment disenfranchising blacks. That ultimately led to Greensboro lunch-counter sit-ins in 1960 and eventual integration of African-Americans into commerce. A current success story reflecting the state's increasing diversity is Hispanic-oriented grocer Compare Foods, which has 20 stores stretching from Henderson to Charlotte. Charlotte and Raleigh regularly rank among the top two or three fastest-growing Latino cities.



MICHAEL HILL

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Early ports in Currituck and Ocracoke failed for poor access, shifting commerce to Wilmington and Morehead City. A slave's accidental discovery of a curing method for bright-leaf tobacco in Caswell County in 1839 led to the dominant tobacco farming and cigarette manufacturing industry of the next 150 years. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill was the nation's first state university, but N.C. State University, started in 1887, gave the state a source of needed industrial specialists. Out of that, we see any number of disciplines, such as agriculture, textiles, engineering.



HARRY WATSON

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The Civil War hit the eastern plantation culture hardest. Afterwards, railroad building and paved highways opened the Piedmont to development that slavery had limited. Urbanization and industrialization spawned Piedmont cities and a business class eager to dominate the state's future with business-friendly measures, including better schools, good roads and improved health conditions — but also strict control of white factory labor. Today's divisions are more urban-rural, and the two major metropolises dominate. The collapse of agriculture and traditional industries have made new forms of manufacturing and services important through the state.