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# The Influence of Geography Upon Early North Carolina

By

Cordelia Camp

*Formerly Professor of History*

*Western Carolina College*



*A Publication of*

*The Carolina Charter Tercentenary Commission*

*Box 1881, Raleigh, North Carolina*

1963





The Influence of Geography  
Upon Early North Carolina



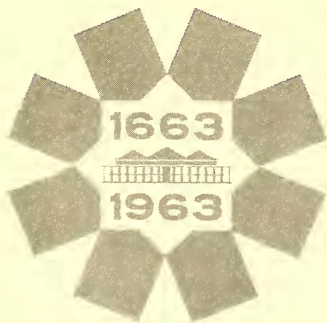
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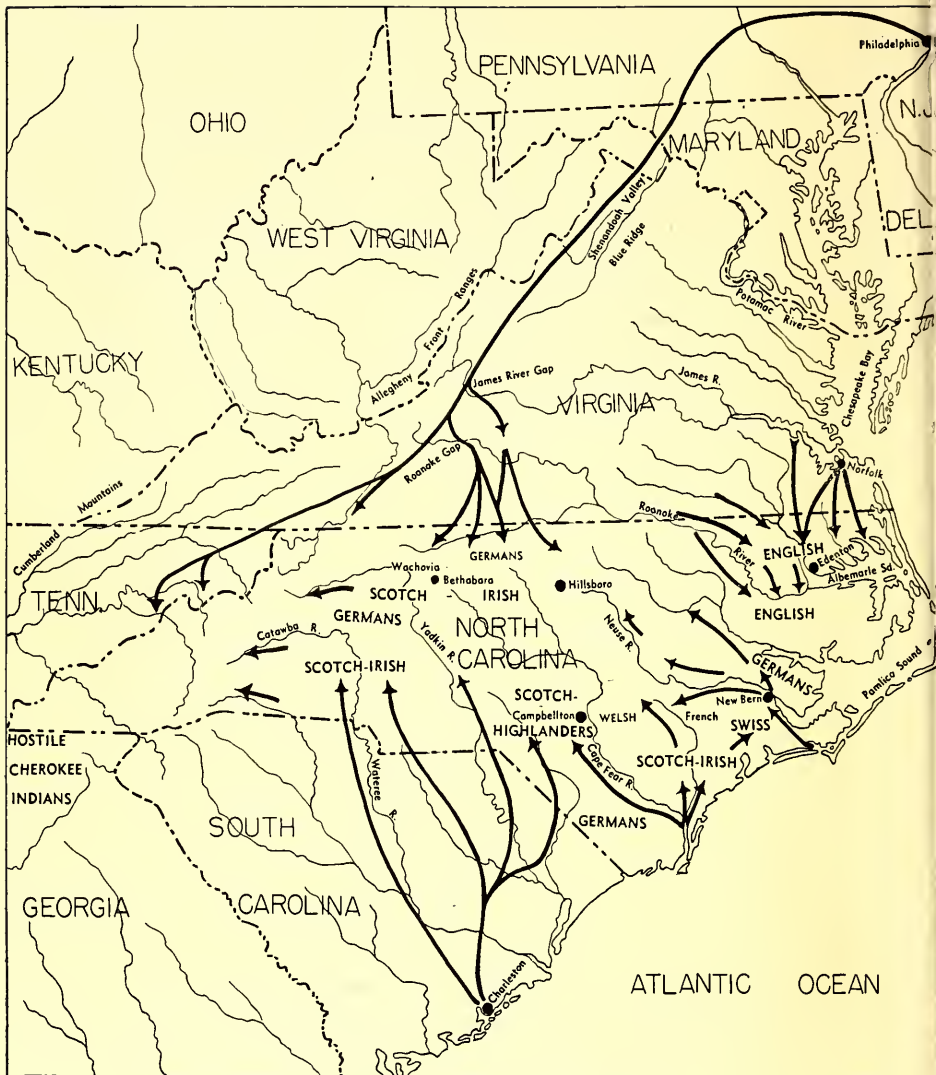
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The Carolina Charter Tercentenary Commission was established by the North Carolina General Assembly to "make plans and develop a program for celebration of the tercentenary of the granting of the Carolina Charter of 1663 . . ." As part of this program the Commission arranged for the publication of a number of historical pamphlets for use in stimulating interest in the study of North Carolina history during the period 1663-1763. This publication is part of that project.

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HOW NORTH CAROLINA WAS SETTLED

From *North Carolina History* by D. J. Whitener, 1959

(Courtesy of Harlow Publishing Company, Norman, Oklahoma)

## CHAPTER I

# Physical Features of the State

North Carolina lies between 34° and 36° 30' north latitude, thus being located within the warmer part of the north temperate zone. The state is bounded on the north by Virginia, on the west by Tennessee, on the South by South Carolina and Georgia, and on the east by the Atlantic Ocean. The extreme length of the state is over 500 miles and the greatest width is 188 miles.

The topography may be described as one vast slope extending from the mountains of the west, with altitudes of more than 6,000 feet, to the level of the Atlantic Ocean. The state is divided into three rather clear-cut physiographic regions: the Coastal Plain, the Piedmont Plateau and the Mountain Region. Each region has distinct physical features. The Coastal Plain with its subregions, making up almost half the state's area, extends from the Atlantic Ocean to the "fall line" of the Roanoke, Tar, Neuse and Cape Fear Rivers. This region varies from 100 to 150 miles in width and ranges in elevation from sea level to approximately 400 feet. This extensive region is naturally divided into two subregions, the Tidewater and the western Coastal Plain. The Tidewater is low and relatively swampy. It includes many natural lakes, the largest of which is Lake Mattamuskeet. Most of the soil of the Coastal Plain is fertile and easy to cultivate. At its western edge is a rather large, hilly and sandy area known as the Sandhills. The soil in this area was not considered good for farming and not many people settled there in early days. Later, it was found that the winters were milder in this region than in many other parts of the country. This led eventually to the development of such resort towns as Pinehurst and Southern Pines. The submountain

or Piedmont Plateau extends from the fall line, which runs in a northeast-southwest direction through the present counties of Northampton, Halifax, Wake, Lee, Hoke and Scotland. From the mountain section to the Piedmont the transition is very sharp, there being a drop of not less than 1,500 feet within a very few miles. The Mountain Region is composed of a broad plateau bounded on the east by the Blue Ridge and on the west by the Great Smoky Mountains. The plateau is the culminating region of the Appalachian system and contains not only its largest masses, but also its highest summits. It is divided by a number of cross ranges and, consequently, into a number of smaller plateaus or basins, each bounded on all sides by high mountains. There are in this mountain area forty-three peaks which attain an elevation of over 6,000 feet and eighty-two mountains which exceed 5,000 feet in height. Mount Mitchell, with an elevation of 6,684 feet, is the highest peak east of the Mississippi River.

### RIVERS AND SOUNDS

Great bodies of shallow water, called sounds, lie between the Coastal Plain and the Atlantic Ocean. These sounds are Currituck, Albemarle, Chowan, Roanoke, Pamlico, Core and Bogue. Between the sounds and the Atlantic Ocean is a low-lying ridge of sand which extends along most of the North Carolina coast and reaches for miles into the ocean, at many places being largely covered with water. There are few passageways for ships through this sand bank, and a hurricane may close a passage which has been open for years. The shallow waters, shifting sands and treacherous currents have helped to make the North Carolina coast line the most dangerous one on the entire Atlantic coast of the United States. The waters around Cape Hatteras have been called the "Graveyard of the Atlantic."



The Coastal Plain is drained by six great rivers: the Chowan, Roanoke, Tar-Pamlico, Neuse, Trent and Cape Fear. These streams run in a southeasterly direction and all except the Cape Fear empty into the shallow sounds off the coast, tending to make them increasingly more shallow with sediment deposits. The Cape Fear flows directly into the Atlantic, but sediment deposited near its mouth forms Frying Pan Shoals which make a dangerous entrance. The Chowan and the Roanoke originate in Virginia; the Tar-Pamlico, Neuse and Cape Fear rise in the Piedmont region of North Carolina; and the Trent rises in this state's Coastal Plain. The main rivers of the Piedmont, the Catawba, Yadkin and the Broad, run in a southeasterly direction and flow through South Carolina before entering the ocean. These rivers are narrow and flow more swiftly than do those of the Coastal Plain. On these rivers have been developed the state's great water power which has been used for industrial development. More than eighty per cent of the state's present-day industrial plants are in the Piedmont area. The important rivers of the Mountain Region are the French Broad, Little Tennessee, Hiawassee and New. All of these streams rise west of the Blue Ridge and drain into the Tennessee River, eventually entering the Gulf of Mexico. Thus the Blue Ridge forms the divide of the land east of the Rocky Mountains.

### THE BEGINNINGS OF NORTH CAROLINA

Based on the discovery of the Cabots, England claimed all eastern North America for nearly a hundred years before making any effort to colonize the region. While Sir Walter Raleigh failed in his attempt to plant the first English colony in America, his efforts stimulated the efforts of the English people in the land and led to the planting of the

Jamestown Colony in 1607. At the time this first English colony was planted, Virginia extended southward to the Spanish colony of Florida. As the Jamestown Colony grew, settlers from it made their way southward to the region around Albemarle Sound. A few of these early pioneers bought land in that region from the Indians. Outstanding among these purchasers was George Durant, who in 1661 acquired from the Chief of the Yeopim Indians a tract lying along the Perquimans River and Albemarle Sound, which still bears the name of Durant's Neck.

By 1663 the settlements on the Albemarle Sound had become of sufficient importance to attract attention in England. A group of English courtiers saw an opportunity to undertake on a vast scale a colonizing enterprise which promised large returns in wealth and power. They were not long in requesting such a grant from the King. In compliance with their request, Charles II issued his famous Charter of 1663 by which he granted to eight noblemen, called the Lords Proprietors, all the region lying between thirty-one and thirty-six degrees north latitude, and extending westward from the Atlantic Ocean to the "South Seas," or the Pacific Ocean. When it was learned that the Charter did not include the settlers on the northern border, a second charter was issued, in 1665, extending the boundary thirty minutes north. Thus began a colony which in a little over a century was to extend its settlement westward to the Great Smoky Mountains.

The physiographic features and other geographic factors of the territory played a major role in the settlement and early development of the state. Its story of development is largely a record of fighting a wilderness containing a great variety of forests, wild animals and Indians. The decided differences in geography, the ethnic elements and the diffi-

culties of exchanging ideas caused a number of conflicts among the people of the various regions as settlement advanced. The underlying cause of these struggles is found in the efforts of the colonists to overcome an unfavorable environment: "It has been said that our past is a record of using our good geography well and adapting ourselves to the bad.

## CHAPTER II

# The Coastal Plain

### HOW GEOGRAPHY INFLUENCED ITS SETTLEMENT

The sand banks and shifting inlets on its coast, and its lack of a harbor, prevented North Carolina's colonization from the outside and caused it to be settled initially by an overflow from the colonies in the north. Many of the early settlers came from Virginia. The Albemarle region, to which these pioneers came, has been described as "a location abounding in attractions for the hardy pioneers." The Albemarle Sound, while furnishing in its wide expanse a protection from the southern Indians, offered an unfailing supply of fish and game. For a while there was a rapid flow of population into this region. Among those who came were a number of men of large means, each of whom brought with him ten to thirty persons. The planters took up land along the water courses, since the land there was more fertile and the streams afforded a means of transportation. Within two years after the Charter was granted to the Proprietors, the population was sufficient for the settlers to organize a government of their own. In 1665 they held their first assembly and the little settlement became a self-governing community. Even with this step toward a democratic form of government, growth became slow. The Proprietors realized that unless people came and established homes, and began to make use of the resources the region contained, they could not make the profit which they expected. They held out inducements through advertising the riches and beauty of the region, the fertile soil and the healthy climate. When these inducements did not bring settlers in large numbers, the Proprietors offered specific advantages. A new

settler would not be required to pay any taxes for the first year. He would be free for five years from trial for any debt or crime that had been charged against him before his arrival in Carolina. In spite of these promises, the colony grew slowly. Settlers found it hard to prosper in the region, since geographic conditions hindered easy trade with the outside world. However, as Virginia became more crowded, settlers drifted into North Carolina and by 1715 the population in that colony numbered about 11,000.

### THE ECONOMY OF THE COASTAL PLAIN

Geographic factors determined that the economy of eastern North Carolina would be based on agriculture and forest products in its early years. The topography, soil and climate combined to make the region an ideal one for growing crops. The forests of the area formed the basis of an early naval stores industry. These two sources of wealth were closely related.

When the planter first decided upon his tract of land, his greatest task was the clearing of a space in the woods and building a rude log house. Further clearing followed which was done in the crudest way. Often the trees were cut down but usually the trunks were girdled, leaving the trees to die, while crops were planted between them and cultivated with the hoe. The leading crops were Indian corn, wheat, oats, rye, tobacco and rice. John Brickell, writing about 1730, comments on the crops as follows:

Indian Corn or maize is mostly planted with the Hoe and proves the most useful grain in these parts being in great plenty all over the Province.

The wheat of this province is very good and fair . . . but the grain is not altogether as large as ours, yet it seldom yields less than thirty measures for one sown.

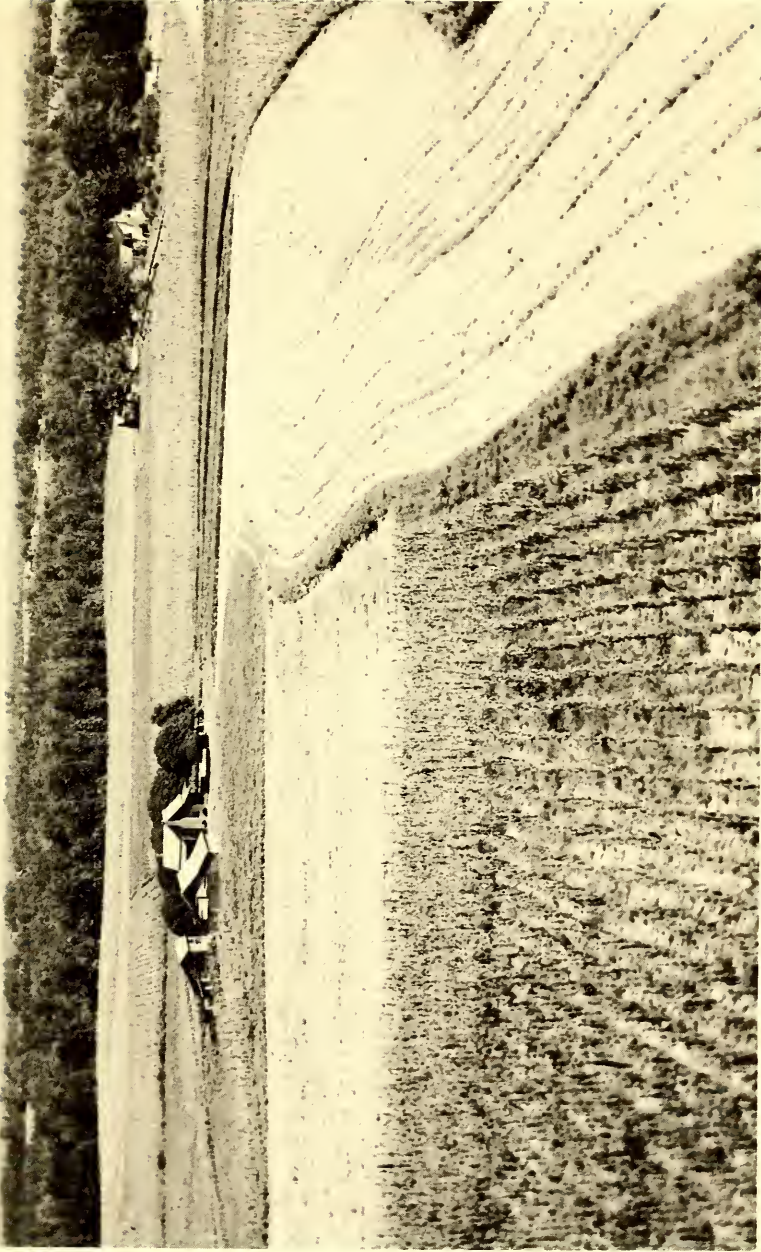
Rice whereof there are several sorts . . . is esteemed as good as any brought in from Europe.

The writer lists potatoes among the crops grown for home use, also a number of vegetables. "Asparagus thrives in this province to a miracle . . ."

One of the greatest handicaps to farming was the inadequacy of the supply of tools. While this was generally true in the other seaboard colonies, the lack of trade with the outside world made it difficult for Carolina to get such as were brought into use elsewhere. Crude makeshifts were used for hoes, harrows, forks, spades and other implements. Bishop Spangenburg reported in 1752 that in a 140-mile journey he saw "not one wagon or plow."

Corn was planted and cultivated with the "hoe," as Brickell says, and by the nature of its growth the harvesting was not too difficult. The planting and harvesting of small grain, however, was harder. Wheat was broadcast and covered with a bush harrow. It was cut with a scythe or a cradle and threshed with a flail. This method of threshing was used in all the colonies until long after the Revolution, since the "Ground" thresher and ordinary fanning mill were not patented until 1837. At first, the grinding of all grain was done by hand. Then windmills were tried, but this was a slow and unsatisfactory process. The flat country and sluggish streams of the Coastal Plain afforded few sites for grist mills run by water power. Any suitable sites for such mills on the plantations were employed by the planters for their own private use. In 1715 the Assembly enacted a law stipulating that suitable mill sites be restricted for the use of public mills. Brickell says, "The stones for these mills are got just up the Neuse and at heads of other rivers."

The early farmers raised horses, cattle, sheep and hogs. In the first decades horses were used chiefly for riding, while the slower, stronger and less nervous ox was used largely as a draught animal. The mule, a hybrid animal, did not come



(Courtesy N. C. Dept. of Conservation and Development)

COASTAL PLAIN FARM

into use until a much later date. Sheep were raised chiefly for their wool, most of which was used in the homes for making cloth. Hogs formed an essential factor in the farmer's economy; they were a principal export as well as a product used freely in home consumption.

The forests of the Coastal Plain proved of no less importance in the lives of the pioneer settlers than did agriculture. R. D. W. Connor wrote, "It was the presence of an unlimited food supply in the forests that enabled the pioneers to push out into the wilderness and prepare the way for civilization." The dense forests sheltered a great variety of wild animals—rabbits, squirrels, possums, and deer. There were also many kinds of wild fowl, some of which were edible. These furnished both food and clothing, the skins and furs being used as leggings, gloves, caps, as well as for rugs and cover. From the forests came berries, fruits, grapes, and other edible foods. But the greatest value of the forests lay in their commercial worth. Their trees served as a money crop to supplement the agricultural crops of the farmers. The predominating trees were the longleaf and loblolly pine. Other trees of a commercial and domestic value were cypress, oak, maple, and walnut. From the pines came lumber, tar, pitch, turpentine, and staves. Statistics show that in 1753 the colony exported 61,528 barrels of tar, 12,055 barrels of pitch, 10,429 barrels of turpentine and 762,000 staves.

The vast amount of inland water navigable by small craft, plus the great abundance of shipbuilding materials and naval stores, led to extensive shipbuilding. White oak furnished the principal material for this type of industry.

For nearly two centuries the forests of the region supplied abundant food for livestock, furnished material for domestic purposes and for shipbuilding, and afforded a considerable



income for the planters. Just as poor and careless methods of farming depleted the soil of the area, likewise the forests were exploited by shortsighted methods of handling them. Brickell cites one example of exploitation as follows:

The planters make their servants or Negroes cut large cavities on each side of the pitch pine tree. Then the turpentine runs and Negroes with ladles take it out and put it into barrels. A tree produced after being boxed for three years then dies and is used for fuel—called light-wood.

### TRADE AND ITS DIFFICULTIES

While eastern North Carolina was favored with a surplus of agricultural products, as the forests furnished great quantities of salable materials, the geography of the region did not permit an outside market for the exportation of these products. The same factors—dangerous coast and shallow inlets and sounds—that influenced the settlement of the colony handicapped trade with the outside world.

There were only two inlets with access to the sea, Ocracoke and Cape Fear. Ocracoke would not admit water of deep draught, and even when ships entered the sound, navigation was difficult because of its shallow water. Between the Cape Fear and Ocracoke lay the Neuse and Tar region which had no good outlet to the sea. Moreover, communication between the sections of the Coastal Plain was difficult because the region was interlaced with swamps and rivers. These unfavorable conditions, therefore, sent much of the early trade of North Carolina overland into Virginia. In addition, small vessels, usually from New England, entered the inlets and shallow sounds, and came to the wharves of the planters to which the small farmers often brought their products. Here their vessels were loaded with products of the farmers and forests to be carried to the West Indies, or sometimes to England, and exchanged for rum, molasses, sugar, coffee, and

such other articles as the planters needed. Often they would be taken to Boston, where the proceeds were invested in clothing, household goods, or slaves.

The demand of the North Carolina people for trade was greater than could be met by the small vessels that entered the narrow inlets, so considerable trade was carried on by other methods. Chief among these was the commerce carried on overland with Virginia. The products sent to Virginia were mainly tobacco and livestock, especially hogs, which were driven overland by the thousands. The trade in tobacco brought trouble between North Carolina and Virginia. The latter colony had been somewhat displeased when North Carolina was carved from the Old Dominion and initially populated at her expense; now it offered keen competition in the staple upon which Virginia's prosperity was founded. Virginia officials were outspoken in their poor opinion of their neighbors, and cooperation in respect of relations with the Indians was often lacking. The commercial interests in Virginia influenced the Assembly of that colony to pass a law in 1679 forbidding the importation of North Carolina tobacco into Virginia or its exportation through the ports of that colony. This blockade lasted until North Carolina became a royal colony in 1729. This action was a great hindrance to the progress of North Carolina. After the act was disallowed, North Carolina tobacco continued to find its way into the markets of the world, where it was known as "Virginia Bright." The long dependence on Virginia for markets caused North Carolina to be subordinate to Virginia politically for years.

Early in her history Albemarle had built up a flourishing coastwise trade with New England. As we have noted, skippers from that region, using small craft, entered the shallow waters and inlets and came to the wharves of the planters,

where they picked up tobacco and other products. These traders brought goods needed or desired by the planters. Prior to 1672 this trade was free from restrictions and duties. In that year England passed trade laws, known as Navigation Acts, which required the colonists in America to trade only with English merchants and shippers. A tax was imposed on any goods not shipped directly to England and in English or colonial vessels. The purpose of this act was to foster England's strength by an increase of her sea power and commerce.

The Act of 1672 permitted tobacco, which was subject to a heavy duty when imported into England, to be shipped from one colony to another free of duty. This practice enabled the colonial merchant to undersell his English competitors who paid duty. When the English merchants complained about this defect in the law, Parliament came to their rescue. In 1673 that body passed an act which levied export duties on certain articles when they were shipped from one colony to another. On tobacco this duty was fixed at a penny a pound. The act provided that the duties were to be collected by officials of the Crown. The passage of this act led in 1677 to a popular uprising in Albemarle. This insurrection, which lasted for about three years, is known in history as Culpeper's Rebellion. It was caused by the attempt to enforce a commercial policy in a colony where geography compelled the inhabitants to engage in a type of trade economically unfavorable to themselves.\*

The whole episode hindered the economic progress of Albemarle and slowed down immigration for nearly two decades.

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\* For an account of Culpeper's Rebellion, see *Upheaval in Albemarle*, by Hugh F. Rankin, a publication of The Carolina Charter Tercentenary Commission, Raleigh, 1962.

## EXPANSION AND SECTIONALISM

After the close of Culpeper's Rebellion, Albemarle enjoyed a period of prosperity under the administration of a group of capable governors. The population steadily increased. In 1690 a group of French and Swiss settled on the Pamlico River. In 1704 the town of Bath was laid off near the mouth of that river. It was incorporated the following year and became North Carolina's oldest town. By 1710, settlements extended from the Virginia border to Albemarle Sound and along the banks of the Roanoke, Pamlico, and Neuse Rivers. New Bern, the second oldest town, was founded in 1710 by people from Germany, along with some Swiss and a few English. Although in 1711 the settlements around New Bern were almost wiped out by the Tuscarora Indians, the eventual conquest of the Tuscaroras by the colonists opened the lands between the Neuse and Cape Fear Rivers for settlement. By 1715, as we have noted, the white population of Carolina numbered almost 11,000.

About this time another instance of the influence of geography upon the affairs of North Carolina is seen. From the beginning of their administration of the government, the Proprietors had attempted to rule the wide expanse of the territory granted them by means of a resident governor. This territory, as we have seen, reached from the Virginia border on the north to the northern part of Florida on the south. As a convenient plan of governing it, the Proprietors had divided this territory into three distinct colonies—Albemarle, Craven, and Clarendon. Because of its good harbor, Clarendon, located in what is now South Carolina, outgrew the two districts in the north. In 1670 a colony was founded at the mouth of the Ashley River and a town called Charles Town was begun. Soon the settlement was moved to the present site of Charleston. The latter colony grew

rapidly and was favored by the Lords Proprietors. Later, the seat of government for Carolina was moved here and a deputy governor was appointed for "that part of the Province of Carolina that lies North and East of Cape Fear." The government of the former county of Albemarle by a deputy, whose authority largely proceeded from that of the governor of Carolina at Charleston, lessened the importance and influence of the executive and increased the power of the people's Assembly. Realizing that a stronger executive was needed to check the influence of the people, and considering the great distance separating the two parts of the colony, with the attendant difficulty of communication and travel, in 1710 the Proprietors decided to have two co-equal governors. This action provided greater autonomy for the northern section and made possible a government more in keeping with the natural environment of the region. Into the official records gradually crept the name of "North Carolina" for this northern area, and in 1711 Edward Hyde was appointed its governor.

Settlement had been going on in North Carolina for some sixty years before the broad and fertile valley of the Cape Fear was reached. Two attempts at settlement of this region had failed because of the dangerous character of the coast, the menace of the pirates who found the region favorable to piracy, and because the Proprietors had devoted their attention to other regions. By 1729 some of these causes had been removed. In 1718 two of the leading pirates, Edward Teach, or "Blackbeard," as he was called, and Stede Bonnet, were captured and put to death. In the same year many other pirates who had been operating along the North Carolina coast were captured and hanged in Virginia, and at Charleston. In 1724 Governor George Burrington reopened the land office in the colony which, because of an order of the Pro-

prietors, had been closed for some time, thus preventing any sale of land in the colony. Now that the region was open for settlement, Maurice Moore took the lead and, in 1727, founded the town of Brunswick near the mouth of the Cape Fear River. In 1740 the town of Wilmington was begun sixteen miles up the river. This town soon became an important shipping point. For the first time the settlers had a port and a direct outlet to the ocean. Furthermore, boats could travel the Cape Fear inland eighty miles to the Piedmont. Prosperous settlements grew up in this valley and it soon became the most progressive region of the entire northern colony.

The commercial interests of the Cape Fear settlers, who enjoyed the advantages of direct trade with the outside world, began to conflict with those of the Albemarle Sound region where trade facilities were less adequate. Political leaders were naturally influenced by the conflicts between these two geographical regions. From the early days of the Colonial Assembly the Albemarle counties had had five representatives each. The newer counties had but two. With their large number of members, the northern counties easily controlled the Assembly. Governor Gabriel Johnston (1734-52), who was unpopular with the Albemarle counties, undertook to lessen the power of this region by cutting down its membership in the Assembly. He also favored the removal of the capital from Edenton to a more central part of the colony—a move greatly desired by the southern colonists. In order to accomplish his objective, Governor Johnston called the Assembly of 1746 to meet in Wilmington in November. He knew that on account of the flooded rivers and wretched roads at that season, few of the northern members would make the long and toilsome journey to Wilmington. Just as the governor expected, the northern members did not attend.

Although a quorum was not present, Johnston declared it a lawful House. Thereupon laws were passed giving each county only two members and moving the capital to New Bern. The northern counties declared the acts unlawful and refused to be bound by them. For eight years they sent no members to the Assembly, paid no taxes, attended no general courts. At the close of the eight-year period the King's ministers ordered the full number of members to be restored to the northern counties.

Such were the difficulties which were encountered by the early settlers in their attempt to carry on a government and trade in an unfavorable geographic region. These circumstances hindered the economic and political progress of the colony.

By about 1735 the English or Coastal Plain population had moved westward to the fall line. The white population of North Carolina now numbered nearly 100,000. The English settlers had occupied the territory without interruption, thereby fastening the English political and social institutions upon the colony. English customs molded the form of local government, the system of judicature, and the whole body of legislation. So deeply embedded were these institutions that they endured despite the later coming of different ethnic elements into the colony.

## CHAPTER III

# The Piedmont Plateau

### SETTLEMENT AND EARLY LIFE

During the latter part of the first century of North Carolina's political existence, the east increased in population. Some improvement was made in agriculture and better houses were built, including some fine plantation homes. Considering the state as a whole, however, this period was characterized by the settlement of the Piedmont Plateau. By the close of the century in 1763, as we have noted, the settlements extended westward to the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Because of its geographical features, this newly settled region had little connection with the eastern Coastal Plain. Since the rivers that water the east are at most navigable only to the fall line, while those of the Piedmont rise on the slopes of the western mountains and flow swiftly through narrow channels through South Carolina to the sea, there is no natural communication between these two regions. Thus geography decreed that the Piedmont, like the east, should be settled by people coming overland from the north.

About 1735 two great streams of population began flowing into the province from the north and spreading out over the plains and valleys of the Piedmont section. Though flowing side by side, these streams of settlers originated in separate sources and throughout their courses had kept entirely distant from one another. One was composed of so-called Scotch-Irish immigrants, the other was of German descent. The name Scotch-Irish is a geographical, not an ethnic, term. They were in reality Scottish people or the descendants of Scots who had resided in Ireland for over a hundred years.



Beginning in 1610, King James I of England, in a plan to stop the Irish rebellions against the throne of England, replaced the natives of northern Ireland with Lowland Scots. These Lowlanders succeeded so well economically in their new home during the first century that they aroused the jealousy of the English merchants of that day. These merchants prevailed upon the English Parliament to pass laws restricting the manufacture and trade of the Scottish settlers, and curtailing their religious liberty. As a result, thousands of them left Ireland and emigrated to America, large numbers of them finding their way to North Carolina. Of those who poured into the Piedmont from 1735 to 1775, a few landed at Charleston and moved up the banks of the Pee Dee and Catawba Rivers into the hill country of the two Carolinas. But the great majority landed at Philadelphia, whence they moved into North Carolina, following the Wilderness Road to the headwaters of the Yadkin, and gradually spread over the region drained by the Neuse, Cape Fear, Yadkin and Catawba, and their tributaries.

Moving over the same route as the Scotch-Irish, and also coming from Pennsylvania, flowed a stream of German immigrants, who came into North Carolina from 1745 to 1775. Various reasons prompted their migration into the colony, but search for good lands was their prime motive. They found land plentiful in North Carolina, and cheaper than in Pennsylvania. These Germans were somewhat inclined to settle in groups or villages for protection and for social contacts. Many towns and villages which dot North Carolina's Piedmont today had their origin in these German settlements. Some of these immigrants became hunters and trappers, and in the vast forests extending along the foothills and covering the mountainsides they chased the fox and the deer, hunted the buffalo and the bear, and trapped the

otter and the beaver. When spring came, they gathered up their furs and skins and, in obedience to the dictates of geography, took them to some market in Fayetteville, Charleston or Philadelphia. Another class of Germans came to the colony in search of religious freedom and fields for religious activity. These were divided into three religious groups—the Lutherans, the German Reformed, and the Moravians. The last group planted a distinctive settlement at Wachovia in what is now Forsyth County.

While the settlements of the Scotch-Irish and Germans overlapped in the Piedmont area, the Germans predominated in the present-day North Carolina counties of Orange, Alamance, Stokes, Forsyth, Davie, Davidson, Randolph, Rowan, Cabarrus, Stanly, Burke and Lincoln. Much of the industry which developed in the Piedmont in later decades can be traced back to the German element for its beginning. Likewise, the Scotch-Irish element has had a lasting effect on the state. They established schools and churches wherever they went and their descendants through the centuries have exerted a great influence on the history of the state.

These immigrants into the Piedmont region entered a vast forest composed of hardwood trees—the oak, hickory, walnut, and maple. Pine also was abundant. While the hardwood forests had an undergrowth of berries and grapes, the species differed somewhat from the undergrowth of the eastern part of the colony. That there was a great variety of medicinal plants in the general region is evidenced by the fact that in later decades there grew up at Statesville the largest crude drug industry in the nation. The hardwood forests of the Piedmont sheltered a great variety of wild animals and fowl.

Although red clay predominates in the Piedmont, many types of soil are found in the region, thus making possible

a variety of crops. Corn was planted on the bottom lands and on the more humus soil. Tobacco, which formed the principal money crop, grew best on the light, more siliceous types of soil. In time, experimentation with the soil best suited to this crop, and with better means of cultivating the plant, enabled the farmers in those counties best suited to tobacco-growing to develop a high quality of the weed. This in turn contributed to the growth of North Carolina's modern great tobacco industry. Farming in the area was influenced by the climate as well as by the soil. The climate of the Piedmont is mild, but the winters are more severe than in the Coastal Plain and the growing seasons are shorter.

The streams of the region are narrow, shallow, and swift. They are not adapted to navigation and commerce, but are excellent for the development of water power. Almost from the start, then, this region developed a diversified economy despite its lack of means of transportation, and it is no accident that during the nineteenth century the leading manufacturing towns of North Carolina grew up in the Piedmont. Manufacturing, which started on a small scale fairly early, developed steadily. By 1840 there were twenty-five cotton mills located in twelve different counties of the region. Today approximately eighty-five per cent of the state's industry is located within this area.

## TROUBLE WITH THE INDIANS

Like the early English settlers in the east, the Piedmont people had to grapple with Indian problems. The people of this region had been living in North Carolina less than two decades when they were called upon to defend their homes from Indian raids.



HUGH WADDELL FROM A MINIATURE IN THE HALL OF HISTORY, RALEIGH, N. C.

(Courtesy State Dept. of Archives and History)

During the French and Indian War, 1754-1763, the Cherokee Indians, who lived in the mountains of North Carolina, allied themselves with the French, fighting against Great Britain and the American Colonies. After the defeat of British General Braddock in July, 1755, Cherokee bands raided settlements in the North Carolina Piedmont, killing, scalping, burning, and stealing. For more than four years they kept the area of Morganton, Hickory, and Statesville in turmoil. To protect the area, Major Hugh Waddell of Wilmington built Fort Dobbs near Statesville in 1755. Some of the settlers took refuge within the fort; others went to the Moravians at Bethabara; while some fled to South Carolina. In 1760, the Cherokees defeated a large army led by Colonel Archibald Montgomery near the present town of Franklin. The next year Lieutenant Colonel James Grant, a British officer, led a large force into the Cherokee country and defeated the Indians in June, 1761. After their defeat, the Indians asked for peace. This defeat broke the power of the Cherokees. The Catawba Indians, whose lands lay in the Piedmont, fought on the side of the British. At the close of the war they were settled on a reservation in South Carolina, south of Mecklenburg County.

### TRADE AND SECTIONALISM

The settlement of the Indian problem removed a menace and brought safety to the Piedmont settlers, but it could not change the geographical factors which hindered their progress. With no natural outlet on the east or south, and with the mountains as a barrier on the west, the people of the Piedmont were virtually cut off from the rest of the state and from the outside world. Yet they cleared the land, built better log houses, erected grist mills and saw mills on the swift streams. Roads characteristic of that period were con-

structed throughout the region. The main ones followed the river valleys or Indian trails. The roads were laid off and maintained by County Commissioners, who appointed a road overseer in each township. All able bodied men were required to work the roads, usually four to six days a year. Big mudholes were drained and smaller ones were filled with pine brush covered with a few shovels of dirt. In winter such roads were often impassable. This red land was easily eroded, and after it was cleared, erosion took place very rapidly to the detriment of the region.

The people living in the northern part of the region carried on trade necessary for a meager life with towns in Virginia or Pennsylvania, while those in the southern part traded at Fayetteville or in the South Carolina towns. Considering the long distance to markets and the conditions of the roads, there was little incentive to grow more than was necessary for domestic purposes. Livestock, such as cattle and hogs and turkeys, were driven to market on foot. The average farmer made two trips to market a year to buy coffee, salt, sugar, and other necessities. These conditions continued with but little improvement far down into the nineteenth century.

### SECTIONALISM AND THE REGULATOR MOVEMENT

While two sections as divergent as the Coastal Plain and the Piedmont Plateau lived under the same political government, so great were their differences that the government brought little unity. In the east the plantation with slavery dominated the social and political society. In the Piedmont the small farm with an average of one or two slaves to a farm was the chief unit in the economic structure. Social classes followed the same pattern. The more aristocratic-

mind colonists were found in the east. Ethnic factors and religion also played a part in the differences. The planters in the east had an English background, while the population in the Piedmont was composed largely of Scotch-Irish and Germans. The Anglican Church prevailed in the east, while in the Piedmont the Presbyterian and different branches of the German Reformed Church were predominant. Thus the two peoples had little in common in their backgrounds and traditions.

The seat of government was in the east and the governor and high officials lived there; here, too, the Assembly met. The east controlled the Assembly, since representation in the House was based on the county, not on population, and the east had more counties than the Piedmont or western territory. Counties could be created only by act of the Assembly and, since that body was controlled by eastern factions, it refused to create counties in the west as fast as population increases justified.

The east not only ruled the Assembly, but through its power to appoint the leading county officers it also dominated the local government. Moreover, the Assembly levied the taxes for the colony and fixed the fees for public services rendered by the local officers. Under the poor economic conditions existing in the Piedmont area, the payment of taxes and fees often provoked hardship there. Then, too, the people were somewhat loath to pay taxes to help finance any projects in the section of the state of which they had little knowledge or interest. When, in 1768, Governor William Tryon succeeded in getting a tax levied for building a state capitol—"Tryon's Palace," a Mecklenburg County citizen, in protesting against the tax, said, "Not one man in twenty of the four most populous counties will ever see the famous

house when built, as their connections of trade do, and ever will, center in South Carolina.”

Under these conditions a spirit of divisive sectionalism was bound to flourish. For a number of years the people in the back country nursed their grievances or suffered the ills they considered inflicted upon them by the east. About 1766, however, an organization was developed with the purpose of ameliorating the existing economic and political conditions. The growth of this organization, known as the Regulator movement, resulted in the Battle of Alamance, which was fought between the Regulators and Governor Tryon's militia in 1771. In this action the Regulators were defeated. The east-west sectional conflict quieted down for a while, but the grievances of the Piedmont people were not permanently cured. Following the American Revolution and its aftermath, the earlier conflict was renewed. It would not reach its political climax until the Convention of 1835.

After the Battle of Alamance, many of the Regulators joined the settlement which had begun across the mountains in the valleys of the Holston and Watauga Rivers in what is now Tennessee. In 1772, feeling that they were so removed from their native state, both by distance and by mountain barriers, these settlers organized a new and independent government, calling their new region Watauga. This independent area carried on for a period of six years, when the North Carolina Assembly interposed its authority and established a new county there.

However, geography continued to have its influence in the region. The feeling of the mountain settlers that the Appalachian Mountains formed an insuperable barrier between the two sections which would always prevent the development of common interests was undoubtedly reflected in



North Carolina's cession of the western territory to the United States in 1789.

The American Revolution brought independence to North Carolina early in the second decade of its historical development. The necessity of unifying the people for participation in the cause for freedom tended to break down the pronounced sectionalism in the colony.

During the Revolution a phenomenon of geography which had heretofore been a hindrance to progress proved beneficial to carrying on the war. Small vessels used the inlets and inland waters of the coast for carrying on an extensive trade with the French, Spanish, and Dutch West Indies, and even with France and the Netherlands. Soon after the war began, the harbors of Ocracoke, Edenton, Beaufort, New Bern, and Wilmington became white with the sails of merchantmen and privateers. British patrols found it difficult to capture these small, fleet vessels, which ran in and out of the narrow inlets. They slipped through these inlets, ran down to the West Indies, or crossed the Atlantic to France or other countries, sold their cargoes, and brought back salt, rum, clothes, and articles of military value. General Washington received considerable supplies through this channel during his hard winter at Valley Forge. In January, 1778, former Governor Martin wrote:

The contemptible port of Ocracoke has become a great channel of supply to the Rebels. They have received through it and continue to receive at that inlet very considerable importations of the necessities they most want for the purpose of carrying on their warfare from the ports of France and the French West Indian Islands.

This trade was a great stimulus to shipbuilding. Shipyards sprang up at all the seaport towns, which were busy throughout the war, building and launching almost every kind of river craft and seagoing vessel.

## CHAPTER IV

# Settlement West of the Mountains

### THE SETTLERS

By 1763, as we have noted, settlement extended to the foot of the Blue Ridge. Except for the Watauga Colony in the northwest, the transmontane region was still occupied by the Cherokee Indians. It was not until after the close of the Revolutionary War that anyone attempted to scale a barrier so formidable as the Blue Ridge. This mountain chain springs suddenly from the Piedmont Plateau to an altitude of 3,000 feet above it. Through this ridge there are few passes, the lowest of which is some 2,000 feet above the foothills. This mountain barrier has directly affected the history of North Carolina. Until this point in history the mountains had favored the settlers by protecting them from the powerful, warlike Indians west of them. After the treaty of Long Island in 1777, by which the Cherokees surrendered their claims to the territory on the Watauga, Nolichucky, upper Holston, and New Rivers, white settlers pushed across the mountains into the region on the north, but the country at the south remained unsettled. It was not until about 1784 that a few daring settlers from what is now Old Fort, the outpost on the west, undertook to cross the mountains into the Swannanoa Valley. Samuel Davidson, the first to undertake to live there, was killed by the Indians. However, his relatives and friends from the fort persisted in the undertaking. In 1785, by the Treaty of Hopewell, the Cherokee claims were pushed westward from the line established by Governor Tryon in 1767, along the crest of the Blue Ridge, to a line running just west of the present town of Asheville and east of Hendersonville. In 1791 the population west of



MOUNTAIN FARM NEAR MOUNT PISGAH

(Courtesy N. C. Dept. of Conservation and Development)

the Blue Ridge was sufficient to meet the requirements of a new county, and in that year Buncombe County was formed from Burke and Rutherford Counties. Buncombe County's boundary was not specified.

As lands in the mountain region were opened for settlement by further treaties with the Cherokee Indians, settlers came rapidly and established homes there. The first comers to the region took up lands in the creek and river valleys, which varied from one to four miles in width.

In the mountain region began a type of life similar to that experienced by the pioneer settlers of the other geographic divisions of North Carolina. However, because of nearly insurmountable barriers, which hindered communication with the outside world, the pioneer type of life in this region lasted longer than it did in other regions of the colony. The more prosperous class in the valleys soon replaced their dirt-floored log cabins with more substantial log houses. The recently restored Zebulon B. Vance house in Buncombe County is an example of the better type of dwelling. However, the less ambitious settlers and the late comers, who took up their abode on the hillsides, continued to live in crude cabins far down through the years. Naturally, the pioneer settlers took to farming. Except for cotton, the products grown were much the same as those cultivated in the other sections of the state. In some places flax was grown and used as a substitute for cotton in home manufacturing.

### TRADE CONDITIONS

Not only were the mountain settlements isolated from the outside world by the surrounding mountains, but there was no means of communication between communities. Road building in the region was most difficult. In addition to encountering the same type of sticky, red clay that character-

ized the soil in the Piedmont section, there were steep grades to contend with in the mountain section. However, the mountain settlers faced the problem and road building of a kind went forward slowly. Roads could best be built along ridges because timber on the crests was light and scattered and because the ridges were generally level on top. In places, however, the resulting roads were too steep for oxen or for horses to pull loads over the grades. While level lands along the creeks and rivers lent themselves to road building, these roads were subject to stream overflows.

A meager trade was carried on with towns in upper South Carolina, with Augusta, Georgia, and with Greeneville, Tennessee. People pooled their marketable produce and wagons made the long trips to these towns, bringing back salt, sugar, coffee, molasses, and a variety of necessities. Cattle and hogs were driven on the hoof to markets.

Because of the difficulty of building roads across the mountain barrier, adequate connection and communications between eastern and western North Carolina was delayed for many years. Even in more recent times the railroad across the mountain from the east did not reach the Tennessee line until 1882. An adequate thoroughfare between the two regions did not become available until 1931, when the first highway from Manteo to Murphy was completed.























