

# Moving through History

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Think about the place that you call home. How long have you lived there? Have you ever moved from one school, neighborhood, town, city, state, or country to another? If so, why did you move? How did moving change your life?

When someone moves away from a place, we call that emigration, and he or she might be called an emigrant. Moving to a place, on the other hand, is called immigration, and the people moving are immigrants. The term migration simply means moving from one place to another—whether to live or to visit. Migration and immigration have played major roles in history. They shape places and people every day.

Immigrants carry a lot with them—from furniture and clothing to nonmaterial things like their skills, beliefs, and dreams. They arrive in a new place with their religions, cultural traditions, ideas about education, and means for making a living. In the United States, we can trace the English language and our government to our origins as an English colony. But because large numbers of people have moved here from all over the world, America has sometimes been called the melting pot or the land of opportunity. Changing federal laws—ranging from requirements for citizenship to limits on immigrants from certain countries or backgrounds—have impacted these moves over the years.

The first immigrants to the land we know as North Carolina were the ancestors of modern American Indians. They likely migrated into North America from Asia some 15,000 years ago, fanning out across the continent and reaching this area by at least 10,000 BC. Not until the 1500s did the first Spanish and English explorers arrive, seeking gold and other riches. In 1585 the first English settlement in America was founded at Roanoke Island, but it proved short-lived—as did the Lost Colony that Sir Walter Raleigh championed two years later. After the 1607 establishment of Jamestown, Virginia, which became the first permanent English settlement, colonists began to move into what is now northeastern North Carolina. By the time of the American Revolution, English, French, Scottish, German, Swiss, and Welsh immigrants had populated the colony, often displacing American Indians. In 1700 North Carolina's estimated population was 10,720; the first federal census counted 393,751 people here in 1790. We see the influence of all of these groups of settlers in the place-names and dialects (varieties of language) still found across the state.

In early North Carolina's piney wilderness, immigrants influenced one another and the foundations of our state. American Indians taught English settlers how to grow maize (corn) and crops such as beans and squash. They pointed out local food sources like fish, berries, and wild animals. Europeans brought along seeds for such crops as rye, oats, and wheat, and introduced livestock (cattle, hogs, poultry, and horses). Some fruits, such as

apples and peaches, came from Europe. Foods brought from Africa included okra, yams, field peas, and peanuts. Enslaved people from West Africa taught planters here how to grow rice. Different groups knew various ways to make clothing, furniture, wagons, and pottery. Indians often lived in longhouses fashioned of saplings, reeds, and other plant materials. Affluent European settlers might have built brick or stone homes. Most early colonists built their one- or two-room homes themselves (or with the help of neighbors) from logs or by using simple wood-framing techniques.

People move for different reasons—often in search of economic opportunities or religious, political, or social freedom. At times people have chosen to leave North Carolina for similar reasons—to seek their fortunes out west; to leave behind a state that allowed slavery (as many Quakers did before the Civil War); or to escape the limits of racial segregation (as many African Americans in the South did in the 1900s). But migration is not always voluntary. During the transatlantic slave trade of the 1500s to mid-1800s, millions of Africans were captured and forced to move to the Americas as slaves. Some were brought to North Carolina, where they worked on plantations growing crops such as tobacco, rice, and cotton. In 1838 the U.S. government forced roughly 17,000 Cherokee Indians to leave their lands in western North Carolina for a reservation in present-day Oklahoma. About a fourth of the Cherokee died on that forced migration, which became known as the Trail of Tears.

Geography and the environment shape migration. Because of the barrier islands (not to mention pirates!) that made the coast treacherous and rivers that limited westward migration from the Coastal Plain, many early European settlers moved here from the north by routes such as the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road. As North Carolina's frontier shifted south and then west in the 1700s, towns and counties sprang up. Tensions also sprang up between colonists from different ethnic, cultural, economic, and religious backgrounds.

During the 1800s and 1900s, migration reflected urbanization and industrialization, as well as transportation advances that made the very act of traveling from place to place simpler. People left North Carolina farms to work in textile or furniture mills, or in the growing cities. Others moved around by season, as migrant agricultural workers. The discovery of gold in Cabarrus County in 1799, the establishment of Research Triangle Park in Durham County in 1957, and even appearances by the Tar Heel State and its cities on magazine lists of “best places” to live or do business offer examples of events that have drawn families to North Carolina. People move to and from military bases and colleges. Wars in other parts of the world drive people here. New retirement communities beckon older residents. And in recent years, emigration from Latino and Asian nations has surged.

Today, immigration again appears on the national political stage. Immigration and migration have shaped the history of North Carolina, now a state of more than 8.6 million residents.

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