

Chapter 10

Towns, Trains, and Transitions



Chapter Preview

Terms: transition, bright leaf tobacco, monopoly, graded school, normal school, furnishing merchant, interest, supply, Farmers' Alliance, farmer cooperative store, money supply, collateral, Populist Party, Fusionists, white supremacy

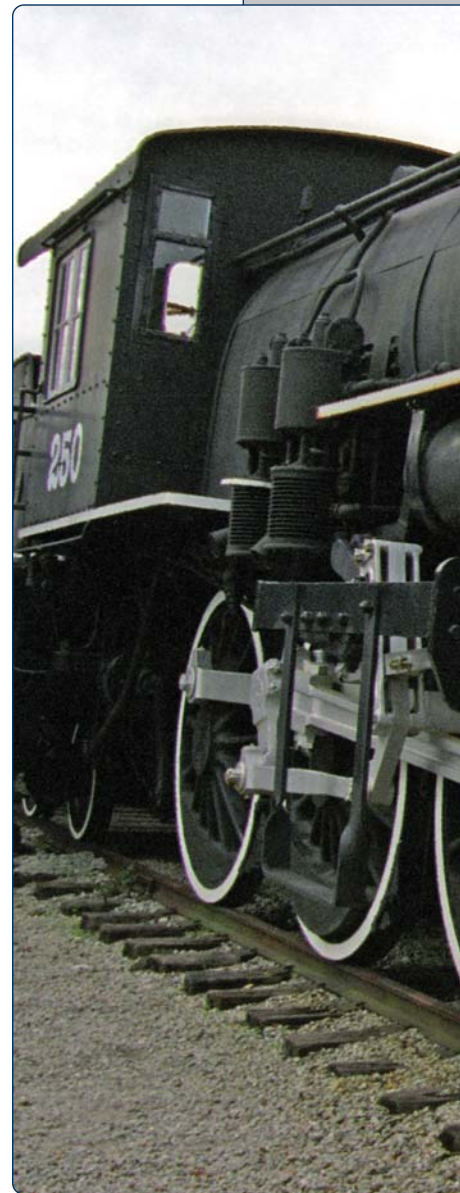
People: Stephen Slade, Washington Duke, James Buchanan Duke, John Milton Odell, Leonidas L. Polk, Furnifold M. Simmons, Charles B. Aycock

Places: Concord, Burlington, Hickory

In the years after Reconstruction, many North Carolinians saw things happen they thought would never come true in their state. African American men, for example, continued to vote and have a voice in state government, despite white resentment. One black leader, George H. White of New Bern, served the state for twenty-five years. The Bladen County native graduated from Howard University in Washington, D.C., after the Civil War, became a school principal, then was one of the state's first African American lawyers. Three times White won election to represent North Carolinians in the United States Congress.

Just as startling to some traditional North Carolinians was the achievement of a woman. Annie Lowrie Alexander became the very first licensed female physician in the state. Miss Alexander, the great-granddaughter of educator David Caldwell, grew up in Mecklenburg County. She was home schooled by her father and attended the Women's Medical College in Philadelphia. She graduated in 1884 and, in 1885, took her medical examination with ninety-nine men. She got the highest grade.

Dr. Alexander practiced medicine from her home in Charlotte until she died in 1929. She focused her career on making women and young children in her hometown healthier. She promoted physical education for everyone and provided free health care at nearby orphanages. Although she was well respected, she could only become an honorary member of the North Carolina Medical Society, since only men were supposed to be members at that time.



Transition—that is, the beginning of important and long-lasting change—happened all over North Carolina in the 1880s and 1890s. Trains connected state residents directly and speedily to the outside world. For the first time, towns grew steadily and prospered. In contrast, long-established farming neighborhoods went through hard times, and farm families were forced to change their habits. Some families, white and black alike, even lost their farms. The transition from isolated neighborhoods to a fully engaged industrial state in the Union was at hand.

Opposite page, above: This roof top is from the 1898 Barber Railroad Depot, which was relocated to the North Carolina Transportation Museum. **Below:** This turn-of-the-century Atlantic Coast Line locomotive is on display at the Wilmington Railroad Museum.





SIGNS OF THE TIMES

POPULATION

The state grew by a half million people from 1870 to 1900. The biggest change was urbanization. For the first time, 10 percent of the state lived in towns.

ARCHITECTURE

No one in North Carolina had ever seen anything like the Biltmore mansion built in the 1890s. It was the biggest house ever built in the United States and copied the French style then popular in New York City.

INVENTION

Two of the biggest inventions of the period were the telephone in 1877 and the electric light bulb in 1879. Raleigh had the first telephones in the state by 1882, but the first electric lights did not come until the 1890s.

FADS

Bicycles made their first appearance in North Carolina in the 1890s. Every young man who could afford it bought one.

SPORTS

Wake Forest College won the first college football game played in North Carolina when it beat the University team, 6-4, in 1888. In 1895, an unnamed UNC player made sports history when he accidentally threw the first “forward pass” in football history, at a game in Atlanta.

LITERATURE

Most of the literature of the period was devoted to “local color,” where the writer visited a place and described it and its people in detail. Charles W. Chestnutt, who grew up in Fayetteville, told stories about black families who lived in the Sandhills and Cape Fear.

FASHION

The spread of the railroad made it easy for everyone to purchase “store-bought” goods like stiff collars for men and corsets for women. The Belk brothers of Monroe opened a Charlotte store with that in mind in 1895. Tailors went out of business across the state.

SCIENCE

Professor Henry L. Smith, who taught at Davidson College's medical school, first used X-rays for the study of the body. Professor Francis P. Venable of the University in Chapel Hill helped develop the Bunsen burner, later to be used by just about every North Carolina child in high school science lab.

FOOD

"Soft drinks" became the fashion, since alcohol was dangerous for someone who worked around machines. The most famous soft drink was Coca-Cola in Atlanta. Caleb D. Bradham developed Pepsi Cola at his drug store in New Bern in 1898. Within ten years, it was being sold in twenty-four states.

Figure 19 Timeline: 1875–1900



1874

Duke family built its first factory in Durham

1879

Wachovia National Bank established

1882

First graded school in state

1887

First Farmers' Alliance chapter in state

1894

Fusionists took control of state

1898

Democrats regained control of state; Wilmington race riot

1875

1880

1885

1890

1895

1900

1886

The first batch of Coca-Cola mixed in Atlanta

1890

United States Weather Bureau created

1891

Dr. James Naismith invented the game of basketball

1894

Sunday comics first appeared

1898

Spanish-American War

1897

First Boston Marathon run

