

Chapter 7

North Carolina Finally Awakens



Chapter Preview

Terms: Rip Van Winkle state, suffrage, credit, Trail of Tears, Democratic Party, Whig Party, curriculum, plank road, superintendent of public instruction, literate, free suffrage

People: George Moses Horton, David L. Swain, William Gaston, William H. Thomas, John Motley Morehead, Edwin M. Holt, Christopher Bechtler, Calvin H. Wiley, Mary Bayard Clarke, William W. Holden

Places: Qualla, Goldsboro, High Point, Rocky Mount, Gold Hill, Morehead City

Students at the University in Chapel Hill liked it when George Moses Horton came to campus. The young vegetable seller from Chatham County was unusual, even for a slave who had defied the law and learned to read and write. Horton could take words, just about any set of words, and turn them into poems. He had learned rhyming by listening closely to the hymns sung at church. His gift for verse was handy for the students and lifechanging for him. George bought his freedom with the skills of his mind.

University students fell into two categories: those who had a girlfriend and those who wanted a girlfriend. The all-male school could get pretty lonely at times, and most students wrote long, and often boring, letters to females of their acquaintance. George could make the letters lively and, for a small fee, provide a poem tailored for the lady. George was particularly good at creating acrostics, poems where the first letters of each line spelled out the name of the lady. More than one heart may have been won for Carolina students during the 1820s and 1830s because of George.



George split the money he earned in Chapel Hill with his master. He was then allowed to do with his time as he wanted. With the help of whites who admired his poems, he was able to publish them in a series of books. The slave became North Carolina's first famous literary figure when a collection of his poems was published.

George Horton, like many North Carolinians of the early decades of the 1800s, started off small and gradually improved his life. During that time, the state finally began to see improvement in the way it governed its citizens, in the education it offered its young people, and in the economic opportunities it supported with public money.

After centuries of frustration, North Carolina finally began to make its own "goodliest land." Not everyone shared in the new bounty, however, for North Carolina continued to support a society where some were free and others bound.

Below: This is the amphitheater-shaped House of Representatives chamber in the State Capitol. It was used until 1961. **Opposite page, above:** These gold coins were minted at the Charlotte Mint.





SIGNS OF THE TIMES

POPULATION

The state hardly grew at all during the 1830s. By the end of the 1850s, however, there were over 900,000 residents. Slaves made up about one-fifth of the population. Wilmington and New Bern were the largest towns.

FASHION

Braxton Craven attended New Garden Academy near Greensboro. He went to the Quaker boarding academy with one “loose coat,” a pair of “baggy jeans,” several “homespun shirts,” and two pairs of shoes. One pair of shoes was “welted,” good enough to wear to church.

FOOD

Farming neighborhoods often had parties where the only refreshments were persimmon beer and baked sweet potatoes. Generous hosts might supply butter for the potatoes. A traveler said he ate fried pork, grits, eggs, and coffee “from Tarboro to the state line.”

LITERATURE

During the 1840s, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote about escaped slaves who hid in the Great Dismal Swamp. Some North Carolinians claimed that Edgar Allen Poe wrote his most famous poem, “The Raven,” after visiting the area.

EDUCATION

All the colleges set up during this period in North Carolina were for men or for women. None allowed blacks to be anything but servants on campus. Only New Garden Boarding School, run by Quakers, admitted both men and women. Even there, men and women met in separate classrooms.

TECHNOLOGY

William Fox Talbot in England and Louis Daguerre in France each developed the science of photography in the late 1830s. It took until about 1850 for “daguerreotypists” to begin to appear in North Carolina. The person having a portrait taken often had to sit perfectly still for more than a minute.

MUSIC

William Gaston, a New Bern attorney, moved to Raleigh to be a judge in the 1830s. He and a sister composed “The Old North State” to create state loyalty after a series of political reforms. It was first sung at a political rally in 1842. In 1926, it became the state song.

Figure 13 Timeline: 1830–1860



1831

Fires in Raleigh and Fayetteville

1835

State constitution revised

1837

U.S. Mint established in Charlotte

1840

New Capitol completed

1852

Alamance Plaid first produced; Calvin Wiley became superintendent of public instruction

1855

Egypt Mine opened

1856

North Carolina Railroad completed; Hospital for the Insane opened

1830

1830

President Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act

1834

Whig Party formed

1838

Cherokee Trail of Tears

1845

1844

James K. Polk elected president

1847

Adhesive postage stamps first used

1850

1849

California gold rush began

1855

1860

TARGET READING SKILL

Cause and Effect

Defining the Skill

Everything that happens does so because something makes it happen. What happens is the *effect*. The person, condition, or event that makes it happen is the *cause*. The connection between what happens and what makes it happen is called the *cause/effect relationship*.

Not all cause/effect relationships are clearly defined; as a result, it is sometimes difficult to determine the actual relationship. Often an event may have more than one effect, and an effect may have more than one cause. At other times, an effect may not even appear in a reading for a long time.

To help you recognize cause and effect, look for

- cue words or phrases such as *because, as a result of, in order to, effects of, consequently, for this reason, since, as a consequence, therefore.*

- the word *and* or a comma instead of a cue words.
- a longer text passage to read, because it may take several paragraphs to illustrate a cause/effect relationship.

Practicing the Skill

In Section 1 of Chapter 7, you will read how the loss of population in North Carolina hurt the state's economy and political power. This event in turn *caused* the state to revise its state constitution, which *resulted* in new constitutional amendments and increased government spending. The new amendments, in turn, *resulted* in a boom in the state's standard of living.

Read Section 2 and describe how the invention of the railroad affected North Carolina's development. You can use a graphic organizer like the one below.

