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## MOTOR CARS IN NORTH CAROLINA

### A MOTORIZED STATE

There is a motor car in North Carolina for every two families in the state. That does pretty well for a southern state with a big majority farm population, nearly half of whom are tenants, and nearly a third of whose total population is negro. At the rate we are buying motor cars today there will soon be a motor car for every family in the state. It may sound impossible, but who five years ago, even, would have predicted 279,155 motor cars in North Carolina on March 8, 1924? We have nearly trebled the number of our motor cars during the last five years. We need only to double the present number to have a motor car for every family in the state, with a few cars to spare.

### History of Growth

There is nothing in the economic history of North Carolina that parallels the increase in the ownership of motor cars. The wildest flight of the imagination a decade ago could not have foreseen the present almost universal ownership of automobiles. In 1915, which was not so long ago, there was a grand total of 16,410 registered motor cars in North Carolina, or one car for every 140 inhabitants. It was freely predicted that at the rate we were buying cars then we would soon be a bankrupt people! In 1919 we had 109,000 motor cars, or one for every 23 inhabitants, representing an investment of about 90 million dollars. In March 1922 we had 150,312 motor cars, or one for every 17.2 inhabitants, representing an investment of about 120 million dollars. On April 13, 1923, we had 204,500 motor cars, or one for every 13 inhabitants in the state, representing an investment, at \$800 per car, of \$163,600,000. On January 1, 1924, we had 248,414 motor cars, or one for every 10.8 inhabitants. From January 1 to March 8 the Secretary of State reports that 30,741 new licenses had been issued so that on the latter date we had 279,155 motor cars, or one car for every 9.7 inhabitants. Twice as many motor cars have been registered since January 1 as were owned in North Carolina in 1915, and we are not broke yet.

And here is something which is hard to believe, yet the registration office at Raleigh assures us it is correct—that from January 1 to March 8 of this year 30,741 new licenses have been issued, or an average of 450 licenses a day, counting Sundays. During the year 1923 automobiles increased by 60,534 yet during the first 68 days of 1924 there has been a gain of 30,741 automobiles. Perhaps this is the year in which we will go broke buying motor cars.

The motor cars on January first were distributed as follows: automobiles 226,288, trucks 21,324, and non-resident cars 802. On March 8 there were 246,813 automobiles and 32,342 trucks, or a total of 279,155 resident motor cars.

In 1923 the number of motor cars registered in the state increased 35.8 percent and the percent gain was larger in only five states. The average gain for the United States was 23.9 percent. During the first 68 days of this year there has been a gain of 12 percent in the number of motor cars.

Eighteen states had more motor cars on January first of this year than North Carolina, while 13 states had a larger population. We are still below the average for the United States in the number of people per motor car, but at the rate we are going we will soon have our share of automobiles, in spite of racial ratios, farm tenancy, and our excessive number of children.

### Leaders in Ownership

Automobiles are fairly well distributed over the entire state. Because of sparse population, poor roads, and lack of annual cash income, the extreme Tidewater and Mountain counties rank poorest in the ownership of motor cars. Yet even in the poorest of these counties automobiles are fairly common. However, the bulk of the cars in North Carolina are owned by a solid circular group of 35 counties lying between Edgecombe on the east and Cleveland on the west. Within this group there

are only three counties that rank below the state average in the ownership of cars, while outside of this group there are only three counties that rank above the state average of one car for every 10.8 inhabitants. The western Coastal Plains and the central Piedmont counties own the majority of the state's motor cars.

### Guilford Leads

Guilford county retains her leadership, both in the total number of motor cars, with 13,790, and in the rate of ownership, with one car for every 6.2 people. Guilford has a car for almost every family in the county. There are enough motor cars in Guilford to take the entire population for a ride, with a fair degree of comfort. Davidson ranks second in inhabitants per motor car, while Mecklenburg ranks second in the number of cars and third in inhabitants per car. Other high ranking counties are Rowan, Alamance, Forsyth, and Lincoln, all Piedmont counties with an industrial foundation.

### Urban Leadership

Contrary to assertions which are fairly common, farmers do not lead in the ownership of motor cars. A study of the table which appears elsewhere in this issue of the News Letter reveals the facts about the distribution of cars. For instance, consider the prize agricultural counties of North Carolina, Robeson, Johnston, and Pitt. These three counties have twice the population of Guilford, yet Guilford has as many motor cars as the three combined. The twenty-six counties which come at the end of the table are all agricultural, yet Guilford alone has as many motor cars as these twenty-six counties combined.

The fifty counties that rank last in the ownership of motor cars comprise one-half the area of North Carolina, yet there are five counties, all mainly urban, in which there are more motor cars than in these fifty rural counties combined. These five counties own more than one-fifth of all the motor cars in the state and pay more than one-fifth of the automobile license and gasoline taxes. Yet the state of North Carolina is erecting and maintaining a state-wide network of modern highways, financed entirely by automobile license and gasoline taxes, in which the poor and rich counties are served alike, irrespective of the ownership of automobiles or the volume of taxes paid. The influence of this liberal and praiseworthy program is already seen in the rapid increase in the ownership of motor cars in our remote counties.

These sparsely populated counties have great natural resources which would have remained undeveloped for years without state aid in highway construction. It is a long-time investment that will repay the state many times over in the years to come. During the last year these counties have bought many thousands of motor cars and shortly they will be paying their part of the state's road bill, and millions of dollars of new wealth will be produced annually in regions formerly undeveloped through lack of transportation facilities.

With the opening up of new territory by the Highway Commission the field of usefulness of the motor car is being extended and thousands of families are buying their first car. The effect is seen in the growth in automobile registration. During the 13 months from March 1922 to April 1923, motor car registration increased by 64,188. During the eleven months from April 13, 1923, to March 8, 1924, motor car registration increased by 74,655. The increase during the last 68 days, during which time 30,741 new licenses have been issued, is without parallel in our state. If North Carolina is not in a healthy and prosperous condition then the purchase of motor cars is no longer a suitable yardstick for measuring economic conditions.

With nearly 300,000 motor cars running around over 6,000 miles of well-maintained state highways we will soon know North Carolina, even if we do not see much of our neighbors.—S. H. H., Jr.

## BUILDING HIGHWAYS

During the year 1923 the State Highway Commission completed 1,044 miles of good roads at a cost of \$21,840,000, and the state led the South in highway construction. Only two states in the Union spent more on highways in 1923 than North Carolina. The southern states ranking in order next to North Carolina are: Texas with 1,000 miles at a cost of \$20,000,000, West Virginia with 928 miles at a cost of \$13,200,000, Arkansas with 767 miles at a cost of \$7,250,000, and Georgia with 500 miles at a cost of \$4,000,000.

Almost exactly one-third of the road mileage completed in 1923, or 336 miles, is of hard-surfaced types. We led the southern states in the miles of hard-surfaced roads completed, with 200 miles more than Missouri, which ranks next to us. At our present rate we will soon surpass Maryland, and rank first in the South in hard-surfaced roads.

At the present time five miles of good roads are being finished each day in North Carolina by the State Highway Commission. More than two and a half miles of hard-surfaced highways are being completed per day. The year 1924 will probably be the record year in highway construction in this state. Chairman Frank Page will soon be able to attain his ambition of a daylight motor trip from Murphy to Currituck courthouse, if the traffic cops don't spoil it.

## COUNTY HOMES

Conditions in the county homes in the state, according to a paper read to the North Carolina Club of the University by Miss Lucy F. Lay, are such as should have the immediate attention of every thinking citizen of the state. While in many cases conditions have been bettered since the various counties have cooperated with the State Board of Public Welfare, and while there are some very excellent county homes, it was shown that the inmates are not getting the attention and treatment they need due to poor equipment, poor management, and a general attitude of laissez faire.

There are over fifteen hundred inmates in the ninety-two county homes. The homes are of all sorts and conditions and range from miserable wood buildings to modern brick homes. A few have modern conveniences and proper facilities for the segregation of the races and sexes, as the homes in Chatham, Vance, and Guilford. Out of the ninety-two homes, thirty-three have fewer than ten inmates. The average number of inmates is sixteen. In Massachusetts, the average is over twenty-five. The average per capita cost of maintaining an inmate in 1922 was \$302, whereas the average at a large institution like the State Insane Asylum at Raleigh is only \$220. The plan which has been suggested as the most practical and efficient remedy for this excessive cost is one by which two or more counties would combine their county homes into district homes.

The last legislature passed an act to enable any two or more counties to establish a district hospital home. So far no counties have done so. The counties seem to be afraid to cooperate in this. The same plan has been tried in Virginia, and has been approved by such authorities as Prof. G. Croft Williams of South Carolina and Mr. Roy M. Brown of the Board of Public Welfare of North Carolina.

If eleven counties in the eastern section of the state would combine their interests and form one district home, by selling their equipment and farms they could build with the proceeds a plant of the proper type, providing proper medical attention, segregation of the sexes and races, and comfortable arrangements for the inmates. Out of the money spent formerly for maintaining eleven homes, it has been

estimated that the running expenses of the homes could be paid, and that an efficient whole-time superintendent, a matron, two practical nurses, and the services of a good physician, could be secured. The average per capita cost would be less than it is under present conditions.

### Insane and Feeble-Minded

Since over eighty-five percent of the inmates of the present homes are distinctly mentally abnormal, it was urged that the state increase the capacity of the Caswell Training School to 1500 in order to care for the five hundred feeble-minded inmates of the county homes, and that the capacity of the State Hospital for the Insane be increased to care for the insane inmates. If this were effected, then those inmates left would come under the district Home for the Aged and Infirm, which is the proper title for the homes.

In stressing the fact that the feeble-minded should be put into institutions, it was brought out that there are over 130 feeble-minded women of childbearing age in the homes, and some instances were related of women with the mental ages of four and five years who had given birth to illegitimate children while in the homes.

The poor management of the homes was attributed largely to the fact that the salary paid is so very small and the equipment so poor that very few who are capable of running such an institution efficiently are attracted to the position. Generally the keeper has had to run a big county farm in connection with the home. In most cases the superintendents are willing and anxious to do all they can for the inmates. Often the length of the term of office

is very short, due to the fact that the superintendent changes with the party administration. The commissioners find it hard to inspect the county home, and, since it is usually situated several miles from the county seat, most of the citizens of the community are likely to forget its existence.

### Bad Sanitary Conditions

The sanitary conditions at the homes are bad as a rule. A large number of them use open wells and springs, and in 1921 57 percent used the common drinking cup. Yet over eighty of the inmates are suffering with tuberculosis, or with venereal diseases. More than fifty percent of the homes have bath tubs and showers, and most of the homes report that a bath once a week is the rule. But in one home, hens' nests were found in both the tubs.

These unsanitary conditions are mainly due to the fact that the superintendent has no paid assistants. Generally the wife of the superintendent serves as matron without pay, cooking the food for the inmates and at the same time taking care of several small children of her own. If the counties will adopt this district hospital home plan, it was asserted that we might then have suitable management by persons who have had training in public welfare work. It is fairly easy to diagnose the case and suggest remedies; the hardest thing to do is to get the people interested in the conditions and to get the counties to cooperate. The women's clubs of the state were suggested as the best organizations through which interest could be aroused. The program of their social service departments should include work with county homes. The belief was expressed that if the conditions are given publicity and the people aroused to the needs, we will soon have a well organized system of district hospital homes, the insane will be removed from the homes to the State Hospital, and Caswell will be given a capacity great enough to enable us to remove every feeble-minded inmate from the county institutions.

## MOTOR CARS IN NORTH CAROLINA

### Inhabitants per Car January 1, 1924

Based (1) on adjusted population by counties as reported by the Census Bureau, and (2) on the number of motor cars by counties January 1, 1924, as reported by the Secretary of State.

Total number of motor cars on January 1, 1924, was 248,414, of which 802 were non-resident. Resident motor cars were distributed as follows: automobiles 226,288, trucks 21,324. Motor cars on January 20, 1923, numbered 187,880, so the gain was 60,534 in less than twelve months.

On March 8, 1924, the registered cars numbered 279,155, or a gain of 30,741 since January 1.

Guilford county ranks first with 13,970 motor cars or one car for every 6.2 inhabitants. State average, one motor car for every 10.8 inhabitants.

W. S. Tyson, Pitt County

Department of Rural Social Economics, University of North Carolina

Rank	County	Total Inhab.	Number Per Car	Rank	County	Total Inhab.	Number Per Car
1	Guilford	13,790	6.2	51	Union	2,983	12.4
2	Davidson	5,179	7.2	51	Person	1,571	12.4
3	Mecklenburg	11,625	7.3	51	Greene	1,395	12.4
3	Rowan	6,302	7.3	51	Hertford	1,331	12.4
5	Alamance	4,329	7.8	55	Caswell	1,363	12.5
6	Forsyth	10,808	8.1	56	Caldwell	1,620	12.6
6	Lincoln	2,213	8.1	57	Alexander	978	12.7
8	Wilson	4,327	8.2	58	Northampton	1,828	12.8
9	Moore	2,742	8.3	58	Robeson	4,474	12.8
10	Wake	9,445	8.4	60	Sampson	2,950	12.9
11	Scotland	1,828	8.5	60	Camden	417	12.9
12	Gaston	6,622	8.8	62	Granville	2,069	13.1
12	Iredell	4,442	8.8	63	Perquimans	834	13.3
12	Randolph	3,660	8.8	64	Martin	1,604	13.6
15	Cleveland	4,041	8.9	65	Craven	2,181	13.8
16	Montgomery	1,617	9.0	66	Duplin	2,245	14.2
16	Buncombe	7,697	9.0	67	Franklin	1,892	14.4
18	Catawba	3,913	9.1	68	Warren	1,491	14.8
18	Cabarrus	3,977	9.1	69	Gates	706	14.9
20	Richmond	2,950	9.3	70	Washington	770	15.1
21	Durham	4,682	9.5	71	Burke	1,571	15.2
22	Lee	1,459	9.6	72	Haywood	1,379	17.6
23	Rockingham	4,811	9.7	73	Tyrrell	273	17.7
23	Edgecombe	4,137	9.7	74	Onslow	834	17.8
25	Cumberland	3,752	9.8	75	Columbus	1,684	18.3
25	Orange	1,924	9.8	76	Bladen	1,106	18.4
27	Johnston	5,195	9.9	76	Pender	802	18.4
27	Nash	4,410	9.9	78	Polk	497	18.6
29	Davie	1,347	10.1	79	Pamlico	481	18.8
29	Pasquotank	1,750	10.1	80	Transylvania	529	19.0
31	Hoke	1,203	10.2	81	Jones	529	19.5
32	Anson	2,809	10.4	82	McDowell	866	20.7
32	Harnett	2,918	10.4	83	Alleghany	352	21.0
34	Stokes	1,972	10.6	84	Wilkes	1,459	22.9
35	Henderson	1,764	10.7	85	Watauga	513	26.9
36	Surry	3,047	10.9	86	Brunswick	545	27.5
36	Pitt	4,458	10.9	87	Jackson	481	28.1
38	Chowan	962	11.0	88	Carteret	561	28.4
39	New Hanover	3,864	11.3	89	Hyde	289	29.0
40	Wayne	4,057	11.4	90	Cherokee	465	33.6
40	Lenoir	2,806	11.4	91	Clay	146	33.7
42	Yadkin	1,443	11.5	92	Madison	561	35.7
42	Stanly	2,614	11.5	93	Macon	353	37.2
44	Rutherford	2,790	11.6	94	Ashe	577	37.6
45	Bertie	2,036	11.9	95	Avery	272	38.9
46	Vance	1,988	12.0	96	Dare	106	49.1
47	Chatham	1,988	12.1	97	Swain	273	52.1
47	Halifax	3,784	12.1	98	Graham	82	59.9
49	Beaufort	2,534	12.2	99	Yancey	241	67.1
49	Currituck	593	12.2	100	Mitchell	159	72.6