

The news in this publication is released for the press on receipt.

DECEMBER 14, 1921

CHAPEL HILL, N. C.

VOL. VIII, NO. 6

Editorial Board: E. C. Branson, S. H. Hobbs, Jr., L. R. Wilson, E. W. Knight, D. D. Carroll, J. B. Bullitt, H. W. Odum. Entered as second-class matter November 14, 1914, at the Postoffice at Chapel Hill, N. C., under the act of August 24, 1912.

OUR RAPIDLY GROWING CITIES

URBAN CAROLINA IN 1920

The bare facts about Carolina Industrial in 1920, as reported to the North Carolina Club in course of its studies during the last college year, were passed on to the reading public in the University News Letter Volume VII, No. 50.

We are here summarizing the bare facts about Carolina Urban in 1920 according to the latest census reports on population.

Urban Carolina concerns 731,123 people living (1) in 413 incorporated small towns with fewer than twenty-five hundred inhabitants each and (2) in fifty-five cities with more than twenty-five hundred inhabitants each. The line between towns and cities is drawn by the census authorities at 2,500 inhabitants and, if unincorporated, small-town populations are counted as rural.

More than a fourth or 28.6 percent of the people of North Carolina now live under town and city conditions, as (1) consumers not producers of the raw materials necessary to existence and to manufacture, (2) with overhead local machinery for self-rule and self-expression in behalf of economic, social, and civic advantages.

Countryside Carolina

The dwellers in the open country of the state, outside incorporated places of any sort or size whatsoever, number 1,828,000 or 71.4 percent of our total population. But not all these country dwellers are farmers. Almost exactly a fourth of them are foresters, miners, quarrymen, fishermen, and wage-earners in numerous unincorporated mill and factory villages in country or suburban areas. The farmers with their families number 1,376,000 souls, while all other people in the country areas of North Carolina number 452,000. In the main the daily work of country dwellers is the production of the raw materials necessary to existence and to manufacture. The essential economic difference between rural and urban populations is this: country dwellers are producers of raw materials, while town people are consumers or transformers of raw materials, and distributors of finished economic products as brokers and merchants.

The farmers of the state produce crude wealth as individuals or as family groups settled in solitary dwellings scattered throughout forty-nine thousand square miles—seven dwellings to the square mile on an average the state over, and fewer than four to the square mile in eight counties, both races counted. They lack community life and overhead local machinery for self-rule and self-expression in behalf of economic and social advantages. They produce, sell, and buy as individuals without adequate organization. They dump their wares on the market at the end of the harvest seasons instead of merchandizing their products throughout the year as the mills and factories are able to do; and only recently have they begun to organize on any large scale in North Carolina for business advantages. They dwell in isolation and insulation more or less complete; which explains the static or stagnant social areas in the remote country counties of North Carolina.

In brief, seven of every ten people, on an average, still dwell in the open country of North Carolina. Which means that seven of every ten voters belong to country precincts, that seven-tenths of the people of the state are served, if served at all, by country churches, that seven-tenths of our school population must take their chances in the country schools such as they are. It also explains why more than nine-tenths of all the white illiteracy of the state is country illiteracy.

More Country Dwellers

And the country population of North Carolina did not decrease as in twenty-four other states of the Union during the last ten years; on the contrary it steadily increases from decade to decade, and the increases are due almost entirely to the virility and fecundity of our country people, white and black—to the excess of births over deaths, and not to immigration as in the western states. Manifestly our native white country people are a hardy, not a decadent stock, as in the North and East. On the contrary we lead the United States in cradles and baby carriages.

But while the country population of the state as a whole was increasing 9.5 percent during the last ten years, nineteen country counties and 308 country

townships suffered population decreases ranging from one to thirty-one percent. Nearly a fifth of all our counties and nearly a third of all our townships lost population in 1910-20. Almost without exception they are remote and lonely country counties, or remote and lonely country townships in wide-awake counties. In the main their population losses are due (1) to sparsity of population, poor roads, and poor schools, (2) to inability to organize for business and social advantages, and (3) to the attractions of industrial and urban centers with their offers of livelier existence, and larger amounts of wage money for weekly fingering.

The nineteen dwindling country counties of the state and their ten-year losses of population are Alleghany 4.4 percent, Camden 4.8 percent, Carteret 31.3 percent, Chowan 5.8 percent, Currituck 5.5 percent, Haywood 0.5 percent, Hyde 5.1 percent, Iredell 2.2 percent, Lee 3.4 percent, Lincoln 16.5 percent, Madison 0.7 percent, Montgomery 2.4 percent, Pamlico 9.1 percent, Pender 4.4 percent, Randolph 4.0 percent, Richmond 2.2 percent, Rowan 8.9 percent, Scotland 15.7 percent, and Tyrrell 7.1 percent.

The 308 dwindling townships lie in ninety of our one hundred counties. The state over, there were only ten counties that did not have one or more townships decreasing in population during the last ten years. Forty-one counties lost population in a third or more of all their townships.

Fewer Farmers

The loss of population in a farm area means diminishing incomes from rented farms, diminishing land values, diminishing chances to secure renters or to sell land at any price, a larger number of wilderness acres, and a dwindling agriculture. It also means poorly supported country schools and churches, less ability to build public highways and to finance public health service, and a smaller opportunity to organize for self-defensive marketing purposes. And further, it means decaying towns with less business and smaller profits for merchants and bankers, smaller chances to sell town lots and to rent stores and dwelling houses. In short, it means static or stagnant social areas, lacking highway and railroad facilities, lacking nearby market towns and ready money, lacking bank facilities and newspaper service, school advantages, and stimulating outlook in general. This is the state of affairs in nineteen country counties and 308 country townships in ninety counties of North Carolina today. The white people in these areas are an unmixed native stock, and all in all there are no better country people in the world, but they are fleeing out of drowsy conditions, and it is the young, alert, and ambitious who go, leaving behind the old folks, the unalert, and the uninspiring. But even more to be considered is the fact that they are leaving the negroes behind in our most fertile farm regions, for in 1920 as in 1910 the negroes are sticking to the farm better than the whites.

And while the open-country areas of the state were increasing 159,000 in general population and our farms were gaining 16,000 in number, we were losing 134,000 farm workers, and 615,000 acres were passing out of cultivation. And moreover, the cultivated farmland of the state was dropping from 4 to 3.2 acres per inhabitant. Over against a decrease of 22 percent in the number of farm workers must be placed other population increases as follows: city increase 54 percent, factory workers and mechanics 54 percent, traders and bankers 44 percent, transporters 45 percent, professional people 73 percent, clerical workers 100 percent, and office holders, local, state and federal 247 percent.

Push-and-Pull Forces

Farm populations are driven out of our country regions as though fired out of a catapult—driven by humdrum loneliness and unrelieved monotony, by the hardships of small profits or no profits at all in farming as a business in average years, by poor roads, poor schools, and poorly supported churches, by inadequate medical service at well-nigh prohibitive prices, and so on. At the same time they are attracted into our industrial-urban centers by the lure of the crowds, by the glittering show windows and entrancing film pictures, by the weekly wage envelope, by the chance to finger larger sums of money than they ever before dreamed of, and even more by the chance to spend

THE TRUE TEST

Ralph Waldo Emerson

The true test of civilization is not in the census, nor the size of cities, nor the crops—No—but the kind of men the country turns out.

money for things they never before dreamed of possessing in all their lives.

So much for the combined effect of the push-and-pull forces that play upon deep-seated human instincts. It is the inevitable result of developing industrialism in every country of Christendom. Factory industries produce cities—more cities and larger cities than ever before in the history of the world. A modern city is essentially a manufacturing center—this, first of all; and the more extensive and varied the industries, the larger the opportunities for trade, transportation, banking business, commercialized amusements, professional, clerical, domestic, and personal workers, caterers, and the like. A community without manufacturing industries may be a country market town of small proportions, a local trade shipping, and banking center, and all in all an attractive residence place, as Wilmington for instance; but without factory enterprises steadily multiplying in number and size it cannot hope to lead in population increases. For instance, forty years ago Wilmington was the largest city in North Carolina—with nearly twice the population of Raleigh, nearly three times that of Charlotte, and more than four times that of Winston and Salem combined. Today it stands not first but third in population, in North Carolina. Like New Bern it has just about doubled its number of inhabitants during the last four decades, while six lively manufacturing centers have increased in population in ratios that range from ten to fifty-four fold.

Leading Carolina Cities

The following table tells the story of increasing populations since 1880 in our fourteen cities with 10,000 inhabitants or more in 1920.

Cities	40 yr. inc. percents	Pop. 1920	Pop. 1880
1 Gastonia	5,354	12,871	236
2 Rocky Mount	2,208	12,742	552
3 High Point	1,343	14,302	991
4 Winston-Salem	1,054	48,395	4,194
5 Asheville	990	28,504	2,616
6 Durham	964	21,719	2,041
7 Greensboro	844	19,861	2,105
8 Wilson	619	10,612	1,475
9 Charlotte	553	46,338	7,094
10 Salisbury	410	13,884	2,723
11 Goldsboro	244	11,296	3,286
12 Raleigh	164	24,418	9,265
13 Wilmington	92	33,372	17,350
14 New Bern	89	12,198	6,443

These fourteen larger cities absorbed nearly half the total population increase of the entire state during the last ten years, and their ratios of growth are almost exactly in keeping with their ratios of industrial expansion. Since 1900 we have doubled the number of our factory establishments and wage-earning employees, and we have multiplied by ten or more both the capital employed and the volume of goods turned out. The effect upon city increases of population is direct and prodigious.

During these twenty years the ratio of country dwellers dropped from 82.3 to 71.4 percent of the total population. Ten years ago North Carolina was being urbanized more rapidly than thirty-six other states of the Union. Our city population increase during 1900-1910 was more than four times the rate of country increase, and in only twelve states were the ratios greater. But in 1910-20 our city population increase was nearly six times the rate of our country population increase, and the chances are that in still fewer states were the ratios of city increase greater. (The 1920 census figures, we may say, are not yet available for all the states.)

It thus becomes clear that while North Carolina is still rural in population, we are rapidly ceasing to be a rural people, that we are moving with rapid strides out of ruralism into industrial urbanism—in population, in livelihood, in wealth production, concentration, and domination.

Our Little Country Towns

A city, or a small town with prospects of growing into city proportions, sits up on a four-legged stool, so to speak, and the legs of this stool are (1) farming and other country occupations that produce raw materials, (2) manufacture, (3) trade and transportation, and (4) banking. And it sits in-

securely if any one of these supports be infirm.

A country market town sits up on a three-legged stool and the legs of it are (1) the surrounding countryside, (2) trade and (3) banking. And it sits insecurely if its back-country is an agriculture area diminishing in population or in prosperity—if its attitude toward the trade territory be indifferent or supercilious, or exacting and grasping—if it is content to take interest from farmers rather than interest in farmers—if it is unconcerned about progress and prosperity in the nearby country regions, in better country roads, better country schools, and better supported country churches—if its tax moneys go to support its own schools, libraries, and public health activities, with little or no thought of sharing these freely with the country homes round-about—if its banks be of the spider-web instead of the honey-bee variety. Large or small, no town or city can grow fat in a lean countryside. Neither individuals nor communities can safely live unto themselves alone.

Here and there, in this and every other state, are small towns that are trying to balance on two-legged stools of this sort—a feat that only acrobats are equal to. With the farm leg gone, they are teetering on trade and banking as town supports. They are towns without an economic basis in agriculture or manufacture—in which, as the wits say, everybody tries to make a living by taking in everybody else's washing. We found towns of this sort in the Berkshire hills last fall, and we have such towns in increasing number in North Carolina and the South.

Census Danger Signals

Of course they fail, and the 1920 census tells the story of failure in detail.

They fail to grow in population. When country people desert the farm, they do not often move into drab and dreary little towns, half-awake, half-asleep, half-alive, half-dead. They go over these unattractive little places into brisk and lively mill or city centers—in North Carolina and in every other state. The cities grew during the last ten years, but not the little towns, as a rule. Four of our industrial centers almost exactly doubled in population during this period, and fifteen little places developed factory enterprises and moved up into the rank of census-size cities. Meantime our 413 small towns increased in population only 22,271 all told—which means an average increase of five inhabitants apiece per year. Ninety-five or nearly a fourth of the total did not increase at all—they "swunk like Sambo's catfish". And nearly a third of the dwindling little towns had fewer inhabitants in 1920 than they had in 1880.

They fail to grow in business. With the housing problem acute in wide-awake centers everywhere, witness the empty stores and dwellings in thirty-odd little towns in North Carolina—towns that are manifestly down-at-the-heels and out-at-the-elbows.

They fail to grow in civic pride and enterprise. Witness the thirty-nine little places in North Carolina that surrendered their town charters and faded from the map during the last ten years, and among them were some of the oldest settlements in the state.

Some years ago Charles Edgeworth Jones wrote a sketch entitled, *The Dead Towns of Georgia*. The dead towns of North Carolina are now inviting the attention of historians. The new century already records an alarming list of dead, wounded, and missing municipalities in this and other states.

Small-Town Functions

Our little towns are set between the two horns of a dilemma: they must definitely determine to be choice residence centers on the one hand or to develop factory enterprises on the other. Most of them never can be and never ought to be industrial centers; but all of them can be the happiest places on earth to live in and to rear children in safely. They must begin to function properly in sheer self-defence. That is to say, they must be proudly related to themselves and helpfully related to the surrounding trade areas, or they must dwindle and disappear as the state moves faster and faster into an industrial, urban civilization.

The University is therefore offering to the 240,000 people in the 413 little country market towns of the state two courses, one on Small-Town Planning, and the other on Small-Town Relations to Trade Territories. And it will offer these courses in vain unless the attention of the state can be fastened upon them.

The proper functioning of our small towns is equally important to the country people of North Carolina, (1) because they need convenient market centers where they can turn into instant ready cash farm products of every sort—not cotton and tobacco alone, (2) because they need to move into these little centers out of the loneliness of sparsely settled areas, and to live there not as store-keepers, bankers, and rent collectors, but as farmers busy with farming on nearby farms, as in the old world countries, (3) because our country civilization must develop community life and organization or it must inevitably fall into decay.

These little places must be captured by our farmers and turned into farm centers—not into trade and banking centers merely but into farm communities busy primarily with farming as a business. It is the easiest way out. And a way out must be found, for eighteen hundred thousand people will not forever dwell in solitary sort, a few families to the square mile, in a vast expanse of fifty thousand square miles. The present state of affairs in the country regions of the state cannot last forever. It is a denial of a fundamental human instinct—the craving for companionship. Our country people were lonely before but they were not acutely aware of it until rural free deliveries, automobiles, and country telephones aroused them out of social apathy. The cityward drift is already strong in nineteen country counties and 308 country townships, and the numbers will greatly increase as the state moves on into a belated but vigorous industrial-urban era. Townspeople and country dwellers in the cotton counties of the state are unbelievably stupid, if they cannot or will not give themselves to economic and social stock-taking long before the approaching boll-weevil depopulates farm areas and destroys the business of farmers, traders, and bankers, alike; or so at least for awhile—a while that seems like an eternity to the sufferers. It is the boll-weevil way everywhere.

The Look Ahead

Does the drift of country populations into the industrial-urban centers of North Carolina promise good or ill for the state? Is our civilization moving ahead in the right direction? Is ours at present a well balanced civilization? Has it long been too rural and too little urban? Does the state need more and larger cities and a smaller farm population?

These are important inquiries, but they cannot be fully considered within the limits of this brief study. Instead, the following propositions are submitted—not as conclusions but as subjects for debate.

First. Well or ill, the cityward drift will continue. It is not a local but a world-wide movement. The problem is not to turn people back to the farm or to keep people from leaving the farm, but to make farm life efficient, prosperous, satisfying and wholesome for country-minded people who choose to live in the country. There are now and will always be many country-minded people in every state and nation, but at present they are being driven out of the country by unendurable conditions, economic and social.

Second. If these conditions cannot be cured, and in the main they must be cured by the country people themselves, then country life in North Carolina will fall into decay as in the New England and the North Atlantic states. The industrial supremacy of this area is now imperiled by the decline of agriculture. As a result eastern factories are being moved into regions of larger food production and lower food costs. Meantime New England manufacturers are spending millions of corporation money for agricultural rehabilitation in the Eastern states.

Third. So far in our history, we have had too many producers of farm products, and too few local consumers. Our towns and cities have been too few and too small to furnish ready, profitable markets for any farm products but cotton and tobacco, and in average years the demand for these in the markets of the world reduces the net income of our farmers to the lowest possible terms. The way out lies (1) in bread-and-meat farming and (2) a larger consuming public at home, (3) with cotton and tobacco as surplus money crops for local and for world-wide consumption.

In a word, North Carolina, is now and has always been too rural and too little urban. Two-thirds of our wealth producers are farmers. In the United States as a whole the ratio is one-third, and it is not an unsafe ratio, the balancing of forces considered. A smaller ratio than this is perilous for manufacture as well as agriculture, as both Old and New England are now discovering—and discovering too late.

Keeping civilization on even keel is the most important question this state can consider. Which means that rural social science and political economy are one in North Carolina, and that an ounce of either is worth a whole ton of politics.—E. C. Branson, a North Carolina Club Study.