When Finding Common Ground Immigration





BRITISH AND AFRICAN PEOPLES WERE AMONG THE EARLIEST

immigrants to settle North Carolina, with many other European, Asian, and Latin American groups to follow. After American independence, Africans continued to be forced immigrants as enslaved labor, and the expansion of individual land ownership damaged many American Indian communities. Yet the state's opportunities steadily beckoned newcomers from overseas. Today, foreign-born North Carolinians make up eight percent of the state's population.

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Chang and Eng Bunker, native to Siam and perhaps the most famous North Carolina immigrants, settled in Wilkes County in 1839. After seeing much of the world, they established a farm and married local sisters. Today some of their many descendants continue to live in Wilkes and Surry Counties.



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It is the opinion of this General Assembly, that the people of the State of North Carolina, greatly desire and will hail with delight the coming among us of all persons from...other countries, to assist in utilizing, developing, and building up of the vast mineral, agricultural and manufacturing resources of the State; that kindness, sympathy and protection will be extended to all.

> Act to Establish a Bureau of Immigration, 1874 Statistics and Agriculture



When one emigrates...your whole life has to be set anew. It takes a lot of work, courage, faith, and strength to go on and not become too despondent.

> **Tina Boerema**, 1998 Dutch immigrant and farmer, Pantego, Beaufort County

We do love our community. We do love this country...We do speak a different language, but our heart is here. Our families are here. And we are not so different.

> Alba Sanchez, 2019 Costa Rican immigrant, Charlotte



Dr. William Coleman, a physician, immigrated to the United States from Barbados when he was about 30 years old. He settled in Salisbury in 1927.



Born in Brazil, Victoria Drab moved to N.C. as a teenager. She married a Syrian immigrant in the 1920s, and lived for a time in Chapel Hill, and registered as an "alien" in Burlington in 1940.

Source Notes

- Detail of North Carolina on a 1940 immigration map, "America—A Nation of One People from Many Countries." Artist Emma Bourne created this art for the Council Against Intolerance in America, acknowledging the nation's diverse ethnicities. Military collection, WWII posters 11.6, State Archives
- State of North Carolina Superior Court of Law, Wilkes County Fall Term 1839, October 12, 1839, CR.104.311.3, State Archives
- •tobacco label c. 1890, Melvin Miles collection, Surry Digital Heritage
- Some of the first Italian settlers at the St. Helena farming colony, Pender County, c. 1909. Hugh MacRae collection Ph.C. 150, State Archives
- Broadside, "An Act to Establish a Bureau of Immigration, Statistics and Agriculture," ratified Feb. 16, 1874 in Raleigh, Duke University collection
- Tina Boerema, Southern Oral History Program interview, 1998, UNC
- Alba Sanchez, New Roots project, Southern Oral History Program interview, 2019, UNC
- Alamance County records CR.1.902.1 & Rowan County records, CR.85.902.1.039, Alien, Naturalization and Citizenship Records, State Archives