

# The Good Old Days? Discovery Tour

## Resource Manual

A compendium of classroom activities and resource materials  
to help you prepare for your Discovery Tour



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# Who Was Here in 1860?

On the eve of the American Civil War, North Carolina was a rural state with a total population of 992,622. Most citizens had been born in North Carolina and farmed for a living. Less than 1 percent of the state's population in 1860 was foreign born, and about 70 percent of white families owned no slaves. Nevertheless, African Americans composed approximately one-third of the total population, and the majority were slaves. Few urban commercial centers existed, and Wilmington, the largest town, had fewer than 10,000 citizens.

## Yeoman Famers

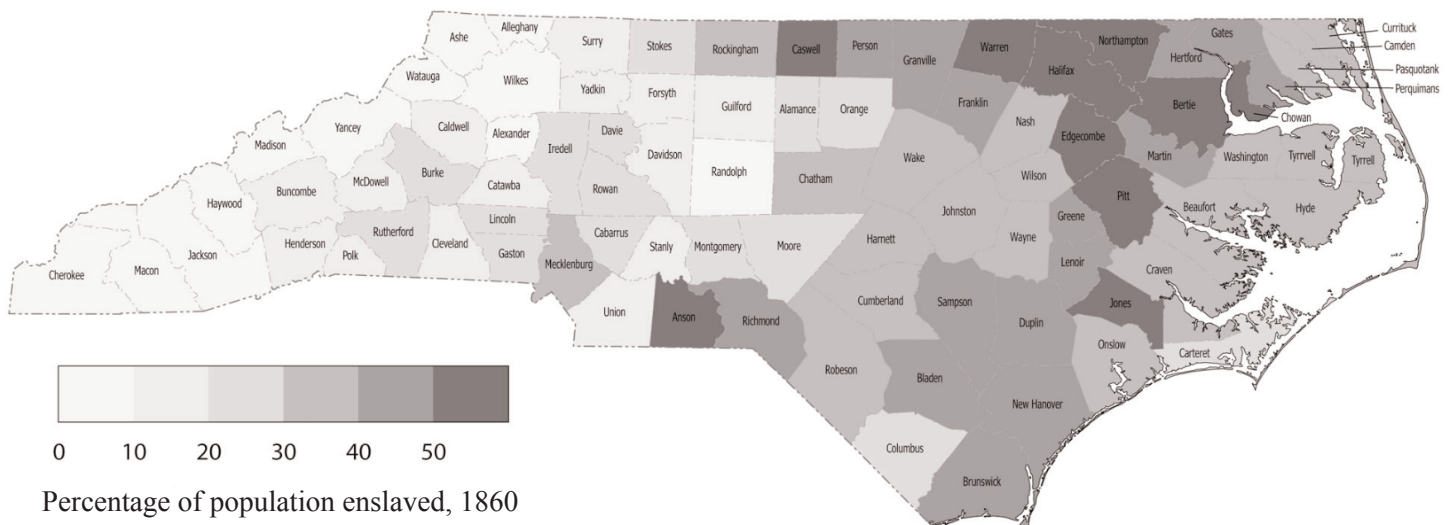
The majority of North Carolinians in 1860 were white subsistence farmers who worked small farms, 50 to 100 acres, and owned fewer than 20 slaves. They were more concerned with rainfall, crops, and seasonal changes for planting and harvesting than with national politics. They produced most of what they consumed and relied on the sale of surplus crops for money to buy what they could not grow or make by hand on their farms. These men would constitute the bulk of North Carolina's army in the coming war.

## Planters

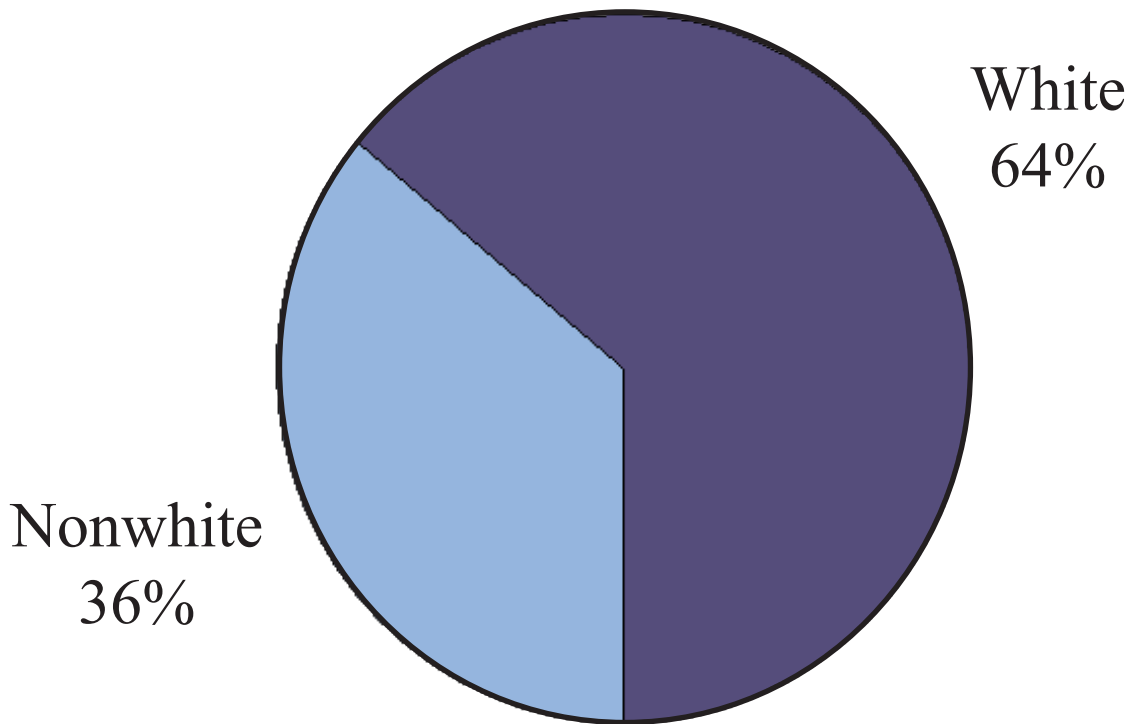
Individuals who owned 20 or more slaves were considered planters. Most North Carolina planters lived in the Coastal Plain and Piedmont regions of the state, where conditions favored large-scale farming. Although they made up a minority, these individuals exercised political influence far greater than their actual number when compared to families with few or no slaves. Planters were usually well-educated men such as lawyers, merchants, and doctors. They frequently served as elected members of the state assembly, and the laws they passed often protected their own interests. Some planters would become active proponents or opponents of secession, and some would become prominent military leaders.

## African Americans

African Americans composed approximately one-third of North Carolina's population in 1860. Although most African Americans worked as unskilled laborers, some were skilled artisans with highly valued talents. Of the 361,522 blacks in North Carolina on the eve of the war, 30,463 were free. Virginia was the only Southern state with more free blacks. Enslaved or free, all African Americans lived in a society tightly controlled by both social and legal codes. But regardless of their legal status, North Carolina's African Americans would play an active role in the coming war.



# North Carolina Population by Race in 1860



## Social Groups within the Nonwhite Population

*Free people of color, including American Indians: 10%*

*Enslaved African Americans: 90%*

## Social Groups within the White Population

*Plantation owners with 20 or more slaves: 6%*

*Farmers, merchants, and business owners with fewer than 20 slaves: 25%*

*Yeoman farmers and craftsmen: 64%*

*Poor landless farmers and laborers: 5%*

## Questions

1. What percentage of North Carolina's population owned slaves in 1860? What percentage did not own slaves? \_\_\_\_\_
2. The majority of the white population were \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The majority of the nonwhite population were \_\_\_\_\_.
4. What do you think the term "free people of color" means? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_ represented only 5% of the white population.

# *Antebellum Life on an Edgecombe County Farm*

By Monika S. Fleming

From *Tar Heel Junior Historian* 50:1 (fall 2010).

In 1968 citizens in Edgecombe County moved an old house from a farm near Conetoe (pronounced “Ka-nee-ta”) about 10 miles north to Tarboro. The local historical society wanted to create a complex of historic buildings and make sure that the lives of earlier residents would not be forgotten. The small farmhouse, once owned by Silas and Rebecca Everett, is now located behind the larger Blount-Bridgers House. The two buildings are open for tours that highlight life in North Carolina during the antebellum era.

Both homes actually were built just before the antebellum period, which ran from the 1820s to the start of the Civil War. The two-story frame Blount-Bridgers House has a wide central hall with four rooms on each floor, a big basement, four large chimneys, and a large porch. Thomas Blount—a very wealthy landowner and United States congressman—owned the house, which was described in one 1810 document as the finest in the county. It once stood on a 990-acre estate north of Tarboro. According to 1815 tax records, the Blount family owned 13 enslaved people and at least six half-acre lots in town.

In contrast, the smaller, three-room Everett home has wood siding, detailed wood molding (called “dentil work” because it looks like rows of teeth), and brick chimneys on its two gable (sloped) ends.

The same 1815 tax list noted that the Everetts owned 478 acres and one slave. Although the Everetts had more land than many Tar Heels, we could consider them yeoman, or subsistence, farmers, typical of many families in eastern North Carolina in the early 1800s. While planters usually had 20 or more enslaved people working their land, yeomen farmed their own land and produced most of what their family needed to survive. They might own a few enslaved laborers and sell or trade a little of what they produced. Wealthier families often left behind more evidence of their lives. But historians can use primary sources such as buildings and documents to piece together the story of households like the Everetts’.

During the antebellum era, Edgecombe County—located in the northeastern Coastal Plain—was a significant farming community. The county seat of Tarboro operated as a thriving river port. The county’s population grew from 10,000 in 1800 to over 17,000 by 1860. The 1850 census counted 1,600 households and almost 900 farms; most farms contained between 100 and 500 acres. Land was one of the most important signs of wealth; society at the time considered ownership of enslaved people as another.

The Everett House is described as a Carolina cottage, a common style and size of home in the 1800s in the Coastal Plain. It has a wide front porch with tapered columns. Benches, built across the front of the house under the windows, are an unusual feature. The porch provided shade from the sun and probably served as an outdoor work area where Rebecca could have shucked corn or snapped beans from her garden. Families and neighbors sometimes shared such common jobs (and bigger ones like quilting or barn raising), mixing work with



*The Everett House in Tarboro features benches on its front porch, where antebellum residents probably sat to do chores. Today the house is also called the Pender Museum because members of the Pender family donated money to pay for its move into town. Image courtesy of Watson Brown.*



social time. The house's interior walls, floors, and ceilings are made of wood. Many buildings of the era have plaster walls, but this one features fine carpentry inside and out, and a wood shingle roof. A craftsman or artisan must have built it.

Inside the paneled front door is a large central room. A fireplace on the right wall provided heat during the antebellum era. Most farms in the early 1800s had separate kitchen buildings with large fireplaces and utensils for cooking in the fire. Kitchens were separate, for one thing, because families did not want the extra heat in the house in the summertime. The Everetts' house is small, with one of its fireplaces larger than the other. Some cooking likely took place in this main room, especially in the winter. A window to the right of the door, and a second smaller window beside the fireplace, would have brought daylight into the house in the years before electricity. Furniture in the room likely consisted of a table, chairs, a corner cupboard to hold dishes, and a spinning wheel for turning cotton into thread.

To the left, as one enters the front door, another door leads into two smaller rooms. The larger one has a fireplace to provide heat, with a small window on the side. This room served as the main bedroom. The furniture would probably be limited to a rope bed, a chest, and possibly a chair or two. No one had mattresses like the ones people have today. Many beds were simply wooden frames with ropes woven across the frame to support bed linens, which usually included a cotton covering filled with corn shucks or straw. Wealthier families might have sturdier bed frames, with feathers filling their mattresses. The smaller room behind this bedroom could have been designed for children or as a storage room holding trunks or chests. Early houses usually had no closets; people hung their few clothes on pegs on the walls. Pegs over the door would have held a gun.

Directly across the main room from the front door is the back door, which leads to the back porch. Opening both doors at the same time allowed air to flow through the house, creating a breeze in hot weather. Inside the back door stands a winding, enclosed staircase that leads to a large open loft. In many houses, the loft would have provided sleeping quarters for children or for slaves if no slave cabins stood on the property. There is not a fireplace upstairs. Two small windows near the chimneys let in light. The house contains no bathrooms. The Everetts would have gone outside to what was called a privy, or outhouse. This structure would have been located several yards away from the main house, because of the smell. At night, if people did not want to go out in the dark, they would use a chamber pot and empty it the next morning. A shed room off the back porch has its own entrance and does not open into the main house. Shed rooms do not have fireplaces. They were used for storage or by travelers, enslaved laborers, or free farmhands. These small rooms could hold a single bed and perhaps a chest or trunk for storage.

While this small house was large enough for the Everetts, it would have been quite crowded for a couple with eight to 10 children, which is how many people lived in the house after Rebecca died. The children would have shared not only a bedroom but beds.

During the antebellum years, people did not just eat or sleep in the house. They also did a lot of the daily work that a household required from all of its members: cooking, preparing food to store for the winter, spinning thread, and sewing. The residents relied on sunlight and, at night, on candles or lamps that burned precious whale oil and later kerosene. Meat might have been kept in a separate smokehouse—a small building often found on farms—where it could be preserved by using salt and dense smoke. Other buildings probably would have included a barn for animals and perhaps a shed for storing tools like a plow.

Rooms and artifacts, or objects, can give us some information about what life was like in the past, but to discover more, historians need written records, too. Researchers have found numerous letters and diaries about life during the antebellum era. Unfortunately, none from the Everetts seem to have survived. The 1850 census lists Rebecca as illiterate, for one thing. During the early 1800s, many Tar Heels—especially women—never went to school and never learned to read or write. What little researchers have learned about the family

comes from records such as wills, land deeds, and censuses, which are federal government records taken every 10 years to help Congress know how many people live in an area.

Silas and Rebecca lived in the house from about 1810, when they purchased the farm, until their deaths. Court records indicate that Silas died between 1835, when he wrote his will, and 1840, when the will was presented in court. Based on the will, he owned at the time of his death 478 acres of land, which he left to his wife. Silas also left property to four sisters and a nephew. The Everetts do not seem to have had any children, which was fairly unusual at the time. The census did not list people by first name, other than the head of every household, until 1850. Before then, all historians have are an age range and gender for each household member. The 1820 census lists Silas Everett as a white male between the ages of 25 and 45. His household includes a white female in the same age group. This is probably Rebecca. The census lists four enslaved people in the household: one adult male, one adult female, and two males under the age of 14. No names are given. It is possible that the Everetts had purchased an enslaved family to help them work the farm since they had no children. By the time of Silas's death, he owned nine enslaved persons.

In addition to counting people, census takers gathered other information that changed from census to census. The 1850 census included the names of all the white members of a household, along with an agricultural census and a slave census. Rebecca was listed as 71 years old and still on the farm. She had hired an overseer to run the farm and supervise the enslaved workers. The agricultural census (officially it was an agricultural schedule listing everything raised on a farm) of 1850 for Rebecca Everett shows she had 475 acres of land, but only 175 were plowed for crops. Her land was valued at just over \$300, with the farm value listed as \$3,000. She owned four horses, three cows, two oxen, seven head of cattle, and 75 swine or pigs. This livestock was valued at \$400. The horses would have pulled a buggy or wagon so Rebecca could get to town without walking. Oxen were used to plow the land to grow crops. Cows provided milk, and women churned milk to make butter. The cattle and pigs also would have been raised for food. The census indicated Rebecca had slaughtered \$200 worth of livestock that year, most likely pigs and a steer to provide meat for the household.

Along with livestock, Rebecca raised 40 bushels of rye, a type of grain used to make flour for bread. She harvested 900 bushels of corn, 130 bushels of peas and beans, 10 bushels of Irish potatoes, and 130 bushels of sweet potatoes. In the 1800s, sweet potatoes were a popular food. They could be stored for months in a cool, dark place like a root cellar or under a house without spoiling. Rebecca's farm produced one bale of cotton, which would have weighed about 400 pounds. Most farmers used the crops they raised, selling or trading any extra to get other goods. Rebecca probably sold part of her crops, along with some of the 55 pounds of butter and 60 pounds of beeswax or honeycomb the census reports that her farm produced. Women melted down wax to make candles. Some of the cotton may have been used to make clothing and household linens.

By the 1860 census, Rebecca had continued to do well on the farm. No overseer is listed, but a young woman, Nancy McGowan, and her two-year-old son are listed as living with Rebecca. Because of Rebecca's age, Nancy likely managed the house, cooking and cleaning. The farm was valued at \$4,000. Rebecca owned 12 enslaved people, five of them younger than 12. Crop production had increased to over 1,250 bushels of corn, two bales of cotton, and 100 bushels of peas. Irish potato production stayed about the same, but sweet potato production had nearly doubled to 250 bushels. The farm produced seven bales of hay, 125 gallons of honey, and 20 pounds of beeswax. Rebecca had five horses and five cows, eight cattle, and the same number of oxen and swine. She estimated the value of her slaughtered livestock to be \$500. She likely had to kill more pigs and cattle to feed everyone.

Rebecca dictated her will in 1860 for someone else to write down. It left her land, slaves, and other property to relatives, including sisters and cousins. She died in the winter of 1864–1865. But if you are ever in Tarboro, you can still stop in and visit the building that she called home so long ago.

# Reading Exercise

## Manumission

Lesson courtesy of Learn NC.

*Manumission* is the freeing of a slave. In the nineteenth century it was used interchangeably with *emancipation*, but now we tend to use *manumission* to mean a slaveholder's voluntary freeing of his slaves, and *emancipation* to describe the enforced freeing of all slaves (such as by the Emancipation Proclamation).

Slaves could be manumitted — become free — in a couple of different ways. If they were allowed to work for themselves in addition to working for their owners, they might save up enough money to buy themselves from their owners. Slaveholders sometimes freed individual slaves whom they particularly liked — including often the master's own children by his slaves, though this was never admitted. Slaveholders most often freed slaves after their own deaths, through their wills. Only very rarely did slaveholders free all their slaves, even through their wills; few were far enough out of debt to be able to give up such valuable property, even if they wanted to do so, and their children might contest a will that wiped out their inheritance.

From the colonial period until 1830, county courts had jurisdiction over manumission. . . . In 1830, the state superior court was given jurisdiction over manumission. After 1830, a master wishing to free a slave had to file a written petition with the superior court, publish a notice of his intention for six weeks, and give \$1,000 bond as assurance of the freedman's good behavior. . . . The freedman then had to leave the state within 90 days; freed slaves who returned to North Carolina would be arrested and sold again into slavery.

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This is the petition that Ned Hyman and Elizabeth Hagans made to the North Carolina General Assembly on 23 November 1833. The petition can be found in the Records of the General Assembly, Session Records, North Carolina Division of Archives and History. All crossed-out text was crossed out in the original document.

To the Honorable The General Assembly –  
of North Carolina –

The petition of Ned Hyman (a slave) humbly complaining sheweth unto The Honorable The General Assembly ~~aforsaid~~, that your petitioner now residing in the Town Williamston in the County of Martin & state ~~aforsed~~, and by occupation a farmer — was born some fifty four or five years ago ~~the property &~~ slave of one Jno. [John] Hyman of Bertie County, that sd [said] Master Saml. [Samuel], that after ~~sd~~ Master Saml., in whose possession and under whose control ~~and management~~ your petitioner lived and served from the time up to the death of sd Master Saml — which happened some time in the year 1828 — Since that time your petitioner ~~with little exception~~ has been under the control of the Executor of his sd decd. [deceased] Master.

Your petitioner would further state, that during his long period and through every change of Master or service your petitioner has been a faithful and an honest servant to the interest of him or her whom it was his duty to serve — and of this he hopes he can give the most satisfactory testimonials. Your petitioner would further state that some time about his Twenty-seventh year he intermarried with one Elizabeth Hagans a free woman of Colour with whom he has lived in friendship and harmony with little or no exception ever since; (and although your petitioner has been informed that the sd union or marriage did not constitute your petitioner & sd Elizabeth “husband & wife” in the Legal acceptance of that phrase — yet your humble petitioner would ask the indulgence of your Honorable body and hope that it will not be considered at all presuming, to use these words, through out the remainder of this petition and the other writings accompanying it, when ever there may be necessity for them or either of them, instead of words — of like import --) Your petitioner would

further state, that through the indulgence and advantages which his kind & benevolent master extended to him, aided by his industry prudence and frugality and seconded by the virtues and exertions on the part of your petitioners wife — Elizabeth, ~~(not less profitable,)~~ your petitioner has had the good fortune to accumulate an estate worth from five to six thousand dollars; consisting of lands chiefly live stock negroes and money, the right & title to all which except the money is vested in your petitioners wife Elizabeth.

Your petitioner would further state that it was the wish of his decd Master Saml. Hyman expressed to his family often times during his last illness that your petitioner after his death should do service as a slave to no person — but that as far as was consistent with the Laws of the State he wished him to be free — alleging as the reasons, that your petitioner had been a trusty faithful and obedient servant to him through a long period of years; that your petitioner would further state that in furtherance of this kind and benevolent wish of your petitioners decd Master for your petitioners future freedom and happiness, his Executor Jno. S. Bryan has (At your petitioners request) sold your petitioner to your petitioners sd wife Elizabeth. — that your petitioner by his sd. wife Elizabeth has three children Penny, Sarah, and Ned — the two daughters are of full age, the son nearly so — that your petitioner has been informed that by, either the death of his sd wife Elizabeth or a change in her feelings or disposition towards your petitioner, your petitioner might not only lose his whole estate but even that portion of freedom and happiness, which by the kindness of his wife he is now permitted to enjoy.

**1) Who was Ned Hyman's first owner? To whom was he eventually sold?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**2) Why did Hyman feel he was particularly worthy of manumission?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**3) According to Hyman, what would he lose if his wife were to die and he was sold? Why did he feel that his situation was more grievous than that of other slaves who might be sold?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**4) Slaves could not legally own property, so who legally owned Hyman's property? What does this arrangement tell you about the precarious social and legal situation of enslaved people?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

But your petitioner in justice to his kind and affectionate wife Elizabeth would further state, that she is not disposed at all to abridge in the least degree the liberty or happiness of your petitioner but wishes and desires (if consistent with the will of the Honorable The Genl. Assembly ~~afore~~) that the same may be enlarged & increased — that she is therefore perfectly willing and anxiously desires to give up her sd title to your petitioner to the Honorable Genl. Assembly ~~aforesaid~~ that they may confer the same (by an act of manumission) together with such other liberties and privileges & immunities as other free persons of Colour now by law enjoys, — upon your petitioner — that



to this end & for this purpose the sd Elizabeth the wife of your petitioner will unite with your petitioner in praying The Honorable Genl. Assembly ~~aforesaid~~ — that they would take his case into consideration and ~~to~~ pass such an act in favor of your petitioners manumission ~~they~~ as they in their wisdom may deem meet and proper — that in Confirmation of the sd Elizabeths sincerity in this prayer and request she will most willingly Sign this petition with your petitioner. . . .

But in conclusion however your petitioner would further stat[e] that from this facts already stated it must be apparent in what an unpleasant and grievous situation your petitioner is placed — He has by laboring ~~of~~ in the nights and as such other spare times as his master would give him and by his prudence and frugality acquired an estate which (Say nothing of the uncertainties of life) he has not the assurance of enjoying even for a day — that he in a single hour might be placed in a worse condition than the day he began his life — that your petitioner has by his faithfulness and extraordinary attention to his masters business and interest secured his esteem and favor and obtained his sincere wishes that your petitioner should be freed — & the nearest your petitioner has been able to approach an end so desirable to his decd Master, is, to have your petitioner vested in your petitioners ~~sd~~ wife Elizabeth — that it must be evident to the Honorable The Genl. Assemble from these facts in what a precarious condition, stand the property, ~~the liberty~~ and [e]ven the happiness itself of your petitioner — Your petitioner together with his wife Elizabeth therefore pray the Genl. Assembly aforsd in tender consideration of his unhappy and grievous condition to pass such an act for his benefit and relief, as in their wisdom may seem meet & in their justice may seem right & proper & your humble petitioners is in duty bound will ever pray & c — signed –

Test [Witness] Wm. B. Bennett

E. S. Smithwick

Ned Hyman his X mark

Elizabeth Hagans her X mark

**5) How was Hyman able to earn money to buy property?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**6) How can we tell that Hyman and his wife did not write this petition themselves?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7) The General Assembly sent this petition to its Committee on Propositions and Grievances for consideration, but did not take any further action. We don't know what happened to Ned Hyman and Elizabeth Hagans afterward. Based on what you know about the treatment of enslaved people, what do you think happened to Ned and Elizabeth? Why?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Comparisons

Life in North Carolina 200 years ago was very different from today. Most families lived and worked on farms, growing crops and raising animals like chickens and pigs. Children were expected to help with work on the farm as soon as they were big and strong enough, and they worked at nearly all the same tasks as adults. Think about what your life would have been like in 1830, and remember that the modern conveniences we may take for granted now were unheard of then. Could you live without a television, computer, or electricity?

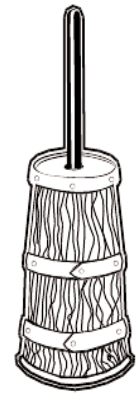
HOW TO:	IN 1800s	IN 2010s
1. Provide light		Electric lamps
2. Provide heat for homes		Oil or gas furnaces or electricity
3. Cook	Fireplaces or wood-burning stoves	
4. Keep food cool	Cool storage in spring-house or root cellar	
5. Provide meat	Slaughtered farm animals; hunted wild animals	
6. Provide cloth		Woven in factory
7. Wash clothes		Electric washing machine
8. Iron clothes	Heated iron on hearth	
9. Write lessons in school		Notebook paper or laptop
10. Provide dolls and toys	Made at home	

# Making Butter

After cows were milked, the milk was strained and poured into a bucket. The milk was placed in a cool place like a cellar. After several hours the cream rose to the surface. The cream was skimmed off the top, and the “skimmed milk” was left. The cream was allowed to become slightly sour. Then it was made into butter in a churn, using a wooden stick called a dash that moves the cream up and down. Churning cream for 30 minutes to several hours will create butter, depending on the temperature of the cream.

The butter was taken out of the churn and washed several times. A little salt was added. Some of the butter was made into one-pound blocks to be sold or exchanged for goods at the store. Some butter was salted and packed in crocks for winter use. The crocks were kept in the root cellar.

Buttermilk was the liquid that was left in the churn. The buttermilk spoiled quickly, so it was used for baking or drinking. Skim milk was fed to calves and pigs or made into cottage cheese.



Wooden Butter Churn and Dash

# Making Soap

Soap could be bought from the general store, but it was expensive, and a store might not be located close to home. Soap-making day came only once a year. Most early mountain families made their own soap using lard and lye. For lard they used animal fat or leftover cooking grease. Ashes were collected from the fireplace or from burning tree stumps. The ashes were placed in a barrel (with an opening at the bottom) or in a hollowed-out log. Water was then added to the ashes. Lye was formed when ashes were soaked in water. The lye was drained into pails. Lye was combined with the melted lard and water, then boiled in a cast-iron pot outside. After a few hours, the mixture thickened and was poured into a pan and left to harden. Then the soap was cut up into squares or bars.



Cast-Iron Pot

Children had to collect enough wood to prepare for soap-making day. Lye could burn skin if touched, and it was unhealthy to breathe the fumes. The lye was very dangerous to work with, but was a necessary part of life 200 years ago. Families used lye soap for everything from cleaning the dishes and floors to washing the baby!

# Dipping Candles

Supplies needed:

candle wax or paraffin	water	large saucepan
tall can	hot plate	wick (one 8-inch piece per person)
pencil or small stick (one per person)		cardboard (one per person)

Time Needed: 30–45 minutes

1. Heat water in saucepan on hot plate.
2. Place wax in can, then place can in water.
3. Melt wax. Be careful not to let the wax boil. Wax should fill the can to within 1/2 inch of the top.
4. Let each student have a piece of wick and a piece of cardboard. Tie one end of the wick to a pencil or stick.
5. Dip entire wick into wax to prevent wick from unraveling. Remove wick and let cool.
6. Take turns dipping each wick quickly. Be careful to let wick cool between dips. Wicks should be held straight while cooling. At this stage a candle is forming. Hold cardboard under candle to catch excess wax.
7. Additional wax should be added to the can from time to time.
8. Each wick should be dipped at least 10 times.

# Diary Comparison

Lesson courtesy of Learn NC.

Read the following diary excerpts from a planter and from a farm wife who lived in antebellum North Carolina and answer the questions at the end of the exercise.

## A Planter

From Henry Harrington Jr. Diary 1826–1864, Henry William Harrington Papers, Collection #314, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Henry W. Harrington, Jr. (b. 1793) was a plantation owner who lived in Richmond County, North Carolina. His plantation, called Beausejour, meaning Pleasant Abode, was 13,000 acres. The plantation was located only a few miles from the South Carolina border, east of the Pee Dee River. Harrington served in the U.S. Navy during the War of 1812 and was a state legislator who participated in the constitutional convention of 1835. He never married.

*January 1852*

Thursday 1st. My overseer [supervisor] of last year, John W. Yaten having left the plantation, yesterday, & William Barmer, who I have engaged as overseer for this year having not yet arrived, I am at the plantation attending to business nearly all day.

Saturday 3rd. Rode to and about the plantation initiating my new overseer into the regular course of business there.

Friday 23rd. This is a fine winter day, fair but still cold & bracing. I rode down to Knowlanton, thence to new ground west side of Stephens' Spring branch. Return to Knowlanton, thence through Campbell old field to Driggers' branch where John Monroe, with George Hinson, Luke & other hands, is hewing timber to rebuild the saw mill. I am at home tonight.

*April 1852*

Monday 5th. At home reading etc. until evening, then rode to the Mills, taking my Gun and Dogs with me and shooting a number of Squirrels by the way. On my return home, after dark, found Dr. F. C. Hall with his sister Mary W, & Miss Lydia Wetmore at Beausejour. I am highly entertained by the fine singing, accompanied on the Guitar, of Mary W. Hall & Lydia Wetmore.

Tuesday 20th. Rode up Sandhill road, calling at Isaac Halls by the way to the County Court at Rockingham. Obtained an order of Court for building a Bridge over Marks Creek at my Saw Mill on the Cheraw river road. Returned, early this evening, down Sandhill road home.

Thursday 22. Finished planting Cotton & Potatoes at Beausejour by 12 oclock and then rode to Knowlanton and thence to the Mills.

## A Farm Wife

From Diary 1834–1893, Penelope Eliza Howard Alderman Papers #4479, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Penelope Alderman (1834–1893) lived in Sampson County, North Carolina, with her husband Amariah B. Alderman, a Baptist minister. Her diary records her daily activities and includes information about the daily life of a farm wife in antebellum North Carolina. In 1854, the time period covered by this excerpt, Penelope was the mother of two children and was expecting another. She and her husband would eventually have twelve children. It is unknown if the Aldermans owned slaves, but they did have household help.

*April 1854*

Monday 3. Wove some. Mr. A. ploughing and took the head ache very hard, cool and fair. Not well.

Tuesday 4. Mr. A had hard head ache all night. Some better, not much work of any kind. Do not read much, and the time is so rapidly going.

Thursday 6. Mr. A. planted his corn. Martha A. Blane [and] David Newton going to be married. Fair warm.

Friday 7. Mr. A. started [traveled] to the sound. Emry went to Boneys and brought the horse back. Wove some. Fair and warm not very well. Mother A. was to come down to stay but did not, by my self.

Saturday 8. Home, worked some. Mother and Hosea came down to stay with me. Half past 1 o clock Enoch Alderman wife, two children, Elizabeth, Anne Jane Heighsmith, her daughter Susan, and Harriet came from Georgia headed to Fathers. Was very sick.

Sunday 9. Anne Jane Heighsmith and her daughter went to Weddles Chapel, we went to Hoseas. Rained very hard in the evening, faired off some. I came home, rode the horse. Very lonesome and in much trouble, want to hear from Father.

Monday 10. Went to Hoseas a while, came back in James F. Bland cart. Sent Emry to meet Mr. A. They came back. He got his Smith tools, brought me five yards calico. We went to Hosea. I worked motto [needlepoint] to send to Kitty.

Tuesday 11. We went to Fathers to see him. He had got better all the rest were tolerable well we were very tired. Left Emry at Hoseas. The children took very bad colds. Very cool windy but fair went through Clinton.

## Questions

1) What types of information did Mr. Harrington and Mrs. Alderman record in their diaries? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2) Do you think this information was important to them? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



3) Judging from the diary entries, how many people visited Mr. Harrington and Mrs. Alderman at their homes? What does this tell you about family and community in antebellum North Carolina? \_\_\_\_\_

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4) How are these two diaries similar? How are they different? \_\_\_\_\_

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5) If you were to write a diary entry about your life today, how would it differ from Mr. Harrington's or Mrs. Alderman's entries? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Write a Diary Entry

Pretend you are a yeoman farmer, wealthy planter, or enslaved laborer living on a farm in 19th-century North Carolina. What do you do all day? Write a diary entry describing specific activities. You may choose one of the following: harvesting crops, making butter, attending school, or tending animals. Use the vocabulary list below to describe the work you complete.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

**Antebellum:** before the Civil War.

**Self-sufficient:** producing more than enough food, clothing, and other things to survive.

**Subsistence:** producing just enough food, clothing, and other things to survive.

**Money crops:** crops sold for money.

**Barter:** to trade goods or services without the exchange of money.

**Springhouse:** small building built along or over a cool water source.

**Tallow:** animal fat used to make candles and lye soap.

**Lye soap:** mixture of lye, water, and tallow.

**“S” hook:** tool used to hang pots from the iron bar in a fireplace.

**Sad iron:** tool used to remove wrinkles from clothes.

**Dutch oven:** thick cast-iron cooking pot with a tight-fitting lid.

**Churn:** container in which cream is moved rapidly to create butter.

**Crock:** ceramic pot or jar used to hold food.

# Antebellum North Carolina Time Line

## 1829–1837

A hero to the “common people” as a frontiersman and Indian fighter, Andrew Jackson is elected to two terms as president of the United States. Jackson’s ideas against a strong federal government and federal involvement in internal improvements become the basis of a new Democratic Party.

## May 28, 1830

President Andrew Jackson signs the Indian Removal Act, calling for the resettlement of all Native Americans to lands west of the Mississippi River.

## 1830–1832

Montfort Stokes (Democratic-Republican, Democrat) serves as governor. A supporter of Andrew Jackson and his new Democratic Party, Stokes disagrees with fellow Democrat Nathaniel Macon over slavery, saying he would join any movement to abolish it through the United States Constitution. Stokes was nominated for governor in 1824 and 1828 before being elected by the legislature in 1830 and 1831.

## 1831

The General Assembly passes a law forbidding African American preachers from speaking at worship services where slaves from different masters are in attendance. Other harsh new slave codes are also passed to tighten control over North Carolina’s slaves.

## January 1, 1831

*The Liberator* is published in Boston, Massachusetts. It is edited and published by William Lloyd Garrison, an African American.

## August 1831

Virginia slave and preacher Nat Turner leads some 20 followers on a bloody revolt through Southampton County, Virginia, just north of the North Carolina border. Their march will end with the slaughter of 57 whites and the November executions of Turner and his gang. Turner’s execution is the most noted since Denmark Vesey and 35 conspirators were executed in South Carolina for planning an uprising in 1822.

## December 1835

The Treaty of New Echota is signed by some representatives of the Cherokee Nation. In it, the signers agree to move the Cherokee to Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma) as long as the United States pays for resettlement.

## 1835

Lunsford Lane has saved \$1,000—enough money to buy his freedom from his Raleigh owner. At this time, though, North Carolina’s slaves can be freed only for “meritorious service to the state,” a decision made in county courts. Lane arranges instead for his wife’s owner to buy him and take him to New York, where he can receive his freedom papers. In 1840, after saving a down payment on the \$2,500 he needs to buy his wife and children (the value set by their owners), Lane returns to Raleigh, where he hopes to live with them while paying installments on their purchase. Once again, however, Lane is forced to leave the state because of laws and codes in place at the time. Back in the North, Lane speaks at antislavery meetings to earn the rest of the money he needs. But when he travels back to Raleigh in April 1842 to complete the purchase and escort his family home to the North, he is attacked, beaten, tarred and feathered, and almost hanged for his abolitionist activities in the North. White friends help the family escape on a north-bound train. Lane will never return to his home state.

## February–March 1836

Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, and 185 other Americans die defending the Alamo, a mission in San Antonio, in the first major battle for Texan independence from Mexico. More than 20,000 settlers, many of them North Carolinians, and about 1,000 slaves had come to live in the northern province of Mexico called Texas. When frictions developed between these American settlers and the Mexican government, the American citizens began a movement for independence from Mexico.

## **1838**

Most of the Cherokee in the mountains of Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina (the Cherokee Nation) are removed on the Trail of Tears to present-day Oklahoma. North Carolina's Oconaluftee Cherokee, however, are allowed to remain on their rugged mountain land.

## **1839**

Raleigh's John Rex, a wealthy planter, dies and designates part of his estate to send his slaves back to Africa, if they wish to go. Some of those who do go will later return to North Carolina.

## **1839**

The General Assembly approves legislation for the first free public schools in the state. The state will furnish \$40 for every district that furnishes a building and \$20 in local tax money. That \$60 will pay for a teacher for two or three months. The first of these "common" schools will open in 1840, and by 1846, every county in the state will have at least one common school. By 1850, more than 100,000 students will be taking classes in 2,657 common schools across the state.

## **1839**

A slave named Stephen, owned by Abisha Slade of Caswell County, discovers a new process for curing tobacco, by using charcoal to heat it quickly and intensely. This process causes leaves to turn a bright golden color, a product known as bright-leaf tobacco.

## **1845–1849**

William Alexander Graham (Whig) serves as governor. Even during this time, feelings are strong on both sides of the North-South debates over slavery and other sectional issues. Graham favors the unionist arm (in favor of keeping the United States together) of the Whig Party, even though he owns three plantations worked by slave labor. In 1852, he will be nominated as the Whig vice presidential candidate, and after Abraham Lincoln's election in 1860, Graham will urge North Carolinians to remain in the Union and rely on the federal Constitution to protect their rights. Unable to stand entirely behind either the Union or the Confederacy, Graham will stand out as a states' rights supporter and opponent of Confederate president Jefferson Davis even while serving as a Confederate senator.

## **1846–1848**

General Zachary Taylor commands American forces in the Mexican War. In the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that ends the war, the United States settles disputes over the southern border of Texas and gains lands that will eventually form the southwestern states. The victory has a sour note, though—northerners do not want these new lands open for slavery, while southerners do.

## **1848**

David Settle Reid runs for governor as a Democrat only after being assured he may also support a reform called free manhood suffrage, which would remove the requirement that a man must own 50 acres before he can vote for state senators. Reid loses to Whig Charles Manly by only 854 votes but will win in 1850 using the same platform.

## **1849–1850**

Though a slaveholding southerner, Zachary Taylor (Whig) is determined to halt the spread of slavery into new territories during his presidency. His death in office allows a compromise that reduces sectional tensions for a time.

## **1850–1853**

Millard Fillmore (Whig) succeeds Zachary Taylor as president upon Taylor's death in office. Fillmore avoids war between North and South by enforcing the Compromise of 1850.

## **September 9, 1850**

The Compromise of 1850 marks the second major compromise to ease tensions between northern and southern (or antislavery and proslavery) groups in the United States Congress. One of the several bills that became known as the Compromise of 1850 admits California to the Union as a free state. Free (or northern) states now outnumber slave (or southern) states in the Senate, 16 to 15. In exchange, a new, stricter fugitive slave law is adopted. Also according

to the compromise, the remainder of the Mexican Cession is to be divided into the New Mexico Territory and the Utah Territory. The territories will be allowed to decide their own direction on the slave issue when they apply for statehood, a concept known as popular sovereignty.

### **September 1850**

The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, part of the Compromise of 1850, calls for federal commissioners to be appointed and given authority to issue warrants, gather slave hunters, and force citizens to help catch runaway slaves under penalty of a fine or imprisonment. Accused runaways now will be denied both a jury trial and the right to testify in their own behalf. The law forces many southern abolitionists and northerners who had previously been able to ignore the issue of slavery to face it on a new level. In fact, eight northern states will pass “personal liberty laws” in the next eight years that will allow them to get around the federal law.

### **1853–1865**

Calvin Henderson Wiley serves as North Carolina’s state superintendent of common schools. He sets up programs for training and licensing teachers, improves the quality of buildings and textbooks, edits the *North Carolina Journal of Education*, and writes the *North Carolina Reader*, a collection of history, geography, and economics. By 1860, nearly 120,000 students are attending more than 3,000 schools staffed by more than 2,700 licensed teachers.

### **May 30, 1854**

The Kansas-Nebraska Act is the third major compromise between northern and southern (or proslavery and anti-slavery) groups in Congress. The Kansas-Nebraska Act actually repeals the first, the Missouri Compromise of 1820. (The Missouri Compromise had eased sectional tensions by allowing Missouri to enter the Union as a slave state and Maine as a free state. The Missouri Compromise had also prohibited slave states from being created in the remainder of the Louisiana Purchase that was north of 36° 30' north latitude.) The Kansas-Nebraska Act now divides the remaining lands of the Louisiana Purchase into the Kansas Territory and the Nebraska Territory and will allow the residents of those territories to decide on the issue of slavery when they apply for statehood, a concept known as popular sovereignty.

### **1855**

Slave codes in force at this time in North Carolina prohibit African Americans from showing disrespect to white persons; trespassing on the property of whites; marrying free blacks; forging passes used to move about in rural areas or within towns; hiring out services themselves; running away; raising horses, cattle, hogs, or sheep; selling alcohol; gambling; hunting with a gun; setting a fire; and selling property without written permission.

### **1855–1856**

Bloody and violent raids between proslavery and antislavery groups in Kansas result in the nickname Bleeding Kansas. Congress refuses to acknowledge, support, or punish either group.

### **1855–1859**

Thomas Bragg serves two terms as governor. As a Democrat, Bragg experienced difficulty getting into state politics from Northampton County, a Whig stronghold. Once in office, he champions the free manhood suffrage amendment, which expands the state’s electorate to include all white men.

### **1857**

The free manhood suffrage amendment passes in North Carolina, abolishing the requirement that a man own 50 acres to be permitted to vote for state senators.

### **March 1857**

The “Dred Scott decision” is another illustration of sectionalism in the United States during antebellum times. Dred Scott, an African American slave from Missouri, had once accompanied his master to parts of the free North. As a result of these travels, Scott sued for his freedom on the grounds that the Missouri Compromise of 1820 prohibited slavery in some of the areas he and his master visited. In the Supreme Court’s split decision, justices first declare that slaves are not citizens and therefore cannot file lawsuits. They then state that temporary residence in free lands does not make a slave free because the Missouri Compromise is unconstitutional—slaves are property, and the Fifth



Amendment forbids Congress from taking property without “due process of law.” Proslavery forces in the South are excited because they now have the support of the United States Supreme Court in carrying their slaves into the western territories. Northerners are shocked, because the Missouri Compromise had already been replaced in 1854 by the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

### **1859–1861**

As governor, John Willis Ellis (Democrat) supports internal improvements such as the maintenance of plank roads and completion of navigation works on the Cape Fear and Deep Rivers. After being elected to a second term and refusing to fulfill President Abraham Lincoln’s call for troops, Ellis dies in office.

### **October 1859**

Already regarded as a dangerous fanatic because of his activities in Bleeding Kansas, abolitionist John Brown leads a raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia (present-day West Virginia). His goal is to secure weapons and gunpowder to arm a revolt of local slaves. The raid is a failure, and he is later captured and hanged.

### **November 1860**

Abraham Lincoln is elected president.

### **December 1860–February 1861**

Seven southern states—South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas—secede from the United States and form the Confederate States of America. Jefferson Davis is chosen as president. Their provisional constitution forbids any law limiting slavery.

### **February 28, 1861**

North Carolina voters choose to remain in the Union by defeating an option to hold a constitutional convention to discuss secession. A constitutional convention is needed to repeal the Ordinance of 1789 that ratified the United States Constitution and joined North Carolina with the Union as the 12th state.

### **March 4, 1861**

Abraham Lincoln takes office as president of the United States of America. In his Inaugural Address, Lincoln pledges not to interfere with slavery in the states where it currently exists. But he also declares the Union “indivisible” and vows to “preserve, protect, and defend” the Constitution of the United States.

### **April 12–13, 1861**

South Carolina and Confederate troops attack Union troops at Fort Sumter, off the coast of South Carolina. When United States president Abraham Lincoln asks for troops from all the Union’s states, which still includes North Carolina, to force the “rebel” states back into the Union, Governor John W. Ellis (see 1859–1861) will refuse to supply North Carolinians to fight sister states in the South.

### **April–June 1861**

Arkansas, Tennessee, and Virginia secede and join the Confederacy following Abraham Lincoln’s call for troops.

### **May 20, 1861**

Delegates to a secession convention vote to amend the state constitution and remove North Carolina from the Union. They also ratify the provisional constitution of the Confederate States of America. With this action and the beginning of war, North Carolina’s antebellum era comes to a tragic end.

# Additional Resources

## Books to Read

Ira Berlin, *Slaves without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South*

Bill Cecil-Fronsman, *Common Whites: Class and Culture in Antebellum North Carolina*

Thomas H. Clayton, *Close to the Land: The Way We Lived in North Carolina, 1820–1870*

Jeffrey J. Crow, Paul D. Escott, and Flora J. Hartley, *A History of African Americans in North Carolina*

Joe A. Mobley, ed., *The Way We Lived in North Carolina*

Kay Moss and Kathryn Hoffman, *The Backcountry Housewife*

Eliot Wigginton, *The Foxfire Book*

## Websites to Explore

African American History Time Line: [teacher.scholastic.com/activities/bhistory/timeline/game.htm](http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/bhistory/timeline/game.htm)

Antebellum North Carolina: [www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-antebellum](http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-antebellum)

North Carolina Education Resources: [www.nchistoryresources.org](http://www.nchistoryresources.org)

North Carolina Historic Sites: [www.nchistoricsites.org](http://www.nchistoricsites.org)

North Carolina History: [www.northcarolinahistory.org](http://www.northcarolinahistory.org)

North Carolina History 1776–1860: [ncpedia.org/history/1776-1860](http://ncpedia.org/history/1776-1860)

## Places to Visit

Bennett Place

4409 Bennett Memorial Road

Durham, NC 27705

Phone: (919) 383-4345

Hezekiah Alexander Homesite

3500 Shamrock Drive

Charlotte, NC 28215

Phone: (704) 568-1774

Duke Homestead

2828 Duke Homestead Road

Durham, NC 27705

Phone: (919) 477-5498

Mordecai Historic Park

1 Mimosa Street

Raleigh, NC 27604

Phone: (919) 857-4364

Governor Charles B. Aycock Birthplace

264 Governor Aycock Road

Fremont, NC 27830

Phone: (919) 242-5581

Zebulon B. Vance Birthplace

911 Reems Creek Road

Weaverville, NC 28787

Phone: (828) 645-6706

Historic Stagville

5828 Old Oxford Highway

Durham, NC 27712

Phone: (919) 620-0120

Somerset Place

2572 Lake Shore Road

Creswell, NC 27928

Phone: (252) 797-4560

# Answers

## North Carolina Population in 1860 from page 3

1. 31%, 69%
2. Yeoman farmers and craftsmen
3. Enslaved African Americans
4. People of African decent, mixed race, or American Indians who were not enslaved
5. Poor landless farmers and laborers

## Manumission from page 7

1. Ned Hyman's original owner was Samuel Hyman. Ned was later sold to his wife, Elizabeth Hagans.
2. It was the deathbed wish of Samuel Hyman that Ned be set free due to his long, faithful service and industrious nature.
3. Ned's wife, Elizabeth, owned him and all of his property. If she died or chose to end their relationship, Ned would lose not only his wife and family but also all of his property.
4. Elizabeth controlled Ned's property. He would lose the rights to all of his property, including his children. He could be sold to an owner far from his home, where contact with his children would be controlled by the owner. Also, the new owner might not allow Ned to earn money, thus limiting the support he could provide his family.
5. Until Ned was sold to Elizabeth, Samuel Hyman allowed him to work paying jobs during his spare time. Ned was able to save his money and acquire property over time.
6. They were illiterate and signed their names with an X.
7. Answers will vary.

## Comparisons from page 10

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Candles                                     | 6. Woven on looms                             |
| 2. Fireplace                                   | 7. Boiled in wash pots or beaten with paddles |
| 3. Stoves, ovens, toaster ovens, or microwaves | 8. Electric iron                              |
| 4. Refrigerator or freezer                     | 9. Slate                                      |
| 5. Bought in grocery stores                    | 10. Buy factory-made toys at store            |

## Diary Comparison from page 12

1. Mr. Harrington and Mrs. Alderman both recorded their daily activities and most important occurrences. Both writers comment on the weather, their travels, and visitors to their homes. Mrs. Alderman tends to write about her state of health as well, while Mr. Harrington details his business ventures.
2. The information that both writers convey in their diaries was important enough for them to spend the time, ink, and paper to comment on their daily lives. These diaries were personal records of their lives, however readers choose to interpret their entries today. Each writer was motivated to keep a diary for different reasons unknown to present readers.
3. Mr. Harrington welcomed four guests at Beausejour: one overseer for business and three friends who provided musical entertainment. Mrs. Alderman had nine guests at her home (and visited church or a neighbor's home numerous times). Judging from the frequency of visits between family and friends, a sense of community and socializing was very important to people living in antebellum North Carolina. Not only did family and friends entertain each other, but they also provided comfort and assistance when needed.
4. The subjects mentioned in each diary are similar; the writers discuss their daily lives, weather, travel, and visitors. Differences include the length and composition of each writers' entries (Mr. Harrington's are longer and better written). Mrs. Alderman regularly comments on her health due to a pregnancy and writes about domestic life. Mr. Harrington writes about his business.
5. Differences between antebellum diaries and current entries will vary but may include references to modern conveniences, school, family life, or extracurricular activities.