

Occupations in 1860 ^[1]

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By the middle of the 1800s, the U.S. Census Bureau was asking more information about the people of each state and their economic production. Beginning in 1840, census takers asked people their occupations. The lists below show the occupations that free North Carolinians reported in the Census of 1860.

Short list

In the 1920s, historian Guion Griffis Johnson grouped North Carolinians' occupations into several categories. She explains:

Dairymen, nurserymen, and overseers have been placed in the farmer group; farm hands, day laborers, laundresses, servants, [teamsters](#) ^[2], apprentices, drivers, and those similarly employed have been placed in the laborer group; those who followed a craft, such as cooper, blacksmith, carpenter, have been classified as tradesmen; physicians, teachers, lawyers, engineers, public officials, and the like have been classified as professional workers; grocers, druggists, innkeepers, traders, bankers, and the like have been placed in the merchant group; clerks, bookkeepers, collectors, and those of similar employment have been classified as white-collar workers; and coachmakers, cabinet makers, harnessmakers, distillers, tobacco manufacturers, and establishments of a similar nature which seem to have been operated on more than an ordinary outlay of capital have been classified as manufacturers.¹

Note that very few people (only 121!) identified themselves as "planters." Although we use the term today to refer to owners of large farms, even the largest farmers and slaveholders in the antebellum South typically referred to themselves modestly as "farmers" -- just as, today, people who own thousands of acres of cropland tend to refer to themselves as "family farmers" rather than, say, "agribusinessmen." *Categories of occupation in North Carolina, 1860*

| Occupation | Number | Percent |
|----------------------|---------|---------|
| Farmers | 87,025 | 45.20 |
| Laborers | 63,481 | 32.94 |
| Tradesmen | 27,263 | 14.15 |
| Professional workers | 7,436 | 3.85 |
| Merchants | 3,479 | 1.80 |
| White-collar workers | 1,913 | .99 |
| Manufacturers | 1,308 | .70 |
| Planters | 121 | .06 |
| All Others | 608 | .31 |
| Total | 192,634 | 100.00 |

Full list

The list below is transcribed directly from the 1860 Census of Population and Housing, and includes every occupation claimed by a free North Carolinian that year. Although most North Carolinians were farmers or farm workers, the state's citizens worked at a wide variety of occupations on the eve of the Civil War. Look over the list and think about these questions:

1. Which occupations were most common? Given what you know about antebellum North Carolina, why would they have been so necessary or popular?
2. What occupations do you see here that surprise you? Why do they surprise you?
3. What occupations do you *not* see here that you would have expected to see? (Check to make sure they aren't listed under another name.) Why do you suppose they didn't exist then?
4. Are there occupations that were more or less important than you would have expected? Why do you suppose that was the case?
5. People responded to census takers' questions by naming their occupations, not by choosing one from a list, but census takers and census officials probably edited the list. As a result, the list partially reflects the ways people thought of their own work, but it also reflects census officials' efforts to put the responses in some kind of order. What names of occupations are different from those we use today, or from those you would have expected to see?

Occupations in North Carolina, 1860

| Occupation | No. |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| Agents | 180 |
| Agricultural Implement Makers | 11 |
| Apprentices | 646 |
| Architects | 6 |
| Artists | 32 |
| Auctioneers | 8 |
| Bakers | 47 |
| Bankers | 15 |
| Bank Officers | 33 |
| Barbers | 46 |
| Barkeepers | 72 |
| Basket-makers | 31 |
| Blacksmiths | 1,706 |
| Boarding-house keepers | 57 |
| Boatbuilders | 3 |
| Boatmen | 117 |
| Bookbinders | 8 |
| Book-keepers | 38 |
| Booksellers | 8 |
| Brewers | 5 |
| Bricklayers | 197 |
| Brick-makers | 49 |
| Bridge-builders | 5 |
| Brokers | 13 |
| Builders | 8 |
| Butchers | 39 |
| Cabinet-makers | 211 |
| <u>Cadders</u> ^[3] | 3 |
| Car-builders | 2 |
| Carpenters | 3,217 |
| Carriers | 43 |
| Carters | 42 |
| Carvers | 12 |
| <u>Calkers</u> ^[4] | 5 |
| Chair-makers | 63 |
| Chemists | 2 |
| Cigar-makers | 5 |
| Civil and mechanical engineers | 235 |
| Clerks | 1,626 |
| Clergymen | 907 |

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|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Clock-makers | 6 |
| <u>Clothiers</u> ^[5] | 12 |
| Coach-makers | 471 |
| Collectors | 21 |
| <u>Colliers</u> ^[6] | 18 |
| <u>Colporteurs</u> ^[7] | 2 |
| Comb-makers | 2 |
| Composition workers | 38 |
| <u>Confectioners</u> ^[8] | 39 |
| Contractors | 22 |
| Coopers | 1,310 |
| Coppersmiths | 21 |
| Cotton-brokers | 2 |
| Cotton cloth manufacturers | 2 |
| Daguerreotypists | 23 |
| Dairymen | 7 |
| Dealers | 19 |
| Dentists | 83 |
| <u>Die-sinkers</u> ^[9] | 9 |
| Distillers | 116 |
| <u>Draughtsmen</u> ^[10] | 2 |
| Drivers | 112 |
| <u>Drovers</u> ^[11] | 12 |
| Druggists | 62 |
| <u>Dyers</u> ^[12] | 10 |
| Editors | 48 |
| Engravers | 3 |
| Expressmen | 2 |
| Factory hands | 809 |
| Farmers | 85,198 |
| Farm laborers | 19,119 |
| Fancy-goods dealers | 14 |
| Finishers | 8 |
| Fishermen | 732 |
| Firemen | 4 |
| <u>Foundrymen</u> ^[13] | 13 |
| Furniture dealers | 2 |
| Gardeners and Nurserymen | 38 |
| Gas-fitters | 10 |
| Gas-makers | 2 |
| Gate-keepers | 22 |
| <u>Gilders</u> ^[14] | 8 |

| Gamesters Occupation | No. |
|--|--------|
| Grocers | 261 |
| Gravel-roofers | 18 |
| Gunsmiths | 44 |
| Hardware manufacturers | 7 |
| Harness-makers | 175 |
| Hatters | 85 |
| Housekeepers | 2,675 |
| Horse dealers | 17 |
| <u>Hosiers</u> ^[15] | 4 |
| Hunters | 3 |
| <u>Hucksters</u> ^[16] | 29 |
| Innkeepers | 152 |
| Inspectors | 36 |
| Iron-founders | 2 |
| Ironmongers | 6 |
| Iron-workers | 26 |
| <u>Japanners</u> ^[17] | 2 |
| Jewelers | 45 |
| Joiners | 3 |
| Judges | 6 |
| Knitters | 75 |
| Laborers | 18,630 |
| Lace manufacturers | 12 |
| Laundresses | 612 |
| Lawyers | 500 |
| Librarians | 2 |
| Lightning-rod makers | 2 |
| <u>Livery-stable</u> ^[18] keepers | 23 |
| Lumbermen | 75 |
| Machinists | 194 |
| <u>Mantua</u> ^[19] -makers | 106 |
| Manufacturers | 43 |
| <u>Mariners</u> ^[20] | 1,121 |
| Marketmen | 4 |
| Masons (stone and brick) | 397 |
| Mat-makers | 2 |
| Matrons | 13 |
| Mechanics | 1,320 |
| Merchants | 2,162 |
| Midwives | 72 |
| Milkmen | 36 |

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|---|------------|
| Millers | 1,105 |
| Occupation | No. |
| Milliners ^[22] | 66 |
| Millwrights | 680 |
| Miners | 550 |
| Model-makers | 2 |
| <u>Moulders</u> ^[23] | 52 |
| Musical instrument makers | 2 |
| Musicians | 17 |
| Music -teachers | 51 |
| Nurses | 39 |
| Officers (Public) | 405 |
| <u>Ostlers</u> ^[24] | 236 |
| Overseers | 1,782 |
| Oystermen | 8 |
| Painters | 355 |
| <u>Paper-hangers</u> ^[25] | 2 |
| Paper manufacturers | 15 |
| Pattern-makers | 4 |
| Peddlers | 57 |
| Physicians | 1,266 |
| <u>Piano-forte</u> ^[26] makers | 25 |
| Pilots | 109 |
| Planters | 121 |
| Plasterers | 68 |
| Platers | 5 |
| Plumbers | 3 |
| Photographers | 4 |
| Porters | 2 |
| Potters | 33 |
| Printers | 202 |
| Professors | 68 |
| Provision dealers | 2 |
| Publishers | 3 |
| Pump-makers | 11 |
| Quarrymen | 8 |
| Rag collectors | 3 |
| Railroadmen | 366 |
| <u>Refectory</u> ^[27] keepers | 10 |
| Riggers | 5 |
| Saddlers | 140 |
| Sail-makers | 22 |
| Sailing-masters | 2 |

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|-------------------------------|--------|
| Sawyers | 105 |
| Seamstresses | 5,019 |
| Servants | 21,092 |
| Sewing-machine workers | 2 |
| <u>Sextons</u> [28] | 2 |
| Shingle-makers | 230 |
| Ship carpenters | 70 |
| Shoemakers | 1,123 |
| Silversmiths | 32 |
| Sleigh-makers | 2 |
| Ship-masters | 54 |
| Speculators | 9 |
| Spinners | 631 |
| Steamboatmen | 12 |
| <u>Stevedores</u> [29] | 2 |
| Stone and marble cutters | 69 |
| Storekeepers | 24 |
| Students | 1,547 |
| Surveyors | 51 |
| Suspender-makers | 2 |
| Tailors | 374 |
| Tailoresses | 228 |
| Tanners | 93 |
| Tar-makers | 3 |
| Teachers | 1,936 |
| Teamsters | 223 |
| Telegraph operators | 8 |
| Tinsmiths | 89 |
| Tobacconists | 274 |
| Tobacco manufacturers | 56 |
| Tool-makers | 4 |
| Traders | 185 |
| Trimmers | 36 |
| Trunk makers | 180 |
| <u>Turners</u> [30] | 14 |
| <u>Turpentine</u> [31]-makers | 1,111 |
| Undertakers | 9 |
| United States officers | 116 |
| Upholsterers | 29 |
| Veterinarians | 3 |
| Warpers | 3 |
| Watchmen | 39 |
| Watch-makers | 67 |

| Occupation | No. |
|-------------------------------|---------|
| Weavers | 959 |
| Wheelwrights | 588 |
| Wine and liquor dealers | 34 |
| Wood-cutters | 75 |
| Wool combers and carders | 3 |
| Woolen manufacturers | 3 |
| Well-diggers | 46 |
| Other occupations and unknown | 604 |
| Total | 192,674 |

- 1. Johnson , Guion Griffis, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina: A Social History* [32], Electronic Edition , 57. (retrieved on May 15, 2008).

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