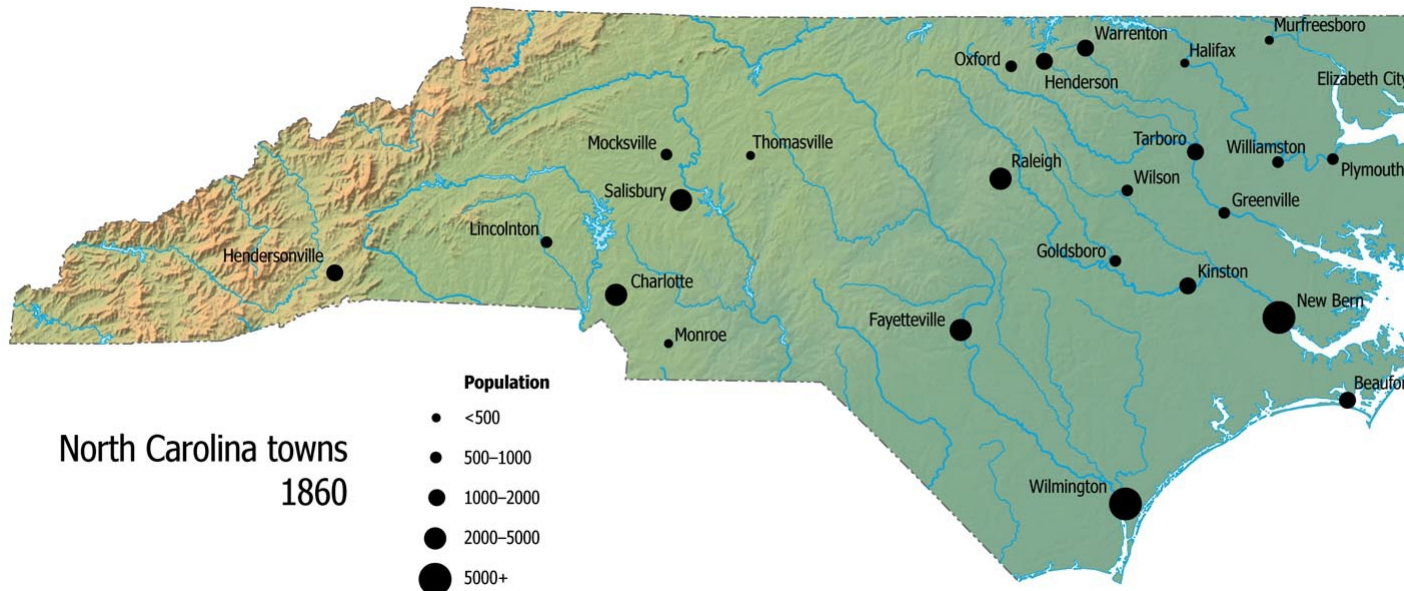# Towns and Villages [1]

North Carolina had a number of towns in the antebellum period -- though a "town" then was far smaller than it would be today. Only two, Wilmington and New Bern, had more than 5,000 people; Raleigh and Fayetteville were the only others with more than 2,500. Today, Charlotte is the largest city in North Carolina, with more than 500,000 people, and the state has 56 cities with populations over 15,000 -- bigger than the largest town in 1860.

The map and the table below show the towns listed on the Census of 1860. In addition to these towns, every county had a county seat, where court was held, and there were numerous small villages -- clusters of homes and businesses around crossroads or along rivers.

Compare this with a present-day map of North Carolina.
Where were the biggest towns in 1860?
What factors do you think led them to be the biggest towns in 1860?
Where are the biggest cities today?
What cities do we consider important today that weren't even on the map in 1860?
Which of the towns listed here have comparatively faded in importance, and which have continued to grow?

Population of North Carolina towns, 1860

| Town | County | Population | | | | |
| | | Free | | | Slave | Total |
		White	Colored	Total		
Beaufort	Carteret	972	59	1031	579	1610
Charlotte	Mecklenburg	1366	74	1440	825	2265
Elizabeth City	Pasquotank	952	217	1169	626	1798
Fayetteville	Cumberland	2806	465	3271	1519	4790
Goldsboro	Wayne	512	25	5337	348	885
Greenville	Pitt	304	14	318	510	828
Halifax	Halifax	146	46	192	?	?
Henderson	Granville	714	22	736	1225	1961
Hendersonville	Henderson	353	5	358	1382	1740
Kingston	Lenoir	662	36	698	635	1333
Lincolnton	Lincoln	482	14	496	352	848
Mockville	Davie	200	20	310	400	710
Monroe	Union	232	7	239	?	?
Murfreesboro	Hertford	394	72	466	?	?
Newbern	Craven	2360	689	3049	2383	5432
Oxford	Granville	364	62	426	452	878
Plymouth	Washington	409	62	471	401	872
Raleigh	Wake	2693	466	3159	4621	4780
Salisbury	Rowan	1267	80	1347	1073	2420
Tarboro	Edgecomb	453	65	518	530	1048
Thomasville	Davidson	220	0	220	88	308
Warrenton	Warren	719	81	800	720	1520
Williamston	Martin	242	10	252	364	616
Wilmington	New Hanover	5202	573	5775	3777	9552
Wilson	Wilson	527	33	560	400	960

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North Carolina towns 1860

Population

- . <500
- • 500–1000
- ● 1000–2000
- ⬤ 2000–5000
- ⬤ 5000+

[17]

Map of North Carolina towns with population as listed in the 1860 census. Click for a larger version.

3 January 2018 | Walbert, David

Links
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