

Weights and Measures

by David A. Norris, 2006

A black and white photograph showing a collection of approximately 12 metal weights and standards. The weights vary in size and shape, including cylindrical pieces with flat or domed tops, and a central, larger conical weight with a handle-like top. They are arranged on a light-colored, reflective surface.

A [statute of 1715](#) ⁽⁶⁾ required the set of weights and measures to include "Five half hundreds, One Quarter of an Hundred, Four pounds Weight, Two pounds, One pound & two Half pound weights-A pair of Brass scales together with a Brass or Copper Yard and of measures an Half Bushel, Peck, Gallon, Pot, Pottle [half-gallon], Quart & pint." The "Eldest of the Church wardens . . . or other such person as shall be appointed by the vestry" was to keep the standards in his house. Anyone having weights, measures, or steelyards (a type of balance in which a weight was moved along an iron rod) not officially sealed in England was to take them to the warden to have them checked. Approved weights, measures, and steelyards were designated with the letters "N.C.," with the warden using a metal stamp, or a branding iron in the case of wooden measures (evidently the half bushel and peck containers).

Laws protecting citizens from unscrupulous merchants continued to be energetically enforced throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A comprehensive clarification of these laws, the [North Carolina Weights and Measures Act \(Chapter 81-A of the North Carolina General Statutes\)](#)^[7], was passed by the [General Assembly](#)^[8] in 1975. The act is primarily enforced by the [Standards Division of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services](#)^[10], which tests the accuracy of all weighing and measuring devices and price-scanning systems used in the state. Violators receive stiff monetary penalties, which are then used to the benefit of the [North Carolina public school system](#)^[11].

Additional Resources:

The State records of North Carolina, Laws of North Carolina- 1715.^[6] By North Carolina, William Laurence Saunders, Stephen Beauregard Weeks, North Carolina. Trustees of the Public Libraries.

Weight and Measures Act, Chapter 81-A, 1975: http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/HTML/BySection/Chapter_81A/GS_81A-1.html [7].

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From:

Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.[16]

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