

Women's Work

A Century's Worth



A Cape Fear Scrapbook



New Hanover Commission for Women



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Views of
opportunities,
life chances
& choices
for
generations of
Cape Fear women

*Produced by the Women's History Project Committee,
a collaboration among
the New Hanover Commission for Women,
the Public History Program, Department of History, UNCW,
and Cape Fear Museum
Wilmington, North Carolina*

Women are a valuable resource and a majority of the population in New Hanover County.

Who we are...



health care



economic
self-sufficiency



living wage



childcare



aging



pay equity

By a 1963 executive order, Governor Terry Sanford established the North Carolina Commission on the Status of Women (NCCSW). Thereafter, the General Assembly gave statutory authority to the NCCSW.

In 1978 New Hanover County and the City of Wilmington established the New Hanover Commission on the Status of Women with seven members appointed by the County, seven by the City, and one each by the Towns of Wrightsville Beach, Carolina Beach and Kure Beach. The State Council is now called the North Carolina Council for Women and the local Council is known as the New Hanover Commission for Women (NHCW).

Biannually NHCW assists North Carolina Equity in organizing and promoting the Women's Agenda Project in New Hanover County. Workshops are held throughout the State and enable women to make recommendations for legislative priorities for the upcoming session of the NC General Assembly.

In the year 2000, over 245 people participated in the Women's Agenda Project in New Hanover County. These participants identified the most important issues as: access to health care, economic self-sufficiency and living wage, childcare, aging, and pay equity.

These contemporary issues, represented by icons in this scrapbook, link present day concerns to women's work over the past 100 years. The scrapbook pages reveal that not only gender, but also race and class, shaped and continue to shape the opportunities, life chances and choices for women.

*Join us
on a journey from the past to the present...*

Fields to market...

¹ Planting rice
with gourds,
c.1900



In 1900, 90% of North Carolina's population was rural. "Back-breaking methods of cultivation and year-round family labor... continued well into the 20th century..."

[*North Carolina Women. Making History.* 161]



² Selling blueberries at
market, c.1930

Castle Hayne continues to be a center
for truck farming and specialty crops.



³ Packing flowers in
Castle Hayne, 2001

Traditional tasks...

"Electricity and other modern technologies were slow to reach rural families, and most farm women had to keep house the old-fashioned way..."

[*NC Women, Making History*, 164]



Domestic work was one of the few jobs

available to African-American women early in the century. As late as 1995, they still held the majority (63%) of positions as housekeepers, child care workers, and cleaners..., occupations associated with less pay.

[*Status of Women in New Hanover County*, 14-16]



⁴ *Cooking on a woodstove, c.1900*



⁵ *Delivering laundry, c.1930*

⁶ Cafeteria line,
North Carolina
Shipbuilding Co.,
1944



Traditional
childcare

arrangements proved impractical during WWII, when women took outside jobs in record numbers. Defense workers benefited from subsidized day nurseries, like the one at Maffitt Village. However, when the war ended, these programs were terminated.

[*The Home Front and Beyond*, 58-59, 69]

⁷ Uniformed nurse maid, c.1900



⁸ Wash-day basics,
c.1900

First steps into the professions...



⁹ Gregory School Faculty, c.1960



"In 1900, the average salary for a teacher

in North Carolina was \$21 per month, less than half the national average. The school term lasted only four months. By 1920, 80% of NC teachers were women." [*North Carolina Women, Making History*, 192, 229]



¹⁰ Hemenway School,
Mrs. Bryant's class, 1959



From 1902
through the
1970s,

James Walker Memorial
Hospital School of Nursing,
Wilmington, graduated
over 1000 nurses. The
School of Nursing at
UNCW offers a B.S. in
Nursing and –since
1998–an M.S. in Nursing.



¹¹ James Walker Memorial Hospital
nursing graduates, c. 1900



“Social class
is thought to
affect life expectancy through
differences in health care,
diet, social stress and living
and working environments.”
In 1995 only 72% of white
respondents and 69.1% of
minority respondents in New
Hanover County reported a
regular source of routine
health care... [Status of Women in
New Hanover County, 31, 46]



¹² UNCW School of Nursing
graduate, c. 1960

Pink collars...

¹³ N. Jacobi
Hardware,
c.1900



¹⁴ Receptionist, East Coast Saline
Water Conversion Plant,
Wrightsville Beach, 1963



By 1940, 15% of North Carolina's employed women held clerical, retail, or service professional jobs.

[North Carolina Women, Making History, 208]

By 1995, this figure had risen to 55.3% in New Hanover County.

[Status of Women in New Hanover County, 12.14]



¹⁵ Uniformed staff, Atlantic
Coastline Railroad Freight
Department, c.1948

¹⁶ Paul's Place,
Castle Hayne Rd.,
1945



In 1995, 67% of North Carolina mothers worked outside the home, the highest rate of any state. The 1990 census reported that 65% of the workforce in New Hanover County was female. 56% of all children under age six in New Hanover County had either *both* parents or their *only* parent in the work force. [*Status of Women in New Hanover County*, 11, 15]

¹⁷ Licensed cosmetologist, 2001



¹⁸ M.G. Tiencken
Variety Store,
c.1900



Putting in our shift...

¹⁹ Emergency Relief
Admin., mattress
factory, c.1930



²⁰ City Laundry, c.1900



High wages and aggressive

recruiting attracted more than 1200 women to production work at the North Carolina Shipbuilding Company during WWII. When defense contracts were cancelled after the war, women were twice as likely as men to lose their jobs. [NC Women, Making History, 279]



Textile industries have been the leading industrial employers of North Carolina women in the 20th century. In 1910, 90% of spinners in cotton mills were females under age 21, with 50% under age 15, earning about 60% of men's wages. [North Carolina Women, Making History, 166-67]

In 1995, women represented 43% of all machine operators and assemblers in New Hanover County. 89% of laundering and dry cleaners workers were African-American females. [Status of Women in New Hanover County, 14]



²¹ Crane operators, North Carolina
Shipbuilding Co., c.1945



²² Block Shirt Co., c.1930

²³ Delgado Cotton Mill
f.1899; later Spofford Mills



FRANCE NECKWEAR — Ties are to be seen everywhere in the manufacturing area of France Neckwear Mfg. Corp. This plant added floor space in 1970 and will take over the neighboring Garver plant as soon as it terminates operations. (SECO Photo)

²⁴ France Neckware, 1971



QUALITY CONTROL — Corning Glass Works employ checks resistors for flaws in the company's quality control program. The local company produces a new line of high-voltage flameproof resistors.

²⁵ Corning Glass Works, 1971

New careers...

Seven thousand NC females volunteered for military service during WWII. The Women's Army Corps (WAC) drew the largest number – 4000 enlistees. [*North Carolina Women, Making History*, 279]



²⁶ WACS, Finance Dept., Camp Davis, c.1940



²⁷ Clerk, New Hanover Co. Public Library, c.1950



²⁸ Technical services, New Hanover Co. Public Library, c.1970



In 1900 there were only five professional librarians in the State! However, after library schools were established at NC College for Negroes (now NC Central) in 1921, NC College for Women in Greensboro in 1927, and UNC Chapel Hill in 1931, women dominated the profession. [*North Carolina Women Making History*, 230]

²⁹ Counselor, Employment
Security Commission,
1971



³⁰ TV hostess,
"Kiddie Time",
c. 1950



Most women in NH
County work in
predominantly "female" jobs.
Although the wage gap has
narrowed since 1995, women
continue to earn less than men,
even in the same profession.

[*North Carolina Women, Making
History*, 16, 12]

In 1992, on the average, women
earned 71¢ for every dollar
earned by men, but African-
American women earned only
65¢ and Latinas 54¢.

[*Celebrating a Century of Women*, 56]



³¹ TV News anchor,
WECT, 2001

Public service...

Women's suffrage passed over the objection of the NC General Assembly, which did not ratify the amendment until 1971. Until passage of the 1965 Civil Rights Act, African-American women faced obstacles exercising their right to vote. [Celebrating a Century of Women, 62]

Hand Of Woman Now Guides Municipal Bark Of City; Mrs. Cowan Assumes Reins

First Woman Mayor in History of North Carolina Takes Oath of Office at City Hall

TO CARRY ON POLICY OF HER LATE HUSBAND

The hand of a woman grasped the wheel of Wilmington's municipal affairs at 9 o'clock yesterday morning, when Mrs. Katherine Mayo Cowan was sworn in as Mayor of the city in succession to her late husband James Hill Cowan.

Clerk W. N. Harris, of the superior court, administered the oath of office in the Mayor's chambers at the city hall in the presence of Comptroller Thompson and Councilman

"I intend to carry out the policies of Mr. Cowan, which I know and understand, and will do everything in my power to make this administration a success," the new Mayor told newspapermen immediately after taking the oath of office.

She then expressed her appreciation to the friends who have made her new position possible.

Seated at the broad desk of her late husband, Mayor Cowan presented the appearance of being an altogether capable executive. She was becomingly clad in a black dress, her hair caught in the position one has grown to expect of the modern business woman, and wore a pair of horn-rimmed glasses.

32 First female Mayor of Wilmington, 1924



33 School crossing guard, c.1970



34 Red Cross Motor Corps, c.1942



35 Wilmington City Council, 2001

By 1992, women were 53% of all NC voters. Despite their numerical and voting majority, in 1996 only four women served on town and city councils in New Hanover County, representing 17% of all municipal positions. [Status of Women in New Hanover County, 66]



³⁶ Mayor of Kure Beach,
1998

Beginning with NC Sorosis, the first federated women's club in the State (chartered in 1896) and the NC Federation of Negro Women's Clubs (founded in 1909), volunteers have given countless hours to the causes of civic improvement, family welfare, education, and racial and cultural uplift.

[*Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History*, 131 and *Charlotte Hawkins Brown and Palmer Memorial Institute*, 64]



³⁷ Docent, Burgin-Wright House, 4th grade history program, NHCPS, 1995

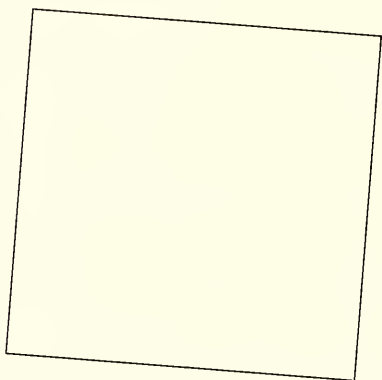
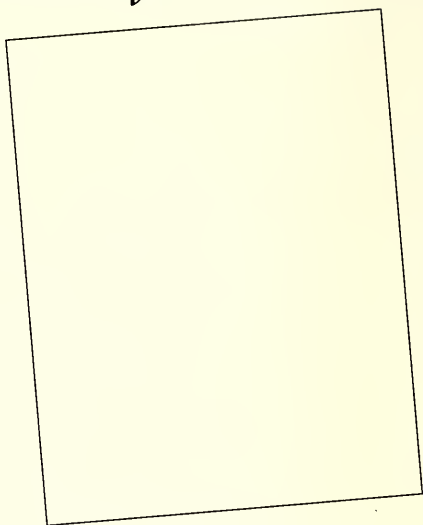


³⁸ New Hanover County Commissioners, 2001



³⁹ Pied Piper Theatre, Jr. League of Wilmington, 1961

My place in history...



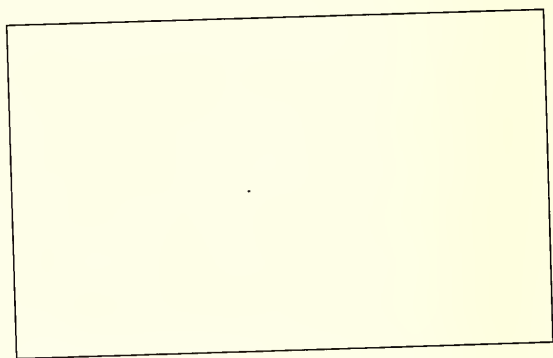


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Cover

Women Washing Dishes, c. 1930. William H. King, photog. CFM 82.18.51

Fields to market...

1. Eric Norden, photog. CFM 80.36.162
2. Louis T. Moore, photog. Louis T. Moore Collection #398 NHCPL
3. Cecilia Leon. Logan Wallace, photog. *Wilmington Star News*, February 14, 2001

Traditional tasks...

4. Eric Norden, photog. CFM 80.36.30
5. Louis T. Moore, photog. Louis T. Moore Collection #214 NHCPL
6. *North Carolina Shipbuilding Company* 3:2 (October 1, 1944). North Carolina Shipbuilding Collection, East Carolina Manuscript Collection, East Carolina University
7. Miss Johnson/Durham, N.C., photog. CFM 989.52.1
8. Eric Norden, photog. CFM 80.36.42

First steps into the professions...

9. CFM 83.34.17
10. Mrs. Bryant, Charles Wallace private collection
11. Dr. Robert M. Fales Collection #120 NHCPL
12. Gwendolyn Hawes. Herbert Howard, photog. CFM 92.163.739

Pink collars...

13. [l/r] Mss. R. M. Furlong and Eva Hagood. NHCPL
14. [l/r] Evangeline Reynolds and Norma Horrell. *Southern PBX Magazine* (Summer, 1963), Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Co., Atlanta, Georgia
15. [l/r] standing: Ella Mae Bullard, Beth Vann, Betty Hill; seated: [?] Conley. CFM IA 04559
16. [l/r] James Long, Lillie Willis Paul, and Edna Bradshaw Paul. CFM IA 5064
17. Jeanette Baker at La Mirage Salon. LuAnn Mimms, photog.
18. Dr. Robert M. Fales Collection #959 NHCPL

Putting in our shift...

19. CFM IA 2988
20. Dr. Robert M. Fales Collection #828 NHCPL

21. *North Carolina Shipbuilding Company* (July, 1945). North Carolina Shipbuilding Collection, East Carolina Manuscript Collection, East Carolina University

22. CFM 97.108.4

23. Dr. Robert M. Fales Collection #401 NHCPL

24. SECO photog., *Wilmington Star News*, February 28, 1971

25. *Wilmington Star News*, February 28, 1971

New careers...

26. [l/r] Sgt. Etta Melveldt; Cpls. Gertrude Grimm, Nina Greenlea; Pfc. Tessie Sevdonstock; T/3 Nellie McCaslin. CFM 988.6.135
27. NHCPL #1725
28. JoAnn Coco. NHCPL #1734
29. Patrice Haines. SECO photog., *Wilmington Star News*, February 28, 1971
30. Katherine Goodwin. CFM IA 5019
31. Frances Weller. Daniel Norris, photog.

Public service...

32. Katherine Mayo Cowan. *Wilmington Star News*, September 23, 1924
33. Ms. Galloway [?]. Herbert Howard, photog. CFM 92.163.736
34. Hannah Block. Hannah Block Manuscript Collection, Randall Library Special Collections, UNCW
35. [l/r] Laura Padgett, Katherine Moore, Sandra Spaulding-Hughes. Doug Hewitt, photog., City of Wilmington Public Information Office
36. Betty Medlin with Governor James B. Hunt, Jr.
37. Mrs. Catesby Jones. Peg Rorison, photog.
38. [l/r] Nancy Pritchett and Julia Boseman. Mark Boyer, photog. New Hanover County Public Information Office
39. [l/r] top row: Jean Ann Sutton, Ginny Van Velsor, Ann Reynolds, Ann Davis; bottom row: Eleanor Hall, Ialeen Tillery, Janet Hicks. "The Box of Smiles." *Shorelines* (February, 1961), The Junior League of Wilmington, N. C. Inc.



Read more about North Carolina women's history...

- Governor's Commission on the Status of Women, *The Many Lives of North Carolina Women* (Raleigh, 1964).
- Susan M. Hartman, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940's* (Boston, 1982).
- North Carolina Council for Women, *Celebrating a Century of Women: A Women's History Book* (Raleigh, 2000[?]).
- Charlotte M. Rath for NHCW, *Status of Women in New Hanover County: A Needs Assessment Report* (Wilmington, 1997).
- Sally Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture
<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/women/>
- Ann F. Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana, 1991).
- Margaret Supplee Smith and Emily Herring Wilson, *North Carolina Women, Making History* (Chapel Hill and London, 1999).
- Charles W. Wadlington and Richard F. Knapp, Charlotte Hawkins Brown and Palmer Memorial Institute (Chapel Hill, 1999).

Members of the New Hanover Commission for Women

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