

Transportation in North Carolina: A Brief History of Getting Around



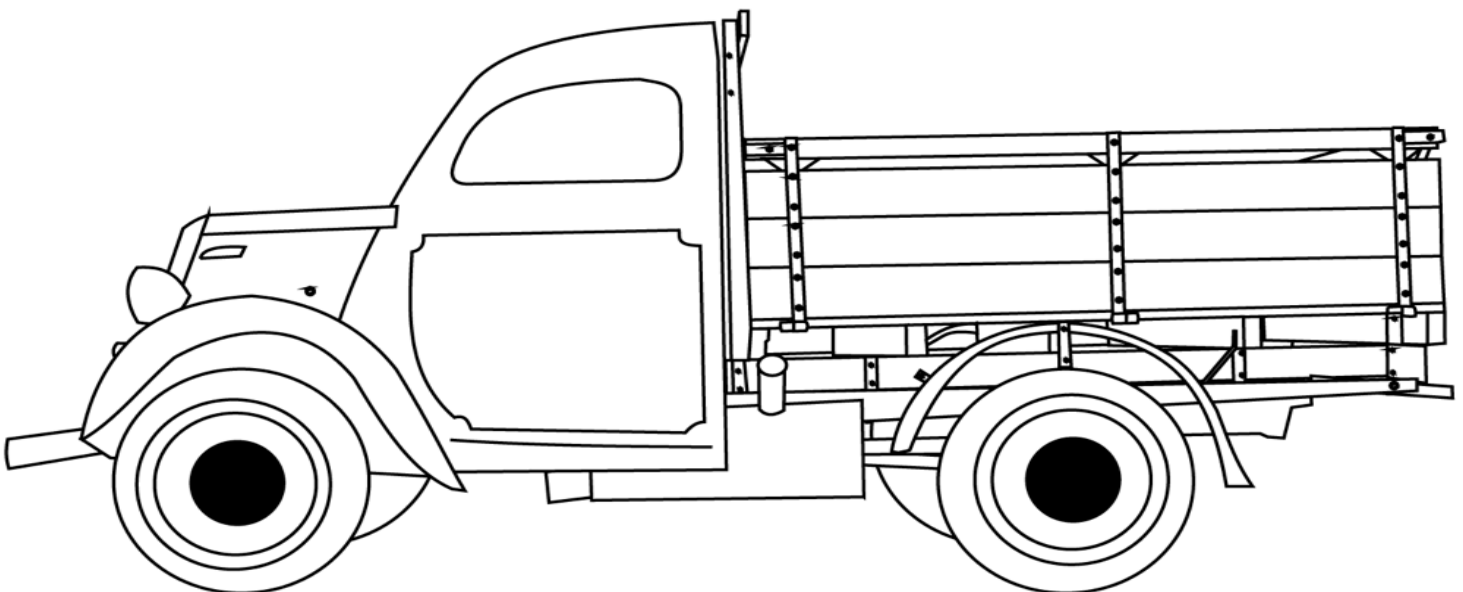
Have you ever wondered what life must have been like before the invention of trains, cars, and planes? Today you can drive by car from Wilmington, N.C. to Boone, N.C. in a little over 5 hours. Imagine a time when that same route could only be traveled by foot or on horseback! In the 1700s that trip would take weeks in the best of conditions. And the way was hard and dangerous.

In the 1700s people traveled by foot or on horseback or by wagon if they were prosperous enough to own them. American Indians traveled by foot and on horseback and navigated waterways by canoe.

There were no real roads. Well-worn paths had developed along common trade and settlement routes. Many of these grew from trading paths created by American Indians.

From the 1850s onward, transportation improved dramatically. Some roads were improved by laying planks down for traction. Waterways were improved and canals built to carry people and goods. By the late 1800s the country was connected by train lines. And by the late 1920s, automobiles had become common -- and the state had nearly 50,000 miles of road, although most of it was dirt. In the second half of the 20th century, paving improved roads even more. Today the state has 80,000 miles of roads. That's enough to circle the earth 3 times!

The photograph above, taken around 1910, shows a delivery truck and workers for the Mint Cola Bottling Company in downtown Raleigh, N.C. What do you notice about the photo? What seems the same as today? What is different? The truck below looks similar. Do you think it was made about the same time or later? Why?



Find this activity sheet in NCpedia: https://www.ncpedia.org/sites/default/files/print_pdf/ncpedia_activity_sheet_transportation.pdf

Read the full article on N.C. transportation history in NCpedia: <https://www.ncpedia.org/transportation-north-carolina-k-8>

Truck line drawing credit: <http://www.supercoloring.com/coloring-pages/classic-truck>

Activity page created by Kelly Agan, State Library of North Carolina, 2020

Photograph of the Mint Cola truck: D.2011.4.500, from the General Negative Collection, State Archives of North Carolina