



Inset: The author's grandfather, Allen Jay Culberson, photographed in the early 1950s on his farm in Snow Camp, to celebrate his Alamance County Young Farmer of the Year Award. Above: The family's scuppernong grapevines, still growing strong. Images courtesy of Jennifer Culberson Wood.

What Reminds You of Home?

by Jennifer Culberson Wood

What says "North Carolina" to you?

When I was a little girl, my grandfather had a vine beside his house that grew great, big, juicy scuppernong grapes. I would watch in steady anticipation until the end of August, when the fruit was ready for us to gather. It took just about all my little girl willpower to wait it out.

One time I even tried the grapes before they were ready. Take it from me: you do *not* want to eat a scuppernong grape before it ripens!

White buckets left by the steps of the kitchen door was my sure tip-off that it was grape-picking day. Once those buckets were set out, I could think of nothing else. All day I would try to keep busy by helping my grandmother with chores while bouncing back and forth to check and see if my grandfather had finished

his farmwork so we could go on and walk down to the vine together. After supper we'd collect our buckets and walk hand-in-hand down the path to where the grapevine glinted in the late afternoon light.

As we stood there watching the day's last shadows fall over bales of hay, my grandfather would pluck the first grape, sample it, and declare, "Yep, tastes like North Carolina."

That same scuppernong vine still grows on what is now my father's farm in Alamance County. And even though I'm all grown up now, no matter where I am—if I see, smell, or taste a scuppernong grape, I always think of my grandfather and say to myself, "Yep, that's North Carolina."

I'm a writer, and the best thing about my job is the opportunity I have to share my home. All across North Carolina I find tastes, sights, smells, sounds, and places that welcome and make me think, "Yep, that's home."

So let's go! North Carolina is divided into three regions. We'll start in the Mountains, cruise on to the Piedmont, and end our journey on the Coastal Plain.

Mountain Region

Brevard is a great town in the western part of our state. You can shop for toys at O. P. Taylor's, look for white squirrels, slide on Sliding Rock, the coolest natural waterslide in the Pisgah National Forest—plus on the way there you get to drive by the Mountain Research Center. This is where the North Carolina Department



Left: The author—as a young girl—enjoys a farm lunch with her grandmother, Flora Belle Culberson. Image courtesy of Jennifer Culberson Wood.



Right: In the early 1900s, the US Department of Agriculture worked with farmers to develop orchards for commercial markets. It hired more than 50 artists to produce technically accurate drawings for its publications. In 1905 artist Amanda Newton (1860–1943) went to Roanoke Island to create this engraving of scuppernong grapes—which became North Carolina's State Fruit in 2001. Image courtesy of the US Department of Agriculture Pomological Watercolor Collection. Rare and Special Collections, National Agricultural Library.

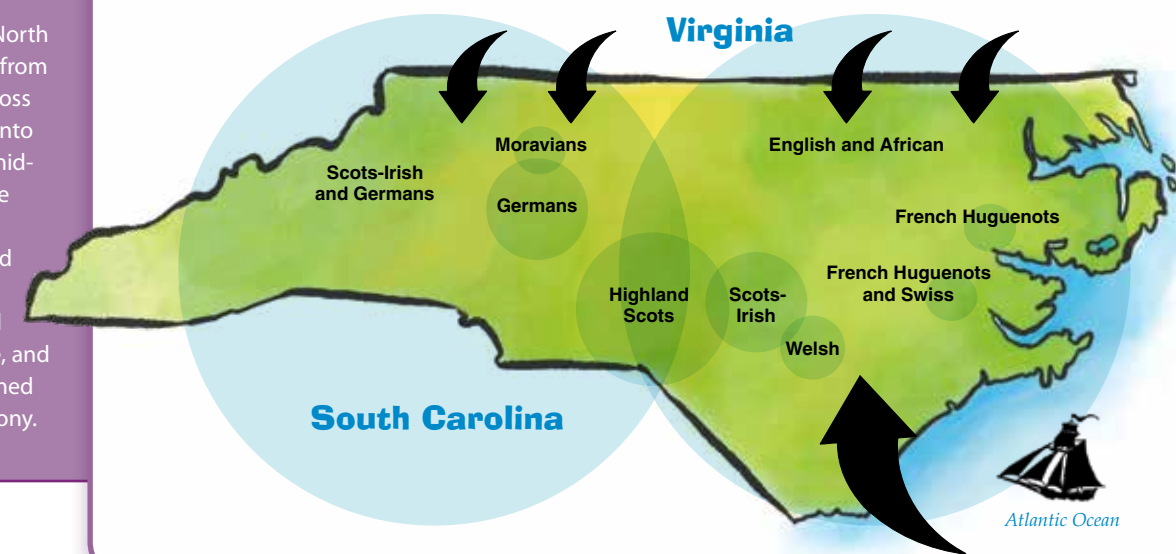
of Agriculture & Consumer Sciences does sunflower and wildflower research. So when those are in bloom, it makes for an explosion of color with a mountain backdrop that cannot be beat.

Take a hike, for natural beauty abounds in our state, and the Hickory Nut Falls hike at Chimney Rock State Park is a great short hike with a beautiful reward at the end.

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Where Are We From?

Many different people call North Carolina home. Immigrants from other colonies and from across the Atlantic Ocean poured into North Carolina during the mid-1700s, adding to the mixture of people already here. English, Scots-Irish, Highland Scots, Germans, Africans, and native Indian groups all possessed skills, knowledge, and religious beliefs that combined to mold the developing colony.





Inset: A family emerges from the “Subway” observation point on the Outcroppings Trail—a 499-step alternative to the elevator on the way to the top of Chimney Rock. Big photo: Visitors enjoy the fantastic view from the top. Images courtesy of Chimney Rock State Park.



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More chocolate, please! North Carolina has gotten really good at this treat, and Asheville is the perfect place to sample some of our finest. Get started at French Broad Chocolate, then move on to Asheville Chocolate. And if you still don’t have your fill, hit up The Chocolate Lounge or Kilwin’s Chocolate, Fudge, and Ice Cream!

The Piedmont

On a carousel, I still think it’s fun to spend an afternoon riding around in circles. Because I was born in Burlington and grew up in Raleigh, I am partial to the carousels in these fair cities. Burlington even holds an annual festival for their historic carousel, and you have two to choose from in Raleigh—at Pullen Park and John Chavis Memorial Park.

A Greensboro lunch counter: This visit should be on every North Carolinian’s must-visit list. The Triad is home to the International Civil Rights Center and Museum, where four young men staged a nonviolent protest at the F. W. Woolworth lunch counter in 1960.



Above: Costumed interpreters at Historic Edenton—the state’s first colonial capital—can lead you on a wide range of tours, including the James Iredell House, the Historic 1767 Chowan County Courthouse, the Cupola House, and the 1886 Roanoke River Lighthouse. Image courtesy of NC State Historic Sites.

Ride the rails: The North Carolina Railway Museum is in New Hill, and they have an open-air passenger car, antique trains, and real working trains, which all make for a fun afternoon of alternate transportation exploration.

The Coastal Plain

Know New Bern, sip Pepsi right on the corner where Caleb Bradham first thought up the drink, and then head over to Tryon Palace for a tour. If you’re in town at the right time of year, you just might catch sight of their incredible Tryon Palace Jonkonnu troupe.

Make a historic pilgrimage to the town of Edenton. Founded November 6, 1712, this lovely little town served as North Carolina’s first colonial capital, and Edenton has protected, maintained, and preserved the original and authentic. Be sure to make your way to the 1767 Chowan County Courthouse, and then take a walk out to the courthouse green for a breathtaking view of Edenton Bay.

A quieter coast: If you head away from the hustle and bustle of the beach, you can spend the afternoon watching Core Sound cormorants take flight, or catch a glimpse of the wild horses—known as the original keepers of Hog Island—running free.

I have found that around most corners of North Carolina, and inside many a conversation, there is something new to be found and learned from one another. I hope I gave you some new NC places to think about exploring.

The story I shared at the beginning featured the scuppernong grape, which just so happens to be our official State Fruit. You might love strawberries or trout fishing, or panning for gold—but maybe you have something new to talk about that makes North Carolina unique. Be confident in the fact that those stories are valuable and what keeps our great state interesting.

Every single day someone new moves here—from another state or another part of the world—and when they do, they bring their own distinct culture with them, enriching our state in new and vibrant ways. It is through centuries of weaving our stories together—both the ones handed down through generations and the brand-new ones—that we keep our state growing strong.

The next time someone asks you where you are from, I hope you’ll take the opportunity to tell them what you love about your home and why it is special to you. 🌸

Jennifer Culberson Wood is an Alamance County native who grew up in Raleigh, married a man from Edenton, and raised a son with footprints across the Mountain, Piedmont, and Coastal Regions of North Carolina. Wood has made North Carolina culture the focus of her freelance writing career and is currently finishing her first novel.



THJHA Club Saves Pullen Carousel!

Do you ever think: “What can I do? I’m just a kid!” The answer is: a lot—especially if you’re a Tar Heel junior historian! Just look at how the Martin ‘76ers from Raleigh’s Martin Middle School saved a part of Piedmont history in 1978.

The students saw that the old carousel in nearby Pullen Park had fallen into disrepair—and they flew into action. They talked to parents, teachers, and other adults. Club president Joey Morris even gave a passionate speech to the Raleigh City Council. Eventually history lovers came together to raise money to restore the carousel to its original condition. Today, thanks to junior historians from the past, we can ride this restored, historical carousel into the future!



Above: Students from the Martin ‘76ers pose with their winning project. Image courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History.

Inset (and on Contents page): The Pullen Park Carousel (ca. 1900) is one of the earliest and best surviving works of the Pennsylvania Carousel Company, founded by Gustav A. Dentzel. It features 52 hand-carved animals, including horses, ostriches, cats, giraffes, pigs, and even a goat! Image by Michael Zirkle Photography, courtesy of the Raleigh Historic Development Commission.