

North Carolina Pioneers

The passage which follows was written in 1709 by John Lawson, an English historian, after a trip to North Carolina. In it he talks about Carolina men, women, and children. As you read, be prepared for words and expressions that are nearly 300 years old, but try to focus on Lawson's views of what Carolinians are like.

As for those of our own Country in Carolina, some of the Men are very laborious, and make great improvements in their Way; but I dare hardly give them that Character in general. The Easy way of living in that plentiful Country makes a great many Planters very negligent, which, were they otherwise, that Colony might now have been in a far better Condition than it is, (as to Trade and other Advantages) which an universal Industry would have led them into.

The Women are the most industrious Sex in that Place, and, by their good Housewifery, make a great deal of Cloath of their own Cotton, Wool and Flax; some of them keeping their Families, (though large,) very decently appareled, both with Linnens and Woollens, so that they have no occasion to run into the Merchants Debt, or lay their money out on Stores for Cloathing....

They marry very young; some at Thirteen or Fourteen; and She that stays till Twenty is reckoned a stale Maid Both Sexes are generally spare of Body and not Cholerick nor easily cast down at Disappointments and losses, seldom immoderately grieving at Misfortunes, unless for the Loss of their nearest Relations

and Friends, which seems to make a more than ordinary impression upon them. Many of the Women are very handy in Canoes and will manage them with great Dexterity and Skill, which they become accustomed to in this watery Country. They are ready to help their Husbands in any servile Work, as Planting, when the Season of the Weather requires Expedition; Pride seldom banishing good Housewifery. The Girls are not bred up to the Wheel and Sewing only, but the Dairy, and affairs of the House they are very well acquainted withal; so that you shall see them, whilst very young, manage their Business with a great deal of Conduct and Alacrity. The Children of both Sexes are very docile and learn any thing with a great deal of Ease and Method, and those that have the Advantages of Education, write very good Hands, and prove good Accountants, which is most coveted, and indeed, most necessary in these Parts. The young Men are commonly of a bashful, sober Behaviour; few proving Prodigals to consume what the Industry of their Parents has left them, but commonly improve it.

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1. Regarding Carolina, what does Lawson see as a disadvantage?
 - A that the women marry so young there
 - B that it is such a watery country
 - C that it is such an easy place to make a living
 - D that the children are so smart and well behaved

2. Overall, with whom was Lawson impressed?
 - A Carolina women, more than Carolina men
 - B Carolina men, more than Carolina women
 - C both men and women equally
 - D neither the men nor the women

3. What are the women *most* talented at?
 - A feeding their families
 - B clothing their families
 - C planting the fields
 - D handling canoes

4. It is expected that a woman will be married before what age?
 - A 12
 - B 13
 - C 14
 - D 20

5. Carolinians grieve more than expected over which of the following?
 - A economic hardships
 - B marriage disappointments
 - C crop failure and natural disaster
 - D death of family and friends

6. How does Lawson describe the children of Carolina?
 - A calm and smart
 - B aggressive and eager
 - C honorable and courageous
 - D bashful and sober

