

# The Old North State

Words by William Gaston.

## As you read...

William Joseph Gaston, a judge and politician from New Bern, wrote “The Old North State” in the 1830s to oppose the notion that North Carolina was backwards — the “Rip Van Winkle State.” Set to music in 1844, it was adopted as the official state song of North Carolina in 1927.

1. What does Gaston praise as being especially good about North Carolina? Why do you think he chose these things to mention?
2. What words and imagery does he use to praise North Carolina?
3. How can you tell that he was trying to fight North Carolina’s reputation as backwards?



Figure 1. Gaston’s poem was set to music by R. Culver in 1844.

Carolina! Carolina! Heaven’s blessings attend her!  
While we live we will cherish, protect and defend her;  
Tho’ the scorner may sneer at and wittings defame her,  
Still our hearts swell with gladness whenever we name her.

Hurrah! Hurrah! The Old North State forever!  
Hurrah! Hurrah! The good Old North State!

Tho’ she envies not others, their merited glory,  
Say whose name stands the foremost, in Liberty’s story,  
Tho’ too true to herself e’er to crouch to oppression,  
Who can yield to just rule a more loyal submission?

Hurrah! Hurrah! The Old North State forever!  
Hurrah! Hurrah! The good Old North State!

Plain and artless her sons, but whose doors open faster  
At the knock of a stranger, or the tale of disaster.  
How like the rudeness of the dear native mountains,  
With rich ore in their bosoms and life in their fountains.

Hurrah! Hurrah! The Old North State forever!  
Hurrah! Hurrah! The good Old North State!

And her daughters, the Queen or the forest resembling  
So graceful, so constant, yet the gentlest breath trembling.

And true lightwood at heart, let the match be applied them,  
How they kindle and flame! Oh! none know but who've tried them.

Hurrah! Hurrah! The Old North State forever!  
Hurrah! Hurrah! The good Old North State!

Then let all those who love us, love the land that we live in,  
As happy a region as on this side of heaven,  
Where plenty and peace, love and joy smile before us,  
Raise aloud, raise together the heart thrilling chorus.

Hurrah! Hurrah! The Old North State forever!  
Hurrah! Hurrah! The good Old North State!

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### Figure 1 (page 1)

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