

# BEFORE CAMP LEJEUNE

## The Paleoindian Period: The First Prehistoric Settlers of North Carolina

Almost 15,000 years ago, during the last Ice Age, the forebears of coastal North Carolina's first Native American inhabitants, known as Paleoindians, crossed a land bridge that connected Siberia to Alaska. Over a period of 2,000 to 3,000 years, small groups of Paleoindian nomadic hunter-gatherers migrated eastward and southward, reaching the Coastal Plain of North Carolina about 12,000 years before present (or 10,000 BC), at the end of the last Ice Age. Clovis fluted stone points, the hallmark of Paleoindian culture in the Southeastern United States, have been recovered throughout the state and document the arrival of the state's earliest known inhabitants.

These groups encountered a landscape in the vicinity of Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune that was significantly different from the New River estuary of today. With so much of the earth's water tied up in glacial ice, sea levels were as much as 300 feet lower than they are today, and the coastline was located several miles to the east. Paleoindian groups encountered a changing post-glacial landscape that included a mix of both ancient and modern flora and fauna. By 9000 BC spruce and jack-pine forests had given way to hardwood and mixed hardwood-pine forests that were similar to the modern forests of coastal North Carolina. Small groups moved across the landscape, often hundreds of miles, to make use of seasonally available natural resources, including large, modern mammals such as elk, deer, and moose, supplemented by foraged or collected plant and animal taxa.

## The Archaic Period: Hunters, Gatherers, and Foragers

The Archaic period (8000 to 1000 BC) is subdivided into Early, Middle, and Late subperiods. During this time the Native American inhabitants continued to hunt, fish, and gather a variety of food resources. New forms of chipped-stone and groundstone tools were adopted, and spearpoints or points—commonly referred to as "arrowheads"—varied in style by region and over time. Experimentation with the domestication of native plants, such as sunflower and goosefoot, and with the making of pottery began in the Late Archaic period.

During the Early Archaic period the environmental setting may have been similar to that of the latter portion of the Paleoindian period. Important changes occurred in the kinds of stone tools people produced and also in where groups lived, as people expanded into upland areas. In general Early Archaic groups appear to have lived in relatively small camps in the floodplains of rivers and streams. Early Archaic sites are also located in the uplands, but such sites appear to have been temporary and used for hunting, collecting, and processing resources such as deer, turkey, and hickory nuts.

By the beginning of the Middle Archaic a marked change occurred in the climate of the United States. Summer days were longer and brighter and the winter days were shorter and dimmer, resulting in long, hot, dry summers and long, frigid, snowy winters. The common occurrence of groundstone tools, like grooved axes and celts, as well as tools used in the processing of plants and nuts,



suggests that plants played an important role in the economies of the period. Innovations in stone tool types continued, which is reflected in the appearance of netsinkers and grooved axes.

The results of archaeological excavations in North Carolina indicate that Middle Archaic populations grew increasingly less mobile, as base camps were established in the floodplains of rivers and streams, reflecting a more sedentary culture. Storage pits, structures, and burials have been identified at Middle Archaic floodplain sites. A focus on resources from rivers (fish, turtles, and freshwater molluscs) and the presence of semi-sedentary or sedentary human groups appear to have their genesis in a warm and dry period that occurred in the Middle Archaic. The exploitation of river locales continued into the Late Archaic.

The Late Archaic period is characterized by regional trade networks, the development of fiber-tempered pottery, the manner in which people were buried, and an increase in the presence of semi-sedentary and sedentary villages. In North Carolina relatively large base camp sites in the floodplains of the major rivers have been excavated by archaeologists. Massive accumulations of discarded shells and refuse, called shell middens; a variety of features, such as trash pits, rock hearths, and postmolds; and a wide range of artifact types have been identified at such sites and indicate that the sites were occupied year-round. During the latter portion of the Late Archaic period it appears that certain groups in the Eastern United States had domesticated three native plants, goosefoot, marsh elder, and sunflower, indicating at least a partial reliance on agriculture.

Also in the latter portion of the Late Archaic groups began to experiment in the production of pottery for cooking food. The different types of prehistoric pottery are often identified by temper, or the material that was mixed with the clay before the vessel was fired. Native Americans used such things as plant fibers, mussel and oyster shells, crushed limestone, and sand as temper. Pieces of prehistoric pottery that have been tempered with plant fibers and dating to the Late Archaic have been found in Onslow County.

## The Woodland Period: Sedentary Villagers

The Woodland period (1000 BC to AD 1500), also subdivided into Early, Middle, and Late subperiods, is characterized by a generalized pattern of seasonal hunting and gathering, an increased emphasis on domesticated native plants and corn, development of pottery technology and diversity in pottery form and decoration, the use of elaborate burial rituals, and the presence of villages that were occupied year-round. Regional differences in artifact styles that began in the Late Archaic are even more apparent in the pottery from Woodland sites. Beginning in the Early Woodland, it is apparent that human groups in North and South Carolina shared similar stone tool and pottery types, but it is also clear that there were growing stylistic differences among pottery wares. This regionalization occurred in different areas of the state, such as the coast, the interior, and the mountains, with the result that specific pottery wares, instead of stone point types, are used by archaeologists to divide the Woodland period into subperiods.

Archaeologists identify Early Woodland sites in the Coastal Plain by the presence of pottery with different kinds of temper, all of which have been found at Camp Lejeune. The sand-tempered vessels have surfaces that are plain or have

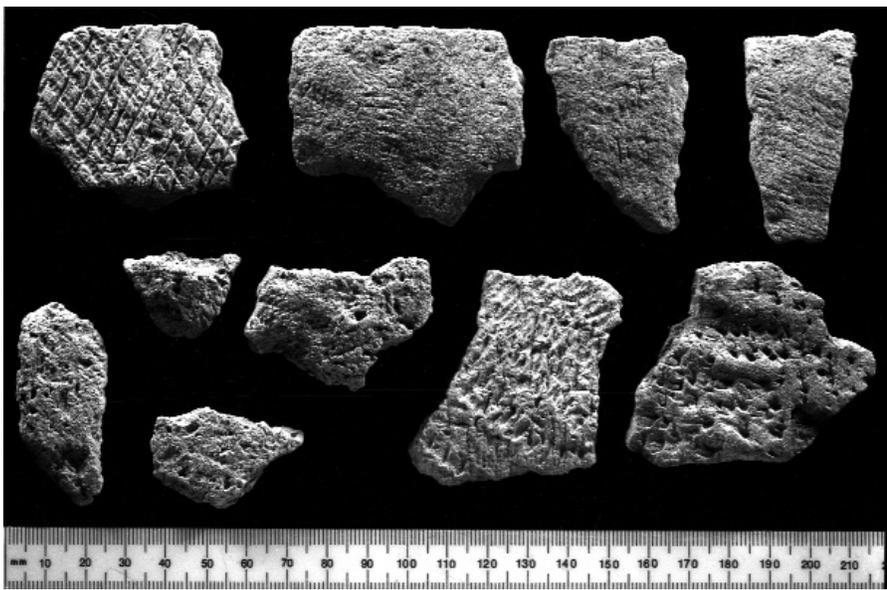
lines of circular decorations made with a hollow reed. Vessels tempered with coarse sand have surfaces that are fabric-impressed, net-impressed, and cordmarked. Cordmarked vessels are those that have been decorated by wrapping cords around a wooden paddle and pressing the cord into the surface of the vessel. Pottery from the Early Woodland is also tempered with marl, and the surface can be cordmarked, fabric-impressed, or simple stamped. The latter occurs when the surface is impressed with a wooden paddle on which designs have been carved. Early Woodland occupations often consist of shell midden sites located along tidal creeks.

Middle Woodland pottery is characterized by cordmarked, net-impressed, and plain surface treatments on clay-tempered and shell-tempered vessels. Middle Woodland artifacts also include stone tools, shell pendants, celts, and bone tools. Small triangular points document the arrival of the bow and arrow. Middle Woodland sites consist of shell middens that represent the remains of seasonal camps, as well as other small camps located along rivers, creeks, and swampy areas known as pocosins. In nearby Carteret County, identified Middle Woodland burials include turtle shells, deer bones, conch shells, marginella-shell beads, and perforated canine teeth.

Cultivation of domestic plants (especially corn and beans) and the sole use of shell-tempered pottery are hallmarks of the Late Woodland period. The concentration on agricultural pursuits caused a large increase in the occupation of broad floodplains by Native American groups. Villages usually consisted of longhouses surrounded by wooden palisades. The dead were often buried in mass graves called ossuaries, which sometimes contained the mixed remains of over 150 individuals.

During the Late Woodland period three distinct cultures, identified by language families, are known to have existed in Onslow County. These were the Algonkian-, Iroquoian-, and Siouan- speaking peoples. Algonkian peoples appear to have been oriented along estuaries on the middle and north Atlantic seaboard and into the Tidewater region of North Carolina. The Iroquoian speakers occupied the inner Coastal Plain, and the Siouan speakers occupied the area south of the Neuse River. Late Woodland pottery identified at Camp Lejeune includes fabric-impressed, simple-stamped, incised, and plain pottery with sand-and-pebble temper characteristic of the Iroquoian speakers, as well as fabric-impressed and plain pottery with shell temper characteristic of the southern Siouan speakers.

The Native American presence quickly declined with the arrival of European colonists, who brought diseases that killed the majority of the Native Americans living on the Coastal Plain by the first decade of the eighteenth century. John Lawson, an early chronicler and explorer in the Carolinas, observed



Examples of pottery recovered during archaeological investigations at Greater Sandy Run at Camp Lejeune.

that Native American populations declined 50 to 90 percent very rapidly after European contact. He estimated that by 1705, 83 percent of the native inhabitants within 200 miles of European settlements had perished from epidemics. Native Americans were also sold into slavery by the early settlers of the region. The deplorable treatment of Native Americans led to the Tuscarora War (1711 to 1713). By 1713, at the end of the war, there were no American Indians living in the south coastal region of North Carolina.

Complex Native American societies and agricultural systems had been firmly established by the time Europeans arrived in Onslow Bay. These now vanished Americans, who may have numbered as many as 200,000 in eastern North Carolina, left evidence of their 12,000-year presence in the more than 350 sites so far found on the base, such as ossuaries representing the Woodland Indians' respect for the dead, shell middens, and innumerable tools, weapon points, and pottery pieces.

## The Beginnings of a Colony

Although Giovanni de Verrazano, a Florentine exploring under the flag of Francis I of France, sailed through Onslow Bay in 1524, Europeans did not attempt settlement along North Carolina's shores until the 1600s. In 1584 an exploratory voyage sponsored by Englishman Sir Walter Raleigh traveled along the coastline of Onslow Bay before establishing Fort Raleigh on Roanoke Island. A map drawn by John White, an artist on the voyage who illustrated the commander's reports, shows remarkable knowledge of the New River area and indicates that Raleigh's explorers may have ventured into the inlet. Both the French and the Spanish attempted settlements along the coasts of the new continent, but their attempts eventually failed. In 1587 the English settlement of Fort Raleigh, initially established in 1585, was re-established on the North Carolina coast, but by 1590 the settlers had abandoned the fort, their fate a mystery. The settlement is historically known as the "Lost Colony." Jamestown, Virginia, established in 1607, became the first permanent English settlement in America.

It was not until the early 1700s that settlement in the coastal region of North Carolina, including present-day Onslow County, was successful. By that time the native Tuscarora Indians were no longer a threat to new settlement; they had either died during the recent Tuscarora War (1711 to 1713), died from newly introduced diseases to which they had no native resistance, or had been forced westward and out of the area. Like the native inhabitants before them, the early European settlers chose the land near navigable waterways for their first homes. Rivers and their principal tributaries, major creeks, and the sounds offered the most immediate access to the land and also provided the easiest and cheapest form of transportation.

By 1713 European settlers, who came from surrounding counties, neighboring states, and even from New England, had crossed the White Oak River into present-day Onslow County. It is difficult to determine from the incomplete records of the time, but it appears that the first permanent settlers in the area around Camp Lejeune were the three Dexter brothers from Massachusetts who recorded land grants beginning in 1713 at Bear Creek, Brown's Island, and Mittam's (later Town) Creek. The latter became the site of

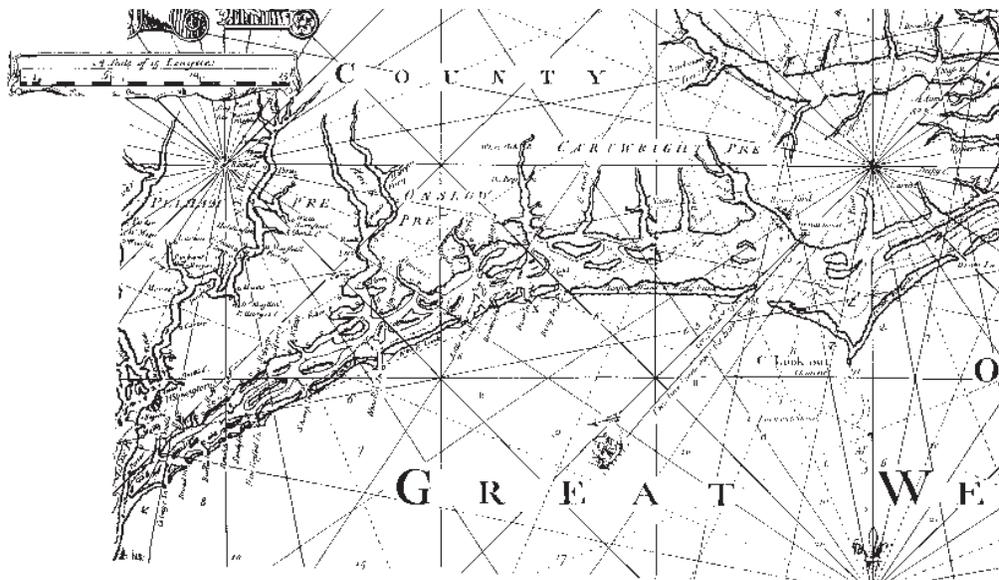
Onslow County's first incorporated town and county seat, Johnston. Another early settler was Captain William Stone, a surveyor who settled along the western bank of the New River in 1722 and is remembered today as the namesake of Stones Creek and Stones Bay, which at over four miles is the widest point in the New River.

Although the New River was used as the major transportation and commercial trade route, it presented the early settlers with many navigational problems. The inlet bar of the New River was extremely shallow, prohibiting large ships from entering the mouth of the river. Portions of the inlet contained shifting channels and an interwoven series of oyster rocks (accumulated beds of oyster shells) extending almost 600 yards down the primary channel beyond the inlet and into the open ocean. As a result of these limitations, only a few small, slow-growing settlements developed.

### Onslow County Is Established

As settlement continued through the early eighteenth century, and the population of the area that would become Onslow County approached 200 families, area citizens petitioned Colonial Governor George Burrington requesting that a new precinct, or county, be created to lessen the hardships of dealing with the distant governments of New Hanover and Carteret counties. Governor Burrington responded with an executive order on 23 November 1731, creating Onslow Precinct from portions of the two previously mentioned counties and naming it in honor of the Right Honorable Arthur Onslow, Speaker of the House of Commons in Great Britain. The General Assembly of the colonial government felt that their prerogatives had been violated, however, and did not recognize the new precinct until 21 February 1734.

Onslow County's first three courthouses were located within the Camp Lejeune area. The first courthouse was established in 1732 at Jarrott's Point, from which Courthouse Bay derives its name; the second courthouse was near Paradise Point beginning in 1737; and the construction of the third courthouse was begun at Johnston on Town Point in 1741. In



Detail of a 1738 map of Carolina showing various "ferrey" locations along Onslow County's waterways.

A view of Onslow County's Courthouse, constructed in 1884. The county seat was moved inland to this location, which was incorporated as Onslow Courthouse in 1785. In 1842, the name of the town was changed to Jacksonville. In 1904, this courthouse was demolished and a new courthouse constructed on the site.



1752, before construction was completed, a catastrophic storm destroyed the partially completed building and reduced the village of Johnston to rubble. Beginning in 1755 all subsequent county courthouses were located at Wantland's Spring, which is known today as Jacksonville.

## Slow Growth During the Eighteenth Century

Onslow County's character was basically agrarian during the first 200 years of its existence. It was a region of mostly small farms whose economy revolved around agriculture, forest products (essentially naval stores), fishing, and rudimentary manufacturing. Naval stores production was based on the extraction of resinous juices from longleaf pines to create tar and pitch, used for waterproofing and preserving the hulls and decks of wooden sailing vessels. Turpentine products were produced in smaller amounts until the beginning of the Antebellum period, when they became the principal export. The production of naval stores, the first major occupation to which the settlers turned, became the greatest source of income for the wealthy planter class and the county's most profitable export. The production of naval stores was the only industry in which North Carolina took first place among the British colonies; in fact, from 1720 to the eve of the Civil War, North Carolina was the world leader in the production of naval stores. And, during those years, Onslow County frequently ranked as high as fourth place among North Carolina counties in production.

Slave labor underpinned the naval stores industry, and as the industry expanded so did the number of required bondsmen. By the end of the Colonial period Onslow County's population was estimated at 5,000 persons, approximately one-third of whom were slaves. Many slaves were employed in the naval stores industry; others were skilled artisans or worked on area farms. The Onslow County region, however, did not develop an agricultural economy based on a plantation system, like those that characterized other coastal regions, such as the Lower Cape Fear River Valley, the South Carolina Low Country, and the Virginia Tidewater. Natural factors, such as Onslow's small harbors, dangerous shoals, and shifting and shallow inlets, discouraged such plantation-style commerce. Instead, the majority of the county's slaveholders lived on small farms, held few slaves, and pursued a combination of subsistence/commercial farming and stock raising. Indian corn, peas, and livestock were the agricultural foundation of the county as the Colonial period drew to a close. In addition, Onslow produced rice, indigo, flour, flax, cotton, hemp, butter, beef, and pork, along with other vegetables and fruit, and a little tobacco for home consumption.

Milling was the only other industry of significance in the county. First gristmills, then sawmills were erected along the banks of Onslow's rivers and their principal tributaries in considerable numbers. With the proximity of the sea and other water sources, fishing and even whaling were also undertaken, but usually only to supplement other economic endeavors. A whaling station was established at Bear Inlet in the early 1800s, at Camp Lejeune's northeastern border.

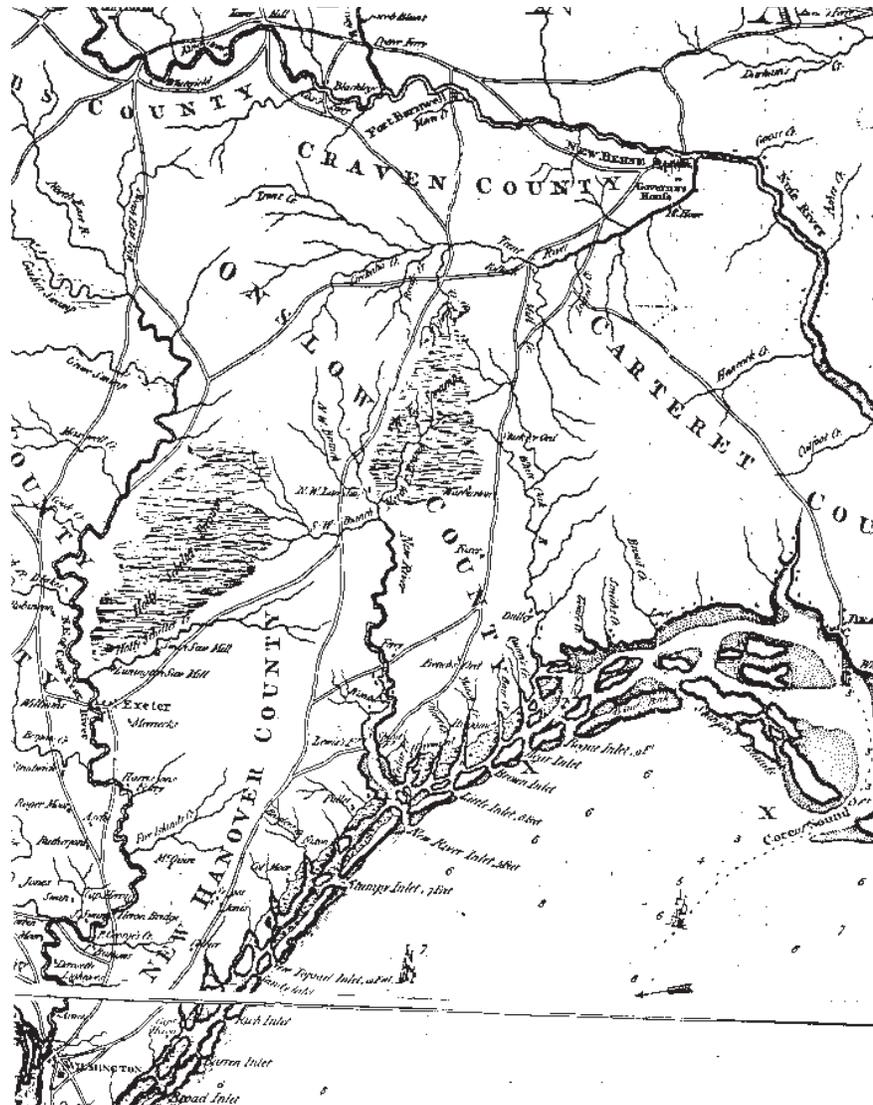
On 7 May 1775 riders thundered down the colonial roadways, crossing the area of Camp Lejeune on the Lower Ferry (Sneads Ferry), and informed Onslow's excited citizenry that the American Revolution had begun. North Carolina and Onslow patriots became actively involved in 1776 with the first

British attempt to seize the southern colonies. At the Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge on 27 February 1776 the Americans, with a sizeable contingent of Onslow County militiamen, decisively defeated the Loyalists (Tories) who had been directed by the colonial governor, Josiah Martin, to unite with a British force afloat in the Cape Fear River. This was the first significant American victory of the Revolution, which, along with the subsequent British failure to capture Charleston, meant that Onslow County and the southern colonies were free from British occupation and plundering until 1781. Only the Royal Navy provided a constant reminder of the British presence with its blockading warships.

### Early Statehood

There was little visible change to Onslow County after the American Revolution. The major effect of the war on the county was economic because of the disruption of shipping by the British blockade. Despite the blockade, the coast was kept open and the shallow inlets permitted smaller vessels access to domestic and overseas markets. During the nineteenth century settlement continued further inland along the navigable waterways. Waterways and shipping continued as the primary means of transportation—although an additional attempt to improve New River navigability failed yet again—and naval stores remained the most important export. In fact, the economy that had evolved during the Colonial period, based primarily on the production of naval stores and the county's agricultural bounty, continued to flourish. Naval stores production increased dramatically following the beginning of the French Revolution in 1791 with tar exports more than doubling and turpentine production beginning a rise that would last until the Civil War. Milling also attained greater importance.

Despite these economic successes, an out-migration of residents, known as the Great Exodus from North Carolina, occurred during the 1830s and 1840s. Onslow County lost some of its largest and wealthiest landowners and many of its most public-spirited and educated citizens. This move to newly opened lands to the south and west was driven by five factors: land grants given for military service in the American Revolution and the War of 1812; the availability of cheap land further west; the existence of excellent land elsewhere for growing cotton, which was becoming the South's top cash crop; higher prices elsewhere for hiring out slaves; and a decline of productivity of the heavily farmed soils. Inland



Detail of a 1794 map of the Carolinas indicating locations of large land holdings, small settlements, and ferry crossings along the New River. Major overland routes are also indicated including Old Wilmington Road, which crossed the New River at Sneads Ferry.

migration within the county itself also increased, driven by the depletion of the coast's already poor soil. Onslow County's soils, particularly in the Camp Lejeune/New River area, consist of a variety of sandy loams and silty, poorly drained soils not well suited for the intensive agricultural efforts as practiced in other regions. Agriculture remained a pillar of the county's economy during this period, but naval stores (particularly turpentine) remained the county's most profitable occupation and export.

By the middle of the nineteenth century at least five major projects to improve the navigability of the New River had been attempted. In 1855 one last attempt to clear the most hazardous part of the New River's channel, the 600-yard rack of oyster rocks above the tidal delta, was directed by the North Carolina General Assembly. The project resulted in no significant improvement in the river's navigability, which meant that just before and during the Civil War access to and egress from Onslow's major waterway and its county seat of Jacksonville were limited by a narrow, twisted channel approximately 50 feet wide and five feet deep at the river's mouth.

## The Civil War

The 1860 federal census recorded that of 8,856 people living in Onslow County, 3,499 were slaves. Slaves and free blacks contributed much of the hard labor required to carve the county from the wilderness and the artisans and skilled workmen who produced many of the bridges, boats, and buildings in the county. Of the 1,175 families living in the county, 313 were slaveholders. Thus, approximately 55 to 58 percent of the county's population were either slaves or slaveholders on the eve of the Civil War.

Onslow's citizens were as inflamed as those of surrounding counties by the issues that had divided the North and South over the previous decade. The coastal counties, however, took more of a "wait-and-see" attitude compared with the majority of the state with respect to the election of President Lincoln in 1860. Lincoln's call for troops, however, soon galvanized the populace in support of secession. Onslow County voted for secession 631 to 89 and subsequently contributed a larger percentage of its men to the Confederate cause than any county in the region. On 20 May 1861 North Carolina officially seceded from the Union.

Onslow soon found itself on the frontiers of the Confederacy, as the White Oak River separated it from the Union forces of the Department of North Carolina headquartered in New Bern to the north and the Confederate forces of the Department of the Cape Fear headquartered in Wilmington to the south. Onslow County contributed seven companies to the Confederate Army, five infantry and two cavalry, which were assigned to the 3rd, 24th, 35th, 41st and 61st Regiments, North Carolina Troops. Over all, more than 1,000 men, at least 70 percent of the county's voting population, enlisted to fight for the Confederacy. Notable soldiers from the Camp Lejeune area included Colonel Edward Fonvielle and Lieutenant Colonel (Dr.) William J. Montfort (after whose family "Montford" Point would be named, although incorrectly spelled) of the 21st State Militia, Captains Solomon Gornto and Edwin H. Rhodes of the 3rd North Carolina, and Captain (Dr.) Edward W. Ward of the 41st North Carolina (3rd North Carolina Cavalry). Except for Rhodes, these men and more than 30

others identified from the Camp Lejeune area are buried in the Montford Point Cemetery.

Onslow County served as a battleground for the entirety of the war, with most of the intense fighting in the Camp Lejeune area centered around Bear Creek, Bear Inlet, and the lower New River. It was no coincidence that this fighting took place near the ocean because it consisted mostly of amphibious raids to destroy local salt works. Salt was a vital necessity in the preservation of foodstuffs, and since the Union blockade precluded importation of the quantity required, salt works had rapidly appeared along the coast, a consequence of the area's geography.

Both the first and the last actions of the war in Onslow County were to occur within the present area of Camp Lejeune. On 17 December 1861 a landing party from the USS Gemsbock put ashore on Cedar Point at the New River's mouth, near Captain Ward's plantation. They slaughtered cattle, examined a Confederate schooner, and then withdrew under the watchful eyes of Southern pickets. Then, just one month prior to end of hostilities, the Union 2nd and 3rd Divisions, XXIII Corps, under Major General Darius N. Couch, marched through Onslow County en route to a rendezvous with General William T. Sherman and a final meeting with the remnants of the army of General Joseph E. Johnston.

Onslow County's most storied Civil War engagement, the Battle of New River (23 to 25 November 1862), occurred within the boundaries of present-day Camp Lejeune. In this battle, the irrepressible William B. Cushing, United States Volunteer Navy, drove his iron-hulled screw steamer, the USS Ellis, into the New River's dangerous mouth and deceptive channels on the early morning of 23 November. His mission was to capture Jacksonville, seize any blockade runners, destroy salt works, and withdraw. Cushing completed his mission quickly, but in an attempt to escape encircling Confederates, he ran hard aground at the channel's mouth off Swan's Point, a victim of the same navigational limitations that had impeded Onslow's progress for 150 years. Under heavy fire from two Confederate cavalry companies and one of artillery, Cushing managed to blow up the Ellis and escape with his crew out of harm's way on 25 November and back out to the Atlantic.



Early twentieth century image of Henderson's Mill, owned by Isaac Newton Henderson. The water-powered saw- and grist mill was located on Queens Creek.



View of the fishing village known as Gilliken's Island located on the banks of Brown's Inlet. The fishermen who occupied the seasonal camp lived in these small wooden huts.



Late 1930s image of Onslow County cotton harvest being brought to the gin.

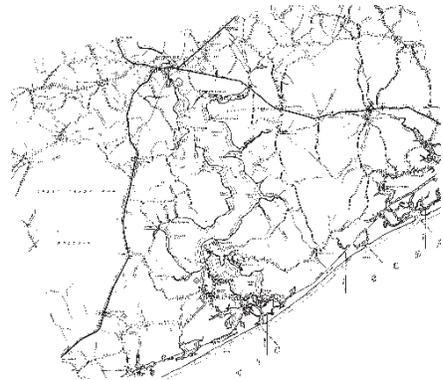
Unlike previous conflicts, the Civil War thoroughly devastated Onslow County economically, socially, and physically. Most of the slaves remained in the county during the war, although some fled across the White Oak River to freedom, and some actively assisted in the war's efforts on both sides. With the war's conclusion, however, African Americans found themselves freed but without the means for survival. The area's landed aristocracy had virtually ceased to exist, and veterans returned to a war-torn landscape. It would require several generations before Onslow County and the Camp Lejeune area would recover socially and economically.

By 1880 economic activities were beginning to return to their prewar levels. Although corn continued as the county's most abundant crop, cotton was becoming the most profitable and helped supply the state's growing textile industry. The unfettered growth of cotton soon exhausted the inadequate soils, however, and by the turn of the century, encouraged by the rapidly expanding tobacco industry, Onslow County farmers began turning to that staple as a new cash crop. Other industries emerged or expanded within the county to offset the diminishing production of naval stores: lumbering was the most significant, with second-growth loblolly pines being the principal target for exploitation. Livestock raising and commercial fishing increased as grist- and sawmilling began to dwindle; however, new industries, such as oyster farming and tourism, were dashed by the effect of a hurricane in October 1879.

The advent of the railroad in 1893, connecting Jacksonville to Wilmington and New Bern, finally initiated meaningful recovery in the region. New York financier Thomas A. McIntyre, who started the lumber industry in Onslow County on a major scale, brought in a railroad, a predecessor to the Atlantic Coast Line (ACL), to facilitate the development of lumbering and other industries. The railroad, a portion of which passed through Camp Lejeune's western edge, also offered new transportation opportunities and provided freight access to distant markets.

## The Twentieth Century

After almost two centuries, waterborne commerce was supplanted by the railroad during the late nineteenth century. Still, the area's natural waterways, augmented by completion of the Atlantic Intercostal Waterway through the Camp Lejeune area in 1932, remained major arteries of transportation, and many area



1938 Onslow County highway map showing the location of small communities such as Marines, Fulcher Landing, and Sneads Ferry along the New River.



View of a car being carried across the New River at Sneads Ferry.



During the early twentieth century Onslow County farmers were still reliant upon horse and mule-drawn equipment such as this rail body car.



Late 1930s image of a truck hauling one of Onslow County's valuable natural resources—lumber.

residents continued to receive their groceries and other supplies by boat from the New River as their ancestors had done for decades. Residents continued to use the network of dirt roads that had existed with minor alteration since the Civil War, but some hard-surfaced roads began to appear. In 1924 U.S. Route 17, which generally follows the trace of the old Colonial Post Road, portions of which passed through the Camp Lejeune area, was completed, and in 1934 State Route 24 was constructed.

The twentieth century also ushered in many changes in Onslow County's agricultural and manufacturing pursuits. The county's last turpentine distillery ceased operation in 1907, and after the first few decades of the new century cotton also ceased to be an important crop, especially in the Camp Lejeune area. Lumbering and tobacco farming partially offset the consequent economic impact; bright leaf tobacco, used primarily for cigarettes, replaced cotton as the leading cash crop. Since the end of the Civil War there had been a rise in tenant farming in the region and within the state as a whole.

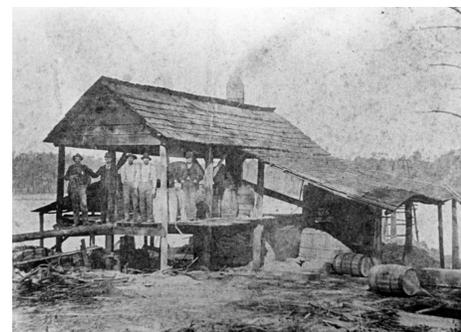
By 1940, 41 percent of Onslow County's farms were operated through tenancy. Large farm tracts disappeared, broken into smaller farms, with only lumber companies holding large-acreage tracts. Such companies included the Pine Land Company, the John L. Roper Lumber Company, the Weeks Brothers, the North Carolina Pulp Company, the Souther Kraft Corporation, the Southern Land Sales Corporation, and the Swansboro Land and Lumber Company. Into the 1920s a few small family-owned sawmills, such as Henderson's Mill, operated in Onslow County. The region's boat-building enterprises were also an important part of the economy. Pleasure boats, as well as working boats, were constructed in the county. "May parties" or "banks parties," facilitated by charter boats, became a popular leisure activity along the New River.

By 1940 approximately 11,200 acres of the Camp Lejeune area were planted fields and the remainder was secondary forest growth, principally loblolly pines. The region's economy was already weak by the 1920s, so the Crash of 1929 and Great Depression had relatively little further impact on the majority of citizens, who had already survived the farm price collapse that followed World War I.

In 1941 most Onslow County residents were descendants of eighteenth-century settler families or former slaves (27 percent of the population was of African-American descent). They were mostly engaged in subsistence farming and manufacturing; however, Onslow County's quiet lifestyle would shortly and suddenly be transformed by a world war.



Onslow County's tobacco harvests were taken by truck to the market in Kinston.



Turpentine distillery that operated on Catherine Lake in the early 1900s. Resin from the county's longleaf pines was distilled to make turpentine.



The Matthews Brothers Nethouse located on Queens Creek was one of numerous boat building enterprises in Onslow County during the mid-twentieth century.



Image of the small community of Fulcher's Landing.



General John A. Lejeune (1867-1942). Gen Lejeune, who served more than 40 years in the Marine Corps, was Commandant of the Marine Corps from June 1920 to March 1929. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.