

SOUTH MILLS

Not until around 1700 did settlers begin to occupy land in the northern end of the county. In 1716 William Joy received a grant of land of over 1000 acres lying within a fork between a creek and the upper reaches of the Pasquotank River. The creek soon became known as Joy's creek, although in recent years the spelling has been corrupted by some maps as "Joyce Creek". In 1717 he became blind and began to sell off some of his holdings to Cornelius Forehand and James Jones, whose descendants still reside in the area. With the building of the Dismal Swamp Canal in 1793 and its completion in 1805 the northern area grew and the community known as "New Lebanon" became the largest development in Camden. In 1839 New Lebanon was renamed "South Mills" because of the two watermills located below the locks that had been erected by David Pritchard.

During April 1862, Union forces attempted to blow up the locks at South Mills in order to impede use of the Dismal Swamp Canal by Southern vessels. The Yankees were turned back by the 3rd Georgia Regiment and D. D. Ferebee's local militia three miles below the town of South Mills. This battle can be researched under the names: Battle of South Mills or Battle of Sawyer's Lane.

In 1883 John Abbott introduced a bill to have South Mills and Shiloh incorporated as towns. South Mills grew and even had its own band. A terrible fire destroyed most of the town in 1904. In 1913 the town built a modern high school and it was maintained until 1952.

Today South Mills is the largest community in the county with a 4-lane highway, the Halstead Bridge and the Dismal Swamp Canal Welcome Center. Housing developments now dot the area and the population is expected to steadily increase.

CAMDEN

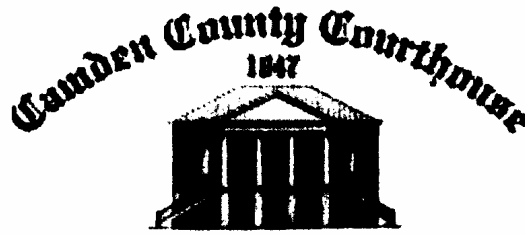
Camden is located approximately halfway of Camden County. First known as Plank Bridge, George Washington made it a "port of entry" on Sawyer's Creek in 1790 and appointed Isaac Gregory its first Collector of Customs. Plank Bridge soon became a port of considerable maritime activity and the community grew. Joseph Jones attempted to establish a town there called Jonesboro. Wharves and warehouses dotted Sawyer's Creek but the town was doomed to failure as ships became larger and required deeper water, thus, a new development was started at the Narrows. The town of Redding, later called Elizabeth City, replaced Jonesboro as the commercial center of the Albemarle.

With the formation of Camden County in 1777, the local government met at Joseph Jones home located in the center of the county. The county later purchased land in front of his home from Thomas Sawyer and built a courthouse, jail and stocks in 1782. As Jonesboro decline, the area was called Camden and soon became the focal point of the county as the seat of government and schools were located there. Camden has built 3 courthouses (1782, 1847 and an annex in 1997) and 3 jails (1782, ? , and 1910). Today Camden sends prisoners to the tri-county jail in Pasquotank. The 1910 jail was restored in 1986.

SHILOH

Shiloh had its beginning as part of "Danson's Grant," a tract of 3640 acres between Portohonk Creek and Arnuse Creek. This tract of land, later called, "Danson Manor" was shown on the map which Edward Moseley published in 1733. William Burgess purchased a large section of Danson Manor and moved his church family, organized in 1727, to Portohonk Creek. A new church was built for the Baptist congregation. The church acquired the name Shiloh Baptist Church in 1812.

Before long many people moved into the area and the bay fronting Danson Manor developed warehouses for shippers. Windmills were built along the bay. Ultimately, five windmills dotted the bay and the first name given to the area was Milltown. Later as land travel became more accessible and people moved inland, the area became known as Shiloh, probably deriving its name from the Baptist Church. Shiloh became the official name for the area when the post office opened in 1827. The Baptist Church now existing in the township of Shiloh was built in 1849.



The Historic Camden County Courthouse

A Brief History

Camden County was created from part of Pasquotank County on May 9, 1777 by North Carolina's first General Assembly. Camden County was named in honor of Sir Charles Pratt, the first Earl of Camden. As a member of Parliament, Sir Charles opposed the Stamp Act and taxation of the American colonies. These views won him wide popularity in the newly-formed United States.

The red-brick Historic Camden County Courthouse was constructed beginning in 1846 following a fire that burned the original wooden county courthouse (which was built in 1782). The brick Courthouse, which stands on the site of the original courthouse, was completed in 1847. It is a Greek revival brick structure with a portico of four massive columns setting on brick piers.

Through the Civil War and throughout the latter-1800's, the Historic Courthouse was used as a courthouse, meeting place, and military encampment. The first known major work on the Historic Courthouse was done in 1898 when the Commissioners awarded contracts that year for fire-proofing portions of the building holding records of the Register of Deeds and the Clerk of Superior Court.

The earliest known photo of the Historic Courthouse pre-dates 1908 and shows an adjacent hotel building. County Commissioner records show that, on May 4, 1908, the Sheriff was ordered by the Commissioners to advertise the hotel building for sale and to sell the hotel building on that June 1, with removal no later than July 30. The hotel was removed to make way for the Old Jail that was con-

structed on that site in 1910.

Although no known records exist, it appears there was extensive renovation of the building done in the period 1910 to 1925 with vaults created in the offices of the Register of Deeds and Clerk of Superior Court, electricity added to the building, and new flooring installed inside the courtroom. The last known staining and varnishing of the benches occurred in 1924 with a \$45.00 contract, of which \$15 was for painting the courtroom walls.

During the 1970's or 1980's, heating, venting and air conditioning was added to the building. Also during this period, the original wooden doors were removed from the first floor and replaced with glass doors, and burnt orange carpeting was installed. These improvements modernized the building for then-current times.

In 1996, a major addition to the Courthouse was constructed that added a new courtroom and bathrooms, expanded the area for the Clerk of Superior Court and the Register of Deeds and added an elevator for handicap accessibility. Construction of the addition did not significantly alter the Historic Courthouse, and the new brick siding complimented the old brick while differentiating between the old and new structures.

Other than the 1920's and 1970's improvements, there has been no significant renovation of the Historic Camden County Courthouse since its opening in 1847. The current renovation seeks to maintain the historic integrity of the structure while making it a functional building for the 21st century.

Camden – County of Opportunity

On May 9, 1777 the General Assembly of North Carolina passed a bill to create a new county on the northeast side of the Pasquotank River. Twice during the Colonial Period the measure had been denied by the Colonial governor, but this time led by Joseph Jones, the new government of the Revolution approved the measure and the new county was called Camden. Camden was named in honor of Sir Charles Pratt, the Earl of Camden, because he had supported the colonist in their struggle against King George III of England. During the Revolutionary War Camden furnished 416 men and officers, more than any other northeast county in the state.

After the Revolutionary War, the residents of Camden built a courthouse, jail and stocks in 1782 on property obtained from Thomas Sawyer at about the same spot of the present-day courthouse. There have been three courthouses and three jails located on this spot over the past 200 years.

The wooden courthouse built in 1782 burned in 1846, thus a new brick one was built in 1847 and it served Camden until 1996. A new courthouse annex built in 1997 serves the county today.

The first jail was used until the 1880's; after which, a second jail was constructed. This one burned in 1910 as a result of an attempted prison escape. The third jail was built in 1910 at a cost of \$6250. Services of this jail were discontinued in the 1940's when Camden began sending its prisoners to Pasquotank jail. Today, the tri-county (Pasquotank, Camden and Perquimans) jail houses prisoners from Camden.

The third jail, a two-story structure, has been restored to its original appearance. The first floor now houses the Board of Elections. The second floor has the original bull-pen containing 4 cells. Also on the second floor is a small museum which uses pictures and artifacts to relate

the history of Camden. Outside, stocks and a pillory have been rebuilt to show punishment used in the 18th Century.

Life was simple in the late 1700's. When the first census was taken in 1790, Camden had a population of approximately 4100. While George Washington was president, construction began on the Dismal Swamp Canal. It began in 1793 and ended 12 years later in 1805. The construction of the canal proved to be one of the biggest events to take place in Camden County.

In 1818, President James Monroe stayed overnight at the Farange Hotel near the present-day Dismal Swamp Welcome Center and also at the home of Enoch Sawyer at the Pecan Farm. He was the only known President to stay overnight in Camden.

Camden's population grew to 6733 in 1830, but by 1840, it had dropped to 5500. This population number was to remain fairly constant for the next 160 years. Only in

the year 2001, did the population of Camden surpass 7000.

An early resident of Camden was Tamsen Eustes who came from Massachusetts to teach at the Elizabeth City Academy. She met and married Tully Dozier of Camden in 1829. Tragedy struck and Tully and their two children died in December 1831. Tamsen sold her estate and moved to Illinois and soon met and married a widower named George Donner. They decided to move to California in 1846 and tragedy was to once again face our Tamsen Donner. Early snows in the winter of 1846 trapped the wagon train moving west. Tamsen became a victim of cannibalism in the famous "Donner Party".

In the early 1900's, Camden had over 20 schools throughout the county. In 1913, South Mills built a modern high school. By the 1920's, Camden had 4 high schools. For economic reasons, in the 1940's, south Camden sent its high school students to Elizabeth City. In 1952, the citizens of

Camden passed a bond to build two new consolidated high schools: Camden High School for white students and Sawyer's Creek High School for black students. Sawyer's Creek School was renamed Marion Anderson High School in 1955. The schools were integrated in 1969 and today Camden has three main schools: Camden High School (9 -12), Camden Middle (6 - 8), and Grandy Primary (K - 5).

In 1923, the building of the "Floating Road" was hailed by the Elizabeth City Daily Advance with the statement, "Camden may henceforth retain her own name, but from hence forth and forever in everything except name she is one with Pasquotank." Then in 1941, the Huffman Company began construction on the "Camden Causeway" by pumping 899,000 cubic yards of sand to create a 3 mile causeway to link Camden and Pasquotank counties.

Even though Camden has close ties and shares many services with Pasquotank, Camden is proud to be a small county with no incorporated town and it has

only one stop light in the whole county. Camden residents take pride in their rural population, school system, and county government and they look forward to its future in the 21st Century.

Today the citizens of Camden, led by Clay and Nancy Ferebee, are restoring the 1847 courthouse. People may aid in the endeavor by purchasing a brick for \$75 to help complete the walkways around the grounds. A three line inscription is included on each brick. What a wonderful way to honor a loved one or memorialize a veteran!



CAMDEN COURTHOUSE

The beautiful Camden Courthouse, a Greek Revival brick structure with a portico of four massive columns on brick piers, was built in 1847. This courthouse replaced a wooden structure built in 1782. A new ground-level judicial building (courthouse) was dedicated February 6, 1998.

Education in Camden

In Camden's early days, there were no public schools. Only the wealthy could seek higher education through private schools. By 1840 the state began to sponsor public school for its young people and by 1884, Camden had 29 schools in the county. These units consisted of one or two teacher schools with education for both white and colored students.

Shiloh District

White

1. Three Branch
2. Oak Ridge
3. Sandy Hook
4. Shiloh
5. Billets Bridge
6. Old Trap

Colored

1. Wickham
(Sugar Hill)
2. Hickory Branch

Courthouse District

White

1. Milldam
2. Pond
3. Sawyer Creek
4. Lake
5. Herring
6. Courthouse

Colored

1. Ivey Neck
2. Chantilly
3. Sawyer Creek
4. Morgan

South Mills District

White

1. Fork
2. Sharon
3. Abbotts Mill
4. Old McBride
5. Cow Mill
6. Metropolitan

Colored

1. Fork
2. Mile Swamp
3. Old Swamp
4. New McBride
5. Tick Mill

By the turn of the Century, Camden still maintained about 22 schools within walking distance for students. But, in 1913, South Mills built a high school with grades 1 – 11 as did Old Trap in 1921, Shiloh in 1923, and the Camden in 1926. Thus, in the 1920's, Camden County had 4 high schools.

By 1945, South Camden was sending its high school students to Elizabeth City while South Mills retained their high school. The citizens of Camden began to demand a school system of its own and a referendum was passed to create a high school for white and colored students. Thus, in 1952, Camden High School was established for white students and Sawyer Creek High School was opened for the black students. South Mills retained its elementary school into the '60's. In 1955, Sawyer Creek High School was renamed Marion Anderson High School with W.C. Witherspoon as principal. In 1969, the schools were totally integrated and today Camden has three schools: Grandy Primary (Grades k – 5), Camden Middle School (Grades 6 – 8) and Camden High School (Grades 9 – 12).

WADE POINT LIGHTHOUSE

Pasquotank River, Serving Pasquotank and Camden Counties until 1955



The Wade Point Lighthouse served as the Pasquotank River's sentinel for almost 100 years from 1859 to 1955. The screw-pile lighthouse was a 26 foot square building which rested on five steel pilings with the floor about 12 feet above the water's surface. The original lighthouse was burned by Union forces (during the Civil War) in 1862 and was not rebuilt until after the war. The lighthouse served the Pasquotank River until 1955 when the Coast Guard decommissioned it and sold it to Elijah Tate from Coinjock for one dollar. The structure was destroyed when it slipped off the barge during a storm into the Pasquotank River. Today the pilings are still visible off Camden Point.

WEDNESDAY

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ALBEMARLE LIFE

DailyAdvance.com

Celebrating a gateway

By JULIAN MARCH

Correspondent

It took almost one million cubic yards of sand to raise the land under what is now the Camden Causeway.

"That was just a pure swamp there," said Alex Leary, a local historian, who added that the sand was pumped from the Pasquotank River. "It was almost impossible [to cross]."

The causeway is "approximately 3 miles long," said Leary. "It spans from the bridge all the way to the pecan farm."

Leary said that in the 19th and early 20th centuries, people had to use boats to come from the Camden side of the Pasquotank River to the Elizabeth City shore.

"Lamb's ferry had probably been there 100 years or more," he said. "I would say Lamb's ferry was operating in the early 1800s carrying people over. Most people in this area went to Elizabeth City by boat."

Leary said that when cars became available in the early 1900s, people in Camden wanted a road to Elizabeth City.

"Somewhere around 1910, they put a bridge there and put this old road in there. They tried to put dirt and sawdust and all that stuff. It was horrible if it flooded. If they had rain or a hurricane, that would just knock it out for a week or more. You can imagine trying to go through the swamp."

By the 1920s, cars were more widely available to working class people. Leary said that residents of Camden were seeking a more dependable way to travel to Elizabeth City in a car, since the original dirt road was often impassible because of flooding, rain, and hurricanes.

"In 1923 they built what was called the floating road," Leary said. "They put pilings down and put cement over top of it, and it had a very narrow road. In 1923, the Daily Advance published a story saying Camden could keep its name, but from then on it would be connected with Pasquotank County."

The floating road was raised about three feet off of the ground on steel bars braced by cement. The actual roadway was on top of the steel pilings. The paved road had six-inch steel runners on each side to prevent cars from going over. Leary said that the road was only about 18-feet wide, and that buses had to run on a schedule like trains on a track because two buses were too wide to go through at the same time. Leary said that the floating road was an improvement over the dirt road, but still not suitable for the low lying area. The flood waters would sometimes completely cover the road so that it was not visible.

"When they put the floating road down, everybody thought that was going to be great, but a hurricane would knock (into) that floating road, and they had a lot of trouble with that."

By the 1940s, residents saw that they needed a long term solution to their road problem. Leary said that an Elizabeth City company was responsible for pumping sand into the swamp from the Pasquotank River to build up the area into land that could be used for a road.

"The floating road was to the east side of the Camden Causeway," he said. "And eventually they would take this up. I remember seeing parts of the floating road when I was a kid, but they pulled all the ramps up. While they were pumping sand, they let the people continue to use the floating road and worked to the west side of it. The floating road was right next to it [the road today]."

Leary said that the company pumped sand into the area for four years.

"The Causeway was built during World War II," he said. "From 1941 to 1945 is when they pumped all that sand in there, and that was a pretty amazing accomplishment then." It was one of the largest earth moving projects for that time, according to Leary.

"What you're seeing-- at one time was just pure swamp. They say it's almost an endless bottom. They would drive pilings in there, and the things would just go right on out of sight. So that's why they figured they had to pump sand."

"They'd take these dredges and they'd pump sand and put boards down and just keep pumping more sand, then they'd put some more boards down, and keep pumping sand."

Leary added that the company inadvertently made what is now a popular fishing hole.

"Right there there's a little creek that comes up to the road where people go fishing a lot," he said. "The company made that so they could pump sand both ways."

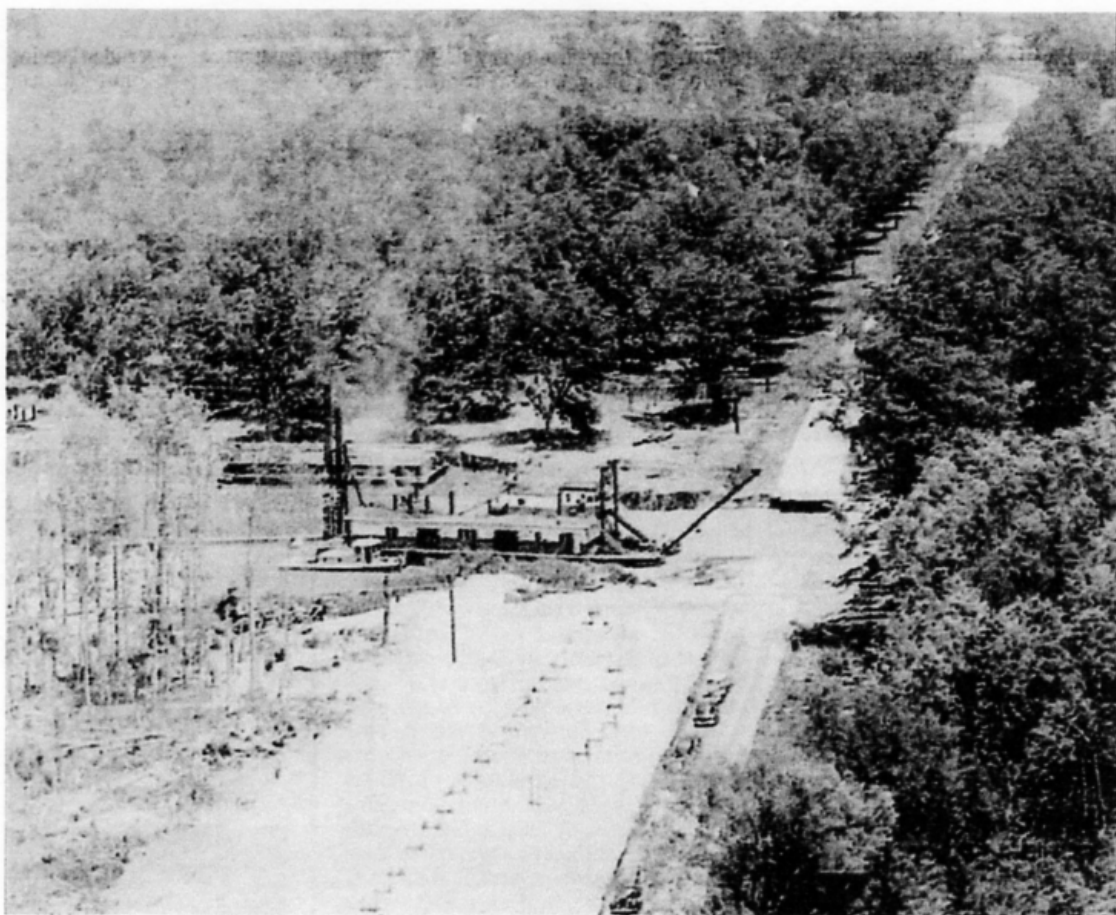
Leary said he is not certain of the exact date of the Causeway's official opening.

"I've heard two stories," he said. "They pumped all that sand in there and they had to let it settle. Somewhere in 1946, they told me that's when they actually put the road in there. Somebody else told me they didn't open it until 1948, but 1946 sounds like a whole lot more reasonable time."

This construction was backed by the North Carolina Department of Transportation.

"The Camden Causeway was a state project," said Nicole Burris, Deputy Director of Public Information for N.C. D.O.T.

The newly paved and built up road was probably in place by 1946.





FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

You might be a "Swampneck"!

If you enjoy fresh air, sunlight dappled trees clothed in dense vine swags, and butterflies dipping and floating on gentle flight patterns..... **then you might be a "Swampneck"**. If spotting a gentle fawn grazing on tender greens in a clearing in the distance excites you..... **then you might be a "Swampneck"**. If spying a lazy turtle, sunning its mottled back on an ancient log, while leisurely paddling in your canoe sounds like sheer bliss.... **then you might be a "Swampneck"**. If the words "Civil War" or "slaves seeking freedom" pique your interest..... **then you might be a "Swampneck"**.

DISMAL SWAMP CANAL, CAMDEN, N.C. - Forbidding as its name may be, the Great Dismal Swamp is one of the few natural American gems remaining in the East. Despite its impressive size and age, the Great Dismal Swamp remains a mystery to most people. We invite you to come see why George Washington, Robert Frost and many other notables in America's history books were lured by Nature's backdrop of emerald draping vines and sweet warbles of the songbirds which call the swamp "home". I guess we could call them all **"Swampnecks"**! The swamp shelters a wealth of history and lore, flora and fauna.

The modern day swamp retains its mystery, but we are able to explore its secrets, without the hardships endured by the pioneering spirits that sought to tame it. Home to one of the largest Black Bear populations on the East Coast, subtropical birds, butterflies, bobcats and white-tailed deer, it is easily understood why this land deserves our protection.

The Dismal Swamp Welcome Center and **Dismal Swamp State Park** are ideally located on US Hwy 17N, in South Mills, NC, 3 miles from the NC/VA border. Neighboring Elizabeth City, 15 miles to the south, provides many lodging venues. Camden County enjoys some great local eateries, with home-cooking like your mama's. **"Swampnecks"** love "mama's cooking"

The Dismal Swamp Canal is an alternate route along the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway, connecting the Chesapeake Bay with the Albemarle Sound. The AIWW provides pleasure boats with a protected inland channel between Norfolk, Virginia, all the way to Miami, Florida. The Canal is on the National Register of Historic Places as a Historic Landmark, noted as a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark, and has received the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Designation. The Welcome Center is home to a 150' face dock that provides a rest stop to nearly 2,000 boaters yearly.

The Dismal Swamp Welcome Center provides a friendly face and tourism information to the traveling public. Whether by water or by land, the staff at this lovely complex aims to please, and assist with a variety of services.

The Dismal Swamp State Park allows visitors to our area the opportunity to finally “walk” across the canal into the swamp. One of NC’s newest State Parks features nearly 17 miles of hiking/mountain biking trails. A 300’ boardwalk which allows guests a “modern” passage into the dense swamp is currently undergoing an expansion project to allow even further “*Swampneck*” exploration. Exhibits provide more detailed information about the plant life, wildlife and history of the swamp.

Logging of Shingles Provides Today’s Trails - Hiking on the original logging trails where wilderness surrounds you, provides a tempered trek into the vast swamp. The late Moses White, a successful logger, timbered in the Dismal Swamp. 18th century timbering of Juniper and White Cedar supplied shingles for the north, transported by lighters (a flat-bottom boat) on the Canal. Ironically, yesterday’s history provides for today’s opportunities.

A Walk on the Wild Side - Do you appreciate nature’s beauty, outdoor fun and a walk on the “wild” side? You **ARE** a “*Swampneck*”! Plan a day visiting the Dismal Swamp. Didn’t bring your bike? We have four adult bikes for you to borrow for the afternoon on our 3 mile paved hiking and biking trail. Bring your camera or binoculars to catch your favorite feathered friend or maybe a soft, fuzzy mammal. We are proud of the fact that we are recognized as a part of the NC Birding Trail and East Coast Greenway. Bring a picnic lunch and spread out your fare on our picnic tables, under the pines. Public restrooms are plentiful.

Paddle for the Border - Around January, we “*Swampnecks*” start preparation for our annual Paddle for the Border. The first Saturday in May attracts paddlers from diverse places to enjoy a trek up the Canal to Virginia. With a limit of 230 crafts, the event fills up quickly. Brightly colored canoes and kayaks are placed on the banks, while their owners register and enjoy a quick breakfast. The day is filled with laughter, entertainment and excitement as the adventurers make the 7.5 mile journey. Lunch is their reward, when they reach their destination, along with stories that they will share for days to come. If you can’t come for this event, bring you canoe or kayak anytime, and launch it by the pedestrian bridge access to our State Park.

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