

Early Physicians

During the colonial period very few physicians served the small population in Onslow County. Medical knowledge of the time was limited and practices such as bleeding were common place. Most medical issues were treated with home remedies unless an emergency warranted the visit of a doctor. People could not afford the services of a doctor and often traded goods for care rather than money. Many of the physicians were not trained at a University but learned through apprenticeships. These physicians often held more than one job because the role of doctor did not always pay very well. Several of Onslow's early doctors were also farmers, kept taverns, and held public offices.

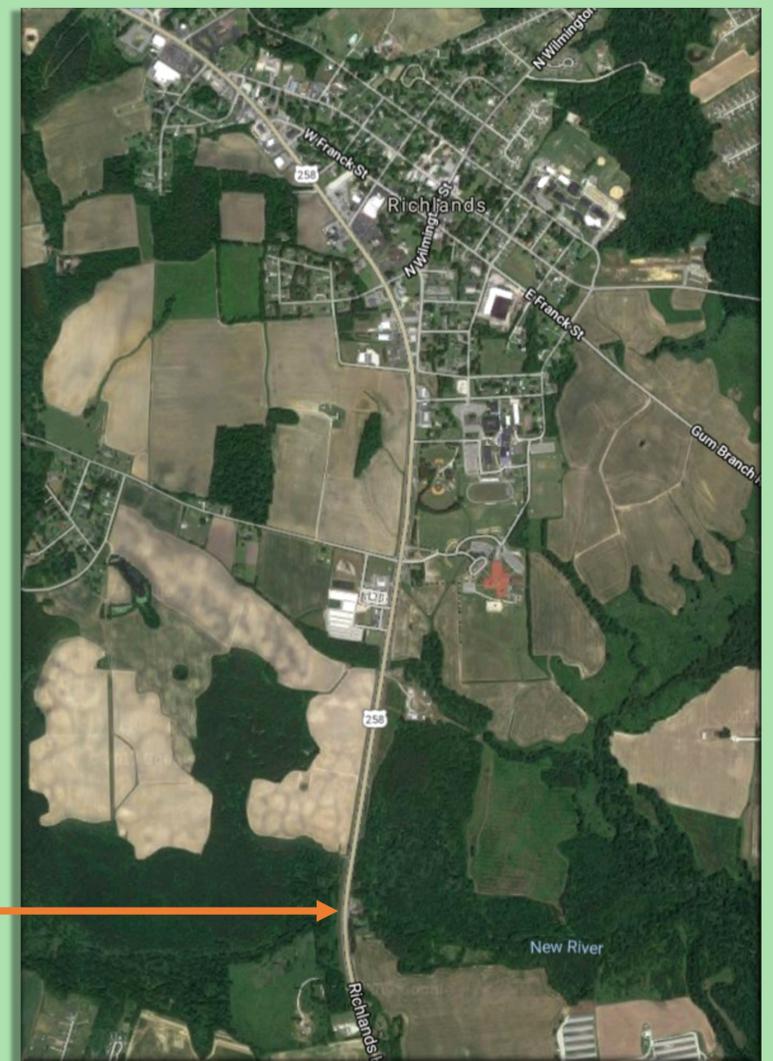
An 18th century surgeon and physician bleed a woman as treatment for her illness. It was thought that by letting blood out of a patient that bad humors might be removed from the body. Treatments such as this often caused more harm than good. Remedies like purging and bleeding caused fluids to leave the body of a person who, already ill, would today be kept hydrated.



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Thomas Carruthers, who lived on the New River at what is now called Doctor's Bridge near Richlands, also kept a tavern in the 1740s. This would have been the main route from New Bern to Wilmington during the colonial period and put Doctor Carruthers in a prominent location for business as a physician and tavern keeper.

Approximate location of Thomas Carruthers' home and tavern.



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