

Child Birth

Children born to Onslow's earliest settlers were delivered at home, usually without the attendance of a doctor. Midwives often helped birth children, though Onslow's earliest women would have likely had the support of only other female family members. During the nineteenth century midwives delivered many of Onslow's children and their profession was listed in the US census, however a decline in this practice was also occurring. As more doctors specialized in obstetrics, a field concentrated on pregnancy and childbirth, the role of the midwife shrank and more children were born under the care of male doctors, though still at home. By the middle of the twentieth century, child birth happened almost exclusively in the hospital. The 1980s and 1990s saw a re-growth in nurse midwifery with increased regulation and licensing for practicing midwives.

Leacraft, Mary	Health	7	B	78	W	Doctor	Midwife	0A
Ella	Daughter	2	B	28	S	Midwife	Midwife	W
Theresa R.	Daughter	2	B	6	S	Midwife	Midwife	W
Leam	Daughter	2	B	21	S	Midwife	Midwife	W

1910; Census Place: Swansboro, Onslow, North Carolina; Roll: T624_1121; Page: 148; Enumeration District: 0060; FHL microfilm: 1375134

Moore, Rebecca	Health	2	W	58	W	Doctor	Midwife	0A
Alphonsa	Daughter	2	W	25	S	Midwife	Midwife	W
Maria	Daughter	2	W	14	S	Midwife	Midwife	W

1910; Census Place: Swansboro, Onslow, North Carolina; Roll: T624_1121; Page: 168; Enumeration District: 0060; FHL microfilm: 1375134

In 1910 the US Census recorded two women in Swansboro, Mary Leacraft and Rebecca Moore, African American and Caucasian respectively, as Doctors of Midwifery. Though they most likely had no formal training, their positions in the community allowed for the respected title of Doctor.

Infant beds at the Onslow County Hospital on College Street in the 1950s. By 1950 nearly eighty percent of births took place in hospitals rather than at home. In the year 1900 half of all births were recorded by midwives, and virtually all deliveries happened at home.



Jacksonville Daily News, ca. 1950s

Arthine Thomas's mother gave birth at the Onslow County Hospital. Her father saved the receipt showing what it cost to have a baby in 1955, \$69.40. Compare that to the national average cost of childbirth today, \$12,290.

ONSLow COUNTY HOSPITAL
Phone 7241 Jacksonville, N. C.

Receipt No. N^o 3135
Date 11-27-55

Paid By Nathaniel Saunders
Patient's Name Hazel Saunders History No. 5422 Room No. A-1
Sixty nine + 40 \$ 69.40

REMARKS: life in full

Patient's Copy Form No. 19 By A. Paulson

Image Courtesy Arthine Thomas

