

# Public Health

*Onslow.*—\*Dr. J. L. Nicholson, Richlands. Whooping cough and chicken pox prevailing in northwest portion of county. Several cases of pneumonia and bronchitis reported—especially prevalent among the children. Two deaths reported from pneumonia. Sanitary arrangements for the new jail are not yet completed; that of the poor-house as good as circumstances will allow. No sickness among the inmates.

February, 1888, NC State Board of Health Bulletin

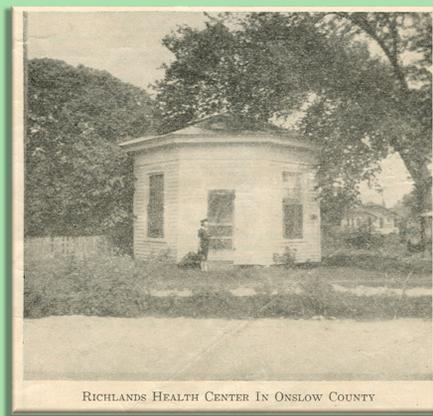
The North Carolina Board of Health bulletin included health reports, such as this one, from each county's Superintendent of Health.

The last decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a growth in public health activity. In 1878 the general assembly mandated the appointment of

Superintendents of Health for each County. Onslow County Chose Dr. W. J. Montfort, establishing the

first official public health role in the county. Previously the county allotted money to physicians who performed service on county related business. For instance, in 1871 Dr. R. W. Ward presented an account to the county for \$21.25 for medical service to workmen who were building the court house bridge. Perhaps the first instance of Onslow County serving the role of health provider is mentioned in the minutes of the Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions of 1802. In that year the court appointed Lemuel Hatch's home in the Upper Southwest District the Pest House for the inoculation of small pox.

In the early twentieth century public health concerns grew around diseases such as hookworm and the flu. Dr. James Lloyd Nicholson proved to be an important actor in the elimination of hookworm disease in Onslow County as well as the southeast region of the state. In July 1918, when the Spanish Flu pandemic began to affect Eastern North Carolina, Onslow County appointed Dr. E. L. Cox as the county Quarantine Officer. Dr. Cox held this post until 1931, when Sallie Rogers replaced him as the first woman quarantine officer in the county. This post, as well as that of county physician held by Dr. J. P. Henderson, were removed in 1941 with the formation of a county Department of Health.



October, 1944, NC State Board of Health Bulletin

Health Department office once used by Dr. James Lloyd Nicholson.

With the arrival of Camp Lejeune and a growing population the formation of a health department became necessary. The offices were first established in rooms above the Double Eagle Bar and Grill across from the courthouse in downtown Jacksonville. Dr. Hamilton W. Stevens served as the first director of the Onslow-Pender health district, serving in Burgaw on Tuesday and Friday and in Jacksonville the rest of the week. The department consisted of the director, a public health nurse, clerk, and sanitarian. Their initial operating budget of \$6000 covered salaries, phone, electricity, and rent.



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In 1944, with the country at war the population of Onslow County warranted a larger staff and office space for the Health Department. A hospital constructed on College Street by the Federal Emergency Administration rented space to the growing health department until the county bought the hospital after World War Two ended. The Onslow-Pender Health District dissolved in 1954 and an independent Onslow County Health Department formed. The department maintained offices around the county in each township, including in an octagonal building in Richlands that once served as Dr. James Lloyd Nicholson's office. The department moved it's main office to Georgetown in 1969 as a growing staff pushed them out of the hospital.

With the construction of the Onslow Memorial Hospital on Western Boulevard the Health Department moved back into the College Street location in 1977, where it remained until 2017. The construction of the Consolidated Human Services building in 2017 allowed the department to move into a larger more modern space. This move also witnessed the demolition of the original hospital, health department, and home to myriad county agency offices.



Photo Courtesy Onslow County Communications

New CHS building in downtown Jacksonville.

