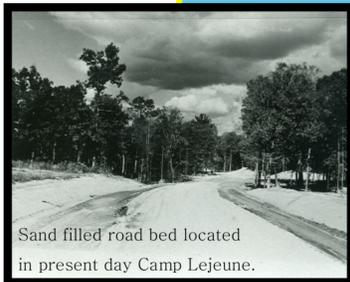


From Bridle Paths to Blacktop

Today traveling on highways is the most widely used form of transportation. However, for much of Onslow County's history the roads were not always well maintained or easily passable. From its colonial beginnings until the 1920s the county government was responsible for building and maintaining roads, bridges, and ferries. For much of the last century the county's roads have been maintained by the state Department of Transportation. Horses, carriages, wagons, cars, buses, and trucks have all used the county roads to move people and goods to destinations within and without the county borders. However, until the early twentieth century, when the state assumed responsibility, a reliable connection between other county roadways did not always exist. By the 1940s the growing population coupled with growing prosperity meant that there were more vehicles using the newly paved roads, and the County Commissioners continually passed resolutions asking the State highway Commission to add new roads to the map.

Road Maintenance

From its colonial beginnings the county court appointed overseers who then gathered male citizens in the surrounding area to spend periods of time each year doing road construction and maintenance. Originally all taxable males were responsible for serving in their district. These roads were often little more than trails of sand, nearly impassable with roots and downed trees. According to Johann David Schoepf, who passed through Onslow in 1784, "the many paths and roads inter-crossing these woods often bring travelers to confusion."

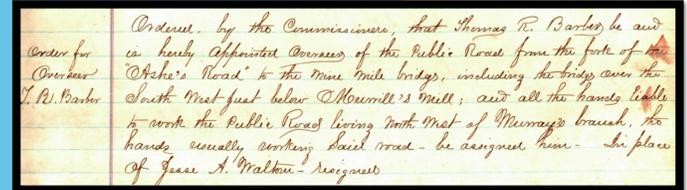


Sand filled road bed located in present day Camp Lejeune.

The road crew below, photographed in the 1940s, is made up of convicts that worked the recently paved Highway 17.

By the mid-1800s slaves and then convicts were used for road maintenance. In 1845 road overseer Dr. Charles Duffy filed suit against John Averitt, owner of the Rich Lands Plantation, for failing to send twenty eight slaves to work on the public road between Dark Entry and Doctors Bridge. The case found its way to the state Supreme Court but due to a technicality, Averitt was not found at fault and no fines were levied against him. This practice of forced labor continued in the twentieth century when convicts from the county jail made up road crews that were trucked to sections of roadway for maintenance. Today convicts are still used in cleaning highways.

During the 1920s North Carolina embarked on a quest to improve her public roads to keep pace with the growing popularity of automobiles. A push for internal improvements by the newly formed state Department of Transportation connected each county with a state maintained highway system and led to North Carolina being called the "Good Roads" state.

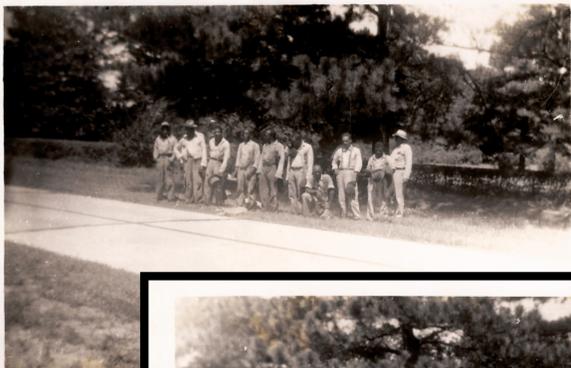


"Ordered, by the Commissioners, that Thomas R. Barber be and is hereby appointed Overseer of the Public Road from the fork of the Ashe's road to the Nine Mile bridge, including the bridge over the South West just below Murrill's Mill; and all the hands liable to work the Public Road lying North West of Murray's branch, the hands usually working said road - be assigned him - In place of Jesse A. Walton - resigned"

Minutes, Board of County Commissioners meeting September, 1868.



Carriage belonging to Jacksonville lawyer Elijah Cox, ca. 1890. Carriages and carts would have provided wheeled transportation for many of the county's citizens until automobiles became prominent.



Sneads Ferry, ca. 1935



Bridges and Ferries

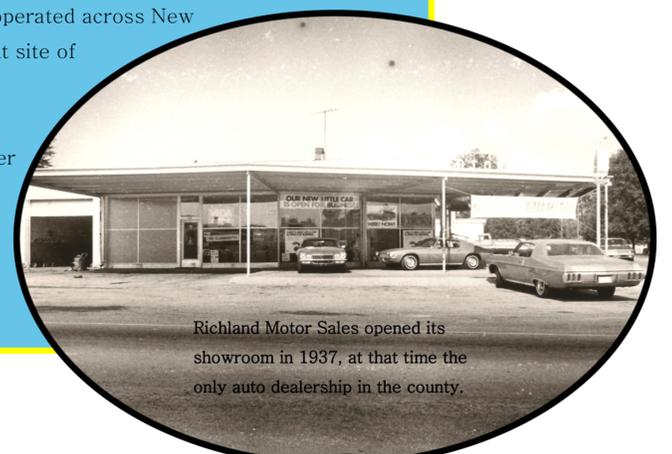
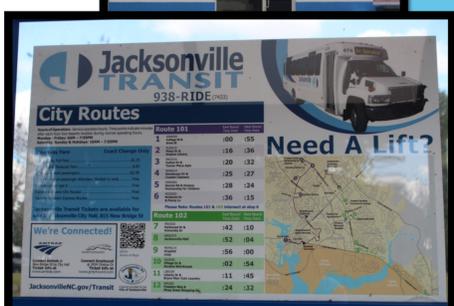
Bridges in Onslow County cover a large number of streams, creeks, and rivers. Early travelers encountering these waterways faced the choice of crossing the sometimes treacherous waters or finding another path around. County court minutes show that



overseers were ordered to construct and maintain bridges. Later the court contracted out repair work, although it was not always completed in a timely manner. Courthouse bridge fell into such disrepair that the court ordered a sign placed warning people to cross at their own risk. Early in the colonial period a ferry was established over the New River and came to be known as Snead's Ferry for the ferry keeper, Robert Snead. Wantland's Ferry operated across New River at the current site of Jacksonville, and additional ferries crossed near former courthouse sites.

Buses

During the early 1940s creation of Camp Davis and Camp Lejeune led to an increase in bus traffic and congestion. This led the County Commissioners to issue a resolution in April 1942 calling for the Seashore Transportation Company and other bus lines operating in the county to create a bus station that was large enough to accommodate as well as segregate the many passengers. Until that point the passengers were forced to wait in the streets and driveways. Today Onslow is served by Greyhound bus company. The city of Jacksonville also has a transit system running two routes.



Richland Motor Sales opened its showroom in 1937, at that time the only auto dealership in the county.