

# All Ashore That's Going To Shore

For much of Onslow's history the rivers and sounds have provided the most efficient form of travel. The many swamps and creeks made overland travel difficult, especially when traveling by horse or carriage. Even Onslow's Native Americans settled around and traveled extensively using the waterways, as evidenced by the thirty eight foot dugout canoe in the museum's main gallery. The colonial settlers also settled in close proximity to the rivers and streams so that they could easily transport agricultural products to market.

## River Navigation

As early as the mid-eighteenth century the Onslow County Court acted to improve the navigation of the New River. In 1760 an "Act to amend and improve the Navigation from Howard's Bay in New River, in Onslow County, to Bear Inlet" passed the General Assembly and gave permission to the County Commissioners to contract out the improvements not to exceed £120. The Commissioners opted to raise the funds for the navigation improvements by holding a lottery. The Board of Trade of Great Britain did not approve of using gambling to pay for internal improvements and wrote a stern letter to Governor Arthur Dobbs requesting him to not pass such acts in the future.

Inland navigation remained important to the county and by the early twentieth century improvement projects maintained a depth of five feet in a two hundred foot wide channel from the New River's mouth to Jacksonville. Similarly, the federal Rivers and Harbors Act of 1912 encouraged work on the Intracoastal Waterway, deepening and widening natural channels that separate the mainland from the barrier islands.



**FOR SALE.**  
A new schooner, capable of carrying 350 barrels. She is built of good materials, and can be purchased on reasonable terms, by applying to  
**R. W. JAMES.**  
New River, Onslow Co. Oct. 10, 1833.

Much of the river traffic in Onslow County transported goods, primarily naval stores, to market. A schooner such as the one advertised above could reach as far as Tar Landing, about three miles above Jacksonville.

**Through the Canal.**  
The steamer Blanche a vessel seventy-nine feet in length, fifteen feet in width and drawing two feet and a half, made the trip a few days ago from New Bern to Jacksonville by way of the canal of the New Bern and Beaufort Canal Company, thereby shortening the route by ninety miles. Capt. R. L. Buckner, who has had charge of the work of constructing the canal, is its superintendent, and Capt. Dennis, master of the Blanche, is loud in his praise of the many courtesies shown him by that gentleman in his passage through. So far, the Blanche is the largest vessel that has gone through the canal.  
We understand that this canal is not completed as yet but that the work is still in progress. When it is finished vessels will be enabled to make the trip inside from New Bern to Bouge and Bear Inlets.

The Wilmington Messenger, January 10, 1891

## Steamboats

Otway Burns, an Onslow native famous for his role as a ship captain during the War of 1812, built the first steam ship in North Carolina in 1818. The Prometheus, constructed at Burns' shipyard in Swansboro was used on the Cape Fear River between Southport and Wilmington. The trip took four hours and cost passengers one dollar each way. Her most notable passenger may have been President James Monroe, who undertook a southern tour similar to George Washington's, passing through Onslow and then on to Wilmington in April 1819.

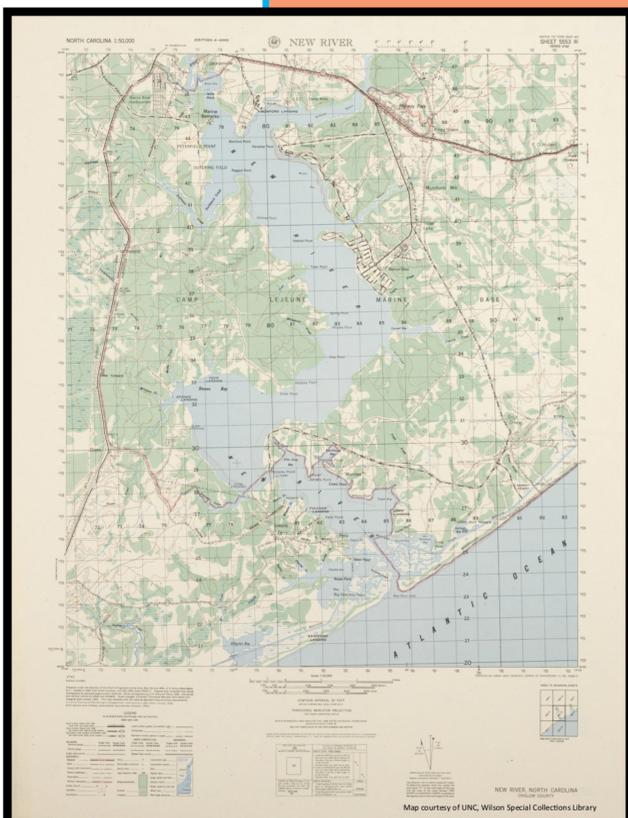
The steamboat Blanche plied the waters of New River during the 1890s carrying people and towing logs, some of which were used for rail road cross ties.

The Neuse and Trent River Steamboat Company sold the steamer Blanche yesterday to the Onslow Lumber Company, and she will now be taken to New river and used hereafter as a freight and passenger boat in that stream in connection with the new Onslow railroad.  
The Daily Journal, December, 31, 1890



## Pleasure

Onslowans have long enjoyed spending time on the waterways. Whether under the power of oars, sail, or motor, boats have transported people to picnics, beaches, or parties including the Holiday Flotilla, which has been floating down the New River for twenty eight years.



This map made by the Army Map Service in 1955 shows the most navigable part of New River from its mouth all the way to Jacksonville. Nautical charts and maps play an integral role in navigating the sometimes treacherous waters of rivers, particularly those affected by the tides such as the New River.

While many boats traveling the waters of Onslow County have transported goods and people, many more have been used in recreational and commercial fishing.

