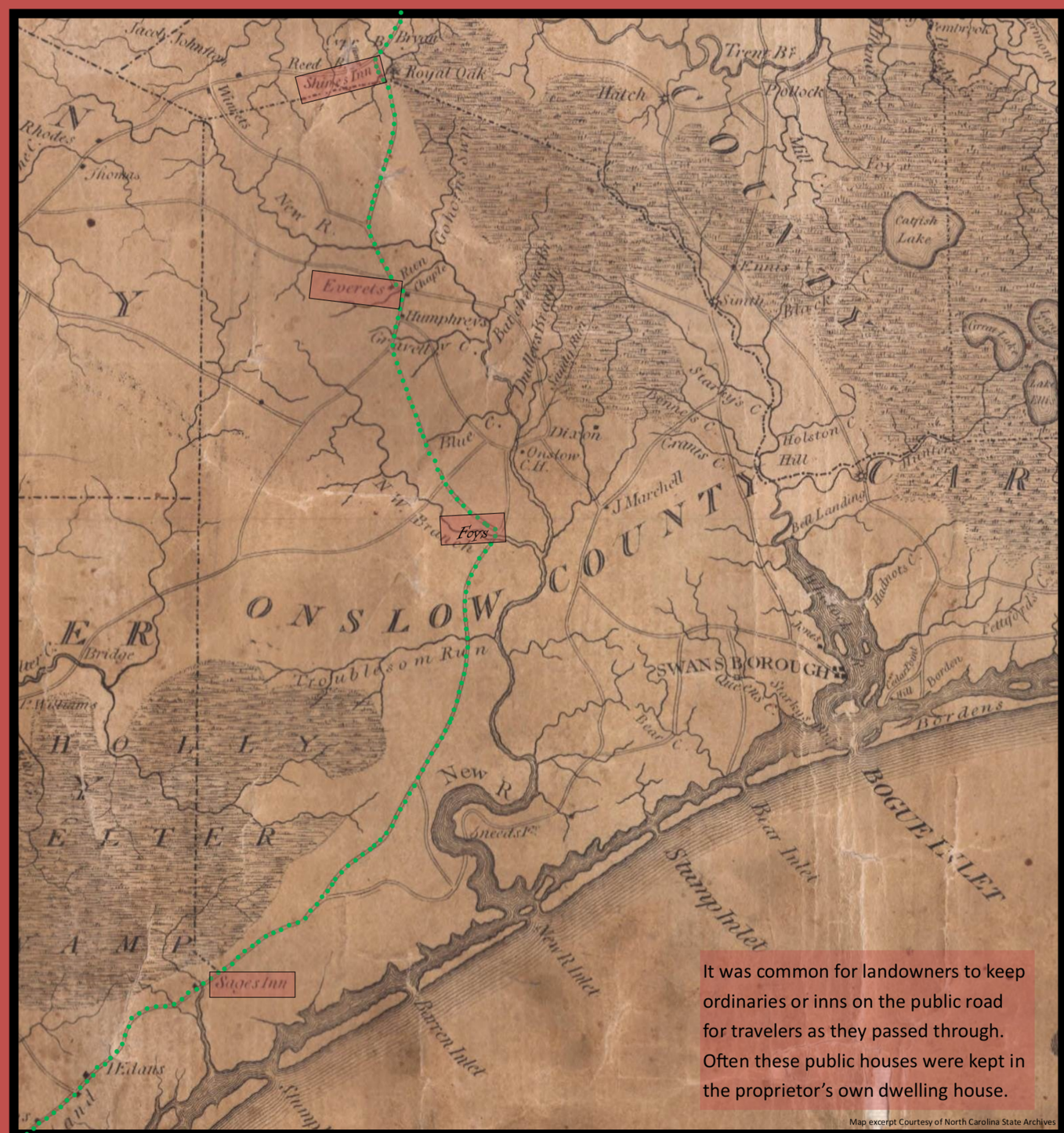
President Washington's Southern Tour



It was common for landowners to keep ordinaries or inns on the public road for travelers as they passed through. Often these public houses were kept in the proprietor's own dwelling house.

Map excerpt Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives

This map, published at the turn of the 18th century, shows the roadways and some marked ordinaries that Washington would have come across. While Foy's ordinary is not marked on the original map, colonial court minutes show an ordinary licensed at the bridge over Southwest Creek, where James Foy owned land and a house, as early as 1766.

In March, 1791 George Washington set out to tour the Southern United States as President of the new country. He intended to visit every state during his administration in order to better understand the nation he governed, but also to make himself more accessible to its citizens. This journey brought Washington through Onslow County on Saturday, April 23, 1791. He recorded the stops made in his journal:

"Breakfasted at one Everets 12 miles bated at a Mr. Foy's 12 miles farther and lodged at one Sage's 20 miles beyd. it — all indifferent Houses."

He went on to say that: *"The whole road from Newbern to Wilmington (except in a few places of small extent) passes through the most barren country I ever beheld; especially in the parts nearest the latter; which is no other than a bed of white Sand. In places, however, before we came to these, if the ideas of poverty could be separated from the Land, the appearances of it are agreeable, resembling a lawn well covered with evergreens and a good verdure below from a broom or course grass which having sprung since the burning of the woods had a neat & handsome look especially as there were parts entirely open and others with ponds of water which contributed not a little to the beauty of the Scene."*

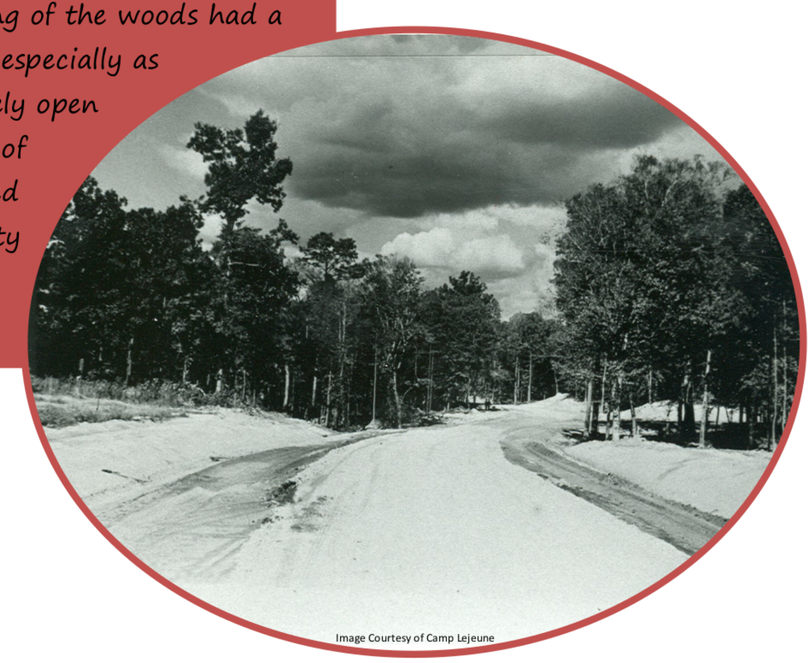


Image Courtesy of Camp Lejeune