

Chronology of Pitt County History

"He lives with his Ancestry and he lives with his Posterity" — Washington Irving

1690—Settlement on Pamlico River of a few French Huguenots from Va.

1696—Bath County created, embracing the present Pitt County.

1699—More French Huguenots from Mannakin Town, Virginia, under the leadership of C.P. de Richbourg, settling in Neuse-Pamlico.

1704—On a bluff overlooking Pamlico River, the first town of North Carolina was laid off. It was incorporated in 1706 as the town of Bath. The first public library in North Carolina was established at Bath. St. Thomas, the first church in N.C. was at Bath.

1710—The town of New Bern was laid off and settled by remnants of a large band of young healthy settlers, chosen and brought over under the leadership of John Lawson and Christopher Gale. Half of the group of English settlers died on the trip over and with all their ships and possessions plundered by pirates, they arrived in Bath County destitute. Later in the year they were joined by a band of Swiss settlers and the town of New Bern finally survived and began to prosper.

1711—New Bern was almost wiped out by the war with the Tuscarora Indians. Massacre of Sept. 22, by the Tuscaroras did not wipe out the Pitt County area, which was saved by Tom Blunt, leader of the "friendly Tuscaroras." John Lawson was killed.

1714—Lewis Duvall, first man to patent land in Pitt County. Tom Blunt was rewarded by a large grant of land known as "Indian Woods," located in present Bertie County.

1718—Capture and execution of Blackbeard (Edward Teach), who had visited his sister on the Grimes farm and had made his winters near Washington, where he used the top of an old cypress tree as his look-out tower. This tree was still standing in 1911, as a reminder of Pirate Days.

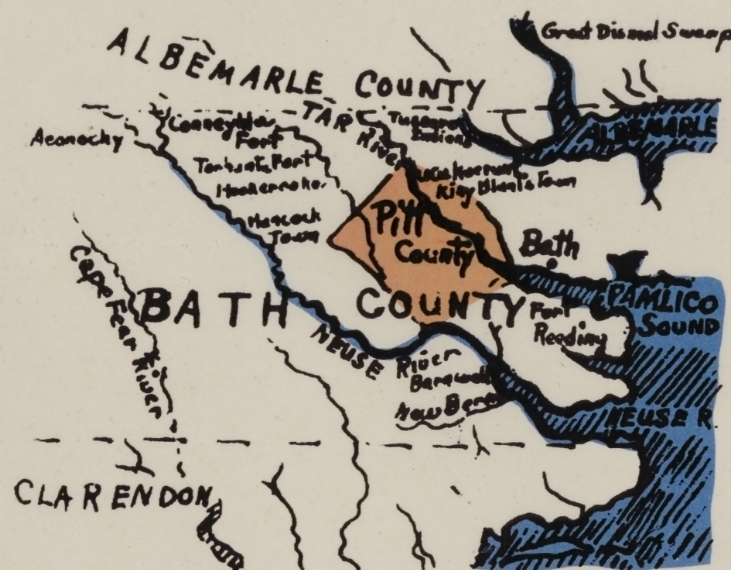
1725—At Red Banks there was a tobacco warehouse for inspecting tobacco.

1725—Capt. John Spier settled at Red Banks.

1731—Edward Salter was Commissioner of Peace for Beaufort Precinct, and was member of lower House of Assembly.

1735—Inhabitants of Tar River section numbered only twenty families.

1738—The Old Division of three counties, Albemarle, Bath and Clarendon was abolished and each precinct became a county. Beaufort, including Pitt, became a county with the court-house at Bath.



1761—Founding of Pitt County from Beaufort.

1771—Martinborough (now Greenville) was founded by Richard Evans. The town was established on his land, and named for the Governor of North Carolina at that time.

1776—In the Battle of Moore's Creek, first victory for American Independence, Capt. John Salter was leader of Pitt County men.

1776—Pitt County sent John Simpson, Edward Salter, and William Roberson to Halifax to the Provincial Congress, who were instructed to concur with other counties in declaring for Independence, Apr. 4.

1776—The Provincial Congress met Nov. 11th, at Halifax to form a Constitution and provide for a permanent government. This Congress united the colony of North Carolina into the State of North Carolina. Pitt County representatives were: Edward Salter, Benjamin May, William Roberson, James Gorham, and George Evans.

1776—Pitt County Justices of the Peace at this time: John Hardee, John Hardee, John Simpson, George Moye, Lazarus Pierce, Amos Atkinson, Reaves, John Williams, Robert Salter, Edmund Williams, Frederick Gible, John Bowers, James Lanier, David Perkins, William Hines, James Latham, William Travis.

1776—Iron ore was used from mines on Tranter's Creek in Pictolus and Chicod Township for the Revolution.

1777—Col. Robert Salter obtained information at Tarboro that a plot had been formed for aiding Royalists by murdering all the government officials of North Carolina. With this forewarning, Col. Henry Irvin was able to capture plotters and forced them to take the Oath of Allegiance.

1779—Dr. Robert Williams appointed Surgeon of the militia.

1781—Pitt County men under Gen. Butler fought in the Battle of Guilford Courthouse.

1782—William Blount, member of the Continental Congress.

Some of the early churches in Pitt County
Gum Swamp Meeting House, 1752;
Red Banks, 1758; Flat Swamp, 1776;
Forbes Meeting House, 1798;
Great Swamp, 1795; Tyson's Church, 1828;
Hancock's Meeting House, 1798;
Church, 1828;

Fellows Chapel, 1819; Oak Grove, 1834;
Grindale Creek, 1827; Cross Roads, 1871;
Reedy Branch Free-will Baptist, 1800;
Roundtree Church, 1827; Antioch Church, 1854;

1783—Richard Evans died without making title to many of the lots sold by lottery in Martinborough.

1785—Pitt County gave up a portion of her eastern territory to Beaufort County.

1785—Col. James Armstrong elected Brigadier General for the New Bern District and was member of State Council, 1784.

1786—Establishment of Pitt Academy at Martinborough. Establishment of the Male Academy under Prof. W.H. Ragsdale on the corner of Second and Greene Streets in Greenville.

1786—Name of the town of Martinborough changed to Greenville in honor of Gen. Nathaniel Greene of Guilford Courthouse Battle.

1787—William Blount of Pitt County was one of North Carolina's signers of the Constitution, drawn up at Philadelphia. He was senator in 1789. Pitt County's delegates to the Convention at Hillsboro for consideration of the Federal Constitution: Sterling Dupree, Robert Williams, Richard Moye, Arthur Forbes, David Perkins.

1789—Building of the Court House, prison and stocks at Greenville.

1790—Pactolus was settled by a school teacher by name of Lincoln who named the town Pactolus because of its fertility, after the river Pactolus in Asia Minor "where sand was mixed with gold." Pactolus incorporated in 1910.

1791—Pitt County residents like to tell the tale of President Washington coming through Pitt County on his way to New Bern and of his choosing a Pitt County belle to be his dancing partner at the Ball given in his honor.

1812—War of 1812—Pitt County was far removed from the main action of the war. Old Brickell Cannon is preserved in Greenville cemetery, which was used by Joseph Brickell to arm his trading vessels against French encroachments on American commerce.

1816—Archibald D. Murphey urged a campaign for better schools—Greenville Academy established, 1814.

1830—Organization of North Carolina Baptist State Convention at Greenville, in what is known as the "Ricks House"—Leaders of movement were Patrick Dowd and Samuel Wait.

1830-40—Pitt County dropped in population from 12,093 to 11,806.

1830—Greenville Female Academy chartered.

1831—Clemmon's Academy established (near Martin).

1831—Contentues Academy (near Moye-Cross Roads on way to Farmville) was established.

1831—Jordan Plain Academy established near Pactolus.

1835—Pitt County sent Dr. Robert Williams and John Joyner to the State Convention which was called to revise the State government.

1835—First Newspaper "Greenville Gazette" published in the county by John Brown ("Printer Brown").

1842—Date of the Great Flood, largest ever known in Pitt County.

1849—Steamboat "Amidas" built and placed on the Tar River by John Meyers & Sons.

1849—Midway Male and Female Academy established near Pactolus.

Some noted Greenville Educators:
W.H. Ragsdale, Mrs. Violet
Whichard, Mrs. A.L. Blou, Miss
Bessie Harding, Miss Annie Perkins.

1850—The Legislature chartered the Greenville Raleigh plank road.

In 1851, an organization of stock holders was formed and this plank road became a great business enterprise. Marlboro was a stage coach stop on this road and was at that time the pride of that section. The steamer "Morehead" was built to connect with stage coach lines.

1856—Date of great snow fall and cold wave in the county.

1858—Burning of Court House at Greenville with loss of most of its records—supposedly burned by a Tennesseean who wanted to destroy a will. This Court House had been built in 1789. First Court House ever built in the county as on the John Hardee land. (An early Courthouse in Greenville was built, in 1771)

1860—Death of Charles Harris, oldest citizen of Pitt County, at the age of 122 years.

1861—In the Battle of Big Bethel in Virginia, Henry L. Wyatt was killed—"was first soldier to fall in battle wearing the Gray" He had been reared in Pitt County and had enlisted from Edgecombe County.

1862—Greenville taken by the Federals in October by the steamer, "North State" from Washington.

1867—Capt. Bryant Smith of Falkland granted a patent for a cotton planter which revolutionized the cotton industry. J.C. Cox secured patents for improvements which were sold all over the South.

1867-69—Pitt County suffered the same indignities, poverty and disfranchisement of whites, as did most of the South during the Reconstruction Period. The State government was abolished and a military government instituted with Gen. Canby at its head. Pitt County had suffered greatly from band of stragglers and marauders from both Northern and Southern. They were called "Blue Coats" and Wheeler's Cavalry.

1875—Pitt County sent Col. W.N. King and T.J. Jarvis to the Constitutional Convention.

1877—The newspaper "Express" established by L. Thomas, and bought later by J.R. and D.J. Whichard. The name was changed to "Daily Reflector" and is still serving the community with David Julien Whichard editor and publisher.

1879-85—Thomas J. Jarvis of Pitt County was Governor of North Carolina—Minister to Brazil, 1885.

1880—Gen. Bryan Grimes was assassinated at Bear Creek. Brig. Gen. Grimes, with many horses shot out from under him, was only officer of the "Bloody Fourth" Regiment of the Battle of Seven Pines, not to be killed or wounded.

1880—Farmville became a town and has shown steady progress. Bethel founded, 1873; Falkland, 1887; Grifton, 1890; Ayden, 1890.

1889—Atlantic Coast Line Railroad built to Greenville, and a regular schedule of trains put on.

1891—A tobacco warehouse was built in Greenville, followed by others, making Greenville rank among the best and largest Tobacco Markets in the State.

1892—Washington Branch Railroad built.

1893—Establishment of one of the oldest business houses by Frank Wilson, "The King Clothier".

1894—Andrew Joyner began publication of the "Index". Henry King published it later as "King's Weekly".

1895—Establishment of H.A. White & Sons, Insurance.

1896—Date of a great fire that destroyed many buildings on Main Street, between Third and Fourth Sts.

1896—Greenville had its first telephones installed by W.S. Atkins and D.E. House.

1898—Two Post Offices had broken records for long service: Pactolus office had been filled by J.J. Rollins & family for over 60 years; Falkland office filled by Dr. P.H. Mayo for 40 years.

1899—Date of Great Fire in Greenville.

1899—Bank of Greenville organized by Little, Tyson, Rawls—(First Bank in Greenville founded by Higgs)

1900—J. Bryan Grimes elected Sec. of State

1900—East Carolina Railroad completed

1901—First Rural Free Delivery of mail was put into operation.

1901—At Winterville was the first Institute for teachers, under Prof. Ragsdale, Supt. of schools in Pitt County; Rev. M.P. Davis, Supt. of Greene County Schools; Prof. C.L. Coan, T. L. Carr, G.E. Lineberry, and Y.D. McWhorter, noted educators.

1901—Greenville Banking and Trust Company organized by R.J. Cobbs, Ola Forbes and others.

1902—Harry Skinner appointed U.S. District Attorney by President Roosevelt for eastern North Carolina.

1902—Bethel, first town in county to establish a graded school.

1903—Greenville voted a school tax and a graded school on site of Old Academy.

1903—The town of Fountain incorporated. Ayden was the site of the Christian College which was bought and turned into a graded school.

1904—"Mary Octavia Grimes Medal" for best essay on local history established.

1906—Norfolk and Southern Railroad built through Greenville. It carried its first passengers to the State Fair to hear William Jennings Bryan speak.

1908—Purchase of Harrington lot for a new Post Office in Greenville.

1909—East Carolina Teachers Training School established by unceasing efforts of James L. Flemming, Senator. Greenville had another bad fire, starting in the old John Flanagan buggy shops, burning all buildings around the square.

1910—The Farmville Enterprise established by John T. Thorpe and G.A. Jones.

1911—Writing of the History of Pitt County, by Henry T. King, "Sketches of Pitt County".

1912—Founding of the "Ayden Dispatch" by Walter Buck, John C. Andrews was owner and editor for more than 30 years.

1947—Marked beginning of Pitt County's greatest contribution to the State of North Carolina.

Senator Robert Lee Humber, a Pitt County son, "by perseverance, diplomacy, and contagious inspiration, obtained a Kress gift of a Million Dollars for the purchase of a magnificent Historical Art Collection, provided the State match it with another million. With Senator Humber's untiring efforts and after many obstacles and frantic deadlines were overcome the Bill was passed making North Carolina the first state to appropriate a million dollars of taxpayer's money to start an Art Collection.

1953—Founding of the newspaper "Grifton Times" by C.G. Simmons.

Compiled by Jessamine Shumate



The Artist weeps and heaps
Ashes on her head
If omissions are made
Of the living or the dead.