

Region of Responsibility

We thought you might like to know—The Museum of the Cape is one of seven museums in the Division of State History Museums. We are one of three regional museums and our exhibits reflect a 20 county region. This series focuses on the history of those counties within our region of responsibility.



The 20 Counties in alphabetical order:

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|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Anson | 11. Moore |
| 2. Bladen | 12. New Hanover |
| 3. Brunswick | 13. Onslow |
| 4. Columbus | 14. Pender |
| 5. Cumberland | 15. Richmond |
| 6. Duplin | 16. Robeson |
| 7. Harnett | 17. Sampson |
| 8. Hoke | 18. Scotland |
| 9. Lee | 19. Stanly |
| 10. Montgomery | 20. Union |

A Brief History of Onslow County

Onslow County was formed from New Hanover County in 1734. Named for Arthur Onslow, Speaker of the House of Commons in the British Parliament, it was settled by the English, Welsh, French, Swiss, Scots, and Germans. Prior to European settlement, the area was inhabited by natives of the Siouan language family.

In 2019, the local newspaper in Jacksonville, the county seat, boasted of "10 things you might not know about Onslow County." There are six related specifically to its history. Here they are:

- 1.) The Onslow family, for whom the county is named, used the Latin motto, *Semper Fidelis* (Always Ready) long before the Marine Corps adopted it.
- 2.) The county is known for its fossils. Sixty-five million years ago, it was home to giant sloths, woolly mammoths and other prehistoric species.
- 3.) Scientists and U.S. Navy personnel, conducted guided missile tests off Topsail Beach. The secret project was nicknamed, Operation Bumblebee. The experiments' success eventually helped NASA's Mercury program.
- 4.) One of the most successful privateers of the War of 1812, Otway Burns was born in Onslow County. He also built the state's first steamboat, *Prometheus*, in the county's coastal village, Swansboro.



5.) The first African Americans, 22,000 strong, in the Marine Corps were stationed at Montford Point. The first women to join the Marines were trained at Camp Lejeune.

6.) "In the heart of the county is the New River, which has the distinction of being the only river in the nation with its headwaters and mouth in one county." (Timmi Toler, *JDNews*)