

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:

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

A Brief History of Pender County

Civil War buffs will immediately recognize and suspect that Pender County was named for William Dorsey Pender, who was a Confederate general and mortally at the Battle of Gettysburg. Pender County was formed from New Hanover County in 1875. Burgaw Indians resided the area prior to settlers from England, Germany, Wales, and France.

In February 1776, a small, but significant Revolutionary War battle took place along one of the county's creek—Moore's Creek—the first battle of the American Revolution to take place in North Carolina. The decisive Patriot victory deterred British military activity from the state for several years. Today, the historic site is operated by the National Park Service.

The county is a dichotomy of rural agriculture and beach tourism, both a mainstay of the economy. In the 19th century, enslaved labor provided the plantation life with wealth and prestige. In 1840, the establishment of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad through the center of the county, made the plantation system more profitable.



Surf City, North Carolina after Hurricane Fran in September 1996 (Photo WSOC).

Topsail Beach and Surf City are the counties two coastal destinations. In 1996, Hurricane Fran wreaked havoc, destroying beloved piers, rows of homes, and creating a new inlet. (Topsail Island is located in both Onslow & Pender counties. North Topsail Beach is in Onslow County.)

Communities in the county include: Atkinson • Burgaw • Hampstead • Holly Ridge • North Topsail Beach • Scotts Hill • Sneads Ferry • Surf City • St. Helena • Topsail Beach • Watha. The county contains a total area of 880 square miles: 871 square miles of arable land and forests, and 9.5 square miles of water. The Venus Flytrap grows naturally in the area.