

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 Richmond County

The earliest inhabitants of the area were the Siouan-speaking Cheraw Indians, which is common for this section of what is now North Carolina. Also typical of this region, the area's European settlers included Highland Scots, German, Scotch-Irish, and English.

Richmond County was formed in 1779 from Anson County and named after Charles Lennox, 3rd Duke of Richmond, a firm supporter of the colonists; in 1778, he called for the removal of British troops from America. Rockingham, the county seat, was named in honor of Charles Watson Wentworth, the second Marquess of Rockingham. He spoke on many occasions against the King's and parliament's handling of American affairs, advocating conciliation and trade concessions before the Revolutionary War broke out and criticized Britain's conduct of the war once it began. (The county seat was originally called Richmond Court House when it was established in 1779. In 1785, three years after Wentworth's death, the name changed to Rockingham.)

In the late 1800s, an England native named John Shortridge established a woolen and saw mill along one of the county's creeks. It is believed that Shortridge named the growing village Hamlet, because in England, a small cluster of houses were called a hamlet. Hamlet is known for its railroad history, which maintained its economy. Hamlet has another claim to fame as well. The birthplace of the great jazz musician, John Coltrane. (click this link to a brief bio on John Coltrane: <http://bitly.ws/9GJM>)

NASCAR fans will have heard of "the Rock," the nickname given to the North Carolina Motor



Speedway. In February 2004, the track held its last race until it was purchased in 2007 by former NASCAR driver Andy Hillenburg. In August 2018, a group of NC investors purchased the track and it is now known as Rockingham Speedway & Entertainment Complex.