

Onslow

History

Brown

Notes From
The Commonwealth of Onslow, A History
by
Joseph P. Brown

Note: According to recent historians some of the historical facts in Mr. Brown's book are inaccurate, I have not included here any of the disputed material to the best of my knowledge.

Names of Places

Some areas were named for people who lived in the area. An example of this would be French Creek. It took its name from a French settler named Alexander Nicola. The creek was first called "The Frenchman's Creek". Other places were named for physical characteristics or some other natural occurrence near them. New River got its name because it was "new" to settlers from New Bern and Wilmington.

Old Town Point-Johnston

In 1741, an act was passed to establish the town. The town was laid out in lots and streets. Each person who received a lot had to agree to build a frame house of at least 16x24. Failure to do so would mean the people lost their land. Each person had to build a fence around the property and clear it of shrubbery and weeds.

The town was destroyed in 1752 by a hurricane and tidal wave. The tidal wave began in Charleston, S.C. and followed the coast northward. It washed the entire town into the New River.

A story is told that it washed a four year old boy across the river and he was so scared that he said, "Hadnot". Supposedly that was how Hadnot Point got its name.

Cray Family

William Cray lived on a farm where Duck Creek comes into New River. He was a Clerk, Register, Colonel of the Militia, Treasurer, Coroner, and as such was the head of the whole County System. He held a lottery in 1761 to raise money to deepen New River. He was also elected to the Assembly from 1764-1775. William Cray was the man in Onslow County who received the first word of the battle of Lexington for the Committee of Safety on Sunday, May 7, 1775. He was the Senator for Onslow County in the General Assembly after the adoption of the Constitution in 1776. He was married to Mary Magdalene de Gignilliatt. Her mother was Esther Marion, who was the aunt of Francis Marion, the "Swamp Fox" of the Revolutionary War. He was buried at his

plantation on Duck Creek in 1778.

George Mitchell

Mr. Mitchell lived near Montfort's Mill about three miles east of Piney Green on what is now Camp Lejeune. The following are some of the things he accomplished:

1778- Elected to House of Commons

1780- Representative in Assembly and Major in the Militia

1781 Colonel in Militia

1784 Commissioner of Navigation for Bogue Inlet

1786 Senator from Onslow

Captain Solomon Gornto

Captain Gornto lived a few miles south on Piney Green on the Base side. He had a large farm and was a carpenter and builder. He served in the Civil War for the Confederates. He was known for his integrity.

Ward's Mill

This was located about one mile below Piney Green. It was built by George Mitchell. It was later called Montfort's Mill.

Enon Chapel

It was organized in August 16, 1872. Its first location was at Cow's Head between Brown Sound and Piney Green. It then moved in 1898 to the Ward's Mill area and was called Enon Chapel. The names of its members included: Dr. W.J. Montfort, E.W. Ward, Solomon Gillett, John Wilkens, L.O. Fonville, Ann Hurst, H.J. Ward, Lou Ward, M.C. Ward, Mollie Ward, Susan Thompson, Sarah Gillett, Miranda Milton, E. Littleton, Rachel and Mollie Fonville, Rena Freeman, Carolina Brown, and Abbie Montfort.

Outline of the first 100 Years in the Area

Public Roads

At first, the roads were few miles in length and led to ferries, mills, and churches. Settlers had to build and maintain them. Laws were passed to mandate that a man had to work a certain number of days a year on the maintenance and building of roads and bridges in his area.

Old Post Road

The ancient post road passed from White Oak by Piney Green, passed Ward's Mill (later called Montfort's Mill) on to Duck Creek, Gillette Creek and to Sneads Ferry to Wilmington. Everyone who traveled from New Bern to Wilmington had to travel this road. Piney Green had one of the first post offices and was a center of activity. Once the Base was opened they closed the lower portion of this road to the public. You can still drive over much of this road today with a base sticker.

Ferry

Private citizens built and operated the ferries. They also set the fee.

Mills

Grist mills were built where there was sufficient water power to run the mill. Corn and wheat were ground. The miller took his share as toll for doing the work. Sawmills were also built.

Carpenter Shop

These operated to make furniture and other needs of the settlers.

Blacksmith

The blacksmith was highly respected in the community. He built cart wheels, ox yokes, plows, hoes, blades, scythes, and all tools. He also repaired guns.

Homes

Homes were built of logs at first. They chinked them with clay if a spring was nearby.

Occupation

Fishing, hunting and running a turpentine still were some of the other occupations.

Trade

Trade was carried on by water and every planter had a dock.

Food Preservation

The following were ways food was preserved: curing meats, stored potatoes and vegetables in a root cellar or other cool dry place, made sauerkraut from cabbage and