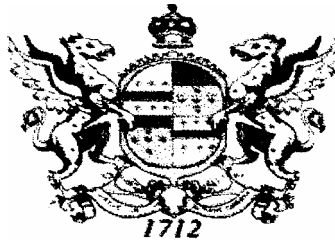


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Craven County



In 1778, William Gaston, Craven County's most honored and notable servant of the people was born. The county seat, New Bern, has the distinction of being Gaston's birth place. Gaston, who had a county named after him and a city (Gastonia) was also the writer of North Carolina's state song. *"The Old North State: Hurrah! Hurrah! The Old North State forever! Hurrah! Hurrah! The good Old North State!"*, wrote Gaston. In his eloquent verses of the state song, Gaston captures what is most true about his birth place. He mentions their hospitality: *"whose doors open faster at the knock of a stranger" and "Liberty's story..."*.

Liberty...

Liberty is a one word description that covers hundreds of years of history for Craven County. After all, Craven County came into being when Queen Anne of England attempted to liberate and rehabilitate palatine refugees from Germany. Fleeing persecution from the French and starvation from the winter of 1708, palatines boarded ships for the New World funded by the queen. One such ship with 650 refugees was set to sail by Baron Christopher de Graffenried. Graffenried was from Bern Switzerland.

On the verge of financial ruin himself, he jumped at the chance to escape to the New World. Queen Anne had made him a landgrave (or landlord as we commonly know). Refugees were settled by John Lawson, land surveyor and historian, at the fork of the Neuse after the long voyage. It was here that Graffenried, also made his home. The city which sprang around was dubbed "Bern -on-the- Neuse" or "Neuse-Bern", after it's founder and it's river banks.

Twenty families made New Bern their home. Also in 1708, Lord William Craven was made Lord Palatine of the Province of Carolina in the American Colonies. Hence the county name. Shortly after settlement, in 1711, New Bern was besieged by the Indians in the seven year Tuscarora War. Settlers endured attacks until 1718. Left impoverished, again, settlers fled the town. In 1722, Thomas Pollock revived the town and a court house was built for the Pamlico-Neuse region (later the spelling would be shortened to Pamlico-Neuse), making New Bern the county seat.

Craven holds a place in history with many "firsts" for the state. New Bern is the site for the states first printing press. The first state mail service started in 1715 in New Bern. Originally mail was posted by each individual plantation. Each plantation owner was responsible for the next leg of the mails journey. This was done as a means of communication during the Tuscaroran War. In 1755 the first official postal service for North Carolina was authorized. In 1766, the state established it's first school, by law, The New Bern Academy. The academy, rebuilt in 1809 after it's 1795 fire, is one of the oldest secondary schools in the United States and is still in existence today.

Craven County is also home to North Carolina's first governor, William Tryon. Tryon took his oath of office in 1764 and in 1766 he set the wheels in motion to have a government house built. The Tryon Palace was completed in 1770. The Palace held governors until 1792. It burned to the ground in 1798 in an accidental fire. In 1944, a 150 years later, restoration was begun on it's original site. The original plans for the palace were found and after \$3.5

million was sunk into it, was brought back to its original magnificence. Today Tryon Palace is responsible for thousands of tourists, helping the county to generate over \$70 million in tourism dollars.



*The Tryon Palace, after its restoration.
The Tryon Palace is only one of Craven County's 145 listed historic sites.
Right is the gardens of the palace.*

Liberty, for Craven County, also came in the form of three residents who made their mark in history, Governor's Abner Nash, Richard Dobbs Spaight, Sr. and Junior. Nash governed during the Revolutionary War. Spaight Sr. was known more for the committee he sat on prior to becoming governor. He sat on what was the first of many council sessions about corrupt officials. Spaight Jr. was known for helping bring about equalization of representation in the legislature. All three supported freedom for Craven County people in one form or another.

Craven County's role in liberty also came about during the Civil War. When black men were enlisted as a means of keeping them free. It was thought that while they were military and fighting they could not be enslaved again. Family, left abandoned and needing, were put in a camp. These camps were called "Freedmen's Camps" and there were few among the Southern States. Craven County has the distinction of having had one. Negroes were camped across the Neuse River in what would become the unincorporated town, James City.



Craven County's rich history doesn't end here. On the western end of the county one can venture off of H 55 West onto Biddle Road. Biddle Road is named for the once Biddle Plantation that is now called Biddle Farm. Doesn't sound like much, eh? But story has it that President George Washington spent one night in it's three storied house to rest during his famous 100-day tour en-route to the capital, New Bern. Biddle Plantation also sits in the middle of the area of what once was a military fort during the Tuscarora War. Col John Barnwell, was sent to help the settlers of New Bern with the Indians. He drew more rebellion from the Indians by his mistreatment of them. This lead to settlers withdrawing from New Bern. Later, during the Civil War, it was the scene of young men fighting with muskets and bayonets. Many soldiers from the area perished and rest in the middle of a field on Biddle Farm. The original three foot high stone wall surrounds the cemetery and large old moss covered oaks cast an eerie spell over all visitors. Today this area is known as Ft. Barnwell.

But wait, stop in any one of Craven Counties cities and if you close your eyes and listen really close you might hear a train whistle blowing. In 1840, North Carolina passed a bill to build a railroad from Goldsboro to Beaufort Harbor. With the railroad came people and with the people came towns. Craven invested in it's future and purchased 1200 shares in the Atlantic & East Carolina Railroad. Towns such as, Cove City, Dover, Ernul, Havelock, Swift Creek(now Vanceboro)sprung from railroad stations. Most were supplying lumber for the boom in construction in the state.

Near Havelock's station sat Trader's Store, the local gossip hangout in the 1920's. Trader's is still in business today. Be prepared to sit and spin a tale worthy of the tales spent years ago of moonshine being stowed away on the train during prohibition by a farmer trying to support and feed his family. One can step back in time when walking through the doors. You can find memories of 1930 scattered about the store. In one corner you can weigh yourself for a penny. In another you'll find a pair of leather shoes on display for \$3.98. Havelock's importance today, Craven is proud to say is the Marine Corps Air Station at Cherry Point. The area was named for the cherry trees that grow there. Cherry Point squadrons played crucial roles in World War II. Half of all aviators who served in the war came from Cherry Point. Their aces have been called on for the US's part in Korea, Iraq, Kuwait, and more recently Afghanistan. Cherry Point breeds that Carolina spirit that seen the state and its country through trying times. The same strong spirit that defends also opens its arms.

"whose doors open faster... "

Throughout Craven County you'll find evidence of the spirit of the people. The same spirit that inspired Gaston to write about Carolinians hospitality. Craven aspires to create the best life for it's citizens and it's visitors. Concerned with the growth and direction that their county would take, residents created *Craven County Future*. A committee that developed task forces to enrich the county. *Project Craven 2006* has task forces for education, economic development and tourism. "The intent of Craven County was to plan 10 years in advance," says Executive Committee Chairman Fred Sikes. "In 1996 CCF meet and formed a plan which was published in 1998 for 2006 and beyond. We had three key accomplishments from this plan." Fred Sikes, who also sits on The Committee of 100 (Planning and Development), gives CCF credit with keeping Cherry Point NADEP (Naval Aviation Depot) from receiving the axe from the closing list from the Department of Defense. "It was out mission to notify and inform all of our elected officials, such as the Lt. Governor, of the economic importance

of the base. Supporting that was CCF's part in developing, in association with Craven Community College, the Institute for Aeronautical Technology. The Institute has just opened this year and strengthens our ability to hire civilians educated in the maintainance of Cherry Points planes." The CCF was also successful at acquiring property adjacent to the Tryon Palace for expansion of the grounds for a new museum and a training facility for Tryon's re-enactors and keepers.

It's third goal was the improvement of communication between the public and the education system in Craven County. "Our citizens now know where our county ranks nationally and what we are doing to improve our standing.

CCF's success does not end there. It's members played an integral part in the development of \$80 million + Neuse River Bridge and US 17 Bypass project, which created better traffic flows for those coming in via Hwy 70 or US 17. The impact was great! Retail, restaurants and the like followed. Almost every exit has a recognizable chain. And once a year these chains come together and have one of Eastern North Carolina's biggest, closed to traffic, "how do you do", carnival food, walk your feet off street celebration, The MUMfest.

Every year in October, when the avg. high temperature is comfortable 74, New Bern hosts the last hurrah of Summer and welcomes in Fall with a street party(complete with amusement rides and pony rides), tours of historic homes, and a boat show. The celebration, held in Downtown, lasts two days and attracts more than 80,000 festival-goers. Take a walk down streets filled with vendors with everything from pizza to porcelain dolls and you're sight and smell will be tantalized with the strong smell of pollen and bees, who frantically scavenge for the last of the sweet nectar found in urns with the celebrated potted mums on every street corner.

A large part of Craven County's visitors are left either awed or laughing. Craven County boasts over 145 historical sites. The New Bern Preservation Foundation, Inc. has spurned most of the restoratioins. The foundation has many projects in the pot. One such project is

The Brick Roads Project.

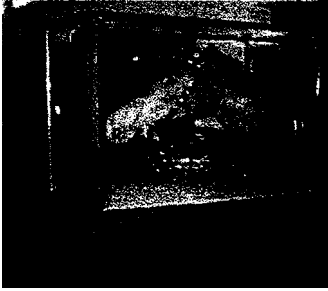


Left: A scene from MuMfest 2003. View of some of the 80,000 people that frequent the festival every year.

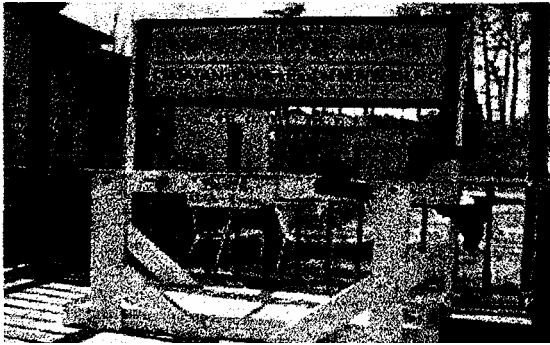
The brick road, located off Hwy 17, will be restored along with the 1907 bridge. Pavers will be laid and grass will be allowed to grow through the cracks as it would have been in the early 1900's. There will be a half acre park commemorating the site.

If historical homes are not up your alley, then venture into the New Bern Firemens Museum. There you can meet up with a horse named Fred. Humph! Firehorse Fred should I say. You'll find him stuffed and mounted and in a display case on exhibit. Stories have it that Fred was quick in the harness and raced as hard as he could to get his hose to a fire. Even after the "horseless carriage" came into being, Fred would try to beat the fire engines to an alarm. New Bern, which had a history of terrible fires that covered city blocks and destroyed much of the town, valued Fred. When New Bern had in it's history it's third destructive fire (the first in 1791, the second in 1861) in 1922, Fred was there. In 1925, when answering what would be a false alarm, Fred died in the harness racing to the call. He was so loved by all his company that they honored him by placing him on permanent exhibit in the fire station.

Better yet, you could cross over the US 17 Bridge and go into James City and find the Self-Kicking Machine in the Riverdale Community, ten miles



Firehorse Fred in the New Bern Firemens Museum



east of New Bern. Built approximately 70 years ago by Tom Haywood, it was recently restored and put back into working condition. This contraption works like this: EXAMPLE: You're a frustrated lost driver who realizes that you made a wrong turn about 20 miles back. So you stop here and kick yourself. Literally! Turn your derriere to face the brogans and turn the crank.

Of course, just one mile up the road is a little known beach, Flanner's Beach. Unlike nearby Morehead, there are no volley ball nets stuck in the sand, no crowds to battle, no seashore pubs and nature has been allowed to do what she does, erode. Left natural, you can hike over the latest storm-downed trees and use a piece of driftwood for your fishing seat, pitch a tent in the wooded state camp grounds, lay on your sleeping bag and listen to the soft lapping of the tide coming in.

Whether you visit the beaten path like the Tryon Palace or the off beaten like the kicking machine Craven County welcomes everyone and puts forth the effort to invite one and all to its home almost every month. Visit Craven County any month, except August, and

you'll find a festival or a celebration scheduled. (visitnewbern.com) Hospitality ranges in the form of fundraisers, such as the Shriners Parade in January, Vanceboro's Strawberry Festival in May to Havelock Chilli CookOff in October. June brings Neuse River Day, a celebration of the river that culminates with a race with three categories, raft, canoe and kayak. Entrants build a homemade water vessel made of anything from inner tubes to the traditional "Huckleberry Finn" float. Few make it the finish line and sink shortly after the start of the race. Which leaves those riverside laughing at those folly.

Moving to Craven County would not be a folly, however. Craven County's population is booming, 91,316/129.1 persons per square mile to be exact, thanks to growth in manufacturing industry. In response to the health needs of a growing population, Craven Regional Medical Center(originally Craven County Hospital-est. 1963) has invested in better facilities. CRMC started with 100 beds and today now has 313. Today, there are many branches to the hospital, all under the title Craven Health Care. "There is a diagnostic center, surgery center, heart center, outpatient and inpatient rehab center medical supply, home care and a medical practice in Vanceboro who served over 166,000 combined last year," says Director, Public Relations Megan McGarvey. There was also a trickle down affect in home construction and retail, with Moen, Inc. (manufacturer of plumbing) being one of the largest contributors by employing 1,000 people. Hatteras Yachts comes in a close third with 925 employees. But Cherry Point employs more than 4,133. With such growth subdivisions are born every day. Taberna being the biggest and most affluent. They offer some of the best golfing in their Country Club, as well as some other subdivisions. Within Craven County there are nine golf courses. (golfable.com) Craven County is now one of the best retirement towns in North Carolina, with draws such as The Sheraton Marina in New Bern, with more than three assisted living residences, and one of the best retirement villages on the east coast. "The Berne Retirement Village is now my home away from home," says Richard Chapman, owner of the famous Pat's Soda Shop in Vanceboro. "RC", as they called him, once ran the most popular stop for dignitaries on Hwy. 17 in Craven County. Governors, Lt. Governors

and Congressmen, such as Gov. Jim Hunt and Congressman Jesse Helms, stopped by to buy their popular Orange-ade. "Originally the Soda Shop was the first location for the Bank of Craven, est. 1912," says The Heritage of Craven County Book Overview Committee Member and Craven History buff, Janis Cannon. "It was also the location of the first drug store, Pat's Drug Store. Pat's Soda Shop has been running since 1971." At any time of the day you'll find Vanceboro's locals sitting at the old-fashioned soda bar spinning the latest gossip about town, sipping on orange-ades and relaxing with nostalgic memorabilia, such as elixirs, original Coke signs and old wood walls and floors with 33 years of dust in the cracks.

But, in Craven County the dust doesn't settle long. Craven is constantly striving for a better tomorrow. Its a wonder dust would settle anywhere when they take their motto from one of the worlds most famous men. "It is a time for a new generation of leadership, to cope with new problems and opportunities. For there is a new world to be won." -President John F. Kennedy. Kennedy seems to be echoing Gaston. Liberty...Spirit...Craven County: Ain't she right at home in the Old North State.

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