

Swain County ^[1]



Average: 4.1 (14 votes)

Swain County



^[2]

SWAIN COUNTY GOVERNMENT:

www.swaincountync.gov ^[2]

COUNTY SEAT: Bryson City

FORMED: 1871

FORMED FROM: Jackson, Macon

LAND AREA: 528.00 square miles

2020 POPULATION ESTIMATE: 14,117

White: 63.1%

Black/African American: 1.2%

American Indian: 30.1%

Asian: 0.7%

Pacific Islander: <0.1%

Two or more races: 4.9%

Hispanic/Latino: 5.8% (of any race)

From *State & County QuickFacts*, US Census Bureau, 2020. ^[3]

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 11TH

BIOGRAPHIES FOR  ^[4]
[Swain County](#) ^[4]



^[5] **WILDLIFE PROFILES FOR**
[Mountain region](#) ^[5]

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

REGION: [Mountain](#) ^[6]

RIVER BASIN: [Little Tennessee](#) ^[7], [Map](#) ^[8]

NEIGHBORING COUNTIES: [Graham](#) ^[9], [Haywood](#) ^[10], [Jackson](#) ^[11], [Macon](#) ^[12]



Swain County, North Carolina

See also: [North Carolina Counties](#) ^[13] (to access links to NCpedia articles for all 100 counties)

by Jay Mazzocchi, 2006

See also: [Cherokee Indians](#) ^[14]; [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#) ^[15]; [Museum of the Cherokee Indian](#) ^[16]; [Oconaluftee Indian Village](#) ^[17].

Swain County, located in the [Mountain region](#) ^[6] of North Carolina, was formed in 1871 from [Jackson](#) ^[11] and [Macon](#) ^[12] Counties and named for [David Lowry Swain](#) ^[18], governor of North Carolina and president of the [University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill](#) ^[19]. It is situated along the Tennessee-North Carolina border. Early inhabitants of the area included the [Cherokee Indians](#) ^[14]; early European settlers were [Scotch-Irish](#) ^[20] and [German](#) ^[21]. Bryson City, the county seat, was incorporated in 1887 as Charleston; the name was changed in 1889 in honor of Capt. Thaddeus Dillard Bryson, the founder of the town. Other Swain County communities include Cherokee, Birdtown, Ela, Lauada, Wesser, Almond, and Nantahala.

Two of Swain County's principal features are large sections of the [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#) ^[15] and the [Qualla Boundary](#) ^[22], the reservation of the [Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians](#) ^[23], with Cherokee as its primary town. These dominate the economy of the county, bringing thousands of tourists to the area year round and giving Swain County its distinctive cultural identity. Fontana Lake, a reservoir created by [Fontana Dam](#) ^[24], built during the New Deal, is a popular recreational area for swimming, boating, fishing, and hiking. Whitewater rafting on the Tuckasegee, Oconaluftee, and Little Tennessee Rivers is another popular activity in the county.

Although tourism is the main source of revenue in Swain County, the county also gains income from forestry and from agricultural commodities such as burley tobacco, tomatoes, boxwoods, ornamentals and other nursery crops, Christmas trees, beef cattle, and dairy products. Minerals in the county include kyanite, pegmatite, clay, feldspar, quartz, garnet, pyrite, magnetite, and thulite.

Swain County is the site of several historic landmarks, among them Nantahala No. 2 Truss Bridge, built in 1899; the Kituwah Indian Mound, once the center of an early Cherokee settlement along the Tuckasegee River; and Oconaluftee Indian Village, established in 1952 and part of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Prominent among the county's cultural institutions are the [Museum of the Cherokee Indian](#) ^[16] and the long-running [outdoor drama](#) ^[25] *Unto These Hills*, presented in Cherokee and telling the story of the Eastern Cherokees' removal to Oklahoma on the [Trail of Tears](#) ^[26]. Other cultural attractions include the Smoky Mountain Community Theatre, the Cherokee Cyclorama Wax Museum, the [Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual](#) ^[27], and the [Cherokee Heritage Museum and Gallery](#) ^[28]. The county hosts festivals and annual events such as Bryson City Riverfest, the Fourth of July Freedom Fest, the Fireman's Day Festival, the Bryson City Chili Cookoff, and the Cherokee Blue Grass Festival. In 2004 the estimated population of Swain County was 13,400.

Annotated history of Swain County's formation:

For an annotated history of the county's formation, with the laws affecting the county, boundary lines and changes, and other origin information, visit these references in *The Formation of the North Carolina Counties* (Corbitt, 2000), available online at North Carolina Digital Collections (note, there may be additional items of interest for the county not listed here):

County formation history: <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/the-formation-of-the-north-ca...> ^[29]

Index entry for the county: <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/the-formation-of-the-north-ca...> ^[30]

Additional resources:

Corbitt, David Leroy. 2000. *The formation of the North Carolina counties, 1663-1943*. <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/the-formation-of-the-north-carolina-counties-1663-1943/3692099?item=4553233> ^[31] (accessed June 20, 2017).

Swain County Government: <https://www.swaincountync.gov/> ^[2]

Swain County Chamber of Commerce: <http://www.greatsmokies.com/> ^[32]

DigitalNC, Swain County: <https://www.digitalnc.org/counties/swain-county/> ^[33]

North Carolina Digital Collections (explore by place, time period, format): <https://digital.ncdcr.gov> ^[34]

Image credits:

Rudersdorf, Amy. 2010. "NC County Maps." Government & Heritage Library, State Library of North Carolina.

Subjects:

[Counties](#) ^[35]

From:

[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press](#).^[36]

Authors:

Mazzocchi, Jay ^[37]

Origin - location:

Swain County ^[38]

1 January 2006 | Mazzocchi, Jay

Source URL:<https://ncpedia.org/geography/swain>

Links

[1] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/swain> [2] <https://www.swaincountync.gov/> [3] <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/swaincountynorthcarolina/POP010220> [4] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/swain-county/biography> [5] <https://ncpedia.org/wildlife/mountains> [6] <https://ncpedia.org/our-state-geography-snap-mountain> [7] <https://files.nc.gov/deqee/documents/files/little-tennessee-river-basin.pdf> [8] <https://ncdenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/PublicInformation/index.html?appid=f82f583438e74bf29adcc76247381eee> [9] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/graham> [10] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/haywood> [11] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/jackson> [12] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/macon> [13] <https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/counties> [14] <https://ncpedia.org/chokeberry/overview> [15] <https://ncpedia.org/great-smoky-mountains-national-park> [16] <https://ncpedia.org/museum-chokeberry-indian> [17] <https://ncpedia.org/oconaluftee-indian-village> [18] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/governors/swain> [19] <https://ncpedia.org/university-north-carolina-chapel-hi> [20] <https://ncpedia.org/scottish-settlers> [21] <https://ncpedia.org/german-settlers> [22] <https://ncpedia.org/qualla-boundary> [23] <https://ebci.com/> [24] <https://ncpedia.org/fontana-dam> [25] <https://ncpedia.org/outdoor-dramas> [26] <https://ncpedia.org/chokeberry/trailoftears> [27] <https://quallaartsandcrafts.org> [28] <http://chokeberryheritagemuseum-gallery.org/> [29] <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/the-formation-of-the-north-carolina-counties-1663-1943/3692099?item=4553466> [30] <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/the-formation-of-the-north-carolina-counties-1663-1943/3692099?item=4553609> [31] <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/the-formation-of-the-north-carolina-counties-1663-1943/3692099?item=4553233> [32] <https://www.greatsmokies.com/> [33] <https://www.digitalnc.org/counties/swain-county/> [34] <https://digital.ncdcr.gov> [35] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/counties> [36] <https://ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/encyclopedia-> [37] <https://ncpedia.org/category/authors/mazzocchi-jay> [38] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/mountain-3>