Johnston County [1]

JOHNSON COUNTY GOVERNMENT:
www.johnstonnc.com [3]

COUNTY SEAT: Smithfield

FORMED: 1746
FORMED FROM: Craven

LAND AREA: 791.30 square miles

2018 POPULATION ESTIMATE: 202,675

White: 79.1%
Black/African American: 16.8%
American Indian: 0.9%
Asian: 0.9%
Pacific Islander: 0.1%
Two or more races: 2.2%
Hispanic/Latino: 14.0% (of any race)


CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 2ND, 7TH

BIOGRAPHIES FOR Johnston County [6]
Johnston County, located in North Carolina's Coastal Plain region, was formed from Craven County in 1746, taking its name from Royal Governor of North Carolina Gabriel Johnston. Communities in the county include the county seat of Smithfield, Clayton, Selma, Benson, Kenly, Four Oaks, Pine Level, Princeton, Wilson's Mills, and Micro.

Johnston County was originally inhabited by Tuscarora Indians, most of whom migrated to New York-joining the Iroquois, to whom they were related-when their efforts to resist European settlement in the area ended with their defeat in the Tuscarora War (1711-13). The county's first town, Smithfield, was then established as an early trading post along the banks of the Neuse River at Smith's Ferry. During the nineteenth century, cotton emerged as Johnston County's chief product, while the simultaneous extension of the railroad facilitated its shipping for commercial purposes; Selma, located at the junction of the North Carolina and Atlantic Coast Line railroads, became the county's second commercial center. Fluctuating cotton prices during the late nineteenth century paved the way for a rise in tobacco production, bringing the county a new prosperity that ended only with the onset of the Great Depression. The postwar era, which introduced productivity-boosting highways to the county, brought an increase in manufacturing to compensate for declining job prospects in the agricultural sector. Nevertheless, Johnston County remains heavily dependent upon farming, with more farms than any other North Carolina county and standing as the leading county in the state in terms of total income derived from agricultural crops, such as sweet potatoes, corn, and soybeans. It also continues to be a state leader in the production of flue-cured tobacco.

Johnston County’s Bentonville Battleground State Historic Site commemorates the last major battle of the Civil War, also notable as the largest military engagement in North Carolina's history. The county is also home to the Ava Gardner...
Museum in Smithfield, a tribute to the Johnston County native and screen legend. The town of Benson annually hosts the popular Mule Days festival. The Tobacco Farm Life Museum in Kenly interprets the history of tobacco farming in the state. Growth in the Triangle area has accelerated a modern housing boom in Johnston County, which had an estimated population of 141,300 in 2004.

Annotated history of Johnston 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: http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/ref/collection/p16062coll9/id/289905

Index entry for the county: http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/ref/collection/p16062coll9/id/290085

References:


Additional resources:


Johnston County Government: http://www.johnstonnc.com

Greater Smithfield-Selma Chamber of Commerce: https://www.triangleeastchamber.com/

DigitalNC, Johnston County: https://www.digitalnc.org/counties/johnston-county/

North Carolina Digital Collections (explore by place, time period, format): https://digital.ncdcr.gov/

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