Onslow County

ONSLOW COUNTY GOVERNMENT:  
www.onslowcountync.gov

COUNTY SEAT: Jacksonville

FORMED: 1734
FORMED FROM: New Hanover

LAND AREA: 762.74 square miles

2018 POPULATION ESTIMATE: 197,683
White: 76.2%
Black/African American: 15.9%
American Indian: 0.9%
Asian: 2.2%
Pacific Islander: 0.3%
Two or more races: 4.5%
Hispanic/Latino: 12.8% (of any race)


CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 3RD

BIOGRAPHIES FOR  
Onslow County
Geographic Information

Region: Coastal Plain
River Basin: Cape Fear, White Oak
Neighboring Counties: Carteret, Duplin, Jones, Pender

Onslow County, located in the Coastal Plain region of southeastern North Carolina, was formed in 1734 from New Hanover County and named for Arthur Onslow, Speaker of the House of Commons in the British Parliament. The county is bordered in part by the Atlantic Ocean. Early inhabitants of the region included Siouan Indians, followed by English, Welsh, French, Swiss, Scottish, and German settlers. Jacksonville, the county seat, was established and incorporated in 1843 and named for President Andrew Jackson; formerly, the county seat had been Onslow Courthouse. Other communities in Onslow County include Swansboro, Sneads Ferry, Midway Park, Hubert, Dixon, Folkstone, and Petersburg. Notable physical features of the county, in addition to the extensive coastline, include the New River, Onslow Bay, Stones Creek, Catherine Lake, Onslow Beach, and Wolf and Bachelors Delight Swamps.

Camp Lejeune Marine Base is in many ways a dominant factor in the life and economy of Onslow County. The base, established during the World War II era, is home to the Second Marine Expeditionary Force, making Jacksonville-like Fayetteville in Cumberland County—one of the United States' principal military cities. The county's economy is also strengthened by its coastal location; Topsail Island, situated along the Atlantic coast, brings in thousands of vacationers and tourists each year (the northeastern end of the island, including the community of North Topsail Beach, lies in Onslow County, while the southwestern end is in adjacent Pender County).

Otway Burns, a privateer in the War of 1812, built the first steamboat in Onslow County in 1818. The county has several historic attractions, such as Historic Swansboro, Mumfort Historic Cemetery, and the Beirut Memorial, erected to honor all servicemen who died in Lebanon and Grenada in 1983. The Montford Point Marine Museum presents the history of the World War II recruit training depot for African American marines. County cultural institutions include Opera Carolina and the Onslow County Crafts Guild. The county hosts popular annual events such as the Onslow County Fair,
the Sneads Ferry Shrimp Festival, Swansboro Arts-by-the-Sea, the Topsail Island Kite Festival, and the Coastal Storytelling Festival.

Onslow County agricultural products include tobacco, fruits and vegetables, cattle, swine, and poultry. Fishing and forestry contribute significantly to the county’s economy as well. Manufactures from Onslow County include textiles, plywood, fuel injectors, meat products, and yachts. In 2004 the population of Onslow County was estimated to be 159,700.

Annotated history of Onslow 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):


Additional resources:


Jacksonville Onslow Chamber of Commerce: [https://jacksonvilleonline.org/](https://jacksonvilleonline.org/)

DigitalNC, Onslow County: [https://www.digitalnc.org/counties/onslow-county/](https://www.digitalnc.org/counties/onslow-county/)


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