

HISTORY

In 1584, English explorers sent by Sir Walter Raleigh landed on the Carolina coast. They questioned the native Indians to find out what lay to the west of the narrow strip of beach that they could see. Arthur Barlowe and Philip Amadas then explored the territory eventually declared Lenoir County. They sent reports back of the Neusiok Indians living on a goodly river called the Neuse.

The first Europeans to actually survey the Lenoir County area were John Lawson and Baron DeGraffenried. They secured this tract of land around the junction of the Neuse and Trent rivers for a colony of German Palatines and Swiss settlers.

When this land was first settled, it was part of Bath County in the Precinct of Craven. Over time county boundaries changed often. Hence, the Lenoir county area was within Bath County from 1696 until 1705, in Archdale County until 1712, in Craven until 1746, Johnston until 1759, and in Dobbs until 1791, when Lenoir County was established independently on December 21 as the land that was formerly the southern half of Dobbs County. This county was named after William Lenoir, who at the time, was Speaker of the State Senate and was a Revolutionary War hero.

Early on, according to a State Board of Agriculture handbook, Lenoir County was well-suited for growing cotton, and there were "no lands



in the entire State of North Carolina better adapted to the cultivation of bright yellow [smoking] tobacco..." Despite this, the lack of a good transportation system held back the county's growth. In October of 1833 a group of concerned citizens met to address this issue and determined that the Neuse River was too crooked and shallow to be practical as a waterway to the sea. Their conclusion was that, for the county to grow, a railroad system was needed that would connect the coastal city of Beaufort to neighboring Goldsboro.

The Civil War temporarily slowed the progress of Lenoir County as most of its able-bodied men joined the war effort. During the Battle of Southwest Creek the Confederate Ram 'Neuse' was destroyed near Kinston by Confederate troops, so as to disable its use by the Union.

In the years following Reconstruction, the county focused on rebuilding itself from the rubble of the war. It was not until the early 1900's that Lenoir County could take the large step forward of constructing a sand-clay road system with steel and concrete bridges. With this improved way of transporting goods to market, several industries developed, including: cotton, meat-packing, lumber, brick and textiles. Along with agricultural projects, the emergence of new industries have helped Lenoir county expand its growth into the future.

CLIMATE

Moderated by easterly breezes, the climate of Lenoir County, is with few exceptions, pleasant for bicycling all year long. The short winters are marked by cold spells, but generally are quite mild; high temperatures being in the 50's and 60's even during the coldest months. The summer is long and can bring some excessively hot days, however, it is still comfortable for bicycling in the early morning and evening. Spring and fall provide plenty of sun and moderate temperatures for lots of biking enjoyment. The resulting average temperature for the year is 65 degrees.

Rainfall is distributed evenly throughout the year. Fall and winter months average three to four inches with five to six inches during spring and summer.



TERRAIN

Lenoir County is located in the center of eastern North Carolina's coastal plain. Its elevation ranges from 44 feet above sea level at the headwaters of the Trent River in the southeast, to an elevation of 125 feet in the west. The county is divided by the Neuse River, which snakes its way for 75 miles through the middle of the county.

The land is good agricultural land with an eastward-sloping plain crossed by shallow valleys and a few gently rolling hills. Large stands of pines and hardwoods abound throughout the county.

Bicycling Lenoir County Style

Lenoir County, located in the center of eastern North Carolina's coastal plain, offers ideal conditions for bicycling with its moderate temperatures and level terrain. This unique set of routes covers nearly 160 miles of lightly-traveled country roads.

The series of bicycle routes in Lenoir County consists of four 'spokes' branching off from a central 'hub'. This hub is Kinston's Bill Fay Park, a park with something for every member of the family with its lighted tennis courts, ball fields, par 3 golf course, picnic shelters/areas, playground area, fitness/nature trail and plenty of parking. There is also an outer 'rim' route, the County Loop, that connects the outside of the four spokes. The spokes, themselves head north, south, east, and west.

Also traversing the county is the Ocracoke Option, a 175-mile route from the Wilson area to the Cedar Island Ferry to Ocracoke. This route is part of the Bicycling Highways System, a series of long-distance touring routes designated by the NC Department of Transportation Bicycle Program. The Connector Spoke, the Tractor Spoke, and Loftin's Spoke all connect to this route.

There are endless bicycling adventures offered through this series of routes. Traveling to and from Kinston, LaGrange, Pink Hill and Grifton; coming off of the Ocracoke Option Route to spend a day or the weekend in the Kinston/Lenoir County area; or having a leisurely ride out into the county to take in a point of interest; are just a few of the opportunities these routes provide.

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bicycling

LENOIR COUNTY



POINTS OF INTEREST

Neuseway Nature Center

This 55-acre park has lots to offer — a nature museum, both RV and tent camping, showers, picnic facilities, fishing ponds, hiking trails and river access. The nature center houses wildlife exhibits which include live snakes, alligators, aquatic life of the Neuse River and some small mammals. The center is open to the public, free of charge, with a small fee for camping. Call ahead at (919) 939-3367 for more information or to make camping reservations.



Harmony Hall

Harmony Hall was erected in 1772 by Jesse and Elizabeth Cobb. At one time the house was owned by Richard Caswell, North Carolina's first constitutional governor. Harmony Hall served as the seat of state government during the American Revolution. This fully-restored house is the only 18th century structure still standing in Kinston and has a museum on its second floor. It is located at 106 East King Street bordered by a decorative colonial fence.

Several other historical buildings are on the same property, including a one-room schoolhouse, an 18th century smokehouse, and the Archbell House, which houses a museum of hand tools and similar items.

Call ahead at (919) 522-0421 between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m., Monday, Wednesday or Friday for more information or to make a tour appointment.

The Caswell Memorial and C.S.S. Neuse State Historic Site

Richard Caswell, who in 1776 became the first governor of the Independent State of North Carolina, lived in what is now Lenoir County most of his life. He is believed to have been buried in the Caswell family cemetery on this site, where a small museum has been erected in his memory. The museum offers a sound-and-light presentation that covers his military and political career.

On the other part of this site, and separated by more than 100 years of history, lie the remains of the ironclad gunboat CSS *Neuse*. Artifacts recovered from the ship and an audio-visual presentation about her history are housed in the nearby visitor center, built to resemble the casemate of the *Neuse*. Admission is free. Call (919) 522-2091 for hours of operation.

Briary Hill Oak Tree

This tree, over 176 years old, is more than just a large tree. It measures 21 feet, 10 inches in circumference, and some limbs reach 75 feet in length. This tree is currently registered in the Live Oak Society of the Louisiana Garden Club Federation, Inc. According to history this massive oak sprouted during the war of 1812 from an acorn brought from Beaufort. Legend has it that this tree served as a shelter for encampments of Civil War troops on more than one occasion.

Tyndall's Tractor Museum

The Wilbur A. Tyndall Tractor Museum is located on Highway 11 North in Pink Hill. It is family owned and operated and was officially opened in the Bicentennial Year of 1976. It houses displays of tractors, farm implements, horse-drawn equipment, antiques, relics and other artifacts related to rural life.

Behind the museum is the Tyndall House, which was built in the 1840s and restored in 1975. In its basement is a collection of 25 balloon-tire bicycles restored from the 1920s - 40s. Among the manufacturers are: Columbia, Schwinn, Ivor Johnson, Hawthorne, Rollfast, Western Flyer, Murray, and Shelby. Call ahead for free tours at (919) 568-3261.



BICYCLE ROUTES

41 Loftin's Spoke

This 8-mile spoke leads through the heart of Kinston into southern Lenoir County. Along the route, the Mitchell Town Historical District features houses built over a century ago.

Stop along the way and relax at Neuseway Park or get a locally-grown snack at the Farmer's Market. This Spoke also picks up the Ocracoke Option at the southern end of the county.

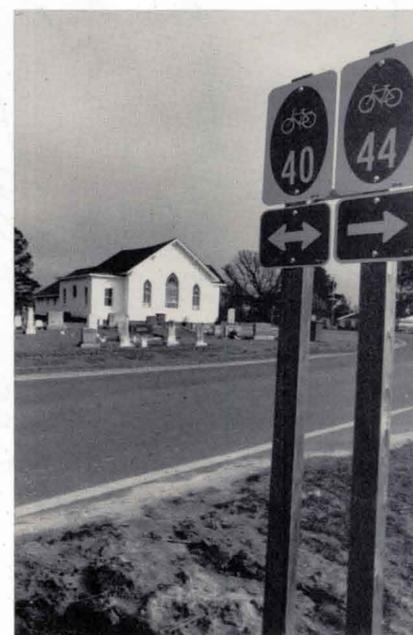


42 Garden Spot Spoke

Beginning in Kinston, this spoke's destination is LaGrange, commonly termed "The Garden Spot" due to its agricultural richness. Along the way is North Lenoir High School. Stop in at Bryan's Store in Institute for a snack before pedaling the rest of this 16-mile route to LaGrange where this spoke intersects the Ocracoke Option route.

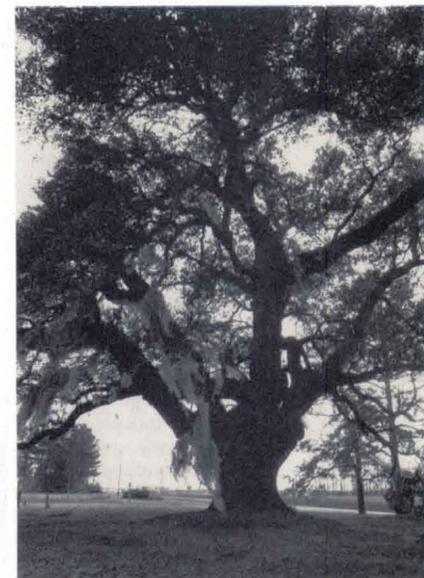
43 The Connector Spoke

This spoke provides an 11-mile connection between the town of Pink Hill and the Ocracoke Option Route, and passes just outside of Deep Run. This route follows quiet country lanes with country stores only at each end, so carrying water and snacks is advisable.



40 The County Loop

Start anywhere along this 59-mile route and follow it full circle around the county or combine it with one of the spoke routes or the Ocracoke Option to create a shorter loop. Country stores are plentiful in the northern part of the loop, but less so in the southern part. One beautiful place to stop is on the loop's crossing of the Neuse River, where the Tractor Spoke and County Loop are joined.



44 The Oak Tree Spoke

Grifton is the destination of, this spoke, and along the way you'll pass the Briary Hill Oak Tree. After biking this routes 15 miles, you might want to stop in Grifton for a rest before riding back to Kinston or connecting to the County Loop.

45 The Tractor Spoke

You are apt to see many tractors along this route whose destination is Pink Hill, home to Tyndall's Tractor Museum. Along this 29-mile route there are many churches and schools. Just before crossing the Neuse River the Tractor Spoke shares a stretch of roads with the Ocracoke Option and the County Loop. Tull's Mill provides a beautiful place to take a break before reaching Pink Hill.