

Formed in 1752 from parts of Bladen, Granville and Johnston counties, Orange County was named for William V of Orange, whose grandfather was King George II of England. Its central location between the mountains to the west and the ocean to the east endowed this area with a favorable climate that encouraged the earliest European settlers to put down roots here. English Quakers were among the first settlers who chose land along the Haw and Eno Rivers. These new settlers, however, were not the first to inhabit the area. The Occaneechi band of the Saponi Nation had lived in this area for centuries, establishing a rich cultural legacy that has regained visibility in the reconstructed Native American village in Hillsborough.

In the latter part of the 18th century, the county was greatly reduced in area, with some of its land used to form Guilford, Wake, Chatham and Caswell counties. In the late 19th century Orange County was once again reduced in size so that land could be used to form Alamance and Durham counties.

The county seat of **HILLSBOROUGH**, originally called Orange, was marked out in 1754 on land near the Eno River that was originally used by Native Americans and known as part of the Great Indian Trading Path. In 1766, the town was renamed Hillsborough in honor of William Hill, Earl of Hillsborough and Secretary of State for England's colonies under George III. Hillsborough was always a center for political activity and an important historical nexus: home to William Hooper, signer of the Declaration of Independence; site of North Carolina's Constitutional Convention of 1778 that demanded a Bill of Rights be added to the U.S. Constitution; and witness to General Joseph E. Johnston's surrender of the largest Confederate army to General Sherman in 1865.

CHAPEL HILL, although incorporated in 1819, dates its origins to 1789 when the **UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA (UNC-CH)** was chartered there as the first public university in the United States, opening its doors to students in 1793. As part of the 16-campus University of North Carolina system, UNC-CH ranks among the great institutions of higher education in the United States. When the Civil War began, many citizens of Orange County went off to fight for the Confederacy.

During the war, North Carolina Governor David Lowry Swain persuaded Confederate President Jefferson Davis to exempt some UNC students from the draft, so the university was one of the few in the Confederacy that managed to stay open. However, Chapel Hill still lost more of its population during the war than any village in the South. So when student numbers did not rebound after the war, the university was forced to close from December, 1870 until September, 1875 during Reconstruction.

Early on, UNC sports teams adopted the unique name of Tar Heels, derived from eastern North Carolina's early colonial production of pine tar, pitch, and turpentine. During the Civil War, General Robert E. Lee was said to have called North Carolina soldiers "the tar heel boys" because they "stuck" to their jobs or posts during difficult military encounters. The name also "stuck" and has been proudly represented by many outstanding teams in different sports over the years.

Besides Tar Heel sports greats, UNC alums also include prominent writers, journalists, actors, and fashion designers as well as U.S. President James Polk. Chapel Hill is also home to the **NORTH CAROLINA BOTANICAL GARDEN**, the largest natural garden of its kind in the Southeast, the **ACKLAND ART MUSEUM**, and the **MOREHEAD PLANETARIUM**, one of the largest planetariums in the United States.

CARRBORO, was first settled in 1882 when a Southern Railway line was extended to link the university with the outside world. The town's current name honors Julian Shakespeare Carr, owner of the local textile mill that is now known as **CARR MILL MALL**, now part of a commercial historic district listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Carrboro was one of the first North Carolina towns to develop a bikeway plan in 1973 and prides itself on its diverse community, terrific farmer's markets, and extensive network of on- and off-road bicycle facilities.

MEBANE traces its beginnings to the early 19th century when a post office was established in 1809. Named for Brigadier General Alexander Mebane of the North Carolina Militia and a member of Congress in the 1790s, Mebane's industrial growth began with the establishment of furniture, bedding, and telephone companies in the early 1900s. Mebane straddles the Alamance-Orange County line, providing access to the Alamance County bicycle routes and several accommodation, shopping and dining options.

Orange County's 400 square miles, located in the North Carolina Piedmont, offer an abundance of scenic country roads and friendly towns awash with history and interesting sights. Characterized by a temperate climate, rolling hills and tree-lined roads, Orange County provides a wonderful setting for bicycling. Although part of the metropolitan area known as the Triangle, much of Orange County is still rural with quiet roads, lush dairy farms and forests. Approximately 17 percent of the land mass remains devoted to farming, producing Grade A milk, tobacco, field crops, eggs, nursery and greenhouse plants, livestock and forestry products.

Orange County has a rich history dating from earlier centuries. The reconstructed Occaneechi Indian Village in Hillsborough attests to the influence of these early residents. The most visible legacy from the county's earliest history is the University of North Carolina flagship campus in Chapel Hill, which opened in 1793 and is the first state university established in the United States. The university houses not only classrooms and libraries but also various historical and scientific collections in addition to other attractions. The campus itself, spreading over a wide area south of Franklin Street, connects seamlessly to the town of Chapel Hill and draws visitors onto brick sidewalks snaking through campus under stately trees.

The three main municipalities – Chapel Hill, Carrboro and Hillsborough – provide the amenities of town life while retaining their charm from another era without the noisy congestion of larger cities. Citizens in the county demonstrate their concerns for the natural environment through local ordinances that preserve trees, protect open space and provide for greenways, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, recycling programs and other provisions to preserve the rural character of the county.

Whether you are a resident or a visitor, Orange County invites you to explore the history and beauty of this area as you pedal along these scenic routes. Happy cycling!

Visit the Division of Bicycle & Pedestrian Transportation's Website for maps of cross-state, regional, and local bicycle routes, additional information on laws and safety tips, a calendar of bicycle events and lists of North Carolina bicycle shops and clubs.
www.ncdot.org/transit/bicycle/



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RESOURCES

Carrboro Recreation and Parks Department
Phone: 919-918-7364
www.ci.carrboro.nc.us/rp/default.htm

Chapel Hill/Carrboro Chamber of Commerce
Phone: 919-967-7075
www.carolinachamber.org

Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau
Toll Free: 888-968-2060
Phone: 919-968-2060
www.chocvb.org

Chapel Hill Parks and Recreation Department
Phone: 919-962-1630
www.chapelhillparks.org/

Duke University's Duke Forest
Phone: 919-613-8013
www.nicholas.duke.edu/forest/location/index.htm

Hillsborough/Orange County Chamber of Commerce
Phone: 919-732-8156
www.hillsboroughchamber.com

Orange County Planning Department
Phone: 919-245-2575
www.co.orange.nc.us/planning/index.asp

Orange County Parks and Recreation Department
Phone: 919-245-2660
www.co.orange.nc.us/RecParks/index.asp

Orange County Visitors Center
Phone: 919-732-7741
www.historichillsborough.org

UNC Visitors' Center
www.unc.edu

Division of Bicycle & Pedestrian Transportation
North Carolina Department of Transportation
Phone: 919-807-0777
www.ncdot.org/transit/bicycle/



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BICYCLING ORANGE COUNTY



NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION | Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation

ORANGE COUNTY HISTORY



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