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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Historic and Architectural Resources
of Harnett County, North Carolina,
ca. 1770-1950

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New Communities and Population Growth

Despite the improvements, few towns developed in Harnett County before 1850. The major transportation route through the county was the Raleigh-Fayetteville Road, along which the stagecoach traveled and post was delivered. A map from 1833 shows Averasboro Post Office and Barclay as the only communities in the county's eastern half and Cameron's Hill in the western half. John Barclay and his wife moved from Pennsylvania to the Harnett County area in the 1820s where they purchased 510 acres and built Barclay's Inn. The inn was located twenty-five miles south of Raleigh and twenty-five miles north of Fayetteville. This location, as well as the inn's famous food and hospitality, made it a popular resting place for travelers. Barclaysville received its post office on June 13, 1850, and it remained in operation until 1915.[21] Cameron's Hill was named for its earliest settler, Allen Cameron, who secured the property in 1770 through a land grant. In 1796, a gristmill was built three miles north of the hill. Daniel Cameron, an iron worker, settled across Duncan's Creek west of the hill where he sold such necessities as pitchforks and axes.[22] Another community, Chalybeate Springs, was named for the iron-like mineral found in the water of the spring. The area was first settled in the late 1700s and in the 1800s became a tourist destination known for its healing waters.[23] Several fords along the Cape Fear River are also noted on the 1833 map, including McNeill's Ford on the road to Raleigh, Adkins Ford, and Northington's Ford.[24] No railroads or plank roads traversed the county before 1860.[25]

The Harnett County area remained a part of Cumberland County throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. While it is difficult to distinguish Harnett's population and agricultural production separately from that of Cumberland County during these years, statistics for Cumberland are still relevant to understanding Harnett. Cumberland County grew slowly in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Its population at the first census in 1790 was 8,730 people (2,180 of whom were enslaved), an average size as compared to other counties in the same year. However, in 1800, the total population had grown to only 9,264, and 10 years later to 9,382. Newly formed counties to the west already were gaining on those to the central and eastern areas, as soils became exhausted and new immigrants moved toward the mountains. Like other East Coast states settled in the early eighteenth century, North Carolina experienced a period of outmigration in the early nineteenth century as farmers left the state, particularly its eastern and central areas, looking for better and cheaper land. The state's limited manufacturing and trading centers and limited improvements to roads and canals exacerbated North

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[21] June Adams, "The History of a Crossroad," in "Northeastern Harnett County Historic Quilt Tour," 1992.

[22] Leon McDonald, "Historical Sketch of Western Harnett County," "Harnett County Centennial Celebration Program," 1955.

[23] Terry Rollins, "Chalybeate Springs," in "Northeastern Harnett County Historic Quilt Tour," 1992.

[24] John MacRae, "A New Map of the State of North Carolina," in William P. Cumming, *North Carolina in Maps* (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1966), Plate X.

[25] Lefler and Newsome, *North Carolina: History of a Southern State*, p. 401.