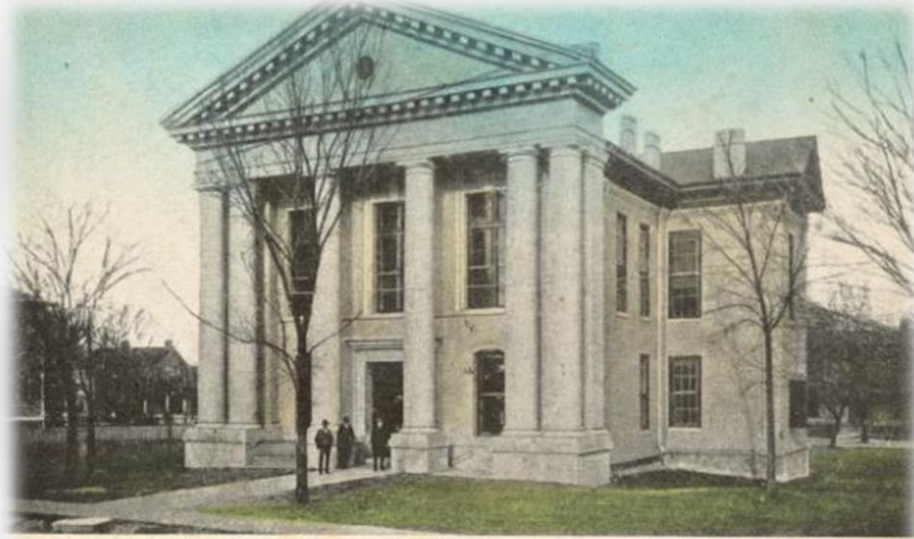
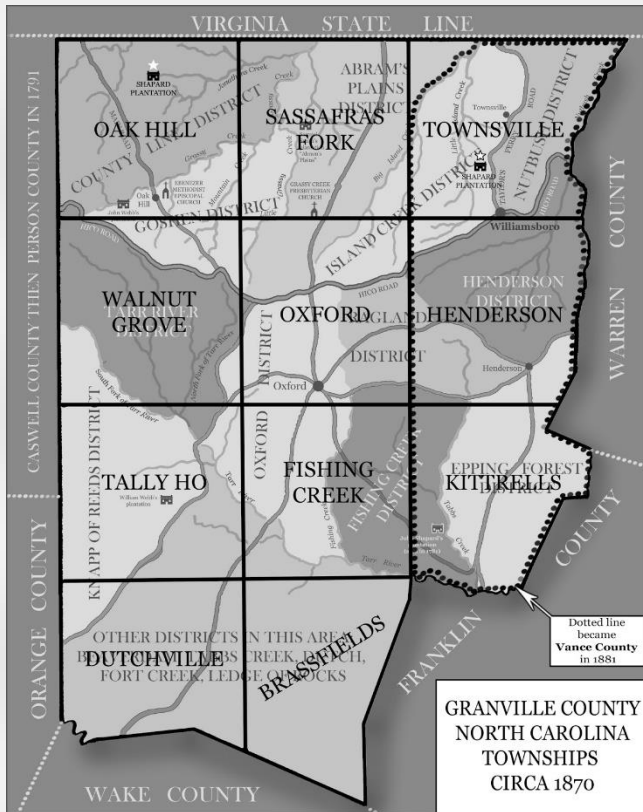


FORMATION AND HISTORY OF VANCE COUNTY GOVERNMENT



Vance County Court House, Henderson, N. C.

Vance County was formed in 1881 pursuant to an act of the General Assembly of North Carolina. The act read in part:

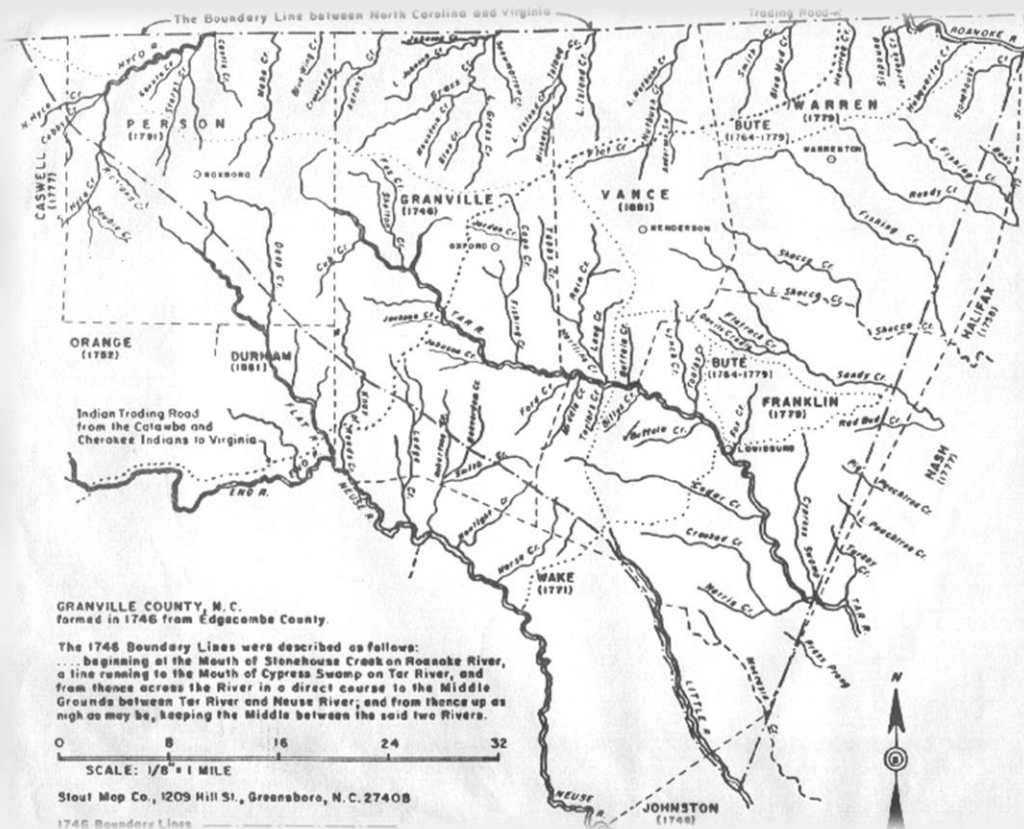


"That a new county is hereby laid off...and bounded as follows: begin at a point on the south bank of the Tar river in Granville just opposite the point where the dividing line between Fishing Creek and Kittrell's townships strikes said river; thence down said river to a point...opposite the place where King's creek empties into said river; thence across said river...to a pine tree near the old Moss house; thence due east to a rock on the road leading from Duke's store to Nat. Macon's place, about half-way between the Alston and the old Perry places;...to Duke's store;...to the point where the Millford road crosses the Warren and Franklin Counties' line; thence in a direct line to Coley's X roads...to the point where Nutbush creek crosses the Virginia and North Carolina state line; thence along said state line to Big Island creek; thence up said creek to the line between Townesville and Sassafras Fork townships; thence along the boundary line between said townships, and between Henderson and Oxford townships, and Kittrell and Fishing Creek townships, south to the beginning."

This act also designated Henderson as the County Seat of the new county and directed the county commissioners to select a site in Henderson for the erection of a courthouse.

The boundary between Vance and Franklin counties was changed slightly in 1909. The present area of the county is 178,500 acres.

The new county was named in honor of Zebulon B. Vance who was Governor of North Carolina 1862-65 and 1877-79 and a United States Senator 1879-94. The majority of land forming the county was taken from Granville County, and smaller sections were derived from Franklin and Warren counties. The initial population was about 9,000.



The first meeting of the Vance County Commissioners was held June 13, 1881 and consisted of E. G. Brodie, Chairman; and A. L. Steed, John B. Crudup, J.M.B. Hunt, and G. H. Yancey members. E. G. Brodie and A. L. Steed were commissioners of Granville and Warren counties respectively at the time of the formation of the county.

The initial meeting of commissioners appointed other officials for the county. These included: W. H. Smith, Sheriff; J. R. Young, Clerk of Superior Court; and R. A. Bullock, Register of Deeds.

The first public election of officials for Vance County was held November 7, 1882. The following officials were elected: W. H. Smith, Republican, Sheriff; J. R. Young, Democrat, Clerk of Superior Court; and J. W. Nicholson, Republican, Register of Deeds; R. E. Young, Republican, County Treasurer.

Prior to erection of a county courthouse in 1884, meetings of the county commissioners and sessions of court were held in private commercial buildings such as drugstores, warehouses and auditoriums.

The original courthouse for Vance County was constructed in 1884 and is still standing and in use. The building was designed by Captain J. R. Thrower, roadmaster for the Raleigh & Gaston Railroad. The structure

was of Victorian design with a central cupola and modest Victorian ornamentation. Its construction cost was \$8,000. The cupola was removed in 1908 when the exterior of the building was remodeled by Frank Millburn, an architect from Washington, D.C. who had designed numerous courthouses in North Carolina and several buildings on the campus of the University of

North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The new facade of the courthouse was designed by Millburn in the Greek revival or neoclassical style. The new courthouse was completed in mid-2001 and was designed by Mr. Surapon Sujjavanich, Architect. Its brick and exterior finish as well as the three courtrooms were designed to maintain the historical significance of the old courthouse and to provide an architectural blend.



Courthouse, Henderson, N. C.



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The political complexion of the county in its early years was substantially Republican, and it has been suggested that one of the motives for formation of the county was the desire of Democrats in the General Assembly to excise the Republican Sections of Granville, Warren and Franklin counties and isolate them in the single new county. The early elected leadership of the county did reflect a Republican predominance and further reflected the Black leadership that had come to prominence within that party. These leaders included such men as Henry Plummer Cheatham, who was elected Register of Deeds for the County in 1884 and who later served in the Congress of the United States, 1889-93. Cheatham was the only Black member of the fifty-second Congress.

Since the county's formation, the population has increased from 9,000 to over 45,500. A system of public education was instituted with appointment of a County Board of Education in 1897 and this board merged with the Henderson City Board of Education in 1969 to form a unified public school system for the county. A county Board of Health was organized as early as 1924 and this board was merged with a similar board for Granville County in 1973 to form the present Granville-Vance Health District. Vance County Technical Institute was formed in 1969, and this institute became Vance-Granville Community College in 1975. Other agencies and programs instituted by the county since its formation include the Vance County Department of Social Services, the Area Mental Health Authority, Veterans' Services, and many others.

