Exploring Beaufort’s Past

History
Originally inhabited by the Coree Indians, then French Huguenots, Beaufort was eventually settled by the British in 1709. In 1713, Robert Turner, who held the original land grant for 200 acres, laid out the town and named the streets just as they are today. The town was named in honor of Turner’s friend Henry Somerset, Duke of Beaufort, and was incorporated in 1722.

By the late 18th century, Beaufort was becoming an active seaport. Inhabited by sailors, pirates, privateers, fishermen, soldiers, and planters, it was a diverse community with the common thread of the sea.

While Beaufort’s active sea trade allowed it to be connected with seaports thousands of miles away, its geography kept it isolated from the interior of the state. This isolation has helped the town retain its historic appearance. Still standing today are the homes of Beaufort’s early sea captains, shippers and merchants. Beaufort boasts over 100 homes that are over a century old and several private residences that are over 200 years old.

Architecture
Beaufort’s early architecture is characterized by its simplicity and charm. Boat-building tools and skills were used as sea captains copied the double-porch styles of the West Indies and Bahamas seen on their seafaring voyages.

The Bahamian influence is reflected in the rooflines of the oldest houses in Beaufort. Providing nature’s own air-conditioning, the gabled ends form a steep pitch at the ridge of the roof which breaks to cover the traditional full-length porches.

Though Beaufort’s houses range from traditional cottages to elaborate Queen Anne and Greek Revival styles, porches are a dominant feature in almost all of them.

The quirky picket fences built with an up and down pattern are distinctive to Beaufort. These picket fences are used extensively, and may have a connection to an early law stating that pigs must be kept in the yard. Pigs found outside the fence could be slaughtered by the finder, though half must be given to the church wardens to feed the hungry.

Beaufort
Beaufort, the third oldest town in North Carolina, is the perfect place for a leisurely walk with its tree-lined streets and quaint historic buildings. Use the map provided on the inside to locate this house as well as guide you through the six-block historic district listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

As you wander, imagine a time when the streets were canopied by elm trees given to the town by Queen Anne of England in recognition of the two Beaufort streets named in her honor.

Beaufort has historically been a seaport village, much as it is today. Walk along Front Street and you will see sailing vessels still using the safe harbor. Look across the inlet to Carrot Island and bird Shoal to catch a glimpse of the wild horses that make it their home.

Make the Beaufort Historic Site at 130 Turner Street your first stop for information on all there is to see and do in the quaint seaport village of Beaufort. We offer lively guided tours of authentically restored homes and buildings, the mysterious Old Burying Ground, and Beaufort’s charming historic district aboard a vintage English double-decker bus. You’ll love discovering our coastal heritage!

Narrated Bus Tours
Buildings Tour
Old Burying Ground Tours
Old Beaufort Museum Shop
Mattie King Davis Art Gallery

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Listed on the National Register of Historic Places

Beaufort, North Carolina

presented by
The Beaufort Historical Association
This Greek Revival house served as the Union Provost Marshal’s headquarters during the Civil War. Axe marks made by Union soldiers cutting wood are still visible on the floor.

The oldest Beaufort church in continuous use, this building was originally constructed by the Methodist Episcopal Church and then given to the AME Zion Congregation.

Note the statue of a Confederate soldier with his back symbolically to the north.

Built at night by the same brick masons working on Fort Macon during the day.

Built by schoolmaster and court clerk Samuel Leffers, this coastal cottage is a good example of a "story and a jump" or a one-and-a-half story house.

Josiah Fisher Bell, son of the home's namesake and resident himself, was a Confederate agent who, with others, blew up the lighthouses at Cape Lookout during the Civil War.

An excellent example of Bahamian architecture, this house stands on its original site. The interior walls and exterior doors of this authentically restored home boast historic decorative faux finishes.

Now a bed & breakfast inn, this building is listed in the book Haunted Inns of the Southeast.

An important resident of the town, Mr. Bordon was a Quaker who could not swear oaths and therefore never held public office.

This was the townhouse for Col. John Easton, who led the Beaufort militia against the British landing in April 1792. Later this house was used as a hospital and then prison during the Civil War.

One of the most intriguing houses in Beaufort, it is believed to have been built on the site of an earlier house that was used as a tavern for a group of sea captains and later used as a tavern. Because the original house stood on a small hill, or "hummock," it was used as a navigation point on early maps.

With over 30 documented owners in its over 200 years, the most famous or infamous house has many factual and fictional stories associated with it.

Founded 1709
Incorporated 1722

Beaufort-by-the-Sea

Home of Captain Charles Biddle and his bride, Hannah Shepard, this house was built during the Revolutionary War.

Said to have been sold for a cow and a calf, this steamboat gothic style house was previously owned by Congressman Charles Abernathy, legislator Nathanael Russell, and author Irving Bichlor.

Originally, wooden pegs were used instead of nails in the construction of this house owned by John Rumley, a prominent civil servant and clerk of the court.

Said to be General Burnside's headquarters during the Union occupation of Beaufort.

Built by Rich Barker, a house carpenter, this is a good example of early Beaufort architecture.

Featuring Victorian gingerbread trim, this house was used as a dormitory for boys from rural parts of the county who attended school in town.

Dr. Davis had an apothecary and medical office building next to the house which now has been moved to the Beaufort Historic Site for tours.

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Used as a hospital during the Civil War, this was also the first home in Beaufort to have a phone but Mrs. Jones was so afraid of it that she had it installed on a post in the yard.