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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 6 1774: Greenville is Born
- 7 Greenville's Timeline
- 10 Agriculture: Tobacco Town
- 12 A River Runs Through It
- **16** Manufacturing: Greenville's Industrial Transformation
- 18 Medicine & Healthcare
- 22 Dr. Andrew Best
- 24 Education: Cornerstone of Progress
- 26 Dr. Leo Jenkins
- **30** Sheppard Memorial Library
- 32 Sycamore Hill
- 34 Greenville Museum of Art
- 36 Sportstown USA
- **40** Notable Residents
- **44** Greenville's History in Photographs



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On the cover: ECU's Dowdy Ficklen Stadium, 2023 (left). Sycamore Hill Missionary Bapist Church, Greene & W 1st St, 1967 (right).

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1774: GREENVILLE IS BORN

Richard Evans saw the potential.

Evans, a legislator, recognized the need for a town to serve as the county seat in his home of Pitt County. However, he was not the only one, and previous attempts to establish a town had failed.

So, when Evans made his plea to the Assembly and Royal Governor Josiah Martin in 1771, he sweetened the proposal by pledging to name the town after Martin. The town was approved, and Evans was given rights to sell lots around his home just south of the Tar River.

"This was a wonderful place to build a town," Pitt County Historian Roger Kammerer said. "It was just a wonderful piece of expansive land on a slope down to the river."

According to the requirements of the Assembly, Evans was to "signify his consent in open court" once the town's lots were laid out, but the legislator never got the opportunity.

Evans passed away before that time, forcing the Assembly to amend the requirements for the establishment of the town. This allowed Evans' widow, Susannah Evans, to convey the lots to a small group of five that would carry out the process.

In 1774, all requirements of the town's establishment were fulfilled and Martinsborough was born.

"There was no town council or board of commissioners at the time, but the new group that was created to sell lots appeared to have some sense of control in terms of keeping up the streets and that type of thing," Kammerer said.

Soon after Martinsborough was established, America achieved independence, and some believed it no longer seemed appropriate to have a town with a Royal Governor as the namesake.

In 1787, the town officially changed its name to Greenesville in honor of Revolutionary War General Nathaniel Greene. In the years to come, the name would be shortened to Greenville.



GREENVILLE'S TIMELINE

1761 Pitt County is established after legislation dividing Beaufort County at Tranters Creek was approved. Pitt County was 656 square miles with approximately 2,600 residents. The county was named for British politician William Pitt, who experienced great success during the French and Indian War.

A five-member commission is appointed to supervise the construction of Pitt County's first courthouse. Commission Chairman John Hardee's house, located three miles east of what would become Greenville and south of the Tar River serves as the county's first courthouse.

A Pitt County legislator named Richard Evans
divides off his property in preparation for the formation of a town on the south side of the Tar River. The town was to be named Martinsborough in honor of then-Royal Governor Josiah Martin.

★ 1774 Following the death of Richard Evans before official completion of the town's establishment, seven appointed commissioners lay the town off into 100 half-acre lots sold by public auction. The original charter is amended to fulfill all of the requirements of the General Assembly and Martinsborough becomes the county seat of Pitt County. The David Stone and Peter Brown survey map of North Carolina was one of the first maps to show the settlement of Greenville.

- **1775** A courthouse is constructed at the corner of Evans Street and Third Street in Greenville, marking the end of use of the Hardee home as the county's courthouse. The courthouse stood on pillars with an open market beneath it.
- **1787** On January 8, 1787, an act of the North Carolina General Assembly changes the name of Martinsborough to Greenesville in honor of Revolutionary War General Nathanael Greene. The name change was the result of people of the town seeking a namesake more in keeping with the new order of things following the revolution. The "es" was eventually dropped from the name, but the timing of the decision is uncertain.
- **1787** The North Carolina General Assembly charters the Pitt Academy, marking the beginning of Greenville's esteemed history of education. Founders included a number of Pitt County's Revolutionary leaders, several town commissioners, and other local leaders.

- **1791** President George Washington visits Greenville (which had recently been shortened from the name Greenesville) and notes in his diary that it included about 15 families and had a large tar and turpentine market.
- **1811** The General Assembly authorizes commissioners in Pitt County to hold a lottery to raise \$2,000 to build a bridge over the Tar River. The law specified that the bridge should not obstruct the passage of fish or boats. The bridge is not constructed until 1823.
- **1833** A new courthouse is constructed on Evans Street at its intersection with Third Street. Construction of the two-story brick building was funded through an annual property and poll tax approved by the legislature in 1789.
- **1840** Greenville develops a thriving cotton culture, and the town's location at the intersection of the river and the plank road from Wilson, NC, helps make it a regional link between the Piedmont area and cities on the North Carolina coast.
- **1857** The Pitt County Courthouse is destroyed by a fire. Most of the county's existing records are also burned, limiting researchers' abilities to track Greenville's genealogy.
- **1889** Greenville gets its first railroad connection after years of debate among residents in Greenville and other parts of Pitt County. The railroad access opened up more opportunities for the growth and expansion of businesses in the city. The Eastern Reflector newspaper proclaimed "Greenville is now no longer among the out-of-the-way places, but is joined to the outside world with bands of steel."
- **1890** Access to the train opens Greenville up to the rest of the world, and tobacco becomes the town's primary cash crop. Greenville becomes the largest tobacco market in eastern North Carolina.
- **1903** The General Assembly authorizes a bond for water, light, and sewer systems in Greenville. The City of Greenville's first Water and Light Commission (later renamed Greenville Utilities Commission) was established to oversee operations, and all systems were operating by 1907.

Continued on page 23.

Happy 250th Anniversary, Greenville!



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TOBACCO TOWN

Tobacco Market. 21 Aug. 1962. Daily Reflector Negative Collection, ECU Digital Collections

In a long and rich history of agriculture in eastern North Carolina, no crop has ever had the impact that tobacco had on Greenville.

When Leon F. Evans brought the first brightleaf tobacco to Pitt County in the late 1800s, he saw the potential of the crop that grows well in the sandy soil common to the area. Evans partnered with a handful of local farmers to plant the first crops, which ultimately disappointed in the harvest. However, the men continued their tobacco experiment, and, by 1890, tobacco was earning more money than any other crop in Pitt County.

"It got really big, really quickly," Roger Kammerer, local historian, said.

Cured in barns, bright-leaf tobacco demand soared in the 1880s with the advent of cigarette production. In 1891, the first tobacco warehouse, the Greenville Tobacco Warehouse, was opened on Ninth Street. The warehouse allowed farmers to sell their tobacco close to home with buyers coming in from various other parts of North Carolina and beyond. The opening of the warehouse reflected the growing tobacco culture in the Carolina Coastal Plains.

In 1899, Pitt County's tobacco production was up to nearly 11 million pounds of tobacco on nearly 13,000 acres. Tobacco's emergence created many new jobs and led to more tobaccorelated facilities and warehouses, including one that was the largest in the world at one time.

Frequent fires in the early 1900s destroyed numerous tobacco facilities, but the opening of the George S. Prichard Tobacco Company Prizery and Stemmery at the corner of 11th and Pitt Streets in 1905 seemed to mark the beginning of the Greenville Tobacco Warehouse District and a new era of prosperity for Greenville tobacco production.

Statistics indicate that Greenville would go on to become the largest tobacco market in eastern North Carolina, establishing the city's reputation as "Tobacco Town."

"Throughout the period of significance, but

particularly in the early years of the 20th century, tobacco sales provided much excitement in Greenville," Architectural Historian Betsy Gohdes-Baten wrote in her nomination for the warehouse district to the National Register of Historic Places. "Frequently, an entire farm family accompanied a crop to auction and spent most or all of the cash received in town before returning home."



Ficklen Tobacco. 31 Dec. 1963–1 Jan. 1964. Daily Reflector Negative Collection, ECU Digital Collections.

Tobacco became a way of life. For years, tobacco auction houses, factories, and brokerages lined the streets of Greenville. During summers, it was almost a rite of passage for locals to work in the tobacco fields or at the curing barns.

"You would work in tobacco to save money to buy your school clothes," Greenville resident Darlyn Crandall said. "You would get paid \$5 a day, and you would go to work around six o'clock and get off around five in the afternoon. And the different farmers would take their cured tobacco to the markets to sell."

Most of the tobacco produced in Greenville was shipped to the large cigarette manufacturers

in Winston-Salem, Durham, and Richmond. Greenville's tobacco market continued to thrive until concerns about the dangers of smoking became a major public health issue. In 1964, the U.S. Surgeon General issued a report arguing that smoking caused lung cancer and numerous other medical issues.

Soon after, some of the older tobacco

processing centers and storage warehouses in Greenville were shut down as newer facilities were constructed in other areas to streamline production. By the mid 1970s, however, Gohdes-Baten said that all six of the contributing buildings in the Greenville Tobacco Warehouse District had been sold and repurposed.

Increased regulations and a strong public relations campaign about the dangers of smoking led to its decline over the next four decades. As a result, Greenville's tobacco market began to fade. Most cigarette manufacturers moved their production facilities overseas, and, in 2005, the Tobacco Transition Payment Program (buyout) began providing farmers with annual payments

to subsidize their losses as most of the tobacco production in Greenville and the Coastal Plains ceased.

Today, most farmers have either transitioned to other crops or left farming all together, but the significance of tobacco for the City of Greenville is not forgotten. A tobacco leaf is depicted on the city's official seal, and stories of working in tobacco fields or visiting the markets are still swapped among those who lived through the golden era of the crop.

And while there will likely never be a resurgence of tobacco again, it is impossible to ignore the importance of the golden leaves of tobacco in Greenville's history. then at the three and breet bringe.

A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

Can recuenter of

Flowing through the heart of Greenville, the Tar River has long been a central feature of the city's landscape, shaping its history and development. Once a bustling waterway teeming with vessels transporting goods, the Tar River has evolved over the years into a tranquil haven for recreational activities.

Bleasa

In the early days of Greenville's history, the Tar River served as a vital artery of commerce. It connected the city to the broader region. Steamboats chugged along its waters, carrying a variety of goods including agricultural products and textiles before modern roads and railways dominated the landscape.

"The river was a major thing," local historian Roger Kammerer said. "The first steamboat was in 1834, and that just changed everything. By the 1880s, you have steamboats all over the place. You had different companies with their steamboats, and there were several landings down where we now have the Town Common."

In addition to cargo, steamers on the Tar River would also transport passengers. Greenville residents became fond of the moonlight excursions. Additionally, trips to Ocracoke were also quite popular as passengers rode the R.L. Myers from Greenville to Washington before connecting with the steamer Alpha for the rest of the trip.

One of Greenville's most famous visitors arrived via the Tar River in 1791. During his southern tour, President George Washington docked along the banks of the river where he was impressed by the commerce he found. He proceeded to eat lunch at a location along what is now Cotanche Street, and spent the night at state legislator Shadrach Allen's Crown Point Inn.

"When he wrote in his diary, he called Greenville an indifferent place, meaning it didn't look any different than anywhere else to him," Kammerer said. "But he wrote two or three paragraphs on the waterfront, all the business, all the goods, the tar, and the turpentine. He had to have seen the river. Because he had lunch down here and he never mentioned anything about walking to the river, I believe they brought him and his carriage over the river on a flat in the area that is now Washington Street. And that is why they named it for him in the 1830s."

As Greenville grew and industrialized, the importance of the Tar River as a commercial waterway began to diminish. The rise of more efficient modes of transportation, such as the railroad connection in the late 1800s and the



View of Tar River and steel bridge, Greenville, N.C. 1909. Tabitha Marie DeVisconti Papers, ECU Digital Collections.

plank roads, gradually rendered steamboats obsolete. By the mid-20th century, the oncethriving trade routes had all but disappeared, and the Tar River's role in the city's economy had waned.

As the years have passed, the Tar River has found a new purpose as a recreational destination. With its scenic features and tranquil waters, the river has become a magnet for outdoor enthusiasts seeking a peaceful escape from the hustle and bustle of urban life. Today, it is a popular spot for kayaking, canoeing, fishing, and other water-based activities.

Occasionally, a powerboat may break the

serene silence with the hum of its engine, but one is more likely to find paddlers leisurely floating down the river, residents traveling along the greenway that runs beside it, or nature enthusiasts observing wildlife or fishing along its banks.

Despite its transformation from a commercial waterway to a recreational haven, the Tar River remains an integral part of Greenville's identity. It continues to shape the city's landscape, providing a scenic backdrop for residents and visitors alike while inviting all to enjoy a leisurely paddle, a powerboat cruise, fishing, or quiet contemplation in the heart of the city.

Boat. 1940-1949. Lucy Cherry Crisp Papers, ECU Digital Collections.





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A strong community is a place of opportunity, and Greenville is still going strong after 250 years. We are proud to celebrate Pitt County's largest community for its rich history as well as its bright future!

GREENVILLE'S INDUSTRIAL TRANSFORMATION

From a tobacco town in years past to the manufacturing production hub of the east that it is today, Greenville has experienced an industrial transformation over the years.

Operations in advanced manufacturing and pharmaceutical manufacturing now play a significant role in stimulating the Greenville economy, while the production of medical devices and supplies is on the rise. Each has found success in Greenville because of a skilled workforce, convenient transportation networks, and high-capacity and reliable utilities.

Much of the city's economic development success can be attributed to the presence of East Carolina University and the collaborative efforts of local government organizations and public-private partnerships such as the Greenville Eastern North Carolina (ENC) Alliance.

"Economic development in Greenville-Pitt County requires deliberate and sustaining effort by many partners to maximize community potential and success," Greenville ENC Alliance President and CEO Josh Lewis said.

In recent years, Greenville has made tremendous strides in solidifying such partnerships. The Greenville ENC Alliance was established in 2019 as a non-profit that utilizes the expertise of the public and private sectors to secure new investments in the area. By working with its partners, the Alliance has effectively recruited new businesses, expanded existing industries, and developed the local workforce.

"We are fortunate in Greenville to have an organization such as the ENC Alliance that has helped us diversify our economy and make us a more attractive destination for business investment," Greenville Mayor P.J. Connelly said. "Greenville has certainly come a long way since the days when its identity was primarily a tobacco town, and I am excited about our future because of the great partnerships we have in this area that contribute to our economic prosperity."

Before tobacco spurred economic growth, Greenville relied on a navigable waterway for the importing and exporting of goods. In the 1800s, there were several established riverboat lines transporting passengers and goods, with cotton being the leading agricultural crop at the time.



Boat construction. 2 Mar. 1960–3 Mar. 1960. Daily Reflector Negative Collection, ECU Digital Collections.

Tobacco was king for years, but in 1950, a group of eight local businessmen sought to diversify an economy that had been mainly agricultural. The group founded Greenville Industries as a for-profit, land-holding company that sold real estate at a reduced price to new or expanding industries to encourage them to call Greenville and Pitt County home.

Greenville Industries worked with the Pitt

County Development Commission (established in 1957) and the Greenville Utilities Commission to establish the Greenville Industrial Park and, in 1963, the efforts of all began to pay off when Empire Brush announced its move to Greenville.

In 1970, Burroughs Wellcome, a major pharmaceutical research and production company, relocated to the Greenville area. The move was a game changer for the local economy as hundreds gained employment and Greenville engineering and Pitt Community College churning out workers from its biotechnology program, the growth of the biotechnology and life sciences industry is poised to continue its recent growth in Greenville and Pitt County.

"We know within chemical manufacturing, biopharma, some of those sectors, they're projected to grow at double digits over the next ten years," Lewis said. "We're going to continue to have job growth from a numbers perspective

> but also wage growth that comes with expanding your presence within those sectors of high-wage jobs."

Manufacturing represents nearly 35 percent of the Greenville region's Gross Regional Product (GRP), and advanced manufacturing primarily revolves around chemicals and plastics, machinery and metals, wood and paper products, and marine-related manufacturing. Some of the major employers include Avient, Hyster-Yale, Penco Products, and Grady-White Boats.

Other major employers in Greenville include Attindas Hygiene Partners, Eastern Carolina Vocational Center, and The Hammock Source. Greenville has also seen a significant increase in software design and development jobs in recent years with the rapid growth of startups like Grover Gaming and RedShark Digital. After years of agricultural

dependency, Greenville has shifted its focus to manufacturing over the past few decades. The transition has propelled the city into a prominent position as a manufacturing leader in eastern North Carolina. With biotechnology and life sciences at the forefront, Greenville continues to attract investment to drive economic growth and establish itself in the regional manufacturing landscape for years to come.



DSM Dyneema, 2019. Aaron Hines / City of Greenville.

began its rise as a major player in the Biopharma Crescent of North Carolina. Today, the former Burroughs Wellcome site is home to the county's largest employer, Thermo Fisher Scientific, and other pharmaceutical manufacturers such as Catalent and CMP Pharma contribute to the nearly 2,500 local jobs in the industry.

With ECU offering undergraduate and graduate degree programs in biomedical

MEDICINE & HEALTHCARE

During the past 250 years, Greenville's medical community has been pivotal to the city's prosperity. From the humble beginnings of the city's first hospital to the state-of-the-art facilities of today, healthcare in Greenville has evolved significantly over the years to better serve eastern North Carolina.

Since Greenville's earliest days, access to medical care has been more readily available than in many other communities. Independent physicians provided a variety of services in the 1800s and, in 1867, six city physicians and six county physicians formed the Pitt County Medical Society that still exists today. Karl B. Pace, Dr. E.T. Dickinson, and Dr. William I. Wooten in mortgaging their property and their life insurance policies to obtain funding for the \$85,000 facility.

While waiting on the construction, a temporary hospital was opened above the H.L. Hodges Hardware Store on Evans Street downtown. In 1924, a new three-story brick Pitt Community Hospital was opened on the corner of Johnston and Woodlawn Streets. The 40-bed facility marked a significant milestone in Greenville's history and set the stage for further expansion and innovation.

Pitt Community Hospital was known for



Pitt Community Hospital, Greenville, N.C. 1924-1951. Frank M. Wooten Jr. Papers, ECU Digital Collections.

through its nursing school and, in 1930, a pediatric department was added to the facility under the direction of Dr. Thomas Watson. By 1934, the hospital had been renamed Pitt General Hospital and the Watson Children's Ward was built. A year later, two additional wings were constructed to expand the hospital's capacity.

producing excellent nurses

However, patient admissions continued to grow, and it became apparent that a new hospital was needed. In 1946, the passing of the federal Hill-Burton Act

Independent physicians continued to serve patients through the turn of the century, but in 1916, Dr. Charles Laughinghouse began a campaign that would transform Greenville's healthcare landscape. Laughinghouse started soliciting support for the construction of the city's first hospital.

The bond issue for the hospital failed to pass, but Laughinghouse did not abandon the effort. Instead, he recruited others to help privately fund the endeavor. Laughinghouse was joined by Dr. provided the opportunity for funds to construct a new hospital, and Pitt County residents approved a \$351,900 bond in 1947 to help with construction.

In 1951, the city's first hospital was replaced by a larger, more modern one on West Fifth Street. Pitt County Memorial Hospital included 120 beds and quickly expanded to 205 beds by 1963. This facility, which became a cornerstone of the community, still did not meet the growing healthcare needs of the Greenville area.



Maynard Children's Hospital, ECU Health.

As a result, local leaders advocated for a \$9 million bond referendum for the construction of a new hospital. Through the bond and federal funding, construction began in 1974. In 1977, the new Pitt County Memorial Hospital opened with 355 beds and a partnership with East Carolina University's recently established School of Medicine.

Since that time, the hospital and Greenville's entire medical community have experienced substantial expansion. The hospital added the only children's hospital in eastern North Carolina in 1986, and by 1987, Pitt County Memorial Hospital had grown to a 560-bed facility that employed more than 2,000 people.

In the 1990s, the hospital went from a public non-profit to a private non-profit that fell under the umbrella of the University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina which managed multiple hospitals in eastern North Carolina. The hospital also added a new Heart Center, a pediatric intensive care unit, and a family birthing center. An outpatient SurgiCenter was also opened during that decade.

By 2000, Pitt County Memorial Hospital had grown to more than 4,000 employees and Dr. Randolph Chitwood made history by performing only the second-ever successful robot-assisted heart procedure using the da Vinci Surgical System. In 2009, the East Carolina Heart Institute was opened, and the hospital's employment grew to more than 7,000. University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina became Vidant Health in 2011, and the Pitt County Memorial Hospital became Vidant Medical Center. Three years later, a new six-story cancer facility was opened, further strengthening healthcare in Greenville.

In 2022, a joint operating agreement went into effect between ECU's Brody School of Medicine and Vidant Health to rebrand Vidant Health to ECU Health. Under the agreement, ECU Health became a clinically integrated, academic healthcare organization that provides efficient, effective, and high-quality care to eastern North Carolina residents.

Today, ECU Health Medical Center is the heart of the ECU Health System. It includes 974 licensed beds and offers extensive inpatient and outpatient services to more than 1.4 million people across 29 counties. Additionally, it is the largest employer in the City of Greenville. ECU Health Medical Center also continues to serve as the flagship teaching hospital for the Brody School of Medicine at ECU.

Through 250 years of cutting-edge advancements, Greenville's extraordinary healthcare facilities and leaders have enriched the lives of eastern North Carolina residents for generations. The city's exceptional medical community continues to separate Greenville from other municipalities across the country, and likely will for years to come. Proud to be a part of the Greenville community and celebrating 250 years with you.







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DR. ANDREW BEST

During the early 1930s, a young boy used to walk three and a half miles every day along the country roads of Lenoir County to attend school. He believed that education was the key to success.

The boy later went on to study at North Carolina A&T University and subsequently at Fisk University's medical school in Nashville, Tennessee. After serving in the military and being awarded a Purple Heart, he returned to eastern North Carolina in 1954 and set up his medical practice in Greenville. The community was unaware of the tremendous impact that Dr. Andrew Best would have.

Dr. Best spent the next 50 years practicing medicine while also emerging as a civil rights leader in Greenville and Pitt County. Despite his engagements in various fields, Best remained focused on his four passions: medicine, civil rights, education, and religion. He played a crucial role in ending segregation in Pitt County through creative and diplomatic means, without much conflict.

"He was a wonderful person," Greenville resident Curlie Green, 98, said. "He could preach. He could doctor. He could do it all."

Best is remembered as a prominent civil rights leader for his work with other medical professionals to desegregate Pitt County Memorial Hospital. He also played a significant role in the desegregation of East Carolina College and provided support during the desegregation efforts of the school system and local businesses.

"He was an active, wise man who came to our community at the right time to get a lot accomplished in the world of integration at that time," Dr. Earl Trevathan, a former pediatrician and colleague of Best, said. "Things did happen before, but with the guidance of a person like Dr. Best, we got through some big issues without any turmoil."

As part of his civil rights work, Dr. Best helped establish the Pitt County Interracial Committee



Andrew Best with Patient, ca. 2001. ECU Digital Collections.

in the late 1950s to address some of the community's concerns with segregation. That group would later become the City of Greenville Human Relations Council.

Easing racial tensions and bringing equity to Greenville, the work of Best was recognized through numerous designations, appointments, and awards. He was the first Black member of the East Carolina University Board of Trustees, a member of the North Carolina Board of Governors, and a part of the North Carolina A&T Board of Trustees among other councils and committees. In 1974, he was named the Masonic Journal's Man of the Year, and in 2001, Best was presented with the Order of the Long Leaf Pine.

Today, the Humanitarian Award presented annually by the City of Greenville's Human Relations Council is named after Dr. Best and Dr. Malene Irons, who worked closely with Best through integration initiatives.

"As far as pushing to get more things in the Black community, he was a leader," Pitt County

GREENVILLE'S TIMELINE

Commissioner Ann Huggins said. "He was a very important person in the community."

Regarded statewide by leaders from the medical profession, Dr. Best was once referred to as a "Medical Trailblazer" by the Old North State Medical Society as he helped generate support for the creation of the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University despite the objections of some at the state level.

All the while, Dr. Best continued to make an impact on the health of the African-American community in Greenville and beyond. For more than 20 years, he served as the only black physician in Pitt or Martin Counties, with patients from all other surrounding counties.

Always putting his patients first, Dr. Best was one of the last doctors to make house calls right up until his final days on the job. He retired from medicine in 2004 but continued to stay active in the Greenville community until his death in December 2005. Today, his legacy lives on in the minds of locals and throughout the community. And, as Greenville continues to advance in medicine, education, and community relations, it is imperative to remember that it was Dr. Andrew Best who helped make it happen.



Andrew Best with plaque. 1991. Andrew A. Best Papers, ECU Digital Collections.

- **1907** The North Carolina Legislature establishes East Carolina Teachers Training School, now East Carolina University. A groundbreaking ceremony for the school is held in 1908.
- **1909** East Carolina Teachers Training School officially opens, and Greenville becomes the educational center of eastern North Carolina.
- **1923** Greenville physician Dr. Charles Laughinghouse and a group of other physicians raise \$85,000 to start Pitt Community Hospital. The hospital's first temporary location was downtown above the H.L. Hodge Hardware Store before moving to a structure on the corner of Johnston and Woodlawn Streets east of downtown. The three-story hospital had 42 beds and two full-time physicians, with 16 nurses.
- **1924** In early 1924, the Greenville Kiwanis Club began to work to open a black hospital in Greenville. They rented the Old Bernard House near the corner of First and Evans Streets and hired Miss Hopkins, a graduate nurse and Greenville native, to manage it. The Kiwanis Club approached both white and black churches for donations, and the Pitt General Hospital agreed to share their sterilizing plant, operating rooms, X-ray and pathological laboratories. Thus, the St. Frances Hospital for Colored People opened on September 1, 1924 with 15 beds and a staff of 2 graduate nurses and a few nurses in training.
- **1936** Local farmer J. E. Winslow, owner of Winslow's Stables, joins some other area farmers to form the North Carolina Farm Bureau to help farmers avoid some of the terrible losses they suffered during the recent economic downturns. Farm bureaus became very popular, forming in numerous counties across the state, with Winslow serving as the state president for more than 10 years. Today, North Carolina Farm Bureau remains a leading advocate at the local, state, national, and international levels for the interests and needs of the farming community.
- **1937** Guy Smith Stadium opens in the area that once served as the fairgrounds. The stadium would host Coastal Plains League baseball games for the Greenville Greenies until 1951. Today, the stadium once again will be hosting a Coastal Plains League team in summer of 2024 while also being utilized by the J.H. Rose High School baseball team and the city's Babe Ruth Baseball League.

Continued on page 31.

EDUCATION: CORNERSTONE OF PROGRESS



Greenville, N.C. The Old Academy. 1905–1925. Moore Family Papers, ECU Digital Collections.

While much has shaped Greenville's 250-year history, the city's commitment to education traces back to its inception and has played a prominent role in its identity through the years.

When the North Carolina General Assembly chartered the Pitt Academy in 1787, it noted that "the proper education of youth is essential to the happiness and prosperity of every community" and identified a "quest of learning at Greenesville." The academy was believed to be located at the corner of what is now Second and Greene Streets. In 1814, the building became the Greenville Academy, an educational institution that would serve residents for years. Records indicate that the academy reached its peak for patronage in the 1820s.

Just before the Civil War, the school moved to Evans Street where Sheppard Memorial Library currently stands. Learning carried on there until the late 1800s, and, in 1903, the school was demolished.

Another private venture on Dickinson Avenue known by locals as "Greenville College" or the Greenville Male and Female Institute was opened later in the 19th century. While the curriculum primarily revolved around music at the institution on Dickinson, its later years were aimed at preparing young ladies to teach in the public schools of Pitt and adjoining counties.

State-supported common schools were also available in Greenville. According to records, Pitt County operated approximately 80 white schools and 55 black schools around the end of the 19th century.

Each of the city's earliest schools laid the foundation for a tradition of academic excellence for decades to come but also accentuated the need for properly educated teachers.

In 1907, the need was met, and Greenville's reputation as a bastion for learning was solidified when the state legislature established the East Carolina Teachers Training School. The school officially opened its doors in 1909 for 123 students and 12 faculty members. In the decades to come, it would evolve into East Carolina University, one of the largest public universities in the state.

"We can never begin to calculate the value it will be to North Carolina," Former North Carolina Governor Thomas Jordan Jarvis said when ECU was established.

He was so correct.

Throughout its storied existence, ECU has been a beacon of opportunity, empowering generations of students with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed. Each year, ECU graduates about 6,500 new students armed with bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. From its earliest days as a teacher training school to its current standing as a comprehensive research university, ECU drives innovation in Greenville.

One of the most transformative moments in ECU's history occurred in 1975 with the opening of the School of Medicine. The school not only expanded the university's academic offerings but also ushered in a new era of healthcare excellence in the region. Today, ECU's Brody School of Medicine stands as a testament to the city's commitment to addressing critical healthcare needs and producing skilled physicians who serve the communities of North Carolina and beyond.

In 1961, another significant educational institution opened its doors when Pitt Community College was chartered by the North Carolina State Board of Education. The college, which operated for years as Pitt Technical Institute, has grown from its humble beginnings to one of the largest community colleges in the state. Today, PCC serves more than 17,000 credit and non-credit students annually, awarding degrees, diplomas, and certificates in more than 70 programs of study.

Greenville's dedication to education throughout the years has also been a catalyst for economic growth. It has propelled Greenville into the global stage as a hub for innovation and progress. Today, more than 10,000 people are employed in education in Pitt County, carrying on a tradition of extraordinary educators who have equipped generations with the tools necessary to make an impact.

For 250 years, Greenville's commitment to education has helped to guide its legacy. And, with the number of educational opportunities continuing to grow, it will likely continue to be a cornerstone for progress in the city for the foreseeable future.

East Carolina University School of Dental Medicine. ECU News Services



DR. LEO JENKINS

Leo Jenkins was a fighter who awoke a giant in the East.

More than any other individual, Jenkins was responsible for East Carolina University's rise from its days as a small teacher's training school to one of the largest universities in the state. East Carolina University, as it stands today, is far from what it was when Jenkins arrived in 1947, and the same can be said for Greenville and eastern North Carolina.

"Leo Jenkins was a great leader for ECU, Greenville, Pitt County, eastern North Carolina, and North Carolina," Pitt County Commissioner Ann Huggins said.

Jenkins spent 31 years at East Carolina, 18 as president and chancellor, leading the school to university status, establishing 150 new academic programs, guiding the initiative to establish a medical school, and elevating the Pirates' athletic programs to new heights.

"My father pushed for growth in Greenville and at East Carolina University," Jenkins' son Jack Jenkins said. "He knew that through size they could help more people in the region get an education and help Greenville, Pitt County, and surrounding areas. So he pushed for growth at East Carolina, and he also pushed for big-time athletics."

Jenkins began his educational career as a New Jersey high school teacher after earning a doctorate in education from New York University, His teaching days did not last for long, however, as he served briefly in World War II after registering for service in 1942. Following his service, Jenkins returned to work for the New Jersey education department before accepting a position as dean of East Carolina Teachers College in Greenville.

Not long after his arrival, Jenkins began the push for the 1951 name change to East Carolina College, noting the school had diversified its educational opportunities beyond the educational field. In 1960, Jenkins became president of the college, and he started the charge toward



Leo Jenkins. 1964. 1964 Buccaneer p. 11. ECU Digital Collections

university designation. In 1967, the years of work paid off when East Carolina College became East Carolina University.

"East Carolina University was not what it is today, and the only thing I can say about that is that it is what it is today because of Leo Jenkins," Inner Banks Media President and ECU Alumnus Henry Hinton said.

Jenkins set the stage for university designation throughout the 60s by leading the university through a series of transformational changes and events. In 1960, he raised awareness of the university by arranging the visit of presidential candidate John F. Kennedy. Two years later, on his own accord, Jenkins successfully led the desegregation of campus without some of the conflict experienced by others. "When he first took over, it was a completely segregated school," Jenkins' son Jeff Jenkins said. "Colleges and universities throughout the country were having riots and problems with integrating their campuses, but he just very quietly did it because it was the right thing to do."

The establishment of a School of Business, a graduate school, and expansion of arts offerings on campus, including the start of ECU's Summer Theatre, also helped establish ECU as a vital asset in eastern North Carolina.

While helping ECU earn the respect of others statewide, Jenkins kept his finger on the pulse of the campus he represented by keeping the line of communication open with students and staff. During his time as chancellor, it was common to see Jenkins walking the campus to interact with others and learn more about campus needs.

When he wasn't lobbying for the university or interacting on campus, Jenkins could be found at his children's events or pursuing one of his passions – painting.

Jenkins was also passionate about athletics and recognized the important role sports play as the front porch for higher education recruitment.

"East Carolina athletics really took off in those days which had a lot to do with attracting students to the university and helping with growth," Jack Jenkins said.

During his tenure, Jenkins propelled ECU athletics into a more competitive place through the construction of Ficklen Stadium and Minges Coliseum and the acquisition of prominent football coaches such as Clarence Stasavich and Pat Dye.

"He had this mantra that if you are going to do something, be the best you can be," Jeff Jenkins said. "In other words, if you are going to have a business school, then strive to have the very best business school in the country. And he had a lot of respect for his take on athletics because it was the same thing. If we were going to have a football team, then let's strive to be the very best football team in the country." Jenkins spearheaded rapid growth at ECU into the 1970s, overseeing the construction of more than 25 new buildings on campus and increasing the number of academic programs from 24 to 174 during his tenure. He also gained the reputation of a tenacious fighter who stood up for eastern North Carolina with entities such as the North Carolina Legislature and the Board of Governors.

"He had big ideas, and he was willing to fight for them," Greenville historian Roger Kammerer said.

One of Jenkins' most significant achievements came in 1974 when funding was awarded to ECU for the establishment of a medical school despite resistance from some in the state.

"I asked him one day why he was continuing with the odds so stacked against him," Jeff Jenkins said. "And this was a great lesson I learned from him. He said 'Son, if you have the truth on your side, nobody can defeat you."

In 1977, the medical school welcomed its first class and today, the Brody School of Medicine produces more doctors who work in North Carolina than any other medical school in the state.

By the time he retired, enrollment at ECU had grown by nearly 12,000 students and the university was well on its way to being one of the largest in the state. When Jenkins passed away in 1989, his legacy as one of the most important figures in eastern North Carolina's history was solidified.

And while some of the battles that Jenkins fought are still prevalent today, eastern North Carolina and specifically East Carolina University are better positioned to fight them because of Leo Jenkins.

"I think you can make the argument that Leo Jenkins is the most important person in Greenville history," Hinton said. "If you look at what his impact was and what his vision was, and what Greenville became, which was his vision."

City of Greenville. Busy=Progressive=Growing.

HERE are three stages in the lives of every community, as there are in the life of every person—the first of infancy, the second of adolescence and the third of maturity. For every city which is born with a future there comes the time, when like a youth, it

unaganes it has really come to be something, when as yet it is nothing to what it really ought to become. Greenville is today in the adolescent stage, where it is no longer a village and is not yet, by many lengs and bounds, the city it is sure to be. It is at the point where the future of many a promising town is traded for a fatuous satisfaction with the strides which have already been made, when the citizens are content to lst indolence grow on their wearied energies and to trust to fate for the achievements that are necessary for the expansion into a matured and permanent edge.

A great many people look upon the eities of North Carolina today as they did ten or fifteen years ago, and take no time to investigate, **Greenville**, no longer a country town, is a fine example of modern progress. The visitor is at first surprised to see such a beautiful place and much more surprised at the evidence of enthusians, eivie spirit, and progressiveness that pervade the eity, as well as the vast building operations that are under way.

The gaspet of **Greenville** is to be found in the dictura of the Apostle Paul, "Forgetting those things which are behind and looking unto those thingss which are before," and this edition of the Weaver series of illustrated efficies is not for the purpose of the stimulation of self-satisfaction and the consequent fostering of a do-nothing era of well-sontext on the part of the eithers, It is to call attention to the fact that **Greenville** is pre-eminently the eity of **possibilities**. Nothing is too great for it, and never in the history of the



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SHEPPARD MEMORIAL LIBRARY



Story Time in Library, Dec. 1955–Feb. 1956. Daily Reflector Negative Collection, ECU Digital Collections.

Once a small lending library in the early 1900s, Sheppard Memorial Library has become North Carolina's largest library building east of I-95 thanks to a plethora of community support through the years.

It was the End of the Century Book Club that first established the Greenville Public Library in 1903 at the Masonic Temple located near the courthouse in downtown Greenville. The library served the community until a fire destroyed the temple and the library's contents.

The library was re-established soon after, and it was housed in multiple locations over the next decade before eventually finding a home at the Greenville Graded School on Evans Street. The library thrived at the school until another fire in 1929 destroyed the school.

At that time, Dr. and Mrs. Robert L. Carr of Greenville decided to ask Harper D. Sheppard, a well-established businessman who grew up in Greenville, for the money to build a permanent library, as a memorial to his father, William Henry Haywood Sheppard, a longtime Pitt County Clerk of Court.

Harper Sheppard was excited about the idea and pledged his financial support for the construction under the conditions that the location be donated by the town, that he could name two people on the building committee, and that all future support of the library be assumed by Greenville residents.

The local school board donated the Graded School land for use of the library, and Sheppard donated a total of \$60,000 to ensure a state-ofthe-art structure that was completed in October of 1930.

The neo-classical library, named Sheppard Memorial Library for William Henry Haywood Sheppard, was formally presented to the city on October 15, 1930 by Harper's son, Lawrence B. Sheppard.

The library was renovated in 1969 and 2000, the latter of which included a 34,000-square foot addition.

GREENVILLE'S TIMELINE

- **1940** The City of Greenville and Pitt County purchase 500 acres of land with an air strip to create the city's first airport. An Airport Commission was formed in 1946 and appointed to lease and operate an airport for the city. Different companies have provided service over the years. Today, the service provider is American Airlines.
- **1950** Greenville Industries is incorporated by eight local businessmen as a for-profit, land-holding company that sold real estate at a reduced price to new or expanding industries. The goal was to diversify an economy that had previously been mainly agricultural.
- **1951** A new hospital, Pitt County Memorial Hospital, opens on West Fifth Street. The hospital, which today houses some administrative offices for Pitt County and Pitt County Schools, included 120 beds at the time before growing to 205 beds by 1963. Despite the expansion, the hospital was still too small, so efforts to facilitate the passage of a bond referendum to build a new hospital got underway.
- **1953** The City of Greenville opens Elm Street Park on May 6, 1953 with a packed house on hand to watch Little League baseball. The park has grown over the years, but it has remained a hub for Little League baseball action.
- **1959** Grady-White Boats opens in Greenville. The business would eventually become one of the largest fiberglass boat manufacturers in the world and one of the strongest community partners in the city.
- **1960** The Greenville Art Center opens at the old Graham Flanagan home on Evans Street. The center was the result of efforts by the East Carolina Art Society, which started in 1956, and the Greenville Women's Club, to provide a "home" for the art center after displaying art in Greenville an exhibition space at Sheppard Memorial Library for the previous few years.
- **1960** The newly-established City of Greenville Redevelopment Commission begins the controversial Shore Drive Redevelopment Project that would impact hundreds of families living just south of the Tar River in the "downtown" neighborhood of homes, businesses, and the Sycamore Hill Baptist Church. The redevelopment project broke up a vibrant African American community in the name of economic development. Once the project was completed, the area was left with only the Sycamore Hill Baptist Church on the corner of Greene and First Streets.

- **1963** East Carolina University opens James Skinner Ficklen Memorial Stadium during a football game against Wake Forest. The stadium included seating on the south side of the field for 10,000 people with a small press box. ECU won the game, 20-10.
- **1966** The Town Common opens, providing an open space park north of downtown along the Tar River in the area that was once the "downtown" neighborhood. Today, the Town Common is one of the city's most popular parks, hosting a variety of events and gatherings while also providing a connection to the city's greenway system.
- **1969** A fire consumes nearly all of the Sycamore Hill Baptist Church, forcing the church to relocate to Eighth Street and vacating the last remaining element of the former "downtown" neighborhood.
- **1970** In a major win for Greenville Industries and one of the first major steps toward the establishment of Greenville's reputation as a pharmaceutical hub, a dedication ceremony is held for Burroughs Wellcome. The facility relocated from New York to locations in Greenville and the Research Triangle Park in the Raleigh/Durham area. The facility has expanded and changed ownership over the years, and today the campus is primarily the home of Thermo Fisher Scientific, a pharmaceutical production and manufacturing facility that employs nearly 2,000.
- **1973** Sunday in the Park is held at the Town Common for the first time. The summertime concert series recently celebrated its 50th anniversary with a series of eight concerts in the summer of 2023.
- **1977** The new Pitt County Memorial Hospital opens in its current location with 355 beds. Additionally, the East Carolina University School of Medicine also opens for its first class of 28 students. In 1982, the Brody Medical Science Building was opened.
- **1986** Greenville City Schools and Pitt County Schools merge to form the Pitt County School System consisting of 30 schools. Today, Pitt County Schools serves more than 24,000 students in its 38 schools.

Continued on page 33.



Houses on West First Street, Greenville, N.C. 1960–1969. Greenville Urban Renewal Files, ECU Digital Collections.

Greenville's Alton Harris still remembers being a young boy racing through the downtown neighborhood on Sunday mornings for a chance to ring the bells at the Sycamore Hill Missionary Baptist Church.

He rarely made it in time as others beat him to the chapel.

The popularity of getting to perform that simple task was symbolic of the impact and influence that the church had. For more than 100 years, the church was the center of religious, social, political, and economic activity for Greenville's African American community. It was the most significant institution in the downtown community and an attraction for residents from Greenville and beyond.

Founded in 1860 by a group of 22 individuals with a shared vision, Sycamore Hill opened its doors on the corner of First and Greene Streets in 1865. The religious and architectural landmark provided a picturesque structure in the Shore Drive neighborhood closest to the Tar River.

In the early 1960s, Greenville leaders

launched a controversial urban renewal plan to revitalize Greenville's downtown and establish a Central Business District. The result was the razing and burning of homes and businesses in the neighborhood. In the process, the City developed the Town Common on 20 acres along the Tar River banks.

An agreement was reached to preserve the church, but a 1969 fire destroyed it too. The church and residents were forced to relocate, many to some of the city's first subsidized housing projects.

The community's connection to the church and neighborhood never faded. As the City updated the Town Common Master Plan in 2016, residents advocated for commemorating the neighborhood and church. In 2020, the City of Greenville opened the Sycamore Hill Gateway Plaza on the Town Common's west end where the church once stood.

Today, the plaza provides a prominent entrance to the park's west end and offers a glimpse into the rich history of the area.

GREENVILLE'S TIMELINE

- **1986** The Children's Hospital opens at Pitt County Memorial Hospital. The hospital would expand over the years, and today the ECU Health Maynard Children's Hospital is one of the country's premier places for pediatric care.
- **1987** Edward Carter is elected to be the first African-American Mayor in Greenville's history. Carter had previously served on the City Council for four years. Additionally, the format for City Council elections was changed during the 1987 municipal election to the 5 districts, one at-large, one mayor format that it is today.
- **1993** The City of Greenville breaks ground for a new Police/Fire Headquarters located on Greene Street downtown. The 47,956-square foot facility included three stories of office and meeting spaces for Police and two stories for Fire/Rescue, while also offering five bays for rescue vehicles, living quarters, a kitchen, and shared common areas including meeting rooms and an exercise area. This facility was the first of its kind for public safety in the area.
- **1995** After years of planning, the City of Greenville opens its first greenway, the Green Mill Run Greenway, to provide an alternative for transportation in the city. The 1.1-mile linear trail (a pilot project at the time) connects Green Springs Park to Elm Street Park. In the image above, Mayor Nancy Jenkins speaks during the groundbreaking ceremony in 1994. Today, there are nearly 9 miles of greenway trails throughout the city.
- **1999** Hurricane Floyd passes over Greenville in September, dumping approximately 17 inches of rain. With more than 20 inches of rain having already fallen earlier in the month during the passage of Hurricane Dennis, the Tar River rose to record levels (29.74 feet) and flooded many areas of the city. Some portions of Pitt County were under water for more than two weeks, while more than 4,300 structures were damaged countywide at a cost of more than \$346 million. There were six deaths reported in the county.
- 2001 H. Boyd Lee Park is opened, becoming the City's first park located south of Greenville Boulevard. The park was named for Boyd Lee, who had served as the City of Greenville's Recreation and Parks Director for more than 30 years. At the time, it was the largest recreational facility in the city.

- **2001** Through a partnership between the City of Greenville and Pitt County, the Greenville Convention Center is opened. Today, the convention center features more than 91,000 square feet of flexible event and meeting space on a campus that also includes three hotels and two restaurants.
- **2004** The City of Greenville is named "SportsTown USA" for North Carolina by Sports Illustrated and the National Recreation and Parks Association. The designation is the result of an expansive list of sports and activities available in the community, and the rising popularity of the local BMX scene that was home to some of the top names in the sport, including Dave Mirra, Ryan Nyquist, and more.
- **2006** The City of Greenville officially opens a new City Hall located at 200 West Fifth Street across the street from the previous City Hall that would be converted to a Municipal Building for City offices. The new City Hall included 48,057 square feet at a cost of \$7.5 million. The glass walls and open atrium were designed to tie into the idea of open government and transparency.
- **2019** In the latest step toward enhancing connectivity while relieving congestion and improving safety along Greenville's roadways, the North Carolina Department of Transportation opens the Southwest Bypass, a 12.6-mile roadway that stretches from Greenville to south of Ayden.
- **2020** Sycamore Hill Gateway Plaza is opened on the western end of the Town Common in the same location where the Sycamore Hill Baptist Church once stood. The \$1.9 million plaza provides a prominent entrance to the park's west end while commemorating the Shore Drive neighborhood that was taken away during the redevelopment project in the 1960s.
- **2022** The North Carolina Department of Transportation officially unveiled the Interstate 587 shield during a ceremony in Greenville on June 22. The new-ly-designated, 37-mile stretch of interstate connects Greenville to I-95/I-795 in Wilson County and becomes Greenville's first interstate connection.

GREENVILLE MUSEUM OF ART



While art in Greenville dates to the city's earliest days, it wasn't until 1960 that the city got its first permanent home for art exhibitions.

The origin of the Greenville Museum of Art, first named the Greenville Art Center, can be traced to 1935 when Rachel Maxwell Moore spearheaded the Greenville Women's Club's efforts to establish the Greenville Arts Festival. At that time, a gallery was opened at the corner of Fifth and Cotanche Streets downtown with the assistance of the Federal Art Project in Raleigh.

In 1943, the gallery moved to an exhibition space on the second floor of Sheppard Memorial Library, and, in 1956, the East Carolina Art Society was established. The society established policies and guided the operation of the art gallery. Over the next four years, local art advocates, led by Dr. Robert Lee Humber, worked to raise money to purchase a permanent home.

That location was the Graham Flanagan home located at 802 South Evans Street. The home, known for its immaculate curving stairway, was

Greenville Museum of Art, 2024. Aaron Hines / City of Greenville.

converted to form the Greenville Art Center, and its first exhibition in May 1960 included paintings loaned from various New York galleries.

Before she died in 1964, Moore bequeathed approximately \$24,000 to the Rachel Maxwell Moore Foundation to fund the purchase of art for the museum's permanent collection. The foundation continues to purchase one to three seminal artworks annually for the museum.

In 1981, the name of the Greenville Art Center was changed to the Greenville Museum of Art. The museum received accreditation from the American Alliance of Museums in 1986 and earned reaccreditation as recently as 2022.

Today, the museum includes more than 7,000 square feet of space dedicated to displaying artwork, and a Greenville Museum of Art Center for Art Education is located next door. The museum continues to operate with a mission to inspire, educate, and connect people through the visual arts through its collection, exhibitions, and programs.

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Here's to the next 250!





See how we are BIG on Greenville!



SPORTSTOWN USA



Greenville Greenies Baseball Team, 1937–1939. East Carolina Manuscript Collection, Moore Family Papers, ECU Digital Collections.

Since the 1880s when the Greenville Baseball Club first took the field against local clubs from the Kinston and Tarboro areas, the people of Greenville have been passionate about sports.

While still very much known as a "baseball town", Greenville has grown to be much more. Today, the city offers a full spectrum of recreational opportunities for those who want to be in the action or the stands.

It's no surprise that in 2004 Greenville was awarded the title of Sportstown USA by Sports Illustrated and the National Recreation and Parks Association. In its 250th year, the city continues to solidify that reputation.

"We are still Sportstown USA," Greenville Mayor P.J. Connelly said. "When you think about all the great opportunities here, it is as good as you will find anywhere. Whether collegiate athletics, semi-professional, or the youth and adult recreational programs, people love their sports in Greenville."

They have had plenty to cheer for over the years.

At East Carolina University, the baseball team continues to be one of the top programs

in the country each year with 34 NCAA Regional appearances and the football program won its 10th bowl game in 2022. Other sports at the university are maintaining success or on a positive trajectory, and ECU's athletics facilities are consistently being improved through the philanthropy of the Pirate fan base.

Greenville has not been home to a professional baseball team since the Greenville Robins, previously known as the Greenville Greenies, played their final season in 1951. However, the Greenville Yard Gnomes collegiate summer team is now playing Coastal Plain League games on the same field each summer at a renovated Guy Smith Stadium.

Youth baseball and softball also continue to excel with Greenville high schools boasting multiple state championships while producing many athletes who went on to play at higher levels. Greenville Little Leagues, always among the best in the state, made a run at the Little League World Series as recently as 2017.

On the topic of Little League, Greenville became the host of the Greenville Little League Softball World Series in 2020. The international
event brings teams worldwide to compete each August at Stallings Stadium at Elm Street Park, one of the country's premier Little League ballparks. The Pitt County Girls Softball Little League has already played in the event two times.

Diamond sports aren't the only game in town though. Greenville is also home to the National Premier Soccer League member Greenville United Football Club.

Established in 2020, this semi-professional team features players from all over the world who help increase the popularity of soccer in Greenville, which started to grow when the Pitt Greenville Soccer Association was established in 1986.

Additionally, Greenville has seen its share of success in football, basketball, volleyball, golf, track and field, wrestling, and swimming, with championships or athletes who advanced to compete professionally. Pickleball, lacrosse, and hockey have taken off in recent years, further expanding the city's diversity in athletic offerings.

The recent addition of a BMX skills course

and pump track at the popular Wildwood Park has carried on a tradition of excellence in extreme sports that dates to the mid-1990s when BMX legend Dave Mirra moved to Greenville. Many other BMX professionals followed Mirra, and the city quickly became known as "Protown USA" and a mecca for BMX worldwide.

"It doesn't matter what you want to do. If there is a sport you are interested in, you can find it in Greenville," Connelly said.

City leaders seem committed to keeping it that way.

In recent years, improvements have been made at existing athletics facilities, and sports opportunities have increased. A Greenville-Pitt County Sports Commission was established in 2019 to enhance sports tourism experiences, and City leaders are exploring plans for a multi-sport complex.

Premier facilities, an enthusiastic fan base, and a talented pool of athletes make it seem as if the title of Sportstown USA is not leaving Greenville anytime soon. And the people of Greenville seem just fine with that.



Little League Softball World Series, August 13, 2023. Aaron Hines / City of Greenville.

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NOTABLE GREENVILLE RESIDENTS

C. M. Eppes

Charles Montgomery Eppes arrived in Greenville in 1903 as the principal of the new colored Graded School. Eppes was also known for his contributions to raising the standard of living for African Americans in Greenville.



David J. Whichard

Born in Greenville in 1862, David Jordan Whichard founded The Eastern Reflector, now known as The Daily Reflector, in 1882. The newspaper played a significant role in Greenville's progress over the years, arguing fiercely



for transformational changes in Greenville.

Janice Faulkner

An ECU graduate and former professor and associate vice chancellor, Janice Faulkner was the first female executive of the North Carolina Democratic Party. In 1993, she was appointed as the North Carolina Secretary of Revenue, and



in 1996, she was appointed by Governor Jim Hunt as NC Secretary of State. She later served as the Commissioner of the Department of Motor Vehicles before becoming the inaugural chair of the ECU Board of Visitors.

James L. Fleming

Born in Pitt County in 1867, James Lawson Fleming was elected to the North Carolina Senate in 1904. During his two terms, Fleming introduced a bill that led to the establishment of East Carolina Teachers' Training School (now East Carolina University).



Roger Kramerer

Roger Kammerer moved to Greenville in 1974 to attend East Carolina University. Kammerer has become the most prominent historian in the city, writing numerous books and articles over the years and playing a significant role as part of



the Pitt County Historical Society.

John Warner

Warner was a filmmaker whose work included *Pitch a Boogie Woogie*, which premiered in Greenville in 1948. Warner was perhaps best known as the owner of Greenville's Plaza Theatre and The Roxy.

Frances Hopkins

Frances Hopkins was a well-known black nurse in Greenville who opened her home on Washington Street to serve as the first hospital in Greenville for colored patients.

Ronald Vincent

Ronald "RV" Vincent, who grew up playing sports in Greenville, is North Carolina's all-time winningest coach for high school baseball and a seven-time state champion with J.H. Rose High School. Vincent is also a member of the



National High School Hall of Fame.

Thomas Jarvis

Thomas Jarvis, the 44th governor of North Carolina played a prominent role in establishing East Carolina Teachers Training School, now known as East Carolina University. Jarvis is also credited with helping to bring



prominent African American educator Charles Montgomery Eppes to Greenville.

Dave Mirra

As the most successful athlete in the history of freestyle BMX, Mirra called Greenville home for more than 20 years and paved the way for dozens of professionals who would follow him to the city and lead Greenville to the reputation of "Protown USA."



Juvencio Rocha Peralta

Juvencio Rocha Peralta co-founded AMEX-CAN in 2001, and the organization has gone on to serve more than 16 counties in eastern North Carolina by building leaders within the organization and the rapidly growing local Hispanic population.



Billy Taylor

Billy Taylor was born in 1921 in Greenville where he attended C.M. Eppes School and developed a love for music. He had a successful career as a jazz pianist, composer, and educator. He was the Robert L. Jones Distinguished Professor of



Music at ECU and was named the artistic director of jazz at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Johnny Wooten

As a C.M. Eppes High School graduate, Johnny Wooten's career blossomed when he returned as the school's band director in 1956. Wooten was a fixture teaching music in the schools. He touched the lives of many students, but he



also spent time performing with some of the nation's top acts such as Gladys Knight, BB King, or Marvin Gave when they performed in Greenville.

NOTABLE GREENVILLE RESIDENTS

Edward Carter

Edward Carter was the first Black Mayor of the City of Greenville, elected in 1987 after serving four years on the Greenville City Council. Carter served two years as mayor, demonstrating a commitment to the human side of government during his tenure.



Lucille Gorham

Lucille Gorham was a beloved teacher and community leader who spent decades mentoring young people in Greenville. In 2007, the City of Greenville and ECU named the Intergenerational Center in her honor. The center



occupies the old Saint Gabriel's Catholic Church and School property where Gorham taught.

Denison "DD" Garrett

A civil rights pioneer and businessman, Denison Dover Garrett was at the forefront of breaking down Jim Crow Era color barriers. In 1944, he was the first black candidate for the Greenville Board of Aldermen, and in 1988 he was elected Pitt



County's first black county commissioner.

Mr. Beast

James "Jimmy" Donaldson grew up in Greenville and began posting YouTube videos in 2012 at age 13. In 2017, his videos went viral, and Mr-Beast became a worldwide sensation. With more than 250 million subscribers today, he is



the most subscribed individual on the YouTube platform.

Eddie Smith

Grady-White Boats has been an integral part of Greenville's industrial sector since 1959. Eddie Smith has been the owner of Grady-White Boats since 1968 and, in addition to that role, Smith has been one of Greenville's most philanthrop-



ic individuals with significant contributions to the medical, educational, recreational, business, and athletic communities.

Parker Overton

Parker Overton began selling water skis out of the back of a car in the 1970s. Less than a decade later, he was the owner of the world's largest water sports and marine accessories dealer. Passionate about Greenville, Overton



used his success in business to help move forward numerous transformational projects and initiatives throughout the city.

Charles Laughinghouse

Charles O'Hagan Laughinghouse led the effort to establish Greenville's first community hospital, which opened in 1924. In 1939, the Laughinghouse Hospital Fund was established to assist those in the Pitt County community who did not have medical insurance.



Dr. Malene Irons

A graduate of East Carolina Teachers College, Dr. Malene Grant Irons was the first female physician in Greenville. Irons served as chief of pediatrics at Pitt Memorial Hospital in the 1950s and spearheaded the efforts to desegregate



the hospital and local businesses the following decade.

Minges Family

After establishing a successful bottling company that thrived off the sales of Pepsi Cola and Mountain Dew, the Minges family became one of the most generous benefactors in Greenville. The Minges family's contributions to the com-



munity are extensive and longstanding, but one of the most notable gifts was the donation made to construct a new basketball facility for ECU.

Dr. Earl Trevathan Jr

Dr. Earl Trevathan moved to Greenville in the early 1950s to begin work at the new Pitt Memorial Hospital where he would later serve as chief of staff and help with desegregation efforts. Trevathan, a local pediatrician for decades, also



served as the Pitt County Health Director and assisted with the establishment of the Brody School of Medicine.

Robert L. Humber

Born in Greenville in 1898, Robert Lee Humber single-handedly launched a movement for World Federation. Humber's advocacy led to 17 states, including North Carolina, adopting resolutions endorsing World Federation. Hum-



ber also helped establish the NC Museum of Art, the NC Symphony, and the NC Community College System. Dr. Mary Raab Dr. Mary Raab's service to eastern North Carolina began in 1977 when

University's

she moved to the area

to join the faculty at East

Medical School. She and

her husband, Spencer,

played a key role in es-

tablishing the Leo Jen-

Carolina

kins Cancer Center and formed outreach clinics throughout the region to bring cancer care closer to patients.

GREENVILLE: A HISTORY IN PHOTOS





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PITT-GREENVILLE AIRPORT

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Together, We've Made History. **Make Way** for More.

Guided by a bold vision and a cooperative spirit, our partnership has opened boundless opportunities to learn, to work, to discover, to innovate, to engage and to serve.

Across our campus and our community, in classrooms and conference rooms, in factories and fine arts studios, in health care centers and athletic stadiums, ECU and Greenville collaborate to enhance the quality of life.

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