Duplin County was created in 1750 from part of New Hanover County and was named for Sir Thomas Hays, Lord Dupplin.
The General Assembly in New Bern created Duplin County from the northern part of New Hanover County on April 7, 1750. At that time the bounds of Duplin County included what was to become Sampson County. The county was named for Sir Thomas Hays, Lord Dupplin, who served on the Board of Trade and Plantations for the Crown in the 1740's. There was also an effort made in the Assembly to name this new county Donegal. It is thought that this effort was in recognition of the Irish heritage of some of the early settlers.

The earliest immigrants to the area were the Welsh from New Castle on Delaware arriving in the early 1700's. They were soon followed by German Palatines and Swiss in the 1730's and 1740's who had originally settled with Baron Christopher von Graffenried's 1709 settlements in New Bern. The Scotch-Irish arrived in 1736 from Ulster, Northern Ireland with Henry McCulloch, a wealthy London merchant, to settle on a rich and fertile 71,160-acre land granted to him from the British Crown. The French Huguenots and English, who migrated from Virginia along with Scottish Highlanders who came from the upper Cape Fear region, also were among the earliest settlers to the area along with African-Americans. The early settlements were primarily along the river and larger creeks, as these were the best means of transportation in the early beginnings of the county.

Henry McCulloch, who had transported Ulster Scots and Swiss Protestants to settle this area, established several settlements. One on the east bank of the Northeast Cape Fear River named Sarecta became Duplin’s first incorporated town in 1787. Another settlement was established on the west side of the river on Goshen Swamp, and a third at a place referred to as Golden Grove, later to become the town of Kenansville. These early settlers were primarily Presbyterians and they established the Goshen congregation in 1736. Later called the Grove congregation, it was the first Presbyterian Church in the state and is still active today.

Dr. William Houston, a physician, came with McCulloch’s colonists and made his home in Sarecta. In 1765, Dr. Houston was appointed Stamp Master for the Province by King George III. Houston soon resigned due to strong stamp tax protest actions in Wilmington by the citizens of the area. These actions were some of the earliest signs of resistance to British authority in the colonies and were reflective of the unity, spirit, and determination of these early settlers.

In 1751, the first official county court was held in the home of William McRee. Today, Guilford Mills, Inc. on NC Highway 11/903, is located on the old site. A short time later the first courthouse was built on Turkey Swamp near the present day Duplin/Sampson County line. When Sampson County was created in 1784 from the western half of Duplin County, the courthouse was relocated again to a more central location. The first sessions of county court at this new site were held in James home near the road to Magnolia about 2 miles south of Kenansville. Later, the court was relocated to the area that was to become Kenansville. It is said that a spring, which provided good water, and is still flowing today, was a deciding factor in relocating the county seat to its present location.
Duplin has grown steadily through the years. The first industry in the county was the naval stores industry. The harvesting of rosin from the abundant longleaf pine forests to make tar, pitch, and turpentine, provided barter and income for the early settlers and remained a significant part of the economy up until the late 1800's. The naval stores products were floated down the Northeast Cape Fear River for sale in Wilmington on large, log rafts. In later years, paddlewheel riverboats became a far better means of transportation on the river. Necessary supplies and staple goods were ferried back up the river. When the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad was completed it provided a faster and more convenient method of shipping and the use of the river for transportation decreased.

The completion of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad in 1840, which ran through the western half of the county, provided additional opportunities for growth and a tremendous influence for further development, not only for Duplin County, but the entire region. The towns of Wallace, Teachey, Rose Hill, Magnolia, Warsaw, Faison and Calypso developed along the tracks.

Although many of the descendants of the early families who settled in Duplin County are still here, many migrated to other areas of the new country during the 1800's. Settlers were moving from Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware and other points north into North Carolina and continuing on to the southern states. This migration southward was a search for new longleaf pine forests to harvest and new ground to farm. Extended use of farmlands would eventually deplete nutrients from the soil limiting crop development. New ground had to be found to survive. The availability of commercial fertilizer in the middle 1800's was a major factor in slowing the migration and enhancing the development of the county.

Duplin County is the 9th largest county in the state in land area, 819 square miles. The 2000 population was 49,063. There are 10 incorporated towns in the county: Calypso, Faison, Warsaw, Kenansville, Magnolia, Rose Hill, Teachey, Wallace, Greenevers, and Beulaville. The county is served by Interstate 40, U.S. Highway 117, NC Highways 11, 24, 50, 403, and 903. Rail service is available through CSX rail service and the Duplin County Airport provides a 6,001' paved, lighted runway.

Duplin County has maintained its agricultural heritage and rural environment through the years while still allowing for a blending with industrial development, economic growth and an enviable lifestyle.
Chronology of Events in the History of Duplin County

1730  Welsh settlements between the Northeast Cape Fear River and the Black River, including the lower, southern part of what was to become Duplin County.

1736  Settlement of Ulster Scots and Swiss Protestants on land granted to Henry McCulloch. These early settlements were at Sarecta, Goshen (Goshen Swamp) and Golden Grove or just the Grove (now Kenansville). Earliest recorded congregation of Presbyterian in North Carolina known as the Goshen congregation, and later known as Grove Church.

1739  First recorded reference to the village of Sarecta (Soracte). First reference to the “Sarecta to the Welsh Tract Road”, one of the earliest county roads, (NC Hwy. 11 follows old road).

1748  Area citizens respond to Spanish invasion threat at Wilmington known as the Spanish Alarm.

1750  On April 7, Duplin County created from the northern part of New Hanover County and was named for Sir Thomas Hays, Lord Dupplin of Scotland.

1751  First official county court held in the Goshen settlement area on Goshen Swamp (north of Kenansville), at the home of William McRee. A short time later the Courthouse was established on Turkey Swamp near the present-day Duplin/Sampson County line west of Warsaw.

1763  Bear Marsh Baptist Church organized in northern Duplin, the first Baptist church established in the County.

1776  Revolutionary War. John Grady of northern Duplin County was the only man killed on the American side in the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge February 27, 1776.

1777  Duplin County Oath of Allegiance and Abjuration--a testimony of support and faithfulness to the State of North Carolina and a renouncement of the authority of Great Britain, was signed by twenty-five of Duplin’s early leaders.

1781  General Cornwallis’ troops marched through Duplin on their way to Virginia and defeat. They encamped briefly at old Duplin Court House on Turkey Swamp. Battle of Rockfish Creek: The Duplin Militia, under the command of Col. Thomas Kenan, was routed by the British on August 2, 1781 near Wallace.
1784 Sampson County created from the western half of Duplin County. Courthouse moved to a
site more centrally located soon to become Kenansville.

1785 Grove Academy organized and located in Kenansville. It was one of the earliest formal
educational institutions in the county and state.

1787 The village of Sarecta incorporated January 6, 1787, Duplin’s first official town. (It no
longer functions as a town).

1790 The beginning of Methodism in Duplin County.
The first federal census of Duplin County was taken; 3,936 whites, 1,278 slaves.

1812 War with Great Britain.

1816 Kenansville authorized to be laid out as a town.

1818 Duplin’s second courthouse erected in Kenansville.

1838 Wilmington and Raleigh Railroad completed through Duplin County.

1848 War with Mexico.

1852 Town of Kenansville incorporated December 27, 1852.

1854 The Duplin County Agricultural society and Fair organized.

1855 Town of Warsaw incorporated February 5, 1855. The village was known in its early
beginnings as Duplin Depot and Mooresville.
Town of Stricklandsville (Magnolia) incorporated February 15, 1855.

1856 Warsaw to Clinton Plank Road completed and in operation.


1861 Civil War begins.

1863 Confederate Arms Factory in Kenansville destroyed by Federal troops on July 4.

1867 Caleb Davis Bradham was born in Chinquapin. In 1898, in his drug store in New Bern, he
created a new beverage called Pepsi Cola.

1868 Twelve townships established August 14, 1868. (Rose Hill Township created in 1897).

1872 Town of Faison incorporated February 10, 1872.

1873 Town of Duplin Roads (later Wallace) incorporated February 28, 1873.
1874  Town of Teachey incorporated January 30, 1874.

1875  Town of Rose Hill incorporated March 10, 1875.

1877  The "North Carolina Amateur", a highly acclaimed amateur newspaper, began publication in Rose Hill. Printed until 1888, publishers included George Melvin Carr and W.B. Southerland.

1888  President Grover Cleveland appointed Beautancus native, Dr. Ezekiel Ezra Smith, and Ambassador to Liberia. Dr. Smith was Duplin's first and only Ambassador and he was instrumental in the development of Fayetteville State University.

1896  James Sprunt Institute established in Kenansville, and named in honor of Dr. James Menzies Sprunt, educator, minister, Civil War Chaplain, botanist and Register of Deeds.

1898  Spanish-American War.

1899  Town of Wallace incorporated March 4, 1899, formerly Duplin Roads.

1900  Beginning in the early 1900's and continuing into the 1940's (peaking in the 1920's and 1930's) the area around Wallace, Teachey, Rose Hill and Calypso produced and shipped more strawberries than any other area of the state.

1911  Town of Bowden incorporated February 27, 1911. It no longer functions as a town.

1913  Duplin County's present courthouse completed and accepted on January 16, 1913. Town of Calypso incorporated March 5, 1913.

1914  World War I.

1915  Town of Beulaville incorporated March 9, 1915.

1921  First Armistice Day celebration held in Warsaw. Renamed Veterans Day in 1954 and continues to be celebrated each year. It is the oldest, continuous Veterans Day celebration in the United States.

1931  Warsaw native, Henry L Stevens, Jr., elected national Commander of the American Legion. He was instrumental in establishing the Veterans Day Celebration in Warsaw.

1939  Four County REA first began installing electric power lines in the rural areas of the county. Four County REA organized in 1937.

1941  World War II.

1948  The Faison Fruit and Vegetable Exchange organized. Today the Faison market is the largest fresh vegetable auction market in the state. The produce market began in the early 1920's.
1949  “The Duplin Story”, an outdoor historical pageant commemorating the 200th anniversary of Duplin County, was presented. Staged again in 1950.

1950  Korean War begins.

1952  J.P. Stevens & Co. located in Wallace, the first major non-agricultural industry in Duplin. Christine W. Williams became the first woman to be elected Register of Deeds.

1953  The beginning of the poultry industry in the county, soon to become Duplin’s largest industry.

1954  The county’s hospital, Duplin General, completed. Hurricane Hazel devastated the area in October.

1963  The Duplin County Fair reactivated and held in Beulaville. It was held in 1963, 1964, and 1965. First annual Rose Hill Poultry Jubilee held October 19, 1963. Later changed to the North Carolina Poultry Jubilee and featured the “world’s largest frying pan”, 15 feet in diameter.

1964  James Sprunt Institute re-established in Kenansville, later to become a part of the state community college system.

1966  Vietnam War.

1969  Town of Greenevers incorporated October 27, 1969. Alex Brown was elected Mayor; first African-American to become Mayor of a Duplin County town.

1975  The County’s first airport opened north of Kenansville.

1976  “The Liberty Cart”, a historical outdoor drama, first performed in Kenansville.

1982  The Duplin county Fair was re-established and is held each year in Kenansville. Dovie Penney became the first woman to be elected to the Board of County Commissioners.

1983  Dr. William Edgar Thornton, a native of Faison, soared into space on August 30, becoming Duplin’s and North Carolina’s first astronaut.

1985  The nation’s largest turkey processing plant, Carolina Turkey, built in Duplin County.

1989  Zettie B. Williams was the first African-American to be elected to the Board of County Commissioners.

1990  Interstate Highway I-40 connecting Wilmington, North Carolina to Barstow, California completed through Duplin County.

1991  Persian Gulf War.

1995  Town of Warsaw held its 75th Veterans Day Celebration.

1996  Hurricanes Bertha and Fran struck the area causing extensive damage.

1997  Duplin County ranks number one in economic growth across the state.

1999  Hurricane Floyd left parts of the county flooded and many homeless.

2000  Duplin County celebrates its 250th anniversary.

2001  Duplin County as well as all of the United States was devastated when terrorist flew planes into the World Trade Center Towers & The Pentagon.

2002  Vision 21 Committee established to carry out the recommendations put forth in the 2002 Strategic Plan. This Plan was created in the hopes of “building Duplin County into a unified community with a diversified economic base providing a good quality of life to all those who would be its citizens.

2003  WestPark Business Technology Center opens offering office and educational space. War on Iraq begins.

2005  The historic courthouse dons a new red roof. Construction is completed on Duplin Commons, a planned campus that serves as home to an agriculture office building, multi-purpose arena, and other future amenities.

2008  Coastal Carolina Clean Power, a former coal burning cogeneration power plant retrofitted to become Duplin County's first “green power” generated facility.

2010  Duplin General Hospital, the county’s publicly owned hospital, entered into a long-term lease with Greenville based University Health Systems to operate the hospital as part of the UHS’s network of hospitals.

2014  James Sprunt Community College celebrates 50th anniversary as the county’s post-secondary institution.