

An armchair tour  
of North Carolina's

# atlas oddities

by Jay Barnes



I love geography. I'm especially fond of my trusty atlas of North Carolina's roads, cities and towns. Though I've traveled all over this great state, my atlas reminds me that there are countless places I've never explored. Hidden crossroads and tiny towns with unfamiliar names dot the landscape from the Blue Ridge to the Atlantic.

And their names cause me to wonder.

A closer look at my atlas reveals the strange and quirky names given to places across the state. At first I was just curious, but when I really started looking, I found plenty of reasons to laugh out loud.

I'd heard of Lizard Lick. And I even knew where to find Tick Bite (it's in Lenoir County). But I never knew there was a Honeymoon, or a Finger, or a Loafer's Glory, North Carolina. And the closer I looked at the names in the index (Index is in Ashe County), the greater the riddle became (Riddle is in Camden County).

What were they thinking when they named Frog Level, Goat Neck, Cat Square, or Lizard Lick? And how about Toast? (You'd have to travel up to Virginia to find Breakfast.) Scanning the fine print in my atlas, I also found Shoe, Beard, Tuxedo, Laboratory, and Spies.

And who would want to live in Colon?

Take the armchair atlas tour, and you could visit Small (population 300), or squeeze into Micro (population 479). You could drive from Happy Top down to Bottom, which is some 200 miles down the Interstate. You'll want to visit Bachelor and Best, and don't miss Faith, Trust, Comfort, and Relief. Hurry on over to Quick, Brief, and Speed. Spend some extra time in Luck and Intelligence, but skip the drive over to Worry.

You could travel to Milwaukee or Minneapolis and never cross the state line. Also on the tour are Buffalo, Denver,

Honolulu, Houston, Orlando, Phoenix, and Pensacola. While you're on the road, drive on to Belfast, Dublin, Bethlehem, and Palestine. And what tour of North Carolina's back roads would be complete without a stop in California, Maine, Nebraska, and Texas?

Depending upon your political preference, you could spend some time in Democrat or Republican, or if you're undecided swing by Independence. Along the way, you'll find Barber, Mechanic, Farmer, and Hooker. Earth, Sun, and Star are also on the atlas tour.

I guess it's no real surprise that North Carolina would have towns named Apple, Almonds, Cherry, Fig, Orange, Peach, and Sweetpea, but there is no Tobacco—just Tobaccoville. And there's also Gold, Sapphire, Silver City, and Emerald Isle.

What curious events led to the naming of Day Book and Meat Camp? What about Push, Duck, Trap, and Old Trap? There's also Radical, House, Chronicle, Fork, Alert, Crisp, and Erect. And have you ever stopped in to see Cleopatra, Hendrix, or Eli Whitney?

And then there, on Highway 705 in Randolph County, I found the one town name that might explain it all: Whynot.

*They aren't where they're supposed to be*

But then I noticed another oddity as I perused the pages of my atlas—many of North Carolina's cities and towns aren't where they're supposed to be!

I knew that Washington was not in Washington County, but in Beaufort County. And Beaufort's not in Beaufort County, its over in Carteret County. But as I looked around, I found a staggering number of misplaced cities located outside the bounds of the counties that share their names.

It's as if someone wanted to play a cruel joke on unsuspecting travelers and send them to all the wrong places.

So if you will, indulge me as we review the following cities and towns, none of which are located in the counties that bear their names:

Ash is in Brunswick County, Brunswick is in Columbus County, and Columbus is in Polk County. Craven is not in Craven County, but in Rowan County. Rowan isn't in Rowan County, it's in Sampson County.

Stanley is in Gaston County, Gaston is in Northampton County. Watauga is in Macon County, and Macon is in Warren County. Madison is over in Rockingham County, but Rockingham is in Richmond County.

Cleveland is not in Cleveland County, Franklin is not in Franklin County, and Guilford is not in Guilford County—they're all in Rowan County.

Edgecombe is in Pender, Pender is in Halifax. Caswell is in Jones, Cherokee is in Swain, Clay is in Granville, Davidson is in Mecklenburg, Graham is in Alamance, Haywood is in Chatham, Henderson is in Vance, Iredell is in Brunswick,

Orange is in Sampson, and Stokes is in Pitt.

But wait— there's more!

Lenoir is in Caldwell County, but Caldwell isn't. Caldwell is in both Mecklenburg and Orange counties. Jackson is not in Jackson County, but there's one in Northampton County and Union County. Union can be found in Macon and Hertford counties, and the only Hertford is in Perquimans County.

So before you venture out to cruise the winding back roads that criss-cross the Tar Heel state in search of never-heard-of places, it might be a good idea to know where you're heading before you leave— and take along your trusty atlas.

*The author acknowledges the North Carolina State Road Atlas, © 1999, published by Alexandria Drafting Company, as the information source for this article.*

*Jay Barnes is the author of "North Carolina's Hurricane History" and co-author with Richard Moore of "Faces from the Flood: Hurricane Floyd Remembered," to be available in late February from the University of North Carolina Press. He lives in Salter Path.*

### Have you heard of Shoe?

Hidden crossroads and tiny towns with unfamiliar names dot the landscape from the Blue Ridge to the Atlantic. Here are a few:



Shoe



Cherry



Duck



Cat Square



Sun

