

SELF-GUIDED TOUR OF THE NAVIGABLE PORTION OF CONTENTNEA CREEK

Updated 9-11-11

INTRODUCTION

“Little Contentnea and Contentnea Creeks together provide nearly 20 miles of beautiful swamp forest paddling. They drain much of Pitt County south of Greenville and empty into the Neuse River. The name Contentnea is most likely an anglicized corruption of the Tuscarora word, “catechna.” Catechna was an Indian town near present day Grifton and the probable site of the 1711 trial and execution of explorer John Lawson...Contentnea Creek is shown on colonial maps and the area was described by John Lawson, during his 1701 visit, as ‘very thick of Indian Towns and Plantations’” (Excerpt taken from “Pitt County Canoe/Kayak Paddle Trails” guide provided by Mid-East RC&D, Pitt County, PTRF and Sierra Club).

MILE POST 81

FOUNTAIN HILL ACCESS

“Access to the Contentnea Creek trail...is where State Road 1004 crosses the creek just north of Fountain Hill in Greene County [N35 24.8 W77 29.9]” (Excerpt taken from “Pitt County Canoe/Kayak Paddle Trails” guide provided by Mid-East RC&D, Pitt County, PTRF and Sierra Club).

MILE POST 83.4

TRI-COUNTY AREA (PITT, GREENE, LENOIR) WHERE LITTLE CONTENTNEA JOINS CONTENTNEA CREEK.

There are several points of interest at this site: 1) Probable location of John Lawson’s execution 2.) Pitt County Environmental Education Center is a close walk away, 3) Several folks who live in the area have reported seeing a very large cat...if you are paddling along this stretch and think you see an eastern cougar, please take pics for evidence so we can turn them over to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service!

MILE POST 89

The bridge you just passed under was North Carolina Highway 11. If it is March, you probably saw some folks bank-fishing for hickory shad under the bridge. The town of Grifton’s Shad Festival held every year in mid-April is the second oldest festival in eastern North Carolina.

MILE POST 90.5

“PORT OF GRIFTON”

TOWN OF GRIFTON NC WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMISSION ACCESS

Steamboats used to ply the creek from 1877 until WWI making port here and continuing all the way to Hookerton! There is a beautiful painting of one such vessel by local artist, Bob Pittman, a close walk away in Grifton’s Town Hall.

MILE POST 92

TICK BITE

"...the trail enters the broad floodplain of the Neuse River. The stream takes a sharp turn to the east...at the community of Tick Bite. Below Tick Bite, the swamp forest provides solitude and contains many old and large bald cypress and water tupelo trees draped in Spanish moss" (Excerpt taken from "Pitt County Canoe/Kayak Paddle Trails" guide provided by Mid-East RC&D, Pitt County, PTRF and Sierra Club).

MILE POST 95.2

MOUTH OF CONTENTNEA CREEK-JOHN LAWSON'S SPECULATED INLAND WATERWAY TO VIRGINIA?

"Here again you are at the juncture of 3 counties, Pitt (east), Lenoir (west), Craven (south). This site is probably very near where Baron de Graffenried (founder of New Bern) and John Lawson were captured (arrested for trespassing) by the Tuscarora Indians in 1711" (Excerpt taken from "Pitt County Canoe/Kayak Paddle Trails" guide provided by Mid-East RC&D, Pitt County, PTRF and Sierra Club).

MILE POST 99

DOWNSTREAM ALONG THE NEUSE RIVER

"...near Biddle Landing...are the remains of an earthen fortification (Ft. Barnwell) built during the Tuscarora War in 1713. During high water the oxbows Grinnel Slough and Grinnel Creek offer a swampland alternative to the main channel of the Neuse River as they run parallel to it" (Excerpt taken from "Pitt County Canoe/Kayak Paddle Trails" guide provided by Mid-East RC&D, Pitt County, PTRF and Sierra Club).

MILE POST 100.85

MAPLE-CYPRESS LANDING ACCESS

"Downstream access is provided at Maple-Cypress Landing...near the State Road 1470 bridge crossing Maple-Cypress Road (SR 1470)" (Excerpt taken from "Pitt County Canoe/Kayak Paddle Trails" guide provided by Mid-East RC&D, Pitt County, PTRF and Sierra Club).

FURTHER DOWNSTREAM ALONG THE NEUSE RIVER

NETWORK TO FREEDOM

The Neuse River is a Network to Freedom partner as an Underground Railroad site through the National Park Service Underground Railroad Network to Freedom program. Along with its massive swamps, some friendly boat captains and safe houses in towns like New Bern (downstream) and Goldsboro (upstream), the Neuse is one of the first rivers in the United States to be recognized for its contribution to the Underground Railroad (Wanda E. H. McLean, 2008).

BUZZARD'S CORNER

"Bluegrass fiddle tends to get lumped in with what's called "mountain music." So it's funny that one of the most recognizable fiddle tunes of all time, "[Orange Blossom Special](http://blogs.newsobserver.com/beat/ervin-t-rouses-orange-blossom-special)," actually has its roots in the lowlands of Eastern North Carolina. Ervin T. Rouse, who wrote the song in 1938, was born in Craven County and lived most of his life in Florida. But that's not terribly uncommon" (Excerpt taken from <http://blogs.newsobserver.com/beat/ervin-t-rouses-orange-blossom-special>).

KINSTON TO NEW BERN

During the Battle of New Bern of mid-March, 1862, forty Confederate soldiers secretly departed Kinston by canoe, paddling a two day trip downstream. At night and using muffled oars, they boarded and destroyed the Union ship, "Underrider," in the port of New Bern ("First Presbyterian Church, New Bern, North Carolina, a Tar Heel Junior Historian Project: Individual Media Interview with Sharon Reed, 1987).

UPSTREAM FROM MOUTH OF CONTENTNEA CREEK ALONG THE NEUSE RIVER

GOLDSBORO

"Sherman's army, on its march from Savannah, entered Goldsboro, its chief objective, March 21, 1865"

(Excerpt taken from <http://www.greatergoldsboro.com/index.php?s=content&p=historic>).