

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF GREENSBORO

**MID-1700'S** - Unlike most of the eastern US, where settlers began at the coast and migrated inland, the Greensboro area was initially populated by settlers migrating south. These first settlers came from four groups: English-Welch Quakers, German Calvinists, Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, and freedmen and slaves from the coast. Thus creating a diverse community based on religious tolerance. These early settlers provided Greensboro with its first famous native "son"- Dolley Madison, President James Madison's wife and our First Lady, was born in New Garden in 1768.

**1781** — The American Revolution was in its fifth year. In March of 1781 General Nathaniel Greene arrived in Guilford County with a force of 4,000 Continental militia. The ensuing Battle of Guilford Courthouse on March 15 against General Cornwallis' force of 1,900 British troops was a technical victory for the British (as Greene left the battlefield first), but proved to be the decisive turning point in the American Revolution. Cornwallis was unable to recover from the many casualties suffered in this battle and surrendered seven months later. Today armchair generals can retrace the two armies' actual paths at the Guilford Courthouse National Military Park and participate in the annual reenactment staged in period costumes. ([www.nps.gov/guco](http://www.nps.gov/guco))



**1808** - Ralph Gorrell accepted \$98 in payment for his 42-acre tract of land which became the new county seat, initially named Greensborough in honor of General Greene. Soon many who had lived in outlying areas were moving to the village.

**1830'S** - Most unusual for the time, Greensboro's first college was for women. Greensboro Female College was organized in 1833. It later received a charter from the Methodist church, changed its name to Greensboro College, and became co-educational. ([www.greensborocollege.edu](http://www.greensborocollege.edu)) In 1837 the Quakers founded Guilford College which remains the third oldest coeducational institution in the country. ([www.guilford.edu](http://www.guilford.edu)) It is also home to the Eastern Music Festival, an annual summer event which brings professional and student musicians together for seminars and public performances over a five-week period.



([www.easternmusicfestival.org](http://www.easternmusicfestival.org)) These first colleges were followed by many more: Bennett College in 1873 was founded to educate African-American women.

([www.bennett.edu](http://www.bennett.edu)) The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (after undergoing numerous name changes) was founded in 1891 as a women's college. ([www.uncg.edu](http://www.uncg.edu)) North Carolina A&T State University was also founded in 1891 as a "mechanical college" for the "colored race." ([www.ncat.edu](http://www.ncat.edu)) Today it is the largest publicly funded historically black college in North

Carolina and the alma mater of numerous black leaders and heroes such as the civil rights leader, Jesse Jackson and astronaut, Ron McNair. Today over 30,000 students are educated in Greensboro's universities and four-year colleges and another 30,000 are educated at Guilford Technical Community College.

**1856** - Greensboro resident, Gov. John Motley Morehead, used his influence to plan a new North Carolina Railroad with a stop in Greensboro - thus ensuring the city's future as a hub of transportation and, hence, manufacturing. In 1927 Greensboro became a stop on the nation's second official air route. Today Greensboro, located within 500 miles of half the US population, continues to be the "Gate City" as a hub of road, rail, and air transportation. (By the way, you can also visit Gov. Morehead's Blandwood home, the oldest standing example of Italianate architecture in America. [www.blandwood.org](http://www.blandwood.org))



**1861-1865** - Greensboro's residents overwhelmingly voted against secession, but when the state of North Carolina joined the Confederacy, Greensboro allied with its Southern neighbors. In April 1865 Greensboro served briefly as the seat of the Confederacy as General Lee surrendered in Appomattox and General Johnston surrendered in nearby Durham. Thousands of troops were mustered out and paroled in Greensboro on their way home. The church which served as the Confederate hospital is now the Greensboro Historical Museum. ([www.greensborohistory.org](http://www.greensborohistory.org))

**1881** - William Sydney Porter got his start as a pharmacist in his uncle's drugstore. But life had other achievements in store for the future author known as O. Henry. Enjoy several of his short stories adapted to the stage at the annual "5 by O. Henry" festival staged at the Greensboro Historical Museum every fall.



**1890** - Lunsford Richardson II bought a partnership in a downtown drugstore and began experiments that lead to the creation of Vicks VapoRub and the pharmaceutical giant, Richardson-Vicks - now part of Procter & Gamble, which maintains two manufacturing facilities in Greensboro. In 1970 the Center for Creative Leadership, one of the world's leading programs for studying and training leaders, was endowed by the Richardsons. ([www.ccl.org](http://www.ccl.org))

**1895** - After years traveling the South with his brother, Caesar (as "drummers" or traveling salesmen for their father's dry goods business) Moses Cone moved to Greensboro in 1880. Recognizing the need for durable clothing for blue-collar workers, Moses and Caesar became involved with textiles and in 1895 founded the first textile finishing plant in the South, Proximity Cotton Mill. Cone Mills Corporation ultimately became the world leader in the manufacture and supply of denim. ([www.conedenim.com](http://www.conedenim.com)) Other textile giants joined them in Greensboro in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, among them: Burlington Industries, Wrangler, and Guilford Mills.

**1938** - Sam Snead won the first Greater Greensboro Open. Today known as the Wyndham Championship, Greensboro has hosted a stop on the PGA tour every year since.

([www.wyndhamchampionship.com](http://www.wyndhamchampionship.com)) In addition to golf, Greensboro has hosted many other major sporting events. The coliseum, which seats 26,000, is headquarters to the Atlantic Coast Conference and has hosted events ranging from the NCAA Final Four to the National Ice Skating Championships.

And that most American of sports, baseball, has been enjoyed in Greensboro since 1902! You'll find many residents enjoying a warm summer evening in the baseball park that opened in 2005. (<http://web.minorleaguebaseball.com/index.jsp?sid=t477>)



**1941** - Gregory Ivy, the first head of the art department at Woman's College (now UNCG), founded the Weatherspoon Art Museum. It has grown from a university teaching gallery to a fully professional museum that is nationally recognized for its excellent collection of over 5,600 pieces and more than fifteen exhibitions yearly. ([www.weatherspoon.uncg.edu](http://www.weatherspoon.uncg.edu))



**1940'S** - The Army Air Force set up an Overseas Replacement Depot to train replacement manpower to fill out and support our air effort – primarily in the European Theatre. This temporary home to over 330,000 WWII vets was the only army camp in the country built entirely in a city.

**1960** - On February 1 four African-American NCA&T students sat down at the whites only Woolworth lunch counter and initiated a six-month long "sit-in." One of the earliest events in the struggle for civil rights, this peaceful demonstration is preserved in the exhibits of the International Civil Rights Center & Museum located in the former Woolworth building. ([www.sitinemovement.org](http://www.sitinemovement.org))

