

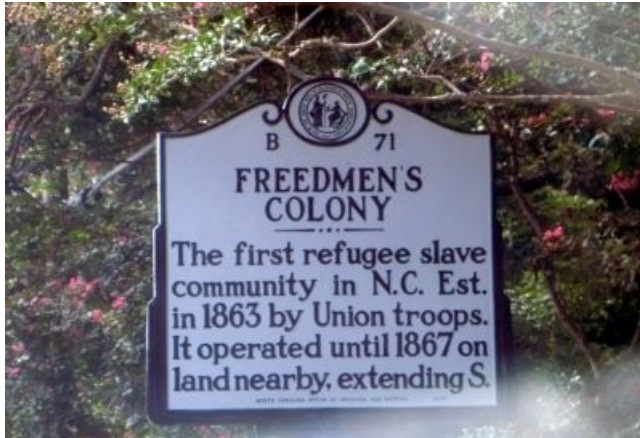
Outer Banks Freedom Settlements ^[1]

Outer Banks

Freedom Flows Along North Carolina's Coast

By Sarajane Davis, N.C. Government & Heritage Library, 2019

What do you know about the Outer Banks?



"Freedmen's Colony." Photograph. North Carolina Highway Historical Marker Program. 2013.

^[2]Did you think about sunny beaches and water activities?

These are some of the things that make the Outer Banks one of the most popular areas to visit in the United States. The area is also very important to African American history in North Carolina. During and after the Civil War, freedman communities were set up along the coast. Eastern North Carolina is home to a rich African American historical legacy.

The Outer Banks is part of the Inner Coastal Plain and Outer Coastal Plain. The islands stretch 200 miles along the southeastern coast of Virginia and cover most of North Carolina. It is a part of the Tidewater region and home to many coastal habitats. In the 1800s, the Great Dismal Swamp was a part of the Underground Railroad along the Inner Coastal Plain. Hundreds of enslaved people followed water routes to escape to freedom. These people created a strong, but hidden community in the Great Dismal Swamp.

The start of the Civil War in 1861 was an important moment for African Americans in North Carolina. The Freedman's Colony on Roanoke Island and James City were two important locations. Over time, both became safe havens for people who could escape slavery. In fact, New Bern became the largest haven for African Americans in the state. On Roanoke Island, African Americans helped the Union win the war. Some people rebuilt forts, many women cooked for Union officers, and some African Americans served as spies.

There are several places that teach African American history in the Outer Banks. Each shares information about African American life along the coast. Each shares information about African American life along the coast. For example, on a tour of Pea Island, you will learn about Richard Etheridge. He led the first all African American lifesaving crew in the United States at Pea Island. The group kept watch and completed daring rescues until the station closed in 1947.

If you could plan a beach trip for your class, which historical site would you visit?

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"Freedmen's Colony." Photograph. North Carolina Highway Historical Marker Program. 2013. <http://www.ncmarkers.com/Markers.aspx?MarkerId=B-71> [11]

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