

A HISTORICAL LOOK AT BRUNSWICK COUNTY HEALTH SERVICES

On January 19, 1949, the Brunswick County Commissioners passed a resolution authorizing the Brunswick County Board of Health to work out a plan for the establishment of a full-time Public Health Department. This decision favorably resolved months of agitation on the part of interested citizens who sought to have Brunswick County added to the list of 96 North Carolina counties with health departments.

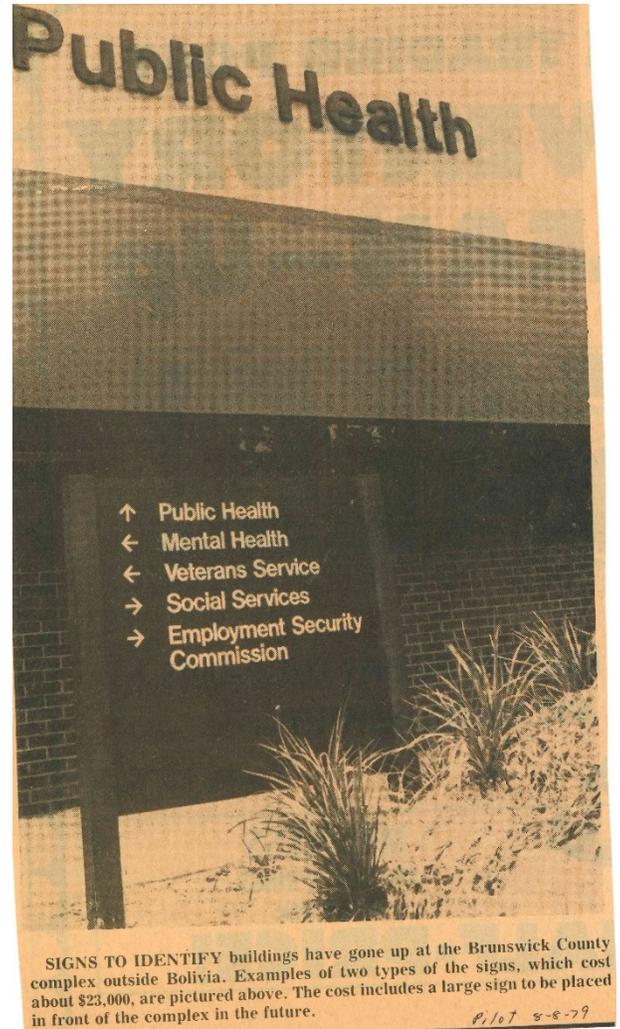
The Brunswick County Board of Health was organized in February 1949. Members were R. L. Rabon, County Commissioner; J.T. Denning, Superintendent of Schools; and Hubert A. Livingston, Mayor of Southport. Other members were to be appointed by these ex-officio members.

The original health department was located in the Hood Building in downtown Southport. In September 1966, it moved to the old "County Home" located a few miles out of Southport. Shortly after the department was opened in Southport, a branch office was opened in Shallotte, located in the American Legion Hut.

The office was moved to downtown Shallotte in the REA Building. When it became necessary to relocate, temporary quarters were found in Inman's Store on Highway 133. Permanent quarters were secured soon thereafter in the R.E. Bellamy Building in downtown Shallotte and remained there until 1958 when a new health center, located next to the Armory, was completed. In August 1978, the department was relocated in the new County Government Complex in Bolivia.

The department started with:

Generalized nursing – School Health, Venereal Disease Control, Immunizations, Blood Test, Prenatal Care, Tuberculosis Control, Licensing and Supervision of Midwives, Crippled Children and Premature Care Program.
Environmental Health – School Sanitation Water Supplies and Excreta Disposal, Lodging and Food handling Establishment, Milk Control and Mosquito Control.



Through the years these basic public health programs which were designed to improve the health of all citizens of the community by: disease prevention and control; provision of good health care and education; and, a safe healthful environment have continued. These programs were expanded, reduced or redirected and new programs added as dictated by laws, regulations, community needs and available monies. New services added included: Family Planning, Communicable Disease Control, Child Health Care, Vital Records Registration, Home Health (until July 1981 when it was transferred to a private agency), Chronic Disease Detection, Animal Control, WIC and Laboratory Services.

Original staff consisted of a part-time health director, nurse, clerk, and sanitation located in Southport. Shortly thereafter, an additional nurse was hired and located in Shallotte, a part-time clerk was employed to work there.

During the years, staff fluctuated up and down. Staff was added or expanded as program monies became available or reduced as programs were removed or terminated. In 1972, the health director's position became full-time.