

THE MARITIMES



THE MAGAZINE OF THE NORTH CAROLINA MARITIME MUSEUMS

BEAUFORT • HATTERAS • SOUTHPORT

SUMMER/FALL 2016

*Humpback whale feeding on menhaden near
Cape Lookout, NC, Nov. 5, 2015.*

Photo by Keith Rittmaster under NOAA/NMFS permit.



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NORTH CAROLINA
**MARITIME
MUSEUMS**
BEAUFORT HATTERAS SOUTHPORT

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*One historic coast.
Three unique museums.*



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North Carolina Maritime Museum's **First Annual North Carolina Whales and Whaling Symposium**

Humpback whale near Cape Lookout, NC.
Photo by Keith Rittmaster under NOAA/NMFS permit.

*Historians, biologists, environmentalists,
and educators present on April 9, 2016*

People have long known that many species of whales frequent North Carolina's coastal waters, but which ones exactly? The public will have the opportunity to learn first-hand at the North Carolina Maritime Museum's First Annual North Carolina Whales and Whaling Symposium. This day-long event will include several presentations focusing on whales and historic hunting practices. Participants will learn which species of whales can be found in our coastal waters, how some of these whales were hunted from the shore and the diversity of marine mammal strandings in North Carolina.

This program brings together professionals from a variety of backgrounds including marine biology, conservation, folklore, and history to give presentations regarding whales and whaling. Historians, biologists, environmentalists, and educators will share experiences and knowledge through a series of presentations and displays appropriate for all audiences.

"We wanted to make sure this symposium blended the cultural and historical aspects of whaling with the cutting edge scientific research that is going on here," said North Carolina Maritime Museum Curator John Hairr. "With our long tradition of whaling and the rich diversity of marine mammals, the North Carolina coast is one of the best places in the world to see and understand how they all interrelate. Forty species of marine mammals have been encountered off North Carolina in historical times."

The Symposium takes place April 9, 2016 from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. Pre-registration is recommended to assure enough materials are available for audience members. It is free and open to the public.

There will be five speakers covering a wide range of topics. Speakers include experts with many years of experience dealing with the history, biology, conservation, and pedagogy of whales and whaling specifically in North Carolina. Each presentation will last approximately 45 minutes, with time left at the end for questions.

The symposium's first presentation will be given by North Carolina Maritime Museum Natural Science Curator Keith Rittmaster at 10 a.m. Mr. Rittmaster will give a presentation regarding the different species of whales, including bottlenose dolphins, sperm whales, right whales, and humpback whales, that he has encountered and photographed off the North Carolina coast.

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From The Friends

SOUTHPORT: The Journey Continues

We continue our exciting journey as concrete was poured, trusses erected and the new addition to the NC Maritime Museum at Southport began to rise from the ground. This new addition represents the wonderful support the Maritime Museum and the Friends of the NC Maritime Museum at Southport have received from our members and contributors in our community. As we anticipate the completion of the extension and the celebration of our grand opening July 4, 2016, we are so appreciative of our loyal supporters and donors.

We are delighted to add three new recently approved Friends' board members: Julie Canny, Carol Midgett & Morgan Harper. We welcome them with open arms for their diverse attributes and skill sets that will enhance the ability of our Board to successfully continue our progress into the future.

Shirley Wilson

Chairman, Friends of the Museum at Southport ■

HATTERAS: Preserving Local History

The Monomoy Surfboat exhibit has just been installed in the Burrus Couch Midgett Gallery. This has taken years of planning. For our community, this is a remarkable event. Many of us on Hatteras Island are descendants of the brave life-savers who rowed out in these small boats under horrific circumstances.

Friends of the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum is committed to the preservation of our local history. We financed the experts at the Watercraft Center at our sister museum in Beaufort to complete the restoration and covered the expenses for the talented staff to move and place the craft in our gallery. The Museum is proud of its community support and the donations of our visitors. Without this, it would be impossible to carry out programs that occur six days a week and capture the interests of all ages. Our exhibits, authentic artifacts, symposiums, scavenger hunts, historic teas, holiday events, guest speakers, book signings, and even our store, would not exist without your contributions. We continue to draw record crowds, and we will try to maintain free admission to the Museum and our programs. However, your donations at the door, your yearly memberships, and the purchase of our historic license plate help make all this reality. Thank you for helping us

preserve the Maritime History of the Outer Banks as we continue to grow. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Daniel C. Couch

President of the Board

Friends of the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum ■

BEAUFORT: Gallants Channel and Other Projects

The Friends' development planning for the Museum's Gallants Channel annex property is moving along well. One team is working with an architect and land planner to develop concept drawings for two proposed buildings. Another team is forming to design a fund-raising campaign. A high priority in these efforts is to create a new home for the Junior Sailing Program, which was displaced from the site by construction of the new bridge.

Also, the Friends are assisting the Museum in its development of the Harborside Park next the Watercraft Center on Front Street. This project is moving forward with a group effort from the Town of Beaufort, the Museum, Beaufort Wine and Food and the Friends. The plans for the deck include restrooms, public access, new floating docks and educational components.

We welcome three new members to the board in 2016, David Johnson, Joe Ustach and Winburne King, and we thank retiring board member Nelson Wilder for his service. Special thanks go to Elwyn Wood for two years of strong leadership as he steps down from the presidency. Newly-elected president is David DuBuisson of Beaufort, a retired journalist.

We have lots to accomplish in 2016 and thank all of our members for their support in these efforts.

Gina Holland

Director of Development

Friends of the Museum in Beaufort ■

Cover Story: A humpback whale like this one feeding on menhaden near Cape Lookout in November 2015 will be the one of the topics discussed at the First Annual North Carolina Whales and Whaling Symposium on April 9, 2016 at the North Carolina Maritime Museum. Photo by Keith Rittmaster, NC Maritime Museum under NOAA/NMFS permit.

North Carolina Maritime Museum in Beaufort

Rare Beaked Whale First Discovered at Beaufort

By John Hairr

On a warm summer morning in July of 1912, a large animal—over 16 feet long—washed up on Bird Island Shoal, inside the entrance to Beaufort Inlet between Pivers Island and Shackleford Banks. For the fishermen who found the strange carcass, it was an odd find. But none who saw the strange creature stranded on the sandbar could have guessed at the significance of what had come ashore that morning on an island along the coast of Carteret County.

At first glance, it looked like an ordinary “blackfish,” a generic term locals used as a catchall phrase for relatively small, dark-colored cetaceans such as pilot whales that occasionally visit the area. But upon closer inspection, this particular whale was unlike any they had ever seen. This blackfish had a long, pointed beak like a dolphin. Even stranger was the fact that there were no teeth showing from the jaws.

The remains of most marine mammals that stranded along this stretch of coast in years gone by did not survive for long, as the inhabitants processed the bodies of whales, dolphins and seals for oil. But the fishermen who found these remains were curious about this strange whale, so they contacted the folks at the U.S. Fisheries Laboratory at Beaufort on nearby Pivers Island. Perhaps they could find someone there who could figure out what kind of creature had washed in from the Atlantic Ocean through Beaufort Inlet. Two assistants from the lab sped to the scene in Launch 106, but they were as clueless to the animal’s identity as the fishermen before them had been. They knew they would have to call in the resident expert on marine life of the area—Dr. Lewis Radcliffe.

As director of the U.S. Fisheries Laboratory at Beaufort, Radcliffe had examined a wide range of marine life in the vicinity of Cape Lookout. A noted ichthyologist, he inspected sharks, rays, bluefish, and just about any other type of fish that was caught by the fishermen working out of Beaufort or Morehead City. Occasionally he inspected the marine mammals such as whales, dolphins, manatees and seals that were captured or washed ashore along the southern Outer Banks. He kept an eye out for anything unusual that might be of scientific importance to researchers.

Radcliffe and his associates knew they had found some sort of whale, but exactly what type of whale it was they could not tell. They hauled the animal’s remains back to the laboratory at Beaufort, where Radcliffe carefully studied the animal and gathered as much data from it as he could. This must have been quite a task, as

adult whales of this species weigh between two thousand five hundred and three thousand pounds. “Body covered with a thick layer of fat,” Radcliffe noted, “flesh beneath this layer very dark red, of loose texture, coarse and stringy.” He described the animal’s coloration as, “Back, slate-black; lower sides, yellow-purple, flecked with black; median line of belly somewhat darker; a grayish area in front of vent; fins the color of the back.”

The whale was 16 feet long, and the width of its flukes were 4 feet 8 inches. The scientists in Beaufort were unable to weigh



The remains of a True’s beaked whale found by fishermen on Bird Island Shoal between Beaufort and Fort Macon in July of 1912.

Photo courtesy Smithsonian Institution.

the entire whale, but they were able to make some measurements of various body parts. The animal contained sixty-eight feet of intestines, and had a stomach that was made up of three chambers. The whale’s heart was nearly a foot wide, 15 inches long, and weighed 10.5 pounds.

If he were to gain further insights on the whale, Radcliffe knew he would have to consult with someone who had more experience working with marine mammals. So he packed up the head, flukes, a pectoral fin and various parts of the skeleton into a barrel. On July 29, 1912, he shipped this collection

north to the U.S. National Museum, a branch of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. He hoped scientists there would be able to determine the unusual whale’s identity.

The decision to send the whale’s remains to the Smithsonian for further examination was an opportune one. Once in Washington, they piqued the interest of Frederick W. True, assistant secretary of the Smithsonian. True’s distinguished career at the Smithsonian began in 1881 when the then 23-year-old Connecticut native became the museum’s librarian and acting curator of the Division of Mammals. He served in a number of important positions during his tenure at the Smithsonian, and in 1897 was named curator of the Department of Biology.

True was considered the nation’s foremost expert on marine mammals. He studied the remains of these and other mammals sent to the museum, and created a collection of marine mammal skeletons that was unrivalled in the last decades of the 19th century. In addition to working on animal remains in the lab, he occasionally took advantage of opportunities to travel on the oceans with the vessels of the U.S. Fisheries Commission to study marine mammals in the wild.

Despite being burdened with the administrative duties of his position, True continued to study whales whenever an opportunity presented itself. Just two years before the remains of the mysteri-



This view of the skull of the True's beaked whale appeared in Frederick W. True's final report of his examination of the whale specimen from Beaufort.



Frederick W. True examined the remains of the mysterious whale found in Beaufort and identified it as a species new to science. Photo courtesy Smithsonian Institution.



Naturalist H.H. Brimley of the North Carolina Museum of Natural History studied the remains of the True's beaked whale shown in this photo. This gravid female whale was found in March of 1940 by some fishermen just north of Oregon Inlet, and measured 17 feet long. Photo courtesy NC Archives and History.

ous whale from Beaufort arrived at the Smithsonian, he had published an eighty-nine page monograph discussing the beaked whales of the world.

Once he finished his examination of the whale from North Carolina, True realized that he was looking at the remains of an undocumented species. "This species belongs to the section of the genus in which the basi-rostral groove is lacking," he wrote. "It differs from all species, except hectori, in that the mandibular teeth are at the extremity of the jaw. From hectori it differs in the greater breadth of the cranium, the size and shape of the maxillary ridges, or prominences, and the ante-orbital notches, the much shorter vertex, and other characters."

Since he was the first to describe the new species, True was able to assign the official Latin

name to these beaked whales—*Mesoplodon mirus*. The species is commonly referred to as True's beaked whale. Other names for the species include True's North Atlantic beaked whale, or the wonderful beaked whale. Like other species of beaked whales, True's beaked whales are rarely seen in the wild, and if seen, are difficult to identify. Several were found down through the years stranded along the coast as far afield as South Africa and Australia. Most specimens of True's beaked whales were found in varying degrees of decomposition. Scientists today believe these whales are distributed in the temperate waters of the world's oceans, but admit to knowing little about their migrations and living patterns. Some suggest the whales found in the Southern Hemisphere could be a distinct subspecies from those found in the Northern Hemisphere. Despite being studied by some of the nation's top experts, True's beaked whales remain enigmatic creatures. A look at a few deceased individuals is the extent of our knowledge of these animals. After a century of study, the beaked whale first discovered in Beaufort Inlet back in 1912 remains one of the most elusive species of cetaceans in the world's oceans. ■



This adult male True's beaked whale came ashore at Corolla, NC on August 17, 2011. The animal measured 14 feet 11 inches long, and weighed 2,097 pounds. After necropsy at NCSU in Raleigh, the skeleton was sent to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. Photo courtesy V. Thayer, NC Division of Marine Fisheries.

THE BEE'S KNEES!

A MURDER MYSTERY

On Friday, September 2, 2016 at 6 p.m. the North Carolina Maritime Museum will be hosting the Museum's sixth annual Murder Mystery Dinner. This year's dinner will be set in the roaring 1920s, specifically in 1929. BIG CHEESES of Beaufort and Morehead City will be coming together to discuss the idea of building a maritime museum in Carteret County. The problem is nobody can decide where to build the Museum and display the priceless maritime collection, Morehead City or Beaufort? Passions are running strong, and valuable artifacts are at stake, hopefully nothing will go wrong...

End your summer with a party that will be the CAT'S MEOW! Visitors are encouraged to dress the part including beads, feathers, and anything HOTSY-TOTSY. As always the evening is expected to be a killer, with some intrigue and a lot of laughs along the way.

Many past dinner guests have said they are KEEN on getting tickets again for this year's dinner. Tickets go on sale on July 1 in the Museum's store, and they have sold out all six years. The dinner is catered by Clawson's 1904, the menu will be available when tickets go on sale on July 1.

FIRST CLUE! Don't take any wooden nickles, question everyone.

42nd Annual WOODEN BOAT SHOW

Saturday, May 7, 2016

The 42nd Annual Wooden Boat Show will take place on Saturday, May 7, in downtown Beaufort. Enjoy activities and exhibits on display at the Museum and the Watercraft Center. Admission is free and open to the public. A variety of wooden boats will be on display on Saturday from 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Enjoy traditional skills demonstrations and displays, educational activities, historic vessels, boat models, sailboat races at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m., and sailboat rides from 1-3 p.m.

Free boat rides will also be offered on Thursday, May 5, and Friday, May 6, from 1-4 p.m. at the Watercraft Center docks (a \$5 per person donation is suggested, which will go to the sailing program.)

The Wooden Boat Show weekend opening event on Friday, May 6, includes a reception and live music from 5:30-7 p.m. Contact the Museum for more information, tickets to the Friday opening reception or Saturday awards reception.

Please visit our website for a complete event schedule at www.ncmaritimemuseums.com. ■



Mark your
calendar for these
upcoming events!

May 6-7 42nd Annual Wooden Boat Show

May 8 Round the Island Race

June 11 Maritime Day

July 9 Great 4th Race

July 15 Crab Cake Cook-Off

Aug. 6 Traditional Skiff Regatta

Sep. 2 Murder Mystery Dinner

Oct. 22 Fall In-The-Water Meet

Nov. 5 Boatshop Bash

Nov. 15 Oyster Harvesting Sail

Dec. 3 Crystal Coast Christmas Flotilla

For more details about events and programs, call (252) 728-7317 or visit www.ncmaritimemuseums.com.

First Annual NC Whales and Whaling Symposium *...continued*

"I'm continually amazed at the abundance and diversity of whales (and their behaviors) in North Carolina," stated Mr. Rittmaster. "I look forward to presenting some of what we're learning about whales in North Carolina along with current conservation issues impacting them."

The next presentation will begin at 11 a.m., when John Hairr will conduct a presentation about Native American whaling and porpoise hunting off the East Coast of the United States. In addition to being head of the NC Maritime Museum's Education section, Mr. Hairr is a North Carolina author, historian, and environmental educator who has studied both North Carolina's history and environment for decades.

North Carolina Maritime Museum's Associate Curator Benjamin Wunderly will be presenting at 1 p.m.

regarding the history of whaling in North Carolina. Mr. Wunderly has spent the past twenty years working along the coast with North Carolina's Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. The focus of his career has been on coastal ecology and marine animals and how human actions, historical and modern, influence them.

"Whale fishing has been a part of North Carolina's history since at least the 1660s and through the disbanding of the last whaling crew in 1917," stated Mr. Wunderly.

In North Carolina, whalers participated in what came to be known as shore-based whaling. Instead of going out on large whaling ships for long periods of time to chase down their prey, North Carolina whalers were able to hunt these leviathans right off of their coast in smaller row boats. Initially North Carolina locals harvested the whales that naturally came ashore, but soon began to pursue the whales that came close to the North Carolina shores.

Following Mr. Wunderly's presentation, Christine Brin, North Carolina Maritime Museum Group and Volunteer Coordinator, will give a presentation titled "Legendary Cetaceans" at 2 p.m. Ms. Brin's background is primarily in the education field working with groups visiting a variety of sites along the East Coast. The presentation "Legendary Cetaceans" will take a look at the stars of the cetacean world such as Flipper and show how legends can be used to teach about whales and whaling in our Common Core classrooms.

The final presentation begins at 3 p.m. when Vicky Thayer, Coordinator of the North Carolina Inland and Central Coastal Marine Mammal Stranding Network,

will be giving a presentation about the network she proudly leads. This conservation-focused program will provide participants with a fascinating look inside what the stranding network does when responding to whales, dolphins, porpoises and seals that strand along North Carolina's ocean beaches and estuarine shores for a variety of reasons. Dr. Thayer will describe the sequence of events that happen when her team gets a call reporting a marine mammal stranding, and what they learn from these animals. North Carolina is a fascinating place to respond to marine mammal strandings, due to the diversity and abundance of both temperate and tropical marine mammal species that inhabit these waters.

"Many North Carolina residents do not realize that our state has over 150 reported marine mammal strandings each year, including whales, dolphins, porpoises,



Atlantic spotted dolphin (*Stenella frontalis*) off North Carolina. Although rarely seen from shore, this is likely the most abundant cetacean off North Carolina.

Photo by Tom Johnson, NOAA/SEFSC 2011.

seals and manatees," stated Dr. Thayer. "These events, although sad for the animals, offer an unparalleled opportunity to improve our understanding of the biology of marine mammals that inhabit our local waters. Marine mammals strand for a variety of reasons, including anthropological causes, disease, and old age. These animals are top predators and may serve as ecosystem sentinels to reflect the health of our marine environment," according to Dr. Thayer.

Throughout the day visitors will also have the opportunity to visit educational displays about whales and whaling. These displays will include the complete skeleton of a dwarf sperm whale courtesy of Mr. Rittmaster and his volunteers. Baleen, teeth, whale oil, and large bones will also be exhibited.

Participants will also have a chance to review and request a copy of the Curriculum put together as a partnership between the NC Maritime Museum and Marine Mammal Stranding Network titled "One Whale: Many Lessons." This curriculum features a series of lessons that puts students in the shoes of members of Marine Mammal Stranding Network as they encounter situations taken from real life.

"This program has received a wide range of interest already from local residents to the educational community," says David Cartier, Public Relations Coordinator for the North Carolina Maritime Museum system. "We are fortunate to have the quality of talent available in-house to share their amazing experiences with the participants. We have a large number of registrants already. With the interest and curiosity in North Carolina whales, we expect this program to be completely full." ■

■

Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum in Hatteras

North Carolina's Deadliest Maritime Disaster

By John Hairr

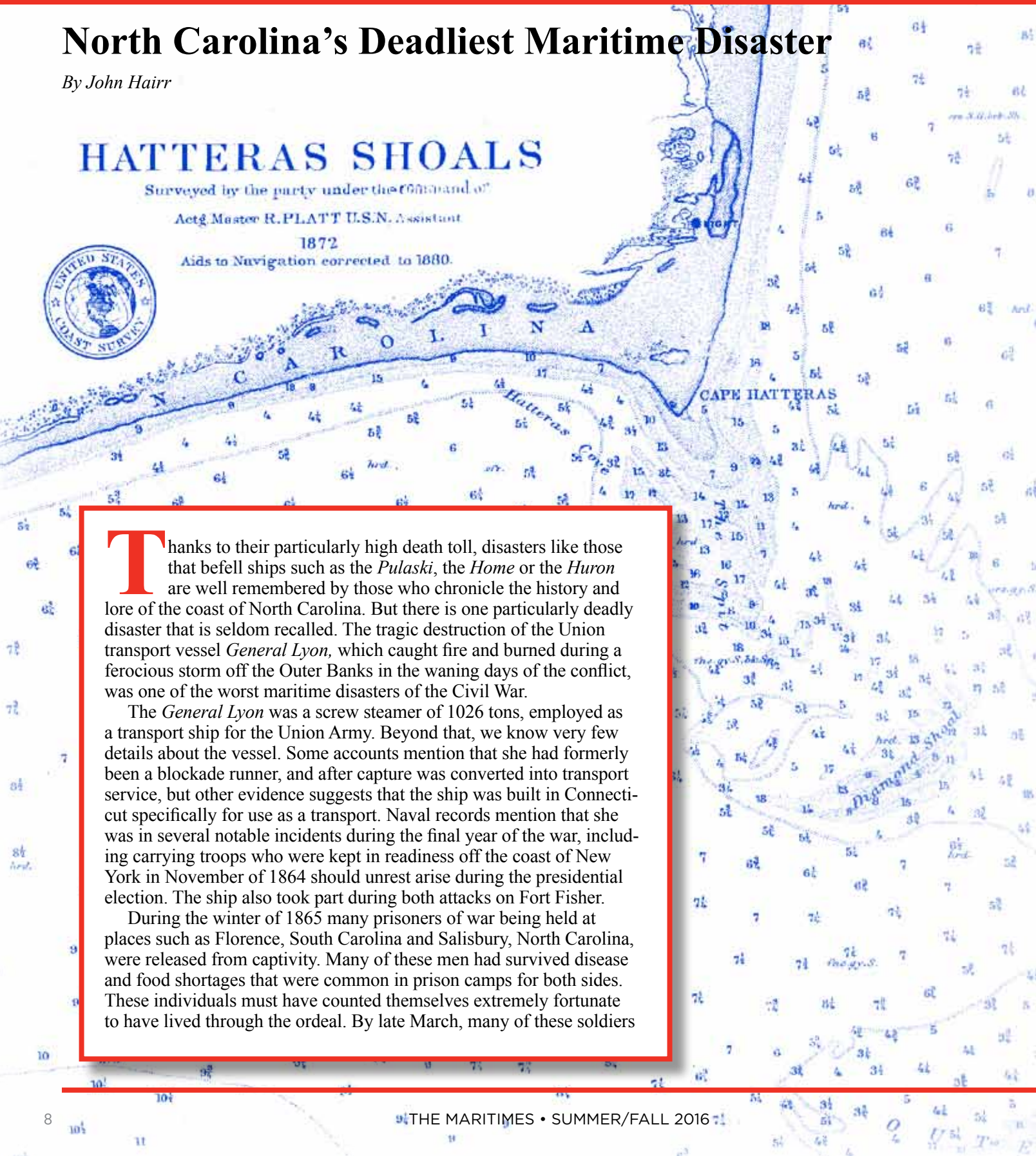
HATTERAS SHOALS

Surveyed by the party under the command of

Actg Master R. PLATT U.S.N. Assistant

1872

Aids to Navigation corrected to 1880.



Thanks to their particularly high death toll, disasters like those that befell ships such as the *Pulaski*, the *Home* or the *Huron* are well remembered by those who chronicle the history and lore of the coast of North Carolina. But there is one particularly deadly disaster that is seldom recalled. The tragic destruction of the Union transport vessel *General Lyon*, which caught fire and burned during a ferocious storm off the Outer Banks in the waning days of the conflict, was one of the worst maritime disasters of the Civil War.

The *General Lyon* was a screw steamer of 1026 tons, employed as a transport ship for the Union Army. Beyond that, we know very few details about the vessel. Some accounts mention that she had formerly been a blockade runner, and after capture was converted into transport service, but other evidence suggests that the ship was built in Connecticut specifically for use as a transport. Naval records mention that she was in several notable incidents during the final year of the war, including carrying troops who were kept in readiness off the coast of New York in November of 1864 should unrest arise during the presidential election. The ship also took part during both attacks on Fort Fisher.

During the winter of 1865 many prisoners of war being held at places such as Florence, South Carolina and Salisbury, North Carolina, were released from captivity. Many of these men had survived disease and food shortages that were common in prison camps for both sides. These individuals must have counted themselves extremely fortunate to have lived through the ordeal. By late March, many of these soldiers

were assembling in Union-occupied Wilmington, where they awaited transport north. It is unclear exactly how many former prisoners were unfortunate enough to be assigned to the *General Lyon* for the trip home. We do know that they came from all across the Union, including Iowa, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Massachusetts, Illinois, Indiana, and New York.

Another group of Union troops who were on the doomed ship were regular soldiers from the Union Army. Over two hundred officers and enlisted men of the 56th Illinois Volunteers were mustering out of the service and heading home. These veterans had participated in several noted engagements, including Vicksburg, Corinth and Bentonville.

In addition to the military personnel, there was a large contingent of noncombatants on board, including women and children. There were some Confederate deserters heading north, as well as several former slaves who had recently been liberated as Union forces passed through their area.

The ship was clearly packed beyond her capacity to safely travel on the high seas, especially if she encountered trouble. Investigation later revealed that she was only carrying enough lifeboats for a hundred people. No one knows an exact figure for how many passengers were on board, but crewmembers and survivors agree that she was carrying nearly six hundred people, including the captain and crew. The *General Lyon* left the dock at Wilmington headed north to Fortress Monroe, Virginia on Wednesday, March 29, 1865. The ship made its way down the Cape Fear River to Smithville, where she pulled into the port. Whether the overcrowded ship took on more passengers here is unknown.

Next morning, the *General Lyon* headed out of the river, and as soon as she rounded Cape Fear the weather deteriorated. Hurricane-force winds from the southwest and high seas battered the slow moving vessel. By Friday morning, she was believed to be sixty miles from Cape Hatteras, somewhere between Cape Lookout and Ocracoke. Many of the passengers were in their beds suffering from seasickness. The hatches leading into the vessel were sealed in order to keep the waters from the ocean from entering the hold of the overloaded ship that was riding low in the water.

Around 10:00 a.m. Friday morning, a fire broke out near the middle of the ship. Surviving crewmembers later reported that the fire was caused when some barrels of kerosene and lubricating oil being stowed in the engine room broke loose while the ship was being tossed about violently on the sea. This flammable cocktail would have been difficult to extinguish in the best of conditions, but the hurricane force winds whipped the blaze into an inferno. Despite the best efforts of the crew, they were unable to contain the conflagration.

A correspondent from the *New York Times* interviewed some of the crew who survived the disaster and noted their recollections of the initial stages of the incident. "The frightful shrieks of the women and children,

and their piteous supplications for help were drowned by the roaring of the storm. Several of the paroled soldiers were sick and confined to their berths. Some of these managed to crawl on deck, and clung there until washed overboard by waves. In half an hour after the fire broke out, the engines partially stopped, and the vessel immediately swung round with her broadside to the wind, and the flames spreading across the deck."

At this point, the crew decided it was time to abandon ship, with the captain leading the way onto the first lifeboat. This boat was caught in the rough seas and washed under the stern of the vessel where it was crushed by the screw propeller. Another lifeboat was launched and nearly made it to the *General Sedgewick*, another transport that was in the waters off Hatteras at that time. The crew of the *General Sedgewick* tried rendering assistance, but the lifeboat was slammed into the side of their vessel by a monstrous wave and sank.

One of the survivors, Michael Brocket of the 56th Illinois Volunteers, later recalled of the events that transpired as the fire overspread the ship. "Pandemonium broke loose on the ship as the flames gradually neared and crowded the people closer and closer to the edge of the vessel, there to be confronted by a sea the tumult of which sang the song of death. Maj. Fryles, in command of the 56th Ill., made a heroic but fruitless attempt to quell the turmoil, but lost his life in attempting to help the women and children escape from the blistering flame. Within half an hour the vessel was wrapped in flames and those on deck had in most instances disappeared in the engulfing waves, very few escaping in the limited number of boats. Many who had safely gotten into the boats were later drowned by the high waves, or pulled down to their death by scores of hands that held on to the small crafts with the crazed determination of a drowning person. The waves were running mountain high and many of the bodies were washed ashore."

By the time the *General Sedgewick* was compelled to leave the scene and head for safety, she had rescued twenty-nine people from the *General Lyon*. The burning wreck was reported, "drifting toward the frightful breakers off Cape Hatteras. She was there burned down to the water's edge, and every soul on board had doubtless perished."

The terrible wreck of the *General Lyon* was one of the deadliest maritime disasters of the Civil War, with nearly six hundred people burning to death or drowning in the storm tossed Atlantic. News of the disaster was lost amidst all of the chaos surrounding the end of the war and the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Remarkably, another maritime disaster took place less than a month after the *General Lyon* went down. The explosion of the *Sultana* on the Mississippi River, with over a thousand people on board, proved to be the maritime disaster that held the public's attention.

To this day, the wreck of the *General Lyon* remains the deadliest known disaster in the infamous Graveyard of the Atlantic. ■

Graveyard of the Atlantic

By Mary Ellen Riddle

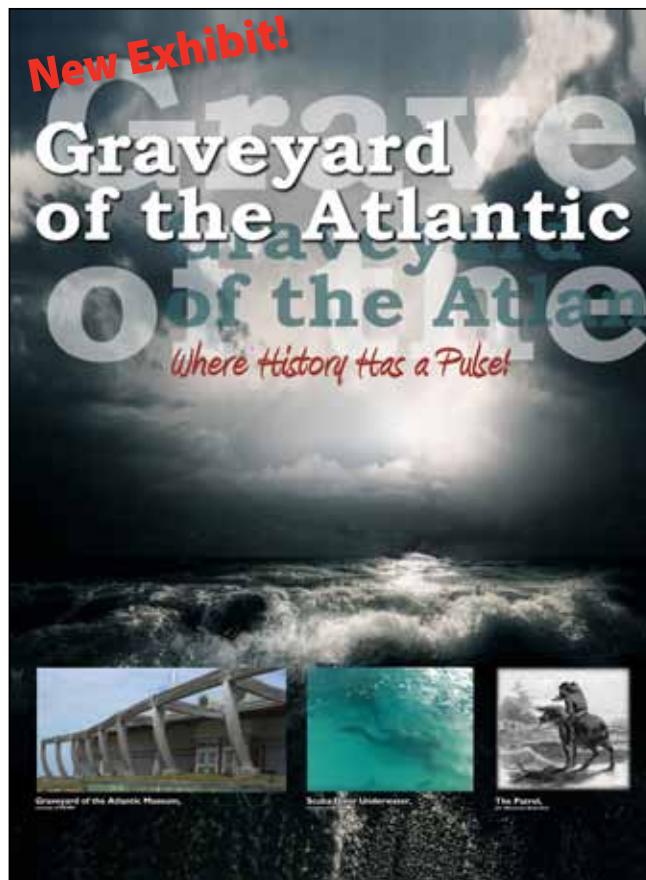
This April, a new panel exhibition was unveiled in the education wing at the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum. It will be on display through February of 2017.

Sharing the same name as the Museum, the *Graveyard of the Atlantic* exhibition features text and vintage photography that illustrate the meaning behind the foreboding title. The exhibition is written on a grade school level so children and families can enjoy a self-guided experience.

Thousands of shipwrecks rest in the waters off the Outer Banks of North Carolina, from Currituck to Bogue Banks. The exact number is unknown, but it is estimated that at least two thousand vessels sank here over a period of four hundred years. Weather, war, piracy and navigational error were the primary reasons for their destruction.

The waters off the Outer Banks of North Carolina are characterized by a confluence of deadly natural conditions. Throughout the age of sail, maritime traffic followed the Gulf Stream moving up from the south and the extension of the Labrador Current moving down from the north. Although these currents provide a constant source of propulsion, they can also run dangerously near or even over shoals, essentially shallow water sandbars, that extend from the tip of Cape Hatteras for miles out to sea. Winds blowing from the northeast or the southwest form longshore currents that carry sand along the coast and deposit it at the capes to form these sandbars. The infamous Diamond Shoals off Cape Hatteras was formed in this fashion. This, combined with sudden, dense fog, and dynamic and even catastrophic storms that form offshore, create a mariner's nightmare. Ships are driven onto shoals by wind and waves and then pummeled to pieces by those same forces. Many ships – and lives - were lost in this fashion in the Graveyard of the Atlantic. Often, navigational miscalculations resulted in ships running hard aground on a shoal, adding to the carnage. The history of such events includes the heroic efforts of the U.S. Life Saving Service and almost unbelievable acts of courage. Surfmen routinely rowed and even swam through hurricane roiled seas to save shipwrecked sailors and passengers. Even those lifesaving efforts that were thwarted led to the strengthening of services offered along the coast, and even to the ground breaking appointment of an African American as a keeper during times of great prejudice.

Piracy also played a role in the loss of ships off the coast. These outlaws of the sea targeted the busy shipping routes that passed the North Carolina coast and found secluded hideouts on the nearby islands surrounded by shallow, shoal-ridden waters. The waterways were perfect for the small, fast pirate sloops, which did not draw as much water as the larger ships their crews robbed and, at times, wrecked.



War generated its share of shipwrecks, as well. The Revolutionary War, War of 1812, the Civil War and both World Wars all have shipwrecks in their histories. Whether ships were lured ashore and scuttled, sunk for blockading purposes, set afire so as not to be used by the enemy, or targeted for destruction, shipwrecks abounded. During World Wars I and II, German U-boats attacked Allied ships off the Outer Banks. Approximately 90 Allied vessels and four U-boats were sunk during the first few months of World War II alone. Outer Banks residents witnessed fiery explosions of ships at sea that caused their houses to shake and covered beaches with oil and shipwreck debris. Their once peaceful homes were transformed into a war zone dubbed “Torpedo Junction.”

This rich history of storms, piracy, war, human error, and, at times, even unsolved mysteries of ghost ships is the very fabric of Outer Banks life. This cultural past is what is shared in *Graveyard of the Atlantic*, which, while written on an elementary school level, provides a glimpse into a common cultural past that links us globally and lends perspective on history, making us more aware of the ties that bind. Included in the exhibition is a guide that reinforces the viewing experience. Visitors, youth, and seniors alike, can join together to have a positive museum experience while exploring the remarkable history of the Graveyard of the Atlantic. The Museum is open from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday. It closes at 4 p.m. October through March. There is no fee to visit the Museum or the exhibition. ■

New to the Museum!

Check out the all-new knot-tying station in our Education Room, and try your hand at tying multiple maritime knots. Kids will also enjoy our new double puzzle located in the Education Room. Put together the pirate-themed puzzle then flip it over to work on a shipwreck puzzle. It is just right for busy hands!

View the Museum's new exhibit on the infamous waters and related shipwrecks called the *Graveyard of the Atlantic*, and discover why the area was given this ominous nickname. The exhibit includes vintage photography and a guide geared toward family and youth. ■



Wreck of the *Priscilla*, August 1899.

Museum Happenings

The Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum presents its Salty Dawgs Lecture Series once a week on Tuesdays at 2 p.m. The series brings maritime history and culture to Museum guests, touching on a variety of topics including shipwrecks, piracy, seafood, beach biology, sea shanties, and artifact discovery. Experts in the field share information in presentations that include hot topics such as the German Enigma coding machine, and Blackbeard the pirate. Presenters include historians, authors, chefs, musicians, divers, biologists, and archivists. All presentations are open to the public and are free.

Sign up to enjoy our Civil War Tea, Talk and Tour scheduled for September 15, 5:30–7:30 p.m. The evening features a lecture, tour of our Civil War exhibit, and period music and food. The event is free with a contribution to our donation box. Reservations are required.

Each Wednesday from 10:30 a.m. to noon, kids and their families enjoy creating maritime crafts while learning snippets of coastal culture and history. All supplies are furnished. All ages are welcome. Free.

Wednesday afternoon at 2:30 p.m. join local historian Drew Pullen as he presents the *Civil War on Hatteras Island*. The author of two Outer Banks Civil War books lends colorful insight into the island's memorable history.

On Fridays from 12:30 until 4 p.m., craftsman Sam Green demonstrates the art of painting canvas-backed decoys and discusses how to construct them. ■



Sam Green Canvas-backed Decoy.



Enigma Machine, courtesy of Jim Bunch.



"Loss of the *Monitor*" A gallant attempt of the officers and crew of the United States steamer *Rhode Island*, to rescue the crew of the *Monitor*, off Cape Hatteras, at midnight, December 30th 1862. By Frank Leslie.

North Carolina Maritime Museum at Southport

Commodities and Communities: Colonial Cape Fear

By Lori Sanderlin

Salt: The Cleanest and Whitest I Ever Saw in My Life...

Today, salt is an everyday item that most people take for granted, but before the advent of refrigeration, salt was a precious mineral. Everyone needed the commodity for curing meats such as pork, beef, and fish.

During the colonial period, settlers received most of their goods, including salt, from overseas markets. England, controlling what its colonies received, often sent Carolina salt from Britain and its other protectorates. One complaint was the colony's inability to receive superior salt from the preferred countries of Spain, France and Portugal. Their northern counterparts were able to receive the import and often Carolina had to pay them more to receive it. Tons of this good were pouring into the colony, but it was often not enough to sustain their need. In January 1775, the vessel *Friendship* alone brought 196 tons of salt. According to the Wilmington-New Hanover Safety Committee Minutes (1774-1776), salt prices had to be regulated to protect people from price gouging.

War often necessitates creativity and ingenuity on the part of the home front and this was also true in the Lower Cape Fear during the American Revolution. The simple answer was to make salt for themselves.

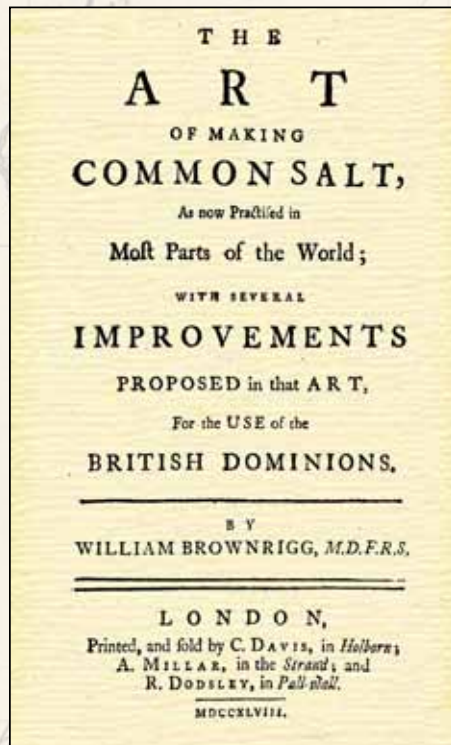
The Art of Making Common Salt by William Brownrigg (1748) became the bible of home salt makers throughout the colonies. Using the sea and sounds around Wilmington, Brunswick, and Fort Johnston, makers were using both the solar and boiling method to produce salt. Fear of starvation prompted people to create private works. Start-up subsidies were given to those who

could properly manufacture salt. Public and private works began dotting the sea and sound for subsistence and profit.

"The Humour of Salt boiling seems to be taking place here, I have seen some boiled here, the cleanest & whitest of any salt (I think) I ever saw in my life—every Old Wife is now scouring her pint pot for the necessary operation. God send them good luck." (From Samuel Ashe letter)

Naval Stores: Keeping Maritime Interests Afloat

The Coastal Plain of North Carolina abounded with the favored tree of naval stores, the longleaf pine. *Pinus palustris* enjoys the sandy soil of the coast and thrived in the Lower Cape Fear. The Cape Fear River and its tributaries originate at the confluence of the Haw and Deep rivers in western North Carolina. Flowing out to the Atlantic Ocean, this navigable artery makes a perfect water route for shipping into the interior of the colony and out to Europe. This geographical and environmental backdrop was the perfect setting for European interests to pursue settlement and use the land to their advantage. During the colonial period, the term naval stores applied to all aspects and uses of the commodity, from tar, pitch and turpentine to the masts built



The Art of Making Common Salt, by William Brownrigg, M.D.F.R.S., 1748.

The image is a historical map of the Province of North Carolina, showing the Cape Fear River and surrounding areas. The map is titled "New and Correct Map of the Province of North Carolina drawn from the Original of Col. Moseley's, 1737." It shows the river system, including the Cape Fear River, and various settlements and landmarks. The map is oriented with North at the top and shows the coastline of the province. The text "COU N T" is visible in the center of the map, and "Bruns- wick" is visible at the bottom. The map is drawn in a detailed, hand-drawn style with various labels and geographical features.

New and Correct Map of the Province of North Carolina drawn from the Original of Col. Moseley's, 1737.



“Boxing” or tapping a pine tree.

for vessels. This laborious industry required repeatedly scarring or tapping the pine to release its amber sap into “the box.” Over time, this eventually killed the tree.

Burning, cooking, and distilling the sap derived the

three main products of tar, pitch, and turpentine respectively. Tar was used on vessels for weatherproofing sailor’s hats and ship’s rigging, and for painting. Pitch was employed for caulking ships, and turpentine was a solvent for paint. War and imperialism was the impetus for Great Britain’s need for naval stores, which were the most important products for the empire. North Carolina produced more naval stores than any other colony, and the Port of Brunswick was certainly the most important in the Lower Cape Fear region. Historian Lawrence Lee estimated that in 1772 “The total exports from all the American colonies were 185,951 barrels [tar, pitch, and turpentine]...of these quantities 59,006 barrels went out of Port Brunswick... To put the Port of Brunswick exports into perspective, they were slightly more than those of the four other North Carolina ports combined, and thirty-two percent of the exports of all colonies combined.”

The importance of Brunswick Town waned, and the growing town of Wilmington stepped up to be the most important port in North Carolina. The docks of the thriving town were covered with barrels of stores. Other commodities such as salt were sent up river to Cross Creek (present day Fayetteville) and surrounding communities. *continued...*



Wilmington was a busy naval stores port. Here vast quantities of barreled turpentine await loading on sailing vessels in the river. (Courtesy North Carolina Department of Archives and History)

Commodities and Communities *...continued*

Salt and naval stores are just two of the many topics covered in the museum's newest exhibit, *Along the Colonial Cape Fear*. Opening Friday, June 3, 2016, the exhibit examines the commodities and communities of the Lower Cape Fear. Discover the people who helped the region thrive, from the land owners and maritime merchants, to the indentured servants and slaves cultivating rice and boxing pines. Hands-on interactives intrigue adults as well as children. Take a moment to smell tar and turpentine to understand what others would have experienced while cooking and distilling the longleaf pine sap. Learn how this commodity was processed and why North Carolinians are called "Tar Heels." Meet Miss Janet Schaw, dressed as "A Lady of Quality," who will give you a loyalist version of the region as she "reads" from her diary.

This exhibit was made possible by a grant from the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR) and is free and open to the public. Groups are welcome to schedule activities and guided tours. ■

Opens Friday June 3, 2016

New Exhibit!

*Along the
Colonial Cape Fear*

The Commodities & Communities
of the Lower Cape Fear

Expansion of the North Carolina Maritime Museum at Southport: Phase II/III

By Mary Strickland

Just when we believed that all was well and there was finally a time to relax and enjoy good progress, someone, most likely a member of the Friends of the Museum Board of Directors, who shall remain nameless, said, "It looks good; let's strike while the iron is hot!" And so, Phase I came to a happy, though brief end, and Phase II took over our very existence.

As a refresher to those who know us, after the June 1992 Grand Opening and subsequent operation as a private local maritime museum for nine years, in 2000 the Southport Maritime Museum became the North Carolina Maritime Museum at Southport, part of the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources. Joining the North Carolina Maritime Museum in Beaufort and the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum in Hatteras, all now under the guidance of Museums Director Joseph K. Schwarzer, our motto "One Historic Coast, Three Unique Museums" reflects the nature and goals of the Maritime Museum System.

Grass does not grow under the feet of the Friends of the NC Maritime Museum at Southport, the museum's financial support organization. Phase II was about to become a reality. Recognizing the need to move from the original storefront location to larger quarters, the staff and dedicated volunteer Friends worked tirelessly to arrive at agreements with representatives of the Federal Government, North Carolina Department of



State, county and city officials broke ground with museum staff and Friend's Board, May 27, 2015.

Natural and Cultural Resources, and Southport City officials. The group also raised over \$200,000, resources sufficient to begin reconstruction of two military barracks on Fort Johnston overlooking the magnificent Cape Fear River. Planning and fundraising were done concurrently, the packing and moving of artifacts was a hands-on achievement, and with celebration on July 4, 2011, the talents and treasures of the people of the Southport community were in place to pass on to future generations in this new home, itself a piece of unique maritime history.

But just when we agreed "There, now we've done it," a new wave of enthusiasm preceded an arm-in-arm visitation of board members, new and old, with proposals for expansion to improve the treasured facility on the historic property. Meetings laid the groundwork for fund raising activities to commence November 2014, with a goal of \$305,000.00 to add required handicap accessible facilities, insulation,

workshop, office, exhibit and archival storage areas; in short to polish up that which still had some rough edges. And once again, the people of the Lower Cape Fear area of North Carolina answered the call. Within one year, individuals and organizations had raised the \$305,000, for Phase III, topping it with additional donations to provide needed furnishings and exhibits to better bring to life the rich history of our cherished State of North Carolina.

The work is ongoing, the sounds of construction echo throughout the building, reassuring us of this wonderful opportunity to serve the past and future students of history. If all goes well, we plan another great event in this newly prepared haven, the Phase III Grand Opening of the North Carolina Maritime Museum at Southport on July 4, 2016. To host such a gathering will be an honor. ■



Meeting the growing needs of the historic Lower Cape Fear.



Staff Spotlight: Meredith Jones

The North Carolina Maritime Museum at Southport recently welcomed its newest staff member, Meredith Jones. Typically found at the front desk, Jones wears many hats, including administrative assistant, volunteer coordinator, visitation tracker, and public relations coordinator. A resident of Boiling Spring Lakes, Jones joined the Museum in November, and has quickly become immersed in Cape Fear maritime history. “One of the first things I did was to complete the scavenger hunt we have on hand for our young visitors, what better way to get to know our museum?” Jones is also a frequent browser of the book section at the Museum’s gift store that she manages, so she continually adds to her knowledge of the area.

Jones is a native North Carolinian, originally from the Piedmont part of the state. “I have lived overseas, traveled the United States and Western Europe, but in my opinion, there is nowhere more beautiful than our state.” A frequent visitor to the Brunswick beaches as a child, she moved to the area with her husband and daughter 16 years ago. Jones holds an undergraduate degree from Appalachian State University, and a



Meredith Jones. Photo courtesy Jason Tyson, *The State Port Pilot*

graduate degree from East Carolina University. Prior to joining the museum she served as office manager for the Southport Christian School. ■

THE MARITIMES

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NORTH CAROLINA MARITIME MUSEUMS

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315 Front Street
Beaufort, NC 28516



The North Carolina Maritime Museum in Beaufort is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.



Natural and Cultural Resources

The North Carolina Maritime Museums in Hatteras, Beaufort and Southport are part of the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, Susan Kluttz, Secretary.

The Maritimes is printed using private funds donated to each Friends of the Museum organization.

Follow Us!



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in Beaufort**
315 Front Street
Beaufort, NC 28516
(252) 728-7317

Hours:
Mon. – Fri. 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Sat. 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Sun. 1 – 5 p.m.



**Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum
in Hatteras**
59200 Museum Drive
Hatteras, NC 27943
(252) 986-2995

Hours:
Mon. – Sat. 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. (Apr. – Oct.)
Mon. – Fri. 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. (Nov. – Mar.)



**North Carolina Maritime Museum
at Southport**
204 E. Moore Street
Southport, NC 28461
(910) 457-0003

Hours:
Tues. – Sat. 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

www.ncmaritimemuseums.com