

An aerial photograph of a coastal area, likely Cape Hatteras National Seashore. The image shows a large, irregularly shaped bay or inlet with a complex network of channels and marshes. The surrounding land is a mix of green vegetation and light-colored, possibly sandy or cleared areas. The ocean is visible on the right side, with a clear blue color gradient. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Final Technical Report - Volume Two:  
Ethnohistorical Description of  
the Eight Villages Adjoining  
Cape Hatteras National Seashore  
and Interpretive Themes of  
History and Heritage

Cultural Resources  
Southeast Region



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**Final Technical Report – Volume Two:  
Ethnohistorical Description of the Eight Villages  
adjoining Cape Hatteras National Seashore and  
Interpretive Themes of History and Heritage**

**November 2005**



*prepared for*  
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About the cover: New Year's Eve 2003 was exceptionally warm and sunny over the Mid-Atlantic states. This image from the Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) instrument on the Aqua satellite shows the Atlantic coast stretching from the Chesapeake Bay of Virginia to Winyah Bay of South Carolina. Albemarle and Pamlico sounds separate the long, thin islands of the Outer Banks from mainland North Carolina. *Image courtesy of NASA's Visible Earth, a catalog of NASA images and animations of our home planet found on the internet at <http://visibleearth.nasa.gov>.*

Signature Page

Final Technical Report  
An Ethnohistorical Description of the Eight Villages Adjoining  
Cape Hatteras National Seashore  
And  
Interpretive Themes of History and Heritage

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## **2. Executive Summary**

This document results from a three-year long research project funded by the National Park Service beginning in 2002 to conduct an ethnohistorical and ethnographic study of eight communities adjacent to the Cape Hatteras National Seashore (CAHA). This study grew out of the National Park Service's recognition of the importance of understanding the social, cultural, and economic histories of communities affected by its policies and actions; its purpose was to "support the Park in the interpretation of its cultural resources, stewardship of ethnographic sources within the Park, and in community relations with these Park neighbors."

Research methods included participant-observation in Hatteras and Ocracoke villages, social mapping, genealogical interviews, and extended, tape-recorded interviews of community elders and leaders. We also built upon interviews of residents who born before or near the turn of the century that were recorded in the 1970s and 1980s by National Park Service staff as part of the University of North Carolina's Southern Oral History Project. In some cases we were able to interview the children of those interviewed in earlier decades, now deceased. These interviews helped us formulate a diachronic description of social and cultural change in Outer Bank villages, particularly relating to the interpretive themes of Cape Hatteras National Seashore: seashore living and fishing economy.

The final document is divided into three main components:

- A description of contemporary life on the Outer Banks, including demographic changes, challenges and issues faced by traditional banker communities, and a discussion of the role of the National Park Service in villager life (Chapter 6). This section includes a discussion of management issues and recommendations.
- An ethnohistorical description of the eight villages adjoining Cape Hatteras National Seashore: Rodanthe, Waves, Salvo, Avon, Buxton, Frisco, Hatteras, and Ocracoke. This is the main body of the text, and includes an overall history of Hatteras and

Ocracoke Islands (Chapter 5), as well as specific ethnohistories of the six other villages (Chapter 7), and is based primarily on recorded interviews.

- Interpretive themes of history and heritage. This section offers information pertaining to ten interpretive themes identified by National Park Service staff. The purpose of this section is to provide a reference guide for Park interpreters who are developing programs about the cultural meanings of artifacts, places, or events in Banker history. We have included as much primary source information for each of these themes as possible, and included secondary source references as well.

In addition to the main document described above, we have compiled the oral histories recorded and transcribed for this project in a separate document. These interviews will be made available to National Park personnel as well as the public. They should be studied in conjunction with the interviews from the 1970s and 1980s conducted by National Park staff and Southern Oral History Project researchers. These interviews are file at the History Center in Manteo, and at the Cape Hatteras National Seashore headquarters in Manteo. Also useful to any research of Outer Banks culture and history is an annotated bibliography of coastal research compiled by Betty Duggan (2001), which was undertaken as a precursor to this project.

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## 7.7. Hatteras Village

### 7.7.1. Name, Place, and Features

Hatteras Village is the southernmost community on the 33 mile long Hatteras Island (Figure 7.7.1). At ten feet above sea level, Hatteras (at its highest point) enjoys the highest elevation of any Cape Hatteras village except Buxton. The word “Hatteras” is likely an English corruption of an Algonkian word that means "area of sparse vegetation" (Payne 1985, 92). "Hatorask" was originally used to refer to the northerly section of the island by Colonists, after what was probably a semi-permanent native population, but was later applied to the southern end which was first settled by whites in the early 1780s (Stick 1958).



Figure 7.7.1. Satellite Image of Hatteras.  
Source: NC Division of Marine Fisheries.

According to early maps and reports, Hatteras was intermittently connected to Ocracoke Island, and one of the early Ocracoke pilots is reported to have lived in Hatteras Village and walked to work on Ocracoke. Hatteras Inlet was reopened by a hurricane in the fall of 1846, as

was Oregon Inlet, and the village was sometimes called “Port of Hatteras” (Stick 1958, 296).

The boat pilot recalled the sight of Hatteras Inlet:

The day the inlet was cut out, there were several families living where the inlet is now...but to their great surprise, in the morning they saw the sea and sound connected together, and the live oaks washing up by the roots and tumbling into the ocean (Van Dolsen 1999, 5).

He recalled that the people who lost their homesteads to the inlet had chopped yaupon

and grown figs, peaches, potatoes, and other vegetables (Van Dolsen 1999, 6).

The “old timers always had some kind of name for everything and everybody,” a Hatteras villager explained, including a section of the community known as “Sticky Bottom.” Sticky Bottom, also called “down the road,” was on the southern portion of the village beyond the old post office. It was a low-lying, marshy area that held a few houses and walkways of boards and planks. “There’d be one little clump of trees, then there’d be a path and a normal tide, and it might be damp and you’d have little wooden footbridges connecting these clumps.”

It was low land down there, still is, really, and it got the nickname Sticky Bottom ‘cause the ruts in the road were always covered with water. That’s mainly where I was raised. It was all swamp and a few of the older houses, but there wasn’t much down there.

During the Depression the WPA crews were enlisted to dig “mosquito ditches” to drain away standing water as part of the government’s efforts to eradicate the insects. This ditching partly drained marshy sections of Hatteras, particularly Sticky Bottom. “Threw up a pile of dirt, dug from each side of the road, and built a dry path – ‘ditch banks’ we call them,” recalled a villager. He said that the ditching and draining made many of the old plank walkways and bridges unnecessary. “They replaced the bridges is what they did.” More dredging and filling occurred when the ferry terminal was moved from the southern end of the island to the southern border of the village on a cove called Austin or Clubhouse Creek.

Sticky Bottom was the south end of the village, and the northern end past the Red and

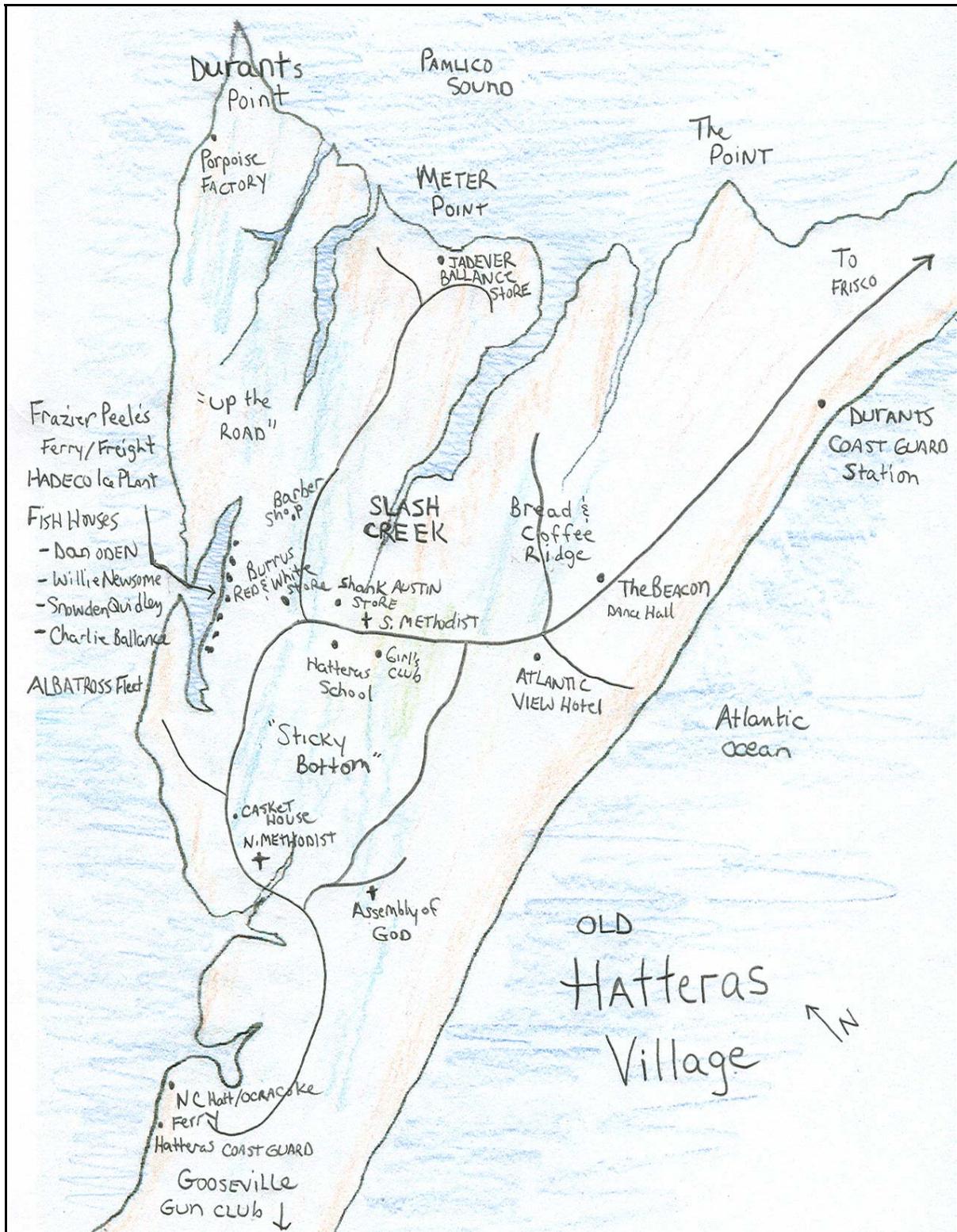
White grocery store was called “up the road.” This section of “old Hatteras” is a meandering neighborhood of old homes where many of the local people live today. “This area is most special to me,” said a resident, “because it’s the least changed.”

In the northeast section was an area called “Bread and Coffee Ridge” and an area with some old houses still standing today was called “the Point” (Map 7.7). Villagers also referred to someone going “up the beach” or “down the beach.”

Up the beach could mean anywhere from Hatteras Village east and north to Norfolk. Down the beach would mean to Ocracoke. Or if you’re in Buxton, down the beach could mean Frisco, Hatteras, Ocracoke, Morehead, Harkers Island. Out of the village, that was a commitment. You could get stuck between the villages in a dirt road. For an hour, till another car came by. Or the next car may not have the capability of pulling you out. You could be stuck all day.

An architectural survey was undertaken in the late 1990s to determine the possibility of establishing a historical district in the village. Although the surveyor concluded that a historical district is compromised by post-1950 structures that dominate the streets, and that only 10 houses pre-date 1900 due to storms and hurricanes, she provided a detailed and useful report describing the features of the old Hatteras homes. They were built low to the ground near the sound. The wood framed houses had wood or coal stoves but no fireplace. They featured cisterns, small outbuildings such as sheds, separate kitchens, outhouses, canning/smokehouses and boathouses. The report offers a description of the W.H. Gaskins house ca. 1860:

The timber frame of the one-and-a-half story dwelling is mortised, tenoned, and pegged and has down corner bracing. The house has a two-room center-passage plan. The stairs to the upper floor feature a chamfered newel with lambs tongue stop, and straight balusters. An original closet, with a beaded board door, is located under the stairs. The interior walls and ceilings are sheathed with tongue-and-groove horizontal boards (Van Dolsen 1999, 19).



Map 7.7. Hatteras Village with Historical Sites (not to scale). Sketch by B. Garrity-Blake.

Missing from the Gaskins house is the original kitchen building, which was separate from the house in pre-1920s fashion and often included a dining room (Van Dolsen 1999, 20).

Kitchens were small (five or six feet deep and 12 or 15 feet wide) “just deep enough for the stove and for someone to stand in front of it preparing food” (ibid, 22). Many homes also had a “cook house” for “heavy” cooking, such as canning (Van Dolsen 1999, 23).

Houses built between 1890 and 1920 were “I”-styled houses: two story buildings with a central passage, side gables, and a bottom floor porch. Unlike other “I” styles of the period, Hatteras homes had a side room doorway behind the stairs, not in front of the stairs, “most likely because the room functioned as a bedroom, not as a public space” (Van Dolsen 1999, 21). In the 1920s and 1930s “four square” homes – two story homes with a hip roof, a side passage and an attached kitchen—were popular. By the 1940s single-story “Cape Cod” bungalow homes were in vogue. The report described a strong tradition of house relocation on the island, as homes were transported with horses, rollers and ropes. This was either because houses displaced by storms were moved to higher ground, or people were simply moving and wanted to take their homestead with them. The oldest houses were located near the sound, as “most travel was by water and was oriented across the sound” (Van Dolsen 1999, 21).

Houses in Hatteras village had several outbuildings in the yard, as well as grape arbors and small pre-refrigeration cooling boxes called “milk boxes.” Milk boxes were “a little place you built, screened in so the air would blow through. Roof on it with screens around it so the flies, bugs couldn’t get in.” Pies, butter, clabber, and other such foods were kept in these small houses until iceboxes were introduced:

We had an icebox. Put ice in the top of it, and used to, you had a pan. You forgot to change it and then you’d have water all over the floor. So I always put a hole right through the floor, and you don’t even have to worry about it. Everything went on, people lived. What you don’t have, you don’t miss.

Before indoor plumbing islanders had outhouses. Hatteras drew well water, and each yard had a pump. A resident recalled bathing in a tub on the back porch:

The worst part is taking a bath. You had to get some water, go around the pump, and lug the water, and take it on the back porch, and get in the tub. Then mosquitoes would eat you up while you're trying to take a bath. They used to make their own soap. But, we had regular soap. Everybody used to think Lux was the best.

The historical survey described modern houses currently going up in Hatteras:

Presently houses are being constructed within the village that do not resemble in size, scale, proportion, height, or materials the dwellings built within the community since the late nineteenth century. The new houses sit high-up on posts, with no front porch, and no obvious front entry. The houses are much larger than the earlier buildings, and visually dominate the village's streetscapes (Van Dolsen 1999, 25).

Two main creeks feed into the village. One is "called the 'Slash' because it slashed the island" and the other was simply called "the creek." Villagers called marshy areas high enough to support a few trees "hamlets" – a large hamlet called Durant's Island supported the porpoise factory, and a vessel used to transport live dolphins for the New York Aquarium was named the "*Hamlet*." From the air, the community of Hatteras looks like a shark fin jutting into Pamlico Sound; the tip of the fin is Durant's Point, a smaller point along the eastern edge of Durant's Island is called Meter Point, and east of that Sandy Point. More than any other village on the banks, the "shark fin" that is Hatteras is shot-through with creeks, ponds, and inlets (Figure 7.7.2). Before "the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the natural inlets and waterways did not have well-defined edges," stated a historical surveyor. "The waterways are increasingly codified, through the use of concrete and timber walls" (Van Dolsen 1999, 18).

Some areas of the village were decidedly male domains, such as fish houses and certain taverns:

Girls and the women weren't allowed [at fish houses], unless it was a dying emergency. There was no plumbing, period; no bathroom facilities. And, the men, a lot of times they would be drinking or whatever. And, when their bladder broke loose... Right where the

Channel Bass is today used to be another beer place, the men would gather there and drink. My sister and my aunt they weren't allowed past that Slash bridge.



Figure 7.7.2. Creek in Hatteras. Photo by B. Garrity-Blake.

Another male domain were the fish camps where village men stored their nets, built so “you didn't have to lug your gear all over the place - you had some place to put your nets out of the weather.” They served as hideouts for boys:

I love the smell of them. They have tarred nets in there, the old smell like a piece of cotton net that's dried out, and some of the dried seaweed smell and fish smell. I don't know why I liked it, we were kids, several of us around, and we'd go there and tell jokes or whatever. Hang out, little hide out.

The net camps were “no bigger than a four by eight shed” with a pitched roof:

They had low open rafters in the top, and they would put a plank or two up there and lay things up there. These guys' whole lives were in there - different net leads, sewing needles, palm saddles for leather work. And, cotton nets. I've had many naps on cotton nets, rainy afternoon, Saturday...It'd be chilly; we'd get in there on those cotton nets and learn how to smoke cigars and cigarettes, or corn cob pipes. We'd read their old magazines –science fiction, westerns. The doors were open so you could go on in. There was nothing to steal. Who wants a cotton net, unless you're going fishing? Who wants a sail needle? That's work.

Some net camps were located out over the water, and could only be reached by boat. Men sometimes gathered at someone's camp to drink or play poker:

Now you couldn't plug the iron in on Sunday, but Grandfather could play poker every Sunday evening. He always had that poker game at his fish camp. He had to take a shove skiff go across the creek. They drank their whiskey, drank their beer, and there was no plumbing so they went out the back door to do their thing. With young'uns, especially girls, you didn't go around there.

Hatteras villagers pulled together in times of crisis and need, as illustrated by a woman's description of her younger brother who was born with spina bifida in the 1940s. Delivered by a midwife, the baby was born "kicking just like any other little baby." But the family noticed a "little place on his back about the size of a marble." Within a month the baby stopped kicking, and was paralyzed from the waist down. They took him to Duke University hospital after crossing the sound on a freight boat, and the doctors informed the family there was nothing they could do. "They wanted her to put him in a home. They said he wouldn't live more than two or three years." The family refused and took him back to Hatteras, where the community – particularly the church – took him under their care:

Mother took care of him. His spine was pulled apart. He had part of it grow on the outside. The Methodist church used to buy alcohol and gauze pads to go on his back. They made all of his gowns that he wore when he was little. He wore diapers until he died.

His siblings taught him everything they learned in school, and he was "happy and smart," living to the age of ten. "He was just our life then," his sister said. "We spent all our time playing with him. I would sit and rock him until my arms ached, just so he could sit up. Villagers still stick together in times of need, a villager stressed, at least the "home people" native to the island.

A resident and his mother used to do an informal census of Hatteras Village in the 1940s and found the population to be around 500. The remarkable feature of their practice was that they knew the names of everyone in the community:

Once a year my mother and I would do a census, and we would set aside a couple of nights and start up the road and we'd just check off in our mind each house and who lived there, and we'd write it down. We didn't necessarily write their names down but we'd do a count. You knew who lived in every house. And, there was just under 500 people.

Old Hatteras family names include Wade, Peele, Ballance, Burrus, Stowe, Austin, Styron, Williams, Scarborough, O'Neal, Gaskins, Gaskill, Farrow, Jennett, Quidley, Scarborough, Rollinson, Gray, Basnett, Whidbee, Midgett, and Oden (Wechter 1975, Stick 1958).

Hatteras began growing after the opening of Hatteras Inlet in 1846, and the village saw more shipping activity than Ocracoke until the 1890s when Ocracoke Inlet was dredged (Van Dolsen 1999). Hatteras had had a population of 500 in 1896, and was a growing mercantile center with four stores (Uriah O'Neal, R.M.S. Rollinson, A.J. Stowe, and Homer Styron), five boat builders (J.J. Barnett, J.M. Stowe, J.F. Stowe, B.F. Stowe, and W.K. Gaskill), and a hotel run by Mrs. Inez Angell (ibid, 10). In addition to Hatteras Village proper, there was a 19<sup>th</sup> century cluster community just west of the village called Stowe, comprised of a few dwellings, a windmill, and a general store (Payne 1985). An interesting shift occurred between 1870 and 1920: the 1870 census listed half the population as living in rental buildings. By 1920 "only nine families rented their home" (Van Dolsen 1999, 10). Hatteras Village became the largest village on the Outer Banks until 1940 when it was outstripped by Wanchese and Manteo (Dunbar 1956).

### **7.7.2. Relation to Other Villages and Beyond**

Even though Hatteras village is the furthest distance from the island's jumping-off point to Manteo, it was a bustling community of locals, Coast Guardsmen, and ferry workers, and a popular destination for other islanders. Its proximity to the inlet made Hatteras a busy port of commerce and, compared to other villages, Hatteras was on the forefront of new innovations.

A resident explained that he felt Hatteras has had more community activity and cohesiveness than many of the other island villages. This point is also stressed by other residents proud of the village's ability to pull together and stand at the forefront in terms of getting ice, electricity, and, later, a library and medical clinic.

This village has functioned as a "village" more so than the other villages on the island. Hatteras had the first power plant, electric power. A guy came here and built a combination ice plant and power plant that provided refrigeration as well as electricity, which radically altered life.

The village has long "attracted a greater number of outsiders," as far back as "the Civil War – Hatteras was the first place in North Carolina reclaimed by Federal forces, and you had carpetbaggers, administrators." Once the charter boat business was established and booming in the 1950s, the village "had all these outside sportsmen coming in on a regular basis, and you had a window to the outside world." A villager reflected, "Hatteras was more apt to change. Those other villages were more isolated – prior to the bridge the island shut down at night, you couldn't get on and off. And if you came to the doctor you came this way."

A feature distinguishing Hatteras and other villages is the particular kinsmen and family names associated with specific communities.

If you look at the rosters of the lifesaving stations, you can tell where the station is by the names. Midgetts, Midgetts, Midgetts is Chicamacomico, a mixture of Grays, Meekins, and Scarboroughs are in Avon, then a few Davis's thrown in you know you're in Buxton. You get to Hatteras you're going to see some Ballances, Styrons, Burrus, you go to Ocracoke you're going to see Gaskills and O'Neals and Styrons.

As stressed by many islanders, each village has its own accent that is lost to the untrained and non-local ear. Especially with the old-timers who retain many of the old phrases and dialect, an individual can reveal their home village by their dialect. With the influx of outsiders, however, and popularity of mass media such as radio and television, these subtle differences are disappearing, as is the "Banker brogue" itself. "If I'm around someone, and I hear some islander

accent, I gravitate toward that,” said a Hatteras native. “To tap into something.” Hearing the unique dialect and brogue carried on by old-timers evokes times past and pride-of-place for many villagers, yet saddens them that the old tongue is heard less and less with each passing year.

Some of the old fishermen were very inarticulate. But they were experiencing the same things as a very articulate poet when they would see a sunset or a sunrise or a rainbow or storm. They were moved by that. And they didn’t start gushing out with a bunch of words. But they’d say, “Boy that was some pretty.”

Like other islanders, Hatteras villagers have a history of leaving the island for school, work, or military service. Captain Ernal Foster, founder of the *Albatross* charter fishing fleet, attended grade school in Beaufort and then Southport, North Carolina because his father, Charlie Foster, was captain of a menhaden vessel that was based in that town once the fish factory in Portsmouth was dismantled and moved there. His father had first left Hatteras at age 14, working on sailing vessels out of Philadelphia. Ernal Foster still has his father’s sailing bag, sturgeon hook, and caviar sieve.

### **7.7.3. School**

Census information for all of Hatteras Island in 1870 lists 60 percent of islanders as fishermen, and 50 percent of the population as illiterate. This level of illiteracy was on par with the rest of the state at the time (Van Dolsen 1999). By 1920 the rate of illiteracy shrank to 16 percent in Hatteras Village, thanks to the school that was founded at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Located where the Hatteras Community Center is now (2004), the school operated three months of the year and served grades one to seven (Van Dolsen 1999).

Before a public school was established, families pooled their resources and hired teachers to come teach children in private homes. After the schoolhouse was built, the number of grades

seems to have waxed and waned depending on the number of students. In the 1920s the two-room Hatteras school, located in the heart of the village, expanded to three rooms and added grades. A woman recalled that in the 1930s it ran through four years of high school, and students from Buxton and Frisco would ride a bus to attend. The quality of education must have been good, considering a villager's experience once moving, just before her senior year, to Maryland:

The principal told my sister, "Well, coming from such a small school, we might have to put her back a grade." I think there were 43 in the senior class. I was the valedictorian that year. I didn't have to study at all.

In the 1940s the school went through the seventh grade, whereupon students received a certificate and could "attend summer school for approximately two months to earn a teacher's certificate" (Van Dolsen 1999, 11-12). Students wishing to graduate from high school traveled to Buxton. In the 1950s "a great majority no later than 16 just quit school." "Drop-outs" could have successful careers, such as a villager who was captain of a tugboat with a seventh grade education. Grades first, second, and third met in one room, fourth, fifth, and sixth in another, and seventh and eighth in a third. Early teachers included Inez Austin and Hilda Brown.

Discipline was strict in school:

If you got a whipping in school you got another one when you got home. The teacher didn't have to notify your parents or grandparents or whatever. Grandmamma give me a whipping. Granddaddy had a few choice words that hurt more than the whipping. And if you sassed a teacher she popped you. They didn't mommick [overly punish] you, they let you know who the boss was.

A woman laughed that few children played hooky, as school was a preferable alternative to staying home feigning illness, only to be dosed with castor oil.

Getting to school was not necessarily easy for students who lived a distance from the center of town, as recalled by a villager:

I remember in the wintertime when it was real cold and windy and we'd get the nor'western, my granddaddy would take his boat and he would shove us up the road to

school. Then he would come back and get us in the evening if the tide was still up, shove us back down the road to home.

Once schools were consolidated in 1955, Hatteras students traveled to Buxton, and age-old village rivalries began to soften.

All of that clannish thing started to change when all the schools come together at Buxton, and all the kids learned to live with each other. [The first day] everybody just stood and looked at each other. But, it weren't long before everybody knew everybody on the island. It was the greatest thing that ever happened. They made a community out of the island. Instead of seven communities [on Hatteras Island] you had one.

A Hatteras resident recalled his father helping the newly consolidated school prepare for the first baseball game:

The first baseball game that the school from Cape Hatteras ever played took place when I was in high school. We had to have lines for [the ball diamond]. My father had this 55-gallon barrel drum of lye and we took that and poured that stuff out for our foul lines. It's lime, not really lye. It's fairly caustic, kills off [fishing net] slime. That probably would not fly too well today, having a bunch of kids out with Dixie cups running that stuff out.

#### **7.7.4. Church**

Hatteras village had just two churches until the early 1940s, one of which was “down the road” toward the inlet in Sticky Bottom, called the Northern Methodist church. The second church was “up the road” at the north end of the village known as the Southern Methodist. “The Northern Methodist is south and the Southern Methodist is north – that confused my mind!” laughed an old-timer. “Mom would tell us you go to one or you go to the other, that's your choice,” said a villager, emphasizing the people attended each other's church. “But if you don't go to Sunday school, you don't leave home all day.” Islanders trace the two sects to the Civil War when “this small island was split. Some favored the North and some the South.”

My great-grandfather fought with the Yankees, and he was a leader of the Southern Methodist church. I always thought that was odd. Another great-grandfather that was

captain of his own pilot boat, he sided with the South. He helped the blockade-runners through and everything.

The churches merged with the United Methodist congregation in 1937. “Problem was, there was a group of people thought they were better than the other group, as usual, like in all churches,” said a member. The Sticky Bottom group had the most members, but the political power seemed to tilt toward the “up the road” residents, so many “down the road” decided to join the newly established Holiness church rather than become part of the United Methodist congregation. “That’s what split Hatteras up,” speculated an old-timer. The Hatteras Holiness Church began with “circuit rider” preachers and tent revivals at Fred’s Landing. A church built in the 1940s (under Reverend Edwards) became known as the Hatteras Assembly of God church (Figure 7.7.3). A villager raised in the Methodist church agreed that church politics and dissent on the eve of a northern/southern Methodist merger were advantageous to the incoming Assembly of God church. “I would assume that about the time the churches were being forced to merge, if a new religion showed up you would find people more receptive to the other message. And the Assembly of God is more energized, and that appealed to some folks.”



Figure 5.7.3. “We Have Lost the Plot” Assembly of God Sign.  
Photo by B. Garrity-Blake.

After the disparate Methodist congregations united, Ernal Foster bought the old Sticky Bottom church, a 50 by 75 foot building, for \$50 dollars. “When they built the new [United Methodist] church,” said his son, “they got ready to put the bell in, and the question is: do you just use the old bell or the new bell?” Ernal Foster encouraged them to use the old Sticky Bottom bell, as it “had the best tone of any bell I had ever heard. Down on the point of the beach, it’s just as plain when they ring it in the afternoon.” Ernal Foster added, “And, this woman says, ‘If they put that bell on that church, I’ll never go inside of it another time.’ I told the [new] preacher, “Well, this is the time to see how good she is!”” In the end the new church decided against the old bell. “My father said gee, the bell from the old church has such a nice tone,” reflected Ernal’s son, “But the powers that be said no way – a little window of the politics of it.”

Sometimes a pastor from the Salvo Assembly of God came all the way to Hatteras to preach. “Mr. Ed Hooper – he was a short little man. He’d get to preaching and jump clean over the top of the altar rail.” Other preachers included Alice Austin and Arvella Barnett. Early Methodist preachers included Mr. and Mrs. Meadows.

A local preacher gave an assessment of islander “religion” that cuts across denomination boundaries:

They’re fatalists. They believe that their life here is a gift from God. If you were to say to them, “There’s a 90 percent chance that a tidal wave is coming in the next ten years and it’s going to demolish this island,” they’d go, “I don’t want to live anywhere else.” If they were Pentecostals they’d say, “I’ll just stay prayed up, honey!” Methodists will say, “I hope everything will be all right!” They’re going to live here until the end.

#### **7.7.5. Stores**

Hatteras Village is home to the oldest grocery store still operating on the island; the Burrus Store, later to become the Burrus Red and White. The store was founded in 1866 by

W.Z. Burrus' grandfather, a blockade runner and Union sympathizer who spent the Civil War in prison. After the war, he returned to Hatteras Island where his father operated a grist mill, and established the store. "Instead of just staples like molasses, sugar, salt, flour, lard and so forth we started getting some canned goods in and bottled drinks from Washington, New Bern, and Elizabeth City by freight boat," W.Z. Burrus recalled (Anderson 1974, 18). The Burrus family rode the wave of economic activity that followed the Civil War in Hatteras Village, as did Homer Styron store and A.J. Stowe, the three of whom were in business by 1872 (Van Dolsen 1999). By 1884, R.W. Midgett and Uriah O'Neal had stores as well.

Customers from Ocracoke to Avon bought items on credit, and the pages from the ledger were apparently cut by razor and given to the debtor as a receipt when the account was paid (Van Dolsen 1999). "They had to come in by boat. They would bring fish in to sell to the fish houses, and stop and buy groceries," Burrus reflected (Van Dolsen 1999, 19). Once the road and bridge were built, it changed the nature of doing business on the island. "It brought a lot more people in and made it easier for us to come and go and changed our way of life right much," Burrus said. "We have less time on our hands than we did then. It seemed like we had more time to ourselves" (Van Dolsen 1999, 18).

Ander Austin ran a general store in Hatteras village in the early to mid-1900s. From the 1930s to World War II children stocked up on candy and drinks at Austin's store before going to the local movie house, run by Ander's son Shanklin Austin. "It cost a quarter for the movie and ten cent to go to Mr. Anders, get me a drink and a bag of peanuts or something. We used to take them salted Planter's peanuts and pour in our Pepsi and shake them all up together." The theater closed when Shanklin Austin was called to duty during World War II. Other storekeepers included Dan Austin, John Meekins, Horace Willis, and Luther Ballance. Some of the older

stores, operating in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, included those run by W.H. Rollinson, Jardever Ballance, and Dan Oden, who had a hand-cranked telephone that villagers were able to use in emergencies. “When my brother died, Aunt Laurie went with me to call my dad and tell him, and she had to use that telephone,” recalled a resident.

“People would say I’ll give you a penny to run up to the store for me,” a man recalled, describing an establishment called Licksville, after the store’s owner. A villager remembered his family going to the store and buying flour by the barrel; he remarked how Bankers planned carefully as to what supplies were needed:

Men used to look ahead and have things on hand. Now, they wait until the last minute. They want something from the store, they run to get it. But, used to they wasn’t that handy. On one side of the chimney in the kitchen there was a barrel of flour. They’d buy it by the barrel, 196 pounds to a barrel. And, a can of lard, 50 pounds, sit on the other side of the chimney, then the baking powders.

#### **7.7.6. Pastimes and Childhood Activities**

Hatteras children played a game called “Cat,” which was like baseball except with a ball of yarn. “Take socks, unravel them, make our own ball and sew it so it won’t come apart.” The ball of yarn was covered with leather, sometimes from stitched-together shoe tongues. It was fortunate that the ball was made of yarn, because the object of the game was to literally hit the batter with the ball as he ran the bases. “If you hit a fellow with the ball, he was out,” a Hatteras resident recalled. Boys and girls played Cat together, typically in the wintertime. They also played “Meehonkey,” an Ocracoke-derived hide-and-go-seek where the hiders cry “Meehonkey!” as a way to taunt the seeker.

Although the tiny schools did not have team sports in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, young men formed baseball teams and played on weekends and during the summer. “It

was a sort of little local league of our own,” a woman recalled. Depression era teams were the “Upoaders” and “Downoaders” or Avon, Buxton, and Hatteras. “The grownups had their own baseball teams. Buxton had a team, Avon had a team, and Hatteras had a team. It was our fathers, which we thought were old men but they were in their twenties. Every Sunday they would have a ball game in some village.”

Boys enjoyed playing “mumbly peg,” a game of skill involving the tossing of knives. In tame versions, whoever threw the knife closest to a target, landing blade down, won. In daring-do versions, whoever threw it closest to their opponent’s feet without stabbing them won. Kids also spent much time climbing trees and swinging on vines. An elderly woman who had long red hair as a girl recalled playing in the trees with boys: “Climbed trees, played Tarzan. I was Tarzan, the boys were the apes.”

In the 1920s and 30s boys had shore skiffs; they would take burlap bags and make sails, and with a southwest wind they’d “shove down to the point and race back” in the sound, and with a northeast wind they’d “race down and shove back.” Boys also enjoyed fishing, as did a self-professed Tom Boy who joined the boys in stealing a couple of clams off people’s leases for bait:

All the neighbors had clam beds and oyster beds. You’d dig you a clam or two and break it and use it for bait. You weren’t supposed to waste clams on bait. One man told us we could use all we wanted out of his, just not be too bad about it. So, we never bothered his. We took the ones that we were supposed to stay out of – that was more fun.

They bought fishing hooks from Austin’s store, five for a penny, and used twine for line. They tied it to a stick and used bottle-stoppers or corks as the bobber, and a piece of led from fishing nets as a sinker. A man recalled catching soft crabs in the 1920s as a boy and selling them ten cents a dozen.

When boys weren't "messaging about in skiffs" they were chasing horses on the beach and breaking them. It was easy to break a two-year old in the soft sand; "he'd settle right down and get easy." Horses were typically caught on "Friday or Saturday mornings," ridden on the weekends and "turned loose Mondays – let them graze on the beach the rest of the week." Horses and cattle were rounded up and dipped every two weeks; "It'd take two days to round them up – get the cattle one day and the horses the next. We boys would get a kick out of being cowboys, rounding up the cattle and horses and driving them through this dipping vat."

When shrimping became popular in the 1950s, young boys had the opportunity to make spare cash in Hatteras village by heading shrimp at the docks. They received about two cents a pound, a weight determined after the shrimp were headed. A villager recalled the scene:

I was kind of slow, there was some of the older boys that were real fast at it and they could make as high as maybe \$5.00 in a day's time if they was plenty of shrimp around and they put in a long day, I mean, two cents a pound, takes a lot of shrimp to make \$5.00. Most of the time if they made a dollar or two dollars and that was considered all right.

Children could also fill net-mending "shuttles" or wooden-carved custom needles with twine on Saturdays for fishermen, earning pocket change for penny candy or a movie.

The men who fished mended nets on Saturday. They'd pull them off the boats, mend them up, put them back, lime them. You didn't fish on Sunday, period. I would go up there [to the landing] and fill net needles to make enough money to go to the theater. I would just put the twine in the needles.

A man recalled learning a lesson as a boy when he stopped to pick figs for the local casket builder's wife, instead of threading needles for the fishermen:

She wanted me to get her a big pan of figs. So, I climbed up there in that fig tree, and that fig juice will burn you up. I got that big old wash pan full of figs and she give me my quarter. I met my Grandfather coming home for his dinner. He wanted to know where I'd been. I was covered with the rash and that juice from the figs. He said, "Son, don't I always give you a quarter to go to the movies on Saturday when you help us with them net needles?" I said "Yes, sir." He just left it at that. He was letting me know hey, you were supposed to do that job, not Miss Julia's figs.

Girls had opportunities to make pocket money as well. A woman remembered making pocket change by assisting Miss Rancey Oden, who ran a boarding house for hunters and other visitors. “She used to give me a quarter to wash them pots and pans for her – she’d let different girls work from the neighborhood.” She also clammed with her grandfather in the summer, making money for back-to-school “pencils and paper and things.”

Monday was washday for women, as well as bean day, and children were expected to pitch in.

Grandmamma didn’t have the scrub board no more, she had the wringer washing machine, but we had a hand pump in the front yard for wash water and the washing machine was on the back porch, so the boys had to go fill all them tubs and that machine with water. And, we come home for dinner, there was always a pot of beans on Monday, cause the beans could cook while she was washing. That wasn’t only at our house; that was the whole neighborhood.

Boys and girls were also expected to help chop wood for the stove. Winters were cold enough for the water in the washbasin to freeze and require breaking with a hatchet. “Granddaddy would make us stay in bed until he fixed the fire,” a woman remembered. “And then he would call us – it would be warm by then.” An elderly couple recalled that girls seemed to get the bulk of chores, while boys had more freedom; the gentleman made an exception for himself, however.

Boys didn’t have nothing to do around the house then. But, I had a big chore. I had to do all the cutting of the wood. I had to get up mornings and build the fire in the old cook stove. That’s why I learned to cook. I spent more time in the kitchen around my mother than my sisters did.

Teenagers participated in the Hatteras Island practice of pooling their resources and cooking fudge and candy. On Sunday afternoon they, like the adults, visited:

All of us would get together and play croquet on a Sunday evening. Or, we might go to the beach in a group. And, we might hold hands but you didn’t kiss or walk arm in arm. Them old folks were, whew! They had their ways. You could go to the beach and maybe do that. You couldn’t ride up and down the road, and you’d better not get caught drinking beer, even though we done it if we got a chance.

The Girl's Club was built by New Jersey industrialist George A. Lyons, and was a popular gathering place in the 1930s for table tennis, cards, and checkers. The club was for women aged 18 to 28, and members had to be initiated and pay dues. The luxury of the club was a shower that members could use after bathing in the ocean. The club was torn down in the 1960s for a new medical center

Playing cards was a "suspect" pastime for some because of its close proximity to gambling. "Some of the mothers didn't even allow a deck of cards in their house."

Sometimes teenagers "shoved out" with pole skiffs to fish houses for ice, returning to make hand-cranked ice cream. Moonlit wiener roasts were popular as well at the beach or on "Sugar Loaf Hill," a ridge in the trees on the west side of the village. "Listening to our young people [in 2004]; it's so boresome. Nothing to do. They don't know how to entertain themselves," an old-timer remarked.

Adults spent much time with village children, fishing, cooking, and story-telling:

They'd tell us stories, things that happened to them, ghost stories and all. And you would just sit fascinated for hours. They'd fix us something to drink. I recall our most excitement was the old casket house. A little house that had caskets stacked in it for the dead. One night I was walking with Jimmy Willis after the movies. We got to that old casket house and that blind flew up and scared me so bad I couldn't even move. He grabbed my arm. We were running them long legs on down by there. They used to tell us they would get us if we went in there.

Women got together to make quilts. "It was a time of togetherness," said a resident:

They'd all get to one house [and quilt], and somebody would say, "Well, I need another quilt." So, all the neighbors would come in, and they'd sit and quilt. I don't suppose in those days you could really have made it if it wasn't almost like one big family on the island rather than individual families. That's something that's getting lost with progress.

Square dances were popular in Hatteras, attracting islanders from Rodanthe down. Early fiddlers included Hiram Austin, Edgar Styron, and James Austin. James Austin's mother insisted that the fiddle "was the devil." Harmonica players, Dolan Gaskill and Norwood O'Neal,

would come over from Ocracoke. Dances took place at the Atlantic View Hotel Pavilion, the Beacon, or Horton's, and for square dances musicians played string band music. "If you were from Hatteras," a villager laughed, "and you went to the beer joint Saturday night you had to fight Rodanthe," a practice which earned one nightspot the nickname "Bucket of Blood" (Wechter 1975, 186). The community dances started falling by the wayside in the 1950s when tourism and mass media began competing for islanders' time; in the 1960s some of the taverns turned into restaurants and motels, catering more to visitors.

On Sunday afternoons, Bankers visited one another after church and enjoyed Sunday dinner. Sometimes in the evening they played music and sang. A woman recalled an unusual way her grandfather and their neighbors would occasionally sing and play together:

Just before dark, my granddad would start singing some old time Methodist hymns, and another neighbor that lived a short distance away played the accordion, he'd start playing. Then another one up the road just a little bit would join in, and they'd all be singing. It was very pleasant in the quiet just before dark hearing the neighbors, all at their own houses but singing.

#### **7.7.7. Medical Care**

Like other island communities, Hatteras village had "granny midwives," that is, experienced local kinswomen designated to assist in childbirth. Pat Stowe served as village midwife, and one of the last midwives to practice was Jennette Stowe, born in Sticky Bottom in 1883. Jennette delivered more than 300 babies from Ocracoke to Chicamacomico and kept records of every birth. She often accepted collards, sweet potatoes and such in lieu of cash. "Don't think of paying me," she told one new father. "Just name her Jennette. He said, O.K., that's Jennette" (Foster and Ballance 1976, 35). She also tended cuts and various illnesses, and shrouded the dead. "I didn't only go to them baby cases," she explained. At ninety-three she

declared, "I ain't wore out. I ain't rusted out." Her husband fished, and she raised vegetables and chickens in the yard. "I'd help clean the fish and he'd go over to Hyde County, sell 'em, then come on back that night. He didn't have no gas boat, just a sail skiff." She recounted this humorous incident:

I used to go fishing with him and one morning he didn't want me to go. I said, I tell you I am going. So, I went down there and got in the skiff. After we got off a little ways he grabbed me up and threw me overboard. I came to the shore a-cussing for everything I could lay my mouth and tongue to. When he come home I watched him walking up the path. He came up here to the door, he throwed his hat in and said, 'If the hat can stay in I can stay in, can't I?' I jumped at him and run 'em. He run and jump over the fence and I run him clear on down to his father's (Foster and Ballance 1976, 38).

By the late 1950s the use of midwives had fallen out of practice, and expectant mothers typically traveled to Manteo or other mainland areas to receive the care of a doctor. Chubby Dorris brought his wife to Dr. Harvey, who ran a clinic in Manteo, and a nurse midwife who was the daughter of Hatteras midwife Jennette Stowe assisted the birth. Dorris's daughter, however, was "the last baby to be born at home in Sticky Bottom" in 1965. A new medical center was being built on land donated by villagers, and Dr. Burroughs from Norfolk took up residency across the road and opened an in-home practice while the facility was getting completed. "Well the hospital wasn't ready but Donna got ready to come in the world."

I got up the road that morning and got a hold of Dr. Burroughs and his nurse, Mrs. Stevens, I'll never forget her, bless her heart, she was a good woman. They come right to the house. We was living in a house trailer just south of Lee Robinson's store and they delivered her right on the spot.

The village doctor continued to deliver babies at the new clinic in the 1960s, but ceased after awhile, compelling women to leave the island for childbirth.

He had to quit taking maternity cases. I think he had a problem with some woman giving birth and they didn't have the blood or something, and it scared him to the point that he wouldn't take the chance. A midwife, if something does go wrong, it happens, and it's sad, but the doctor, you can get sued. I have no idea what his reasons were. But, it stands to reason nowadays. Everybody's suing everybody.

Resident physicians served the entire island as best they could. Some Hatteras villagers were enlisted to help transport the physician. “There were several [doctors over time]; my father drove for one and he made house calls,” a resident recalled. “He drove the doctor’s car for him – all the local guys knew what they were doing; everyone was a decent sand driver.” His father remarked, “That was rough going, up and down the beach nights. Some nights (the doctor would) come get me, two o’clock out of bed, go up Rodanthe, up the beach.” Dr. Kenfield was in residence in the 1920s and 30s, and was replaced by Dr. Crenshaw in the late 1930s; the latter undertook surgery to treat appendicitis.

Dental care was hard to come by; a villager reported that she did not visit a dentist until she traveled off-island at the age of 18. “Luckily I didn’t have any cavities. I had good teeth.”

#### **7.7.8. Early Transportation**

Villagers navigated sail skiffs and shove skiffs before roads and automobiles transformed the way people got around. Before the harbor was dug in Hatteras, fishing boats were tied offshore, and everyone had a 15-foot shove skiff to transport them to their vessel. “We didn’t have no oars,” an old-timer explained. “We didn’t row. We learned to shove them around with a paddle.”

Before the state ferry system was established, Frazier Peele and Tommy Eaton ran a private service from Hatteras to Englehard and later to Ocracoke on the four-car ferry/freight boat *Hadeco*. The *Hadeco* was built in Morehead City in 1933, and was named after the “Hatteras Development Company,” Eaton and Peele’s ice and electric plant enterprise that was up and running by 1935. Peele charged \$5 dollars per car to run to Englehard, sometimes fishing or hunting ducks on the way. The ferry could hold four cars, typically Model-A Fords at the

time.

A villager recalled the car his grandfather bought in the late 1920s for about \$500.00 dollars. “It was a Wippet. It had a front seat and a rumble seat.”

In the 1940s “there was a few cars around but not too many people could afford them. Or afford to keep them running if they had them.” A resident recalled the 1948 construction of the first paved road segment that led from Hatteras to Avon, and described a small section still in place that is “the oldest asphalt on the island.” Before the segment was built between Avon and Rodanthe in 1948, he traveled to Waves with his mother via the Midgett Express; half the trip was on pavement and the other was sand paths. With pavement came new formalities for Hatteras drivers:

When you didn’t have paved roads you didn’t have driver’s licenses – people on the island did not have driver’s licenses. You didn’t have tags on your car! No paved roads, what are you paying for? You could literally go to Norfolk, if you put a sign out “I’m from Hatteras Island,” you didn’t get a ticket. Now you can’t even twitch without the proper documentation. It’s necessary, I’m happy that we have what we have now, but there’s something to be said for that kind of freedom.

A paved road was built through the village in 1952, and the ferry docks were moved from the village proper to the end of the highway in 1958; one of the biggest changes to the island came, however, upon the opening of the Herbert C. Bonner Bridge over Oregon Inlet in 1963, rendering the ferries from the north obsolete and creating a pipeline for tourism.

### **7.7.9. Early Communication**

As late as the 1940s only a few establishments had telephones in Hatteras village. During World War II, people could communicate via the weather bureau telephone. Captain Ernal Foster, who scaled back from commercial fishing to pioneer the more lucrative charter boat business, had a telephone so customers could call and reserve excursions. There was also a

telephone at Lee Robinson's store. Villagers had access to both telephones in the event of emergencies or perhaps to mail-order clothing, but "you didn't impose that much, you didn't have much of a reason to call anyway."

By the early 1950s some houses were equipped for electricity and others were not. "A lot of people in the neighborhood didn't have television and still didn't have the money to have electricity put in their house. I can still remember a few with lamplight." Many of the old houses were simply added upon and renovated throughout the years, including equipping them for modern electricity. "You had one light and maybe one plug-in in each room," explained a villager. "You didn't have three or four plug-ins and ceiling fans and you had one light and a small light bulb. You'd better cut it off - you didn't run up no big bill." A villager recalled when the lights were first switched on in his house. "Man, the whole world lit up."

#### **7.7.10. Postal Service**

Hatteras village, having the greatest population on the island at the time, opened the region's first post office in 1858. Robert Styron served as postmaster. By the turn of the century the remaining island villages had post offices as well, and the route ran from Hatteras to Manteo with stops along the sound side of the island. Ernal Foster worked on the mail boat for a dollar a day in 1928 and described the route:

Get up around five in the morning and start out. You'd pick up the mail. You had to use a skiff boat. Had a station out in the sound. We'd tow the skiff. You'd start at Frisco, shove ashore, pick up the mail, stop in Buxton, go to shore, Avon, all the way up. Next stop would be Salvo, then Rodanthe, then you run into Manteo. Spent the night. Slept on hard boards. Fed yourself.

The next day they would do the same route in reverse, delivering the mail. Another mail boat worked the same route from the opposite direction, ensuring that people had a daily delivery

and pickup. Although not part of the official mail boat routes, mail was hauled to and from Ocracoke as well; first by boat and eventually by a villager named Charlie Mack who acquired a “command car” or Army truck and drove off the ferry, across 13 miles of sand, to the Ocracoke Post Office.

#### **7.7.11. Early Trade**

One of the freight boats that stopped in Hatteras village was the *Hadico*. Like other freight boats, it frequently took passengers as well as goods. A woman recalls riding in the belly of the *Hadico* as a little girl:

The *Hadico* went from here to Englehard. We were standing below. I was scared to death because I could see water coming through the planking of the boat, every time it would hit a wave you could see it wash down inside. I couldn't have been more than five years old. They kept telling me, that's not going to hurt anything honey, that's just from the waves splashing.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century Hatteras village housed two windmills, used to ground corn that was traded for yaupon and smoked fish on the mainland. Trading became more active upon the opening of Hatteras Inlet, and islanders traded and bartered with the mainland as late as the Depression years:

Daddy, back in the Depression, he'd get a boat load of fish and oysters and clams. Then he'd tack them up in the rivers and trade them off to the farmers. He'd trade it for anything they wanted to trade, whether it was chickens, cows, pigs, whatever. Neuse River, up towards Little Washington; and, they go up the other way up Alligator River. I've gone with them when they'd be gone over to Bath. Bath is an old town. First Louisiana coffee I ever saw, my father bought it there in a store.

#### **7.7.12. Commercial Fishing**

Because of Hatteras Inlet, the village has long enjoyed a thriving fishing economy, both commercial and charter boat fishing. Hatteras village was less involved in the Coast Guard than

communities such as Rodanthe, as the inlet location was more conducive to making a living fishing. Although fishing was not booming from the Depression years until just before World War II, by 1948 Hatteras had a fleet of 40 fishing boats. Eight stores served the community, as well as a post office, several fish packing houses and an ice plant that supplied power to the village. Still, the percentage of commercial fishermen in Hatteras in 1950 (23%) was far less than in 1870 (60%); the decrease “has continued steadily throughout the second half of the twentieth century” (Van Dolsen 1999, 13). Commercial fishermen, who like other islanders also work in non-fishing endeavors, describe their work patterns as cyclical, following the natural patterns of various fisheries occurring at different times of the year, and of boom and bust periods hinging on such things as seasonal shifts, major storm events, and market prices.

Fishing has always run in cycles, and there was times when the pound netters and haulers, they had a cycle like it run real good for so many hears and then you couldn't make a living fishing around here. Who can explain it? The sound would dry up and they quit coming in here with shrimp.

A Hatteras custom was for women to meet the fishing boats and choose what fish they wanted without charge.

If a commercial fisherman came in, and they were coming in every day, and you went down to the dock they would offer, “You want a fish?” And he's sitting on 200, 300 pounds of puppy drum or mackerel. And you'd say yes, and he'd say, “Well help yourself.” And it was expected that you would get down and pick out what you wanted.

An early fishery taking place near the turn of the century was sturgeon. Crews would harvest the prehistoric fish off Nags Head, which was deserted beach. Sturgeon were netted and pulled aboard with a hook. The roe was “rubbed” with a sieve to remove the valuable caviar. Captain Ernal Foster's father and uncle were employed by a company to execute this fishery, and he recalled them rubbing caviar in a room that was shrouded in secrecy:

They wouldn't let nobody else in that room. They was scared. My father and my uncle was the only two in that room rubbing caviar. The owner of the company, he just said, "Two men, that's their job." He wouldn't allow the rest of them in.

An unusual winter fishery that took place occasionally in the 1940s was the "blow toad" or blowfish fishery.

In the wintertime there was some small trawlers worked out of here. Frazier Peele owned one, and Donald Oden, he owned one and once in a while they would come in and they would have a load of the blow toads and we would skin them. Toadfish, blow toads, they would swell. We would skin them for five cents a pound if the fishermen caught them. It wasn't nothing steady or regular.

Hatteras village did not have a menhaden fishery, but were exposed to menhaden crews who would come up from Beaufort and Morehead City and catch fish to the rhythm of chanteys, particularly in the 1940s and 1950s.

Menhaden boats come out of Morehead city, because they got factories down there that make fertilizer. But, they used to have nothing but colored people on those big boats. And, we could set around here eating, nights, when the wind was calm and there would be fishing. They sung by rhythm and they pulled the net in by rhythm and they'd sing. They'd all sing the same song. It seemed like it just covered the whole island.

The earliest fish houses were built 200 or 300 hundred yards out on the sound, and foot bridges connected a few to the village shore. Eventually some people built ramps or piers to the facility. "My uncle was the first one build a pier to his fish house that you could drive on," said a villager. "My cousin Vern, he run off of it. The steering on some of the old Model-A's wasn't as good – lot of loose motion."

Although children were sometimes paid for small jobs like heading shrimp or threading net needles, the job of packing fish was too grueling for youngsters. "You had to be a man to do that kind of work," explained a villager. "They didn't pack fish in 50 pound cardboard containers like they do today."

The wooden boxes would weigh 30 pounds, depending on how wet they were, how many times they'd been used. They'd put a bottom layer of ice, and they would pack fish, then

ice, more fish, and then on top of it ice. That put a 100 pound of fish up to at least a 150 pounds. They had to do that because they didn't have the refrigeration and the cold storage.

After the fish was packed, the workers placed a metal stencil over the end that designated the location and painted it on. "Beyer Fish Company, New York" was one such stencil. Some of the earlier fish house owners of Hatteras village included Willard Burris, Pat Fish, Charlie Ballance, Frazier Peele, Morris Burris, Herbert Oden, and Donald Oden. "When there's plenty of fish, there're plenty of fish houses," a villager explained. "It got down to where there was only two." Whether a few or several, fish dealers made an agreement with one another as to what price to pay for particular fish.

They'd run back and forth talking to each other and one fish buyer would say, 'let's pay two cent today,' that's what they all paid. They'd get together, they knew how much they were going to pay you. Them buyers had their heads together and they still do, that's been going on since the beginning of the time and it's not going to change.

Thomas Spurgeon Eaton of New Bern went into business with Frazier Peele and built the first ice plant on the island in Hatteras Village in 1935, exposing villagers to electricity several years before the Rural Electrification Administration brought current to the banks (Tolson et. al 1979). He used a Delco "light plant," or generator, to create ice, as he was "concerned for the fishermen" and their highly perishable product (ibid, 58).

They made it in 300-pound blocks, and then it was handled and chopped up and dropped through grinders, they called it, and the fish were packed in that manner from it. There wasn't any ice machines, like you see today on the roof building ice like I have over here.

Rollinson Channel and a basin were dredged shortly after the ice plant was put into operation so that vessels could have access. That was a factor leading to the disappearance of the old fish houses out on the sound.

Before multifilament nylon was introduced in the late 1950s, men and women tied their

own three or four hundred yard cotton nets. “My mother tied nets for people for a dollar a block,” recalled a villager. “There were four skeins to a block” (Webster and Willis 1976, 39).

I used a net needle to tie with. A net gauge is something you held in your left hand first, then you went to work. If you wanted the net 40 or 60 meshes deep, you’d tie 60 marshes, throw all of them right down, then wrap your line around your gauge and through the marshes. Then there was the selvage and the double selvage. It’s the top part of the net after you get it sewed on the line. You hitch that to the lead line and the cork line, you tied about six to eight marshes to every cork (Webster and Willis 1976, 39).

Different types of fishing nets required different types of care and treatment. “With cotton nets you had to lime them to kill the fish slime,” explained a Hatterasman. “Every couple of days they’d go out in the sound and mix saltwater and lime and make up a solution and throw it all over the nets make it run off.” The heavier pound nets, however, were “tarred.”

The drop net fishery, started in the 1920s, was particularly successful in the 1970s and 80s with mechanized net reels and an abundance of weakfish, or gray trout. Fishermen from all over Hatteras Island rigged their vessels with drop nets and reels, and kept their boats in Hatteras village because of the convenience of the inlet and easy access to the Atlantic Ocean.

#### **7.7.12.1. The Porpoise Factory**

A porpoise fishery was based in Hatteras Village from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until 1926. This porpoise fishery actually involved the harvest of what are now known as “bottle-nosed dolphins.” The fishery consisted of a processing factory located on the side sound of the village, and a crew of fishermen who worked in camps up and down the beach. “They called [people from Hatteras] Porpoise Oilers,” laughed a villager, as porpoise fishermen were often covered in the cetacean’s oil. “Cape Hatteras is the only point in North America where a porpoise fishery has ever been regularly conducted, and where such animals can be taken near the shore and beached with drag seines,” stated a report by the New York Aquarium:

[Porpoises] are taken with a net of extra heavy twine, about one thousand feet long, which is placed about two hundred yards outside the line of surf and parallel with it. At each end there is a boat in waiting, ready to carry the haul lines directly ashore as soon as a band of porpoises has passed between the net and the surf (Townsend 1914, 18).

The best season was springtime when the dolphins were most plentiful; by summer the fishery was usually played-out. The 18-member crew included two flagmen who would signal the crew with a tree branch from a half mile away when they spied a “wafe,” or a large school of dolphins (Gray and Umphlett 1978, 41). Two lap-strake dories waited offshore while two were deployed from the beach. The dories were “about fourteen to fifteen feet long,” said fisherman Damon Gray. “I had three men with me, one rowed the back [set of] oars and two rowed the center oars...one oar each” (ibid). The offshore dories headed the school off with a relatively light net, while the surf dories closed in with heavier surf nets.

My father said they had to keep moving [the net]. Because the porpoises would reach a point where they’d move out around the area where they had been caught the last time. They learned that this was an area that was a bad place to be.

The dolphins were encircled with a seine and pulled ashore, sometimes with the help of a horse. Gray described having to “hook them in the breather,” and recalled that the horses were frightened of the dolphins when they screamed. “A horse was afraid of a porpoise. They would run every now and then with a cartload of hides” (Gray and Umphlett 1978, 41).

A Cape Hatteras school student interviewing Gray asked, “Did you ever get chomped down on by a porpoise?” The old fishermen answered, “Perry Austin put a small one on his shoulder, and it bit the side of his head and knocked him out” (Gray and Umphlett 1978, 41).

Once dragged to shore by the blowhole, the animals were often beached while another set was made. Up to three sets were made in a day, and often the gasping mammals were left on the beach to be butchered the next morning. “They would live right on,” reported Gray. “We killed them when we got ready to skin them” (Gray and Umphlett 1978, 41). The animals were

stabbed in the heart under the left fin. “My father knew that it was a job,” reflected the son of a crewman, “but, he didn’t like it because when they’d stick the porpoises they’d squeal.

Reminded him of killing a pig or something.” The crew removed the hide with “skinning knives,” as the skin was used for “heavy machinery belts” (Gray and Umphlett 1978, 41). “We killed them for the hides mostly...we’d trim it...to get about that thick.” They also “cut out the jaw bone” for access to “a place about the size of your fists...we tried that and they got about a thousand dollars a barrel for it. It was used for watches and fine jewelry” (ibid, 39).

The butchered dolphins were carted to the processing facility on the other side of Hatteras village. “It was not that far to haul the stuff from the ocean side up around Durant’s point to the factory,” said the son of a crewman. “And the factory was in a place where the water was deep enough so the freight boat could pull right up to the docks and take the product.” The factory consisted of “furnaces and big tanks.” The tanks were placed over the furnaces, and “a big fire” was lit to “try” or render down, the fat for oil (Gray and Umphlett 1978, 41).

In 1922 the crew was paid a salary of \$30 dollars a month, and the captain of crew received \$34 plus “commission on the porpoises” (Gray and Umphlett 1978, 41). A separate crew processed the dolphins for oil. Jaw fat, derived from a gland in the dolphin’s head, was tried into oil for use in watches and fish machinery, selling for about \$1,000 a barrel.

Porpoises are valuable for their jaw oil, hides and body blubber. The oil derived from the jaws represents the greater part of the value, being worth ordinarily \$20 dollars a gallon, refined. It is extracted from the broad posterior branches of the lower jaw, and is universally used for the lubrication of watches, clocks and similarly delicate mechanisms (Townsend 1914, 19).

Dolphin blubber was also rendered into lesser grade oil. The animal’s hide was sold for use as industrial machinery belts. “They would use everything but the teeth, there wasn’t any

machinery that could cut them back then,” Gray reported. “They just left them right on the beach” (Gray and Umphlett 1978, 39).

The proprietor of the fishery was Joseph K. Nye of New Bedford, Massachusetts, so islanders referred to the product as “Nye oil.” Hatteras resident W. H. Rollinson was manager of the factory, located on Durant’s island, a hummock, on the Pamlico side of the village. Nye explored drying and processing carcasses for fertilizer a la the menhaden industry, but the location proved too isolated to supply efficiently fuel required for a furnace. Hatteras village’s porpoise fishery petered out by 1926. “The owners were from the north, and they died up,” explained a villager. “There was a fellow here that took over and he died, and his wife took over and she got old. So, it just deteriorated, factory and all.” The woman ran it for a year, apparently treating the crew very well. “We made a good salary then, and they drove us to the camp,” explained a former captain. “And, she carried me my meal everyday, right down on the beach.”

An outfit by the name of “Porpoise Oil and Leather Manufactory, Wainright and Co.” operated from 1885 to 1891 in Hatteras, but it is not clear what its relationship was to the Nye operation (Van Dolsen 1999, 9).

A 1914 report by the New York Aquarium described three attempts to obtain live dolphins for an exhibit with the assistance of Hatteras fishermen. Dolphins were netted with drag seines, pulled from the net by a rope wrapped around the tail, and corralled in Slash Creek until the weather was suitable for transport. The animals were loaded in wooden “porpoise tanks” aboard the *Hamlet*, a wooden bugeye captained by Ethelbert Dozier Burrus of Hatteras Village (Figure 7.7.4). “My great-grandfather Dozier built the boxes, unique boxes, and went to Hyde County to get the wood,” related Dwight Burrus. The vessel sailed across Pamlico Sound

and up the Great Dismal Swamp canal to Norfolk, where the dolphins were loaded on a steamer for New York. The animals died en route during the first two attempts, and although five lived during the third they became ill with “tubercular pneumonia” seven months after arriving at the aquarium (Townsend 1914, 21).

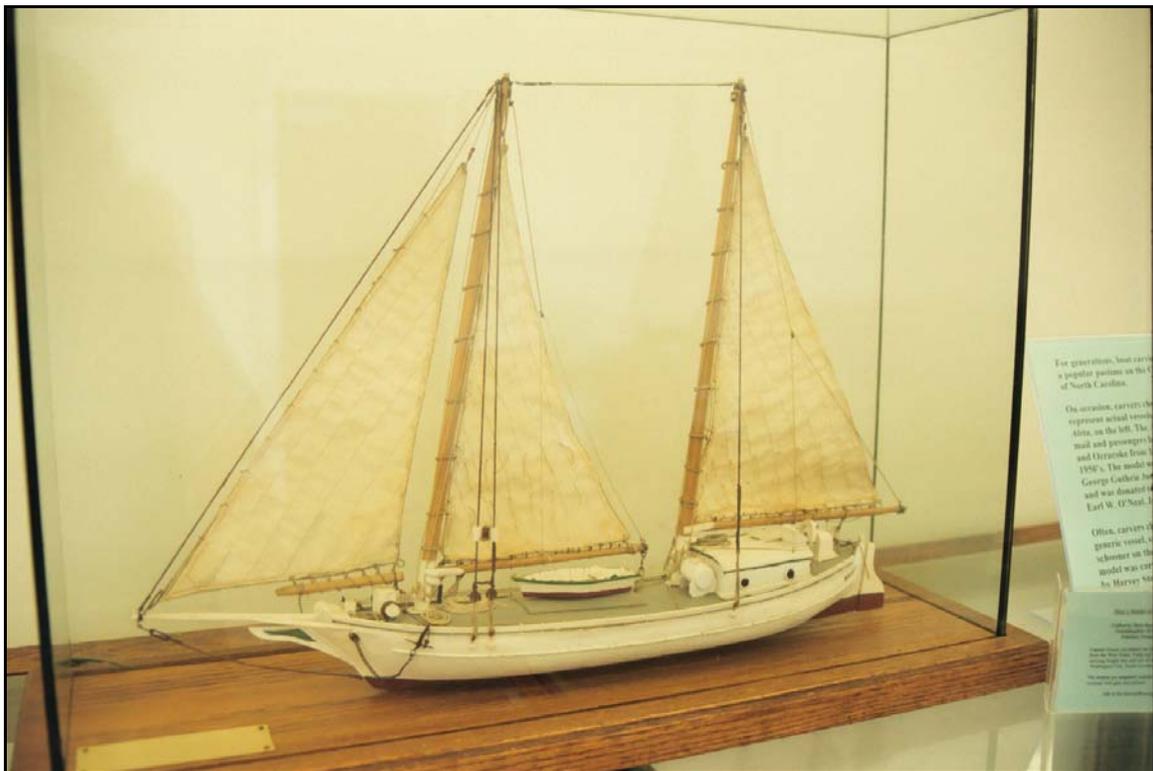


Figure 7.7.4. Model of the *Hamlet* in the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum.  
Photo by B. Garrity-Blake.

The attempt to capture and transport what the aquarium director called the “lively rangers of the open ocean” represented an early shift in attitude toward marine mammals. It is doubtful that the Hatteras fishermen approached the task as anything more than a paying job to catch the big fish for peculiar Yankees, and the report hints that a difference in commitment stymied the project. The director writes that the animals died because “details of shipment, entrusted to others, had been disregarded” the first time, and then “the same blunder” was made the second time (Townsend 1914, 11-12).

Islanders recalled another attempt at capturing live dolphins that took place in the mid-1930s, a couple of years after the porpoise factory had shutdown:

A man came wanting to catch porpoises to keep alive. He paid Fred Stowe and crew with a 38-foot boat \$5 dollars a day to porpoise. We caught two, and put a wire across the bridge at the Slash so the dolphins couldn't get out. After several days of rough weather, we put them into wet burlap bags and big wooden totes or crates. They took them back to New York maybe on a truck – they wanted them for an aquarium – but they died a few days after arriving.

#### **7.7.12.2. The *Jackie Fay***

The story of the vessel *Jackie Fay* illustrates the flexibility of Hatteras Islanders in adapting to changing conditions. In 1934 local boat carpenter Calvin Burrus built the 40-foot *Jackie Fay*, a round-stern workboat, for \$650. Constructed with juniper planking and oak molding, Burrus hewed wood with an adz and chisel, and bent ribs in a steam box. The *Jackie Fay* had a cabin, pilothouse, and a mast and boom. She was outfitted with a 70 horsepower engine and equipped for commercial fishing. Van Dolson's historical survey of 1999 found that the *Jackie Fay* was the last of the round-stern vessels built in the village (Van Dolson 1999).

A four-man crew ran the vessel as far as Atlantic or Marshallberg, drop netting and trolling for finfish and trawling for shrimp. The *Jackie Fay* was documented with the U.S. Customs Office; therefore any crewman working aboard the vessel was eligible for free medical services at a U.S. public hospital. In the 1950s, the vessel was equipped to take sport-fishing charters. In the 1970s the *Jackie Fay* was commissioned to take University of Virginia researchers beyond Diamond Shoals to take sand surveys. Finally, the *Jackie Fay* was donated to the Hatteras Village Community Association, and restored to her original lines. The Association built a display for the vessel along Highway 12, giving her a "snug and dignified" berth with historical information available to the visitor.

The *Jackie Fay*'s adventures were not yet over; hurricane Isabel swept the vessel out to the sound and broke it to pieces in 2003. A grandchild of the original owner, who had worked as mate on the *Jackie Fay* for charters, found a piece of the vessel after the storm; it sits like a memorial in his yard.

### **7.7.12.3. The *Albatross* Fleet and the Charter Boat Industry**

Captain Ernal Foster was instrumental in starting the charter boat industry in 1937, which came to be one of the most important economic sectors in the village during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Van Dolson 1999). Before Foster started taking guides, he had a brief stint in the Coast Guard and then had been working in a sheet metal shop in New York. But the Depression hit, and everyone was getting laid off. "Everything went dead up there. I told a boy, 'I can go home. My father's a commercial fisherman, and I can get something to eat and a place to sleep.' He said, 'Well, you're very fortunate.'" He passed soup lines in Central Park, and a policeman offered him two soup tickets. Foster declined, saying, "I'm on my way to North Carolina where I can get something to eat." An old-timer confirmed that the Depression was not as bad on the Banks as in other areas, "We weren't depressed at all in my thinking."

Foster returned to Hatteras and began procuring lumber for a new boat. He got his framing from Washington, North Carolina for three and a half cents a foot. His planking came from Mann's Harbor for a penny more. A local builder was fishing off New Jersey for bluefish and was unavailable, and another by the name of Stowe had just had a stroke. So Foster traveled to Marshallberg and had a builder named Milton Willis of M.W. Willis and Sons build the *Albatross*.

"I didn't have enough money to pay him for her. The man said, "Well, I trust you." So I

towed my boat home.” He borrowed \$75 dollars from the bank for a shaft, and bought a Buick for \$15 dollars. “Man said, “Drive it home.” I said, “I don’t want the car. I just want the engine.” He borrowed a gas tank and a steering wheel. “So, that’s how I started out with the *Albatross*, with nothing.” His son described how he derived the name:

Sometime in his schooling, he read the Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner. He was struck by the description of how graceful the bird was, and also the fact – now this is the thing that most people seem to miss - that it’s unlucky to kill one. Most people associate an albatross with bad luck, but I say no, *killing* one is bad luck.

Outdoor writers from major cities began contacting him and writing columns about the great fishing off Hatteras with Captain Ernal Foster. This helped his business get off the ground in 1937. “Then the war come on and that killed me for four years.”

In 1942 they come and drafted me. Then they wasn’t satisfied – the government seized my boat. Went off with her. Later, I got my boat back. She was painted battleship gray. Boy, I was mad some, inside and out. The worst part, they had her down in Fort Macon and Morehead. Had taken these girls and officers partying. One day I was coming off patrol out of Morehead, and told my skipper, “I could run right through the middle of that boat and cut her half in two and I’d feel good about it.” He said, “You’re crazy.” I said, “That’s my boat they’re using!”

After the war, business picked up for Foster, who eventually built two more boats to comprise the famous *Albatross* fleet of round-stern vessels still chartered today (Figure 7.7.5). In the 1950s he charged \$50 dollars per trip, but \$30 dollars went to the boat and ten to a crewman. Nonetheless, he was able to send his son to college.



Figure 7.7.5. *Albatross* Fleet, Hatteras Village. Photo by B. Garrity-Blake.

Before Foster started the charter business, commercial fishermen might take sportsmen out when “they didn’t have anything else to do and the fish were not running,” but recreational clients took a backseat to commercial pursuits. When the charter business began to slow down, Foster would supplement his income by fishing commercially; however, recreational fishing remained his priority.

The charter fishing industry grew tremendously in the 1950s, particularly with the advent of marlin fishing. The first blue marlin caught off Hatteras was in 1933 when an elderly man hired Captain Nelson Stowe; the giant fish was landed with a linen line and a bamboo pole. Captain Ernal Foster landed a 475-pound marlin in 1951 on a 72-pound, 24-thread linen line, which is very light by today’s standards. Ten years later he caught a world-record 810 pounder, which received much publicity. In 1953 the third member of the *Albatross* fleet was put into

action, and Captain Edgar Stowe had built the *Twins*. The following year Stowe built the *Twins II*, the first diesel-powered charter boat in the fleet (Foster n.d.).

Hatteras village was becoming renowned as the “marlin capital of the world,” and the Hatteras Marlin Club and Tournament was established at this time. In 1958 a couple on the *Albatross II* stunned the fishing world and began a new philosophy of sport when they caught, and *released*, a marlin. Charter boat captains profiting from the industry’s popularity in the 1950s included Clam Stow, Elmer Balance, Ronald Stowe, and Oliver O’Neal. Besides the *Albatross* fleet and the *Twins* vessels, there was the *Ronnie*, the *Jackie Fay*, *Escape*, and *Ursula*. Today, in 2004, charter boats out of Hatteras are too numerous to list, but still include the vintage *Albatross* boats.

Ernal Foster’s son Ernie Foster, now proprietor of the Albatross fleet, reflected on why sport fishing has become so popular:

When you are in a city, and everything revolves around a controlled environment, getting in a position when you know you’re on the edge, when you’re in contact with something that is grander than you or more wild than you or stronger than you, and that you have a little bit of temporary mastery of it, it’s very affirming.

There are different types of charter customers who are seeking different things:

You have game hogs who just want to kill something; awful folks. You have others who say “a bad day of fishing is better than a good day at work.” There are lots of people who just want to get out and get away from the pressures and also make contact with this part of themselves that just stays dead all the time.

He also noted differences between male clients and female clients, and explained why charter captains might prefer to cater to women:

Lot of charter boat [captains] have a swagger and ego, showing off their gold marlin chain. That’s a trend of the industry that I don’t like, that’s different from how I was raised. But, even with that, if you ask them “Who would you rather take fishing, a bunch of men or a bunch of women?” They all say women. And, it has nothing to do with, “Oh, they’re women!” It has everything to do with, “They will pay attention. You can

teach them.” If you tell a woman “Here’s what you need to do,” she’s all ears and she does it. A bunch of young guys? “I fished once ten years ago, I know all about this.”

Although the charter boat business has been growing, this has not necessarily translated into better business for tried-and-true Hatteras outfits like the *Albatross* fleet. More charter boats mean more competition, and some incoming captains do not follow local mores but, are instead primarily interested in making a dollar or exhibiting their masculinity; a charter boat captain defined this new breed of captain as the “trust fund baby”:

Most of the guys in the charter fleet are not from here. The business started out as a way for watermen to make a living. It has gradually evolved to where the charter industry is a charter hobby. You get young men who have significant amount of wealth behind them. They’re doing something they enjoy and it doesn’t cost them but so much. Which is a very different perspective from, “well at least I fed my family.” Their perspective is, “well it didn’t cost the family empire but twenty thousand this year, I did good.”

Charter boat captains are able to write-off the expense of their vessel, fuel, equipment, and so on, an advantage that seems perverse to the struggling Hatteras Islander in regard to incoming, wealthy operations:

By allowing everyone and his brother to become a charter boat captain, we’re decreasing the taxes paid on these elaborate boats. You can depreciate a million-dollar boat. No tax on fuel, no sales tax, the whole bit. If you go to one of those guys down on the sound who can’t make it, and say, I’ll give you \$1,000 dollars or \$3,000 dollars for that commercial license on that 16-foot skiff and the guy says “it’s a deal,” you keep that license. When you blow up a \$100,000 dollar, 1,000 hp engine in your sport boat you write it off as a commercial fishing deal.

The charter industry is not immune to burgeoning fisheries regulations, both on the state and federal level. A captain points out the frustrating nature of working within these sometimes-conflicting regulatory systems:

State waters go to three miles, and federal waters go from three miles to 200. The Feds won’t let you possess a striped bass beyond three miles, which means if you have one in the boat, and want to go out three miles, it’s illegal to have him in the boat so you throw him overboard and go outside three miles. In the name of conserving the fish, you’re creating a situation where you’re likely to kill more fish. I hope that’s not the intent, to encourage me to kill more striped bass.

Surf fishing has been as popular as offshore recreational fishing, and not only for visitors. In the late 1960s village women formed one of the first female surf-fishing teams, known as the Hatteras Gulls. They competed as far away as New Jersey, winning several tournaments.

### **7.7.13. Hunting**

Villagers hunted in the sound for waterfowl during the cold weather months. “Some days we’d have a lot of wind - that’s when we killed fowl. They say, *When it’s time to kill fowl it’s time to kill men*, real stormy, bad weather, fowled.” Men hunted in single or double coffin-style sunken batteries and used live decoys until both the free-floating battery and live decoys were outlawed. “Our live geese would honk and talk to the wild birds and bring them right to us.” Market hunting was a popular occupation until the Migratory Bird Act of 1917 prohibited it; its demise spelled the rise in “guiding” for wealthy Yankees and privately-owned hunt clubs (Van Dolsen 1999).

Hatteras Village was well on its way to becoming a “sportsman’s paradise” by the 1920s (Van Dolsen 1999). The Gooseville Gun Club, built by Detroit Industrialist George Albert Lyons in 1927, consisted of 1,500 acres of the southern tip of Hatteras. The owner introduced pheasants to the island, but they did not adapt well and were eventually transported off the island. The federal government purchased the land owned by Gooseville in 1954 for \$47,000 as part of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore (Swain 2002). (Photographs of the Gooseville Gun Club and an interview with former caretaker Luther Austin are available online at:

<http://hatterasonmymind.com/HVCA/HatterasVirtualTour/StickyBottom/USCG.html#top>.)

Hatteras guides also worked for the Green Island Hunting Club, located on the north end of Ocracoke, which was owned by steel industrialists from Pittsburgh. The gunning club

operated in the 1920s but closed in 1933 after the clubhouse was destroyed in the '33 storm.

“Things was getting so bad it wasn’t worth rebuilding [the club],” recalled an old timer. “The eelgrass had a disease. So, there wasn’t no food for the brant.” Indeed, wasting disease decimated the aquatic grasses in the early 1930s.

A man recalled an incident with an uncooperative decoy while he and his father were taking sportsmen hunting. “We had a strap that would go around the decoy’s leg. This evening it was about nigh freezing. I was taking the strap off and this old gander was hollering and he got me by the ear and just about pulled it off.”

Ernal Foster recalled getting stranded on the roof of the Green Island Hunting Club during the '33 hurricane with a couple of friends and his 13-year-old brother. The boys took a gas-powered skiff to the island to fetch a hunting boat, but decided to spend the night at the Green Island club when the wind began gusting. The next morning their skiff broke loose and washed up in the marsh with a hole in the hull. The boys huddled in the club as the weather worsened and the tide rose, flooding the club and floating the kitchen table. The decoy boat smashed into the club, knocking a hole in the wall. They spent the night on the roof, listening to ocean breakers, howling wind, and the creaking, tilting club.

I said, “Howard, we better move before that chimney’s going to break. If you don’t move you’re going to get killed.” We had no more than moved when that chimney broke and went through the roof right where we had been sitting. I wasn’t expecting to see daylight.

The next morning was calm, as they were in the eye of the storm. “I went down by my boat and looked at the sound and it was four feet higher than the ocean – coming! By the time I got back, it was up to my shoulders.” That night they ate canned peaches and sausage, and the next day the storm had subsided and they managed to get a small hunting skiff operating. They motored back to an unrecognizable Hatteras village; they had been gone five days and their families gave

them up for dead. Villagers helped him fetch his boat from the island, and he eventually repaired it with a portion of his mother's kitchen wall that had been torn out. "Boats was tore up around the shore," Foster recalled. "They started with one boat and get that back in the water. And, help one another." No islander was lost in that storm or any other storm in recorded history.

"Miss Julie" Oden, a retired school teacher and widow of the village casket supplier, ran a boarding house for sportsmen from 1934 to after World War II. The "Harbor House" offered "country size meals;" it had outside plumbing, and showers were taken "in the privacy of the grape arbor" (Van Dolsen 1999, 26). Two additional motels operated in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century: the Atlantic View Hotel (built in 1928) and the Durant Station Motel (built around 1950)(ibid).

#### **7.7.14. Livestock and Gardening**

Residents of Hatteras village raised chickens and kept cattle and hogs, which roamed freely about the village as late as 1950; they ate great quantities of seafood and grew vegetables in small gardens. "The best thing that growed here was collards," said a villager. A woman pointed out that they did not generally eat loaf bread: "A loaf of bread, I didn't know what that was until just before I got married. When we had sandwiches, they were on biscuits." Families kept their perishables in iceboxes, and obtained ice that was shipped in and chopped up:

"They'd get ice up to the dock and they would wrap it in a sack," recalled a resident. Midwife Jennette Stowe recalled her mother collecting figs and mulberries:

I've seen Mama, many of a morning, go in the kitchen and get a big pan, go around in the yard and pick figs off the fig trees and preserve figs. And, in the front yard there was a mulberry tree as high as the house, and we used to jump on that and she'd lay her sheets down under the tree and we'd shake the limbs for 'em to fall off so she could rake 'em up and preserve 'em (Foster and Ballance 1976, 36).

Villagers preserved vegetables and fruit by canning, and smoked ham, bacon, and sausage in smokehouses behind their houses (Van Dolsen 1999).

### **7.7.15. Perceptions of Environment and Storms**

Before satellite imagery and mass communication that alerted people to hurricanes, islanders relied on other means to predict bad weather, including their senses. “The old people could smell it in the air,” said a woman. “My granddad used to look in the sky and say something’s coming.” “They studied the elements, they watched the sky, they watched things,” agreed a man. Bankers also paid attention to barometers and Weather Bureau warnings:

Old-timers lived by the barometer. I’ve seen my grandfather walk by his barometer and tap it gently. That was to make sure it wasn’t hung up or nothing. They didn’t have a regular marine forecast. It would come over the radio, and it might be from Chicago. You didn’t have the local updates. And, they had the Weather Bureau. It was down to Hatteras next to the Burris Red & White. And, they would take what data that they had and they would put flags up for small craft.

Old-timers of Hatteras village vividly remember the ’33 storm that flooded the village. A resident explained that her father and uncle were away running a freight boat, so her mother and aunt gathered all their children in one house and braced for the storm:

The tide came up. Mother and aunt got the kerosene stove and put it on the dining room table to get it out of the water and cooked our meals. They were standing in water in the dining room, in water about to their waist, cooking food for the children! They were trying to keep us upstairs but we kids were wild with excitement. We’d never seen that before.

She added that “everything on the whole island was covered with a slick, slimy clay from the mainland” after the storm. “You couldn’t walk without slipping. It was green.”

A woman who grew up in Hatteras village remembered the 1944 storm:

We were sitting on the porch and the sun was shining real pretty and the sea tide was coming up fast. We were kicking our feet in it from the porch. Then it started blowing the rain in. I guess the wind shifted. My dad sent us in the house upstairs with my mom.

The sound tide started coming. And, it got so bad that the waves were breaking on the back of our house and spattering in the upstairs window. We had them boarded up and it was coming through the cracks.

She said that her father had wanted to open all the windows and doors to let the water flow in, but her mother would not allow it. “She didn’t want him to, and that caused our house to float off the blocks.” The windows and doors broke out, and at one point her father was downstairs up to his neck in water. Her four-year-old brother was walking about upstairs “with fat little legs” singing “pistol-packing mamma, lay that pistol down.” From upstairs the family could see only water, and feared they had washed out into the sound. But when the storm subsided, they found that the whole village had been submerged; the Red Cross helped people put their houses back on the blocks.

It seemed every September the tide would come in the house. All you did was wash the mud out and scrub the floors. I remember my mom used to cry. Then she would get linoleum down and put curtains and all up and here would come a hurricane and it all rolled up in a knot, mud and all. And, then they started painting the floors. There’s some tough women, some sweet old ladies and, that was the way of life. You did it every year.

A Hatteras old-timer said that his father drilled holes underneath the inside stairs as a protective measure against flooding. “Three big holes; kept them plugged. If the tide started coming in he’d pull the plugs so it wouldn’t flood the house off the blocks. If air catches underneath of them, that pressure would cause the house to float.” He added, “The house would get steady after the tide got in it; wouldn’t even hardly shake.”

An employee of the Hatteras Weather Station was surprised by the Ash Wednesday storm of 1962 that cut an inlet above Buxton:

It had gone offshore, and no one thought it was coming and it swooped back for some reason and just about ruined the whole east coast from Hatteras on north. I got up about four o’clock and mother said, “Lucy is the tide up?” And, I said, “I don’t think so.” She said, “Well, I hear your cat really meowing his head off.” And, I opened the door and the poor little thing had come swimming home. Was out on the front stoop all wet and dripping. The tide was up so I didn’t get to work that morning.

Storms would bring shipwrecks, and shipwrecks occasionally brought the island unexpected treats. A villager recalled a ship run aground full of bananas; although they eventually got the ship back to sea, the captain had invited the villagers take their fill.

Everybody got all they could handle. They were pretty green. Put them in the attic to ripen. Christmas Eve, we'd set up, boys and girls, partying. They had a bunch [of bananas] hung over the stove so they'd ripen quick. Great big ones. So, one night we're sitting there, boys, seeing who could eat the most. You can imagine what happened.

The geography of Hatteras Village has changed greatly since the 1930s, not only due to storms that cut or closed inlets and moved shoals, but because of human activities as well. The topography was flat until the CCC crews built dunes or "hills." "There wasn't nothing on our beaches," said a villager. "Just lot of homes in each village – people wouldn't build on the beach on account of storms, sea tide running over. It was just as flat as this floor." The geography of the village has changed much in the past few decades, mainly because of ditching, filling, and draining. In Sticky Bottom, formerly a swampy area, "half of the land, over half if you count these new developments, has been pumped up and created."

#### **7.7.16. Significant Places**

Two areas in the heart of Hatteras village have become very significant for residents due to proposed developments. One development, jokingly called "Lonesome Palm Estates," by a villager, is located on a former marsh and then dredge spoil. The other is called "Slash Creek Condominiums," and is a marshy area surrounding what villagers call "the Slash", a creek bisecting the community. For many Hatteras villagers these areas, particularly the Slash, have become a symbol of the village's last stand against greed and power. Before Hurricane Isabel delayed the "Lonesome Palms" project, the land was cleared and palm trees planted; the non-

native palms and mountain-style stonework gate appear out-of-place against the native oaks, salt grass, and yaupon bushes.

It was the prettiest marsh in the village. My first awareness of red wing blackbirds and marsh hens was walking by that marsh when I was a kid. The people doing that – a senator and a developer - there's not much class there. It's hideous.

Slash Creek development was delayed by permit questions and challenges; nonetheless, stands of live oak trees were bulldozed and land was cleared and flattened. It became a holding area for hurricane debris after Isabel, and was then cleared for development (Figure 7.7.6).

Villagers, worn down by both the battle against powerful investors and the hurricane, are resigned:

The thing that I find difficult is *not* that these are my neighbors doing this and I have to live with it. You can get into fights with your neighbors. But, these are people who are not going to even live here. And, once that thing is done and it's sold, they simply wipe their hands and be gone, and the rest of us are left with whatever they've created. They're not even willing to live with it.



Figure 7.7.6. Slash Creek Development, Hatteras Village.  
Photo by B. Garrity-Blake.

Villagers have a difficult time believing that such developments do not occur at the expense of traditional uses. “The last year has been terribly unsettling for all of us,” said a resident. “Once this “Lonesome Palms” and Slash Creek went in you couldn’t pretend anymore that it wasn’t going to happen. There’ve been two fish houses torn down, you see that stuff coming.” Not only are fish houses and old homes disappearing as new docking and rental mansions proliferate, but also part of the “dying off” of traditional culture occurs with the passing of each old-timer.

The money that has come in has come from other sources. It has not contributed to the community, was not created by the people in the community, with very few exceptions. The villagers, the Outer Banker, those characters are gone. There’s still a few here, but they’re dying off.

As in all villages on Hatteras and Ocracoke, family graves are highly valued by native residents. The 1999 historical survey found that “the cemeteries are as much a part of the village as the houses” in Hatteras (Van Dolsen 1999, 18). Graves are not found in designated church cemeteries but, in Banker fashion, are “spread throughout the village, at the edge of roads, alongside houses, or within overgrown areas. Anywhere there is a slight elevation in the landscape, or where there was an earlier dwelling, a cemetery can be found” (ibid). Some families put fresh or plastic flowers on their family graves, while others “retained the tradition of outlining the graves with shells” (Van Dolsen 1999, 28).

#### **7.7.17. Rituals and Community Events**

Weddings were simple, and usually occurred in someone’s house or in Elizabeth City, the “marriage capital of the world,” because it was cheaper and easier than getting the license off-island and then returning for a church wedding. “They didn’t have weddings,” said Mrs. Ernal Foster. “They just got married.” Many couples had simple weddings as a matter of economics.

“People did not have lots of money for weddings so they had to share their coats. Most women wore their Sunday clothes to get married in.” Guest-packed church weddings were rare before World War II. If a church wedding occurred, the couple “had maybe two or three couples stand up with them. That’s what they called it then, stand up” (Dennis and Tolson 1983). Even through the 1960s unmarried couples living together was taboo. A village man reflected:

People not married living together? My God, they’d have tarred and feathered you. They’d have run you out of town. You just didn’t do stuff like that. When I got married, we went to Elizabeth City, got our license, and was married by a minister, but it was in the minister’s home. It wasn’t in the church. I guess there was church weddings, but they was very few. Mostly, we just went off and got married cause you couldn’t get a marriage license on the island.

Few families could afford a big reception, and the common practice was to have social gatherings after a wedding with modest refreshments. Distant honeymoons were unheard of as well. “You couldn’t afford to miss no work. There wasn’t no going to the Bahamas or Florida - I’m sure people done that, but not in my neighborhood.” In the 1940s and 1950s, girls were still marrying relatively young, “anywhere between 16 and 18, before they finished high school. An old saying that’s come up in recent years: if you wasn’t married by 21 you was an old maid; now you’re smart.” A villager married at 15 recalled that her uncle had to sign for her. “Back then there wasn’t anything else to do but get married.”

Before access to undertakers, villagers took care of funerals by enlisting local carpenters to make coffins and local women to line them with cloth purchased at the general store. “Then a man started buying coffins,” a resident recalled. “Rance Oden. He had a storage house in his yard – we called it the casket house.”

They’d be from \$35 dollars to \$90 dollars. He was buried in the most expensive one he had, \$90 dollars. It got soiled a little bit, and he kept that for his own use. He was the first man that used undertakers on this island after World War II. He died and then the undertaker from Elizabeth City come down. He was the first person they put away on Hatteras Island.

The dead were buried in family plots, as “none of our churches had cemeteries around them.” A Manteo funeral home had established a branch in the village by the 1970s.

Christmas in Hatteras was a time of eating: Captain Ernal Foster recalled “an awful lot of pies.” Although villagers in Hatteras did not celebrate Old Christmas, they did retain into the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the custom of traveling from house to house.

You had families go from house to house. Leave to go to another house, then they serve pie. Another house, pie. Cakes and pies, coffee – most of the men were coffee drinkers. Families did not serve turkey on Christmas day, as there were no turkeys on the island, but cooked wildfowl. Black-eyed peas were always served on New Year’s Day.

Hatteras Village helped put the Outer Banks on the map as a tourist destination by hosting the Dare County Pirates’ Jamboree from 1956 to 1964. To extend the tourist season, the “world’s largest fish fry” took place in April on the Hatteras Village beachside ball diamond where General Billy Mitchell made history by proving the effectiveness of airborne bombing in 1923. Villagers held dory races, dune buggy races and Ocracoke Boy Scout pony races; men and women fashioned pirate outfits and competed in the pirates’ king and queen pageant for the Jolly Roger Ball. Islanders cooked up free fish dinners for some 2,000 people, an enormous undertaking that required all eight Cape Hatteras communities to pull together: fish houses donated fresh fish, and men welded giant cooking trays. Restaurants donated slaw, potato salad and dessert. Islanders had a “tiger by the tail” with the increasingly popular jamboree, and finally discontinued the event as hotels, restaurants and volunteers became overtaxed (Couch 2002b). Before the Jamboree helped pull in thousands, “tourist” was not a common word; visitors were known more as “sportsmen” (Quidley 2001).

### **7.7.18. National Park Service**

A Hatteras man recalled attending meetings in the village about the establishment of the National Park Service:

Our congressman at that time, Hubert Barnes, had several meetings here. I was a good size boy then. I went to some of the meetings at the school building here. The majority of the people didn't want it. He said folks the Park Service is coming here whether you want it or not. You can't stop it and I can't stop it. The only thing I can say is to reserve you some rights.

An early source of irritation for islanders was when villagers were required to remove any fish camps or net houses along the shore that had become park property. "Wherever someone wanted to build a net camp, they would do so with very little thought of who owned the land," said an islander. "The owner might go, 'Oh, I see you built a net camp over there on my shore side. How's it working out?' [The attitude was], 'Your property, my net camp.'" This informal understanding disappeared once the property owner became the government:

[The National Park Service] took domain of land that had already been sold to them by our grandfathers - they made them start cleaning up these net camps, feeling that they have to police the land. Well, back in those days, every man's conscience policed the land. It's been very hard for the Outer Banker for that reason. To come to grips with somebody else telling him where he can and can't go.

### **7.7.19. Coast Guard and the Military**

An early military presence in Hatteras was established upon the construction of two Confederate forts near the village: Fort Clark and Fort Hatteras. After much fighting, Union forces took over both forts and maintained control of the Outer Banks throughout the remainder of the war.

By 1878 the Hatteras Lifesaving Station, later changed to "Durants," was in operation near the village, and Surfmen undertook many daring rescues; evidence of shipwrecks remain

on the shores of the village today (Figure 7.7.7). A woman recounted a story about her grandfather, who had served in the Hatteras Lifesaving Service. He was helping row a dory back and forth to a wrecked Portuguese ship, shuttling its crew to safety:

Two of [the Portuguese sailors] got mad with each other and were fighting on the way back in and drew knives. My grandfather must have been six foot six. He had hands like hams. He wasn't fat. He said it made him so mad to think that they were risking their life to go save these people, and they were about to knife each other. So he picked each one up in his hand and held them over the side. He said, "Now you all may not understand a word I'm saying, but if you don't put them knives up and sit back down, I'm going to drop you in the ocean. He said they got the message.



Figure 7.7.7. Tourists and Shipwreck, Hatteras. Photo by B. Garrity-Blake.

The Coast Guard in Hatteras village provided limited economic opportunity for women, who sometimes “took in laundry” for the guardsmen. And, a “lot of the young girls got husbands from the Coast Guard.” Young men who joined the Coast Guard often left the island, such as Ernal Foster who journeyed to Long Island to enlist. He discovered upon arrival that most of the men at the New York station were from Hatteras Island. He remembered corresponding with family and friends from home:

You write every day or so. The girls would write. Worst thing I would get letters telling me how much fun they was having. Chicken stew and all these big parties they were having, and that would get me homesick.

An old-timer reflected that, however important, the Coast Guard did not play as central a role in Hatteras village as it did in Buxton, Avon, and Chicamacomico. “This was more of a fishing area,” he explained.

Hatteras had a lighthouse on stilts in Pamlico Sound built “just like a home, with everything in it.” Paul Angell and his wife moved to Hatteras from Massachusetts near the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to tend Oliver’s Reef light, and brought with them a black child they had adopted in New Bern. “They reared Tom and trained him to be a perfect servant. He became a good neighbor. Old timers on Hatteras still remember Tom Angell’s homemade ice cream and delicious chocolate cakes” (Wechter 1975, 188). Villagers speak of Tom Angell as if he was the only black resident of Hatteras until another family brought in a few black maids, yet the 1870 census counted 12 black males and 14 black females out of a population of 673 (Van Dolsen 1999). Angell lived out his life on the island, selling pineapple and chocolate ice cream on Saturday nights, and hosting square dances with fiddlers and a triangle player. Over the years villagers, who say that a true “black angel” passed when Tom Angell died, have raised him to almost legendary status.

The Civilian Conservation Corps was deployed in Hatteras, and one villager’s mother met her husband that way: “My father’s family is from Raleigh. He was in the CCC camp – my mom was 25 and he was only 18 but he told her he was 25.” The young groom worked at a Hatteras fish house, and then after the fourth baby was born, with spina bifida, he was elected sheriff of Dare County. Then, he ran away.

I remember the morning he left. My momma asked him if he was going to bring [the baby] some potatoes home for lunch. He said he hoped to. My cousin works on the

ferry, he told my mom the next day that my father just threw his gun, holster and all, overboard on the way to Englehard on the *Hadico*. I was married before I ever seen him again.

A villager recalled joining the CCC camp at 13, because the foreman told him “You’re big enough to be 18.” He was sent to work a project in California. A man recalled barges that were brought in with the CCC dune-building effort, and stated that “we never had large rats on the island until they started putting those barges in – had mice but didn’t have big rats.”

Hatteras villagers witnessed World War II unfolding in their “backyard” just as other islanders did, and blacked out their headlights and windows. In the last two weeks of January 1942 alone, German submarines off the Outer Banks sank 13 ships. “This area was a prime target,” explained a resident, “because this is where our shipping turns when headed for Europe, or makes a right angle when continuing down our coast.” “The submarines just laid right off there and popped them off,” agreed a Hatteras woman. “The way they had to swing out around the shoals.”

[Children] weren’t allowed on the beach but sometimes we would go. You could find life jackets washing up and K-rations, stuff that was in the life raft. They had a malt tablet, a supplement of food. Man, that was good. It would be in a can. Kids would go to school with a pocket full of them old malt tablets.

The Coast Guard, which expanded during the war, patrolled the waters and sank 33 subs shortly after the January attacks. They also patrolled the beaches on foot, jeep, or horse in search of spies. They reported oil slicks so thick from downed tankers that waves rolling up on the beach could not break, and gobs of it snared jeeps in the sand. Local fishing boats were used for patrols as well, and villagers took part in patrols. Fishing “was at a standstill.” In the end, most of the country’s ships sunk during the war were off the North Carolina coast (Stick 1952).

Hatteras housed a weather station moved from Buxton in 1880. In 1956-57 the Hatteras Weather Station was moved back to Buxton, and became known as the Cape Hatteras Weather

Station (Stick 1958). The cold Labrador Current clashes with the Gulf Stream off Cape Hatteras, making the waters dangerous and at times unpredictable; likewise the weather is quick-changing as well, and long challenging for weather station keepers like Lucy Stowe of Hatteras:

My first appointment was to the weather station in the village. They just said to me, “Here is the thermometer, here is the barometer. We had an anemometer – an instrument for measuring wind velocity and direction. At night we lit a candle inside a paper lantern and tied it to the line on the balloon (Nunn 2001, 19).

There were no women employed at weather stations “until the war started and most of the men were gone.” Stowe continued her job long after the war, and was unaware that women “had been discriminated against until I got reading all about it.” She described her job:

You read the instruments every hour. We released helium-filled balloons and tracked it with a theatolite to get wind direction and velocity aloft. The next year they put in the radiosonde. That was the new center radio instrument up on the moon. Then after World War II when radar became available, that really changed the ways of reporting the weather. It was a big jump forward.

Stowe plotted and mapped data, and sent reports every hour across the country. “Hatteras northeasters” were known clear to New England, born of the clash of warm and cold currents. A lull forms, which then “sweeps up and batters New York and New England.” In 1955 the station got radar, and she and her co-workers were able to track hurricanes, tornadoes, and thunderstorms.

#### **7.7.20. Political Life**

A resident pointed out, “very few politicians have come from Hatteras,” although the village is famous for becoming the capital of the “true and faithful state of North Carolina” as declared by anti-secessionists in the run up to the Civil War. Hatteras resident Charles Henry Foster was elected to the House of Representatives and sent to Washington, D.C. A committee

on elections declared Foster's position invalid, and the wider world's opinion on the political importance of the Outer Banks was captured in a New York Times article:

The actual de facto jurisdiction of this Government is confined to the sand-bar recently captured by the US Navy at Hatteras. The portion of this bar protected by the US flag may be 15 or 20 miles long, by about one mile wide. Would it not be a hazardous experiment to reconstruct the political edifices on such a foundation (in Stick 1958,158)?

Despite these bold beginnings, most Bankers consider Hatteras a self-sufficient village that exerts political influence when necessary to help the community, not advance the power of any individual.

The house right past this one caught on fire. We didn't have a fire department, we couldn't get the thing put out. They were able to keep it down to the point where the fire did not spread, but the man lost his house. By the next year we had a great fire department. It was door-to-door donations, monthly donations, and fish fries in the summertime. That's how we paid for it.

The Hatteras Volunteer Fire Department and Ladies Auxiliary was established in 1959, and was the first fire department on the island. When other villages saw their success in starting a department and raising funds, they began planning for their own departments. A fatal fire in Rodanthe was further impetus, as the Hatteras men reached the northernmost village only in time to "cool the ashes" (Printz 1982, 57). Other examples underscore qualities of a self-governing village that did not depend on nor seek outside assistance:

When the schools were consolidated, we were left with a school building that had no function. The community organized the Civic Association. Several ladies decided we needed a library. So, they gathered up books and staffed it by volunteer effort. No outside help or resources. When the public health doctor was taken off the island, Hatteras village got together and built the medical center and recruited a doctor. That's how we govern ourselves as a community.

The Water Company Association was born from discussions that took place at the Hatteras Volunteer Fire Department. The Hatteras Village Civic Association (HVCA) was instrumental in getting the first bank on the island, so people no longer had to bank by mail. The

president of the HVCA helped established a branch in Ocracoke as well. Concerned about the potential loss of their culture and history, members of the HVCA raised funds to conduct an official architectural and historic survey. “This village is proactive,” said a resident. “It’s the most progressive village on the island.”

Back in those days, they didn’t call it anything other than a group of people getting together to make things move. These were people that were come back from the military. These people had foresight and they wanted to see things go.

The United Methodist women began holding summer-long Saturday night fish fries in the 1940s as a fundraiser. In 1959 the Hatteras Volunteer Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary joined forces with them, and the growing event began taking place at the fire department. Finally the Hatteras Village Civic Association joined in the fund-raising event, and the group split the profits three ways. This shows how the village comes together to meet community needs.

#### **7.7.21. Law Enforcement**

It is a testament to the influence of remote Hatteras that the sheriff of Dare County, including mainland towns of Manteo and Nags Head, was, from 1982 to 2002, a Hatteras village resident. Hatteras village began changing rapidly in the 1950s, said the long time sheriff, but “the biggest change came after I became sheriff.”

Dare County began using the magistrate system about 1970. A Hatteras villager agreed to serve as magistrate from the time the system began until today, receiving \$100 per month in the early years. His job becomes demanding when tourists flock to the island in the spring and summer. One month, he was called to his office 92 times to handle traffic violations. He recalled:

Easter weekend used to be my ruckus. Traffic violations, a lot of fighting going on at beer joints and places. On Easter weekend college kids would head for the beach. It was rough. Everything but bank robberies. We didn't have a bank.

Drug abuse has come to be the biggest problem facing Hatteras in the magistrate's estimation. "They brought a young man in, and his daddy was in there to post his bond. I said son if you don't straighten up somebody is going to get killed. Less than 30 days later they were both dead."

### **7.7.22. Modernity and Perceptions of Change**

A resident who long enjoyed surf fishing on the beach said that an increase in "people and buildings" was a big change for the village and surrounding beaches (Figure 7.7.8). "When I was first fishing, if you could see someone fishing in either direction you thought you were crowded," she reflected. "Now if you get two feet away from someone, you feel like you're lucky."



Figure 7.7.8. Hatteras Ferry Terminal.  
Photo by B. Garrity-Blake.

New people coming into the community, she continued, are “cordial and nice” individually, but “as a group they try to convert the area to resemble the place they left.” Rather than subscribing to the philosophy “live and let live” they seem to have a case of live and live larger.

Villagers worry about the spread of rental housing and condominiums that forever change the face of the landscape but which contain few full-time, committed citizens of the community. With such a transformation comes a gulf in income levels unprecedented in the village’s history.

Hatteras is moving toward a place where it will only be rental units. Unless they leave land for their children, any young person won’t be able to afford to function here. Perhaps it will become some kind of elite place that the filthy rich will move to and they’ll have little enclaves for their hired help. Within 20 years any sense of local flavor or “islanders” will be completely gone.

Businesses have had an increasingly difficult time finding local labor, particularly in the summer months, so Latino laborers are migrating in:

They’re coming in here for the work. They’re reaching out for better ways of living. They can work in a restaurant and get nice tips, or they can work in the kitchen and get good wages to cook, or to bus tables, or whatever the man might need. It’s hard to get people to work at the beach. You get college kids over here, work one month out of the season, and he wants to play while he’s here. So, you get a month’s work out of a four-month season with them. With a Mexican that’s got a family, you get four months of work out of him.

A Hatteras man described a shift in the type of people attracted to Hatteras Island, a former paradise on a “downhill spiral”:

There’s a certain type of people that like the seashore, quiet. They don’t need to be entertained. The ocean, sand, that’s enough for them; a flock of pelicans. People say to me, “Oh, we saw the dolphins come by today!” They’re all excited. That made their whole day. They didn’t need to have a go-cart track. But, there is a type of people that like that kind of fun. There are plenty of places in the world they can go. The local people don’t crave go-cart tracks. We’ve made a turn, we’ve opened Pandora’s box, and there’s no end to this thing now.

He added that the growing problem of drug abuse was part and parcel of this trend; not to say that tourists have introduced drugs, but that the faster lifestyle has exacerbated an existing

problem of local drug use. Drugs first made an appearance in Hatteras in the 1960s as teenagers began smoking marijuana. Parents who grew up in the sixties sometimes turn a “blind eye” to their own children’s habits, and the multi-generational interconnections and protective instincts among community members has impeded efforts to eradicate the island of heroin, oxycontin, and other deadly drugs.

The “perfect balance” between locals, tourists, and business that was struck in the 1980s tilted to the “dangerous side of the curve” in the 1990s. The village had the *Albatross* Fleet and the *Miss Hatteras* head boat in the 1980s, and a flying service in the early 1990s. “Look at it now,” said a business owner. “Kayak tours, wind surfing, jet skis, water sports, dolphin [watch] rides, three different parasail businesses.”

Hatteras villagers are embroiled in bitter and divisive debate about development more than any other island community, as some business owners welcome the changes while others rail against them. The shock and devastation of Hurricane Isabel, which cut Hatteras village off from the rest of the Banks by creating a new inlet south of Frisco, brought everyone together in an effort of cooperation and survival until the inlet was filled and a new road built (Figure 7.7.9). In short order, however, disagreements about land use, development, and community goals arose and villagers reminisced about their brief “old Hatteras” spirit of co-dependency and neighborliness.



Figure 7.7.9. Isabel's Inlet and NC 12 Remnants in Foreground of Hatteras  
Photo by B. Garrity-Blake.

However, people on both sides of the development issue face the question, “What are we going to do to retain the character of our community?” Islanders point to infrastructure developments when asked how the village has come to be so popular with outside investors and prospective residents. “The single biggest factor in changing this island was the [Oregon Inlet] bridge,” said a villager. “That opened things up. That was the pipeline; they opened a valve.”

“I think we’ve missed a golden opportunity,” reflected a resident, “when they consolidated the water with Dare County.” He explained that the village had a moratorium on building because of local water limitations, but since connecting with the Dare County Water Department system, developers were able to build more densely. The change to county water was the turning point for the Banks:

When is this septic [from new development] going to start leeching out? When is it going to start affecting the fish? When are *we* not going to have clean water? Five years

ago, we all were making a pretty good living. We knew then that all these extra people were beginning to affect our quality of living. We were crankier, we didn't have that loving graciousness that we had. Local people were managing their businesses, now they're burnt out, they have sold their businesses to [incoming business investors from] New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania.

"We got city water," agreed a neighbor. "Look how we're devolving. We're sitting on one big septic tank."

Construction seemed to increase after the 2001 terrorist attack at the World Trade Center in New York City. A villager explained this in terms of the declining stock market and the desire for wealthy individuals to invest their money in property: "The floodgates for Hatteras was literally the collapse of the stock market. All of these folks who were trying to look for a killing, it became real estate in the last couple of years." Another wave of building occurred after Hurricane Isabel in 2003, as business owners necessarily built new hotels, restaurants, and rental homes, some structures much larger than the destroyed properties.

The group opposing Slash Creek condominiums and the "Lonesome Palms" project became exhausted and discouraged by the tenacity of their opponents. A member attributed the success of developers in winning such battles is a full-time devotion to turning a profit:

A developer's job is turning every buildable piece of property into a profit. And, turning property that's marginal into buildable property. So, we get together to fight this. If we win we're only out \$10,000 dollars. This guy goes to bed at night *dreaming* about how to make his project happen. He spends 12 hours a day scheming, and if he wins he makes a million. If we win we're *out* \$10,000. There is no way to stop that kind of aggressiveness.

For islanders who attach great significance to family land deeded in their name for generations, the idea of buying property solely to sell it at profit is offensive – particularly when real estate investment outweighs all other ways of making a living on a small island. Yet, the pressure to make money and the temptation to sell land bit by bit can outweigh such concerns.

“The prices for property are so over-valued that it won’t generate income unless you sell it to a bigger fool.”

## 7.8. Ocracoke

### 7.8.1. Name, Place, and Features

Ocracoke village, three feet above sea level, is the southernmost community associated with the Cape Hatteras National Seashore. It is located on the southwest end of the 17-mile-long Ocracoke Island, which extends southwest from Hatteras Inlet to Ocracoke Inlet between Hatteras and Portsmouth Islands. The 775 acres comprising the village is a small portion of island, as the majority of the bank was designated as federal park land in 1953 (Figure 7.8.1).



Figure 7.8.1. Satellite Image of Ocracoke.  
Source: NC Division of Marine Fisheries.

Ocracoke village, originally mapped as “Pilot Town,” was settled around 1743 by British government workers assigned the duty of piloting vessels through the strategically important Ocracoke Inlet (Stick 1958). By the mid-1700s it was referred to as Ocacock, Okok, or Ocracoke, among other terms. “Ocracoke” is thought to be a derivative of the Algonkian word “waxihikami,” meaning “enclosed place,” and written as “Wococon” by early cartographers (Payne 1985). The original colonial owner of Ocracoke was John Lovick, who was granted the

island in 1719. A Richard Sanderson sold the island to William Howard, the first landowner to actually reside on Ocracoke, in 1759 for 105 pounds (Sterling O'Neal 1998).

The village experienced a vibrant and interesting history from the early 1700s until the mid-1800s due to the importance of Ocracoke Inlet as a passageway for piracy, trade, and military operations (see Stick 1958). Edward Teach, better known as Blackbeard, hid out in the sounds and rivers of North Carolina, and seemed to enjoy a cozy relationship with Governor Eden of Bath. Tarheel citizens appealed to Virginia Governor Alexander Spotswood, who dispatched two British warships that engaged in battle with Blackbeard and crew at Ocracoke Inlet on November 22, 1718. The fight brought about the death of Blackbeard, and marked the end of piracy's short reign in North Carolina (ibid).

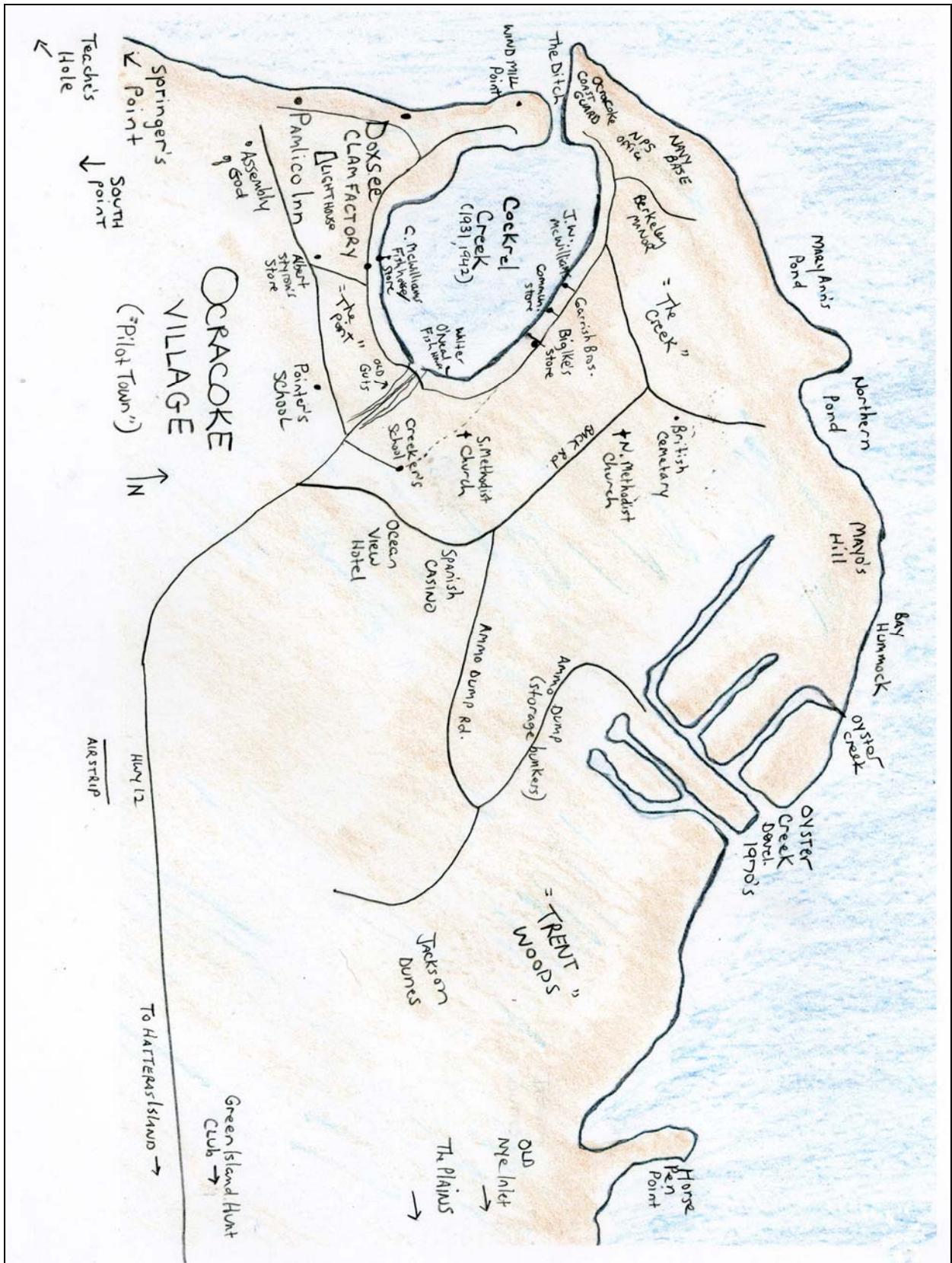
Not only was the Ocracoke Inlet a vital gateway to Pamlico Sound river communities such as Bath, New Bern, and Washington, it also served the thriving port of Portsmouth. Once Hatteras Inlet was re-opened by a storm in 1846, however, Ocracoke (and Portsmouth) became less strategically important as a primary shipping thoroughfare, and experienced a decline in population after the Civil War. Trade continued, however, at Springer's Point, an area outside Ocracoke's harbor on the south end of the village where a 25-foot deep cut allowed access for larger vessels. Ocracoke Inlet was dredged in 1895, and commercial traffic started to increase again (Van Dolsen 1999).

“Built out of the planks of shipwrecks...and home to a salty, weather-beaten people who rarely had much truck with the mainland” (Cecelski 2001,48), Ocracoke was saved the fate of the now extinct village of Portsmouth. The village stayed alive thanks to the dredged inlet and revived shipping in the 1890s, the dredged Silver Lake that enhanced commercial fishing in the

early 1930s, and post-World War II improvements in transportation and communication that put the island on its golden path to tourism.

Ocracoke village wraps around a body of water once called Cockle Creek or “the ditch,” one of the few natural harbors in the area. Three or four piers were in Cockle Creek, but the water was shallow and most skiffs were tied to stakes. Since being dredged and deepened in 1931 and again in World War II Cockle Creek has become Silver Lake. Some of the dredge spoil was deposited near the mouth of the creek, known as “the Gut,” destroying oyster beds. The north side of Silver Lake is still known as “the Creek” and the south side has always been “the Point;” for years villagers were called “Creekers” and “Pointers” (Map 7.8). A villager explained that this separation began with two of Ocracoke’s founding families, the Williams on the Point and the Howards on the Creek. He recalled when it was “a big step to go ‘down the point.’” An old saying suggests a bit of a community rivalry between the neighborhoods: “Hold on to your oar when you go down to the Point!” On the other hand, Pointers and Creekers long assisted each other in planting gardens, building houses, and sewing quilts (Ballance 1989).

Two small creeks or “guts” extended from the east side of Cockle Creek to the ocean. They were covered with four footbridges leading from one side of the village to the other. These smaller creeks were filled during the dredging of Silver Lake in 1931 and during World War II. An area to the south of the Point side is called Widgeon Woods. “Up Trent” refers to a wooded area in the northeast section of the village, not to be confused with Trent (Frisco) on Hatteras. The western side of Trent was a wet and marshy area before WPA workers began ditching and draining; “I had to lay big old Pepsi crates from the door to get to the road,” a resident recalled.



Map 7.8. Ocracoke Village with Historical Sites (not to scale). Sketch by B. Garrity-Blake.

The Ammunition Dump housed munitions during World War II; it sat on 47 acres leased by the Government and returned to villagers after the war. Due east of the village where the tracks curved around toward Hatteras Island was Loop Shack Hill, one of a few dunes that protected the Loop Shack, a military detection system built during World War II for finding German submarines. “A wire was run out under water in a loop shape,” explained an Ocracoker. “It worked like a metal detector, and picked up any submarine activity above the wire.”

The trees and bushes in Ocracoke village was called “new growth” by people in the first part of the century, as “a bad hurricane killed all the growth on these banks in 1878.” Before government-sponsored introductions of grass, trees, and dunes, the island of Ocracoke was “nothing but blowing sand.” The only hills were “natural – there is something under there. Either a piece of wreck or piece of wood.” A man who planted grass for the Park Service recalled that the beach was “bald, no trees, no grass – just beach gravel, shell, shipwrecks; flat, nothing.” During the planting operation, the crews would drive their tractor around old shipwrecks and “pull the lever up so the man in the seat would come up, swing around the [wreck] and put it back down again.” In fact, the whole area between the village and the National Park Service campground was known as “the Plains” as it was devoid of dunes and vegetation.

The area between the village and the ocean was about a mile of sand and “a tidal place, mud flats.” Today, in 2004, the Atlantic beach shoreline falls within National Seashore borders and therefore Ocracoke is the only village in the Cape Hatteras region without oceanfront development.

Old-timers reported the existence of an inlet just north of the Ocracoke airport that has since filled-in. Another inlet further north, called “the Wells,” was temporarily cut by a storm.

In the 1930s and 1940s Charlie McWilliams ran the mail from Ocracoke village to the mail boat waiting at Hatteras Inlet; “he had to wait until low tide before he could drive across the inlet in his truck.” When such openings occurred, the villagers called it “cutting the beach.” They maintained that erosion has been more of a problem on the sound side than the ocean. The land is naturally washing away. It is eroding and eroding and they have hurricanes that cut big slices out of there. You have the continuing north wind – it takes these trees and roots away. Kills them. You have nothing to hold it.”

Erosion and filling along the sound on the northern edge of the village has changed two small bodies of water, Northern Pond and Mary Anne’s Pond. Dredge spoil from Silver Lake was deposited in this area by the Navy, filling Mary Anne’s pond as well as low, marshy area. An old-timer who was born near Northern Pond described it as “cedars, white myrtles and red myrtles, sage grass and just a sandy shoreline on the back of the island.” Mayo’s Hill was one of the island’s highest points, but is now under water. Further east on the sound side is an area called Jackson Dunes that extends further out than 100 years ago. Nearby was Jackson’s graveyard, which likely washed away in the San Ciraco hurricane of 1899 that blew for three days. The islanders that lived in this area of Trent moved into the village proper after the storm. “My grandfather was in that storm,” explained Gene Ballance, who researched maps to determine the changes to Ocracoke. “They were trapped at Quark’s Hammock with nothing to cover them but part of the sails.”

Property was surveyed in an informal method on Ocracoke, marking boundaries from tree to stone or road to hencoop. “They would say the line ran from somebody’s chicken house to a certain cedar. But my ancestor bought 50 acres of land in 1788 for ten pounds. The deed gave so many chains north, so many chains south, longitude and latitude, so that was definite.” A

school teacher who bought property in 1937 became interested in surveying when neighbors pointed out that he had misread his deed; his property was rectangular shaped, not triangular as he had thought. His interest led to a certificate in surveying, and the question about his property was clarified with a “boundary agreement” between neighbors: “Then other people got interested in boundary agreements and wanted them,” reported the teacher.

By 1962 the former teacher had become the first land surveyor on Ocracoke at a time that coincided with the first stirrings of aggressive property marketing. He found that earlier surveys worked off a north-south line established by a U.S. geodetic survey running from the northwest corner of the lighthouse.

Early 20<sup>th</sup> century houses were built with rooms “all in a line” with one room after another; in the late 30s houses assumed a more square appearance with kitchen and dining room “extended out on the back.” Houses were covered in wooden shingles. One house had “framing out of the deck of an old schooner, four to six inches thick.” Many used ship’s ballast stones as foundation. Islanders cooked with wood or oil stoves until electricity was run to the island in 1948 when they were then faced with a “\$2 dollar a month light bill.” Before that residents used kerosene lamps; “if you had a mantle lamp, a gaslight, you were wealthy.”

In “Banker fashion,” families in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century had several outbuildings, including smokehouse, one or two-seat privies, and coal or woodhouse. They also had chicken pens, gardens, and burn-piles for garbage. Today, in 2004, many of the locals continue to have several small buildings on their property for workrooms or storage (Figure 7.8.2).

Most Ocracokers caught rainwater in cisterns. Villagers had a “pitcher pump” in their kitchen sink to pump the water inside. “It was lousy, it was yellow,” recalled a resident. “It had wigglers – mosquito eggs - in it. They’d catch the water off the roof in rain gutters which

drained to a cistern or rain barrel.” When the Ocracoke Historic District was established in 1990, over two hundred structures were identified as having historic value.



Figure 7.8.2. Ocracoke Yard with Nets.

### **7.8.2. Relation to Other Villages and Beyond**

Despite the close proximity of Ocracoke and Hatteras Islands, there was “not a tremendous amount of interaction” between villages before the highway was built. Ocracoke was more oriented toward communities to the south and east, such as Atlantic, Morehead City,

and Washington, North Carolina, as this followed freight and mail boat routes. Before 1845, Ocracoke was part of Carteret County, and villagers traveled to Beaufort if needing to visit the county seat. Ocracoke and Hatteras Islands were connected primarily through rotations of Coast Guard personnel and shared fishing or hunting activities; intermarriages occurred between islands, but in some Ocracoker's minds Hatteras villages were a world apart.

When father came to Ocracoke and asked for my mother's hand, my grandfather started crying. He said, "Why are you crying? Don't you want her to marry me?" Grandfather said, "I don't mind her marrying you, but I don't want you to take her up to the Cape Woods!"

A trip to Hatteras was a big outing that took about three hours in a single-cylinder gas boat. "My God," said a villager. "You'd think you were going to New York."

Villagers had dealings with nearby Portsmouth Islanders, and recalled when some one hundred people lived there before the 1933 storm. "A lot of the last ones come over here," explained a man. "Then about 1937 they put that Coast Guard station [in Portsmouth] out of commission."

Ocracokers traveled beyond their island for work, whether it was in the Coast Guard, military service, or commercial fishing. A villager explained that his father was fishing for sturgeon with a Hatteras man at one of the two camps at Nags Head and Kill Devil Hills when the Wright Brothers took their first flight in 1903. The men were struggling to remove sharks from the net when they witnessed the airplane fly a short distance and fall. "The next time they flew it just a little farther." A woman left the island for two years to live in Black Mountain in west North Carolina. When she returned, she said the difference between the mountain community and her island home was "like the sky was lowered."

Like Hatteras Islanders, Ocracoke men commonly left the island in the 19<sup>th</sup> century working on freight schooners from the West Indies to New York, and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century a

veritable pipeline of travelers existed up the Atlantic seaboard due to Coast Guard and dredge boat jobs. Ocracokers were more likely to travel to northern cities such as Norfolk, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York than inland cities such as Raleigh; Alton Ballance's father worked up and down the coast on a 476-foot Army Corps of Engineer hopper dredge (A. Ballance 1989). The out-migration in the twentieth century occurred roughly between the end of World War II and the 1970s, when the tourist economy began picking up steam (ibid).

About half of Ocracoke's permanent population is a direct descendant of the island's early settlers. The prominent surnames of native Ocracokers include Ballance, Garrish, Gaskill, and O'Neal. Although most families live in nuclear units, the small island makes visiting and growing up together a fact of life. There is a strong sense of extended family cohesion and interdependency. To outsiders and newcomers, this translates into "clannishness," but to native islanders, it is simply a meaningful and lasting kin-based foundation within the flux and flow of tourism. Although the native families are overwhelmingly white and Protestant, Ocracoke has long had a family of African-American residents, only one of whom remains today. In recent years, there has been a significant influx of Hispanic residents, introducing the largest new ethnic influx in the island's history. Although speaking a different language and tending to be Catholic, the Hispanic residents have more in common with native Ocracokers than white, upper-income newcomers in their reverence for and reliance on family ties, as well as a strong work ethic (Nunn 2002).

### **7.8.3. School**

Ocracoke's first school, called "Captain Wilson's," was started in Ellen Robinson's home in 1870 to accommodate the children of Coast Guard families. But, a rivalry developed between the "Creekers" who lived along Silver Creek and the "Pointers" who lived across the creek near

the present day lighthouse, and this resulted in the emergence of two schools: Creekers School and Pointers School, the latter temporarily closing after a storm washed it across the road (Ocracoke High School 1973). Students attended the Lodge at the turn of the century, offering grades one through seven in the first floor of the Oddfellow's Lodge. These early institutions were "pay" schools, supported by families who could afford to education their children. Education was thus fragmented, occurring as little as three months per year in a variety of places.

The first public school was built in 1917, but schooling was not much steadier. In 1919 Hyde County cut short the school year by five months, closing the Ocracoke School for lack of funds. "My parents decided then that it was time for us to go away to school," recalled a villager. Several children were sent to a private Methodist school in Misenheimer, North Carolina, or to Washington to the Collegiate Institute. Others attended St. Paul's Episcopal school in Beaufort. Children were exposed to different people and dialects; "they thought we islanders had a very distinct accent and we thought they did. I heard some of the girls say, "Let's go down to the branch [i.e., creek]." I had no idea what a branch was except a branch off a tree."

Before 1931 the Ocracoke School did not offer high school, and some islanders boarded with relatives in Hatteras to finish there. An Ocracoke schoolteacher described the informal way she was first exposed to the island in 1936. Her nephew had visited the island and could only remember his proprietor as "Aunt Mame." "So, I wrote a letter to Aunt Mame, Ocracoke, North Carolina. I got an answer from Uncle Gary." She wrote "Uncle Gary" that her family would be down. They "found their way" to Atlantic, and took the mail boat to Ocracoke. They vacationed with no electricity or telephone, and rowed across Silver Lake daily for a pail of ice. That summer they purchased an old house, and began staying at the island annually before accepting full-time teaching jobs at the school in 1948.

In 1948 the school had a faculty of five to teach grades one through 12. “It was a wonderful place to teach,” she reported, “because we lived so far from Hyde County seat that we couldn’t go to all of the faculty meetings.” She described Ocracoke children as “bright and eager to learn” fascinated that the “same Atlantic Ocean where they played and enjoyed life was the one that brought the early English expeditions to Carolina.” She found that the islanders in general had a “great deal of talent in dramatics and music.” When the school had concerts, the “adults joined in. It was a small community.” Classes were small as well; an islander explained that it was easy being the Valedictorian, as he was the only graduate.

It was not unusual for students to leave Ocracoke to pursue higher education. “They would simply go and live with relatives. There are a good many older people who got their education away from Ocracoke.”

The K-12 Ocracoke School that operates today was built in 1971 in a modern-style architecture that was somewhat controversial in the village. During construction, students simply met in the Methodist church Sunday school rooms. “For as long as I can remember,” wrote Alton Ballance, both a former student and teacher at the Ocracoke School, “school has been released early for funerals.” This was likely due to many people being related to the dead, as well as the need for the schoolyard as extra parking space (A. Ballance 1989, 151).

#### **7.8.4. Church**

Ocracoke, like most Banker villages, originally had one Methodist church (established in 1828) that eventually fractured after the national church split over the issue of slavery in 1844. Ocracoke’s Methodist Episcopal by default became the Methodist Episcopal South, and then lay dormant during the Civil War period for lack of a preacher. With a new preacher arriving on the

island in 1869 the “scattered fragments of a once happy church” joined together and became active again (Howard 2003, 2). But, some members of the choir were unhappy about a new emphasis on singing hymns by note as opposed to ear, nor could they afford to take music classes to learn to read the new hymns, so they sent a delegation to Marshallberg to persuade the headmaster of the northern Methodist to start a church on Ocracoke (A. Ballance 1989). Thus, the Northern Methodist Episcopal, or Wesley Chapel, was founded on Ocracoke in 1885, establishing a rival congregation until the churches were united in 1937. As in Avon, villagers enjoy telling the story of the southern church singing, “Will there be any stars in my crown?” and the other answering, “No, not one.”

The same year that the Methodist churches united, “a Hatteras Island group representing the Assembly of God Church came to Ocracoke to hold services” (A. Ballance 1989, 137). The Assembly of God presented an alternative to islanders who did not want to join the United Methodist church or who sought a more fervent method of worship; first they met in the Ocracoke School building, and later on Elijah Styron’s porch. In 1940 Styron donated land for the construction of a church (Figure 7.8.3). A villager who joined the Assembly of God explained that, unlike the Methodist, one was required to “be saved and except Christ as your savior” (ibid).



Figure 7.8.3. Former Assembly of God Church in New Location.  
Photo by B. Garrity-Blake.

“We spent almost all day at church,” recalled a villager, describing an afternoon and evening session of bible study in addition to the morning’s sermon. As no Methodist church was located at “the Point” on the other side of the creek, Methodist “Pointers” usually ate Sunday dinner with families residing near their church rather than going home and returning again. Many “Pointers” belonged to the Assembly of God church on Lighthouse road. No matter to what church people belonged, everyone agreed that Sunday was no time to work.

I got up real early in the morning, and I was going to be so smart. I was going to catch some fish before my Dad and my sister got up. My sister came and said, “what in the world are you doing?” I said, “I’m fishing.” She said, “the devil will get you before the sun goes down.” I said, “why?” And, she said, “It’s Sunday.” We never fished on Sunday! And, I believed what she said. Boy, my little hands flew getting that line out of the water!

An old-timer declared, “The awfulest people on the island – sinful people – always tied their nets up and put them up, boats up until Monday morning. They kept the Sabbath day.”

After the Civil War, all slaves living on Ocracoke left the island; two African-Americans working on Ocracoke in the post-war period married and settled on the island, raising two children, one of whom married and bore 13 children on Ocracoke. As of 2004, one child was still on the island, Muzel Bryant, age 100, the only African-American resident. “Muze” currently lives with and is care for by one of the very children she helped raise. Muzel and her siblings were unable to attend the Ocracoke School during segregation, but the teachers stayed after school to teach them math and reading, and other students also helped educate the Bryant children. Muzel’s father, Leonard Bryant, served as sexton of the United Methodist church in the 1940s and 1950s, and his family attended regularly although within the racial boundaries acceptable at the time.

[The Bryants] sit in the rear [of the church], not because they have been requested to do so, but because that’s what they want to do. They join the others in communion, waiting until the rest of the congregation has participated before going forward...Leonard always wore a white coat, greeted the members cordially as they entered the building, showed visitors to their seats, passed out the hymnals and attended to the bell ringing (Goerch 1956, 118-119).

Since the Northern and Southern churches united, the United Methodist and the Assembly of God have been the dominant congregations and both hold sunrise services on or near Billy Goat Hill, “a large sand dune near the airstrip” (A. Ballance 1989, 132). The tradition of “sacrificing a large cedar” for the Methodist sanctuary at Christmas raises the eyebrows of new residents (ibid, 141). A Catholic service is offered today as well, as is a Christian Science meeting, reflecting the needs of a changing population. A growing group of artists, writers, musicians, and environmentalists lend a certain “new-age” vein of beliefs expressed on Ocracoke. Some point out that the church is no longer the center of village life; “our lives have

become more complicated,” said an Ocracoker. “There are more things to do” (A. Ballance 1989, 138).

#### **7.8.5. Stores**

Ocracoke general stores were no different than other establishments along the Banks in extending credit to villagers. Storekeepers kept ledgers and ran monthly accounts, although were not always paid promptly. A storekeeper’s daughter recalled her father’s regular monthly ledger, and then another more informal system for customers who made occasional purchases.

They’d say, “You can put this on a bag.” He’d use a paper bag to record the purchase and stick it in a file. Sometimes there would be hundreds of those accounts, maybe one or two items charged on each. Some paid and some didn’t.

Storekeepers banked on the mainland, sending receipts via freight boat to Washington. “The boatman deposited the money in the bank as he did for all the merchants here on the island.” Freight boat captains also delivered orders to sawmills and picked up lumber.

J.W. McWilliams Company was in operation until the Depression, offering an impressive array of goods like shoes, dresses, jewelry, and decorative figurines as well as typical items. When the proprietor became ill, islander Amasa Fulcher, former lighthouse keeper, managed it until branching out and beginning his own store in 1918, which later became the Community Store. Other stores on the “Creek” side were operated by A.B. Howard, M.L. Piland, Walter Cleveland O’Neal, Charlie McWilliams, Charlie Minor O’Neal, and Isaac “Big Ike” O’Neal. On the “Point” side was Albert Styron’s store, still operating as of 2004, and 1940s stores run by the Garrish brothers (Jesse and Danny) and Clarence Scarborough. The village had a couple of small ice cream shops as well, such as John Gaskin’s where people could get milkshakes, shaved ice, and sherbet.

If villagers wanted an alternative to clothing offered in catalogues or at stores, many of the women sewed, including Elecia Garrish who, like boat builders of the time, required no pattern. “Just tell her what you wanted and she made it.”

Early hotels included the Pamlico Inn, built by the Taylor family in the western part of the village on the sound. The Gaskill family purchased it in 1915, and built a long pier that was subsequently used by the mail boat.

#### **7.8.6. Pastimes and Childhood Activities**

Ocracoke children spent much time swimming and boating in Silver Lake. “There was a little wharf that ran out in the lake in front of our house, and I’ve fallen overboard many times.” A villager recalled getting pulled from school by her mother for the remainder of the year because a relative had dreamt she drowned en route; this suggests that parents were not complacent about their children’s water activities.

“By the time we were six or seven years old,” said an old-timer, “we learned how to handle a boat, mostly sailboats at the time.” Boys would sail to the north end of the island to several fish camps and camp out. “It used to seem like you were a long way from home down there.” They thought nothing of catching horses and riding them on “moonshiny nights up and down these roads.” Although free-roaming, the horses were owned. “It didn’t make any difference whose they were. People didn’t care about it as long as we didn’t mistreat them.”

Children played the baseball-like “Cat” where the batter is out when the opposing team hits him with the ball, and a version of hide-and-seek called “Meehonkey.” For Cat, “older ladies would wind yarn into the size of a baseball and take the tongues of old shoes to cover them with.” Other games were called “Running Through” and “Goose in the Middle,” versions

of tag. “Comesie Comesie” was similar to “I-Spy.” They played a prank called “Rosin String,” where a string was tied to someone’s windowsill, and rosin rubbed up and down on it, vibrating the house. “Run them crazy,” recalled an old-timer. Other games included “Lucky Strike, Lucky Strike” and “King Stick.”

Kids picked up bottles and turned them in for a deposit:

Nobody thought anything about throwing stuff down. It was like, “Well, it’ll build up the beach, sand will catch on it – littering? No, there ain’t nothing to that.” But, bottles, they’d just throw them out along the side of the road so you wouldn’t have much trouble picking them up. We had these crates we stuck them in. If you got six crates you got another crate of drinks. Drinks free, or your deposit, whichever one you wanted. We couldn’t wait to get six, we always blew it on candy or something.

The Ocracoke School held community square dances two nights a week in the 1940s and 50s. “Ocracoke was noted for square dancing,” recalled a villager. “People came here in the summer because they loved to dance.” People came down from Hatteras Island or sailed from Washington. “They’d come over on the [two-masted sailboats known as] bugeyes. They always had plenty of corn liquor with them.” Dances were also held at the Pamlico Inn, the Spanish Casino, and at the old Doxsee clam factory and hunting lodge complex. Fiddlers included “Din Widdle” Williams, his son Sam Keech Williams, and Thomas O’Neal. Tom O’Neal helped form a group called the Graveyard Band, most of them Garrish’s, which played dances and parties from the 1920s to the 1950s (A. Ballance 1989). Edgar Howard played banjo off-island, and he and his brother Walter were successful jug-band musicians. Later Edgar and guitarist Maurice Ballance played together. Edgar Howard’s tombstone says, “You Ain’t Heard Nothing Yet,” reflecting both his love for music and his sense of humor. Some callers were Mack Williams and Harvey Wahab. Favorite tunes included “Turkey in the Straw,” “Soldier’s Joy,” and “Under the Double Eagle.”

An old-timer shared a tale about dancing on the ice as a teenager:

Northern Pond froze over and a whole lot of us girls and boys went out there, we were round dancing. We saw the sea going under the ice. You'll fall in if you get close to an air pocket. We got too close and fell into it. Our clothes like to froze on us before we got home.

Like on Hatteras, villagers held "basket parties" as fundraisers for church or school.

"Young girls 18 or 19 would fix a basket with ribbon, real pretty. Maybe you'd have sweets, fried chicken, hot rolls [inside]." Young men would bid in response to the question, "How much am I offered for my basket?" They had fun trying to outbid the girl's beau, sometimes driving the price to \$20 or \$30 dollars.

The first establishment showing movies on the island was called the Ocean Waves, operating during the World War II era; shortly thereafter the Ocracoke Theater opened in the Wahab hotel along with a roller skating rink.

A resident remembered annual visits from a traveling Chautaugua troop that brought their tent and performances to small villages throughout the United States from the turn of the century until the 1930s. Another islander recalled the Hyde County Chamber of Commerce holding their annual convention on Ocracoke in July 1939, sponsoring a dance, fish fry, and a fiddler's contest.

Women held quilting parties; the hostess would often feed the group dinner in exchange for helping her make a quilt and help others with their quilts as well. Young girls got together and had rag-sewings for rug-weavings.

Ocracokers demonstrated a flair for telling stories, jokes, and superstitions, and enjoyed get-togethers where such could be shared. An old-timer relayed this humorous tale about a preacher who set sail for Hatteras after holding a weeklong camp revival in Ocracoke.

Monday morning the preacher was aground in the sound. Granddaddy and his cousin were fishing there, and one said, "Buddy ain't that the preacher there shoaled on the reef?" Says, "He's been in O'cock two weeks trying to tell us how to get to Heaven, and

he can't find his way from O'cock to Hatterse!" They called it O'cock and Hatterse. I always tell that.

Other favorite topics included how people earn their nicknames. An old-timer describes how one of his best friends acquired the name "Conch."

We was small little boys out mullet fishing. We'd go with two boats, pole along, he was on one stern and I was on the other. Two old men were shoving ahead and we're sitting on the back kicking and laughing. One fisherman was very contrary, wouldn't take no fooling off of you. They'd holler out "set away!" and we were supposed to jump overboard [and set the net]. He said, "set away," and I jumped overboard. I turned and saw the other boy still setting on the boat, la la la, singing and having the biggest time you ever saw. The fisherman took that gourd and hit him right in the head and knocked him overboard. Said, "Conch, take that!"

"Tell about the time when you and your brother got in that tub and went across the sound," said a fisherman's wife.

There were 14 in our family. Three sets of twins. My other brother was twin of me. We were little boys sitting in a washtub. The tide come up and we floated off. There was a hole in the bottom and we had to hold our finger over it so the water wouldn't come in and fill it up and sink us and we'd drown. And, we drifted way off in the channel. The wind aired up a bit and the tub kept going towards the reef. Our parents had to send a man with a motorboat to get us.

Some of the phrases Ocracokers used made no sense unless one knew the story that went with them. "Too late, I've done promised Freener" is a phrase that was used when someone was too late in asking for a favor. The story dates back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Alexander Garrish's offer of marriage was repeatedly refused by the woman he loved. Finally, she changed her mind, but by then he had fallen for another woman, Epherena Fulcher, whose nickname was "Freena," pronounced "Freener" by islanders (Howard 2001, 1). "Too late," he told her, "I've done promised Freener."

Another favorite story among Ocracokers pertains to the origin of the name "Joe Bells" for the bright red and yellow gaillardia flower (*Gaillardia aristata*) that grows all over the sandy banks. Joe Bell is said to be a broken-hearted man who moved to the island in the early

twentieth century to forget his pain. Some say he planted the gaillardia flowers in his yard simply because he thought they were pretty, while others say he planted them all over the island in tribute to the woman he loved. Whatever the case, the flower is found throughout the Banks and is called “Joe Bell” by Ocracoke and Hatteras Islanders alike. Legend-collector Charles H. Whedbee offers an account of Joe Bell that is not specific to Ocracoke: like a “latter day Johnny Appleseed,” Joe Bell planted the flowers throughout the Banks in memory of his departed wife, after finding them growing in her inland garden around a seashell (Whedbee 1978, 92).

Ghost stories are prevalent on the island, including eerie accounts of apparitions sighted at Springer’s Point, countless cemetery tales, and supernatural overtones to the disappearance of a hermit-like figure named Old Quork shipwrecked on the island in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Payne 1985). One day Quork (pronounced “Cock”) defied God and nature and took his skiff out in a storm to retrieve his nets in Pamlico Sound. He was never seen again, but his disappearance inspired fishermen to refrain from fishing each March 16<sup>th</sup>. Islanders are not sure if Quork really existed but think that he probably did, as a creek, a point, a hammock, and a hill are all named after him, and are in the vicinity of where the eccentric islander allegedly disappeared. The name, however, could be a “derivation of the...word quaking, (which is) a low wet marsh or hammock...from the Middle English term quaghe” (Payne 1985, 156).

Some of the men passed the time making “meal wine,” an alcoholic beverage made from fermented corn meal that a resident jokingly called Ocracoke champagne. One recipe called for the following: four pounds of corn meal, five pounds of sugar, four gallons of water, three or four packs of yeast, and a box of raisins. These ingredients were stored in a jug or crock, covered, and set aside for five or six days. More sugar could be added during the process, as well as peaches or other fruit. Once the brew quit “working” it was strained through cheesecloth

and was then ready to drink. “If a rat happened to fall into the mixture and drowned, you’ll probably want to wring him out and toss him out the window” (P. Howard 2003a, 2).

### **7.8.7. Medical Care**

Ocracoke had midwives who attended births and offered local remedies such as poultices, sassafras and lavender tea, pellagra tea, and asafetida. Early midwives included: “Aunt Hettie Tom,” Lola Wahab Williams, and “Aunt Lot” or Charlotte O’Neal. Charlotte O’Neal would “take a little piece of cloth and scorch it,” using it to tie a “big seedless raisin” on the baby’s freshly cut umbilical cord. “The raisin had the drying effect; as the raisin dried, the cord dried along with it.” “Miss Charlotte” delivered 523 babies on Ocracoke and Portsmouth Island, until a local woman, trained as a nurse, took over.

A lady asked, “Was babies ever born on this island?” I said, “Lady, we had only sailboats at the time, little boats. There was no way you could get them hardly to the mainland to have a baby born. It would have to be born at Ocracoke.”

As was the custom, local girls were often hired as live-in helpers for new mothers after the birth of a baby. Mildred Bryant, a member of the only black family living on the island, recalled working at age fourteen for a new mother, earning \$8 dollars a week (A. Ballance 1989, 108). Elsie Garrish and Kathleen Bragg, both native Ocracokers, were among the first nurses to serve the island.

Charlotte O’Neal’s grandson remembered her as “a little short woman all drawn up.” He described her method of removing carbuncles. First, she would apply thin slices of salt pork to, say, the back of the neck where the infection was. A rag was tied to secure the pork, and the patient left it there for several hours. “The salt pork draws it to a head, pulls it up,” he explained. Then she settled on the porch with the patient and her tin of snuff, preparing for the procedure.

While dipping snuff, she'd remove a thread from the inner seam of her skirt, and make a lasso for the carbuncle. The puss was raised little by little by the tightening string, coming out "like toothpaste."

Sarah Gaskill, born in 1879, described a folk method of alleviating asthma and croup or "tissick" (Ocracoke High School 1973). She was afflicted with the condition until her father sought this advice: bore a hole in an old tree at the height of the patient. Put the patient's nail and hair clippings in the hole. Plug the hole, and return home without looking back at the tree. Gaskill never had a bout of asthma after her father followed the instructions. A spoonful of turpentine with sugar was administered for colds, and a cotton ball soaked in asafedita and hung around the house on strings kept "diseases away" (A. Ballance 1989, 120). An island man was known for ridding people of warts by uprooting marsh rushes, rubbing the wart with the plant, and replanting it in the same hole. "For a stingray sting, they'd take and cut open a live chicken – it had to be a black one, though – and they'd lay it wide open right on the sting" (ibid, 121). Islanders believed that sick people needed to be kept in a darkened room, including one of the first North Carolinians to be cured of lockjaw, an islander who was sequestered for 25 days and given strychnine poison by a local doctor (A. Ballance 1989, 121). The fact that pneumonia was sometimes called "old people's friend" for shut-ins and those who were chronically bedridden indicates that the condition brought about a swift end once taking hold (ibid, 131).

Islanders also took advantage of traveling dentists. "I remember one from Concord named Dr. Herring," said a villager. "I can still smell that room and that paddle [foot pedal] and hear that drill."

Navy doctors cared for villagers during World War II, and civilian physicians periodically took up residence in Ocracoke. "We had a doctor that came here and he had one

kind of pill that he dished out, little pink pills,” recalled a villager, wondering if the pill contained Calomel. “They’d make us all sick.” A Dr. Angle not only tended to illnesses, but “sold soft drinks and candy and I guess medicine.” A family doctor in the village watched children walk by his office twice a day on their way to school. His comment to a parent illustrates the close nature of the community. “He told my mother, ‘I get a charge out of those girls of yours. They go by here mornings all nice and clean and neat, and when they go home in the afternoons, that little one is muddy. Her stockings are down.’”

Early 20<sup>th</sup> century Bankers were known to contract tuberculosis. The prominent storekeeper J.W. McWilliams who ran what was almost a department store had to leave the island for Black Mountain because he contracted TB. Some succumbed to pneumonia. “I had typhoid fever when I was four year old” recalled an old-timer. Before vaccines were developed children died of diphtheria. Others suffered from colitis and the flu, hitting hard on the island around 1936. “The doctors would try to give them IV solutions,” recalled a nurse. “Some were saved but a lot died.”

The Ocracoke Health Center opened in 1982, and the National Health Service Corps assigned a doctor to the island shortly before the center opened. The federal program has since been dropped, however, and doctor’s salaries must be paid “from local revenues” (A. Ballance 1989, 130).

Ocracoke got its first ambulance when the father of a shark-bite victim donated one to the rescue squad. Before the ambulance, rescuers simply transported patients in automobiles. They built an emergency clinic on the island after five people were electrocuted when their catamaran mast hit a power line in the 1980s; the bodies were stored in a National Park Service outbuilding until arrangements were made.

### 7.8.8. Early Transportation

Ocracokers have stories extending several generations back attesting to the importance of boats and islanders' efforts to protect and care for vessels. A villager born in 1910 discussed her maternal grandfather who was "an old sea captain" of a double-masted freight schooner. He was in Charleston at the onset of the Civil War; he "sneaked out" of the harbor and set sail for Ocracoke.

Came to this inlet and went on up the Roanoke River and sunk the boat in the river. Only the top of the mast was sticking out, and he took the sails ashore and buried them. He said, "No damn Yankee was going to get that boat." Then he came home. The boat rested there until the war was over. Then he took barrels and pontooned it. And raised it up and sailed again.

Villagers got around by sail skiff like other Outer Bankers, but were more familiar with a boat that originated in the Carteret County area: the Core Sound sharpie. "That was a big flat-bottomed sail boat, very shallow draft center-board type. It would go in a foot of water – they could raise the center board all the way to just nothing but the little skeg in the stern." The sharpie was suited for waters made up of "sloughs and channels and big enormous flats that go from two or three feet of water to bare at low water."

Ocracokers traveling to the mainland usually boarded the mail boat to Morehead City. They could also ride the freight boat to Washington for a dollar and a half before World War II; "nine hours and you slept on the deck and many got seasick." Traveling north to Norfolk was more arduous, struggling through thirteen miles of sand tracks and clouds of mosquitoes and greenhead flies, boarding the Hatteras Inlet ferry at Styron's Hill, and then taking the Midgett Express for the long portion of the trip, crossing all of Hatteras Island to arrive at the Oregon Inlet ferry. "It was like going on a safari across a desert to get to Manteo," remarked a villager. It was common to get stranded along this journey, and travelers often received help from the

various Coast Guard stations, such as food, water, or mechanical assistance. “To this day old folks will pack an extra change of clothes and food for a day trip, because you never know if you’ll get stranded!”

In 1938 a resident began a taxi service from the village to Hatteras Inlet, navigating sand paths in a station wagon. The ferry, run by Hatteras resident Frazier Peele, began in 1950 as a passenger ferry and expanded to a four-car operation by the time the state bought his business in 1957. “The [Hatteras Inlet] ferry consisted of taking a boat, putting a platform on it, taking boards for a ramp and running the car up on the boat. Just running the car off in shallow water, and off you went; there were no docks or anything.” Peele was contracted by the state at first, almost getting fired when he decided to break policy and run the ferry from Hatteras to Ocracoke on the ocean side on an especially pretty day.

Most Ocracokers saw their first car when Hatteras villager Fred Stowe brought his Model-T over and charged one dollar per ride. Islanders began purchasing their own cars in 1925, although many had no use for them due to the self-contained nature of the village. “If you could get three or four hundred dollars together and buy a Model T-Ford they would load it on the deck of the [freight] boat and lash two skiffs together and put planks on it to get it to shallow water.” Coast Guard personnel and storeowners were the first who could afford cars, purchasing Model-T’s and then Model-A’s in the 1930s. “My grandfather didn’t know how to stop his Model-T and drove it through the stable doors,” an islander laughed.

Small airplanes became a presence in the 1930s, occasionally landing on the hard-packed beach or taxiing right to the door of the Wahab hotel (Howard 2004). In the late 1950s a retired Air Force pilot moved to the island and started a flying service, making use of the newly paved road leading from the village to the National Park Service campground. Sam Jones, owner of

Berkeley Iron and Machine Works in Norfolk, lobbied for an airstrip, and in the early 1960s the FAA identified the “White-Cowper” airstrip as W95 (ibid, 3).

During World War II the Navy built the first concrete section of road on Ocracoke leading to the ammunition depot, a set of buildings set into a sand bank. The road from Ocracoke village to Hatteras Inlet was paved in 1957. The completion of the highway and the building of the Oregon Inlet Bridge were pushed by an organization known as the “All Seashore Highway Association,” of which Ocracoke entrepreneur Stanley Wahab was vice-president. The highway necessitated driver’s licenses, so teachers held night classes for adults wishing to cram for their State driving test. “The minute we got the hard surface road,” recalled an islander, “they sent somebody down to give the tests and everybody had to take them.”

State ferry service began in earnest when private ferry captains sold out in the late 1950s, early 1960s and the state offered four runs daily to Hatteras and a run to Cedar Island in Carteret County. Islanders complained about the long three-day journey to the county seat of Swan Quarter on the mainland; they also claimed they were discriminated against in having to pay the costs of a ferry ride to leave their island. In 1977 a third ferry service was launched, transporting villagers between the island and Swan Quarter; although residents still had to pay to ride the ferry, they could purchase an annual pass for a discounted rate.

### **7.8.9. Early Communication**

Islanders simply wrote letters until telephones became widespread on Ocracoke; the arrival of the mail boat was a daily source of excitement whether it was receiving news or hearing other folk’s news. Once radios became available in the 1920s, islanders gathered to listen to fights, shows, and music. “Dad would sit there a rocking and listening to the old

fiddlers on the radio from Nashville,” recalled a resident. When televisions were introduced in the 1950s, reception was bad and only one or two stations could be picked up. By the 1970s people were worried, however, that television – as well as the growing crowds of tourists - would quicken the erosion of the local dialect.

#### **7.8.10. Postal Service**

The first post office on the Outer Banks opened in Ocracoke village in 1840. By the turn of the century the mail boats, following a completely different route than that of Hatteras Island, sailed south from the village to Carteret County. The route stopped at Morehead City, and included points between such as Portsmouth, Atlantic, Davis, and Beaufort. Before the highway was built to the north end of Carteret County to Atlantic, two 45-foot long mail boats with cabin and awning ran between Ocracoke and Morehead, taking one day up and one day back, in opposite directions. “The crew would simply switch boats in Atlantic,” said local historian Earl O’Neal. “One boat was called the *Morehead City* and the other was the *Ocracoke*.” The mail boat captains were known as “Mr. Gus” and “Mr. Pinter” (A. Ballance 1989, 217).

Once the highway was built from Morehead City to Atlantic in the 1920s, the *Morehead City* was put out of operation, and mail was trucked to Atlantic. The mail boat from Ocracoke continued to run, leaving the island at 7:00 am and reaching Atlantic around 11:00 am, then returning to the island around 4:00 that afternoon. This run was operated by Captain Will Willis, and included a stop on Portsmouth Island where “Henry Piggot...would be waiting for them in his little skiff” (A. Ballance 1989, 218). Captain Elmo Murray Fulcher ran the *Aleta* for 17 years from the late 1930s until the State took over the ferry service (Figure 7.8.4). He worked seven days a week, every other week; his partner George O’Neal took the route on alternative weeks.

On off-weeks the men fished. Ansley O’Neal received the State mail boat contract, and continued until the service was discontinued in 1964 (A. Ballance 1989, 219).



Figure 7.8.4. Model of Mailboat *Aleta* in Graveyard of Atlantic Museum  
Photo by B. Garrity-Blake.

The mail boat took passengers as well to and from the Carteret County mainland. Ice was brought over on both the freight boats and the mail boat. “I remember running with a pair of tongs and a block of ice, my feet burning in the hot sand,” recalled a villager. “I had to go from shade tree to shade tree, we traveled by narrow foot paths. I think I had an ice cube by the time I got home.”

In 1917 Pamlico Sound froze over, and the mail boat was stuck for days. An islander recalled the big freeze:

The little mail boat from Atlantic froze outside of Portsmouth Island. A wooden boat can’t move in the ice due to the ice will cut the wood and the boat will get a leaking and sink. She froze all around her, and [the captain] got out and walked to Portsmouth Island on the ice.

During the freeze men shot ducks that were lighting in a waterhole in the ice, and the Bluff Shoal lighthouse keeper was stranded until villagers chopped a channel through the ice. “He said the lack of food wasn’t worrying him,” recollected an old-timer. “His tobacco was worrying him.”

Early postmasters on Ocracoke include John McWilliams, Ed Farrow, Billy Howard, Tommy Howard, and Elizabeth Howard. Elizabeth Howard worked the post office during World War II when it was so busy the government employed a clerk to assist her. “We had mail to come from Hatteras as well as Atlantic, North Carolina,” she recalled (A. Ballance 1989, 217). The post office was housed in community stores until a facility was built in 1952.

#### **7.8.11. Early Trade**

The earliest settlers on Ocracoke who were not hired to pilot vessels were, like Hatteras settlers, stockmen who had received land grants to raise cattle on the island. As fencing was expensive, the natural barrier of water was desirable. “They shipped the hides back to England,” explained Ocracoke historian Earl O’Neal. “They probably just destroyed the meat – they certainly didn’t eat it all” (Personal Communication 2004).

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup>, Ocracoke boys often signed aboard cargo vessels that ran fruit, molasses, coconuts, and sugar from the West Indies. “Castle Rock used to be a boat terminal,” recollected a villager, “and that is where they unloaded their cargo and taken it in lighter boats to Washington.” Boys signed on as young as fourteen. “I remember hearing my father all my life talk about St. Kitts, Dominica, and Puerto Rico,” said a resident.

Villagers regularly sailed to the mainland to trade salted fish for farm products; “That was the only way they could get rid of their stuff” reported an old-timer:

My father had a certain fellow over there; they made an agreement that he would furnish him with things from the farm and he'd furnish him with fish. He'd send him over some pigs and then oyster and clams, fish, anything out of the water.

A resident recalled his grandfather's story about picking up a keg of flour while running freight:

They were living up Trent then. He went over to his neighbor's house and they got a bed sheet and spread it out on the living room floor. Rolled the barrel onto the sheet and then took a handsaw and sawed the barrel in half to divide it between them. The flour was packed so tight very little fell out. He took his home and couldn't sleep all night just thinking about that light bread he was going to have in the morning.

A woman remembered watching islanders roll barrels of flour across Silver Lake from the Creek to the Point when the water was iced over.

Although Frisco and to a lesser extent Avon are known for the yaupon trade, Ocracoke villagers also processed the tea and sold it around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century for fifty cents a bushel. A tea-processor's daughter exclaimed how much she detested the bitter brew:

I said, "Daddy, I'll never drink none of that yaupon." He said, "You don't know what you're going to do before you die." So, after I was married and old, I had the measles and that's all I could drink. I hain't drank some since.

Ocracoke experienced frequent shipwrecks off its shores, and islanders benefited from cargo washed ashore from wrecks. A villager recalled the wreck of the *Victoria S* in 1925 that scattered cypress lumber on the beach. "We'd use our horse and cart to haul lumber from across the beach to the sound side and put it into the boat and bring it on up to the village. That was a big time when those sail vessels went ashore." The *Nomis*, also carrying lumber, wrecked in 1935.

Men from the island would go aboard and throw a lot of [cargo] out of the holds. They'd strip the ship of all the gear and bring it ashore and had what they called a vendue. These insurance companies would have them sell [salvaged items] to the highest bidder. The fellows would pile the lumber, and sometimes if they'd pile five piles they'd give them one.

Vendues were advertised, and took place two or three weeks after the wreck. A watchman stayed by the wreck until the auctioneers arrived. Mainlanders would come bid on the cargo and any ship parts such as sails, turnbuckles, lanterns, port lights, etc. Islanders would use remaining lumber for fences or framing in houses.

Freight boats ran from Washington to Ocracoke; an islander recalled two-masted bugeye vessels some 60-feet long, which were eventually outfitted with Lathrop engines. An important item shipped to the island was ice, delivered from Washington in 300-pound blocks. If dead bodies were transported to or from the island, the vessel's flag was hung upside down at half-mast. The *Bessie Virginia* was the last freight boat to run between Ocracoke and Washington, North Carolina before NC 12 and the Oregon Inlet Bridge made this mode of shipping obsolete in 1963.

Ocracokers benefited off venture capitalist that took up residence on the island, such as the Harvey Doxsee family of New York who ran a clam factory, and wealthy industrialist Sam Jones of Swan Quarter. Jones married a local woman, and was more invested in the village than other businessmen who frequented the Outer Banks to hunt or fish. He built three houses on Ocracoke, including the sprawling Berkeley Manor, and hired local men as carpenters and maintenance workers. He built the Whittler's Club in the 1950s that provided a pier and berth for his wealthy visitors and a clubhouse used for Boy Scout meetings and a place for men to sit and whittle. He had a horse named Ikey D. that he loved so much he insisted that he be buried beside the animal on his property known as Springer's Point. An islander recalled getting hired by Jones to bury the animal, and the graveside conversation:

Sam Jones said, "Stevie, take a note. I want my horse buried here. I want a white picket fence put around it. And, when I die, you people are the witness to this. I want to be buried standing up here with my horse." Later, we tried to bury Jones standing up. And couldn't. The water table was so high. He kept popping up. Nine out of ten don't

believe that, but I was right there. They laid him down. He's still there, nobody else there but his horse.

Stanley Wahab was a native Ocracoker and landowner who developed some of the first establishments looking toward the ocean beach: the Wahab Village Hotel, complete with movie theater and roller skating rink, and the Spanish Casino for dances. Wahab, who also taught school, built a generator-run electric plant in 1939 as well as the first water and ice plant in 1936. "We used to have greased pig contest at the roller rink and whoever caught the pig won," recalled a villager. "There was a movie two or three nights a week, in fact I have a ticket from the theater in 1939." The theater was built in 1914 and called the Ocean Wave. As the island was "dry" no beer was sold at the dance halls, but people brought their "meal tea" or imported moonshine. "There was a drunk now and then laying in the sand tracks on Saturday night." Wahab made the first telephone call in 1956 once Carolina Telephone and Telegraph established service. Wahab, like Jones, hired many locals and envisioned a tourist economy for the island, referring to Ocracoke as "the Bermuda of the United States" (A. Ballance 1989, 208).

#### **7.8.12. Commercial Fishing**

Before motorized vessels, Ocracoke fishermen often sailed to Hatteras Inlet, rowing there or back depending on the wind. They sometimes fished at night without lamps, seeing "by the light of pulling the net in." They had no ice. "We didn't have any way to sell fresh fish. We would have to salt it." Salted fish, usually mullet, was sent via freight boat to Washington, North Carolina and traded for corn, potatoes, and other produce, and later sold for cash. "[Merchants] would sell them on commission. If they sold a hundred pounds of mullet for ten dollars they would get 10 percent." Salting fish was necessary before ice became available in the 1930s, but residents of Little Washington had acquired a taste for salted Ocracoke mullet and continued to

purchase it through the 1960s. “We’d pack the salted mullet in barrels or lard cans with our names on it, and a truck would pick it up on the mainland and deliver it to people around Washington. Then, we’d get our cans back,” explained an islander. He added that salted fish was consumed in great quantities on the island as well, causing a local doctor to attribute the high sodium diet to a rash of women’s kidney ailments.

A “porpoise” rendering facility was built on Shell Island in 1797, and one to three crews of fifteen to eighteen men seined dolphins off Ocracoke Island from December to April up until the Civil War (Stick 1958). As it required “an outlay of about \$400 in nets and boats to get started again after the war,” it was not resumed on Ocracoke. A porpoise factory was, however, built in Hatteras Village in the 1880s (ibid, 229).

Clams and oysters were plentiful along the Outer Banks until the early twentieth century; Carolina schooners competed with Chesapeake Bay schooners in the oyster trade, ultimately decimating deepwater reefs with dredges. Ocracokers did not use the dredges; the heavier rigs came from mainland areas along Core and Pamlico Sounds. Ocracokers tonged for oysters in shallow waters inaccessible to sharpies and schooners, poling skiffs to areas such as Big Rock and Beacon Island. When motorized skiffs were introduced, “four, five boats would hook on to them,” getting towed to the oyster grounds.

“Another thing that caused the decline of oysters is storms,” a fisherman pointed out. “Hurricanes covered the beds up and killed them and the water got changed.” Some fishermen linked the sea-grass die-off of 1933 to smothered oysters. “When the grass died the sand began to shift of the shoals and a lot of the oyster beds were covered up.”

Clams were plentiful enough to support the Doxsee clam factory that ran from 1897 – 1920 on the southwest side of the creek or Windmill Point. Women were paid six cents an hour

to pick clams from freshly steamed shells for canning. Clams were brought in from as far as Carteret County across the sound; live terrapin turtles, themselves a lucrative “fishery” until the 1930s, were tossed into the hold full of bivalves so that they would walk around on the clams and maintain their freshness by “keeping their mouths shut.” A villager recalled working from six in the morning to six in the evening five or six days a week. This was the first opportunity for some islanders to make regular wages; the women decided to ask for a raise and drafted a young woman to visit the boss and make the request. “When she told them what she wanted, he said, Well, I reckon you need a raise if you’re going around in patent leather shoes to work.” Men were employed as packers or “dumpers,” dumping discarded shells.

When not selling to the clam factory, islanders loaded bushels of clams on boats and sailed them up to Hatteras and Buxton to sell, or delivered them to Washington. They dug clams for local consumption as well, particularly enjoying clam chowder. “Mother would chop the clams and cook them with the broth. Add potatoes and onions, a little bit of cornmeal and a bit of salt pork fried out. Cook it for an hour or two.” Unlike the New England style chowder, Bankers refrained from adding milk and used water instead. This may be related to the belief that one should not drink milk with fish, or could have developed when milk was scarce.

A villager recalled a period when clams were the only marketable product, so whole families were enlisted to rake clams whether they wanted to or not. Some used special rakes fashioned for clamming while others simply used yard rakes. “An old joke was that a lot of them would turn the rake upside down – they knew they had to be standing out there anyway, it was so much easier.” Islanders would take their clams to a fish house and dump them under the dock where they would remain alive until someone was ready to buy them. “All along under the dock was where you’d get them to buy.”

Commercial fishing became more profitable after the dredging of Cockle Creek and the construction of Silver Lake Harbor in 1931. Still, as the Depression took hold, many families were forced to relocate, albeit temporary in some cases, to large cities in search of employment. In 1939 “Ocracokers asked for a channel ten feet deep to entice some Hampton Roads fish packers to relocate at Ocracoke”; the dealers assured them that the dredging would not entice them to relocate, but the channel was dug during World War II to serve wartime installations, and then proved useful to fishermen (Dunbar 1956, 116).

Shrimp became lucrative after World War II and filled a hole left by the diminishing ocean sink-net fishery that targeted trout and croaker from the mid 1920s. “Shrimping kept Ocracoke going until it slacked off in the mid-fifties.” Before that period, shrimp and flounder “were the poorest; you couldn’t hardly sell them.” Old-timers did not consider shrimp fit to eat, much less market. “My dad had never eaten a shrimp in his life. He said it was trash food. It was hog food to him.” Once the market improved, Ocracoke fishermen rigged their boats with trawl nets. “In the early fifties there were 16 or 17 shrimp boats,” recalled a dealer. “In 1959 there were only two.” This was likely due to the hard freeze of 1958 that destroyed overwintering shrimp and froze fish in the ice, “their tails was up in the ice like lily sprouts.” Fishing in general became poor in the late fifties, and some people had to leave the island in search of work until commercial harvesting “started making a gradual comeback in the early 1960s.”

The freeze also had a positive impact, because up to that point I had never seen a large croaker in Pamlico Sound. The spring of 1958 the croakers had migrated far enough south, whereas, before, they’d been north of us in Chesapeake Bay. They came down around Cape Lookout, migrated around the inlets here and filled the sounds full. From then on we had plentiful fish, once they spawned here and had this area imprinted in their genetics or whatever, they kept returning back.

When fishing picked up, men gillnetted for bluefish, mullet, mackerel, grey trout, croaker and drum; they fished pound nets as well, a method viewed as slightly more lucrative than

others. Mullet was split for the roe before getting marketed. Ocracokers fry roe or “take it and put some in a jar. They put a teaspoon of salt, about a half a teaspoon of cayenne pepper, put the lid on it, put it in a hot water bath, and cook it for about three hours.” For a few years men were pound net fishing off New Jersey in the summertime. Crews haul seined through the 1960s, running dory operations along the beach for striped bass, blue fish, and drum (Figures 7.8.5-7). Until tourism picked up in the 1970s “the only way to make money was fishing. Trap nets, pound nets, oystering.” The gray trout fishery became abundant in the late 1970s to mid-1980s. Long haul nets or “drag nets” were 150-yard seines (today they are ten times that length). “On each boat we could tie together and circle the fish, like mullet.” Stake nets were 30-yards long and tied to stakes so they could swing with the tide. “My father and I caught the biggest catch of trout that was ever caught in a stake net – 9,000 pounds.”



Figure 7.8.5. Ocracoke Beach Seine Dory.  
Photo by B. Garrity-Blake.



Figure 7.8.6. “Have Mercy” and Ocracoke Fishermen.  
Photo by B. Garrity-Blake.



Figure 7.8.7. Picking Striped Bass from Net, Ocracoke.  
Photo by B. Garrity-Blake.

Fishermen began setting crab pots in the late 1950s, and did well until the late 1980s; “We had 53 crabbers unloading to this dock in 1985,” said an Ocracoke dealer, “and now we have two or three.” The Bay scallop fishery, typically “scooped” in January and February, has also waxed and waned over time. “They would use a clam rake with a bale of wire back of it and go along and scoop it up.” Some fishermen rigged motorboats with small scallop dredges. The

scallop beds became scarce in the late 1960s; they have since reappeared intermittently but are often consumed by huge schools of skates that migrate into the sounds each year.

From the 1970s to early 1980s fishermen experienced a warming trend that repeated itself in the late 1990s to the present. “We had no flounders this past winter. Croakers have been non-existent down south of here and in the sound, but there’s plenty in the Chesapeake Bay. What’s happening is the water is not getting cold enough to push the fish further south so they could return to our estuaries.” Fishermen also think that the changing orientation of offshore shoals and the inlet has something to do with the presence or absence of fish and crabs. “Back in the 30s when the shoals shifted, it would bring the fish in,” explained an Ocracoker. “The inlet went to the north going out but to the south it would kind of act like a pound net. The shoals would guide the fish in.”

Eugene Ballance and his brother and father refined the red drum fishery, historically a subsistence or side fishery, with improved nets and catching techniques to take advantage of a temporary window of opportunity in the market: the Gulf Coast’s appetite for red drum or “blackened red fish” (Figure 7.8.8). While restaurants sought red drum filets, severe net restrictions prevented Florida, Texas, and Louisiana fishermen from catching the fish, so the Ocracoke team obliged. The market was healthy from the late 1980s to the late 1990s until North Carolina fisheries managers greatly restricted the red drum fishery.



Figure 7.8.8. Eugene Ballance Preparing to Dock Skiff.  
Photo by B. Garrity-Blake.

Although fishermen often left their nets in pursuit of other occupations when fishing became poor, they nonetheless identified themselves as fishermen and extolled the benefits of working for oneself as opposed to “getting a job.” A villager described leaving the island to build a dredge for the State when fishing was in a down cycle in the early 1960s.

I wasn't one to be sitting around waiting for somebody to tell me how to do something I already knew how to do. My job was getting to me, my nerves was, because I was hating the job. I was eating Roloids by the roll a day. I had a chance to go and run that boat for Billy Smith. I never took another Rolaid, from day one, just relaxed, and this is where I want to stay. That's when I started fishing full-time.

Fishing full-time today, according to islanders, is more difficult than in the past; not only because of a barrage of complex regulations, but also because of the soaring costs of living.

Unless you have a boat big enough that you can follow the fish up and down the coast, different fisheries, the shrimp, the flounder, the scallops wherever they may be, you need another job. When I was growing up, the benefits were not as important then as they are now. When my first kid was born, the bill was only \$300 dollars. Now it's, what, \$5,000? The insurance premiums are unreal. Medications are unreal.

The act of fishing has become more complex, with the increased restrictions/multiple layers of bureaucracy as well as more high-tech instruments by which to fish. A fisherman who graduated from college but returned to full-time fishing said that his degree in mathematics helped him “in knowing how to operate equipment – electronics.” Fishermen also have had to adapt to a rapidly changing economy and market.

The biggest change is in the markets. New York, Philadelphia – in the past, anything you got would go there. Now, sometimes it’s not worth it to truck it that far. A lot of the local restaurants have more business so it’s changed from a bulk market to niche fisheries; what’s needed at a certain time of the year.

Although consumer demands for seafood may ensure a role for Ocracoke fishermen in the future, some worry that the larger economic and social context is less supportive of the domestic fishing industry and less attentive to the health of the natural resources upon which fishermen depend. With increased reliance on imported seafood, and more development on the island, there may not be a place for fishermen in the future. If fishermen disappear, according to a villager, “the whole lifestyle is lost.” He added that both fishermen and fish are in jeopardy if the larger society has little vested interest in their future. “Something you don’t depend on, you can’t be as interested in taking care of it.”

Recreational guide fishing has long been a good occupation on Ocracoke. Thurston Gaskill, who at age 84 in 1986 was the oldest guide on the island, described the evolution of sport fishing technology. Before the rod and reel were “hand lines – simple piece of line 50-yards long with eight ounces of lead three feet from the hook. You would have that coiled up on your hand or surf fishing you would have a little stick between your fingers.” He first saw a rod and reel around 1915 from sportsmen who brought something akin to a cane pole and a simple reel “with nothing but a thumb leather for a drag.” Later reels with drag handles were used, selling for from \$5 to \$10 dollars. When trolling for bluefish or mackerel they would use

chicken or loon bones for bait, or feathers and wood plugs; “anything to attract a fish’s attention.” Store-bought lures were available in the 1920s. The tourist season ran from June through August, and “100 visitors at one time would be called a large crowd,” compared to today’s peak numbers of ten to 12,000 and an increasing year-round business.

Gaskill’s goal as a guide was to “teach all of them to go hunting and fishing as a recreation and a sport, not to see how much game you can kill or how many fish you can catch.” Other hunting and fishing guides included Luther Fulcher, Ben Fulcher, Stach Howard, Washie Spencer, Ben O’Neal, Stacy Howard, Nathan Spencer, and Jamie Styron.

### **7.8.13. Hunting**

Market hunting or “gunning” was a source of income for islanders until the Migratory Bird Act set limits in 1918. The fowl was packed in flour barrels and shipped to New York. Carved wood and canvas decoys were constructed, including “root head” decoys using the natural shape of roots for the decoy heads. Long after market hunting was outlawed, Ocracokers worked as hunting guides for visitors.

Ocracokers worked as hunting guides throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. An early industrialist who frequented the island was named Rex Beach who stayed in the *Nevada*, a houseboat converted from a Core Sound sharpie built in Marshallberg. “They taken the sails off and put a house all over it. They had a one-cylinder or two-cylinder motor, what they call an automatic motor.” Beach then purchased the old Doxsee clam factory.

The north end of Ocracoke Island had two hunting clubs: Green Island and Quark’s Hammock. Green Island, its clubhouse destroyed in the ’44 storm, was closer to Hatteras Village than Ocracoke village, and employed men from both. Fellow Ward, the president of a

battery company, owned it. Quark's Hammock was owned by a Mr. Keppel from New York and sold to Baltimore businessman Stanley Wahab. Watermen kept camps near Quark's Hammock as well, including people from Atlantic and Cedar Island, called "Core Sounders" by Ocracokers. Property of both clubs was purchased for the Cape Hatteras National Seashore. Closer to the village was a hunting club on Beacon Island. The owner of the Pamlico Inn also ran the hunting club; he would meet patrons on the mail boat and escort them to the club. Their families could stay at the Inn for \$17.50 per week, meals included.

Well-funded hunt clubs were often the first to use motorized skiffs or "gas boats." "We used a three horsepower Palmer engine with an enormous flywheel. They were what we called make-and-break engines with an igniter in them and you'd have to take out and rub the carbon off to get it going." Following that model was the Model-T style jump-spark and coil style motor.

Islanders hunted during winters that were so cold, according to a villager, "icicles were hanging on the decoy duck's bills." During the great freeze of 1917 when Pamlico Sound iced over, fowl would search for breaks in the ice or "pot holes" where warm water from the ocean would force up through the ice. These were "honey holes" for hunters. An Ocracoker remembered another bad freeze in 1958 that killed crabs, shrimp, and fish, and covered the sound with a sheet of ice that dislodged channel markers and other structures such as duck blinds.

Like Hatteras Islanders, Ocracokers used twelve gauge guns and made use of lay-down batteries in duck hunting. "You lay down, submerged with heavy iron decoys slung on the outside rim of the battery to get them flush with the water. You could throw your foot like that to draw attention to the passing ducks and they would swerve over and stool into these sets of

decoys.” Once the free-floating batteries were outlawed in the 1930s, guides used stationary curtain batteries or built stilt blinds in the sound and brush blinds along the shoreline.

Men sought a variety of ducks and geese, including “sprigtails” (pintails), widgeons, and brant. The most popular and “best eating” duck was the redhead (A. Ballance 1989, 89). In the 1970s and 1980s some hunters noted that jets from the Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station actually helped them by scaring flocks of waterfowl out of the marsh into the sky (ibid). Alton Ballance described the good variety of waterfowl encountered by hunters:

Canvasbacks...red-breasted, and hooded megansers, locally called the “fishermen’s duck” was eaten less often...due to their fishy taste; black ducks, good eating, hard to shoot because of their alertness...ruddy ducks, small, less prized...buffleheads, probably the smallest duck hunted...greater and lesser scaup, locally called the “blackhead,”...the blue and green winged teal...mallards, gadwells, wood ducks, common goldeneyes, and shovelers (A. Ballance 1989, 89-90).

Ocracokers also trapped and ate robins, mocking birds, and cedar waxwings, as well as shore birds. Old-timers recall making a bird-trap from cedar slats tied together with twine; the trap was a veritable cage held over a hair-trigger mechanism that was baited with bread or seed.

A soundside hummock was particularly popular for snowy egret nesting; at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some islanders hunted these birds and sold the feathers to buyers of the millinery trade. They also sought least terns, common terns, and grebes (Dunbar 1956). By 1913, after the formation of the National Association of Audubon Societies and the passing of protective legislation, egrets were no longer sought for hat plumage (DeBlieu 1998).

#### **7.8.14. Livestock and Gardening**

“Everyone had horses and cattle and pigs, and sheeps and goats. So, it was quite a Robinson Crusoe island.” Families kept chickens, ducks, and hogs, as well as free-ranging

livestock. Grazing livestock kept the underbrush down and contributed to a relative lack of vegetation on the island.

Although an old-timer recalled when the daily staple was “white beans, fish, and corn bread,” islanders occasionally butchered livestock. During cold winter months hog were slaughtered, a community event that involved bleeding the animal, scalding off the hair, and butchering and dividing meat that was salted and smoked. “I remember going with my father to cut a stick from a bay tree. As the lard cooked, they stirred it with the bay sticks and gave it some kind of flavor that they all liked.” They poured lard into five-gallon cans and used it throughout the year.

Someone would “kill a beef” about once a week and sell the meat; they usually shot steer and “seldom ever killed a cow.” Local stores assisted by furnishing scales to weigh the meat and a place to keep it until customers picked up their order. The island had about “1,000 head of cattle” in the 1930s. “Norman Styron’s father owned most of the cattle. He brought them from down on Cedar Island. They kept breeding.”

Annual spring sheep drives were big events on the island. The men and boys would gather at the outer edge of the village and fan out, walking or riding north while hooting and hollering. Meanwhile men who had sailed to the north end of the island drove the sheep south, until they met with the others and penned the 300 or so animals. The men built a platform upon which the sheep were sheared.

It was a day or two shearing and marking lambs. They had a lamb pen. When they had doubts about this lamb belonging to this ewe, they put the ewe and the lamb in the pen. If they proved to be the right lambs, they were marked according to the fellow’s marking.

The fellows participating in the sheep drive camped out on the beach. “We’d take the sail out of the boat and make us a tent,” recalled an old-timer. They built campfires, sang, and “carried on”

deep into the night. “I’ve often thought that if there had been a fire in the village, the women would have to put it out because every man and boy was down near the sheep pens,” the old-timer continued. “That sheep penning was quite a thing.”

After the shearing wool was shipped to Washington, and some was used by local woman for spinning. “I had two spinning wheels that belonged to my grandmother,” an islander reported. A few sheep were slaughtered for local consumption. Bankers who still had sheep in the 1950s had to get rid of them or pen them when the highway was built.

When the State required two dipping vats to be built and utilized, Ocracokers had difficulty getting some of their wilder stock to cooperate. “One or two horses were gored that was trying to pen them. Several men were run up trees.” Individual cattle could be identified by brands or marks notched in their ear when the calf was born. If a stockman were found to have undipped livestock, they had to appear in court. “That was an expensive thing, because they had to go by boat to Swan Quarter.”

I recall my father making two trips, because he had not dipped his cattle. The judge said if you can’t dip them, kill them. So, he and others went down with rifles and shotguns. They were just slaughtered, the whole herd was killed out. I’m talking about the ones that was up on the north end, the wild ones never did come up in the village.

A man recalled helping burying the freshly shot cattle when he was a boy. One of the men shooting the cattle was a Coast Guardsman with a 30-30 rifle. “They thought they killed all of them. We happened to look way down on the point and we saw one standing near the sound a mile down there. He killed it with the first shot.”

Fourth of July pony pennings were a time of great excitement in Ocracoke, and the almost ritualized event took place until the 1950s. Each family had their unique “notch” or brand, registered with the county. Horses were sold to farmers who came over from the mainland looking for plow horses.

In 1938 Ocracoke began rounding up some 400 wild ponies to ship off the island. The exodus came to a halt during World War II but the State required remaining livestock to be penned. In the end, islanders were able to keep 35 ponies for the mounted Boy Scout troop; the remainder was removed on barges. The troop was the brainchild of islander Marvin Howard, who returned to the village after a career of sailing. Comprising the only mounted Boy Scout troop in the United States, the members were responsible for catching, taming, and caring for their ponies. The Scout's herd was exempted from the North Carolina law passed in 1957 requiring free-ranging livestock to be penned. However, the mounted troop disbanded in 1959, and the National Park Service penned and took over the care of the remaining animals.

Villagers cultivated small gardens, growing collards, Irish ("ice") potatoes, sweet potatoes, cabbage, peanuts, tomatoes, and beets. "Everybody would take a hoe and hill potatoes up after the wind blowed them down." Islanders also grew gourds, which were dried and used for bailing scoops in boats or dippers for water barrels. People had fig trees, and tried growing apple and peach trees but these were especially vulnerable in storms. "Ocracokers knew that fig trees fared best when someone lived nearby. That was because everyone emptied their dishwater on the oyster shells at the base of the fig trees" (Howard 2001, 1). Produce such as oranges and bananas were imported on the freight boats. Wild grapes and berries were plentiful, used in preserves.

#### **7.8.15. Perceptions of Environment and Storms**

The 1899 storm (August 16-18) compelled residents of Diamond City and Shackelford Banks to abandon their Banks' villages in favor of mainland Carteret County. This storm hit Ocracoke and Hatteras Islands hard as well. Thirty-three homes and two churches were

destroyed on Ocracoke; hundreds of horses, sheep, and cows drowned (Barnes 1995).

Storeowner “Big Ike” O’Neal described his adventure:

The tides were rising fast and my ole dad, fearful that our house would wash from its foundations, said, ‘Here son, take this axe and scuttle the floor.’ Like a big fountain the water gushed in and hit the ceiling and on top of the gusher was a mallard duck that had gotten under our house as the tides pushed upwards (Barnes 1995, 52).

Ocracokers explained overwash and the cutting of new inlets from hurricanes in the same terms as Hatteras Islanders: the approaching storm blows ocean water into the sound. “When it gets by Cape Hatteras the wind will shift back to the northwest and here will come all this water out of the sound and the inlet won’t take care of it as fast as it should.” If the northwest shift coincides with a rising tide, villagers witness “two walls coming together – the incoming tide and the rush of that excessive side.”

Some shared the concerns of those Hatteras Islanders who felt that the dunes did more harm than good by blocking the natural flow of escaping storm water and causing more erosion. “The dunes was a sad mistake. In a storm, the water comes up against the dunes and takes away the beach. It eats the foot of the dune out. Prior to the dunes, in a hurricane the water came over the beach.” Sand, according to a villager, simply shifted around, but would never simply wash away.

It don’t melt or run off. It just shifts slowly, shifts around over the centuries. Takes it off one side and puts it on the other. Move it down and around. That’s the beauty of sand. It don’t disappear.

Duke marine geologist Orrin Pilkey substantiates islanders’ theory that dunes increase erosion. A healthy barrier island “has overwash passes.” He points out that the old creeks “along Highway 12 at Ocracoke are probably old inlets.” Dunes increase erosion because “the storm energy comes up against this dune line” (in A. Ballance 1989, 171). Without the dunes “you would have smooth overwash and...maintain a more normal, gentler profile” (ibid, 172).

Old-timers could detect an oncoming storm by paying attention to natural signs. “The ocean talks to you,” said a villager. “It makes a completely different sound when a storm is coming. It crackles and talks.” Ocracokers are long adapted to floodwaters and prepare for storms accordingly, securing loose objects in the yard, hauling books and valuable papers upstairs, and protecting furniture. “My furniture’s been up and down more than Humpty Dumpty,” said an old-timer.

The dining room table went in the living room and the sofa went on top of the dining room table. The chairs would go on top of the sofa. All the little tables had to be put upstairs. If there was a bed downstairs it was jacked up. When the water went down you got a mop and you would stir it up so the mud would go out with the water. My brother and I would slide down the banister into the water and have the best time.

In the earlier decades some people took refuge at the lighthouse or Coast Guard station; once people had cars, they moved them to the high points of the island. In “Banker fashion,” old-timers removed plugs or boards in the floor of their homes to keep them from floating off the blocks. “Most everybody had what they called a scuttle on the floor. Let the water come in. Hold it on the blocks; one board that they would take up.” An old-timer who built houses recalled when floors were prepared for floodwaters as a regular building technique. “My father drilled holes in the corners of the floors. All way around, put wooden stoppers.”

Although villagers proudly say that no islander has died in a hurricane, Alton Ballance’s uncle died as the result of drinking contaminated water after the 1933 storm (A. Ballance 1989).

Navy personnel stationed on the island warned villagers to prepare during the 1944 hurricane. “They went around telling everybody there’s going to be a hurricane,” recalled a villager. Flooding was severe, as the ocean overwash combined with backed-up waters from the sound. “In the ’44 hurricane the sound and ocean met, I think, on this corner!” said a villager who experienced rushing waters so fierce that it tore the straps off her shoes. Plenty of livestock

was drowned in the '44 storm. A fisherman observed cattle carcasses in the sound, noting that cows “float head up.”

The prevalence of storms made shipwrecks a fact of life for Ocracokers, including the *Home* (1837), the *Black Squall* (1861), the *Pioneer* (1889), the *Richard S. Spofford* (1894), the *Ariosto* (1899), the *George W. Wells* (1913), the *Carroll A. Deering* (1921), and the *Nomis* (1935). A household saying on the island during bad weather has long been, “God help the sailors on a night like this” (Howard 2004). An account of the wreck of the steamboat *Home* underscores the gruesome scenes islanders sometimes witnessed:

Most of the dead could not be identified and were buried just as they had been washed ashore with their clothing and jewelry on. Their hands had swollen so it was impossible to get the rings and bracelets off. Diamonds, pearl necklaces and jewelry of all descriptions were buried with the bodies (Howard 2004, 3).

#### **7.8.16. Significant Places**

Silver Lake is significant to many islanders, as its shore was a hub of activity in the village. Its shallow waters offered a safe place for children to play and bathe. “That lake was just a blessing to us,” remarked an elderly resident. It was also a place for children to fish for crabs, oysters, and flounder.

“Up Trent,” or the north side of the village facing the sound, was significant as duck hunting grounds. It was “all marshes and potholes” until the area was ditched and filled in the mid 1970s. “I couldn’t believe that had happened,” said a villager. “I thought we were losing some quality of the island.” Trent is now Oyster Creek housing development.

A villager cited her front porch as a special place where she could look out at the village. “I eat my breakfast out here, most of my meals.” Many villagers, before air-conditioning and mass media, spent much of their spare time sitting on the porch visiting one another.

As in other Outer Banks villages, residents live in close proximity with the dead, for cemeteries are scattered all about Ocracoke. These cemeteries hold great significance to islanders (Figures 7.8.9-10). Tales abound about “haunts” and “spirits,” as moss covered graves surrounded by gnarled live oaks and old picket fences make for especially spooky settings, but islanders care for their ancestor’s plots; a tombstone will occasionally be seen bedecked with notes, birthday cards, or small trinkets for the departed.



Figure 7.8.9. Grave of Reverend Wyche (center) b. 1852, d. 190?  
Photo by B. Garrity-Blake



Figure 7.8.10. Old Ocracoke Cemetery. Photo by B. Garrity-Blake.

### **7.8.17. Rituals and Community Events**

The Fourth of July parade and pony penning has long been a big event on Ocracoke, although today the pony penning is a memory. The first parade, according to an old-timer, took place just after World War II. The parade was followed by a dance, and was similar in spirit to Rodanthe's Old Christmas in that "by ten o'clock they were all fighting." In recent years elaborate and humorous floats are made for the event, but in the 1950s "they just dressed up and decorated different things like a trailer." For years a beauty queen was selected and featured at the parade; in 1956 a writer described a mock version that played on racial stereotypes and featured the mother of the only black family living on the island. "The queen rides in the parade on a truck and inside a veiled-in enclosure. When the veil is removed, there sits Jane, peeling potatoes, eating watermelon or engaged in some other ordinary chore" (Goerch 1956, 119).

Christmas was celebrated by spreads of food such as goose, collards, the ubiquitous light rolls cooked in old woodstoves, and an array of deserts like sweet potato, lemon, and coconut pies. Some years were leaner than others, however; an old-timer stated, “We were lucky and proud enough to get a piece of fish and some bread on Christmas.”

If there was a ritual food for Ocracokers, it had to be the “old drum” dish so celebrated on the Outer Banks; the fish was boiled, flaked, and served over potatoes and onions and hardboiled eggs. Cracklings and grease was poured over the top; this dish is still enjoyed but with the smaller “puppy drum” due to restrictions on the largest of fish.

Ocracokers were somewhat limited in their marriage choices. “If you lived on Ocracoke back when I come up, you married your kin,” recalled an islander. “Who else?” Cousin or second cousin marriage was not unusual; but the Coast Guard, Navy, or other government programs like the Civilian Conservation Corps brought in potential new marriage partners. As many people shared a last name, and some a first name, it was common for married women to be referred to by their first name and then their husband’s first name. For instance, if Sally O’Neal married Ike Ballance, she would be called “Sally Ike” or more commonly, “Aunt Sally Ike” (A. Ballance 1989).

In the event of a death, local carpenters made the coffin, and it was “customary for people to keep on-hand some coffin plank.” Women, as on Hatteras Island, sewed the interior lining.

An older person’s coffin would be covered in black material. If the person was younger it would be covered in white. Ladies would come around and expertly pad it and fix it up very pretty. All the stores sold beautiful embroidery material. They used this to make a ruffle around the coffin. The flowers were always homegrown.

In the 1930s coffins were shipped in and stocked at a local store, and burial associations began appearing, enabling people to contribute to a general fund that would ultimately pay their funeral expenses. “Before that, there wouldn’t have been any need,” reflected a villager, “because

burying a person was very inexpensive. The coffin was made, the body was buried the next day, and that was it.” Two British sailors who washed ashore during World War II after a U-boat sunk the *Bedfordshire* were buried in coffin-shaped sinkboxes used by waterfowl hunters, as the island was short of lumber (A. Ballance 1989).

By the 1950s most burial associations were under the auspices of the state Burial Commission in Raleigh, but Ocracoke’s association was purely a “community proposition” (Goerch 1956, 120). In 1956 members contributed 25 cents for every death plus a dime fine if dues were paid late. The Community Store kept four coffins on hand from Washington, North Carolina, and flowers were either cut locally or flown in by Jesse Taylor of Beaufort (ibid). Before the 1970s islanders did not worry about purchasing a grave plot. “If someone died and the family didn’t have high land to bury them on, they would just ask, ‘May I bury on your property?’ By verbal agreement they’d say ‘Yes, go ahead.’”

#### **7.8.18. National Park Service**

The establishment of the National Park Service in 1953, encompassing two tracts of land on Ocracoke (the whole area north of the village to Hatteras Inlet and a section along the north part of the Creek where National Park Service offices are located), and the paving of the road went hand in hand in islanders’ minds. Although most people wanted the convenience of the road, not everyone was in favor of the Park. “Some approved and some didn’t,” said a villager, expressing the same sentiment as Hatteras Islanders that the Park at least protected his homeland from becoming overbuilt. “I’m sure we would have had summer homes all the way up the island and I don’t know that the majority of people here would have wanted that.”

A woman explained that her father had donated 38-acres of oceanfront for the National Seashore. Although her brothers disagreed, she maintained that her father saw the “value and wisdom” of preserving land and preventing “what you have at Nags Head from my house to the inlet.” The land acquisition “did not have a big impact on people,” said a resident, “because they did not realize that the land was worth anything. There was nothing on it except cattle and horses.”

Alton Ballance suggests that employment opportunities offered by the National Park Service helped “ease bitterness,” as men were hired to plant grass and build sand fences along the beach (A. Ballance 1989, 166). He pointed out, however, that only a few islanders managed to make a career out of Park Service employment. An Ocracoker who worked for the Park Service for ten years in the 1960s planting grass felt like it had been a good program, particularly out by the campground where “if it wasn’t for the grass the sand would just blow the beach all around.” “We drove a farm tractor,” recalled another villager. “Three buckets with three people setting inside – we were planting *Spartina*, building back the beach.” Another resident emphasized that the dune building “made it possible for the road to stay here – this stabilized it.”

Ocracokers shared the opinion of many Hatteras Islanders that certain environmental policies of the National Park Service were questionable, if not counter-productive. A villager cited the Park Service’s efforts to restrict access to plover nesting areas:

You hear about protecting the piping plovers in nesting areas. The Park Service has destroyed the nesting areas. The whole beach was a sandbar and the birds would nest all over. There is now so much more cover for the mink, the otters, and the feral cats and they raid the nests. You do something to improve one thing and you destroy something else.

Others resent Park Service policies simply because they conflict with the islanders' historical "unrestricted use of the land," and bristle at having to "compete with 'outsiders' for usage of the land" (A. Ballance 1989, 166).

The National Park Service revamped its 136-site campground on Ocracoke in the 1980s; the once-primitive area located about a third of the way down the island toward Hatteras Inlet now has flush toilets and city water, a change viewed by some as mirroring the homogenization of Ocracoke village (A. Ballance 1989).

#### **7.8.19. Coast Guard and the Military**

Federal authorities, alarmed at the growing number of shipwrecks off the Outer Banks, authorized the first lighthouses in 1794, including Cape Hatteras in Buxton and Shell Castle Island in Ocracoke. The Shell Castle Island lighthouse, a wooden structure some 55-feet tall, was built on a half-mile long, 60-foot wide spit of oyster shells in Ocracoke Inlet. Two entrepreneurs, John Wallace and John Gray Blount, built a shipping and trading center on Shell Castle, complete with warehouses, wharfs, a ship chandlery, a tavern, and a porpoise rendering facility (Stick 1958).

Census records show that this outpost had a population of 18 whites and ten slaves in 1810; these maritime slaves were skilled watermen who piloted vessels across shoals into Portsmouth harbor or across the Pamlico to New Bern or Edenton; they also sailed to Cape Lookout as part of the jumping mullet and porpoise fishery encampments (Cecelski 2001). The Shell Castle light became useless as the channel drifted away, and in 1822, \$20,000 dollars was approved to build the present day 65-foot-high lighthouse in Ocracoke (Stick 1958).

Ocracoke lost its strategic importance when the deeper Hatteras Inlet was opened by

storm in 1846. Nonetheless, Fort Ocracoke, also known as Fort Morgan, was constructed on Beacon Island one mile inside the inlet in 1861. But federal forces blocked Ocracoke Inlet by sinking schooners loaded with rock, and Fort Ocracoke was abandoned as efforts shifted to Hatteras Inlet (Stick 1958). Although larger landowners held slaves, “racial boundaries were confused on the Outer Banks, where islanders...heeded the less rigid racial mores of shipboard life more than those of tidewater plantations or inland ports” (Cecelski 2001, 50). Bankers were renowned for their ambivalent allegiances during the War Between the States, and were called “opportunists” by Confederate troops who complained that they raised white flags to the “house-tops on the approach of either Confederates or Federals” (Stick 1958, 155).

Many villagers worked aboard lightships or in lighthouses. A resident recalled her father working shifts on the Bluff Shoal lighthouse that was located offshore:

He was out for a week, and he was home a week. Sometimes he'd let us go out with him. He would give us a room to ourselves, my sister, she's three years older than me. We'd strew our paper dolls and our play dolls but we had to keep it neat. We'd clean up after we quit. And, we fished; he fixed us fishing lines.

She explained that the lighthouse was located near two sandy islands, and her father would put his children ashore while he gathered oysters.

The islands were crowded with birds. The birds laid their eggs right on top of the sand. But, he never would let us bother [the eggs]. Until one time, he let us take one apiece. We made a hole in each end and blew the egg out and washed it good, put ribbon through it and tied it up. The egg was all mottled up in different colors and it made a pretty little ornament.

In 1822 the 75 foot tall Ocracoke lighthouse was constructed on the island. Records of lighthouse keepers did not begin until 1847, and ran through the last keeper in 1946: John Harker, Thomas Styron, William Gaskill, Enoch Howard, J. Wilson Gillikin, Tillman Smith, A.B. Hooper, Wesley Austin, and Joe Burrus all maintained the beacon which today represents the oldest North Carolina lighthouse still in operation (Howard 2004, 3).

Ocracoke Island housed two Lifesaving Stations. By 1883 a station was operating at the north end of the island at Hatteras Inlet; it was initially called the Ocracoke station but was later changed to the Hatteras Inlet station. According to Ocracoke resident and writer Alton Ballance, a “tiny settlement” of families associated with the service lived in a place known as Cedar Hammock near the Hatteras Inlet station (A. Ballance 1989, 45). The Hatteras Inlet station was completely swept away in a 1955 storm (Stick 1958).

The Coast Guard played an important role in the village, as the island had its share of wrecks and rescues. The Charlie Mason, a menhaden boat from Beaufort, foundered off Ocracoke and the Coast Guard rescued all but one crewmember. “Everybody come ashore on the breeches buoy but Payton Young. He had a heart attack and they carried him to the Coast Guard Station and gave him artificial respiration. But, he died,” recalled a villager. The wreck soon became legendary, as factory owner Harvey Smith offered several thousand dollars to whoever could free the vessel and return it to Beaufort by that Sunday evening. The crew itself rose to the challenge, and the event was eventually chronicled in a folk song written by Charles Stowe called, “The Charlie Mason Pogie Boat,” sung regularly by Ocracoke performers.

The Civilian Conservation Corps, based just north of the village, was called the “transit camp” by Ocracokers because “it was people that was brought here from all other cities.” Some villagers were unimpressed by the project. “They were here to keep them out of trouble in the cities,” reflected a villager. “They stuck this fence there and sand crawled up – it helped a little but a storm washed the whole thing out.”

A Navy Amphibious Section Base was built on a former plantation purchased from the Cradle family during World War II, instantly doubling the population of the island by bringing in 600 personnel. “The Cradles didn’t want to sell it, but, the government condemned it.” The

Navy filled low portions of the land with sand dredged from Silver Lake. The original home on the property was simply sold to a villager and dragged by horse and cart to a new location. The building material for the amphibious base was transported to Ocracoke from the Cherry Point base in Havelock. The Navy built its own medical facility, commissary, officer's club, three power plants, and the island's first paved road from the base to an ammunition storage facility.

After the war, the base was abandoned. "We would go down there and roller skate all over the hospital. And the administration building – there were filing cabinets with papers; we'd drag it home." The "ammunition dump" was abandoned as well. "My brother come home with ammunition in a wagon and my mother liked to have a heart attack," said an Ocracoke native. Villagers eventually used the munitions area as a trash dump.

A villager estimated that 20 percent of Ocracoke's population during World War II served in the military, not including "all the men that worked on dredges for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers." Making up for the exodus of native servicemen were Navy sailors stationed on the island. Villagers feared the close proximity of German U-boats, and were suspicious of spies on the island, including a group of artists who were mysteriously escorted off the island by the military. "We lost our innocence during World War II," an islander said, explaining that people began locking their doors for the first time.

"Just six weeks after the war started we were on the front line." Islanders blacked out their headlights and drew their curtains during the war, and a villager remembered that the lighthouse was shaded and then put out entirely. This was to prevent submarines from sighting ships against the lights of the village. Fishing guide Thurston Gaskill's younger brother was on a freighter that was sunk by a German U-boat during World War II northeast of Cape Lookout shoals. Gaskill's cousin found wreckage along the beach on Ocracoke, including a panel off the

ship with the 20 year-old's mate's license attached. An islander made a cross using the panel, which hangs in the Methodist church today in 2004.

The government stepped up a mosquito control program in 1944, involving ditch digging and the spraying of DDT. Although locals claimed they had immunity to the insects, military personnel and visitors did not. "The islanders used to pick myrtle and the mosquitoes didn't like the odor a bit, so they just hit [swatted] them with the myrtle." Before spraying, islanders also smoked out mosquitoes with smoldering cedar branches. Until DDT was outlawed, pelicans dwindled in numbers and eventually disappeared altogether, but have since made a strong comeback.

#### **7.8.20. Political Life**

Ocracoke village was annexed to Carteret County in 1770 after a member of the Colonial Assembly complained, "those lawless bankers on Occacock Island are not paying taxes anywhere" (Stick 1958). In 1845 the jurisdiction of the island community shifted from Carteret to Hyde County (O'Neal 1998). Ocracoke has long struggled to gain a political foothold since becoming part of Hyde County. Irvin Garrish was the first islander to win a seat on the Hyde County Board of Commissioners in 1980; he ended what many islanders felt was "taxation without representation" (A. Ballance 1989, 236). After Garrish won, the county decided to grant Ocracoke and other townships a regular seat on the commission. When Alton Ballance was elected in 1984, the island's voice in county issues – an often times ignored voice – enjoyed increased recognition. During Ballance's service, island property was revaluated, some lots increasing by 1,000 percent:

No issue has awakened Ocracokers more than the sudden increase in property taxes... Attempts to find some avenue of relief, especially for our elderly on fixed incomes, have

proven unsuccessful. State law requires property to be valued at “fair market value,” which is what a willing seller and buyer can agree upon (A. Ballance 1989, 237).

County commissioners from Ocracoke have long struggled with issues pertaining to growth and development. A formal zoning ordinance was proposed for the island in 1981, but voted down by property owners 2-1. A “controlled growth ordinance” was proposed in 1986 that did not call for zoning but proposed development restrictions such as set-backs, height limits, and parking requirements; this ordinance passed.

### **7.8.21. Modernity and Perceptions of Change**

“The road. That’s what changed all of Ocracoke,” said a villager. The state ferry system ushered in tourists “from all parts and sites” and brought a hectic pace to the island.

The major impact on this village is when they put the road in the 50s, and the ferry systems started from here to the Atlantic and then Cedar Island. The State took over Hatteras Inlet, and the people really started coming in. I’m not going to say it’s all for the better. I know everybody is probably better off financially but nobody has time now to do any visiting. They never have time to do anything but work.

Yet, few islanders would argue that tourism has not benefited the community. An Ocracoker reflected that if it had not been for the employment opportunities from tourism, and the highway and ferries that brought them to the island, Ocracoke could have gone the way of Portsmouth Island and become a ghost town.

In the 1950s “if there was a tourist everyone turned their head,” but today the sheer influx of tourists makes residents feel imprisoned in their own community during peak holidays like July Fourth. Ocracokers look forward to winter, when they can reclaim their island, or even hurricanes, when tourists are evacuated and “we get out and walk down the road and see what’s happening – we have our island back.”

In 1974 Ocracokers were debating whether to go to a “city water” system or depend on the old method of cisterns, a debate that was decided a few months later with the construction of a water tower. A villager at the time said that a centralized water system was needed to keep up with the tourists, as it was “all part of progress. The question is, can we hold it within limits and not let tourism get the best of us?” She felt like the native islanders had an “inherent wisdom” and would make good choices, not foreseeing the future impact of outside investors. The island’s first central water system was completed in 1977, setting off a building boom.

When asked if anything besides windmills and sail skiffs has disappeared from island life in the past century, an old-timer responded, “Yeah, the low prices!” A villager described the difference between newcomers of the past, and newcomers today seeking to “set up shop” on the island: “When I grew up, people who came here were wealthy. Now the ones that come here do so to get wealthy; to make money.” She added that the islanders’ natural inclination to be friendly and welcoming has worn thin with an overwhelming influx of people. “It’s heartbreaking to see what’s happening. What newcomers brought with them is not that good. It’s nothing to benefit the island. Gift shops, booze, just stuff – write Ocracoke on it and sell a dozen of them.”

Ocracokers worry that the soaring real estate values will price them right off the island, as Hyde County has raised property taxes to exorbitant levels.

Some of the property is going up 300 percent. We have some elderly people living off fixed income. I don’t see how they can possibly afford the tax. Houses selling for \$150,000 one year are now selling for \$300,000 and it keeps on and on. An assessor told me that this waterfront property around the harbor was going to be listed at \$6,000 dollars a foot. How much can you stand if you own waterfront property and you’re not in business?

Islanders’ share the concern of those on Hatteras that younger people are less able to afford property in their own communities. “It’s really difficult to buy land around here. Unless

they already have some place, it's in their family, it would be hard to build a house." In 1974 a 95 year-old woman remarked, "some day Ocracoke is going to be owned by strangers."

As an illustration of the soaring value of Ocracoke real estate, a villager pointed out that in 2000 he sold 1.5 acre of the highest land on the island for \$95,000. "The new folks came in and leveled the hill, if you can believe it!" he added. "We used to park our cars there during a storm." The new owners subdivided the half-acre into three lots and sold all three for a total of \$550,000. "Nobody can afford to live here anymore," the villager concluded. "Folks are moving off the island."

The pressures brought to bear on Ocracoke natives have compelled some to move off-island, and many people foresee the day when the local voice becomes so small it goes unheard.

There's not going to be many people here that can say anything about it. Ocracoke might look like a Caribbean island where they have this little place off to one side where the peasants live, and then people in those palaces. I was up to Corolla [the northernmost community on Bodie Island] the other day and didn't see a person – none of the businesses were opened. It was just huge houses; deserted, no cars or anything. That's probably what this place will be.

Like Hatteras Islanders, Ocracokers note that the art of "visiting" has passed, as villagers have television, the telephone, automobiles, and now the internet among the many distractions that fill people's pastimes.

One of the oldest residents on Ocracoke took a philosophical view of changing times and things of the past. "What we have seen, we won't see no more. It's gone down behind us like a funnel. Everything you see now and when you were born, growing up, you won't see because it won't be here. It'll be somewhere's else."

## **8.0. Interpretive Themes of History and Heritage**

*A legacy of diverse archeological, historical and cultural resources bears witness to human conflict and adaptations to exceptional natural forces exerted upon the Outer Banks barrier islands.*

The following interpretive themes section of this report are designed to as a reference guide for National Park Service interpreters who are designing programs, displays, or other informational resources for Park visitors interested in the culture and history of Hatteras and Ocracoke island villages. The interpretive themes were selected by the Cape Hatteras National Seashore staff; each theme is captured in a sentence preceding a description of what we found and our list of resources/references. So as not to duplicate works describing, say, shipwrecks (Stick 1952) or place names (Payne 1985), we have compiled as much first-hand information from interviews as possible, cross-referenced to the ethnohistorical descriptions in the main body of our report, while also pointing the reader to useful secondary source materials. Interpreters should also refer to the annotated bibliography and writings of Outer Banks researcher Betty J. Duggan (2001), which was a precursor to this project and is intended as a companion to this section.

The goal of providing this material to interpreters is to help staff convey to visitors the cultural meanings of material artifacts, geographical landmarks, and other tangible resources accessible for view and study. In this way the National Park Service staff can better describe the cultural context of places, things, and events important to Outer Banks villagers, and ultimately provide a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the traditional Banks dwellers themselves. The ten interpretive themes explored in this research are:

- **Shipwrecks of Hatteras and Ocracoke**

*Shipwrecks, both submerged and buried along the shorelines, and the artifacts from them are testaments to loss of life, of property, of war and survival involving maritime commerce along the Seashore.*

- **Structures and Artifacts**

*Structures and artifacts of Light Stations, Life-Saving Stations, Navy and Coast Guard Stations, Weather Stations and Coastal Survey Markers in the Seashore represent the efforts of the United States to protect life and preserve property of maritime commerce from natural and wartime forces.*

- **Geographic Features**

*Geographic features of The Cape, Diamond Shoals, Gulf Stream and Labrador Current are historic reference points for navigation, weather observations and events, war activity, technological experiments such as aerial bombing and voice radio, and nautical folklore. Historic inlet locations determined human adaptations of settlement, trade and transportation patterns.*

- **Villages and Maritime Forests**

*Villages and maritime forests encompassed within the Seashore are historic habitation sites of American Indians, European settlers, African American watermen and shipwreck survivors. These unique cultures developed while living in isolation under a harsh maritime environment using the traditions of barter, salvaging and subsistence trade. Windmills, fish camps, hunt clubs, wharves, marinas, boatbuilding and seafood facilities are examples of cultural resources that have existed in these villages and the Seashore.*

- **Gravesites**

*Gravesites of sailors, lifesavers, mariners and shipwreck victims within the Seashore represent the toll of war and nature.*

- **Civil War Fort Sites**

*Civil War fort sites and associated artifacts in the Seashore represent the struggle to control North Carolina commerce between the Confederacy and Union.*

- **WPA/CCC**

*Oceanside dunes construction, furniture making, cabins, a base camp, visitor use infrastructure and observations of weather, waterfowl, and shorelines are cultural resource legacies of the Seashore from The Work Projects Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps.*

- **Ocracoke Island**

*Ocracoke Island possesses unique heritage benefiting from its remote setting. Ocracoke Village retains its historical identity as a port village and primary point of entry to North Carolina. Island ponies are a legacy of 17<sup>th</sup>- through early 20<sup>th</sup> century livestock-raising. A local harbor, Teach's Hole is the location of the battle between the pirate Blackbeard and Virginia soldiers and sailors. Shell Castle Island served as a piloting and transfer point and as a customs site in Ocracoke Inlet which remains as a submerged cultural resource.*

- **Names of Banks**

*Names of banks, inlets and other features including village names Chicamacomico (Rodanthe, Waves, Salvo), Kinnakeet (Avon), The Cape (Buxton), Trent Woods (Frisco), Hatteras, and Pilot Town (Ocracoke) are part of the cultural heritage of the Seashore.*

- **Unique Customs**

*Unique customs, legends, folklore, dialect, and the seafood industry are intrinsic to the cultural heritage of Outer Banks inhabitants' links to the sea.*

### **Further Research**

The above outlined themes are presented in separate sections, and each section includes a reference list for more information and further study. These topics are also explored in the ethnohistorical sections of this document. The following sources and references, however, are applicable to all interpretive themes. As such, these sources and references are instrumental in any study of Hatteras and Ocracoke Island culture, and are indispensable to future research.

“Geographical History of the Carolina Banks,” Gary Dunbar (1956).

A baseline study of traditional Outer Banks culture from early settlement to the 1950s.

*Sea Chest*, Cape Hatteras School (1973-1983).

A journal of Hatteras Island traditions and culture as collected by island high school students. The collection was in its peak years from 1973-1983; the entire collection is available in the Hatteras village library.

Southern Oral History Project (1974, 1988).

This is a collection of oral histories of Ocracoke and Hatteras Islanders, although most are of Ocracokers. They represent a generation of islanders born near or before the turn of the century, and offer rich detail of early Banker life. Many of the interviews referenced in the interpretive section are from this collection on file at CAHA headquarters in Manteo; they should be studied with the interviews collected for this project for a diachronic view of island culture and change.

*The Outer Banks of North Carolina*, David Stick (1958).

A classic work offering detailed history of the Outer Banks, including Hatteras and Ocracoke.

The Sol Libsohn Collection of Hatteras Island Photographs (1945).

A collection of photographs was taken as part of Standard Oil Company's exploratory drilling at Cape Hatteras. No oil or gas was found, but some 150 photographs documenting fishing, general stores, public health immunizations, post offices, graves, post-hurricane scenes, and so on were taken, and are available at the University of Louisville Photographic Archives.

**Further Reference:**

Cape Hatteras National Seashore and Locale: an Ethnographic and Ethnohistoric Essay and Reference Bibliography, Betty Duggan, 2001

An annotated bibliography that preceded this project, and should be treated as a companion work.

## **8.1. Shipwrecks of Hatteras and Ocracoke**

*Shipwrecks, both submerged and buried along the shorelines, and the artifacts from them are testaments to loss of life, of property, of war and survival involving maritime commerce along the Seashore.*

Shipwrecks have been an integral part of Banker life from the first settlements in the 1700s until modern history, particularly throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Before the rise of an extensive railroad and, later, a trucking system, a major trade-route for shipping extended from the Atlantic waters off New England to Florida for sailing vessels en route to and from the West Indies, South America, or the Gulf coast of the United States. Along this route, few areas were more dangerous to sailors than the waters off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. The treacherous Diamond Shoals, combined with moody weather systems that quickly evolved from clashing waters of the warm Gulf Stream and the cold Labrador current, caused hundreds of vessels to wreck and earned the North Carolina coast the sobriquet, “Graveyard of the Atlantic.”

Inhabitants of the Banks have long had the reputation of being “wreckers” who opportunistically pillaged the remains of shipwrecks, or even enticed ships onto shoals in order to reap the bounty (e.g., the legend behind the village name “Nags Head,” asserting that early settlers attached lanterns around the necks of horses to trick sailors into believing they were passing other ships, not shoals). This reputation is unearned, as Outer Banks dwellers have a strong record of assisting ships and sailors in distress, even before the first U.S. Lifesaving Stations were established on the Banks in 1874. Although the cargo of wrecked ships, and the parts and lumber from the ships themselves, were often used by Hatteras and Ocracoke Islanders, materials, with few exceptions, were obtained legally. Vendues, or wreck auctions, became an important part of the Banker economy and social scene once wreck districts and commissioners

were established by the state General Assembly in 1801. Locals secured jobs salvaging the wreck and guarding the cargo until auction day; many also participated in the bidding.

Many popular writings of Outer Banks life have romanticized inhabitants as shipwreck victims or descendants of castaways who settled on Hatteras or Ocracoke. Although there are accounts of such individuals who stayed on the Banks and married into local families, by far, most of the early settlers were mainland farmers or stockmen who were attracted to cheap land opportunities and the “natural” fencing of the water bound banks, making the building of fences unnecessary. Shipwreck survivors, for the most part, were sailors eager to leave the Banks and get back to work.

The majority of the wrecks listed below are those mentioned by villagers in interviews or articles, indicating their significance to residents of Ocracoke and Hatteras. A few of the wrecks listed below are those that, although not mentioned in Banker interviews, shed light on Banker life in that period of time.

- “*Henry*, Sloop, December 5, 1819, (New York to Charleston) Ocracoke, 6 lost.”

An excerpt from a letter written by the only survivor of the *Henry*, Captain Hand, illustrates one of the few accounts showing both altruism and opportunism from Bankers in the face of a wreck: “I, however, am gaining, having received the kindest treatment, and every possible care from inhabitants. My chest has been picked up, but it had been opened, and all my clothes of value taken out. I am here almost naked...” (Stick 1952, 11). The *Henry* went down long before the U.S. Lifesaving Stations were established, and 18 years after the vendue system was put into law. At this point in history, shipwreck victims depended on volunteer rescuers.

- “*Enterprize*, Schooner, October 27, 1822, (Rhode Island to Charleston) New Inlet, 0 lost.”

When the *Enterprize* ran aground and caught fire off Chicamacomico, the crew pushed a horse overboard to see if it could make it to shore. The horse simply waded across the shallows, so the passengers and crew followed, finding cart tracks on the beach. The survivors met three men on horseback, and discovered that they were on the northern banks. They hired Captain Edward Scarborough of Kinnakeet to sail them, minus the horse, to the port of Ocracoke on his schooner the *Thomas A. Blount*. En route, the weather turned foul; Captain Scarborough was washed overboard and never seen again. The castaways made it safely to Ocracoke (Stick 1952, 13).

- “*Home*, Steamer, October 9, 1837, (New York to Charleston) Oc, 90 lost.”

The 130-passenger, 220-foot steamer *Home* wrecked off Ocracoke during a hurricane known as “Racer’s Storm.” After running aground six miles northeast of shore at 10:00 pm, two lifeboats were smashed to pieces when the crew attempted to lower them. The last boat was lowered with 15-20 people aboard, but immediately capsized. Two men donned the only lifejackets on board, and safely made it to shore. The ship broke apart as a passenger tolled the bell in an attempt to rouse help from the sleeping village nearby; in the end, 40 people made it to shore alive and 90 drowned (Stick 1952, 23-26). The sinking of the *Home* was Ocracoke’s most gory shipwreck event. Acadia Williams remarkable 1952 account of this wreck, as relayed to Walter Howard, is available on the Internet at: [www.villagecraftsmen.com/news100104.htm](http://www.villagecraftsmen.com/news100104.htm). According to Ocracoker Irvin Garrish, it was the wreck of the *Home* that compelled the Coast Guard to begin requiring life jackets.

- “*Monitor*, Federal Gunboat, December 30, 1862, Cape Hatteras, 16 lost.”

The *U.S.S. Monitor* was the United State’s first ironclad ship. The steam-powered Confederate ram, called the “cheesebox on a raft,” for its low profile in the water, sank in rough seas off Cape Hatteras. Forty-nine men were rescued from the *Monitor* by the accompanying ship *Rhode Island*, and sixteen were lost (Stick 1952, 53-57). A firsthand account of the sinking as described by crewman Frank B. Butts is available online from the East Carolina University collection (<http://www.lib.ecu.edu/ncc/historyfiction/document/bum/entire.html>), including his recollection of the “old African cook” congratulating doomed sailors for being in a “metallic coffin,” and assuring them that “the devil would surely pick their bones as no shark could penetrate their graves” (Rider 1878, 15).

- “*Richmond*, Side-wheeler/passenger steamer (?), 1878 (?), Salvo.”

The most visible shipwreck along Hatteras is a propeller shaft jutting out of the water just offshore of Salvo. Salvo residents say this is the *Old Richmond*, a Civil War era side-wheeler used to carry passengers. I.D. Midgett talks about the *Richmond* in his interview on file at CAHA, as do Nellie Farrow and Jackie Weinberg. David Stick mentions the *Richmond* as a modern steamship operating in 1878, but does not list it as a total loss wreck.

- “*A.B. Goodman*, Schooner, April 4, 1881, Diamond Shoals, 1 lost.”

The *A.B. Goodman* foundered on Diamond Shoals during weather so rough that the seven lifesavers of Creeds Hill station wrote wills before setting out in their craft. Through snow and wind they reached the schooner and rescued the four remaining crewmen; one had been swept overboard during the night (Stick 1952, 108-109). This wreck occurred only three years after the Creeds Hill Lifesaving Station’s establishment in the Frisco area.

- “*Ephraim Williams*, Barkentine, December 22, 1884, Big Kinnakeet, 0 lost.”

The *Ephraim Williams* was a 491-ton barkentine en route to Rhode Island from Savannah. Caught in rough seas and bad weather, the vessel foundered off Big Kinnakeet. The Cape Hatteras Station crew, who had been tracking the vessel, and joined by Keeper of Creeds Hill Station, launched a lifeboat from the beach and battled tremendous surf to reach the ship. Their successful rescue of the nine crewmembers earned each Surfman a Gold Lifesaving medal. The investigating officer wrote that, “These poor, plain men, dwellers upon the lonely sands of Hatteras, took their lives in their hands, and, at the most imminent risk, crossed the most tumultuous sea that any boat within the memory of living men had ever attempted on that bleak coast, and all for what? That others might live to see homes and friends” (Stick 1952, 114-115). An account of this wreck is available at:

[http://www.lifesavingservice.org/accounts\\_williams.html](http://www.lifesavingservice.org/accounts_williams.html).

- “*John Shay*, Schooner, April 17, 1889, Cape Hatt, 6 lost.”

This wreck is mentioned in Charles Williams *The Kinnakeeter* (1975). The schooner, according to Williams, was trapped in the Kinnakeet Atlantic Anchorage Basin north of Cape Hatteras where sailing vessels routinely rested before or after navigating the dangerous Diamond Shoals. The vessel broke apart in bad weather and all who were aboard drowned.

- “*Annie E. Blackman*, Schooner, October 24, 1889, New Inlet, 6 lost.”

The three-masted, coal-carrying schooner *Annie E. Blackman* was one of many ships distressed along North Carolina’s coast by the storm of October 23, 1889. The vessel sank three miles off New Inlet, and six of seven crewmen drowned. The seventh was the captain, wearing a cork jacket. He floated to shore, tethered himself to a telegraph pole, and encircled it all night to

keep up his circulation; lifesavers found him walking in circles the next morning (Stick 1952, 122-23).

- “*Pioneer*, steamer (?), 1889, Ocracoke, (?) lost.”

This ship went down off Ocracoke, although details are sketchy. The vessel is mentioned by Irving Garrish (Ginns 1977) as a story his grandmother told him. He said it was full of general cargo, from clothing to food, and that islanders “went beachcombing,” which was acceptable in this case as everything was “just floating around” (ibid, 186).

- “*Strathairly*, Steamer, March 24, 1891, Chicamacomico, 19 lost.”

*Strathairly* was a 1,236-ton schooner-rigged screw steamer loaded with iron ore that ran aground in the fog south of Chicamacomico one quarter mile from shore. The twenty-six man crew sounded distress signals on the steam whistle and, as was the practice, the Surfman on beach patrol lit a red Coston light in response and fetched his mates. Two other lifesaving crews responded on the scene as well, but the vessel was invisible until the fog lifted around 10 am. The vessel’s mainmast had fallen; the lifeboats had been broken to bits in the pounding surf; and the *Strathairly* had broken in two. Twenty-three men were at the bow; the captain, first mate, and chief engineer had drowned when the mast broke. The shore crew repeatedly fired the Lyle gun, a cannon-like device used to propel a cable to the wreck, but the line either fell short or snapped upon retrieval. The castaways finally donned life belts and jumped into the surf, but were swept south by a current. By dark, 16 had been fished out of the water, and seven of those survived.

- “*Nathan Esterbrook, Jr.*, Schooner, February 20, 1893, Little Kinnakeet, 1 lost.”

The three-mast schooner was loaded with guano fertilizer and heading south when it struck the outer bar and was spied by a Little Kinnakeet Station patrolman. Gull Shoal and Big

Kinnakeet were called to the scene as well. The Lyle gun was shot and a line secured to the Easterbrook. The line, however, was tied too low on the mast; when the second mate got in the breeches buoy, a floatable device that victims wear like pants for transportation to shore, the wreck shifted and the line went slack. The crewman was dragged through the water, and later died. The remaining men were transported safely via life car, “a fat, cigar-shaped contraption, made of metal, watertight, and large enough to hold four men” (Stick 1952, 131).

- “*Richard S. Spofford*, Schooner, December 27, 1894, (Boston to Georgia) Ocracoke, 1 lost.”

The *Spofford* ran aground at the mouth of Ocracoke Inlet in December of 1894, ten years before the Ocracoke Lifesaving Station was built; when villagers spotted the schooner, no attempt was made to contact the lifesaving stations at Portsmouth or at the north end of the island. The ship endured hours of pounding from the breakers. Five crewmen finally launched a small yawl that immediately capsized; nevertheless, the men made it to shore. The Portsmouth Station Keeper spied the vessel, and unsure if it was in distress, launched a rescue effort. In the dark of night, the remaining men were transported via breeches buoy, save for one casualty who was found lashed to the rigging (Stick 1952, 152-154).

- “*E.S. Newman*, Schooner, October 11, 1896, Pea Island, 0 lost.”

The three-masted schooner had run into foul weather, lost sails, and went adrift for 100 miles before running aground two miles south of the Pea Island Lifesaving Station. The station members, entirely made up of African-Americans, were unable to fire the Lyle gun due to overwash and flooding. They secured two Surfmen with line, and sent them out into the breakers to rescue the crew, one by one. All nine were rescued, and the Pea Island Lifesaving crew received the Gold Lifesaving Medal 100 years later on March 5, 1996. This wreck is significant in illustrating the prejudices of the times: although the segregated crew demonstrated equal capacity

and bravery as white-crewed stations, they did not receive the same accolades. An account of this rescue is available online: [http://www.lifesavingservice.org/accounts\\_newman.html](http://www.lifesavingservice.org/accounts_newman.html).

- “*George L. Fessenden*, Schooner, April 27, 1898, Chicamacomico, 4 lost.”

The 394-ton, 24-year old schooner *Fessenden* met its demise after running aground off New Inlet. Loaded with 521 tons of stone, the “rotten as a pear” ship broke to pieces just as Chicamacomico rescuers prepared the breeches buoy. Three of the seven-member crew survived, and there was little remaining of the vessel save for some rotten timbers in the surf (Stick 1952, 158-60). This wreck shows the sorry condition of some of the vessels used in shipping, making both the crewing of and the rescuing of the vessel especially dangerous.

The *Reppard*, *Florence Randall*, *Robert W. Dasey*, and *Priscilla* (below) were four of 13 ships along the Atlantic coast falling victim to the San Ciriaco storm of August 16-17, 1899, one of the fiercest hurricanes to ever hit the Outer Banks (Barnes 1995).

- “*Aaron Reppard*, Schooner, August 16, 1899, Gull Shoal, 5 lost.”

The 459-ton 3-masted schooner *Aaron Reppard* held a cargo of coal en route to Savannah. The vessel was surprised by the hurricane and was dragged into the pounding surf below Chicamacomico; the distressed crew, clinging to the ship’s rigging, was met by Surfmen from Little Kinnakeet, Gull Shoal, and Chicamacomico stations. The masts broke, however, plunging the crew into the surf; five drowned and three were saved.

- “*Florence Randall*, Schooner, August 16, 1899, Big Kinnakeet, 0 lost.”

The *Florence Randall*, a 741-ton 3-masted schooner, foundered two miles south of the Big Kinnakeet station at the same time the *Reppard* rescue was unfolding. All nine men and one woman were safely rescued, but the cargo of fish scrap en route to Charleston from the Promised Land, New York was lost.

- “*Priscilla*, Barkentine, Baltimore to Rio de Janeiro, August 17, 1899, Gull Shoal, 4 lost.”

Rasmus Midgett, patrolling the Chicamacomico banks on horseback in the aftermath of the storm around 3am, passed the wreckage of the *Reppard* and came across the distressed 643-ton barkentine *Priscilla* just off the beach. Midgett swam out to the wreck and instructed the exhausted crew to jump overboard. He pulled all ten ashore, one by one. Four had already washed overboard, including the captain’s wife, two sons, and a cabin boy. Midgett was awarded the Gold Lifesaving Medal of Honor (Stick 1952, 167-68). Midgett’s account of the rescue is available on the internet at: [http://www.lifesavingservice.org/accounts\\_priscilla.html](http://www.lifesavingservice.org/accounts_priscilla.html); a photo of the *Priscilla* wreck is available at the Outer Banks History Center

- “*Robert W. Dasey*, Schooner, August 18, 1899, Little Kinnakeet, 0 lost.”

The 3-masted schooner *Robert W. Dasey* became stranded on the beach near the Little Kinnakeet station. The vessel was bow to the beach, enabling a successful rescue of all seven aboard. The *Dasey* is mentioned in *The Kinnakeeter* with little detail. Although called the *Robert W. Dasey* by both Stick (1952) and Williams (1975), a website for the U.S. Lifesaving Service refers this ship as the “*Robert W. Casey*.” A testimony from the crew about how grateful they were to the Surfmen of the Little Kinnakeet Station is available at:

[http://www.lifesavingservice.org/accounts\\_testimonies.html](http://www.lifesavingservice.org/accounts_testimonies.html)

- “*Ariosto*, Steamer, December 24, 1899, Ocracoke, 21 lost.”

The *Ariosto* was a schooner-rigged steam steamship that ran aground three miles southwest of Hatteras Inlet on Christmas Eve. Several of the crew attempted to reach shore in lifeboats, but capsized and drowned, making this an especially tragic wreck in the history of the Outer Banks. The Ocracoke Lifesaving crew arrived on the scene and rescued nine of 21

castaways (Stick 1952, 172-73). Ben Spencer of Ocracoke, in an interview on file at CAHA, recalled the “rubbish” in the water from this wreck that would snag their fishing nets.

- “*Ida Lawrence*, Schooner, December 4, 1902, Ocracoke, 0 lost.”

Irving Garrish recalled that his father’s house and three other Ocracoke homes were built with framing made out of the timbers from this vessel (Ginns 1977).

- “*Hilda*, Schooner, February 6, 1907, Cape Hatteras, 7 lost.”

All seven crewmen drowned after the three-masted schooner *Hilda* ran aground at the inner shoals five miles off Cape Hatteras. Both the Creeds Hill and Cape Hatteras stations were deployed, but rough and freezing weather prevented them from reaching the vessel before it completely broke up and disappeared (Stick 1952, 185-86). This rescue shows how the lifesaving stations often joined forces; it also shows how such efforts can still be futile.

- “*George W. Wells*, Schooner, September 3, 1913, Ocracoke, 0 lost.”

The six-masted, 2,970 ton schooner *Wells* was the largest ship to wreck off the Banks. Hurricane-force winds shredded the ship’s 28 sails, and it ran aground off Ocracoke. All 15 crewmen, three women, and two children were rescued by Hatteras Inlet Lifesaving Station; the ship’s remainders were later burned, “reputedly because of a disagreement as to who was to salvage her” (Stick 1952, 190). This wreck was mentioned in passing by Ocracoker Henry Ballance as he recalled islanders talking about the *Wells* as the “pride of the fleet” for its status as a “sailing master.” According to Ballance, the *Wells* came ashore near the present-day pony pen.

- “*Loring C. Ballard*, Schooner, April 3, 1915, Gull Shoal, 0 lost.”

The *Loring C. Ballard* was one of many ships imperiled by a fierce spring storm that flooded coastal North Carolina and dumped two feet of snow in Raleigh. Rescuers from the

newly dubbed Gull Shoal Coast Guard Station saved all seven crewmen of the Ballard (Stick 1952, 191).

- “*Diamond Shoals*, Lightship, August 6, 1918, Cape Hatteras, 0 lost.”

This lightship, anchored as a floating lighthouse on Diamond Shoals, was sunk by a German U-boat during World War I. As was the custom for the era, the crew was pre-warned and left the ship safely. Connie Farrow, whose interview is on file at CAHA headquarters, mentioned this ship which sank when he was 12.

- “*Mirlo*, Tanker, August 16, 1918, Chicamacomico, 10 lost.”

While several vessels, including the *Doyle*, *Seaqman*, *Merak*, and *Diamond Shoals* were victims of World War I German submarine torpedoes, the lack of casualties indicate the practice of forewarning ships of such attacks. However, the *Mirlo*, a tanker en route to Norfolk with a cargo of gasoline, likely hit a mine off Wimble Shoals. The explosion was sighted by the Chicamacomico station seven miles away. Deploying their new gas-powered lifeboat, Captain John Allen Midgett and crew navigated through a burning sea to reach the scene; in the end they managed to shuttle 42 out of 52 burned and drowning crewmen to shore. Midgett and his five crewmen were awarded Gold Lifesaving Metals (Stick 1952, 205-07). An on-line account of this rescue can be accessed here: [http://www.lifesavingservice.org/accounts\\_mirlo.html](http://www.lifesavingservice.org/accounts_mirlo.html).

- “*Carroll A. Deering*, Schooner, January 31, 1921, Diamond Shoal, 11 lost.”

The five-masted schooner *Deering* is known as the “Ghost Ship of Diamond Shoals” due to the mysterious nature of its wrecking. The ship was discovered on the outer shoals with all sails set and nobody aboard. Theories of piracy, mutiny, and murder were spread throughout the media; Buxton fisherman C.C. Gray claimed to have found a note in a bottle describing piracy, but authorities discovered his claim to be fraudulent. The mystery of the *Deering* was never

solved (Stick 1952, 209-212). The “message in a bottle” hoax is significant, as C.C. Gray was trying to make the Cape Hatteras Coast Guard station appear inept so someone would get fired and create a job opening. It shows the lengths at least one person went to in trying to secure a coveted “government job” and leave the financial insecurities associated with commercial fishing.

- “*U.S.S. New Jersey*, Battleship, September 5, 1923, Diamond Shoals.”
- “*U.S.S. Virginia*, Battleship, September 5, 1923, Diamond Shoals.”

The *New Jersey* and *Virginia* were de-commissioned battleships sunk by Brigadier General Billy Mitchell in his successful attempt to prove the effectiveness of aerial bombing. Both ships were sunk off Diamond Shoals (Stick 1952, 212).

- “*Victoria S.*, Schooner, August 23, 1925, Ocracoke, 0 lost.”

Irvin Garrish (interview on file at CAHA headquarters) of Ocracoke recalled that the *Victoria S.* came ashore near the present-day airstrip; he was five years old at the time. Garrish seemed to think it was loaded with lumber, and recalled a vendue being held. He said that the “natives would drop whatever they were doing. They would pack a picnic lunch, go to a vendue or auction sale, prepared to stay all day.” Garrish recalled one vendue taking place at Springer’s Point, and another at the Ocracoke Coast Guard Station. Irving Garrish (as opposed to Irvin, but likely the same person), was interviewed for a folklore collection (Ginns 1977), and pointed out the “vendue” was pronounced “wandue” by old-timers who turned the “v” sound into a “w” (Ginns 1977, 187). Ocracoker Henry Ballance (on file at CAHA) said that the lumber-filled vessel came to shore near the present-day airport. Elisha Ballance (interview on file at CAHA) actually witnessed the rescue itself when he was six and described what happened.

- “*Cibao*, Steamer, December 4, 1927, Hatteras Inlet, 0 lost.”

Carrying 17,000 bunches of bananas, this Norwegian steamer ran aground off Hatteras Inlet. The men from Hatteras Inlet Station successfully rescued all 48 aboard via power lifeboat (Stick 1952, 217-18). Bankers enjoyed a steady diet of bananas for days afterward. “Honey, we had bananas,” Henry Ballance of Ocracoke recollected. He said that the captain offloaded the bananas to villagers, wanting them out of his hold. Irving Garrish recalled bananas “up and down the beach” for 15 miles along Ocracoke (Ginns 1977, 186).

- “*George W. Truitt, Jr.*, Schooner, February 20, 1928, Ocracoke Inlet, 0 lost.”

Henry Ballance recalled that the *George W. Truitt*, loaded with lumber, wrecked near the present-day pony pen. Ballance believed it was cypress, “wide boat lumber,” and recalled that his father got some, “ripped it,” and made a fence.

- “*G.A. Kohler*, Schooner, August 23, 1933, Gull Shoal, 0 lost.”

The *Kohler*, last of the great sailing vessels, foundered off Salvo in a storm. Gull Shoal crewmen rescued all nine on board. After the storm subsided, the huge vessel remained on the beach. The wreck, minus the sails, was sold to Charles Williams of Avon for \$150 dollars who, in turn, sold it to Leonard Hooper of Salvo for the same price. The timbers were used to build the Salvo Assembly of God church. The ship’s turnbuckles were used to anchor the Avon Assembly of God church, also under construction, to the ground. The *Kohler* was mentioned in village interviews of Roy Gray of Frisco, Edward Hooper and Les Hooper of Salvo, I.D. Midgett of Waves, Willard Gray and Mary Gray of Avon, the latter whose mother salvaged mahogany chairs from the wreck.

- “*Nomis*, Schooner, August 16, 1935, Hatteras Inlet, 0 lost.”

The *Nomis*, according to Henry Ballance, (he called it the *Nemus* or the transcriber heard it pronounced that way), came ashore north of the present-day pony pen, between it and the first bridge. He recalled that the ship was loaded with lumber, and ended up being used to build the CCC camp which was slated for construction just south of the bridge. Cyrus Ruffman Gray of Buxton tells first hand about the rescue of this ship, as he was on the Hatteras Inlet station crew. He said it was the last crew they saved before the station was decommissioned. His interview, on file at CAHA, offers specific details about this rescue, but the transcript is cut off before the interview was completed. Elisha Ballance describes the *Nomis* and details about the vendue that followed.

“In the World War II years, 87 vessels went down off North Carolina; although some sank due to weather or shoal conditions, two thirds were due to German submarines or mines in the “Battle of Torpedo Junction” (Stick 1952, 239). These include:

- “*Anna R. Heidritter*, Schooner, March 1, 1942, Ocracoke.”

The *Heidritter* was mentioned in passing by Henry Ballance of Ocracoke as a World War II casualty that resulted in the ship coming ashore in the same area as the *Nomis*. Ballance was off the island at the time. At the ship’s vendue, his father bought an iron cook stove or “laundry stove.”

- “*City of Atlanta*, cargo ship, January 19, 1942, Cape Hatteras.”
- “*Dixie Arrow*, oil tanker, March 26, 1942, Ocracoke.”

Avon resident Gibb Gray, in an interview on file at CAHA, remembers vividly the wartime events off the coast of Hatteras during World War II when he was fifteen. In this interview, he describes seeing the explosion of the *City of Atlanta*, and the *Dixie Arrow*. He

came upon bodies on the beach. Gamaliel Ballance reflects on wartime bombings as well (also on file at CAHA).

- “*Louise*, cargo ship, December 16, 1942.”

The *Louise* went down off Kinnakeet in inclement weather loaded with truck tires, according to Avon resident Charles Williams (1975). Out of the 13-member crew, only two were saved. Willard Gray of Avon describes this wreck in an interview on file at CAHA.

- “*LST*, landing craft carrier, 1947, Chicamacomico.”

This vessel broke from a tug in 1947 and wrecked along the beach at Waves. David Lance Midgett (interview on file at CAHA) tells about his grandfather providing room and board for the salvage workers who had been hired to scrap the ship. For years, the remnants of the ship were a landmark on the beach, from which villagers swam and dived.

### **Primary Sources:**

Outer Banks History Center in Manteo, North Carolina:

United States Lifesaving Service Records 1892-1929 (wreck reports, daily journals, payroll records, bills, and leases).

United States Coast Guard Annual Reports 1876-1949.

Cape Hatteras Headquarters in Manteo, North Carolina:

Transcribed oral histories referencing shipwrecks (on file in archives):

Elisha Ballance (*Victoria S.*, *Nomis*).

Henry Ballance (*George W. Wells*, *Victoria S.*, *George W. Truitt Jr.*,  
*Nomis*, *Heidritter*).

Connie Farrow (*Diamond Shoals*).

Nellie Farrow/Jackie Weinberg (*LST*).

Irvin Scott Garrish: (*Pioneer*, *Home*, *Victoria S.*, *Cibao*).

Cyrus Ruffman Gray (*Nomis*).

Gibb Gray (*City of Atlanta*, *Dixie Arrow*).

Mary Gray (*G.A. Kohler*).

Roy Gray (*G.A. Kohler*).  
Willard Gray (*G.A. Kohler, Louise*).  
Edward Hooper (*G.A. Kohler*).  
Leslie Hooper (*G.A. Kohler*).  
D. Lance Midgett (*LST*).  
I.D. Midgett (*Richmond, G.A. Kohler*).  
Ben Spencer (*Ariosto*).

Coastal Resource Management Handbook:

Listing of archaeological sites (including wrecks).

**Secondary Sources:**

*Graveyard of the Atlantic*, David Stick (1952).

*North Carolina's Hurricane History*, Jay Barnes, (1995).

Collections and artifacts at the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum.

## 8.2 Structures and Artifacts

*Structures and artifacts of Light Stations, Life-Saving Stations, Navy and Coast Guard Stations, Weather Stations and Coastal Survey Markers in the Seashore represent the efforts of the United States to protect life and preserve property of maritime commerce from natural and wartime forces.*

The protection, restoration, and preservation of governmental structures and artifacts of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore have been a top priority of the National Park Service. As exhibits, such sites and artifacts underscore to visitors the central role the federal government has played in the lives of Bankers throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, providing jobs, monitoring weather patterns and geological shifts, and installing defense and lifesaving facilities.

### 8.2.1. Light Stations

The federal government first authorized the construction of two lighthouses on the Banks in 1794: Shell Castle off Ocracoke and Cape Hatteras. Although the first lighthouses in the nation's history were authorized in 1790 (Cape Henry, Virginia) and 1792 (Bald Head Island, Cape Fear), the Outer Banks were recognized as one of the most dangerous areas for seafarers and received much attention from Congress (Stick 1958). Lightships, functioning as floating lighthouses, were also employed from the 1820s until post-World War I in both the sound and ocean shoal waters. The *Diamond Shoals* was the best known lightship; it was torpedoed in 1918 during World War I. Emma Gray of Avon (interview on file at CAHA) was married to a keeper at Pasquatank and Thimble Shoals (Virginia) light stations; she described the eight-day work stretches and how the crew would return to shore for food or mail, or to receive offshore deliveries. Maintaining lighthouses and lightships through hurricane winds, beach erosion, and wartime aggressions has proven difficult, the most recent example being the relocation of the Cape Hatteras lighthouse in 1999 due to erosion.

- Shell Castle Light

Shell Castle Light, built and put into operation in 1798, was the first lighthouse on the Outer Banks. It served shipping traffic through Ocracoke Inlet, the “primary point of entry” at the time into mainland North Carolina (Stick 1958, 303). The wooden structure was located on a 25-acre oyster spit known as Old Rock and changed to Shell Castle by two entrepreneurs who secured state grants for the site and four other small islands (including Beacon Island) inside Ocracoke Inlet. By 1820 the channel had shifted away from Shell Castle Light, so Congress replaced it with a lightship until Ocracoke Lighthouse was built in 1823.

- Cape Hatteras Light

Cape Hatteras Light has undergone several incarnations. The first, a 120 tower built out of sandstone, was completed in 1802. Twenty feet of the structure was comprised of a stone foundation sunk into the ground, so the tower itself was only about 100 feet high. Dubbed the “worst light in the world” for low visibility (Stick 1958, 168), it was elevated to 150 feet in 1854. After the Civil War, which cost the lighthouse a lens and lantern, a new site was chosen for a taller lighthouse, 600 feet northeast of the old tower. A 180-foot high lighthouse was completed and put into operation on December 16, 1870. This lighthouse, the tallest in the United States, steadily lost shoreline and was abandoned in 1935 in favor of a “skeleton steel structure” erected in Buxton woods. After CCC crews built the beach up with dune fences and grass, the light was reactivated. It was moved 2,900 feet, to the objection of many residents, in 1999 to avoid falling into the sea.

Cape Hatteras Light is the most visible and important symbol of the Outer Banks. For seafarers, the light is a marker and reminder of the deadliest stretch of water along the Atlantic Coast: Diamond Shoals. For shoreside inhabitants of the Banks, the light is a symbol of their

history as both seafarers and rescuers of those who run afoul off their shores. Villagers' emotional response to the moving of the light reveals their deeply significant attachment to the tower. Many villagers felt that something very fundamental to their identity was relocated along with the tower: their roots to the Banks and their orientation to the island. The phrase, "the lighthouse is cracked but still standing," was used by villager Joe Farrow in reference to the people of the Banks, pointing to Cape Hatteras Light as a symbol of the tough, resilient character of the Bankers themselves. "If they move the lighthouse, will they move us next?" was a question that troubled many residents, as explained by Hatteras village resident Dwight Burrus.

Some villagers recall living in Cape Hatteras lighthouse quarters, such as Edna Gray, born in 1908. The daughter of lighthouse keeper James Casey, Gray offers one of the most complete descriptions of life at both Cape Hatteras and Ocracoke before the U.S. Coast Guard took over responsibility of the lighthouses in 1939. She described interesting day-to-day details, such as collecting birds for pot pies that had hit the tower during high winds and fallen dead on the sand. Her description of daily Banker life is testimony of how lighthouse keeper families were very much a part of village life.

The Rany Jennette interview also sheds light on life at the Cape Hatteras lighthouse, as Jennette was granddaughter of one of the keepers. Connie Farrow's interview touches on the lighthouse as well, as he married Ester Quidley, daughter of a keeper. Farrow, like numerous other Bankers interviewed, also recalls the baseball diamond and social events that occurred at the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse.

Ernal Foster's interview includes mention of Oliver Reef light station, a few miles north of Hatteras Inlet in Pamlico Sound. Built in 1874, this station was a square house with a lantern centered on the roof. Foster discussed the station in reference to Tom Angel, one of the village's

few black residents in modern memory: Tom Angel was the adopted son of a family who moved to Hatteras in order to man the Oliver Reef station.

- Ocracoke Light

The 75- foot high Ocracoke Lighthouse (or 65 feet from ground to center of light) was built in the village in 1822. As a harbor light, the Ocracoke facility did not need to be on par with taller lights, and after 1904 seafarers also made use of the Bluff Shoal screwpile light located 7.5 miles from the village in Pamlico Sound. The Ocracoke light is the oldest lighthouse in continuous service in North Carolina, and the second oldest in the country. Little information on the Ocracoke Light is available from on-file oral histories, but Edna Gray described staying at what must be the Bluff Shoal lighthouse.

### **8.2.2. Lifesaving Stations**

The United States Lifesaving Stations of Hatteras and Ocracoke Island, precursors to the U.S. Coast Guard Stations, comprised a significant government institution on the Outer Banks for villagers. The mission of the lifesaving service and the seafaring abilities of the Bankers were a good fit and, once some initial problems were worked out, the Outer Banks' Surfmen proved to be superior lifesavers. Stations employed local members as much as possible; this not only infused the Banks with a steady source of income, but contributed to the stations being very much a part of the Banker communities. Almost every interview on file at CAHA headquarters mentions the U.S. Lifesaving Service or U.S. Coast Guard Service, offering rich information on specific stations.

- The Oregon Inlet Station (originally called "Bodie Island Station") located on the south side of Oregon Inlet, was the northernmost facility in the Cape Hatteras region. It was one

of the first stations to be built in 1874. A new building replaced the original station in 1898. Villagers remember this station as the final point before crossing over Oregon Inlet on their way to Manteo or other points north. Here, weary travelers would get waved in by a friend or family member working as lookout and fed a sumptuous meal. The Station is still in existence, and it is the hope of many villagers that it will be restored before becoming completely swallowed by sand. Earl O'Neal of Ocracoke recalled eating meals at both the Oregon Inlet and Pea Island stations while traveling north.

- The Pea Island Station, located on Pea Island south of the Oregon Inlet Station and north of Chicamacomico, was built in 1878. Burned by arsonists in 1880, the station was soon rebuilt. A product of segregation, the station was manned by an African-American crew, and headed by Richard Etheridge, a former slave. The acts of heroism shown by the Pea Island crew were not acknowledged by the government until a century after the fact, when the men were awarded the Gold Lifesaving Medal in 1996 for their 1896 rescue of the *E.S. Newman* crew. Pea Island Surfmen were the first African-Americans some islanders had ever encountered, as described in Elsie Hooper's interview. The Mary Gray interview, also on file at CAHA, offers a description of how kind and helpful the Pea Island crew was in assisting islanders in their travels north. The station closed in 1947.

- New Inlet Station: One of the last lifesaving stations built, this station was constructed in 1904. Located north of Rodanthe, the station burned down only a few years after it was built, and was not replaced.

- The Chicamacomico Station, built in 1874, was replaced by a new building in 1911. Located in Rodanthe, the station is best known for the daring rescue of the *Mirlo*. The lifesaving crew were primary organizers of Rodanthe's Old Christmas celebration, illustrating

how interwoven the station members were into village life. Nellie Farrow recalls when station members hitched a wagon to large “government horses” to pick up school children in Waves and Salvo when roads were flooded. The original Chicamacomico Station has been restored and put on public display by “Friends of the Chicamacomico Station,” but some islanders bitterly complain that the restoration efforts have not maintained the structure’s historical integrity. In 2005 a \$5 dollar admission fee was put into effect.

Anderson Midgett of Rodanthe described a rescue he witnessed at this station, and offers details on lifesaving drills. The stations often helped community members in need in everyday life; D. Lance Midgett of Waves recalled that the Coast Guard helped his father launch a new trawler by pulling it to the water with an amphibious vessel.

- The Gull Shoal Station, originally called “Cedar Hummock” when commissioned in 1878, was located about five miles south of Salvo. It was destroyed in the 1944 storm. About three and a half miles south of the station in Pamlico Sound is “Cross Shoal,” named after the “Cross House,” a small structure on the beach. Little Kinnakeet and Gull Shoal patrolmen would meet at this structure and “strike the clock” of the other station with a special key to prove that they had made their rounds. This process is described in Burt Hooper’s interview.

Gull Shoal crewman Erasmus Midgett rescued 10 people single-handedly from the *Priscilla* in 1899. Another well-known rescue for this station, with the assistance of the Chicamacomico station, was the eight crewmen safely taken off the *G.A. Kohler*.

Villagers in the Chicamacomico region were especially isolated and did not have easy access to doctors based in Hatteras or Buxton; the Gull Shoal and Chicamacomico Stations were depended upon to send communications or call for an air ambulance in the event of emergencies. Station members were also called in the event of disputes or other matters otherwise handled by

the Sheriff's Department, and helped tote buckets of water in the event of a fire before the fire departments were established.

- Little Kinnakeet, established in 1874, was located about seven miles south of Gull Shoal Station, and a few miles north of Avon. The station was rebuilt in 1904. Four or five families lived at Little Kinnakeet, and although the station and village are gone, at least one house was moved to Avon and sits behind Lucy Miller's house today. "Miss Lucy" is the daughter of a Little Kinnakeet Coast Guardsmen. Her older sister Emma Gray reported that there was no store at the site, and families had to walk or ride with horse and cart to Avon to get flour, sugar, cornmeal, lard, beans, peas, and canned tomatoes and beef. Once roads and vehicles became established, Charles Williams of Avon trucked goods to village stores and Coast Guard stations as well. The Little Kinnakeet station is still in place, and is currently under restoration by the National Park Service.

- Big Kinnakeet Station, commissioned in 1878, was located near the southeast edge of Avon. It was rebuilt around the turn of the century, but is no longer in existence. Big Kinnakeet, like the other stations, stabled two "government horses" that were used to pull surf boats. Gibb Gray explains that these were Army Cavalry horses transported by barge to Hatteras. Roy Gray was the son of William James Gray, stationed at Big Kinnakeet. He also offers interesting details of station life, including the fact that Avon boys regularly went to the station to receive haircuts. Because Avon had stations on either side, the Coast Guard was especially important to the village, and village politics in regard to who secured these government jobs was especially intense. Although class and status differences were hard to detect, those who received a regular check enjoyed a little more status than those without steady employments. Ruby William recalled her Coast Guardsmen father delivering canned food to

needy families.

Kinnakeeters worked at distant stations as well, of course, compelling families to either become well-traveled or accustomed to getting along with an absent father for much of the time. Kinnakeet midwife Omi Meekins learned a variety of skills out of necessity, according to her daughter Mary Gray, as her Coast Guardsmen husband was frequently away. Crewmen were also transferred to the area from distant regions and often became a part of the community. Willard Gray recalled a New Jersey Guardsmen who started a side occupation of “killing a beef” and selling meat to villagers.

The Coast Guard stations were important to local businesses, as stores supplied “grub” and other supplies; freight boat captain Loran O’Neal obtained a government contract to haul coal to the stations during the Depression, according to his son L.P. O’Neal. Coast Guard supply boat *AB21* ran freight and supplies from Elizabeth City to the stations, and was also commissioned by revenue officers to intersect bootleg operations during prohibition. Kinnakeet resident Manson Meekins recalled the captain of that supply boat giving him a jug of corn whiskey from a load captured at East Lake. Big Kinnakeet Station was located near a flat plain used for horse and Model-T races; villagers from the southern part of Hatteras came up for these events, as well as baseball games. Members of the Big Kinnakeet station undoubtedly took part in these community activities.

- Cape Hatteras Station, located nearest to Diamond Shoals, was commissioned in 1883 and dismantled in 1915 to make way for a new Coast Guard station. A high profile wreck was the *Carroll A. Deering*, the “ghost ship” that ran aground under full sail with no crew on the outer Diamond shoal. Cyrus R. Gray described a grueling training program at this station, as well as the last rescue before the station washed away.

Like the other station crews, Cape Hatteras Coast Guardsmen performed above and beyond their lifesaving duties, and were very much part of the community. U.S. Navy Chief Pharmacist's Mate "Doc" Folb (Toth et. al 1973), who served patients and delivered babies from Hatteras Village to Rodanthe in the 1920s, said he could not have traveled up and down the island were it not for frequent assistance from the Coast Guard who pulled him out of soft sand and swampy areas. Folb also described how the Surfman on patrol would start down the beach at sunset to meet the neighboring Surfman traveling from the opposite direction to exchange tokens, providing evidence that each man had worked his shift. Manson Meekins of Avon described the Cape Hatteras Station, as his father was stationed there.

- Creeds Hill, commissioned in 1878 was located just below the village of Frisco on a large dune which was part of Stowe's Hills. The station was destroyed in a storm and rebuilt in 1918 with the help of Buxton resident Rocky Rollinson. Villagers were able to access the telephone at Creeds Hill for emergencies. Alonzo Stowe of Frisco prepared and sold yaupon tea for 11 years during his days off from the Coast Guard; Coast Guardsmen also fished, gardened, and drove livestock when not on duty. Connie Farrow of Frisco discussed the importance of the Coast Guard to Frisco.

- Durants, originally called the Hatteras Lifesaving Station, was commissioned in 1878. The station was moved twice due to beach erosion, but the original building stood until washing away in 2003 during Hurricane Isabel. Lucy Stowe discussed her grandfather who was stationed at this site, recounting a story about him rescuing Portuguese sailors. She also mentions the employment opportunity that local women had in doing laundry for Guardsmen. Tolson et al (1979) mentions that the entrepreneur who brought ice to Hatteras village also stored food for Coast Guardsmen.

- Hatteras Inlet Station, originally called the Ocracoke Station, was put into commission on the north end of Ocracoke Island by 1883. A small hamlet of families lived at Cedar Hammock near the station according to Alton Ballance (1989). The station was swept away in one of three hurricanes that hit the state all within a one month period in 1955 (Hurricanes Connie, Diane, and Ione); remnants of a wharf are still visible today.

A high-profile rescue occurred with the wreck of the *George C. Wells*, a 3,000 ton sailing vessel that went aground 500 yards off Ocracoke. Elisha Ballance discussed the remoteness of this station from Ocracoke. Cyrus Gray described rescuing the last crew saved from a shipwreck by the Hatteras Inlet Station surfmen; he believed it was the *Nomis*.

- Ocracoke Life Saving Station, built in 1904, was located in the village proper on the “creek” side of the village. A new Coast Guard station was built on the same site during World War II. The station was downgraded to a sub-unit in 1996, and the large stationhouse abandoned; it is currently being refurbished as a dorm and teaching center for the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching. Ocracoke Coast Guardsmen, as in other villages, enjoyed a slightly higher social status due to their regular paychecks, and were among the first on the island to own automobiles. Earl O’Neal talked about the role of the Coast Guard in helping islanders with medical emergencies. He also mentions how local girls often married servicemen.

- The Portsmouth Island Station, established in 1894, was put out of commission in 1937 due, in part, to a declining population. The station still stands, as does many other structures in the abandoned village, all under jurisdiction of the Cape Lookout National Seashore.

### 8.2.3. Navy and Coast Guard Stations

- United States Coast Guard.

The United States Lifesaving Service and the United States Revenue Cutter Service combined to form the U.S. Coast Guard in 1915; the mission and much of the personnel of the old lifesaving stations remained the same, and the significance of the service to villages is discussed above. The stations, however, were gradually de-commissioned and Coast Guard operations “were consolidated into Group Cape Hatteras” (Foster 2005, 16). In 2004 the U.S. Coast Guard announced system-wide restructuring plans, including closure of the Cape Hatteras facility near Buxton. About half of the over 100 “Coasties” stationed on Ocracoke and Hatteras received orders to relocate elsewhere, and the Cape Hatteras base, as well as the base’s 45-unit base housing built in 1996, closed in July 2005. Major shoreline erosion near the base hastened the scheduled closing. The departure of many Coast Guard personnel highlights the continued importance of Coast Guard families to local communities, as the schools, ball teams, churches, and civic groups lost members. Cape Hatteras Secondary School lost its “teacher of the year,” who was married to a serviceman (ibid, 19).

- United States Navy Facility at Cape Hatteras.

The United States Navy have had a presence on Hatteras Island since World War I, as a facility comprised of “two Naval stations, one compass station, and a radio station” operated out of Cape Hatteras, according to the Chief Pharmacist’s Mate “Doc” Folb (Toth et. al 1973, 43). The Navy doctor served eight Coast Guard stations, five lighthouses, and seven villages of Hatteras Island; through this service, more than anything, the Navy played an important role in community life. In 1923 the doctor brought in a nurse from Atlanta and set up nursing schools in each village, teaching residents to “do emergency work at home, take care of children, and do

minor things like that” (Toth 1973, 44). The Navy also played a role in protecting the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse, as servicemen built three concrete groins to help fend off beach erosion in the 1930s. As discussed by Mary Gray of Avon, the Navy facility was particularly active in communicating with villagers during World War II, enforcing the headlight restrictions and blanketing of windows so as not to create backlighting for German U-boats targeting ships off the coast of North Carolina.

The U.S. Navy left Hatteras Island in 1982, and the U.S. Coast Guard command and control took over the Navy base in Buxton. Leon Scarborough shares WWII memories of finding rations washed up on the beach, and Gaskill Austin recalls watching the explosions from a rooftop. Gibb Gray of Avon discussed WWII activities as well, and is considered a local expert on this period.

- United States Navy Facility at Ocracoke

A Navy Section Base and commissary, officer’s club, medical clinic, and associated power plants operated in Ocracoke from 1942 – 1944; the base was converted into an Amphibious Training Base from 1944-1945 and a Combat Information Center in 1945 (Stick 1958). The Amphibious Training Base brought in 600 personnel, doubling the population of the island. This provided work for islanders, particularly women who were employed to do laundry.

Sullivan Garrish discussed a dispute that the landowners – the Cradle family – had with the Navy over the Navy base property. Ellen F. Cloud stressed that Ocracokers did not have a big problem with the NPS acquiring land, but did have a problem with the Navy, as that was land within the village. Thurston Gaskill described building the amphibious base, as he helped haul materials from the mainland; he also enlisted and served out of the Ocracoke base during World War II. Elizabeth Howard said that the Navy warned villagers about the oncoming 1944 storm.

She also discussed the USO shows, movies, and general entertainment that arrived on the island with the Navy. Fanny Pearl Fulcher talked about her father, who owned land leased by the government to store ammunition; Earl O’Neal, grandson of Leaser, discussed it too. Henry Ballance described the ammunition facility in his interview on file at CAHA, as well as the employment opportunities that the Navy brought to the island. He also stressed that islanders got along well with their military neighbors. Gene Ballance discussed the Navy’s role in changing the infrastructure and landscape of the area, laying down the first paved road to the ammunition storage facilities, dredging Silver Lake, and filling low, marshy areas of the village with spoils from Silver Lake. Mary Fulcher Cloud recalled the ruins of the Navy facilities after they abandoned the base after World War II.

#### **8.2.4. Weather Stations**

Although the United States Weather Bureau was not created until 1890, weather stations pre-date the Bureau and were monitored on the Outer Banks by lighthouse keepers or lifesaving station personnel (Barnes 1995). Until World War II, however, weather forecasting methods remained primitive and largely ineffective. Bankers relied on traditional methods of predicting storms by noting changes in wind, wave, and animal behavior. The weather service posted warning flags for villagers, and even dropped messages in sealed metal tubes to fishermen from small planes in the 1940s and 1950s, as described in Nat Jackson’s interview.

- Cape Hatteras Weather Station

The Cape Hatteras Weather Station, one of several stations established along the North Carolina coast, was originally established at the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse keeper’s quarters near Buxton on August 16, 1874. It was transferred to the Hatteras Lifesaving Station in 1880, and

then to a private residence in 1883. It suffered damage during the San Ciriaco hurricane of August 16-18, 1899. Before the station's anemometer was blown away, it recorded winds of over 100 mph with gusts between 120 and 140 mph. S.L Doshoz was the Weather Bureau observer at the time, and reported that "no such storm has ever been recorded within the history of the Weather Bureau at this place." His full report is reprinted in Barnes (1995), describing chest deep water over the entire island, groups of 40 to 50 people huddled in small houses, and "cries of terror" from drowning livestock (1995, 53). An official Weather Bureau Service building was built the following year in 1901. The station operated in Hatteras until getting decommissioned in 1946. A new station was built in Buxton that year, and the old station in Hatteras village was used by the U.S. Coast Guard from 1952-1958 and then transferred to the Cape Hatteras National Seashore. Between 1958 and 1995 it was leased or rented, and is now undergoing restoration by the National Park Service.

The Lucy Stowe interview provides excellent details about the weather station. Stowe, the first woman employee at the Cape Hatteras station, was hired during World War II when much of the male population was called to duty. Douglas "Chubby" Dorris mentioned the Weather Bureau's role in warning villagers of rough weather.

### **Primary Sources:**

Outer Banks History Center in Manteo, North Carolina:

United States Lifesaving Service Records 1892-1929 (wreck reports, daily journals, payroll records, bills, and leases).

United States Coast Guard Annual Reports 1876-1949.

United States Weather Bureau Records.

CAHA Headquarters in Manteo, North Carolina:

Virtually every oral history references lifesaving stations, and many reference light houses, but the following offer particularly telling details or insights:

Elisha Ballance (Hatteras Inlet Station).  
Dwight Burrus (Cape Hatteras Light).  
Connie Farrow (Creeds Hill Station).  
Nellie Farrow (Chicamacomico Station).  
Cyrus Gray (Cape Hatteras, Hatteras Inlet Stations).  
Edna Gray (Cape Hatteras light, Bluff Shoal light).  
Emma Gray (Light Stations, Little Kinnakeet station).  
Mary Gray (Kinnakeet Stations).  
Willard Gray (Coast Guard).  
Burt Hooper (Gull Shoal Station).  
Manson Meekins (Cape Hatteras Station).  
Earl O'Neal (Oregon Inlet, Pea Island Stations).  
Lucy Stowe (Durants Station).  
Ruby Williams (Kinnakeet Stations).

Interviews that reference Navy facilities:

Eugene Ballance (Ocracoke).  
Henry Balance (Ocracoke).  
Ellen Fulcher Cloud (Ocracoke).  
Fanny Pearl Fulcher (Ocracoke).  
Sullivan Garrish (Ocracoke).  
Thurston Gaskill (Ocracoke).  
Elizabeth Howard (Ocracoke).  
Manson Meekins (Cape Hatteras).  
Earl O'Neal (Ocracoke).

Interviews that reference Cape Hatteras Weather Station:

Lucy Stowe.  
D. Chubby Dorris.

Coastal Resource Management Handbook:

Listing of Historical Structures.  
Listing of Archaeological Sites.

Listing of Cultural Landscape Districts.

**Secondary Sources:**

*The Outer Banks of North Carolina*, David Stick (1952).

*Graveyard of the Atlantic*, David Stick (1952).

*North Carolina's Hurricane History*, Jay Barnes, (1995).

Collections and artifacts at the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum.

### 8.3. Geographic Features

*Geographic features of The Cape, Diamond Shoals, Gulf Stream and Labrador Current are historic reference points for navigation, weather observations and events, war activity, technological experiments such as aerial bombing and voice radio, and nautical folklore. Historic inlet locations determined human adaptations of settlement, trade and transportation patterns.*

The barrier islands that comprise the Outer Banks are dynamic and forever changing. Shifting sands, winds, tide, and weather patterns have changed the location of inlets, shoals, and shoreline. The sparseness of the Banks have made it an ideal environment for historical events and experiments such as the Wright Brothers flight at Kitty Hawk in 1903, the wireless communication signal sent by Reginald Fessenden from Buxton to Roanoke Island in 1902, and the successful aerial bombing tests of General Billy Mitchell off Hatteras Island in 1921. The quick-changing nature of the geography and weather of the Banks has also long made the area a treacherous and dreaded place for sailors attempting to navigate past Diamond Shoals; a danger compounded during World Wars I and II as German submarines lurked offshore and bombed passing vessels silhouetted against the shoreline.

Geography and history on the Banks have combined powerfully for villagers, who have long adapted to quixotic and often dangerous weather patterns, feast-or-famine cycles of various fisheries, and constantly shifting ground beneath their feet. Villages have flourished or diminished depending on the deepening or shoaling of an inlet, presence or absence of particular fisheries, or the with which they were able to get on and off the island. Both natural and man-made events have changed the topography of the Banks and of particular villages significantly in the past century.

### 8.3.1. Natural changes

#### Storms

- Freezes.

Ice storms and freezes are infrequent, but old-timers recall winters when Pamlico Sound turned into a sheet of ice. Major freezes occurred in 1894, 1917-18, and 1958. Roy Parsons, Ben Spencer, and Thurston Gaskill of Ocracoke each recalled the 1917 freeze when the mail boat was frozen into the sound near Portsmouth Island. Emma Gray of Avon recalled that same freeze, when villagers from Rodanthe showed up at Little Kinnakeet on foot looking for food; the ice prevented them from taking their boats. Murray Fulcher of Ocracoke said that the sound froze entirely in 1958, killing crabs, shrimp, and fish. When the ice broke it “sawed off all the aids to navigation, or pulled them out of the bottom.” Fulcher believed the 1958 freeze also had a positive impact, leading to a more southerly migration along the Atlantic coast of croaker into Pamlico Sound.

- Nor’easters.

Nor’easters, when the wind blows fiercely off the ocean from the northeast, sometimes for days on end, can cause as much flooding and beach erosion as a hurricane. The Ash Wednesday storm on March 7, 1962 was an especially fierce nor’easter. It cut an inlet just north of Buxton, breaking Hatteras Island in half. Villagers worked with the Army Corps of Engineers, filling the inlet with junked cars and sand, successfully closing the inlet after almost a year. This storm is recalled in an interview of I.D. Midgett of Waves.

- Hurricanes.

Hurricanes have done the most damage and changed the topography of the Outer Banks more than other storm events. Historically Bankers have adapted well to summer and autumn

tempests, and surprisingly few deaths have occurred along the vulnerable islands. Sea tides and washouts were frequent, as were flooded homes. Bankers simply allowed water into their houses via holes in the floor to prevent the structure from floating off the foundation, and swept mud and sand away once the storm passed. Before the 1960s few people lived near the ocean; villages were oriented toward the sheltered sound side of the islands. In the past few decades, oceanfront property has the highest value, and the damage to large beach homes, along with the sole paved highway and associated restaurants, hotels, and shops, can be (and has been) tremendous. Hurricanes can flatten dunes, build or shrink beaches, uproot trees and bushes, and create or fill inlets.

The San Ciriaco storm of August 16-18, 1899 was the most powerful in memory for 20<sup>th</sup> century Bankers. This hurricane devastated Diamond City, Shackleford Banks, and Portsmouth Island communities to the south of Cape Hatteras, inspiring an exodus for more sheltered areas that left these villages virtual ghost towns. Thirty-three houses and two churches were destroyed in Ocracoke, and storeowner Big Ike O'Neal was quoted in an Associated Press article that his father ordered him to take an axe and "scuttle the floor," that is, to cut holes in the floor, thus allowing water to enter the structure and prevent it from floating off its foundation (Barnes 1995, 52). The ocean washed over Hatteras Island, flooding homes and drowning hundreds of animals. The weather station was damaged, and an account of the storm from Weather Bureau observer S.L. Doshoz is reprinted in Barnes (1995). Seven vessels wrecked off the coast, four along Hatteras Island alone, exhausting lifesaving station crews.

Bankers recall the ferocity of the "double-number" storms of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the 1933, 1944, and 1955 storms. Two hurricanes hit the banks in 1933, the more devastating of which occurred September 15-16. The storm opened Drum Inlet to the south of Portsmouth Island, and

another inlet north of Hatteras village, which eventually filled itself in. The storm flooded much of the coastal plain. It also destroyed the Green Island Hunt Club on Ocracoke; Ernal Foster's account of surviving the storm at the hunt club is on file at CAHA. Maggie Austin of Frisco describes the destruction of Little Grove Methodist Church. The September 14, 1944 storm, known as the Great Atlantic Hurricane, was the second storm to hit North Carolina that year, and devastated the village of Avon, in particular. The sand-embankment dike that was built around the village in the early 1930s contained a tidal surge that would have otherwise rushed from the sound to the ocean; the resulting flood destroyed or damaged 96 of the village's 115 homes (Barnes 1995). Accounts of this storm can be found in most of the Kinnakeet interviews, including those provided by Willard Gray and Carrie Gray. Hurricane Ione of 1955 was the third to hit the state that season; a casualty of that season was the Hatteras Inlet Coast Guard Station.

Lucy Stowe, who worked at the Cape Hatteras Weather Station, describes the Ash Wednesday storm of 1962 in her interview. Villages were flooded, and a temporary inlet was cut north of Buxton.

Hurricane Emily of 1993 received little media attention, as its impact was largely confined to Hatteras Island villages from Avon south, particular Buxton and Frisco. The tall pines of the Cape area snapped in two, or suffered a slow death from salt spray. Cape Hatteras School received four feet of water, destroying computers, Xerox machines, textbooks, and even recordings and photographs used in *Sea Chest* articles. Houses and cars were flooded. Today, in 2004, the effects of Emily are still visible in the denuded forest areas, particularly through Frisco. Margaret Willis of Frisco describes this storm in her interview.

Hurricane Isabel, which hit September 17, 2003 was the most devastating storm to reach the Banks in a decade, and was the worst for Hatteras village in modern memory. The ocean ran

across the community, destroying hotels, beach houses, stores, trailers, and restaurants. Isabel cut a large inlet in the same spot as did the 1933 storm, isolating villagers off from the rest of the Banks until the end of November when the Army Corps of Engineers managed to fill it. Isabel also wreaked havoc on the northernmost part of the island, destroying several beach homes in Rodanthe.

Hurricane Alex of 2004 was another storm largely unnoticed by the wider world, but significant to Ocracoke Islanders who experienced extensive flooding and damage. Portions of NC 12 were washed out, and transportation problems were compounded by the fact that Hyde County officials did not evacuate tourists until after the storm, resulting in hundreds of flooded cars and stranded visitors.

### **8.3.2. Inlets**

- Ocracoke Inlet.

Early explorers marked the existence of Ocracoke Inlet, and it soon became the primary point of entry from the banks, giving rise to Port Town (Ocracoke village) and Portsmouth village. In the late 1700s, Shell Castle Island, located in the inlet, was a thriving lightering post where ships offloaded cargo to shallow-drafted vessels to deliver goods to New Bern, Washington, and Elizabeth City. Ocracoke Inlet was strategically important during the Civil War, and a Confederate fort was built on Beacon Island near Shell Castle Island. Ocracoke Inlet began shoaling in the 1820s, however, and became less important for shipping once the Hatteras Inlet was opened in 1846 and the railroad system became dominant in the late 1800s.

- Oregon and Hatteras Inlets.

Oregon and Hatteras Inlets were opened simultaneously by a hurricane in 1846. Hatteras Inlet opened north of Old Hatteras Inlet, which had reportedly closed in the mid-1700s after an English vessel “sank in the channel and shoals built up around the wreck” (Stick 1958, 8). Hatteras Inlet separated Ocracoke from Hatteras Island for the first time in many decades; both Hatteras and Oregon Inlets funneled “much of the water which had been passing out through Ocracoke Inlet” (ibid, 89). By the Civil War period, Hatteras Inlet “had replaced Ocracoke Inlet as the main point of entry through the Banks,” and because of the inlet, Hatteras village grew and prospered (Stick 1985, 304).

Oregon Inlet opened in an “inlet-prone” area of the northern banks which had previously included Port Fernando or Hatarask Inlet and Port Lane (shown in 1586 maps). A few miles south of Oregon Inlet, between Bodie Island and Rodanthe, was “Gun, Gunt, or Gant Inlet, Chick, Chickinacomock or Chicamacomico Inlet, and Dugg Inlet” (Stick 1958, 279). The year before the hurricane of 1846 created Oregon Inlet, Loggerhead Inlet north of Rodanthe and New Inlet on the southern end of Pea Island were open. Loggerhead Inlet closed in 1870, while New Inlet remained “more or less” open until closing in 1922, but was reopened by the 1933 storm (ibid, 283). Shortly after a wooden bridge was built, New Inlet closed once again. Oregon Inlet, however, named after the first vessel that passed through, had staying power, and was bridged in 1963; today it remains one of the most dynamic and dangerous inlets in North Carolina.

- Southern Hatteras Inlets.

Temporary inlets have opened in two primary “hotspots” of southern Hatteras Island. In 1962, during the Ash Wednesday storm (a nor’easter), the island was breached just north of

Buxton. In 1999 Hurricane Dennis caused a breach in the same place. In both cases, the inlet was filled relatively fast and the road repaired.

In 1933 a hurricane opened an inlet just north of Hatteras village, whereupon attempts were made to build a wooden bridge; the inlet filled itself in, however, before the bridge was completed. Hurricane Isabel re-opened this inlet in September of 2003, but it was filled and repaired by late November of that year.

### **8.3.3. Fisheries and Habitat Cycles**

- Fisheries.

The appearance and disappearance of a variety of fisheries has influenced the growth and economic viability of villages. In the mid- to late 19<sup>th</sup> century, large oyster reefs were available to villagers, until becoming decimated by northern skipjack crews. Fishing became generally poor in the 1930s and 40s, inspiring villagers to leave the island for work (also influenced by the Great Depression and wartime activities), and greet proposals for a new national park and tourist-trade with open minds. The fishing industry, namely because of the growth of shrimp trawling, expanded in the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s, causing fishermen to worry about the impact of a federal park presence on their livelihoods. The growth of the shrimp fishery reflected changes in market and food preferences; before consumer demand for shrimp, Bankers considered the crustacean as “trash fish” and, according to villagers such as D. Chubby Dorris of Frisco, fed them to their pigs and chickens.

At the same time sport fishing for marlin was growing in popularity, and, as described by Thurston Gaskill and Ernal Foster, thriving charter boat industries infused villages such as Hatteras and Ocracoke with new sources of income. The appearance of huge schools of

weakfish, or grey trout, off the beaches in the 1980s became an important source of winter income, as explained by Rudy Gray, and caused the sink net fleet to grow substantially in Hatteras Village and Oregon Inlet.

Restrictions against consuming certain traditional foods have not changed the size nor income level of villages but have offended the cultural sensibilities of villagers: sea turtle, shore birds, and big red drum are now off-limits to harvesting, but were favored dishes throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

- Habitat.

The opening and closing of inlets affects the habitat and associated fisheries of the Outer Banks and sound areas of North Carolina. Crab and a variety of fish larvae are transported through inlets, as are shrimp. Fishermen have long noted that clams thrive best in sea grass beds near inlets; not only do inlets open and close, but grass beds constantly migrate. Sloughs, or cuts along the sound bottom where currents run, are also prime areas for catching a variety of fish, and are choice spots for pound nets. Such habitat features change from season to season, and throughout history have affected how and where banks fishermen work.

Two of the more significant habitat changes of the past century concerned oysters and eelgrass. Oysters steadily declined throughout the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, never recovering from aggressive harvest techniques of northern schooner fishermen, and ultimately suffering from red tide in 1987 and the Dermo parasite which killed large oysters throughout the 1990s and 2000s. This had a greater direct impact statewide than on Banks' fishermen, as their oyster fishery had been negligible since the early 1900s. However, the decline has likely had an impact on other finfish species, as oysters are filter-feeders that clean pollutants from the water, and serve as habitat for many aquatic animals.

The kill-off of eel grass due to wasting disease starting in 1932 had a more direct impact on villagers; not only did it put an end to the seaweed harvesting business based in Avon, but caused a marked decline in waterfowl – especially brandt – that fed off the grass. Eel grass, as discussed by Manson Meekins of Avon, did not recover until the 1950s, and in the meantime the hunting guide business suffered and several lodges closed.

#### **8.3.4. Man-made changes**

- Dunes.

A significant man-made change to the natural topography of Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands was the dune-building project of the 1930s carried out by the Civilian Conservation Corps with help from the Works Project Administration. An important impetus for this effort was the desire to curtail beach erosion and flooding as part of the ongoing planning to establish a national seashore park.

Before the 1930s, villagers describe the topography of Hatteras and Ocracoke as flat, prone to ocean over-wash, and – in certain areas – bald of vegetation and comprised of blowing sand. Although the Cape area was wooded, much of Hatteras and Ocracoke had little or low vegetation, grazed by livestock and thinned by frequent storms. The ocean beach was farther from villages than today, as the banks have slowly migrated west. Many interviews, such as those provided by Manson Meekins, Sullivan Garrish, and Nathaniel Jackson, describe a clear, unobstructed view from sound-side communities to the ocean, with an occasional hill from a sand-covered shipwreck. Natural creeks absorbed much of the ocean over-wash, or communities simply adapted to the occasional flooding of their homes and villages.

The dunes are of great interest to villagers, and many interviews reference the building of

dunes and the impact of dunes on the topography during storms. Not everyone expressed the view that dunes are an unwelcome addition; Henry Ballance believed that anchoring the blowing sand was good for villages. Most interviewees, however, said that the hills have accelerated erosion on the beach and caused more flooding in villages from sound-side water surges (Rany Jennette, Ephraim O’Neal, Ben Spencer, Gaskill Austin).

- Harbors, ditches, and dikes.

The Army Corps of Engineers harbor-building projects of the 1930s and 1940s were received positively by villagers, as they received a sheltered area in which to tie their boats. A harbor was dug in Ocracoke in 1931, and then deepened in 1942 in association with Navy activities. Rodanthe received a T-shaped harbor dug by the U.S. Coast Guard in 1936-1937. Hatteras received a harbor in 1936, and Avon in 1946-47. WPA projects included extensive ditch-digging in villages as well, as a means of mosquito control. A large ditch and dike was built around Avon to better protect the village in the event of storms. Concomitant with the digging of harbors was the filling of low, marshy places in the villages with dredge spoil; areas such as Sticky Bottom in Hatteras, Peter’s Ditch in Avon, and Mary Ann’s Pond of Ocracoke became built-up and dry, no longer necessitating boardwalks. Some natural creeks were covered as well. Several villagers, such as Eugene Ballance, Manson Meekins, and Ernie Foster, remarked on the different appearance their community acquired after these digging, ditching, and filling projects,

- Road, Bridge, and Park

The designation of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore in 1953 was preceded by the acquisition of land that defined village borders and put into motion policies that would dictate how parklands could and could not be used by the public – tourists and villagers alike. This was

a change in landscape to which many villagers objected, while others have grown thankful to have large swaths of beach protected from development. With the establishment of the Park came the laying down of infrastructure to accommodate visitors: Highway NC 12, built in sections from 1950 – 1953, and the Bonner Bridge crossing Oregon Inlet, built in 1963. Free-ranging livestock was outlawed as well. The road and the bridge, more than anything else, set the stage that would enable rapid population and tourism growth beginning in the 1970s. The sheer numbers of Park users, along with changes in legislation such as the Endangered Species Act, made it necessary for the National Park Service to increase control over Park management, angering locals who loathe what they see as decreasing freedoms in their own homeland. Some have remarked, however, that they appreciate the National Park Service keeping open the many sandy paths from the highway to the sound, enabling access to fishing and hunting grounds.

**Primary Sources:**

CAHA Headquarters in Manteo, North Carolina:

Transcribed oral histories referencing geography and on file at the CAHA archives:

Gaskill Austin.

Eugene Ballance.

Henry Ballance.

D. Chubby Dorris.

Ernal Foster.

Murray Fulcer.

Sullivan Garrish.

Thurston Gaskill.

Emma Gray.

Nathanial Jackson.

Rany Jennette.

Manson Meekins.

I.D. Midgett.

Ephraim O'Neal.

L.P. O'Neal.

Roy Parsons.

Ben Spencer.

Margaret Willis.

**Secondary Sources:**

The Outer Banks of North Carolina, David Stick (1958).

North Carolina's Hurricane History, Jay Barnes, (1995).

Place Names of the Outer Banks, Roger Payne (1985).

Geographical History of the Carolina Banks, Gary Dunbar (1956).

#### 8.4. Villages and Maritime Forests

*Villages and maritime forests encompassed within the Seashore are historic habitation sites of American Indians, European settlers, African American watermen and shipwreck survivors. These unique cultures developed while living in isolation under a harsh maritime environment using the traditions of barter, salvaging and subsistence trade. Windmills, fish camps, hunt clubs, wharves, marinas, boatbuilding and seafood facilities are examples of cultural resources that have existed in these villages and the Seashore.*

Names such as Chicamacomico, Kinnakeet, Hatteras, and Ocracoke comprise the lasting legacy of indigenous inhabitants of the Outer Banks. Hatteras Indians, part of the Croatan chiefdom, had settlements in the Cape Woods' area along the sound, and these Algonkian-speakers were the only permanent Banks' residents at the time of European contact (Ward and Davis 1999). The native population became impoverished and sickly upon European settlement, and had disappeared via starvation or intermarriage by the late 1700s. Archaeological excavations in the Buxton Woods have discovered a mix of indigenous and European trade items (ibid); other indigenous sites along the banks were temporary hunting and fishing camps. The relatively small population of African-American slaves and free blacks who lived on Hatteras and Ocracoke left little trace; many slaves were employed as pilots for lightering vessels passing through Ocracoke Inlet, and lived at Shell Castle Island. Slave burials were likely unmarked or have long washed away with most other pre-Civil War graves.

The earliest white settlers of the Banks were typically poor yeoman homesteaders of European origin. Many came down from Virginia or mainland North Carolina, and were attracted to cheap land for raising livestock. Although shipwreck survivors occasionally married into local families and settled on the Banks, the majority of early pioneers came from the mainland; village families with centuries-old roots are, for the most part, descendants of these yeoman farmers. Early Banker families and subsequent generations built a strong cultural legacy on Hatteras and Ocracoke, yet tangible evidence of this legacy is quickly disappearing beneath

the tremendous level of development that has transformed the region since the 1970s and particularly since late 1990s.

Cultural resources that have shaped village life and served (or still serve) as markers of cultural identity include churches, stores, schools, fish houses and camps, harbors and landings, hunt clubs, lifesaving stations, and lighthouses. The latter, stations and lighthouses are discussed in interpretive section 8.2. Churches, schools, and the like are discussed for individual villages in the ethnohistorical section; however, shared features and meanings for interpretive purposes are explored below. The long history of raising livestock is only evident in a few place names such as “Horse Wading Creek” and a few dipping vats that remain scattered throughout the islands; several villagers recalled their wrangling days fondly (Elisha Ballance, Henry Ballance, Cyrus Ruffman Gray, Ernal Foster, and Les Hooper discussed roundups, pennings, branding, dipping, and butchering of livestock). The best discussion of early trade and bartering is provided by Dunbar (1956).

- Churches.

The Methodist church was the center of traditional village life throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By the early 1800s, formal memberships in established village churches had been formed, but, by 1844, the Methodist church had fractured over the issue of slavery. Congregations along the Outer Banks either became Southern Methodists, or split and established both a Northern and Southern Methodist church. According to villagers, these community-level splits had less to do with slavery than community rivalries and disagreements. For example, on Ocracoke, the Methodist church became a Southern Methodist church, and then lay dormant throughout the Civil War period. When villagers regrouped after the war, some resented the proposal to start learning hymns by reading music rather than by ear. That

disagreement brought about the establishment of the Northern Methodist church. The fervent style of worship offered by the Pentecostal Assembly of God church was introduced in Avon during revivals and camp meetings in the late 1920s. When the Northern and Southern Methodist churches united in 1937, disagreements about leadership, church location, and style of worship ensued. Assembly of God churches that had been built in Avon and Salvo benefited from such disagreements, as they represented an alternative for disgruntled Methodists; these rifts also led to the establishment of new Assembly of God churches in both Hatteras and Ocracoke.

Although rivalries and emotions ran deep, and whole families were torn apart by conflicting church loyalties, villagers often attended each other's church and gathered together for revivals and other social events.

Church was long the central venue for socializing in small Banks' villages. Many islanders reported that everyone went to church; Sunday was devoted to worship at least twice a day, and families visited one another and enjoyed a Sunday meal as well. Working on Sunday was strictly taboo. For families regularly subjected to fierce storms and involved in dangerous occupations such as commercial fishing and lifesaving, a strong respect for the Divine was critical and expressed often. Fanny Pearl Fulcher, Maggie Austin, Ernal Foster, Margaret Willis, Audrey Rollinson, and Edward and William Hooper were among those who discussed church life in their interviews on file at CAHA.

- Stores.

The hey-day for small community stores occurred between the 1920s and World War II, when almost every family seemed to run their own tiny establishment. Products such as Pepsi Cola and Lucky Strike cigarettes became popular, and the typical general store that carried

staples such as flour, corn meal, and lard expanded their inventory. An influx of Civilian Conservation Corps workers in the 1930s added to the stores' clientele, and the Midgett brothers' bus line used many of the stores as stops. Some stores doubled as post offices, and most were popular places to socialize and gossip. Sometimes stores were venues for square dances, although dance halls grew in popularity in the 1930 and 1940s. Interviews that discuss community stores include those provided by Fanny Pearl Fulcher, Anderson Midgett, Rudy Gray (son of the "Pepsi Cola man"), Cyrus Ruffman Gray, L.P. O'Neal, and Dale Burrus (of Burrus Red and White). Ruby Williams reflected on the old community square dances, and Jimmy Austin, son of a fiddler, was one of many who discussed the gatherings as well.

- Schools.

Hatteras Island schools were established from the mid- to late 1800s and underwent a series of consolidations leading up to the Cape Hatteras School in 1955. At one point, Rodanthe, Waves, and Salvo each had a school, but all the children of Chicamacomico began attending the Rodanthe School in the early 1930s. The early village schools were tiny, having one or two classrooms and just a handful of students. None went through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, and older students boarded in Manteo or other locations to receive a high school degree. After a paved highway connected the communities, island students were bused to the new, large K-12 school in Buxton. At first, village rivalries were aggravated and many fights broke out, but soon students learned to get along; several villagers reflected that consolidation was the best thing that ever happened to the communities. Alice Rondthaler, former teacher of Ocracoke School, discussed teaching at the small village school; most of the interviews on file contain some information on village schools.

- Fish Houses and Camps.

Most villages had at least two or more small fish houses, located on the shoreline or out on the Pamlico near the channel. Fish houses were used to pack and ship salted fish and smoked fish; upon the advent of ice in the 1930s, fish houses were equipped to hold huge blocks buried in wood shavings or sawdust. Fish houses were sites of commerce and communication, and were largely a male-domain. With the introduction of gas-powered boats in the 1920s, fish house owners provided fuel as well as other supplies to fishermen. The commerce at fish houses connected villagers to the wider world, as buy boats and freight boats would come from Elizabeth City to Hatteras and from Washington to Ocracoke. Fish camps were small, square sheds used to store nets and other fishing equipment. They were placed along landings and later harbors, or build along lonely stretches of beach as a place for fishermen to work and sleep overnight. “Your land, my net camp” was the motto, as fishermen obtained permission to build camps on other people’s property, and the camp was open to anyone who needed shelter. Thurston Gaskill talked about the transition to gas-powered boats from sail skiffs. Jimmy Austin, Rudy Gray, and Manson Meekins discussed fish markets and fish houses; Ernie Foster and Dwight Burrus reflected on the significance of net camps as get-aways for boys, and symbols of island culture.

- Harbors and Landings.

Landings were places in villages where people hauled their boats, mended nets, repaired equipment, built boats, and so on. Like “Bennie’s Landing” in Kinnakeet, they were often named after the owner of the land or whoever lived nearby, but landings were open for everyone’s use. Until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, some landings and points held windmills used to grind corn obtained on the mainland in exchange for salted or smoked fish. Landings were the

sites of camp meetings in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, cooled by waterborne breezes and accessible to the sound waters for baptisms. As the sound waters were shallow, the mail boat and freight boats anchored several yards offshore in the channel, and villagers would “pole out” in a “shove skiff” to pick up the cargo. The delivery of mail was a highlight of the day and villagers gathered at the landing to watch the mail being “hailed over.” Landings were thus places of activity, transportation, transition, and excitement.

Harbors were dug in several villages in the 1930s and 1940s, providing villagers with a more sheltered place to keep their vessels. Before docks and wharfs became popular in the 1960s, fishermen would simply tie their boats to stakes, either in the sound or in the harbor; stakes were flexible and held vessels safely unless a major hurricane hit.

Villagers who discussed post offices and the old mail boat routes include Murray Fulcher (whose father ran the Aleta) Anderson Midgett, Manson Meekins, Ernal Foster, Edward Hooper (retired Salvo postmaster), and Carrie Gray. L.P. O’Neal talked about the freight boat route that his father ran, as did Murray Fulcher. Emma Gray and Manson Meekins reflected on the old-time camp meetings. I.D. Midgett, L.P. O’Neal, and Manson Meekins mentioned boat building and builders.

- Hunt Clubs.

Hunt clubs became popular in the early 1900s, as wealthy industrialists bought large swaths of land along the Outer Banks and build clubhouses. Villagers were hired as guides and caretakers, and the relationship between sportsmen and bankers was mutually beneficial: a new source of income flowed into communities, and hunt club clientele reaped the benefits of bankers’ hunting prowess, many of whom had market-hunted waterfowl until the Migratory Bird Treaty Act outlawed it by 1918. Clubs were many islanders’ first exposure to wealth and

tourism. Some of the larger hunting clubs included Gull Island Hunting Club south of Salvo (destroyed in the 1944 storm), Phipp's Hunt club south of Avon and at Cape Hatteras (donated to the National Seashore), Gooseville Gun Club on the south end of Hatteras Island (donated to the National Seashore), Green Island Hunt Club on north Ocracoke (destroyed in the 1933 storm), and Quark's Hammock Hunt Club, property of the latter two eventually sold for the National Seashore. Manson Meekins, Ernal Foster, Elisha Ballance, Burt Hooper, and Audrey Rollinson include information on hunt clubs in their interviews on file at CAHA.

### **Primary Sources:**

CAHA Headquarters in Manteo, North Carolina:

The following transcribed oral histories referencing cultural resources are file at CAHA archives:

Jimmy Austin.  
Maggie Austin.  
Elisha Ballance.  
Dale Burrus.  
Ernal Foster.  
Fanny Pearl Fulcher.  
Murray Fulcher.  
Thurston Gaskill.  
Carrie Gray.  
Cyrus Ruffman Gray.  
Emma Gray.  
Rudy Gray.  
Edward and William Hooper.  
Burt Hooper.  
Manson Meekins.  
Anderson Midgett.  
I.D. Midgett.  
L.P. O'Neal.  
Audrey Rollinsons.  
Alice Rondthaler.  
Lucy Stowe.  
Margaret Willis.

**Secondary Sources:**

*Geographical History of the Carolina Banks*, Gary Dunbar (1956).

“Post Route Map of the States of North Carolina and South Carolina showing Post Offices with the intermediate distances and mail routes in operation on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June, 1896.” A. von Haake. This traces the mail boat route for Ocracoke and Hatteras Islands in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Map is available at the Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

## 8.5. Gravesites

*Gravesites of sailors, lifesavers, mariners and shipwreck victims within the Seashore represent the toll of war and nature.*

Hatteras and Ocracoke island gravesites are typically small family plots located in yards, open fields, sandy plots, or hidden in the woods. With the exception of two dedicated cemeteries for British soldiers found washed ashore during World War II, graves of sailors, lifesavers, mariners, and shipwreck victims are not segregated into special areas. Most of the lifesavers were community members, buried in family plots. Shipwreck victims were usually buried quickly and respectfully in whatever space was available.

The Banker tradition has been for families to “set aside a little bit of land for the graves” (Horn 2004, 17); this is both a southern tradition and a carry-over from colonial days, when “families were required to keep their own cemeteries. It was their custom to have the graveyards nearby” (ibid). Many graves have long disappeared due to storm and erosion, and others are marked with old cedar stumps or are unmarked. Granite or marble headstones were imported, and, today (2004), some of the old stones are bleached white from the sun and worn down from the elements, and are nearly or completely unreadable. Other headstones are covered in moss and lichens, absorbed into the trees and bushes that shade them:

The markers were made in New England by stonecutters and artisans and were easy to ship along the coast by sailing vessels. Early wills and estate records, as well as the markers, help refute the belief that early settlers were a group of ruffians, illiterate for the most part, for most of the records contain requests for a Christian burial and suitable marker (Carter 2004, 23).

Several gravestones from the early 1900s are engraved with a hand pointing skyward, while many display a bird holding a twig, U.S. Coast Guard insignias or “Woodmen of the World” symbols. Most also have a small footstone engraved with the initials of the deceased.

Graves are relatively shallow; holes dug deeper than two feet are in danger of filling with

water. Many graves are oriented toward the east. An old Banker tradition is for family members to border the grave of their deceased in conch shells or sea shells; a photograph from the Sol Libsohn collection of 1945 shows Rodanthe children decorating their grandfather's grave with shells and flowers. The oldest grave on Ocracoke is for Ann Howard, born in 1724; for Hatteras Island, the earliest birth date that can be read is 1790 on the stone of Silvey Meekins (Carter 2004).

Ocracoke village is home to more than 75 small family plots, and one community cemetery dedicated in the "early '50s on land from the Garrish family" (Horn 2004, 18). A volunteer board oversees maintenance and records of the cemetery, selling plots to community members and requesting \$10 dollars per year donation from families with relatives in the graveyard (ibid). The Ocracoke Burial Society has operated since 1948, with each member paying dues each time another member dies; the dues were initially ten cents, and are up to fifty cents today (Horn 2004, 18). The dues were designed to help family members with burial expenses, but today – as the average family receives about \$250 – residents keep up their membership more for traditional purposes than financial need (Horn 2004, 18).

Mary Gray's interview includes a description of the custom known as "sitting up with the dead," and Manson Meekins talks about local carpenters specializing in coffins. Carrie Gray also talks about old, pre-funeral home burial customs, and of discovering unearthed skeletons after the 1944 storm. Ernal Foster of Hatteras reflects on the "coffin house" in Hatteras village, and the practice of women sewing the lining of caskets. He also talks about prices of coffins, and the transition to undertakers after WWII. D. Lance Midgett discusses his family plot and prices paid. Fanny Pearl Fulcher of Ocracoke discusses coffin preparations and the verbal agreement between villagers to bury the dead on someone else's "high ground" if the family had

none. Numerous villagers such as I.D. Midgett and D. Lance Midgett mention family burials including locations, maintenance efforts, and the meaning of family plots in their lives.

### **Primary Sources:**

CAHA Headquarters in Manteo, North Carolina:

The following transcribed oral histories reference burials and are on file at the CAHA archives:

Ernal Foster.  
Fanny Pearl Fulcher.  
Carrie Gray.  
Mary Gray.  
Manson Meekins.  
D. Lance Midgett.  
I.D. Midgett.

The CRM handbook lists graves on Park property.

### **Secondary Sources:**

A thorough list and description of Dare County graves, including Hatteras Island, is available in the following publication:

Meekins, Lois Johnson and Amy Midgett Gamiel,  
2001 *Sacred to their Memory: Dare County, North Carolina Cemeteries*. Gateway Press, Baltimore.

For Ocracoke, the following authors enlisted the help of Mattamuskeet School high school students to compile an index that includes maps and epitaphs of Ocracoke village graves through 1973. Earl O'Neal, Ocracoke historian, has kept this index up to date.

Swindell, Martha Rebecca and Romulus Sanderson Spencer.  
1973 "In Memory Of...An Index of Hyde County Cemeteries." With help from students of Mattamuskeet School. Hyde County Historical Society.

## 8.6. Civil War Fort Sites

*Civil War fort sites and associated artifacts in the Seashore represent the struggle to control North Carolina commerce between the Confederacy and Union.*

By all accounts Hatteras and Ocracoke Island villagers expressed divided loyalties during the Civil War. Perhaps more accurately, however, Bankers were less concerned with politics beyond their communities and more interested in being left alone to live their lives than fight for either the north or the south.

One possible explanation for Outer Banks' ambivalence is the fact that no large-scale plantations existed on the sandy islands, and although some community members owned slaves, slavery was never as significant on the Outer Banks as elsewhere. In 1850, for example, about 1,200 people lived on Hatteras Island, 100 of whom were slaves. The ratio was higher for Ocracoke; of 536 residents, 104 were slaves. The Shell Castle lightering outpost in Ocracoke Inlet had employed "slave river pilots, sailors, and lighter crews" (Cecelski 2001, 48), which may explain the higher rate of slavery. "Racial boundaries had long been confused on the Outer Banks," observed historian David Cecelski, as Bankers "heeded the less rigid racial mores of shipboard life more than those of tidewater plantations" (ibid, 50).

Bankers were called "opportunists" by Confederate troops who complained that they would raise white flags upon the approach of either Army (Stick 1958, 155). If anything, Bankers had Union leanings, given the important role the federal government had played in establishing lighthouses and forts. Banker families had some members who fought for the Confederates and others for the Union.

The Outer Banks was strategically important to both the north and the south during the Civil War in the struggle to control commerce and shipping through Ocracoke and Hatteras Inlets. Hatteras Inlet was especially important, as it had come to be the only inlet along the

Outer Banks that could accommodate large vessels, and was, in fact, the inlet used by the Union fleet that attacked Fort Roanoke in 1862 (Stick 1958). State and Confederacy officials recognized the importance of protecting the region, and ordered the construction of four forts from Oregon Inlet to Ocracoke in 1861. The ensuing war activities expressed further the less than unanimous support Bankers had for either side, particularly the Confederates.

### **8.6.1. Forts and Camps**

- Fort Hatteras.

Fort Hatteras, was built on the east side of Hatteras Inlet one-eighth of mile from the channel, and was the principal fort along the Banks. According to David Stick, Fort Hatteras was a square structure 250-feet wide, made of sand with an outside “sheathed by two-inch planks driven into the ground, covered over with turfs of marsh grass...hailed in from the other sided of Hatteras village” (Stick 1958, 119). The Fort was armed with “twelve smooth-bore 32-pound guns, suitable for controlling the channel in the nearby inlet but with comparatively short range” (ibid). The day after federal forces attacked and took over Fort Clark, they attacked Fort Hatteras and occupied it as well, gaining control of Hatteras Inlet on August 29, 1861.

- Fort Clark

Fort Clark was built less than a mile east of Fort Hatteras, closer to the ocean in a location ideal for conducting a cross fire against the channel (Stick 1958). Fort Clark was smaller than Fort Hatteras, with five 32-pound guns and two smaller guns. Fort Clark was the first to fall under Union occupation after unsuccessfully withstanding a navy attack; Union soldiers raised a white flag and abandoned post. Although remnants of Fort Hatteras and Fort Clark have long washed away, a monument sits near the site.

- Fort Morgan

Also known as Fort Ocracoke, Fort Morgan or Beacon Island Fort, was built on Beacon Island inside of Ocracoke Inlet, near Shell Castle Island. Confederate troops abandoned Fort Morgan when receiving word that Hatteras Inlet had fallen under control of Union forces. Once Fort Morgan was deserted, Union troops sank several stone-filled schooners in Ocracoke Inlet by Union troops, effectively blocking the already shoaling and under-used inlet. Today, in 2004, Beacon Island is a dry shoal with no sign of a fort.

- Fort Oregon

Fort Oregon was a small structure built on the south side of Oregon Inlet, and has long disappeared due to erosion (Stick 1958).

- Live Oak Camp

After federal forces took control of the inlets, 600 troops were sent to Chicamacomico to establish a base in the northern Hatteras region. The troops set up Live Oak Camp, its precise location is unknown today. When Confederate boats approached on the sound side, Union troops decided to retreat on foot and horse 35 miles down the beach toward Fort Hatteras. Rebel forces came ashore and pursued them, also on foot, in an event that came to be known as the “Chicamacomico Races.” Both sides were short on water, and exhausted in the hot sun and soft sand; the Union soldiers were “hauling...two heavy howitzers with them through the deep sand” (Stick 1958, 135). Between Kinnakeet and Cape Hatteras the Confederates received orders to return to Chicamacomico, whereupon they were pursued by the Yankees. Union troops found themselves fired upon by the U.S. steamer Monticello on the beach north of Kinnakeet, and retreated across the island to the safety of their gunboats, while Union forces abandoned Live Oak Camp for Fort Hatteras.

- Civil War Memories and Stories

A few Civil War memories have been passed down to modern villagers and are including in oral histories, including Avon resident Emma Gray's story about her great-grandmother who lived in Little Kinnakeet. Presumably during the Chicamacomico Races, when the village learned that Yankee troops were marching down the beach, residents fled to Hatteras village. Upon returning, Emma Gray's great grandmother discovered that "them soldiers had turned her pot of clothes over in the fire, upside-down!"

Sullivan Garrish of Ocracoke discussed his great-grandfather who refused to join the Union Army; the Yankees therefore locked him up at Portsmouth and took away his fishing boat.

Earl O'Neal shared a popular Ocracoke story about his great-grandfather, James Horatio Williams. Williams was approached by Union troops wanting to buy six head of cattle, but Williams refused to take money from Yankees; his wife, however, quietly accepted the cash. Williams, a schooner captain, escaped Charleston harbor during battle of Fort Sumter, returning to North Carolina and sinking his two-masted schooner *Paragon* up-river to preserve and hide it until war's end. This story was also shared by Elizabeth Howard and Nathaniel Jackson. Lucy Stowe talks about how the island had split loyalties, and her great-grandfather fought on the Yankee side but was leader of the Southern Methodist church, while another grandfather fought in the Confederate Army.

**Primary Sources:**

Outer Banks History Center in Manteo, North Carolina:

Civil War Union Army Pension Claims, Dare County, 1890-1925.

CAHA Headquarters in Manteo, North Carolina:

The following transcribed oral histories reference the Civil War and are on file at the CAHA archives:

Sullivan Garrish.

Emma Gray.

Elizabeth Howard.

Nathanial Jackson.

Earl O'Neal.

Lucy Stowe.

**Secondary Sources:**

*The Outer Banks of North Carolina*, David Stick (1958).

*The Waterman's Song*, David Cecelski (2001).

## 8.7. Works Projects Administration/Civilian Conservation Corps

*Oceanside dunes construction, furniture making, cabins, a base camp, visitor use infrastructure and observations of weather, waterfowl, and shorelines are cultural resource legacies of the Seashore from the Work Projects Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps.*

Under President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, the Works Projects Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) programs were launched during the Great Depression as a means to employ young Americans and enlist them to help restore the country's natural resources.

- Civilian Conservation Corps

The CCC was established in 1933. Arno Cammerer was the director of the National Park Service during the Great Depression. Cammerer wasted no time in capitalizing on the labor force represented by the CCC, including in the development of the nation's first national seashore. The mission of the Banks' CCC camps was to erect sand fences for dune-building in an effort to combat beach erosion and protect villages from tidal surges. Nat Jackson recalled them tying fencing to metal stobs. They also dug new roads, ditches, and planted trees and spartina grass. "CC boys" wore uniforms and drove military vehicles. As the Hatteras camps were established shortly after the 1933 storm, workers collected brush from downed trees and piled it on the beach in the dune-building effort.

Three camps were established along the Outer Banks: in Rodanthe, Cape Hatteras, and Ocracoke. The Rodanthe camp consisted of two barges tied up at the newly dug harbor, according to I.D. Midgett of Waves. The camp was under the leadership of a Mr. Kirkpatrick, known for having Siamese cats. Manson Meekins recalled the Cape Hatteras Camp, consisting of cabins just south of the lighthouse. The Cape Hatteras camp was led by a retired Army officer

named Byrum, a friend of Kinnakeeter Gibb Gray's father. Gray recalled going to the camp and exploring the pool hall and mess hall. The Ocracoke camp, according to Henry Ballance, was located near the first bridge after the pony pen heading north. CCC workers on Ocracoke built that camp from lumber salvaged from the *Nomis* wreck of 1935.

The CCC program brought new people and influences to Hatteras and Ocracoke. In an effort to entertain the young men, movie theaters were established. Small family stores enjoyed the increased business of patrons making \$30 per month. Some "CC boys" ended up marrying local girls and staying in the area. They were both appreciated by islanders for their hard work and regarded warily, as "transient" or "transit camp" workers considered by some to be a "rough lot," sent to the area by the government to "keep them out of trouble." Villagers recall that many were from out west or up north.

- Works Projects Administration

The WPA was established in 1935 as a method of employing out-of-work Americans in their own communities during the Depression. A number of different programs were launched, but on Hatteras and Ocracoke WPA projects involved public works (e.g. road maintenance, mosquito-ditch digging, tree and bush planting), food distribution (tubs of butter, beans, and barrels of potatoes were provided to islanders) and a textile center. Gibb Gray recalled that WPA workers were paid one dollar a day, and checks were delivered by airplane.

A WPA textile was center set up in Charlie William's old store in Avon and paid Kinnakeet women to learn to sew. The clothing was distributed locally, as some joked about the poor quality of some of the products. Willard Gray remembered that a Mrs. Ray, formerly Meekins, was in charge of the textile center. She lived in Rodanthe, but traveled to Avon to oversee 8-10 women and give sewing lessons.

The WPA on Ocracoke was employed in similar work. Nat Jackson recalled the WPA men digging ditches, and Fanny Pearl Fulcher remembered a textile center set up at the Ocracoke School for island women.

**Primary Sources:**

CAHA Headquarters in Manteo, North Carolina:

Transcribed oral histories referencing the WPA/CCC and on file at the CAHA archives:

Henry Ballance.  
Fanny Pearl Fulcher.  
Gibb Gray.  
Willard Gray.  
Nathanial Jackson.  
Manson Meekins.  
I.D. Midgett.

Coastal Resource Management Handbook:

Listing of archaeological sites

## 8.8. Ocracoke Island

*Ocracoke Island possesses unique heritage benefiting from its remote setting. Ocracoke Village retains its historical identity as a port village and primary point of entry to North Carolina. Island ponies are a legacy of 17<sup>th</sup>- through early 20<sup>th</sup> century livestock-raising. A local harbor, Teach's Hole, is the location of the battle between the pirate Blackbeard and Virginia soldiers and sailors. Shell Castle Island served as a piloting and transfer point and as a customs site in Ocracoke Inlet which remains as a submerged cultural resource.*

Much of the history and culture of Ocracoke is discussed in the ethnohistorical section of this report. However, selected topics are explored here that are especially unique to Ocracoke.

- Music and Square Dancing

Although all villages enjoyed square dancing and string music, Ocracoke seemed especially rich in musical talent, and had a deep appreciation for music and dance, as well as story-telling. Music and dancing were forms of creative expression as well as a chance for islanders and visitors to gather and socialize. The presence of a Navy base likely contributed to the dances' popularity. Musicians Edgar Howard and Maurice Ballance were interviewed for the Southern Oral History Project, and recorded by Karen Helms of East Carolina University (1977). Roy Parsons discusses his career off-island in his interview, and now performs regularly with the Ocracoke Opry, a weekly live variety show. In the 1940s and 1950s people traveled to the island from Hatteras or the mainland to attend Ocracoke's well-known square dances held at the Pamlico Inn, Spanish Casino, or at the old clam factory. Elizabeth Howard was one of several Ocracokers who discussed the old dances.

- Fourth of July Pony Pennings

Fourth of July was long celebrated on Ocracoke with an annual "pony penning," where herds of horses were rounded up and sold to mainland buyers. This seems to have started in 1938 when the pony population reached some 400 ponies and it was necessary to thin the herds. The roundups came to a halt during World War II, but the state required remaining livestock to

be penned. In the end, islanders were able to keep 35 ponies for the mounted Boy Scout troop, the only one in the United States. After World War II, Fourth of July was celebrated with a parade and square dance. Interviews discussing pony pennings, roundups, and July 4<sup>th</sup> parades include Ben Spencer, Elisha Ballance, Elsie Garrish, Henry Ballance, Alice Rondthaler, Nathaniel Jackson, and Wayne Gray.

- Meal Tea

Ocracoker villagers have a talent for fermenting “meal tea” or wine, using four pounds of corn meal, four gallons of water, five pounds of sugar, four packs of yeast, and fruit (e.g., raisins, peaches, bananas) for flavoring. In warm weather a batch is ready within a week. During prohibition Hatteras Islanders had ready access to moonshine from East Lake (west of Manteo), but Ocracokers made their own beverage, which was popular at dances. A description of the meal tea-making process can be found online at [www.villagecraftsmen.com/news090203.htm](http://www.villagecraftsmen.com/news090203.htm).

- Stanley Wahab and Sam Jones

Stanley Wahab and Sam Jones were two influential residents who served as wealthy benefactors and visionaries in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Jones, from Norfolk, married an Ocracoke woman. He invested in the village by building three houses on the island, including two large residence called Berkeley Manor and “The Castle.” He also built what came to be know as the Whittler’s Club, as fathers and sons gathered to pass the time whittling; it was also used for Boy Scout meetings. He was successful in lobbying for an airstrip, as he liked to travel by plane. Jones, an eccentric, had a horse named “Teach” that he insisted be buried next to him at Springers Point when he passed away. Stanley Wahab developed some of the first establishments looking toward the ocean beach: the Wahab Hotel with a movie theater and skating rink, and the Spanish Casino for dances. Wahab also taught school and was very much a

part of the community. He built a generator-run electric plant in 1939. Local men worked as carpenters and maintenance workers for both Wahab and Jones. Wahab and Jones represent an early breed of industrialists who desired to improve the quality of life for islanders; today villagers point to them as examples of what modern business persons are not, as they see contemporary investors as wanting to make money from the island, without a concern for improving it or the community. Nathaniel Jackson spoke about working for Sam Jones, and Early O'Neal described the business ventures of Stanley Wahab.

- Teaches Hole and Springers Point

Teaches Hole is a channel southwest of the village near Springer's Point. It is famous for being the site where Edward Teach, or Blackbeard the Pirate, met his demise in a battle with a British warship captained by Robert Maynard. The story of Blackbeard has long been a primary tourist draw for Ocracoke. Teaches Hole is a "honey hole" for anglers fishing for trout. Springers Point was once owned by Sam Jones; it is a wooded section where Jones' and his beloved horse "Ikey D" are buried. The point, 42 acres of maritime forest, was recently bought by the North Carolina Coastal Land Trust for protection and conservation.

### **Primary Sources:**

CAHA Headquarters in Manteo, North Carolina:

Virtually every oral history of Ocracoke residents references the island's unique customs; the ethnohistorical section of this report contains detailed information on this subject.

The interviews cited above are:

Henry Ballance.

Elisha Ballance.

Elsie Garrish.

Wayne Gray.

Edgar Howard and Maurice Ballance.

Elizabeth Howard.

Nathaniel Jackson.

Alice Rondthaler.  
Ben Spencer.

**Secondary Sources:**

Gary Dunbar's "*Geographical History of the Carolina Banks*" of 1956.

Many Ocracoke customs and practices are described in Alton Ballance's 1989 work *Ocracokers*.

Ellen Fulcher Cloud has several publications on the history and traditions of Ocracoke, such as *Ocracoke Lighthouse* (1993), *From whence we Came: The History of the Original Ocracoke Names* (1995a), and *Customs Records: Port of Ocracoke, 1815-1866* (1995b).

Karen Helms published a recording of Ocracoke musicians called "Between the Sound and Sea" (1977).

## 8.9. Names of Banks

*Names of banks, inlets and other features including village names Chicamacomico (Rodanthe, Waves, Salvo), Kinnakeet (Avon), The Cape (Buxton), Trent Woods (Frisco), Hatteras, and Pilot Town (Ocracoke) are part of the cultural heritage of the Seashore.*

Many of the original names for the banks, capes, and inlets recorded by early explorers and settlers have Indian origins. Although the Indian meanings of these names are lost to most Bankers, the terms have great significance to villagers as markers of their cultural identity and sense of place, or what Payne described as “one’s emotional identification with a mentally defined area, including the physical landmarks and the names of places within this area” (Payne 1985, 12). Payne explains that place names are also windows into how people categorize, perceive, and use their environment, such as “Duck Blind Slue,” “Shitty Point,” and “Horse Pen Point” of Ocracoke. Many village names changed upon the establishment of post offices, as the older Indian names were considered too cumbersome and hard to spell. Inlet names come and go with the inlets themselves, reflecting the dynamic and ever-changing environment of the Banks; the most recent example was Little Hatteras Inlet, cut by Hurricane Isabel from September 17 to late November 2003. A plethora of housing developments also have brought new names to the Banks, often incorporating the very environment the construction destroyed or altered, such as “Slash Creek estates.”

- Villages

As described in the first section of each ethnohistory, many of the present-day village names were adopted by the postal service as older, Indian names were considered too difficult to pronounce or spell. Rodanthe and Waves were originally North and South Chicamacomico, and today the whole northern banks region is often referred to as Chicamacomico. Salvo was originally Clarks, chosen supposedly from a Civil War event where a Union ship captain ordered

the village to receive a salvo of gunfire, and “Salvo” was written on his chart and later included on maps. “Clarks” was likely rejected as redundant to a mainland town. Kinnakeet was rejected in favor of Avon, but villagers are attached to the old Algonkian name and many proudly cite its meaning as evidence of their Indian and/or Lost Colonist ancestry: “that which is mixed.”

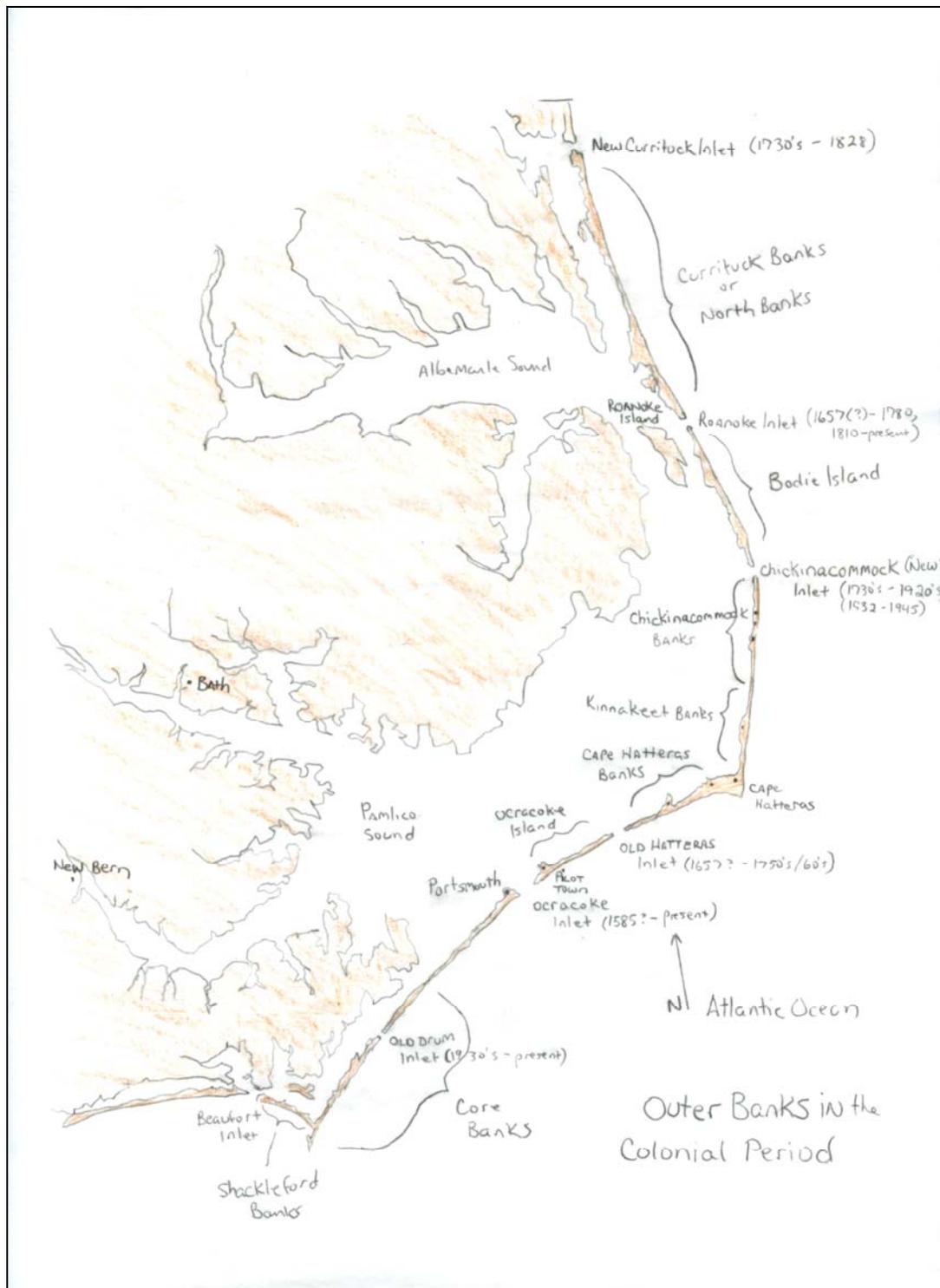
Buxton was originally called the Cape or Cape Hatteras until adopting the name of a judge.

Frisco was known as Trent Woods, likely rejected because of redundancy with a mainland town and confusion with “Up Trent” of Ocracoke. Hatteras and Ocracoke kept their original Indian names, the former a corruption of an Algonkian term meaning “area of sparse vegetation” and the latter a corruption of a term meaning “enclosed place” (Payne 1985, 92,139).

- Banks

The Outer Banks refers to the long chain of barrier islands extending from the Virginia border to Bogue Inlet, south of Cape Lookout. The barrier islands making up the Outer Banks from north to south are: Currituck Banks, Bodie Island, Pea Island, Hatteras Island, Ocracoke Island, Portsmouth Island, Core Banks, Shackleford Banks, and Bogue Banks.

Hatteras Island, as depicted on early maps, was referred to in terms of three historical segments: Chicamacomico Banks, Kinnakeet Banks, and Cape Hatteras Banks (map 8.9.1). Chicamacomico or Chickinacommock Banks extended from the former location of New Inlet (north of Rodanthe) to the former village of Little Kinnakeet. Kinnakeet Banks ran from former Little Kinnakeet village at old Chaneandepoco Inlet to Buxton Woods. Cape Hatteras Banks extended from Buxton Woods to the tip of Hatteras Island.



Map 8.9.1. Outer Banks in the Colonial Period. Sketched by B. Garrity-Blake. Sources: Dunbar 1956, Stick 1958.

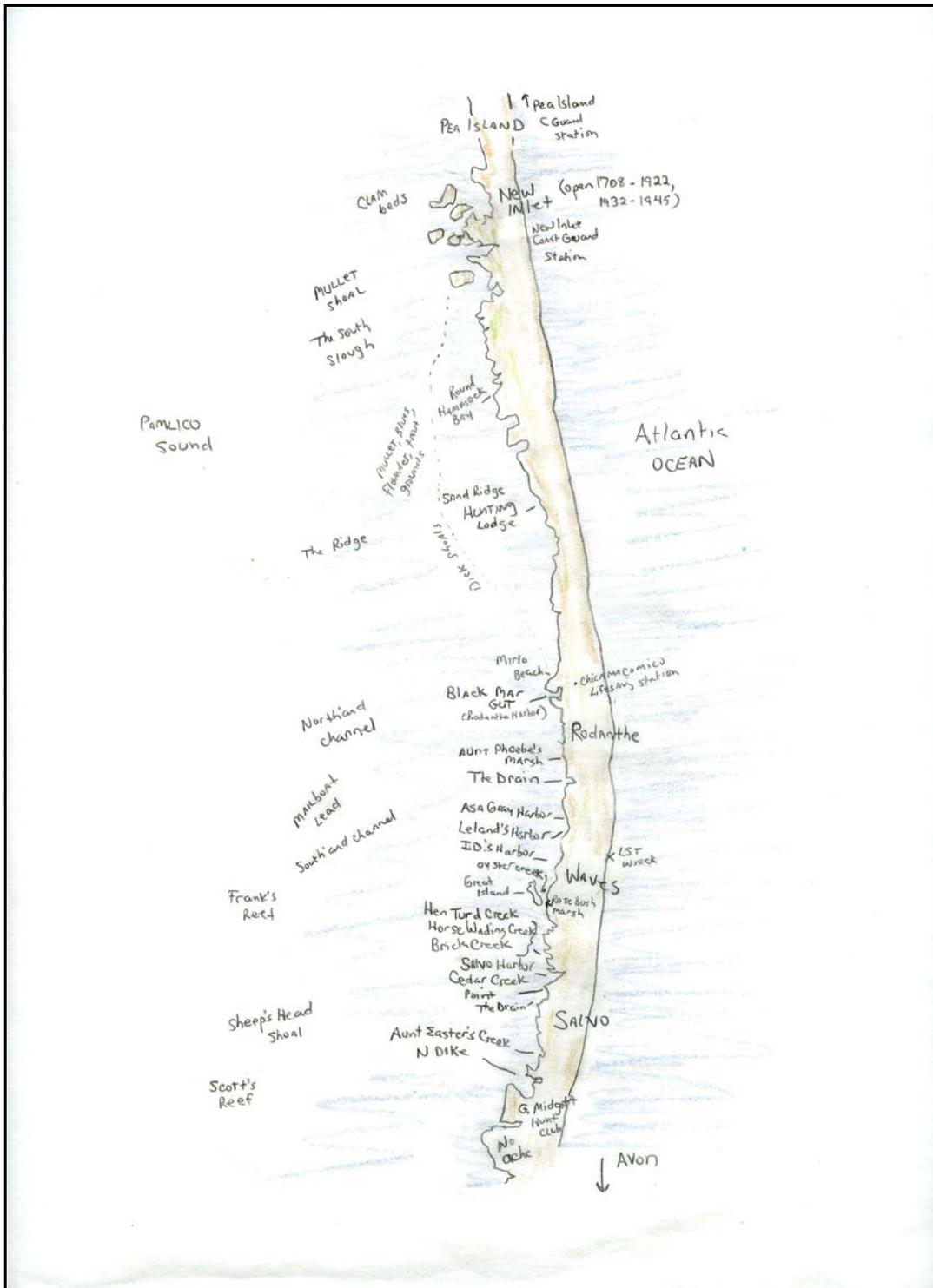
- Inlets

Inlets have come and gone along the Outer Banks throughout the centuries. Fierce hurricanes and nor'easters often cut new inlets or close existing ones. "A naming practice on the Outer Banks has been to refer to a newly opened inlet as New Inlet" (Payne 1985, 15). The history of Hatteras and Ocracoke inlets, including the impact openings and closings have had on village life, is discussed in interpretive section 8.3.

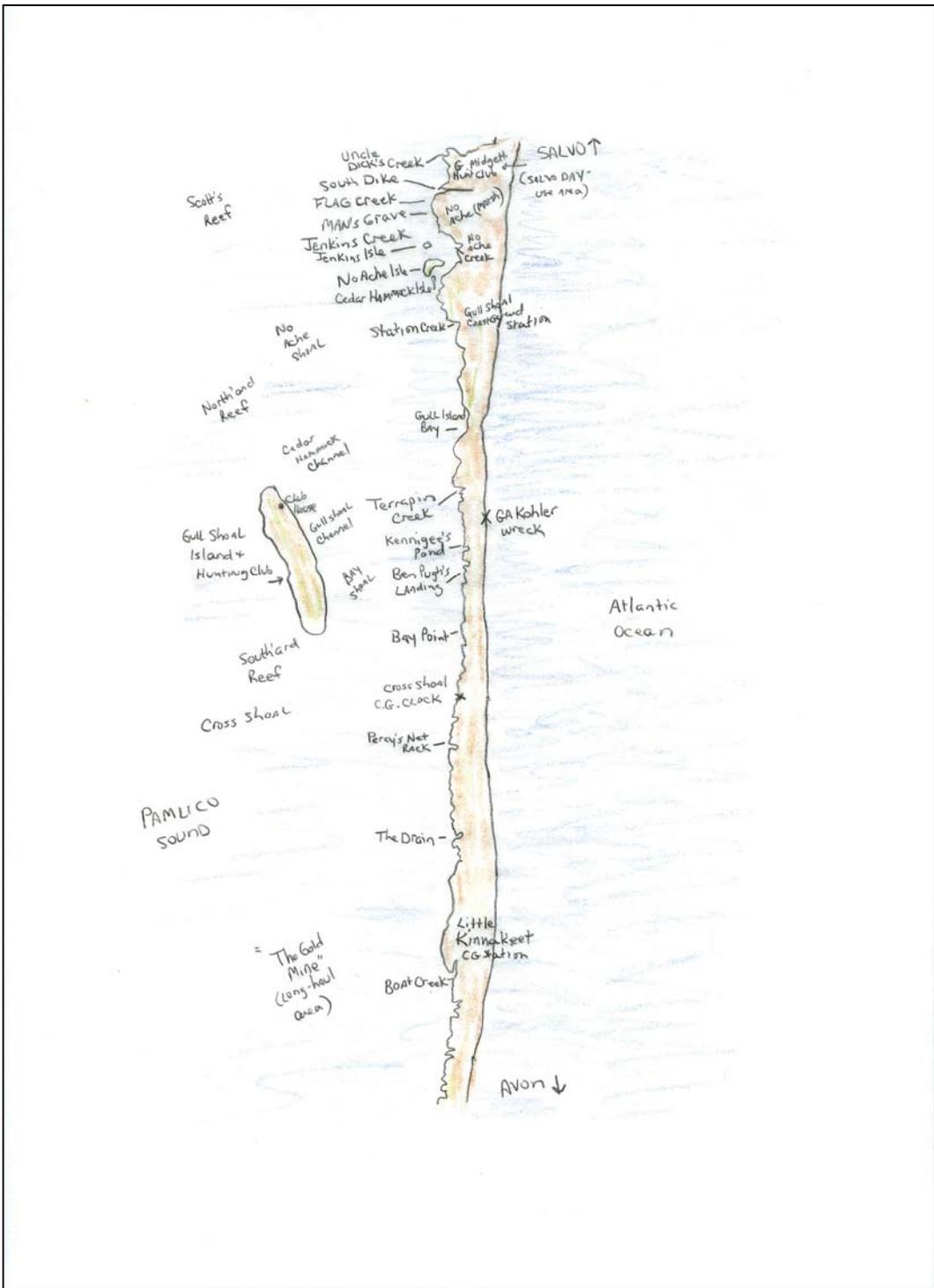
- Creeks and Landings

The local names of creeks and landings reflect a more recent history of Hatteras and Ocracoke, as most were established by 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century villagers. Some are known to villagers, as they refer to sites within the villages themselves, while others are more remote and are known by watermen who named landmarks, creeks, fishing areas, and so on. Landings, where fishermen, mail skiffs, and travelers beached their boats, were "town squares" of banker communities, or central places of activity and communication. Sketch maps of old village layouts (found in each ethnohistorical section) contain names of landings and creeks, while maps 8.9.2-4 show a broader view of creek names from Pea Island to Cape Hatteras. Eugene Ballance of Ocracoke has meticulously mapped the entire island of Ocracoke, available from the North Carolina Sea Grant College Program.

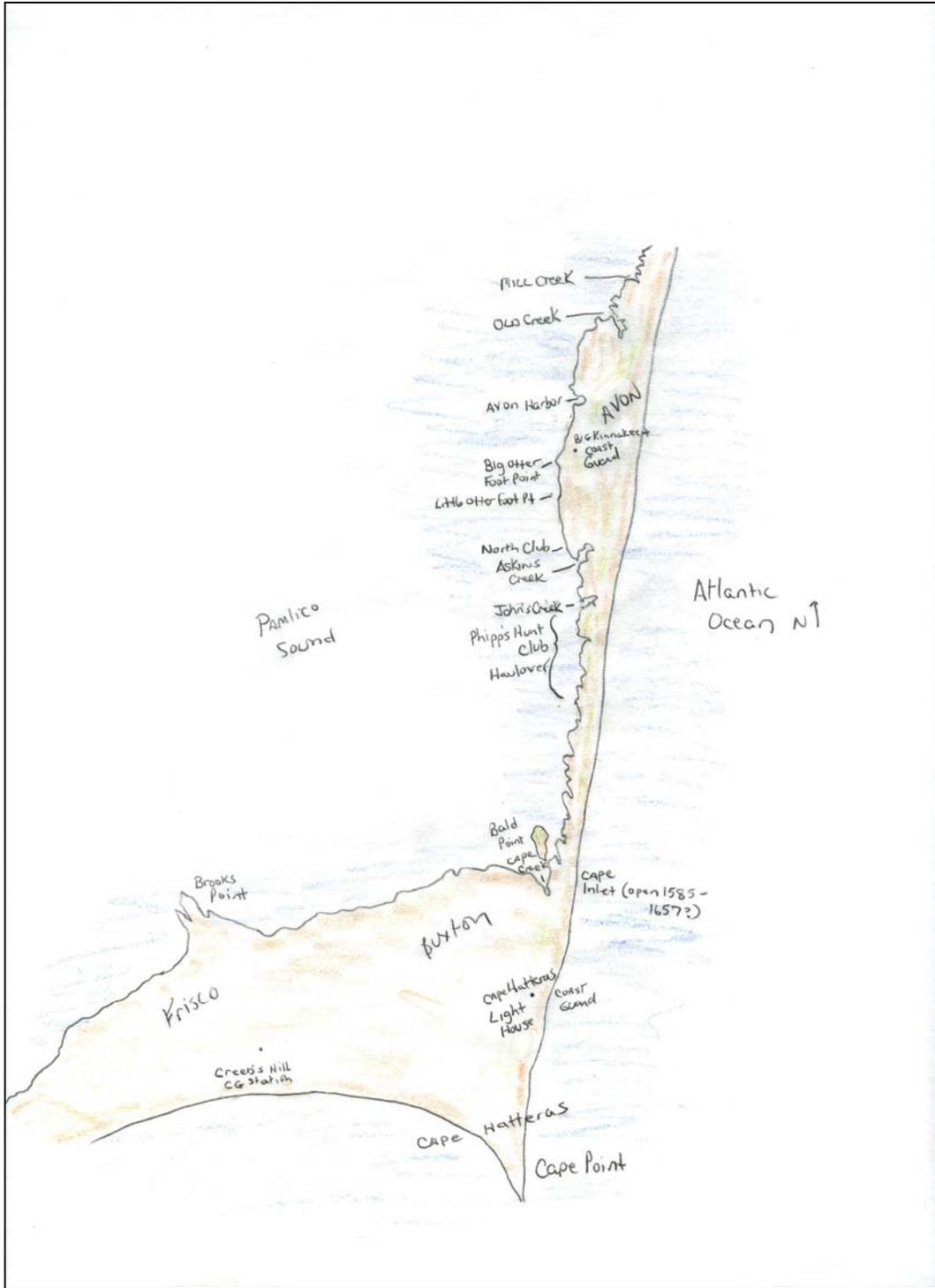
Interviews that include discussions of creeks include that of Burt Hooper, Eugene Ballance, and Manson Meekins (Maps 8.9.2-8.9.4); Manson Meekins also drew detailed maps of creeks and hunting grounds in the Kinnakeet area.



Map 8.9.2. Local Place Names Pea Island to Salvo. Sketch by B. Garrity-Blake.



Map 8.9.3. Local Place Names Salvo to Little Kinnakeet. Sketch by B. Garrity-Blake.



Map 8.9.4. Local Place Names Little Kinnakeet to Cape Hatteras.  
 Sketch by B. Garrity-Blake.

**Primary Sources:**

CAHA Headquarters in Manteo, North Carolina:

The following oral histories reference place names. They are transcribed and on file at CAHA archives:

Eugene Ballance.

Burt Hooper.

Leslie Hooper.

Manson Meekins.

North Carolina Sea Grant College Program:

Ballance, Eugene, Fisheries Resource Grant #98-FEG-31 (includes complete map of creeks, inlets, shoals, and landmarks).

**Secondary Sources:**

*Place Names of the Outer Banks*, Roger Payne (1985).

*Geographical History of the Carolina Banks*, Gary Dunbar (1956).

*Outer Banks of North Carolina*, David Stick (1958).

## 8.10 Unique Customs

*Unique customs, legends, folklore, dialect, and the seafood industry are intrinsic to the cultural heritage of Outer Banks inhabitants' links to the sea.*

### 8.10.1. Customs

- Visiting

Almost all of the oral histories collected and on file for this project from the 1970s and 1980s mention the significance of the “visiting” ritual. Neighbors and family members visited one another daily and weekly, particularly on Sunday after church. They ate Sunday dinner at each other’s houses, often inviting the preacher as well. They sat on the porch and told stories, strummed guitars, and/or sang songs, as Lucy Stowe describes in her interview. This was not only to pass the time away and socialize, but was an important way to exchange information, pay attention to the welfare of one another, and undertake the small community method of social control through gossiping. Gender-specific visiting usually revolved around a specific activity: women occasionally gathered to prepare sausage, can vegetables, or make quilts, while men met to repair fishing nets, round up livestock for de-ticking or butchering, or play cards (see D. Chubby Dorris, Cyrus Gray, Ben Spencer, Elisha Balance, Anderson Midgett, and L.P. O’Neal interviews). Villagers frequently took sailing, riding, or driving excursions to other villages in order to attend revivals or visit family. Women whose husbands were away in the Coast Guard or off fishing were known to take their children and spend the night with other family members so as not to be alone, as described in the Carrie Gray interview.

- Selected Games

Cat: cat was a form of baseball whereby a homemade ball – made from yarn, typically gathered by unraveling old socks, and covered with stitched-together leather such as the tongues

of old shoes - was thrown at the batter as he or she ran the bases. Cat is described mainly by Ocracoke and Hatteras village residents such as Thurston Gaskill and Ernal Foster.

Meehonkey: this version of “hide and go seek” seems to have started on Ocracoke but was played in Hatteras as well. Children hid from the person who was “it,” and yelled “meehonkey” to taunt the seeker. Meehonkey is described by Henry Ballance, Thurston Gaskill, and Ernal Foster.

Lucky Strike, Lucky Strike: According to Ellen Fulcher Cloud of Ocracoke, this game grew out of barefoot children on hot sand desiring an object on which to place their feet. If the object happened to be an empty pack of Lucky Strike cigarettes, they would call, “Lucky Strike, Lucky Strike,” and have good luck the whole day through.

Rosin String: children often found rosin on the beach from ships. A favorite prank was to tie a string to a screen nail of a house and pull it tight. In the dark of night, they would rub the rosin on the string, causing an eerie sound to wail and sending vibrations to the window and house, waking everyone up.

Basket Parties: a “bidding war” whereby young men would bid on a young woman’s basket, filled with homemade goodies and decorated in a unique fashion. Although basket parties were usually fund-raisers for churches, they were playful events with obvious flirtatious, if not sexual, undertones. Basket parties were cited by both Ocracoke and Hatteras islanders such as Edna Gray and Elizabeth Howard.

House: Banker children made due with what materials were at hand, and played various forms of house, mimicking adult activities: boys made tiny sailboats out of shards of glass, both boys and girls made sun-baked dolls and figures out of mud, and served play-food. See interviews of Nellie Farrow, Ruby Williams, Bonita Williams, and Cyrus Gray.

Going to Somebody's House: this game was played like 20 questions, except the child would have somebody's house in mind, and the other players had to guess whose house based on questions like, "Do they have a dog? Do they live near the creek? Is the mother blonde?"

- Courtship and Marriage

Before a bridge connected islander to the wider world and a paved road made driving prevalent, teenagers courted in groups. Typical activities included walking up and down the sandy roads, going to the beach at dusk for a weenie roast, or meeting at one another's house to stew chicken (usually stolen from a neighbor) or make "pull-candy." Weddings were small affairs, and couples usually left the island to travel to the county seat of Manteo or Swan Quarter to enlist the services of a magistrate. Wedding receptions were small and understated compared to today's practices, typically involving non-alcoholic punch, a cake, and some cookies. Few couples indulged in a honeymoon. It was not uncommon for a newly married couple to move in with family until they could afford to get their own house. See interviews of Mary Gray, Ruby Williams, Margaret Willis, Audrey Rollinson, D. Chubby Dorris, Manson Meekins, and Henry Ballance for explications of these practices.

- Kinship Terms

As each village was inhabited by families that shared only three or four surnames, islanders had a creative method in identifying each other. For men, nicknames were often employed, usually derived during childhood when the individual did something to "deserve" the name. Nathaniel Jackson, for example, explained in his interview how his friend came to be known as "Conch." Married women were referred to by their first name with a diminutive "ie" added, plus their husband's first name. Either "Aunt" or "Miss" was added as well. For

example, Loran O’Neal of Avon married Ida Meekins. Her official married name was Mrs. Ida O’Neal, but she was called “Miss Idy Loran.”

- Work

Bankers were generally church-going and religious, and did not work on Sundays. Before motorized vessels became common in the mid 1920s, fishermen usually pulled their sail skiffs out of the water on Saturdays, cleaning and perhaps painting them white, and left them on land until Monday morning. Several residents reminisced about the clean, neat skiffs lined up along the landings every weekend. Fishermen worked all week, weather and fish availability permitting. When not fishing, men treated nets, painted boats, hunted waterfowl, or repaired net camps. Although some women were employed at local hotels, family stores, or at businesses such as the Doxsee clam factory in Ocracoke, their typical work week revolved around household chores and child-rearing. Women also helped build and mend fishing nets, often hanging the nets in their homes so they could work at night. Bankers fortunate to earn a coveted Coast Guard job— and, therefore, a regular paycheck— had slightly more status in the villages, although blatant displays of status were uncommon and frowned upon. Virtually every oral history touches on past work activities.

- Rituals and Celebrations

Most rituals of traditional Outer Banks life were centered around the Methodist and Assembly of God churches, such as baptisms, funerals, and camp meeting revivals (as described by Emma Gray and Manson Meekins). The fervent style of the Assembly of God faith was in contrast to the more staid practices of the Methodist church, and seemed to add passion and vibrancy to church members long accustomed to a hardworking, sand-swept life on the Banks.

Weddings (described above) were subtle affairs, but funerals involved at least two days of preparation (see the interpretive section on gravesites for a discussion of these practices).

The most unique ritual in the region was, and continues to be, Rodanthe's "Old Christmas" celebration. Rodanthe is one of the few remaining communities in the United States to continue this Protestant protest-rite that defied England's adoption of the Gregorian calendar in 1752 by celebrating Christmas on Twelfth Night eve or January 5<sup>th</sup>. An early expression of Rodanthe's Old Christmas consisted of a mummer-like tradition of cross-dressing, wearing black face, or disguising faces with stockings; this was phased out by the 1930s, as was parading through Chicamacomico to a motley drum and fife corps while begging for food. The celebration became concentrated at the Rodanthe School, which is the Rodanthe Waves Salvo Community Center today, for an oyster shoot (test of marksmanship with a bucket of oysters as a prize), chicken and dumpling dinner (cooked by a select group of Rodanthe women), dance (formerly a square dance with local musicians) and the appearance of "Old Buck." Old Buck is the mythological bull that was shipwrecked on Chicamacomico; legend has it that he was killed by a Frisco hunter, but magically appears on Old Christmas to march about with a handler, scaring children. Old Buck might symbolize the Bankers themselves, as many claim to be descended from shipwrecked sailors, and have persevered through storms, floods, fish scarcities, and now tourism. The Old Christmas ritual, part commercial event, part family reunion, certainly symbolizes the Bankers tenacity, riding the thin line between economic dependence on a tourist economy and losing their cultural integrity because of it. Interviews that describe various aspects of Old Christmas include Lovie Midgett, Leslie Hooper, and D. Lance Midgett.

### 8.10.2 Myths, Legends, and Lore

- **Myths**

“They washed ashore in a shipwreck, and have been here ever since.”

As Bankers have long patrolled the beaches for dunnage, flotsam, and jetsam and are famous for their discoveries and rescues of shipwreck survivors, it is not surprising that the first families, ponies, and even the magical beast of Old Christmas are said to have washed ashore from sinking ships. This re-birth, of sorts, explains the character of the Outer Banker: a tough, resilient survivor who emerges from the salty jaws of death to thrive and propagate in a harsh, unforgiving environment. The castaway, whether human or beast, is typically a male who attracts admiring island females and begins a line of hearty souls that continues today.

The idea that early family members came from the sea, having survived a shipwreck, is widespread among native islanders. Although there is truth to this idea, as some folks did indeed arrive by ship, the majority of early white settlers were stockmen and farmers, many of whom received King’s grants to raise cattle in the water-bound region that required no expensive fencing.

Cultural geographer Gary Dunbar similarly observes, “Popular belief has it that the majority of the Bankers are descendants of shipwrecked sailors. While it is possible that occasional shipwrecked seamen remained here, the main family names are traceable to Maryland and Virginia” (1956, 39). Dunbar stresses that the same evidence used by popular writers to argue for shipwrecked origins – family and place names, folklore, speech patterns – “clearly indicates an almost solidly English background, deriving immediately from southeastern Virginia” (ibid, 51). So, it is safe to say that there are at least mythical elements to the belief that the earliest ancestors were delivered to the Banks by wind and sea rather than on a range pony.

Writer Ben Dixon MacNeill, who first frequented the Banks in the 1920s and resided in Buxton in the mid-1950s to write *The Hatterasman*, described the arrival of the first member of the Oden clan who washed ashore in the 1856 wreck of the *Mary Varney*. Legend has it that a Hatteras preacher had “prayed for a shipwreck yielding pork,” as it had been a hard, frozen winter and islanders were hungry. The preacher reminded folks of his prayers while keeping an eye on a pork barrel that floated from the *Mary Varney* wreckage to shore. All were surprised, however, when:

[T]he cask disintegrated, its staves falling loosely to the sand. Out of the ruins rose the fine figure of a man, disheveled here and there and a little bloody. He was not edible pork. He was the first Herbert Oden to set foot upon the island and he never left it as long as he lived. He was done with the sea (MacNeill 1958, 36).

An alternative account claims that John Oden—the first of the Oden clan— shipwrecked off Hatteras not once but twice in the 1830s. “The coincidence of being shipwrecked twice convinced John that he must be destined to live here” (Oden and Rollinson 1983, 29). The second time Oden wrecked, he “came ashore in a rum barrel,” the only survivor of his ship (ibid).

The Midgett, O’Neal, Meekins, Farrow, Miller, Burrus, Daily, and Oden families all share lore of an early founder who “was a castaway” (MacNeill 1958, 37), some swimming ashore and others washing up in a rum cask. According to this lore, these castaways married local women and became members of the community in good standing. “Three days before Christmas in 1837 the sea brought Hatteras Island a young schoolmaster,” MacNeill wrote, describing Joshua Dailey who spent the rest of his life teaching in Trent (1958, 110). Thomas Wallace, Trent’s first postmaster, washed up on Hatteras before landing a plum government job.

Another famous castaway was known as “Pharaoh Pharaoh,” “Pharaoh Farrow,” or simply, “that A-rab.” This man was the founder of the “Farrow family” who emerged from the

wreck of the *Prince of India* in 1737 (MacNeill 1958, 67). Although there is “no documented record that the *Prince of India* ever existed,” it held as its cargo an archetype of Outer Bank origins: Arabian horses (MacNeill 1958, 65). The horses and “two Arabian youths” are said to have washed ashore on the north end of Ocracoke, giving Bankers their first wild ponies. One of the youths “must have been Egyptian,” as an itinerant clergyman named him “Pharaoh.” This youth was later known as “King Pharaoh,” as he came to own much land and numerous slaves, “all of whom had been brought here by storms” (MacNeill 1958, 67). The other youth, simply known as “A-rab,” “A-hab,” and later “Wahab,” is cited as the founder of the Wahab family of Ocracoke.

Nathanial Jackson of Ocracoke refers to these origins in describing his wife’s family.

I married a Wahab. That’s Arabian. I always told my wife she come here on an Arabian horse. That’s where these ponies come from. They jumped ship and come ashore.

Rodanthe’s “Old Buck, the bull” swam to shore one night in a fierce storm, and proceeded to fortify local herds of cattle with his virile seed; his awesome invincibility has been commemorated annually ever since. The idea that island ponies are descendants of Arabian horses, pirate horses from the Barbary Coast, or from 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish explorer Ponce de Leon’s cargo is widespread.

The real explanation is that the horses and other stock were purposely placed on the islands by stock raisers in colonial days...These ‘ponies’ were actually horses stunted by lack of controlled breeding... About 1754 it was observed that these Banks’ ponies were bought by mainlanders to teach children to ride. Other names for these horses were ‘beach horses’ ‘marsh ponies’ and ‘tackies’ (Dunbar 1956, 49).

Bankers concede that the scruffy ponies now allocated to a pen on Ocracoke bear little resemblance to the magnificent Arabians or Spanish stallions that allegedly washed ashore in the 1700s, but point out that a steady diet of wire grass and brackish water will do that to anyone.

- **Legends**

“The Lost Colonists could not have settled on Roanoke Island.”

The history of Sir Walter Raleigh’s 1585 expedition to establish a colony on Roanoke Island is well-known: after dropping off 110 men, women, and children on Roanoke Island, Governor White returned to England for supplies. Three years later he returned to his colony on Roanoke Island only to find the settlement abandoned save for the letters CRO carved in a tree and CROATOAN on a post. White took this to mean the colonists were on Croatoan Island, between Cape Hatteras and Old Hatteras Inlet, with Chief Manteo. His crew was reluctant to explore the treacherous shallows any further, however, and White was forced to return to England not knowing the fate of his people, who were never heard from again (Dunbar 1956). The fate of the Lost Colonists served not only as a lesson for the successful Jamestown colony of 1607, but also as a subject of much creative speculation to this day and a great tourist draw for the town of Manteo. Did Indians massacre the colonists? Did Indians adopt and intermarry with them? Did they simply migrate elsewhere, and/or starve to death? Legends about the journey and fate of the Lost Colonists are found throughout eastern North Carolina, including a theory that the Lost Colonists settled in the Carteret County village of Cedar Island, and another that they intermarried with Indians and migrated to Robeson County area to become the Lumbee.

On the Outer Banks, some villagers discount the very idea that Roanoke Island was the site of the earliest English colony, and believe that the famous Lost Colony was established, or at least ended up in, one of three villages: Rodanthe, Avon, or Buxton. Folks cite nautical reasons why the colonists could not have landed in the Manteo area. “Anybody that thinks that they sailed back a Manteo is a fool,” said L.P. O’Neal of Avon. “There’s no way that they were going to sail a boat up there through those narrow channels in a sailboat. They’d go aground

and never get off.” The discovery of a gold ring found amid American Indian artifacts in an archaeological dig in Buxton fueled local theories that the colonists took up residence with Hatterask Indians at the Cape. Others cite the writings of John Lawson who, arriving at Kinnakeet Banks 100 years after the colonists were lost, described Chief Kinnakeet as having freckles and gray eyes. Those who question the validity of Roanoke Island/Manteo’s claims on the Lost Colonists emphasize that their northern neighbors would never give the legend up, as it has brought many tourist dollars into the area. “That’s just the phoniest thing,” said L.P. O’Neal. “They make money off it.”

There are numerous recorded legends of Ocracoke and Hatteras, such as that surrounding “Quark’s Hammock.” The name is likely a derivative of “quaking hammock,” from the Middle English term *quaghe* meaning low or wet marsh (hence the word *quagmire*) (Payne 1985, Dunbar 1956). Ocracokers have a more interesting explanation, involving the disappearance of an “irreverent castaway named Old Quork” (Payne 1985, 156). Old Quork, originally from an exotic location in the West Indies, lived like a hermit on the island and disdained social interactions. He “kwawked” like a heron when spoken to, hence his name. As a storm approached one March, Quark defied local wisdom and set out on his boat to check his nets. He was never seen again. To this day fishermen are reluctant to leave the shore each March 16<sup>th</sup>.

Islanders tell of strange lights that appear off the coast, and tales abound about ghost ships and mariner apparitions. Many of the legends and stories of the Outer Banks are recorded in a series of books by Charles Whedbee (see Whedbee 1966, 1971, 1978, 1985, 1989).

- **Lore**

“If you mix shellfish and sweets the two will work against each other.”

Outer Bankers, particularly old-timers, hold the belief that it is unhealthy to follow a meal of oysters and/or clams with dessert, for sweets and shellfish will “work against each other” and cause illness. This folk belief extends beyond the Outer Banks into Carteret County as well.

Students writing for the Ocracoke yearbook listed island lore that ranges from the culturally mainstream (“It’s bad luck to walk under a ladder”), to the culturally esoteric (“A casket floating by your house is a sign of death”). Some of the more unusual ones are listed below:

“Following in someone’s footprints will give them a headache.”

“It’s bad luck to cut your fingernails after dark.”

“If two people look in the mirror at the same time, the oldest one will die first.”

“Killing a frog means that your mother will die.”

“If you urinate in the road you will get a sty in your eye.”

“If you get a wart, wipe your finger on a rock, wrap the wart in a birthday present, and put it behind you. Whoever finds it will get the wart.”

“If your eyebrows meet it is a sign that you will drown.”

The Ocracoke students found that folk beliefs had a central role in island curing practices. For example, a cure for nosebleeds involved putting nine drops of the blood in a vial and stashing it in the attic with a verse of scripture. For nine days “they went and read the scripture verse, and the nosebleeds were supposed to have been cured” (Ocracoke High School 1973, 20). An old-timer related a tale of his great-grandmother who cared for a child who stepped on a rusty nail by stashing the nail above the doorway and dunking it in kerosene daily for nine days (ibid).

### 8.10.3. Dialect

The most comprehensive study of the Outer Banks dialect and phraseology was headed by Walt Wolfram and Natalie Schilling-Estes of North Carolina State University and members of the North Carolina Language and Life Project in the 1990s. Research focused specifically on Ocracoke, but their findings are applicable to the wider coastal region as well, including Hatteras Island.

Wolfram and team examined the widespread assumption that the “brogue” heard on Ocracoke and other coastal locations is a survival of what is commonly called “Old English,” “Elizabethan English,” or “Shakespearean English,” introduced by early settlers and preserved by virtue of waterbound, isolated communities. They concluded that although some words and usages do have distinct Elizabethan roots, such as *mommucked* for “harassed,” the Early Modern English/coastal North Carolina linguistic connection is not “that simple” (Wolfram and Shilling-Estes 1997, 3). Rather, as all languages change over time, the Ocracoke dialect has evolved according to a variety of influences, and coastal speech patterns can be traced to settlers from southern, western, and eastern England, as well as to those with Irish and Scots-Irish roots. In fact, the region that most resembles the Outer Banks brogue is “the mountain areas of North Carolina” or “Appalachia” with its strong Scots-Irish ancestry (ibid, 27).

The coastal brogue, exemplified by the phrase, *it's hoi toide ohtsoide the hice* (it's high tide outside the house) or *he's to tain sellin' feesh* (*he's in town selling fish*), is strongest in the down east villages of Carteret County (e.g., Atlantic, Cedar Island, Marshallberg, and Harkers Island) and among Ocracoke natives; although Hatteras old-timers retain the brogue as well, it is less prevalent in that area. The pronunciation also changes slightly from village to village, and islanders claim to have the ability to identify if someone is from, say, Waves as opposed to

Avon, by their accent. The same is true of Carteret County villages, although few on the banks or mainland can readily describe the subtle differences that catch their ears.

Wolfram and Shilling-Estes point out that Ocracoke was not the isolated village it was assumed to be, and in fact was a booming port town until the inlet fell out of use upon the opening of Hatteras Inlet in a 1846 storm (1997, 16). After 1846, however, Ocracoke was more cut off than Hatteras Island, and this is likely why, along with the eventual road and bridge connecting Hatteras to the wider world, the brogue is stronger on Ocracoke today than on its neighboring bank to the north. To the south, Carteret County's down east villages have been connected to the mainland as long as those on Hatteras yet retain a strong dialect; this is likely due to a relative lack of tourism and development in this marshy portion of the county, continuity in commercial fishing, and an entrenched cultural pride.

The dialect research on Ocracoke found that middle-aged native men speak with a stronger brogue than old-timers. This peer group could be exaggerating their accent in a conscious/subconscious effort to retain their cultural identity in the face of rampant tourism that they have witnessed since the 1960s (Wolfram and Shilling-Estes 1997, 24). Middle-aged women tend not to "put on the brogue" as strongly as their male counterparts, possibly because they tend to hold jobs in shops and restaurants where they have greater contact with outsiders, and keep their dialect more private (ibid, 25). Researchers have suggested that television and other mass media venues had less influence on young folks than is commonly assumed. Rather, their speech patterns are shaped more by "those with whom they come into daily, face-to-face contact" including family, teachers, peers, and tourists (Wolfram and Shilling-Estes 1997, 25). Although youngsters tend to speak with island phrases, such as *it weren't my fault*, they are less likely to use the "*hoi toide* vowel in their speech" (ibid, 23). Children and young adults might

use the northern *high tide* instead, but not the southern/inland *hah tahd* (Wolfram and Shilling-Estes 1997, 23).

A list of words, phrases, syntax, and sayings more or less unique to coastal villages, particularly Ocracoke and Hatteras Islands, follow. Those marked with an asterisk (\*) are not cited in Wolfram and Schilling-Estes. Those cited in Wolfram and Schilling-Estes do not represent their complete inventory of Ocracoke words, but are those that are most unique to Ocracoke or the Outer Banks.

- **Vocabulary**

*Airish* (breezy): “It’s right airish out this evening.”

*Begombed* (soiled): “You’re shirt’s begombed with grease” (Ocracoke).

*Buck* (buddy): “Hey there, Buck” (Ocracoke).

*Cat* (baseball): “We played a game of cat.”

\**Chicken turtle* (terrapin): “You ever eat chicken turtle?”

\**Cornable* (cormorant): “Cornables taste fishy” (Ballance 1989).

\**Crowd* (you all): “Eating is all you crowd think about!”

\**Different ones* (some people): “Different ones came and visited her grave.”

*Dingbatter* (outsider): “Did you hear that dingbatter run aground again?”(Ocracoke/Carteret County).

*Doast* (flu, a large amount of something) “Don’t kiss me I’ve got a doast.” “He ate a doast of clams” (Ocracoke).

\**Dope* (Coca Cola): “Drink you a dope.”

\**Drummer* (salesman): “Mama let rooms to tourists and drummers.”

*Fladget* (small piece): “Cut you a fladget of cake.”

\**Flaw* (gust of wind): “A flaw of wind capsized our sail skiff.”

\**Flat cart* (all-purpose pony cart): “We rode to church on a flat cart.”

\**Gall* (to court): “He’s going a’gallin’ this weekend.”

\**Gang* (group): “That gang of cattle is wild.” “We carried the whole gang of young’uns.”

\**Gas boat* (motorized boat): “We took sail skiffs until gas boats come along.”

\**Gas tar/coal tar* (thin and thick tar for dipping nets).

\**Hamlet, hammock* (hummock, small grove of trees in marsh).

*Hatterasser, Kinnykeeter, O’Cocker* (village nicknames).

\**Hattie call* (type of home remedy, likely from Hadacol, popular 1950s patent medicine): “She give us hattie call when we got sick.”

*Hill* (dune): “The tide washed right over them hills.”

\**Ice taters* (Irish potatoes): “That drum would be good with some ice taters.”

*Landing* (shore area where a boat can pull up): “Meet me at Manson’s landing.”

*Lighter knot/ lighter wood* (part of a tree, heavily resined, good for lighting fires, used as metaphor for strong person): “She’s tougher’n a lighter knot.”

\**Marsh, \* mash* (net mesh): “We had to go to a bigger size marsh.”

\**Man nose* (soft clam): “We caught us some man noses.”

*Meehonkey* (hide and go seek) “We used to play meehonkey.”

*Mommuck* (to harass, to muck up): “I am mommucked this night.”

\**Muddle* (drum stew): “Nothing like a good muddle for Sunday dinner.”

\**Off* (off-island): “He married a girl from off.”

\**Outlet* (rip-tide alley between shoals): “That feller got swept away in an outlet.”

\**Pick-up turtle* (stewed sea turtle): “Save me a quarter of that pick-up turtle!”

\**Pie-bread* (pastry, used in chicken or shorebird stew).

*Pizer* (porch): “Let’s set on the pizer.”

*Puck* (sweetheart): “She’s Tommy’s puck.”

*Quamish* (queasy): “I feel quamished.” (Ocracoke).

\**Rosin string* (prank involving vibrating a house) (Ocracoke).

\**Saw sack* (canvas bag used to “tote” clams, etc.).

\**Sea chickens* (edible shore birds – curlews, sandpipers, etc.).

\**Sea Oars* (seaweed or eel grass dried and bailed for market).

\**Sea Tide* (overwash): “We liked to have drowned during that sea tide!”

*Scud* (a ride): “I’ll take you for a scud around the island.”

\**Scuttle* (hole in floor unplugged during storms to let water in/out).

\**Sealer Bailer*: mechanism used to bail sea weed/eel grass.

\**Sharpie* (sail boat adept in shallow waters) “We built a Core Sound sharpie.”

\**Shove skiff* (skiff built to be poled along) “A shove skiff met the mail boat.”

*Slick ca’m* (dead calm water): “Boys, she’s slick cam today.”

\**Snuff mop* (end of twig chewed to pulpy instrument for dipping snuff).

\**Sports* (hunters, anglers): “Granddaddy took them sports out each fall.”

\**Tissick* (croup): “I came down with the tissick” (Ballance 1989).

\**Thruss* (thrash): “The fish would thruss about in the net.”

\**Truck* (stuff, belongings, gear): “I carried my truck to the boat.”

\**Waif*: School of bottle nose dolphins fished for “porpoise factory”

*Wampus cat* (silly person, from *catawampus*): “You daggone wampus cat!”

*Water fire* (\*phosphorescent plankton): “At night you could spot the mullet streaking through that water fire.”

*Wigglers* (mosquito larvae): “It didn’t kill us to drink the wigglers.”

\**Woods mold* (mulch): Topsoil collected for gardens from Buxton Woods.

- **Phrases**

He went *up the road/down the road, up the beach/down the beach* (He went north/south).

We're going *down point, round creek, or up Trent* (More use of directional).

\*Come eat *dinner with us this evening* (Come eat lunch this afternoon).

\**You're bright, you are* (You're an idiot).

She has *uttered a word* (She has really said something/talks too much).

\*He's *right, ain't he?* (Isn't he something?).

\*Johnny *ain't right* (Johnny's mentally challenged).

I came a cussing for everything I could *lay my tongue to*. He will *lay a cussing* on you (to swear at someone).

I *liked to have* killed him (I could have killed him/almost killed him).

He's looking for a sign *yet* (He's still looking for a sign).

Is the mail *called over/\* hauled over* yet? (Is the mail in?).

That chap is so *offshore* he can't get back (That man is crazy).

\*We drove the *bank of the beach* (We drove on the hard-packed wet sand).

\*That's what you call *pretty work* (Job well done, usually referring to a big haul of fish).

- **Syntax**

He *weren't* home (Different subject/verb agreement system).

We caught six hundred *pound of flounders* (Different use of plural).

I *run* aground last week. The booze yacht *run* ashore (Different use of tense).

My father is *to* the harbor (Different use of preposition, likely carried over from nautical orientations such as "The wind is to the north").

*I'll not* say another word (Contract the helping verb instead of the negative).

Mother used to hang net *of an* evening (Different use of preposition).

He went *a-fishing* this evening (Use of *a* prefix with *-ing* verbs).

We use dories for mulleting *anymore* (Use of positive *anymore*).

Bobby *might could* help you (Double modal).

She's a *right* pretty ("purty") skiff, she is (Use of *right* to intensify adjective/adverb).

That's the meanest preacher that's *ever been*. (Use of *ever been* to intensify adjective).

That collard is *prettysome* (Use of *some* to intensify adjective).

That is *some pretty* (Variation of above).

I am mommucked *this day* (Emphasis of *today*).

\*Daddy will catch a *big lot* of fish (Use of *big lot* to intensify amount).

\*Then I add my gravy *in to it*." "He shot five holes *in to it*" (Use of *in to it* to intensify verb).

- **Sayings**

\* "When it's time to kill fowl it's time to kill men" (Refers to dangerously rough/cold hunting weather).

\* "Wind from the east, fish bite least. Wind from the west, fish bite best" (Refers to weather and fishing).

\* "Smoke goes high, wind's going to die. Smoke goes low, the wind's going to blow" (Refers to weather).

\* "You have to go out but you don't have to come back" (Coast Guard motto referring to occupational hazard of lifesaving).

\* "The lighthouse is cracked but it's still standing" (Refers to endurance, said in reference to resilient, tough islanders).

\* "Where there's children and dogs there's bound to be trouble" (Refers to large gatherings).

#### **8.10.4. The Seafood Industry**

Making a living from the sea has been a mainstay of Outer Bank life, albeit one that has waxed and waned depending on economic and environmental conditions. Fishing was so central to everyday life that no special ritual or custom celebrated it, per se, but the uncertainties and dangers faced by fishermen no doubt figured into the central importance religion held for Bankers. Starting in 2004, Hatteras village began hosting a “Blessing of the Fleet” celebration on the year anniversary of Isabel, the most devastating hurricane to hit the banks in decades. Sadly, as the festival becomes more consciously oriented toward celebrating fishermen and educating tourists about fishermen, the fishing industry has declined to near oblivion.

Traditionally the customs associated with the seafood industry included net mending, weekly boat hauling, boat launchings, bidding wars between buyers over boatloads of fresh catch, and the practice of letting neighbors and the elderly take their pick of the catch before it was sold. Fishermen upheld informal understandings of where various people’s fishing grounds were, and it was understood that fish or net camps were unlocked and to be shared by all who needed to take shelter, rest, make coffee, or borrow a net needle.

Making a living from the sea included subsistence fishing and hunting, and Bankers acquired tastes for some foods that came to have great cultural importance yet are now off-limits for consumption due to strict conservation measures. These dishes include “pick-up turtle” (described by L.P. O’Neal) or sea turtle, shorebird pie or shorebirds and pie-bread (described by Edna Gray and Rudy Gray), and “ol’ drum,” or large red drum fish: stewed, baked, canned, or boiled (see Daniel Willis, L.P. O’Neal, Gaskill Austin, and Rudy Gray for examples of ol’ drum preparation). Traditional drinks include yaupon tea (Maggie Austin, Sarah Gaskill) and fermented (alcoholic) meal tea (Earl O’Neal, L.P. O’Neal).

Many interviews contain information about various methods of catching fish. Those who offered insight into the history of fishing and the changing method over time are the following: Sullivan Garrish, Murray Fulcher, Ernal Foster (including sturgeon, beginnings of charter boat fishery), Thurston Gaskill (haul seining, the shad fishery, and early rod and reel fishing), Gaskill Austin (sport fishing, salted and smoked fish), Elisha Ballance (“stake net” fishing), Gibb Gray (evolution from trot-lining to crab potting), Henry Ballance (“drag netting” and the Ocracoke clam factory), Manson Meekins (hauling and the pound net fishery), L.P. O’Neal (“swipe netting,” long hauling), I.D. Midgett (dory fishing/beach seining), Ernie Foster (charter fishing, old porpoise factory), Dale Burrus (old porpoise factory), Eugene Ballance (red drum, fishing in general), and Douglas “Chubby” Dorris (shrimping, crabbing, sink/drop netting).

In addition to fishing techniques, interviews contain information on old net camps (Ernie Foster, Dwight Burrus), fish houses, ice houses, and markets (Manson Meekins, Jimmy Austin, Rudy Gray, Murray Fulcher), and net tying and treatment (Ephraim O’Neal, Rudy Austin, Gaskill Austin, D. Chubby Dorris).

### **Primary Sources:**

CAHA Headquarters in Manteo, North Carolina:

Virtually every oral history references the unique customs of Hatteras and Ocracoke, and the ethnohistorical section of this report is comprehensive and contains detailed information. The interviews cited above are provided by:

Gaskill Austin.  
Jimmy Austin.  
Maggie Austin.  
Henry Ballance.  
Elisha Ballance.  
Dwight Burrus.  
D. Chubby Dorris.  
Nellie Farrow.  
Ernal Foster.

Ernie Foster.  
Murray Fulcher.  
Elsie Garrish.  
Sullivan Garrish.  
Sarah Gaskill.  
Thurston Gaskill.  
Cyrus Gray.  
Edna Gray.  
Emma Gray.  
Gibb Gray.  
Mary Gray.  
Rudy Gray.  
Leslie Hooper.  
Elizabeth Howard.  
Manson Meekins.  
Anderson Midgett.  
D. Lance Midgett.  
Lovie Midgett.  
Ephraim O'Neal.  
L.P. O'Neal.  
Audrey Rollinson.  
Ben Spencer.  
Lucy Stowe.  
Bonita Williams.  
Ruby Williams.  
Daniel Willis.  
Margaret Willis.

### **Secondary Sources:**

Gary Dunbar's "*Geographical History of the Carolina Banks*" of 1956.

*Sea Chest* articles, Cape Hatteras School's answer to the Foxfire series of mountain folklore, are a wealth of information about the unique customs of Hatteras and Ocracoke, and are housed in the Hatteras village library.

Ben Dixon MacNeill describes selected myths and legends of Hatteras in his 1958 *The Hatterasman*; it is difficult to discern, however, which anecdotes are taken for legendary and which are taken for history.

Many Ocracoke customs and practices, particularly pertaining to fishing, are described in Alton Ballance's 1989 work, *Ocracokers*.

The 1973 edition of the Ocracoke High School annual contains *Sea Chest*-like information, and is housed at the Hatteras village library.

Walt Wolfram and Natalie Shilling-Estes have published numerous papers on Ocracoke dialect. Most are housed at the Outer Banks History Center, but the book *Hoi Toide on the Outer Banks: the Story of the Ocracoke Brogue* (1997) was cited above.

The most comprehensive collection of myths and legends of the Outer Banks is a series of books by Charles H. Whedbee written between 1966 and 1989.

## 9.0 Conclusion

This research identifies three commonly held misperceptions regarding Banker history. The first misperception is that early settlers were shipwreck victims. Rather, most mainlanders who carved out a life on the Banks were stockmen; and, although Bankers relied upon subsistence fishing and eventually bartered or sold smoked or salted mullet, 19<sup>th</sup> century islanders spent more time on horseback tending cattle, sheep, and horses than in a fishing boat. These “cowboy” beginnings left a legacy of round-ups, branding, shearing, marketing, and butchering that lasted until free-ranging livestock was outlawed two years before President Roosevelt signed the 1937 bill establishing the Cape Hatteras National Seashore. Wrangling shaped Banker perception of the environment as well, for open beach was pastureland and the ocean and sound provided a natural fence. This Banker relationship with the natural environment likely contributed to some islanders’ belief that much of the property sought by the federal government for a national park was of little value, particularly when they could no longer use it to drive free-ranging herds.

The second misperception is that the entire island is part of the Outer Banks. Rather, the natural environment of the Outer Banks does not include the unbroken chain of grass-covered dunes that lie between the ocean and the highway today. Sand dunes are a cultural legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) program of the 1930s, as young men were sent all over the country to plant trees, dig ditches, and in the case of Hatteras and Ocracoke, install sand fences to build dunes. All of these efforts were part of Roosevelt’s plan to both employ the unemployed and shore up the country’s natural resources. Before the dunes, Hatteras and Ocracoke islands were mostly flat, and kept smooth by frequent ocean over-wash. Although villages were shaded by bushes, pines, and live oak trees, and the Cape Hatteras area was thickly wooded; island

vegetation was kept in check by herds of herbivores. The dune-building project and the subsequent road-building efforts went hand-in-hand with the establishment of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore, officially designated in 1953. Although villagers were glad to receive assistance in protecting their villages and eroding beaches – particularly after the 1933 storm – and were happy to hear that the National Park Service planned to resume the “sand fixation work” begun by the CCC (see Appendix Two), many now question the wisdom of dune-building, and believe that the dunes have contributed to shore erosion and village flooding, blocking the sound waters from rushing back to sea during hurricanes.

The third misperception is that, historically, Bankers have been isolated from the rest of the world. Indeed, the interviews conducted in the 1988 Southern Oral History Project– interviews that provided an important foundation for this project– described islanders as “isolated from the rest of the country” and “separated from their own peculiarities.” However, this research discovered that islanders were very much connected with the outside world, even historically. These connections include: the earliest days of trading fish for corn on the mainland; working aboard ocean-going schooners; extensive mail boat deliveries; freight boat deliveries; fish marketing networks from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century; and a long history of U.S. Lifesaving Service and Coast Guard Service. All of these activities contributed to the islanders’ impressive network of far-flung relations and a keen sense of worldliness. Additionally, many Bankers left the islands to finish high school until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century when a high school was established on the island. Storekeepers, fishermen, and boat builders also depended on market and supply contacts from Elizabeth City, Little Washington, and Beaufort.

“What is the message they send across the years, these proud, independent individuals living a life apart in a world apart?” asked the Southern Oral History Project. The message

would likely be that the Bankers have never considered themselves a world apart; rather, their survival depended on interdependence with each other and a far flung network of family, friends, and businesses. Although islanders are careful not to romanticize the past, and emphasize that pre-bridge and pre-road years were sometimes marked by hardship and hunger with few occupational choices and opportunities for income, many describe the road and bridge that connects them as never before to the outside world as a “mixed blessing.” Visitors to the Cape Hatteras National Seashore, and tourists who fill village motels and restaurants, have been an economic boon to Bankers, enabling young residents to stay on the islands and find lucrative work, if they so choose. Yet, as more working harbor-fronts, beach lands, and old homes are transformed into upscale marinas and rental properties, villagers find sad solace in the rising property values beneath their feet and the prospect of selling out and cashing in.

Ultimately, this study of the eight communities adjacent to the Cape Hatteras National Seashore (CAHA) has emerged from the National Park Service’s desire to better understand and appreciate the social, cultural, and economic histories of Hatteras and Ocracoke villages and families long inhabiting the region. The importance of documenting Outer Bank community history became increasingly evident during the course of fieldwork, as the appearance of Hatteras villages changed dramatically after the devastating Hurricane Isabel in 2003; further, *all* of the communities experienced unprecedented levels of development in the wake of this “storm.”

In some respects, the history of life on the Banks is simultaneous with radical change as hurricanes have altered the landscape by flattening hills and opening new inlets, floating houses off blocks, covering roads, and unearthing graves. Banker families have long weathered such storms, triumphantly emerging to sweep mud from kitchens, repair boats, and care for one

another; they also have experienced both sadness for losing bits and pieces of family history (photographs, heirlooms, documents) and gratitude for their survival. Permanency is not a given when one lives on a spit of sand; Bankers understand that nature has a cyclical rhythm—sometimes things wash ashore, other times things wash away. Until recently, however, the changes Bankers have endured have been primarily physical rather than cultural. Now, Bankers are realizing—and resigning themselves to—the seeming permanence of the physical *and* cultural transformation of their island. Beleaguered villagers witness the last old homes razed, and the few remaining lots bulldozed for new development; they also see the few remaining campgrounds and groves of live oaks sold to make room for yet another luxury residential development. This onslaught of development has proven more powerful than any hurricane in permanently altering their physical and cultural landscape: Bankers now contend with soaring property values and an unprecedented level of incoming wealth.

The changing physical appearance of these eight Banker communities raises important questions, i.e., what constitutes a community, and when is a community's cultural integrity compromised to the point where previously majority values become the minority voice? We have seen that, while the trappings of tourism and development have almost obscured historical Rodanthe, Rodanthe villagers tenaciously cling to the tradition of Old Christmas. Remarkably, Old Christmas is now largely organized by villagers who have moved off Hatteras Island; thus, extending the perimeters of the community beyond both village and island. New residents of Rodanthe are, in many respects, not considered members of the village, as they share no blood relations with long-term natives. Blood and marriage ties are central in holding traditional villagers together no matter where they live; but what will become of the shared Banker culture

when new generations of Midgetts, Grays, Stowes, or Ballances no longer live in close proximity on a fragile barrier island?

The very factors adding to the Outer Banks' cultural tapestry (i.e., incoming residents and tourists, decline in traditional livelihoods, gentrification of coastal villages, burgeoning development) are also inspiring villagers to re-think their negative assessment of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore. Many islanders have long objected to the presence and policies of the National Park Service, believing that the government has not given them their due as neighbors and residents, and has over-managed and over-restricted the public's use of historical homeland. Yet, some of the most vocal critics now concede that the establishment of the National Seashore was an important piece of legislation for Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands in preventing wall-to-wall development of the Outer Banks. Still, habitat loss and landscape alterations are occurring within the boundaries of villages; boundaries that clearly delineate what is and what is not marketable property.

A recent upsurge in the popularity of heritage tourism and eco-tourism may prove beneficial to those islanders wishing to keep their communities and culture intact, as tourism officials are more cognizant that visitors value unique ways of life and— in this post-industrialized, computerized world— are fascinated with livelihoods such as fishing and boat building that involve a proud tradition, working with one's hands, and living closely with natural resources. Now, only a small percentage of visitors are aware of the history and culture of the locals that are checking them into hotels or taking them on fishing charters; ethnohistories such as provided in this document, and by agencies such as the National Park Service, can play a critical role in fostering an appreciation that could very well be the Banker's saving grace.

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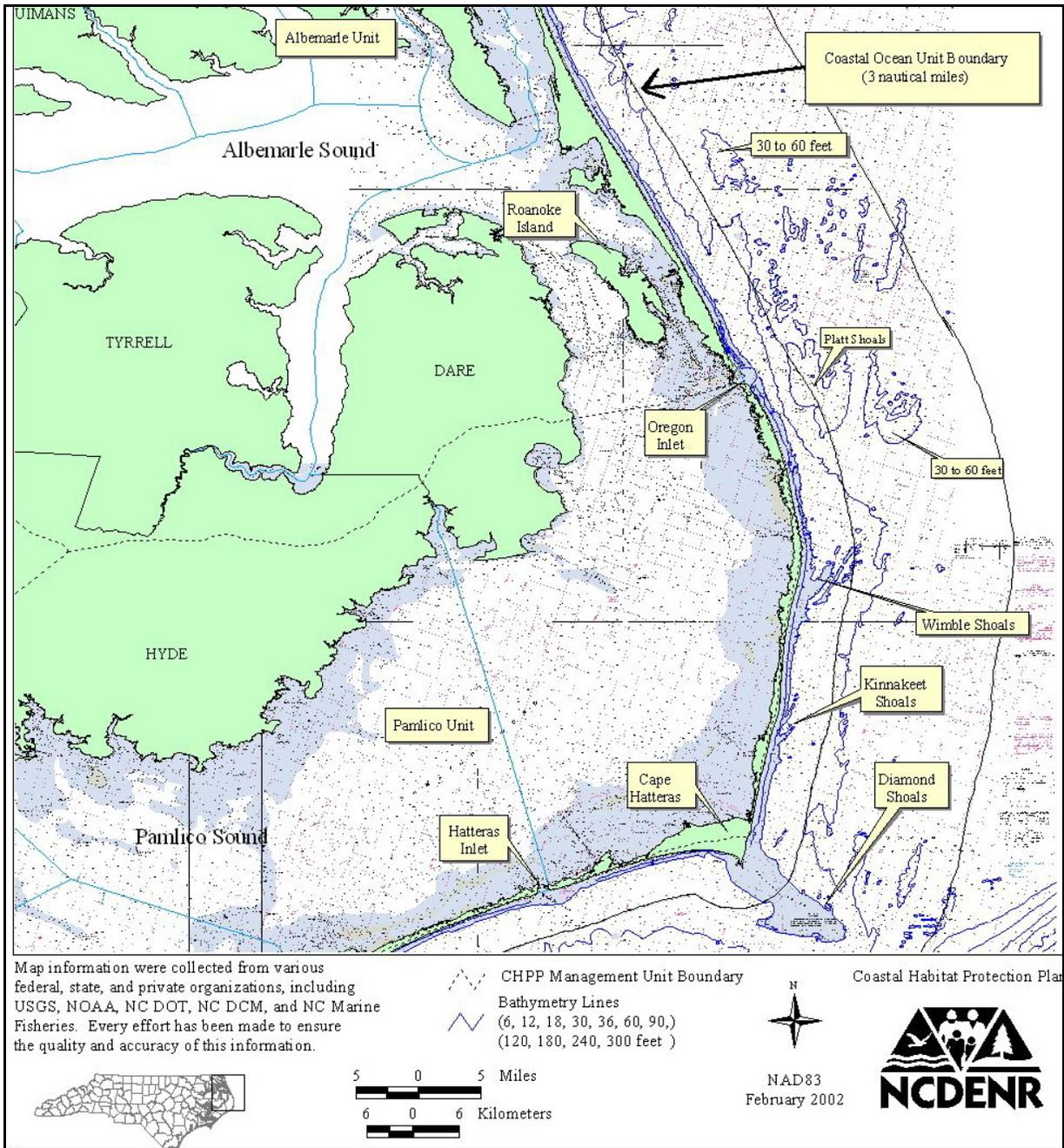
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## 11.1.0 Fishing Practices of Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands

### 11.1. Early Fisheries, Boats, and Gear

Early settlers to the Outer Banks fished primarily for subsistence. They used dip nets, small seines, and even bare hands to catch everything from mullet to menhaden. Although pots, weirs, fykes, and spears were used in Colonial America, it is not clear what their range was in coastal North Carolina (Dunbar 1956). “Fishing for market was not really important until the 19<sup>th</sup> century,” when Bankers began supplementing their varied livelihood by trading salted fish (and cured yaupon) for corn from mainland plantations and towns (Dunbar 1956, 79). Although Albemarle Sound shad and alewife fisheries were expanding for mainland river communities with the 1815 introduction of long haul seines, fishing operations remained humble along Hatteras and Ocracoke, consisting of “small boats and modest gear” deployed in the “sound margins or near the inlets” (Dunbar 1956, 79). Before the Civil War, ocean fishing “was largely confined to the (near) shore fishery for bluefish which began in 1842” (ibid), as the Atlantic was often rough and the shoals dangerous (Map 11.1.1). As the commercial market slowly grew, so too did the Bankers’ fishing skills.

Their knowledge of fish habitats and migrations was slow in developing until fishing for market made them more keenly aware of such matters. Commercial fishing also brought more efficient methods and improved gear and boats. The great changes were to come immediately after the Civil War (Dunbar 1956, 79-80).



Map 11.1.1. Northern Coastal Shoals.  
 Source: NCDENR 2005 Coastal Habitat Protection Plan.

The opening of Hatteras and Oregon Inlets in the 1846 storm was advantageous to Bankers, and improvements in boats and gear allowed an expansion of commercial fishing in the post-Civil War period. The economy of the Outer Banks improved with an influx of government

jobs and paychecks upon the establishment of post offices, lifesaving stations, lighthouses, and weather stations (Stick 1958). Economic and infrastructure improvements went hand in hand, as freight boat, mail boat, and buy boat routes were established and fish houses built.

Early settlers fished from rowboats, dugout canoes, and perriaugers (dugouts built with two or more pinned-together logs); but small, versatile sailboats “came into being after 1850” (Dunbar 1956, 120). A workboat unique to North Carolina was the shad boat, built primarily on Roanoke Island by the Creef and Dough families. They were used to gillnet for shad in the Albemarle and northern Pamlico Sounds, and oysters in the lower Pamlico. Early shad boats ranged from twenty-two to twenty-six feet and, according to boat historian Howard Chapelle (1941), were rigged with a sprit mainsail, jib, and topsail. The wineglass-shaped keel was carved from a log. The frames were naturally curved cypress-knee roots. The shad boat hull was undecked, and the topsides were painted white; many had “black and red bands in three narrow stripes along the gunwales, which set off the strong sheer” (Chapelle 1941).

In the 1880s the Core Sound sharpie sail skiff replaced the shad boat in the southern Pamlico and southern banks regions (Chapelle 1941). Modified from the New Haven, Connecticut, sharpie, one of which was brought to Beaufort in 1875, the Core Sound sharpie was wider and slower than the New Haven model, but comprised a safer and more powerful workboat. By 1890, according to Chapelle (1941), sharpies were built up to 45 feet and rigged as schooners (two masts with shorter forward mast, rigged with mainsail, mizzen, and forward jib) for oyster dredging. The availability of dimensional lumber made the sharpie an advantageous design for quick and easy construction. The “Core Sounder” was characterized by a flat bottom and shallow draft, ideal for shoal waters, as well as a rounded stern to prevent net hangs (Stick

1958, 179). The Core Sound sharpie was “not generally used north of the village of Hatteras (Dunbar 1956, 124).

Another popular fishing boat emerging in the 1880s was the Chesapeake Bay-style dead rise skiff, or “V” bottom boat, which eventually replaced both the shad boat and the sharpie skiff due to its adaptability as a motorized vessel. Versions of the V-bottom dead rise included the skipjack, a sailboat with one mast raked back on an angle, popular for oystering. The “bugeye” was similar to the skipjack except it had two masts; both the bugeye and skipjack were built with a Virginia-style cross-planked bottom (North Carolina builders generally used longitudinal planking). The “flattie” was a Chesapeake style sailboat with the dead rise located from midship aft. The Core Sound V-bottom was built with rounded stern, and was used from Core Sound to Hatteras Island. The V-bottom was eventually rigged with engines for ocean fishing and shrimp trawling (Stick 1958, Dunbar 1956).

Historical fisheries of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century that are now defunct include the “porpoise” (bottle nose dolphin) fishery (described in the Hatteras Village section of this report), the sturgeon fishery (gill netted mainly off Nag’s Head beach until the fishery crashed in the 1920s), and the terrapin “fishery” (diamond back terrapin turtles were marketed to Baltimore and other points north), although both terrapin and sea turtles were mainly harvested for personal consumption on Hatteras and Ocracoke. Some fisheries have occurred sporadically, such as bay scallops that were “taken fairly extensively over a period of ten years...following World War I” (Stick 1958, 227). Although the menhaden fishery is still active, participants are limited to Carteret County. In the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, however, some Bankers worked as captains or pilots of menhaden steamers out of Portsmouth Island, Beaufort, Morehead City, or Southport.

From the time of the Civil War, [Bankers realized] that the seafood in the nearby waters represented a vast source of potential income, with the result that the three-quarters of a century or so between then and World War II might best be described as the great era of commercial fishing on the Banks. Even the term “fishing” would be misleading, for the Bankers caught and sold practically everything they could find in the water, from whales and porpoises to turtles, oysters, and even seaweed (Stick 1958, 212-13).

## **11.2. The Modern Fishing Industry of Hatteras and Ocracoke**

Early in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, North Carolina accounts for 70 percent of the total United States commercial fishery landings in weight, and over 50 percent of the landings in value in the southeastern region of the United States. Dare County is number two in the state for commercial landings (just behind Carteret County) and Hyde County is the third top producer (Bianchi 2003). Although the bulk of Dare County landings occur in Wanchese rather than Hatteras Island, and much of Hyde County’s landings are attributed to mainland crabbing rather than Ocracoke, commercial fishing has played a vital role in the history of the Outer Banks, and continues to be economically and culturally significant.

Commercial fishing has long been an opportunistic endeavor on the Outer Banks compared to other regions in the state: people fish when market or environmental conditions are favorable, but hedge their bets with non-fishing work as well. Traditionally persons specializing in skills such as boat building were also fishermen; in a sense there were no “full-time” commercial fishermen on the Banks. “My father was a jack-of-all-trades,” said the son of a well-known Buxton boat builder. “I guess you had to be that to survive here. He was a very good and outstanding fisherman (Baum et al. 1976-77, 49).

Fishermen have to be carpenters to construct the little buildings in which the net is stored; they must be engineers to design the docks on which the buildings so often stand; they must be mechanics to keep their power boats running, to design and build the beach-buggy trucks they need for hauling their equipment down to the sea. Many build their own boats and houses, are electricians and plumbers and masons, raise garden crops on

the side, take out hunting parties in the winter season, are sports-fishing guides in the slack of summer (Stick 1958, 236).

Unlike mainland fishermen who have had a greater diversity of fisheries to harvest, Islanders have experienced scarce times when the lack of product made alternative work necessary. Until the last few decades, Islanders also struggled with logistics in packing and transporting fresh fish; they sold salted and smoked fish before ice and refrigeration. Coast Guard or ferry system jobs have been conducive to maintaining part-time work in commercial fishing. Even Islanders who make the majority of their living fishing typically fall back on other work during hard times such as carpentry, mechanics, or jobs pertaining to tourism (Garrity-Blake 1996). Today, early in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, jobs associated with development and recreation can be especially lucrative on the Outer Banks, making commercial fishing less desirable to Islanders entering the work force.

A Division of Marine Fisheries review of socioeconomic research concludes that there are three primary issues facing North Carolina fishermen. First, fishers have experienced a decline in ex-vessel value in recent years, primarily due to low market prices for their principle products. Fishermen of Hatteras (see Table 11.1.1) and Ocracoke (see Table 11.1.2) are no exception to this rule. Second, the availability of fisheries has declined, due to a combination of hurricanes, natural fluctuations of the stocks, declining water quality, and management measures (state and federal) designed to protect specific species. Third, the impact of state and federal regulations has become severe: not only do fishermen complain about the restrictions themselves, but report difficulty in keeping up with the myriad of sometimes conflicting and confusing rules and proclamations (Bianchi 2003).

Table 11.1.1. Economic Value of Commercial Landings, Dare County.

Year	Landings (#'s)	Current Value	Deflated Value*
1994	38,759,391	\$21,797,090	\$6,148,959
1995	39,729,754	\$27,798,405	\$7,625,102
1996	43,781,184	\$23,893,117	\$6,365,126
1997	38,608,954	\$24,653,021	\$6,419,647
1998	37,029,553	\$23,840,498	\$6,112,704
1999	34,073,538	\$22,954,141	\$5,759,194
2000	33,518,071	\$26,538,214	\$6,440,824
2001	31,646,791	\$24,975,642	\$5,896,749
2002	28,888,314	\$23,014,227	\$5,348,506
2003	32,531,441	\$20,082,694	\$4,562,788
2004	31,388,840	\$20,633,473	\$4,566,188

\*Ex-vessel prices and value deflated according to Consumer Price Index to remove effects of inflation so value of the dollar remains constant.

Source: Bianchi 2003, 66.

Table 11.1.2. Economic Value of Commercial Landings, Hyde County.

Year	Landings (#'s)	Current Value	Deflated Value
1994	12,992,409	\$10,184,957	\$2,873,176
1995	10,334,382	\$ 9,234,070	\$2,532,905
1996	14,371,620	\$ 9,380,189	\$2,498,882
1997	14,289,840	\$11,105,084	\$2,891,764
1998	15,799,661	\$10,649,470	\$2,730,524
1999	15,414,096	\$12,439,977	\$3,121,190
2000	11,914,417	\$12,645,321	\$3,069,019
2001	9,063,900	\$ 8,181,350	\$1,931,617

Source: Bianchi 2003, 74.

Fishermen are quick to add a couple of points to this list: political pressures brought to bear by sport fishing and environmental groups have added an ideological aspect (“it’s all politics”) to fisheries management. Also, state managers fail to “stick up” for Tarheel fishermen in the face of broader regulatory entities such as the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. Harvesters furthermore point to a lack of recruitment among their ranks, as fewer younger people are entering the fishery; this trend is encouraged by the very fishermen who

bemoan it, as parents strongly advise their children to seek a career with a more promising future than commercial fishing.

Unlike some off-island harvesters working on large, company-owned vessels, Hatteras and Ocracoke fishermen tend to be independent owner-operators with some “long-time loyalties between fishermen and fish dealers that hinge on the questions of slip space and access” (Griffith 1996, 44). In recent years Outer Banks fishermen have become “increasingly concerned that real estate development will entice dealers to sell their space to developers less interested in commercial fishing than in providing marinas and condominiums for recreational boating traffic” (ibid). Indeed, as of 2004, only two fish processors worked three fish houses out of Hatteras Island, and both have talked about soaring real estate values versus their diminishing profits in the seafood industry. Fifty years ago each village had fish houses, and they formed the pulse of commerce for communities; today the remaining few sit like decrepit albeit respected grandfathers on a gold mine of property.

### **11.2.1. Beach Haul Seine Fishery**

Beach haul seining is one of the oldest North Carolina fisheries still practiced today (Table 11.1.3 below shows the number of haul seine operations state-wide; the sharp increase in 2002 participants is due to a particularly big striped bass opening). Nineteenth century fishermen skilled at crashing through the surf in small dories in pursuit of fish were the very surfmen sought out for rescue services upon the establishment of lifesaving stations. Likewise, those on patrol for the lifesaving service likely kept an eye out each spring and fall for migrating schools of striped bass, bluefish, red drum, and gray trout, alerting if not joining island haul seine crews.

The basic methods of haul seining have changed little throughout the decades. A crew patrols the beach, scanning the ocean for signs of fish: diving sea gulls, churning waters, an oily slick or dark shadows. “They go by smell, things like that,” said a villager. Finding fish without electronics was a skill passed down by the old-timers. “Old-timers had their own little secrets. A bluefish, you’ll see a slick on the water and they’re biting on the menhaden and when they chew them up the oil comes out from them.” Fishermen studied the behavior of seabirds in determining where and what species the fish were. “Sink netters catching croakers and trout go by the gannets diving,” said an Ocracoker. “How deep the gannets dive, if they dive on a slant or shallow, they can read the way the gannets done and tell what type of fish was there.”

When the haul seiners spy fish, a small dory is launched from the shore through the breakers; a shore-based crew secures a line attached to one end of the net while the dory crew feeds out the seine. The net is pulled straight offshore, and then guided toward the left or the right, depending on which direction the migrating fish are traveling. The dory crew heads off the school, and wraps the net in a U-shape back toward the beach. The fish, splashing in the bunt of the net, are dragged ashore with a hawser and sorted. Years ago horses were used to help pull the net in, and then in the 1950s net winches were fashioned using ten horsepower Briggs and Stratton engines. Now nets are hauled with a truck. “We tie a bowline in the warp (rope), hook it on the front of the truck, and start pulling the warp in,” explained Rodanthe fisherman Mac Midgett:

We’d run along the beach until we found a little gully, or what we call sloughs, that looked good for fishing, and we would take the boat right off the truck and put the net on it and, two men rowing oars, take the area in, and swipe the net to the beach. We could work from Hatteras Inlet to Oregon Inlet on a low water. Then, back before we had a highway we would stay up there at night, or when a flood tide caught us. Then we could work back because it’s too hard to plow on the soft, sandy beach in an old truck. We would wait till the tide got out and run it along the surf, where it was hard (Baum et al. 1976-77, 46).

Sometimes haul seines get hung up. “Some of the things you can get hung on are wrecked airplanes, sunken trawlers, high shoals,” (Midgett 1980, 19). When the net is snagged, sometimes the warp snaps, creating a dangerous whip to whoever is standing nearby on the beach.

Table 11.1.3. NC Beach Seine Fishery.

Year	Number of Participants
2004	167
2003	24
2002	182
2001	89
2000	89
1999	33
1998	82
1997	93
1996	92
1995	104

Source: Hesselman 2004, 40-41.

Before motorized dories became popular in the late 1960s, they were rowed through the surf. The traditional dory was about 15 feet in length and was designed to jump the waves: “That’s why there’s the curve in the bottom, what we call the rocker, like on a rocking chair,” said a Hatteras Island boat builder (West 2004, 12). The dories were built with a pointed bow and a near-pointed stern; the sides of the boat were built with a heavy flare or “flam” to help keep the water out. Dory frames were typically cypress, while the planking was juniper. Once motors were adopted, builders modified the dory design and built them larger, in the 16 to 20-foot range:

We discovered that if you lessened the rocker, you could go faster. The guys found out that if they weren’t rowing, the sea-keeping capability wasn’t as important because they had power and they had speed (West 2004, 12).

Since at least the mid-1800s, Bankers hand-sewed cotton nets, but in the 1970s monofilament nets were manufactured. Especially heavy loads were hauled in with the assistance of workhorses, but once motorized vehicles became common fishermen switched to trucks or tractors. Before the post World War II highway connected the villages, haul seine crews established fishing camps up and down the beach. The camps were places to store nets and equipment, and typically were outfitted with bunks, provisions, and a stove for extended fishing expeditions many miles from home villages.

“They’d say they were going to Rocky’s camp,” recalled an Islander who worked in a crew in the 1970s. “Well, Rocky’s camp hadn’t existed for over 30 years, but it still identified a specific location on the beach” (West 2004, 12). Men from “up the beach,” that is, Nags Head, Duck, and Corolla, would travel to Hatteras or Ocracoke and fish from these camps as well. Island fishermen seemed to get along fine with their out-of-town colleagues.

In the 1970s dory fishermen from Long Island – largely shut out of the striped bass fishery in New York – traveled to the Outer Banks; these fishermen did not exactly receive Southern hospitality. “The northerners had longer nets and bigger boats, and they didn’t just launch their boats, they shot them out, backing the truck and the trailer down to the water and then slamming the brakes so the boat would take off in a mad rush” (West 2004, 11-12). In 1973 20 haul seine crews were setting off Cape Point alone, including the Long Islanders with their aggressive style and motorized net winches. It became so crowded that crews worked on a rotating basis, and it was understood that “once a crew had pulled in its nets, it could not set them again until all other crews had taken turns” (DeBlieu 1998, 201). Tarheels noted that the Yankee fishermen were extremely adept at netting striped bass, if not too adept, and lobbied successfully to outlaw out-of-state haul seine crews (DeBlieu 1998, 201; Matthiessen 1986).

Haul seine crews of Hatteras Island endured a series of hardships throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The ocean striped bass fishery was effectively closed in 1985, and to this day only a limited quota is allocated to fishermen, amounting to a one to three-day a year fishery of 50 stripers per license-holder per day. Massive schools of gray trout mysteriously disappeared in the early 1990s. In 1993 the haul seiners' favorite fishing grounds, an area known as "the Point" at the tip of Cape Hatteras, became a battle ground between commercial and recreational fishermen (West and Garrity-Blake 2003, 65). Surf anglers objected vehemently to haul seiners pulling ashore nets of bluefish or red drum, and in the end convinced policymakers to ban the crews within a half-mile radius of the point. In 1998 state policymakers enacted emergency measures to curtail the harvest of red drum, cutting further into the diminishing profits of haul seine crews.

Today (2004), crews of seiners continue to patrol the beach in search of fish, but have modified their fishing technique to "fish nearshore gillnets that are anchored but not attached to the beach" (Steve et al. 2001, 15) (Figures 11.1.1-5). Although not technically beach seines, fishermen tend to report this fishery as such because they "work in close proximity to the beach and associate themselves with the haul/beach seine fishery" (ibid). The State Marine Fisheries Commission, however, concerned about a recent increase in beach seine fishermen (particularly after a "fishing derby" scenario unfolded in 2002 as evident in table 11.1.3 above), is considering the prohibition of gill nets in the haul seine fishery, encouraging the traditional multi-filament seines. This would likely reduce the number of people participating in the fishery and lessen by-catch.

Instead of haul seining, they are setting beach seine nets. Only one end of this type of seine net is anchored on the beach. The net is pulled straight out, anchored offshore, and marked with a bright orange buoy. Instead of gathering up the catch in the purse of a haul seine, these fishermen catch the fish as they try to swim through the net. However, they

still pull their nets offshore with dories that dance over waves, blessing our island with a sturdy romance (West 2004, 13).



Figure 11.1.1. Ocracoke Dory Rig. Photo by B. Garrity-Blake.



Figure 11.1.2. Seiners Loading Stripers for Market.  
Photo by B. Garrity-Blake.



Figure 11.1.3. Seiners Loading Dory. Photo by B. Garrity-Blake.



Figure 11.1.4. Marine Patrol Officer and Ocracoke Fisherman. Photo by B. Garrity-Blake.



Figure 11.1.5. Striped Bass at Fish House, Ocracoke.  
Photo by B. Garrity-Blake.

### **11.2.2. Ocean Sink Net Fishery**

The drop net fishery, known by state fisheries managers as the sink net fishery, involves the use of submerged, as opposed to floating, gill nets (Figure 11.1.6). Drop net fishermen target species that are found “just beyond the surf zone’s outer bars” to depths of about one hundred feet. This ocean area “serves as the wintering grounds for a large portion of the Atlantic Coast bluefish, weakfish (gray trout), and Atlantic croaker populations, due to the warming influence of the Gulf Stream offshore” (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 1993, 37).

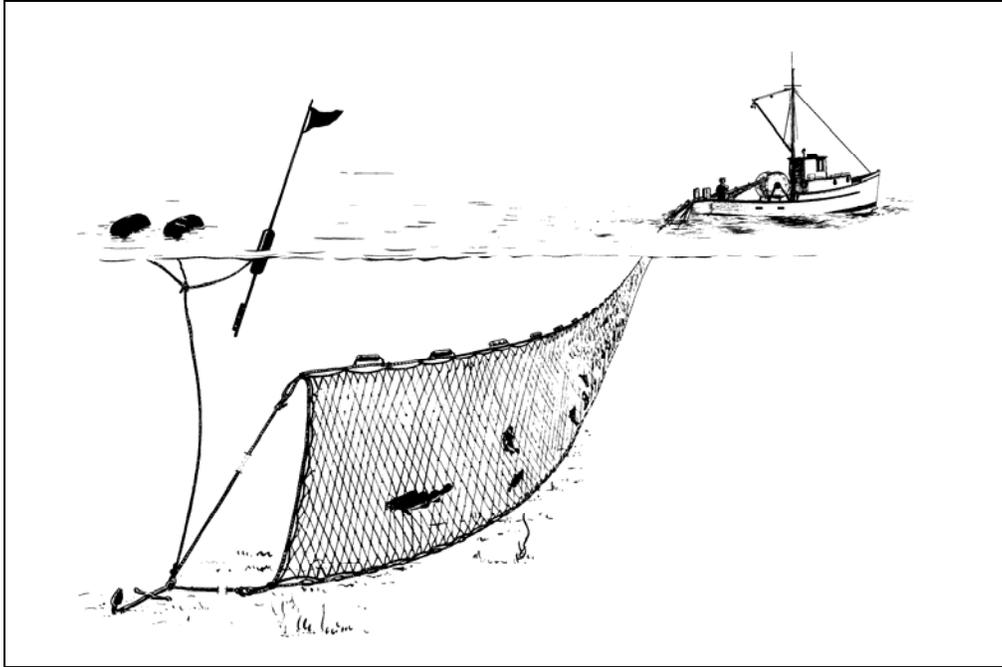


Figure 11.1.6. Sink Net and Sink Net Reel.

Source: North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries.

The geographic range of drop netting extends from Oregon Inlet to Drum Inlet (off Carteret County), and crews in small to mid-sized vessels (26-40 foot boats) hail from Ocracoke, Hatteras, Stumpy Point, Engelhard, Wanchese, Beaufort, and Harkers Island. The drop net fleet is concentrated in Hatteras Village from January through March and split between Wanchese and Hatteras in December and April. At the height of the gray trout runs in the mid to late 1980s, over one hundred boats fished out of Hatteras Village. Drop netting continues to be one of the most popular methods of fishing along the Outer Banks (Table 11.1.4).

Table 11.1.4. NC Anchored Gill Net Fishery.

<b>Year</b>	<b># of Participants</b>
2003	2,326
2002	2,404
2001	2,708
2000	2,948
1999	2,037
1998	3,080
1997	3,667
1996	3,551
1995	3,839

Source: Hesselman 2004, 40-41.

Drop nets are heavily weighted monofilament gill nets designed to “hang in the water column fish just above the ocean floor” (Steve et al. 2001, 7). The nets are about fifteen feet deep, and are dropped and sunk close to the ocean floor at a depth of a few to several dozen feet. “Large buoys or ‘high flyers’ are attached to both ends of the net by enough line to allow the net to sink freely” (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 1993, 37). Crews may retrieve the net almost immediately or stand by, but do not typically leave the vicinity while the nets are fishing.

The drop net method developed on Hatteras Island in the 1920s with crews setting 300 yard, three-inch mesh cotton nets from round-sterned boats; in the 1930s there were around 35 vessels drop netting in the ocean out of Hatteras Village in pursuit of gray trout and croaker (Batsavage 2004, 1-4). Drop net boats were typically “low-sided round-sterned craft without cabins to allow fouled nets to be lifted up and over the boat” (ibid). The Hatteras drop net fishery declined after World War II because of low market prices, and a scarcity of weakfish and croaker discouraged participation in the fishery throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

Drop net fishing made a strong comeback in the 1970s, jump-started by the introduction of the hydraulic net reel by North Carolina Sea Grant agent, Sumner Midgett, who had seen the

reel at a fishing expo in Seattle. The extension agent approached Captain Ernal Foster of Hatteras about testing the technology on the *Albatross*, explaining that the reel might assist fishermen with striped bass hauls, speed up fish handling, and allow for smaller crews. The first hydraulic net reel in the state was thus installed on the *Albatross* during the winter of 1973-1974. It proved successful in catching striped bass (locally known as rockfish) and bluefish. The following winter the Fosters installed the motorized reel on the *Albatross III* and local fishermen took note of their successful hauls.

“I would watch [the Fosters] when they came in the afternoons and I had been dory fishing on the beach,” said Rudy Gray of Chicamacomico. “They were just catching so many more fish than I was. I said, ‘Man, that’s got to be the ticket.’” Gray helped advance the drop net method by ordering a fiberglass net reel from Washington State and customizing his boat with a U-shaped “stern roller” that made handling some 2,000 yards of gill net even easier. His ideas caught on, as did modifications made by others, leading to the modern drop net fleet that operates today.

The hydraulic net reel was initially designed for gill nets targeting striped bass. But, North Carolina ocean waters were closed to striped bass harvest in 1985, “ending the floating gill net fishery” (Batsavage 2004, 1-4). At the same time, blue fish and gray trout were appearing in greater numbers, and fishermen were modifying their nets to target the deeper-dwelling schools. Gray trout (weakfish) was on its way to becoming a gold mine fishery in the late 1970s, peaking from 1985-1987, and making Dare County number one in landings not only in North Carolina but along the entire east coast of the United States. This was due to the merging of a modernized sink net fishery with a sheer abundance of weakfish.

The ten-year run of gray trout had slowed by 1990, but revitalized commercial fishing

along the Outer Banks and kept the economy pumping through the tourist-starved winter months. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFS) declared gray trout overfished in 1991, and the reluctance of states to voluntarily comply with recommended measures to protect the fishery led to the enactment of the 1993 Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act. This act mandated state compliance of ASMFC approved management plans, abandoning the option of voluntary cooperation. This translated into a 12-inch minimum size limit for ocean sink net operations and a variety of other restrictions for other methods of fishing; weakfish have since been declared fully recovered by the ASMFC, but fishermen point out that stocks have not appeared off the coast of North Carolina in the past ten years and attribute the scarcity to warmer water temperatures that keep the schools in northern waters.

Drop net harvesting occurs at heavy levels both north and south of Cape Hatteras, and in both State (see Table 11.1.5) and federal waters (see Table 11.1.6). Sink nets are consistently ranked as the gear that catches the highest landings of fish from the ocean. The only exception is an occasional outranking by menhaden purse seines in state waters, fly nets and flounder trawls north of Cape Hatteras, or by hook and line fisheries in federal waters south of Hatteras (Hesselman 2004).

Table 11.1.5. Sink Net Fishery, 0-3 Miles South and North of Cape Hatteras.

Year	Pounds Landed S. of Cape Hatteras	# of Trips	Pounds Landed N. of Cape Hatteras	# of Trips
1996	5,995,329	2,673	1,800,008	597
1997	5,443,830	3,882	3,957,708	1,447
1998	5,726,908	3,643	3,968,992	1,671
1999	3,877,005	3,407	4,144,282	1,588
2000	3,805,707	3,770	3,444,670	1,064
2001	4,728,902	4,403	2,948,255	1,180
2002	2,699,918	3,798	2,352,584	864

Source: Hesselman 2004, 55-58.

Table 11.1.6. Sink Net Fishery, >3 Miles South and North of Cape Hatteras.

Year	Pounds Landed S. of Cape Hatteras	# of Trips	Pounds Landed N. of Cape Hatteras	# of Trips
1996	1,493,960	497	3,968,411	721
1997	2,088,251	682	3,895,461	1,088
1998	3,243,387	917	3,803,036	1,126
1999	1,562,494	751	4,371,679	1,141
2000	778,608	322	6,431,371	1,219
2001	1,185,402	494	4,312,862	876
2002	1,043,605	393	3,713,432	702

Source: Hesselman 2004, 55-58.

The drop net fishery targets mainly Atlantic croaker, bluefish, and kingfishes; dogfish was targeted when the export market picked up in 1992, and drop netters harvested a significant amount of the shark until 2000, but the ASMFC “established low annual quotas and trip limits which ended the directed fishery in North Carolina” (Batsavage 2004, 2-4). For example, the spiny dogfish fishery’s “annual quota was reduced to 4.0 million pounds for the entire Atlantic coast compared to approximately 4.5 million pounds landed in North Carolina the previous season” (Steve et. al 2001, 9).

Jan DeBlieu offers a description of a typical Hatteras Island drop net set. She points out that once the boats pass out of Hatteras Inlet into the ocean, the captain charts a course toward

Diamond Shoals and, depending on which side of the shoals the fish are on, makes a short trip “two to three miles offshore and ten or twelve miles north” or a longer, three-hour run if the schools are congregated off Avon. Once the captain spots fish on his depth-finder, the set begins:

At the captain’s signal the mate tosses out a round float, the reel begins to grind, and a web of net feeds out with the force of water behind the boat...One side of the net sinks under the weight of lead pellets. The other side...pulls toward the surface to form a free-floating underwater fence...Some boats “soak” their nets for half an hour or an hour...others retrieve them after only a matter of minutes. As the reel grinds in, the captain and mate...pluck the fish from the net...Many fishermen use an L-shaped metal pick to stretch the mesh open, but some work the fish free with their hands (DeBlieu 1998, 196-197).

### 11.2.3. Inshore Long Haul Seining

Long-hauling is a traditional fishery that is one of the oldest still in practice in North Carolina and is specifically adapted to the state’s shallow sound waters. The method dates back to the early 1900s, and has two regional variations. In the more southerly waters of Pamlico Sound, a seine is pulled by two boats and, once full, is hauled onto a shoal (Figure 11.1.7.).

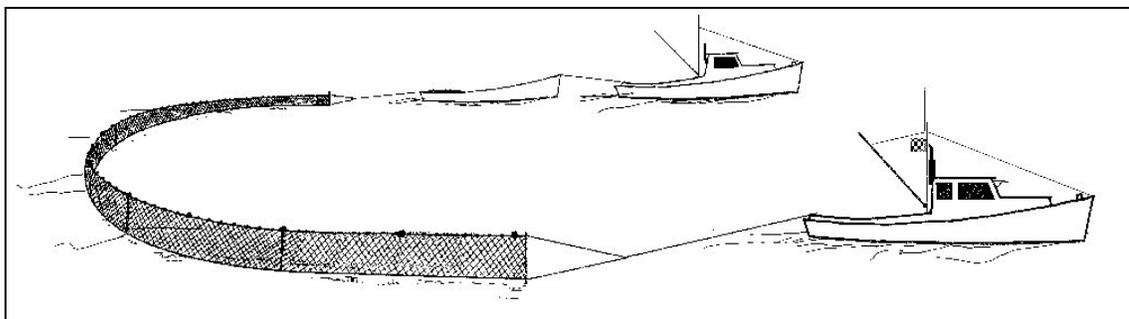


Figure 11.1.7. Long Haul Seine.  
Source: North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries.

One end of the net is secured to a stake and circled, squeezing the net into a tighter circle and concentrating the fish. During this process four or five crewmen go overboard, “footing” the net and guiding it so the fish do not escape. The catch is then bunted, that is, the ends gathered

together and tightened for fish removal, and bailed into a run boat. “Core Sounders,” fishing crews from Atlantic and Cedar Island, use this method.

Ocracoke and Hatteras fishermen employ the second style of haul seining, suited to the slightly deeper waters of central and northern Pamlico Sound. Two boats pull a seine, encircle the fish, and may or may not haul the set to a shoal; they pull the end of the net aboard the boat rather than jumping overboard and footing it. The crew bunts the fish and bails them aboard a run boat. The fishing grounds of central and northern Pamlico Sound are divided from the south and southwestern grounds by Bluff Shoal which naturally bisects the sound.

Both methods use a 1,000 – 1,600 yard seine that is six feet deep. The crew “runs out the net,” or strings the seine between two mid-sized motorized boats (30 to 45 foot), with the non-motorized “net skiff” close in tow (Raynor 1979). The float line drags under water, and the lead line bumps along the bottom. The net is pulled through the water in a horseshoe shape at depths of seven to 20 feet, but is bunted in about three feet of water at “slack tide” (Steve et al. 2001, 15):

200 yards of...the net is real deep and on the extreme end of this deep net is what you would call the “bunt.” The closer you get to the bunt, the smaller and more heavy the meshes get. This allows the net to withstand the weight and strain of many fish and also prevents escape (Raynor 1979, 41).

Beyond the bunt and deep portion of the net is the “wing,” 1,400 yards long, held open by six foot long, one inch thick staffs or “sticks” (Raynor 1979:41). The staffs, according to fisherman Belton Gray, Sr., enable crews to “use a net that is shallow, in case there’s floating grass...the grass will go over the top” (ibid). Each end of a long haul net is tied to a nine-foot tall staff, which in turn is tied to one hundred yards of “warp” or line pulled by the boats (Raynor 1979, 41).

The process of long hauling is labor-intensive. The net is hauled for as long as two miles.

When ready to fish the net, the two boats come together; the warp from one vessel is handed off to the other, and then the boat is “anchored away from the scene so that it won’t be in the way” (Raynor 1979, 41). With the net in a circle, “ring hauling” commences: “The power boat pulls the net in a big circular motion that gets smaller and smaller as more and more of the net is taken in [aboard the net skiff]” (Raynor 1979, 42). Belton Gray explained that many variables come into play at this point. “According to where you’re at, and what the sea conditions, wind conditions, and fish conditions are, you can either stop at that time and take it all in by hand or you can do what we refer to as ‘ring up’ as much of the staking net as you can and then stop” (Raynor 1979, 42). The net skiff is “staked down” or anchored in place before the net is “bunted,” or pulled in far enough to concentrate the fish in the bunt. The fish are then bailed with a dip net into a “run boat,” usually the second vessel that had been anchored out of the way.

“To set, pull and haul in the long haul seine typically takes a full day with a six-man crew” (Steve et al. 2001, 15). Belton Gray estimated the process to take hours, adding, “It’s real hard work but I thoroughly enjoy it” (Raynor 1979, 45). Haul seiners catch a great variety of fish, but target spot, croaker, and gray trout. Hatteras Island and Ocracoke fishermen haul primarily in the months of June, July, and August; only a handful of crews continue to prosecute the fishery in either region (Table 11.1.7, below).

In the 1950s crews came down from the Nags Head area or up from Carteret County to long haul off Hatteras Island or Ocracoke, sleeping in their boats in village harbors at night (Stick 1958).

Table 11.1.7. NC Haul Seine Fishery.

Year	# of Participants
2004	26
2003	25
2002	44
2001	29
2000	35
1999	31
1998	42
1997	67
1996	118
1995	97

Source: Hesselman 2004, 40-41.

#### 11.2.4. Inshore Gill Net Fishery

A fast-growing segment of the estuarine commercial fishing industry is the gill net fishery (floating, sinking, and runaround nets); this fishery picked up speed in the early 1990s as ocean summer flounder underwent severe restrictions and fishermen turned to estuarine southern flounder. The state “also saw a large influx of gill net fishers from Florida following the banning of nets in their waters” (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 2005, 42). Ocracoke and Hatteras fishermen, like mainland fishermen, suffered cutbacks in gillnetting due to the National Marine Fisheries Service’s closure of most of Pamlico Sound to large-mesh gill nets starting in 2000. However, small-net gillnets are increasing in number, and seem to be a preferred alternative to pound nets due to the mobility of the gear and its relative cost-effectiveness. Gill nets are responsible for the third highest landings of seafood from Pamlico Sound, behind crab pots and shrimp trawls. Gill nets now account for the “majority of landings in Dare County” and are the primary gear used by Ocracoke and Hatteras Islanders in estuarine waters (Bianchi 2003). Gill netters target bluefish, southern flounder, gray trout, spotted sea trout, striped mullet,

Spanish mackerel, spot, striped bass, and croaker (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 2001c).

The only directed red drum fishery in the state occurred along the Outer Banks when market conditions became favorable in the 1980s and 1990s, and the chief gear was the gill net. Ocracoke villager Eugene Ballance, along with his father and brother, harvested red drum with a runaround gill net *and* a seine: once rounding the drum or “channel bass” up with the gill net, they would come in with a seine to capture the fish, thereby eliminating the time-consuming job of picking fish out of the gill net mesh. This directed fishery was halted 1998 with strict regulations designed to recover a struggling stock (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 2001d).

#### **11.2.5. Pound Net Fishery**

Pound nets are stationary gear set in the shallow sound waters that likely evolved from indigenous American Indian fishing weirs. A long net or “lead” directs fish into a heart-shaped net enclosure called the “heart,” which in turn funnels the fish into a square net enclosure known as the “pound.” There may be one or more hearts directing fish to the pound. Although pound nets are made from monofilament nylon webbing “dipped in a copper solution annually to prevent fouling” (Burns 2004, 5-1), they maintain a distinctly primitive look: the whole apparatus is secured to the estuarine bottom with long, thin gum tree stakes, giving the appearance of a water bound fence and corral (Figure 11.1.8).

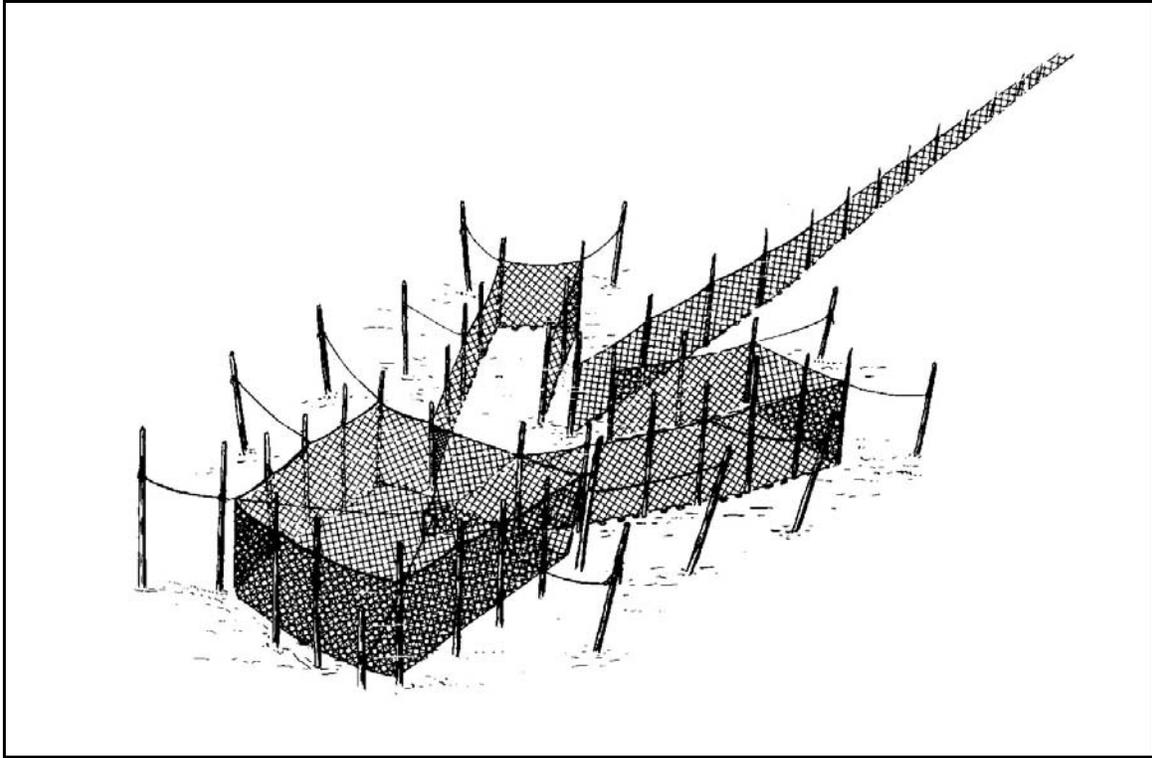


Figure 11.1.8. Pound Net.

Source: North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries.

Making, setting, and maintaining a pound net is a labor-intensive and expensive endeavor; Hatteras and Ocracoke fishermen travel to the mainland (Tyrrell County, East Lake) to purchase the stakes from private landowners. A Buxton fisherman explains:

If we hear of land being cleared for farming or what have you, we get permission to get the small trees that's no use to anybody else; about six, eight-inch wide saplings. We might pay a dollar a stake, not very much. We like to use black gum because you get two, three years use out of that. Pine, you get a year before they rot. We load them on a trailer and haul them here.

Some pound netters are now using PVC pipes instead of black gum saplings; although somewhat cost prohibitive they last longer. Stakes are as long as 30-feet in length. They are driven into the sound bottom with a motorized water pump; the pump hose is tied to the stake and is used to blow sand out of a six foot-deep hole:

We attach a pump to the bottom of the stake we're setting. That pump blows the sand out all around so it'll sink into the sand. We pull the pump out and do the next one. The sand fills back in around the hole, setting that stake. We set a lot of them.

Pound nets take up a considerable amount of space, as leads can run up to 1,200 feet, the heart can be sixty square feet, and the pound itself 25 square feet. Fishermen hold state-issued permits to set and maintain pounds in designated areas, and some permits have been held for generations.

The pound net, set in the spring and taken up in December, allows for the live entrapment of a variety of fish (trout, croaker, spot, flounder), and is considered to be one of the more environmentally-friendly fishing methods. Some pounds are specifically designed for flounder, as the tunnel leading into the pound is set about eight inches from the bottom, so the low-lying flat fish cannot escape. Flounder pounds are generally bigger than a regular pound net, and use a larger mesh size. They are outfitted with escape panels for undersized fish, five and one half inch mesh sections sewn into the corners of the four-inch mesh pound. They are mainly fished in the fall, intercepting southern flounder as they make their annual migration from the sounds to the ocean.

Typically a crew of two to four fishermen fish a "set" of pounds, three or four separate pounds held under one permit. Some pounds are set along sloughs, natural highways for migrating fish, and "catch" better than other pounds. The crew approaches the pound, shoves a side down, and drives the skiff right in. "The bottom of the pound is gathered-up...until the fish are concentrated in the back of the pound. The fish are then either "rolled" in the skiff by pulling the...netting and fish into the skiff, baled out using "dip" nets, or are picked out by hand" (Burns 2004, 5-2). Sometimes the dip-net skiff is towed out by a larger vessel, which in turns gets loaded with the catch.

Pound nets increased in number from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, including operations responding to a growing demand for live flounder for the Japanese sushi market. The National Marine Fisheries Service closed most of Pamlico Sound to deep water, large mesh flounder nets in 2000 due to sea turtle interactions; this further increased interest in flounder pounds. A series of hurricanes, however, including Isabel in 2003 and Alex in 2004, taxed the high-maintenance fishery. Additionally, weather hardships, impending new southern flounder regulations, and an increased effort in the less expensive, more mobile estuarine gill net fishery has brought about a recent decline in pound net fishing (Table 11.1.8). For example, in 2003 twelve crews fished pound nets in the sound off Hatteras Island. In 2004, that number shrank to four.

Table 11.1.8. NC Pound Net Fishery.

Year	# of Participants
2004	93
2003	105
2002	162
2001	152
2000	141
1999	80
1998	216
1997	287
1996	281
1995	292

Source: Hesselman 2004, 40-41.

### 11.2.6. Crab Pot Fishery

The availability of blue crabs in the Outer Banks region has fluctuated over time. Fishermen theorize that water salinity, water temperature, weather, currents, and spawning behavior are some of the factors determining the presence or absence of these unpredictable animals. Except for persons catching crabs with a dip net for their own consumption, crabbing

effort was minimal. There was a small “Jimmy market” of large adult male crabs after World War II, and then crabbing got serious with the introduction of pots in 1957. This lasted until the mid to late 1980s; crabs then became scarce for Outer Bankers throughout the nineties, yet appeared in record numbers for western sound and river communities. Only recently have crabs begun to appear again for Hatteras and Ocracoke Islanders.

Before the late 1950s a small trotline fishery operated out of Hatteras Village, particularly in the 1930s. Trotlines were made of “700-1,000 yards of No. 3 cotton line” (Scarborough 1978, 19). The lines were set with anchors on either end and marked with buoys. Tied to the line at two or three foot intervals were chunks of bait; pieces of fish or tripe – no hooks were necessary. “At that time [in the 1930s] we were using tripe, which came in barrels. We could bait a line for a dollar by using ten pounds of bait cut up in small pieces” (ibid). Crabbers fished their lines by gaffing the end and feeding it through a roller. As the crabs emerged, hanging tenaciously to the bait, the fisherman scooped them with a wire dip and shook them into a box. After fishing the line the crabber would bait it for the next haul. A Hatteras villager recalled his grandfather crabbing a little, but quitting before the fishery became profitable:

There was no market for crabs down here. It took so long to get them off the Island with the ferries, they’d be dead by the time they got to the market. They finally did start getting some markets, and crabbing brought some money over the years.

Crab pots, invented in Maryland in 1928, were introduced in the Albemarle region, and a business in Wanchese began manufacturing them in the 1950s (Figure 11.1.9). The first landings from pots recorded in North Carolina were in 1953 (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 2004b). Salvo fishermen tried pots in 1957, and then the technology quickly spread to Avon, Buxton, Hatteras, and then Ocracoke. Crabbing peaked for Outer Bankers in the mid-1980s and,

since 2004, has been experiencing a tentative resurgence, along with an incipient but lucrative “peeler pot” or soft crab fishery.

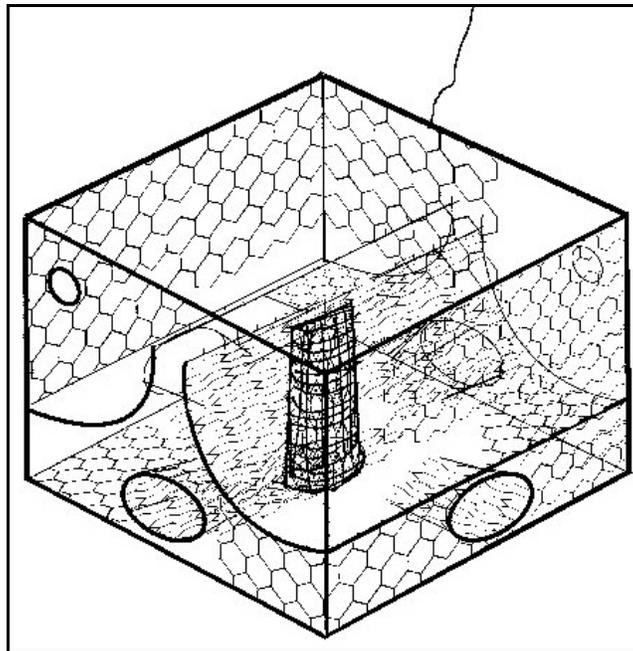


Figure 11.1.9. Crab Pot.  
Source: North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries.

The crab fishery statewide has changed tremendously from the late 1990s until 2004 due to low market prices and a flood of imported crabmeat (Table 11.1.9). The majority of mainland picking houses have closed; the industry has survived due to a thriving live “basket market,” wherein live crabs are packed in baskets and trucked to Virginia and Maryland. The fastest growing segment of the crab fishery is the “peeler” or soft crab market. Although a few Hatteras and Ocracoke fishermen have experimented with soft crab shedding operations, the fishery in this region is weak, relative to mainland and river communities.

Table 11.1.9. NC Crab Pot Fishery.

Year	# of Participants
2004	1,250
2003	1,347
2002	1,418
2001	1,574
2000	1,518
1999	1,735
1998	2,027
1997	2,333
1996	2,253
1995	2,194

Hesselman 2004, 40-41.

### 11.2.7. Shrimp Trawl Fishery

The shrimp trawl fishery was non-existent along the Outer Banks before World War II. A small shrimp fishery had begun in the southern region of the state around 1880, but fishermen along Core and Pamlico Sounds considered the crustacean to be a net-clogging nuisance up until the late 1940s (Maiolo 2004). Bankers tossed shrimp overboard or used them as hog feed or garden fertilizer. Many associated shrimp with insects and still refer to them as “bugs.”

Otter trawls, developed in Scotland in 1892 and exported to Massachusetts the following year, became common throughout the Gulf and South Atlantic region by 1930 (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 1999, 4). They consist of conical nets, the mouth of which is held open by large wooden otter boards or “doors” as the boat tows the apparatus along (Figure 11.1.10). A “tickler chain” running in front of the mouth is designed to unsettle shrimp from the bottom so they get flushed into the net. Otter trawls were introduced to Pamlico and Core Sound fishermen by a Louisiana shrimper in the 1930s; the new gear caught on so well that state policymakers closed Pamlico Sound to trawling in 1934 because of bycatch concerns (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 1999, 4). A fall fishery was allowed in the sound the

following year, however, and many long haul skiffs were rigged for shrimping in response to a rapidly expanding shrimp market.

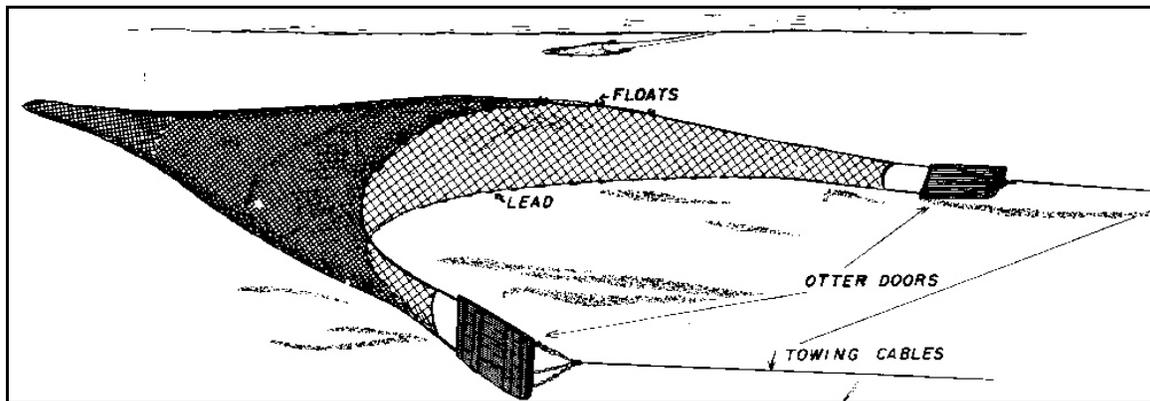


Figure 11.1.10. Trawl Net.  
Source: North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries.

In 1951 policymakers responded to the boom, opening new portions of Pamlico Sound to trawling and allowing night shrimping; this increased production by 200 percent (Maiolo 2004, 61). The Outer Bankers were among the last to join the shrimp fishery, probably because of logistic difficulties in keeping the highly perishable shrimp fresh. Yet the shrimp fishery became profitable for fishermen out of Ocracoke and Hatteras Villages, helping keep the fishing economy running in spite of a scarcity of gray trout until the late 1950s. Bankers shrimped with small boats, however, pulling one trawl net, in sharp contrast to the increasingly large vessels coming out of Pamlico County and other mainland areas outfitted with two to four nets. By 1960 most Bankers abandoned shrimping, as it was too difficult to compete with the larger vessels and the market was losing its appeal for Islanders. Since then, shrimping activity for Hatteras and Ocracoke Islanders has been sporadic.

Fishermen harvest three species of shrimp: brown (*Penaeus aztecus*), pink (*P. duorarum*), and white (*P. setiferus*) or “green tails.” Since 1993 trawl nets have been required to

have turtle excluder devices (TEDS), and are outfitted with bycatch reduction devices as well. Primary nursery areas are off-limits to trawling, and although it is not a nursery area, a large swath along the sound side of Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands has been closed to trawling since the mid-1980s. This was enacted due to political pressure to close more estuarine waters to trawling and protect sea grass beds. These measures were met with little resistance; shrimping has not been a major Outer Bank fishery since the 1950s.

Statewide, participation in the shrimp fishery has declined due to the flood of cheap imports. Fishermen in 2004 are receiving less for their product than they did in the late 1960s when adjusted for inflation; the number of participants has dropped more than 30 percent in the previous two years (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 2004d) (Table 11.1.10).

Table 11.1.10. NC Shrimp Trawl Fishery.

Year	# of Participants
2004	280
2003	490
2002	703
2001	631
2000	869
1999	510
1998	679
1997	938
1996	945
1995	1,091

Source: Hesselman 2004, 40-41.

### 11.2.8. Oyster and Clam Fishery

Until the 1970s, harvesting of the eastern oyster (*Crassostrea virginica*) represented the most valuable shellfishery in North Carolina (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 2001a). Landings had long since peaked, however, from late 19<sup>th</sup> century levels. Landings

spiked in 1889 because of market and technological changes. It had been illegal to sell North Carolina oysters out of state until the law was changed in 1872. When inter-state sales were possible, Long Island Sound, Delaware Bay, and Chesapeake Bay sated the appetites of eastern states, leaving North Carolina's largely hand-harvested fishery on the margins as state fishermen could not produce the quantity that other states yielded with mechanical harvest methods. But, by 1889 the northern bays had been fished out, and fishermen from Virginia and Maryland sailed to Pamlico Sound "with dredges and efficient mechanical tongs," fully exploiting the deep-water Pamlico Sound oyster beds (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 2001a, 42) (Figure 11.1.11).

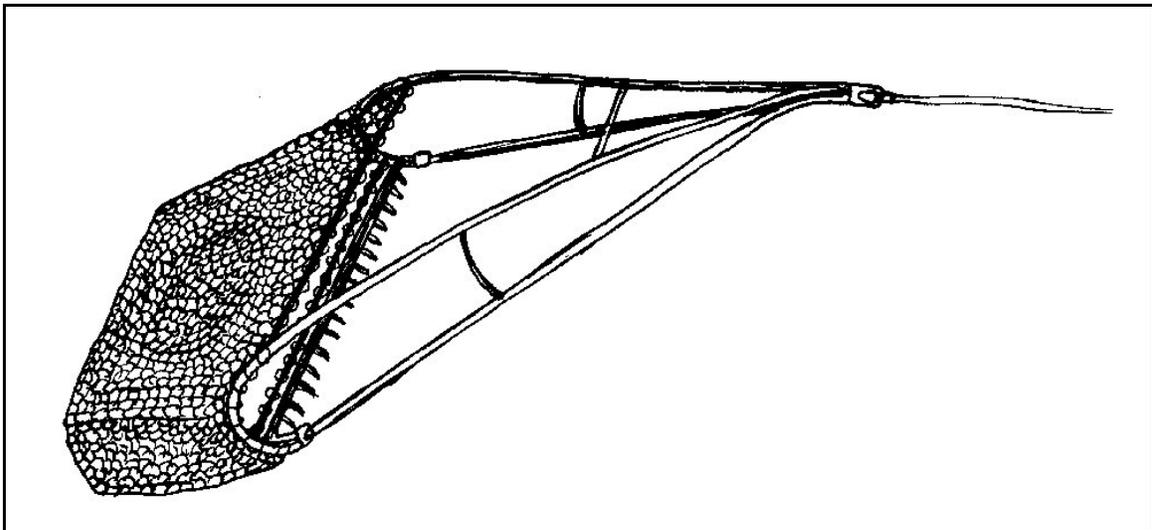


Figure 11.1.11. Oyster Dredge.  
Source: NC Division of Marine Fisheries.

The famous "oyster wars" began that year with the arrival of some 300 out-of-state sail-powered schooners outfitted with efficient dredges. "A loophole in an 1887 law, which allowed dredging only in waters greater than eight feet deep in Pamlico and Roanoke Sounds, pertained only to residents, while there were no restrictions to prevent out-of-state fishermen from

dredging anywhere in North Carolina waters” (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 2001a, 42). North Carolina fishermen were unsuccessful in stopping this for the next two years; in 1891, however, state lawmakers made oyster harvesting by non-residents illegal. This resulted in a mass exodus of oyster schooners and the closing of oyster canneries that had sprung up in response to the huge increase in production.

In 1897, six years after northern oystermen ravished North Carolina oyster beds, the dredging law was revised; state fishermen were granted more area in which to dredge and a longer dredging season, resulting in an increase in landings and the re-opening of canneries. Oyster harvest peaked in 1902 at 1,833,000 bushels, but from that point on began a steady decline. By 1927 oyster dredging was legal by sail power only; however, some areas of Pamlico Sound were exempted from this restriction by 1931. In 1947 powerboats were limited to one 100-pound dredge and a 75-bushel per day limit. By 1955 several new areas were designated off-limits to mechanical oyster harvesting, including a reef behind Ocracoke Inlet. In 1981 waters inside the six-foot contour line behind Ocracoke and Hatteras Islands were closed to dredging by proclamation, and a closure from Ocracoke Inlet to Oregon Inlet made permanent in 1991 (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 2001a, 47).

Islanders were able to make a living tonging oysters as late as 1978, such as Avon fishermen Edward Scarborough who mainly crabbed and oystered (Scarborough 1978). Devastation wrought by red tide in 1987 and years of the oyster parasite Dermo brought oyster harvests down to an average of about 47 thousand bushels per year; a mere fraction of historic levels (Table 11.1.11). For Outer Banks fishermen, oystering has had little importance for much of the twentieth century. Although Islanders recall oyster beds off Chicamacomico, Avon, and Buxton and harvested these reefs for local consumption, the reefs are largely gone. The “oyster

shoot” held during Rodanthe’s Old Christmas has continued thanks to oysters from other parts of the state and, most recently, from Louisiana and Florida.

Table 11.1.11. Oyster Production in North Carolina.

Year (at 10 Year Intervals)	Bushels of Oysters (x 1,000)
1950	225
1960	289
1970	78
1980	123
1990	58
2000	38

Source: North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 2001a, 43.

Clams have had more importance to Outer Bankers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century than oysters, as fluctuating availability of the bivalve has provided fishermen periodic harvests along Ocracoke, Hatteras, and Oregon Inlets (Table 11.1.12). The hard clam (*Mercenaria mercenaria*) fishery “has existed since the 1880s when dealers from Virginia sent boats to the sounds to North Carolina to buy clams. These boats came mostly to the Ocracoke area” (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 2001b, 32). Ocracoke Inlet and surrounding areas were discovered to be especially rich in clams; its easy access for out-of-state vessels made it the ideal location for the Doxsee clam factory which was established at the mouth of Cockle Creek. The plant processed “whole clams, clam chowder, and clam juice,” labeling the product as “quahogs from Islip, New York” (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 2001b, 32). Clams were hand harvested and supplied to the factory by Ocracoke, Hatteras, and Core Sound fishermen. Landings peaked at 134,286 bushels in 1902, but declined sharply thereafter, prompting the clam factory to close and move to Atlantic in 1906. Later it moved to Florida, reflecting a general decline of the resource in the Core and Pamlico Sound areas.

The 1933 hurricane opened several new inlets along the Outer Banks, and is attributed to a great resurgence in the clam fishery. Landings remained high until World War II, but have fluctuated ever since. In the 1940s fishermen began dredging clams by dragging an anchor to slow the boat and expose clam beds with prop wash; fishermen followed behind the boat and hand-raked the clams. Then the bedstead method was invented, a “sled-like gear” used to scoop clams without fishermen having to get out of the boat. This led to a modified 100 pound, four foot wide oyster drag in the mid-1940s, employed with a “kicking stake” that anchored the boat and allowed it to run in a complete circle. Finally, in 1968 a hydraulic dredge was invented by fishermen, perfecting the “clam kicking” method: jets of water from a high pressure pump exposes and dislodges clams which are “kicked up” up into a trawl and carried via conveyor to the vessel (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 2001b, 33).

Despite the evolution of mechanical clam harvesting, hand harvest methods have remained important. There is an art to “signing” clams that harvesters are proud of: the ability to spy a particular “keyhole” mark in the sand, indicating the presence of clams. Clams are also felt with bare feet, and islanders pride themselves on their talents as “finders.” Clams may be giggered, or gouged out with a prong, raked (custom rakes made with butter knife-tines were invented in Carteret County), or tonged and bullraked in deeper waters.

Table 11.1.12. Clam Production in North Carolina.

Year (at Five Year Intervals)	Pounds of Clam Meat
1975	285,089
1980	1,541,719
1985	1,393,294
1990	1,354,842
1995	902,369
2000	676,048

Source: North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 2001b, 54.

Ocracoke fishermen objected to “clam kickers” from Carteret County working near their island. The 1981 proclamation outlawing dredging on the Sound-side of the Islands afforded hand-harvesters some protection. Mechanical clam harvesting has been primarily executed in the Carteret County, Core Sound area, but in 2002 an area of Core Sound was closed in “exchange” for equal acreage in Pamlico Sound near Ocracoke; the idea is to rotate the designated areas, allowing recovering and replenishment.

Excessive rainfall associated with Hurricanes Bertha and Fran in 1996, Bonnie in 1998, Floyd in 1999, Isabel in 2003, and Alex in 2004 brought about state-wide closures of shellfish beds, reducing both oyster and clam landings. These closures mainly had an impact on mainland areas, however, as runoff from densely developed beach towns brought about public health concerns in regard to surrounding shellfish beds.

The state shellfish lease program, whereby individuals can lease a certain amount of estuarine bottom for the planting and private cultivation of oysters or clams, began in the nineteenth century as “squatters rights.” No-fee grants for two acres or less were issued by the state starting in 1858; in 1873 this was raised to ten acres as long as the area did not include natural shellfish beds. In response to oyster depletions in the Chesapeake Bay, the government sent a surveyor to North Carolina to study the feasibility of increased shellfish cultivation in 1886. Lieutenant Francis Winslow surveyed waters off Dare, Hyde, Pamlico, Carteret, and Onslow counties, identifying 583,000 acres suitable for leasing (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 2001b, 45). This resulted in a new leasing system whereby lessees were charged twenty-five cents per acre and had to show a growth in harvest in five years. Non-residents could hold grants more than two miles from shore in Pamlico Sound from 50 up to 200

acres in size. “This new law caused a great deal of interest and by 1889 approximately 50,000 acres had been issued in franchises” (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 2001b, 54. 2001b:45).

Several modifications have been made to the lease program since, including a push to lease area on the sound side of Core Banks, so controversial that legislators imposed a moratorium on the eastern half of Core Sound and capped the total acreage allowed in the region. Leasing has proved more successful for clam growers, as oysters experience a high rate of die-off. Leases have also been useful for the state’s shellfish relaying program, where fishermen remove clams from polluted areas and place in clean-water leases for depuration. Clam leases off Hatteras and Ocracoke have been small in number compared to areas along the mainland. The large amount of acreage leased in Hyde County (Table 11.1.13) is due to mainland leases, not Ocracoke.

Table 11.1.13. Planting/Harvesting of Hard Clams in 1999 by County.

County	Number/Acreage of Leases	Bushels of Clams Planted	Bushels Harvested
Carteret	120/563	25,457	7,587
Dare	5/75	3,750	908
Hyde	25/412	1,725	867

Source: North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 2001, 48.

### 11.2.9. Fishermen and Grants

A relatively new opportunity for commercial fishermen is the North Carolina Fishery Resource Grant Program. The program was begun in the mid-1990s under the principle that “people in the industry often have the best ideas for improving and protecting fisheries but may lack the financial resources or scientific backgrounds to conduct experiments, collect data and

analyze results” (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 2004c, 7). One million dollars per year is allocated by the North Carolina General Assembly to fund a variety of studies, many of them fishermen-initiated, comprising a program that is “first in its kind in the United States” (ibid). The State Division of Marine Fisheries initially administered the program, but due to controversy and an overburdened staff the responsibility was transferred to the North Carolina Sea Grant College Program of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The program encourages partnerships between fishermen and scientists, and some Outer Bank fishermen have become involved in these scientific studies. This not only represents a small but important supplement to their income, but promotes cooperation and trust between harvesters and the scientific community.

Eugene Ballance of Ocracoke, one of the top red drum fishermen during the 1990s, has participated in several of these projects. He has applied GIS and GPS tools to map the location of long-extinct oyster beds for future restoration projects (Ballance 2004). He is currently working with Drs. Thomas and Donna Wolcott from North Carolina State studying the migratory patterns and use of spawning sanctuaries of adult female blue crabs. Ballance is a good example of a “high tech” fisherman adapting his skills to scientific and management applications (Figures 11.1.12-15).



Figure 11.1.12. Gene Ballance Baiting Crab Pot.  
Photo by B. Garrity-Blake.



Figure 11.1.13. Fisherman Entering Data.  
Photo by B. Garrity-Blake.



Figure 11.1.14. “Handcuffing” Crabs to Attach Data Logger.  
Photo by B. Garrity-Blake.



Figure 11.1.15. Crab with Data Log Backpack.  
Photo Courtesy of Gene Ballance.

### 11.2.10. Sport Fishery

North Carolina is number two along the Atlantic Coast in terms of the number of annual sport fishing trips made and pounds of fish landed, behind only the east coast of Florida (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 2004d). The number of recreational anglers in North

Carolina rises each year, and in 2000 an estimated 2 million anglers fished the beaches, sounds, and ocean. The fastest sector of growth is out-of-state fishermen, and the majority of them are “coming from Virginia, primarily to fish on the Outer Banks” (ibid, 6). Sport fishing has long put money into the Outer Banks’ economy during the slower fall months, but now is a year-round business. An estimated one billion dollars is generated in North Carolina from recreational fishing, and the Outer Banks receives the largest share (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 2004d, 6). The estimated number of annual angler fishing trips, calculated as part of the Marine Recreational Fishery Statistics Survey (MRFSS) program, is charted at ten-year intervals below, illustrating the extent to which angling has increased in North Carolina – tripling since 1981 (Table 11.1.14).

Table 11.1.14. Estimated Annual Sport Fishing Trips in North Carolina.

Year	# of Trips in Ocean>3 Miles	# of Trips in Ocean <3miles	Inland Trips	Total # of Angler Trips
1981	1,246,637	304,881	522,679	2,074,197
1991	2,767,924	324,720	669,747	3,762,391
2001	4,418,304	517,167	1,714,075	6,649,546

Source: North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 2004a, 5.

Although the majority of anglers are probably not members of a sport fishing organization, the recreational fishing lobby is powerful, and state chapters of national organizations have high membership. The largest of these, the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA), started in Texas in 1977 and has since grown to 175 chapters in 15 states, including North Carolina. The CCA-NC has long pushed for game fish status of red drum, much to the ire of Ocracoke and Hatteras villagers. Despite striped bass recently getting categorized as a recovered fishery, the CCA-NC urges lawmakers to maintain strict harvest limits against the interests of commercial fishermen and charter boat captains, who desire more catch for their

customers (Figures 11.1.16-17). The primary reason CCA-NC is held in contempt by many Outer Bank watermen is due to their reputation for lobbying in favor of a statewide ban on fishing nets, a reputation that CCA-NC spokesmen claim is unfair.



Figure 11.1.16. Sport Fishermen with Striped Bass.  
Photo by B. Garrity-Blake.



Figure 11.1.17. Sport Fishermen Show their Catch.  
Photo by B. Garrity-Blake.

The charter industry was “put on the map” by Hatteras villager Ernal Foster in the 1940s. It has long thrived in the interstice between commercial and sport fishing. Although captains cater to recreational fishermen, they themselves often have a commercial fishing license and participate in the commercial pursuit of fish in slower, winter months. In recent years, many have sought a commercial license just to participate in the very lucrative blue fin tuna fishery. In 1999 it was estimated that 50 percent of charter captains held a commercial license. Today, in 2004, there are over 300 “for hire” vessels operating out of North Carolina, representing a 37 percent increase in three years. They may also sell excess catch of their customers. This does not necessarily include boats under twenty-five feet in length; “due to their transient and mobile nature, detection of this group is very difficult. Many...think that growth within this sector is the highest of all” (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 2003, 3). Charter boats landed close to 8 million pounds of fish in 2001, higher than “any other Atlantic and Gulf for-hire sector” (ibid, 2).

Species sought by recreational fishermen include striped bass, red drum, wahoo, king mackerel, marlin, and bluefin tuna. When striped bass are running and in season, cars and trucks line up along Highway 12 for miles, and the beach is thick with anglers hauling in the massive fish. Fishing tournaments, such as the Hatteras Village Open sponsored by the Hatteras Village Civic Association, bring tremendous business to the Outer Banks. Proceeds of the Village Open serve community needs, such as scholarships, food pantry donations, and hurricane victim relief.

A pier fisherman describes the thrill of catching a red drum:

Drum like to run...Letting ‘em run is the way to tire them...He’ll turn and let you ride ‘em in a good way before he really starts to fight. He might try to rub the hook off the bottom...He starts to run again, but this time back toward shore. That’s when you take in your line. Keep tension on the line...you don’t ever want it to go slack. That’s one of the prettiest sights you’ll ever see – a red, red drum coming out of blue water (DeBlieu 1998, 185).

### **11.2.11. Fisheries Management, Legislation, and Trends**

Outer Banks fishermen have long felt marginalized in state and federal management decisions as regulators have been less inclined to schedule public meetings and hearings on Hatteras or Ocracoke (Johnson and Orbach 1996). This disconnection was partly alleviated upon the formation of the Hatteras-Ocracoke Auxiliary to the North Carolina Fisheries Association in 1993, part of a region-wide organizational effort on behalf of fishermen's wives (West and Garrity-Blake 2003). Members of the auxiliary post regular newsletters to inform fishermen of meetings, articles, letters, and management trends. Auxiliary members also attend and testify at hearings, and hold fundraisers to assist fishermen in their travels to distant meetings. Susan West, long-term president of the Auxiliary, served on the Moratorium Steering Committee that recommended a series of reforms for the state's fisheries management system; she currently serves on the Legislative Commission for Seafood and Aquaculture and has been courted by the Governor to serve on the Marine Fisheries Commission. Avon dealer/fisherman Tilman Gray served on the Marine Fisheries Commission through 2004.

The 1976 passage of what is now known as the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act called for the establishment of eight regional regulatory councils to develop fisheries management plans. North Carolina, on the dividing line where the colder Atlantic waters meet the warmer Gulf Stream, falls under the jurisdiction of both the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (MAFMC) and the South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (SAFMC). North Carolina fishermen who work in federal waters (three to 200 miles offshore) are affected by regulations stipulated in Council FMPs for species such as monkfish (MAFMC), wahoo, king mackerel, reef fishes, and black sea bass (SAFMC). Monkfish has been one of several sources of contention between Outer Banks fishermen and

regional managers; it had grown into a profitable fishery in the 1990s, but this species was declared over-fished and off limits to North Carolina fishermen specifically, providing a quota for northern harvesters.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) was formed in 1942 as a 15 state compact in recognition that many fish species traverse state boundaries. The impact of the ASMFC was minimal until the passing of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act of 1993. This act put “teeth” in the Commission’s mission and directives and required states to comply with policies put forth by this wider regulatory body in the management of such species as Atlantic croaker, menhaden, striped bass, black sea bass, bluefish, scup, sharks, Spanish mackerel, spiny dogfish, spot, spotted seatrout, summer flounder, and weakfish.

Spiny dogfish management illustrates the frustration fishermen have with inter-state and federal management. The National Marine Fisheries Service and environmental groups became concerned about dogfish harvest increases, so in 2000 harvest levels were cut from around 40 million pounds per year to 4 million pounds. North Carolina fishermen, who had been the second largest harvester of dogfish, were excluded from the fishery entirely because Massachusetts caught the entire year's quota before the dogfish appeared off the Outer Banks. In 2003 the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission divided the quota between the north and the south, giving North Carolina fishermen a chance at two million pounds. But the dividing line was established below Massachusetts, making the "southern" region Rhode Island to Florida. Setting a low quota increased the amount of discarded dogfish, caught as bycatch to other species. Avon dealer and fisheries commissioner Tilman Gray reported that dogfish limits are too low to justify marketing and trucking the product to Fulton’s Fish Market in New York, and

that if many more fisheries are truncated, the “whole infrastructure – fish houses, 18-wheelers, harbors – will collapse.”

The Fisheries Reform Act was passed by the North Carolina General Assembly in 1997, representing the most sweeping piece of fisheries management legislation in state history. A critical component of the Act was the establishment of a system of citizen advisory committees that make recommendations to the Marine Fisheries Commission. Several residents from the Outer Banks have served on the Northeast Regional Advisory Committee or several of the standing fisheries-specific committees, further increasing the voice of Hatteras and Ocracoke Islanders. Their commitment is evident in the long distances they travel to attend these meetings. Another component of the Act was the directive for the state to develop fisheries management plans for commercially and recreationally important species. Islanders have served on a variety of these FMP committees such as red drum. A third change mandated by the Act was a new licensing structure that allowed only commercial fishermen to sell their catch and capped the total number of commercial fishing licenses allocated by the state. Although a recreational fishing license was recommended, it was not passed until 2004. Recreational users of commercial gear were licensed under the Act to fish with limited amounts of gear to catch fish for personal consumption only.

At a 2004 Division of Marine Fisheries-sponsored workshop, advisors were surveyed regarding their impressions of the Fisheries Reform Act and its successes and shortcomings. By far the advisory committee process was cited as the most successful aspect of the Act, bringing “diverse representation,” “increasing dialogue among user groups,” and fostering “public willingness to understand, communicate, and reach consensus” (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 2004c, 4). In a panel discussion, a dealer/fishermen from Ocracoke expressed

concerns felt by many harvesters: the Fisheries Reform Act has fallen short of protecting professional fishermen as promised – despite reforms in management the commercial industry is suffering and declining.

Concerns for the commercial fishing sector were further articulated at a socioeconomic workshop. Although the number of people holding commercial fishing licenses has remained steady since 1997, there has been a small but steady decrease (1% to 2% per year) in licenses held by North Carolina residents and a concomitant increase in out-of-state fishers. This is partly due to charter boat and sport fishermen seeking licenses to land and sell the lucrative bluefin tuna. Long-time commercial fishermen report having to work harder for less money, and according to Division of Marine Fisheries surveys, only six percent of respondents had annual profits of more than \$30,000 per year (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 2004d, 3). Fishermen of Dare County were singled out as being particularly “threatened by the very lucrative tourism industry” (ibid). The number of commercial fishermen in Dare County dropped 13 percent from 1997-2002, and 7.5 percent in Hyde County during the same period (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries 2004d, 3).

Commercial fishing on the Outer Banks, as along the mainland, is in a state of flux. Fishermen are a versatile and innovative population, and those who survive ongoing local, national, and global changes in the economy will be those who are able to adapt with new gears, processing technologies, and markets. Outer Bankers have managed to make a living from virtually everything found in the sea, from eelgrass to dolphins. They have traveled off-island to work in the sturgeon fishery to the north, the river shad fishery to the west, and the menhaden fishery to the south (Garrity-Blake 1994). They have made use of everything wrecked upon their beaches, and left nothing off their menu of subsistence possibilities, including shorebirds and sea

turtles. Outer Bankers will no doubt be among the ranks of the determined few who manage to carve out a place for themselves in the future of commercial fishing.

### **11.2.12 Timeline of Fishing Trends and Practices**

1850s-1930s Terrapin fishery.

1872 Out-of-state oyster sales made legal.

1877 Clam cannery established on Ocracoke.

1870s-1926 Porpoise factory in Hatteras, small facility in Trent.

1886 Winslow's shellfish survey.

1889-1891 Oyster Wars – VA/MD schooners.

1891 Oyster harvest by non-residents outlawed.

1897 Pamlico Sound areas opened to oyster dredging (only non-residents before).

1898 Second clam factory (J.H. Doxsee) at Ocracoke (Windmill Pt.).

1899 Hurricane San Ciraco.

1902 Oyster harvest peaks.

1903 Sturgeon fishing (roe) up to KDH (late 19<sup>th</sup> cent. to 1920s.)

1906 Doxsee clam factory closes, moves to Atlantic, NC.

1907 Sturgeon declared NC's most valuable fish, then crashes.

1914 New York Aquarium issues report on transporting live dolphins from Hatteras.

1920s Motors first introduced for boats.

Drop net fishery introduced.

Hey day of hunting clubs.

1926 Porpoise factory closes.

1927 Oyster dredging legal only by sail-powered vessels.

1928 Crab pot invented in Maryland.

1930 Introduction of otter trawl to Pamlico Sound.

1933 Blue marlin sportfishing – 1<sup>st</sup> one caught off Hatteras.

1933 Storm

1934 Pamlico Sound closed to trawling.

1935 Ice plant on Hatteras, Hatteras Development Company.

1937 *Albatross* built, 43 foot w/ fluted hull (*Albatross II* 1948, *III* 1952).

1942 ASMFC formed.

1944 Storm.

Post-World War II: Shrimp market picks up, charter boat fishery picks up.

1947 Powerboats limited to one 100 lb. oyster dredge.

1950s nylon nets, multi-filament.

1951 Portions of Pamlico Sound opened to trawling.

1955 No-dredge zones for oyster harvest, including reef behind Ocracoke.

1957 First crab pots in Hatteras, then Ocracoke.

1960 Shrimping declines on Banks.

1962 March 7 Ash Wednesday storm.

1960s Dorries become motorized.

1968 “Clam kicking” method perfected.

1970s Fishermen attempt coop on Ocracoke.

Late 1970s-Late 1980s Boom in gray trout fishery.

1973 Sea Grant agent’s net reel experiment w/ Fosters on Albatross.

1976 FCMA (Magnuson Act).

Buddy Hooper experiments with monofilament gill nets in ocean.

1979 Rudy Gray modifies drop net boat.

1980s Shift from dorries.

1981 Six-foot contour behind Hatteras/Ocracoke “no dredge” zone for oysters.

1980-85 Expansion of drop net fleet.

1985 Ocean striped bass fishery closed.

Hurricane Gloria.

1987 Red Tide.

1991 “No dredge/no trawl zone” behind OBX permanent rule.

1993 NCFA Auxiliaries (Hatt-Ocra, Carteret, Pamlico).

Turtle Excluder Devices required in trawls.

Atlantic Coast Cooperative Fisheries Management Act.

Commercial Fishermen restricted from half mile radius of the Point.

Hurricane Emily.

1994-1997 Moratorium Steering Committee meetings.  
1996 Hurricanes Bertha/Fran.  
1997 Fisheries Reform Act.  
1998 Red Drum emergency restrictions, “by-catch fishery.”  
1998 Hurricane Bonnie.  
1999 Hurricanes Dennis I, II, and Floyd.  
2000 NMFS restricts large mesh gill nets from area of Pamlico Sound (ESA).  
2000 Herring FMP, Blue Crab FMP.  
2001 Oyster and Clam FMP, Red Drum FMP.  
2003 Hurricane Isabel.  
2003 Striped Bass FMP.  
2004 Hurricane Alex.  
2004 Passage of the NC Coastal Recreational Fishing License

### **11.2.13. Common and Scientific Names for Fishery Species**

Amberjack (*Seriola dumereli*)  
Blue Crab (*Callinectes sapidus*)  
Bluefish (*Pomatomus saltatrix*)  
Catfishes (*Ameiurus*)  
Clam, Hard (*Mercenaria mercenaria*)  
Croaker (*Micropogonias undulates*)  
Dolphinfish (*Coryphaena hippurus*)  
Drum  
    Red (*Sciaenops ocellatus*)  
    Black (*Pogonias cromis*)  
Eel, American (*Anguilla rostrata*)  
Flounder  
    Southern (*Paralichthys lethostigma*)  
    Summer (*Paralichthys dentatus*)  
Snowy Grouper (*Epinephelus niveatus*)  
Herring, River  
    American Shad (*Alosa sapidissima*)  
    Hickory Shad (*A. mediocris*)  
    Blueback Herring (*A. Aestivalis*)  
    Alewife (*A. pseudoharengus*)  
Mackerel  
    King (*Scomberomorus cavalla*)  
    Spanish (*S. maculatus*)

Menhaden, Atlantic (*Brevoortia tyrannus*)  
Monkfish (*Lophius americanus*)  
Mullet  
    Striped (*Mugil cephalus*)  
    White (*M. curema*)  
Oyster, Eastern (*Crassostrea virginica*)  
Porgies (*Sparidae*)  
Scallops, Bay (*Argopecten irradians*)  
Scup (*Stenotomus chrysops*)  
Sea Basses and Groupers (*Serranidae*)  
Seatrout  
    Gray (Weakfish) (*Cynoscion regalis*)  
    Spotted (*Cynoscion nebulosus*)  
Sharks  
    Sandbar Shark (*Carcharhinus plumbeus*)  
    Spiny Dogfish (*Squalus acanthias*)  
Shrimp  
    Brown (*Penaeus aztecus*)  
    Pink (*Penaeus duorarum*)  
    White (*Penaeus setiferus*)  
Snappers (*Lutjanidae*)  
Spot (*Leiostomus xanthurus*)  
Striped Bass (*Morone saxatilis*)  
Swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*)  
Tautog (*Tautoga onitis*)  
Tilefishes (*Malacanthidae*)  
Triggerfish (*Navodon scabra*)  
Wahoo (*Acanthocybium solandri*)  
Wrasses (*Labridae*)  
Wreckfish (*Polyprion americanus*)  
Yellowfin Tuna (*Thunnus albacares*)

## Appendix 2. Conrad Wirth Letter

The Coastland Times, Manteo, North Carolina

### A LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF THE OUTER BANKS

When I visited with you earlier this month, I told you that we would study further some of the problems that were bothering you and see if some adjustments in the boundary of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreational Area could be made to meet our joint problems more satisfactorily. This we have done. Rather than make another three-day trip to your Islands, I believe that the best way to get the results of these studies to all of you in a clear and concise way is to print them in your local paper. Victor Meekins has agreed to see that every family on Ocracoke, Hatteras, and Bodie Islands, south of Whale Bone, get a copy.

This issue of The Coastland Times contains a set of maps and descriptions which show in detail the new boundary at Pamlico Sound to within 150 feet of the shores of Ocracoke and Hatteras Islands. The new boundary lines have the approval of the Secretary of the Interior; and I have discussed them with Mr. George Ross, Director, North Carolina Department of Conservation and Development, who also approves of them.

During the week of October 6, I met with many of you individually and in public meetings held in the towns of Ocracoke, Hatteras, Avon, and Rodanthe, to answer questions about the Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreational Area project. We discussed its purposes, boundary lines, and the programs for its acquisition and development. Congressman Herbert C. Bonner and others joined in several of the meetings and discussions. You asked many questions; many of these were on how the establishment of the Recreational Area would affect you personally, your business, or your property. I hope, and believe that those questions were answered to the satisfaction of those who asked them.

In the public meetings, you brought out for main points:

1. Many of you were uncertain as to just where the Recreational Area boundary lines would be around the communities and felt that not enough room was being left for community expansion.
2. There was the question as to the rights of individuals to continue commercial and sport fishing.
3. There was concern as to whether your present hunting rights would be affected.
4. There was a feeling that once the Recreational Area is established the local people would be denied access to the ocean beach.

I wish to re-emphasize the answers to these questions, with the aid of the accompanying maps.

As to the first question, I promised you that we would restudy the boundaries and change them if necessary and desirable. The study was based on a personal visit to all of the communities and the Recreational Areas, as well as the statements made to me by many local people personally and in public meetings. Our studies showed that the Old Recreational Area boundary lines were

too confining, so we have changed them in all cases by moving the boundary lines around the communities closer to the ocean. On the ocean side of the towns, the new, approved boundary lines include in the Recreational Area only those lands along the ocean which are necessary to protect and control the sand dunes, to re-establish them where necessary, and hold them to protect the communities from the intrusion of the ocean. The National Park Service intends to resume the sand fixation work that it started in the 1930's and more firmly establish the dunes.

The boundary line has also been changed on the Sound side. It has been moved in to a distance of 150 feet from the shore lines of Ocracoke and Hatteras Islands, except in front of the communities, and the offshore islands outside of that line are eliminated from the Recreational Area. The boundary line of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore Area does not extend in front of the communities on the sound side. In the case of Bodie Island it was more practical to describe a meets and bounds line, as shown on the accompanying maps, than it was to use an irregular line 150 feet offshore.

In regard to fishing and hunting (questions 2 and 3), -- under the basic legislation authorizing the Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreational Area, fishing and hunting rights in the Sound were reserved to the people. That being the case there is no real need to include Pamlico Sound waters in the Recreational Area. This is so because the North Carolina fishing and hunting laws and regulations and those of the Federal Government which have been in effect for a great many years in the Sound area will still apply to waters both inside and outside the Recreational Area boundaries. Therefore, the new boundary line in the Sound has been set only 150 feet offshore from Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands. That is purely an arbitrary distance. It brings the line close enough in so that everyone can know definitely where it is. Due to the irregularity of the shore line, it may be necessary to make minor adjustments in some places so that any small offshore islands will be either wholly in or wholly out of the Recreational Areas. In other words, the line won't split any islands.

The following larger islands are excluded from the Recreational Area:

Off Bodie Island – those among others: Pond, Grun, House, Warren, Headquarters, Bells, Bowser, Cedar, Cutoff and Herring Shoal, Big Tim, and Litte Tim Islands.

Off Hatteras Island – these among others: both Great Island, Midgett, Noache, Gull, Big, and Kings Islands.

Off Ocracoke Island--these, among others: Outer Green, Cockrel, and Negro Islands.

The guarantees in the laws relating to hunting and continuation of commercial fishing in the waters of the Sounds will apply within this 150 feet offshore strip exactly as they do outside of it. The State and Federal fishing and hunting regulations within this strip cannot be affected by any National Park Service regulation.

The law says that hunting will be permitted on Ocracoke Island, on the waters of the Sounds and on not more than 2,000 Island Refuge and its waters. The law requires the Secretary of the Interior to designate the 2,000 acre hunting area would be selected by a committee composed of two representatives of the State of North Carolina, to be designated by the Governor, and one each from the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service of the Department of the

Interior. The National Park Service will move toward the establishment of this committee and the designation of these lands at the earliest possible moment, after the lands have been acquired. Of course, no part of the 2,000 acres will be in the Pea Island Refuge.

Concerning access to the beach (question 4), --when I met with you I explained that when the lands for the Recreational Area are acquired and become public property there will always be access to the beach for all people, whether they are local residents or visitors from the outside. However, it will be necessary to establish certain regulations, such as to designate places for vehicles to get to the beach in order to reduce sand dune erosion to a minimum; to manage ocean fishing where large numbers of bathers are using the beach; and to confine bathing to certain areas. These latter are safety measures, as it would be dangerous to permit surf fishing where there are large numbers of people in bathing and, likewise, fishermen would not want bathers to interfere with their fishing.

With the changed boundary lines in the Sound and the enlargement of the areas excluded for community expansion, as indicated on the accompanying maps the establishment of the committee to determine the 2,000 additional acres of land on the islands to be opened to hunting, and making clear the problem of access to the ocean beach, I feel that we have found a reasonable solution that meets the needs of the Recreational Area. I might add that if, at any time, the State is in a position to build a road on Ocracoke, we can easily reach agreement on the right-of-way for it.

Now, a word concerning the future development of the Area. As stated above, the National Park Service proposes to resume the sand fixation work; to re-establish the natural plant and wild-life within the area; and to provide access to the beach for everybody. We plan also to tell the story of the sea. Cape Hatteras has perhaps one of the most interesting and heroic sea histories in the entire United States, if not in the world. It is the plan of the National Park Service to establish a museum to tell the story of the sea, and especially the part that the Cape Hatteras coast line and you people have played in it. The fascinating history of the Outer Banks, combined with the story that is told at the Wright Memorial and at Fort Raleigh on Roanoke Island will make this part of the North Carolina one of the most important tourist objectives in the United States.

As our plans move forward we will call upon the people of the communities on Ocracoke, Hatteras, and Bodie Island to work with us in establishing the museum. Many of you have relics of the past and stories of great accomplishments handed down through your families that are needed to record and relate this history. It is hoped that when the museum is ready you will see fit to donate or loan appropriate objects for exhibit purposes. When our plans are formulated in more detail they will be made known to you, and we are going to ask for your advice and suggestions.

The National Park Service has always believed in free enterprise, and has practiced it in all the areas of the National Park System. In the case of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreational Area, we expect the people in the communities on the Islands of Ocracoke, Hatteras, and Bodie to take care of the tourists. No developments for tourist accommodations are planned or will be permitted on government property. Consequently the property within the

communities will, without any doubt, have an increasing commercial value because of the existence of the Recreational Area; its greatest value will be for use in taking care of the public.

You have never experienced this kind of a development before, but we in the National Park Service have seen it many, many times throughout the United States when national areas are established. Business interests outside of your communities know what this development is going to mean to the communities; they are already among you and are acquiring land in anticipation of the establishment of the Area. They know that there will be a large influx of people and that land values will rise. I would like to give you a word of cautions: Hold your lands within your communities; don't let outside speculators come in and take over; join together and you people in the communities whose families have lived there for generations care for the visiting public yourselves and enjoy the prosperity that you so rightfully deserve because of your long occupancy of these lands.

The National Park Service and its staff stand ready to cooperate with you at all times in the development of your communities, if you want us to. I hope we can work together as partners, and that we can look forward to along and pleasant association that will bring enjoyment to millions of visitors and prosperity to you.

In closing this message, I should like to thank the people of all the communities for the reception given us when we met with you on October 6, 7, 8 and 9, and for the frankness of your remarks, which enables us to work out our joint problems.

Sincerely yours,  
CONRAD L. WIRTH  
Director, National Park Service

October 27, 1952.





As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering sound use of our land and water resources; protecting our fish, wildlife, and biological diversity; preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places; and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people by encouraging stewardship and citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

NPS D- 433 January 1997



Cape Hatteras National Seashore  
1401 National Park Drive  
Manteo, North Carolina 27954

[www.nps.gov/caha](http://www.nps.gov/caha)