

THE MARITIMES

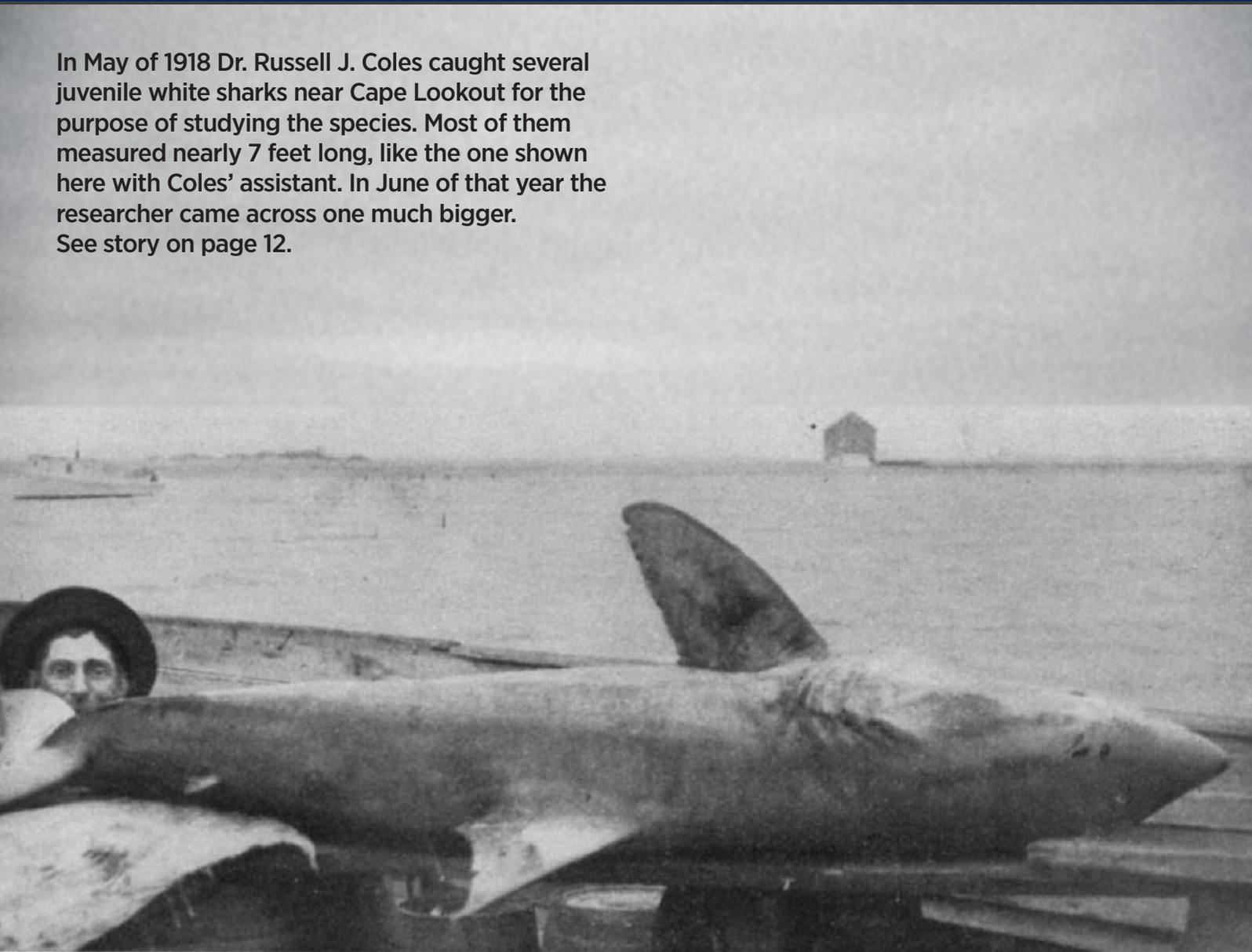


THE MAGAZINE OF THE NORTH CAROLINA MARITIME MUSEUMS

HATTERAS • BEAUFORT • SOUTHPORT

WINTER 2021/SPRING 2022

In May of 1918 Dr. Russell J. Coles caught several juvenile white sharks near Cape Lookout for the purpose of studying the species. Most of them measured nearly 7 feet long, like the one shown here with Coles' assistant. In June of that year the researcher came across one much bigger. See story on page 12.



THE MARITIMES

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NORTH CAROLINA
**MARITIME
MUSEUMS**
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*One historic coast.
Three unique museums.*



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Maritime Museums Awarded \$99,000 Grant

By Cyndi Brown, Informations and Communication Specialist

The North Carolina Maritime Museums will receive \$99,209 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, which recently awarded a total of \$29,545,363 grants toward 208 projects at museums across the nation. The maritime museum grant will be used to expand work in the conservation lab housed at the North Carolina Maritime Museum in Beaufort. The museum's Friends group will provide the needed matching funds.

Museum Conservator Michelle Crepeau is based at the Beaufort site but supports operations of all three maritime museums, which also include sites in Southport and Hatteras. She said the money will be used toward the current lab's new archaeological extension, which is currently under construction. Specifically, the grant will allow the purchase of new equipment to help treat larger and more complex archaeological artifacts in-house. That equipment includes a micro-air abrasive blasting unit



and a combined workstation and dust collector, a portable down draft work bench and a high-grade air compressor for the operation of pneumatic tools.

Crepeau said that the lab enhancements will help expand treatment, outreach and educational capabilities as a whole. "The expanded lab will be fully visible to the public," Crepeau said. "This will bring a greater variety of conservation practices to the public, creating new opportunities for educational programming and public engagement."

That's part of the goal of the grant program itself. The Institute of Museum and Library Services describes itself as the primary source of federal support for the nation's libraries and museums. That support includes grants, research and policy development.

"This year's awardees exemplify museums as learning institutions," Laura Huerta Migus, deputy director of IMLS Office of Museum Services, said in a news release. "These projects reflect the varied roles that museums occupy in the fabric of their local communities and the focused investments needed to improve their capacity to be of service."

For Crepeau, that includes the opportunity to "pay it forward." She said the IMLS grant will also go toward hiring a paid intern to help with conservation tasks. Crepeau noted that conservation can be a difficult field to break into as it requires a substantial investment of pre-graduate training but offers limited opportunities and even fewer that are compensated.

"I am very grateful for the opportunities I was afforded back when I was struggling my way into this profession," she said. "I count it as my biggest success that I am now in a position to support others in their exploration of and first steps into this field." ■ ■ ■

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From The Friends

SOUTHPORT: Greetings from the mouth of the Cape Fear River!

Marybeth and I were most fortunate to take a 24-day camping trip to the Great Lakes and the Western Rivers. We were able to visit and tour two wonderful museums during our travels: the Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum at Whitefish Point, Mich., and the Ohio River Museum in Marietta, Ohio. Why do I mention this? There are two reasons. First, you must visit them if you ever have the opportunity. Secondly, both museums are supported by their “Friends of the Museum” groups, and each museum depends on their volunteer efforts—just like our three museums! The Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society (GLSHS) is a leading professional maritime organization dedicated to preserving the history, artifacts, and material culture of the Great Lakes. Through research, discovery, and documentation, GLSHS is working to keep alive the spirit of adventure of our maritime past. The Friends of the Museum operates the Ohio River Museum on behalf of the Ohio History Connection. Their mission is to promote and preserve the history of their region, the Northwest Territory, and of the inland waterways. It was refreshing and reassuring to see that wonderful people throughout the nation care about maritime history! The passion that I observed by these volunteers is the same that I see in our volunteers here in Southport.

For the fall and winter, our goal for the Southport Friends is to continue to raise funds for the new Civil War exhibit that focuses on the naval conflict in the Lower Cape Fear. Also, a new commercial fishing exhibit will share the rich history of the industry in the region from 1870 to 1970. Please follow us on social media as we will announce our Day of Giving, Adopt-a-Fish program, and the Spring WWII-themed fundraiser. We have so much planned, and we hope you will join us.

Thank you for your continued interest in preserving and sharing our maritime history!

Come and see us in Southport!

Tom Hale,

Chairman

Friends of the NC Maritime Museum in Southport ■

HATTERAS: The Krupp Naval Gun heading to Hatteras

When Ken Howard, director, and Charles Knight, military curator, at the North Carolina Museum of History asked us if we would like the Krupp naval gun from *Wakestone*, the former Josephus Daniels home in Raleigh, we were thrilled with the prospect and daunted by the challenges we had to overcome to make this a reality. We sincerely thank Beacon Development Company for their donation, Coleman Harris, and his remarkable team including Jeff Cortright, Jose Abraham and Glenn Pearson from Carolina Stone Setting Company and White Equipment Company who removed the gun from *Wakestone* and lowered it on to the Museum trailer, LCDR USN Alison Moon and Yeoman YN1 USN Joel

Souther for logistics, Bill and Darlene Francis who drove the gun to the Warren Lasch Conservation Center in Charleston, S.C., and to the Friends of the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum for paying for travel and conservation costs.

The L/30 Krupp naval gun was manufactured in 1891 and is from a captured World War I German Battleship. It was given to Daniels while he was secretary of the Navy and served as a lawn ornament at his Raleigh home. The Daniels family has had a prominent role in North Carolina’s maritime history for almost 285 years. Many Daniels have risen to local, state, national and international fame. It is possible the gun was taken off the *Ostfriesland* before Billy Mitchell sank it off the coast during bombing trials in 1921. Research continues.

Daniel C. Couch

President

Friends of the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum ■

BEAUFORT: Challenging times continue to affect us.

Over the course of the past nearly two years the Beaufort Friends has had to cancel many of our planned fundraising activities. Most recently, and with substantial regret, we have determined that we must cancel our Annual Boatshop Bash—a significant fundraiser generally held in early November indoors at the Harvey W. Smith Watercraft Center.

Nevertheless, we can celebrate a couple of recent big successes. Our inaugural Summer Sunset Cocktail Party held on the Harborside Park Deck, adjacent to the Harvey W. Smith Watercraft Center, was a sellout. Everyone who attended had a terrific time. And it was a big fundraising success.

Also recently the Friends hosted a Fourth of July Fireworks watching party at Gallants Channel, a Beaufort Friends’ location and planned future home of a major expansion of the N.C. Maritime Museum in Beaufort. Our Annual Crab Cake Cookoff featured local chefs’ crab cakes and coleslaw. Those events too were fundraising successes.

These and other Beaufort Friends’ activities have recently enabled the Friends to fund for the museum, among other things, the purchase of a much-needed new truck and the acquisition of a model of the historically significant Crissie Wright.

Planning is underway for our Annual Holiday Flotilla, an on-the-water parade of seasonally decorated boats and other watercraft. All participants are welcome. Since this event can be done entirely outside, if necessary, we are very hopeful that we will be able to hold it as planned.

We are working hard to keep our membership up and seeking alternative ways to fund our support for the N.C. Maritime Museum in Beaufort. We thank all of our generous supporters for enabling us to assist the museum.

See you at the museums.

Bruce J. Prager

President

Friends of the NC Maritime Museum at Beaufort ■

Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum in Hatteras

Evidence Suggests the Midgetts Actually Were Mighty

By Jillian Schuler, M.A. Student in Maritime Studies, Department of History at East Carolina University

In 1974, Nell Wise Wechter put to paper what had been known by the locals on the Outer Banks for decades: the Midgett family was mighty. Wechter, previously known for young adult novels, strayed from her usual genre by writing about the three Midgett keepers at the Chicamacomico Life-Saving Station: Little Bannister Midgett, John Allen Midgett, and Levene Midgett. Her admiration for these men was vivid in the ways she discussed their selflessness, their kind nature, and their commitment to the service. What Wechter lacked in evidence she certainly made up for in passion and description, but it does beg the question: Were the Midgetts really mighty?

Since that publication, there have been many subsequent updates to what constitutes a mighty member of the Midgett family. With a family that continues to be active in the Coast Guard service, frequent updates are warranted. Some of these updates attempt to supplement names from the same period as the original mighty Midgett trio and frequently quote Wechter's book in doing so. However, similar to Wechter's book, writings on the Midgett family use a combination of folklore and fact that undermines the true impressiveness of this family's acts. This article will attempt to rectify this missing factual foundation in order to confirm that the Midgett family were indeed mighty, in many ways and on multiple occasions.

Prior to the establishment of the United States Life-Saving Service (USLSS) in 1871, men from the Midgett family were among the prominent families volunteering to assist those involved in a wrecking event. This experience, combined with their knowledge of the sea due to their daily work as fishermen, made them primary candidates to be surfmen

and keepers when the service was finally established. More frequently than not, that past experience helped many Midgetts serve long, admirable careers in both the USLSS and eventually the Coast Guard that replaced the USLSS when it merged with the US Revenue Cutter Service in 1915. The family boasts of having more than 200 of its members participate in the life-saving service since the 1800s, which is the most one family has contributed to the military across five branches. This definitely expands their might beyond a trio. During that time, 10 Midgetts earned Life-Saving Medals of Honor, further cementing their reputation as the Mighty Midgetts.

While the USLSS was created in 1871, the legislation to establish stations in North Carolina did not pass until 1873. In 1874, the *Elizabeth City North Carolinian* reported the beginnings of construction of stations in Kitty Hawk, Bodie Island, Little Kinnakeet, and Chicamacomico. Within the year, seven stations were built during this initial establishment of the USLSS. In 1879, Little Bannister Midgett became keeper at Chicamacomico, marking the beginning of a long relationship between the Midgetts and the Chicamacomico Life-Saving Station.

Little Bannister Midgett, known as Cap'n Ban, had a reputation that many equated to Paul Bunyan—lots of stories about the man without much verification as to whether they were true or not. When suggested to him that he would become a legend someday, Little Bannister Midgett allegedly replied, "Well, I reckon a legend ain't nothing but a lie that takes on the dignity of age." Some of these stories Little Bannister Midgett perpetuated himself, including the claim that he did not know how to read and write due to the Civil War disrupting his public education.

In reality, it would have been his responsibility as keeper to record the station's daily activities in a log and maintain communications with the federal offices. However, he found he could get away with not abiding by some of the written requests from Washington DC by simply declaring he could not read them. Little Bannister Midgett's reluctant relationship with the federal office became a part of Outer Banks folklore when Ben Dixon MacNeil decided to include a story



Chicamacomico Life Saving Station, 1960s.

of him in his book *The Hatterasman*, a collection of (sometimes) larger than life tales from the Outer Banks. The story describes Little Bannister Midgett's reluctant adherence to the federally encouraged introduction of motors on rescue boats and serves to represent the ways his legacy had been written into folklore.

Despite the various stories, Little Bannister Midgett was responsible for creating the foundation of the Mighty Midgett moniker. As keeper at the Chicamacomico Life-Saving Station, Little Bannister Midgett garnered national attention when he led the rescue efforts during the wrecking of *Thomas J Lancaster*, a schooner carrying a cargo of ice bound for Savannah, Georgia. During the early hours of October 4, 1881, the vessel ran aground about three and a half miles north of the Chicamacomico station. Unable to dislodge the vessel, swells repeatedly crashed against the side of the ship, resulting in its wrecking. The rescue effort was incredibly taxing, with strong gales wearing down the keeper and his crew. At one point, a sailor jumped from the wreck and successfully swam to shore, however when another tried, he was pulled by the current and drowned. As written in the official wreck report, Little Bannister Midgett swam out to save the sailor, however failed to do so and returned from the incessant current completely spent, and coming on with a chill. Eventually the wind calmed enough for the life-saving crew to conduct their operations, saving the remaining five passengers, and cementing Little Bannister Midgett as a keeper committed to the service.

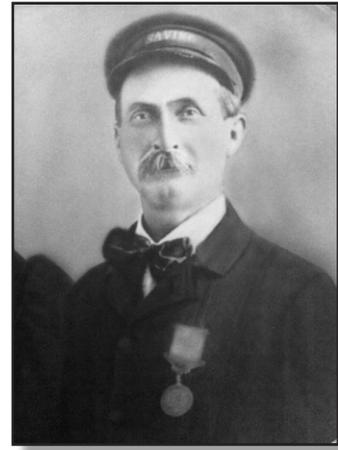
A lesser known Midgett contribution is that of Little Bannister Midgett's wife, Sabrina, who also played a role in the *Thomas J Lancaster* rescue. She assisted the captain's wife who had lost her entire family in the wreck, and distributed dry clothing gathered by the Women's National Relief Association, as reported in the annual treasury report. This directly contradicts McNeil's stories of women's relationship with the sea being one of distance and jealousy, and indicates the way in which the USLSS truly was a commitment of the entire Midgett family.

When a USLSS rescue occurs where life is lost, a description of the rescue must be included in the annual report of the USLSS's operations in order to assert that it was not the fault of the station for the loss of life. In 1881, *Thomas J Lancaster* was one of only four wrecks where life was lost, resulting in the story garnering much attention. The comparatively small number of fatal wrecking events differs greatly from the 1899 report where a hurricane caused many tragedies, however the story of Erasmus "Rasmus" Midgett still managed to stand out.

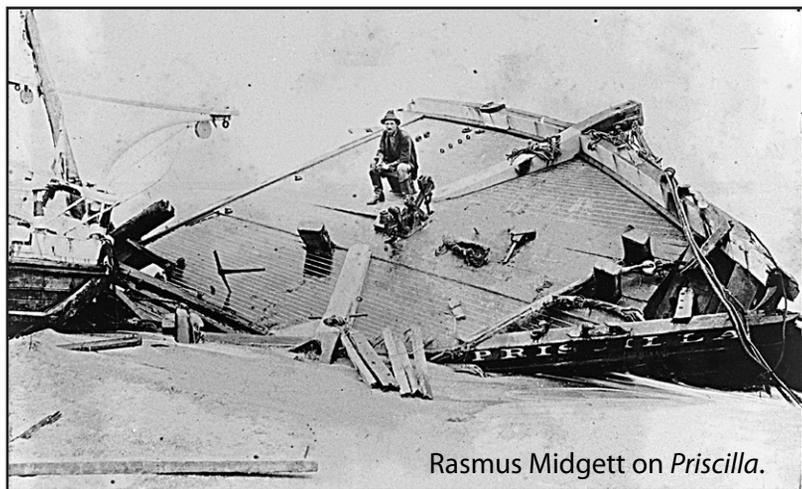
If you ask among the Midgetts themselves, they will all agree that Rasmus Midgett was the mightiest of them all. Rasmus was excluded from Wechter's book due to the full title of the books being *The Mighty Midgetts of Chicamacomico*, and Rasmus being

Surfman No. 1, second only to the keeper, at the Gull Shoal Station under Keeper David Pugh. However, plenty of subsequent writers have worked to rectify that situation.

The rescue that earned Rasmus his reputation occurred in August of 1899, during the hurricane San Ciriaco. Rasmus was conducting a morning patrol, and it was so dark that he could scarcely see where he was going. Only a little under a mile away from the station, he began to notice pieces of debris washing up on shore, evidence of a wreck. He continued another two miles, when he began hearing the cries of men asking for help. While the darkness and the stormy skies prevented Rasmus from being able to see anything, he dismounted from his horse and neared the edge of the water, his eyes slowly making out the part of a wreck, with survivors clinging to it. He knew that even on horseback he would not be able to make it back to the station to garner the necessary help in time to save the men onboard *Priscilla*. Instead, Rasmus made the brave decision to wade out into the hurricane seas himself, waiting until the wave retreated to rush out to the wreck. Once he reached the wreck, he encouraged one man to jump off the wreck, and he brought him to shore. He repeated this tactic seven times, successfully hauling the withered men to safety. However, the three remaining men were too injured to jump. In order to assist these men, Rasmus went right out onto the wreck, carefully carrying each of the three men from the wreck onto shore. While the seven still able to walk began the trek to the station, Rasmus rode ahead to get a horse and cart to transfer the three men too weak to walk themselves. For conducting such a successful single-handed rescue, at great personal risk, Rasmus was awarded a Gold Life-Saving Medal. *continued...*



Rasmus Midgett. Courtesy of Ernie Foster.



Rasmus Midgett on *Priscilla*.

Evidence Suggests the Midgetts Actually Were Mighty *continued...*

With a story that seems too heroic to be true, it is important to note that the incident is corroborated by both the wreck report written by Gull Shoal Station Keeper and the annual report submitted to the US Treasury.

While Rasmus is consistently considered the mightiest Midgett, Captain John Allen Midgett Jr., keeper of Chicamacomico station from 1916 to 1937, garnered significant attention for his brave actions during the wrecking of *Mirlo* in 1918. Captain Midgett, son of New Inlet Station Keeper John Allen Midgett Sr., was raised to serve in the Life-Saving Service and eventually the Coast Guard after the merger. He worked his way to becoming keeper of the Chicamacomico station where seven miles from the station, on August 16, 1918, the British tanker *Mirlo* was hit by a torpedo from German U-boat, *U-117*, causing an explosion seen by Leroy Midgett, the surfman on watch at the station. While Captain Midgett prepared his power lifeboat to assist those on *Mirlo*, a second explosion occurred on the tanker, causing its captain to give the order to abandon ship via the lifeboats.

When Captain Midgett arrived with his six-surfman crew, the situation had worsened drastically. One of the lifeboats had capsized while being lowered into the water, leaving sixteen men clinging to its exposed hull. A third and final explosion broke the ship in two, spilling gasoline into the water, causing walls of flames and smoke. The first lifeboat the life savers encountered was that of the captain of *Mirlo*, Captain Williams, who informed them of the other two lifeboats, and that one had been capsized. Giving Captain Williams instructions to take his boat closer to shore, Captain Midgett turned back to the maze of smoke and fire and directed his surfmen to continue rowing as he navigated them to the overturned life boat, saving the remaining six men still clinging to the boat. Captain Midgett had to circle the dangerous wreck site several times before finding the final and smallest of the three lifeboats. At great risk to his personal safety and the safety of his crew, Captain Midgett deftly maneuvered through the dangerous



John Allen Midgett, some years after *Mirlo*. National Park Service Collection.



Leroy Midgett showing medal to children. David Stick Papers, OBHC.

wreck site, rescuing forty-two of the fifty-two men that had been onboard *Mirlo*.

In recognition of the personal risk taken (several of the surfmen sustaining burns), and the overall success of the rescue, the U.S. government awarded Captain Midgett and his crew Gold Life-Saving Medals, and the British government awarded the men Victory Medals. It is frequently noted that five out of the six surfmen in the crew had the last name Midgett, and the sixth, an O'Neal, was married to a Midgett, exhibiting the extent the Midgett family permeated the Coast Guard service in North Carolina.

Chicamacomico's last keeper was Keeper Levene Midgett, who served from 1938 to 1954 when his retirement coincided with the decommissioning of the Chicamacomico Station by the Coast Guard. Like the keepers before him (including his uncle, Little Bannister Midgett), Keeper Midgett earned the "mighty" reputation in a wreck rescue. In December 1931, a small fishing trawler named *Anna May* ran aground on Outer Diamond shoals. Any attempt at rescuing the five men would consist of an arduous journey across the shoals in an attempt to locate the vessel. Collaborating with the Keeper of the Cape Hatteras Station, Keeper Midgett and his men had to make the arduous journey out to the shoals twice before finally locating the wreck, rescuing all aboard and earning the Silver Life-Saving Medal.

On July 2, 1972, the NC Navy League Council and the US Coast

Guard celebrated Midgett day to acknowledge and appreciate the contributions of the Midgett family, as well as the specific actions of Captain Midgett during the *Mirlo* rescue. The day included the unveiling of the Coast Guard's newest search-and-rescue cutter named *Midgett*, and plenty of members of the Midgett family gathered to celebrate their shared heritage. Younger generations of Midgetts continue to follow in their family's footsteps and join the Coast Guard. So much so that the service is sometimes nicknamed the Midgett's navy, and their commitment to its service continues to perpetuate the well-earned family reputation of being mighty. ■

Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum Ready to Unveil Facebook Followers Photography Exhibit

By Mary Ellen Riddle, Education Curator and Volunteer Coordinator, Hatteras, NC

In April of 2022, the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum will unveil a Facebook Followers Photography Exhibit. Our 31,225 Facebook followers (as of September 2021) have been invited to contribute three photographs per person taken within the last 5 years of something about the Outer Banks that speaks to them. The entries have been coming in for months and feature a wide variety of images including sunsets and sunrises, boats at sea, beachgoers, stormy waters, architecture, forests, and critters. The exhibit will be up until March of 2023. Visitors will vote on the Best in Show, which will win an award.

We value the dedication of our Facebook followers who appreciate the culture and history posts we exhibit daily year-round. Not only does the museum appreciate their support but also their feedback and enthusiasm. Our Facebook followers have a deep love of the Outer Banks that, for some, stretches

back multiple generations. Many folk who have vacationed over the years have retired on the Outer Banks and even come to the museum to volunteer. We consider our followers a family bound together by the love of these tiny slips of sand where history has been made for centuries. This exhibit is a way for our followers to contribute to the museum experience through their documentation of the Outer Banks. ■



Photos:

▲ *Acorn & Junior*, Erin Millar

◀ *Stormy Seas*, Abby Humbel

▼ *Hatteras Sunset*, Jill Robey



Hatteras

North Carolina Maritime Museum at Southport

Coastal Migration, the Otter Trawl, and the Rise of North Carolina's Shrimp Industry

By David Bennett, Curator of Maritime History

Prior to the second decade of the twentieth century, the shrimp industry in North Carolina was confined to New Hanover County and relatively insignificant. This was largely due to a lack of a domestic market and the limitations of technology. The few fishermen engaged in shrimping used cast nets and haul seines. This changed around 1914 when Scandinavian immigrants Samuel Thompson and Otto Benson introduced the otter trawl to Southport.

The otter trawl is a large, funnel-shaped net towed behind a boat just above the seabed. Attached to the two ends of the net are "otter boards" that keep the net open while moving underwater. The net was originally developed in Britain and came to the United States via the Bay State Fishing Company, of Massachusetts, in 1905 and proliferated in the northeastern United States.

Samuel Thompson immigrated from Norway to the



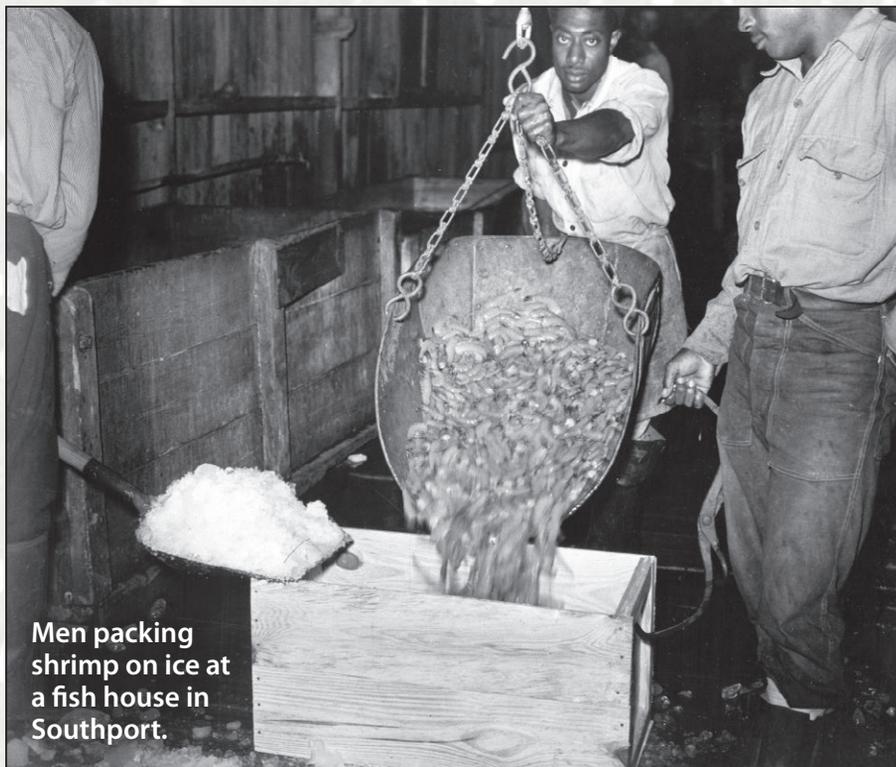
Fishermen about to unload a net of shrimp on the deck of a boat.

United States in 1898 and settled in Seabright, New Jersey, where he worked as a pound net fisherman. Between 1910 and 1914, Thompson moved to Southport, North Carolina, with his wife and in-laws. Based out of Southport, Thompson and Benson, Thompson's Swedish father-in-law, worked as itinerant fishermen who fished stake nets as far south as Georgetown, South Carolina. What drew them to Southport is unknown; however, a small population of Scandinavian immigrants settled in the Cape Fear region in the early 20th century. During that time, Wilmington tried to attract northern European and Italian immigrants to displace African American labor in the community's growing industries.

In September 1914, *The Wilmington Dispatch* reported that two local fishermen perfected a net that could catch fifteen to twenty bushels of shrimp per day. This is probably a reference to Thompson and Benson employing an otter trawl. Other accounts claim that Thompson and Benson, along with fellow Scandinavian immigrants, Jonas Matsen and Chris Danielson, pioneered shrimp trawling in the offshore waters of Brunswick County. The duo quickly gained a reputation for being innovative fisherman "ever alert to new methods of fishing."

With access to express railroad shipping, New York markets were willing to pay top dollar for Southport shrimp. At the time the going rate ranged from \$1.10 to \$1.35 per bushel (\$30.09-\$36.86 in 2021). The success of Thompson, Benson, and others prompted locals to adopt the new net. By October 1914, the otter trawl had ushered in a shrimp craze amongst Brunswick County fishermen. That fall, between 1,400 and 1,800 bushels of shrimp were landed each week. The average boat made about \$20 per day. One observer noted that shrimping "has taken every boat to the neglect of all other kinds of fishing." Two years later, at least forty boats were using the net.

The earliest boats used in Southport's shrimp fishery were gasoline-powered Seabright skiffs used by the Scandinavian fishermen. They were wooden boats with lapstrake planking. The sides were rounded while the bottom was flat. The boat-type originated in New Jersey and was common in the shore fisheries of the Jersey Shore. The Seabright Skiffs used in Southport were probably between twenty and thirty feet in length. Local fishermen used other small, gasoline-powered skiffs. These



Men packing shrimp on ice at a fish house in Southport.

boats later gave way to the Core Sounder, introduced to Southport by Carteret County fishermen in the 1930s. Large, diesel-powered trawlers did not come into use until after World War II.

With profitable shrimp landings on the rise, Richard Doshier and William St. George opened Southport's first shrimp cannery in 1915. Other canneries and fresh seafood dealers followed. In addition to those businesses came jobs that employed hundreds of women and children, black and white, who picked and packed shrimp. Southport became a boom town and the capital of the state's shrimp industry.

In 1915, the North Carolina Fisheries Commission began regulating shrimp trawls in Brunswick, New Hanover, and Pender counties, however, the state did not record commercial landings with the otter trawl until 1918.

Success was met by controversy. Mullet fishermen feared that the bycatch produced by shrimping was destroying the mullet fishery. As the debate played out in public, the blame shifted from the otter trawl to the obsolete haul seines that were being phased out of the shrimp industry. As the haul seines faded from use so did the debate surrounding the industry. Seines had long been a source of tension in the region prior to the otter trawl's introduction.

Tragically, Samuel Thompson died in 1916, at the age of 36. The author of Thompson's obituary credited him with bringing the otter trawl to Southport in 1914 and teaching the locals how to use it. Shortly thereafter, Otto Benson moved his family to St. Marys, Georgia, a community renowned for shrimping, where he continued to work as a fisherman.

continued...

Coastal Migration, the Otter Trawl, and the Rise of North Carolina's Shrimp Industry *continued..*

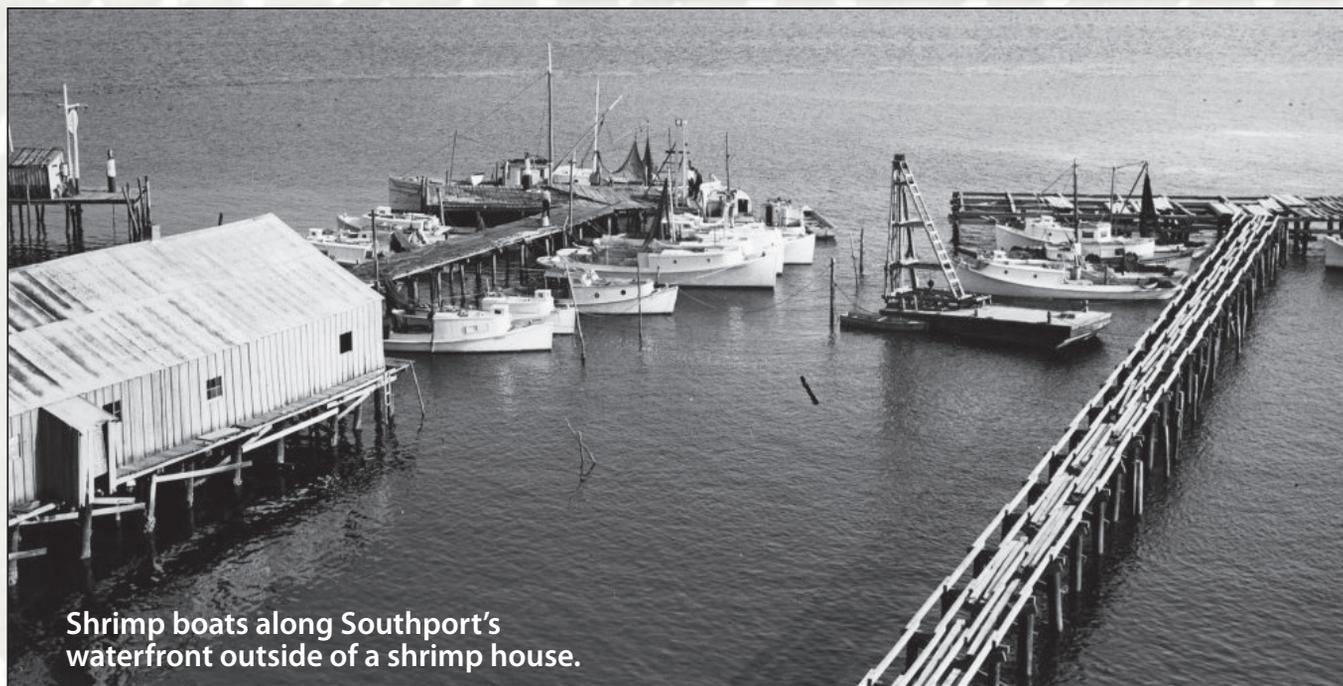
Benson's move to St. Marys may have had less to do with Thompson's death and more to do with a slump in Southport's shrimp industry in 1916, which prompted a group of Southport fishermen to migrate to St. Marys. This appears to have inaugurated the annual migration of North Carolina shrimp boats to Georgia and Florida waters.

The story of the otter trawl coming to Southport might not be entirely unique. Lewis J. Hardee, a prominent fish dealer and fisherman from Southport, originally hailed from Fernandina Beach, Florida, the birthplace of the United States' modern shrimp industry. He noted that, in the early 20th century, Scandinavian fishermen travelled south from New Jersey to northern Florida where they fished for bluefish out of Seabright Skiffs. They later turned to shrimping and introduced the otter trawl to the Fernandina Beach community, which stimulated a tremendous industry. In some ways, the experiences of Southport and Fernandina Beach appear to mirror one another. Not long after the otter trawl took hold in Brunswick County, fishermen and fish dealers from Fernandina Beach, Florida, migrated north to Southport. Some of the Fernandina Beach fishermen, like the Fodale and Hardee families, established a permanent presence in Southport.

Thompson and Benson may have been forgotten, but their legacy lived on. Brunswick County's shrimp industry grew. Carteret County fishermen quickly adopted the otter trawl and travelled to Southport seasonally to trawl for shrimp. Eventually the net spread to the Pamlico Sound. Over one hundred years later, the otter trawl is still used in North Carolina, but the industry's future is uncertain with stricter regulations, foreign imports, rising fuel costs, and additional factors. The early history of the otter trawl in North Carolina, however, highlights the importance of coastal migration and technology transfers in the development of North Carolina's shrimp fishery. ■



Men, women, and children picking shrimp at a fish house in Southport.



Shrimp boats along Southport's waterfront outside of a shrimp house.

Education Programming Updates for 2021

By Katy Menne, Curator of Education, Southport, NC

The Southport crew members have been busy bees. Summer has come and gone, ushering in a big push for school programs. With changing health safety guidelines, some schools are allowing visitors into their buildings. Miss Katy has been filling up her calendar with visits to schools across five counties in southeastern North Carolina.

Not all the fun is happening off site though. Come visit the Maritime Museum at Southport and experience some fun opportunities in our facility! In June, the second version of the semi-guided tour was rolled out. This version still includes the spoken English, American Sign Language (ASL), and English subtitles of the first version, but now also includes Spanish subtitles. There is also a 5-second count down screen to prompt viewers to pause and continue exploring, or where to move next. This last item was a suggestion from staff with North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, when they came for a visit last spring. Also opened in June was the temporary exhibit “How does water speak to you?” This exhibit focused on the maritime community being felt, not merely seen in images or read in books. Running from mid-June to Labor Day, four works of art created by members of the LGBTQIA+ community were on display in the exhibit hall.

July saw the official opening of Admiral’s Quarters Sensory Room which offers numerous options for self-regulation, including a sail to darken the space that features a bean bag chair, hug boat, bubble light, Wally the Whale, and more. This new addition to the class-

room offers a space for visitors to decompress and self-regulate whenever they visit. Previously, the museum only offered Sensory Saturday (monthly) and Sensory Backpacks to visitors. This step allows for continual support of all people when they stop by.

In mid-September, the braille tactile maps of the entire facility were unveiled. Through the assistance of the Southport Lions Club and the Friends of the N.C. Maritime Museum at Southport, these maps were designed and printed to include high contrast font and braille. They will provide autonomy for visitors, volunteers, or interns with low vision and total blindness.

All these items offer another step into inclusion within the museum. Check the Southport location’s social media for updates on new projects and how you can get involved.

Back by popular demand, fall and winter holiday to-go bags return October 19th. Enjoy the holidays from wherever and whenever this season with all new crafts, and remember, we can mail them for an extra fee! ■

Holidays To-Go

\$7 Each, no holds
Scary Schooner: Oct 19–Nov 6
Harvest Yawl: Nov 9–Dec 4
Sea-Sons Snow: Dec 7–31
*Or while supplies last

With Each Bag:

- Supplies for 4 crafts
- Holiday Goodies
- Written Instructions
- Emailed links for video instructions and story time



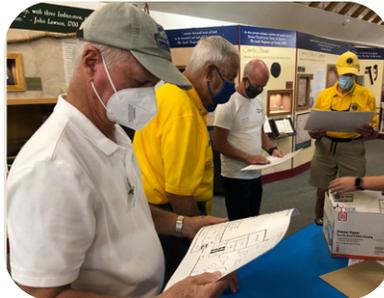
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www.ncmaritimemuseumssouthport.com



Southport NC Lions Club
 @SPTNCLionsClub

Our #SouthportNC #Lions participated in the “unveiling” of the NC Maritime Museum’s Braille “tactile maps” developed with funding from our Lions Foundation. This is a great advance in making the museum more accessible and inclusive! @ncmaritimemuse1

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Southport

North Carolina Maritime Museum in Beaufort

Russell Coles' Giant Great White Shark

By John Hairr, Education Curator, Beaufort

Hanging on the north wall of the North Carolina Maritime Museum in Beaufort is the mount of a great white shark, *Carcharodon carcharias*, caught several miles off Beaufort Inlet in September of 1984 by the crew of the shark-fishing boat *Alligator*. The shark had a total length of over 15 feet and tipped the scales at 2,080 pounds when the remains were weighed on a commercial truck scale at the State Port in Morehead City. The shark was a media sensation, with thousands of people paying to see the shark after the enterprising fishermen—Lloyd Davidson, Jon Dodrill and Sylvester Karasinski—put it on display along the waterfront in Morehead City. They even managed to get the remains to the N.C. State Fair in Raleigh, but decomposition of the flesh finally forced them to take the rotting carcass away. Fortunately, a mount was made of the head and about half the body, which is one of the most popular conversation pieces in the museum.

Few realize that people along the southern Outer Banks have long interacted with white sharks in these waters. In fact, one of the largest great white sharks ever officially chronicled anywhere in the world was measured by Dr. Russell Coles just offshore from Shackleford Banks in 1918. Coles spent many years hunting for sharks and rays in the waters off Cape Lookout in the first quarter of the 20th century. Even today, scientists owe a huge debt to this retired tobacco farmer from Danville, Virginia, for the work he did documenting the various species of large marine animals he personally observed.

This particular specimen turned out to be among the most interesting Coles ever studied. On June 28, 1918, he came across the large great white that had been tangled in a net near Cape Lookout. Earlier, some other fishermen from the Ocean Leather Company reported seeing an enormous shark entangled in a fishing net just offshore, but when they said the shark was as big as their 25-foot fishing boat, Coles dismissed their story as a tall tale. Then again, something piqued his interest. Perhaps

he thought back to a run-in he had back in 1905 in the Lookout Bight when a twenty-footer rammed his skiff. Whatever it was, he decided to have a look.

Coles must have been used to hearing unverified reports of some really big sharks lurking offshore. Sometimes fishermen brought back evidence to help substantiate such stories. For instance,

the promoter of the North Carolina Outer Banks, Aycock Brown, told of some fishermen working offshore in the warm waters of the Gulf Stream who hooked a great white more than 30 feet long near the Gulf Stream off Cape Lookout. The shark was so big that it could not be hauled aboard the commercial shark-fishing boat that caught it, so they were unable to prove the veracity of their story. They did, however, extract some teeth from the giant shark, which according to Brown measured a remarkable four inches long.

Though not quite a thirty-footer, Coles found the 1918 great white to be among the largest he had personally seen, and upon closer investigation, realized the fishermen's description of the large shark was remarkably accurate. "My carefully noted observations justify the following claim of dimensions for it," wrote Coles, "length, 22 ft.; head, larger than 50 gallon barrel; mouth, 3 ft. wide; circumference at arm-pit of pectoral, 18 ft.; length of pectoral, 6 ft.; width of pectoral, 3 1/2 ft.; dorsal, not seen; width at caudal notch, origin of tail, 20 in.; width of tail, 7 ft.; weight, over 2 tons."

Most people to this day do not understand the significance of Coles' detailed calculations, as this places

the shark among the largest great whites seen anywhere in the world. For instance, the famed "Monstruo de Cojimar," caught off the coast of Cuba in the summer of 1945, is acknowledged by most authorities to have been one of the largest great whites ever caught with a total length of 21 feet. The longest accurately measured and independently verified great white ever recorded in the world was taken off the coast of Malta in 1987. It measured 23 1/2 feet long.



President Teddy Roosevelt died before he got a chance to fish for sharks and manta rays with his friend Russell Coles at Cape Lookout. They are shown here 'dressed for devil-fishing' off Captiva Island, Florida, in March of 1917. Photo courtesy Theodore Roosevelt Center.

Controversy surrounds efforts to accurately measure fully mature *Carcharodon carcharias*, with many scientists using arcane formulae to tear down one case and build up another. The largest great whites ever reported were truly remarkable fish, if the reports are anywhere near accurate. One specimen from False Bay, South Africa, was reputed to be 43 feet long. Another large shark, this one caught in 1930 off Grand Manan Island in the Bay of Fundy between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, was reputed to be 36½ feet long. The size of these enormous sharks was never independently verified and, down through the years, has been disputed by researchers.

Since the giant great white shark escaped from the net before Coles could extract a tooth or cut off a fin, he was unable to bring back anything tangible from the Cape Lookout specimen, which he no doubt would have forwarded to one of the museums he frequently sent materials to from his studies in these waters. We are fortunate that he escaped injury (or worse) when the shark wrestled free and that he took the time to publish his account of the large sharks he found there off Shackelford Banks in June of 1918. Coles' meticulous work helps separate this particular shark from other legendary monstrous great whites encountered off the Carolinas—or anywhere else in the world. ■

Summer in Beaufort

By Zdena Sinkhorn, Student, College of Wooster

My first day with the North Carolina Maritime Museum began early. Due to a mix up on my part. I arrived, rested after driving 30 hours from my home in Longmont, Colorado, only to find out that in my excitement, I had remembered my start date incorrectly and showed up the day before I was expected. Luckily, the staff of the Maritime Museum are some of the most hospitable and understanding individuals I have had the pleasure of working with, so this mix up was quickly laughed away and I began my first few weeks with the institution. Those weeks in June were a relative tornado of information, as I learned about local history, the museum's daily functions, and the role of the museum in the overarching state network. Looking back now, about two months later, it seems strange to think that there was a time when I didn't know the inner workings of the museum.

For the longest time I had been simply a visitor to the museum, stopping by once a year when my family came on vacation. But now I leave at the end of my APEX summer internship having learned what it means to work in a museum and how important it is to have awareness about the different work that goes into maintaining the N.C. Maritime Museum. At its surface, a museum may seem to be just a simple collection of artifacts and objects from history, but it really is much more.

Working with Lynn Anderson and Tessa Johnstone in the collections department of the museum showed me just how much work and care goes into making sure that the museum's collections are well cared for and accessible. This aspect of museum work is not readily apparent to the majority of visitors, but understanding the necessity of cataloging the different artifacts is key to having a functional museum. Learning all the different aspects of cataloging an artifact is arguably the most valuable skill I will walk away from this internship with, due to the many steps involved in this particular activity.

Cataloging involves not just assigning an object a number, but also researching the artifact, providing a historical context for it, having the conservator assess the artifact for any potential deterioration, and making sure that whoever

accesses your records down the line will be able to use it. Working with a museum's collections is almost like working with an active time capsule. You have an odd sense of continued purpose, and you know that whatever actions you take now will likely impact the museum for years to come. Part of this sense of time displacement is due to the connections that exist between collections and a range of other departments. For example, I was lucky enough to work with the conservator, Michelle Crepeau, while I was working on cataloging the two different sets of artifacts I was assigned: chronometers and taffrail logs. Crepeau and I worked together on the taffrail logs, which are an older form of a speedometer, to assess their condition and determine whether the artifacts would need cleaning and/or conservation. Being able to see both sides of the cataloging process—from initial discovery to its entrance into a particular exhibit—was truly incredible.

Incredible is a good word to cover my entire experience with the North Carolina Maritime Museum in Beaufort, actually. From beginning to end, I was excited to be here, learning about the amazing history of the area and experiencing what it's like to work in such a unique position. I am so grateful to have been given the opportunity to work with the museum, both to the different individuals who helped guide me over the summer and to my school, The College of Wooster in Ohio, for providing the funding that enabled me to come here for the summer. It can be hard to find a career or job field to be truly excited and passionate about, but after working with the staff of the museum for the summer, I have a much clearer vision of what I want to do with my life. Working to preserve the history of a town, region, or state is a difficult, but immensely rewarding task and I feel more certain than ever that this is the field I would like to pursue in life. This year will be my last in my undergraduate program, and I will walk away from this internship more prepared than ever before for whatever awaits me in the future. ■



Zdena examines the condition of a taffrail log which was hung or attached off the stern of a ship and used to measure speed.

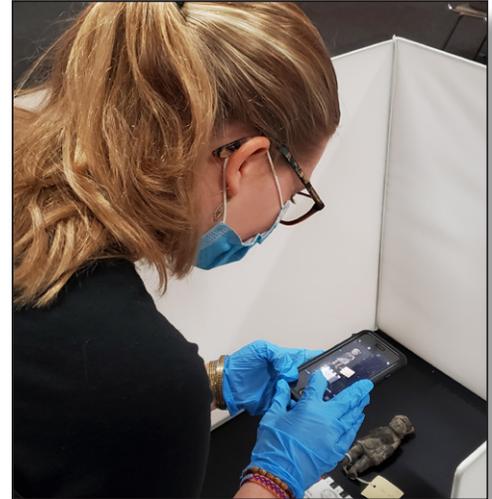
ECU Graduate Students Get Valuable Experience at NC Maritime Museum in Beaufort

By Cyndi Brown, Informations and Communication Specialist

Staff at the N.C. Maritime Museum in Beaufort recently opened its collections to a group of graduate students from East Carolina University's maritime studies program. The hands-on experience is designed to help them connect the maritime artifacts with aspects of life in their respective eras.

"It's not just the object, it's the history and context," said ECU Professor Lynn Harris, who led the 11-student visit. "It's history but also how it's used, how it's made."

Harris' students have collaborated in the past with other museums — including virtual visits with sites in Bermuda and South Africa — and conservation labs, like the one at East Carolina University. But Saturday's visit to the museum in downtown Beaufort was the first one for her program. Harris said she was surprised by the array of collections the students were able to choose from: boatbuilding, fishing, shipwrecks, navigation, whaling/ scrimshaw and outboard motors. The museum's collection staff set up artifacts from each theme in the museum's auditorium, and the students were able to choose the artifact that interested them to create an "artifact biography" for Harris' American maritime material culture course. "They're tracing the history of these artifacts," Harris said. That includes the artifact's curation history, ownership and transition through time, Harris explained.



To start, the students photographed, measured, processed and wrote descriptions of their respective artifact. Later, they'll add the history behind the artifact and its trajectory: where it started and — using the conservation and curatorial records provided by Museum Collection Manager Lynn Anderson and Collections Registrar Tessa Johnstone — how it came into the museum's possession and its current status.

The most popular choice was in shipwrecks, specifically the toys recovered from the *City of Houston*, a passenger ship that wrecked in 1878 off Frying Pan Shoals near Cape Fear. The artifacts, which are part of the collection at the N.C. Maritime Museum at Southport, included baby rattles, mini condiment and tea sets, toy soldiers, toy trumpet, forks and more.

Jill Schuler, a first-year maritime studies grad student from Raleigh, was studying two bird-shaped whistles recovered from the shipwreck.

She said she appreciated getting the firsthand experience with artifacts.

"It helps us start thinking about how





to approach material culture and how we study artifacts,” Schuler said.

She said she was drawn to the maritime studies program specifically for its cross-relationship with her two undergrad degrees: history and international relations. Maritime archaeology, she said, connects them both. “It gives us that physical connection to the past,” she said. ■

Registration! Summer Science School & Junior Sailing Program

Summer Science School offers courses for children entering preschool through tenth grade. Each class provides an opportunity to learn about the maritime history, culture and environment of coastal North Carolina through classroom and field trip experiences. The most popular class topics include seashore life, pirates and fishing. Registration begins Monday, January 31, 2022. For more information about Summer Science School registration, contact the museum registrar at (252) 504-7758.

The Junior Sailing Program offers basic through advanced sailing instruction to youth ages 8 and older. This exciting program teaches the arts of rigging, sailing and seamanship, and introduces students to maritime traditions and history. The program is designed to teach the basic skills of sailing to beginners and to hone the skills of more advanced students, using a combination of time in the classroom and on the water. Registration begins Monday, January 17, 2022. For more information about Junior Sailing registration, contact the Friends office at (252) 728-1638.



Mark Your Calendar!

- Oct. 16** Fall In-The-Water Meet
- Dec. 4** Crystal Coast Christmas Flotilla
- Dec. 5** Annual Membership Meeting & Holiday Open House
- Jan. 21** 9th Annual Clam Chowder Cook-Off
- May 7** 46th Annual Wooden Boat Show
- June** 11 Maritime Day
- June** 17 June Summer Party Fundraiser
- July 9** Great 4th Race
- July 22** 15th Annual Crab Cake Cook-off
- Aug. 6** Traditional Skiff Rally
- Aug. 19** Summer Sunset Deck Cocktail Party
- Sept. 2** Murder Mystery Dinner

For details call (252) 728-1638 or visit
www.maritimefriends.org

Beaufort

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