

# The Cape Lookout Country

At Cape Lookout, best-behaved of our three capes, the North Carolina coast commits itself to a new direction. It starts an enormous and symmetrical curve which follows the compass from west by north, to west, to southwest—the arc ending at Cape Fear and embracing Onslow Bay. It has few of the navigational advantages we imagine a bay should have, though lying partly in the lee of Cape Lookout.

This gives Onslow Bay some protection from the northeast storms of winter, and exposes it well to the southwest summer winds.

For the land-bound traveler, this is a marvelous route to big waters.

It is equipped by nature and man for enjoyment—with convenient waterways, bridges, docks, piers, accommodations, and recreation areas and points of interest. The boatman and angler will find no better service anywhere in North Carolina. Boats and guides are on every hand; and boat service is excellent.

## Morehead City

Coming in from New Bern, the traveler emerges from Croatan National Forest, passes through the outskirts of the Marine Air Base at Cherry Point, and enters Morehead City (pop. 5,144). The highway map doesn't show it, but the city is built on a narrow point of land between Bogue Sound and Calico Creek, the latter named for a shipwreck which strewed calico over its shores.

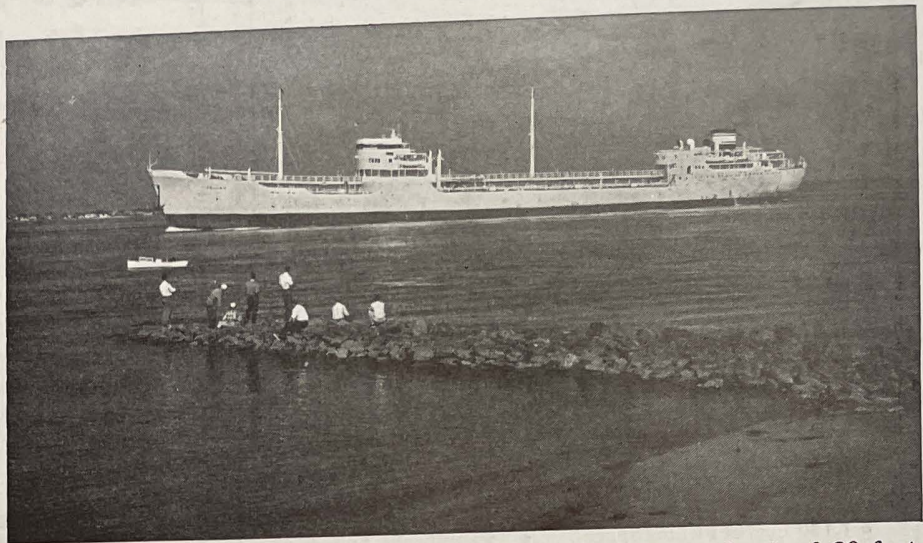
## Bogue Sound

Bogue Sound is quickly reached by turning to the right down any cross street. It is a well-utilized piece of water; at its widest, 4 miles. On its mainland bank, which is high, a handsome residential section runs for a couple of miles. Both natives and summer residents like boating, and transient pleasure craft usually tarry. Hotels, courts, good restaurants, fishing fleet.

## Atlantic Beach

A new bridge runs across at the narrowest place (about half a mile) to Atlantic Beach, a large, well-established and growing resort. Hotels, cottages, courts, fishing pier, amusement center.

This is on Bogue Banks, usually



North Carolina's deepest inlet is Beaufort, kept dredged to a depth of 30 feet. The picture by Hugh Morton shows an ocean vessel entering the inlet where Bogue Banks terminate at Fort Macon and heading for the state port terminal. Good bottom fishing here, and nice wading on the little beach for children. The deepest entry is the mouth of the Cape Fear.

about a quarter to half a mile wide. The beach lies east and west, and its surf is mild. Behind the beach in most places the land descends to salt marshes on the sound, though there is some firm sound-side property. Much of Bogue Banks is covered with shrubs and some trees, especially the west end.

At its east tip is Fort Macon State Park, built around the best military antique in this state—a sunken fortress complete with moat, patio and dungeons, built in 1828-36, and captured by the Yankees in 1862. It has a museum and is a major point of interest.

A public beach with bath house, picnic facilities and concession stand is near by. At the fort, walk on down to Beaufort Inlet, a good place to see North Carolina's deepest and most useful inlet. Big ships come by within shouting distance, bound for the Morehead-Beaufort port, seen to the north.

## Beaufort Inlet

Beaufort Inlet was once called Old Topsail (there's a "new" Old Topsail in Pender County) and has always been a good entry. However, the harbor had no links with the back country for a long time, and the port's usefulness was limited.

Before the Civil War, an attempt was made to connect Beaufort and

New Bern via the Neuse. A canal was dug from Clubfoot Creek (called Cut-foot on old maps) to connect with Harlowe Creek, but it was a failure. The ditch still has water in it, but it is not used.

Opening of the waterway down Adams Creek to Core Creek, thence to Newport River, and thence southward, and especially the coming of the Mullet Line Railway in 1859, gave the inlet its potential.

In the last few years millions have been spent improving the inlet and the port terminal. The entry now carries 30 feet of water, and boats can march right up to the docks without benefit of tugs. The port's traffic is steadily increasing; tobacco is the main export and petroleum products the principal import. (455,702 tons in 1952; 607,519 tons 1953.)

## Fishing Port

To most visitors, Beaufort Inlet is the road to fishing adventures. Out of it every likely morning in the summer pours a numerous fleet of sport-fishing cruisers, bound for the wrecks around which swarm tropical game fish, for the cape, or for the Gulf Stream, 35-land miles away.

## Bogue Banks

The other — west — end of Atlantic Beach runs 30 miles to Bogue



We walked across the narrow point of the hook and came to the second ocean. Here the surf comes in, but quite moderately, because the beach trends toward the northwest, and is protected from the open ocean. Due west and due south lies the Atlantic.

On the second ocean we found the old Breakwater. This is a jetty of rocks — boulders, really — thrown into the sea and serving as a sort of synthetic extension of the natural hook. It was low tide, and the rocks were just exposed. At high tide, they are covered.

The breakwater is a monument to a great scheme that failed. When put down, it was proposed to build a railway bridge to the Cape, and vessels were to stop in there for re-coaling. Nothing came of it, but Jimmy Harker the Elder — who worked on this project — says he is convinced that the railway from Morehead to Beaufort would never have been built except for this dream.

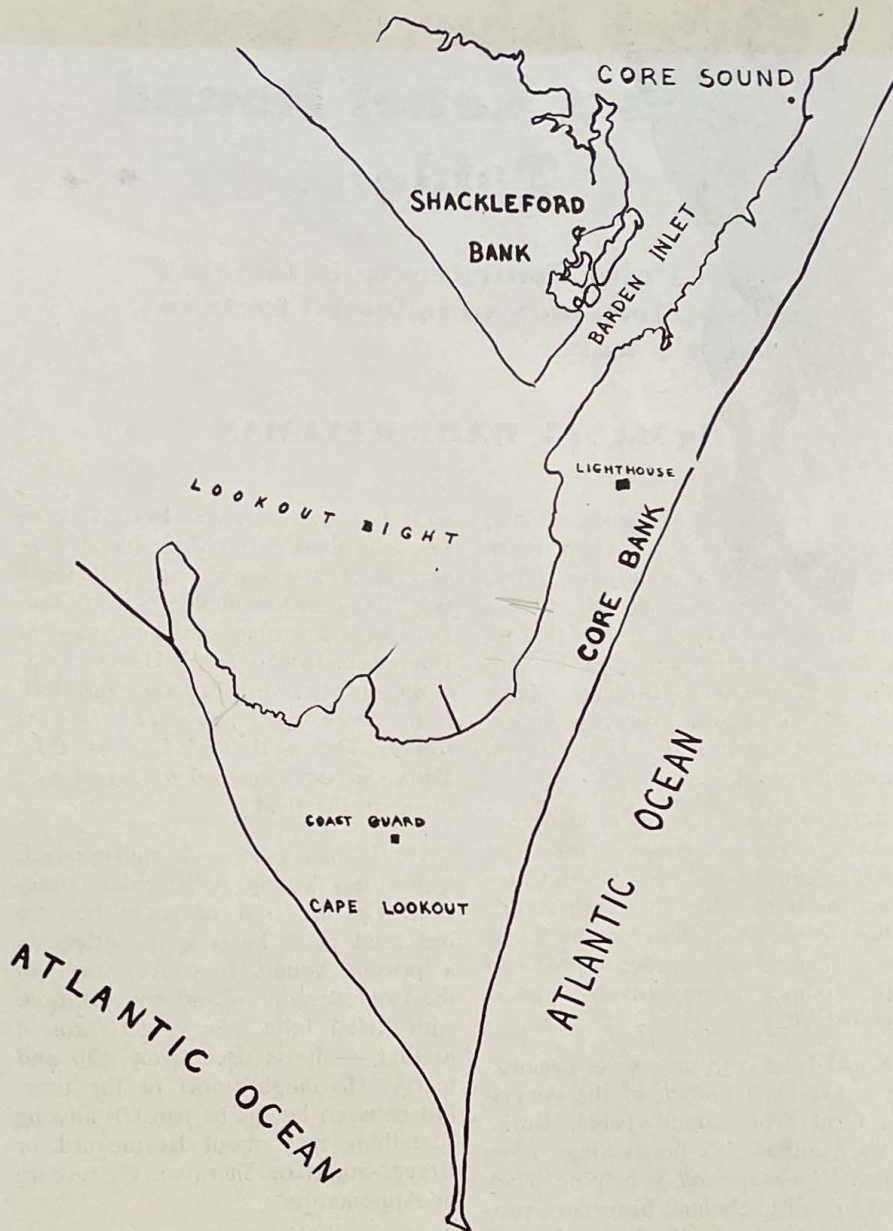
It served another purpose. Sand collected on the rocks and built up a considerable stretch of beach. Consequently the breakwater comes in from the sea and disappears under the sand. How far it runs under the beach I don't know.

That was quite a job, too. Charts show it is 30 to 40 feet deep around the breakwater, and unless they dumped the rocks onto a hidden reef, it took a lot of rock to reach to the surface.

Across Barden's Gut is Shackleford Bank, a high, fine wooded beach, running sharply to the northwest. It is completely undeveloped, except for a few camps, but Beaufort people run across the sound there for swimming, fishing and crabbing. Some day it will be popular.

The Cape area of Core Banks likewise is undeveloped and neglected,

**This rare picture, furnished us by Steve Wall of Wilmington, was made during construction of the Cape Lookout Breakwater.**



though it is an easy trip from Harker's. The lighthouse and Coast Guard station are at the Cape itself, and there are a few fishing camps. You have to go all the way to Drum Inlet before encountering much use, and there the surf fishermen have taken over.

Core Banks are eroding badly, and north of Drum Inlet the dunes have mostly been leveled. Ira Morris, who owns some fishing cabins up there, told me he was doing all he could to keep his property from being blown and washed away. He puts out old car bodies to catch the wind and thus start dunes. Even his garbage is carefully piled on the beach for this purpose.

If the second ocean is still too innocuous, stroll down the beach to Cape

Point and turn toward the east. Here a robust surf sends its hissing combers up to the crown of the beach — our third ocean is highly exposed and rough. Extending beyond Cape Point, but beneath the surface, are Lookout Shoals, the surf breaking violently over them in rough weather and tossing spray high in the air.

The lighthouse is conspicuous, and on a fair day you can see it from Atlantic Beach. It is 169 feet tall, and was rebuilt in 1859 after being first established in 1812 to warn mariners from the shoals.

The tower is painted in black diamonds — officially "black and white diagonally checkered."

A local legend says that the painting  
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Inlet, and is being developed for residences. Halfway down is the interesting fishing village of Salter Path, settled by squatters who successfully maintained their right to possession in a court case some years ago. House-keeping units for rent. Beyond is the new development called Emerald Isle.

Bogue Banks often has fairly high covered dunes, coming almost up to the high-water mark. There is a coast guard station near Bogue Inlet — the Swansboro Lifeboat station.

### Beaufort

Just before highway 70 on the mainland crosses the causeway heading east, it passes the busy Morehead City Yacht Basin—worth a visit — with near by ship-building and repair yards. The causeway crosses Newport River (the waterway) to Inlet Island, then a short bridge spans Gallant Channel. Newport Marshes on the left is a heron rookery. The island on the right is Piver's, site of the U.S. Biological Station and Duke University's Marine School. A road just west of Gallant Channel leads to it.

Time and progress have failed to rub the colonial charm from Beaufort, settled in 1709 as Fishtown. The principal occupation of this area for two centuries has been harvesting the sea, and the pursuit of the numerous and valuable menhaden (fatback) is Beaufort's largest industry today. Accommodations, boats and guides are available here, but the visitor will be more entranced by the modest and sturdy old Bahama-type homes, some of them looking toward the sea, shaded by large ancient oaks, and the gait and atmosphere of leisureliness. It was captured by Spanish privateers in 1747.

The town's business center is on the water, and if you follow this east it furnishes a quiet drive to noxville Point along Taylor Creek, a body of water hemmed in by Shackleford Slue by Carrot Island.

### Shackleford Banks

Here at Beaufort you can hire a boat and visit Shackleford Banks, a wooded sand bank which for 100 years points northwest from Cape Lookout. Only a fisherman's cabin or two remains on the bank, though it once was the site of a thriving village, Dutch City. In the 1800's this ghost town was the center of the South Atlantic's largest whaling industry. The beach on the bank is excellent for swimming.

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