

Carteret County - - Winter Menhaden Capital of the World

Research Shows Possibility Of New Fish Industry

Bonito, Taken Off Coast, Can Be Canned, Marketed As Tuna

Although a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, it's short-sighted to become so dependent on one fishing industry that failure of this one fishery may lead to unnecessary hardship.

For this reason, the possibilities of new fisheries are always being investigated by fishery scientists.

Latest reports indicate that the fish, known here as bonito, can now be marketed commercially as "little tuna."

A recent investigation by Cyrus H. Chilton, marketing expert of the United States Branch of Commercial Fisheries, reveals that in the fall of 1946 a packer on the Eastern Shore of Maryland canned a few thousand cases of little tuna.

Again in 1947 this canner put up a pack of the same fish, with government approval of the designation "tuna" on the label.

The 1947 pack, labeled "Light Meat Tuna," and double that of 1946, was distributed on the New York retail food market and was "favorably received," according to Chilton.

Needless to say, this indicates a potential new industry on the Atlantic coast. The little tuna, known as bonito, false albacore, frigate mackerel, and several other names, have been observed migrating south in November and December off the North Carolina coast.

A Trip on the Bonner L. Willis ...

By Gainer Bryan, Jr. "The women run right along with the fish. When the fish is pore, the women is pore. The women is a heap liver when you got a good fishin' season."



Capt. Bonner L. Willis

The season is now on. For the next 10 weeks the crew's nest looks out of the menhaden boats will be combing the sea for the telltale oil slicks and the signal to the waiting purse boatmen to get their nets ready.

The Bonner L. Willis is typical of the dozens of boats engaged in the menhaden industry which have already begun plying the inshore waters of the Carteret coast.

"We're scavenging now in the last of the summer's runs," Bonner L. Willis, Jr., explains. "The schools we're fishing in now are coming from the inlets and creeks on their way to Florida. There'll be a better run when the fish start coming down from up North."

Bonner, Jr., owns a share in the boat which bears his father's name, along with Charles O. Styron. It is the seventh pogie boat that Captain Willis has been skipper of, beginning with the Columbia, when he was 19.

The three fishermen bought the boat, a former Navy sub-chaser, from the Navy for \$3,800 in January, 1948, and re-outfitted her. As the Air Phoebie, she operated out of Morehead City section base

and in the Panama Canal Zone, with two pancake Diesels of 1200 H. P. each.

Her new owners installed two GM engines of 360 HP combined, in the place of the pancake type, put a waist on the vessel, installed a new shaft alley, pilot house and galley and all new machinery.

The Standard oil dock in Beaufort, where the Bonner L. Willis moors, like many other berthing places for the menhaden fishers in Beaufort and Morehead City, begins to come alive with shadowy figures at 4 a. m. on a day that promises fair weather.

A hulking form which looms among the moving shadows up on deck is none other than the skipper himself, identified by the mellow brown smell of his cigar and the barely visible black and white checks of his plaid shirt.

He greets you a salty "Good Morning" as you come on board.

A cheerful glow penetrates the early chill from a hatchway just forward of midships, not to speak of the more cheerful aroma of frying "streak 'o lean and streak 'o fat," and you go in for too-hot-to-handle tin cup of coffee from Henry Jackson, native of Southport, the Bonner L. Willis' brawny cook.

Small talk gets underway with all eyes focused on the appetizing activities of Henry the Cook, as he dices potatoes and cuts up onions in a panful of beef, then shoves the breakfast hash into the oven.

By 5 a. m. most of the crew have groped their way on board, and all hands turn to for hoisting the purse boats up aft on the davits. A line is secured to the striker boat from the fantail so it will trail aft.

Cook pounds a pan with a ladle, and it's chow down for all hands. A blessing is asked, then the disappearing act starts on the steamers, the "streak 'o lean and streak 'o fat," grits, rolls, coffee and preserves. By the time the last man swabs the syrup out of his tin plate the Bonner L. Willis has cast off from her mooring and is underway.

Up in the pilot house Captain Willis himself is helmsman, and Bonner, Jr. serves as pilot (boat keeper). Marion Lewis, engineer, answers the bells in the engine room.

Alex Dudley is mate of the Bonner L. Willis. See A TRIP Page 2

Setting the Net



Purse boats go to head of school, divide, encircle a spot of fish—the schools are often miles in extent—then meet and bring ends together. Striker, meantime, acts as hitching post for far end of seine.

Grafflin S. Prather Invents New Bailer, Fish Counter

(Exclusive to THE NEWS-TIMES) THE NEWS-TIMES, with this story, publishes for the first time anywhere, information on inventions which will modernize and revolutionize the "machine end" of the menhaden industry.

With each succeeding day the fame of Grafflin S. (Dutch) Prather, 203 S. 19th street, Morehead City, spreads farther and wider in the commercial fishing industry.

His recent inventions, a hydraulic fish bailer, a boat loading apparatus, and an automatic fish counter are the answer to problems that have confronted both engineers and fishermen for years.

The hydraulic fish bailer, as well as the other two pieces of apparatus, are in production now at Morris Machine Works, Baldwinville, N. Y., and will be shipped to purchasers early next year.

Unloads By Pumping The fish bailer, selling for approximately \$60,000, successfully unloads fishing boats by means of pumping. Heretofore, many attempts have been made to pump larger-sized menhaden from the holds of vessels on to docks, but these attempts have failed.

Now, with the assistance of Morris Machine Works, Mr. Prather's invention, tried and proven in actual tests, makes a bailing crew unnecessary. The entire unloading, or bailing operation is controlled by one man located in a glass-enclosed control tower high above the dock where he has good visibility of the hold.

The success of this unit is due principally, engineers say, to specially designed pumping units and a specially designed suction nozzle. The hydraulic bailer is furnished in a number of sizes capable of unloading even the largest sizes of fish at rates ranging from 200,000 to 750,000 fish per hour.

Its makers claim that profits to factory-owners will be increased. See INVENTOR Page 4

25 Per Cent of Nation's Industry Centered Here

From Nov. 1 to April 1 Carteret county is the menhaden capital of the world.

In all of United States there are only 32 menhaden processing plants and nine of these are located in North Carolina.

In 1946, for the first time in 12 years, menhaden constituted the biggest catch in the United States—nine hundred million pounds, or 20 per cent of that year's total catch. This yielded some \$10,000,000 worth of oil, meal, and dry scrap.

During the war 50 per cent of Atlantic coast menhaden fleet, comprised of the best vessels, was transferred to the Navy and Coast Guard, and yet, during that period, there was better than average production, while the pilchard or sardine industry on the West coast, which was taken over by the government, went into a slump.

This resulted in the menhaden fishery replacing the pilchard in No. 1 spot during 1946. In that year approximately 150 million pounds of menhaden were caught in North Carolina, constituting one-sixth of the total catch in the United States. North Carolina's catch was valued at a million and a half dollars as compared with \$974,631 in 1945.

This million and a half dollars is the actual value of the catch to fishermen and not the total value of the industry, which would include the cost of processing, eventual sale of the fish meal, scrap, and oil, and value of the boats and factories involved.

Although catches in 1947 were less than those of the year previous, the total value of the menhaden industry in this county has been quoted \$3,500,352.

Menhaden are the chief source of fish oil, meal and scrap in the United States.

According to the latest statistics on production, issued by the branch of commercial fisheries, Fish and Wildlife Service, the menhaden industry turned out 17,729 tons of fish meal and scrap in June of this year. This was about 400 tons less than during the same period last year.

1948's total for the first six months is larger, however, than the total for the first six months of 1947, 25,058 tons as compared with 20,425 tons, was from tuna and meal and scrap in 1947 was 97,334.

The next highest output, only 20,425 tons, was from tuna and mackerel. The menhaden industry produced 1,072,015 gallons of fish oil in June of this year, approximately 160,000 gallons under the June 1947 output. For the first six months of 1948, the oil output exceeded that of the same period in 1947. Produced from January through June this year were 1,600,330 gallons and for the first six months of last year the total was 1,472,936.

Eight Factories Concentrated In This Coastal Area

55 Vessels Expected to Comprise This Year's Fleet

Within the small area from the eastern limits of Beaufort to a short distance west of Morehead City are located eight fatback processing plants. The only other in the state now operating is the Brunswick Navigation company, Southport.

This county's plants are the following: Morehead City—Carteret Fish and Oil company, operated by Clarence Taylor; R. W. Taylor company, operated by R. W. Taylor; Wallace Fisheries company, operated by George Roberts Wallace; Phillips Fisheries (located between Beaufort and Morehead City), Lewellyn, Jasper, and Orlando Phillips; Beaufort—The Fish Meal company, Harvey Smith; Quinn Menhaden Fisheries, Wallace Quinn; Beaufort Fisheries, W. V. B. Potter; and Morris's Fish company, Lambert R. Morris.

Other plants are located on the eastern coast and the Gulf as follows: New York, one, Delaware, two, New Jersey, three, Virginia, eight, North Carolina, nine, Florida, five, Mississippi three, and Louisiana, one.

Approximately 55 boats will comprise the fleet here this year. Because non-residents are allowed to fish in North Carolina waters, only 25 per cent of these boats are locally owned. The non-resident fishing tax is approximately 50 per cent more than the local, however, and in addition, \$5 must be paid for each man in the crew.

Game, Food Fish Shun Menhaden

A recent investigation by local fishery technologists shows that game fish of these waters do not feed extensively on menhaden, as some sports enthusiasts have contended.

It has been observed that young and adult menhaden on the Atlantic coast are not attacked by schools of bluefish, mackerel, and other species feeding in the same area. Because game fish rarely devour menhaden, purse seining of these fish has not proved destructive to food and game fishes, the experts say.

They point out that in menhaden nets are caught large sharks which destroy the fatback, food, and game fishes. Taking of these sharks, therefore, benefits not only the menhaden fishery but other fisheries as well.

Statistics show that wherever there are large catches of menhaden, there are also large catches of food and game fish, which tends to disprove the theory that the menhaden fishery is detrimental to taking of food and game fishes.

service may be enlisted as seaman recruit. Seaman recruits are transferred to the Coast Guard Recruiting Center, Cape May, N. J., for recruit training.

Numerous Offices Cause Confusion!

The various offices and enterprises located at the former Navy section base seem to be nothing but a source of confusion to "outsiders."

Located there are five different agencies, and at the request of these agencies, their specific names and phone numbers are listed here: North Carolina Commercial Fisheries office, 5411, Morehead City Technical Institute, 9951, Institute of Fisheries Research, 7606, State Highway Patrol, 8531, and Sutton's Dairy.

Sutton's Dairy, however, has only a storage place at the section base. Its office is located in Camp Glenn with the phone number 9956.

The Commercial Fisheries office gets long distance phone calls for men at the Institute of Fisheries Research, the Institute of Fisheries Research gets bills for Morehead City Technical Institute, and lost souls wander around in MCTI workshops looking for a "dairy."

All five of these enterprises are completely separate from one another. The commercial fisheries office is a state government agency, the Institute of Fisheries Research is a division of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, MCTI is part of State college, Raleigh, the State Highway Patrol is comprised of the state's law enforcement officers and has a tiny office just inside the fence at the section base, and the dairy storage place is under the supervision of a business with headquarters at Kinston.

Personnel at the former section base admit that they understand how people can become confused about it all, but they wish the situation would soon become clarified.

New Net Company Begins Business in Carteret

Newcomer to the county's business world is The Standard Net Manufacturing company with offices in Beaufort and Morehead City.

Beaufort Boat Caught Biggest Menhaden in '45

The largest menhaden ever taken, according to fishing statistics, was caught by one of the Fish Meal company boats three years ago off Cape Hatteras.

This one, five years old, measured 20 inches in length and weighed 3 1/2 pounds. A cast was made of it by Dr. H. F. Prytherch at the United States Biological station, Piver's Island, and several models now hang in fish factory offices in this locality.

North Carolina's Oyster Industry

By A. F. Chestnut Oyster Specialist

The oyster represents an important natural resource to the State of North Carolina. During the biennium of July 1944 to June 1946, the value of oysters gathered in this state was over one million dollars. Among the fishery products, the oyster was exceeded in value by the menhaden, shrimp, and sea trout, respectively in 1945.

However, in comparing the production of oysters in North Carolina with other oyster producing states, North Carolina is third or fourth from the bottom of the list.

In 1940, the oysters marketed from this state represented but one percent of the 78 million pounds of oyster meats produced by all the Atlantic and Gulf coast states. Production of oysters increased in this state in 1944 to 474,200 bushels, nearly a four-fold increase over 1940. Since 1944 there has been a gradual decline in production.

The prospects for this season are not too encouraging from the standpoint of a supply of oysters. Reports from the Pamlico Sound area, which produces the bulk of the oysters in this state, indicate that the supply of oysters is limited on the natural beds. Carteret County produces a little over ten percent of the oysters marketed by the state. The figure might be somewhat higher for Carteret County if the production figures from leased areas were readily available.

What Are These Menhaden?

The menhaden, in a sense, is the Atlantic counterpart of the Pacific sardine. It, too, is a member of the herring family, but unlike the Pacific sardine, the menhaden is used almost exclusively in the manufacture of meal and oil. Only small quantities are canned.

The menhaden fishery started in New England, eventually spread southward, and is now centered in the Middle Atlantic states. The annual catch has fluctuated widely, between 150 million pounds in 1892 and 900 million pounds in 1946. In recent years it has averaged near to 600 million pounds.

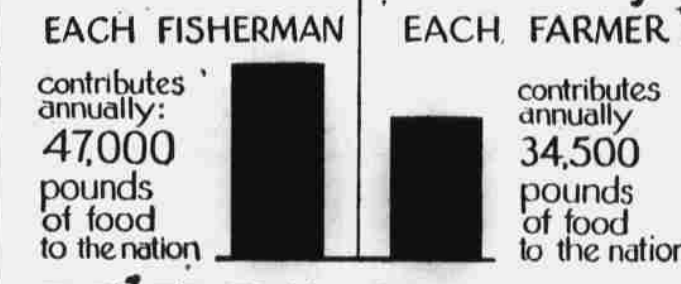
The purse seine is the most important gear for catching menhaden; pound nets are also used, but less importantly.

The meal manufactured from the menhaden was formerly used only for fertilizer and the oil only for industrial purposes, but research by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service has resulted in improvement of both products so that they are now used in animal and poultry feeds. Menhaden roe is saved and prepared as a frozen, salted, or canned product.

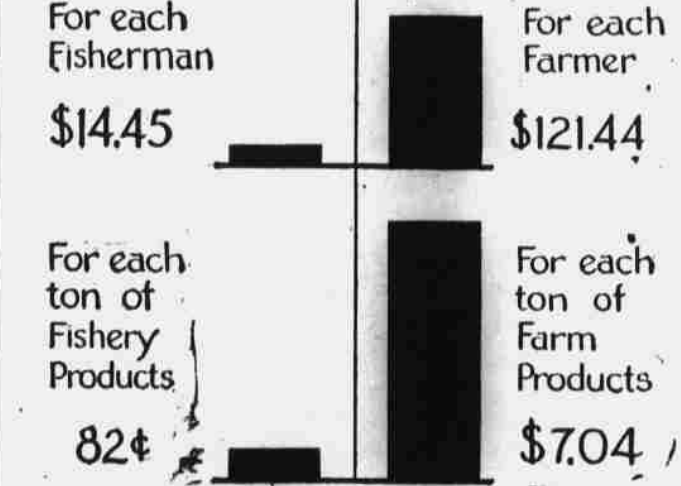
At least three species of menhaden inhabit the Atlantic coast; all are used without differentiation by the fishery. They are a migratory fish which travel in schools and their seasonal migrations control operation of the fishery.

In the spring large schools appear in coastal waters and even in the brackish waters of the bays, sounds, and larger rivers where conditions are favorable for their feeding and growth. The young fish, about an inch long on their arrival, attain an average size during the first year of 5 to 6 inches and a weight of 1 to 1 1/2 ounces.

During the second year they grow to a length of 8 to 10 inches, weigh approximately 7 ounces, and yield variable quantities of oil, depending on latitude (more oil northward than southward) and on variable oceanographic conditions. See MENHADEN Page 2



THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SPENDS ANNUALLY



During the war menhaden and food fishermen were being drafted continually. It was practically impossible for them to get an exemption.

Finally, at the request of local factory owners and other interests in the fishing business, Dr. H. F. Prytherch, fishery technologist, Piver's Island, succeeded in arranging a hearing before a congressional committee asking that exemptions be granted men who were necessary to maintain the nation's fish oil, fish meal and scrap, and food supply.

Pogies Supply Most Oil, Meal

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Coast Guard Undertakes Intensive Recruit Drive

Countless fishermen and sons of fishermen eventually find their way into the armed forces of our country, especially in the Navy, Merchant Marine, or Coast Guard.

Tide Table

Table with columns for HIGH, Tuesday, Nov. 16, and LOW, 1:23 AM, 2:11 PM, Wednesday, Nov. 17, 8:19 AM, 1:59 AM, 8:35 PM, 2:51 PM, Thursday, Nov. 18, 8:59 AM, 2:37 AM, 9:15 PM, 3:33 PM, Friday, Nov. 19, 9:40 AM, 3:18 AM, 10:00 PM, 4:18 PM

In addition to the main recruiting station, Norfolk, Virginia, recruiting stations are located in Morehead City, Charlotte and Wilmington, North Carolina.