

Fisherman's Paradise—

# Town Creek Is Beautiful Stream

By EUGENE FALLON

"It was very strange, especially in dark nights, when your thoughts had wandered to vast themes in other spheres, to feel this faint jerk, which came to interrupt your dreams and link you to Nature again."—From "Walden" by H. D. Thoreau.

From Morehead City to Little River, S. C., they talk of fishing; read of it; write of it, engage in it. The coastal waters of Brunswick are a mecca for fishermen. The seas are an inexhaustible fish-market, always open for customers. This is well and good, but how many residents and non-residents of Brunswick County realize that here, almost within sight of the sea, is some of the finest freshwater fishing in North Carolina?

Where is this wonderful sport centered locally? Not in stocked fish ponds but in that meandering stream called Town Creek. The writer talked to men who have fished this sylvan stream for years. This is what he learned:

Town Creek is thirty miles long and it is deceptively deep—averaging 20 feet, according to former Game Protector H. D. Bowmer who spent 18 years guarding fish and game from overzealous hunters and fishermen.

"I will state that the fish in Town Creek, in number and in size, compare favorably with fish found in any interior county of this state," Bowmer says.

The grizzled woods veteran should know whereof he speaks. Not only has he navigated practically every foot of the forest-shaded freshwater creek and its winding tributaries, but he has worked in Pender, Columbus, Robeson and New Hanover counties, aiding other game protectors in their work. On top of this, Bowmer has been known to drop a line or two on his own time. What sort of fished beauties inhabit

Town Creek?

Largemouth bass, crappie, jack, bream, redbreast, warmouth perch, yellow perch and the inevitable catfish, according to Bowmer. Most of these in goodly number at that. As to size, Bowmer has seen 8 and 10 pound bass pulled from the stream. The former wildlife man himself snatched an eight-poundunker from the creek at a point only four miles from the mouth of the Cape Fear River.

As it turned out, Bowmer was the man to see. Although he operated a party boat out of Southport into the watery world of the vast Atlantic for a number of years, he remained a freshwater disciple of Isaac Walton, whom as everyone knows, was the Compleat Angler, and a man with an aversion to anything smacking of salt brine.

Born in Missouri, near Sedalia, Bowmer admits with a smile that he came down here and to Southport in 1928 with the avowed purpose of looking upon an ocean for the first time. Then 33, he was a little awed at the immensity of the broad Atlantic; awed and fascinated also; so much so that he never went back to the land of mules, Harry Truman and the James Brothers. The big fellow said that a "terrible drought back home" drove him to the moist places. Town Creek was his second discovery.

"A prettier stream I never saw," he announced brightly. "Not so big as the Missouri River of course, but a sight to behold, what with its dark waters, its mossy trees, its twists and its turnings. And you know what? There's not a shoal anywhere in its length. The first day I fished it I caught the limit (then 20 fish) inside a couple hours. Had more than 10 pounds of fish—firm and good-eatin' fish—before I'd gotten started good."

There are people (the writer included) who would rather catch

a one-pound freshwater fish than a big marlin ghostly with salt. Town Creek awaits them.

At the bridge on U. S. Highway 17, the Creek looks puny, but don't let that fool the casual traveler. Up at Snowfield Landing the stream widens to some 350 feet, for example. From the bridge the creek runs eastward a full 20 miles to merge with the Cape Fear.

The writer spent a few hours in the latter portion of last week on the creek. Having seen the famed Suwanee and practically being raised on the banks of the mighty Mississippi, I hereby testify that Brunswick County's Town Creek puts these famed streams to shame with its quiet beauty. About the only body of water which approaches it in scenery is also located in North Carolina—Juniper River in Pasquotank County. This last-named body of water also winds its way through a beautiful forest. The Juniper's water are a shade darker—purportedly gaining its rich color from the roots of the juniper trees which line its banks—but the Juniper is not nearly so deep as Town Creek, and even small fishing craft are often snagged there on its shoals.

At the bridge last Friday and parked in the yard of Frank Rabon, a famed Town Creek huntsman, were two pickup trucks. The drivers were nowhere in sight, Frank's married daughter said that the two separate parties had come down from Red Springs in Robeson County, and from the industrial city of High Point in Guilford, to fish the lovely stream. Both parties, said the lady, were "repeaters" and had been rushing down to Brunswick for years. Now both Robeson and Guilford have lakes and rivers in which fish are to be found, but obviously not in numbers or size to compare with the ones in Town Creek.

To return to Southport and Bowmer for a moment: a game warden by the very nature of his work must be recognized as a pretty good authority on fish and game in his delegated bailiwick. Bowmer reports that he often examined both the license and the catches of fishermen on the creek. It was quite common, he said, to find Canadians afloat on the Brunswick stream; Canadians and folk from various other states as

far afield from Carolina as Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Kentucky. Occasionally, said Bowmer, he would have to issue citations to these and to local sportsmen for exceeding the legal limit of fish.

"Some of the catches," he recalled, "were truly amazing . . . so large in fact that even Town Creek could not afford them as a regular run . . ."

Asked if Town Creek were as good a fishing spot as, say, the Waccamaw River, Bowmer mullied it over for a time. "Six of one," he said finally, "and half-a-dozen of the other. It would be hard to make a pick."

The remarkable part of the information gained by the writer is that such fine freshwater fishing is to be found so very close to the sea. The Waccamaw River, being the dividing line between Brunswick and Columbus counties, might be expected to furnish fine sport. The sea is more than a whoop and a holler, away. But Town Creek, replete with thousands of goodsized fish in water as sweet as rain, is a little on the miraculous side. And yet another surprise is in store for those who visit the deep stream of fresh water. In March and April millions of herring come out of the sea to penetrate far up the creek to spawn and then return to salt water.

Bowmer said that large organizations—clubs and the like—arrange for herring fries along the creek in early springtime. The herring average 2 or 3 to the pound, with some much larger and heavy with roe. For fifty cents, said Bowmer, a net license is purchased and the game protector said that a boat is run a few feet up the creek and net lowered—with all the party needed for a herring fry picked up on the way back. The herring is fried in deep fat and even the bones are eaten, with the exception of the spine bone. Rockfish are also taken and to a great size.

The game protector said that he had seen "a few alligators and a number of moccasins, but not in alarming number." Deer haunt the banks of the lovely creek, according to Bowmer, and all manner of small game, including mink and otter. Town Creek wanders some eight miles above the bridge over Highway 17. Bowmer

## Freshwater Fish



Here is a string of freshwater fish being exhibited by an upstate angler who caught them several years ago while fishing during the month of February in the waters of Town Creek.

would not hazard a guess as to the combined length of the creek and its many offshoots, other than to say it was "longer than you might guess."

And there you have it, a practically unheralded asset to this county, but one upon which nature has laid a lavish hand. Search as you may, I do not believe you will find an area in the Southeast where the finny treasures of fresh water congregate so

close to the ocean in such numbers as in Town Creek. Where else, indeed, do bass brush away herring; bream dart past rockfish in the unending search for food, as in landlocked Town Creek, woods paradise within smell of the ocean?

**SELL!—Want Ads!**



Weather like we have been having for the past few days always brings the cane pole fisherman out of hibernation. Usually they are people who prefer freshwater fishing in the creeks and rivers and ponds that are plentiful in Brunswick county, and some of their luck is fabulously successful.

One of the best reports we have had thus far this spring was of a recent trip made by Capt. Ralph Cammack, who landed 10 bass, ranging in weight from 3-lbs. to 9-lbs. The source of these fish was not disclosed.

Another outstanding catch was reported by Capt. W. W. Vennel of Tranquil Harbour, who got his string of jacks in one of the lakes at the Boiling Spring Lakes Development, where he owns some property and plans to build.

When you go to lining up freshwater fishermen most likely to succeed, there is a local list which should not be overlooked: E. C. Blake, Joe Cochran, Arthur Huntley, to name a few. Another man ready to get into the act is A. K. McCallum, who lives at Tranquil Harbour. His first love is bird hunting, but he confesses that freshwater fishing runs this sport a close second with him.

But these are the fellows with the big reputations. The ones we had reference to in the first paragraph are the folks who load the

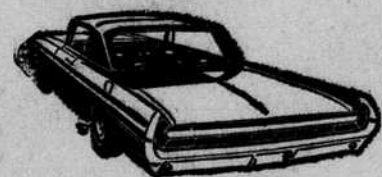
whole family in the car, strap the poles on the side and do cane-pole, riverbank fishing. Not only is this done with the promise of a change of diet—freshwater fish make for good eating—but usually it is the first brush with spring.

That reminds us that one day this week we saw some people stretching their arms and extending their light poles across a fence bordering Highway No. 130 to fish in a protected area of the roadside canal. Now there is a three-mile stretch of canal with no fence, but the idea of getting a hook in the water beyond the wire enclosure was too inviting to turn down. We didn't wait to see the results, but we did wonder what would be the rate of loss on flopping fish being hoisted that high and far from the canal to the roadway.

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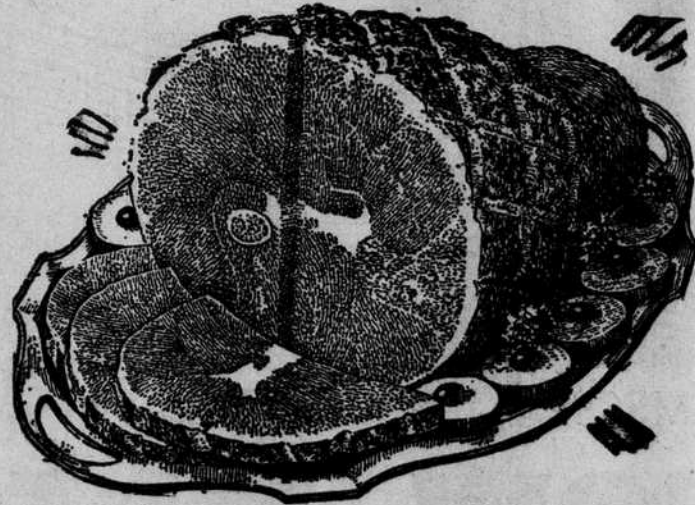
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Frosty Morn

**FRANKS 39c**

1-Lb. Pkg.

Raths-Fresh Frozen

**Neck Bones 10c**

Per Lb.

SUN SPUN

**ICE CREAM**

1/2 Gal.

Assorted Flavors

**49c**

SUN SPUN Old Fashioned

1-Lb. Loaves

**BREAD**

**2 FOR**

**19c**

MIXED

**GREEN SALAD**

**2 lb.**

**25c**

**SPRING ONIONS**

**2 Bunch**

**25c**

VINE RIPE

**TOMATOES**

lb.

**19c**

FAMO

**FLOUR 10-lb. BAG 98c**

LUTER'S

**Pure Lard 4 lb. Pkg. 53c**

O' HENRY

**RICE 5 lb. 59c**

GALVANIZED

**Foot Tubs 69c**

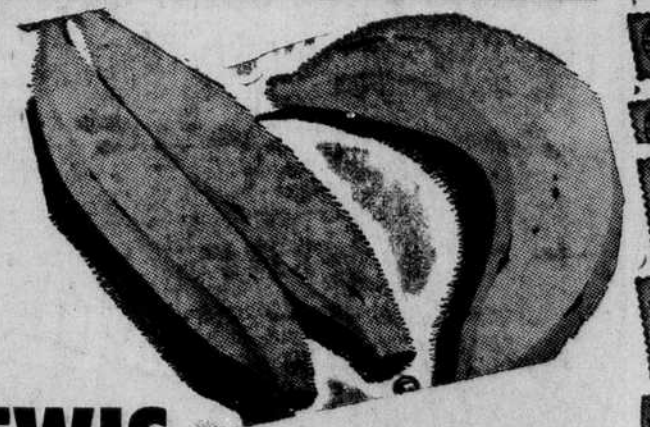
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