

# Conch Shell Horn Called Slaves, Dogs in Bygone Days

Sea shells, one-time homes of creatures of the sea, have been put to varied uses by man. Today they are popular as ornaments for lady, such as earrings, pins, and bracelets; they have been fashioned into lamps, pin cushions, and are continually used as ash trays. Fishermen since the long ago have found that certain types of conch shells make good horns.

W. A. Ellison, jr., director of the Institute of Fisheries Research, Morehead City, has in his possession such a shell which has been in his family well over 150 years. He's shown in the accompanying picture blowing it.



Giving forth with a blast on the conch shell.

### Used as Slave Horn

This shell belonged to Mr. Ellison's great great grandfather who lived on the Roanoke river in Martin county. There it was used as a "slave horn." When the bell was rung at the house to call the slaves, it could not be heard in the fields farthest away. So the overseer in the "middle field," who had the shell slung over his shoulder by means of a rope, would blow it to call the slaves "over yonder."

Since those days the shell has been handed down in the family, used as a door stop and, in general, knocked around, but it's intact, except for one small hole and chipped off points. It's worn smooth on the under side and has a feeling of creamy ivory.

### Dogs Harkened to It

In Mr. Ellison's possum hunting days he used the horn to call his dogs. Today he can blow a healthy blast on the thing that would startle a bridge tender a half mile away into opening the draw in jig time.

Mr. Ellison believes that the shell, common in Florida and the Bahamas, was probably picked up by his great great grandfather's schooner which would sail to the Caribbean to bring back sugar and broadcloth from the West Indies.

To make a horn out of this "pink conch," the spire, or end of it is knocked off. That hole then becomes the mouth piece and the sound comes out over the lip of the shell. The rope in Mr. Ellison's slave horn is about two and a half feet long and is fastened through two holes drilled in the lip.

It may not be as valuable as a jeweled heirloom but it would take more than money to make its present owner part with it.

Receipts from licensing of menhaden boats and gear last year amounted to \$27,999.50 in this state.

## Clams Serve As Fisherman's Staple Product

### New Dredge Method Makes Large Catches of This Type Shellfish Possible

By Dr. A. F. Chestnut

Clams have provided a source of income to Carteret county fishermen for many years. At the turn of the century a clam factory was established at Ocracoke by Mr. J. H. Doxsee, sr., who came from Long Island about 1898.

According to federal statistics, close to 1,200,000 pounds of clam meats were marketed in 1902 from North Carolina, with the bulk presumably handled by the Doxsee company. A few years later the plant moved to Sea Level and shortly after moved to Marco, Florida. From 1908 production of clams averaged about 300,000 pounds a year with some years, as in 1936, as high as 839,000 pounds.

#### 1941 High

In 1941 the highest production yet recorded was 1,302,000 pounds. In 1948 this dropped to 207,000 pounds. Unfortunately, statistics are based on tax receipts or rough estimates, so complete production is not known. However, certain trends are defined and, in general, clam production in North Carolina appears to be dependent upon an available market rather than a supply of clams.

Many of the fishermen have come to regard the clam as a staple product: a backlog against hard times. The clams have apparently always been present in abundance. When shrimping, fishing or crabbing seasons were poor or unprofitable, clamming would at least provide some income although it meant hard work.

#### New Dredging Method

Early this spring a new dredging method was perfected which made possible large catches of clams. There was a ready market for clams since shortages have been evident in the north and the clam industry had prospects of rapid growth. A single boat could dredge as much as 9,000 pounds (approximately 90 pounds of clams in the shell per bushel) with regular catches of from 3,000 to 5,000 pounds per day.

For comparison, a clammer working with a rake has a good day if he can catch as high as 500 pounds of clams. With prices at one and one-half to one and three-quarters of a cent per pound the clammer can gross a sizeable income. The wear and tear on the gear and engine as well as gasoline consumption, as high as 40 gallons per day, however, eats away at the profits. The drain of clams from Core Sound this spring was heavy enough to cause concern to some

who claimed the beds were already depleted.

A survey was undertaken in June by the Institute of Fisheries Research and at least 60 areas were spot-checked by dredging with a commercial boat. In general it appears that clams are still abundant in commercial quantities, even in areas that were heavily dredged. Looking ahead to the future and for the best interests of the fishermen and the industry, now is the time to consider the wisest plans to be followed before another valuable resource is depleted.

At present there is little information available on clams, for few studies have been made. The next few years should bring forth much information for federal and State laboratories from Maine to South Carolina are busy investigating clams.

Four kinds of clams are harvested along the Atlantic coast, only one of which is of commercial importance to North Carolina. This is known by various names — the hard or round clam, quahog, cherrystone and littleneck. The names cherrystone and littleneck designate commercial grades or sizes. Commercially the clams are graded and sold according to size.

Littlenecks average about 600 clams per bushel and sell for \$7

to \$8 per bushel; cherrystones average about 400 clams and sell for \$5.50 to \$6. An intermediate grade or mediums, about 250 clams per bushel, is sometimes offered on the market. Chowder clams are the largest size, averaging from 150 to 175 clams per bushel, and sell for \$3 to \$4 per bushel. The prices quoted here are from the New York market reports for the last week in October.

None of the three clams briefly mentioned below has been found, thus far, in commercial quantities in North Carolina. The ocean quahog, or mahogany clam, is found in the open ocean at depths of from 60 to 150 feet and caught chiefly from Massachusetts to Long Island Sound.

The surf, or skimmer, clam is gathered along the ocean beaches by special dredges with hydraulic attachments to wash the clams out of the sand.

Soft clams, often called manni-noses, are gathered from tidal flats from Maine to Maryland by digging, for the clams are buried from one to two feet below the surface. The bulk of the clams sold along the Atlantic coast go to shucking houses or canneries where the clams are processed for chowder, and the price received for the

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## E. P. McFee Visits Menhaden Plants In Coastal Area

E. P. McFee, director of research, Gorton Pew Fisheries, Gloucester, Mass., was a recent visitor to menhaden plants in this area and at Southport. McFee is one of the leading specialists on fisheries by-products in the United States.

He was greatly impressed with the stickwater installations at Sperti Foods incorporated at Lennoxville. Scientists say that if the valuable by-products can be recovered from the waste now thrown away after the cooking of menhaden, an entire new field will open to the fishing industry.

At present the animal protein factor, commonly called AP factor, added to soybean meal makes soybean meal as valuable for animal feed as fishmeal and at lower cost. This constitutes one of the greatest threats to the fishmeal industry today.

The AP factor can be obtained synthetically or as a by-product in the manufacture of oreomycin, and in by-products of brewing operations.

Use of stickwater plants would also prevent what some states have already defined as pollution when the by-products of menhaden cooking are dumped back in the water.

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