

# Clayton Fulcher Establishes Successful Firm

Clayton Fulcher, Atlantic seafood dealer, has established a most successful fish business.

Now retired, Mr. Fulcher likes to tell of how, practically penniless, he went to Bayboro 25 years ago to take a job as skipper of a run boat for \$10 a week.

Though ill health forced Mr. Fulcher's retirement in 1951, his two sons, Clayton Jr. and Harry, are carrying on very capably in his place. The founder of the business still takes a keen interest in its affairs, and keeping him from frequent daily visits to the office and the plant would be impossible.

When just a lad, Mr. Fulcher began fishing with his father, Christopher. In 1930 he set out for Bayboro — bummed a ride, he relates, because he didn't own a car at that time — and took a job with Leckler Lewis, a Bayboro dealer who now lives in Kinston.

Within a year, Mr. Fulcher was ashore, managing Lewis's fish house. And it wasn't long before the enterprising young fisherman opened his own business in Bayboro.

### Harbor Dredged

The year 1937 brought an important change to Fulcher's home town, Atlantic, when the PWA built a harbor at the point where the Ocracoke mailboat now docks. It was now possible for fishermen to bring their catches to docks built close to shore. Previously, catches had been hauled in over long docks built out over the shallows to the deep water.

Another important change as far as the fishing industry was concerned, was the building at about the same time of an ice plant in Atlantic by Dr. O. C. Daniels of Oriental. Mr. Fulcher purchased this plant a few years later.

Today the Fulcher Seafood Co. extends several hundred feet along the harbor. The docks are crowded with trawlers and run boats, many of them owned by the company. Modern equipment is the order of the day, both in the plant and on the boats.

During the peak of the season, more than 75 employees are on the weekly payroll, which averages 30 to 40 year-round.

Catches of fish are unloaded at the dock by machinery, and dumped into conveying equipment. As the conveyor brings them into the plant to be graded, the fish are washed with fresh water. Grading is done by hand by workers who stand at the sides of the moving conveyor belt and select the fish to be packed.

The shrimp house is a fairly



Three generations — the founder of the Clayton Fulcher Seafood Co., center, stands with his two sons, Harry, and next to Harry, Clayton Jr., and Clayton III, age 9.

new building, extending about 75 feet over the water. In this frame building with a concrete floor, 60 women work at one time, heading shrimp which are conveyed in a trough of flowing water to the automatic grader. The grader separates the catch into four classes. The workers can head as many as 40 boxes, or 4,000 pounds of shrimp in an hour.

### Operate Ice Plant

Shrimp and fish are packed in ice from the company's own plant, which has a capacity of 15 tons per day. As fast as it can be moved, usually within a day, the catch is on its way to the tables of seafood fanciers hundreds of miles away.

The company formerly owned its own fleet of trucks but sold out a few years ago to a New Bern company, which now contracts to do the hauling.

An interesting portion of the plant is the dehydrating section, where all waste material such as shrimp heads and inedible fish, are reduced to scrap for animal feed. This operation is profitable

and eliminates the former practice of taking all waste products to sea to be dumped.

The Fulcher fleet consists of 13 boats, ranging in size from the Ina Lucille, a 71-foot diesel-powered trawler equipped with depth recorder and automatic pilot, down to the run boats, gas-powered vessels less than 40 feet in length. All boats are equipped with radio-telephones.

The four largest boats, all diesel-powered, shrimp in the summer and fish north of Hatteras in the winter. Working at a depth of 15 to 20 fathoms, these boats ply the area from Cape Lookout to the Virginia Capes, catching mostly croakers, trout, and sea mullet.

The Ina Lucille is captained by Henry Fulcher of Atlantic; the 65-foot Clay by Julian Willis of Atlantic, who has been with the company for 20 years; the 60-foot Verna R. by Harry Brickhouse, Atlantic; and the 50-foot Linda Gall by Fred Goodwin of Cedar Island.

Also diesel-powered are the 47-foot trawlers Novelda, skippered by Bradford Nelson of Harkers Island,

and the Betty E., whose captain is Randolph Mason, Atlantic.

Completing the actual fishing fleet are the gas-powered Madoc, captained by Ismael Mason, and the Genevieve with Arlie Daniels as captain.

Five run boats, the Clayton Jr., the Harry, the Muriel, the Marion A., and the Elizabeth, are kept busy supplying the larger boats, which often stay out for a week at a time, bringing in the catch of large boats as well as that of some 80 or 90 other vessels from which the company regularly buys.

### Shop Repairs Boats

The company maintains its own machine shop, where welding, and all sorts of repairs and maintenance is done by Robert Goodwin and Al Jones, both of whom have been with the company 15 years.

Eyes ever open for possible improvement and expansion, the Fulchers plan to replace the wooden building which houses the main part of the shop with a concrete block structure requiring less maintenance.

The elder Clayton Fulcher, son of an Atlantic fisherman and grandson of Capt. "Wall" Morris, Harbor Island lighthouse keeper, married the former Miss Betty Mason of Atlantic in 1916.

His oldest son, Clayton Jr., was graduated from high school in Atlantic in 1937 and from Elon College in 1941. During World War II he served with the Navy, attaining the rank of lieutenant and serving in both the European and the Pacific theatres.

### Served on Minesweeper

After a year and a half aboard a minesweeper in the Mediterranean, he was transferred to the Island of Saipan, where he was made fishing officer for the United States Navy Military Government.

Clayton Jr. is married to the former Miss Iris Jarvis of Straits, and they have a 9-year-old son, Clay.

Mrs. Fulcher owns and operates the Cedar Island Beach fishing pier, about 10 miles east of Atlantic, which extends 1,200 feet over Pamlico Sound. Operated in conjunction with it is the Driftwood Motel. The pier, opened in 1954, was washed away during the Oct. 15, 1954 hurricane, but was rebuilt for the 1955 season.

Clayton has been in the business with his dad since 1946, when he returned from service. Harry has been with the company since his graduation from high school in 1943. The two brothers took over full responsibility in 1951.

Harry, the younger brother, is married to the former Miss Lucille Lewis of Marshallberg. They have

## Duke Laboratory

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of his publications were concerned with the parasitic crustacea which attack fish.

From 1950 to the present Dr. Wanda Sanborn Hunter and Dr. Winona Vernberg have been among our most productive workers. They are making a systematic survey of the parasites of marine animals, studying their complex life cycles which are often found in several marine animals.

In addition, they are conducting physiological studies on some of the more important parasites. To the writer's knowledge, no parasitological work is being done by the state or federal laboratories of this area.

Even though every staff member from the botany and zoology departments of Duke University is free to work on research problems of his own choosing, it is gratifying to the director of the Duke University Marine Laboratory that so many are working on marine problems. It makes for a well balanced program.

The administration of Duke University and the executive committee of the marine laboratory wish to encourage investigators from other colleges and universities to share our facilities. They diversify our program and provide for an exchange of ideas on marine problems.

A separate research building

two children; Linda Gail is 7 and Harry Michael, 3.

### Active in Church

The Fulcher family is active in the church life of the community, all holding offices in the Baptist Church or Sunday School. Clayton Sr. serves on the board of trustees of the church, which is now building a handsome new brick structure, completely air-conditioned, at a cost of about \$125,000. Clayton Jr. is a deacon and Harry is a Sunday School teacher.

Looking out at the company whose success his hard work and business ability have made possible, the retired member of the firm often muses about what he could have done 35 years ago if he had just one of the fishing boats which his company now owns.

"Home is the sailor, home from the sea . . . But one gets the impression that he wishes he weren't!"

was built in 1940 and another was added in 1954. Since 1950 a new hard rubber saltwater system has been installed and modern equipment such as a refrigerated centrifuge, chlorimeter, dark room, etc. have been added. With better facilities, investigators are coming from more distant areas.

To encourage research workers from the southeast to take advantage of our laboratory, four \$500 postdoctoral grants are given annually.

The second main function of the

Duke University Marine Laboratory is to train marine biologists. Fundamental courses are offered on the Duke University campus throughout the scholastic year, but in the summer all senior graduate work in botany and zoology is offered at the marine laboratory in Beaufort.

They carry six semester hours credit and may be taken by students from any college or university in the nation. It has been the custom to offer three basic courses each summer, such as marine ecology, marine invertebrate zoology, and either marine algae or marine microbiology. These courses are given by staff members from Duke University who have taught at Beaufort for many years.

To broaden the program and to allow some variety, the fourth course is usually changed each year and given by men from other

institutions. For example, Duke University in cooperation with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service offered quantitative biology in 1950, biology of populations in 1951, and bio-hydraulics in 1952.

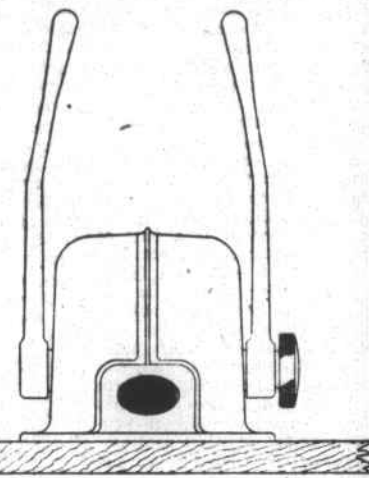
Outstanding men were procured to give these courses and they were attended, very largely, by men from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

In 1953, Dr. Donald Pritchard, director of Chesapeake Bay Institute of Johns Hopkins University, was obtained to offer oceanography. In 1954 and this summer, radiation biology was given.

The instructional program at the Duke University Marine Laboratory has drawn students from the mid-west, north and south. It has offered training to men in the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and to graduate students who are going to devote their life to problems in marine biology.

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