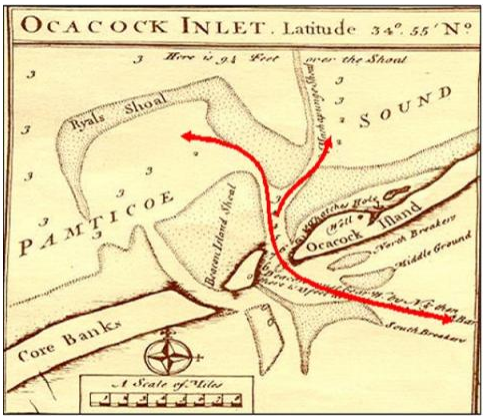
Blackbeard and Shipwrecks - Ocracock Inlet



This image depicts part of a map called *Ocacock Inlet*, including the following printed notation: "A 1733 chart of Ocracoke Inlet by Edward Moseley." (Note the different spellings of the inlet's name, including today's "Ocracoke").

The inlet, an estuary situated in the Outer Banks of North Carolina, connects the Atlantic Ocean to Pamlico Sound. It also separates the islands of Portsmouth and Ocracoke.

This place was the scene of a battle, in 1718, between the British Royal Navy (led by Lieutenant Robert Maynard) and Edward Teach (the pirate known as "Blackbeard").

At the end of the fighting, the pirates had lost (and Blackheard's severed head was on the bowsprit of Maynard's ship).

This map is still an important resource. It allows modern researchers to examine how the Inlet has changed during hundreds of years. It also helps to explain why there have been so many shipwrecks in the area. We learn about that from NOAA (the U.S. federal government's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration):

> *Ocracoke Inlet, North Carolina, is shown on Edward Moseley's map of 1733. This map, when compared with other historic maps, enabled researchers to determine how the inlet has changed over several hundred years. Some shipwrecks are no longer in or near the present inlet. The map clearly shows the obstructions at the mouth of the inlet that caused numerous ships to run aground.*

In fact, there have been so many shipwrecks in this area that we now have an "Ocracoke Shipwreck Survey." Ocean Explorer, part of NOAA's website, tells us about the survey:

> *An extraordinary increase in the number of identified shipwreck sites since the beginning of the Ocracoke Shipwreck Survey has led to the development of a Geographic Information System (GIS), which can provide overlays of data by location, date, ship type, and other criteria. The GIS is then used to create survey blocks, like those in the image above, in areas identified as most likely to contain shipwrecks or vessel clusters.*

How many ships have been wrecked in the area of North Carolina's Outer Banks? The answer may surprise you:

> *The unique combination of environmental, geological, and climatic forces at work in this region make it a perpetual hazard to safe navigation. Unfortunately for mariners Cape Hatteras is an obstacle that must be negotiated by all ships traveling along the eastern coast of the United States. Thousands of vessels of different types and nationality have come to grief along the North Carolina coast.* (Dr. Timothy Runyan, Maritime Studies Program, East Carolina University.)

Isn't it interesting that a map from 1733 remains an important part of today's studies?

Credits:

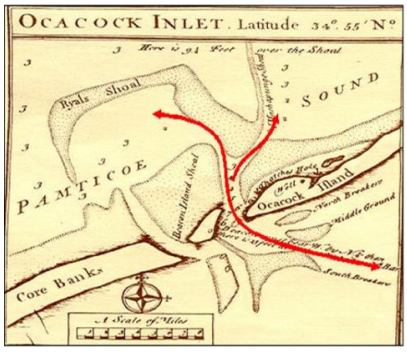
Image online, courtesy NOAA.

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