



The Coast

Ever since English settlers first reached North Carolina's coast in 1585, the area has been an abundant source for myth and legend. Pirates, shipwrecks, Civil War naval battles, and German submarines all figure in the rich history of the region. Often defined by the scenic Outer Banks and their distinctive lighthouses, the North Carolina coast is the setting for many recent novels, including popular works by Karen Robards and Nicholas Sparks, the Civil War novels of William Trotter, and the final novel by Tim McLaurin.

Ellyn Bache. *Riggs Park*. New York: Harlequin Next, 2005.

When Barbara is diagnosed with cancer, she calls on her lifelong best friend Marilyn for support. Marilyn has problems of her own, but pushes these aside and rushes to Washington, D.C. Together the two women explore their friendship and their past, uncovering along the way secrets from their childhood together in the Washington suburb of Riggs Park. Although most of the novel is set in the Washington area, it begins and ends at Marilyn's home in Wrightsville Beach.

Doris Betts. *The River to Pickle Beach*. New York: Harper & Row, 1972.

In the turbulent summer of 1968, Jack and Bebe Sellars take over the management of Pickerel Beach on the North Carolina coast. Hoping for a peaceful, easy summer, their plans are disrupted by the arrival of several difficult people, including a violent, racist former Army buddy of Jack's. The story, though written in third-person, is told from the alternating viewpoints of Bebe and Jack, with the events of the summer triggering memories of their past together. Throughout the novel, the racial violence and volatile national political struggles never seem far from the surface.

Wanda Canada. *Island Murders*. Wilmington, N.C.: Coastal Carolina Press, 2001.

Figure Eight Island, the exclusive resort community near Wilmington, seems an unlikely place for a crime wave, but dead bodies are showing up all over the island. The first suspect is Carroll Davenport, a local developer who has had a few too many friends and relatives who died violent deaths. But Carroll is soon cleared and decides to pursue the case on her own. In the course of investigating the increasingly complicated case, Carroll covers a lot of ground, visiting many sites in the Wilmington area that will be familiar to locals.

Wanda Canada. *Cape Fear Murders*. Wilmington, N.C.: Coastal Carolina Press, 2003.

Carroll Davenport, a local developer who has an unlucky habit of getting drawn into murder investigations, is back on the case when she finds North Carolina State Senator William Burriss III

murdered alongside his mistress. The killers may or may not have ties to Carroll's mafioso late husband. With the help of Ben Satterwhite, an FBI agent and possible love interest, Carroll chases criminals all over Wilmington and Wrightsville Beach in this sequel to Canada's 2001 novel *Island Murders*.

Elisa L. Carbone. *Storm Warriors*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001.

Nathan Williams and his grandfather live on Pea Island, on North Carolina's Outer Banks, in 1895. Nathan is fascinated by the "surfmens," the African American rescue crew at the United States Life-Saving Station. Nathan dreams of joining them and spends all of his free time observing the surfmen and studying their books. Over the course of the novel, Nathan experiences the harsh injustice of racism, participates in a daring rescue, and begins to learn that there may be a better life for him beyond the island. Although written for a younger audience, this novel gives a wealth of detail about the surfmen based on research on the real-life rescue crew.

Diane Chamberlain. *Her Mother's Shadow*. Don Mills, Ont.: Mira Books, 2004.

Lacey O'Neill grew up in a small community on the Outer Banks, trying to live up to the memory of her mother, who was murdered when Lacey was thirteen. Now in her mid-twenties, Lacey is suddenly thrust into a mother's role, when she agrees to become the guardian of Mackenzie, the daughter of Lacey's best friend who was killed tragically in a car accident. As the two struggle to overcome the tragedy and get to know each other, Lacey finds herself with feelings for both a local man who may be Mackenzie's father, and the lawyer who has just arrived in town to work on a case. The novel is set in the fictional coastal town of Kiss River.

Blake Crouch. *Locked Doors*. New York: St. Martin's, 2005.

Andrew Thomas is hiding out in Alaska, framed for a crime he didn't commit. But he can't lay low forever. When people close to him start disappearing and there is a killing spree in his home town of Davidson, N.C., Thomas is forced out of hiding, certain that one of his old enemies is on the loose. Thomas returns to North Carolina and chases the bad guys all the way to a dramatic showdown on Ocracoke Island.

Philip Gerard. *Cape Fear Rising*. Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, 1994.

When Sam Jenks and his wife Gray Ellen move from Chicago to Wilmington, N.C. in August 1898, they find a city in turmoil. Amidst a vicious, racist political campaign, a group of white citizens begin to mobilize against the city's large African American population. Based on the actual events of the November 1898 Wilmington riot that led to the murder of many African Americans and the violent overthrow of the city's government, Gerard dramatizes one of the most significant periods in North Carolina history.

Homer Hickham. *The Keeper's Son*. New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2003.

The tiny, fictional island of Killakeet, on North Carolina's outer banks, is shaken when German U-Boats appear off the coast in 1941. Coast Guard Lt. Josh Thurlow, the son of the keeper of the lighthouse, takes it upon himself to protect his home. Leading an ill-equipped bunch of locals, Thurlow takes to the sea. The novel follows the emotional struggles of Thurlow and his father and also gives detailed descriptions of submarine warfare during World War II.

Michael Grant Jaffe. *Whirlwind*. New York: Norton, 2004.

Lucas Proudly is a weatherman in the fictional coastal town of Bentleyville. His career is going nowhere, and his only romantic prospect -- the bartender at a local strip club -- shows no sign of returning his affections. Then Hurricane Isabel hits the state. Lucas's beachfront coverage is shown nationwide and his

apparent death is captured on film. But Lucas survives, emerging from a wrecked building several days later to find himself an instant celebrity.

Tim McLaurin. *Another Son of Man*. Asheboro, N.C.: Down Home Press, 2004.

When Nate dies of cancer in Chapel Hill, a small group of his friends carry out his final wish by bringing his ashes to his favorite spot on the North Carolina coast. They run into trouble when they travel unawares into a coming hurricane. The travelers are saved by a mysterious man known only as "Son." The novel combines action, as the would-be pilgrims battle the elements; mystery, as they try to understand the enigmatic Son; and tragedy, as they remember the final days of their friend. *Another Son of Man* was published posthumously, two years after McLaurin's death in 2002.

B.J. Mountford. *Bloodlines of Shackleford Banks*. Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, 2004.

Wild ponies have run wild for centuries on the Outer Banks island of Shackleford Banks. But modern development and diseases have taken their toll, and each year volunteers gather to roundup the ponies for a checkup. This year, however, things don't go quite as usual. One of the horses is missing, and there are signs of foul play. The stakes quickly escalate when one of the volunteers is murdered. Park Service worker Roberta "Bert" Lenehan pursues the case, in the course of which she encounters greedy developers and environmental activists, and studies the long lineage of the horses.

B.J. Mountford. *Sea-Born Women*. Winston-Salem, N.C.: John F. Blair, 2002.

Wanting to start her life anew in a quiet, out-of-the-way place, Roberta ("Bert") Lenehan takes a job in the coastal town of Portsmouth, N.C. But peace and quiet never come as she is disturbed by mysterious noises in the night. When Bert becomes romantically involved with a younger man, she learns from him about the legend of the "Sea-Born Woman," whose ghost is supposed to aid sailors but, as many are beginning to fear, may be involved in recent unsolved murders.

Bill Morris. *Saltwater Cowboys*. Wilmington: Coastal Carolina Press, 2004.

The residents of a small maritime community in Down East Carteret County are surprised when sea turtles began showing up in places as odd as a hotel jacuzzi and the mayor's truck. Dodge Lawson, who operates a sort of marine salvage service when he's not fishing, has the job of hauling the turtles back out to sea. Dodge becomes embroiled in the turtle mystery, which seems to be the work of environmental activists. Much of this funny novel is given to the story of the honest and genuine Down Easters who are simply trying to save their community from an onslaught of aggressive developers and inconsiderate recreational fishermen, while being harassed by a documentary filmmaker who pokes his nose into everything, and the never-ending parade of university researchers studying the local dialect.

David Payne. *Early from the Dance*. New York: Doubleday, 2003.

Adam Jenrette, a successful artist in New York, has just suffered a breakdown and returned home to Killdeer, N.C., a fictional town on the Outer Banks. Things there don't exactly get any easier. Adam runs into Jane McRae, with whom he had spent a memorable summer when they were both eighteen. Adam and Jane find that they are still emotional about the suicide of a common friend from Killdeer. Together they reminisce about that long-ago summer and reflect on how choices they made then have echoed throughout their lives.

David Payne. *Gravesend Light*. New York: Doubleday, 2000.

Joe Madden is a professor at Duke who has come to the Outer Banks to study the inhabitants of a small fishing village. Joe moves into his family's home on the fictional island of Little Roanoke, and soon after begins an affair with Day Shaughnessy, a doctor at the local hospital. The narrative alternates between Joe's

voice and Day's, describing the evolution of their relationship, and Joe's research. The citizens of Little Roanoke play a prominent role in the novel as Joe tries to understand the unique way of life on the Outer Banks.

Karen Robards. *Beachcomber*. New York, Atria Books, 2003.

Christy Petrino sought a simple vacation at Ocracoke Island after breaking up with her mobster boyfriend. But when somebody makes an attempt on her life, she must figure out whether the New Jersey mob or an Outer Banks serial killer (nicknamed "The Beachcomber") is out to get her. This romantic suspense novel teams Christy with FBI agent Luke Rand. Those familiar with Ocracoke may raise an eyebrow at Robards's description of "cliffs on the island, tall rocky cliffs leaning out over the ocean"

Sarah Shaber. *The Professor Simon Shaw Mysteries*.

Simon Said. New York: St. Martin's, 1997.

Snipe Hunt. New York: St. Martin's, 2000.

The Fugitive King. New York: St. Martin's, 2002.

The Bug Funeral. New York: St. Martin's, 2004.

Simon Shaw is a professor of history at historic (but fictional) Kenan College in downtown Raleigh. Dr. Shaw's specialty is historical anthropology, and this leads to his being called into action in each novel to investigate a long-unsolved crime. Although Simon lives and works in contemporary Raleigh, his adventures often take him to other parts of the state. In *Snipe Hunt* Simon digs into North Carolina's maritime history while on vacation at the Outer Banks, while in *The Fugitive King* he looks into a crime in his hometown of Boone.

Nicholas Sparks. *The Guardian*. New York: Warner Books, 2004.

Julie Berenson is only twenty-five when her husband dies of a brain tumor and she struggles to decide how to go on with her life. As the novel progresses, Julie begins to date again, but one of the men she encounters becomes too possessive too quickly and when somebody begins stalking her, she fears that it's him. The "guardian" is a Great Dane puppy, a posthumous gift from her late husband. The novel is set in the coastal town of Swansboro.

William R. Trotter. *The Sands of Pride* (New York: Avalon, 2002) and *The Fires of Pride* (New York: Carrol & Graf, 2003).

In these two novels, Trotter dramatizes many of the important events and individuals in coastal North Carolina during the Civil War. *The Sands of Pride* is set in Wilmington during 1861 to 1863 when the port city was the center of Confederate blockade-running efforts. *The Fires of Pride* of pride continues the story through the end of the war, with a long section on the Union assault on Fort Fisher. Trotter is able to trace several narratives throughout the chaos of battle, with many of his characters based on actual people. Trotter is the author of a multi-volume history of the Civil War in North Carolina, and can be counted in these novels to provide accurate depictions of events, and careful attention to historic detail.