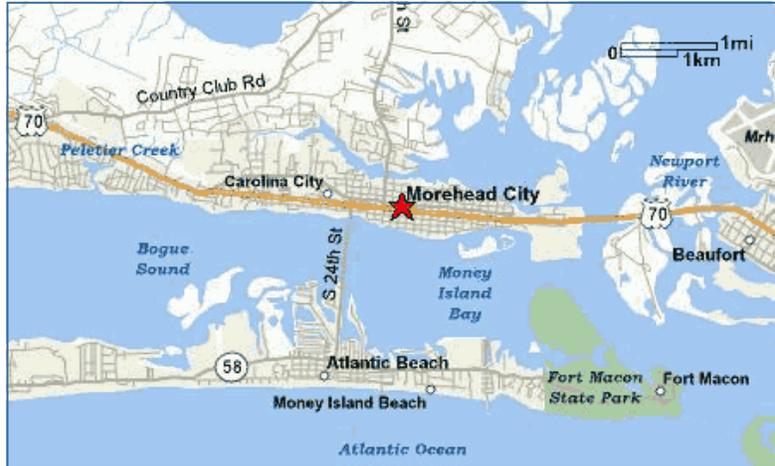


**ACTIVITY:** Diving (Hard hat)  
**CASE:** GSAF 1853.00.00.c  
**DATE:** Late September or October 1853  
**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Atlantic Ocean at Morehead, North Carolina.

**NAME:** Mark Dare  
**DESCRIPTION:** He was a commercial diver.

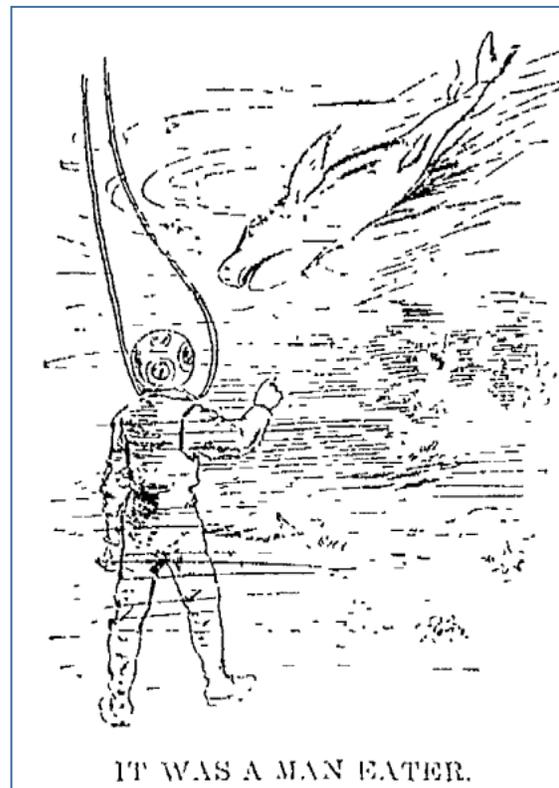


### BACKGROUND

On September 22, 1853, the coasting vessel *Atlanta* capsized during a squall and sank just inside the bar near Morehead, North Carolina. Owners of the craft contracted with a diving company to raise the vessel and salvage as much of her cargo as possible.

**NARRATIVE:** Mark Dare and another diver were contracted to salvage the wreck. On his fourth dive, Mark was outside the sunken vessel, waiting for signal from the diver inside when he noticed a large shadow moving above him.

“In a moment every fish had disappeared,” said the diver. “My first thought was that it was the shadow of a passing boat. But suddenly a feeling of terror seized me. . . . By this time the shadow had come nearer and taken shape. I had scarcely needed a glance to show me that it was a man-eater, and of the largest size. . . . All I could do was to remain still until it left. It lay off 20 or 24 feet, just outside the rigging of the ship, its body motionless, its fins barely stirring the water about its gills. I saw it turn on one side, its mouth open, and heard the teeth snap.”



The shark swam past the diver, then turned and grasped the diver's copper breastplate. “Having seized me,” said Dare, “the [shark] went tearing through the water.”

When the diver's air hose snapped, air bubbled into the shark's mouth, and it released the diver. Apparently enough air remained in the diver's suit to bring him to the surface because he was picked up, unconscious, 50 yards from the boat.

**INJURY:** The diver was not injured, but there were “several ragged holes punched in the metallic part of his diving suit.”

**SPECIES:** The incident involved a white shark.

**SOURCE:** The Fort Wayne Gazette, Sunday January 24, 1897

IN A SHARK'S MOUTH.



**I** WAS while cruising about off the east coast of North Carolina that I first made the acquaintance of Mark Dare, one of the best-known divers for milcs around.

He was a man of some 72 years when I first met him, but one would have set him down at not more than 55 to look at him. Tall, straight as a stick, of powerful build, and with a face denoting in every lineament the daring fearlessness of his nature, he was a man calculated to inspire admiration wherever he went.

He was as full of stories as one of the tallest buildings in New York City, and nothing pleased him better than to relate his experiences to an attentive listener. Among other yarns, he spun to me the following adventure, which, he stated, was the narrowest escape he had ever had from death:

It seems the Atlanta, one of the finest coasting vessels on the coast of North Carolina and Georgia, was capsized in a squall on the 22d of September, 1853, and sank just inside the bar, near the little town of Morehead.

The owners of the craft contracted with a diving company to have her raised and to recover as much of her cargo as was still serviceable.

Mark Dare and another diver were engaged to do the work. They made several successful descents, but on the fourth trip Mark met with the adventure of which I spoke.

His comrade signaled hastily to be drawn up, and when he had been hauled into the boat he related how Dare had been seized by a huge white shark and carried off. But scarcely had he done speaking when Mark rose from the water fifty yards from the boat and was picked up insensible, with several ragged holes punched in the metallic part of his diving suit. Means were successfully adopted to bring him round, and, when he had sufficiently recovered, he told of his thrilling experience.

"As you know," said he, "we had made our fourth descent, and while my companions clambered into the submerged vessel, I waited on the ground till he should attach the cords to draw something out. I was about to signal to be drawn up for a moment's rest, when I noticed a shadowy body moving at some distance above my head and toward me.

"In a moment every fish had disappeared as if by magic; the very crustaceans themselves lay still upon the sand, and the scuttle-fish scurried away as fast as they could.

"I was not thinking of danger, and my first thought was that it was the shadow of a passing boat. But suddenly a feeling of terror seized me. I felt impelled to flee from something I knew not what. A vague horror seemed grasping me, such as a child fancies when leaving a darkened room.

"By this time the shadow had come nearer and taken shape. It had scarcely needed a glance to show me that it was a man-eater, and of the largest size.

"Had I signaled to be drawn up then it would have been certain death. All I could do was to remain still until it left. It lay off twenty or twenty-five feet, just outside the rigging of the ship, its body motionless, its fins barely stirring the water about its gills.

"I was sure that the fish was thirty feet long, and so near that I could see its double row of white teeth. Involuntarily I shrank closer to the side of the wreck. But my first movement betrayed my presence.

"I saw the shining eyes fixed upon me. It quivered and then it darted at me like a streak of lightning. I shrank still closer to the side of the ship.

"I saw it turn on one side, its mouth open, and heard the teeth snap viciously as it darted past me. It had missed me, but only for a moment. The sweep of its great tail had thrown me forward.

"The shark turned, balanced itself, and, with quivering tail, it darted at me again. There was no escape this time. It turned on its back as it swooped down on me like a hawk on a sparrow.

"The cavernous jaws opened and the IT WAS A MAN EATER.

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"The shark turned, balanced itself, and, with quivering tail, it darted at me again. There was no escape this time. It turned on its back as it swooped down on me like a hawk on a sparrow.

"The cavernous jaws opened and the long, shiny teeth grated as they closed on my metal harness. It had me! I could feel those sharp teeth grinding upon my copper breastplate as it tried to bite me in two; for, fortunately it had caught me just across the middle, where I was best protected.

"Having seized me, the man-eater went tearing through the water. I could feel it bound forward at every stroke of its tail. Had it not been for my copper helmet, my head would have been torn off by the rush through the water.

"I was perfectly conscious, but somehow I felt no terror at all. There seemed only a feeling of numbness. I wondered how long it would be before those teeth would crunch through, and whether they would strike first into my back or my breast.

"All these thoughts passed through my brain in an instant, but in that time the connecting air tube had been snapped and my head appeared ready to burst with pressure, while the monster's teeth kept crunching, crunching away upon my harness.

"Then I felt the cold water begin to pour in, and heard the bubble, bubble, bubble, as the air escaped into the shark's mouth.

"I began to hear great guns, and to see fireworks and rainbows and sunshine, and all kinds of pretty things. Then I thought I was floating away on a rosy summer cloud, dreaming to the sounds of sweet music, which every moment became fainter and fainter, until only a low hum reached me. Then all became blank.

"The shark might have eaten me then at his leisure, and I never would have been the wiser. Whatever induced the creature to release me, of course I shall never know—perhaps he found me too tough—but, be that as it may, you can imagine my astonishment and delight when I opened my eyes on board this boat and saw you fellows around me."

SAILOR LAD.