

North Carolina's "Clam King"

## NC SEAFOOD TRADITIONS

Williston, North Carolina was once known as the "Clam Capital of the World." Prominently located on the waterfront of this "Down East" Community in Carteret County, Willis Brothers Seafood was owned and operated by [Elmer "Clam King" Willis](#).



His fish house was filled with women shucking clams, cleaning shrimp and grading fish according to size. Willis Brothers was one of the largest suppliers of clams to the Heinz Food Company. In fact, the company sold more clams to Heinz for its clam chowder than any seafood business in the country.

Four North Carolina Governors attended clambakes at Elmer's clam house, highlighting the breadth and scope of his success. Not only did his business thrive but Elmer and his wife Pearl helped raise money by holding clam bakes for the community schools.

In 1967, Elmer Willis won the North Carolina State University Food Science Award given each year to a person in the food industry who had made contributions to the educational, industrial and business aspects of food production. Though Mr. Willis had only an 8th grade education, he had the business acumen of Donald Trump as well as the work ethic of a Downeast fisherman.

For more information on the history of our Down East communities, go to [Core Sound](#).

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