

Royal, Benjamin Franklin ^[1]

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by Douglas J. McMillan, 1994

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A photograph of Dr. Benjamin Franklin Royal, circa 1932-1938. Image from the Internet Archive / N.C. Government & Heritage Library.

^[2]Benjamin Franklin Royal, physician, surgeon, and founder and chief of staff of the original Morehead City Hospital, was born in Morehead City, the son of John, Jr. (a railroad conductor) and Mary Franklin Royal. His mother was the daughter of J. R. and Harriet Pigott Franklin. The Royal family traces its North Carolina ancestry to Marmaduke and Sarah Royal, who lived in the Shackleford Banks–Harkers Island District in 1800. His paternal grandparents were John (keeper of the lighthouse on Shackleford Banks) and Caledonia Moore. John inherited fifty acres of Banks land from his father, Marmaduke.

Benjamin F. Royal was graduated from [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[3] in 1906 and Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia with an M.D. degree in 1909. He interned at the Methodist Episcopal Hospital in Philadelphia, practiced six months in Shelby, N.C., and began a lifelong practice in Morehead City in 1910.

Royal soon was taking care of the personnel at the isolated Coast Guard station in the area north and southwest of Beaufort. He opened Morehead City's first hospital in 1911 with seven beds. In 1918 he founded a new hospital with twenty-six beds. When influenza raged in Morehead City as elsewhere that year, Royal and his faithful nurse, Miss Edna Broadway, saw the community through the epidemic. In 1928 the town of Morehead City took over operation of Royal's hospital.

In 1942 the Atlantic Ocean off the North Carolina coast was a war zone as the Battle of the Carolina Capes raged. Altogether some 250 American and Allied ships were sunk by [German U-boats](#) ^[4] with around 3,500 men from the ships in need of Royal's medical and hospital care. Many of these were burn victims from the flaming oil from sunken ships; it is said that Royal did not lose a single one of these patients.

In addition to practicing medicine, he was a leader in state, regional, and local civic affairs. Royal was a promoter of the North Carolina State Port, a member of the North Carolina Navigation and Pilotage Commission, a trustee of The University of North Carolina School of Medicine, a member of the State Board of Medical Examiners, and vice-president and president of the [North Carolina Medical Society](#) ^[5]. He formally retired from his medical practice on 10 Apr. 1962. His hobbies were ornithology and wood carving. He died in a nursing home in Durham and was buried in Bay View Cemetery, Morehead City. Royal married Annie McTyeire Adams on 15 Oct. 1914. They were the parents of three children: Benjamin Franklin, Jr., who was killed in World War II, Florence F., and Ruth Adams.

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