A popular, sticky Boardwalk treat, the term "salt water taffy" originated on the Atlantic City Boardwalk in

The first to sell a taffy confection of any sort on the Boardwalk, so far as can be discovered, were Ritchie Brothers and Windle W. Hollis, both of whom sold taffy about 1880. Popular legend says that another candy seller, David Bradley, who operated a candy stand at St. James Place and the Boardwalk, had an accident one night in August 1883. A storm splashed seawater over his candy stock. The story continues that a young lady purchased some taffy the next day, and Bradley remarked that it was "Salt Water Taffy". The name stuck, and because Bradley did not copyright or trademark the product, other candy-makers used it to advertise their own taffy.

The first mention of a Salt Water Taffy business in the Atlantic City City Directory was in 1889 under the name "Hollis, Windle W., Original Salt Water Taffy". Today, there are numerous sellers of the colorful treat on the Boardwalk and beyond.

Would you like to make your own salt water taffy? Try this recipe at Exploratorium .

Related Resources in the Heston Collection

Frank Butler. Book of the Boardwalk . Atlantic City, NJ: Haines and Co., 1952.

Arthur H. Gager III. The History of Salt Water Taffy and the Life of Joseph F. Fralinger. N.p.: 2 ed., 1983.

Bryant Simon. Boardwalk of Dreams . New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Subject Files:
Salt Water Taffy

Archival Collections:
Please see the Heston Collection Indexes at the Reference Desk to locate photographs and postcards on this subject.