

# Sunset Beach

This island was purchased in 1955 by Mannon Gore, whose family still owns considerable property in Sunset Beach. In 1961, he constructed the pontoon bridge that still serves the community, the only one of its kind on the eastern seaboard. A water system was installed in 1980. The town has a population of 191 and 1,076 housing units.

## Sunset Beach Information

Town Hall.....579-6297  
 Town Administrator.....Linda Fluegel  
 Mayor, Jim Gordon.....579-6625  
 Building Inspector.....Larry Crim  
 Council Members:  
 Ed Gore Sr., Mayor pro tem  
 Minnie Hunt  
 Mary Griffith  
 Donald Safrith  
 Police Chief, William Hill.....579-2151  
 Fire Chief, Carson Todd.....842-9449  
 Nearest Volunteer Rescue Squads:  
 Calabash Squad.....579-7474  
 Shallotte Squad.....754-6666

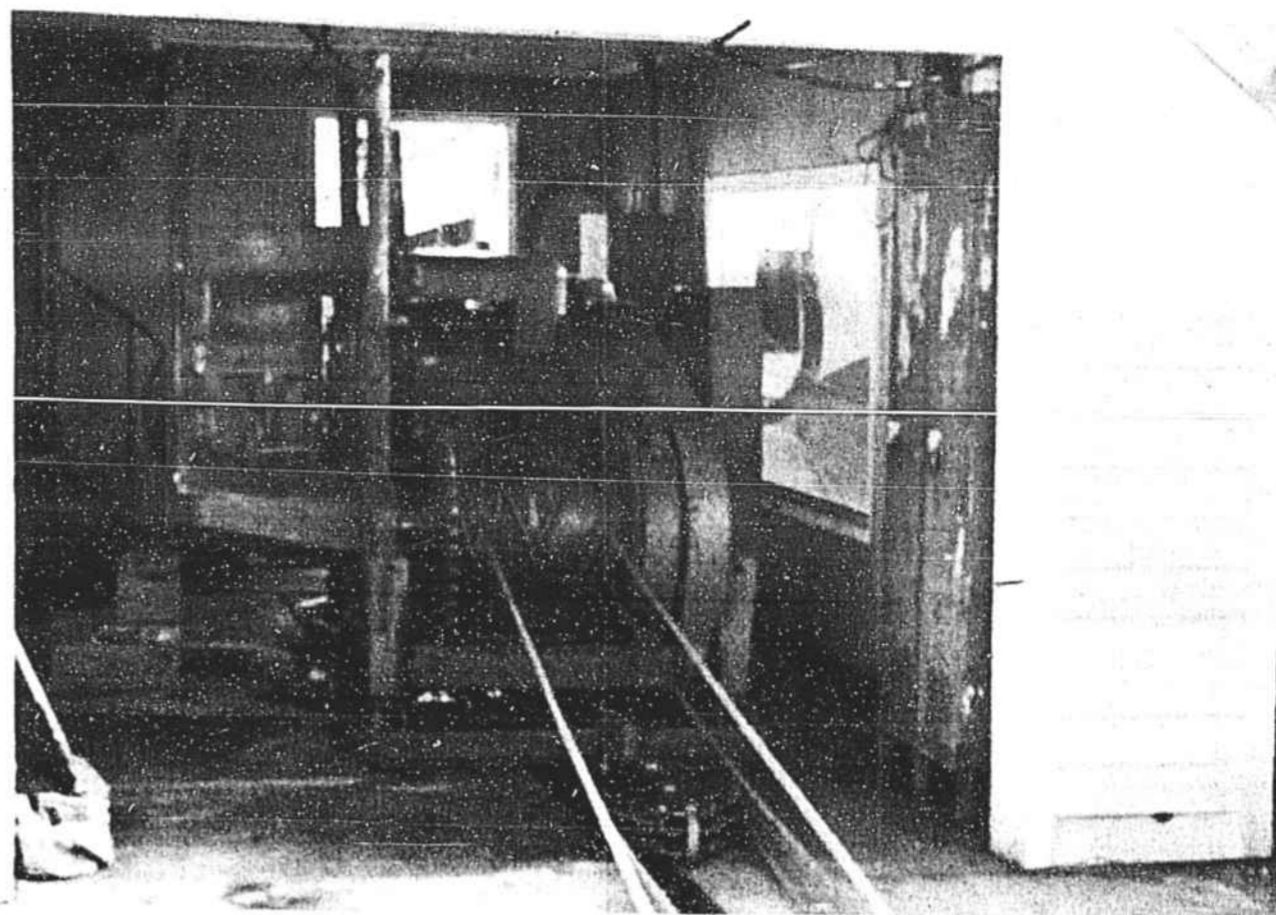
## Sunset Beach Regulations

The town of Sunset Beach prohibits, within the city limits:

- Fireworks;
- Discharge of firearms;
- Public drunkenness;
- Charcoal fires in rental units without written permission of the owners;
- Excessive noise;

While visiting Sunset Beach, please DO:

- Obey posted speed limits, 30 miles per hour;
- Keep dogs on a leash or fenced;
- Clean up litter you have dropped on beach or streets.



THIS GIANT WINCH is the mechanism that swings open the Sunset Beach bridge, allowing water traffic to proceed down the Intracoastal Waterway. STAFF PHOTO BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN

# Sunset Beach Is Home Of A Vanishing Species

BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN

A man in grease-stained work clothes sits at a desk in a tiny frame house and gazes out the window. A stream of cars pass before his window going in one direction, then in the other.

Flowing under the little house is the Intracoastal Waterway, where, suddenly the outline of a yacht can be seen in the distance.

Watching carefully, the man waits till the vessel comes a little closer, then he rises and steps to a nearby panel of buttons, yellow, green, red and black. He presses two of these and red-and-white wooden barriers on either side of his house descend to block the flow of traffic.

As cars halt on both sides, the man hurries down a winding steel staircase to the barge on which the house rests and mounts a huge orange contraption, resembling a tractor.

As he shifts its gears, cables grind noisily and the barge swings out into the middle of the waterway, leaving a passageway for the yacht.

When it has passed, he shifts again and the barge returns to its former position, linking the Sunset Beach mainland to its island community.

This flotation swing bridge is nearly extinct. Robert Cox of the bridge division of the N.C. Department of Transportation said there's not another like it on the eastern seaboard.

And, following the examples of Holden and Ocean Isle Beach, Sunset is in the process of replacing this

relic of the past with a concrete high-rise bridge by 1990.

It was a marvel back in 1957-58 when Mannon C. Gore, who owned the island, built it, then operated it for three-and-a-half years.

His son, Ed Gore, a Sunset Beach developer and member of the town council, said his father opened and closed the bridge daily till midnight. "After that, if there was an emergency, residents could call on him to open it at any hour," Gore said.

In 1961 Mannon Gore turned over the bridge to the state DOT, which has maintained it ever since. "We replaced it with a new one in '61," Cox said, "and again in 1974 and in 1983. This is the fourth bridge at Sunset Beach."

According to Cox, Gore sank his original bridge near the Sunset Beach pier as an artificial reef.

Sunset Beach was, for a long time, the best-kept secret of the South Brunswick Islands, retaining its natural, family-oriented charm, with a minimum of commercialism and a small population.

That is changing now, and a spurt in tourism has made the quaint flotation bridge "a bottleneck to vehicular and marine traffic," according to Ed Gore.

"It has to open frequently for small

boats," he said, "and that slows the flow of cars that want to come and go onto the island."

In response, a resolution by the past town administration called for replacement of the bridge by "whatever the state deemed necessary," which Gore said will be the high-rise, because it's the least expensive.

"Our high-rise will be different from the others," he added, "because we've asked for a bike path to be incorporated into the design, so the rails will be higher."

He expects a "spectacular view" from the new bridge, because 4,000

feet of marsh lies between the mainland and the island homes. "You won't just see rooftops," he said.

The DOT is acquiring rights-of-way for the project now, and construction is scheduled for 1989-90.

Soon there will be no little house with its panel of buttons and machinery for swinging it out into the waterway. There will be no bridge tender to make that trip downstairs about 30 times every day.

The boats, that now number more than 50 daily, will skim right under a concrete structure that will permit an unrestrained flow of cars back

and forth from the beach.

Everything will be easier and vehicles can move faster, but a sliver of the past that is charming and personal will be gone.

The sights and sounds and smell of the Atlantic Ocean are coveted treasures, and they have been worth the price of a few minutes spent waiting in the car, watching the unhurried movement of a barge as it swings gracefully aside, welcoming fishing boats and yachts to the other side of the bridge.

That's a ceremony that will be missed in the headlong dash over the concrete.

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