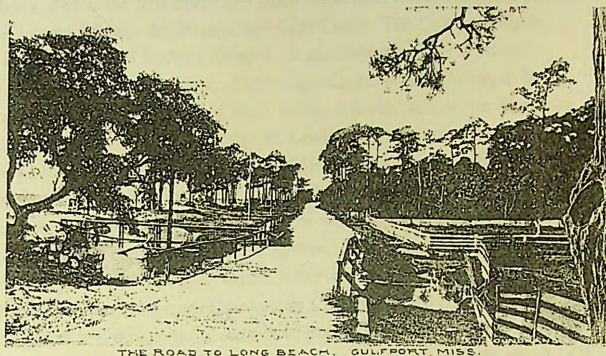


In several years of work in this fashion something happened in many places along the route, and some places were better than others. In some places the workers dug up stumps and palmettos. In other places the road snaked around the obstacles. Twenty-five small log bridges floored by two-by-six planks were built over watercourses flowing from the land into the Gulf.



*A circa 1901 view of a bridge on the front beach shell drive located between Gulfport and Long Beach. This was one of 25 small bridges located along the beach road from Biloxi to Pass Christian. The Old Spanish Trail (U.S. Highway 90) later followed this stretch of road. Photo courtesy of the Jon Richard Lewis Postcard Collection.*

Nothing at all happened in the two miles west of Biloxi. In the late 1880s, Biloxi merchants were not happy about that situation because wealthy New Orleanians owning homes to the west of that impassable section could not drive their carriages into Biloxi to shop. Those people could get to Biloxi if they wished to backtrack to Mississippi City, go up Courthouse Road, and then travel eastward to Biloxi via Pass Road. In other words, a person would have to drive a carriage for some 18 or 20 miles one way for a lack of two miles of road the other way. Many other Biloxians wanted the beach road because the Harrison County Courthouse was at Mississippi City. They wanted a beach road so they would not have to travel the much longer back way through Handsboro in order to perform civic duties.

In the absence of county action in improving the beach drive, individuals sometimes personally paid for such improvements. Some wealthy homeowners on the beach near Mississippi City paid to have loads of oyster shells spread on the road in the front of their homes to provide a hard pavement for their carriages. Frank Howard outdid all others by building a 48,000 brick breakwater to protect his beachfront drive on east beach Biloxi.

Throughout 1889, 1890, and 1891, the editor of the *Biloxi Herald* newspaper railed at the county supervisors about the beach road or rather the lack of it. On January 2, 1892, he broadsided the board of supervisors with this: "Heretofore it has been deemed sufficient for each member to alone look after the interests of his own district, but this is not the right way. In contemplation of law each member of the Board represents the whole county." While he did not actually use the phrase "county unit system," he certainly captured the gist of it. On April 30, the editor pointed out that convicts could be put to work on the road, and he ended by demanding the shelling of the whole front road from Henderson Point to Point Cadet.

The road finally reached Biloxi in mid 1892, and the supervisors were shelling at vari-