

ous points when on October 1, 1893, the first hurricane since 1860 (and likely the most powerful one of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century) smashed into the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The October Storm destroyed the beach road and all 25 small bridges along it. It also destroyed the railroad bridges across the Bay of St. Louis and Biloxi Bay. At Pascagoula the storm destroyed both railroad bridges and washed away the three miles of track between them. All of the hundreds of wharves, both private and public, from Biloxi to Bay St. Louis fell victim to the storm.

In the years following the October Storm, the people of the Mississippi Gulf Coast rebuilt their piers, wharves, bathhouses, and railroad bridges. Work continued on the Harrison County beach road in the time-honored desultory fashion. The supervisors shelled the roads in some places and not in others. They rebuilt the small bridges in some places and not in others. "Holes to holes and home for dinner" remained the order of the day.

In 1897 the state legislature passed a law empowering a county board of supervisors to elect a county road commissioner to oversee improvement of public roads. However, since the legislators did not require the appointment of such a commissioner, the law had little effect. On May 8, 1897, referring to this emasculated law, the editor of the *Biloxi Herald* opined, "A proposed road law or a dog tax has a paralyzing effect on the average legislator, and he always approaches them by a circuitous route which sometimes lands him in close proximity but never clearly up to scratch."

Three years later, a harbinger of the greatest transportation revolution in history since the invention of the wheel rolled into Biloxi on four of them. The state legislature might continue to be ambivalent about a dog tax, but the solons were about to be shocked out of their road law paralysis.

On June 26, 1900, the *Biloxi Herald* editor crowed:

"Look out for the automobile. Frank Schaffer's automobile has not yet arrived, but when it comes it will be a novelty.

Mr. Frank Schaffer has received information that his automobile will reach Biloxi at 10:00 today, and he will at once be able to place it into service. Those who want to engage its services or take a ride in the novel vehicle should leave their orders with him. We daresay it will create a sensation on the streets of Biloxi when it appears."

Two days later the *Biloxi Herald* announced, "Frank Schaffer's automobile yesterday created quite a sensation on the streets. Everybody was out to see it and many rode behind it. As the girls would say, 'it was out of sight.'" Schaffer did a land-office business at 25 cents a ride.

Not only was the contraption the first in Biloxi, but according to the *Jackson Evening News*, "Biloxi is the only city in the state that has such a vehicle." So Biloxi claimed the accolade for first automobile in Mississippi. Three days after its arrival Biloxi achieved honors for