

Name: Jim Senter

Abstract Title: Building the Bridge to Paradise

Abstract Description: In the 1920s, the traditional livelihoods of the Outer Banks were in decline. Migratory bird laws and waterfowl hunting restrictions put market gunners out of business while environmental degradation led to decreasing fishing stocks. Tourism was seen as a way into a different future. Bridging Currituck Sound was the first step in building that future. Local resident, mainland businessmen and out-of-state groups vied to see who would buy up the beachfront and build a bridge to their properties. Dare County promoted itself as a natural paradise in which to escape the bustle of crowded mainland cities. At the same time, tourist attractions such as the Wright Memorial in Kitty Hawk were planned and built. Using newspaper accounts, deed records, minutes of county commissioners' meetings and other primary sources, I tell the story of the race to build a bridge to paradise.