

## ABSTRACT

Title of Document: SOMBREROS AND MOTORCYCLES:  
PLACE STUDIES ON TOURISM AND  
IDENTITY IN MODERN SOUTH CAROLINA

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This dissertation examines the rise of tourism as an important social and economic force in the U.S. South through place studies of tourist sites in South Carolina. The roadside attraction South of the Border and the historically black town of Atlantic Beach are analyzed as touriscapes that provide historical narratives foregrounding the connections between place and southern identity in the modern era. Touriscapes are defined as places where perspectives overlap and identities intersect to produce spaces of serious cultural and historical significance as well as recreation and fun. Both of these touriscapes were enacted as tourism developed and Jim Crow segregation began to crumble, and they have survived into the twenty-first century. They are sites of commercial development, resistance, and political strife that should be studied, engaged, and preserved for future generations to better understand the complexity of southern history, culture, and identity.

SOMBREROS AND MOTORCYCLES: PLACE STUDIES ON TOURISM AND  
IDENTITY IN MODERN SOUTH CAROLINA

By

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the  
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
2008

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# Dedication

To my father, Paul Michael King

## Acknowledgments

I want to thank Professor Mary Corbin Sies for helping the intellectual focus of this work develop and for the rigor with which she read it and the time she took to discuss it with me. I came to the University of Maryland, College Park, to learn about cultural landscape studies. As a student in the Department of American Studies, I encountered a rich and rigorous exploration of place that has changed my work and my perspective on American culture. Professor Nancy Struna has assisted my intellectual development from my first semester at the University of Maryland, and I am better for it. I sincerely thank the rest of my dissertation committee, Professors Angel David Nieves, Leslie Rowland, and Psyche Williams-Forson, for their time and expertise in helping me to develop and focus my interests in tourism and southern identity.

My family in South Carolina, especially my mother, Frances Earle King, provided unending love and support that have profoundly influenced my emotional and intellectual development. Thanks to my grandparents, Earl and Mary Frances Lewis, my brother and sister, Paul King and Robyn Ward, and my nephews Rodney and Lee Ward, for their love, encouragement, and company. In addition, my friend, copy editor, and sounding board down South, Rebecca Snurr, read and commented on this draft and accompanied me on many trips to South of the Border. My nephew Rodney and friends Darren and Alison Thrash-Davis attended the 2007 Atlantic Beach Bikefest with me as part of my research for this project.

Thanks to my colleagues at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) for their support as I wrote this dissertation, especially Professor Jason

Loviglio, who read and offered comments on this work. I would also like to thank my many wonderful students at UMBC who have inspired me to continue to see things with new eyes every semester.

My most wonderful, caring, and considerate husband, Bay Woods, took the time out of his busy duties as teacher and administrator to read every part of this work numerous times and offer invaluable comment, even though I never once read his dissertation on Plato's heroes and villains. Without traveling the road I have with Bay, I would never have been able to complete this dissertation. Our dogs, Waylon and Mr. Bojangles, provided walks when I needed a shift of perspective and fresh air.

Finally, I thank my father, to whom this work is dedicated, for inspiring wonder in me from an early age. He always encouraged me to seek out knowledge and made me feel as if I could accomplish anything I set my mind to. He was a great man who grew up in a segregated South, but was able to see beyond it. He taught me tolerance and to always stand up for what I believe in but never to stand so hard that I could not be moved by what was right. He was an educator and an inspiration to generations. He read numerous parts of this work and was my trusted research partner from the beginning, and, even when he was sick and in pain, he accompanied me to make photocopies and visit archives. He will travel with me in all I do, always.

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## Chapter 1: Introducing the Touriscape

If it's tourist season, why can't we shoot them?

- Bumper sticker (seen on a car in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina)

My opening quote addresses the tensions between two aspects of leisure culture—hunting and tourism. In a tone that is meant to be comical and antagonistic, this bumper sticker combines the practice of hunting, which can be both work and leisure, with tourism, which simultaneously provides work to some and leisure to others. The bumper sticker offers a criticism of the traffic and crowds produced when visitors flock to the warm coastal region of the South Carolina coast. In an intentional play on the meanings of “season,” a term related to natural change, this quote makes the tensions of social change in a southern community, where both hunting and tourism are aspects of everyday life, apparent. The display of this item further signifies that the driver is an insider (a local) defining his identity against the annoying outsiders (tourists). This bumper sticker expresses a disdain for tourists; however, today it is the tourism, and not the more traditional activity of hunting, that provides the dominant forms of work and amusement in Myrtle Beach.



As the weather warms, travelers who head south on Interstate 95 towards the state of South Carolina will pass numerous billboards advertising South of the Border, the immense neon roadside attraction with a Mexican

bordertown theme. Quite a few will actually stop at this site of consumer culture and architectural kitsch. The weary will lodge at the motor inn. The hungry will eat at one of the many restaurants—perhaps the Hot Tamale, the Sombrero Restaurant, or Pedro’s Diner. Shoppers will browse the numerous souvenir shops. The largest shops, Mexico Shop East and West, are on opposite sides of Highway 301, which served as a main north-south route before being displaced by the interstate. Few will know that along Highway 301 in 1949, South of the Border began as a small cinder-block structure built to sell beer to those living in a neighboring “dry” county. Today, restless children encouraged by flashy billboards to “keep yelling” at their parents to stop at South of the Border may be allowed to visit the amusement park, play games in the arcade, climb the large animal statues placed throughout the complex, buy fireworks from Fort Pedro, or enjoy Pedro’s Golf of Mexico, a miniature golf course. Some will simply get gas and move on.

Many of those passing through South of the Border will head further south to the Grand Strand region, sixty miles of recreational beaches stretching from the northern border of South Carolina southward through Horry and Georgetown Counties. Most will be headed to Myrtle Beach to enjoy the ocean, the shopping, and the entertainment venues. Few have heard of Atlantic Beach, South Carolina, unless they are traveling specifically for the annual Bikefest, a motorcycle festival for African Americans. Tourists driving alongside the beach on Ocean Boulevard must take a detour bypassing Atlantic Beach. This traffic pattern is a remnant of Jim Crow segregation, a symbol of a time when the four-block Atlantic Beach community was the only recreational beach along the South Carolina coast for African Americans.

Today, as millions of tourists drive through Atlantic Beach on Highway 17, few know that from 29<sup>th</sup> to 32<sup>nd</sup> Avenues North lies the last bit of undeveloped oceanfront property on the Grand Strand. If travelers do head toward the ocean into the heart of Atlantic Beach on 31<sup>st</sup> Avenue, they will end up at a cul-de-sac where the old Atlantic Beach pavilion once stood and musicians played while people danced beside the sea. From the cul-de-sac, the town's borders loom in the distance. To either side, dense shrubbery, chain-link fences, and high-rise condominiums signify the development going on around, but not in, Atlantic Beach.



The small town's built environment includes only a few aging homes, bars, and motels, but a fascinating history and proud people lie in the shadows of those high-rise condominiums. While millions pass through South of the Border and Atlantic Beach, few know the controversial stories of these tourist sites and their relationship to southern culture.

South of the Border and Atlantic Beach may seem to have little in common except for their location in the northeastern corner of the state of South Carolina and the fact that they stand out in contrast to their surroundings. The fact that these places do not simply blend in with the larger space that surrounds them is directly linked to their importance as objects of study. In his 1996 book *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression*, Tim Cresswell explores events that upset the traditional notions of things being “in their place.” “Although ‘out of place’ is

logically secondary to ‘in place,’” he argues, “it may come first existentially. That is to say, we may have to experience some geographical transgression before we realize that a boundary even existed.”<sup>1</sup> On the surface, it is the physical *differences* of South of the Border and Atlantic Beach, in relation to their surrounding communities, that make them *similar*.

The 300-acre South of the Border complex draws tourists off the road because the built environment disrupts the monotony of driving the I-95 corridor. The gaudy tourist attraction, one of the largest employers in Dillon County, brings millions of visitors and millions of dollars each year to an economically depressed area of the state referred to as the “Corridor of Shame” for its deplorable public education system.<sup>2</sup> By contrast, Atlantic Beach’s lack of economic stability and tourist facilities is an abnormality in the booming hospitality industries of the Grand Strand region.

Atlantic Beach is a chartered municipality of just under one hundred acres. South of the Border is a private business of just over three hundred acres. The different spatial, organizational, and economic qualities of these two tourist attractions express the myriad effects of increased tourism on southern communities. For all of the differences of these tourist attractions, they share histories that express the contested nature of identity in a changing region known for its hostility to change. While these places physically stand out, socially they fit into the conflicts concerning race and identity in the post World War II South.

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<sup>1</sup> Tim Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Corridor of Shame: The Neglect of South Carolina’s Rural Schools*, Ferillo and Associates, DVD directed by Bud Ferillo, 2005. Ferillo’s 2005 documentary dramatized the case of *Abbeville vs. State of South Carolina*, in which local residents brought suit against the state for violating the right of its children to a public education.

Both South of the Border and Atlantic Beach transgress the dominant image of southern tourism—romanticized plantation homes, war memorials, gardens, southern belles and cavaliers—that is often associated with the historic city of Charleston, South Carolina. Both places offer interesting and important cultural histories that show tourism’s influence on work and leisure in the modern South. These sites of tourism are important touchstones for the shifting cultural and economic terrain of southern identity in a Newer South—a region where service work, especially the “hospitality industry,” is replacing traditional agriculture and New South manufacturing as the defining mode of production.

In this dissertation, southern identity in the Newer South is intimately tied to the consumption of images, goods, and places. These sites of tourism and their communities developed during the early twentieth century. Dillon County, where South of the Border is located, was formed in 1910. The beaches that make up the Grand Strand, where Atlantic Beach is located, were difficult to reach until the first major road and bridge were built in 1914.<sup>3</sup> Advances in transportation and tourism were the catalysts for this Newer South that emerged in the postwar period. In *Where The Memories Grow: History Memory, and Southern Identity* Fitzhugh Brundage argues: “The advent of automobile tourism has led to the commercially oriented celebration of southern architecture, landscape, and history, and in turn historical

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<sup>3</sup> Marion County, which Dillon County was carved from in 1910, has a Revolutionary and Civil War history as well as New South manufacturing and trade. The area that later became Dillon was not developed until the railroad line was built in the twentieth century. Within Horry County, Conway was the county seat and engaged in the turpentine and timber trade. Because of the swamps, rivers, and inlets, traveling from Conway to the beach required a ferry. See Durward T. Stokes, *The History of Dillon County, South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1978) and Barbara F. Stokes, *Myrtle Beach: A History, 1990-1980* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007).

memory in the South has come to reflect the ubiquitous influence of tourism.”<sup>4</sup> While Brundage’s statement is true for “historic” tourist sites like Charleston, in Dillon and Horry Counties it is the act of creating rather than remembering that is central. It is the combination of creating as a process of remembering anew that the Newer South represents. Within this new construction of southernness, marginal places like Dillon and Atlantic Beach are able to move from the periphery to the center.

In the Newer South, identity is not presented as a monolithic or static category. The term “southern identity” encompasses the overarching system in which diverse regional identities are constructed, lived, and reformulated in relation to social and historical changes. The term “southern identities” refers to the various identities possible within this system. The Newer South is a place where identity is constantly being reformulated through the movement of people, goods, and cultural representations. The Newer South acknowledges the role of mass media and travel on southern identity formation. The traces of this process can be read on the landscape and in the ways these sites of tourism are produced and consumed.<sup>5</sup>

The basic purpose of this work is to trace how identity in the Newer South changes in relationship to shifting notions of place and modes of production. I trace how recreational tourism became a driving economic and cultural force in the twentieth century in Horry and Dillon Counties and, therefore, transformed ordinaries

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<sup>4</sup> Fitzhugh Brundage, *Where The Memories Grow: History Memory, and Southern Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of New Carolina Press, 2000), 10.

<sup>5</sup> This way of looking at southern identity is influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure’s notions of *langue* and *parole* in *The Course on General Linguistics* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1988, 1913); Michael Omi and Howard Winant’s idea of racial formation in *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge, 1986,1989); the idea of double consciousness W.E.B. DuBois develops in *Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1996, 1903); and Gloria Anzaldua’s notion of *mestizaje* in *Bordelands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999. 1987).

citizens involved in the production and consumption on new places and new images of the South. The next chapter explores the connections between tourism, identity and the South. Because there are many distinct and divergent cultures under the umbrella of “the South,” the chapter then focuses on the emergence of a modern tourism industry in the state of South Carolina, where “beautiful places, smiling faces” serves as the current tourist industry motto. Subsequent chapters offer place studies drawn from the northeast corner of the state. The South of the Border tourist complex, location of the largest *sombrero* in the world, and the historically black community of Atlantic Beach, with its controversial *motorcycle* festival, function as symbolic icons of a Newer South where identity travels into the space of commodified places and cultures. This space is an important terrain for working out the controversies and conflicts that have infected the representations and consciousness of those within the South.

Shifts in the racial landscape of the South over time are important in the construction of tourist sites. Tourism is the art, and sometimes the sham, of attracting people to places. The people who are attracted to certain places are constantly changing. South Carolina historian Walter Edgar points out that for “over three hundred years historians told the story of South Carolina in terms of black and white,” but by the mid-1990s increasing numbers of Latinos and Asians were adding

<b>2006 U. S. Census Data on Race</b>			
Percentage in:	South Carolina	Horry County	Dillon County
White	68.5	83	51.1
Black	29	14.6	45.3
American Indian	0.4	0.4	2.4
Asian	1.1	0.9	0.4
Hispanic or Latino	3.5	3.9	2.8

new layers to that story.<sup>6</sup> The Latino and Asian populations in South Carolina, while still small, have continued to grow.

This work examines race as it intersects with other aspects of identity, especially place, class, wealth, and power. The ability to sustain a profit and construct a marketable image and sense of place is at the heart of all stories of modern tourism. Cultural studies scholarship that sees capitalism as the root of oppression is one-sided and often short-sighted in today's market-driven society. The potential to combat the greed, oppression, and homogenizing aspects of global capitalism—the very culprit blamed for a sense of placelessness—can arise from the localized entrepreneurial spirit of capitalism.

Adding the stories of South of the Border and Atlantic Beach to the history of South Carolina offers a more comprehensive picture of the state's economic development and the diverse cultural significance of tourism. As independently run spaces of tourism, South of the Border and Atlantic Beach are outside of the corporate model of tourist development. They possess a sense of distinctive identity that is representative of the Newer South, where consuming commodities is a central part of producing identities.

### **Everything That Rises Must Converge: Defining the Touriscape**

South of the Border and Atlantic Beach are framed as place studies. I define a place study as a case study that foregrounds both the geographic and social meanings

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<sup>6</sup> Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: A History* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 583.

of place. Place is both a concrete three-dimensional location and the process of putting people *in their place* in the social hierarchy. The concept of place should be an integral part of American Studies scholarship because of its centrality to how people think about and understand themselves and others in relationship to their surroundings and their location within a social hierarchy.

Place is an evocative term because it is at once highly complex and simplistic to the point of needing no explanation. In its most basic sense, place refers to a location imbued with meaning through the complex interactions and interpretations of people.<sup>7</sup> Tourist destinations exemplify the interdependence of place and space. Sites of tourism are the places that tourists stop to rest, pause, and enjoy. Therefore, it is the mobility of people and vehicles passing through places that creates the space of the tourism industry in general.<sup>8</sup> Both place (the specific) and space (the general) combine in the construction of identities. Identities are grounded, specific, and individual as well as being shared with larger communities.

Traditional and troubling notions of place, as authentic and rooted in the romanticized notion of home, have been defining aspects of the economic and social development of the U.S. South as well as academic studies of the region's history,

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<sup>7</sup> Dolores Hayden points out that "place" is "one of the trickiest words in the English language, a suitcase so overfilled one can never shut the lid." Tim Cresswell writes that "place" is a "word that seems to speak for itself" and is "wrapped in common sense." Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997, 1995), 15. Tim Cresswell, *Place: a short introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 1.

<sup>8</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Place and Space: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 3-7. Cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan sees place as embodying the security, safety, attachment, and certainty of home. For him, the problem place poses is getting stuck or bogged down. Tuan, like many writing on the South, romanticizes "home" as an ideal place and erases its oppressive and potentially violent aspects. Space, on the other hand, expresses freedom and openness (for example, the thrill of the open road), but it also holds the potential of getting lost. For Tuan, space provides movement while place offers pause. He claims that it is impossible to stay home or in place, because those terms derive meaning only in relation to movement and change, and he points out that space and place need one another for definition.

literature, architecture, and culture. The climate and the land, combined with the ideology of the plantation system, determined the types of production and labor—primarily agricultural and slave—in the antebellum South. The valorization of home and hostility to change and outsiders has characterized much of the region’s politics and culture since then.<sup>9</sup> Complicating this romanticized and static sense of place is a central aspect of this dissertation.

A New Southern Studies has emerged to challenge the static and immobile notion of place in southern scholarship.<sup>10</sup> Michael Kreyling feels that the New Southern Studies “surrenders its traditional claim to regional and historical distinctiveness, finds a common language in public debates over globalization of identities, and takes its chances in the dangerous, new, postmodern world where construction replaces essence.”<sup>11</sup> The New Southern Studies may be a novel

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<sup>9</sup> Dominant notion of what home means has changed over time for the white southerners who have historically defined the contours of power in southern society. The South, as the privileged site of home, was defined against the North in the period leading up to and following the Civil War. Momentous historical events, such as World War I, expanded the dominant southern definition of home from a regional to national space. The national pride the South is known for today did not dislocate older and more conservative notions of regional pride. This leads to allegiances to U.S. and Confederate flags. These seemingly contradictory representations of place-based identity—a flag representing secession from the union and the flag representing the union of the United States of America—speaks to the complexity of place-based systems of allegiance and identity.

<sup>10</sup> Important works in New Southern Studies include: Houston A. Baker, Jr. and Dana D. Nelson, “Preface: Violence, the Body, and ‘The South,’” *American Literature*, 73. 2 (June 2001); Houston A. Baker, *Turning South Again: Re-thinking Modernism/Re-reading Booker T.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001); Suzanne W. Jones and Sharon Monteith, *South to a New Place: Region, Literature, and Culture* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2002); Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Jon Smith and Deborah Cohn, *Look Away! The U.S. South in New World Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Martyn Bone, *Postsouthern Sense of Place in Contemporary Fiction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005) and “The Transnational Turn, Houston Baker’s New Southern Studies and Partick Neate’s *Twelve Bar Blues*,” *Comparative American Studies*. 2.2 (2005), 189-211; James L. Peacock, Harry L. Watson, and Carrie R. Matthews, *The American South in a Global World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2005); Leigh Anne Duck, *The Nation’s Region: Southern Modernism, Segregation, and U.S. Nationalism* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> Michael Kreyling, “Toward ‘A New Southern Studies’” *South Central Review* 22.1 (Spring 2005), 16.

perspective from which to view the South; however, relationships between the local and the global and contrived constructions, such as the Lost Cause, have long been aspects of southern culture and scholarship. These place studies exemplify how the complementary notions of place (pause) and space (movement) combine in specific tourist sites in the U. S. South.<sup>12</sup> Symbols of the Old South and the New South combine to inform the Newer South, which is greatly influenced by both the post-World War II creation of a consumer culture and the lure of “hitting the road.” The glorification of the “Lost Cause” of the antebellum South and the economic boosterism of a New South Creed based on industrialization and harmony are mythologies directly challenged by the harsh image of a backwards and violent South during the Civil Rights Movement. The Newer South has moved through these false glories and real horrors and is reinventing itself by embracing its own duality—its wonders and horrors. The Newer South does not celebrate or simply ignore. It creates new spaces, and, in the case of this dissertation, tourist sites are central spaces being created.

In a sense, it is the discourse—the promotional literature, advertisements, popular culture, literature, films, scholarship, and the voice of tourists and locals

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<sup>12</sup> In *Mobilizing Place, Placing Mobility: The Politics of Representation in a Globalized World*, Tim Cresswell discusses how the “sedentary metaphysics” of place is complicated by a “nomadic metaphysics” celebrated by postmodern theorists for being “replete with a wonderful new mobile world of nomads and travelers making connections, pursuing lines of flight and experiencing speed.” Moving beyond the extremes of the sedentary and the nomadic perspectives, Cresswell gets back to place by arguing for the intersection of rooted notions of identity and the mobility of the nomad. As Cresswell points out, he uses place like Michel de Certeau uses space in *The Practices of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), “Part III: Spatial Practices,” 91-176. Confusingly, when Cresswell uses place and de Certeau uses space, they are referring to similar practices. For important discussions of theories of travel and mobility see Caren Kaplan, *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996); James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Mark Simpson, *Trafficking Subjects: The Politics of Mobility in Nineteenth-Century America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

themselves—that intersects with the physical landscape to produce spaces of tourism.<sup>13</sup> However, because tourists are on the move and on vacation, they are difficult to study. Vacationing is often located outside of the realm of politics and serious scholarship. Tourists’ voices can be heard in the ways they spend their money and the places they choose to stop while on vacation.<sup>14</sup>

To analyze how fluid categories of identity intersect and overlap with the physical and social world of tourist space, I coin the concept of the touriscape.<sup>15</sup> These place studies piece together stories of and, therefore, create touriscapes as tangible products of a Newer South.<sup>16</sup> To understand the touriscapes of South of the Border and Atlantic Beach, it is important to first break down the word itself and describe its relationship to place and identity.

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<sup>13</sup> This all can be understood through Michel Foucault’s notion of discourse as a diverse system of texts, practices, rules, and regulations that actually create ideas about thing—this thereby creates the thing itself. It is in the moment of creation where the discourse begins to recede into the background. This is why Foucault’s work always traced the emergence of things, like the insane asylum, hospital, and clinic in *Madness and Civilization* (1961), *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963), and *Discipline and Punish* (1975). While my topic is not quite as glum or innately a part of the modern process of regulation, I think Foucault’s notion of discourse is a profound and far-reaching concept worthy of application to unearth the complexity of identity and tourism. Because my topic is based in the realm of recreation and leisure, popular and media based texts are important parts of unearthing the discourse surrounding southern tourism.

<sup>14</sup> More ethnographic studies and oral history projects focusing on tourists are needed.

<sup>15</sup> My concept of the touriscape is influenced by the idea of the vacationscape from Orvar Lofgren, *On Holiday: A History of Vacationing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 2, 93, 98-100. Lofgren discusses the concept of “vacationscapes,” places that are both real and mediated by cultural fantasies. He writes: “Simultaneously moving in a physical terrain and in fantasylands or mediaworlds, we create vacationscapes.” Lofgren does not mention the use of the term “vacationscape” by Clare Gunn in *Vacationscape: Developing Tourist Areas* (Washington, D.C.: Taylor & Francis, 1972, 1997). Lofgren is working in the cultural realm of history and anthropology (in Sweden) and Gunn is working in the professional realm of planning and architecture (in the United States). As I suggest in my conclusion, to sustain touriscapes the overlap of these two fields is important.

<sup>16</sup> Storytelling has long been an important attribute of southern culture. Using Jay Mechling’s narrative approach to culture—culture as “those stories that Americans tell one another to make sense of their lives”—foregrounds the contested nature of culture. Jay Mechling, “An American Culture Grid with Texts,” *American Studies International* 27 (1989), 2-12. Whose stories get told and how depends on power. The stories of the Lost Cause and the New South Creed are important aspects of how southerners and others have understood the region.

*Tour*, the root of tourist, means “a going round, a travel or journey.” It is related to *turn*, “to cause to revolve, transfer, convert, whirl around, change,” which is derived from the Greek word for a “carpenter’s tool to draw circles”—a compass. The word *landscape*, derived from a genre of Dutch painting in the sixteenth century, is an “expanse of scenery that can be seen in a single view.”<sup>17</sup> A *touriscape* is a specific place produced and used for tourism. It is also a place viewed from a mobile perspective, one that travels, transfers, converts, whirls around, and changes. A touriscape is a place as well as a way to see place.

The most basic perspectives that intersect in the creation of touriscapes are the local (insider) and tourist or traveler (outsider). Touriscapes are places created in the space where these insider and outsider perspectives overlap and have three main qualities. First, a touriscape is a place rooted in a geographic location while also possessing the mobility to transverse physical and social boundaries. Second, touriscapes are created in the space where fluid categories of identity and various perspectives overlap to produce an insider/outsider perspective, which integrates these various positions and social locations. Third, touriscapes are places where visions of the past, present, and future are integrated.

This concept derived from studying how these two sites of tourism were constructed over time and how they engaged the shifting terrain of southern history and culture in ways that are both traditional and innovative. Alan Schafer, the owner

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<sup>17</sup> Rev. Walter W. Skeat, *An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953, 1879), 656, 673; *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992), 1011. Because the image or representation (painting) preceded the use of the term *landscape* to the “real thing,” it is an interesting term to illustrate the postmodern focus on the importance of surface, image, and representation—in the language of poststructuralism, the chain of signifiers.

of South of the Border, inhabited a social location that was able to move inside and outside of legal, political, and economic boundaries in creating the physical and social aspects of South of the Border. The men who founded Atlantic Beach navigated their positions both inside and outside of the economic and social space of the Grand Strand area as they built and sustained their community.

The touriscape, as both a place and a perspective, complicates older notions of “the South.” South of the Border and Atlantic Beach challenge the dominance of a normative white southern culture. Icons such as the Confederate flag, southern belles, and stately plantation homes represent this Old South. These icons, found throughout many prominent tourist sites in the region, promote the myth of an elite, white South and the Lost Cause. South of the Border and Atlantic Beach are not elite tourist destinations that recreate a mythologized past. However, they do have the potential to bring people from different social locations together in the process of creating a Newer South.

### **Tools of Analyzing the Touriscape**

In *On Holiday: A History of Vacationing*, Orvar Lofgren points out that tourism research “has become quite an industry, a densely populated field of interdisciplinary study.” Lofgren feels “scholars who explore this field to get a more general understanding of the workings of the modern world” have produced the most

thought-provoking research.<sup>18</sup> These place studies focus on specific sites of tourism while engaging general concepts of tourism and identity.<sup>19</sup>

My approach blends the tools offered by interdisciplinary fields such as cultural studies, cultural landscape studies, and cultural history, and grounds the general theories on tourism and identity in specific place studies.<sup>20</sup> I explore how cultural landscape studies and cultural history inform a semiotic approach to studying culture. Within the touriscape, signs are always in motion; they are chains of signifiers. The tourist, like history, travels through the landscape depositing meaning.

Because the ties between place and identity are central to southern culture, cultural landscape studies offers important ways of seeing the material in conversation with the social. J. B. Jackson, a founding figure in cultural landscape studies, was “chronicling the changing American landscape from the highway with both apprehension and enthusiasm, teaching his students to be tourists in new ways.” Writing in the 1950s, Jackson defined “landscape” as “a composition of man-made or modified spaces to serve as infrastructure or background to our collective experience; and if *background* seems inappropriately modest, we should remember that in our

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<sup>18</sup> Lofgren, *On Holiday*, 6-7.

<sup>19</sup> General studies of tourism and tourists, such as Dean MacCannell’s *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999, 1976) are important starting points for understanding modern tourist, but they do not offer the specific examples and the lens to see and then complicate the various aspects of identity. As studies of the South have often focused on the upper-class, white individual as the defining category, MacCannell focuses on the upper-class white tourist as the subject of study. This dissertation seeks to study specific sites of tourism and read the various combinations of identities that construct and travel through the sites.

<sup>20</sup> Arthur Asa Berger, *Deconstructing Travel* (Walnut Creek, CA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), xi. Berger writes, “The cultural studies approach to tourism tries to avoid being partially right but generally wrong by looking at tourism from a number of different disciplinary perspectives—to gain insights that a single disciplinary approach cannot offer.”

modern use of the word it means that which underscores not only our identity and presence but also our history.”<sup>21</sup>

Cultural landscapes studies promotes a more comprehensive way of seeing the stories embedded in the material world. In “Axioms for Reading the Landscape” Peirce Lewis explains that in “teaching oneself how to see” the scholar should engage in “an alternation of looking, reading, thinking, and then looking and reading again.”<sup>22</sup> My interest in these place studies first derived from the experience of looking. The bombastic neon and campy aesthetic of South of the Border’s built environment always seemed out of place in Dillon County. The detour Ocean Boulevard takes around Atlantic Beach seemed jarring and illogical. Anomalies in the landscape sparked my interest in these places. As Lewis wrote: “Our human landscape is our unwitting autobiography, reflecting our tastes, our values, our aspirations, and even our fears in tangible form.”<sup>23</sup> If the landscape is our autobiography, the touriscape is our travelogue.

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<sup>21</sup> Lippard Lippard, “Foreword: Lookin On” in Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976, 1999), ix-x. J. B. Jackson. *Discovering Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 7-8. Jackson paid a great deal of attention to the landscapes of mobility, mainly roadside architecture, and regional distinctiveness in his work. See *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994) and *Landscape in Sight: Looking at America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). The basic analysis of the relationships between artifacts and humans is expanded by Jeremy Korr’s 1997 article, “A Proposed Model for Cultural Landscape Study” (*Material Culture*, Fall, 1997), to include nature. This addition is especially important in the analysis of landscapes of tourism because the natural environment often functions as a central factor in the choices of developers and tourists. It is often the most delicate natural environments that are the most appealing and therefore the most exploited by tourism.

<sup>22</sup> Peirce F. Lewis, "Axioms for Reading the Landscapes: Some Guides to the American Scene," in *Material Culture Studies in America*, ed. Thomas J. Schlereth (Nashville, TN: American Association for State and Local History, 1982), 182.

<sup>23</sup> Lewis, Axioms for Reading the Landscape.”

The touriscape functions as a stage where identity is worked out, performed, and grounded in “place experiences.”<sup>24</sup> All of these forces must be located in their historical contexts. My place studies begin in the 1930s, but it is important to recognize the trajectory of tourism’s rise to prominence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Tourism began to shift from a practice of the social elite in the nineteenth century to a more democratized cultural experience in the 1940s. More people on the road lead to the development of more diverse places to travel. Sites of tourism were created to appeal to people from different walks of life and backgrounds.<sup>25</sup>

During the postwar era, America became engaged in an international cold war of ideology and then a controversial armed conflict in Vietnam while also experiencing great internal war, waged mostly in the South, over the basic civil rights of its own citizens at home. Southern tourism serves as one battlefield for the meaning of modern citizenship, freedom, and mobility. Once tourism became a commercialized and (somewhat) democratized activity, people’s relationships to place as both a commodity and a signifier of subjective identity became more complex.

Lizabeth Cohen argues that America’s postwar economy based in mass consumption “stood for an elaborate, integrated ideal of economic abundance and democratic political freedom... that became almost a national civil religion from the

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<sup>24</sup> John A. Jakle, *The Tourist: Travel in Twentieth-Century North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 20-21; Claudio Minca and Tim Oakes, eds, *Travels in Paradox: Remapping Tourism* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006).

<sup>25</sup> Cindy S. Aron, *Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Marquerite S. Schaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001).

late 1940s into the 1970s.” The idea of consumption as an avenue to equality and the “good life” was integral in giving more Americans a “place at the table”—meaning access to sites of consumption and leisure. The process of making America a “consumer’s republic” and adding the landscape as another object for consumption dampened the liberatory aspects of travel and the open space of the road.<sup>26</sup>

As the American roadside lost its frontier mythology of individualism and freedom and became a tamed landscape of family vacations, travel became packaged as tourism.<sup>27</sup> Tourism engaged the freedom of early traveling as an aspect of its marketing allure. Being “on the road” became a central avenue for working out the dialectic of rebellion and conformity in American culture. The road became a space of the imagination as well as a physical location.

Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* (1957) spawned the idea of the oppositional road trip, which has influenced generations of young people. Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda’s, *Easy Riders* (1969), Ridley Scott’s *Thelma and Louise* (1991), Gus Van Sant’s *My Own Private Idaho* (1991), Spike Lee’s *Get on the Bus* (1996), and Chris Eyre’s *Smoke Signals* (1998) reflect how “the road movie’s overt concern with

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<sup>26</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003) 127, 166-191.

<sup>27</sup> Warren Belasco, *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979) and “Commercialized Nostalgia: The Origins of the Roadside Strip” in *The Automobile in American Culture*, David L. Lewis and Laurence Goldstein, Eds. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1980, 1983), 105-122. Belasco traces the mass production and domestication of travel and the resulting tension between rebellion and conformity that informs Americans’ ideas and realities concerning being on the road. Early in the twentieth century auto camping took the form of “gypsying” and engaged the American values of independence and self-reliance; however, as a growing consumer society evolved and the democratization of travel and leisure ensued, the roadside became a largely tame, commercialized, and homogenized landscape. Belasco sees the modern motel as symbolic of the “domestication of the touring romance itself.” Furthermore, the developing car culture engaged a central irony of American capitalism. Belasco explains: “early on, the automobile industry became the backbone of modern industrial capitalism, yet it was born in a spirit of rebellion against that system.” The irony of being both inside and outside of the dominance of American capitalist ideology is essential to understanding the complexity of contemporary travel and tourism.

rebellion against traditional social norms is consistently undermined, diluted, or at least haunted by the very conservative cultural codes the genre so desperately takes flight from.”<sup>28</sup> Rebellion is itself defined by the parameters of tradition and, therefore, the two can never be fully distinct from one another. If one does not have traditions or social codes, one cannot rebel against them. This inseparable relationship between rebellion and conformity—where one is necessary to give the other meaning—relates to the insider/outsider perspective and the creation of touriscapes.

A postmodern sense of ironic distance in relation to postwar consumer culture began to develop in the 1960s. This was not a new layer of meaning, but an attempt to return to the “romanticized past” of the “open road.” Cotton Seilers directly challenged the “idealized conception” of the road and argues, “the space of the American road, like the contours of citizenship, was established under specific regimes of racialized inequality and limited access whose codes it reproduces.” The Civil Rights Movement and the “freedom riders” began the process of challenging the idealized concept of the “open road” in the hopes of expanding the freedom and mobility of physical and social space. As this dissertation shows, this process is still occurring today in the touriscapes of South of the Border and Atlantic Beach.

The rebellion of traveling out into the world of the unknown and the homogenization of that very experience through consumer culture and global capitalism coexist in any trip, no matter if we care to admit it or not or like one construction more than another. Locating the practical and the theoretical aspects of

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<sup>28</sup> David Laderman, *Driving Visions: Exploring the Road Movie* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 20.

identity within the development of tourism and dealing with the tension modern mobility produces is important in moving forward into a Newer South.

This dissertation tells the multi-dimensional stories of specific places and people. In adding these stories to the scholarship on tourism and southern identity, I hope to expand how the South is seen and what is considered southern. The sombreros at South of the Border and the motorcycles of Atlantic Beach are used to move what is emblematic of the South in new directions without erasing regional distinctions. The commercialization that some have seen as killing southern distinctiveness is, I argue, moving this distinctiveness to new places and engaging new identities in dialogue with the old ones. I am not arguing for commercial development and commodification of the South; I am tracing its inevitable effects on the people and the places of these marginal areas of South Carolina. I am putting a sombrero on the southern belle in a hoop skirt. I am parking a motorcycle in front of the columns of the plantation home.

All the debates questioning whether or not there is a distinct southern culture or identity, and if there will continue to be one, hinge on the category's relevance for the younger generations who came of age after the Civil Rights Movement. This emerging generation of southerners—who know only *de facto* rather than *de jure* segregation, who wear overalls as a fashion choice rather than work clothes, who see land as something to develop rather than farm, and who create rather than remember—understand the postmodern aspects of identity as lived realities and not as disembodied theories.

South of the Border and Atlantic Beach are physical places in the present, which can serve as tangible starting points for a discussion of the complexities of the past and the future.<sup>29</sup> The post-civil rights generation can see these places in the present and work backwards and forwards in the process of understanding and envisioning a new sense of place and self. As tourism transforms ordinary places and people, it creates the potential for new development—not just in the physical sense. This dissertation examines the plusses and minuses of employing recreational tourism as a primary means for maintaining or increasing economic viability and a sense of place. Understanding these touriscapes is a part of the process of interpreting and constructing the future of southern identity—a category that is valid as long as people inhabit it and engender it with meaning.

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<sup>29</sup> South of the Border and Atlantic Beach are not the only touriscapes within South Carolina; however, they are marginal places that have been left out of the narrative of South Carolina and southern history. They are not even mentioned in passing in Walter Edgar's 585-page history of the state of South Carolina. Bringing these two places together produced a new way to analyze southern space. The concept of the touriscape and the Newer South could be applied to other places within South Carolina and the South in general. Both concepts could be refined and applied to other areas of scholarship, especially ethnographies and oral histories that focus on the relationship between tourists and place-based identity formation.

## Chapter 2: Beautiful Places, Smiling Faces in the Newer South

### **Moving Southern Identity into a Newer South**

This chapter examines southern identity in the modern U.S. South in relation to travel and tourism. It begins with the geographic and psychological contours of southern identity development in the context of contemporary consumer culture. Tourism is a force in the emergence of the Newer South, a state of economic development that moves beyond the typical economic categories of agriculture and industry and includes the marketing of culture and identity in a service-based economy. Change and continuity are both central to the history of the region and the industries and identities it produces. This chapter seeks to complicate the concept of southern identity with the insider/outsider perspective, a way to see the intersection and overlap of categories of identity.

Fixing the geographic boundaries of a region can be difficult. As Douglass Reichert Powell explained in his 2007 book *Critical Regionalism: Connecting Politics and Culture in the American Landscape*: “When we talk about a region, we are talking not about a stable, boundaried, autonomous place but about a cultural history, the cumulative, generative effect of interplay among the various, competing definitions of that region.”<sup>30</sup> Southern identity is based on self-identification, performance, and, in the Newer South, the expressive role of post-World War II consumer culture. Individuals and groups who claim southernness *are* southern and

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<sup>30</sup> Douglass Reichert Powell, *Critical Regionalism: Connecting Politics and Culture in the American Landscape* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 5.

construct the borders of the identity category. Because the process of identification entails southerners and non-southerners to both recognize signifiers of southernness, it is important to describe what is typically thought of as “the South” and “southern” and work out from this starting point.

Shared history is central to southern identity. The eleven states that seceded from the United States of America during the Civil War offer a historical and geographical way to define the South. In the order of secession, those states are: South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina, and Tennessee. The U.S. Census Bureau adds what are typically considered border states—West Virginia, which succeeded from Virginia in 1863 to join the Union, Maryland, Washington D.C., a “district” and not really a state, and Delaware—in the South Atlantic Region; Kentucky in the East South Central Region; and Oklahoma in the West South Central District. Numerous states possess sub-regions that are seen as more southern than others, such as southern Maryland, north central Florida, and eastern Texas. There are also specific regions within the category of the South, such as Appalachia, the Gulf Coast, the Ozarks, or the Deep South. The Southeast Tourism Society (STS), the foremost organization for promoting southern tourism, includes Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.<sup>31</sup> This list removes Florida and Texas from the original Confederate states and adds West Virginia.

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<sup>31</sup> “Southern Exposure” Special Advertising Section, (*Travel and Leisure* April 2008), the 8 pages between 170-171; [www.escapetothesoutheast.com](http://www.escapetothesoutheast.com)

John Shelton Reed has extensively explored the quantitative and social boundaries of the region. In his article “The South: What is it? Where is it?” first published in 1991, he wrote: “Allow me a homely simile. The South is like my favorite pair of blue jeans. It’s shrunk some, faded a bit, got a few holes in it. There’s always the possibility that it might split at the seams. It doesn’t look much like it used to, but it’s more comfortable, and there’s probably a lot of wear left in it.” In a survey Reed conducted among his students at the University of North Carolina, ninety percent considered South Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Tennessee to be southern. More than fifty percent felt Texas, Florida, Virginia, and Kentucky were southern.<sup>32</sup> All of these definitions of the South include South Carolina, making it solidly southern in history, geography, and tourism marketing.

South Carolina is part of the Deep South—the most pure, undiluted, and authentic southern culture—and was aligned with the region’s political trends.<sup>33</sup> Following Reconstruction, South Carolina was a part of the Solid South, supporting the Democratic Party until President Truman desegregated the armed forces. The Republican Party’s “Southern Strategy,” based on opposition to the Civil Rights Movement and consolidating the white vote in the region, successfully brought South Carolina and the South over to the Republican Party, where it remains. Not a central southern state in the Civil Rights Movement and without a large city at the heart of

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<sup>32</sup> John Shelton Reed, “The South: What It Is? Where Is It?” 5-28 in *My Tears Spoiled My Aim: and Other Reflections on Southern Culture* (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 1993); originally published in Paul Escott and David Goldfield, eds. *The South for New Southerners* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

<sup>33</sup> Deep South, an organization for tourism promotion, only includes Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee as part of the Deep South. <http://www.deep-south-usa.com/index.html>

the New South movement, South Carolina has quietly followed trends of the region without making many waves. Yet the waves of its coastal beaches and temperate climate draw many visitors during the summer months.

Quoting U. B. Phillips, Reed points out the importance of the region's weather in its identity: "It fostered the cultivation of staple crops, which promoted the plantation system, which brought the importation of negroes, which not only gave rise to chattel slavery but created a lasting race problem." The weather also has been a central factor in attracting tourists to the region. Reed also discusses the uniting social fact of rural poverty. Poverty is a signifier of cheap land, cheap labor, and a low standard of living, which also translate into cheap deals for tourists and retirees.

Reed argues that conservative "family and sex-role attitudes" and violence are defining characteristics in the region. He points out "many of the same features can be found in scattered enclaves all around the United States." When southerners move, they take their culture with them. Reed moves from the specific to the general aspects of identity as he explains the South's existence as "an idea," one that inspires strong feelings. "Many are fond of the South (some even love it); others have been known to view it with disdain. In either case, the South exists in people's heads and in their conversations. From this point of view, the South will exist for as long as people think and talk about it, and as for its boundaries—well, the South begins wherever people agree that it does."<sup>34</sup> Finding agreement on what is or is not southern is difficult at times. It is important to understand that there are many different and even conflicting southern identities; however, the overarching category

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<sup>34</sup> Reed, "The South," 26.

is useful and valid in many respects because people (who locate themselves both inside and outside the category) perceive it to exist and debate the contours of its existence.

In his 2005 book, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity*, James C. Cobb points out that “identity typically refers to a *perception* of reality rather than to reality itself.” Identity “may be grounded in verifiable fact, but as the case of the South illustrates all too well, it is often a mixture of the unvarnished and the varnished or even the whitewashed truth.”<sup>35</sup> To understand the emergence of what I call the Newer South, where tourism is a central aspect of economic and cultural identity, understanding the negotiation of the Old and New South is important.

Wilbur J. Cash, who was born in Gaffney, South Carolina, wrote the influential *Mind of the South* in 1941 and argued that the southern mind—the values and way of life of white southerners—had continued unchanged in many ways from the antebellum period into the twentieth century. In *Origins of the New South*, C. Vann Woodward argued that as the Redeemers and New South boosters pushed for economic modernization and racial segregation a new order was emerging in the region that broke with the past. From Woodward’s perspective, these New South leaders appropriated and manipulated the past to promote their own power and profit. Cobb integrates these two perspectives on southern history. “The history of southern identity is not a story of continuity *versus* change, but continuity *within* it.”<sup>36</sup> This process of continuity within change is part of the insider/outsider perspective that

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<sup>35</sup> Cobb, *Away Down South*, 6.

<sup>36</sup> Cobb, *Away Down South*, 7. Emphasis in original.

looks at how southern identity is not one central and unchanging subject position but a fluid perspective on how identities travel through time and space.

Before the Civil War southerners identified more with their specific home—their town, their state, their community and family—rather than the South in general. Cobb quotes a South Carolinian preparing to fight in the Civil War: “I go first for Greenville, then for the Greenville District, then for the up-country, then for South Carolina, then for the South, then for the United States, and after that I don’t go for anything.” Cobb argues that defeat led to the postwar emergence of regional unity, which at the time meant “loyalty to the southern white cause,” though the allegiance to one’s state remained an important part of southern identity long after the Lost Cause was created to save face and unite the white South.<sup>37</sup> The 1941 travel guide, *South Carolina: The WPA Guide to the Palmetto State*, noted: “South Carolinians are among the rare folk in the South who have no secret envy of Virginians. They have a love for their own State which is phalanx against attacks of whatever order.” South Carolina historian Walter Edgar remarked in his history of the state: “Although within the state race, class, and gender made a difference, when facing the outside world a Carolinian was a Carolinian was a Carolinian.”<sup>38</sup>

Cobb shows how modern southern writers engage a “lost contact with the physical and human ‘place’ that is such an important source of their identity.” For example, in a discussion of literature about the poor, white South, Cobb found that “writers like [Harry] Crews, [Dorothy] Alison, [Larry] Brown, and [Tim] McLaurin identify both themselves and their characters not just with the South as a place but

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<sup>37</sup> Cobb, *Away Down South*, 57.

<sup>38</sup> Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: A History* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 583-584.

with particular places within the South that shape and affirm them.”<sup>39</sup> The region of the South is full of different sub-regions that are geographically and culturally distinctive. In the words of a song referencing South Carolina by the Star Room Boys: “Carolina, how I love your rolling waters by the sea. But those inland towns, they bring me down, they roll right over me.”<sup>40</sup> This speaks to the fact that one can both love and hate the South without rejecting it outright.

In addition to the sub-regional aspects of the South, the history of slavery, white supremacy, and racial segregation caused southern identity to be racially divided. Up until the 1970s, when most historians and popular writers used the word “southerners” they meant the white people of the South.<sup>41</sup> The history of slavery and racism haunts all southerners, but in starkly different ways. The effect of this legacy can manifest in guilt and shame for many white southerners and the renunciation of southern identity and the geographic region of the South itself for black southerners. The Great Migration, the trend of black migration out of the South, with ten million African Americans leaving the region between 1910 and 1970, began to reverse by the 1970s.<sup>42</sup> By 2001, the percentage of blacks in the South who identified as southerners began to exceed that of whites in the region.<sup>43</sup> Generational shifts in perspective are tied to the movement of people.

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<sup>39</sup> Cobb, *Away Down South*, 258.

<sup>40</sup> Star Room Boys, “Why Do Lonely Men & Women Want to Break Each Other's Hearts?” Checkered Past Records, 1995.

<sup>41</sup> This also speaks to the fact that most historians and writers were white due to the forces of racism.

<sup>42</sup> Peter Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way: Southern Blacks' Migration to Pittsburgh, 1916-1930*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Sam Joseph Dennis, *African-American Exodus and White Migration, 1950-1970: A Comparative Analysis of Population Movements and Their Relationship to Labor and Race Relations*, (New York: Garland Publications, 1989); Farah Jasmine Griffin, “*Who set you flowin'?*”: *The African American Migration Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>43</sup> Cobb, *Away Down South*, 263.

In the 1958 article “The Search for Southern Identity” Woodward warned that if “Southernism” was wedded too tightly to segregation it would be rejected by the next generation.<sup>44</sup> When contemporary critics played up the common history of black and white southerners, such as in 1993 when Alabama journalist Brandt Ayers wrote that southern history was “a journey that blacks and whites took together,” Cobb felt such claims must be qualified. “Blacks and whites had not only clashed frequently about the direction in which they were traveling,” Cobb points out, “but in the main, they had also made the trip in accommodations and circumstances that were strikingly dissimilar.”<sup>45</sup> These sub-regional, historical and racial differences led to the complexity of southernness as an aspect of identity. These conflicts are also what made the category interesting and worthwhile. Southern identity offers a productive insider/outsider perspective because of its history of grappling with contradiction.

Rebecca Bridges Watts’ 2007 book *Contemporary Southern Identities: Community Through Controversy* explores “what it means to be a Southerner at the beginning of the twenty-first century” through an examination of recent controversies, such as the Confederate flag debate in South Carolina. Watts, a professor of rhetoric and communication studies, argues that if “some form of ‘Southernism’ is to continue as a distinctive mind-set and way of life in the twenty-first century, Southerners will need to learn to strike a balance between their past, with its ruling order of division, and the present, with its ruling order of identification.” Parallel to Cobb’s “continuity within change,” Watts finds that the “ability to endure not in spite of but because of the countless changes in its social

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<sup>44</sup> C. Vann Woodward, “The Search for Southern Identity,” *Virginia Quarterly Review* Summer 1958.

<sup>45</sup> Cobb, *Away Down South*, 289.

order” has given the region its “distinctive identity.” Pulling from the work of Kenneth Burke, “who advocates judging objects and ideas through multiple lenses to provide a clearer more comprehensive view,” Watts argues that order is at the center of southern identity. Division, “keeping people and their interests separate or segregated,” is the dominant order of the South’s past, and identification, “the joining or reconciling of people and their interests,” features prevalently in its future. However, Watts argued these that concepts are in a dialectical relationship with one another. If there were no division there would be “no aspiration to attain identification.” Tara McPherson also calls for a new perspective on southern identity. She brings to light the “lenticular logic of racial visibility.” Unearthing and moving beyond this “monocultural logic, a schema by which histories or images that are actually copresent get presented (structurally, ideologically) so that only one of the images can be seen at a time,” pushed us to see southern history and culture through more diverse and complex perspectives. The controversies, contradictions, and shifting lens of vision in southern culture offer a way to re-envision the future through a complex insider/outsider perspective located in places enacted through mobility.

In an interview published in 1981 in the *South Carolina Review*, Walker Percy described the loss of the South’s regional identity as “Losangelization.” He explained: “That’s not good. The trick is, given the New South, which is not the South of Faulkner, not the South of Eudora Welty, it is not the South of Flannery, it is the South of Interstate 12 and Highway 190. It is the South of Los Angeles. How to humanize that! How do you live with that? What I am trying to do is to figure out

how a man can come to himself, living in a place like that.”<sup>46</sup> MacPherson begins *Reconstructing Dixie* by confessing her status as an “expatriate southerner, voluntarily displaced from Dixie,” located in the postmodern pastiche of Los Angeles. Her introductory story of eating “sushi and barbecue” at an event hosted by “Japanese multimedia giant Sega” in a L.A. House of Blues, “a simulacrum of a Mississippi Delta blues joint,” is to “highlight some of the myriad ways in which the South travels.” This work is located between Percy’s disdain and McPherson’s celebration. I suggest to those who, like Percy, lament what is lost, to get off the Interstate and examine the people and the places he finds.

The South, which hosts more American tourists than any other region in the nation, is a central physical and psychological space for envisioning the future. McPherson sees tourist zones in the South as “political combat zones, terrains of struggle over contemporary meanings of history.” McPherson examines sites that directly engage the Old South symbolism such as Georgia’s Confederama theme park or the “simply authenticity” of a steamboat tour that offers the images of the “Golden Age” of Louisiana’s antebellum period. McPherson’s claim that the “political combat zone” of tourism is “currently staking claims on the discursive battlefield of Dixie’s war history that reroute narratives of race and gender in the service of masculine tales of conflict and resolution” is important cultural work.<sup>47</sup> This dissertation points out that the South offers spaces of pastiche as postmodern, but perhaps not as cosmopolitan, as Los Angeles. Looking not to corporate chains, such as House of Blues, but off the interstate and along the coast of South Carolina “political combat

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<sup>46</sup> Cobb, *Away Down South*, 250; “Walker Percy, Interview with Jan Nordby Gretlund, January 2, 1981” *The South Carolina Review* 13 (Spring 1981), 12.

<sup>47</sup> McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie*, 13, 96-101

zones” of the South are found. It is not from the perch of ironic distance in Los Angeles, but on the ground in the struggling communities of the contemporary South that these battles are primarily fought. South of the Border and Atlantic Beach offer new histories and new perspectives on the future of southern identity.

Tourism plays a small role in McPherson’s impressive interdisciplinary exploration of television, film, literature, and other forms of today’s popular culture landscape. In 2003, the same year McPherson’s monograph was published, Richard Starnes edited the collection *Southern Journeys: Tourism, History, and Culture in the Modern South*. Starnes argues that tourism is “one of the most powerful economic forces in the modern South” and one that is changing the culture and demographics of the region. These changes have “created tension between residents and visitors that manifest” in various ways.<sup>48</sup> These place studies expand the disciplinary focus on the history of tourism Starnes offers into the interdisciplinary terrain McPherson mines.

Starnes laments that few historians heeded Rembert W. Patrick’s call, given in his 1962 presidential address to the Southern Historical Association, to pay attention to the “mobile frontier.” Like Cobb’s, Watt’s, and McPherson’s views on contemporary southern identity, Starnes believes tourism serves as an “important force of conflict and change in countless communities across the region.” He sees this realm of study as a natural extension of the “traditional importance of hospitality and leisure in southern culture.” Tourism has played an important role through the South’s modern moments. Starnes explained: “Resorts took their place alongside the spindle, the sawmill, and the forge as the economic tools that reshaped the region

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<sup>48</sup> Starnes, *Southern Journeys: Tourism, History, & Culture in the Modern South* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003): “Introduction,” 3.

after the Civil War.” He located the “imagemaking” central to the project of the New South as “business and political leaders crafted elaborate advertising campaigns to draw larger and larger shares of the tourist market.”<sup>49</sup> This thread that began during the industrialization of the South in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is even more important as industry moves farther south and the “hospitality” industry becomes more central.

Harvey Newman’s *Southern Hospitality: Tourism and the Growth of Atlanta* traces the connection between the romantic picture of southern hospitality while pointing out the limits of that hospitality, especially in relation to race. Starnes sees the biggest change in modern tourism as “black tourists emerged as an important component of the post-Civil Rights South’s tourist economy, a fact brought to national attention during debates over the future of the Confederate flag in Georgia and South Carolina in 2000.”<sup>50</sup> However, civil rights battlefields and monuments are now rivaling Confederate ones in popularity in the region.<sup>51</sup>

Tourism has and continues to function as a lens to see and better understand the shifting landscape of southern culture throughout the modern era. With Alecia P. Long’s *The Great Southern Babylon: Sex, Race, and Respectability in New Orleans, 1865* (2004) and Anthony Stanonis’ *Creating the Big Easy: New Orleans and the Emergence of Modern Tourism, 1918-1945* (2006), the creation of one of the South’s premier tourist destinations has been given much deserved attention.<sup>52</sup> Following

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<sup>49</sup> Starnes, *Southern Journeys*, 3-5.

<sup>50</sup> Starnes, *Southern Journeys*, 7.

<sup>51</sup> Shelia Dewan, “Civil Rights Battlefields Enter World of Tourism” *New York Times*, August 10, 2004.

<sup>52</sup> Alecia P. Long, *The Great Southern Babylon: Sex, Race, and Respectability in New Orleans, 1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004); Anthony Stanonis, *Creating the Big Easy*:

Hurricane Katrina and the aftermath, such analyses of tourism's cultural and economic impact are even more important. The effects of Katrina speak to the need to further analyze specific touriscapes in the U.S. South.

### **“Beautiful Places, Smiling Faces” Building Tourism in South Carolina**

Less illustrious states, such as South Carolina, have yet to have their tourism industries mined for important historical and social forces. “Smiling faces, Beautiful places” is the current motto of South Carolina's tourism industry. This phrase evokes both southern hospitality and beautiful landscapes that have made tourism so popular in the South. However, the road to the more than \$14 billion tourists now spend annually in the Palmetto state was a bumpy ride—especially if you were driving in South Carolina in the early twentieth century before paved roads were the norm.<sup>53</sup> The development of tourism in South Carolina is not only representative of historic and cultural shifts occurring in the modern South, it was also a catalyst.

Tourism was not new to South Carolina in the twentieth century, but it became more developed and organized during the 1920s and 1930s. The Second World War interrupted tourism development, but the consumer boom that followed combined with the structures developed before the war led to major changes in the state's landscape and culture that continue to evolve today.

In 1923 South Carolina's governor, Thomas G. McLeod organized “Boost South Carolina,” a conference to plan a statewide promotional campaign to draw

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*New Orleans and the Emergence of Modern Tourism, 1918-1945* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006).

<sup>53</sup> Zyscovich, “Atlantic Beach, South Carolina: Master Plan,” 7. The tourism industry in the state of South Carolina posted earning of \$14.4 billion in 2000 and is expected to gross \$425.5 billion by 2110.

tourists. The conference was not a success, but regions, cities, and towns throughout the state devised their own plans to lure tourists. Tourism promotion, like southern identity, is strongest on the local level. In *South Carolina: A History*, Walter Edgar pointed out: “As the economy worsened during the 1920s, city officials increasingly turned to tourism as a solution.” In the 1920s, the South Carolina coast began to develop a tourism infrastructure. Greenville businessman John T. Woodside organized the streets of Myrtle Beach and built the illustrious Ocean Forest Hotel. Charters were issued for Floral Beach (called Garden City Beach today), Sea Island Homes of Beaufort, and Edisto Beach, near the city of Charleston. Charleston, with its long and illustrious history, lacked modern accommodations for tourists until the Fort Sumter Hotel opened in 1923 and the Francis Marion Hotel followed in 1924. However, the editor of Charleston’s paper, the *News and Courier*, felt “nothing is more dreadful than tourists, whether grasshoppers, boll weevils, or money-bagged bipeds. They will make Charleston rich and ruin her.” Tourism symbolized a new economic strategy that, like New South industrialization, was not always a pleasant option for those living in tight-knit southern communities. Tourism, which was and continues to be focused on the coastal region of the state, also produced regional animosities within South Carolina.<sup>54</sup>

While the upcountry was benefiting from the textile industry, the lowcountry was floundering economically. Despite the economic hardships hitting the state and the country during the Great Depression, in 1929 lowcountry legislators, led by state senator Richard M. Jefferies of Colleton County, proposed legislation that would

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<sup>54</sup> Edgar, *South Carolina*, 493.

provide sixty-five million dollars for state highway construction in the lowcountry. Despite opposition from upcountry counties, which had funded their roads through county taxes, the measure passed and was signed by the Governor.<sup>55</sup>

While the coast and the upcountry did not see eye to eye on development and promotion, in 1934 businessmen with interests along the coast of South Carolina joined forces with North Carolina resort owners to form The Carolinas Inc. The organization's primary goal was to "build tourist travel" as part of a "comprehensive economic vision." A 1935 advertisement funded by the organization in the Kingstree, South Carolina, *County Record* explained the organization's "purpose of bringing facts about the Carolinas before their people, that they may be better informed as to the resources, history, and industrial importance of the Carolinas, and that they may know how they can assist in the broad movement to advertise to the world the advantages of this favored section." Convincing local residents of the importance of tourism was a central aspect of the organization's plan. The advertisement explained that Americans spent \$5 billion annually on tourism, and the Carolinas, despite their tourism potential, bring in an "insignificant share of those tourist dollars." The advertisement promoted the desirability of tourists for their spending power and pointed out that tourists would later invest and buy homes in the region. The mobility of insider/outsider perspectives was featured early in modern tourism promotion. Carolinas Inc. implores all residents of the Carolinas to "do their share" and "awaken to our tourist possibilities" to both pay taxes and increase the general economic

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<sup>55</sup> Edgar, *South Carolina*, 491.

standing of the region.<sup>56</sup> Development of roads and the organized promotion of tourism in the 1920s and 1930s laid the groundwork for the postwar flourishing of tourism in the state. However, Carolinas Inc., along with tourism promotion and planning in general, were interrupted during World War II.

In 1946 *Holiday* magazine advertised Ocean Highway (Highway 17) by advising travelers to “go south from pines to palms” and to “avoid the congested traffic of larger cities.” The Ocean Highway was built in the 1920s and, much like the Dixie Highway from the Midwest to Florida, was primarily concerned with tourists headed to the emerging resorts of the South. Ocean Highway, which runs from New Brunswick, New Jersey, to Jacksonville, Florida, followed as close as possible to the Atlantic Ocean, and focused on providing a scenic trip rather than a speedy arrival.<sup>57</sup> Roads and automobile ownership expanded and the postwar economy left more money and leisure time open for vacations. The time was ripe for tourism in South Carolina.

In 1952 a front-page article in the *Columbia Record* by Betty I. MacNabb discussed South Carolina’s developing tourism infrastructure. MacNabb noted the coastal region’s dominance in tourism and argued that the rest of the state, including Columbia, the state’s capital, had “just recognized the lucrative tourist possibilities which are inherently hers.” South Carolina, with an estimated \$67 million spent by tourists in 1951, was criticized for not fully taking advantage of the \$15 billion

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<sup>56</sup> The Carolinas Inc. advertisement, *County* [Kingstree, SC] *Record*, May 2, 1935. Richard D. Starnes, “Creating a ‘Variety Vacationland’: Tourism Development in North Carolina, 1930-1990” in *Southern Journeys Tourism, History, & Culture in the Modern South* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003): 140-142

<sup>57</sup> Federal Writers’ Project of the Work Progress Administration, *The Ocean Highway: New Brunswick, New Jersey to Jacksonville, Florida* (New York: Modern Age Books, 1938); Claudette Stager and Martha Carver, eds. *Looking Beyond the Highway: Dixie Roads and Culture* (Knoxville University of Tennessee Press, 2006)

domestic tourist trade. MacNabb noted that South Carolina ranked last in the southern states and near the bottom nationally in obtaining tourist dollars.<sup>58</sup>

She located the “first stirrings of recognition that South Carolina might become a tourist state” in 1945 when the newly formed State Research, Planning and Development Board began to advertise in national publications. In 1950, the board created a department of public relations. In 1951, after the state Chamber of Commerce produced a comprehensive study on lost revenue resulting from the lack of travel promotions entitled “Dollars in Flight,” the state legislature approved \$20,000 for publications to attract visitors to South Carolina. The State Research, Planning and Development Board produced the colloquially titled “Nothin’ Could be Finah Than to See South Carolina”; the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce put out a pocket-size booklet “Tourist’s Guide—with a List of Accommodations”; and the State Highway Department produced an enlarged highway map with color pictures. Residents were also advised to be educated promoters of their state.<sup>59</sup>

MacNabb warned that a “careless ‘I dunno’ may mean the loss of hundreds of dollars when a tourist has the inclination to look around before hurrying on.” South Carolinians were encouraged to do their part to promote their home to visitors. MacNabb informed her readers that the state’s developing tourism organizations were sponsoring a “series of courtesy clinics.” The romanticized “southern hospitality” of the region needed to be intensified to bring in the tourist dollars. “Southern

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<sup>58</sup> Betty I. MacNabb, “South Carolinians Roll Out the Carpet for Nation’s Free-Spending Tourists” *Columbia Record*, November 6, 1952.

<sup>59</sup> Betty I. MacNabb, “South Carolinians Roll Out the Carpet for Nation’s Free-Spending Tourists” *Columbia Record*, November 6, 1952.

hospitality” was not an innate trait of the region, it was something that needed to be worked on in clinics and rigorous promoted by tourism boosters.

In 1955 the *State* newspaper announced “Tourist Advertising Program Almost Too Successful in South Carolina.” The director of the State Development Board reported that “requests were the highest in history,” and the state legislature increased tourism promotion from \$20,000 to \$30,000 for next year. Travel and tourism were becoming an important part of the South Carolina economy, one change among many in the postwar South.

Southern tourism boosters utilized the freedom the Second World War offered women in the workplace as well as within the domestic realm. In the South, women were the symbols of “southern hospitality” and therefore had a public role in promoting the hospitality industry. Tourism along the roadside and the beaches of the Grand Strand was promoted with everyday working women in very different roles from the elite white women Stephanie Yuhl discusses in 1920s and 1930s Charleston. Tourism had very different class connotation in these emerging areas. These places lacked the long history, elite bloodlines, and grand architecture Charleston used as a central aspect of its tourism appeal. In the roadside and coastal tourism markets arising in the northern part of South Carolina, tourism was more about creating recreation rather than remembering a romanticized past. The expanding hospitality industries of both elite and everyday places offered women a certain level of power and participation, but it was within the confines of genteel and demure southern womanhood. Women welcomed travelers and tourists into their “home,” meaning their home state of South Carolina. During the postwar era women were often in

charge of planning family vacations, and the advertisements were geared towards this demographic.

One of those State Development Board ads in the December 1956 edition of *Holiday* magazine pictures a passive and genteel woman, standing with gloved hands down by her side, and a man, holding a camera, with a southern plantation home and garden in the background. The main ad copy reads: “If you like gardens / you’ll love... / South Carolina.” The small print extols the Old South charms of the state: “Majestic old plantations, still in their formal settings, overlook these awe-inspiring gardens. Here you’ll find roving minstrels singing spirituals of the Old South, as only they can. Here you’ll see the historic culture of South Carolina blended with the old world charm of these stately gardens.” The ad attempts to appeal to women with romanticized Old South imagery found in places like Charleston, but replaces the southern belle in a hoop skirt with a woman in conservative but modern dress. Even elite Charleston was being marketed to the growing masses.

Despite the second wave of feminism evolving in the 1960s, South Carolina continued to use this gendered version of “southern hospitality” to attract tourists. Barbara McAden, executive women’s editor for the *State* newspaper, wrote a 1968 article, “Now Travelers in S.C. Will Feel Like Guests,” to announce the first of eight planned tourist welcome centers in the state. The first welcome center was located in Little River, the northernmost edge of the South Carolina coast, and cost \$250,000. McAden explained the appeal of the welcome center: “They [tourists] will be more like guests who get the warm, cordial welcome that a Southern homemaker offers when she says, ‘Won’t you come in the living room?’” The manager of the welcome

center was South Carolina native, Irene Valcarcel, who had previously worked for Howard Hughes as an executive secretary. Valcarcel and the other three female employees at the welcome center were referred to as “Southern Belle” hostesses. McAden described the hostesses’ attire: “All will wear custom-designed ensembles of blue skimmer dresses, white boots, large rimmed white hats banded in blue and blue and red coats.” The outfits were made from South Carolina textiles and included white gloves. Actress Joan Crawford, who handed out complimentary soft drinks at the event, was quoted in the article: “It is so nice for people to be able to stop, on a journey going cross-country, in such pleasant surroundings.”<sup>60</sup>

As Starnes pointed out, there were “fundamental tensions between southern hospitality and southerners’ traditional aversion to outsiders.”<sup>61</sup> White southerners in charge of the state’s hospitality industries used updated southern belles, decked out in red, white, and blue, to welcome the white middle-class visitor to their state, but racism, against its own black residents as well as those visiting the area, was a central aspect of the state’s leisure culture. In 1934 Atlantic Beach, the subject of chapter four, was the only section of the South Carolina coast with recreational tourist accommodations owned, operated, and patronized by blacks. When African American communities, such as Hilton Head Island became potential sites of tourism, white developers quickly moved in and took the land from and ignored the history of African Americans. When the James F. Byrnes Bridge made Hilton Head Island accessible by car, Charles Fraser and Fred Hack developed the island. Predominantly

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<sup>60</sup>Barbara McAden, “Now Travelers in S.C. Will Feel Like Guests” and “Welcome Center Manager Is Experienced Greeter Already” *State*, February 22, 1968

<sup>61</sup> Starnes, *Southern Journeys*, 14.

black in 1950, by 1980 Hilton Head Island was a predominantly white residential and resort area.<sup>62</sup>

African Americans were not welcome to inhabit the emerging spaces of tourism in the state. However, the previously quoted ad in the 1956 edition of *Holiday* magazine showed that blacks were framed as scenery, local color, and commodities used to lure white tourists. The ad copy—“Here you’ll find roving minstrels singing spirituals of the Old South, as only they can”—presents black South Carolinians as exotic figures from a romanticized past, not active participants in the postwar tourism development of the state. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 made the segregation of public accommodations illegal; however, in South Carolina *de facto* discrimination against African Americans continued long after. While women were allowed to partake in tourism promotion within the confines of decorous southern womanhood, African Americans were shut out of the state’s emerging tourist marketing except as amusing local color.

In the 1960s, tourism marketing showed substantial growth and profitability. In 1966, tourists spent \$285 million within the state, a 9 percent increase from the previous year, and almost 120 percent increase since 1954. In 1954 Hurricane Hazel, a category-four storm, hit the South Carolina coast, the heart of its growing tourism industry. Even without comprehensive insurance, the area eventually rebounded from the storm and was created on a “bigger is better” model. The Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968 offered the first federal flood insurance, and the small beach cottages along the South Carolina coast began to expand to include elaborate

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<sup>62</sup> Margaret A. Shannon with Stephen Taylor, “Astride the Plantation Gates: Tourism, Racial Politics, and the Development of Hilton Head Island” in *Southern Journeys*, 177-195.

beach houses as well as more extensive commercial development, including condominiums and hotels.<sup>63</sup>

In 1967, Governor McNair merged the travel and information division of the State Development Board and the outdoor recreation division of the State Forestry Commission into the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (hence referred to as PRT). Former journalist and McNair press secretary Bob Hickman was the first chairman of the newly formed agency. He described its purpose: “We were begun to make South Carolina an attractive place to visit and live.” PRT devised a \$13 million proposal to enhance the state’s tourism and recreation facilities as well as increase national and international promotions.<sup>64</sup> Tourism spending was framed as a way to improve South Carolina for residents as well as potential visitors.

A study of the effectiveness of PRT’s 1972-1973 advertising campaign, compiled by the South Carolina Division of Tourism in Columbia, found that for every dollar invested the state received thirty-two in return. The study also ranked the most popular destinations within the region. The more working-class Grand Strand outranked all other destinations with 54 percent of the tourist population. The more elite tourist destinations of Charleston (with 18 percent) and Hilton Head (with 6 percent) followed. This meant that the top three destinations for tourists were all on the South Carolina coast, and coastal tourism comprised almost eighty percent of the tourist trade in the state.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Edgar, *South Carolina*, 579.

<sup>64</sup> Edward B. Borden, “Tourism: A Top SC Industry,” *Sandlapper* May 1968: 57-61.

<sup>65</sup> “Advertising Study – effectiveness of PRT’s 1972-1973 advertising campaign,” compiled by South Carolina Division of Tourism in Columbia in 1973.

While Myrtle Beach, the heart of the Grand Strand, was the most profitable of the South Carolina beaches, different resort areas connoted different taste and class levels. “The concept of ‘going to the beach’ changes,” writes Walter Edgar, “Natives, seeking to enjoy their traditional laid-back, casual vacations, abandon their old haunts at Myrtle Beach, Cherry Grove (part of North Myrtle Beach), and Garden City for the elite enclaves of Debordieu, Hilton Head, and Kiawah; others prefer the ‘arrogant shabbiness’ of Pawley’s Island or the down-home feel of Edisto Beach.”<sup>66</sup> The more elite beaches were south of Myrtle Beach, heading towards Charleston.

Where people vacation—like the types of cars they drive, the clothes they wear, and the places they shop—signify important aspects of identity and create an insider/outsider status based in class and taste. To take a vacation itself was once representative of upper class status. As vacations have moved towards being thought of as a right rather than a privilege in America, it has become fashionable to choose a vacation spot as a sign of social status.

“Context,” the first story in Dorothy Alison’s collection *Skin: Talking About Sex, Class & Literature* begins when the author brings her lover home to meet her family in Greenville, South Carolina. Upon seeing Alison’s home and meeting her family, her partner, who came from an upper-class Northeastern family, confessed: “I thought I understood what you meant when you said ‘working class’ but I just didn’t have a context.” As her partner slept, Alison remembered a simple family vacation to Folly Beach, South Carolina, a small town just north of Charleston. Her family stayed in a guest house, cooked rather than ate out, visited the beach but could not

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<sup>66</sup> Edgar, *South Carolina*, 579.

afford to rent chairs or rafts, and her stepfather scoffed at the price of souvenirs and called the shop owner a “Jew Bastard.” Alison ended the essay: “I wondered what she would have thought of Folly Beach, the poor man’s Jersey Shore, or of us if she could have seen us there. I burned with old shame and then stubbornly shook it off. Context is so little to share, and so vital.” Context is a central aspect of the touriscape and the insider/outsider perspective that makes these social and physical distinctions of class visible on the landscape and in our minds.

A similar touriscape served as the linchpin of the King Vidor’s 1937 film *Stella Dallas*, which features Barbara Stanwyck in the title role. It was while on vacation with her daughter that Stella overheard the rich children mocking her attempt to perform above her class. Because this affected the happiness of Stella’s beloved daughter, Laurel, and the daughter’s relationship with a rich young man, Stella took her class performance up a notch and ended up intentionally pushing her daughter away from her and her lower class status. Laurel was then able to fully enter high society and marry the upper-class man she loved. Stella’s campy performance of working-class aesthetics was representative of her realization that she could never be accepted by the dominant, elite society. To claim agency she intentionally pushed her look over the top to achieve the status she wanted for her daughter. The over-the-top look of a touriscape can signify important class and taste distinctions.

Richard N. Cote’s 2001 novel *The Redneck Riviera* is set in Myrtle Beach. The title of the book and the general usage of the term to describe Myrtle Beach represent the area’s whiteness and working-class connotations. The “redneck”

stereotype evokes poor and working-class whites, often from the South, who are lazy, shiftless, tacky, and often violent and racist.<sup>67</sup> In addition to Myrtle Beach, numerous non-elite resorts along the southeast coast, especially the Florida panhandle, are referred to as the “Redneck Riviera.”<sup>68</sup>

Cote describes a dividing line between the northern and the southern coasts of South Carolina: “A two-hour drive north of Charleston, South Carolina’s Redneck Riviera is a forty-mile-long strip of coastline that ran south from the North Carolina state line and includes Little River, North Myrtle Beach, Myrtle Beach, and ends at Murrell’s Inlet, ten miles south of Myrtle Beach.” This dividing line represents more than geography. It represents the notions of class and taste that influence tourists. “Civilization—as most traditional South Carolinians conceive of it, anyway—starts a couple of miles south of Murrell’s Inlet at Brookgreen Gardens. The historic former rice plantation and its magnificent outdoor statuary is the first pearl in an unbroken chain of natural beauty that lies to the south of the neon, plastic, and T-shirt shops of the Redneck Riviera. Further south lies 150 miles of the state’s greatest natural treasures, including South Carolina’s legendary rice plantations, the incredible eighteenth- and nineteenth-century architecture of Charleston, and the lush sea islands,

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<sup>67</sup> Duanne Carr, *A Question of Class: The Redneck Stereotype in Southern Fiction* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1996).

<sup>68</sup> A small genre of fiction discussing the working-class resorts of the Southeast has developed recently: Dennis Covington’s *Redneck Riviera: Armadillos, Outlaws and the Demise of an American Dream* (Counterpoint, 2005) tells of a son’s crazy battle for his father’s land and is mostly set in the Florida panhandle. Sophie Dunbar’s *Redneck Riviera* (Intrigue Press, 1998) is a mystery novel set on the Mississippi coast. E. Don Harpe’s short story “Redneck Riviera,” which can be purchased from Amazon Shorts at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) [accessed March 18, 2008], tells the story of Billy Joe’s interaction with a UFO on a trip to Panama City Beach, Florida. There is also the Tom T. Hall song “Redneck Riviera,” which is set on the coast of the Florida Panhandle. Non-fiction sources of Redneck Riviera include: Nike Taylor, “Winter In The Redneck Riviera,” *Storyhouse*, <http://www.storyhouse.org/niki.html> [accessed June 29, 2007]; David L. Langford, “Redneck Riviera: pass the gator tail and beer and get ready for the mullet toss” [Kennewick, Pasco, and Richland, Washington] *Tri-City Herald* May 18, 2001; Ron Burch, “The Culture of the Redneck Riviera” *Southern Reader*, 2004 <http://www.southernreader.com/SouthRead7.8.html> [accessed January 8, 2007]

which stretch down to the beautiful historic town of Beaufort.”<sup>69</sup> While many would disagree with the harsh and uncomplicated cultural distinctions Cote makes, the postwar development along the South Carolina coast certainly did go in different directions. Even though Charleston is further down South, it connotes a higher class status

In 1973, “Visit South Carolina: Land of Memories,” a special section of the *Charleston News & Courier* promoted historic and cultural tourism from Brookgreen Gardens to Charleston. Even an advertisement for Piggly Wiggly, a southern grocery store chain, was tinged with the imagery of class. The Piggly Wiggly pig is shown wearing a suit, top hat, and monocle while holding a cup of tea in a gloved hand. The pig even used an aristocratic expression to announce the grocery store’s good deals: “Piggly Wiggly’s got simply smashing buys.”<sup>70</sup> These apparent taste and class distinctions found along the South Carolina coast speak to the fact that the products we buy and the places we vacation signify our attachments to place and our identities.

Following South Carolina’s Tricentennial in 1970, the state began to promote more historic tours and trails. In 1974, the South Carolina Library produced a brochure “Historic South Carolina: A Literary Tour of the State.”<sup>71</sup> PRT partnered with the state’s Highway Department and the Department of Archives and History to promote the “Cherokee Path Trail: A South Carolina Historic Trail.”<sup>72</sup> The trail runs from Charleston, through Columbia, to the Blue Ridge Mountains in the Upcountry.

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<sup>69</sup> Richard N. Cote, *Redneck Riviera* (Mt. Pleasant, SC: Corinthian Books, 2001)

<sup>70</sup> “Visit SC: Land of Memories” (special section) *News and Courier & Charleston Evening Post*, March 6, 1973.

<sup>71</sup> South Carolina State Library, “Historic South Carolina: A Literary Tour of the State” 1974.

<sup>72</sup> PTR, Highway Dept, and the Department of Archives and History, “Cherokee Path Trail: A South Carolina Historic Trail” 1977.

This trail also attempted to spread out tourist dollars, which were becoming more and more concentrated along the coast, to other parts of the state.

As the 1970s came to an end, tourism was suffering because of the gas crisis and recession. These hard economic times served to further segment the tourist trade between the haves and have-nots. A state study by the Tourism Business Center of the Small Business Development Center of South Carolina found the top four problems for tourism in the region to be gas prices, inflation, availability of gas, and declining availability of capital. Because of these conditions, in-state tourism grew as an important aspect of South Carolina's hospitality industry. In 1979, the number of out-of-state tourists dropped for the first time since PRT was established. The article "Vacational Travel Behavior and Perceived Benefits of Home State Residents" discussed a 1979 study of travelers and suggested amendments to the state's tourism strategy. A low-cost, three-to-five-day vacation package for middle-class couples with children was suggested as the most appealing product. The experts advised promoting "personal benefits first and family togetherness second." They also found that "educational benefits" did not resonate with consumers and advised against their use. The slogan likely to appeal was not "See South Carolina First" but "Relax— You're at a South Carolina Beach."<sup>73</sup>

Karen McPherson's 1980 article for the *State*, "Americans Still Vacation, Just in a Different Style," argued that Americans would continue to travel in the face of high gas prices, inflation, and recession because "Americans regard vacations as a

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<sup>73</sup> South Carolina PRT, "Tourism: What Its Economic Impact Means to South Carolina" (Columbia, South Carolina PRT, 1979); Arch G. Woodside, Ellen M. Moore, and Michael J. Etzel, "Vacational Travel Behavior and Perceived Benefits of Home State Residents" "S.C. Development and Tourism Issue" *Business and Economic Review* Volume XXVI, no. 5, April 1980. Katherine King, "Despite Recession, S.C. Vacation Spots do Well" *State*, July 20, 1980

right.” The freedom of mobility had become embedded in the consumer-based notion of recreation as a right. People were still vacationing, yet the types of vacations they took were affected by the economy. “Destination travel”—going to one place and staying—as well as tourists “seeking to immerse themselves in a whirlwind of activities in an effort to leave their worries behind” were the vacationing trends of recession. The popularity of “destination tourism” helped recreational tourism, but hindered “more thoughtful” sites of tourism, such as historic and heritage based sites, especially historical trails and corridors.<sup>74</sup> Tourism can serve as a way to measure the thoughts of travelers and their reaction to economic instability. Academic studies as well as the more anecdotal thoughts of journalists add to the construction of contemporary touriscapes.

South Carolina’s tourism industry continued to expand in the 1980s, with tourist spending in the state exceeding the \$2 billion mark for the first time in spite of economic worries and budget cuts.<sup>75</sup> By 1985, tourism was bringing in an excess of \$3 billion to South Carolina and Governor Richard W. Riley declared May 19-25, 1985, as the first South Carolina Tourism Week.<sup>76</sup> South Carolina, which has some of the lowest taxes in the nation, instituted an accommodations tax that generated \$8.5 million in the 1984-1985 budget year.<sup>77</sup> Much of this money went back into promotions for the industry and improving recreational facilities. In 1986 a two-cent per gallon gasoline tax netted \$38 million for highway improvement.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Karen McPherson, “American Still Vacation In Just A Different Style” *State*, July 20, 1980.

<sup>75</sup> William Stracener, “Tourism Spending In 1980 Highest in State’s History,” *Columbia Record*, March 1, 1981.

<sup>76</sup> “Gov. Richard W. Riley proclaimed May 19-25 as SC tourism week” PRT Press Release.

<sup>77</sup> PRT Press Release, “New Accommodation Tax,” August 1, 1985.

<sup>78</sup> PRT Press Release, “2 Cent Per Gallon Gasoline Tax,” August 1, 1985 (tourism box, SC)

Tourism became big business for South Carolina during the 1980s, but unhinged development caused problems, especially along the coast. Pollution from overdevelopment and swelling summer populations as well as overfishing were ravaging the delicate coastal area. The corruption of water supplies and beach erosion were also becoming problems. In 1988, the South Carolina legislature passed a Beachfront Management Act to regulate development, but a lawsuit caused the legislation to lift its ban on new beachfront construction. The South Carolina Coastal Management Council was forced to turn to erosion control methods such as shipping in sand to the areas most in danger. These problems were further exacerbated on September 21, 1989, when Hurricane Hugo, a category-four storm, hit the region. The storm affected the entire South Carolina coast from the Grand Strand south to Charleston with 135-miles-per-hour winds and a twenty-foot storm surge. Twenty-nine people were killed, damage to property totaled almost \$6 billion and sixteen state parks along the coast were closed, but the state immediately began to rebuild. PRT held a brainstorming forum in October of 1989 to plan how to deal with the impact of Hurricane Hugo on the state's almost \$5 billion tourism industry. Charles Harrison, assistant director of PRT at the time, pointed out: "A bright spot in this disaster is that this is the time of year when attention shifts to our upstate parks, which were untouched by the hurricane." South Carolina joined with the federal government in an over \$9 million renourishment project, which rebuilt the worst hit beaches on the Grand Strand, and the largest dune revegetation project in the nation's history, costing

\$1.5 million. All visible remnants of the storm's wrath were gone in just a couple of years.<sup>79</sup>

In the 1990s, agriculture and other traditional jobs held on in the lowcountry and the upstate was attracting new industries, but tourism was now the State's most important industry. Coastal tourism brought in the most money, jobs, and taxes to the state. Walter Edgar wrote of the state's most profitable coastal area: "The Grand Strand of the 1990s was no longer a slightly down-at-the-heels family resort. It had almost as much glitz and glamour and neon as Las Vegas."<sup>80</sup> However, the rural areas, of South Carolina, especially in the midlands, remained economically depressed and bypassed by most of the tourist trade. In 1990, PRT formed the Community Development Division to focus specifically on rural tourism. Especially hard hit were the areas along the old 301 corridor displaced by the construction of Interstate 95 in the 1960s. Director Fred Brinkman stated that the new division would assist in the implementation of the recent PRT policy to "extend the full benefits of tourism and recreation to all of South Carolina."<sup>81</sup>

In 1992 a national recession caused tourist spending in South Carolina to drop by more than 1 percent rather than increase the average 7 percent.<sup>82</sup> Nonetheless, the 1990s were generally successful for the expansion of the state's tourism industry. The warm climate and comparatively low housing prices, as well as the growing tourist industry, led to a sharp demographic change for South Carolina. In 1940, more than 90 percent of South Carolinians were born in the state. In the 1990s, 32

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<sup>79</sup> Edgar 580-581; PTR Press Release, September 29, 1989; Associated Press, "Large waves of tourists hitting S.C. beaches despite Hugo" *State*, June 27, 1990.

<sup>80</sup> Edgar, *South Carolina*, 580.

<sup>81</sup> PRT Press Release, January 8, 1990.

<sup>82</sup> Beverly Shelley, "Recession pinches state's tourism business," *State*, August 2, 1992.

percent of the population was born elsewhere. Asian and Hispanic migration to the area was also beginning to change the region's simplistic black and white racial composition.<sup>83</sup> African Americans were not only migrating back to the South to live in the late twentieth century; they were beginning to vacation there as well.

In a 1996 article entitled, "S.C. heritage: State seeks black tourists," published in the *State* newspaper, Dewanna Lofton pointed out that, according to the Travel Industry Association of Washington D.C., African Americans spend \$34 billion annually on domestic travel, with half of that amount being spent on visits to historical or cultural sites. "We are seeing a long overdue realization of the potential and complexity of the African-American market," said Marion Edmunds, director of marketing for PRT. African Americans travel to the South more than any other region in America. Cynthia Legette, who owns a Columbia firm specializing in ethnic marketing, was quoted in the article: "The South is home for most African Americans in this country. When African-Americans left the South to escape racism and social struggles, they found that sort of thing everywhere. So, they look back to their base in the South as their real home."<sup>84</sup>

Eddy L. Harris echoed this sentiment in his 1993 memoir *South of Haunted Dreams*. Harris left his home in St. Louis to undertake a personal journey to the South on his motorcycle. "And so I headed south. I did not travel to Africa to find my roots. I traveled to the South to find them. For the South, not Africa, is home to Blackamericans, and Blackamericans as a race are essentially southerners. Only in

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<sup>83</sup> Edgar, *South Carolina*, 583.

<sup>84</sup> Dewanna Lofton, "S.C. heritage: State seeks black tourist" *State*, March 12, 1996.

the South could I discover where my beginnings as a Blackamerican have gone. Without realizing it at the time, I was going home.”<sup>85</sup>

In her 2006 book *Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs: Black Women, Food, & Power*, Psyche A. Williams-Forsion described the significance of travel and mobility to African Americans: “From the moment that African people reached these shores until well into the period of the Great Migration and then the early civil rights movement, African American people had to measure their freedom of movement by someone else’s authority. Once freedom was realized, women, men, and children traveled for days, months, and sometimes years. Some searched for a new existence, while others simply searched, not wanting to be confined to any permanent space.”<sup>86</sup> The eloquence of both Harris and Williams-Forsion was often lost in the lingo of those in charge of promoting tourism in South Carolina.

In 1996, Congress gave official designation to South Carolina’s Heritage Corridor program. The state promoted the natural resources and cultural and historic themes of the 240-mile long corridor, which spans fourteen counties stretching from the Blue Ridge foothills to the Atlantic Ocean. Officials hoped the Heritage Corridor would be a “catalyst for economic development in rural South Carolina.”<sup>87</sup> Tourism is framed as a form of social entrepreneurship that can be used to improve the conditions of some of the poorest residents in one of the poorest states in the union. There are two sides of seeing tourism as a way to revive an economically depressed area. First, the increase in visitors spreads throughout other existing industries and

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<sup>85</sup> Eddy L. Harris, *South of Haunted Dreams* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993), 36.

<sup>86</sup> Psyche A. Williams-Forsion *Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs: Black Women, Food, & Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 114.

<sup>87</sup> Corridor Discovery: A Quarterly Newsletter About Progress Along the SC Heritage Corridor, Vol. 1, No. 1 Jan. 1997.

offers an incentive for new economic development. The other side is that the low-skill and low-pay service jobs tourism often brings offer little escape from poverty and oppression. The tourism industry reifies social inequalities because it is often poor women and minorities who fill these service positions.<sup>88</sup> Tourism needs to be studied in a critical fashion by groups invested in community as well as profit, rather than being explored as a quick fix for a long history of poverty.

In 1997, PRT produced the “Report on African-American Travel and Tourism In South Carolina.” Two major differences in black tourism as compared to the white travelers visiting the state were the interest in cultural and heritage tourism and the larger share of the “group trade” market, including group reunions, tours, or conventions. While African Americans spent an estimated \$280 million annually in the state, ranking South Carolina thirteenth of the fifty states, the state lagged behind most other southern states in attracting black tourists.

The marketing of South Carolina to African Americans was harmed by the Confederate flag controversy. In the late 1990s a bitter battle raged that brought South Carolina’s past, present, and future into the national spotlight. In 2000 the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) called for a boycott of South Carolina in order to hit the state’s lucrative tourism industry until the Confederate flag was removed from atop the statehouse dome. In July of 2000, the Confederate flag was moved from flying above the state capital to the Confederate Veteran’s Monument, located in a prominent position on the statehouse grounds, where it still flies today. The NAACP boycott of travel and tourism in South

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<sup>88</sup> Vivian Kinnaird and Derek Hall, eds, *Tourism: A Gender Analysis* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 1994).

Carolina continued but lost the momentum it once had. As South Carolina moved into the twenty-first century, its tourism industry was at the heart of a contentious debate about an emblematic symbol of southern identity.<sup>89</sup>

The contentious nature of marketing South Carolina to African Americans continued in the state's tourism industry. The 1997 "Report on African-American Travel and Tourism In South Carolina" detailed points of interest in the state for African Americans. Making a skewed comparison the report claimed that "Sullivan's Island in Charleston is to African Americans what Ellis Island is to European immigrants; 70-80% of their ancestors passed through it."<sup>90</sup> This uncritical comparison is somewhat challenged in PRT's 2005 African-American Heritage Guide, a brochure advertising the Heritage Corridor. With more research and less grammatical editing the brochure estimated that 40 percent of African Americans can trace their roots to Sullivan's Island. "Although some have referred to Sullivan's Island was to Africans as Ellis Island was to European immigrants, the comparison seems misleading since Europeans immigrants came to America by choice and Africans came by force." [sic]<sup>91</sup> PRT's implication in the 1997 quotation and the awkward attempt to correct it in 2005, without actually owning up to the mistake, was representative of the difficulties South Carolina's predominantly white tourism officials experienced in trying to marketing the state to African Americans. This awkwardness derived from a long tradition of white governance and power in the

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<sup>89</sup> John M. Coski, *The Confederate Battle Flag* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); Rebecca Bridges Watts, "Stories of War: The Confederate Flag in South Carolina," 87- 116 in *Contemporary Southern Identity* (Jackson University Press of Mississippi, 2007).

<sup>90</sup> South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism – Market Research Office, "Report on African-American Travel & Tourism in South Carolina" October 1997.

<sup>91</sup> PTR, "African-American Heritage Guide" (Heritage Corridor brochure – received Aug 2, 2005 – Coastal Carolina University)

region. Without a cooperative and community-based tourism strategy based in social engagement as well as profit, South Carolina's tourism industry, like the Confederate flag that flies on the statehouse grounds, represents an inability to move productively beyond the past.

Sometimes moving beyond the past entails revisiting it. In May 2004, U.S. Congressman James E. Clyburn of South Carolina's sixth district gained approval for a National Park Service preservation study on the Gullah/Geechee history and culture found in the Sea Islands from North Carolina south to Florida. Later in 2004, Representative Clyburn proposed a bill, which was passed by Congress and signed into law by President George W. Bush in October 2006, authorizing \$1 million in annual funding for a period of ten years to establish the Gullah/Geechee Heritage Corridor. In 2006 a five-year study completed by the National Park Service recommended that the federal government act quickly to preserve this African American culture, which is disappearing partly because of resorts and other seaside development. "The Gullah/Geechee culture is the last vestige of the fusion of African and European languages and tradition brought to these coastal areas," Clyburn professed. "I cannot sit idly by and watch an entire culture disappear that represents my heritage and the heritage of those that look like me." According to Clyburn, "The growth of heritage tourism in South Carolina has outpaced traditional tourism growth by 83%. Establishing a Gullah/Geechee Heritage corridor will serve to preserve the

culture while tapping into the growing interest in heritage tourism.”<sup>92</sup> Here is the spirit of social entrepreneurship, where good business coincides with good practice.

Clyburn’s efforts show the potential of African American leaders to influence the state’s tourism industry in positive ways while bringing the state’s leisure industries into the twenty-first century. From the exclusion of African Americans and dressing “southern belle” hostesses in silly costumes to welcome visitors to the state as they would into their home, the state has now entered a more modern era of tourism. However, the over-development of the coastal region, the poverty of the rural midlands, and the continued shadow of discrimination still haunt the South Carolina of “beautiful places and smiling faces.”

It is clear that the economic and cultural influences of tourism relate to modern southern identity. In closing, I want to summarize four key points about tourism and southern identity that influence the stories of the touriscapes in the next two chapters: First, tourist practices and places of tourism both engage the change *within* continuity that defines southern history and culture. Second, that the local is the strongest aspect of southern identity and tourism development and promotion. The bonds become stronger and stronger in the movement from the region of the South, to the specific state, county, community, and family. Third, the love/hate relationship locals have with tourists and tourism is similar to the love/hate relationship southerners have with southern culture. The fourth and final point is that, like the tourist, southern identity is simultaneously rooted in place and the mobility of

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<sup>92</sup> Congressman James E. Clyburn, News Release, 12 July 2004; Meghan Hogan, “National Park Services Releases Gullah-Geechee Study,” January 25, 2006  
[http://www.nationaltrust.org/magazine/archives/arc\\_news\\_2006/012506.htm](http://www.nationaltrust.org/magazine/archives/arc_news_2006/012506.htm)

travel. These aspects of both southern identity and tourism enable a vision that is able to deal with the past, appreciate the present, and look towards the future.

I now turn to the two cases studies to explore the changes in southern culture and tourism development on the ground and in the communities of South Carolina. Dillon County—where the South of the Border roadside attraction is located—and Atlantic Beach—located in Horry County—are marginal spaces within South Carolina’s tourism industry and history. Both areas are economically depressed and ignored by scholars. While South of the Border is a profitable roadside attraction located in a depressed county, Atlantic Beach is a struggling town located in the booming Grand Strand region. They both offer untold stories about and new perspectives on the history of tourism in the state. Both spaces have endured controversies directly related to tourism and identity construction. Understanding these controversies and these spaces offers new perspectives on the past, present, and future of South Carolina and southern culture.

## Chapter 3: Behind the Sombrero: Alan Schafer's South of the Border, 1949-2001



Travelers on Interstate 95 see an imposing neon sombrero rising in the distance. The two-hundred-foot Sombrero Tower is the first sign of South Carolina's famous tourist complex, South of the Border. From the observation deck inside the sombrero, visitors can view the vast 350-acre compound consisting of a miniature golf course, a truck stop, a campground, garishly decorated motels, souvenir shops, restaurants, amusement rides, and strange animal statues. Beneath the layers of kitsch, however, lurk layers of controversy.

When it opened in 1949, South of the Border's primary purpose was to sell beer to residents of the conservative, rural counties in the Bible Belt of the South. Owner Alan Schafer, the Jewish southerner and mastermind behind South of the Border's constant evolution, then engendered further uproar with his outspoken nature and behind-the-scenes political dealings. The icon of Pedro, South of the Border's cartoonish mascot, later began to draw the ire of travelers because of the ethnic stereotype the figure embodies. Controversies, like the millions of tourists, have passed through and changed the landscape and meaning of South of the Border over time. Throughout controversy and change the touriscape of South of the Border has risen, like its huge sombrero tower, to be a recognizable icon of southern roadside culture.

This chapter looks behind the sombrero by focusing on the production side of the story—that is, the discourse shaped by Schafer. This helps to elucidate the connections between economic gain and social change as well as the insider/outsider perspective on travel and tourism. The size of South of the Border and power of its kitsch aesthetic affords the site a special position both inside and outside of South Carolina's social and political norms.



Expanding the often-simplistic dichotomy of race relations in the South, South of the Border functions as a complex borderland where real and imagined identities mingle and

clash. I argue that South of the Border is an important touriscape for reinterpreting contemporary southern culture and identity because its geographic location and constantly changing built environment are symbolic of a changing southern landscape. Schafer constructed South of the Border to engage those inside rural Dillon County as well as those outsiders passing through. He constructed his tourist spot as he constructed his own identity—as a constantly shifting landscape of contrasts and contradictions.

The name "South of the Border" denotes the physical border between the states of South and North Carolina and connotes the cross-cultural consumerism of a Mexican bordertown. The borders of the roadside attraction are social as well as physical. South of the Border has often pushed the boundaries of what is considered

acceptable within the tourism industry and southern culture. Its location on the border as well as alongside the road evokes a sense of rooted mobility. This chapter traces the evolution of the burgeoning tourist conglomerate in the context of a changing southern landscape—the South expanded, roads were built, people moved, and businesses arose to accommodate this mobility.

The power to construct South of the Border was tied to the history and vision of one individual, Alan Schafer (1915-2001). He manipulated social and historical forces while developing a multi-million-dollar business that has thrived for more than five decades. While he navigated the social environment, Schafer also created a multifaceted built environment with a strange amalgamation of cultural themes. Critically analyzing South of the Border's social and built environment over time foregrounds the hybrid identities that emerged from increased prosperity, mobility, and diverse cultural contact in the South following the Second World War.<sup>93</sup>

From the time he opened his roadside business in 1949 until his death in 2001, Schafer made all the major decisions in constructing South of the Border, from designing its aesthetic to defining its political role within Dillon County, a predominantly rural county with almost a quarter of its residents below the poverty line and a racial composition that has remained predominately a split between white

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<sup>93</sup> Few academic texts exist on South of the Border. They include: an entry in Charles Reagan Wilson & William Ferris, ed., *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); Maria Rogal, "South of the Border: Down Mexico Way" *Visible Language* (Providence, Rhode Island, 2000) <http://mariarogal.com/pdf/sobweb.pdf> [accessed October 2001]; Nicole King, "The Story of South of the Border: A Southern Construction of Space" (Masters Thesis, Department of Foreign Language and Literature, University of New Mexico, 2001); Laura Koser, "Planned By Pedro: South of the Border, 1950-2001" (Masters Thesis, Department of History, University of South Carolina, 2005).

and black.<sup>94</sup> The story of South of the Border is Schafer's because he obtained the power to construct the physical and rhetorical space of his tourist empire through his aggressive business practices, accrued wealth, and political connections. In an article on South of the Border's fiftieth anniversary, reporter Anna Griffith wrote: "Schafer is as big a character as the 97-foot-tall sombrero-wearing Pedro that guards over his kingdom. He's as much a study in contrast as the clashing shades of pink, aqua and fuchsia his designs favor."<sup>95</sup>



Schafer was a political powerhouse as well as a successful businessman. He described himself to a journalist as a “knee-jerk liberal, bleeding-heart Democrat.”<sup>96</sup> He served as chair of the Dillon County Democratic Party from 1963 to 1981.<sup>97</sup> In 1968, Schafer was a delegate for Dillon County at the Democratic convention in Chicago. While most South Carolina delegates supported Hubert Humphrey and young Americans rioted in the street against the Vietnam War, Schafer sat in

the front row of the South Carolina delegates wearing a “Draft Ted [Kennedy]” hat and holding a banner with the same sentiment.<sup>98</sup> In 1980, at the height of his political career, Schafer attended a cocktail party for Democratic delegates wearing a white

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<sup>94</sup> Dillon County’s population is 50 percent white and 45 percent black. Less than 3 percent of the population is American Indian. Less than 2 percent is Hispanic.

<sup>95</sup> Anna Griffin, "South of the Border Turning 50," *Sun News*, March 19, 2000.

<sup>96</sup> Brett Bursey, “Meet Alan Schafer, Grandmaster of Tack,” *The Point*, October 1993.

<sup>97</sup> Rudy Maxa "South of the Border Down Carolina Way" *Washington Post*, January 7, 1979. Maxa wrote in 1979 that Schafer had served as chairman of the local Democratic Party for 16 years (since 1963). Schafer kept his position until a vote buying scandal in 1981.

<sup>98</sup> Maxa, “South of the Border,” 16.

suit and a “J.R. for president button.” Schafer and the fictional powerhouse of the television show *Dallas* had much in common. Schafer told the press: “I’ll vote for him [Jimmy Carter] because I’m pledged to vote for him, but I think he’ll lose.”<sup>99</sup>

Unabashedly outspoken, Schafer, of course, was correct. Carter lost the 1980 election to Ronald Reagan. Schafer blended his colorful political critiques with South of the Border's advertising. One upside-down billboard read: "South of the Border — sign planned in Washington. Pedro feex later OK?"<sup>100</sup>

Schafer's South of the Border exemplified trends in American roadside culture and tourism.<sup>101</sup> However, more central to my analysis, his travel spot challenged the demure and conservative façade of rural southern culture and thereby undermined the dominance of the local power structure, the institutional segregation prevalent in the region, and the stereotypes of a homogenous southern culture. The tactics and the motivation for Schafer’s challenges are complicated and far from ideal or innocent; however, his history and his touriscape offer clues for better understanding the complexities of twentieth century southern history and culture.

In the tumultuous period following the Civil War, Alan Schafer's grandfather, Abraham, a recent German Jewish immigrant, bought a small farm in Little Rock, South Carolina, and established a mercantile business.<sup>102</sup> By the time Alan Schafer's

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<sup>99</sup> Joan Mower, “Schafer unhappy with Carter,” *Columbia Record*, August 11, 1980.

<sup>100</sup> Lawrence Toppman, "You're a Beeg Wiener at Pedro's, You Never Sausage a Place," *The Toronto Star*, January 27, 1990.

<sup>101</sup> Laura Koser's thesis “Planned by Pedro” does an excellent job locating South of Border within the context of American roadside culture.

<sup>102</sup> Durward T. Stokes, *The History of Dillon County, South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1978), 123. On page 297, Stokes points out that Abraham Schafer lived in Little Rock before 1885. This makes the Schafer family one of the earliest Jewish families in the area. In "Sentence Proceedings Before the Court" from November 24, 1981 reprinted in "The Alan Schafer Story" *Dillon Herald*, April 29, 1982: Mr. Wallace [Schafer's lawyer] states, "His [Alan Schafer's] was the only Jewish family in that community [Little Rock, SC]."

father, Samuel, was born in 1888, Irishman James W. Dillon had assisted in the procurement of land for a railroad station and a small town. The new town of Dillon thrived from the railroad traffic, and development of the area led the state legislature to carve Dillon County out of the northern part of Marion County in 1910.<sup>103</sup> Samuel Schafer and his first wife, Wilhelmina (Heller) Schafer, had two children, including Alan born in 1915. His mother died in the 1918 flu epidemic, and Mag Hines, a black woman who worked for and lived with the Schafer family, raised him and his brother Charles.<sup>104</sup>

Dillon County experienced its share of economic hardships in the early twentieth century, and Alan Schafer claimed to have learned from them. "The bank took the farm in the 1920s and that's why I hate banks. And that's why I've never borrowed any money," Schafer told a journalist.<sup>105</sup> During the 1930s, one-third of South Carolina's farms were foreclosed, and almost three-fourths of the state's farmers survived on borrowed money. In 1931, the state's deficit had swelled to five million dollars.<sup>106</sup> However, during the 1930s, Dillon County also experienced some economic hope with the construction of a major road. Highway 301 became known as Dillon's "Gold Coast" because, as Durward T. Stokes writes in his study of the county, a "new era in transportation had begun which proved to be profitable in many ways for the county and its citizens."<sup>107</sup> As the railroad had led to the establishment

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<sup>103</sup> Stokes, *History of Dillon County*, 127-128.

<sup>104</sup> Sass, *The Story of The South Carolina Low Country*, 410; Maxa, "South of the Border Down Carolina Way," 16.

<sup>105</sup> Bursey, "Meet Alan Schafer."

<sup>106</sup> Walter Edgar, *South Carolina*, 485, 489.

<sup>107</sup> Stokes, *History of Dillon County*, 360.

of the town and county of Dillon in the beginning of the twentieth century, advances in transportation continued to contribute to changes in the area.

To tap the market opened by the highway and the legal sale of alcohol created by the repeal of prohibition in 1933, the Schafer family created the Schafer Distribution Company in 1934 and turned the business into one of the South's most successful beer distribution operations. Alan Schafer returned home from the University of South Carolina in 1933 with only his senior year left to complete. After Abraham Schafer's death, Samuel asked his son to go into business with him. The young Schafer had an idea—sell the family's country store and concentrate on the beer business. At the Schafer's store patrons could buy groceries on credit but had to pay cash for beer. As a young and observant entrepreneur-in-training, Alan noticed that even during tight times beer brought money. Beer, not tourism, was his first business venture.<sup>108</sup> The family business expanded beyond the boundaries of the old family store because travel and mobility offered increasing profitability in a modernizing South.

As Jews, the Schafer family skirted the cultural stigma associated with selling alcohol that would have affected the white southern Baptists and other religious conservatives who dominated the area.<sup>109</sup> Schafer later attributed the success of his business to "loyalty in the black accounts," pointing to the possible coalitions between the area's small Jewish community and its large African-American

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<sup>108</sup> Griffin, "South of the Border Turning 50;" Alan Schafer's entry, Herbert Ravenel Sass, ed., *The Story of the South Carolina Low Country* (West Columbia, SC: J.F. Hyer Publishing Co., 1956), 410. Samuel Schafer would drive all the way to Baltimore, Maryland to get beer for the general store. This shows the open market for a local beer distributor.

<sup>109</sup> Stokes' 1978 history of Dillon Country states that the formal religions in the county were predominantly Baptist, Presbyterian, and Methodist.

population.<sup>110</sup> According to Stokes with the "hard work and the managerial genius of the younger Schafer" the distribution business flourished and by 1950 its territory had expanded from the Carolinas as far as Miami, Florida.<sup>111</sup> As the business grew so too did the Schafer family's cultural and political influence in the area.

Samuel Schafer was a well-respected member of the local Jewish community. Abraham Schafer became one of the first Jews to settle in what eventually became Dillon County, and the Schafer family remained the only Jews in Little Rock during most of Alan's childhood.<sup>112</sup> Samuel Schafer helped build the first synagogue in the area in 1942, although Dillon County's Jewish community remained small, growing only to fifty members by 1978.<sup>113</sup>

In addition to establishing himself as a leader in the small Jewish community, Samuel Schafer proudly served as a member of the Democratic Party's executive committee, the only viable political party in the area during the early and mid-twentieth century. After his father became ill, however, Alan Schafer felt that the Democrats failed to honor his father's contributions. "When the election came up in 1944, Dad had gone to Sloan-Kettering [medical center]. I asked a guy I thought was a friend of his to elect Dad an honorary committeeman [of the Democratic Party]. The guy promised he would, but they didn't. And it damn near broke my father's heart." Alan Schafer saw this slight as unforgivable. "Early on I made up my mind if

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<sup>110</sup> "Alan Schafer Story," *Dillon Herald*.

<sup>111</sup> Stokes, *History of Dillon County*, 123, 376.

<sup>112</sup> Stokes, *History of Dillon County*, 297; "Sentence Proceedings Before the Court," reprinted in "Alan Schafer Story"

<sup>113</sup> Stokes, *History of Dillon County*, 297.

I ever got a chance to cut those bastards' throats, I would.”<sup>114</sup> Samuel Schafer died in 1945. His son's vendetta against Dillon's political establishment did not.

Here Schafer created a personal story to justify his challenge to the political machinery of Dillon County—a tactic he often employed during interviews to support his actions in politics and business. Schafer's construction of personal stories to defend his motives often obscured the actual political and social forces that informed his choices. Yet this was an astute way to negotiate the delicate insider/outsider position that Schafer continually worked to his benefit.

The Second World War marked both the rise of Alan Schafer on the local scene and a larger shift in southern life. Schafer worked locally with the military police from 1943 to 1945, thereby remaining involved in his community and in the family business despite the war.<sup>115</sup> Not traveling abroad as part of the war effort, Schafer witnessed firsthand the region's dramatic changes during this time. In 1940, for example, more than three-quarters of South Carolina's population lived in rural areas or towns with less than twenty-five hundred residents, and the state had the lowest population of foreign-born residents in the country.<sup>116</sup> But, as historian Pete Daniel writes: "The war challenged [southern] provincialism, offered employment, and reshaped society. After the war, [soldiers] could not fit their experiences or expectations back into the South of the 1930s."<sup>117</sup> South Carolina historian Walter

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<sup>114</sup> Maxa "South of the Border Down Carolina Way."

<sup>115</sup> Sass, *South Carolina Low Country*, 411.

<sup>116</sup> Edgar, *South Carolina*, 513.

<sup>117</sup> Pete Daniel, *Lost Revolutions: The South in the 1950s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 9. For the importance effects of World War II on southern culture see: Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967); Pete Daniel, "Going among Strangers: Southern Reactions to World War II," *Journal of American History* (December 1990), 888-891; Neil McMillen, ed., *Remaking Dixie: The Impact of World War II on the American South*, (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1990); Charles Chamberlain, *Victory at*

Edgar discusses the changes in South Carolina resulting from World War II and veterans' desire to facilitate positive change in race relations in their state. Edgar points out, however, that the "[e]nthusiastic young veterans wanted to change South Carolina, but they faced the opposition of the county elites who preferred the status quo."<sup>118</sup>

Wartime opportunities for employment and service by African Americans along with the rumblings of civil rights activism began to erode white supremacy even in provincial Dillon County. In 1948, taking advantage of the postwar South's changing nature, Schafer embarked on two progressive campaigns in politics and business. As a consequence of a recent Supreme Court decision, Democratic primaries, the "real elections" in Dillon County at the time, opened to blacks in 1948.<sup>119</sup> But few white South Carolinians warmed to the idea of black voters. The same year, in response to President Harry Truman's decision to integrate the U.S. military, a group of southern Democrats, including South Carolina's governor Strom Thurmond, formed the States' Rights Democrats Party (the Dixiecrats) platform, with Thurmond serving as the party's eventual presidential candidate. Thurmond's

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*Home: Manpower and Race in the American South during World War II*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003).

<sup>118</sup> Edgar, *South Carolina*, 571. See Edgar, *South Carolina*, "All in One Lifetime" 512-552 for a discussion of the changes in South Carolina after World War II. Also, see Gail William O'Brien, *The Color of the Law: Race, Violence, and Justice in the Post-World War II South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Charles D. Chamberlain, *Victory at Home: Manpower and Race in the American South during World War II* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003).

<sup>119</sup> The Supreme Court ruled in 1944 that blacks could not be denied the right to vote in Texas Democratic primaries. South Carolina acted swiftly to make primaries "private affairs" and beyond the reach of federal laws. In 1948 Judge J. Waties Waring finally opened the primaries to black voters. Waring felt: "It is time for South Carolina to rejoin the Union." See Edgar, *South Carolina*, 515-516, 519.

opposition to African American civil rights won him every county in South Carolina, except for Anderson and Spartanburg in the upcountry.<sup>120</sup>

Schafer continued to swim against South Carolina's political tides during this time of turbulent change. He often discussed his involvement in the 1948 primary: "I went out and registered every black citizen in the Little Rock precinct. Then I took control of that nucleus of 140 to 150 voters and I've had it ever since." As a result, Schafer placed himself at the center of the local tensions over political and racial power. He explained: "With that black base, I took over the county machine. The Ku Klux Klan used to follow the trucks of my beer distributing company around. I was a pariah in the white community."<sup>121</sup> Although Schafer was white, he was not quite "lily-white" as he called his political enemies.<sup>122</sup> Schafer used his position outside both black and white society in the area as a way to travel between both social locations. He presented his political endeavor in 1948 as seizing control of the emerging black vote rather than viewing blacks as controlling their own voices or political power. Schafer's language—"I took control" and "I took over the county machine"—leads to the question of whether he was he co-opting the emerging African-American vote for his personal political power or forming a coalition based on shared power.

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<sup>120</sup> Edgar, *South Carolina*, 520-521.

<sup>121</sup> Maxa, "South of the Border Down Carolina Way." Schafer later retold the same story in "The Alan Schafer Story" in the *Dillon Herald*. Here Schafer tells of working with local blacks: "I continued to work with the blacks, in getting them registered and holding church meetings to help them get around all the pressures that they ran into at the polls. When the politicians at last realized that the black vote was becoming a force to be reckoned with, the open hate and discrimination went underground. Still, by flagrant gerrymandering blacks were kept from winning any political office, even though they are about 40 percent of the county's population."

<sup>122</sup> During the vote buying scandal of 1980 Schafer called the opponent of the candidate he supported the "darling of the local press and the lily whites." He also used phrases such as "the rednecks" to discuss his political foes. Schafer, "The Alan Schafer Story."

To local conservative whites, the distinction mattered little. Black voting meant black (and Jewish) empowerment. Schafer's alliance with African Americans thus spurred a backlash. He explained: "Boycotts against my beer company were organized. Crosses were burned in front of my home. Groups of Klansmen began following my beer trucks around, urging white retailers to not buy beer from that 'nigger lover' Schafer." The passage of time failed to abate the furor. According to Schafer: "The Klan continued this harassment through the years, holding rallies aimed at me just 3 miles south of South of the Border and then driving in a Kavalcade through S.O.B. premises as a warning."<sup>123</sup> Such efforts at intimidation were not surprising considering many white southerners' fervent opposition to desegregation at this time. Schafer's work with the Africa American community placed him solidly outside the norm for white southerners of his generation.

In October 1948, just a month after the primary, Schafer paid every employee of his beer distribution business, which had a four-thousand-dollar-per-week payroll at the time, in two-dollar bills to show "that legally controlled alcoholic beverages contribute a vital share to the prosperity and well-being of the Town, County, and State."<sup>124</sup> These bills flooded the area and made an impression. In addition to illustrating the vital role of legal alcohol, Schafer wanted to show that he was an economic and political force not easily silenced through boycotts or threats. Schafer promoted the sale and consumption of alcohol and crossed the color line to work with the black community at the moment of its emergence on the political scene. Schafer's

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<sup>123</sup> Schafer, "Alan Schafer Story."

<sup>124</sup> This is pointed out in Laura Koser's masters thesis "Planned By Pedro: South of the Border, 1950-2001," 10. "Will Flood County With \$2.00 Bills," *Dillon Herald*, August 26, 1948. "Schafer \$2 Bills in Circulation," *Dillon Herald*, September 2, 1948.

status as a Jewish southerner gave him the fluidity to inhabit these social borderlands. In addition, the wealth and upward mobility he acquired through his business acumen certainly offered him additional possibilities for building powerful coalitions. The two-dollar bills flowing through the local economy of Dillon County were physical symbols of Schafer's power to inhabit a fluid position within the area's social, political, and business arenas.

Schafer skillfully used his hybrid identity to create and to combat criticism as it fit his agenda. When the Jewish Anti-Defamation League sent him a letter of complaint concerning the "almost-Kosher" Virginia ham he advertised at South of the Border, he replied, "I'm almost Kosher myself." Schafer explained: "There is a power to being Jewish—you hear about persecution, but most people think you're a lot smarter than you are. It's a nationwide syndrome." Journalist Rudy Maxa clarified: "Schafer is a southerner when it suits him. He is also Jewish when it suits him."<sup>125</sup> It is both Schafer's wealth and his whiteness that allowed him a certain degree of mobility on social and political issues.

In *Blacks in the Jewish Mind*, Seth Forman points out that although the 1915 lynching of Jewish businessman Leo Frank in Atlanta is well known, "these kinds of actions were tempered by countervailing Southern ideas concerning the equality of all white men, the overriding concern with the subordination of Blacks, and the usefulness of the Jewish presence as merchants and artisans." Jews in the South negotiated their "delicate situation"—their livelihood often depended on "not rocking the boat"—by attempting to be accepted by whites in the dominant culture of white

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<sup>125</sup> Maxa, "South of the Border Down Carolina Way."

supremacy.<sup>126</sup> The other choice was to challenge white supremacy and risk retribution. As a businessman and political figure, Schafer would have to negotiate this social borderland as he opened and ran South of the Border.

Schafer understood the importance of manipulating physical as well as social borderlands when he selected the location for South of the Border. He opened the small business when Robeson County in "bordering" North Carolina went dry; no alcohol could be bought or sold there. No longer able to distribute beer in the area, Schafer decided to draw the beer drinkers to him. The new laws concerning the sale of alcohol added a greater significance to the North-South Carolina border. In negotiating this situation, Schafer had to now ground his more mobile distribution business in a specific location. This speaks to the fact that at times being grounded in place can actually offer more freedom to bypass social and legal regulations than mobility. In 1949, Schafer procured a small piece of land in Hamer, South Carolina, a small town seven miles north of Dillon, and set up an 18' x 36' store, which he called the "South of the Border Beer Depot." The simple spatial placement of the store on the southern side of the state line gave South of the Border its name and contributed to its lasting identity.<sup>127</sup> The location of the store was directly tied to Schafer's attempt to circumvent the liquor laws. His business's name and location also evoke Schafer's own identity on the borders of acceptable southern social codes.

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<sup>126</sup> Seth Forman, *Blacks in the Jewish Mind: A Crisis of Liberalism* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 34-35.

<sup>127</sup> Joseph Melvin Schafer, Interview with Dale Rosengarten and Klyde Robinson, July 11, 1995, Jewish Heritage Project, Robert Scott Small Library, College of Charleston, 30-32; Griffin, "South of the Border Turning 50"; "South of the Border (A Short History)" 2000. This document was given to me when I met with Susanne Pelt, head of public relations at South of the Border in 2000. It appears to be the document given to journalists or other interested parties throughout the years because the information within the piece reappears in articles on South of the Border over the past twenty years. Hamer, South Carolina is a small town seven miles north of the city of Dillon.

Schafer claimed that Governor Strom Thurmond told him to serve food in addition to beer to avoid controversy resulting from those who saw the sale of alcohol as a sin.<sup>128</sup> Schafer eventually changed the name from "beer depot" to "drive-in" and added a ten-seat grill. A December 1949 South of the Border ad in the *Dillon Herald* announced "a new kind of drive-in restaurant" where patrons could "eat, drink" and "be merry." The establishment now served "deliciously toasted sandwiches, made to order while you wait. Every sandwich a meal in itself. Sliced chicken, corned beef. Pastrami—plus all regular style sandwiches." Lest patrons forget the establishment's primary purpose, however, large bold letters proclaimed, "Beer by the case," and the store ran a promotion where the first one thousand cars would receive a free bottle of wine. Less flatteringly, Schafer later remembered the offerings as "grilled cheese. Grilled ham. Peanut butter and jelly. That was the whole menu, except for soda and coffee—and beer, of course."<sup>129</sup> Selling food did not automatically make South of the Border a socially acceptable space, but it helped disguise the socially distasteful beer market. Schafer manipulated the built environment of South of the Border and its border businesses as he manipulated his identity and the social and political

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<sup>128</sup> Bursey, "Meet Alan Schafer;" Joseph Melvin Schafer, Interview, 31-32. Alan Schafer's brother Joseph Schafer explained that Alan originally opposed the sale of food because it was too much trouble. However, the Dillon County sheriff, according to Joseph, was the one complaining. Joseph Melvin Schafer, Interview. Regardless of what specific sheriff or politician opposed South of the Border's beginnings as just a "beer depot" or bar, it is clear that the social codes (if not the law) pushed South of the Border to diversify its focus beyond beer.

<sup>129</sup> "South of the Border (A Short History)," Earl Swift, "South of the Border is the big enchilada of East Coast tourism" *The (Baltimore) Sun*, April 14, 1996. A South of the Border ad appeared in the *Dillon Herald*, December 29, 1949. This ad frames the drive-in as Bob MacKenzie's South of the Border. Bob MacKenzie was the first manager of the grill. It is interesting to note that Schafer never featured his own name in any South of the border advertisements. "MacKenzie" connotes the Scotch/Irish stock that was much more common in the region than Schafer's Jewish heritage. Even later when Schafer began to use the Mexican caricature of Pedro as the public owner of the tourist spot, this may have been, in some way, a deflection of his own Jewish heritage. Though by the end of the 1960s, Schafer was so well know, at least in local circles, his identity was inseparable from his tourist complex—which is one of my main points in this chapter.

boundaries of Dillon County. Schafer became skilled at maximizing or minimizing controversy in accordance with his needs.

Further advertising the alcohol trade at South of the Border and representing the success of the beer-depot turned drive-in, in 1951 Schafer added on to the original structure with the Champagne Room.<sup>130</sup> This 1951 ad shows the expanded South of the Border and foregrounds the fact that the business was open twenty-four-hours a day. This is an example of how Schafer's business functioned in between the constraints of local law and the demands of travelers. In 1949, the city of Dillon instituted a curfew on beer sales from midnight to sunrise.<sup>131</sup> Because South of the Border was outside of the city limits it was able to circumvent this rule. South of the Border benefited from local prohibition and the freedom of the open road, where travelers passed through at all hours. Time as well as space led to the expansion and success of Schafer's border business. In addition to facilitating an alcohol trade unpopular with many locals during the 1950s, South of the Border soon began to offer accommodations to tourists passing through. During the 1950s, South of the Border grew from a small diner that served beer to include a grill, cocktail lounge, a gas station, a souvenir shop, and an eighty-room motel.<sup>132</sup>

During this period in American history, the motel trade, like the sale of alcohol in the Bible Belt, had a questionable moral status. The motel complicated the boundaries of public and private space by allowing consumers a private realm outside of the sanctity of the home. John Jakle and Warren Belasco, historians of roadside

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<sup>130</sup> Advertisement, *Dillon Herald*, May 17, 1951.

<sup>131</sup> Koser, "Planned By Pedro," 16; "Council Sets Curfew: Beer Banned in Dillon After Midnight," *Dillon Herald*, July 21, 1949.

<sup>132</sup> "The History of South of the Border," *Discover Dillon County: Quietly Progressive South Living*, Dillon County Chamber of Commerce, March 1994, 10.

American culture, point out that early motels "developed an unsavory reputation in the popular media." Both use as evidence J. Edgar Hoover's famous 1940 attack on motels, in which he claimed, "behind many alluring roadside signs are dens of vice and corruption."<sup>133</sup> Schafer opened his first motel in 1954, the same year the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision banning segregated public schools and thereby polarizing the South.<sup>134</sup>



As more and more motels sprouted up across the American landscape, motel referral organizations appeared. Such "chains," explains Jakle, were comprised of "independently owned motels whose owners adhere to set standards and aid one another by supporting national advertising and a reservation and referral system."<sup>135</sup> According to Schafer, this system did not fit the progressive nature of his emerging tourist empire because of the racial politics of the time. He wrote journalist Rudy Maxa: "In 1954, we were admitted to what was then a mutual referral organization [of motel owners] . . . but within 18 months were asked to resign, which we did. The reason (never stated openly, but told to us personally by the top brass) was that we accepted Negroes on equal basis with anyone else who had the \$\$\$." Schafer defended his progressivism regarding race: "Of course, we were the first major motel/restaurant south of Washington who from the

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<sup>133</sup> John Jakle, "Motel by the Roadside: America's Room for the Night, in *Fast Food, Stock Cars & Rock-n-Roll*, ed. George O. Carney, (Boston Way, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995), 180. John Jakle, Keith Sculle, and Jefferson Rogers, ed., *The Motel in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 16-17. Warren Belasco, *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 168.

<sup>134</sup> For the effects of the 1954 Supreme Court decision on South Carolina see: Daniel, *Lost Revolutions*, 195-196, 228-250; Edgar, *South Carolina*, 522-529.

<sup>135</sup> Jakle, "Motel by the Roadside," 184; Jakle, et.al., *The Motel in America*, 138-139.

start always had an open door policy — first come, first served. And also we checked only the color of their money, not their skins [sic]."<sup>136</sup> This statement—“we checked only the color of their money, not their skins”—was Schafer’s public statement on what he saw as the equalizing power of the dollar.<sup>137</sup> He wrote all of this to Maxa in 1979, not 1954, when desegregation caused such a stir throughout the South and the nation.

In the early 1980s, a Schafer associate reiterated the claim that even before the federal government demanded it, Schafer served blacks at South of the Border:

"There was never a sit in at South of the Border. There was a demonstration conducted by the Ku Klux Klan in retaliation for his opening these facilities to black people."<sup>138</sup> At that same time, Gloria Blackwell, a black professor teaching in Atlanta who had grown up with Schafer in Little Rock, also described his efforts on behalf of African Americans. Blackwell thought of Schafer “almost like a brother,” and the two had worked together to educate and register black voters. When Blackwell tried to restart a defunct chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in Dillon County, Schafer became a member. According to Blackwell, "I can speak for the citizens — for the black citizens in Little Rock and Dillon County, and we have always seen him as, first a friend, for things that had to do with civil rights, education, health, welfare, any of those efforts; in those efforts

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<sup>136</sup> Maxa, "South of the Border Down Carolina Way." On page 527 of Edgar’s *South Carolina* a similar quote is used in a slightly different context: “When whites in Orangeburg applied economic pressure to blacks who petitioned for the desegregation of the city’s schools, the black community retaliated in kind...blacks in Orangeburg showed whites that the color of money was neither black nor white; it was green.”

<sup>137</sup> Schafer make the same claim in almost the same words in the 1991 SCETV video *Southern Lens*. He states: “The only thing we looked at was the color of the money.”

<sup>138</sup> "Sentence Proceedings Before the Court," reprinted in "The Alan Schafer Story." The language here “opening these facilities to black” connotes the fact that they must have been previously closed to blacks and not open to all races “from the start” and Schafer claimed.

we worked together." Blackwell likewise noted that both she and Schafer stood on the margins of white southern society. She commented, "We knew of course what race was all about since we were both victims, but our relationship had nothing to do with white and black. And I have seen him all of his life working as a person who worked out of a philosophy... Everything he has ever done has been consistent with a philosophy of dedication to the improvement of human rights."<sup>139</sup>

Despite such public encomia, little hard evidence substantiates Schafer's claim that South of the Border was an integrated space from the beginning. The ads and articles in the *Dillon Herald* from the 1950s and 1960s do not mention African American patrons and the Carolina Studios Photographic Collection at the University of South Carolina's South Caroliniana Library show images of black workers, not patrons.<sup>140</sup> Ads run by Schafer from this era offer no evidence that South of the Border welcomed African Americans and African-American travel guides do not mention South of the Border. Even if he catered to blacks in some way, Schafer was not brave (or foolish) enough to publicly advertise his stance during the 1950s and 1960s. Economic tactics, often referred to as "the squeeze," were used to punish black or white South Carolinians who supported integration. Segregationists, as South Carolina historian Walter Edgar notes, applied "social ostracism, economic

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<sup>139</sup> "Sentence Proceedings Before the Court," reprinted in "The Alan Schafer Story."

<sup>140</sup> Laura Koser discusses the pictures of South of the Border's workers in the Carolina Studios Photographic Collection. Koser, "Planned by Pedro," 35-37. In addition, I agree with Koser's conclusion on page 35 of her thesis: "More research is needed about the African American experience at South of the Border specifically, and on travel on U.S. 301 generally." While this article focused on the power Alan Schafer possessed in constructing South of the Border, studies of how consumers understood, used, and remember the roadside attraction are needed.

boycott, and political pressure ... to force politically correct views."<sup>141</sup> The region surrounding South of the Border was notorious for its Ku Klux Klan activities.

Beginning in 1956, James "Catfish" Cole organized a strong revival of the Klan. Cole earned his living as an evangelical minister and general huckster from Marion County, South Carolina, which borders on Dillon. One of Cole's targets was the large American Indian population in neighboring Robeson County, North Carolina. A 1958 Klan rally there provoked a massive protest by the county's Lumbee Indians, with both factions armed. The stand off ended with the Klan fleeing into the woods.<sup>142</sup> South Carolina novelist Josephine Humphrey's 2001 work of historical fiction, *Nowhere Else on Earth*, is based on the history of the Lumbee tribe of North Carolina. The Lumbee fought the British during the revolutionary war but were persecuted locally for aligning with the Union forces during the Civil War, the period in which Humphrey's novel is set. Humphrey explained that writing the novel changed her view on southern identity: "One is that my notion of 'Southernness' has changed because of her [Rhonda Strong, the Lumbee protagonist of the novel], because of the book. My thinking about race has changed. My ideas about community identity and racial identity, about the fate of Native Americans—these have all changed."<sup>143</sup>

While the Lumbee were harassed following the Civil War and then again during the civil rights movement by white supremacists, they were welcome at South

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<sup>141</sup> Edgar, *South Carolina*, 526-527.

<sup>142</sup> Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 79; Daniel, *Lost Revolutions*, 208.

<sup>143</sup> Interview by Michael Sims, "Historical fiction presents new challenges for Josephine Humphreys," *Book Page* [http://www.bookpage.com/0009bp/josephine\\_humphreys.html](http://www.bookpage.com/0009bp/josephine_humphreys.html); Josephine Humphreys, *Nowhere Else on Earth* (New York: Penguin, 2001); Robin Sumner Asbury, "Fiction From Marshlands: National Bestselling Writers Find Inspiration in the Carolina Low Country" *Sandlapper*, Autumn 2007, 33-38.

of the Border. According to Karen Blu, in *The Lumbee Problem: The Making of an American Indian People*, the Lumbee “proclaimed, whether correct[ly] or not, ‘You can get anything [at South of the Border].’ When it was illegal to sell beer, wine, and liquor in Robeson...Indians seeking to purchase any of these items legally often drove to this South Carolina tourist center, where they could also be entertained by the passing of, to them, strange people with strange ways.”<sup>144</sup> For groups marginalized by segregation laws, the touriscape of South of the Border clearly supplied a place where the rules of the racial caste system could be bent if not broken.

Some form of spatial segregation similar to that described by cultural historian Andrew Hurley likely divided South of the Border. Hurley describes diners as compartmentalized “into different sections and rooms” that allowed customers to use the diner in facilities “in a variety of different ways [and] kept people who had no desire to associate with one another at a distance.” If a public facility achieved a diverse following, it was as much the result of proprietors’ efforts to keep people apart as to mix them together.”<sup>145</sup> The fact that South of the Border was broken up in to different sections—the main grill and the “Champagne Room”—and the fact that the space was open 24-hours may have enabled certain spaces during certain times to function as integrated space. Schafer claimed that South of the Border “accepted” black patrons, but he did not explain the conditions of that acceptance. Integrating leisure space could be a dangerous and even deadly undertaking in South Carolina during the 1950s and 1960s. In 1968, for example, in a tragic incident referred to as

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<sup>144</sup> Karen I. Blu, *The Lumbee Problem: The Making of an American Indian People* (1980; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 12. Blu dates these statements made by Lumbees in the 1960s.

<sup>145</sup> Andrew Hurley, *Diners, Bowling Alleys, and Trailer Parks: Chasing the American Dream in Postwar Consumer Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 83.

the Orangeburg Massacre, three black South Carolina State college students were killed and twenty-seven others injured by police when racial tensions resulted from efforts to desegregate a bowling alley.<sup>146</sup>

The broadness of Schafer's claim to be the first decent restaurant open to African Americans between Washington, D.C. and Miami negates the existence of black-owned businesses in the region. Eighty miles south of South of the Border, Atlantic Beach, South Carolina, a booming black beachfront community and the topic of the next chapter, offered numerous “decent” facilities owned and operated by and for African Americans during the period of racial segregation in the region. Furthermore, with strident opposition to desegregation in the South during this time, it seems unlikely that an integrated bar, restaurant, and motel located in a conservative rural county would have flourished as South of the Border did during the 1950s and 1960s. However, South of the Border's customers were not just locals. Travelers may have been less concerned with upholding southern segregation. In



addition, motel rooms at South of the Border were clearly built to ensure guests' privacy. Each had its own covered parking space directly in front of the motel door.

In 1957, further establishing an outsider position within the conservative culture of the area, Schafer open a liquor store at South of the Border. The sale of beer and location of South of the Border

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<sup>146</sup> Jack Bass and Jack Nelson, *The Orangeburg Massacre* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986); Hurley, *Bowling Alleys, and Trailer Parks*, 190.



originally derived from a desire to sell beer to locals living in a neighboring dry county. However, Schafer's venture into liquor was framed as "service to motel guests" and reflected in the location of a minibar in all of the motel rooms at South of the Border. Schafer located the

liquor trade as a service provided to outside travelers to escape the condemnation of the conservative local community. Of course, nothing prevented locals from buying liquor from South of the Border or escaping the restriction of the home or the prying eyes of neighbors by using the motel and its minibar.

Roger Scott, a local state senator, publicly condemned Schafer for the liquor trade. Scott railed against the entrepreneur by publicly accusing Schafer of trying to "whitewash his South of the Border Motel" and possessing the "biggest harem in South Carolina." Schafer defended himself by taking out a full-page ad in the *Dillon Herald* and pointing out how much tax revenue his liquor store provided the county.<sup>147</sup> Schafer often combated moral complaints with economic arguments. Furthermore, the built environment of South of the Border communicated contradictory messages about the social locations of the complex.

The fact that Schafer sold beer and liquor, had nightclubs, and a motel with private entrances to, and mini bars in, each room added to the risqué nature of South of the Border. In 1958, one of the souvenir shops began featuring a "mens only—ladies keep out" section, which is still present today in the form of "Pedro's Dirty Old

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<sup>147</sup> Laura Koser, "Planned By Pedro: South of the Border 1950-2001," Masters Thesis, University of South Carolina, 2005, 55-60; Advertisement, "The Power to Tax is the Power to Destroy," *Dillon Herald*, April 29, 1965; "Eyebrows Raise During Scott's Senate Speech," *The State*, October 8, 1965.

Man Shop” in Mexico Shop East. Yet, South of the Border also offered numerous attractions such as rides, arcades, swimming pools, and miniature golf courses that appealed to “family fun.” The Border presented a place that appealed to locals as well as travelers. It was both controversial and family-friendly. In attempting to make the most money by appealing to the most consumers, Schafer created a fascinating touriscape, which certainly led to more modern notions of space and social interaction. Furthermore, the paradoxes of South of the Border reflect southern culture, which often appears to be simple and conservative on the surface. However, controversy and complexity lurk below.

The Interstate Highway Act of 1956 changed the nature of American car culture and strengthened Schafer's hand within Dillon County. Many, including South Carolina historian Walter Edgar, have expressed the strong suspicion that Schafer somehow "finagled" the construction plans to ensure that South of the Border not only came within view of drivers but that the federal highway included two exits that poured customers directly into the tourist complex.<sup>148</sup> Schafer denied that his money and power influenced the location of the exits, explaining that in 1957, when the Eisenhower administration “first issued the interstate map, I went with Rep. [John] McMillan to see the Bureau of Public Roads. We had 60 rooms at that time, and I said. 'Should we expand or not?' Every map they had showed the interstate would cross the border right at our point, so we went ahead and expanded.”<sup>149</sup> Some argue that the U.S. Interstate system was instrumental in destroying independently owned “mom-and-pop” roadside businesses and leading to a general sense of

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<sup>148</sup> "Roadside Legacy," *St. Petersburg Times*, July 21, 2001.

<sup>149</sup> Maxa, "South of the Border Down Carolina Way."

“placelessness” in American travel.<sup>150</sup> Writing of his 1961 road trip across America in *Travels with Charley: In Search of America*, John Steinbeck avoided the “superhighways” because they “are wonderful for moving goods but not for the inspection of the countryside.” He feared that one would soon be able to drive from New York to California “without seeing a single thing.”<sup>151</sup>

When the interstate construction began in South Carolina in the mid-1960s, South of the Border not only survived, it flourished.<sup>152</sup> The interstate further pushed Schafer to embellish and expand the built environment of South of the Border.<sup>153</sup> To lure speedy travelers off of the interstate, South of the Border became bigger, brighter, and more garish. Schafer made sure travelers would see his roadside attraction by expanding numerous eye-catching billboards with outlandish catch phrases such as one advertising the motel with a stereotypical image of an American Indian holding a knife and making smoke signals with the phrase: “Don’t be lost injun! Get a Reservation.”<sup>154</sup>

By the mid-1960s South of the Border had rapidly expanded to include even more attractions—a barbershop, drug store, package store, nightclubs, novelty and variety shops, post office, outdoor recreation facilities, a go-cart track, and an immense 104-foot statue of Pedro weighing seventy-seven tons. The massive Pedro

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<sup>150</sup> Tim Hollis, *Dixie Before Disney: 100 Years of Roadside Fun* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999), 15.

<sup>151</sup> John Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley: In Search of America* (New York: Penguin, 1962), 89-92.

<sup>152</sup> “NC Highway Commission Proposes I-95 Route to SC Line,” *Dillon Herald*, December 16, 1964.

<sup>153</sup> The June 3, 1965 “Borderlines” appearing in the Dillon Herald announce that while Schafer would have to relocate certain structures to accommodate the interstate, he was beginning a \$100,000 improvement project to expand and improve South of the Border.

<sup>154</sup> Tim Hollis, *Dixie Before Disney: 100 Years of Roadside Fun*, 16. The insulting nature of Schafer’s advertising campaign and billboards is discussed later in this chapter.

held a South of the Border neon sign and contained four miles of wiring.<sup>155</sup> This huge glowing Pedro, which lured travelers from the interstate, represented Schafer's expanding power and wealth.

In 1961, Schafer capitalized on the Civil War Centennial by opening the ironically named Confederateland, USA, which included a museum of Confederate memorabilia and a theme park with miniature golf and rides.<sup>156</sup> This shows that Schafer was not above playing upon traveler's stereotypes about the South; however, the Confederacy was not treated with the reverence and serious tones found in most Civil War tourist sites. Few tourist sites in the South offered beer and liquor, Civil War memorabilia, rides and mini golf, "authentic" Mexican food, and fireworks all in one place. In 1962, Schafer entered the fireworks business—another controversial border trade.<sup>157</sup> He was constantly changing the built environment of South of the Border to appeal to the travelers and the increasingly fickle whims of a growing consumer society. He still maintained a relationship with the local community of Dillon County.

Throughout the 1960s Schafer ran weekly informational ads under the heading "Pedro's Borderlines" in the *Dillon Herald*. The ads listed new employees and included employee announcements such as marriages, births, awards, and college acceptances. "Pedro's Borderlines" also showed that many local community groups, such as the Boy Scouts, schools and businesses, supper clubs, dance clubs, and historical societies frequently used South of the Border as a community gathering space. While serving the local community, South of the Border successfully appealed

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<sup>155</sup> Ballard, "Palmetto Pathways"; "History of South of the Border," *Discover Dillon County*, 10.

<sup>156</sup> Ballard, "Palmetto Pathways."

<sup>157</sup> "Borderlines," *Dillon Herald*, September 18, 1964.

to the diverse working and middle-class tourist market traveling through. For example, the four March 1965 "Borderlines" ads included letters from happy tourists from Vermont, Washington, D.C., New York, Connecticut, Virginia, and Maryland.<sup>158</sup> In *Dixie Before Disney: 100 Years of Roadside Fun*, Tim Hollis explains: "While Southerners had been aware of the unique features of their part of the country for decades, it was not until Northerners discovered those sites and began coming to visit them that the region's true tourist potential was realized. Until that time, the South was the most isolated area of the United States, known more for its place in legend than from any direct contact outsiders might have had with it."<sup>159</sup>

Appealing to various consumers traveling along the highway created an odd North-South amalgamation at South of the Border. From a 1952 ad announcing "Confederate Cooking!! (Yankee Style)" to various Yankee/Confederate jokes scattered throughout the "Pedro's Borderlines" series in the 1960s, it is clear that South of the Border was literally making Yankee/Confederate distinctions laughable.<sup>160</sup> However, that did not prevent the site from still profiting from the glorification of the Lost Cause at the Confederateland, U.S.A. amusement park. During a time when many southerners fended off civil rights and desegregation with images of a romanticized Old South and the Lost Cause, South of the Border mocked rather than sentimentalized these icons of the past in its advertisements.

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<sup>158</sup> "Pedro's Borderlines," *Dillon Herald*, March 5, 11, 18, and 25, 1965.

<sup>159</sup> Tim Hollis, *Dixie Before Disney: 100 Years of Roadside Fun*, 3.

<sup>160</sup> *Dillon Herald*, 9 October 1952. There was also a billboard for South of the Border that read "Confederate Cookin' Yankee Style!" The images on the billboard included a Confederate flag and the American flag on the right side and a sombrero and serape on the left. The image can be found in "South of the Border's Award Weening Billboard." A publication sold in the souvenir shops at South of the Border.

Schafer's negotiation between the "Confederate" locals and the "Yankee" tourists is apparent in a 1965 "Pedro's Borderlines" that announced a new shoe, bag, and hosiery department at South of the Border. The announcement ends by advising the locals: "Hurry Senioritas, before ze Yankees clean out ze best numbers in ze Easter Rush!"<sup>161</sup> Furthermore, one 1962 "Pedro's Borderlines" begins "Pedroland Invaded!" and quips: "There were so many people beating their way to pedro's doors Monday that five Yanqui soldiers landed in a helicopter to beat the heavy traffic for lunch. If thees keep op, pedro may hav' to build landing strip...then, Yanqui soldiers breeng all the buddies!" This extension of "southern" hospitality to "Yanqui" soldiers was further complicated in the same "Borderlines" advertisement with an image of a stout and stereotypical Mexican figure wearing the uniform of a Confederate soldier.<sup>162</sup> While using the Civil War as a laughable marketing ploy, Schafer was fighting real political battles behind the scenes.

In 1964, Schafer remained a staunch Democrat as many in the region began to defect to the Republican Party because of the Democratic candidate for president, Lyndon B. Johnson's ties to the 1964 Civil Rights Act. A prominent Democrat, Schafer campaigned hard for LBJ and even hatched a plan to smear Barry Goldwater, the Republican nominee and foe of civil rights legislation, in the South. Schafer's correspondence with U.S. Senator Olin D. Johnston describes a plan to obtain proof of Goldwater's NAACP membership card and print up 100,000 copies to distribute in South Carolina. Schafer wrote that he could "get a great many of the South Carolina Negro leaders to go along with this (bragging about Goldwater's NAACP

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<sup>161</sup> "Pedro's Borderlines," *Dillon Herald*, March 18, 1965.

<sup>162</sup> "Pedro's Borderlines," *Dillon Herald*, August 8, 1962.

Membership) without a thought of them deserting the party.” The senator replied that he needed time to check on Goldwater’s NAACP membership, and he would get back in touch with Schafer.<sup>163</sup> Nothing ever came of this specific plan. However, this incident illustrates that while South of the Border was growing and becoming more profitable, Schafer’s political aspirations and schemes were expanding as well. It also shows that Schafer was continuing to use the emerging voice of local blacks as part of his local power.

In 1965, Schafer took over as the leader of the Dillon County Democratic Party. He was ascending the ranks of the Democratic Party as it was descending in influence in the region and the state of South Carolina. Aside from his home state of Arizona, Goldwater only won southern states in 1964—Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and, certainly to the chagrin of Schafer, South Carolina.<sup>164</sup> As South of the Border’s touriscape expanded throughout the 1960s, so too did Schafer’s power within local and state political circles. It seems that during the economically unstable 1970s Schafer was less intent on constantly manipulating South of the Border’s built environment and more concerned with politics than tourism. It was during the mid-1970s that the iconic Sombrero Tower—the ultimate symbol of Schafer’s power—was constructed at South of the Border. One newspaper went so far as to describe Schafer, who had never won election to any public office, “as one of the most powerful politicians in South Carolina.”<sup>165</sup> Another referred to him as the

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<sup>163</sup> Laura Koser, “Planned By Pedro,” 81-82; Alan Schafer Correspondence to Olin D. Johnston, August 28, 1964, “Legislative, General, 1964,” Olin D. Johnson Papers, Modern Political Collections, South Caroliniana Library.

<sup>164</sup> Dillon County went for LBJ in 1964. As the Republican Party remains the dominant party throughout the South, Dillon County has continued as a Democratic stronghold. Against the political tide, Dillon County went for Democrat John Kerry in the most recent presidential election in 2004.

<sup>165</sup> “Schafer, two others named in indictment,” *Columbia Record*, June 29, 1981.

“enigmatic millionaire” of Dillon County.<sup>166</sup> Certain people found Schafer’s quirky and outspoken nature (and his gaudy travel stop) offensive to the “good old boy” system of southern politics, though Schafer was moving into the inner circle.

In February 1980, Schafer received a position on the South Carolina Highway and Public Transportation Commission, an appointment that marked his first “official” public appointment in South Carolina government and the peak of his political power.<sup>167</sup> He fell from that perch just a few months later when he was charged with buying votes in the 1980 Democratic Party primary in Dillon County.<sup>168</sup> The controversial primary involved Roy Lee (the incumbent and Schafer ally), who appointed the first black deputies in Dillon County’s history, and was running against Greg Rogers, whose major backer was his father Pete Rogers, a local judge and a major political force in the area. Schafer remained defiant in the beginning, claiming that the absentee ballot box, which was taken by South Carolina law enforcement from South of the Border, allowed African Americans to vote without harassment. Federal agents explored three aspects of the election: “straight buying of votes, civil rights violations,” and “use of mail to carry out schemes” (absentee ballots were sent through the mail).<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> United Press International NY, “Schafer unhappy with Carter,” *Columbia Record*, August 11, 1980.

<sup>167</sup> “Schafer Makes It,” *Columbia Record*, February 27, 1980; “Tourist Complex Owner Elected to Commission,” *State*, February 21, 1980.

<sup>168</sup> This complicated vote buying scandal actually reached back to the 1978 primary as well and included dozen of other individuals in Dillon County. It is likely that vote buying and rigging had been going on for some time in the county.

<sup>169</sup> Jack L. Truluck, “U. S. Attorney Joins Probe Of Dillon Vote Charges,” *State*, June 19, 1980; “Schafer to Learn How Much Prison Time He Must Serve,” *Columbia Record*, February 10, 1982; Anne Marshall, Suspended Councilman Pleads Guilty to Three Counts of Vote Fraud,” *Columbia Record*, July 13, 1981; Jack L. Truluck, “Probe Narrowing in Dillon County Vote Buying Saga,” *Columbia State*, February 2, 1981.

Eventually politicians on both sides were found guilty in the vote buying scandal. A 1981 article in the [Columbia, SC] *State* reported that the verdicts and the stiff penalties “have sent shock waves across Dillon County, the state of South Carolina and even the United States of America.”<sup>170</sup> In typical “Alan Schafer fashion,” the controversial figure got married just a few days after he entered a guilty plea on one count of conspiracy and two counts of mail fraud. A 1981 article in the *Columbia Review* entitled “Schafer puts troubles aside to get married” explained: “Schafer, 67, and the former Patricia Francis Campbell, 40, were married on October 4 at the Bamberg home of Julius B. Ness, associate justice of the South Carolina Supreme Court. . . . Mrs. Schafer has been a secretary at her husband’s South of the Border tourist complex in Dillon for many years.”<sup>171</sup>

An editorial in the *Dillon Herald* entitled “Get Off Our Backs” complained that the vote buying scandal in Dillon County was part of a “political vendetta” that used the county “as an example” for offenses (vote buying) that have “been virtually traditional in South Carolina politics.” Using extremely strong language the editorial posed the question: “Has justice been served in the rape of Dillon County?” Schafer was referred to as a “political kingpin” who “has done much more good in his life than bad.” The editorial also criticized the ten-year sentence of State Senator Gene Carmichael and the persecution of Judge Rogers in the vote buying scandal. It seems that a large part of the local community felt that Schafer “would be much more valuable to Dillon County with his efforts in industrial development and philanthropies if he were at home and not in prison.” It seems that Schafer’s years of

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<sup>170</sup> Jack L. Truluck, “Judge Says Vote Fraud Verdict Makes S. C. Better Place to Live,” *State*, May 17, 1981.

<sup>171</sup> “Schafer puts troubles aside to get married,” *Columbia Record*, October 16, 1981.

making economic arguments for him and his business ventures resonated within his local community. The *Dillon Herald* editorial praised Schafer's general character and business and civic contributions, but it also pointed out that "his days as a political powerhouse are finished."<sup>172</sup>

Schafer continued to run his tourist complex and publicly defend himself from federal prison at Eglin Air Force Base. In a letter to the *Dillon Herald*, printed April 29, 1982, Schafer claimed that vote buying had been "business as usual" in Dillon County for years and that the racist underpinnings of the election and the history of disenfranchising the county's black voters made Schafer feel that "the rightness of my motives justified the means."<sup>173</sup> Though Schafer did show regret and remorse: "I do not condone what I did. I am deeply ashamed for myself; for my family; for the Democratic Party and for the many friends I feel I have let down. My transgressions were not for personal profit nor for political power nor political gain. They were motivated by what I believed to be the best of reasons — love of the underdog, a fear of the concentration of power."<sup>174</sup> Repentance did not equal submission, however. Although he pledged that such offenses "will never happen again," he also vowed "always, as long as God gives me strength, [to] fight for the poor, the underprivileged, and against the concentration of power in any man. This is what my life has stood for. I seek no recognition for it. I have never sought wealth for its own

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<sup>172</sup> Editorial, "Get Off Our Backs," *Dillon Herald*, April 29, 1982.

<sup>173</sup> Schafer, "Alan Schafer Story."

<sup>174</sup> In "Alan Schafer Story" South of the Border's owner explains that Roy Lee's opponent Greg Rogers is the son of the Judge of Probate, Pete Rodgers, and that "Pete Rogers had already secured the election of his son-in-law, Jack McInnis, to the Dillon County seat in the S.C. House of Representatives." Therefore, Schafer reasoned that the elder Rogers was attempting to become a "one-man dictator" in Dillon County. "If Rogers could win the Sheriff's office, he would control the top three Dillon County political offices in his immediate family." In the hotly contested election Rogers received 4,686 votes to Lee's 3,905. However, Lee received 1,265 absentee ballot votes to Roger's 81. Jack Trulock, "Probe Narrowing in Dillon County Vote Buying Scandal," *State*, February 1, 1981.

sake, but for what good I could do with it for my fellow man. Whatever may happen to me, these feelings will go with me to the grave."<sup>175</sup> By 1994, Schafer had become less apologetic and sentimental, and he again began to maintain his innocence: "I did absolutely nothing wrong, I just had a chicken shit bunch of lawyers." Although he was "officially" out of politics, Schafer declared it "doesn't mean I can't give the sons of bitches who are still in it hell."<sup>176</sup>

Schafer also refused to let time in prison stop the expansion of his constantly changing kitsch emporium, working to ensure that South of the Border appealed to the broadest possible consumer base. In 1988, he added a fifteen-thousand-square-foot convention center, which appeals more to the local community, costing three hundred and fifty thousand dollars to South of the Border's numerous attractions.<sup>177</sup> He also went into the regional soda business in 1993 by saving Blenheim Ginger Ale, a South Carolina icon that engenders regional pride. Kevin Geddings, a marketing consultant for Schafer who referred to his boss as the "greatest marketing mind in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in South Carolina," explained: "You know Georgia had Coke and North Carolina had Pepsi, [Schafer] didn't want to see the Blenheim brand lost forever."<sup>178</sup> It was probably both local pride and wise business acumen that caused Schafer to buy the bottling company.

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<sup>175</sup> Schafer, "Alan Schafer Story." Alan Schafer's generosity is well documented. Stokes history of Dillon County points out that Schafer gave extensively to "worthy religious, charitable, scientific, literary, and educational causes" on the local, state, and national levels. In an interview with the author in July of 2000, Suzanne Pelt, public relations manager at South of the Border, pointed out that Schafer gives on average a quarter of a million dollars per year to worthy charities and highly values education an important cause. Pelt also gave me a recent copy of the *Dillon Herald* from July 6, 2000. On the front page there was a story and picture of Schafer presenting a \$25,000 check to the Dillon County chapter of the Red Cross.

<sup>176</sup> Bursey, "Meet Alan Schafer."

<sup>177</sup> Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Press Release, September 28, 1988.

<sup>178</sup> "Roadside Legacy," [Florida] *St. Petersburg Times*, July 21, 2001.

In the late-1800s Dr. C.R. May invented Blenheim Ginger Ale by combining the famed spring water of Blenheim, South Carolina with Jamaican Ginger as a concoction for his patients' stomach problems. As was the case with most sodas, patients liked the taste and the drink became a popular treat served at soda fountains in local pharmacies. In 1903 Dr. May and A.J. Matheson opened the Blenheim Bottling Company to produce the spicy concoction. Fitting in with Schafer's and South of the Border's image, Blenheim's kick is only for the brave. Southern food scholar John T. Edge compared the soda's taste to a "slap in the face from a spurned lover." *New York Times* writer William Grimes wrote in 1998 about the ginger ale: "The first swallow brings on a four-sneeze fit. The second one clears out the sinuses and leaves the tongue and throat throbbing with prickly heat." When Schafer bought the company in 1993, he moved the production of the soda to a new bottling facility he built at South of the Border and turned the old bottling plant into a Bottler's Museum. The extremely spicy ginger ale has been featured on a national broadcast with Charles Kuralt and in *Playboy* magazine in the 1980s, but Schafer began a national advertising campaign in high-end publications like the *New Yorker*, which led to the soda's cultural cache as a hip regional soda. Paul Lukas' 2003 *New York Times* article on the popularity of regional sodas reported that fears Schafer, owner of "kitschy" South of the Border, "might cheapen Blenheim's heritage were unfounded." Lukas explained: "They've [the Schafer family] maintained the brand's gorgeous bottle design and its spicy flavor, which have earned Blenheim a certain highbrow cachet among soda epicures."<sup>179</sup> In postmodern fashion, Schafer blurred the line between high and low culture as well as local, national, and international markets.

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<sup>179</sup> Company Brochure, "We Make Ginger Ale the Old Fashioned Way, Since 1903" Blenheim

Soda possesses the multifaceted significance of being both an extremely recognizable national icon, a source of regional pride and southern identity, and a global export and symbol. Jim Auchmutey of the Atlanta, Georgia *Journal Constitution*, wrote in 1996: “What beer is to Germany and wine is to France, the soft drink is to the southern United States. Three of the world’s best selling drinks—Coke, Pepsi and Dr. Pepper—were formulated in the former Confederacy more than a century ago by pharmacists.” Southerners really like their soft drinks. In 1996, southerners drank sixty-two gallons of soda—that is one-fifth above the national average.<sup>180</sup> In his 2003 article, Lukas eloquently referred to regional sodas and those who love them as a “sort of effervescent subculture, bubbling under the surface of the ruthlessly consolidated soda market.” He found that heritage and authenticity are essential aspects of these small-time regional sodas’ popularity.<sup>181</sup>

The popularity of these small regional consumer goods offers a challenge to the McDonaldization of society that sociologist George Ritzer discussed in his 1993 book. Historian Donna Gabaccia explained: “Most fast-food chains start in a specific location and when they spread, they take their regional identity with them.” She offers Kentucky Fried Chicken, Bojangles, and Shoney’s as examples. John Sheldon Reed, professor emeritus of sociology at University of North Carolina, pointed out: “There are lots of brands that have iconic significance for southerners—the kind of things that those living outside the South bring back with them...Rebel Yell bourbon

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Bottlers, Hamer, SC, 1999; William Grimes, “A Southern Ginger Ale With a Sting in Its Tail” *New York Times*, February 25, 1998; Paul Lukas, “Surviving by Fizzy Logic,” *New York Times*, August 12, 2003.

<sup>180</sup> Jim Auchmutey, “Falling hard for soft drinks: Fizzing with personality, regional sodas grab thirsty fans, whose loyalty is effervescent” [Atlanta, GA] *Journal Constitution*, July 21, 1996.

<sup>181</sup> Paul Lukas, “Surviving by Fizzy Logic” *New York Times*, July 23, 2003.

used to be that way. Duke's mayonnaise. The Moon Pie. Lots of local soft drinks—Cheerwine in North Carolina, Ale-8-One from Kentucky, Blenheim Ginger Ale from South Carolina.” Reed makes the argument that “the South remains culturally distinct in part because it gives its own regional flavour to mass-produced products.”<sup>182</sup> Schafer's purchase of South Carolina's regional soda and the fact that he relocated the bottling plant to and heavily marketed the soda at South of the Border, shows that he was attempting to establish his empire as a multifaceted regional icon.

Schafer's venture into the world of regional soda was only a brief diversion from his involvement in the political scene of South Carolina. In the mid-1980s, the South Carolina Legislature quietly and with no debate passed a measure, sponsored by state senator—and Schafer friend—Jack Lindsay, that made video gambling legal in the state.<sup>183</sup> Between 1996 and 1999, Schafer added the Silver Slipper and then four more video gambling establishments to South of the Border's amusements.<sup>184</sup> The issue of video gambling came to play a pivotal role in South Carolina's 1998 gubernatorial race, which pitted Republican incumbent David Beasley, an opponent of video gambling, against Democrat Jim Hodges, who largely dodged the issue.

Operators of video gambling establishments, including Schafer, put a great deal of

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<sup>182</sup> John Heer and Steve Penfold, “Fast food celebrates regional differences: McFefafel: Consumption patterns global homogenization” *National Post*, February 15, 2003.

<sup>183</sup> Will Moredock, *Banana Republic: A Year in the Heart of Myrtle Beach* (Charleston, SC: Frontline Press, 2003), 45. Moredock explains that the change in the budget bill was not noticed until lawyers pointed it out in a 1988 case where the owner of a convenience store with video gambling machines was sued. In 1991 the state Supreme Court upheld the ruling. During the 1990s in South Carolina the industry grew rapidly. By 1999 the industry brought in 2.8 billion dollars with over 30,000 machines throughout South Carolina. “S.C. Court Rejects Video Gambling Referendum” *Washington Post*, October 14, 1999.

<sup>184</sup> “South of the Border (A Short History),” 1999. After the Silver Slipper, Schafer opened the Golden Eagle in 1997, The Orient Express and Pedro's Hideaway in 1998. The Golden Eagle was the smallest poker mall (as they were called by the industry), and the only one not open 24-hours.

money into the Hodges campaign and ran negative advertisements against Beasley. A few weeks before the election, Beasley's campaign filed suits against Schafer and another video gaming mogul, Fred Collins, to stop the ads and force the men to divulge how much they had spent on the anti-Beasley advertisements. A judge refused the request, and after the election, won by Hodges, the Beasley campaign dropped the suit. The 1998 race was the most costly and nasty gubernatorial race in modern South Carolina history, but Schafer and video gambling appeared triumphant.<sup>185</sup>



Schafer had only won the battle and not the video gambling war. The legislature passed a Hodges-backed measure that

required that the video gambling issue be decided by popular referendum to be held in November 1999. But a month before the vote was to be held, the South Carolina Supreme Court ruled that by holding such a referendum, the legislature would unconstitutionally delegate its lawmaking responsibilities to voters. They upheld the part of the law that stipulated if the referendum was held, video gambling would become illegal as of July 1, 2000, and the video gambling parlors closed.<sup>186</sup> The

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<sup>185</sup> Catherine Pritchard, "North Carolinians Place Their Bets" *Fayetteville Observer-Times*, March 2, 1997; Michael Sponhour, "Ads Break State Law, GOP Says," *State*, August 29, 1998; Associated Press, "Accusations Fly Over Gambling Money in Governor's Race," August 28, 1998; Associated Press, "Beasley's Campaign Sues, Collins, Schafer For Campaign Ads," October 23, 1998; Associated Press, "Judge Refuses to Stop Gambling's Anti-Beasley Ads," October 27, 1998; Associated Press, "Beasley to Drop Suit Against Video Poker Operators," November 12, 1998; Associated Press, "Judge Dismisses Beasley Case; Gambling Operators Sue for Slander," November 12, 1998.

<sup>186</sup> Michael Sponhour, "Gov.-elect Hodges Wants Final Step in S.C. Video Poker War to be a State Wide Referendum," *State*, November 19, 1998; Cliff LeBlanc and Douglas Pardue, "Video Poker Operators Says Court Will Put Them Out of Business" (Columbia, South Carolina), *State*, April 29, 1999; Cliff LeBlanc, "No Poker Vote, S.C. Supreme Court Decision Halts Games By July 1, 2000,"

flashy Silver Slipper was converted into the Silver Arcade. The rest of the video gambling parlors down highway 301 were left derelict and later converted into used car dealerships.



As South Carolina's most visible icon of tourism on the busy Interstate 95 corridor, South of the Border also suffered as a result of the tourism boycott of South Carolina launched in the

summer of 2000 by the NAACP as a result of the state's refusal to remove the Confederate flag from the statehouse.<sup>187</sup>

Despite these setbacks, Schafer's unflagging dedication to his business resulted in continued growth and national publicity. South of the Border began to capture national attention when, in 1986, *Roadside America* – "the modern traveler's guide to the wild and wonderful world of America's tourist attractions" – featured the site. In the 1992 "new and revised" edition, South of the Border's status was elevated to one of the seven wonders of roadside America.<sup>188</sup> The *Washington Post* named South of the Border the tackiest place in the Mid-Atlantic in 1996.<sup>189</sup> This prompted The *State* newspaper in South Carolina to respond: "Aside from quibbling over the Post's geographical acumen (just where does the South begin these days?) we'd have

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*State*, October 15, 1999; "S.C. Court Rejects Video Gambling Referendum" *Washington Post*, October 15, 1999. David Firestone, "South Carolina High Court Derails Video Poker Games" *New York Times*, October 15, 1999.

<sup>187</sup> The Confederate flag debate also hurt Beasley's 1998 reelection campaign for governor. In 1996, he professed that "he had been shown—through prayer and Bible reading—that the Confederate flag should come down." This was a reversal from his previous stance, and it greatly angered his conservative base. Beasley tried to avoid the issue, but, like video gambling, it fueled his 1998 defeat. Moredock, *Banana Republic*, 39.

<sup>188</sup> Jack Barth and Doug Kirby, *Roadside America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986), 15-16. South of the Border is also featured in the new and updated *Roadside America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 107-110.

<sup>189</sup> Eva Zibart, et.al., "Tack Mentality" *Washington Post*, July 12, 1996.

to say this award seems long overdue."<sup>190</sup> The travel site made its big screen debut in the critically panned 1999 film *The Forces of Nature*, starring Ben Affleck and Sandra Bullock. In 2001, the *U.S.A. Today* listed South of the Border among the "10 great places to stop the car and take a look," while *American Heritage* dubbed it one of America's best roadside attractions.<sup>191</sup>

At the end of Schafer's days the transgressive nature of selling beer had lessened and the dry counties had long ago gone wet. The empire built on beer, like its owner, was beginning to age and possess an outdated, retro image. In 2000, the last spot of revelry and booze soaked debauchery at South of the Border, The Cancun Saloon, was reinvented as Pedro's Antique Shop. Like Schafer, South of the Border had aged and weathered the many changes in southern culture. No hard liquor could be bought at South of the Border after the saloon closed. The antique shop, which was Schafer's idea, showed an appreciation of the material objects and memories of



the past. The antique shop even contrasted to the rest of the bright tones of yellow, red, orange, and green; it was a more subdued white and blue. As Schafer mellowed with age, so too did his roadside attraction.

Schafer ran his tourist empire until right before his death in 2001, often putting in twelve-hour days, seven days a week, even while battling prostate cancer and leukemia. At the time of Schafer's death eight-million travelers per year visited

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<sup>190</sup> "Talk About Town," *State*, July 24, 1996.

<sup>191</sup> "10 Great Places to Stop the Car and Take a Look" *USA Today*, August 3, 2001; John Margolies, "The Best Roadside Attractions," *American Heritage* (April 2001), 18.

South of the Border, he employed 750 workers in the rural and economically-depressed area of Dillon County, and his tourism empire was valued at \$50 million.<sup>192</sup>

### **The Strange Career of Pedro: Trading in Souvenirs and Identity**



The strange career of Pedro further complicates the roadside attraction's social location, Alan Schafer's philosophy of equality, and the representations of identity that overlap within the touriscape of South of the Border. A close reading of Pedro shows how both identity and place overlap in this tacky landscape of roadside consumption. To explore the deeper meanings of Pedro, I examine the discourse surrounding his origins as the mascot of South of the Border and then locate him within the larger context of the tourist attraction's commodity exchange and built environment. On the surface, Pedro and the souvenir trade at South of the Border illustrate the kitsch of racism and the commodification of identities that simplifies and essentializes the complexities of cultures. South of the Border's insensitive lampooning of various cultures and identities intensifies its aesthetic of tackiness. On a deeper level, the pastiche of floating signifiers found within South of the Border satirizes the holistic and stable nature of identity in the postwar landscape of consumer culture. This opens a space for reconstructing a Newer South and a new terrain of southern identity, which pulls from and plays with the symbols of consumer culture.

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<sup>192</sup> Griffin, "South of the Border turning 50."

These images of Pedro and South of the Border may not be “authentic” or “real” yet the mindset and emotions they represent are. Examining the strange career of Pedro shows how the politics of exclusion/inclusion have moved from the realm of actual physical occupancy to that of representation. Alan Schafer’s use of Pedro in the context of South of the Border’s larger history, culture, and architecture is a sign that the postmodern shift from truth and reality to representation and simulation is not only the province of “privileged” intellectuals, but has been growing up in the provinces—the small-town South—all along.

Pedro most obviously embodies how the U.S. South imagines and exoticizes Mexico and Mexicans. During the early twentieth century “all things Mexican were the rage” and the roadside architecture of the period used faux-Mexican motifs to represent the “exotic” nature of travel, which is ironic considering this is the same period when the roadside was becoming a tame and commercialized landscape. South of the Border’s carnivalesque built environment and consumer items represent the fact that commercial culture does not have to be tame and homogenous.<sup>193</sup>

South of the Border’s name derived from the need to foreground the geographical location of the business south of the state line, where alcohol could be purchased legally. In the 1950s, as South of the Border’s business extended beyond selling beer, a more extensive “Mexican bordertown theme” developed. This theme reflects similar trends of exoticizing Latinos found in postwar American popular culture such as the “Latin Lover” personae of actors such as Ricardo Montalban and Cesar Romero, the “Brazilian Bombshell” epitomized by Carmen Miranda, the

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<sup>193</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1941).

popularity of Desi Arnaz, and the cartoon character Speedy Gonzales.<sup>194</sup> The Pedro character is visually similar to Speedy Gonzales because his image is cartoon-like, both figures wear similar attire topped off with oversized sombreros, and both characters share a similar dialect.

In 1999, when The Cartoon Network, owned by AOL-Time Warner, pulled Speedy Gonzales off the air to avoid offending its viewers, a backlash was led by the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), “the nation’s oldest Hispanic-American rights organization.” In 2002 LULAC, along with other Latino organizations, successfully argued that Speedy Gonzales was a positive cultural icon loved throughout Latin America and by Latinos in the United States, and he was returned to rotation by the network. Some Latinos, it seems, did not see Speedy Gonzales as a negative stereotype, but rather as a clever and capable figure who, like the “trickster” of folklore, outsmarts his opponents.<sup>195</sup> The Speedy Gonzales controversy speaks to the complex and contradictory messages communicated by icons of popular culture.

South of the Border’s Pedro can also be read as a representation of how many Americans, especially in areas with low Latino populations such as Dillon County, have tended to reduce all Latinos to “Mexicans.” The use of Pedro also expands the context of the geographic term “South” beyond the southern region of the United States of America. In 1952, C. Vann Woodward discussed the American South’s

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<sup>194</sup> Helen Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican: Cultural Relations between the United States and Mexico, 1920-1935* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1992); W. Dirk Raat, *Mexico and the United States: Ambivalent Vistas* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 196-197. John Jakle discusses the use of Latin styles in roadside motels during the 1950s in *The Motel in America*, 45.

<sup>195</sup> Tom Kuntz, “Adios Speedy, Not So Fast,” *New York Times* April 7, 2002. “Andale! Andale! Arriba! Arriba!” *Hispanic*, May 2002, “Speedy is Back” July/August 2002; *Hispanic* 15.5; “Cartoons si, correctness no,” *Report/News magazine* July 8, 2002.

distinction from the rest of the country because of its defeat and “occupation” following the defeat of the Confederacy in the Civil War.<sup>196</sup> South of the Border’s touriscape evokes these overlapping postcolonial situations, as well as the legal and political complexities of borders, within the geographical designation of the “South.” These many “Souths” play with the travelers’ spatial bearings and complicate any one “authentic South” as a fixed geographic location.

The most recent South of the Border brochure features “Pedro’s Map,” a rendering of I-95 beginning in Washington, D.C. and ending in Orlando Florida with, of course, South of the Border prominently featured in the middle. The brochure juxtaposes a single and small image of a plantation home—the traditional cultural representation of the South—designating Charleston with seven much larger images of Pedro. The plantation home functions as a foil for the carnivalesque landscape of South of the Border. In the largest image on the brochure, Pedro is leaning against a cactus napping, with his sombrero down over his face, and his hands crossed over a large serape draped belly. Next to this image are the words: “South of the Border—Where the Real South begins!” This statement mocks the very idea of a “real” South in the context of both the United States and Mexico.

The claim that South of the Border represents anything “real” has drawn criticism from Mexico and the U. S. South. “Once, a Mexican embassy guy wrote to a senator from New Mexico saying the embassy was hot, that we gave employers a

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<sup>196</sup> C. Vann Woodward, Southern Historical Association presidential address: “The Irony of Southern History,” *Journal of Southern History* 19 (February 1953), 3-19. Also see *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989, 1960). Recent collections that address the U.S. South in a global and postcolonial context include Deborah Cohn, ed., *Look Away: The U.S. South in New World Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); James L. Peacock, Harry L. Watson, and Carrie R. Matthews, *The American South in a Global World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

bad image of Mexicans,” Schafer explained during a 1979 interview. “I told the senator we had 100 good-paying jobs, above the minimum wage, with chances for advancement, and he should send some Mexicans down. I never heard from him again. They lost a chance to give jobs to 100 Mexicans.”<sup>197</sup> Here Schafer conflates an important distinction between representations and actual people and uses his own wealth and power to deflect outside criticism of his tourist complex.

Reading *South of the Border* as a “real” representation of the U.S South has also drawn criticism. When Maureen Duffin-Ward wrote a piece on the American road trip for the Charlotte, North Carolina *News and Observer*, she received a letter signed by B.E. “Even if you had not stated that you were from Philadelphia, I would have know that you are ‘not from around here’ when you said that *South of the Border* is the ‘real South.’ I think anyone from the real South who has been to *South of the Border* will disagree with your view and just might be kind of offended.” B.E. offers an “insiders take” on Schafer’s roadside attraction, “*South of the Border* is just an eyesore and junky place to take the money of Yankees from up North (including Philadelphia) who are speeding back and forth to Florida. I don’t think anyone from the real South will stop there more than one time, unless they are loading up on fireworks. I think you need to get out more often and see some more of the real South—it certainly is not *South of the Border*!”<sup>198</sup> B.E. never does offer suggestions of where to find the real South, only that it is decidedly not *South of the Border*.

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<sup>197</sup> Maxa, “*South of the Border Down Carolina Way.*” Schafer’s comments belie a geographic dislocation because he suggests that workers be sent “down” from Mexico, when they would actually be coming “up” from a more southern location. This mistake shows how Schafer’s lifelong location “down” in the American South has clouded his geographic acumen. The common phrase “down south” represents an American construction that is complicated when Mexico is included.

<sup>198</sup> “The road less traveled hits a few bumps,” [Charlotte, NC] *News and Observer*, May 25, 2004.

While Pedro and South of the Border do not represent the “real South” of either Mexico or the southern United States, they do represent how people often think about these places.

Artist and photographer Ruben Ortiz Torres exhibited a photo depicting South of the Border's Sombrero Tower in a 1998 art show in California. The artist compared the photograph of Sombrero Tower to one taken in Guatemala. He elaborated: "In Guatemala they do this dance which is called the Dance of the Mexicans, and a Guatemalan guy dresses as a Mexican guy. He wears the same iconography, the big hat, the gun—they've seen Mexican films from the 1930s—so there's the gun, the tequila, whatever." The artist believed the photos and their subjects "convey more information about Guatemala and South Carolina than they do about Mexico." He explains: "So for me, what all this means is that whenever we see any representation—no matter how objective or scientific—it's always telling us more about who's doing it than what's being represented."<sup>199</sup> According to this logic, South of the Border's built environment speaks most clearly of Alan Schafer's culture, identity, and the perspectives he gained living in the South from his birth in 1915 until his death in 2001. Analyzing the discourse surrounding the origins of Pedro offers a better understanding of what this image and the touriscape of South of the Border represents.

In the video *Southern Lens* Schafer claimed that it was customers' questions—"Where's the Mexican that runs this place?"—that inspired the addition of Pedro to South of the Border's Mexican theme.<sup>200</sup> At first Schafer only used

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<sup>199</sup> Takahama, "Seeing Where Cultures Come Together."

<sup>200</sup> "South of the Border," *Southern Lens*, 1991.

sombreros to advertise South of the Border. As the business grew, so too did the mascot. Following World War II, branding became an important aspect of marketing products in the expanding consumer culture. Mascots added personality and a friendly and inviting imagery, which was especially important to the business of tourism.<sup>201</sup> While numerous brand mascots evoke a homespun or down-home feel, Schafer wanted to evoke the opposite—the exotic.

"South of the Border (A Short History)," a 2000 public relations document posed and answered the question of how Pedro came about. In an informal style, the story explained: "Well, Mr. Schafer went to Mexico to establish import connections and met two young men. He helped them get admitted to the United States, and they went to work at the motel office as bellboys for several years. People started calling them Pedro and Pancho, and eventually just Pedro. The story of the two young men from Mexico was used by Schafer's lawyer at his 1981 sentencing hearing as evidence of his magnanimous nature."<sup>202</sup>

The narrative of Pedro and Pancho becomes more farcical and cartoonish in "Pedro Presents South of the Border's Award Weening Billboards," a short Schafer publication containing images of the early billboards.

In 1950, pedro, hitch-hiking down U.S. 301, on his way back to Mexico, got lost. Arriving at a place called Hamer, S.C., almost starving, he stopped at a farm, scrounged some bread and cheese and went back to the road to catch a ride.

A Hungry Yankee saw him, hit the brakes, and offered him \$5 for the sandwich. pedro immediately decided that at \$5 for a nickel's worth of cheese and a slice of bread, this was the place for him!

So pedro bought a wheel of cheese, 3 loaves of bread, borrowed a tobacco crate, and set up business by the side of the road. Sadly, no one stopped.

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<sup>201</sup> Naomi Klein, *No Logo: Taking Aim and Branding Bullies* (Knopf, 2000).

<sup>202</sup> "Sentence Proceedings Before the Court," reprinted in "The Alan Schafer Story."

Desperate, pedro grabbed a board and wrote on it: sanweech \$5. The Yankees still kept whizzing by. A day later, the bread getting stale, pedro changed the sign: sanweech \$1. Six or eight people stopped. pedro was in business. Soon, he changed the sign again: sanweech 50 cents. Business Boomed! pedro sent for hees brother, pancho. They added another crate, and wrote two more signs, reading sanweech 10 cents. They were mobbed!

In the Mad Rush, pancho was run over by a New York Cab Driver who had no insurance. pedro decided queek, he better get off the road. Off the road, not so many Yankees pulled in to buy the Sanweech. So, pedro put up more Signs, and More, and More. An' pedro leev happily Ever Seence! Hope you are the same.<sup>203</sup>

This publication offers an absurd revisionist history of South of the Border changing its origins from a beer store operated by the shrewd, controversial Schafer to a sandwich stand operated by a disarmingly cartoonish Pedro. The “Mexi-speak”—graphical representation of the sound of Spanish vowels onto English with awkward grammatical construction—that appears throughout the “heestory,” is similar to other ethnic—including the southern U. S.—dialects.<sup>204</sup> Pedro is depicted as the owner and creator of South of the Border throughout the site and its official publications, including literature welcoming visitors and asking for their opinions of the services. Pedro functions as the public performance of Schafer's alter ego, an outsider and “trickster” who has exploited “Hungry Yankees” for economic gain and empowerment.

Pedro has appeared on the hundreds of Schafer designed billboards from Pennsylvania to Florida.<sup>205</sup> These billboards illustrate the changing nature of the

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<sup>203</sup> "Pedro Presents South of the Border Award Weening Billboards" can be purchased in most of the souvenir shops at South of the Border for \$.50 (marked down from the original one dollar price). No date given.

<sup>204</sup> In 1986, the authors of *Roadside America* coined the term “Mexi-speak” in reference to South of the Border’s advertisements.

<sup>205</sup> Rather than outsource the billboards to another business, Schafer just created Ace-Hi Advertisements, which designed and created all of the numerous advertisements for Schafer’s

Pedro stereotype. A 1997 article published in the Raleigh, North Carolina, *News and Observer* by G.D. Gearino explains that in the beginning, South of the Border "drew unhappiness because it was a peddler of beer; no one cared about it being a peddler of stereotypes."<sup>206</sup> "Pedro's Borderlines" from the 1960s shows the lack of concern with the ethnic stereotyping Pedro represents. Instead, to the consumers visiting South of the Border, Pedro seems to represent both authenticity and humor. A Borderline from 1965 announces: "Zee International Club of Dillon High School" came to South of the Border and "enjoyed a real Mexican dinner in the Acapulco Room these past week as part of their study program."<sup>207</sup> A couple from Fort Dodge, Iowa wrote a letter asking "Pedro" to send a few copies of the menus "so that we might show our children your wonderful sense of humor."<sup>208</sup>

Pedro has been interpreted in various and contradictory ways by those writing on South of the Border. In a 1987 article in South Carolina's *The State* newspaper Dan Lackey wrote: "'Pedro will show you to your room,' says the desk clerk in the lobby of Pedro's Motel. I turn, expecting a bona fide Mexican bellboy, but Pedro is any of several distinctly gringo guys in blue knit shirts labeled 'staff.'"<sup>209</sup> In 1990, Lawrence Toppman wrote of a run-in with a "Pedro/employee," who he described as a "bicycle-riding male and female bellhops who dress in orange S. O. B. shirts and

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businesses. Ace-Hi Advertisements was also one of the companies mentioned in the 1998 suits concerning the anti-Beasley ads.

<sup>206</sup> G.D. Gearino, "Hasta La Vista, Pedro: South of the Border's Politically Incorrect Mascot Gets a Makeover, But Don't Think He's Running Scared," (*Raleigh*) *News and Observer*, October 17, 1997.

<sup>207</sup> "Pedro's Borderline," *Dillon Herald*, February 26, 1965.

<sup>208</sup> "Pedro's Borderline," *Dillon Herald*, April 8, 1965. It must be noted that Schafer chose the letters that appeared in "Pedro's Borderline" and his purpose was to promote his business. The letters from tourist are filtered through the owner in becoming part of the public record.

<sup>209</sup> Dan Lackey. "South of the Border" *State*, October 11, 1987.

sombreros associated with the line, “Badges? We don’t got no stinking badges.”<sup>210</sup> In a 2000 article on South of the Border in the Myrtle Beach newspaper *The Sun News*, Anna Griffin writes: “Today, South of the Border staff refer to male teen-age youth who work in the motel, many Lumbee Indians from nearby Pembroke, as ‘Pedros.’”<sup>211</sup> An online article on the tourist attraction at [roadsideamerica.com](http://roadsideamerica.com) discusses the usage of Pedro as follows: “Today, all SOB workers, regardless of race, creed or color, are called pedro.”<sup>212</sup> These descriptions of Pedro inscribe, confuse, and erase racial difference.

In 1979, Schafer dismissed claims that Pedro was "an unfair stereotype of the lazy, crafty Mexican." When accused of ethnic stereotyping he admitted that he "plays on being Jewish in a small, Southern community."<sup>213</sup> Schafer, as *Roadside America* observed in 1986, toned down the Mexi-speak on the billboards.<sup>214</sup> Gearino's 1997 article described a similar shift in the Pedro image: "Pedro, once shown in his swarthy, mustachioed glory, returned to the almost abstract image he enjoyed on a 1950s-era menu—a design that almost completely hides his face (although, curiously, he still seems to rest a lot)."<sup>215</sup> In addition, the image of Pedro from the 1950s and the 1960s has dark skin and cartoon-like features, while the later image of Pedro where his face is hidden appears to have white skin.

Schafer defended his use of the Pedro image as a light-hearted and harmless joke: "We've had complaints for years that our advertising is insulting to the people of

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<sup>210</sup> Lawrence Toppman, “You’re a beeg wiener at Pedro’s: You never sausage a place,” *Toronto Star*, January 27, 1990.

<sup>211</sup> Griffin, "South of the Border turning 50."

<sup>212</sup>212 “South of the Border,” <[roadsideamerica.com](http://roadsideamerica.com)>

<sup>213</sup> Maxa, "South of the Border Down Carolina Way."

<sup>214</sup> Barth, *Roadside America*, 16.

<sup>215</sup> Gearino, "Hasta la vista, Pedro."

Mexico. You get all that politically correct stuff. [People] don't get the joke."<sup>216</sup> In 1994 he boasted: "I stay politically incorrect all the time. Even people who come in bitching and complaining spend money."<sup>217</sup> Schafer saw tourists spending money as a clear statement that Pedro was not an offensive stereotype. The green color of money was the deciding factor.

Just three years later, in 1997, Schafer had to admit: "We have to communicate with the present generation. These baby boomers do not have a sense of humor."<sup>218</sup> What is politically correct, of course, changes with the times. This may explain Schafer's reluctance to fully accept the political correctness of the 1980s and 1990s. When he first opened South of the Border, white supremacy and segregation were politically correct in the South. During the final years of Schafer's life, Pedro almost completely disappeared from the billboards. The Pedro image was replaced by a simple serape and sombrero on the corner of the billboards, which can be read as a commitment to more sensitive advertising in Schafer's later years.<sup>219</sup>

This imagery is a return to the early 1950s advertising style before Pedro emerged on the scene. Gearino writes: "South of the Border's notorious and plentiful



billboards, which stretch from Florida to New Jersey and are seen by millions of travelers a year, are described many ways: cultural artifact, blight on the

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<sup>216</sup> Gearino, "Hasta la vista, Pedro."

<sup>217</sup> Cathy Lynn Grossman. "Bordering on the Absurd: 1,000 Acres of Kitsch on the Road," *USA Today*, June 29, 1994.

<sup>218</sup> Gearino, "Hasta la vista, Pedro."

<sup>219</sup> After Schafer's death in 2001 Pedro reemerged in full force on South of the Border's billboards.

landscape, childhood memory or amusing diversion. In the past year, they've earned a new description—politically correct.”<sup>220</sup> With the popularity of political correctness and the number of Latinos moving to South Carolina more than tripling between 1990 and 2000, perhaps Schafer thought the ethnic stereotype just might cut into his profits.<sup>221</sup> “South of the Border, denying there was pressure to alter its billboards, said any change was part of a long-term plan to dress up the business,” Gearino explains. “In other words, one man’s toning-down is another man’s upgrade.” Public relations director Susanne Pelt states that ninety-nine percent of the advertising budget is spent on the billboards, and this means they have to be changed often to keep the attention of the tourists and travelers.<sup>222</sup>

The commercialization of public space is the subject of important civic debates and offers certain challenges to critics and tastemakers.<sup>223</sup> These billboards extend both the physical and social aspects of the touriscape of South of the Border far beyond the physical boundaries of the complex. The many signs incorporate even the traveler who does not stop into the space of South of the Border—and insinuates the complex into the traveler’s space. The kitsch aesthetic of the South of the Border billboards and built environment challenge the elitism of culturally appointed taste makers, while also subscribing to an ethnic stereotype that is neither transgressive nor libratory. Content and style can send contradictory messages. The billboards offered

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<sup>220</sup> G.D. Gearino. “Hasta la vista, Pedro: South of the Border’s politically incorrect mascot gets a makeover, but don’t think he’s running scared” *News and Observer* 17 October 1997, <[www.news-observer.com/daily/1997/10/17/day00.html](http://www.news-observer.com/daily/1997/10/17/day00.html)>

<sup>221</sup> Helena Oliviero, “Population triples in 1900s,” *The (Myrtle Beach) Sun News*, March 16, 2001. This article analyzes South Carolina census data from 1990-2000.

<sup>222</sup> Gearino, “Hasta la vista, Pedro.”

<sup>223</sup> Catherine Gudis, *Buyways: Billboards, Automobiles, and the American Landscape* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Laura E. Baker, “Public Sites Versus Public Sights: The Progressive Response to Outdoor advertising and the Commercialization of Public Space,” *American Quarterly*, December 2007, 1187-1213.

a space for Schafer to communicate with the public and convince them that South of the Border was in line with their patterns of consumption. The billboards command the youngest travelers to demand a voice in the consumption choices of the family: “Keep yelling kids. They’ll stop.” When drivers do stop, they are further integrated into South of the Border’s carnivalesque commodity exchange.

The numerous souvenirs displayed at South of the Border represent the complex cultural and economic relationships between the South and the global tourist trade. Schafer countered the Mexican Embassy’s complaint about Pedro, according to one reporter, with a “red hot” letter “in which he suggested the embassy perhaps instead should focus on the \$1.5 million in merchandise he imports annually from Mexico.”<sup>224</sup> In another interview, Schafer stated that he imported only ten percent of his merchandise from Mexico “because I have a tough time getting deliveries on time. So, I buy Mexican imitations in the Orient. Mexican straw hats marked made in Taiwan, for example; Mexican ceramics made in Hong Kong. I wish I could get it all out of Mexico.”<sup>225</sup> Schafer’s claim that he is helping Mexico by purchasing cheap souvenirs for his tourist spot, is complicated by his purchase of Mexican-themed souvenirs from Taiwan and Hong Kong. Schafer constructed a touriscape that foregrounds the connections between local and global trade. A sign in Mexico Shop West, which features an image of Pedro holding an American flag, explains the origins of the cheap t-shirts found at South of the Border. “Pedro has the best t-shirt values in America. Our million dollar print and dye plant is ‘state of the art’ and we buy t-shirts by the truck load direct from local factories.” Schafer purchased a

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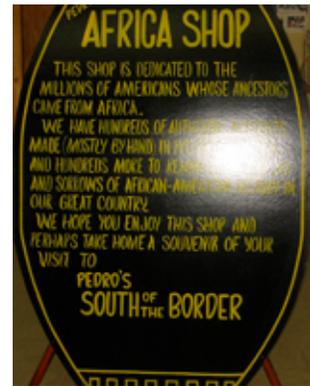
<sup>224</sup> Gearino, “Hasta la vista, Pedro.”

<sup>225</sup> Charles Hillinger. “The Big Bang; Business Booms All Year Round at the Nation’s Biggest Fireworks Stand” *Los Angeles Times*, July 4, 1989.

bankrupt textile factory, a central symbol of the New South, to produce his South of the Border t-shirts at low prices. Schafer astutely appeals to consumers' patriotism by featuring local "American-made" items alongside souvenirs from "around the world."<sup>226</sup>



South of the Border offers much to the discussion of positive and negative aspects of increased cultural exchange and the commodification of cultures. Schafer appropriates various identities and turns them into dollars. In 1995, Schafer opened Pedro's Africa Shop. A sign at the entrance welcomes visitors with these remarks: "This shop is dedicated to the millions of Americans whose ancestors came from Africa. We have hundreds of authentic artifacts (mostly made by hand) in present day Africa. And hundreds more to remind you of the joy and sorrows of African-American history in our great country. We hope you enjoy this shop and perhaps take home a souvenir of your visit to Pedro's South of the Border."<sup>227</sup> In 1995, Pedro's Africa shop was painted black and yellow, adorned with American flags, and sat in the shadow of the tremendous Sombrero Tower. This is certainly a strange amalgamation of local, national, and global iconography.



In 2000, I found a strange, hand-written note taped to an "authentic" African artifact – labeled "Colonisation [sic] Figure" – in the Africa Shop. The note read: "This carving represents a French colonial figure. When colonialists first came to

<sup>226</sup> The locally procured and produced t-shirts are complimented with Schafer's purchase of the regional soda of South Carolina, Blenheim Gingerale.

<sup>227</sup> This quote is from a picture I took of the sign at the shop's entrance/exit in summer 2000.

Africa from Europe many young girls would keep dolls such as this so that their own children might be as prosperous as the new visitors."<sup>228</sup> Selling supposedly “authentic” African handcrafts without any understanding of the complex history of colonization creates problems. Such a stance is even more problematic in the South with its legacy of slavery, especially when suggesting African admiration of European might. In addition, the “authentic” nature ascribed to the imagery and objects in Pedro’s Africa Shop contrasts with Schafer’s claims that the image of Pedro is simply a humorous and playful “joke.”

Encounters like this one with the African handcrafts at South of the Border are symbolic of the difficulties of cross-cultural understanding and the problems of commodifying cultures and identities.<sup>229</sup> Clearly, the tourist trade at South of the Border expands southern culture beyond images of southern belles and plantation homes at the same time it commodifies and thereby simplifies the cultures added to the category of southern identity. South of the Border, for example, memorializes the African American experience by selling “authentic” souvenirs from Africa in a Mexican themed tourist spot created by a progressive Jewish man in the predominantly conservative and Protestant region of the American South.

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<sup>228</sup> This quote comes from a picture I took inside Pedro's Africa Shop in summer 2000.

<sup>229</sup> In “Into the Future: Tourism, Language and Art,” Peter Wollen discusses how “[a]rt, in particular, has developed a special relationship with tourism as its artisanal base has been reshaped as a department of the souvenir industry.” Discussing the “circulation of images and discourses” Wollen writes: “the flow from low to high and from periphery to core has been discussed in terms of appropriation and innovation, while the opposite flow has been seen as vulgarization and its end product has been dismissed as kitsch.” Wollen sees kitsch not as a degraded form of trash or the antithesis of art. He writes, “Modernism is being succeeded not by a totalizing Western postmodernism but by a hybrid new aesthetic in which the new corporate forms of communication and display will be constantly confronted by new vernacular forms of invention and expression.” Peter Wollen, *Raiding the Icebox: Reflections on Twentieth-Century Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 190, 209.

Pedro's Africa Shop most clearly represents the attempts of a white liberal to respectfully appeal to African American consumers. Schafer's political power and business success were tied to the local black community, which makes up almost half of the population in Dillon County. Schafer had close and friendly relationships with the local African American community; however, the Africa Shop still has an uncomfortable and "out of place" feel within the faux-Mexican bordertown theme of the tourist complex. Potential visitors may expect to find lawn jockeys and African American stereotypes abounding within the shop. However, the "artifacts"—I use this word to connote the handmade, folk art vibe the shop attempts to create—represent an attempt to respectfully treat African and African American cultures within a bombastic and gaudy tourist attraction.

The Africa Shop's original yellow and black façade has been updated with a fresh paint job that incorporates the black, red, and green colors of the Black Liberation Flag.<sup>230</sup> These colors are also used in many of the flags of African nations after achieving independence following colonization. The shop's exterior mingles representations of Africa, America, and South Carolina. Large statues of zebras and giraffes, animals typically found on the continent of Africa, are placed outside the entrance. Flying atop the shop are eight American flags and a single South Carolina state flag.

The original 1995 sign dedicating the shop to the "millions of Americans whose ancestors came from Africa" still greets shoppers. There are three main types of objects sold in Pedro's Africa Shop. The first and most prevalent is "authentic"

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<sup>230</sup> These observations and the close reading of the artifacts for sale within Pedro's Africa Shop are based on a trip I made to South of the Border on May 16, 2008.

African crafts, such as fertility icons, Chiwaras, “good harvest” statues from Mali,



rounded, beaded masks from Gabon, Dan Masks from the Ivory Coast, and Nigerian African wear. These artifacts are often accompanied with hand written notes that explain their significance. Gone are the colonization figures I found in 1999.

The current notes attempt to educate the potential consumer about the origins and purposes of the artifacts. For example the note accompanying “Wiseman or Woman” figures explains: “Age makes a person experienced. An old person is considered wise and his council [sic] is sought. The old people used to settle disputes and look for ways to bring peace among antagonising [sic] factions or people. An old person is also respected by the younger generation in Africa.” These notes attempt to communicate positive information and educate consumers about African culture.<sup>231</sup>

The second type of objects for sale in the Africa Shop is the contemporary figurine, which depiction various everyday representations of black people. There is a series of black men in suits with various instruments, perhaps alluding to the important



contributions of African Americans to American music, a series of black domestic scenes similar to the sentimental images of the German Hummel figurines, representations of black women in upper-class attire of the nineteenth century, and

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<sup>231</sup> This particular note seems to communicate cultural mores, respect for elders, that offer suggestions for today’s youth.

black baby dolls. These figurines are displayed for purchase in an attempt to present more contemporary images of blackness. This shows that contrary to Schafer's claims, he *did* pay attention to the color of his consumers' skin and not just the color of their money.<sup>232</sup> These objects, read alongside the African folk art, attempt to present the overlapping aspects of African Americans' past and present. The modern figurines avoid the insulting stereotypes found in black collectables, such as the Mammy, Sambo, and Uncle Moses.<sup>233</sup> The only figurine that engages a stereotypical representation is one of a young black boy eating a slice of watermelon.



The artifacts for sale in Pedro's African Shop attempt to present positive and respectful commodities that African Americans, or any consumer, can purchase. There is a special section called "Christian Inspirations," which features black angels, black preachers, and other Christian iconography. There is a certain class distinction between the two types of objects discussed so far. The African masks and traditional handcrafts appeal to a more discriminating and high-class consumer. This is apparent in the placement of such decorative African "folk art" in high-end chains, such as Pottery Barn and Pier One, as well as the display of similar artifacts in museums and art galleries. The sentimental figurines of contemporary African Americans signify a more common and pedestrian aesthetic.

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<sup>232</sup> Items that attempt to appeal to African Americans show that in contemporary consumer culture issues of identity, such as race, influence the landscapes of tourism.

<sup>233</sup> For more extensive analyses of these types of collectables and their cultural significance, see Kenneth E. Goings, *Mammy and Uncle Moses: Black Collectibles and American Stereotyping*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); M. M. Manring, *Slave in a Box: The Strange Career of Aunt Jemima* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998); Psyche Williams-Forsen, *Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs: Black Women, Food and Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

This presentation of a range of objects attempts to appeal to a diversity of consumers' tastes and personal preferences, showing that class as well as race inform consumer purchases.



The third type of objects for sale at Pedro's Africa Shop is the Mexican-themed souvenir, such as Pedro figurines and sombrero

ashtrays, which are small in number and dispersed throughout the shop. While there is a separate section for "Christian Inspiration" and an "Elephant Hut," which sells various elephant figurines, the rest of the items are indiscriminately blended together on the store's shelves and in bins. There are also objects that integrate traditional African folk art with more modern motifs, such as an artifact that depicts a black figure with a grass shirt and straw hair riding a motorcycle. This artifact may be chosen to appeal to the thousands of African American bikers that may travel through South of the Border on their way to the annual black motorcycle festival at Atlantic Beach, South Carolina (discussed in the next chapter). This integration of a traditional artifact and a contemporary motorcycle combines folk traditions and modern culture. Furthermore, this item is displayed in between Pedro snow globes and a figurine depicting a black man wearing a suit and playing a guitar. No distinction is made between this wide variety of object through placement or pricing.<sup>234</sup>

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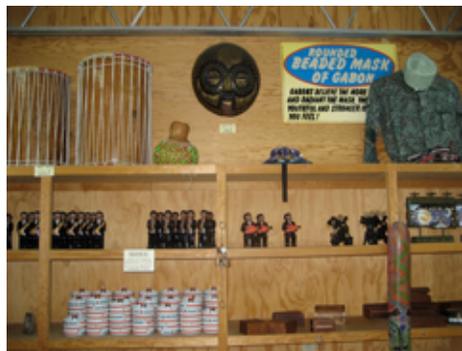
<sup>234</sup> Almost all of the items in Pedro's Africa Shop are very reasonably priced. There are a few large pieces of folk art that are priced in the hundreds of dollars.

This integration of Africa, Mexico, and the U.S. South can be seen in the articles of clothing displayed in the shop. There are t-shirts that depict the continent of Africa or images of African women with the words “South of the Border” below. The latter is displayed on a white mannequin with deep red lipstick. The signifiers of place and identity are free floating in these clothing items. The t-shirts reference the continent of Africa and South of the Border, which connotes both



Mexico and South Carolina. These t-shirts, presumably produced at the local plant Schafer purchased, are mixed in with traditional dresses made in Africa. Bins of American flags also signify that while this is the “Africa” Shop, it is intended to appeal primarily to African Americans.<sup>235</sup>

All of these various commodities invite consumers to purchase items tied to place-based aspects of identity. Pieces of Africa, Mexico, South Carolina, and America are available for purchase within Pedro’s Africa Shop. This represents both the important of place to identity formation as well as the fluidity of both characteristics within the realm of travel and consumer culture.



During the half hour I spent observing the goods for sale in the Africa Shop, three different groups of people entered the shop. An older white couple came in and did not buy anything. A woman in traditional African dress

<sup>235</sup> The Africa Shop fits in with South of the Border’s larger attempts to lure consumers with “exotic” cultural representations.

accompanied by a young man with long dreadlocks entered and were still browsing when I left. An older African American man, who purchased a small African artifact, spent a great deal of time in the shop before choosing his item. Two young African American women worked in the shop.<sup>236</sup>

To better understand Pedro's Africa Shop, I compare it with Mexico Shop West, the largest gift shop at South of the Border. The building, which is at least five times the size of Pedro's Africa Shop, is broken down into four main sections. The main shopping area features a plethora of general souvenirs, toys, and "exotic" objects, such as Asian figurines, Hawaiian grass skirts and leis, and a small selection of the same African artifacts featured in the African Shop. There is a section of Christian-themed items, similar to the ones for sale in Pedro's Africa Shop; however, these items include white and black angels, preachers, and Jesus figures. Shoppers can purchase a variety of items, including the random and the strange. In the back of the store is The Dirty Old Man Shop, which contains soft-core sex toys, pornography, lingerie, and similar items.<sup>237</sup> While these "adult themed" items are segregated, South of the Border also sells some sexually explicit items in the general bins in the Mexico Shop.

I found a "Horny Hillbilly" in a bin with tambourines, huge pencils, and other toys and souvenir.<sup>238</sup> This figurine, in addition to other items such as "Silly Hillbilly

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<sup>236</sup> I have been to Pedro's Africa Shop a dozen times over the past ten years and there have always been African American women working in the shop; however, a large percentage of workers at South of the Border are both female and black.

<sup>237</sup> The Dirty Old Man shop was closed for inventory when I visited on May 16, 2008; however, I have been the shop before.

<sup>238</sup> For the past ten years South of the Border has sold vulgar golf towels in the general bins in the Mexico Shop. For example, one towel depicts a cat lounging inside of a martini glass with the words, "Happiness is a Tight Pussy. Another towel depicts a man fishing with no pants and a fish's mouth on

Teeth,” shows that South of the Border sells commodified images of whiteness alongside the various other “exotic” representations of identity. However, the whiteness these objects package is coded within the terms of class—lower class—and region—the mountain South. The “Horny Hillbilly” is a small rubber rendition of a bearded mountain man revealing an enormous penis. The figure comes inside a box with an image of the Confederate flag and the words, “The South Will Rise Again.” Historian Patrick Huber analyzes this specific souvenir and argues that it represents “a primitive white hypermasculinity” that is also found in stereotypes of the post-Reconstruction “black brute.” Huber points out that the use of Confederate imagery and Lost Cause verbiage on the box represents a certain “historical amnesia about the mountain South found in regional tourism” because, for the most part, Southern Appalachia stayed out of the Civil War or fought with the Union.<sup>239</sup> This displaced Confederate symbolism is the only image of the Confederate flag found within the entire complex. This souvenir mocks rather than seriously argues that the South (as in the Old South/Lost Cause) will rise again.

The lack of Confederate flags is refreshing in a tacky tourist destination in the South, but flags abound throughout South of the Border’s landscape. American flags are sold in every souvenir shop, and there are a total of fourteen within the complex. Atop Pedro’s Concrete Bazaar, which sells concrete lawn ornaments, flags of South Carolina, North Carolina, and Mexico wave in the breeze.

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his penis and has the sentiment, “A Happy Fisherman.” These towels are in bins with general merchandise and toys and not in the Dirty Old Man Shop, where they would, perhaps, be better placed.<sup>239</sup> Patrick Huber, “The Riddle of the Horny Hillbilly,” paper presented at the “Dixie Emporium Symposium,” October 8, 2005 and in *Dixie Emporium: Tourism, Foodways, and Consumer Culture in the American South*, Anthony Stanois, ed (University of Georgia Press, forthcoming October 15, 2008).

Off from the main emporium of consumer goods in Mexico Shop West, is the Little Mexico Shop, which contains an amalgamation of Mexican crafts, clothing items, and more general merchandise, such as the ubiquitous sombrero ashtray. This



shop is similar to Pedro's Africa Shop because

it primarily sells Mexican folk art and traditional attire. The final shop in Mexico Shop West, "Hats From Around the World," contains just what its name suggests. While some of the hats, mostly sombreros, evoke

foreign places, the shop primarily sells gag hats that are shaped like hot dogs, beers, pink flamingos, and a host of other strange objects. The "around the world" designation most likely is derived from the places across the globe where these items are made and purchased, not traditional representations of global cultures.

At the heart of South of the Border's strange and absurd consumer kitsch is the riddle of Pedro, a stereotypical representation of a Mexican man in traditional clothing. In exploring the strange career of Pedro, it still remains unclear exactly what he represents. It is clear that a Jewish liberal used this offensive and dislocated Mexican mascot to sell an amalgamation of different exotic representations of identity to whites, blacks, Latinos, and anyone else who happened to be passing through. Schafer was an equal opportunity huckster, who could be easily dismissed. However, his vision in constructing a successful roadside emporium offers important commentary of the nature of identity in a Newer South.

One of the central aspects of the Pedro riddle is the similarities and differences between representations and actual people. The reverent tone and honest attempt to respectfully memorialize the African American experience in Pedro's African Shop, beginning in 1995, stands in stark contrast to the short-lived Confederateland, USA of the early 1960s. South of the Border's commodity exchange is influenced by the changes of the Civil Rights Movement. It is important



to remember that Alan Schafer was a contemporary of white men like Strom Thurman and George Wallace. All of these men have complex relationships with the issue of race in a southern context, but Schafer was registering black voters while

Thurman ran on a ticket of segregation and Wallace uttered his famous, "Segregation now—segregation forever," speech in front of the doors of an all-white school in Alabama. While Schafer was in no way a pioneer for civil rights or perfect in navigating the unequal power dimensions of white southern society, he constructed a tourist empire that confronts the difficult legacy of racism within the South and America within the realm of tourism and consumerism.

The attempts to present positive images of African Americans at Pedro's African Shop is tied to the large number of African Americans who live near, work at, and pass through South of the Border. As a local man interested in politics as well as business, rather than a distant corporate owner with no ties to the community, Schafer constructed South of the Border in relationship to both his local community

and the diversity of people passing through. In part, Pedro grew to be such a simplistic and stereotypical image because there were few Latinos in the area. Even with the numbers of Latinos tripling in the past decade, Dillon County's Latinos make up less than three percent of the population. However, during a recent trip to South of the Border, I encounter numerous Latino families browsing Mexico Shop West, while looking at the souvenirs while speaking Spanish.<sup>240</sup> As the demographics of the Newer South diversify, so too does the complexity of representations within the tourism industry.

In complicating and challenging the stable nature of identity through the various representations of identity at South of the Border, the space produced images that confound and challenge what is considered southern, American, African, and Mexican. Furthermore, the combination of all of these various signifiers of identity represents the fact that these categories are not always separate; they interact and overlap in numerous circumstances. The image of Pedro at the beginning of this section is dressed in "traditional" Mexican style; however, his serape and sombrero are in red, white, and blue and accented with stars that represent the American flag. This Pedro figure signifies certain aspects of Mexican, American, and southern identity. On my recent trip to South of the Border, a new Pedro was placed next to the American flag Pedro, which sits in a prominent location on highway 301-501.

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<sup>240</sup> This is clearly just a passing observation, and more work needs to be done to study who actually uses South of the Border and for what purposes. While visiting South of the Border in May 2008, I was commenting on how dead the Hot Tamale restaurant was to the cashier, a young African American woman. She informed me that the place really picked up when the local clubs closed at 2am. Simply pulling from my own observations, there are various interesting and complex social interactions happening at South of the Border. This aspect of the tourist complex deserves a deeper analysis.

This new Pedro statue was painted green with white shamrocks, which signifies that Pedro is Irish?



The strange career of Pedro produces an uncomfortable dislocation from the stable sense of identity that cultures, including the U. S. South, have held dear and, at times, defended at the peril of others and themselves. If properly engaged, this uneasy feeling can push people to contemplate the complex problems of change and racism within southern communities and within themselves.<sup>241</sup>

Pedro is a trickster figure in the way he visually plays with the signifiers of identity and place. The strange career of Pedro most succinctly symbolizes, for good or bad, the fluidity of identity within a Newer South.

### **Concluding Schafer's Story**

This is primarily a story of how change moves through time, place, and people. Schafer worked below the surface and sometimes beyond the law to “give those bastards hell”—meaning the ruling white elite. Schafer inhabited both dominant and subordinate positions. His power came from his qualified whiteness, his wealth, and connections derived from an insider perspective. That fact that he was not “lily white” and did not completely defer to the local elite and white supremacy made him an outsider and a threat to dominant southern society. His

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<sup>241</sup> For example, this uneasy feeling can push people to question the notions of race, class, and identity in the South, the U. S., and beyond. As people drive away from South of the Border they may ponder questions such as: Why is there an Irish Pedro on the side of the road? Why is the “largest sombrero in the world” in South Carolina? Why does Pedro have an Africa Shop? What does Pedro represent? What do all of these contradictory images say about the nature of race relations within the contemporary South?

understanding that his beer distribution business was successful because of “loyalty in the black accounts” led to his professed focus on “the color of their money, not their skin” with South of the Border. Perhaps, late in life he shifted the nature of his billboards to not offend the growing population and purchasing power of Latinos. Schafer took risks, but ultimately he understood the complexities of his consumers’ identities, tastes, and preferences. He understood that interaction and overlap create a vibrant space for commerce as well as social border crossing. He understood that places and people must constantly move and be remade to remain relevant.

Schafer often framed the story of South of the Border as a place almost constructing itself. He once told a journalist: “All an accident. We didn’t anticipate the tourists.” Schafer was pushed into the food service business to attain social acceptability. In addition, he claims his souvenir trade began when a northern salesman stopped at South of the Border without enough money to get home. “He had a station wagon filled with plush toys—bears, elephants. So I bought them. I took about a five-times markup, and I put these animals on all the shelves, and in three weeks they were gone. And I said, ‘Jesus.’” Schafer also tells how travelers’ demand pushed him into the motel business: “They’d aim for South of the Border after seeing our signs, thinking that we had a motel here,” Schafer says. “For a while, we had them sleeping on the floor in the dining room. Then I thought, ‘Well, this is silly, to have them staying here for free.’”<sup>242</sup> Schafer soon opened his first motel rooms. Schafer claimed to invent the attraction’s mascot Pedro only to appease travelers’ presumptions of a Mexican owner. These supposed accidents imply that

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<sup>242</sup> Swift, “South of the Border is the Big Enchilada of East Coast Tourism;” Griffin, “South of the Border Turns 50.”

the consumers (the tourists and local patrons) played an important role in how South of the Border evolved. The story of Alan Schafer is important, but it must be complicated further by examining how people perceived, interacted with, and consumed South of the Border as a travel spot and a local space. Why people stop at South of the Border is not an accident, but an important part of the roadside attraction's history and allure.

Schafer intently listened to the voice and the power of patrons' dollars. In making a profit Schafer influenced and was influenced by social change. In the news story announcing his death Anna Griffin writes: "Schafer's life story has two central themes: Occasional shows of compassion and frequent examples of shameless commerce."<sup>243</sup> Does it matter if the motivations of social change are a belief in equality or a desire to make a profit? In America's commercial culture it is usually a combination of both. South of the Border's story shows that social change and economic success are not mutually exclusive—they are often closely linked. The story also demonstrates that spaces of enjoyment and leisure can also be serious sources for cultural history.

Because of the diversification of the southern economy from agriculture to manufacturing and then service-based industries, it is important to study and better understand the role of tourism in the larger economy. A representative event occurred on August 31, 2006 when the first Ben Bernanke Day was celebrated in Dillon County. The current Chair of the Federal Reserve returned to the hometown where his interest in economics began. Bernanke worked at South of the Border as a young man, and his family, like the Schafers, was a part of the small Jewish

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<sup>243</sup> Anna Griffin, "South of the Border creator Schafer Dies," *Sun News*, July 21, 2001.

community in the county. Bernanke's employment at Schafer's tourist spot, his experience working construction in the area, and observing the hard work his father and uncle put in at the local pharmacy the family ran all influenced his interest in the economy and its effects on everyday workers. Bernanke stated at the event: "I was impressed by these experiences, and I think they were an important reason I went into economics." In his speech, Bernanke referred to development of the Interstate 95 corridor as a "tough problem." Journalist Jim Davenport explained: "That busy route between Florida and New York cuts through the state's poorest counties and hasn't yielded the prosperity most thought it would bring between Savannah, Ga., and South of the Border in Dillon." At the celebration, moderator Marc Johnson bestowed Bernanke with representative regional gifts—an honorary degree from Clemson University and a South of the Border souvenir. Johnson joked: "We would be willing to bet that there's not a Fed chairman past and probably present that would be the proud owner of a coffee cup from South of the Border."<sup>244</sup>

In a 1993 article "Under the Big Sombrero" a journalist explains why some people find South of the Border distasteful. "For them South of the Border is emblematic of the New South, a monument to greed and bad taste, a place Elvis might have loved in his later years."<sup>245</sup> South of the Border is indeed bright, garish, and extreme, but that is part of its challenge to the normative ideals of what it means to be southern and who gets to be a southerner. South of the Border began by being tacky because it pushed booze and, in some ways, catered to different races and today

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<sup>244</sup> Stella M. Hopkins, "South Carolina county celebrates Ben Bernanke Day" *Charlotte [NC] Observer*, September 1, 2006; Jim Davenport, "Bernanke returns to South Carolina roots" August 31, 2006.

<sup>245</sup> Russell Underwood, "Under the Big Sombrero: Fear and Loathing at South of the Border," *The Point*, October 1993.

it is seen as tacky because of its proclivity towards neon and its offensive depiction of Mexicans. Examining South of the Border as a southern touriscape expands the stereotype of moonlight and magnolias to encompass bright neon sombreros and “almost kosher” country ham. To be southern can mean to be Jewish, to be rich, to be outspoken, or to be a Democrat. In the most recent presidential election Dillon was one of the only counties in South Carolina where the Democratic nominee, John Kerry, won. Southern identity is about knowing your history, your place, your culture, and navigating this terrain as an individual. Schafer and South of the Border are southern because they endured living within the myths and realities of the region and maintained a certain level of economic and social autonomy. The ability to create innovative spaces and identities in dialogue with the past is a hallmark of a Newer South.

The Sombrero Tower is the most impressive symbol of Schafer’s power to construct a touriscape that shifts views on southern culture. The Sombrero Tower was constructed during Schafer’s rapid ascent to political power in the 1970s. The “largest sombrero in the world” offers the traveler to ability to come inside and ride to the top where there is a view of the entire South of the Border complex and surrounding landscape of trees, nature, and highway. The lookout tower is a symbol



of Schafer’s power and the fact that to really view things from the outside you must come inside.

## Chapter 4: The Saga of the Black Pearl: Change and Continuity in a Black Beach

### **Beach Music and Bike Week**

This chapter brings together different historical eras, social structures, and types of tourism in Atlantic Beach, South Carolina—a historically black seaside community also known as the Black Pearl. To envision the town as a touriscape involves seeing the connections and overlap between the two main forms of black leisure culture located in the small town throughout the twentieth century—the early performers of beach music and the later riders of motorcycles—as well as the town’s connection to the Grand Strand’s history. The black musicians of the 1940s and 1950s who performed in the larger Myrtle Beach area were required, by the strictures of Jim Crow segregation, to eat and lodge in Atlantic Beach. The black bikers flooding the regions in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries also had to transverse the boundaries between the black beach and the larger and predominantly white Myrtle Beach community in order to attend the Atlantic Beach Bikefest.

This overlap and intersection of geographic and social boundaries makes Atlantic Beach a rich touriscape for exploring the change and continuity of southern culture and identities throughout the tumultuous period of desegregation. Tourism was the central social and economic force that created the communities along the Grand Strand, including Atlantic Beach. The touriscape of Atlantic Beach is an informative place study for understanding how a southern climate, social structure,

and racial dynamic can affect the development of a service economy based on tourism.

Because of the sandy and swampy land, which was poor for farming, the coastal region of Horry County, where Atlantic Beach is located, never developed a plantation economy based on slavery. Most African Americans migrated to the area by choice in the period following the Civil War to seek employment in fishing, farming, or timber and to purchase cheap land. African Americans constitute a smaller percentage of the general population in Horry County than in other parts of South Carolina, but they played a part in the emerging tourism economy of the South Carolina coast from the beginning.

In Atlantic Beach, blacks were inside the tourist industry as landowners and entrepreneurs and outside as consumers of the recreational space and goods and services. Indeed, many functioned in both positions as they transversed the boundaries of black and white social space. Atlantic Beach offered a safe space for recreation outside the strictures of white supremacy. The freedom Atlantic Beach offered lured blacks from different areas and different backgrounds inside the small four-block community.

When desegregation opened more options for black tourists, Atlantic Beach went into decline. In 1980, a local black motorcycle club began a festival in the town, again taking advantage of the open space of Atlantic Beach for mobility and expression. The festival began to grow and once again brought black tourists from throughout the eastern seaboard. The festival drew a large crowd and expanded beyond the boundaries of the small black beach. Through the motorcycle festival and

its mobile attendees, the enacted space of Atlantic Beach and black leisure culture began to move into the larger Grand Strand region and cause tensions within the predominantly white beachfront communities.

These tensions complicate the modern image of “southern hospitality” that seaside communities attempt to construct, the image of “beautiful places and smiling faces.” In telling the story of the Black Pearl, this chapter asks the reader to think about how the controversies of the past move into the present in complex ways. This is the first step in constructing southern identities that engage the problems of the past while looking towards the solutions in the future.

### **Building a Black Beach**

The history of Atlantic Beach, South Carolina, shows the important role of tourism in building and sustaining communities. My goal is to draw attention to the rich and complex history and culture of Atlantic Beach and add it to the scholarship on southern tourism, African-American leisure culture, and southern identities. This chapter strives for an approach to tourism that integrates business and culture, recreation and heritage, the past and the future. I argue for a more comprehensive perspective on cultures and identities—one that sees the emerging culture of the town as a continuation of its historical traditions. Atlantic Beach is a symbol of the strength of African Americans in the South to persevere and build physical and psychological communities during the era of legal segregation and the resulting challenges of maintaining that sense of place and community as desegregation offered wider access and mobility for African Americans in the region.

The Black Pearl is one of the last surviving beachfront communities on the East Coast with a history of black ownership and self-governance. It is a small parcel of land just under one hundred acres that is part of the larger Grand Strand. The area remained isolated and undeveloped until advances in transportation in the period following World War I assisted in the emergence of a fledgling tourism industry. After World War II brought increased prosperity and leisure time to Americans, the area developed an extensive tourism economy. As the Grand Strand developed as a tourist destination predominantly for whites, small Atlantic Beach also began to develop its own identity within the larger tourist economy.<sup>246</sup> In her 2007 history of Myrtle Beach, Barbara F. Stokes explained: “The African American Community in Myrtle Beach has a heritage as rich and deep as that of the white population, but the lives and history of these people have been largely unsung and unappreciated outside of their own neighborhoods.”<sup>247</sup> Like Stokes, I seek to move this important history out to the larger society, because it is important for all South Carolinians and for those interested in southern history and culture to understand the touriscape of Atlantic Beach. Telling the story of Atlantic Beach enacts it as a touriscape. Recovering this story is part of the process of collective memory advocated by the 2000 collection *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity* edited by Fitzhugh Brundage. “If characterizations of southern memory are to be meaningful,” Brundage writes in the introduction, “attention should be given to what kind of history southerners have valued, what in their past they have chosen to remember and forget, how they have disseminated the past they have recalled, and to

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<sup>246</sup> Bedford, *The Independent Republic*, 4; Barbara F. Stokes, *Myrtle Beach: A History, 1900-1980* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007).

<sup>247</sup> Stokes, *Myrtle Beach*, 185.

what uses those memories have been put. We need, in short, a social history of remembering in the South.”<sup>248</sup> Enacting the touriscapes of the South through these place studies is part of this social history of remembering.

Black-owned since 1934 when businessman George Tyson purchased the land, Atlantic Beach was designed to be a “haven for blacks” on the Grand Strand. Tyson bought Atlantic Beach (29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> avenues), Pearl Beach (30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> avenues), and property on the west side of Highway 17, making the community, at that time called Tyson’s Beach, a total of 98.85 acres.<sup>249</sup> When Tyson ran into financial problems, the Atlantic Beach Company, a group of local black professionals, took over his failing mortgage in March 1943 and divided the area into 50 x 150 foot lots for individual sale. The First Baptist Church of Atlantic Beach was built in 1944 on land donated by the Atlantic Beach Company. Dr. Leroy W. Upperman, the last surviving member of the company until his death in 1996, pointed out that it was “not out of altruism, but as a business venture” that the company sought to develop Atlantic Beach for African Americans. Michael Kelly, the son of the late Dr. Peter Kelly (from Conway, South Carolina), treasurer of the Company, agreed that it was a business venture, but one that possessed a “spiritual vision.” “These men saved the land so that Negroes would have a beach to go to. They went through the struggle because they bought the land with money out of their pockets. They had no help from banks or governments.”<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> W. Fitzhugh Brundage, “Introduction: No Deed but Memory” in *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 3.

<sup>249</sup> Town of Atlantic Beach, “Comprehensive Plan,” adopted 2001 <http://www.atlanticbeachsc.com/asps/future.asp>; Stokes, *Myrtle Beach*, 199.

<sup>250</sup> Yolanda Jones, “\$10,000 started Atlantic Beach: Buyers sought a black haven,” *Sun News* 20 February 1994. Dr. Leroy W. Upperman was born in New Jersey in 1913 and received his M.D. from

Dr. Kelly is the one who told Upperman about the real estate venture at Atlantic Beach. In a 1995 interview for the Horry County Oral History Project, Upperman explained: “[Tyson] needed someone to take up the mortgage. So, Dr. Kelly, along with Dr. Robbie [Robert] Gordon [from Dillon, SC], used their influence and contacted some other doctors and college presidents to try to get some money to bail out Tyson in his real estate problems.” The president of Fayetteville State University at the time, J. W. Seabrook, became the “mastermind” of the company, which also included Sam Taggard, Charles Baggett, F. L. Atkins, Dr. H. H. Creft, Dr. W. P. DeVane, Dr. J. D. Douglass, and A. J. Henderson in addition to Upperman, Gordon, and Kelly. The “general philosophy” of the company, Upperman explained, was “to take the land and develop it and make it into a first-class beach, rather than a haphazard thing.”<sup>251</sup>

The “golden era” of the Black Pearl, which gave the small area its lasting sense of place and pride, was during the years of the Atlantic Beach Company from 1943 to 1956. The town’s website features a quotation by John Hope Franklin: “Rich in culture and entertainment, Atlantic Beach was one of the most prosperous and popular places for Blacks during the 40s to mid 70s.”<sup>252</sup> Atlantic Beach hosted black

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Howard University in 1938. Dr. Upperman was a physician at Wilmington[NC]’s Community Hospital from 1939-1941 before he went into private practice in general medicine and surgery. Dr. Upperman was a lifelong member of the NAACP and active in various community and educational endeavors. The African American Cultural Center at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington is named after Dr. Upperman. On August 11, 1995, as part of the Horry County Oral History Project, Dr. Randall Wells conducted a videotaped interview with Dr. Upperman on his involvement in the Atlantic Beach Company, 1943-1956. The video and transcript are located with the Horry County Oral History Project documents at Coastal Carolina University and in the Dr. Leroy W. Upperman Collection at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington.

<sup>251</sup> Upperman, Leroy, Dr. Interviewed by Randall A. Wells, 11 August 1995. Horry County Oral History Project; Yolanda Jones, “\$10,000 started Atlantic Beach: Buyers sought a black haven,” *Sun News* 20 February 1994.

<sup>252</sup> “Atlantic Beach, South Carolina: Her History” accessed June 18, 2007  
<http://www.atlanticbeachsc.com/asps/history.asp>

entertainers such as James Brown, Ray Charles, Martha and the Vandellas, Count Basie, Billie Holiday, and the Drifters, who performed but could not stay in the whites-only hotels of neighboring oceanfront communities. Upperman points out that Atlantic Beach was meant to be a haven for *all* African Americans: “So his [Tyson’s] idea was to develop a black beach which would serve the needs of black people. This meant not only the domestics, but they wanted places where school teachers or others could come to the beach and have a home and enjoy the beach in that way.”<sup>253</sup> Because of the lack of a recreational beaches open to African Americans, Atlantic Beach was packed all summer.

Earlene Woods, motel owner from the 1950s to today, described the attraction in an interview for the Atlantic Beach Oral History Project: “Anyone in North Carolina, Virginia, all over the states was here in Atlantic Beach because they were free to do what they wanted to do and eat where they pleased and be served by waitresses and treated like human beings.”<sup>254</sup> A merchant during the golden era, Willie L. Isom explained: “We had all the places wide open. Quite naturally our people couldn’t go anywhere but right here, so you can imagine how clustered Atlantic Beach was at the time. People would dance in the street and you can see the dust flying.”<sup>255</sup> Stanley Coleman recalled how white people would bring their cooks to the beach with them. “They had a separate room in their garage for the cooks. But at night . . . Atlantic Beach was in order and sometime their boyfriends from Atlantic

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<sup>253</sup> Upperman, Leroy, Dr. Interviewed by Randall A. Wells, 11 August 1995. Horry County Oral History Project.

<sup>254</sup> Stokes, *Myrtle Beach*, 201; Earlene Woods, interview by Damon L. Fordham, October 10, 2002, Atlantic Beach Oral History Project.

<sup>255</sup> Stokes, *Myrtle Beach*, 201; Willie L. Isom, interview by Damon L. Fordman, October 29, 2002, Atlantic Beach Oral History Project.

Beach would come get them and take them up to Atlantic Beach and then bring them back when it was over that night.”<sup>256</sup>

In 1954, Hurricane Hazel, which destroyed much of the built environment of Atlantic Beach and the surrounding area, was a major setback to the fledgling leisure industries along the South Carolina coast. Most businesses did not have insurance, a lack that was common along the Strand during this period. Upperman remembers that Hazel destroyed the nicest hotel at Atlantic Beach, the Gordon Hotel, owned by his friend Dr. Gordon. “That was the only decent motel or business there—when I say decent, the others would be second and third and fourth rate compared to that.”<sup>257</sup> Like the rest of the Strand, Atlantic Beach eventually rebounded after the devastating hurricane due to the continued influx of tourist dollars.

William Moredock recalls that Thursday was “Maid’s Day” at Atlantic Beach, and employees would get off early for the festivities. “When my family vacationed here [Myrtle Beach] in 1959, our mother talked our maid into coming along, promising her a day in Atlantic Beach. Taking her there and picking her up on that July day was an adventure and—for my mother—a thoroughly unnerving experience. Driving through the little town, we were completely cut off from ‘our’ world, completely surrounded by ‘the other.’ We had never seen so many black people—hundreds of them on the streets, in the hotels, a thousand or more on the little beachfront. Everywhere, music poured from clubs and houses as people danced and

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<sup>256</sup> Coleman, Stanley D. Interviewed by Randall A. Wells, 21 October 1993. Horry County Oral History Project.

<sup>257</sup> Upperman, Leroy, Dr. Interviewed by Randall A. Wells, 11 August 1995. Horry County Oral History Project.

celebrated.”<sup>258</sup> The era of the Atlantic Beach Company is when rock n’ roll and beach music emerged, both of which are cultural expressions that possessed the potential to transcend racial barriers. However, as Pete Daniel discusses in *Lost Revolution: The South in the 1950s*, the potential of integration through music and other forms of leisure culture in the South was squandered as Jim Crow segregation set up barriers to interracial cooperation.

Along the Grand Strand, those barriers were physical as well as social. Ocean Boulevard stops abruptly at the Atlantic Beach border and begins again on the other side. Even the natural landscape was segregated when white property owners ran ropes into the ocean and placed “whites only” signs on the beach. Alice Graham laughed as she explained: “I cannot understand how they thought if we were in water confined to one spot that they wouldn’t be contaminated by our blackness just because they put up a rope. It’s water and it’s flowing. It makes no sense.”<sup>259</sup> The ropes and the road set up physical barriers symbolic of separation; however, Atlantic Beach flourished within the larger Grand Strand community. In its heyday Atlantic beach had motels, nightclubs, liquor stores, restaurants, grocery stores, service stations, and both a beauty and barbershop.<sup>260</sup> Referring to Atlantic Beach, Upperman declared: “Compared to nothing, this was very promising.”<sup>261</sup> While inside the larger Grand Strand economy of tourism, Atlantic Beach was separate social space in the early and mid twentieth century.

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<sup>258</sup> Morehead, *Banana’s Republic*, 63.

<sup>259</sup> Stokes, *Myrtle Beach*, 200; Alice Graham, interview by Damon L. Fordham, October 10, 2002, Atlantic Beach Oral History Project.

<sup>260</sup> Stokes, *Myrtle Beach*, 200.

<sup>261</sup> Upperman, Leroy, Dr. Interviewed by Randall A. Wells, 11 August 1995. Horry County Oral History Project.

The hostility towards integrated socialization on the Strand can be found in the attack on Whispering Pines nightclub, also known as Charlie's Place.<sup>262</sup> Just inland and a few miles south of Atlantic Beach in the black Racepath district of Myrtle Beach, often colloquially referred to as the Hill, Charlie Fitzgerald, a prosperous black businessman, owned a club that featured the big rhythm and blues artists of the 1940s and 1950s. South Carolina had its own type of rhythm and blues referred to as "beach music" and the accompanying dance called the "shag."

In 2000, journalist Frank Beacham wrote an article on Charlie's Place for the *Oxford American*, which later became the first chapter in his book *Whitewashed: A Southern Journey Through Music, Mayhem, and Murder*. "Though there's continuing debate over the origins of South Carolina's state dance," he writes, "those who created it give major credit to the black dancers of the era, many of whom did an erotic dance that mimicked the act of fornication called the "dirty shag."<sup>263</sup> While the shag had roots in African American music and dance, white southerners have appropriated the dance. Today, the Ocean Drive section of North Myrtle Beach is full of commercialized nostalgia for South Carolina's state dance. Middle-aged white southerners still frequent Fat Harold's Beach Club, Duck's, or the OD Pavilion Social and Shag Club and buy shag music and memorabilia. *Shag: The Movie* (1989-dir. Zelda Barron) tells the story of four white southern women who take a trip to Myrtle Beach following their 1963 high school graduation. The first image of the film is a full screen shot of the word "Shag" filled in with the Confederate flag, and the only

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<sup>262</sup> Stokes, *Myrtle Beach*, 193-196.

<sup>263</sup> Frank Beacham, "Charlie's Place: The 1950s South Carolina Beach Scene was a Haven for Innovative—and Interracial—Dancing Then the KKK Took Notice" *Oxford American* November/December 2000: 55.

black people who appear in the film are the band that plays during the dance sequences. Because Atlantic Beach had experienced such little change in its built environment since the 1960s, the final scene is filmed at the Atlantic Beach Pavilion, “one of the last of the old style pavilions.” Atlantic Beach’s pavilion burned down a few years after being used in the film.<sup>264</sup> This surviving white fascination with dancing to black music was what led Beacham to research the interracial roots of the shag.

During the summer of 1945 as World War II came to an end “the lure of black music began to take hold among white dancers.” White teenagers who wanted to listen to the new music and dance crossed the color line to visit Charlie’s Place. One of those white teenagers, Harry Driver, remarked: “We had integration twenty-five years before Martin Luther King, Jr. came on the scene. We were totally integrated because the blacks and the whites had nothing in our minds that made us think we were different. We loved music, we loved dancing, and that was the common bond between us.” However, that “common bond” was a serious social taboo and seen as a threat by the local whites in power.<sup>265</sup>

The same catalyst for Alan Schafer’s interracial involvement in Dillon County politics—the 1948 Supreme Court decision, which gave African Americans the right to vote in South Carolina’s primaries—drew out the staunch segregationists in Horry County as it did in neighboring Dillon County. The Klu Klux Klan revived in the area and during the summer of 1950 took notice of Charlie’s Place. On Saturday,

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<sup>264</sup> Fessa John Hook, *Shagging in the Carolinas* (Arcadia, 2006), 118. The fact that the Atlantic Beach pavilion only lives on in memory and in the cinematic text of the film, speaks to the unwitting preservation of the built environment within a commercial film.

<sup>265</sup> Beacham, “Charlie’s Place” 62.

August 26, 1950, the Klan led a police-escorted motorcade of over twenty cars through Myrtle Beach's main drag and then by Charlie's Whispering Pines nightclub on the Hill. Later that evening, the Klan returned to Charlie's Place and Fitzgerald was forced into the trunk of a car as the Klan shot up his club and beat numerous patrons. Fitzgerald was kidnapped, beaten, stabbed, and left for dead. In addition to providing the space for interracial dancing, Fitzgerald owned numerous other successful black businesses in the area—including a motel, barbershop, beauty shop and cab company. Moreover, his wife Sarah was one of the two African Americans in Myrtle Beach to register to vote in 1948 when the South Carolina primaries were legally opened to all races.<sup>266</sup>

When he miraculously made it back to his club later that night, Fitzgerald was arrested. In a strange turn of events, the only individual who was killed at Charlie's Place that night was James D. Johnston, a Klan member, who was shot in the back. Once the Klan robe was removed, it was discovered that Johnson was a police officer from neighboring Conway. It appeared that a fellow Klan member shot Johnston in the mayhem. Johnston was left behind at Charlie's Place to die on the floor. No Klan members were indicted for Johnston's shooting, the attack on the club, or Fitzgerald; yet Fitzgerald was held in jail for weeks.<sup>267</sup> The violent attack on the club and its successful owner deterred interracial cavorting on the Grand Strand and another

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<sup>266</sup> Stokes, *Myrtle Beach*, 196.

<sup>267</sup> Sheriff C. Ernest Sasser arrested Fitzgerald and took him out of town to a jail in Columbia, South Carolina. Beacham suggests that this may have been to protect Fitzgerald from the Klan. After the attack Fitzgerald even said of Sheriff Sasser, "I've never know a straighter white man in my life."

potential revolution was lost.<sup>268</sup> This incident speaks to the extreme and violent challenges to creating an interracial touriscape during the mid twentieth century South.<sup>269</sup>

On that same night after the Klan paraded through the Hill district, the cavalcade drove through Atlantic Beach. There was no violence; however, Atlantic Beach residents called officers to their town the following day. The local paper at the time, the *Myrtle Beach Sun* [later named the *Sun News*], reported that a “contingent of merchants” met with the sheriff and other law enforcement officers. The paper reports the merchants’ response to the Klan activity: “it is our desire and wish to give you our full cooperation in preserving law and order at this beach. There are about 10,000 colored people here now and you don’t see not even one drunk or disorderly. We feel like we have better order than the white beaches. We don’t feel like the Klan has the right to move in on us by parading... We are 100 percent southern Negroes and we have our own beach and in Conway, Myrtle Beach and other places, we try to live separately, not having any desire to mix churches, schools, or anything else. We only have ninety days to make and pay our rent here but with the Klan coming [we might] just as well fold up. When you visit the white beaches, you don’t see any colored unless they are employed.”<sup>270</sup>

This sly public statement by Atlantic Beach merchants, faced with violence and intimidation from the Klan, illustrates the skills needed not only in constructing

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<sup>268</sup> Frank Beacham, “Charlie’s Place,” *Oxford American*, 50-62. Frank Beacham, *Whitewash: A Southern Journey Through Music, Mayhem & Murder*, “Charlie’s Place” (19-60), New York: Booklocker.com, Inc., 2002.

<sup>269</sup> It is important that the touriscape not become reified into a concept that just addresses the overlap between white and black space. This would negate the important intersection between various groups of African Americans from various stations and areas who interacted to form a vibrant touriscape at Atlantic Beach during Jim Crow segregation.

<sup>270</sup> Stokes, *Myrtle Beach*, 194; *Myrtle Beach Sun*, September 1, 1950.

but also in publicly representing a touriscape. Local merchants had a mere ninety days to lure visitors and sustain their businesses. Atlantic Beach merchants skillfully presented racial violence and intimidation as bad for business for them and the larger Grand Strand tourist economy. The ten thousand African Americans present at Atlantic Beach are framed as “southern Negroes,” which signifies that they knew how to navigate the black codes enforced by white southern society. It was the Klan that broke the code of segregation by entering the Atlantic Beach community, and Atlantic Beach merchants that restored order. The power of Atlantic Beach coupled with cracks in the façade of southern white supremacy through national legislation threatened the individuals invested in the society of white control over black space.

The sheriff promised to protect Atlantic Beach and publicly condemned the violence and intimidation of the Klan. The *Myrtle Beach Sun* reported after the incident: “Many colored waitresses and maids, fearful of a return visit of the Klan, left town Sunday and Monday, and this week a number of hotel operators have reported they were without domestic help of any kind.” While framed as a sign of fear, the actions of the domestics can also be read as a form of protest that, similar to Schafer’s two-dollar-bill campaign in 1948, showed the economic importance of their work to the larger economy. Driver reported that he could not return to Charlie’s Place to dance: “They would hate me because I was white even though I had nothing to do with it.”<sup>271</sup> The segregated landscape of leisure on the Grand Strand was resolidified through violent means. Perhaps buoyed by the success of their own space of leisure and commerce, merchants in Atlantic Beach and black workers in the white

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<sup>271</sup> Beacham, “Charlie’s Place,” *Oxford American*, 59, 62.

tourism industry made their voices heard by both standing their ground and leaving. This shows the importance of touriscapes and a rooted mobility in affecting change.

Atlantic Beach's role as a "haven for blacks" was certainly necessary.

African Americans could enjoy the beach and entertainment only within the realm of segregated leisure. This is supported by Mark S. Foster's discussion of black resorts in "In the Face of 'Jim Crow': Prosperous Blacks and Vacations, Travel and Outdoor Leisure, 1890-1945." He explains: "Efforts to establish resorts or recreational facilities near areas favored and utilized by large numbers of whites led to trouble."<sup>272</sup>

Atlantic Beach's ability to exist in the midst of a white vacation area with only one recorded incident of harassment throughout the turbulent decades of the 1950s and 1960s makes it an important place to study. It also makes Atlantic Beach a unique touriscape within southern culture.

Having weathered a major hurricane and the Klan, it was actually the desegregation of leisure space, beginning with the South Carolina state parks in the mid-1960s, which led to Atlantic Beach's ultimate decline. Motel owner Earlene Woods weathered the 1954 storm, and explained: "Integration was worse. Because the hurricane took the businesses, but integration took the people."<sup>273</sup> For a touriscape to exist, different groups of people must be brought together.

In 1966, Atlantic Beach incorporated as a municipality of Horry County. This meant that the town's government now had the ability to control what kind of development could occur and could maintain autonomy from the predominantly white

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<sup>272</sup> Mark S. Foster, "In the Face of 'Jim Crow': Prosperous Blacks and Vacations, Travel and Outdoor Leisure, 1890-1945," *Journal of Negro History*, 84.2 (Spring 1999), 140. Foster discusses the black resorts along the Atlantic Coast and the Midwest (136-143), but does not mention Atlantic Beach, South Carolina.

<sup>273</sup> Stokes, *Myrtle Beach*, 201; Woods interview, 2002.

beach communities in the area. Just two years later in 1968 when the surrounding towns of Cherry Grove, Crescent Beach, Windy Hill, and Ocean Drive consolidated into North Myrtle Beach, Atlantic Beach opted to maintain its autonomy as a black beach with black control.<sup>274</sup> Upperman questioned the practicality of the decision: “I thought they made a mistake in incorporating as they were. I can understand the need for racial identity and that is good if you can compete, but if you can’t you’re out of control.”<sup>275</sup> Upperman’s position contrasts with the perspective of those guiding the town during the late-1960s—perhaps reflecting generational differences developing in the African American community. Upperman advised: “But from a practical point of view, to build a city in a four block area, that’s just too damn small.”<sup>276</sup> Size was not the only problem facing the town of Atlantic Beach.

As desegregation accelerated in the 1970s, Atlantic Beach, like other black communities and businesses, experienced an economic downturn. The town’s website, last updated in 2003, explained: “In the 1970s desegregation would offer new opportunities for Black tourists, vacationers and businesses. It was positive times for Black folks. They could now experience some of the freedoms they had never experienced before. They began to explore other beaches along the southeast coast. This, coupled with merchants unprepared to trade in a free market economy

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<sup>274</sup> Yolanda Jones, “\$10,000 Started Atlantic Beach: Buyers sought a black haven,” *Sun News*, 20 February 1994. Sammy Fretwell “Atlantic Beach struggles to maintain its identity,” *Sun News* (date). Will Moredock, *Banana Republic: A Year in the Heart of Myrtle Beach*, Charleston SC: Frontline Press, 2003: 63-67. Catherine H. Lewis, *Horry County, South Carolina, 1730-1993*, 84-85, 88-89.

<sup>275</sup> Yolanda Jones, “\$10,000 Started Atlantic Beach: Buyers sought a black haven,” *Sun News*, 20 February 1994.

<sup>276</sup> Upperman, Leroy, Dr. Interviewed by Randall A. Wells, 11 August 1995. Horry County Oral History Project.

would have devastating effects on the Black Pearl.”<sup>277</sup> In 1997, a journalist for the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* described the detrimental effects on the built environment of the town: “Atlantic Beach looks more like war-torn Beirut than an ocean sanctuary once known as the Black Pearl.” Journalist William Moredock describes the Atlantic Beach of the late-1950s as “a little Caribbean village in the heart of this redneck Baptist kingdom,” and laments that today it “looks like something out of the third world.” In the late-1980s Upperman visited Atlantic Beach: “It looked like hell. I passed right by it and had to turn around and ask a man of color where was Atlantic Beach.”<sup>278</sup>

### **Surviving Desegregation**

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which desegregated public accommodation, played a significant role in Atlantic Beach’s economic downturn. This was an occurrence throughout other real touriscapes (American Beach, Florida) and imagined mediascapes (Tony Morrison’s *Up Beach* and John Sayles’ *Lincoln Beach*).

In Morrison’s 2003 novel *Love*, *Up Beach* is the fictional location of a black resort built up by Bill Cosey. The novel blends the resort’s present dilapidated state with flashbacks to its flourishing past. The first person narration of L, which ties together the past/present narrative, describes Cosey’s daughter-in-law May, who became mentally unstable after the family’s resort business failed. May blames the physical and emotional destruction of the resort on “Freedom.” “She tried hard to

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<sup>277</sup> “Atlantic Beach, South Carolina: Her History” accessed June 18, 2007  
<http://www.atlanticbeachsc.com/asps/history.asp>

<sup>278</sup> Lyn Riddle, “Around the South: Strand’s ‘Black Pearl’ seeks renewed luster” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* 2 November 1997: 18. Will Moredock, *Banana Republic: A Year in the Heart of Myrtle Beach*, Charleston SC: Frontline Press, 2003: 63-64. Though most of the Caribbean is part of the third world.

keep the place going when her father-in-law lost interest, and was convinced that civil rights destroyed her family and its business. By which she meant colored people were more interested in blowing up cities than dancing by the seashore... Fact is, folks who bragged about Cosey vacations in the forties boasted in the sixties about Hyatts, Hiltons, cruises to the Bahamas and Ocho Rios.”<sup>279</sup> The beachfront community of a past glory offers a fitting setting for the emotional struggles of Morrison’s female protagonists. She writes about Up Beach: “The withdrawal of that class of tourist was hard on everyone, like a receding wave that left shells and kept script, scattered and unreadable, behind.”<sup>280</sup>

John Sayle’s 2002 film *Sunshine State* is set in the fictional Florida beachside community of Plantation, a place that must deal with its complex past as the threats of destructive development loom. Dr. Lloyd (Bill Cobbs) is the “moral center” of the film’s many storylines and characters. Dr. Lloyd attempts to galvanize the residents of the historically black community of Lincoln Beach to develop pride of place and fight the developers who seek to mine the area for quick profits while destroying the sense of place the community holds.<sup>281</sup> The past and the present blend together through an insider/outsider perspective in Sayles’s mediascape.

*Sunshine State* addresses the complexity of the insider/outside perspective through the film’s main female characters. Desiree (Angela Bassett), who returns home to visit her mother for the first time in twenty-five years, and Marly (Eddie Falco), who finds herself ready to be uprooted from the only “home” she knows, share little screen time, but both represent the rooted/mobile aspects of place and

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<sup>279</sup> Toni Morrison, *Love*, New York: Vintage, 2003, 8.

<sup>280</sup> Morrison, *Love*, 39.

<sup>281</sup> Stephen Holden, “Within a Florida Civics Lesson, Rich Stories,” *New York Times* 21 June 2002.

identity. Morrison and Sayles draw from the harsh realities endured by real black beachfront communities of the South. In the process, they add another layer to the “real” touriscapes throughout the South, such as Atlantic Beach, South Carolina and American Beach, Florida.

Russ Rymer and Marsha Dean Phelts both tell the story of American Beach, Florida, a black beachside resort founded in 1935 by the wealthy African-American businessman Abraham Lincoln Lewis. Both Rymer and Phelts trace the flourishing of the black resort and its impending economic and social deterioration in the period following desegregation. Rymer forms a bond with the fascinating MaVynee Betsch, great-granddaughter of American Beach’s founder A.L. Lewis. Betsch was a well-educated and polished opera singer in her youth and spent a decade performing in Europe before she returned to American Beach, gave up all her money, and took on the role of local preservationist and colorful character. Referred to by some as the “beach lady,” because of her nomadic life style, Betsch did not cut her hair or the nails on her left hand. She had almost seven feet of hair reaching down her back and often carried her nails around in a bag. With her colorful appearance and rebellion against the greed of American consumer culture, she was a complex and memorable symbol for preserving the history and the environment of American Beach.

Rymer writes: “For MaVynee, the vista of American Beach presents not only the landscape of achievement against great odds but the landscape of defeat at the hour of triumph.”<sup>282</sup> MaVynee Betsch, who had the “r” in her first name removed when Ronald Reagan became president, fought the rich and powerful Amelia Island

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<sup>282</sup> Russ Rymer, *American Beach: A Saga of Race, Wealth, and Memory*, New York: HarperCollins, 1998, 101.

Plantation developers, led by Charles Fraser, who previously developed Sea Pines Plantation in Hilton Head, South Carolina, as they encroached upon the culture, history, and natural landscapes she loved. Rymer writes: “The privilege of living in ‘Plantations,’ playing golf on ‘links,’ and shopping in ‘chains’ sounds suspiciously like slavery to her.”<sup>283</sup> Betsch, who was born the same year American Beach was founded, died in 2005 at the age of seventy. In the last years of her life she was widely recognized for her preservation and public history work with articles in *Smithsonian* magazine in 2003 and the cover of *Preservation* magazine in 2005. The 2005 article, “Whose Beach Is It, Anyway? One woman fights for a piece of Florida’s past,” focused on Betsch’s inventive and personal approach to preservation.<sup>284</sup>

While Rymer is a visiting outsider allowed access to American Beach’s history primarily through his friendship with Betsch, Marsha Dean Phelts is an insider who grew up in American Beach and blends the beach’s history with her own perspective and chosen career as local librarian. In the chapter “The Irony of Civil Rights” Phelts explains how the “American Beach that grew and prospered under segregation vanished with the passage of the Civil Rights Act, July 2, 1964.” She ends her book with a plea for preservation of the town in the face of outside developers: “But I thank God for the chance to try and tell my American Beach story- so you can understand the depth of feeling in our hearts and souls, and why we think it so important that an American Beach for African Americans be preserved for generations to come.”<sup>285</sup> Like American Beach, Atlantic Beach’s economic and

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<sup>283</sup> Rymer, 105.

<sup>284</sup> Michael Parnell, “Beach Lady Dies” [Fernandina Beach, FL] *News-Leader* 05 September 2005.

<sup>285</sup> Marsha Dean Phelts, *An American Beach for African American*, Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1997, 119, 178.

social downturn following desegregation led to calls for revitalization and preservation. The town currently vacillates between positive plans for redevelopment that respects the town's distinct sense of place and the ravages of crime, poverty, and the threat of thoughtless development invested in quick profits and historical amnesia.

Because Atlantic Beach did not incorporate until 1966 there is no viable census data until 1970. Using this data as well as its own "windshield survey," the Waccamaw Regional Planning and Development Council prepared a report, "Atlantic Beach Land Use Plan and Housing Element," for the newly formed Atlantic Beach Planning Committee. The report was published in June of 1979 and analyzes the physical and social demographics of the town while making suggestions for revitalization and reorganization. Because of economic stagnation and apprehension concerning outside developers, there have been minor demographic and physical changes in the town since the late-1970s into the twenty-first century.

For historical perspective, I compare the data in the 1979 report to information in the more recent Comprehensive Plan for Atlantic Beach, approved in 2001. The impetus for the recent Comprehensive Plan was the South Carolina Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act of 1994. These reports offer a picture of the town's physical and organizational landscape. Upperman pointed out that in the days of the Atlantic Beach Company there was no zoning, "no organization where you had to have business and residential." He explained: "But most of the zoning was natural down Atlantic Street and you'd take sometimes almost half an hour to get down because congestion. The highway was not too well developed at

all.”<sup>286</sup> The lack of zoning and planning in the early stages of the town’s development led to serious problems down the road.

In 1970, there were 215 year-round residents in Atlantic Beach. The population peaked in 1990 with 446. While the 1979 report projected 580 permanent residents, in 2000, the number actually had dropped to 351. As with most resort areas, the population swells into the thousands during the summer months. In 1970, the town was ninety-eight percent black. In 2000 Atlantic Beach’s population was still predominately (eighty-two percent) black, but had diversified to include ten percent white residents, and eight percent other races and ethnicities, predominantly Latinos. In 1970, sixty-seven percent of families in Atlantic Beach were below the poverty line. This was far greater than the county (twenty-five percent) and state (nineteen percent) averages.<sup>287</sup>

In the 2001 report, the specific economic elements of Atlantic Beach are not included. Instead, a focus on the larger regional economy is used. The rationale given is: “That the local economy is not confined to the Town limits, but is shaped to a large extent by what is happening in the county, region, and state, requires us to look beyond the town when assessing economic conditions, constraints, and capabilities.”<sup>288</sup> This shows that the town is indeed a touriscape where the inside and outside overlap to form the economic system. The 2000 census shows only thirty-one percent of Atlantic Beach families below the poverty line, which is quite an

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<sup>286</sup> Upperman, Leroy, Dr. Interviewed by Randall A. Wells, 11 August 1995. Horry County Oral History Project.

<sup>287</sup> Waccamaw Regional Planning and Development Council, “Atlantic Beach Land Use Plan and Housing Element” June 1979.

<sup>288</sup> Town of Atlantic Beach, “Comprehensive Plan,” adopted 2001  
<http://www.atlanticbeachsc.com/asps/future.asp>

improvement from 1970 (and even the forty-three percent in 1990), but still in excess of the regional and state averages. Most interesting is the economic analysis presented in the 2001 Comprehensive Plan: “The Town of Atlantic Beach has not fully participated in the thriving tourist-based economy of the Grand Strand, and this is reflected in the generally thin physical development seen within the town limits.” This exclusion is not presented as merely because of the town’s size or its autonomous status. “Many landowners and residents believe Atlantic Beach has suffered economically when all around it development has flourished and land prices have soared due to the [local] government’s lack of consistency in planning, its failure to gain the confidence of the landowners, the overall perception that there are issues of integrity surrounding previously submitted development plans, and ultimately, those plans have failed to capture the goals and desires of a majority of the landowners and residents.”<sup>289</sup> The rift between the town’s government and its residents and landowners shows internal strife inside the community. Yet the section ends with the hope that there is still potential and points out that forty percent of the land of Atlantic Beach remained undeveloped in 2001—in 1979 forty-three percent of the area was undeveloped. In over twenty years very little has changed in the town’s rate of development.

The standstill in Atlantic Beach’s development is staggering when compared to the extensive growth of the Grand Strand region at large. Statistics are helpful, but the issue is quite apparent upon a simple drive through the Grand Strand. The 1979 report points out that lack of planning and zoning has contributed to the town’s

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<sup>289</sup> Town of Atlantic Beach, “Comprehensive Plan, 5” adopted 2001  
<http://www.atlanticbeachsc.com/asps/future.asp>

problems: “In Atlantic Beach, single family dwellings are plagued by an intermixture of incompatible land uses. Multi-family residential, commercial, and industrial land uses are intermixed with single family residential uses, resulting in excess traffic, excess noise, and increased danger of fire during tourist season.”<sup>290</sup> The Waccamaw Regional Planning Commission strongly suggested instituting proper planning, zoning, and utilizing federal and state programs as solutions to land use problems. Atlantic Beach did not adopt zoning ordinances until 1985 and in the 2001 Comprehensive Plan they are discussed as “inadequate as a guide for a proper balance of land uses.” Even today zoning problems still hamper the town in moving forward with development projects.<sup>291</sup> The main issues arising from the lack of proper zoning are that several land uses are permitted in a single district, the height restriction on oceanfront development impedes future economic development, and the unsettled issue of adult entertainment. “Atlantic Beach has found itself in legal battles that forced it to open its doors to questionable business because of the lack of consistency between the business license ordinance and the zoning ordinance.”<sup>292</sup> The “questionable businesses” are the Crazy Horse, a strip club, and 4:20, a drug paraphernalia and general merchandise store, both located on Highway 17. The issue of zoning is still hotly contested in the small town and will be further discussed in the section on the future of Atlantic Beach at the end of this chapter.

Comparing the 1979 and the 2001 reports on the town also demonstrates little improvement in the built environment of Atlantic Beach. The “windshield survey”

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<sup>290</sup> Waccamaw Regional Planning and Development Council, “Atlantic Beach Land Use Plan and Housing Element” June 1979, 28.

<sup>291</sup> The current zoning issues are discussed in detail in the concluding section of this chapter.

<sup>292</sup> Comprehensive Plan, 23.

conducted by the Waccamaw Regional Planning and Development Council, conducted in the summer of 1978, found that out of the 201 residential structures in Atlantic Beach sixty-seven (twenty-five percent) were deteriorating—“needs more repair than would be provided in the course of regular maintenance”—and nine were dilapidated—“determined to be unsafe or inadequate shelter and in its present condition endangers the health, safety, or well-being of the occupants.” Out of the sixty-seven seasonal houses fifteen were deteriorating and one was dilapidated.<sup>293</sup> Furthermore, Atlantic Beach had inadequate housing for low-to-moderate-income families and motel rooms were often used as residences for this segment of the population. Using the 1970 Census of Housing, the study concluded that eighty-two percent of all owner-occupied housing was valued at less than \$20,000, which was nowhere near competitive with the larger Grand Strand region.<sup>294</sup> While the report pointed out the need for extensive improvements in the built environment, it also suggested that new housing needed to be “implemented with neighborhood conservation in mind.” The section on Neighborhood Preservation pointed out: “Neighborhoods often tend to be communities within themselves, reflecting the characteristics of their residents.”<sup>295</sup> While in a state of deterioration, the Atlantic Beach community still holds the physical reminders of a past golden era.

The Comprehensive Plan of 2001 lists 241 housing units in Atlantic Beach (though the 2000 Census lists 244 housing units). Either way, this is exactly or right

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<sup>293</sup> Waccamaw Regional Planning and Development Council, “Atlantic Beach Land Use Plan and Housing Element” June 1979, 68-72.

<sup>294</sup> Waccamaw Regional Planning and Development Council, “Atlantic Beach Land Use Plan and Housing Element” June 1979, 81.

<sup>295</sup> Waccamaw Regional Planning and Development Council, “Atlantic Beach Land Use Plan and Housing Element” June 1979, 77.

about the 241 housing units in 1970; however, in the 1980s a fifty-two-unit multi-family housing project was built west of U.S. 17 in Atlantic Beach—meaning that some of the substandard housing has been removed. The 2001 report lists owner-occupied houses at thirty-three percent and renter occupancy at sixty-six percent. “The transient population has had a devastating effect on every aspect of the community. It is most evident in the apathy and disinterest in the community’s long-term goals. Attendance at town meetings and functions is low.” However, seasonal housing has diminished with nearly fifty-four percent of housing being occupied year round. The 2001 report also stated that the value of property in the town was increasing because Atlantic Beach offered “some of the last undeveloped oceanfront property on the Strand.”<sup>296</sup> The potential of this undeveloped property and the possibility of heritage tourism related to the area’s distinct history and culture offered the best hope for the future of the town of Atlantic Beach. This promise has yet to be realized because of the constant economic and social struggles in the town’s post-civil rights history.

This chapter is a starting point for the history of Atlantic Beach. As the 2001 comprehensive plan for Atlantic Beach pointed out: “There is much about the history that is incomplete. A history project to recapture the oral history of the beach should begin immediately.”<sup>297</sup> The history and culture of Atlantic Beach is best told from the perspective of its residents and those that remember its past in conjunction with those

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<sup>296</sup> Town of Atlantic Beach, “Comprehensive Plan,” adopted 2001, 16-17

<http://www.atlanticbeachsc.com/asps/future.asp>

<sup>297</sup> Town of Atlantic Beach, “Comprehensive Plan,” adopted 2001, 11.

<http://www.atlanticbeachsc.com/asps/future.asp>

that are invested in its future. Knowing more about the rich history of Atlantic Beach will stimulate efforts for a sustainable future.

Because of its size and small tax revenues, basic social services, such as functioning police and fire departments, are difficult to sustain. Even though Atlantic Beach did not incorporate into the city of North Myrtle Beach in 1968, the city provides water, wastewater, and fire protection.<sup>298</sup> A wrongful-death lawsuit filed in 1984 resulting from an Atlantic Beach police officer shooting the “wrong man” at a local bar almost bankrupted the town by the end of the 1980s and left it for a period without any official police protection beyond that of the county and state. In 1998 the town clerk Al Scott was murdered in the hotel where he also worked. In 2001 the town was again on the verge of bankruptcy and in danger of losing its municipal charter.<sup>299</sup> In the 2001 Comprehensive Plan the town planned to hire a police chief and three more officers. “With this number of officers, the Town will be in an excellent position to continue to enforce law through strong policing, and eradicate drug violations and prostitution as an identifiable feature of the town.”<sup>300</sup> In August of 2007 the police chief of Atlantic Beach, Juan Lopez, resigned stating “the town’s financial constraints are such they just don’t need a police chief.” In September of 2007, local media reported that Atlantic Beach was more than seventeen thousand dollars behind on its state-provided insurance policy, more than sixteen thousand dollars behind in its employee retirement benefits, and tax payers currently owe the

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<sup>298</sup> Town of Atlantic Beach, “Comprehensive Plan,” adopted 2001, 12.

<http://www.atlanticbeachsc.com/asps/future.asp>

<sup>299</sup> “Atlantic Beach, South Carolina: Her Future,” Town Website,

<http://www.atlanticbeachsc.com/asps/future.asp>

<sup>300</sup> Town of Atlantic Beach, “Comprehensive Plan,” adopted 2001, 12.

<http://www.atlanticbeachsc.com/asps/future.asp>

town more than forty-one thousand dollars in property taxes from last year.

Furthermore, SLED (South Carolina Law Enforcement Division) is currently investigating an Atlantic Beach employee for misappropriation of public funds.<sup>301</sup>

Numerous situations such as these continue to plague the town and dampen the hope for its renewed luster.

### **Development at Atlantic Beach: Problem or Solution?**

There is a picture by Paul Klee called *Angelus Novus*. In it, an angel is depicted who appears as if trying to distance himself from something that he stares at. His eyes and mouth gape wide, his wings are stressed to their limit.

The Angel of History must look this way; he has turned to face the past. Where we see a constant chain of events, he sees only a single catastrophe incessantly piling ruin upon ruin and hurling them at his feet.

He would probably like to stop, waken the dead, and correct the devastation - but a storm is blowing hard from Paradise, and it is so strong he can no longer fold his wings.

While the debris piles toward the heavens before his eyes, the storm drives him incessantly into the Future that he has turned his back upon.

What we call Progress is this storm."

- Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History IX"

Development has been a hotly debated topic because while Atlantic Beach residents want to see their town improve and take part in the surrounding tourism boom, they do not want to lose the distinct heritage of their community. A complex negotiation between the past and the future as well as those inside and outside the town must occur to sustain the touriscape of Atlantic Beach. The stakeholders range from longtime residents to developers to local officials to newcomers and neighboring communities. I argue that all South Carolinians have some stake in the

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<sup>301</sup> Sammy Fretwell, "Atlantic Beach struggles to maintain its identity" *Sun News* 1987. Jonathan Tressler, "Atlantic Beach Police Chief Resigns" *Sun News* 21 July 2007. Yolanda Jones, "\$10,000 Started Atlantic Beach: Buyers sought a black haven," *Sun News*, 20 February 1994. Will Moredock, *Banana Republic: A Year in the Heart of Myrtle Beach*, Charleston SC: Frontline Press, 2003: 63-67. Transcript from a new story on TV 13.

historical memory Atlantic Beach holds. The stakeholders need the vision of an insider/outsider perspective to formulate a plan that is economically feasible and meets the diverse goals of the community. The real challenge is for the town and those invested in it to engage the past while moving towards the future. As Benjamin's reading of the *Angelus Novus* illustrates, in facing the past we cannot avoid the future (progress and destruction). The mobile perspective of a touriscape can offer tools for reinvisioning a future for Atlantic Beach that engages aspects of the past while moving forward.



Many ideas and plans for the development of Atlantic Beach have been discussed throughout the years; yet nothing has materialized. The Atlantic Beach of today is a town left behind by time and the prosperity the tourism industry has brought into

surrounding beaches. It is bookended on both sides by the highrise resorts of North Myrtle Beach, but the town's own built environment holds only rundown relics of a past golden era. A 1987 *Sun News* article, "Atlantic Beach struggles to maintain its identity," details possible plans for revitalization and the obstacles the historic town must overcome.

Property owner Flora Jones states: "This Atlantic Beach was a God-given piece of land for poor, poor black people, and God is not gonna let this land be misused. At some point, something is going to happen to make this place

worthwhile. Just not these highrise buildings.” On top of the residents’ disdain for the uninspiring highrise development prominent on the Grand Strand today, David Essex, of the Waccamaw Regional Planning and Development Council, points out the “property in Atlantic Beach is so subdivided [50 X 100 lots], numerous property owners must agree to sell.” The lack of large undivided tracts means that “developers have to work harder to get the land, which can have both positive and negative consequences.”<sup>302</sup>

Michael Kelly said that some see the 1980s Atlantic Beach as a “gold mine” but, in his opinion, it is not. “It’s a place that has a golden spirit, but it is in trouble, and that is not what my father and the other men of the company wanted to happen.” Giving another perspective on the town’s future economic possibilities, Joe Montgomery, mayor of Atlantic Beach in the 1980s, said about the town: “This is a gold mine. But we want to maintain our identity, and we want a certain amount of control. We want to learn from mistakes that were made in other places, like Hilton Head.”<sup>303</sup> Hilton Head is indeed a good warning. Gullah people once inhabited Hilton Head Island—Gullah is the term used for the African-American people of the Sea Islands who possess a distinctive language and culture. The island is now primarily white and wealthy. Sea Pines Plantation, the same development firm Betsch fought against in American Beach, golf courses, and luxury tourist accommodations have no relationship with the island’s distinctive history. The African American heritage of the island has been lost.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> Sammy Fretwell, “Atlantic Beach struggles to maintain its identity *Sun News* 1987.

<sup>303</sup> Sammy Fretwell, “Atlantic Beach struggles to maintain its identity *Sun News* 1987

<sup>304</sup> Sammy Fretwell, “Atlantic Beach struggles to maintain its identity *Sun News* 1987, Margaret A. Shannon with Stephen W. Taylor, “Astride the Plantation Gates: Tourism, Racial Politics, and the

In the article “Astride the Plantation Gates: Tourism, Racial Politics, and the Development of Hilton Head Island” Margaret Shannon and Stephen Taylor offer frameworks that can be applied to Atlantic Beach. “Attempts to understand the racial dynamics of southern economic development have often fallen victim to the fallacy that African Americans have never participated in the course of that development.” This is often because that participation is erased from both the historical memory and the built environment. In addition, both Hilton Head and Atlantic Beach “illustrate the broader principle that economic identity, not racial identity alone, creates political coalitions, and it is these economic issues that determine the course of industrial development in general, and tourism development in particular.”<sup>305</sup> A town, no matter how small, must be sustained by a local economy and invested individuals.

In 1987, the town of Atlantic Beach was in talks with the Columbia, South Carolina real estate developing firm Keenan Company in hopes of developing a “master plan for developing Atlantic Beach.” Nothing materialized. In 1997 the press reported that the town hired Omega International to devise a development plan with funding from wealthy blacks in mind. “The vision is to create a Caribbean-style village with a boardwalk, some shops, perhaps a hotel and convention center and a few condominiums. The land will be leased to developers, not sold, town leaders made clear. Too many blacks have lost their oceanfront land, they say. Townspeople

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Development of Hilton Head Island” in *Southern Journeys: Tourism, History & Culture in the Modern South* ed. Richard Starnes, Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 2003.

<sup>305</sup> Margaret A. Shannon with Stephen W. Taylor, “Astride the Plantation Gates: Tourism, Racial Politics, and the Development of Hilton Head Island,” *Southern Journeys: Tourism, History & Culture in the Modern South*, Richard D. Starnes, Ed. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003, 177-195.

hope to create a haven for families.”<sup>306</sup> Atlantic Beach’s incorporation in 1966 and its 1968 decision not to become part of North Myrtle Beach have allowed the town, unlike Hilton Head Island, to maintain self-determination, but have also made it more difficult to develop.

A 1997 article “Around the South: Strand’s ‘Black Pearl’ seeks renewed luster” in the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* pointed out that it had been fifteen years since a new business had opened in Atlantic Beach. Author Lyn Riddle described the Atlantic Beach of the late-1990s: “Fifty percent of the land within the town limits is undeveloped, a staggering statistic considering virtually all other parcels along the Grand Strand, from the oceanfront inland, bear the weight of hotels, beach houses, restaurants and amusement parks. One oceanfront block here has no buildings; the next is full of ravaged ones—empty, decaying. One structure sits at the edge of the dunes, its concrete walls all that remain—no insides, no roof.” The town has no highrises, no condos, and no chain motels. Skeeter’s Motel, Evan’s Motel, and the Ocean Queen are all small hotels with around fifty rooms total. Riddle talked with town clerk Al Scott less than a year before his murder. Scott grew up locally and frequented Atlantic Beach in its golden era. Riddle explained: “He brought his three children back to the beach to live 10 years ago. He said he left a life of integrated suburbia in New Jersey because he wanted his children to know who they were and where they came from.” Riddle ended her article with a description of the five hundred thousand dollar renovation planned for 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the main drag in the town. “It will become a boulevard, with underground power lines, resurfacing,

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<sup>306</sup> Sammy Fretwell, “Atlantic Beach struggles to maintain its identity *Sun News* 1987.

landscaping. It is the first sign that a new future exists for this place. The money came from the federal government and pushed the town's budget past the \$1 million mark for the first time."<sup>307</sup>

Corruption of outside developers often led to the dashed hopes of the town's residents. David B. Richardson of the Florida development company D.B. Richardson & Associates headed the Atlantic Beach Community Development Corp. throughout the late-1990s. Under his tenure the group received \$800,000 in federal grants but dissolved in 2001 "without making any progress toward development in the town."<sup>308</sup> In Atlantic Beach money and talk does not necessarily translate into change.

The 2001 Comprehensive Plan for the town of Atlantic Beach included yet another redevelopment plan. The plan pointed out that the area "is a resort town, but without adequate resort facilities and services." The redevelopment plan's expressed goal was to add facilities and services while keeping in touch with the heritage and identity of the town. The town claimed that it wanted to avoid using eminent domain, where governments can seize private property of citizens for public use. "Also, the Town does not wish to develop in a hostile manner that pits landowners against the government. Instead, the Town will facilitate development by providing incentives for landowners to participate in development and provide opportunities for landowners to meet in the hopes that they will work together for personal gain and the overall good of the Town."<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> Sammy Fretwell, "Atlantic Beach struggles to maintain its identity *Sun News* 1987.

<sup>308</sup> David Wren, "Five Rivers closed down amid scandal" *Sun News* 19 November 2006.

<sup>309</sup> Town of Atlantic Beach, "Comprehensive Plan," adopted 2001  
<http://www.atlanticbeachsc.com/asps/future.asp>

The redevelopment plan was nebulously based on “input received and data gathered from a variety of sources.” The plan divides Atlantic Beach into four study areas. The Beachfront District, which would include “432 highrise condominiums, a ‘condotel’ (condominiums managed and rented as hotel rooms) with 200 rooms and a conference center, low-rise apartments, 36,800 square feet of shops, and two restaurants.” The Central Business District, “located halfway between the beachfront and US Highway 17 along 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> Avenues,” would have a central plaza for gathering and other recreational activities. Adjacent to the plaza is planned to be “a 1000-seat performance theater, 1 120-to-150-room hotel, 74,000 square feet shops and four restaurants.” To keep with the town’s heritage and identity the theater would offer an alternative to the larger venues in Myrtle Beach by featuring “small concerts that recall the musical performances of the past.” In addition, the shops and restaurants “are envisioned to offer food and goods that are unique to certain cultures, including the African-American and Native American cultures.” The plan envisioned the Highway 17 Commercial District as presenting a “unique image” including a “new open space or ‘town green’” that would distinguish Atlantic Beach’s piece of the commercial strip. “The open space serves as the foreground to the new visitor’s center and a place to display public art that is in keeping with the town’s history or theme, thereby reinforcing the desired image.” The final district presented, Residential Area Northwest of Highway 17, was designed to add to the Community Center currently located in this part of town. The plan also added a “town government complex, which would hold administrative offices, a fire station, a police station, a jail, a courtroom with judge’s chambers, a boardroom, Council chambers,

and a park.” The plan also incorporated a move of the First Baptist Church of Atlantic Beach from its spot on 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the Central Business District to this part of town where it could “be better integrated into the neighborhood and become a focal point of this portion of the town.” The redevelopment plan concluded: “The mix of uses, building orientations, open spaces, and pedestrian walkways all contribute to the ‘village’ environment envisioned for Atlantic Beach.” No visible work has been done to achieve these goals; yet the redevelopment plan offers a picture of what the town officials would like to see in the future.<sup>310</sup>

The “Atlantic Beach Landowners Association Wish List from Survey Data” is also included in the 2001 Comprehensive Plan. The landowner’s association envisions a “total heritage experience” for the town’s future development. This is defined by the association: “For example, at your family reunion, we’ll greet you upon arrival with African and Native American drums, arrange your meeting spaces and meals, plan your leisure activities, supervise activities for children while adults have down time, and invite you to attend an authentic workshop service with an excellent gospel choir before your departure with a T-shirt in hand.” The homeowners have a vision, one that needs to be refined and grounded in the dollars and cents of planning and development.

The March 26, 2006 edition of the *Sun News* has three out of four of the front page articles on Atlantic Beach under the main headline: “Solutions in development.” The feature included two news articles with contrasting perspectives—“Atlantic Beach hopes investors can cure its ills” and “Development’s legs tied up by city

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<sup>310</sup> Town of Atlantic Beach, “Comprehensive Plan,” adopted 2001, 35-37.  
<http://www.atlanticbeachsc.com/asps/future.asp>

crime.” In addition, Issac J. Bailey’s column entitled “Amid apathy, hope glimmers in town” is also included on the front page. The only article featured on this edition’s front page that is not about Atlantic Beach is an ongoing feature “After Katrina” on the repercussion of the 2005 hurricane that hit New Orleans, another southern city whose tourist economy and racial problems have made major headlines.<sup>311</sup>

The two news articles contrast recent real estate purchases and promises of development and community improvement with the problems of corruption, crime, and insufficient law enforcement in the town. The front-page images include a map of who owns what along the Atlantic Beach oceanfront, including \$12.28 million dollars of real estate purchases made in the last eight-and-a-half months. Journalist David Wren writes: “Millions of dollars worth of projects are scheduled to start in the next year, transforming the town’s now vacant oceanfront. Developers say that kind of money won’t put up with the kind of crime and blight that have plagued the four-block town to varying degrees since desegregation.” The article lists numerous logistical and organizational hurdles to development, such as the previously discussed small land parcels and infrastructure issues. The “distrust of outsiders, particularly white-owned development groups” is presented as the “underlying reason” for the lack of development. However, Strand Capital Group, a white-owned Myrtle Beach development group, is reported to be working with Mike Kelly, whose grandfather

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<sup>311</sup>The headline for the March 26, 2006 *Sun News* reads “Solutions in Development.” The articles “Atlantic Beach hopes investors can cure its ills” and “Development’s legs tied up by city’s crime,” interestingly enough, are both written by David Wren, but they present two different sides of the development issue. The former addresses the hopes tied to development and the later the crime and other determinants to the success of development. Issac Bailey is a regular columnist for the paper. His is a young African-American columnist who is known for his balanced but conservative perspective. Finally, it is interesting that the only frontpage article not about Atlantic Beach is about the highly charged issues of dislocated families from Hurricane Katrina. The issues of race and development in a southern tourist town certainly connect the two places.

was the treasurer for the original Atlantic Beach Company, on a 141-condo oceanfront project called Pearl Villas.<sup>312</sup>

The big developments the article reported as on the horizon never materialized; however, smaller individual improvements did begin in 2006. Donnell Thompson, who owns a North Carolina construction company and used to vacation in Atlantic Beach as a child during the 1960s, realized that he could spend what a condo would cost in North Myrtle Beach and build an entire beach house in Atlantic Beach. “I thought it would be a challenge, but I’ve been able to approach challenges head on all my life, and I thought it would be very good if I could be instrumental in the process of turning Atlantic Beach around. This place is certainly worth the chance.” On 31<sup>st</sup> Avenue, one row back from the beach, Thompson built the only elevated beach house in Atlantic Beach to date.<sup>313</sup> Bailey, a conservative African-American columnist for the newspaper, praised the attempts of white Atlantic Beach developer Amy Breuing to improve the floundering town. Breuing, a registered nurse from Connecticut, found her calling in restoring old buildings. Her first restored apartment building in Atlantic Beach is called The French Quarter. Breuing is quoted as saying that “more people need to help and the Grand Strand’s perception of Atlantic Beach needs to change.”<sup>314</sup> The articles paint a positive image of diverse investment, stakeholders, and perspectives on the future of the “Black Pearl.”

The other front-page article focuses on the challenges of crime and corruption that developers face. In 2001, Atlantic Beach councilman Vander More Gore was sentenced to life in prison for a 20-year conspiracy to sell cocaine and marijuana in

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<sup>312</sup> Wren, “Atlantic Beach hopes investors can cure its ills.”

<sup>313</sup> Wren, “Atlantic Beach hopes investors can cure its ills.”

<sup>314</sup> Bailey, “Amid apathy, hope glimmers in town.”

the town. The article also details the work of former Atlantic Beach police captain Frank Johnson and former town manager Charles Williams, an official from the Municipal Association of South Carolina, to combat crime and corruption in the town. The Evans Motel and Woods Apartments are presented as the main places of illegal drug sales and prostitution in the town. Irene Armstrong, long-time mayor of the town, and her brother and Atlantic Beach councilman, Evan Woods, own the Evans Motel. Earlene Woods, owner of the apartments in question and Atlantic Beach entrepreneur since the 1950s, is their mother. In the article Mayor Armstrong is quoted as saying that while drugs are a problem, “the extent of the problem is overblown by the media.”<sup>315</sup>



Today, Atlantic Beach still remains virtually unchanged. Redevelopment has yet to happen. The last bit of undeveloped oceanfront property in the Grand Strand remains empty. However, there have been newspaper articles, as recent as September 5, 2007, which announce redevelopment projects where individuals plan “to start construction in the next few months.” The September 2007 article announced a Charlotte, North Carolina company beginning construction of ocean-view condos in Atlantic Beach. This project was supposed to spur more development in the town; however, it has yet to materialize.<sup>316</sup> In 2008, Atlantic Beach is still working out new zoning ordinances that would allow development.

In an article in the *Sun News* appearing on December 25, 2007 it was reported that the Atlantic Beach Planning Commission had extended the interim development

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<sup>315</sup> Wren, “Development’s legs tied up by city’s crime.”

<sup>316</sup> Staff reporter, “Ocean-view condos in works for Atlantic Beach,” *Sun News* 05 September 2007.

ordinance through June of 2008. This was the fourth time the ordinance had been extended in 2007. The interim rules “allow single-family homes to be built and modified, while commercial and multifamily projects are kept on hold until the town’s new zoning ordinances are enacted,” said Marcia Conner, the Atlantic Beach’s town manager. The hold up in the new zoning ordinance is attributed to a lack of funding. Town officials estimate it will cost from \$20,000 to \$50,000 “for the Waccamaw Council of Governments and Zyscovich Inc., a Miami-based urban design and architecture firm, to write the ordinances.” It was reported that the town received \$225,000 in November from the state legislature’s 2007-2008 Fiscal Year Appropriations Act for “planning, marketing, and tourism.” The Planning Commission will have a first reading of its recommendation on January 7 and the second reading on January 15 of 2008.<sup>317</sup>

With the national housing market and the larger American economy in turmoil, 2008 does not seem like the moment for Atlantic Beach to finally realize its development goals. The fact that the town has held onto its roots as a black community in the face of rampant and homogenizing development on the Grand Strand is symbolic of the tenacity of some residents and local leaders. But the true test of Atlantic Beach’s spirit will be the moment development moves from planning to reality.

The balance between understanding the past and sustaining the future of Atlantic Beach is difficult to envision. This vision cannot be achieved without an economy and a culture that remembers the past and respects the present development

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<sup>317</sup> Jonathan Tressler, “AB Planning Commission extends rules” *Sun News* 25 December 2007.

of black leisure culture. During these flirtations with big-time development, Atlantic Beach has taken on a new layer of African-American history through the annual motorcycle festival the town has hosted for almost three decades. While looking back into the golden era of Atlantic Beach's past and reflecting on its present state of disrepair, we need to look forward to emerging aspects of African-American leisure culture—the black biker.

### **The Atlantic Beach Bikefest Controversy, 1996-2006**



Two motorcycle festivals occur in the Grand Strand area annually during the month of May. The Harley-Davidson motorcycle festival, which began in 1940, is predominantly white, occurs the week before Memorial Day weekend, and is commonly referred to as “Bike Week.” The Atlantic Beach Bikefest, which began in 1980, is predominately black, occurs during the Memorial Day weekend, and is often referred to as “Black Bike Week.” As is often the case, whiteness is invisible and presented as the norm and anything non-white is marked as secondary or “othered.”

The Atlantic Beach Bikefest has yet to restore the town to its past glory, but it does present an updated touriscape where the beach's past overlaps with the complexities of black motorcycle subcultures of today. The motorcycle festival has garnered the town much publicity—both positive and negative. The few available histories of Atlantic Beach, such as the entry in the 2006 *South Carolina*

*Encyclopedia*, conclude the town's story with a reference to the motorcycle festival.<sup>318</sup> The concluding paragraph of Stokes' *Myrtle Beach: A History, 1900-1980* introduced the black motorcycle festival as an "event that attracted tens of thousands, bringing much needed income and life back to the Black Pearl."<sup>319</sup> I explore the history and social implications of the motorcycle festival because it offers important hints for the town's future and a grounded study of a refashioned and mobile touriscape. Like *South of the Border*, the touriscape of Atlantic Beach exists when borders are expanded through physical and social mobility and when perspectives and identities collide.

The Atlantic Beach motorcycle festival was the brainchild of the Carolina Knight Riders Motorcycle Club and Atlantic Beach councilman John Skeeters. The club, which began in 1977 as the Flaming Knight Riders and received a charter as the Carolina Knight Riders motorcycle club in 1982, was open to anyone, but primarily consisted of middle-aged black men who rode Harley-Davidson motorcycles. When the black motorcyclists wanted a rally, "they had no place to go except the town of Atlantic Beach." The event began as a small festival and parade on Memorial Day weekend where revelers "ate chicken bog, danced and vied for trophies in contests for the best looking motorcycle." In the 1980s, the Carolina Knight Riders and the town of Atlantic Beach "parted ways when their ideas didn't match"—meaning the Carolina Knight Riders wanted a motorcycle event but the town wanted to become more involved and "turn it into a social event." The dispute stems from the

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<sup>318</sup> Barbara Stokes, "Atlantic Beach," *The South Carolina Encyclopedia*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006, 34-35.

<sup>319</sup> I think it is telling that the Bikefest serves as a conclusion for Stokes' book. The fact that the last line references the Bikefest shows that this event begins a new era for the region in general and Atlantic Beach specifically—one that represents both continuity and change.

conflicting perspective concerning what was most central to the event—motorcycles or the town itself. Once new leadership took hold in the town, the two groups rejoined forces and the event began to grow.<sup>320</sup> The rooted focus of the festival (in the town) and the mobility (of the motorcycle as vehicle) combine to make Atlantic Beach a place that combines a sedentary and nomadic metaphysics.

The Carolina Knight Riders began to extend an invitation to other African-American motorcycle clubs outside of the local region. The small festival began to attract visitors in excess of 30,000 after 1996 and up to 200,000 in the twenty-first century.<sup>321</sup> The festival's growth corresponded to the growth of both black motorcycle clubs and large events specifically for African-American youth, such as Freaknik in Atlanta, Georgia, or the Black College Reunion in Daytona, Florida. During the late-1990s, the demographics of the Atlantic Beach Bikefest also began to shift to more young, urban African Americans driving Japanese street bikes and even included young revelers with no bikes at all. Members of the Carolina Knight Riders referred to these new tourists sans motorcycle as “tag-alongs”—college students who come to town to hang out during the festival.” Club member George Livingston states: “The media lumps everyone in town that weekend into the biker category and everyone is not a biker. Those kids come to party and this is just not us.”<sup>322</sup> Livingston is astute in focusing on the media's representation of the bike festivals and the insider/outsider dynamic of motorcycle culture.

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<sup>320</sup> “The History of The Carolina Knight Riders” <http://www.freewebs.com/carolinaknightridermc/history.htm>; Will Moredock, *Banana Republic*, 66.

<sup>321</sup> The attendance numbers are reported with extreme discrepancies. For example, the *Sun News* reported in a 1996 article that “officials expect the crowd to double from last years (1995's) 15,000 BUT later reported in 2001 that 50,000-60,000 BBW participant were present in 1995 and that doubled by 1996 to over 100,000].

<sup>322</sup> “The History of Black Bike Week” *Sun News*

For the first fifteen years, the Atlantic Beach Bikefest brought people into the town and occurred without major incident. When the festival began to grow beyond the boundaries of the black beach, local politicians and the press began to take notice. In this section, I trace the emergence of the controversy surrounding the black motorcycle festival in 1996 and the tensions culminated in discrimination suits filed by African-American tourists and the NAACP in 2003. The decade-long debacle concluded when all of the suits were settled in 2006, and a shift in perception and the divisiveness of the motorcycle festivals began to occur in 2007. This historical trajectory leads to an analysis of motorcycle subcultures as an important expression of aspects of contemporary identities.

On May 22 1996, a front-page article in the *Sun News* noted that officials from Myrtle Beach and North Myrtle Beach “are preparing for a Memorial Day weekend overflow of bikers from Atlantic Beach.” The festival was located in Atlantic Beach, but attendees traveled throughout the larger Grand Strand region. The police presence was increasing; however, Myrtle Beach was no longer able to send officers to North Myrtle Beach because they were needed to deal with the overflow of incidents into Myrtle Beach proper. The article described how officials were “mobilizing police” to deal with a crowd expected to double the 15,000 tourists from the 1995 event.

Obviously, the thousands of tourists attracted by the festival could not be contained within the four-block community with its meager lodging and entertainment venues. The article described Atlantic Beach as the “tiny black beach town,” which had recently “re-established its defunct police department and has two

officers on hand to help during the festival.” Tom Leath, Myrtle Beach City Manager, was quoted: “Up until last year, the Memorial Day bike fest didn’t really impact us. Last year [1995] it did.” The impact was coded as negative and the article described “incidents on Ocean Boulevard that included bared breasts and buttocks and noise complaints.” The black bike-week participants were presented as “wilder” and the motorcycles as “louder” than during the predominantly white Harley Davidson motorcycle rally that immediately proceeded black bike week.<sup>323</sup>

A more positive article by Yolanda Jones appeared the following day and explained that in 1995 Atlantic Beach, “which often struggles to pay its bills,” made almost \$10,000 from the \$150 business license fee that vendors must pay to sell their wares in the town. Jones also detailed the publicity the 1996 rally garnered when Atlantic Beach Town Clerk, Earl Bellamy, went on The Doug Banks Show, a popular and nationally syndicated radio show.<sup>324</sup>

By 1997, when the black biker festival began to draw reported crowds of 50,000 to 60,000 people, the negative press intensified. North Myrtle Beach’s city council discussed but did not pass a “cruising ban,” the first attempt to limit the mobility of the black bikers. Atlantic Beach officials pointed out that it was not bikers alone but general tourist traffic during the busy Memorial Day weekend that caused traffic gridlock.<sup>325</sup> The complaints about the festival caused a marked increase in police presence, which prompted local resident Pat Bellamy to respond: “They

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<sup>323</sup> Kent Bernhard, Jr., “Myrtle Beach, North Myrtle Beach police prepare for weekend visitors,” *Sun News* 22 May 1996.

<sup>324</sup> Yolanda Jones, “Beach town ready to rock: Atlantic Beach set for bikers,” *Sun News* 23 May 1996.

<sup>325</sup> Katie Merx, “North Strand struggles with plan for biker fest,” *Sun News* 8 April 1997.

complain that we cause traffic and this and that, but do they say that during Harley week? Can't African Americans take vacations?"<sup>326</sup>

Bellamy's question became even more relevant when, the day after the 1997 Atlantic Beach Bikefest, an article appeared on the front page of the paper announcing that Mark McBride, Myrtle Beach city councilman and (in one week's time) mayoral candidate, was proposing a referendum on banning bike weeks in Myrtle Beach. His proposal wanted to allow residents to vote down both or just one of the bike festivals; however, the article admitted that McBride was "much more critical of the Memorial Day festival." McBride stated that race was not a motivating issue in his call for the referendum: "I don't care if it was a golden-age bus tour, we wouldn't want the bus tour." McBride told the press that he personally witnessed "public nudity, drug activity, what appeared to be a stabbing and a near riot." Police deny a riot and said that an individual pulled a knife out, but that there was no stabbing. McBride countered that he went into the hotel in question himself and "saw a lot of blood and a fork." The article also quotes Bradley Roberts, the front desk clerk at the historic Chesterfield Inn located on Ocean Boulevard in Myrtle Beach: "We've had several rooms check out early, because they didn't want kids exposed to these kind of things."<sup>327</sup>

A *Sun News* article about McBride's proposed referendum framed the mounting controversy: "Race, politics and youth came together with thousands of bikers last weekend, creating high tensions and a lot of talk." Jerome Smith, who traveled from Charlotte, North Carolina, was insulted: "I saved up my money to come

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<sup>326</sup> Yolanda Jones, "Bikers arrive early in Atlantic Beach," *Sun News* 24 May 1997

<sup>327</sup> Mike Soraghan, "Biker fest ban proposed: MB politician to ask council for referendum," *Sun News* 26 May 1997

to Atlantic Beach for the biker fest. Then we hear they want to ban us from coming and for what, because they don't want black people here? It's just plain crazy and is pure and simple racism." Myrtle Beach resident Cherry Hannah shared Smith's ire: "Don't single out the black bikers and use the white bikers as pawns. McBride expects to win this election because he has some whites on his side. But why are they so afraid of black people? Can't we come to the beach? Apparently not in Myrtle Beach."<sup>328</sup> A white resident of Myrtle Beach, Frank Burgess, is also quoted: "One thing we don't want is for this to turn into a racial issue. The problem is nobody was prepared for such a large group of black people coming into Myrtle Beach. They were scared."<sup>329</sup>

It is hard to see how fear of a large group of African Americans could not be seen as a racial issue. However, these problems are not only about race. They are also about other aspects of identity including age, class, gender, sexuality, and taste. McBride's successful campaign for mayor was based on the trend of reformulating racism and homophobia as a platform of "family values." Besides his rants against the black bike festival, McBride also led a tirade against the Gay and Lesbian Pride Festival held in Myrtle Beach in 1998. The fact that McBride had such success at the polls speaks to the regression of civil rights initiatives of the 1960s and 1970s and the success of "family values" as code for a new kind of discrimination masking as morality. This period of controversy set the Grand Strand region and the South back decades. It was MacBride's cloaked discrimination rather than a Klan cavalcade that was intimidating Atlantic Beach.

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<sup>328</sup> Yolanda Jones, "Council gets diverse views on bike fests" *SN* 5/28/97, 1A.

<sup>329</sup> Yolanda Jones, "Council gets diverse views on bike fests," *Sun News* 28 May 1997. Katie Merx, "Council weeks cure to bike woes: But end to fests is not a solution," *Sun News* 28 May 1997.

The increased police presence and general hostility drew “mixed reactions” from local residents. Not everyone wanted to see their city turn into a hostile police state as it awaited the expected 100,000 “young blacks” for the 1998 Atlantic Beach Bikefest.<sup>330</sup> In 1998 police instituted its first street closure on the main drag, the Grand Strand’s Ocean Boulevard, only during the black festival. When asked why the street closures were not in effect during the previous week’s Harley Davidson Festival, Myrtle Beach Police Chief Warren Gall said: “Historically the traffic situation during Harley Week has never been as bad as traffic during the [black bike festival].”<sup>331</sup> The town of Atlantic Beach hired the consulting firm Omega International to handle organization of the bike festival and concerts were located in the south end of Myrtle Beach in attempts to spread out the traffic.<sup>332</sup> The Bikefest controversy shows how Atlantic Beach is a mobile touriscape that travels beyond the boundaries of the four-block community and intersects with the larger Grand Strand region.

After the festival, local business owners along Ocean Boulevard expressed dismay at how the festival was over-policed and the road closures hindered sales. Airbrush artist Jesse Smith said his business went way down. “I’m not registered to vote but I’m going to register tomorrow to get that mayor [McBride] out.” Beachworld manager Mark Patterson thought the police presence and behavior was excessive. He saw tourists arrested for shooting water guns at one another in a playful manner. “It’s 95 degree, squirt me. I understand [police] need to maintain

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<sup>330</sup> Anita Brown and Yolanda Jones, “Biker fest precautions spur mixed reactions” *Sun News* 20 March 1998.

<sup>331</sup> Anitra Brown, “Grand Strand readies for Bike Festival” *Sun News* 21 May 1998.

<sup>332</sup> Anitra Brown, “Former air base prepares for bikers” *Sun News* 22 May 1998.

control but sometimes you can overdo things. It's a misuse of justice."<sup>333</sup> In July of 1998 Horry County suggested that Atlantic Beach misspent public money on the festival. The town's officials denied the charges and, after a county audit, they were cleared of any misappropriation of funds in November of 1998.<sup>334</sup>

Under the leadership of Mayor McBride, the city became very pro-active to undermine the Atlantic Beach Bikefest, if they could not ban it outright. In October of 1998, the Council of Myrtle Beach Organizations or COMBO, "which is made up of local marketing and political lobbying groups," began to plan their own Memorial Day celebration geared towards bringing military veterans from the Southeast to the Grand Strand. Ashley Ward, head of the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce and a member of COMBO, stated in the article "Veterans to get Memorial festival: Event could impact black bikers": "We get a lot of complaints that Memorial Day is a major holiday and the Grand Strand doesn't do anything to celebrate it." Ward adds that the purpose is to "bring more balance to the weekend and return to the historic reasons for the weekend." Critics saw the plan as "an attempt to supplant black bikers by filling area hotel rooms with veterans and military families." Bill Gasque, a member of the Bike Week Task force, which lobbied local municipalities to write letters to the Atlantic Beach Town Council asking what they were going to do to "make the event go smoother," is annoyed that some have turned the task force's work into a racial issue. "It's not a racial issue. It's a behavioral issue," Gasque said. "I don't care if you're black or white, if you don't behave yourself in public, it's a

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<sup>333</sup> Lauren Leach, "Police say bike fest went well" *Sun News* 26 May 1998.

<sup>334</sup> Craig S. Lovelace, "Bike festival spending prompts Horry County audit" *Sun News* 30 July 1998. Anitra Brown, "AB approves fest spending" *Sun News* 7 August 1998. Chandra L. McLean, "AB fest spending cleared by audit" *Sun News* 26 November 1998.

behavioral problem.” The task force, made up of mainly white business owners from Myrtle Beach, framed the controversy as an “us” versus “them” issue. Task force member and owner of the Breakers Hotel, Vernon Drake, pointed out: “It started in Atlantic Beach. It’s y’all’s festival.” Merv McMillan, Town Manager of Atlantic Beach, saw the event as a “Grand Strand situation” and not just an Atlantic Beach issue. The town of Atlantic Beach is part of the Grand Strand. “I recommend that all the municipalities of the Grand Strand and county get together and discuss it.” However, the Myrtle Beach City Council decided to increase regulation and enforcement rather than open a dialogue.

In December 1998, the Myrtle Beach City Council and police chief announced further road closures for the 1999 Atlantic Beach Bikefest.<sup>335</sup> It is important to note that historically one of the main activities during the summer months in Myrtle Beach has been to cruise Ocean Boulevard. The boulevard passes through the major tourist businesses along the ocean and is always packed during the summer months with young tourists “cruisin’ the ‘vard.” The new proposal was intended to close this main thoroughfare from 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue South to 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, where Atlantic Beach begins. This idea was partially attributed to consultation with Atlanta officials, who were dealing with their own controversy surrounding a large festival for young African Americans. Taxpayers “footed a bill of almost \$2,000 to send city, county and other leaders to Atlanta” to learn about how officials there were handling FreedomFest, formerly known as Freaknik. Myrtle Beach City Manager Tom Leath

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<sup>335</sup> While I am no expert in city planning or odology, it seems that closing main roads to prevent traffic gridlock seems counterproductive. Currently, the side streets and residential roads are closed off during the festival, which seems to work and make sense. The closing of Ocean Boulevard, the main stretch of tourist traffic that is essentially one big travel jam from May to August, seems like a strange way to deal with traffic problems that occur throughout the tourist season/

said: “What Atlanta [officials] said is to make the vehicular festival a pedestrian festival.” Of course, a motorcycle festival is by nature vehicular. Limiting mobility in this way seems like an attempt to eliminate the festival from certain parts of the Grand Strand—a new tactic of segregating public space. The final suggestion offered by Chief Gall was contacting the National Guard “to assess the situation and come up with a plan as to how it could help Myrtle Beach during the weekend.” This bold proposal drew intense controversy from the start. The final quote in the article came from frustrated Myrtle Beach Councilwoman, Judy Rodman: “If you make it look like we’re having a war, we’ll have a war.”

In March 1999, the article “Police beef up role in bike fest: Force to have about two hundred more than 1998” reported that there was going to be one police officer for about every two hundred bikers at an estimated cost of two hundred thousand dollars. There were only 18 additional police officers brought in from outside of Myrtle Beach in 1997. In April of 1999, an article announced that the Horry County Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee was only allocating \$25,584 to Atlantic Beach for the upcoming festival. This was down from \$79,977 in 1998 and much lower than the \$122,000 requested by the town. Tax advisory committee chairman Paul Goodrich stated: “We didn’t feel that it was fair that the taxpayers pay for something that should pay for itself.”<sup>336</sup> Limiting the biker’s mobility through road closings in compounded by limiting the freedom of mobility with an excessive police presence.

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<sup>336</sup> Charbonne La Belle, “Police beef up role in bike fest” *Sun News* 11 March 1999. Chandra L. McLean, “Board advises less funds for bike fest” *Sun News* 17 April 1999.

Mayor McBride and the Myrtle Beach City Council continued to pursue “assistance” from the S.C. National Guard even after the *Sun News* reported on local opposition to the plan. When the state’s Democratic governor, Jim Hodges, publicly remarked that he did not think sending in the guard was a good idea, the Myrtle Beach City Council asked the mayor to meet with the governor personally. Mark Kruea, Myrtle Beach’s public information officer, remarked: “The city doesn’t want to call the Guard. We need additional man power.”<sup>337</sup> Myrtle Beach resident Jim DeFeo approached city officials with the suggestion of using trained police dogs from New Jersey during the black motorcycle festival. The city declined because it thought that police dogs brought to mind the images of Birmingham, Alabama in 1963. Governor Hodges was unwavering in his opposition to the use of the National Guard in Myrtle Beach because he felt it was “inappropriate” and would “send the wrong message to visitors.”<sup>338</sup> The city abandoned the idea of closing Ocean Boulevard but still made the street one way during the Bikefest. The suggestions of using of the National Guard and police dogs both signify residual imagery of the racial unrest of the civil rights protests of the 1960s. More subtle tactics, such as manipulation of public roads, creation of a competing festival (which never took off), an increase in hotel rates, and business closures replaced the blatant racism and *de jure* segregation used in the golden era of Atlantic Beach. These changes reflect the layers of Atlantic Beach’s evolving touriscape.

The months following the 1999 Atlantic Beach Bikefest, which occurred without any major incidents, brought national attention from the U.S. Department of

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<sup>337</sup> Chandra L. McLean, “Visitor guide created for Bike Fest” *Sun News* 26 February 1999.

<sup>338</sup> Chandra L. McLean “Opposition to guard presence for AB fest rises” *SN* 2/11/99, 1A. Charbonne La Belle, “Dog use at bike fest rejected” *SN* 3/6/99, 1C.

Justice. Ernie Stallworth, from the Justice Department's Community Relations Service, arrived in Myrtle Beach to "assess racial tensions that he said were heightened by the idea of bringing in the National Guard." Stallworth generally praised the local police behavior; however, Mayor McBride did not agree with Stallworth's conclusions. "Everybody has an opinion," McBride said. "I just expect more—I have higher standards. I think it's a sad commentary on societal problems that a community is expected to just accept and deal with this."<sup>339</sup> Myrtle Beach and Atlantic Beach officials took part in an October conference organized by the Justice Department that also included officials from Atlanta, Georgia and Daytona Beach, Florida—all the participating areas were predominantly white cities that host large African-American festivals. After the conference, Myrtle Beach officials still would not admit that the problems associated with the large black motorcycle festival had anything to do with race.

Ozell Sutton, Justice Department Director of the Southeast Region, said: "Just face the issue. The issue is race." Atlantic Beach mayor Irene Armstrong and Beverly Clark, who heads the Friendship Team welcoming committee for the Bikefest, agreed with Ozell's assessment. Clark said: "Caucasian residents create this fear within themselves. The problem is they're so used to being in the majority, and when they find themselves in the minority, they feel uncomfortable."<sup>340</sup>

Possessing an insider/outsider perspective offers a way to critically analyze and process this uncomfortable feeling by breaking it down and understanding that the root of the anxiety is related to a shift in position. Individuals experience a

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<sup>339</sup> Chandra L. McLean, "Area planning now for 2000 biker fest" *Sun News* 4 June 1999. Charbonne LaBelle, "Official commends city on handling of bike festival crowds" *Sun News* 9 July 1999.

<sup>340</sup> Chandra L. McLean "Conference seeks Bike Fest answers" *Sun News* 29 September 1999.

shifting terrain of being inside and outside of the majority in various ways (race, sexuality, gender, religion, class, origin, etc.). Recognizing this psychological discomfort as a transitional stage involves seeing how the fear is related to a shifting position and not innate danger. This realization is essential in moving beyond our comfort zones in productive ways and not reifying the binary of being inside or outside. It is truly not being inside or outside of something that is the problem. It is the moving between that is traumatic as well as productive. The tourist seeks the new and the transformative. These transformations are positive because they expand our understanding of our and others' positionality—this process transforms and expands the space we can inhabit together. However, Myrtle Beach City Manager Tom Leath still held onto his immobile position that it was not race but that the groups “party differently” that led to the different treatment. Leath commented: “During spring break you have a limited area of Ocean Boulevard where predominantly white kids hang out, hoop and holler. The white crowds party in smaller groups. During Memorial Day weekend, it seems to be one large party.”<sup>341</sup> As those from Atlantic Beach tried to share their feelings and perspectives, officials from the city of Myrtle Beach contradicted and negated those feelings by embracing an immobile perspective on the controversy.

Leath and McBride are relying on casual observation for their conclusions about the different partying habits of white and black youth, and they do not consider how their social position affects their perception. Professors George Smeaton and Bharath M. Josiam of the University of Wisconsin and graduate student Holly Sowell of Pennsylvania State University completed a study comparing the party habits of

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<sup>341</sup> Chandra L. McLean “Conference seeks Bike Fest answers” *Sun News* 29 September 1999.

black and white college students on spring break in 1998. The study analyzes responses from African-American students attending Atlanta's controversial and much-maligned Freaknik and white students traveling to Panama City, Florida. "The researchers found that thirty-six percent of the predominant white students in Florida reported being 'drunk every day,' whereas seventy-six percent of the students at Freaknik said they never got drunk during the entire celebration. Nearly one third of the Panama City group said they smoked marijuana compared to eighteen percent of the Freaknik attendees. Just over thirteen percent of the Panama City group engaged in sexual activity with people they had first met at the event compared to ten percent of the Freaknik attendees." More research needs to be done to better understand tourists' actual behavior.<sup>342</sup> Quantitative and qualitative research of tourist behavior and perspectives is important in negotiating southern touriscapes with complex histories.

In 2000, Atlantic Beach faced national as well as local controversy. The NAACP instituted a tourism boycott of South Carolina in protest of the state flying the Confederate flag atop the state house dome. In February of 2000 the NAACP mailed letters to numerous African American motorcycle clubs asking for their support in the boycott. An article in the [Raleigh, NC] *News & Observer* stated: "Atlantic Beach residents also want the flag hauled down, but many fear the boycott will harm them, some of the very people the NAACP wants to help." While the town of Atlantic Beach adopted a resolution in support of bringing down the flag, some critics still thought that was not enough to justify spending tourism dollars in South

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<sup>342</sup> "Comparing the Party Habits of Black and White College Students on Spring Break" *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* Summer 2000, 18.

Carolina, even at a black motorcycle festival based in a historically black beach. This issue brought up the complexity of boycotting a state with a large percentage of African Americans because their state government has supported racist symbols. Some thought “attending the Bike Festival will send a message to opponents of the event that it’s not going away.” Chandra Cox, financial secretary of the Carolina Knight Riders, the local motorcycle club that originally organized the event, stated: “We have people in positions in all jobs along the Grand Strand, and we don’t want to jeopardize our own jobs by supporting these economic sanctions on our own places of employment.” Irene Armstrong, mayor of Atlantic Beach, responded to the criticism of the town continuing with the festival by posing the question: “If you know that’s your lifeline, do you cut it off?”<sup>343</sup>

The 2000 motorcycle festival showed a drop in attendance. Hilton Jones of Columbia, South Carolina attended and sold T-shirts that read: “It would’ve been more babes & bikes if it weren’t for the flag.”<sup>344</sup> Following the 2000 festival, Stallworth, the U.S. Department of Justice official, stated that his department was looking into complaints of “heavy-handedness” by the police. In addition Rev. H.H. Singleton, president of the powerful Conway, South Carolina branch of the NAACP, also announced that the local NAACP chapter received complaints that it was investigating.<sup>345</sup> While the NAACP boycott and Confederate flag debate may have kept some Bikefest participants away, it also put greater national attention on the racial unrest occurring on the Grand Strand.

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<sup>343</sup> Chandra L. McLean, “NAACP moves to weaken Bike Fest” *Sun News* 10 February 2000. Ned Glascock, “Black bikers debate breaking boycott to attend festival” [Raleigh, NC] *News & Observer* 8 March 2000.

<sup>344</sup> Chandra L. McLean, “Vendors say business is slow so far” *Sun News* 27 May 2000.

<sup>345</sup> Chandra L. McLean, “Justice to look at bike fest complaints” *Sun News* 30 May 2000.

In 2001, the South Carolina Human Affairs Commission attended both the Harley Davidson Rally and the Atlantic Beach Bikefest to “observe how visitors are treated.”<sup>346</sup> South Carolina lawmakers had passed a compromise in 2000 moving the Confederate flag from atop the statehouse dome to a Confederate memorial on statehouse grounds and began plans for an African-American memorial to be erected on the grounds. While the NAACP was not satisfied and officially continued the tourism boycott of the state, the effects on South Carolina tourism in general and the Atlantic Beach Bikefest specifically were negligent. The bike festival was expected to draw up to 450,000 attendees in 2001.<sup>347</sup> The town of Atlantic Beach was proactive in keeping control of the event. When North Myrtle Beach tried to take control of the section of Highway 17 that ran through the town by passing a bill in the state legislature, residents of Atlantic Beach went to the state capital to protest. With support from Governor Hodges, the residents were successful. After unsuccessful experiences outsourcing the festival planning in past years—especially a failed concert organized by Omega International in 1998 and a lawsuit for lack of payment from the 2000 organizer—Atlantic Beach put all organization in the hands of the Bikefest Committee, comprised completely of Atlantic Beach residents. While there was skepticism about the town running the festival on its own, Atlantic Beach actually netted \$90,000 from vendor license fees. Throughout the controversy the small town, which often has intense economic viability issues, had learned how to take control and turn tourists into dollars. Following the 2001 festival, Sherry Suttles, a former town manager in Oberlin, Ohio and Lawrenceville, New Jersey and current

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<sup>346</sup> Mary-Kathryn Craft, “Residents observe changes over years” *Sun News* 20 June 2001.

<sup>347</sup> Chandra McLean, “Boycott not expected at forefront this year” *Sun News* 24 May 2001.

champion of her adopted hometown of Atlantic Beach, began the process to form an Atlantic Beach Chamber of Commerce to better lobby for the town's specific interests.<sup>348</sup>

Mayor Irene Armstrong challenged the South Carolina Department of Transportation's plan to close main streets in Atlantic Beach to traffic during the 2002 festival. While the town was successfully controlling certain aspects of the festival, attendees still complained of excessive police patrolling. A.C. Walker of Daytona Beach, Florida lamented: "The week before [during the Harley rally] there were no police. Then all of a sudden you get all these blacks together and there's fear of a riot." In 2002, the town of Atlantic Beach paid the public relations firm, Single Source Consulting of Chesapeake, Virginia, sixty-four thousand dollars to organize the Bikefest and promote the town on a national scale. Mayor Irene Armstrong stated: "We are getting national recognition and national inquiries. The returns should be far greater than the money we put out for providing services."<sup>349</sup>

Atlantic Beach would receive more extensive press from discrimination lawsuits filed in 2003, on the eve of that year's motorcycle festival. On May 20, 2003 the suits were filed in federal court in Florence, South Carolina. The *Sun News* broke the story: "Twenty-five people plan to file two lawsuits today against Myrtle Beach, Horry County and a local hotel, alleging racial discrimination during Atlantic Beach Bikefest." The city and county were accused of "overly aggressive traffic

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<sup>348</sup> Chandra McLean, "Atlantic Beach will not give up" *Sun News* 3 April 2001; Chandra McLean, "Bike Festival plans unclear" *Sun News* 3 February 2001; Chandra McLean, "Bike festival inflates AB coffers" *Sun News* 11 July 2001; Kathleen Vereen Dayton, "Support solicited for new chamber" *Sun News* 22 June 2001.

<sup>349</sup> Erin Reed, "AB mayor works to change street closings for bike week" *Sun News* 9 May 2002; Erin Reed and Tonya Root, "AB bike event in full swing" *Sun News* 26 May 2002; Erin Reed, "PR firm to earn at least \$64,000" *Sun News* 6 April 2002.

restrictions and policing” and the Yachtsman Resort Hotel was accused of “violating civil rights of bikefest attendees.” Mark Kruea, spokesperson for the city of Myrtle Beach, claimed that it was “absurd to think that the city’s response to these motorcycle events is in any way based on race.”<sup>350</sup> The following day a separate series of complaints were announced accusing local restaurants of “discriminatory practices” including closing and hostile treatment of blacks. Restaurant owners responded by claiming that traffic congestion caused their businesses to close during the black motorcycle festival. Tourism officials in Myrtle Beach framed the suits as part of an unsuccessful attempt by the NAACP to harm tourism in the region and Mayor McBride decried the lawsuits as a “publicity stunt.”<sup>351</sup> The story garnered national attention and was covered by national news organizations, such as CNN and the *New York Times*.<sup>352</sup>

The article “Plaintiffs push for race talk” that appeared in the *Sun News* on May 21, 2003—the start of the Atlantic Beach Bikefest—framed the suits as an impetus for a much-needed discussion on race relations in the area. The article began by pointing out the “type of discrimination [the plaintiffs] experienced is the continuing legacy of a race problem the community isn’t likely to discuss and even less likely to admit.” The purpose of the suits was to show that discrimination still existed but was more subtle than in the days of Jim Crow segregation. Plaintiff Clint White, an avid motorcyclist who had attended the Bikefest for over a decade and also

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<sup>350</sup> David Klepper, “MB, county, hotel to face lawsuit” *Sun News* 20 May 2003.

<sup>351</sup> Kenneth A. Gailliard, “Lawsuits allege unfair treatment at Bikefest” and Kevin Wiatrowski, “Officials say NAACP effort won’t hurt Strand” *Sun News* 21 May 2003.

<sup>352</sup> Jeffrey Gettleman, “Suit Charges Bias at Rally for Black Bikers” *New York Times* 21 May 2003; Jeffrey Gentleman, “Claims of Bias Cloud an American Dream for Black Bikers” *New York Times* 25 May 2003; “Black Bikers Sue Myrtle Beach for Discrimination” CNN, aired 21 May 2003, 20:40 ET.

attended the Harley festival, explained that “this is one of those things you accept as an African-American” and, while it would be easier to simply not attend the festival on the Grand Strand, the plaintiffs needed to take a stand and start an honest conversation. Atlantic Beach Mayor Irene Armstrong pointed out: “The controversy over Bikefest is part of a problem older than Atlantic Beach.” The article summarized the larger goals of the plaintiffs: “If the lawsuit prompts a discussion about race among business owners, officials and ordinary residents, then it will have succeeded.”<sup>353</sup> In October of 2003, the lawyers for the Yachtsman unsuccessfully attempted to get the lawsuit dropped claiming it lacked merit. The discovery deadline for the suits was set for April of 2004.<sup>354</sup> Even though the cases would not go to trial until 2005, in December of 2003 the NAACP lawyers sought an injunction against Myrtle Beach to “stop some of the alleged discriminatory activity.”<sup>355</sup>

A 2004 *Sun News* article titled “Suits move forward as event nears” reported that while the Yachtsman Resort and Hotel was “moving towards a negotiated settlement” conciliatory talks with the city of Myrtle Beach were “less successful.” In addition, the city refused to change the one-way traffic pattern instituted only during the black motorcycle festival.<sup>356</sup> A few days later a new class action suit against four Myrtle Beach restaurants—J. Edwards Great Ribs & More and Fleming’s (both owned by J. Edwards Fleming), Damon’s Grill, and Greg Norman’s Australian Grille—was filed. These four restaurants were among the twenty-eight named in the discrimination complaint made to the South Carolina Human Affairs Commission in

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<sup>353</sup> David Klepper, “Plaintiffs push for race talks” *Sun News* 23 May 2003.

<sup>354</sup> Kenneth A. Gailliard, “Atlantic Beach Bikefest lawsuits continue” 11 October 2003.

<sup>355</sup> Kenneth A. Gailliard, “NAACP lawyers plan ’04 Bikefest injunction” *Sun News* 1 December 2003.

<sup>356</sup> Kenneth A. Gailliard and David Klepper, “Suits move forward as event nears” *Sun News* 25 May 2004.

2003.<sup>357</sup> Kweisi Mfume, president of the NAACP at the time, remarked: “In this day and age, you would think that business owners realize that discrimination is not just illegal, but also immoral. It’s bad for business and bad for America. In Myrtle Beach, these restaurants are clearly not making good business sense. They are in effect reducing profit and losing market share because of their stereotypical and prejudicial attitudes about Black people. That kind of discrimination can’t hold up in a court of law.”<sup>358</sup> Cited as evidence in the case was a 1998 letter J. Edwards Fleming wrote to the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce. The letter stated: “Before I will tolerate the take over by a group of such as what we have experienced, I will close my doors and take the loss... Something must be done, but it is going to be difficult with this group being black as they have all the rights in America anymore.” In the letter Fleming threatened to close his restaurant in 1999 “if something isn’t done to prevent such a racist group of people from disrupting our lives and business from which we are accustomed.” Fleming also wrote letters to Mayor McBride urging him to “keep pushing restrictions for the bike rally and add more law enforcement if necessary to protect the city.” In the 2003 article breaking the story, Fleming is quoted professing: “I am not a racist.”<sup>359</sup>

On October 2004, Mfume announced an “amicable groundbreaking settlement” with the Yachtsman for 1.2 million dollars. Just over fifty percent goes to the named plaintiffs and the rest to all registered hotel guests during the time period in question. In addition the Yachtsman agreed to: “offer a 10 percent coupon for the

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<sup>357</sup> Kenneth A. Gaillard, “NAACP sues four MB restaurants” *Sun News* 24 May 2004.

<sup>358</sup> Kweisi Mfume, “Four Myrtle Beach Restaurants Sued for Discrimination,” NAACP News Release, 27 May 2004.

<sup>359</sup> Kenneth A. Gaillard, “NAACP suit cites letter” *Sun News* 29 May 2004.

guests' next stay at the Yachtsman; cover the plaintiffs' cost and legal fees; apply consistent policies for all guests year-round; expand its non-discriminatory policies and training procedures; designate an ombudsman to investigate future complaints of discrimination and allow monitoring by the NAACP counsel." Plaintiff Michael Little thought the best part of the settlement was that it would "encourage other local businesses to change too."<sup>360</sup>

The negotiations between the NAACP lawyers and the city of Myrtle Beach were not as fruitful. During 2005, the city and the civil rights organization were entangled in public and legal wrangling. On February 24 of 2005, the NAACP filed an injunction in the U.S. District Court in Florence, South Carolina to prevent the planned one-way street closure from 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue North to 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue South during the black motorcycle festival. The group wanted "similar traffic management plans" for both of the similar festivals, including the predominantly white Harley festival.<sup>361</sup> In March, the city of Myrtle Beach's lawyers filed a last minute response to block the injunction.<sup>362</sup> The NAACP was prepared to fight what they saw as the city's reliance on "racial stereotypes" that African Americans are more prone to "engage in illegal and anti-social behavior" in instituting its traffic patterns. The civil rights organization felt that Mayor McBride's "racial biases" and "rhetoric" were to blame for encouraging discrimination by the city as well as local businesses.<sup>363</sup>

In late-April the two sides had their day in court with NAACP lawyer Paul Hurst arguing that the city's discriminatory traffic pattern was based on "subjective,

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<sup>360</sup> Anna-Marie Harris, "South Carolina Hotel Settles Biker Lawsuit" *The Crisis* November/December 2004, 54-55.

<sup>361</sup> Emma Ritch, "NAACP strives to clog Bikefest traffic patterns" *Sun News* 17 March 2005.

<sup>362</sup> Emma Ritch, "MB resist call to alter Bikefest traffic-flow plan" *Sun News* 20 March 2005.

<sup>363</sup> Emma Ritch, "NAACP: MB readies for event with racial biases" 16 April 2005.

vague generalizations” about African Americans, and that the “city’s lack of empirical data about the number of attendees shows it made the decision based on gut feelings instead of facts.” Van Osdell, the city’s lawyer, pointed out that the NAACP’s own expert witness admitted that the Bikefest attendees are “much younger” than those attending the Harley-Davidson rally. Hurst said that the NAACP wanted to compromise with the city. The trial date was set for November 2005.<sup>364</sup> Right after the contentious court appearance, it was announced that the NAACP had settled with J. Edward Fleming, owner of two of the restaurants sued in 2004. The settlement included an undisclosed monetary settlement as well as the requirement that Fleming keep his restaurants open during the Atlantic Beach Bikefest.

As local businesses settled, the city remained stalwart in defending its position and the fact that the different treatment had nothing to do with race. In early-May lawyers for the city of Myrtle Beach asked a judge for the NAACP’s sealed documents related to the case. The city thought the documents could “provide proof that ‘profit’ is an alternative basis for plaintiffs’ lawsuits, not merely to ‘right’ a civil injustice.” When a judge sided with the NAACP in May ruling that Myrtle Beach would have to use the same traffic pattern for both motorcycle festivals, the city appealed and got a stay on the ruling. They, therefore, were allowed to go ahead with the one-way traffic pattern only during the black motorcycle festival. The NAACP struck back by organizing a rally and news conference on the steps of the Myrtle Beach City Hall. The organization announced it was launching Operation Bike Week Justice, a monitoring program in place during both the white and black motorcycle festivals. Organizers hoped that Operation Bike Week Justice would send the

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<sup>364</sup> Emma Ritch, “NAACP, MB talk Bikefest in court” *Sun News* 26 April 2005.

message to the city that “the eyes of the world are watching and will be watching for the next several weeks.” Leaders of local NAACP branches were especially offended by Mayor McBride’s deposition in October, which claimed black tourists “want to disregard the law and sit on the tops of their car and smoke dope and drink and do whatever they want to and disregard everything.” Rev. Kenneth E. Floyd, president of the Conway branch of the NAACP, stated: “This is 2005 and this kind of racism must and will stop in Horry County.” Anson Asaka, assistant general counsel for the NAACP, argued “the city has no legitimate explanation for what they’re doing.” He called the differing traffic patterns an “apartheid traffic plan.”<sup>365</sup> With a rainy Memorial Day plus the legal bickering, the 2005 Atlantic Beach Bikefest ended on a somber note.<sup>366</sup>

One month after the 2005 motorcycle festivals, the Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce published its study of 406 local businesses in the local paper. The survey showed that fifty-eight percent of businesses found the May bike rallies had a negative effect on their businesses; sixty-three percent had an overall unfavorable view of the rallies; sixty-five percent felt the rallies created “a reputational risk for the market;” and seventy-one percent recommended that something (eliminate, reschedule, scale back, etc.) needed to be done about the rallies.<sup>367</sup> Affronted that the poll only took into consideration a sampling of local business owners, the NAACP vowed to conduct its own more inclusive survey.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> Emma Ritch, “MB rebuffed in bike-traffic fight” *Sun News* 10 May 2005; Emma Ritch, “NAACP rallies to demand equal treatment of bikers” *Sun News* 20 May 2005; Jessica Foster, “NAACP rallies Bikefest participants” *Sun News* 27 May 2005.

<sup>366</sup> Kenneth A. Gailliard, “Rain dampens last day of Bikefest” *Sun News* 31 May 2005.

<sup>367</sup> Dawn Bryant, “Businesses tire of status quo for May rallies” *Sun News* 25 June 2005.

<sup>368</sup> Emma Ritch, “NAACP polls residents on bike rallies” *Sun News* 18 August 2005.

During the final months of the summer of 2005, a two-day court appointed mediation between the NAACP and the city of Myrtle Beach took place. Nothing tangible or positive materialized, but the plaintiffs' original goal of starting a local conversation was being realized. However, dialogue did not seem to be bringing the sides together. On September 19, a Bike Rallies Forum organized by the Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce took place at the Myrtle Beach Convention Center. The following day the *Sun News* reported "Bike forum settles only on more talks." The set up of the forum was not conducive to the free flow of ideas from those inside the biker communities. Area political and business leaders were included in the round table discussion, but the audience pointed out that "the conversations wouldn't be useful until everyone had a chance to speak." Despite pleas the "mostly biker-supportive crowd wasn't allowed to address the panel." Local biker Jim Horton pointed out: "A task force is ineffective without including local residents."<sup>369</sup> This shows the complexity of insider/outsider perspective. Not all subjects within the category of "locals" viewed the rallies in the same way. In addition, the biker category and racial dynamic add more layers to the overlap and intersection of perspectives.

The article "Uneasy Riders: Myrtle Beach's Separate and Unequal Biker Rallies" by Paul Wachter appeared in the November/December 2005 edition of *Legal Affairs: The Magazine at the Intersection of Law and Life*. Wachter discussed the inspiration for the suit in Myrtle Beach, a similar 1999 suit the NAACP won in Daytona Beach, Florida. The U.S. District court found that a "cumbersome traffic

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<sup>369</sup> Emma Ritch, MB, NAACP still ironing out lawsuit issues" *Sun News* 2 September 2005; Dawn Bryant, "Bike rallies' many voices meet today" *Sun News* 19 September 2005; Dawn Bryant, "Bike forum settles only on more talks" *Sun News* 20 September 2005.

plan” only during the black college reunion and not during similarly large events for white tourists, such as the Daytona 500 and spring break, “restricted the reunion guests’ right to travel.” Travel and traffic patterns were becoming a new phase in civil rights litigation. University of South Carolina law professor Andrew Siegel locates the Myrtle Beach case in a “larger tradition of white Southern defiance.” “They see the NAACP as an outside group, and outsiders portraying them as a bunch of racist rednecks, so they don’t want to back down.”

The only thing that may overpower the pride of conservative, white politicians in the South is their greed. Alan Schafer’s claim that he “checked on the color of their money not their skins” is echoed in a 1998 article in the *Journal of Black and Higher Education*, “The Color of Money Rescues Daytona Beach’s Black College Reunion.” Since the driving force of tourism is profit, the \$27 million the Black College Reunion brought into Daytona Beach eventually overpowered the residual racism of the majority white beachfront community.<sup>370</sup> Even though there was not a monetary component in Myrtle Beach’s eventual settlement with the NAACP, money was certainly a larger consideration of the tourism boosters on the Grand Strand.

After almost three years of legal maneuvers and intense debate, on February 2, 2006, a federal judge approved a compromise settlement between the NAACP and the city of Myrtle Beach (the suit against the county was dropped in 2005). The settlement “requires that the city use identical traffic patterns during certain periods of May’s two motorcycle rallies.” The city of Myrtle Beach decided to use the one-way

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<sup>370</sup> Paul Wachter, “Uneasy Riders: Myrtle Beach’s separate and unequal biker rallies” *Legal Affairs: The Magazine at the Intersection of Law and Life* November/December 2005, [http://www.legalaffairs.org/issues/November-December-2005/scene\\_wachter\\_novdec05.msp](http://www.legalaffairs.org/issues/November-December-2005/scene_wachter_novdec05.msp); “The Color of Money Rescued Daytons Beach’s Black College Reunion” *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, Autumn 1998, 73-74.

traffic pattern during both the Harley-Davidson Rally and the Atlantic Beach Bikefest. In late-May of 2006, the final restaurant, Damon's Grill, also settled with an agreement to remain open during the black motorcycle festival and pay \$125,000 to plaintiffs.<sup>371</sup>

The NAACP announced that it would continue to monitor the bike festival and keep Operation Bike Week Justice alive. Controversy now shifted to Atlantic Beach's decision, made in conjunction with the newly formed promotional company based in Columbia, South Carolina, Entertainment Consortium, Inc., to charge a ten-dollar admission fee to the city of Atlantic Beach during the motorcycle festival. Issac A. Bailey, a popular, African-American columnist for the *Sun News*, wondered if the feeling of discrimination would diminish since the Harley riders would now also be riding one-way in Myrtle Beach. He wrote that while the successful NAACP case may be "considered progress by some. For me, the settlement may have been necessary to stop wasting tax payer dollars on court costs but was little more than silly..." He also thought that the ten-dollar admission fee to Atlantic Beach made the town "essentially a gated community."<sup>372</sup>

Bailey's ire towards the NAACP had become more balanced by the time he wrote his December 15, 2006 column for the *Sun News* "Case shows NAACP is no attack dog." Bailey wrote: "I sometimes vehemently disagree with the NAACP. But what they do is often more complex than I admit." Bailey's new perspective comes

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<sup>371</sup> Emma Ritch, "Biker will be riding one way" *Sun News* 3 February 2006; Emma Ritch, "City's conflict with NAACP settled after nearly 3 years" *Sun News* 15 February 2006.

<sup>372</sup> Emma Ritch, "NAACP plans monitoring of 2006 rallies" *Sun News* 18 May 2006; Paul Nelson and Josh Hoke, "AB readies plan to tame rally traffic" *Sun News* 26 May 2005; Issac J. Bailey, "Bikefest has its own set of worries" *Sun News* 26 May 2006; Emma Ritch, "NAACP pledges to monitor Strand during Bikefest" *Sun News* 26 May 2006.

from a complaint the NAACP received about Amy Breunig, one of the few white business owners in the Atlantic Beach community. Breunig has successfully worked with Councilwoman Sherry Suttles on a fundraiser that helped get a second police car ready to patrol the town. When Breunig would not write a black tenant a reference letter, he contacted the NAACP. The president of the Myrtle Beach branch checked out the claim and dismissed it. Bailey's column pointed out both the fact that the NAACP does not take on invalid claims of racism and the new era of interracial cooperation in Atlantic Beach.<sup>373</sup>

The ten-dollar fee that Atlantic Beach charged for the 2006 rally had negative effects on the publicity for the event. In general, participants and especially vendors agreed with Bailey's assessment that the fee was misguided. Even with the money generated from charging admission, the town lost almost eighty-nine thousand dollars on the 2006 festival. Councilwoman Sherry Suttles remarked: "Last year's [2006] Bikefest was a disaster."<sup>374</sup> Again, Atlantic Beach took over the management of the festival. Outside publicity and management companies had never proved fruitful for the event or the town. The Bikefest's problems were symbolic of the complexity of making the town a viable resort community. As the town and the festival move into the future, an amalgamation of issues is at hand. The complexities transcend the simple focus on race and incorporate a vast array of issues including style and taste.

### **Style and Substance: Critical Analysis of Motorcycle Subcultures**

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<sup>373</sup> Issac Bailey, "Case shows NAACP is no attack dog" *Sun News* 15 December 2006.

<sup>374</sup> Lisa Fleisher, "Bikefest budget higher after firm's '06 losses" *Sun News* 07 January 2007.



Warren Belasco's 1979 social history of early American travel argued that in the beginning "hitting the road"

engaged those central American values of independence and self-reliance; however, as a growing consumer society evolved the roadside became a tame and commercialized landscape. In 2002 David Laderman examined how the road movie's "overt concern with rebellion against traditional social norms is consistently undermined, diluted or at least haunted by the very conservative cultural codes the genre so desperately takes flight from."

In 2006 Cotton Seilers directly challenged the "idealized conception" of the road and argues, "the space of the American road, like the contours of citizenship, was established under specific regimes of racialized inequality and limited access whose codes it reproduces."<sup>375</sup> The road and one of its most rebellious icons, the motorcycle, are indeed haunted by inequality and conservative cooptation while also representing the complex contours of identity and personal expression.

The motorcycle functions as an important symbol in contemporary American culture. J.B. Jackson, the father of American vernacular landscape studies, gained his perspective by driving the countryside on his motorcycle. The motorcycle and its resulting subcultures have an intimate and direct relationship to place and space.

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<sup>375</sup> Warren Belasco, "Commercialized Nostalgia" in David L. Lewis and Laurence Goldstein, eds. *The Automobile and American Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1980) and *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979). David Laderman, *Driving Visions: Exploring the Road Movie* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002). Cotton Seiler, "So That We as a Race Might Have Something Authentic to Travel By": African American Automobility and Cold-War Liberalism" *American Quarterly* 58.4 (December 2006): 1091-1117.

British scholar Dick Hebdige, whose 1979 book *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* was at the forefront of analyzing the importance of postwar youth subcultures, discussed the relationship between subcultures and space: “Each subculture represented an attempt to win ‘space’, both real space—street corners, neighbourhoods, etc.—and symbolic space: areas in which new forms of identity could be developed beyond the given cultural and ideological parameters.” This fight for physical and social space is at the heart of the controversy surrounding the Atlantic Beach Bikefest and the negotiation of identity the Harley and the speedbike riders engage in every May on the Grand Strand. While within the realm of leisure culture and tourism, these debates are important ones about identity and power. Hebdige explained: “The struggle between powerful and powerless groups was displaced literally onto the surface of things, was transmuted into the ‘struggle for the sign’, and the ‘political’ moment of subculture became synonymous with the moment of (conspicuous) consumption.”<sup>376</sup> This is especially relevant for the young black bikers participating in the Atlantic Beach Bikefest today.

In “Subcultures of Consumption: An Ethnography of the New Bikers” John W. Schouten and James M. McAlexander define a “subculture of consumption” as a “distinctive subgroup of society that self-selects on the basis of a shared commitment to a particular product class, brand, or consumption activity.” These subcultures often possess “an identifiable, hierarchical social structure; a unique ethos, or set of shared beliefs and values; and unique jargons, rituals, and modes of symbolic expression.” Schouten and McAlexander explain that to outsiders, “including nonbikers and aspirants to the subculture, the variety of group identities “may appear

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<sup>376</sup> Dick Hebdige, “Traveling Light: One Route Into Material Culture” *RAIN* December 1983, 11-13.

virtually indistinguishable, even stereotypical.”<sup>377</sup> This may be the lack of understanding and apprehension of residents of the Grand Strand to both the Harley-Davidson and Atlantic Beach Bikefest tourists. This also explains why historically there have been two different and distinct rallies in the area during the month of May. The “New Bikers” in the ethnographic study are “owners of Harley-Davidson motorcycles who do not belong to known outlaw organizations.” No academic work has been done on predominantly young African-Americans who choose to ride Japanese speed bikes. This is a fruitful area for further research, but the lack of attention speaks to the central role that Harley-Davidson motorcycles have played in dominant American identity construction.

Peter Stanfield’s article, “Heritage Design: the Harley-Davidson Motor Company,” analyzes the design of Harleys and the company’s “dual emphasis on heritage and national identity” in explaining why these bikes possess “a signifying role in popular culture that far outweighs European and Japanese competitors.” The extensive size and engines of Harleys represents the American desire to have the biggest and the best consumer items. Stanfield argues that beginning in the 1970s, when faster and lighter Japanese bikes emerged on the American scene, Harley-Davidson began to actively promote its American heritage. Harley’s marketing success proved the company’s ability to design and frame their bikes as both quintessentially American and possessing a certain cachet of “otherness.” The Japanese created a “new niche” in the consumer market for motorcycles. The creation of the “lightweight sports/leisure motorcycle” enabled the Japanese

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<sup>377</sup> John W. Schouten and James M. McAlexander, “Subcultures of Consumption: An Ethnography of the New Bikers” *The Journal of Consumer Research* June 1995, 43, 49.

companies to “differentiate their products on a design, function and marketing front.”<sup>378</sup> These material and social differences in motorcycles and their resulting subcultures is important in understanding the social negotiation of the motorcycle festivals on the Grand Strand through a more complex cultural perspective.

The Harley rally possessed a negative “outlaw” image in its early days in the 1950s and 60s (popular culture representations of the time include juvenile delinquents clad in leather and menacing motorcycle gangs), but hotels began to “receive” bikers in the late 1970s according to the *Sun News*. This acceptance slowly spread to restaurants and other typical areas of tourism. Today, “welcome bikers” signs can be seen throughout the Grand Strand region during the Harley-Davidson festival.

The refashioning and normalization of the Harley rally coincided with a similar shift in the Harley-Davidson brand. The diversification of the brand—with Harley-Davidson cigarettes, Harley-Davidson coffee, Harley-Davidson apparel and accessories (even for pets)—brought mainstream acceptability to the renegade image. Wealthy Baby Boomers in the throes of mid-life crises acquired Harleys to reclaim (or at least purchase) youth and rebellion. Harley-Davidson moved from the brand of outlaws to a lifestyle brand that was “safely” rebellious. The success of the recent film *Wild Hogs* (2007) starkly contrasts with the rebellious biker films of the 1950s and 1960s, such as Marlon Brando’s *The Wild One* (1953), Monte Hellman’s biker exploitation films like *The Wild Angels* (1966), and especially 1969’s *Easy Rider*.

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<sup>378</sup> Peter Stanfield, “Heritage Design: The Harley-Davidson Motor Company” *Journal of Design History* 5.2 1992, 141-155.

*Easy Rider* was an immediate success when released in 1969. The film was the first indie put out by a major film company and it led the way for the New American Cinema. Today, as in 1969, *Easy Rider* is often framed as the definitive representation of the 1960s counterculture. However, as Barbara Klinger writes in “The Road to Dystopia: Landscaping the nation in *Easy Rider*,” the film is one of “conflicted historical and ideological identity” and seeing it this way “complicates what commentators have long seen as *Easy Rider*’s transparent personification of the late 1960s’ rebellious youth consciousness.” In addition, Klinger points out the symbolic importance of region in the film. She writes: “In the Southwest, the protagonists enjoy the freedom of the road, the hospitality of those they encounter, and the beauty and mystery of the region’s wilderness. Conversely, the small-town South... is demonized in *Easy Rider* as the region most identified in the 1960s with militant ignorance, racism, and violence.”<sup>379</sup> Furthermore, the white male protagonists are the heroes (or, anti-heroes) of the film—the ones with agency, the ones riding the bikes. African Americans are articulated visually only in passing and as part of the southern landscape. They utter no words. They ride no bikes.

While “White Bike Week” is associated with Harleys, “Black Bike Week” is predominantly associated with Japanese-made speed bikes. Brian Alexander’s *New York Times* article “Now Racing: Black Motorcyclists Move From Street to Track” notes that the “Harley-Davidson style cruisers” are seen as being “co-opted by middle-aged doctors and lawyers” and that the “less expensive” and “faster” street bikes present “a different version of the old outlaw biker cachet.” These bikes also represent consumption of a brand as a lifestyle, the contestation of power, and the

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<sup>379</sup> Klinger 181

diversification of American motorcycle subcultures. Alexander writes: “From Myrtle Beach, SC to Brooklyn [NY] to Los Angeles [CA] to St. Louis [MO], motorcycling, like other motor sports long a bastion of white males, has been diversifying.” While motorcycling has diversified, motorcycles have also “seeped into urban black culture.”<sup>380</sup> The film that is representative here is 2003’s *Biker Boyz*, which focused on urban motorcycle clubs and African Americans doing street tricks on Japanese speed bikes.



This new outlaw aesthetic is described as “a kind of Quentin Tarantino sensibility with a dash of techno Ninja warrior, a pinch of globalism and hip hop defiance,” though this emergent style and culture can be read as a continuation of the past rather than a break from it. AMA champion and Atlantic Beach Bikefest alum Rickey Gadson explains that “like the early stock-car drivers who ran moonshine during the week and raced on weekends, he is a product of that outlaw culture.” Furthermore, Gadson points out “what is outlaw today will garner sponsorship tomorrow.” The fluidity of the outlaw styles and images is important in understanding motorcycle subcultures.<sup>381</sup>

Alexander’s *New York Times* article further points out that along with motorcycles, “bikers care about image.” Recognizing the images and styles of biker subcultures is important in understanding both the continuity and change the motorcycle possesses in the American imagination. It is also important in understanding the histories and cultures of the two separate and primarily segregated motorcycle festivals in the Myrtle Beach area and, on the other end of the spectrum,

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<sup>380</sup> Brian Alexander, “Now Racing: Black Motorcyclists Move From Street to Track” *New York Times* 27 October 2004: 7.

<sup>381</sup> Alexander, “Now Racing,” *New York Times*

how these bikers really do have a lot in common. Alexander writes: “Motorcycle enthusiasts argue that a touch of danger and showing off have always been part of the sport. The fact that urban young people, many of whom are black, are riding fast bikes does not make it much different from white suburban boys souping up a Trans-Am and laying rubber on a highway.”<sup>382</sup> This is a continuation of this spirit of rebellion, but the signs are changed to also incorporate different identities within the larger category of biker. This is similar to the divergent types of southern identities under the more general category of southern identity.

The *New York Times* article focused on the diversification of professional motor sports from NASCAR’s Drive for Diversity program to black New Jersey native Ricky Gadson’s multiple national championships in the American Motorcycle Association (AMA). Gadson is quoted in the article: “Every year I used to go down to Myrtle Beach for bike week. It used to be more old-timers on cruiser bikes. Now it’s a sport bike event. Thousands and thousands of young black folks are down there with the fanciest, trickiest bikes they can find.” Furthermore, the *Times* article points out that “[a]ccording to the National Association of Black Bikers, about 350,000 riders, mostly black, are expected to attend the city’s Atlantic Beach Memorial Day Weekend Bike Festival in 2005.”<sup>383</sup>

A 2005 article on the Bikefest controversy in the *Christian Science Monitor* ends by quoting Anthony Anderson, a black biker traveling to the Atlantic Beach festivities from Chicago. Anderson points out that the controversy is not simply about race, but “more about economics and social perception.” He explains:

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<sup>382</sup> Alexander, “Now Racing,” *New York Times*

<sup>383</sup> Brian Alexander, “Now Racing: Black Motorcyclists Move From Street to Track” *New York Times* 27 October 2004: 7.

“Discrimination is based on post-9/11 attitudes and what kind of bike—American vs. foreign—a given biker rides. When I rode a [Japanese Kawasaki], I used to get hassled a lot more by police. These days, when truckers see [my] bike is a Harley, they give me the road.”<sup>384</sup> The realization that different motorcycle subcultures have distinct styles and signify different identities that relate to race, class, age, gender, sexuality, and taste is an important step in understanding the problems associated with the Atlantic Beach Bikefest and motorcycle subcultures in general. I have only touched on the vastly complex semiotics of these subcultures. This under-analyzed aspect of contemporary cultures of consumption is ripe for further academic attention.

It appears that the type of bike, as well as the color of skin of a biker, is an important signifier of identity in today’s motorcycle subcultures. Knowing how to read the signs of these different subcultures descending on the oceanfront communities of the Grand Strand region is important in understanding the distinctions of black leisure culture today. However, the power of the black bikers to drive throughout the region, even if it scared some of the white folks who are used to being



comfortably in the majority inside their communities, is a stark contrast to the scare tactics of the 1950 Klan parade through Atlantic Beach.

When I attended the 2007 Atlantic Beach Bikefest, the CEO for Ruff Ryders Entertainment—a hip hop

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<sup>384</sup> Patrik Jonsson, “A motorcycle mecca stirs up questions of race,” *Christian Science Monitor* 27 May 2005: 11.

label that also includes a motorcycle club, video production department, and clothing line—briefly spoke to the crowd: “Is the South in the house? [cheers from crowd] Is the South in the house? [louder cheers] That’s what I’m talking about because I’m from the South. Yeah, what’s up? I ain’t got much to say, you know, ‘cause I ain’t a talker I’m just about doing. Love is love. I’m from New York City, but the Earth’s my turf. One. Y’all be safe.” In this brief statement, the CEO of Ruff Riders claims a southern identity, states that he is from New York City, and claims to be a citizen of the Earth. At the time, I thought this was a contradictory and even odd statement that expressed a certain confusion; however, the CEO’s statement expresses the new mobile perspective on southern identity, which sees the regional, national, and global aspects of identity as intersecting parts of a whole. This complex statement on southern identity was delivered in the heart of Atlantic Beach, from a stage constructed near the dunes with the ocean as a backdrop. The town’s website claims “that every wave that laps her [Atlantic Beach’s] shore originated in Africa four days earlier.”<sup>385</sup> The connections between the diverse and mobile aspects of identity and place represent the continuity *within* change that is a central aspect of contemporary southern identities.

### **The Rebuilding of Atlantic Beach**

Saturday May 5, 2007 the town of Atlantic Beach held a block party and clean up, funded by a \$4,000 Community Pride grant from South Carolina’s beautification organization, Palmetto Pride.<sup>386</sup> This community initiative foreshadows the positive

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<sup>385</sup> “Her History,” <http://www.atlanticbeachsc.com/asps/history.asp>

<sup>386</sup> Josh Hoke, “Atlantic Beach set to clean up town” *Sun News* 4 May 2007.

reception of the 2007 Atlantic Beach Bikefest. With the NAACP discrimination cases settled, the community took up another controversial issue—the sexist images and behavior of some participants at the festival.

As far back as 1996, there was commentary on the negative representations of women at the festival.<sup>387</sup> Leslie Estes' article commented on the "usual Biker Weekend T-shirt with a fully dressed man surrounded by bikini-clad women." Estes found that some men were distressed by these representations as well. Attendee Chris Smith might have bought into such imagery when he was a younger man: "It's developmental," he said. "It's not like all of a sudden you're conscious to what your responsibilities are concerning what you wear. I don't wear anything that denigrates sisters...or me."<sup>388</sup> A great deal of the criticism during the late-1990s and onward centered on the nudity and sexual vulgarity found at the motorcycle festival. In 2007 that criticism was coming from women, like Patience Suggs, inside the community of African American bikers rather than outside. Suggs, a 22-year-old stay-at-home mother who is married to a former U.S. Marine, rides a motorcycle. Her mother and her husband also ride motorcycles. Through her public campaign, Suggs wanted young women to know that they do not have to "expose" their bodies and "defraud" their selves "in the name of black bike week." She saw images of women at the motorcycle festival as "worse than what shock jock Don Imus was recently fired for perpetuating." Suggs stated to *Sun News* columnist Issac Bailey: "It bothers me every year. I was born and raised here in Myrtle Beach. It seems even worse now." Suggs

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<sup>387</sup> There are, of course, similar issues related to the Harley-Davidson Rally and problematic representations of gender and sexuality. Yet for this chapter I am only analyzing this issue in relation to the Atlantic Beach Bikefest.

<sup>388</sup> Leslie F. Estes, "Small town abuzz with big crowd," *Sun News* 27 May 1996, 1C.

stated that she knew women who have been “abused and assaulted” at the motorcycle festival but do not report it because “they were not supposed to be there.” She explained: “I’m trying to help the girls so that they won’t have that story.” Suggs even contacted the NAACP to help her crusade, but was told by Mickey James of the Myrtle Beach NAACP: “We want people to be more conservative, but there is nothing we can do about the morality of people. That’s not our job. We are more about civil rights.” Suggs’ challenge to the demeaning representations of women shows that the Atlantic Beach Bikefest participants hold different and even conflicting view points about what is acceptable within their subculture.

On the eve of the 2007 Atlantic Beach Bikefest, a *Sun News* article announced that Harley-Davidson would have a presence at the black motorcycle event for the first time. Hoping to “rejuvenate biker interest” after the ten dollar admission fee debacle of 2006, Atlantic Beach “welcomed” and even “partnered” with Harley-Davidson in 2007. Lynn Bonner, Harley-Davidson’s director of market research, explained: “As a part of our ongoing initiative, we’ve partnered with a number of rallies that appeal to a number of different bikers. African American and Hispanics are a growing consumer market for our motorcycles and products.” Keith Hyman of the National Association of Black Bikers saw the Harley presence as a positive sign: “They are trying to redevelop the infrastructure of the event. They are going to bring some good things to it. I think everybody will come to appreciate that Harley isn’t trying to take over the event, they are trying to bring enhancements to it.”<sup>389</sup> Harley’s

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<sup>389</sup> Josh Hoke, “AB rally embraces Harley presence” *Sun News* 20 May 2007.

American symbolism adds to the local flavor of Atlantic Beach and the globalism represented by the Japanese speedbikes.

For the first time, some vendors at the Atlantic Beach Bikefest are “giving something back to the beach” by donating twenty percent of their profits to the Booker T. Washington Community Association, an organization formed to revitalize local African-American neighborhoods in the area, and the Horry County Police Department’s scholarship program for the children of the county’s police officers.<sup>390</sup> The 2007 Atlantic Beach Bikefest was judged an unprecedented success for the area and many saw it as a positive sign for the future.

An article in the *Sun News* following the 2007 bikefest entitled “Old notions of race and rallies loosening,” frames the Harley-Davidson involvement as a “first step toward finding common ground between the demographics of the two rallies.” Like Upperman’s claim that Atlantic Beach was developed as a business venture and not an altruistic gesture, bike manufacturers see their participation in Bikefest as “mainly a business decision, but they do want to help the festival grow.” Jonathan Formo, owner of Redline Powersports, which sells sports bikes and not Harleys, also sees the merger of different bikes and different races as a positive development: “It’s already happening. And we are seeing more sports bikes in the first bike week and more cruisers in the second week. And we are seeing more blacks and whites riding together.” Myrtle Beach biker, Vantrous Graham is quoted: “I’d like to see it where everyone can come together. This is a good thing. It’s always been that things were separated. Now everybody is coming together. This is the first step. This is going to

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<sup>390</sup> Jonathan Tressler, “Vendors to donate rally profits” *Sun News* 26 May 2007.

go a long way.” Atlantic Beach City Council member Sherry Suttles feels: “If this marriage or whatever it is brings in more Harleys and more diversity, then everything is all good.”<sup>391</sup> Dale Johnson of Silver City, North Carolina, has been attending the Bikefest for fifteen years and noted that in 2007 “[the police] weren’t really as strict over minor stuff as in the past.”<sup>392</sup>

Issac Bailey’s column on the 2007 “bike month” proposed it was the “least disruptive we’ve had.” Bailey wrote: “We owe a lot of the success to the Harley-Davidson dealers of the Carolinas, Redline Sports and other bike manufacturers.” Bailey recalls back when the Harley rally was an “utter mess” and recalled the famous armed standoff with police and biker gangs in the 1970s. “Things changed when the Harley dealers realized their brand was being tarnished. It was a business decision, one born of necessity. A business decision also prompted them to get involved with Bikefest this year, presumably because it could grow the number of future Harley buyers. The Grand Strand will long benefit for that business acumen.” Locating the situation on the Grand Strand in a larger context, Bailey quipped: “After all, NASCAR icon Dale Earnhardt Jr. teamed up with rap mogul Jay-Z for a commercial and video. Why wouldn’t Harley team up with Bikefest?”<sup>393</sup> The commercial realm, a key aspect of the touriscape, is framed as a potent site of collaboration and social interaction.

Yet Bailey points out that not everyone was happy. Despite her previous positive outlook, Bailey pointed out that councilwoman Suttles “is upset that there was no agreement for Harley to give the town a cut of its profits.” Bailey added:

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<sup>391</sup> Josh Hoke, “Old notions of race and rallies loosening” *Sun News* 27 May 2007.

<sup>392</sup> Jessica Foster, “Holiday crowds roll out” *Sun News* 29 May 2007.

<sup>393</sup> Issac A. Bailey, “Company cleans up biker rallies” *Sun News* 30 May 2007.

“Never mind that the town never got around to trademarking the event.” Suttles had this to say following the festival: “I don’t like Atlantic Beach antics any more than anybody else. But this is about business.”<sup>394</sup> Because of past problems with outside influences, Suttles may be worried that the Bikefest will lose its connection to the city of Atlantic Beach and the city will lose the money and the publicity from the festival. The alternative of other leisure opportunities for African Americans was the starting point for Atlantic Beach’s original downturn.

Her concerns may be valid. A promotional website advertising the 2008 rally as “Urban Beach Fest,” “[a]lso know as Black Bike Week or Atlantic Beach Bikefest” claims that “this enormous motorcycle rally will feature special rides, contests, live entertainment and more.” There is a link for Atlantic Beach from the site, but nothing is there.<sup>395</sup> Like the fears that southern culture would disappear into a homogenized consumer culture, there are fears that the Atlantic Beach Bikefest could disappear into just another motorcycle festival, one without a distinct heritage grounded in the history of Atlantic Beach.

Business, profit, and branding all seem to be at the heart of Atlantic Beach’s history. The culture and controversy of the black bikers can be added to the many layers of Atlantic Beach’s history. In addition, heritage tourism can be added to recreational tourism as a way to sustain the town.

The 2001 Comprehensive Plan for Atlantic Beach states that its goal of creating a year-round tourist economy must be based on “several festivals.” The Bikefest “alone cannot sustain the town and its businesses.” The major idea for the

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<sup>394</sup> Issac A. Bailey, “Company cleans up biker rallies” *Sun News* 30 May 2007.

<sup>395</sup> <http://www.urbanbeachfest.com/>

town is to expand marketing efforts. “The Town must tap into its unique history and niche in the market to sustain a viable resort community. Heritage based tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry. Golf, a major Grand Strand attraction, coupled with Tiger Woods, and the heightened awareness and participation in the sport by African Americans, presents another selling point for Atlantic Beach... Atlantic Beach has an opportunity to position itself as a place where you can learn about the Gullah/Geechee culture, the contribution of low country folks to the State and the Nation, enjoy a distinct food, music, night life and Sunday morning worship service.”<sup>396</sup>

Atlantic Beach could blend all the elements of its history, culture, and identity into a fascinating, unique, and profitable touriscape—one based in both continuity and change. As the city’s website proclaims: “Black entertainers once performed on the Grand Strand and stayed in Atlantic Beach because they had to, now we look forward to the day when entertainers and everyday folks will stay with us because they can. No matter who you are, feel at home in Atlantic Beach, we’re just family.”<sup>397</sup>

Following the successful Atlantic Beach Bikefest in 2007, the town hosted the fourth annual Gullah/Geechee festival in August of 2007. Atlantic Beach was chosen as the site of this cultural festival because of its history as “the summer home for many blacks before integration occurred.” In 2006, a federal act was passed creating the Gullah-Geechee Heritage Corridor, which runs from Wilmington, North Carolina to Jacksonville, Florida. The federal act calls for spending ten million dollars over

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<sup>396</sup> Town of Atlantic Beach, “Comprehensive Plan,” adopted 2001, 10.

<http://www.atlanticbeachsc.com/asps/future.asp>

<sup>397</sup> “Atlantic Beach, South Carolina: Her Future” 2003, <http://www.atlanticbeach.com/asps/future.asp>

the next fifteen years to “promote and protect Gullah sites and the creation of a Coastal Heritage Center. The money is seed money and after it runs out, the sites need to be self-sustaining.” An article on the 2007 cultural festival held at Atlantic Beach describes the booth of “Bunny” and Andrew Rodrigues: “Their booth was a magnet for those with money in hand and a mind open to learning about the Grand Strand’s Gullah heritage.”<sup>398</sup> Both an open mind and money are necessary for the continued sustainability of this fascinating “Black Pearl” on the Grand Strand.



Individuals who understood both the spirit of good entertainment and good business founded Atlantic Beach. This spirit and this history continues in both the local activists who work to govern and promote the town as well as the tourists that are drawn to the area. Atlantic Beach offers a rich touriscape engaging the hybrid culture of Africa and America found in the Gullah people, the business owners and black performers of the golden era, and the black bikers that flood the town every May. While it is difficult to maintain a sense of identity in the greed and profit-driven mentality of contemporary American consumer culture, the ongoing tradition of Atlantic Beach found in its past and its present represent the possibilities of its future.

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<sup>398</sup> Jason Rodriguez, “Gullah descendants congregate at festival” *Sun News* 19 August 2007. Bruce Smith, “Panel meets to begin Gullah preservation efforts” *Sun News* 16 February 2007.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion: Symbols of a Newer South

This dissertation seeks to move what is emblematic of the South in new directions by locating the stories of these touriscapes within the larger narrative of American consumer culture and regional southern identity. South of the Border and Atlantic Beach are two examples of a Newer South, where tourism is central to the economy and culture and identities are negotiated within the expressive realm of consumer culture.<sup>399</sup> Tourism is part of the marketing and consumption of southern culture. It offers a space to reimagine both real and symbolic aspects of regional identity while moving into a Newer South.

Controversy and conflict are the heart of southern history and culture and have been integrated into southern identities of every type. Including these stories as part of southern culture is part of the process of articulating a new southern identity representative of a new consciousness—where culture and identity are things that we all can create, purchase, and reformulate within the physical and social space we inhabit. These place studies highlight how profits affect the process of identification and social integration. When located in a larger context these stories offer a challenge to the homogenizing effects of contemporary mass culture and the outdated symbols of the South. Adding sombreros and motorcycles to the symbolic landscape of southernness, and more specifically South Carolina's history and culture, does not

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<sup>399</sup> United States Department of Commerce News, "Service Industries—New Economy's Biggest Generator of Jobs; Mississippi Leads States, Census Bureau Reports" 29 June 2000. [http://www.census.gov/Press\\_Release/www/2000/cb00-102.html](http://www.census.gov/Press_Release/www/2000/cb00-102.html). The press release states that Mississippi "grew faster than other states on the strength of hotel and amusement industries." South Carolina follows Mississippi. Georgia and North Carolina are also highly ranked in this economic shift.

offer a simple solution.<sup>400</sup> These icons are not typically southern; however, their location, their stories, and the social forces they represent make them a part of the rapidly evolving landscape of American and global consumer culture.

Both Alan Schafer's declaration that "we checked only the color of their money, not their skins" and Leroy Upperman's claim that the Atlantic Beach Company developed the black beach "not out of altruism, but as a business venture" speak to the connections between social change, business profits, and class. Schafer's comments attempted to locate his profitable tourist empire as a space of social equality. Money is the great equalizer; however, this logic also makes those without money or purchasing power non-existent within Schafer's equation. At times, class may overpower race, but the equalizing effects of poverty are seldom a welcomed experience. As tourism grows as a central aspect of southern culture, the fact that its low-paying and seasonal job opportunities seldom offer upward mobility and equality must be considered.

Upperman and the other forefathers of the Atlantic Beach Company were members of the black upper class; however, the town was developed to offer recreational options to blacks of various classes—from doctors and college presidents to domestics and hotel workers. Schafer and the men of the Atlantic Beach Company were interested in making a profit, in doing so they crossed social borderlands, such as race and class, while building their touriscapes. There are shifting boundaries *within* these touriscapes. At Atlantic Beach, the Gordon Hotel was a space for the

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<sup>400</sup> One of the key aspects of touriscapes in the Newer South is that they raise new and complicated questions about identity, place, and change.

elite. At South of the Border, the back room had a different racial code than did the front.

Both Schafer and the Atlantic Beach Company funded their business ventures with their own capital rather than borrowing money from banking institutions. The prejudice of the banking establishments in the South was a contributing factor. The Atlantic Beach Company bailed out Tyson's failed mortgage, and did not want to end up in the same situation. Schafer framed his independent financing of his business ventures in a family story—"the bank took the family farm and that's why I never borrow money." This is an embellished tale because the Schafers were primarily merchants and not farmers. Schafer was able to play up and down his class status because it fell between the extremes. The independent nature of capital that began these touriscapes continued and influenced their individual and specific sense of place and aesthetics. This explains the apprehensions of landowners in Atlantic Beach concerning outside corporate developers.

Reading these landscapes as they change over time, the creation of a Newer South is apparent. In constructing the contemporary touriscape of Atlantic Beach, the citizens *choose* to foreground a Gullah cultural heritage that has no direct connection to the geographic location of the town, rather than embracing a motorcycle festival, the Atlantic Beach Bikefest, which did emerge from within the town. Alan Schafer seldom alludes to his own Jewish heritage within the landscape of South of the Border, rather he integrates signifiers of various other identities. Comparing the Confederateland, USA attraction from the 1960s to Pedro's Africa Shop of today, movement towards a Newer South is apparent is the choices Schafer made in adding

new layers to his tourist complex. One of the most important factors for the movement of both of these places, as well as those who construct and inhabit them, is the fact that identity *can* be a choice.<sup>401</sup> People who pass through or move to the South have a plethora of choices about how to construct their southern identity—or if they want to claim southernness at all. Many choose to add a personalized southernness to other aspects of their identity, similar to the ways Schafer or the Atlantic Beach Company would add another layer to their touriscapes.

### **Bringing Old Dixie Down**

As the Confederate flag, that outdated symbol of (white) southern identity, becomes dislocated from its context of sovereignty and dominance, the room for new symbolism emerges. As consumption and postmodern notions of identity construction become more important, the old symbolism can be usurped. In South Carolina, the Confederate battle flag was placed atop the statehouse in 1962; depending on which story you believe, this act represents a memorial to the centennial of the Civil War or a protest against civil rights and the attempts to desegregate southern society. In the mid-1990s, the fact that the Confederate battle flag had flown in the same context of authority as the American flag and the South Carolina state flag for over thirty years caused an intense controversy that ultimately played out in the state's travel and tourism industry.

A state's image is central to the success of its tourism industry. The Confederate flag controversy that came on the cusp of the twenty-first century in

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<sup>401</sup> There are certainly aspects of identity that are predetermined and do not function as choices.

South Carolina affected both South of the Border and Atlantic Beach despite the fact that South of the Border mocked the flag's authority and Atlantic Beach passed a resolution supporting its removal. It was a coalition of the state's most powerful business leaders, including chambers of commerce and the state's travel and tourism officials, that forged a temporary compromise that simply moved the flag to a less sovereign place on the statehouse grounds.<sup>402</sup>

It was not just lobbying for the removal of the flag that caused the NAACP's boycott of South Carolina's tourism industry in 2000. The goal was to also "highlight their [African Americans'] right to equal opportunity in a capitalist society."<sup>403</sup> Watts sees tourism as a site for reimagining southern identity for the future. "Promoting South Carolina tourism (the NAACP's boycott of which served as the opening salvo in this debate), with an emphasis on the state's historical significance both to the descendants of slaves and the descendants of Confederates," Watts explains, "could be another way to achieve increased identification between a diversity of Southerners, African American and white alike."<sup>404</sup>

We need to respect the history and also facilitate the social and cultural exchange between different groups of people—not just the descendants of slaves and Confederates, but the various shades and types of identities that make up contemporary southern society. Identity is expanded and reformulated through diverse social interactions, often through recreation and the cultural exchange found in travel, tourism, and consumption. To facilitate social interaction and to assist in the success of South Carolina's business, cultural, and educational endeavors, the

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<sup>402</sup> Watts, *Contemporary Southern Identity*, 96-98.

<sup>403</sup> Watts, *Contemporary Southern Identity*, 112.

<sup>404</sup> Watts, *Contemporary Southern Identity*, 158.

Confederate flag should be completely removed from the statehouse grounds in South Carolina and placed in its proper historical context in the South Carolina State Museum. Flags are flown to represent the present, not “lost causes” of the past. In *Critical Regionalism* Douglass Powell writes: “Regions never have flags: even the identification of the Confederate flag with the contemporary U.S. South traces back to that region’s brief experience as a nation-state.”<sup>405</sup> Regions do not have flags, but states do. The South Carolina state flag is a historically relevant and unifying symbol of southern identity. The current state flag evokes the South Carolina’s role in both the Revolutionary and Civil Wars and offers a symbol that unites rather than divides or offends like the Confederate flag.

In 1776, Colonel William Moultrie was assigned the task of designing a flag for the South Carolina troops fighting for independence from the British. Moultrie chose the dark blue of the troops’ uniforms and the crescent moon that adorned the front of their caps. In 1860 when South Carolina succeeded from the Union and became its own nation, a flag was needed. After a week of intense debate, a simple white Palmetto tree was added to Moultrie’s original design. During the Revolutionary War, Moultrie and his men defended the South Carolina coast from an attack by British warships in a fort made from Palmetto trees. When the British cannonballs hit the fort, they sunk into the soft yet strong wood. The fort held up throughout the attack. The Palmetto tree became a popular symbol of the strength and bravery of South Carolinians. South Carolina’s flag offers a symbol of the state’s role in the formation of the United States of America and dates to the Civil

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<sup>405</sup> Powell, *Critical Regionalism*, 4.

War that threatened that very union. In her history of the South Carolina state flag, Wylma A. Wates wrote, “this blue flag with its white crescent and white palmetto stands today a symbol of what South Carolina was and has become.”<sup>406</sup>

This flag symbolizes the complexity of history, the duality of pride, and it offends no one. No modern day hate groups, like the Ku Klux Klan or neo-Nazis, have appropriated the South Carolina state flag to represent racism and hate. It does not offend special interest groups, potential tourists, or business interests. In the memoir of his travels throughout the South, Eddy Harris details exactly what the white South is saying through its continued use of the Confederate flag: “We don’t care if our symbols are hateful to you and upset you or remind you of our inhuman treatment toward you. We don’t care because these are the sources of our pride and we do not concern ourselves with your pride. These are our symbols and not yours. And you do not share in what is ours.” Harris admits, “Symbols aren’t everything but they go a long way towards maintaining or changing attitudes.”<sup>407</sup>

It is not only African Americans who disdain the symbolism of the Confederate flag. In an interview, prominent southern food scholar John T. Edge explained that he was driving to Columbia, South Carolina to “check the temperature” at Maurice’s Piggie Park, a well known bar-b-que restaurant in the state’s capitol. Maurice became an outspoken defender of the “heritage not hate” perspective during the Confederate flag controversy and made the flag a central decorative element in his bar-b-que restaurants. “At Maurice’s last time I was there he was flying the Confederate flag high and saying that it wasn’t about race. And

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<sup>406</sup> Wylma A Wates, *A Flag Worthy of Your State and People: The History of the South Carolina State Flag* (Columbia: South Carolina Department of Archives & History, 1996, 1985).

<sup>407</sup> Harris, *South of Haunted Dreams*, 125.

that’s just not possible,” Edge explains. “No matter how he might feel about the flag, it’s a symbol of divisiveness and oppressiveness for many. I’m a white child of privilege, and it’s a symbol of oppression for me.”<sup>408</sup> This tale of a road trip to South Carolina, the symbols of southern culture, and personal identity speak directly to the importance of a perspective that can simultaneously see all sides—even those outside one’s own social location.

South Carolina is important for understanding contemporary southern identity because, as Watts points out in her book, the state functions as “the philosophical cradle of the Confederacy.”<sup>409</sup> South Carolina is philosophically and politically southern in both the eyes of its residents—whether they agree with the dominant ideology or not—and in the eyes of those outside of the state. In conservative columnist David Brooks’ 2008 editorial for the *New York Times* on the shifting terrain of conservative voters, he points out that only 34 percent of Republican voters in South Carolina call themselves “very conservative.” Brooks then reminds his readers: “This, I repeat, was in South Carolina, one of the most right-wing places in the country.”<sup>410</sup> While not the only state to endure controversy surrounding a lingering allegiance to the Confederate flag—Georgia, Mississippi, and Alabama have all had their flag issues—South Carolina certainly functions as a touchstone for conservative and traditional white southern identity. Adding sombreros and motorcycle to the state’s symbolic landscape is a direct challenge to Old South ideology.

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<sup>408</sup> Adam Robert, “The Deep Delicious South” *Salon*, July 17, 2007.  
[http://www.salon.com/mwt/food/eat\\_drink/2007/07/17/johnt\\_edge/print.html](http://www.salon.com/mwt/food/eat_drink/2007/07/17/johnt_edge/print.html)

<sup>409</sup> Watts, *Contemporary Southern Identity*, 157.

<sup>410</sup> David Brooks, “The Voters Revolt” *New York Times*, January 22, 2008

The Confederate flag had functioned as a class marker as well as a racist symbol. The Confederate flag has often signified working-class or “redneck” southern identity. This class significance was represented by Howard Dean’s controversial statement in 2003 that “white folks in the South who drive pickup trucks with Confederate flag decals on the back ought to be voting with us, and not [Republicans], because their kids don’t have health insurance either.” A postcard from South of the Border features a middle-aged, white man with a beard wearing a Blenheim t-shirt and a red baseball hat with the South Carolina state flag. To the right of the man’s head is the word “Bubba.” The popular image of the white working-class “redneck” with the Confederate flag t-shirt or hat is refashioned to instead include a regional beverage and the state flag as signifiers of southern identity. In *Away Down South*, Cobb located the “bubba” or “redneck” stereotype’s origins in a “fierce and even admirable resistance to American mass society’s insistence on conformity” but points out that “many who were enthusiastically buying (both figuratively and literally) into the redneck craze were really the solidly middle-class folks who manicured the lawns and mangled the fairways of southern suburbia.”<sup>411</sup> This is the primary audience that delight in and consume South of the Border within the ironic distance of kitsch celebration.

Today, the Confederate flag can be found on souvenirs and other consumer items throughout South Carolina in certain areas, including the tacky beachwear stores of Myrtle Beach. However, when the Memorial Day weekend brings the black bikers to town, the Confederate flag t-shirts are replaced with Black Bike Week t-

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<sup>411</sup> Cobb, *Away Down South*, 226-228.

shirts in most of the Grand Strand beachwear stores, operated primarily by Israeli merchants.<sup>412</sup> The state flag has almost completely replaced the Confederate flag as the emblem for representing southern identity on consumer goods. However, the Confederate flag still flies on the statehouse grounds.

The Confederate flag's prominent place in South Carolina's state capitol was an easy touchstone for journalists during the January 2008 presidential primary. South Carolina appeared early in the primary cycle to allow African-American voters a voice in the electoral process. A *Time* magazine article "Breakdown the Black Vote" read: "South Carolina, where a Confederate battle flag still flies on the capitol grounds off Gervais Street and where dying but persistent de facto segregation still divides church life and civic organizations, will be a test of just how deeply the skirmish [between the Clintons and Barak Obama] has resonated with voters." Leading up to the primary Bob Herbert's op-ed column for the *New York Times* "The Blight That Is Still With Us" begins: "The political mantra this year is 'change.' But South Carolina, where the Confederate flag stills flies on the ground of the State Capitol, is a disturbing example of how difficult it is for people of good will to dispose of the toxic layers of bigotry that have accumulated over several long centuries." Patrick Healy's *New York Times* article "Obama Carries South Carolina By Wide Margin" contains a quote that juxtaposes the past of southern identity with the possible future. "A poignant reminder of South Carolina's historic racial divide, the Confederate flag, swayed in the cool breeze on Saturday only a few yards from where supporters waved placards for Mr. Obama, who if elected would become the

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<sup>412</sup> Moredock, *Banana Republic*, 148-149.

first black president.”<sup>413</sup> As new people inhabit new places, potentially even the office of the presidency, a Newer South with newer symbols will emerge.

### **Symbols of a Newer South**

Fiction writer Percival Everett was born and raised in Columbia, South Carolina and is a professor at USC. He is not a Gamecock (University of South Carolina) but a Trojan (University of Southern California). Everett’s fiction is not centered on race and the South; however, the short story “The Appropriation of Cultures,” which appeared in *Callaloo* in 1996, envisions black jazz musician Daniel Berkley’s southern heritage epiphany. When some white college students harass Daniel by insisting he play “Dixie,” he obliges and offers a sincere rendition rather than allow the students the satisfaction of an angry and ironic spectacle. Daniel is deeply affected by the rendition and seeks to reclaim his southern identity and embrace the dominant signifiers of southernness. He even purchases a pickup truck for the purpose of displaying his Confederate flag. Other African Americans follow Daniel’s lead. The story concludes with white South Carolinians abandoning the Confederate flag and removing it from the statehouse dome.<sup>414</sup> Everette’s story pre-dates the Confederate flag controversy in South Carolina but still addresses the divisive nature of many symbols of southern identity and the rights of black

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<sup>413</sup> John Cloud, “Breaking Down the Black Vote” *Time*, January 28, 2008; Bob Herbert, “The Blight That Is Still With Us” *New York Times*, January 22, 2008; Patrick Healy, “Obama Carries South Carolina By a Wide Margin” *New York Times*, January 27, 2008.

<sup>414</sup> This story was brought to my attention by William M. Ramsey’s article “Knowing Their Place: Three Black Writers and the Postmodern South” *Southern Literary Journal* (2005); Percival Everette, “The Appropriation of Cultures” *Callaloo* 19.1 (1996): 24-30.

southerners to be a part of defining southern identity—even if they live in southern California.

Today, as *South of the Border* and *Atlantic Beach* illustrate, the signifiers of southern identity are often articulated within the realm of consumer culture. Angel Quintero, a Cuban-born veteran of the U.S. Navy, and Sherman Evans, a Midwesterner and U.S. Air Force veteran, both came to reside in Charleston, South Carolina. Both were young entrepreneurs, Quintero in music production and Evans in fashion, who came together to form Nu South Apparel. The clothing line's distinctive logo, a Confederate flag in the red, black, and green colors of African-American liberation, earned much recognition. Like *South of the Border* and *Atlantic Beach*, Nu South Apparel was a do-it-yourself grassroots business that operated using its own money and resists buyouts by large corporations.<sup>415</sup> In a 1998 interview with the founders of Nu South by Virtual Advisor Interactive, a consulting and marketing firm for small businesses, Evan stated: "We've learned the most valuable lesson ever. Ownership is so important in this game in the future. We gotta quit letting these super-corporations just consume all these great ideas coming into the marketplace. We believe in ownership, and we're not turning it over. It's time for the people to step up and make a difference."<sup>416</sup>

Nu South Apparel's location in the coastal tourist region of Charleston shows that this reformulated southern identity is sold to tourists as well as locals. From inside the dominant Old South mecca of tourism, a new generation reformulates the

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<sup>415</sup> Independent sites of consumer culture are difficult to maintain in our current culture of huge corporations. Nu South has now gone out of business.

<sup>416</sup> Interview, "A New Brand of Race Relations," *Virtual Advisor*, <http://www.va-interactive.com/inbusiness/editorial/bizdev/articles/nusouth.html> accessed January 4, 2008.

symbolism of the past to look toward the future. The Virtual Advisor article states: “Charleston, a tourist city with a population of under 100,000, but with more than 5 million visitors per year, may seem an unlikely place for a grass roots movement to begin.” Quintero stated: “We decided, the war started in downtown Charleston, we were going to finish the war in downtown Charleston.” The NuSouth store was in the prime spot of historic Charleston’s tourist district on Wentworth Street. “Amidst the hustle and bustle of tourists shopping for relics of the Old South, a lone boutique stands out. It’s the flagship store of Nu South Apparel, and it’s conspicuous because of a flag hanging out the window.” The store’s placement on the main drag of Charleston’s tourist district shows the emergence of this reformulated symbol of southern identity in consumer culture.

Nu South Apparel has been discussed as representing an “important double consciousness, a self-awareness that transcends the politics of identity and points us towards New Souths” by McPherson in *Reconstructing Dixie*. William Ramsey concluded his 2005 article “Knowing Their Place: Three Black Writers and the Postmodern South” by discussing NuSouth as a “fascinating story of surfaces replacing essentialist depth.” The final lines of the article are Ramsey’s break down of a Nu South t-shirt: “‘THE FUTURE IS THE PLAYVA’ (*playva* meaning individualistically and improvisationally ‘your talent or your skill’ or the way you do things). On the back was their erasure of history: ‘THE PAST IS THE PAST.’”<sup>417</sup> In his discussion of Nu South in *Away Down South* (2005), James Cobb writes: “Troubling as it might be to some, behind the Nu-South idea was the kind of self-

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<sup>417</sup> Ramsey, “Knowing Their Place,” 137-138.

confidence born of upward mobility that had also allowed southern whites to embrace the stereotyping inherent in the 'Redneck' or the 'Bubba' personae."<sup>418</sup>

The creators of Nu South do not see their consumers as only African Americans. While some, like Cobb, assume their consumer base is meant to be "young, urban hip-hoppers," their clothes are actually geared towards "college students and twenty-and-thirty something professionals, who collectively make up the largest consumer group in the nation, regardless of race." Quintero stated in the Virtual Interactive interview: "It's not a black thing. It's not a white thing. It's common sense." Business and consumption becomes the sites for working out of conglomeration of new southern identities for the future. "The thing you've got to realize is that as we go into the new millennium, people are looking for something that truly says that there's been change, that we've moved forward," Evan explained. "That's what Nu South really brings to the table. It's a positive empowering statement about the future."<sup>419</sup> If people are not buying what you are selling, it has no power.

In 2007 another Charleston brand of apparel emerged. Sixteen Seventy Clothing Company sells colorful polo shirts with an embroidered Herring Gull, a bird local to the South Carolina low country, on the left front area. These shirts can be purchased and are advertised primarily through a MySpace page designed by creator Troy Gathers. An ad on the MySpace page juxtaposes historic homes, horse-drawn carriages, and images from the historic site of Fort McMultrie with images of the shirts. The copy reads: "More than a souvenir. Sixteen Seventy is American

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<sup>418</sup> Cobb, *Away Down South*, 284.

<sup>419</sup> Interview, "A New Brand of Race Relations," *Virtual Advisor*.

History.” In the company’s bio on MySpace it is clear that the brand was created to celebrate pride in the history of Charleston, which was founded in 1670. The bio frames Charleston as a “storybook with a million tales from the past” in a state “with more stories than the complete works of Shakespeare.” Charleston is framed as offering numerous firsts for America—the first museum and library, first “decisive victory” of the American Revolution, first shots of the Civil War. The litany of important historic accomplishments for the state ends with the claim that South Carolina was “the birthplace of America’s first golf club in 1786.” While the creator and most of the “friends” shown on Sixteen Seventy’s MySpace page are young African Americans, a YouTube ad, obviously constructed in a college classroom because a professor is thanked at the end, features an endorsement for the shirts by a white golf pro, Aaron Robinson. The creator of Sixteen Seventy is using “fashion to show the lifestyle of the historic state” of South Carolina. Because of the Internet and promotional spaces, such as MySpace and YouTube, the ability to easily enter the realm of consumer culture and expand old notions of southern identity is obtainable by industrious young people. These young entrepreneurs are continuing the traditions of Schafer and the Atlantic Beach company in new and different ways in a process of articulating a Newer South.

The amalgamation of history, consumerism, and pride of place is central to brands such as Nu South and Sixteen Seventy. The new generation of post-civil rights southerners, especially those in locales where tourism is central to the economy and culture, understand the expressive power of consumer culture and its effect on identity and a sense of place. A South of the Border souvenir made in Mexico,

Tiawan, or Africa, a souped-up Japanese speed bike, a craft from the Gullah-Geechee festival, a Sixteen Seventy polo shirt made in China, and a Pedro with an Irish serape, all can be signifiers of southern identity. All of these artifacts of consumer culture represent the globalization of a regional identity. The insider/outsider perspective allows individuals to see the regional, the national, and the global in conversation with one another. This perspective combined with actual cultural exchange on the ground offers an avenue to rearticulate a multivalent worldview.

The future of southern identity in a Newer South is about change and the loosening of categories. Individuals determine what “being southern” means in negotiation with society at large. This dissertation seeks to broaden what is emblematic of the South and, specifically, the southern state of South Carolina by adding the motorcycle and the sombrero to the mix. Both of these artifacts represent the individuality of these very different places in the face of a homogenizing and mass-produced corporate culture that dominates local, national, and global realms. Both of these place studies show that good business and social change can, and must, exist together. Creating consumer items and experiences can be a tool to reinterpreting and therefore changing our cultures and our selves.

### **The Future of Touriscapes**

The touriscapes of South of the Border and Atlantic Beach reflect the change and continuity of southern culture, history, and identity in different ways. Each place shows the importance of overlap and intersection and has a valuable story and built

environment that offer commentary on the U.S. South. These touriscapes should continue into the future as important sites of commerce and cultural history.

Alan Schafer used South of the Border to negotiate his own fluid identity as his power within business and politics grew. As he built a tourist empire in his own image, which reflected his location inside/outside local power, he brought together local, national, and international icons such as a local soda, Confederate/Yankee imagery, Mexican souvenirs purchased from Asian markets, “authentic” African crafts sold in the shadow of an enormous Sombrero Tower, and “almost-kosher” Virginia ham. In the process of commodifying cultures for profit, Schafer created a complicated terrain where identities can be rearticulated.

Schafer’s powerful position is reflected in South of the Border’s Sombrero Tower, where you must go inside and ride to the top to see the comprehensive view of the complex and its surrounding landscape. The view from inside the Sombrero Tower, high above the tourist complex, is jarring. The outlandish neon kitsch aesthetic of South of the Border almost disappears into the dingy grays and browns of the roofs of the numerous structures that dot the landscape. After the onslaught of numerous billboards singing South of the Border’s praises, many travelers arrive disappointed by the peeling neon paint and lack of open amusements. With Schafer gone, will South of the Border be able to thrive in the Twenty-first century?

Atlantic Beach brought together various African American identities within the realm of recreation while creating a rare “haven for blacks” on the Southeast coast. This community of black producers and consumers of tourist goods was located within the larger and whiter community of the Grand Strand. As time moved

on, the layers of black leisure culture and well as the complex interaction between different races and different types of tourists created a space for working out the complex legacy of Jim Crow segregation.

Desegregation of southern beaches in the late-1960s led in part to Atlantic Beach's stagnation. In the 1990s, when North Myrtle Beach wanted to open up Ocean Boulevard through the town, Atlantic Beach residents declined because they wanted to keep the town separate, distinct, and free of outside influences. Along with the oceanfront road, development, growth, and progress continued to bypass the town into the twenty-first century. The once packed seaside space of commerce, recreation, and music has aged and faded to the shabby grays and browns of deterioration compounded by ongoing debt and scandal. Today, Atlantic Beach has to figure out how to incorporate the prosperity from the outside without losing the distinct identity inside the community—an identity that reflects the town's history.

In March of 2008, Atlantic Beach mayor, Irene Armstrong, was indicted on three felony counts of bribery at elections and two misdemeanor counts of misconduct in office, and Town Manager Marcia Conner was indicted on two counts of misconduct while in office and one count of violating an employer's obligations to police retirement funds. Juan Lopez, the Police Chief of Atlantic Beach in 2006-2007, alerted the authorities to the mismanagement of funds. Lopez left his position and the town in July 2007 after he was accused, and later cleared, of racism in dealings with the black community. While in Atlantic Beach, he was frustrated by the mismanagement of funds in addition to the accusations of prejudice. Charles Williams, the interim town manager provided by the Municipal Association of South

Carolina, led a meeting on April 8, 2008 to deal with the town's debt, which exceeds \$600,000. As the local press and some in the larger community advocated Atlantic Beach being absorbed by North Myrtle Beach or Horry County, the remaining members of Atlantic Beach's town council professed that the town would never give up its charter and therefore its independence and autonomy. The emergency meeting began to deal with the town's mounting problems by lifting the two-year moratorium on development in Atlantic Beach. Councilman Donnell Thompson declared, "We're open for business."<sup>420</sup> What does this mean for the Atlantic Beach of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

### **Open For Business**

Sustainability, in reference to these touriscapes, entails three main parts. First, both places must remain economically viable. They must make a profit. The second part is to maintain this viability while also retaining the identity and sense of place that made the landscapes distinct. This means no corporate buyouts by big developers who have no interest in the historic and cultural fiber. The third aspect of sustainability speaks to the environmental issues related to both the coast and the roadway. Corporate development along the Grand Strand that seeks big profits without considering erosion, flooding, and the impact of hurricanes has led to a ravaged coast line that is in danger of disappearing through overdevelopment as well as the next big hurricane. The gas crisis and the ecological and political threats of American automobile culture are approaching crisis point as we move into the twenty-first century. Both Atlantic Beach and South of the Border must consider the

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<sup>420</sup> Janelle Frost, "Atlantic Beach turns over financial duties," *Sun News* April 8, 2008.

natural environment as part of their long-term plans. These places are distinctive because of their fascinating and controversial histories, built environment, and natural environment.<sup>421</sup> Much of the man-made distinctiveness of these places derived from the autonomy of independent ownership, along with eccentric architecture and planning (or lack of planning).<sup>422</sup>

South of the Border's independent vision derived from an individual and is now in the hands of his family (widow and sons). Atlantic Beach was first the vision of one man, a company of ten, and now a group of landowners. As this dissertation has shown, a great deal of change has taken place at both South of the Border and Atlantic Beach; however, a certain continuity of vision and an independent aesthetic and spirit survives. The relationship between continuity and change, like that of the insider/outsider perspective, is what has made these spaces distinctively local, and therefore southern.

Seeing these sites as touriscapes, where the intersection and overlap of categories is central, enables envisioning a future where recreational and heritage tourism can come together to keep these sites "open for business" while also preserving their independent spirit and historic vision. Dolores Hayden writes in the forward to *Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America*, "commercial speculation and

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<sup>421</sup> The natural environment—the beach—is a defining aspect of Atlantic Beach. South of the Border's natural environment is less central in its appeal. One interesting feature of South of the Border's natural environment worth noting is the proliferation of Palmetto Trees that Schafer planted against the advice of horticulturalists. The state tree of South Carolina is native to the coastal region. When Schafer came across a good deal on the trees he planted them throughout his complex, even though many thought they would simply die in the inland and along the roadside. Most survived and create a strange integration into the coastal region for those passing through South of the Border on their way to the beach.

<sup>422</sup> I use "man" here because both South of the Border and Atlantic Beach are owner and operated by men in their formative years; however, in both case women now place a central role. For example, Schafer's widow and the numerous women, like Sherry Suttles, Irene Armstrong, and Amy Breuing, play important role in the future of these places.

exploitation lurk as enemies of the unique, the authentic, and the local.”<sup>423</sup> In certain cases this is certainly true; however, it was commercial speculation that created both South of the Border and Atlantic Beach. In a period shortly after prohibition was lifted, Schafer entered the alcohol and later the tourist trade as he ascended in political power. The African American businessmen who built Atlantic Beach did so as a business venture, but one with a larger vision of providing recreation for blacks in a space that offered freedom from discrimination and the freedom to take part in the hospitality industry. Both of these touriscapes are based in commercial speculation and certainly represent the unique and the local. To discount the importance of the commercial and the recreational as essential parts of the historic American landscape is to miss out on the rich stories these places hold. I want to conclude by offering some possible ways to envision commercial recreation and historic preservation inhabiting the same space. This is a part of the various insider/outside perspectives that constitute these touriscapes.

### **Preserving the Border**

South of the Border has remained profitable into the twenty-first century, in spite of America’s shift to the current roadside landscape of in-and-out chains and travel plazas. In recent years, the field of historic preservation has evolved to appreciate the vernacular architecture that dots the American roadside. This is reflected in the recent emergence of various organizations that focus on preserving the recent past and commercial architecture. Organizations such as The Society for

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<sup>423</sup> Delores Hayden, “Foreword: In Search of the American Cultural Landscape,” in *Preserving Cultural Landscape in America*, Arnold R. Alanen and Robert Z. Melnick, eds. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), ix.

Commercial Archaeology (SCA), “the oldest national organization devoted to the buildings, artifacts, structures, signs, and symbols of the 20th-century commercial landscape,” The Recent Past Preservation Network, and the Vernacular Architecture Forum (VAF) speak to emerging interest in places like South of the Border.<sup>424</sup>

Because of the constant manipulation of the built environment there is little of the original structure left for official historic designation in the traditional sense. This is fitting because South of the Border has never been traditional and to attempt to preserve it in a typical conservation model would make little sense. Yet, South of the Border has its own history of preserving the past. The hybrid museum/amusement park Confederateland, USA of the 1960s; its replacement in the 1970s—the Brewseum, a museum fittingly based on beer; the old Blenheim building converted into a bottlers’ museum; the display of natural wonders, like the great white shark at the Myrtle Beach Shop; and the quasi-historical Pedro’s Africa Shop of today all engage a certain commitment to historical memory. However, South of the Border has never taken its own history seriously.

Working with South Carolina-based archivists and scholars interested in the recent past and roadside culture, South of the Border could add a historical element, even a museum, that interpreted the varied history of the beer shack turned roadside emporium. South of the Border survived during times of momentous change in the South. Because documenting the voices and perspectives of tourists is so difficult due to their mobility and recreational focus, the South of the Border museum could include a StoryCorp-style recording booth for travelers to memorialize their travel

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<sup>424</sup> <http://www.sca-roadside.org/index.php> formed in 1977; <http://www.recentpast.org/index.html>; <http://www.vernaculararchitectureforum.org/> accessed April 7, 2008

narratives. StoryCorp is a non-profit oral history organization affiliated with the Library of Congress. In true Alan Schafer style, the tourists would pay to record their histories and leave with a CD of the recording, a high tech souvenir, and the knowledge that they are becoming a part of the South of the Border archives. In addition, the museum itself could be designed as a replica of the original beer depot or its expanded and more Moderne look into the 1950s. If Schafer's final modification of the complex, the addition of the Antique Shop, reflects his evolving vision for South of the Border, then more respect for the past would fit right in with the logical progression of South of the Border's future. Antiques and historic landscapes both impose the fifty-year rule. South of the Border crossed that threshold as it moved into the twenty-first century. This milestone should be reflected in the complex's multifaceted built environment.

In "Selling Heritage Landscapes," Richard Francaviglia points out that today's "typical tourist" both American and foreigner "has developed a strong appreciation for American history and seeks those places that convey it." Schafer would certainly approve of expanding South of the Border's consumer base to meet current trends in cultural and historic tourism. Francaviglia discusses four different ways to market heritage landscapes. The fitting one for South of the Border would be "imagingally preserved landscapes." He writes: "When used effectively, images can actually be superimposed onto the real scene, thus increasing the sense of drama about the passage of time." South of the Border would continue its typical tourist trade and border businesses while adding another layer to the touriscape. This way South of the Border could continue into the future while engaging its past.

Some may see the contrived façade of Mexican culture and offensive nature of the Pedro stereotype as hindrances to any successful historical interpretation at South of the Border. First, to incorporate a serious preservation element at South of the Border would require critically engaging this aspect of the tourist site and the collaboration of those in charge of the commercial aspects of the roadside attraction with trained professionals in the field of public history, museum studies, and historic preservation. Ideally, Pedro could be removed from the billboards and advertisements and be dealt with in the context of the museum. This would not mean that the bordertown flavor of South of the Border would change; it existed for years before Pedro was incorporated. Pedro disappeared from the billboards in Schafer's later years, though he is back in full force today.<sup>425</sup> A reimagined Pedro could even be a way to incorporate a narrative about the changing nature of the Latino population in South Carolina, which is primarily from Mexico. This is a difficult issue because, as chapter three discusses, Pedro says more about the history of South Carolina's exoticization of Mexico than Mexico itself. I am not arguing that the Mexican bordertown theme should be purified from South of the Border's touriscape, only that it could be used as a way to start a conversation about these types of representations. Part of the museum could interpret South of the Border's history with African Americans, American Indians, and Latinos. The collaboration of professionals in the field of museum studies and preservation with those buying and displaying "authentic" souvenirs from other countries could prevent further occurrences like the "colinization figure [sic]," described in chapter three.

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<sup>425</sup> In addition Pedro and the Mexi-speak are prominent features at South of the Border's official website <http://www.pedroland.com/>. The website appear in 2001 after Schafer had passed away.

The “Pedro issue” would be a complex one to tackle within a purely historic space, much less a hybrid one combining historic interpretation and commercial culture.<sup>426</sup> A partnership between the University of South Carolina Department of History and Institute of Southern Studies and South of the Border would be a way to bridge the gap between commercial and historical perspectives. Involving the local schools, which are struggling to meet the needs of their students, may be a way to invigorate interest in both community and education. While interpreting and preserving South of the Border’s history would not be an easy task, looking at it through the lens of the touriscape opens the possibilities of such an intersection. This all would cost money. But South of the Border is based on the green color of money as much as the shades of neon. Schafer’s successes with South of the Border are wedded to his progressive vision and constant innovations.

South of the Border still continues to turn a profit, while Atlantic Beach is in debt and lacks a sound structure of leadership. However, Atlantic Beach offers an important history and distinct identity. While it may be difficult, it is certainly a place worth preserving.

### **Bringing Back the Black Pearl**

The Black Pearl needs new luster. The Bikefest brought in the mobility and energy of the future, but it is only one week out of the year. The Bikefest should be a part of Atlantic Beach’s future, but the town needs an influx of development and a plan with the capital to implement it. Donnell Thompson, Amy Breuing, Sherry

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<sup>426</sup> In today’s museums and preservation sites, there is seldom, if ever, a space of historical interpretation without some form of commerce—from a gift shop or café to a “suggested donation.”

Suttles, Mike Kelly, and others offer an insider/outside coalition that can bring the town into the 21<sup>st</sup> century without erasing its past.

Atlantic Beach could add two things the Grand Strand lacks. The first is historical significance and a place to memorialize the South's complex past of Jim Crow segregation through the perspectives of African Americans. This would fit into the growing popularity and profitability of heritage tourism. Second, because the oceanfront is currently not developed, Atlantic Beach could lead the way in the region with green development mindful of the delicate coastal environment. Going back to the 2001 Comprehensive Plan, the town wants to blend recreational accommodations with heritage. A theater that offers smaller productions that directly relate to the African-American community and green space in the midst of a sea of condos could replace the strip club and drug paraphernalia shop on the highway and provide a distinct look for Atlantic Beach—one that sets it apart from the homogenous look of cookie-cutter development while locating it within the larger tourist economy of the Grand Strand. The space in between the highway and the ocean is prime real estate that should be developed differently than the rest of the Grand Strand to evoke its distinct history and positive vision of the future.

Because Atlantic Beach has not experienced much change since the 1970s, there may be numerous structures dating back to the period of the late-1950s and 1960s that could be restored in some way.<sup>427</sup> In addition to hosting the 2006 Gullah-Geechee Festival, there has been an effort in the twenty-first century to memorialize the town's history. The effort has been led by Sherry Suttles, an Atlantic Beach

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<sup>427</sup> Hurricane Hazel in 1954 certainly destroyed most structures previous to that date.

transplant, current town council member, and founding president of the Atlantic Beach Historical Society.<sup>428</sup> The Atlantic Beach Historical Society successfully fought to erect a historical marker in 2005. The historical society began an oral history project and sponsored events during the annual SunFun Festival. During the 2007 SunFun Festival, the Atlantic Beach Historical Society and Chamber of Commerce hosted a two-day event called “Preserving Memories and Da-De-Da,” which involved folk dancing and a session on developing a historic preservation “master plan.”<sup>429</sup> The historical society should embrace the Atlantic Beach Bikefest, which is a major part of the town’s historical narrative. As I argue in chapter four, the Bikefest, which has been around for almost thirty years, needs to be integrated into the fabric of Atlantic Beach’s history to represent both the change and continuity of southern history and incorporate the younger generation. The rich history of Atlantic Beach is still in motion. The recent legal and economic troubles have countered much of the progress of the Atlantic Beach Historical Society.<sup>430</sup>

The problem is that the vision and the discourse are there, but nothing seems to happen on the ground. In the words of Mike Kelley, grandson of Dr. Gordon Kelly of the original Atlantic Beach Company, in 2006: “We need to stop the rhetoric and take action. We’ve been [talking] now for 40 years.”<sup>431</sup> One of the most important

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<sup>428</sup> Suttles completed the Urban Fellows Program in New York City in 1970 received a M.P.P. in Public Policy at the University of Michigan in 1972. She has worked with the International City-County Management Association, and has been an assistant to the city manager in Oberlin, Ohio and Long Beach, California and various positions as a management consultant, and served on the boards of International City-County Management Association (ICMA) and American Society for Public Administration. (ASPA) before coming to Atlantic Beach.

[http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcas/html/employment/uf\\_alumnibios.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcas/html/employment/uf_alumnibios.shtml) accessed April 8, 2007

<sup>429</sup> The Atlantic Beach Historical Society declared no income or assets in 2007.

<sup>430</sup> The Atlantic Beach Historical Society seems to be defunct or, at least, inactive in 2008.

<sup>431</sup> Issac Bailey, “Amid apathy, hope glimmers in town,” *Sun News* March 26, 2007.

aspects of the touriscape is the continual movement of ideas blended with the tangible products on the ground. The stakeholders of Atlantic Beach—including the residents and those invested in its distinct history and identity—must come together to mobilize progress and save the Black Pearl. The development ban is now lifted in Atlantic Beach. Will a revived touriscape for the twenty-first century emerge?

### **Adding the Sombrero and the Motorcycle: New Icons of a Newer South**

In the spirit of the touriscape, this ending is really a starting point. I conclude with a call for the communities, the commercial developers, the historians, preservationists, and all invested South Carolinians, living inside or outside of the state, to recognize the immensely interesting cultural histories of these tourscales. We need to replace old and outdated icons of southern identity, such as the Confederate flag, with new icons of a Newer South in motion, one in conversation with its past, its present, and its future—and one grounded in geographic location and a sense of place.

South of the Border and Atlantic Beach are by no means ideal or perfect places. They represent the controversies at the heart of southern culture. They are dirty, raunchy, tacky, and old, but they are distinct and important places where future generations can go to better understand the trials and tribulations, the change and the continuity, the inside and the outside, of being southern in the twenty-first century.



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