

Howell's Point—Sunset Harbor

By now, you know this place was not always called Sunset Harbor. Today, Sunset Harbor is a mid-twentieth-century development on the banks of the Lockwood Folly River. Views of the sunset across the river harbor inspired the name, chosen to appeal to potential buyers.

The earliest of maps refers to this area as Howell Point, or sometimes Howell's Point, which persisted into the 1960's.

This also may have been the location of a community known as Gore's Landing that suffered from the dredging necessitated by construction of the Intracoastal Waterway. On early maps one will find the name, Gore's Landing.

This pleasant community, formerly known as Howell's Point, has long been a center of fishing and retirement activities.

World War II was ending, families were being reunited, and with automobiles and road improvements people were beginning to travel to the coastal beaches and communities for rest and relaxation.

One such hamlet was Howell's Point, often referred to as the Point. Much credit is given to D. A. Whitley and his wife, Margaret for the development of the community. They moved here in the mid 1940's when there was only one or two cottages. By 1950 there were 40 or more cottages.

D. A. Whitley was born December 1, 1892 in Durham, NC. Census records, as well as other records, has him living in Iredell and Davie counties, NC, Winston-Salem, NC, Texas, Moore county, NC, Brunswick county, NC and dying in Hampton, Virginia December 21, 1965. He married Margaret V. Beach on November 8, 1933 in Wake County, NC. They had one daughter, Lorraine. He served as a cook during World War I and was sent to France from August, 1918 until June, 1919. He is buried with a military marker in Hampton National Cemetery, Hampton, Virginia.

D. A. (Dennis Arnold) Whitley and family moved to Howell's Point from Baltimore, Maryland. They acquired property in August, 1945 and began construction on their home and a small hotel that adjoined their residence. The hotel building had facilities for taking care of about a dozen guest. It also housed a small store that did an active business in summer. The community needed badly a store as it is was six miles over an impassable road to the nearest point of supply.

It was noted in the September 15, 1948 issue of the State Port Pilot that Mrs. D. A. Whitley and daughter, Lorraine of Howell Point are spending this week in Greensboro,

where Lorraine is entering school on September 20. Lorraine will marry James Judson Richardson on June 15, 1956 in Brunswick County, NC.

On February 20, 1951 the Whitley home and hotel were completely destroyed by an early morning fire. The 3 o'clock fire also destroyed a nearby cottage owned by a Mr. Freeman of High Point, NC. The Whitleys were able to escape with only a small portion of their clothing. The State Port Pilot newspaper article was unsure if the family had any insurance but it is considered certain that the buildings will be replaced as early as possible. Several weeks later the family put a small item in the paper. It read: Word of Appreciation. We wish to thank the many friends and relatives who unsolicitedly came to our assistance when our home and hotel at Howell's Point were destroyed by fire. The sympathy and help in our misfortune earned our undying gratitude. Signed: Mr. and Mrs. D. A. Whitley and Miss Lorraine Whitley.

One month later (March 21, 1951) an article said Howell's Point is now rebuilding. The recent loss of the hotel will be followed by an enlarged facility. The Whitleys are going right on living there and plan an immediate rebuilding on a larger scale.

In June, 1951, W. D. Boling and associates of Asheboro, NC recently acquired the Tom Clemmons land consisting of 365 acres of land with long frontages on both the waterway and Lockwood Folly River. Practically all the land is high and dry with no marsh. The community is undoubtedly earmarked for substantial growth.

The purchaser has been working at a project to develop the area as a resort. They plan to spend around \$20,000.00 in construction.

Mr. Boling has just completed the remodeling of the old Scout house with eight rooms and a bath. He plans the construction of eight to twelve nice small cottages in the near future.

An upstate building contractor will build homes and sell them complete with the lots on which they are situated. Mr. Boling stated that he has a number up state residents coming down in the near future with a view to buying and building. He is certain that several of them will buy.

Earlier in the month eight building lots were sold to mostly to High Point and Asheboro interests. Most of them plan to build immediately along with others who have recently bought lots.

Mr. A. E. Inman of the Shallotte Lumber and Builders Supply Company said: "Howell's Point is going to be one of the growingest places in Brunswick. During the past year (1950) I have sold more people at Howell's Point than at anywhere else along the coast."

May 1, 1946 The State Port Pilot: Progress Comes to Howell's Point. Development of one of Brunswick County's most interesting seaside location hampered by bad roads. It reads,

"Taking into account the fact that its road receives absolutely no attention from either the county or the Highway Commission, the Howell's Point community has made more real progress than any other section of Brunswick during the past few years. "

Taking into account the fact that there was only one home at this place six or seven years ago (about 1940), the many well built and painted homes there now afford a pleasing surprise."

"In addition to the many Brunswick people who have property interests at Howell's Point, the place has gained quite a number of fine citizens from other sections of the state."

"By those who know the place, Howell's Point has always been rated as the No. 1 fishing and hunting spot in Brunswick. On the north bank of Lockwoods Folly River at its junction with the inland waterway, it has unsurpassed fishing and oystering grounds. In winter the deep woods surrounding the beautiful little community are fine for deer, bear, wild turkey, squirrel, and other hunting. Up to the present time both hunters and visitors to the community have been unable to secure accommodations of any sort. The building of the small hotel will be a distinct boost to such people."

"The matter of no road is a sore point with Mr. and Mrs. Whitley and other residents of the community. The place would undoubtedly build up very rapidly if it could get anything at all in the shape of a road. As it is now, it has neither mail service nor transportation facilities to school. Children who live out there have to board in Southport if they are to go to school."

One year later (May 28, 1947) the property owners pitch in on road repair to make the road passable. The road to Howell's Point from the hard surface between Southport and Supply to the Point is now credited with being in the best shape that it has ever been. This condition is largely the result of efforts of residents and property owners.

The highway forces scraped the road to within one mile of the Point and from there the local citizens took over with volunteer labor, trucks and some hired help. By fall it is hoped that the highway commission will see the need of taking over the road.

The paving of this road should open the way for additional hundreds of people who delight in a nice, quiet place with the best of inside fishing and oystering. With people going there year-round, Howell's Point promises to be a tremendous attraction if it only has a good road.

But just how long will it take to get the road paved?

On December 20, 1950 the State Port Pilot had another article about the road. It read:

"They continue to get the road to Howell's Point better. We understand it will be paved, come next spring or summer. That beautiful setting with its choice fishing waters at the

mouth of the Lockwood Folly River is really destined to blossom out and grow one of these days.”

March 21, 1951: The road, always the worst handicap the growing community has had to contend with, has been graded and is reportedly ready for surfacing all the way from its junction with Route 130. (This is now Highway 211, the Supply-Southport Road).

Today the paved road from Highway 211, the Supply-Southport Road, to the marsh at the fire station is the original road to the Point. There was a road through Winding River between Lennon’s Crossroads to Zion Hill and was called the mail route. It was constructed, as the name implies, to deliver the mail.

In December, 1952 Mrs. Whitley said, “Fishing continues to be good with visitors continuing to use the dirt road.”

“With the road from 130 serving a large number of farm families and the sizeable number of year-round homes at the Point, the residents think they have cause to feel that they were badly discriminated against in the State road building program.”

“The earth road to the Point is pretty fair. Still it is felt that on the basis of population alone, not counting the hundreds of visitors, Howell’s Point is deserving of a black top road.”

Mrs. Whitley said the community will be able to take care of a considerable number of Sunny Point workers. In addition to a number of available homes, she and her husband have 19 rooms available at the club house and another building.

Mrs. Whitley, in May, 1953, said the good sand-clay road for the three miles from Route 130 is contributing a lot to new house construction and the increasing number of visitors for a day or a few days of fishing.

Around 50 small cottages for rent by the day, week or month are finding good demand. In addition, the community has quite a number of year-round residents.

The Whitleys established themselves as the first real permanent residents in the mid 1940’s—a time when there was no year-round road for transportation. The Whitleys had to board their daughter in Southport while she was attending school. The couple have watched the gradual conversion of the goat path into an all-weather road with a lot of mixed feelings. While watching the road improvement they have also seen a lot of new neighbors coming into the community.

By March, 1955 it was reported by Ralph Clemmons that the public seems to be coming to Howell’s Point instead of right on the coast. There are 11 new homes and living quarters already and there is a café where the public can get hot meals at any time. There is a general merchandise store for cold drinks, fishing tackle and anything the

vacationist may desire. There are boats and cottages for rent and for those who do not catch any fish Mr. Brown has fish, oysters and clams for sale.

On April 13, 1955, Attorney S. Bunn Frink said that Howell's Point has come back with more houses than it had before the October storm. Nearly every house was destroyed in that storm. That storm was Hurricane Hazel which struck on October 15, 1954. Mr. Frink said there are 40 or 50 homes, small but substantial. They are not just rebuilt structures, many of them are new.

What about the road project? Did it finally get paved?

The State Port Pilot, in the March 13, 1957 issue, reported that the paving project nears completion. It will finish this week, according to D. A. Whitley. He was in Southport the day before and told the Pilot's editor "that this paving is a project that residents of the community have been endeavoring to obtain for many years."

At last, D. A. Whitley and his wife, Margaret, can drive on a paved road to their home and hotel. It took almost 20 years to go from a sand-dirt road to a paved one. And even today, May 2, 2023, the road is being widened and resurfaced.

In 1910, Charles Henry Smith compiled a map of Brunswick County, NC. He shows a road leading from just above the marsh and along Mercer's Mill Pond to Mosquito Branch and on as far as St. James.

A former resident, who grew up at the Point, recalled that this road was used ONLY for bootlegging. She said her grandfather and several cousins were bootleggers and also that she had a 16-year old cousin that was shot in a family feud.

I would say that for every article in the State Port Pilot about the road going in to Howell's Point was an article about the good fishing and oysters that abounded there.

W. B. Keziah founded the State Port Pilot in 1928. His talent as a reporter far exceeded his skill as a businessman. He was southeastern Brunswick County's biggest promoter of fishing and tourism. He wrote the Rovin' Reporter column which appeared each week at the bottom of page one. He had contacts in all the communities and would "hitch a ride" once a week to collect the news from his correspondents. I recently spoke with one of these "correspondents." Albert Parker said that during the week he kept a notebook and Keziah would stop by his store weekly to collect his notes.

Keziah had connections to all the newspapers in North Carolina and beyond the state and he was always inviting publishers and reporters to come down to Southport and that he would show them a good time.

Keziah touted Howell's Point as one of the most favored fishing and oystering points on the coast.

In his October 20, 1948 column he wrote about Jerry Ball, public relations man for the Standard Oil Company, who showed up one afternoon in Southport.

Jerry Ball was supposed to be in Wilmington at a meeting of newspaper circulation managers. He said, "I am supposed to be there shaking hands with them, but I just had to come down here on a little matter of business."

What was this little matter of business? He had been told about the Howell's Point folks catching oysters, putting them in pens and feeding them corn meal.

So, Keziah said, "We may as well go down to Howell's Point."

Arriving at the destination, Jerry was straightway shown the oyster pens, well stocked with oysters. But it was not feeding time for them just then and nobody was going to lug a sack of corn meal down to the pens just to convince a doubting Thomas.

As an alternative, host D. A. Whitley provided a rowboat with an outboard motor, a water bucket full of shrimp for bait and a man to handle the boat and motor. In two minutes there were at a spot where 18 other boats, all in a radius of 100 yards surrounded them. When they pulled up their anchor, they found they had a wash tub plus a water bucket, full of spots, croakers, whiting, bluefish and flounders.

It was past time for giving the oysters in the pens their daily ration of corn meal. However, Mr. Whitley set up the two visitors (Ball and Keziah) to an oyster roast and that was just as good.

Mr. Ball said to Keziah, "I've heard plenty of fish tales from you and believe most of them but I can't swallow those oysters."

October 30, 1946. Fine Fishing at Howells Point. D. A. Whitley, operator of the hotel, brought in 190 spots and Virginia mullets, all of which he had caught alone on the morning tide. His wife stated he had been out on Monday and that trip he brought in 195 spots and 45 other fish. His catch on this trip ran to almost a bushel and a half and he said that the hardest part of the work was keeping the hook baited and taking the fish off.

The week before C. A. Roberts, son Ray, and friends from Kannapolis spent part of the week and on one of their fishing trips they got over 200 pounds of red drum, spots, trout, and flounders.

And, by week's end D. A. Harrington of Wadesboro and a party of friends were with the Whitley's. Fishing only a short while Sunday morning they caught over a half bushel of fine fish.

In June, 1947, Keziah wrote that the road was in fair condition and that as a result of this accessibility an increased number of both local and upstate sportsmen and commercial fishermen were coming to the Point. Twenty or more good rowboats and outboards are

kept there and others are brought in and out on trailers. Also, locals would make their way down for a night of gigging flounders—for sale and their own use.

Over the year Keziah continues to report about fishing at Howell's Point. In December 3, 1952, D. A. Whitley brought in 10 large red drum, six black drum and several nice speckled trout. The day before, O. N. Watson and a friend from Wallace caught 30 beautiful big speckled trout while surf fishing.

May 27, 1953. The Fishing is Good at Howell Point. Mrs. Whitley said they were having a very good sport fishing season now. Visitors are getting some nice trout, bluefish, and large red-fin croakers.

April 13, 1955. Mr. and Mrs. John McDowell, residents, caught about 40 fine sheephead with hook and line.

March 13, 1957. Sportsmen are beginning to make some pretty good catches of whiting, croakers and that spots and sheephead fishing should be especially active in a short time. Several nice catches of drum have been made in the past week. Mr. Whitley said that the folks at his guest house recently had made some nice catches of fish. He said that the fishing will get better every day from now on.

Howell's Point was not only a fishing community at the end of the dirt road than ran from Highway 130 (now Highway 211) to the Lockwood Folly River. It was also a community of farmers who grew tobacco, corn, sweet potatoes, and raised hogs and large gardens to feed their families.

Janice Rivenbark Singletary grew up at the Point. She recalls living in four different places. The first was in the fish shack, later to become the Fishing Clubhouse. Two other places were along Grand River Drive. And a fourth place that she could not recall at the time I interviewed her. She recalled working in tobacco at the Hoyd Lancaster farm and still remembers having to put in tobacco on July 4th. The tobacco barn is still standing along the roadside.

These farmers and fishermen have contributed a lot to the community's growth and improvement. First, and foremost, they were responsible for improving the road from a "goat path" to a hard- surfaced road.

Ralph and Dewey Clemmons gave the land for the first church building at the Point. This was the Howell's Point Mission, begun in the 1950's as missionary circle meetings in the homes of several individuals. Mr. Whitley and Mr. and Mrs. S. D. Thompson opened their homes for the meetings. Men from Antioch Baptist Church and the community constructed the building.

This area for years was mainly a summer resort and without the aid and support of a number of people having summer homes here, the Mission probably would not have

survived. Rev. W. R. Lingle was the first pastor of the Mission. He said, in a State Port Pilot article, "I see great prospects for Howell's Point as it is the fastest growing resort on the coast." He was a permanent resident and said he expects a large Sunday School when the vacationers start arriving.

The Mission was renamed Howell's Point Baptist Church on February 25, 1968 with Rev. Lindsey Clemmons as pastor. On August 25, 1968, the church was struck by lightning and destroyed by fire. Within six months a new brick sanctuary was completed and paid for. The first service was held on March 3, 1969.

On August, 1980, the cornerstone for a new church building was laid. The name of Howell's Point Baptist Church to Sunset Harbor Baptist Church was changed on October 25, 1981.

There was a groundbreaking ceremony for a parsonage on February 10, 2002.

The groundbreaking for a new building—Family Life Center—was held on January 30, 2021. With a seating capacity of 300, it will be used by the church and, as a place for community dinners.

Today the only other church at the Point is Faith Community Chapel. Behind the church is a cemetery. Today there are approximately 20 graves—the earliest burial being Ruth Marie Thompson in 1994.

A portion of the area is named Cox's Landing which borders the Lockwood Folly River and the location of a former church and the Cox's Landing Cemetery. The cemetery, located at the site of the church, dates back to the mid 1770's and the last burial was about 1928. Alvah Cox (1906 - 2005) said that the last ones buried there were Raleigh Lewis and Edmond Galloway. Directions to the cemetery: take Cox's Landing Road .6 mile to trailer on left of George Miller. Go to fence in back of trailers. Walk down fence 100 steps. Turn Left on 1st fire lane and travel 300 steps. Cemetery lies on right. Oak tree marked with an X and a C. One wooden marker is visible. Other graves were identifiable by sunken areas. The cemetery is not enclosed but large live oaks act as a boundary. John Clouser with the Division of Archives and History noted that progress is encroaching on the cemetery.

Another cemetery nearby is the Lancaster-Galloway Cemetery, located on lots 44 & 45 in Station 7 of River Run Plantation. It is on a bluff across the river from Varnamtown. Some 25 people of the Bell, Galloway, Lancaster, Simmons, Varnam, and Lockamy families are buried there.

A joint volunteer fire department—Sunset Harbor and Zion Hill was founded September 11, 1979. They see the community as their top priority and they aim to be an integral part of keeping the residents safe. A small park, a representation of both communities, adjoins the building.

In June, 1988, Bill Cox told a reporter that businesses are few and far between, but in one of the two area gas station/grocers, there is a sense of old-time "general store" friendliness. He was speaking about James Carter.

In the 1970's James Carter's little establishment was for many years the one source of gas and a limited supply of groceries. Mr. Carter said, "Don't get so much business anymore, now that folks can go to the big supermarket in Southport. But, we enjoy living here and talking to people who come in."

His place is still the only one that offers a relaxed, chatty atmosphere, where you can catch up on the local gossip.

James Carter died in 2000 and his wife, Flowers Hardin died in 1998. Both are buried in the Faith Community Chapel Cemetery.

The only convenient store/gas station now (2023) is the May Way at the corner of Sunset Harbor Road and Swain Street. Previously it was named Kopps Kwik Stop.

For some, who walked on the "wild side" of the law, Howell's Point was a place for some men to construct a still to produce moonshine liquor.

On August 22, 1945, the State Port Pilot reported that James Sam Brown and Bill Munsey were arrested at their still near Howell's Point.

Rural Policeman and Alcoholic Tax Unit Officers Gray and Smithwick captured a 150 gallon submarine type whiskey still in full operation. With the still they took eight barrels of mash and twenty gallons of nontax paid whiskey, which was destroyed.

The men were arrested and carried before U. S. Commissioner James B. Swails who bound them over to the Fall term of Federal Court in Wilmington under bond of \$500 each. At last report this week neither of the men had given bond and both were still in jail in Wilmington.

On August 7, 1957 a raid was made where a liquor still was being constructed. The officers located the still site near Howell's Point. The raid resulted in the arrest of four Wilmington men and another from Supply. A 1952 model pickup truck and a 1950 model auto were confiscated. The officers destroyed three 900-gallon distilleries and several mash boxes. Curtis Thomas Long of Supply was among those charged with possession of materials intended for use in violating Internal Revenue Laws. (I checked my family tree and found that Curtis Long was my 4th cousin.)

Juke joints were popular hangouts for local area people to socialize after a week's work. Sometimes referred to as "community rooms" they catered to the rural work force.

The owners made extra money selling groceries or moonshine to patrons.

There was food, music, dancing, gambling, drinking, and sometimes murder.

The March 1, 1951 edition of the State Port Pilot had an article telling of the death of Chester William Bell. His death resulted from cuts and loss of blood from a knife wound. His attacker was Henry William Davis. Both men lived on the Howell's Point Road.

On Saturday night both men were at a juke joint two and a half miles down the road from Highway 130 (now 211). There was said to be drinking and quarrels arose. Davis drew a pocket knife and slashed at Bell. The point of the knife caught Bell in the throat just below the left ear, the gash extended across his throat and shoulder to the right arm cavity. Bell was credited with not having had a weapon of any sort. Bell died immediately after being admitted to Doshier Memorial Hospital.

Davis was held without bond awaiting an inquest hearing at the Courthouse. On March 14, 1951 he was held for the grand jury at the May term and bond was set at \$1,500.

The inquest is said to be have been the largest attended of any in many years. The court room was packed, as were the aisles and hallway at the rear of the room.

But what is it that attracted people to Sunset Harbor? Why consider Sunset Harbor as a place to retire?

Nestled among the spreading live oaks and gnarled cedars on a bluff at the confluence of the Intracoastal Waterway and the Lockwood Folly River are many small residences. Most of the streets are still dirt and the sandy yard are filled with stinging nettles and cactus.

Most residents lived in mobile homes, many attractive doublewides, and a great many are retirees.

Today, 2023, these retirees are building larger homes—some are two-stories in height. And yet, within this tranquil spot a few mobile homes remain.

Many of the residents were avid fishermen, a group that organized the Brunswick County Fishing Club in 1971. This offered fellowship among the anglers—residents and non-residents.

In 1975 the club built its own clubhouse on the graceful curve of the river and had provided the community's chief social life. The property and a small building was purchased from Roy Boling, developer, in the early 1970's.

In 1988, the club opened the clubhouse every third Saturday, May through September, to serve dinners to anyone who wanted to come. My husband and I attended many of the dinners and later became a member of the club even though we were not fishermen.

The traditional fish fry was held in October when prizes are awarded in the annual fishing club.

What were the origins of the fishing club? In the 1985 edition of the club's annual publication, a historical piece discusses the origins.

"The subject was often kicked around on Saturday morning at the club. Perhaps it was the natural result of saltwater sports fishermen exchanging ideas about their sport, or it might have been the upshot of a few who dreamed of a place where they might relax after a day of fishing, and then there were those who visualized an exclusive Florida-style yacht club."

Whatever the motivations, the fishing club has not only fulfilled some individuals' dreams, it has been an active proponent in the improvement of fishing.

A proud accomplishment of the Club was when a double-ramp access to the inlet was completed in the summer of 1985. The existing ramp was renovated and a second ramp and parking area was added by the N. C. Wildlife Resources Commission. This was a joint effort of the state and the Brunswick County Fishing Club. A newspaper article and picture is in the September-October, 1985 Supplement to The Brunswick Beacon.

A popular mode of transportation around the Point was golf carts. People used them to take garbage to the green boxes, visit friends and run to the neighborhood store. Some people even ride them to church. In 1990 it is estimated that about 80 percent of the people in the community have golf carts.

A resident, Marvin Fletcher, was given 2 tickets by the North Carolina Highway Patrol for driving around on the streets. But now in November, 1990 he shouldn't have to worry about the Highway Patrol giving him any more tickets when he cruises around Sunset Harbor in his golf cart.

The state and the golf cart owners apparently came to terms concerning the use of the carts within the community. The agreement will allow residents and visitors to continue driving their golf carts as long as they keep them off state roads and only cross state roads at specified points marked with signs.

Doug Bowers, division engineer with the North Carolina Department of Transportation said signs along those roads designating areas as golf carts crossings should be popping up soon.

Around 1990 there was talk about incorporating this quiet, waterway community into an official town.

On October 31, 1991 a meeting was held at Sunset Harbor Baptist Church. State Representative David Redwine conducted the meeting. He explained the incorporation process to a group of about 60 permanent and part-time residents.

Residents will decide such issues as town boundaries, taxes, a proposed budget and public services before he would take their request to the North Carolina General

Assembly. Mr. Redwine suggested it would be 1993 before the process would be completed and the request be presented.

Also, this would require registered voters to decide the issue in a referendum as a condition of becoming a town.

The proposed boundaries would run from the Atlantic Waterway and Lockwood Folly River to the edge of River Run Plantation and the old Swain property.

Discussion centered around property owners who are registered in other counties not being able to vote on taxes they must pay, possible annexation by Long Beach, police protection, and that River Run would be too expensive to maintain and repair the subdivision's roads and provide services and still keep the tax rate low.

While area residents continue to debate the merits of incorporating, some members of the community continue to vigorously pursue that goal.

On May 21, 1992, approximately 141 property owners met at the Sunset Harbor-Zion hill fire station. The session was called by a new loosely organized group of incorporation opponents who call themselves The Committee for Fair Government.

Spokesman Sam Royal said that all 141 returned ballots passed out during the meeting. Of that number, 130 opposed incorporation and 11 favored it. Of those present who are eligible to vote in a referendum on the subject, 51 opposed incorporation and 9 favored it.

On July 11, 2002, the Wilmington Star News had this headline: Sunset Harbor on the way to incorporation.

A House bill for the charter request moved up in the North Carolina General Assembly. The proposed incorporation covers the area between Beach View and the Intracoastal Waterway.

The county Board of Elections certified the names of 145 registered voters that signed the petitions that went to the General Assembly last month. The number of residents in Sunset Harbor is estimated at 400, although many are only in the community on weekends and summers. Sunset Harbor has 300 registered voters.

Below are the town boundaries included in the charter request that was sent to the North Carolina General Assembly.

"ARTICLE II. CORPORATE BOUNDARIES.

"Section 2.1. **Town Boundaries.** Until modified in accordance with the law, the boundaries of the Town of Sunset Harbor shall be as follows:

BEGINNING at a point in the run of Mercer's Mill Pond Creek where said run of Mercer's Mill Pond Creek is intercepted by the southern boundary of River Run Plantation, as the same is shown on plats of River Run Plantation recorded in the Brunswick County

Registry, as extended to the west; thence running eastwardly with the southern boundary of River Run Plantation as the same is shown on plats of River Run Plantation recorded in the Brunswick County Registry; thence across Sunset Harbor Road (State Road #1112) to the western boundaries of the Old Swain Property; thence southwardly with the western boundary of the Old Swain Property to a point where said extended line intersects with the boundary line of Lockwood Folly Township and Smithville Township in the U. S. Intracoastal Waterway, thence westwardly with the boundary line of Lockwood's Folly Township and Smithville Township in the U.S. Intracoastal Waterway, back to the run of Mercer's Mill Pond Creek; thence continuing with the run of Mercer's Mill Pond Creek, to a point in the run of Mercer's Mill Pond Creek where said run of Mercer's Mill Pond Creek is intercepted by the southern boundary of River Run Plantation, as the same is shown on plats of River Run Plantation recorded in the Brunswick County Registry, as extended to the west, the place and point of beginning.

You know what happened. You're still an unincorporated community.

When did the name change from Howell's Point to Sunset Harbor?

Howell's Point, now Sunset Harbor, developed into a residential community during the 1950's and 1960's and since then has remained a scenic, laid-back village.

In the Register of Deeds Office at the Complex is a survey map for the Howell's Point Development dated April 2, 1951. Also, a survey map for the Sunset Harbor Development, a subdivision near Howell's Point dated July 14, 1966.

Primitive or pleasant, Sunset Harbor is a good place to live, according to Bill Cox. His brother bought a lot in the early 1970's and reported that it was a primitive place, complete with snakes. But when he retired from teaching and made his move here in 1975, he found the quiet atmosphere and good gardening soil decidedly to his liking.

During the 1940's and 1950's families would go on outings—usually Saturday or Sunday afternoons—to the beach or to one of the many landings along the Lockwood Folly River. Several families, including mine, would go to Howell Point. I remember they would pick up oysters and then after gathering dry wood would build a fire to roast the oysters. Sometimes they would catch fish, clean, and fry them in an iron skillet over an open fire. Cornbread was fried just before the fish. The women brought mason jars filled with sweet tea and a homemade cake would be the dessert. It was on one such occasion—a 4th of July, 1949 family gathering—here at Howell Point that the news reached my great Aunt Virginia that her husband had been killed in an accident on Highway 701 near Bentonville, NC. He drove a Greyhound bus and a truck collided with him and immediately erupted into flames. The family recalled that she was out in the water and fainted immediately upon being told by her brother about the accident. They had been married about 1 ½ years.

Lindsey Clemmons, Sr. hosted an oyster roast at Howell's Point for the faculty of the Bolivia school on Saturday afternoon, January 15, 1941.

A cousin, Charles Clemmons, always remembers it as Howell's Point.

He said," because I probably went there with my parents more often when I was little and they called it that. They loved it there. I'm certain of that now because it was a big part of their family life when they were young. Daddy (Moody Clemmons) had a small house there for several years before he passed away, as did my Uncle John Smith. We visited there almost every year until they died. Uncle John loved to come there, despite the long trip from Alabama. For him and Daddy it almost was like a pilgrimage.

I really can't say I liked it that much—too hot and too many gnats, sandflies, mosquitoes, and sand spurs. My most indelible memory is the oyster shell incident when I was about six or seven. We always swam in the river when we were kids. I don't know how smart that was, but as a kid it was pretty exciting. I recall that no one warned me about oyster shells, and of course I sliced my foot open on one as I frolicked in the brackish water. At that age, unbelievable pain! Fortunately, Aunt Virginia was there, and as a nurse, she knew exactly what to do. Iodine! Pain on pain! I survived, of course, but only confirmed my dislike for the place. Ironically, I have since grown to love roasted oysters.

Now, of course, I look back and see my parents laughing and enjoying time with their families. And now I'd give anything to be back there again with all of them."

The part-time residents, retirees and natives who populate the community know exactly why it's known as Sunset Harbor. It's the waterfront that defines life at Sunset Harbor. On any given evening you can see many of them sitting in golf carts and on the pier near the boat ramp watching the sun go down and reaffirming the very reason they chose to live here.

Written by Gwen Clemmons Causey

May 5, 2023

Presented to the Brunswick County Fishing Club, Inc

June 10, 2023

List of Early Residents/Location

- 1946 Dennis Arnold (A.D.) Whitley, Margaret & Lorraine, Baltimore, MD
 Mr. & Mrs. Ray Roberts, Kannapolis, NC
 Mr. & Mrs. C. A. Roberts, Gastonia, NC
 Mr. & Mrs. Freeman, High Point, NC
 Mr. & Mrs. Glenn Hannah, Red Springs, NC
 Mr. & Mrs. R. B. Babbington, Gastonia, NC
 Rev. Clemmons, Reidsville, NC
- 1947 H. L. Long
 Ralph Clemmons
 Dewey Clemmons
 Elwood Clemmons
- 1951 Mr. & Mrs. W. J. Beach
 Mr. & Mrs. Minton Beach
 Mts. Fannie Moore
 J. B. Jones, Greensboro, NC
 J. K. Whitley
 Claude Roberts, Kannapolis, NC
 Pat Glass, Kannapolis, NC
 J. O. Love, Red Springs, NC
 D. E. Dew, Red Springs, NC
 Leonard Ward, Asheboro, NC
 Mr. Brown, Clarkton, NC
- 1952 Heber Green, Fayetteville, NC

Mr. & Mrs. O. R. Gravely

Mr. & Mrs. J. W. Atkins

Mr. & Mrs. C. A. Atkins

Coley D. Wilson

1953 J. L. Murrow, High Point, NC

1955 9 permanent residents

No Date Charles Ross, Landis, NC

Mr. McLaine, Kannapolis, NC

Alvah Cox

1983 Mr. & Mrs. Wilmer Harper