



## Coastal Connection: Opening U.S. 17 in Georgia

Though the cooling breezes and beaches of the Golden Isles had attracted regional visitors for decades, the building of the Atlantic Coastal Highway from Calais, Maine, to Miami, Florida, transformed local tourism. The completion of U.S. 17 made this area of Georgia accessible by paved roads to thousands of motorists travelling along the coast.

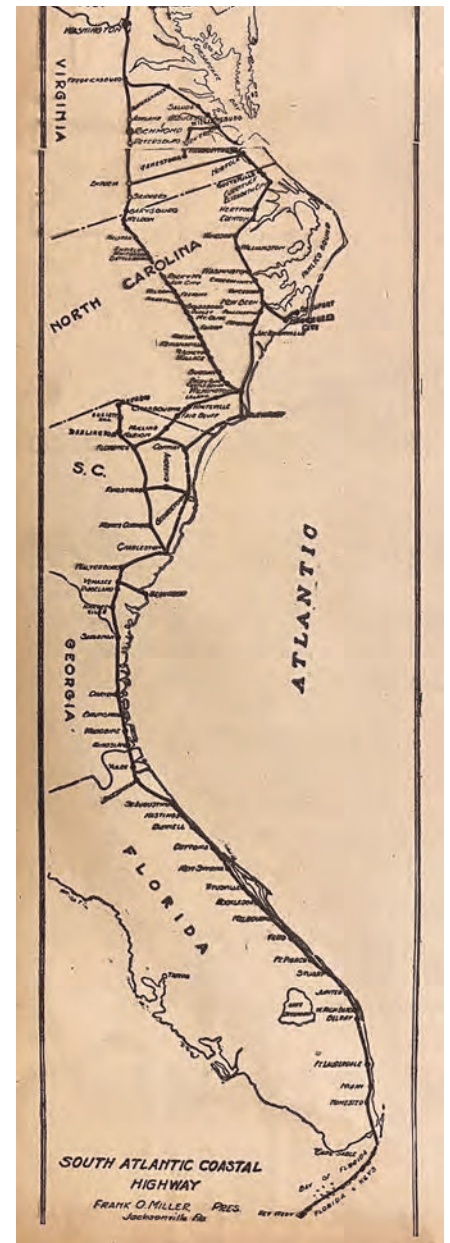
Construction of the Georgia section began in 1924. As the project neared completion, civic leaders in Brunswick started working on a plan to beautify local stretches of the road. As reported in *The Brunswick Pilot* on April 15, 1927, the state landscape engineer would be asked to develop a plan that could be executed with assistance

from the Brunswick Women's Club. The highway near Savannah was already being planted with "palms, lilies, and other flowering plants." The road through Georgia was officially opened at a ceremony attended by 3,000 people in the Liberty County town of Midway on October 27, 1927; however, another celebration was held nine months later in Glynn County.

On July 11, 1928, the completed Georgia section was turned over to the president of the Atlantic Coastal Highway, Frank O. Miller, at an impressive, though rain-drenched, ceremony, held at the original County Casino on St. Simons Island. Unfortunately, as described in the July 13th edition of *The Brunswick Pilot*, the schedule of afternoon activities was curtailed due to stormy weather and high

seas. Two races were held at the St. Simons pier for "prawn boats" owned by the Portuguese fishing community, but races for smaller vessels were cancelled. Activities at the Sea Island Beach Casino were held despite the rain. These included a "Parade and Revue" of regional beauty queens, swimming competitions for adults and children, a diving exhibition, and dancing in the evening.

The July 13th *Pilot* also announced the opening of passenger bus service on U.S. 17 between Savannah and Jacksonville with a stop in Brunswick. Owned by the Coastal Transport Company, a subsidiary of Sea Island Company, the new



line was described as putting Brunswick "on the main line between north and south travel."

This month's images from the Coastal Georgia Historical Society archives show a Brunswick *Pilot* map of the southern half of the Coastal Highway and an early postcard of the Sea Island Casino, where many of the celebratory events took place.