

# MATHEWES FERRY

## Path to A Road

By Heather Lyman

As one of Mount Pleasant's few North South roads, Mathis Ferry carries an average of 9,500 cars a day. Bikers and runners take advantage of its sidewalk. With dozens of grand, moss-covered oaks curling overhead, it captures the beauty of the Lowcountry. For those of us living and working along Mathis Ferry Road, it quickly becomes a daily part of our lives, but have you considered how many others have traveled its path over the years? Have you ever really thought about its history?

Looking at the historical evidence, Mathis Ferry Road is approximately 300 years old. It appears to have emerged during pre-colonial days as a wide Indian path: an access road between the early Indian village, near what is now Boone Hall, and the harbor.

What is known for certain is that a document calling for the building of the road was drafted as early as 1700. An extremely successful merchant from London, Captain Anthony Mathewes, moved to the Lowcountry in the 1680's establishing several homes and plantations on the peninsula and east of the Cooper River. And while he acquired vast land and wealth, he became known for the fact that he piloted the first ferry to connect East Cooper with Charles Towne, aptly called "Captain Mathewes' ferry."

The actual road was constructed as a "common highway," originally 16 feet wide, to connect the old Georgetown stage route to Captain Mathewes' ferry. In the mid-1700's, Mathewes' Ferry Road (as it was originally named) was a functioning "highway" for use by all who lived or traveled east of the "Wandow River." A grand plantation and shipyard, at present-day Hobcaw, and the plantation home of Charles Pinckney, which has recently been restored and opened for tours just off of Long Point Road, were some of the largest in the area, necessitating frequent use of the road.

As time passed, the name of the road was shortened to "Mathis Ferry." It has been designated a State Scenic Byway to be preserved and admired as a historic treasure. With care for the existing tree canopy and new trees planed by the I'On Company, it can survive for generations after we are gone.

**Suggested Reading:** Miles, Suzannah Smith, *Writings of the Past*. King's Highway Publications, 1996.

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