



The Historic Town of Atlantic Beach, South Carolina

717 30th Avenue South
Atlantic Beach, South Carolina 29582

PRESS RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACT:

Linda Cheatham, Interim Town Manager
843- 663-2284

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Atlantic Beach Historic District placed on the National Register of Historic Places

The Town of Atlantic Beach, South Carolina is pleased to announce that the Atlantic Beach Historic District has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places, the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. The historic district includes the entire Town of Atlantic Beach, bordered roughly by 29th and 32nd Avenues to the north and south, and South Ocean Boulevard and Wiley Avenue to the east and west. The Atlantic Beach Historic District recognizes 72 properties within the Town which have retained their structure and character for over 50 years and have significantly contributed to the Town's history. [National Register of Historic Places - Weekly List 1.24.2025](#).

The Atlantic Beach Historic District retains the "original circulation patterns and public access to the beach, informed by segregation, and the strong form and patterns," established by founder George Tyson during its original development period in the 1930s, according to the nomination submission.

The statement of the nomination's significance shares:

Atlantic Beach Historic District is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: Black and Entertainment/Recreation. The historical built environment, including residential, commercial, and recreational buildings, bears witness to the ingrained custom of segregation in South Carolina. More importantly, the environment was shaped by the successful efforts of Blacks to thrive, prosper, and enjoy themselves in an otherwise oppressive world. Established ninety years ago, in 1934, Atlantic Beach was one of the only oceanside recreational sites open to Blacks in South Carolina during Jim Crow segregation. Atlantic Beach was governed and owned by Blacks throughout the period of significance. Today, Atlantic Beach is the only remaining African American owned and government oceanfront municipality in the United States.

The Atlantic Beach Historic District nomination was achieved through a collaboration between the Atlantic Beach Historic Committee, Horry County Historic Preservation Commission, Horry County Planning and Zoning, and Chronicle Heritage.

ABOUT THE HISTORIC TOWN OF ATLANTIC BEACH, SOUTH CAROLINA

Atlantic Beach, South Carolina, fondly known as *The Black Pearl*, is a historically rich African American community in Horry County, South Carolina. Dividing the Town of North Myrtle Beach along the Grand Strand, Atlantic Beach is the only African American owned and governed beach municipality in the country.

October 11th, 2024 marked the 90th anniversary of the establishment of Atlantic Beach, founded by George Tyson, when he purchased the first tract of land along the ocean front to provide residences for the "colored workers" who served the white establishments along the Grand Strand. The first tract was called Atlantic Beach. Mr. Tyson later purchased an additional 47 acres, referred to as Pearl Beach, to expand the community.

The Black Hawk Night Club on Atlantic Beach's oceanfront became a popular entertainment venue, drawing visitors and residents. The community grew and Atlantic Beach became a vibrant ocean front destination. This storied journey includes the booming days of the 1940's-50's when African Americans came from all over to enjoy "The Pearl", including many prominent R&B singers of the time. These African American men and women developed a new community - created businesses, built homes, organized governance and invited others to visit them. Atlantic Beach, a fully segregated beach community with physical barriers on the north and south ends, grew and flourished becoming one of the most popular vacation destinations for African Americans.

Challenges to these glory days were varied. In 1954 Hurricane Hazel in 1954 destroyed many of the wood structures along the ocean front. In the 1960s desegregation destroyed the identity with the "Black Pearl" as African Americans left Atlantic Beach for other destinations they were not allowed to visit earlier. This loss of visitors led to disinvestment in Atlantic Beach. In 1969 when surrounding beaches joined under the umbrella of North Myrtle Beach, Atlantic Beach and Pearl Beach were incorporated into the Town of Atlantic Beach. Even with continued physical barriers between the communities, economic challenges, and independent governing bodies, Atlantic Beach has been sustained as a historic African American owned and governed community for 90 years.