

Before WWII Silver Lake Harbor was a wide, shallow tidal creek. Older islanders still refer to the harbor by its traditional name, Cockle Creek (or just “the Creek”). Although the Creek was only 3-4 feet deep, it was as wide as it is today. Then, as now, the harbor was connected to the sound by the “Ditch” (the narrow inlet adjacent to the old Coast Guard Station/North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching).

Two narrow streams (or “guts” as islanders called them) flowed from the Creek toward the bald beach. Most likely, the term “gut” dates to at least the 18<sup>th</sup> century. According to a Virginia Historic Preservation document\* a creek on Daingerfield Island, Virginia, “was originally mapped as a ‘gutt,’ a term used for a slow-moving, marshy body of water. The gutt separated the island from the mainland.”

On Ocracoke, the two streams, the Big Gut (or Aunt Winnie’s Gut, so named for Winnie Blount, who lived nearby) and the Little Gut, effectively divided Ocracoke village into two main areas (Down Point, the area that includes Springer’s Point and the lighthouse; and Around Creek, the area that includes Howard Street, the present-day Methodist Church, and the Community Square area).

The Little Gut flowed through the village about where Hwy 12 is now, and the Big Gut was parallel to it, just southwest of the old Odd Fellows Lodge/Island Inn. Both guts were filled in by the Navy in 1942 when they dredged the harbor to accommodate their vessels.

A friendly rivalry developed between Creekers and Pointers that continues to some extent even to this day.

Eventually simple foot bridges were built across the guts in several places.



## Bridge over Gut

Although some of the bridges were eventually widened to accommodate horse-drawn carts, most of the bridges were only built for foot traffic, .



Bridge over gut

The two guts led to some interesting island stories. The following story was told to me by islander Al Scarborough, about his grandmother and her sister.

Miss Sue (Susan Gaskill Scarborough, 1878-1954) and Miss Lyzee (Eliza Gaskill Thomas, 1866-1946) were sisters. Miss Sue and her husband, Charlie Scarborough, lived "Around Creek" (on the northeast side of Cockle Creek/Silver Lake):



Scarborough House

Miss Lyzee and her husband, Capt. Bill Thomas, lived “Down Point” (on the southwest side of Cockle Creek/Silver Lake):



Thomas House

Miss Sue and Miss Lyzee had a clear view of each other’s houses across the harbor.

Although the foot bridges had been constructed by the time Miss Sue and Miss Lysee were married, the journey by foot (through soft sand and across the rickety bridges) from one side of the harbor to the other side was not taken lightly. When Miss Sue took a notion to visit Miss Lyzee (usually only once or twice a year) she intended it to be a proper visit, and that meant packing her valise for the journey. After walking for more than an hour she wasn't about to turn right around and return home. She always stayed several days with her sister before walking back to her home on the "Creek" side.

\*[https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/planning/info/masterplan/masterplan\\_historic\\_preservation.pdf](https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/planning/info/masterplan/masterplan_historic_preservation.pdf)