

## **BEN SAWYER BRIDGE PROJECT: Who was Ben Sawyer?**

### **Have you wondered about the man for whom the bridge is named?**

Benjamin Mack Sawyer was the Chief Highway Commissioner/Executive Director of the South Carolina Department of Transportation (known at the time as the SC Highway Department) between the years 1926 and 1940. Nicknamed “Builder Ben,” Sawyer oversaw a period in South Carolina during which the number of roads in the highway system nearly doubled and the number of paved roads grew from 228 in 1925 to 6,537 in 1940. In his book *The South Carolina Highway Department 1917 – 1987*, author John Hammond Moore writes Sawyer’s “career seems to have been a rare example of the right man and the right job coming together at the right time.” Recognized as a honest, jovial man, full of energy but never too busy to share information about his department, Sawyer transformed the department from a full time staff of 250 to a fully functioning state agency with several thousand employees. Born in 1890 near Salley in Aiken County, SC, Sawyer died in a tragic accident from a leaking gas heater at the age of 50 just five years before construction was completed on the bridge which now bears his name.

Progress continues on the Ben Sawyer Bridge Rehabilitation project as deck pan installation wraps up for the approach spans and rebar placement is complete for 3 of the 12 spans. The steel for the swing span has arrived from Florida and is being erected at the former Navy Base in North Charleston. Crews at the old Navy Base are also working to construct the new control house (see picture attached).



Photo caption: With new framing completed on the new bridge’s control house, construction begins on closing in the building’s walls.

Safe travels,  
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*(September 15, 2009)*