

Warm greetings from Ocracoke Island!

Summer is just around the corner and, as you can see from the photos below, Ocracoke Village is bursting forth with new wildlife.

These baby blue jays were just about to outgrow their small nest when I made this picture.

Blue Jays:



The nest was built no more than an arm's length away from my tree house and right at eye level so whenever we were in the mood we had only to climb into the tree house for a "bird's eye view." Several of the island children knew about the baby birds and came by for regular observations.

Other critters can be found in the oddest places. One of the joys of living on Ocracoke is an outdoor shower.

Philip's Outdoor Shower:



I use mine year-round (except when the temperature falls below 32 degrees and I need to drain the pipes to keep them from freezing). Not too many days ago I was alerted to a companion as I was taking my morning shower. I do have two shower heads but this time I had thought I was alone! It took me a moment to locate the croaking, but eventually I found this little guy hiding behind the shampoo bottle.

Shower Companion:



Later on in the day I discovered one of his buddies peeking our of my garden hose.

Tree Frog in the Hose:



Another sure sign of warmer weather is increased activity about town.

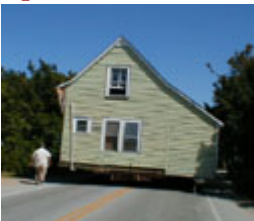
One long-time island tradition is moving buildings around the village! This spring islanders and visitors were treated to the excitement of two house movings. In April the Assembly of God parsonage (circa 1945) was moved to its new location on Highway 12.

Parsonage:



A month later the Herman and Flossie Spencer house (circa 1900) was moved about a tenth of a mile to its new home in front of the former parsonage.

Spencer House:



Many of you are familiar with the Island Inn, built in 1901 and Ocracoke's oldest inn. It was originally built several hundred feet closer to Cockle Creek (renamed Silver Lake during World War II). My father attended school there in 1917-1919, while the Oddfellow's Lodge

of Ocracoke met on the second floor. In 1920 the building was converted into a private residence and was moved several hundred feet to its current location.

The Inn was built by Charlie Scarborough. Charlie's grandson, Alton, tells how the new owner, Ben O'Neal, asked Charlie, after church one Sunday morning, to supervise the move. Charlie allowed as how it would take him a week to make preparations. At that time Ocracoke had no paved roads. The lanes and much of the village were deep soft sand. During the week Charlie had some tall, straight trees cut down and trimmed to use as rollers. The building was jacked up and a team of horses was readied.

On the next Sunday, after services, Charlie announced that he would move the Lodge the next day and called for all the able-bodied men to be there at sunup. He was offering wages of thirty-five cents per day as enticement.

As the men gathered, one among them was known to all as a slacker, a grumbler and an all-round slouch. The other workers wondered aloud if he was to be paid the same thirty-five cents as they were. Charlie, of course, got wind of the discontent and devised a novel plan. He walked to an old stump lying nearby and rolled it over toward the side of the building. "Sit right down here," Charlie admonished the ne'er-do-well. "I'm payin' you the same thirty-five cents I'm payin' everyone else. But your job is to gripe and complain. Tell everyone within earshot how the pay is too little, how the work is too hard, how we're doin' everything the wrong way, how it's too hot, and that there's the greatest bunch of skeeters here you've ever seen."

"And the rest of you," Charlie exhorted, "are to keep your mouths shut and work! There's no need for fussin' and moanin' from any of you now. That's all to be done right from this here stump.....and we'll be finished by dinnertime!"

In 1940 the Inn was purchased by Robert Stanley Wahab and the first floor was converted into a coffee shop with soda fountain and ice cream bar. During the war the second floor became a club for Navy Officers.

The Island Inn (c. 1945)



After the war several former Navy barracks were moved to the Inn and attached to the building. During this period the Inn was used as a dance hall where local musicians gathered to play on Saturday nights for the traditional Ocracoke Square Dances.

Today the Island Inn is owned and operated by Bob and Cee Touhey who run the inn much like a bed-and-breakfast. The comfortable rooms are furnished with antiques and each has a private bath. A heated swimming pool has been added for the enjoyment of their guests.

Like many an older building, the Island Inn boasts a ghost as a regular visitor. As Anne McDermott notes in an article in "The Island Breeze" (November, 1999),

"Mr. and Mrs. Godfrey managed the establishment for Stanley Wahab during WW II. Legend says they fought like cats and dogs. One night, the couple went "down sound" (a local expression for going to Cedar Island). Godfrey returned two days later without his wife but offered no explanation as to her whereabouts. One week later, her body was found. Her throat had been cut. Her murderer was never determined, but the locals suspected Mr. Godfrey had killed her. Apparently, Mr. Godfrey was the first to see his wife's ghost. He was then drinking heavily, according to the story.

The Touheys have never seen the ghost, but many of their guests have claimed to. Most of the sightings have occurred on the third floor-in their rooms and hallway. Guests have reported doors slamming for no reason. One lady was particularly frightened when she awakened to see a woman playing with her makeup. She knew she had seen a ghost when the makeup just disappeared and was never found. At another time, a man was shaving when suddenly the toilet paper just started rolling off the roll for no possible reason."

On your next visit to Ocracoke consider staying at the Island Inn. If you are afraid of ghosts the "Stanley Wahab Wing" across the street offers luxury accommodations with no specters. Visit the Island Inn Web Site for more information.

Be sure to stop by and visit us at Village Craftsmen on your next trip to the island. We are adding new craft items regularly and we are always delighted to see familiar faces.

Until next time,

Philip and the entire staff at Village Craftsmen