

There has been quite a bit of construction taking place on Ocracoke this winter. Sometimes folks shudder to think about new building, but it's not all intrusive. Consider the following.

Last August Hurricane Alex came so unexpectedly, and brought with it so much tide water (it was the most tide Ocracoke had seen in sixty years) that many islanders have been working to raise their homes and businesses to protect them from future storms.

Three homes on Howard Street are currently in the process of being raised. Others in the village have also been raised. In addition, several island businesses are under new ownership and/or are being remodeled or moved. At least one business is currently for sale, a timely opportunity, perhaps, for one of our readers to relocate to Ocracoke. Read on for more information.

The former home of Lela Howard, now owned by her nephew, Wilson Garrish and his wife, Martha, is in the beginning stages of a major restoration project. It sits across the street, and a couple of house down, from Village Craftsmen.

Lela Howard Home



The house has been jacked up and footings poured. A crew is now on the island laying the new brick piers.

A few doors west and on the other side of the street sits one of the oldest homes on the island, the Eliza Howard & Benjamin Gaskins house.

Eliza & Benjamin Gaskins Home



A few years ago this home was restored by Betty Schotten, but several inches of water poured in during Alex. It is now raised several feet and waiting for new brick piers.

Closer to Highway 12 is a small cottage owned by Van O'Neal. This home also had water during the hurricane. It has been raised and the new brick piers are almost completed.

Van O'Neal Cottage



As many readers already know, I had raised my grandparents' home before the storm so the rising water never came near enough to be of concern.

Homer & Aliph Howard Home



There are other construction and renovation projects throughout the village. The James Henry Garrish home, formerly the Blue Door Antique Shop on Lighthouse Road, will again become a private residence. The owners, Michael & Paula Schramell, have moved their antique shop a few doors up the road, next to the Island Inn, and plan to make the former building their new home. Not surprisingly, the first step was to raise the house several feet.

James Henry Garrish Home (The Blue Door)



Another classic home “down point” near the lighthouse, the Ollie & Theodore Mutro home, has been raised after hurricane Alex. Dale Styron Mutro and his father, Anthony have also remodeled most of the interior of this house.

Ollie Styron & Theodore Mutro Home



Carol & Warren Ritchie, owners of The Beach House Bed & Breakfast on Highway 12 are undertaking a major remodeling project. A consequence of adding additional rooms to the rear of the building is a modified roof line. They decided to remove the entire original roof, so for several days at least, the Beach House is a flat box covered with sheets of rubber.

Walter & Armeda O’Neal Home (Beach House B & B)



Several readers have asked about the Boyette House motel. Owner Jon Wynn closed the motel last fall, and a crew of workers has been busy all winter remodeling the building as condominiums. I understand Jon already has a growing list of potential buyers.

The Boyette House Motel



Many people familiar with Ocracoke may have heard that the popular Fig Tree Deli is now closed. Darlene Styron, owner of The Sweet Tooth, formerly located on Silver Lake, will be moving her business to Highway 12 in the building that used to be home to the Fig Tree Deli. To everyone’s delight, she will be adding deli sandwiches to her selections of confections and ice cream. The building sports a new color & look, has been completely remodeled inside, and is now more visible from the road. Be sure to stop by on your next visit.

Sweet Tooth (formerly Fig Tree Deli)



Changes are underway for Teach's Hole, Ocracoke's premiere pirate shop. George & Mickey will soon be moving from their location on the Back Road (near the Fire House & Coffee Shop) to their newly acquired property on Highway 12, across from the Variety Store. Their spacious two-story building will include office and storage space upstairs as well as an efficiency apartment for employees. Their will be ample parking also.

Teach's Hole



In other news, Video Dave, and his wife Laura, report that their business, Eleven Eleven, is for sale. Their video store is located in Spencer's Market on Highway 12 and has been in business over 3 years. Dave & Laura are proud of their large customer base (both locals and visitors), and are offering training, inventory, electronic equipment & fixtures for sale. Dave says the price is negotiable, and he would like to hear from serious inquirers. He has asked me to help spread the word. You can contact Dave directly by clicking [here](#). He'll be happy to give you more information and answer any questions you might have.

Eleven Eleven Video Store



Change is sometimes threatening. At times it means progress; at other times it can mean losing a valuable part of a community's heritage. I take heart that more than half of the building projects I've described are designed to protect or restore historic island homes. The Boyette House project and the Sweet Tooth are both remodeled businesses rather than new construction. Teach's Hole, though a new building, will house a popular existing business, and will be set well back from the road. The sale of Eleven Eleven will simply be a change of ownership.

Ocracoke, like nearly every place else, changes — sometimes gradually, sometimes quickly. Through it all, we seem to manage to maintain a valuable sense of community, and even a growing awareness of the importance of our unique island heritage.

Many islanders are working to see that it stays that way.