

Winter Greetings from Ocracoke Island!

As you might imagine, Ocracoke is quiet this time of year. The winter holidays are behind us, most island businesses are closed for the season, and folks are enjoying several months of rest and relaxation.

This is not to say that nothing is going on, however. Several winter storms have come and gone. There has been some overwash on NC Highway 12 from time to time, but the road (repaired after Hurricane Isabel) remains our main connection to Hatteras Island and beyond.

We even got a light dusting of snow today, but it's gone already.

A Touch of Snow:



Residents of Hatteras village continue to struggle with the terrible destruction caused by Isabel. To help cheer up our northern neighbors, a number of us (the performers at the summertime Ocracoke Opry, and others) put on a free performance for Hatteras village in November. This was just days after the road was re-opened. Everyone up there was delighted to settle back, relax, and enjoy some fine music and storytelling. Many of the folks at Hatteras told us it was the first time they'd smiled since the hurricane.

The next evening we repeated the performance for our friends on mainland Hyde County who had also experienced extensive flood damage.



Then one day in December a tornado struck Ocracoke just before midnight. Luckily, no one was injured. Damage was significant, though spotty. A portion of the roof was blown off of the Post Office. Wind pressure flexed walls and roof members as well. Until the damage could be repaired the Post Office conducted it's business out of the adjacent Sheriff's Department and Jail for several days, .

The tornado damaged other businesses and property, as well, blowing out windows, uprooting trees, and breaking masts off of boats.

If that weren't enough, a strong wind and rough seas forced one of the Swan Quarter ferries onto a shoal several days later. Passengers, who should have been back to Ocracoke by 6 p.m., spent the night on the boat, and the ferry didn't get pulled into deeper water until 2 p.m. the next afternoon.

Also the historic Assembly of God church has been moved this winter. It now sits on a lot across from the Post Office.

Preparing to move the church from it's original location:



The church traveling down Lighthouse Road:



Rear view of the church being moved:

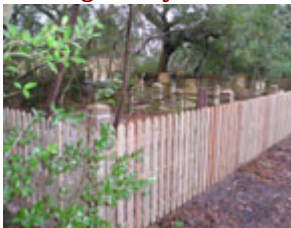


The Assembly of God fellowship is planning to construct a larger, redesigned church on the original lot to accommodate their growing congregation.

There have also been some changes on Howard Street. Hurricane Isabel took down a number of trees around Village Craftsmen and in the graveyards across the street.

A new, traditional style, wooden fence has also been erected around many of the graves on Howard Street.

New graveyard fence across from Village Craftsmen:



My grandparents' home, the Homer & Aliph Howard residence, just around the corner from Village Craftsmen, is one of the older homes on the island. It is a traditional "story and a jump" house and was built around 1860. A portion of the lumber used in the construction of the house was salvaged from schooners that wrecked on Ocracoke beach in the nineteenth

century.

This winter I will be embarking on a rehabilitation of this historic structure. We will begin by raising the house to better protect it from storm tides. Then we will reinforce floors and walls to make it more structurally sound.

Of course, we plan to repair damage to the original windows & doors, replace the roof, and rehabilitate the original bead-board interior walls and ceilings. In the process we will re-wire, re-plumb, and re-paint. Lastly we hope to replace the fence and brick walkway in order to restore the house to its early 20th-century appearance.

It may take several years to complete the rehabilitation, but please take a look at the house on your next visit, and follow our progress. We hope to include this house on a future Christmas-time tour of Ocracoke's historic homes.

The Homer & Aliph Howard Home:



Click [here](#) or on the photo above to read more and to view vintage photos of this property as well as current photos (both inside and outside) documenting our progress.

Our best to all of our off-island friends. Be sure to stop by and say hello on your next visit to the island.

Although we conduct internet business year 'round, Village Craftsmen on Howard Street is closed in January. We will re-open for the season on Saturday, February 14, 2004.

Take care,

Philip & the entire staff of Village Craftsmen