



Ready, set, move



Lighthouse hovers over Edenton bay

Structure escapes history of calamity

By **RITCHIE E. STARNES**
Editor

Its circuitous journey has finally come to an end and how appropriate that it's a watery home.

Last Tuesday, hundreds of spectators gathered to watch workers successfully complete the land to water relocation of the cottage-style 1886 Roanoke River Lighthouse - the only remaining one like it in the U.S. A crew of professional movers lifted the Lighthouse and then eased the structure from the edge of waterfront in Colonial Park to pilings erected nearby in Edenton Bay where it will become the latest historical attraction in the town of Edenton, part of the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources.

For a structure steeped in local history, onlookers chose to see the latest chapter unfold.

"We wanted to be here for this historic moment," said Kathryn Perry of Rocky Hock as she and her husband, Jack, watched from the park. "I don't think we'll see anything else again like this in our lifetime."

"We love lighthouses," she added. "But this one in particular because it's part of us, part of our history."

Others figured the spectacle was too unique to pass up.

"I've been here watching since 10 o'clock this morning," said Edenton's Tamatha Thomas during mid-afternoon. "This is an exciting moment for our town. It's a once in a lifetime chance to see a lighthouse moved. I've never seen anything like this happen

and probably won't again."

Some understood the significance of such a prize landmark gracing an already history-rich town.

"I think it's fantastic. I think it will bring in a lot of visitors and benefit our entire community," said Jack Drage between taking photographs.

Tuesday's move marks the latest in an incredible sequence of events and history that includes both calamity and survival.

According to Linda Eure, site manager for Edenton's state historic properties, Congress arranged for a lightship be positioned in the mouth of the Roanoke River to help guide vessels navigating from the Albemarle Sound in 1884. At a cost of \$10,000, a 125-ton, three-masted vessel was built. Whale oil lights cov-

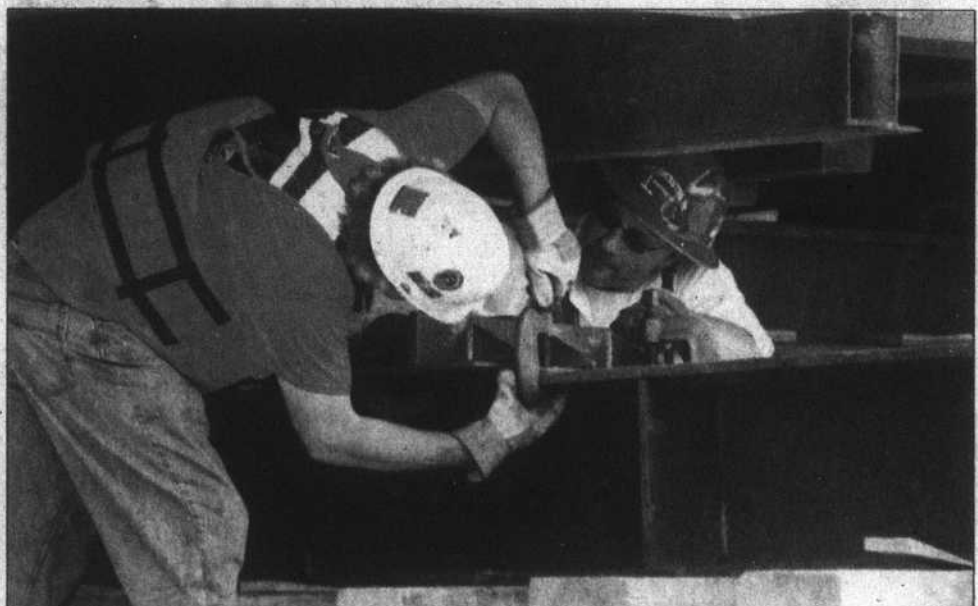


PHOTOS BY KIP SHAW

(l-r children) Josh Harvill, Molly Harvill, Emma Syphus enjoy front row seats for the lighthouse moving last Tuesday.



Hundreds of spectators (above left) gather at Colonial Park to witness the moving of the 1886 Roanoke River Lighthouse. Workers (above right) make final preparations before moving the structure over water.



Property tax delinquencies have reached over \$900K

Collections to get aggressive

By **RITCHIE E. STARNES**
Editor

Chowan leaders want to get more aggressive with collecting delinquent property taxes that has soared to more than \$900,000.

Along with a list of the county's top 100 tax delinquents, County Manager Zee Lamb relayed the need for more aggressive efforts to the Board of Commissioners at a recent budget workshop. He told them collections had begun to slide since 2008 when the county cut a position in tax collections.

"Collection efforts over that time have been minimal," Lamb said at the meeting.

His news surprised the commissioners. "I can't believe we have let the debt service slide," said Commissioners' Chairman Eddy Goodwin.

On Monday, Clyde Kepley, tax administrator, concurred that the collections decline has been due to a shortage of personnel.

"They didn't have the staff to put toward collections the way we should," Kepley said.

Kepley and Lamb reiterated Monday afternoon that more needs to be done to collect back taxes. Recently renewed efforts have already netted the collection of two of the county's top five delinquent accounts for a total of \$76,000. Two others in the top six have set up payment plans.

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Chowan totaling \$21.4M in debt

Plans call for loan restructuring

By **RITCHIE E. STARNES**
Editor

As the Board of Commissioners continue to dig out of a fiscal hole left from the financial debacle in 2008, it will next begin restructuring Chowan's \$21.4 million debt as of the fiscal year's end.

Talks are under way about refinancing some of the county's loans while paying more principal toward others in an effort to whittle down a staggering debt that continues to hamstring the county's coffers for years to come. Plans call for the county

to refinance at least three loans in an effort to gain a better interest rate, roughly half the current rate, with a shorter payment schedule, thus potentially saving taxpayers nearly \$600,000 over the next seven years.

Those loans include: the \$5.1 million owed, at 4.05 percent interest rate and 11 years, for D.F. Walker Elementary School; \$1.8 million, 4.09 percent and 13 years, for the Northern Community Center; and nearly \$1 million, 4.38 percent at 13 years, for a second loan taken out for construction overruns of the Shepard-Pruden Memorial Library.

"For a county our size, we're carrying a very

heavy debt," said Kim Woodley, county finance director. "We're exceeding state averages for a county our size."

Chowan's per capita debt is \$1,455, compared to the state's range of \$395 to \$1,168.

County leaders want to reduce the length of the loans to seven years, which would result in a lower interest rate and less debt service for a shorter term. By bundling the three loans, the county would also save on legal fees and any prepayment penalties with only a single hit.

Chowan officials had also hoped to refinance a pair of USDA loans with

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