

Perquimans: the gem of the Albemarle area just waiting to be discovered

Cotton was king in the Old South, but tourism is expected to bring in the bacon as Northeastern North Carolina enters the 21st century.

In his 1995 book, "Touring the Backroads of North Carolina's Upper Coast," Daniel Barefoot stated, "As is evident along much of the tour (of Perquimans County), most of the eleven thousand people who call Perquimans home earn their livelihood from the land. Few counties in North Carolina are more rural and agrarian. Though the county is blessed with three rivers and Albemarle Sound, it has not been able to parlay these resources into tourist revenue. Perquimans rests in relative obscurity, surrounded by counties that have used their historic pasts to develop tourist industries. However, despite its apparent lack of tourist appeal, Perquimans is an undiscovered gem for coastal visitors who are interested in the history of the Albemarle."

Those who live in Perquimans County are, for the most part, proud of the county's rich heritage and many are preparing for a future that will take Perquimans County out of the "relative obscurity" to which Barefoot eludes and into a heritage tourism destination in the 21st century. There is a base for heritage tourism already established in the county. Entrepreneurs have turned several architectural treasures into bed and breakfast inns, each with a different look and theme.

Ben and Jackie Hobbs have combined their penchant for historic structure collecting, Ben's furniture making skills, and a bed and breakfast enterprise which is very unique. The couple, both former teachers, began collecting and moving historic structures in need of repair to their property years ago. Ben also became very interested in handcrafting reproduction furniture.

Today, the couple's restored "village" includes the 1760 Richard Pratt House, the 1837 Bear Swamp House, the 1750 Bennett's Creek House and the ca. 1710 Flat Branch House. The beautifully restored buildings serve as their home and as Beech Tree, a Bed and Breakfast. In addition, Ben offers furniture making classes to which students from across the country come. While here, they have the opportunity to stay in one of the Beech Tree cottages. Ben's furniture graces homes across the country.

Next to turn an heirloom into a bed and breakfast was Peter and Nancy Rascoe. The Windsor couple restored Swampside, a plantation in Nancy's family, into 1812 on the Perquimans.

The spacious center-hall B&B features a second floor porch that overlooks the Perquimans River in the distance.

In addition to serving as a place to spend the night, 1812 hosts etiquette parties for children and the front lawn, enclosed by a white picket fence, has been the site of several afternoon

wedding receptions and parties.

The Eagle and Anchor on Market Street was next to open. Ron Carrier purchased the home at 215 W. Market Street and, along with his cousin, Sally, operate the bed and breakfast, mainly on weekends. Still employed in the Hampton Roads area, Ron plans to retire to Hertford.

Jane McMahon was the most recent Perquimans resident to become an innkeeper. After months of restoring a long-empty home at 107 Covent Garden, Jane opened The Covent Garden Inn this spring. With themed rooms and an especially cozy kitchen, the inn features one room with a balcony.

In addition, Thomas and Linda Morris have restored the old county home across from the softball fields in Winfall. From its parlor, Linda and Jane McMahon operate the Blue Door Gallery.

These are just a few examples of how architectural treasures which will draw people to the county are being given new life.

In addition to this, Perquimans County has some very unique shops. The downtown area has some true treasures, both free-standing and tucked inside Hall of Fame Square. There are also interesting places to browse at Ward Shopping Center. One can find surprise businesses around many corners and down many rural roads.

Add to these gems the Newbold-White House, the state's oldest standing

brick home, a walking tour in Hertford, a driving tour of the county, friendly people and a variety of eateries, and Perquimans has what it takes, with some marketing efforts, to become a tourist destination.

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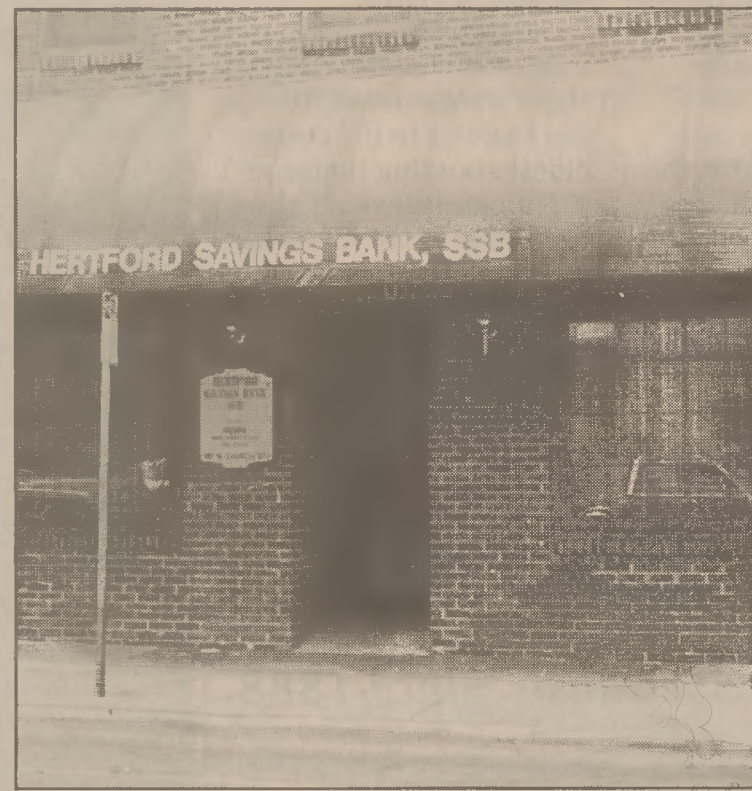
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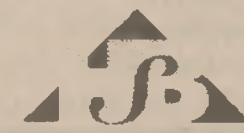


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Hertford

Hours: Mon-Fri.; 8:30am-5:00pm

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Chief: Dale Vanscoy : 426-5587

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