

## Elizabeth City and Michael's Aftermath

by Claude Milot

Communities on the Albemarle Sound were lucky once again to have escaped the major destruction wreaked elsewhere by Hurricane Michael, the second of this season's two hurricanes. Norfolk TV stations aired scenes of streets flooded by storm surge in Elizabeth City, but the Pasquotank River quickly receded after the storm.

On October 12<sup>th</sup>, the day after the storm, I drove to Elizabeth City and found no residual evidence of the flooding; everything seemed back to normal. I dropped by Pelican Marina to see if it had sustained any damage. I found the gravel parking lot covered with a thin layer of mud, but, except for a large puddle of water to the side, no evidence of the storm surge. Inside the marina's store, however, Michael's lingering presence was still felt. I found two workers swabbing the wooden floors of muddy residue: one of them showed me how high the waters had risen, about eight inches above the floor. But he assured me with good humor that nothing had been lost, saying, "Everything in the store was designed to float, after all."

I then drove over to the Museum of the Albemarle to check it out. Fortunately, the water that had flooded the little park across the street had not reached the museum. The museum was open, but visitors apparently had not yet returned: my wife and I may have been the first.

Having the whole place to ourselves, we took the elevator to the upper floor to look for the museum's newest exhibit, *River Bridge: Sunken Secrets*, a collection of artifacts raised from the bottom of the Pasquotank River by two intrepid divers, Philip Magre and Eddie Congleton. The exhibit itself was the work of archaeologist and Albemarle Plantation resident Martha Williams who spent five years sorting and cataloguing over 10,000 pieces collected by the divers. Pottery, glassware, ceramics, pins and needles, iron tools, shoes, and wood products are beautifully displayed as tangible proof of the international commerce that took place in Virginia and the Albemarle Sound in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The port known as River Bridge was the northernmost navigable point on the Pasquotank River. Loopers sailing down the Dismal Swamp Canal now bypass this section of the river when they proceed down Turner's Cut after going through the locks at South Mills. But the history of this area is not lost: it is preserved in exquisite detail in the Museum of the Albemarle.

Loopers stopping in Elizabeth City will be well rewarded if they dock at Pelican Marina or the city's Mariners' Wharf and take a short walk to the Museum of the Albemarle. It is a jewel not to be missed.