



Jewel in the Albemarle Crown

by Terry Conway

Legend has it that a stately cypress tree once grew smack in the middle of Edenton's harbor long before the first English colonists set foot in the Albemarle region of North Carolina. Whenever a ship of trade arrived at Edenton, it was a code of conduct for the captain to nuzzle a bottle of the best Jamaican rum into a hollow spot of the cypress' trunk. When a ship pulled up anchor, the vessel's crew would pay its respects to the "Dram Tree" by hoisting a drink to a safe voyage. Ships whose crews skipped a drink to the Dram Tree or, even worse, failed to place a bottle there when entering port, were said to be doomed to disaster. The tree survived until the spring of 1918, when a tremendous ice floe vanquished the landmark.



Edenton Waterfront

Today, sailing out of Edenton Bay, one crosses over the site where that cypress once sprouted as you cruise into Albemarle Sound—the largest freshwater sound in America. You enjoy the unspoiled shoreline as you glide up the Chowan River or east towards Roanoke Island. Uncrowded waters and reliable fall winds create some of the best sailing in northeastern North Carolina.

Chartered with the Atlantic Ocean as its eastern boundary, the Albemarle region was probably first visited by members of Sir Walter Raleigh's expedition in the 1580's. Today, the Albemarle mainland towns that line the rivers and estuaries are a microcosm



Albemarle Sound

of American history. From first exploration by English colonists in 1584, to residents who protested against British tyranny in 1774, to invasion by the Union Army during the Civil War, the Albemarle has played a pivotal role in just about every major event in American history.

That often turbulent past, however, is interwoven with a peaceful rural setting and a relaxed pace of life. The countryside of Albemarle is characterized by farms and crossroad communities, and punctuated dramatically by opulent plantation homes that are reminders of another time. The bountiful waters of Albemarle Sound are inviting to boaters and fish-

ermen. North Carolinians have long considered Edenton the jewel in the crown of Albemarle. One of the prettiest towns in the South, it flanks the beautiful, open waterfront of Edenton Bay. A community of 5,200 people, it possesses a royal ransom in architectural treasures, scores of well-tended gardens and some of the earliest settlements in North Carolina.

A major port and trading center in the 1800s, Edenton has a large historic district with homes, stores, and churches dating as far back as the early 18th century. Escaping major damage during the Civil War, Edenton is unique in the number of authentic colonial homes that have remained intact for generations. Many sites are included in the National Register of Historic Places.

Edenton's three-block-long business district is lined with shops and businesses and its waterfront has been given over to parks and stunning vistas across Edenton Bay and Albemarle Sound. It is not uncommon for residents of the gracious old homes that line the shaded streets to invite newcomers in for tea.

Visitors can explore the rich history and architectural diversity of Edenton during a comprehensive 45-minute trolley tour through the historic district. The Cupola House is just one of the many unique and beautifully preserved homes in Edenton. It was built in 1758 for Francis Corbin, a land administrator for Lord Granville's land district in the state. In 1918, the Cupola House Association was formed to protect this historical landmark. The interior of the home

was restored and furnished in 1967 as a museum of the pre-Revolutionary period. The town features an impressive collection of 18th and 19th century buildings. The Chowan County Courthouse, built in 1767, has been characterized as "the finest example of Georgian architecture in the South" by many historians and is one of many National Historic Landmarks in Edenton.

Historic accommodations also abound. An especially captivating one is the Granville Queen Inn. Each of its nine guest rooms is designed with a sense of adventure, an air of fantasy. A pair of huge cast bronze sphinxes dominate the Egyptian Queen bedroom that also boasts a sumptuous bath that sports cobra-handled sink faucets. The Peaches and Queen room has



The Cupola House

hand-crafted Italian furniture from an estate near Torino with a bath finished in glass and marble. Most of the rooms have fireplaces and private balconies and guests have their choice of a gourmet five-course or a deluxe breakfast. You're seated in the formal dining

room or on the Victorian Plantation Porch, styled with wrought iron tables with wicker chairs under lazy ceiling fans.

The Captain's Quarter is an elegant Colonial Revival Bed and Breakfast that features eight tastefully decorated guest rooms. They're all styled with a nautical theme, offering separate sitting areas and antique or reproduction furnishings. The bedrooms showcase beautiful four-poster, wicker,



The Chowan County Courthouse

brass, or canopy beds. Check out their getaway packages such as Mystery Weekends.

Stop by Chero's just behind the town

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