

# Hurricane Isabel Damage To Historic Structures

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This report is based upon information conveyed verbally by State Historic Preservation Office (HPO) contacts or observations gleaned through site visits by staff. Information is provided alphabetically by county noting known damage to historic properties. Hurricane Isabel crossed the state on September 18, 2002, and staff is still gathering information from the field through site assessment visits and other contacts. Information provided to us by citizens is vital; please let us know of specific information about historic properties' conditions as you learn about them. We will continue to update this report weekly as we receive damage reports.

Two days before Hurricane Isabel roared across the state, HPO staff began providing assistance to owners of historic properties in the path of the storm. As Isabel headed for North Carolina, staff activated the HPO disaster response plan by notifying all local historic preservation commissions of the information sheets posted on the HPO web site ([www.hpo.dcr.state.nc.us](http://www.hpo.dcr.state.nc.us)) that address drying out water-damaged buildings, selecting a contractor for repairs, insurance claims, landscape restoration, and special assistance provided by the HPO. Immediately after the storm, staff began fanning out across the counties declared disaster areas to distribute disaster response literature, assess damage to historic properties, and provide technical assistance to property owners. Within two weeks, staff had made dozens of site visits in many of the hardest hit counties, including Bertie, Chowan, Gates, Hyde, Hertford, Pasquotank, and Perquimans. In Raleigh, the environmental review coordinator began working closely with representatives of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to expedite reviews of federal recovery efforts affecting historic properties that are required under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The head of the HPO's Disaster Response Task Force coordinated with Preservation North Carolina in the preparation of this report and with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which is providing a restoration architect to assist the HPO's restoration staff with on-site technical assistance.

**NOTE:** An asterisk indicates new or revised information since the first report of September 24, 2003. Omission of a disaster county indicates that the HPO has not obtained information about significant damage to historic properties in that county. If a property is not damaged, its name is not printed in boldface.

**See the HPO Web site for information on disaster assistance for historic buildings and for updated versions of this report: [www.hpo.dcr.state.nc.us](http://www.hpo.dcr.state.nc.us). This site includes HPO staff telephone numbers and e-mail addresses to which you may submit damage reports. We also will mail the fact sheets and damage report forms upon request.**

**The most important single step is to air out wet buildings: open doors and windows, remove airtight coverings such as aluminum and vinyl siding, and run fans. DO NOT USE HEATERS, as accelerated drying out causes more damage; let the buildings dry out naturally.**

## Summary of Reported Major Damage to Historic Properties

Thus far it appears that most of the historic properties (individual buildings as well as historic districts) in the thirty-six counties declared disaster areas by Governor Easley escaped significant

damage from flooding due to their elevated locations. (Previous generations' choices of sites, coupled with long-ago floods that swept away buildings in flood plains, contributed to this pattern.) In several northeastern counties, however, the impact on historic properties is severe. Here, damage due to wind and blown in rain, as well as flooding in certain areas, is extensive. Hundreds of buildings were buffeted by winds that peeled off metal roofs and broke chimney caps and stacks, which in turn caused more damage as they fell. In many areas, significant damage is the result of falling trees. In fact, the number of fallen trees is dramatic and at many historic properties the loss of trees is highly detrimental. In the hardest hit counties, widespread damage to historic properties caused by Hurricane Isabel far exceeds the destruction of the storms of the previous five years, including Floyd.

With the exception of Hatteras village, the most severely battered areas are north of the Pamlico River and east of I-95 (especially east of US 13): principal damage to historic properties is reported in the waterside towns of Edenton, Elizabeth City, and Hyde County, which suffered the worst flood damage to historic areas, while elsewhere in this region Ahoskie, Murfreesboro, and surrounding areas were battered by wind and falling trees. Damage to Hatteras is described as catastrophic, causing the complete destruction of sixty properties and extensive damage to many more, yet historic properties situated away from the ocean and sound weathered the storm fairly well. In all of these areas, the need for technical assistance is overwhelming. It is feared that without adequate insurance, many property owners in these areas may opt to leave their damaged buildings as is or demolish them.

Reports from dispersed rural properties are coming in slowly, as assessment teams and preservation friends are able to investigate and report. So far, many people are telling us that damage was limited to water pushed under doors and through building cracks by tremendous winds. In coastal counties south of the Neuse River, there was little if any storm damage. Throughout the region, old buildings in disrepair are further weakened in every storm, so Isabel, like Floyd and Fran, will take a long-term toll beyond the immediate destruction.

**Important: Experience has shown that many flooded buildings that appear from the street or road to have escaped serious damage are not as stable as they appear. In several cases already, conversations with owners and interior inspections reveal moderate to severe problems of waterlogging structural damage. Thus the estimate of damage or non-damage reported may be overly optimistic until more in-depth assessment can be done.**

#### BEAUFORT COUNTY

**Washington** came through with only minor wind damage and without any flooding. In **Bath**, a tree is reported to have fallen on **St. Thomas Church**, but there is no serious damage to the building and the rest of the town is unscathed except for damage to trees. In **Belhaven**, the **John A. Wilkinson School**, rehabilitated by local citizens as a community center with assistance from Preservation North Carolina and FEMA after being flooded by Hurricane Floyd, is undamaged.

#### BERTIE COUNTY

**Windsor** experienced some flooding, but nothing like the effects of Hurricane Floyd. For example, **Bunn's Barbeque**, close to the river and heavily damaged four years ago, had a few inches of water. Outside of town, **Hope Plantation** and the **King-Bazemore House** had no

problems, but the education center at Hope has trees on it and some buckled metal. In the midst of restoration, **Scotch Hall**, the seat of the largest antebellum plantation in the county, lost its metal roof and more than half of both chimneys (and may yet lose what is left) and on the interior has water-damaged plaster.

#### BRUNSWICK COUNTY

So far, reports are good: In Southport, the only loss was a single downed tree which caused no structural damage.

#### CAMDEN COUNTY

The **\*Camden County Jail** had slight damage to its tile roof.

#### CARTERET COUNTY

The Beaufort Historic District suffered relatively minor wind damage. The communities of Straits, Gloucester, Smyrna, and Stacy, all in the area of the county known as "Down East," were hit much harder and suffered flooding and wind damage, but we have no reports yet of rural historic property damage. Morehead City is fine, as is Ft. Macon.

#### CHOWAN COUNTY

Having come through unscathed by Hurricane Floyd four years ago, **Edenton** and the rest of the county are described as devastated by Isabel. Tree loss is phenomenal, but serious damage to most of the major architecture by falling trees is moderate. For example, all but thirteen of the hundreds of trees at **Hayes Plantation** are reported to be down and all of the trees at **Pembroke** are gone, yet the houses are essentially unharmed. Numerous waterfront properties suffered major flooding. The **Barker House** had three feet of water which destroyed its entire HVAC system; the house also lost a replacement chimney cap and had its new copper roof loosened, but the furniture, elevated on blocks, was not damaged. Next door, **Waterloo** was similarly flooded, as was the ca. 1820 **\*McDowell-Holmes House** at 205 E. Water St. and the 1893 **Privott-Jones House** at 208 E. King St. In contrast, flood waters did not get inside waterfront property at the foot of the Courthouse Green, and the Chowan County Courthouse is fine. At the **\*Cupola House**, water blown in around the chimneys and lack of air circulation for several days resulted in mold appearing on third-floor plaster walls and ceilings. The **Ziegler House**, the visitor center for the town's State Historic Sites, suffered one collapsed chimney that caused structural damage. Dozens of properties in and around the historically African American neighborhood at the north end of the Edenton Historic District (including the house at **\*203 S. Oakum St.** which lost much of its second floor and likely will be demolished) were damaged by falling trees and lost all or parts of their roofs to wind. Similar damage occurred to houses in the Edenton Mill Village, including **410 Phillips St.** which lost a rear room to a fallen tree, and elsewhere throughout the town. For example, trees fell on an **early outbuilding at the Allison House** on King St., the **\*Jesse Murphy House** at 123 W. Albemarle (too damaged to save), the ca. 1901 **\*James Pruden House** at 105 N. Granville (porch and large dormer crushed), and **St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church** (substantial damage to the roof of the east wing). **Kadesh AME Zion Church** suffered major structural damage and lost much of its stained glass as well as tin roof shingles. **St. Ann's Catholic Church**, one of only three antebellum Catholic church buildings in the state, also suffered serious damage, having lost one side of its copper roof; the church also had some flooding, as did the adjacent rectory which had two feet of water.

**Kramer's Garage**, a restaurant in a recently rehabilitated historic building, experienced considerable **flooding**; while the **West Customs House** and the **William McNider House** (219 E. Church St.) lost their metal roofs.

Outside of Edenton, **\*Strawberry Hill** lost half of its roof and a chimney stack and had about 8" of water in the house that caused extensive damage to walls and floors. Repair estimates for the house and outbuildings total \$400,000. Falling trees and wind caused extensive damage to the roof, front porch, and interiors at **Shelton** (ca. 1820); the property also lost much of a chimney on the main house and the metal roofing of an early 19<sup>th</sup>-c. barn. At the **\*Bissell Plantation**, a chimney stack was lost and a metal roof blew off, leading to extensive interior water damage. The main house at **Greenfield** have only minor damage, but the smokehouse and slave quarter/schoolhouse suffered extensive damaged, a large early 19<sup>th</sup>-c. barn lost part of its roof, and two early 20<sup>th</sup>-c. barns collapsed. At **Athol**, a large falling tree severely damaged the rear porch, while at **Mulberry Hill** most of the metal roofing was blown off, leading to interior water damage and a large early barn was completely destroyed. Other important agricultural buildings that were severely damaged include an **\*early 19<sup>th</sup>-century stable** (totally destroyed) **and barn** (minor roof damage) about 16 miles north on Edenton on NC 32 and a ca. 1896 **\*mule barn** on NC 17 (substantial damage to its roof system). The **former Roper Lumber Company Office** (a.k.a. Cooper Cabin) in Black Rock was hit by a tornado that blew off the roof, twisted the frame, and destroyed the foundation. **St. John's Community Center**, originally a Rosenwald school built ca. 1920, lost much of its metal roofing and its chimney stack.

Rural churches were particularly hard-hit. Two large pine trees fell on **Yeopim Baptist Church** of 1851, one of the oldest Baptist church buildings in the region, collapsing a porch of the roof into the sanctuary and causing interior plaster damage. The 1886 former **Evans Methodist Church**, prominently located about ten miles north of Edenton and remarkably intact prior to the storm, lost its tower and several of its original Tiffany stained glass windows, had dozens of the original tin roof shingles blown off, and suffered structural damage along the bottom of its south wall.

#### CRAVEN COUNTY

In the New Bern historic districts, there was very little damage beyond broken windows caused by falling trees. Some of the town's streets flooded due to water backing up in storm sewers, but the flooding did not reach any buildings. At Tryon Palace, there was only light tree damage.

#### DARE COUNTY

The extent of damage along the Outer Banks varies widely, with the worst devastation having occurred in the village of **Hatteras** where more than 60 properties were destroyed. Thus far, however, the only report about historic properties there is good: The **Ellsworth and Lovie Ballance House**, the only property in the Village listed in the National Register and situated well away from the water, suffered no damage at all. Moving north, the **Cape Hatteras Lighthouse** had its windows blown out, at the **Chicamacomico Lifesaving Station** the 1874 cook house had some windows broken and the 1911 cook house lost some shingles, and the **Bodie Island Coast Guard Station** lost its roof to wind and other buildings in the complex lost roof shingles and siding. In Nags Head, the only report we have received is that all of the historic beach cottages in the **Nags Head Beach Cottage Row Historic District** remain standing. At the **Sea Foam Motel**,

one of the few intact 1950s motels left in Nags Head, water washed through eight of the oceanfront rooms. In Kill Devil Hills, the **Wright Brothers National Memorial Visitor Center** held up well, with only a little water blown in under the door. At **Roanoke Island Festival Park** there is very heavy tree damage, but buildings and the *Queen Elizabeth II* are fine.

#### EDGECOMBE COUNTY

So far, reports indicate that damage is minimal (in dramatic contrast to the effects of Hurricane Floyd), consisting mostly of downed trees. A few mobile homes were blown over and one house (not historic?) in Princeville was damaged by a falling tree.

#### GATES COUNTY

Buildings across the county suffered wind damage that caused metal roofing to peel back, as at the **Joseph Freeman House**, and in some cases lifted if off, as at the 18<sup>th</sup>-c. **Pipkin-Goodman-Edwards House** (which also lost a chimney stack, as well as second-story ceilings due to blown in water) and the antebellum **Lee-Smith** and **Jethro Goodman** houses, all near Reynoldson. In many areas, outbuildings took the greatest beating: for example, at the **Savage House** the kitchen lost a chimney stack, flue cap, and some metal roofing, a barn lost much of its tin roof, and a smokehouse was demolished, while at the **State Line House** a large barn collapsed against the county's only antebellum stable, pushing it out of kilter. At Sunbury, many trees are down, including one resting against the **Costen-Nixon House**, but there does not appear to be substantial damage. In Gatesville, the **County Courthouse**, water is leaking into the courtroom apparently through the flashing at a chimney stack, and the gable end of the jail addition lost a raking board and pieces of the roof overhang. Perhaps the most serious damage is at the **Savage Family Farm** at Wiggins Crossroads where the entire roof structure of the antebellum Greek Revival main house blew off into the side yard, front porch, and attic.

#### HALIFAX COUNTY

The only word thus far is that some water blew into the **Hoffman-Bowers-Josey-Riddick House** in Scotland Neck and **Historic Halifax** lost about 70 trees but the buildings are undamaged.

#### HERTFORD COUNTY

Murfreesboro, an early port on the Meherrin River, fared pretty well: the **Roberts-Vaughn House** has some damage to its chimneys, as does the **Wheeler House**, which also has a log crib partly crushed by a fallen tree. At the **Cowper-Thompson House**, a tree went through part of the roof and a chimney stack fell. In the county seat of Winton, **Gray Gables**, a large shingled Victorian era house, has some damage to roof overhangs. A number of houses dating from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> c. through the early 20<sup>th</sup> c. in **Union** and the immediate vicinity suffered wind damage, particularly to metal roofs. Similarly in **Ahoskie**, several houses and a number of warehouses have wind-damaged roofs and the 1830s **McGlohon-Mitchell House** lost a chimney stack. Near the Chowan River, the crossroads village of **Harrellsville** has several buildings with damage to roofs and chimney stacks, including two frame store buildings and the **John Sharp House**.

In rural Hertford County, the elaborate Federal style **T. E. Browne House, The Cedars**, south of Murfreesboro, has considerable interior damage from water blown in through sections of roof and chimneys damaged in a May 2003 tornado. Several important properties in the **Como** vicinity on the Virginia line experienced varying degrees of damage: two pinnacles on the tower

of **Buckhorn Baptist Church** were blown over, permitting water to enter the tower; **Vernon Place**, a Federal-Greek Revival style house, had a tree fall on the rear wing and lost the roof on a barn; **Riddick Plantation** lost much of its metal roofing and several windows, leading to water damage to the intact late 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>c. Interiors; an outbuilding at **Myrick Place** collapsed; and much of the roof of the main house at **Hare Plantation** is peeled away. Near Ahoskie, the Greek Revival style **farm office at the William Mitchell House** received extensive damage from a massive oak tree.

#### HYDE COUNTY

Virtually every building in the county seat of **Swan Quarter** was flooded, including the antebellum **Hyde County Courthouse**, and in **Englehard** 75% of the buildings were flooded. Along US 264 on the south side of Lake Mattamuskeet, the **Hugh Jones House** and the **Wallace-Mann-Clark House** lost chimney caps while many outbuildings at the **Jennette Farm** lost their metal roofs. The Mattamuskeet Lodge is undamaged except for a few roof shingles that blew off and the Octagon House, reportedly built to withstand powerful storms, is fine. The **Rose Bay Missionary Baptist Church and School** buildings had several inches of flooding that buckled floors; similar damage occurred at the **Sears Store** and **St. John's Episcopal Church** in Sladesville. Remarkably, newspaper reports indicate that buildings in **Ocracoke** on the Outer Banks came through with minimal damage, in sharp contrast to Hatteras Village just to the north in Dare County.

#### JONES COUNTY

No reports of damage. Trenton is said to be fine.

#### MARTIN COUNTY

At the **Simmons House**, 112 W. Grace St. in Williamston, a falling tree destroyed a substantial amount of framing and plaster. One of the 30 fallen trees at **\*Fort Branch** destroyed a reconstructed cabin. The **\*Matthews House** in Hamilton lost its entire roof structure to a falling tree and as a result also had substantial interior water damage. At the **\*Ballard-Salsbury House**, the main house had damage to roofing, gutters, plaster, and the west wing foundation, while on the grounds, **\*Sycamore School** had significant roof damage that led to interior drywall damage. The most dramatic report is of the total collapse of the main block of a **\*two-story house at Third and Broad in Robesonville**. Many other properties had damage limited to water blown in through cracks.

#### NEW HANOVER COUNTY

Thus far, it appears that damage, if any, was minor.

#### NORTHAMPTON

At **\*Diamond Grove** (Piland House, early 20<sup>th</sup>-c.), all of the east side rooms had water-damaged plaster and all of the paint on the east side exterior (painted in 2002) was pressure-washed off the house by the wind-blown rain.

#### ONslow COUNTY

Two contacts, in Jacksonville and Richlands, report that historic properties suffered no significant damage.

#### PAMLICO COUNTY

The only report thus far is from Oriental, where flooding was severe with eight to nine feet of water in downtown Oriental and two to three feet along Smith Creek.

#### PASQUOTANK COUNTY

The storm brought flooding, wind, and downed trees that caused extensive damage to many properties in **Elizabeth City's** historic districts. The greatest concern is for the recently renovated three-story **McMullen Building** with its elaborate pressed-metal façade that lost its cornice and is peeling away from the building. **Antioch Presbyterian Church**, a small frame Gothic Revival style building already suffering from deterioration, completely collapsed. The **Mitchell-Ward House** suffered considerable water damage and lost a chimney stack; one outbuilding, a recently rehabilitated office, was blown off its foundation and had its floor system damaged, but it appears to be repairable. At the **Episcopal Church Parish House** the roof lost pieces of slate and part of a cross, and copper flashing peeled up. In the **Episcopal Cemetery**, falling trees damaged or destroyed many grave markers and iron fences. Several buildings in the commercial district lost roofs, windows, and doors. For example, about 20% of the roof of the **Weatherly Building** collapsed and some of the doors and windows were destroyed, while the **\*Chesson Building** lost most of its metal roofing and some windows and suffered water damage on the interior. Roof damage also occurred at the **former First Citizens Bank** (200 S. Poindexter St.), **G. R. Little Building**, **Thumpers Building**, and the **Elizabeth City Water Plant**. **106 N. Poindexter St.** and **111 S. Water Street** had storefront damage.

#### PENDER COUNTY

The Burgaw town manager's office reports that the county came through the storm in good shape.

#### PERQUIMANS COUNTY

Reports are beginning to trickle in. A number of properties, including **Stockton** and the **Jacocks House**, suffered damage from wind that pushed water through cracks to interiors. Elsewhere, wind toppled chimney stacks: at **Cove Grove**, three chimney caps fell and some of the metal roof came off; a falling chimney stack at **Land's End** damaged the ca. 1830s slate roof and the chimney of the ca. 1730 **Sutton-Newby House** was damaged, as was the roof, but the extent remains unknown. The Sutton Newby House also lost its **plank smokehouse**, crushed by a tree. At the ca. 1730 **Newbold-White House**, extensive water that came in through the shingle roof has curled original interior sheathing. North of Hertford, two huge 19<sup>th</sup>-century barns lost most of their metal covering, exposing the frame to the weather. Also very early, the **\*John Bogue House** lost a portion of its tin roof and a few windows.

#### PITT COUNTY

Thus far, damage to historic properties appears to be relatively minimal. For example, at the **Humber House** (headquarters of Archives and History's Eastern Regional Office), the basement had minor flooding and there were numerous roof leaks. More extensively damaged properties include the **\*Claire Baker House** in Greenville, which experienced damage to the tin roofing and interior water damage as the result of a falling tree on the back of the house.

#### WASHINGTON COUNTY

In Plymouth, the brick façade of the early 20<sup>th</sup>-c. \***Municipal Building** collapsed. At the 1923 \***Depot Building** (Port o' Plymouth Museum), a large section of roofing shingles blew off. Chimney caps blew off and a falling tree destroyed the front porch and dormers of the ca. 1895 \***Loane-Owens House**, a Victorian-era landmark. Part of the roof of the **Chesson House** peeled off but is fairly easily repaired. **Somerset Place** had very minor damage to the buildings (e.g., shutters blown off), but about 35 trees were lost, including a number of the ancient cypresses on the site and along adjacent roads.