DOING THEIR PART:
Maryland's Boatyards and Small Shipyards in World War II

By Richard J. S. Dodds

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic in 1943, when the allies turned the tide against Nazi Germany's submarine warfare campaign. Perhaps it is fitting, therefore, that we look back to the time when Maryland's boatyards and small shipyards — like M. M. Davis and Son of Solomons — played an important role in achieving allied victory.

Their contribution has been largely overlooked by historians, who have focused with good reason on the large shipyards of Baltimore, which was the nation's leading wartime shipbuilding and repair center. The first liberty ship, Patrick Henry, was launched there on September 27, 1941. The city was also home to the Coast Guard's Curtis Bay Yard, which built many small craft for the Navy and Coast Guard.

This story, however, lies not with Baltimore but with the smaller waterfront towns like Annapolis, Oxford, Cambridge, and Solomons — towns that had been building boats for generations. Here wood, not steel, was the preferred medium.

Prominent among the wartime boatbuilders were the Annapolis Yacht Yard, Owens Yacht Company of Dundalk, the Berg Boat Company of Georgetown, Cambridge Shipbuilders, Oxford Boatyard, and of course M. M. Davis and Son. Together they served the country well and made a significant contribution to the allied war effort.

Introduction
In the period just before World War II began, Maryland's boatyards were suffering from the depression that was still gripping the country. Orders were scarce and production was geared to building custom-designed boats; power tools were few but craftsmanship was high. With the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939, however, there came a boom in new boat construction and old boats were repaired and placed in service; American businessmen took advantage of neutrality while the government sought to beef up its defenses. All this new activity caused one Maryland newspaper to announce that the wooden ship age was returning again. Indeed, the likes had not been seen on the Chesapeake since the golden era of boatbuilding in the late nineteenth century.

Both the Navy and Army embarked on an enormous program of procurement and

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LATE NEWS

Offices Move: The move of the museum offices from the North Annex into the newly renovated Administration Building began in late March. Furniture for the offices was delivered and installed during the third week, with the actual move beginning soon after. The move of the museum library and archives, however, will be delayed until early April. A plan of the new offices and library was included in the winter 1992/93 issue of the Bugeye Times. Visitors to the museum offices will now use the south entrance to the Administration Building.

Museum Loses Long-Time Supporter: See page 2 for a memorial tribute to Joseph C. Lore, Jr., a supporter of CMM since its inception in 1969.

Grants Received: CMM has been the recipient of several recent grants. Potomac Electric Power Company donated $20,000 in the fall to the aquarium exhibit; the Maryland Humanities Council granted $1,200 for the museum exhibit "A Cord Not Easily Broken: Family and Community in Southern Maryland"; and the Mobil Foundation, Inc., granted $6,500 to underwrite a portion of the new permanent exhibit "A Window in Time: Maryland in the Miocene."
JOSEPH C. LORE, JR., 1900-1993

The Solomons community and the Calvert Marine Museum family were saddened by the death of Joseph C. Lore, Jr., on March 1. Mr. Lore was one of the group of several people who realized in the late 1960s that the area needed a museum to preserve its heritage for the edification of future generations.

Joseph C. Lore, Jr., was a life-long resident of Solomons, working with his father and brothers in the management of J. C. Lore and Sons, a seafood processing facility that developed in the years following his father’s arrival in Solomons in the late 1880s. Joseph Lore, Jr., established his family after marrying Virginia Bell, a teacher at the Solomons School, building a residence on land just to the north of the present museum property.

“Captain Joe” was active in many community organizations, such as the Solomons Island Yacht Club and the Calvert County Historical Society, in both of which he was a charter member. As president of the historical society in the late 1960s, he was approached with the idea of sponsoring a museum at Solomons. Efforts in 1969 resulted in the building of a small museum on Solomons Island near the Lore Oyster House on donated land, opening for the first time in October 1970.

In the next few years the historical society, with Mr. Lore’s active participation, managed the developing Calvert Marine Museum with an all-volunteer staff, and also worked toward a larger facility by approaching the Calvert County Commissioners with a request to turn over the then-vacated Solomons School and property for the museum. This request was eventually granted and the museum moved into the new building in June 1975, with a director and small staff paid by the county. By 1979, when the historical society turned over the management and support of the museum to the county, Mr. Lore was still involved in museum management as a member of the museum committee of the historical society, and he remained a dedicated supporter through the succeeding years.

Mr. Lore retired from the seafood processing company in 1975. When the company closed in 1978, Mr. Lore and the family supported CMM’s efforts to obtain the oyster house in order to preserve a link to the oyster-processing past of Solomons. Grants made possible the purchase of the oyster house property, along with its contents. Purchased also was the company boat, the Wm. B. Tennison, now a popular museum attraction for river cruises.

Preparation of exhibits in the oyster house required the next five years, but the results have been gratifying and popular. The heritage of the Lore family and its role in the Patuxent maritime industries have been preserved.

Mr. Lore’s advice has often been sought by museum staff, and his support has been generous, as friend and neighbor. He is survived by Mrs. Lore, two daughters and their families living in the Solomons area, and grandchildren. A memorial fund for contributions has been established by the museum.

SEA TURTLES IN THE BAY

CMM is interested in learning of any sightings in the bay or lower rivers of sea turtles, dead or alive. These large turtles, primarily loggerheads, migrate occasionally into the Chesapeake Bay, especially in the spring. Unfortunately, they sometimes are struck by boats or die of other causes and then wash up on the beach. CMM wants to maintain records of sightings and will send the data to state and federal agencies that monitor marine turtle populations.

If you see a sea turtle (usually one to two feet across), please note the location and call Ken Kaumeyer at the museum. An attempt will be made to visit the site to determine the species, sex, size, and certain other information.

EDITING, ANYONE?

The museum is looking for a volunteer to take over the editorship of the Bugeye Times when the present editor, Paul Berry, relinquishes this assignment at the end of 1993, completing ten years. Work with the museum’s newsletter is interesting and challenging, requiring about two weeks each quarter. If you might be interested, call Layne Bergin at CMM for further details.
CONTRIBUTORS TO THE 1992 YEAR-END APPEAL

The Board of Directors of the Calvert Marine Museum Society, the museum director, and staff thank all of the following members and friends for their contributions of nearly $11,500 to the 1992 Year-End Appeal to benefit the museum.

Mrs. Frances Allis * Mr. Roger A. Anderson * Mr. & Mrs. Charles Armiger * Mrs. Elizabeth R. Ashby * Mr. Scott Ballantyne * Bay Mills Construction Company, Inc. * Mr. Donald Berezowski * Mr. & Mrs. Paul L. Berry * Mr. & Mrs. Billiter & Family * Mr. & Mrs. Richard Bjurberg * Mr. & Mrs. James A. Boswell * The Honorable and Mrs. Perry G. Bowen, Jr. * Mrs. James H. Buys * Cather Marine, Inc. * Mr. & Mrs. Paul Celmer * Mr. Norbert Chandler * Mr. & Mrs. Thomas L. Clancy * Mr. & Mrs. Samuel Cochran * Mr. & Mrs. David Cockey * Mr. & Mrs. Melvin A. Conant * Mrs. Fern Denton Conner * Mr. & Mrs. John Connolly * Mr. & Mrs. David Coughlin * Mr. & Mrs. Donald Creighton * Mr. & Mrs. Maurice Criddlin * Mr. & Mrs. Jo Bruce Crozier * Mr. & Mrs. Laurence W. B. Cumberland * Mr. Howard P. Danley * Mr. G. Thomas Daughtery * Mr. & Mrs. Richard A. Day * Direct Mail Lithographers, Inc. * Miss Cora Dixon * Mr. & Mrs. Robert M. Douglass * Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Dove * Mr. & Mrs. John Duff * Mr. & Mrs. Horace Eltonhead * Mr. & Mrs. Wallace A. Eslinger * Mrs. Marie S. Essex * Mrs. Mary S. Evans * Mrs. Anna Weems Evalt * Mr. & Mrs. Charles Fadeley * Mr. & Mrs. Elliott Finley * Mr. & Mrs. John G. Fletcher * Mr. Paul Fletcher * Mr. & Mrs. Charles Force * Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Fowler * Mr. Lurman Foxwell * Mr. & Mrs. John W. Fringer * Mr. & Mrs. Patrick Fulton * Mr. Richard Gamble * Mr. & Mrs. William E. Garapick * The Honorable and Mrs. Louis L. Goldstein * Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Gondolf * Mrs. Helen J. Gorrell * Mr. & Mrs. Albert C. Grosvenor * Mrs. & Mrs. Thomas Gudiness * Mr. T. Summers Gwynn * Ms. Mary K. Hackett * Mr. & Mrs. Robert I. Hall * Thomas L. Hance, Inc. * Ms. Angela Hankness * Mr. & Mrs. John E. Hassing * Mr. & Mrs. Herbert S. Higdon * Mr. & Mrs. M. Kiplinger Hine * Mr. & Mrs. Phillip S. Hughes * Mrs. Carolyn Ireland * Dr. Maryce Jacobs * Mr. & Mrs. Robert Jeffries * Mr. & Mrs. Jack Johnson * Mrs. Madeline Johnston * Mr. & Mrs. Robert Jordan * Mr. & Mrs. Joseph T. Keiger * Mr. Shewell D. Keim * Mr. & Mrs. Donald Kilpatrick * Colonel and Mrs. Francis King * Mr. & Mrs. Gerald C. Kinne * Mr. & Mrs. G. R. Klinefehler * Mr. & Mrs. Francis Koenig * Mr. & Mrs. Edward J. Koppel * Ms. Sheeler Kowalewski * Mr. & Mrs. Paul E. Kraft * Mr. James A. Kunkle * Mr. & Mrs. Warren Kunz * Mrs. Ruth C. Lennkau * Dr. and Mrs. Louis F. Libelo * Ms. Lauren Liebrecht * Mr. & Mrs. John W. Mace * Mr. & Mrs. George Mahoney * Mr. & Mrs. Leo Mallard * Mrs. Lisa Mandell * Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Manning * Mr. & Mrs. Peter A. Margelos * Marina Travel Agency, Inc. * Mr. & Mrs. Myron G. Marlay * Mr. & Mrs. John A. Marshall * Mr. & Mrs. Eugene May * Mr. & Mrs. Parker W. McClellan * Mr. & Mrs. John O. McCurry * Mrs. Macel H. McGilvery * Mr. & Mrs. William H. McGilvery * Mr. & Mrs. John Menassa * Mr. & Mrs. J. Paul Menehan * Dr. Patricia Milford * Lt. Colonel and Mrs. Donald B. Miller * Mrs. Kathleen and Robert Miller * Mr. Timothy A. Miller * Mr. & Mrs. Edward Mitchell * Mrs. Gladys Moore * Mr. Frank A. Moorhead * Mrs. Margaret G. Moran * Mrs. Amelia T. Morsell * Mr. Carl W. Neutzel * Ms. Jennie S. Nicholas * Ms. Dorothy L. Ordwein * Mr. & Mrs. Nathaniel Parks * Mr. Joe W. Patterson * Ms. Shirley Paulson * Mrs. Virginia Peddicord * Mr. & Mrs. Donald Polz * Mr. & Mrs. Michael Power * Mr. Theodore Pratt * Captain and Mrs. Arthur F. Rawson, Jr. * Mr. & Mrs. Bob Ray * Mr. & Mrs. Julio C. Rivera * Mr. & Mrs. Dennis Roderick * Mr. John Ruark * Ms. Peggy Rude * Mr. Ray K. Schleeter * Ms. Edith A. Schrader * Mrs. Joyce R. Schwartz * Captain and Mrs. Willard F. Searle * Mr. James C. Sharp * Mr. & Mrs. C. T. Sharpless * Mr. & Mrs. K. D. Shelton * Mr. & Mrs. William W. Simmons * Mr. George A. Smedile * Dr. and Mrs. Bruce H. Smith * Mr. Charles T. Smith * Mr. & Mrs. Clay Smith * Mr. & Mrs. James F. Smith * Mr. & Mrs. Henry Spector * Mr. & Mrs. Edward A. Sprague * Spring Cove Marina * Mr. & Mrs. Harvey Stamper * Ms. Mildred B. Stevenson * Mr. & Mrs. John F. J. Stinson * Ms. Charlene Sturbitts * Ms. & Mrs. Thomas M. Taylor * Mr. & Mrs. Robert Terpak * Ms. Alice Tetelman * Colonel and Mrs. Gordon F. Thomas * Mr. & Mrs. Sam Thurston * Ms. Martha W. Tongue * Mr. Thomas O. Tongue * Mr. & Mrs. Middleton Train * Mr. Peter Urban * Dr. and Mrs. Jack Ursic * Mr. & Mrs. Jack Van Wie * Mr. & Mrs. Fletcher Veitch * Ms. Kristen Vorhes * Mr. & Mrs. John Whitmore * Ms. M. June Whitson * Mrs. Virginia Whittington * Captain and Mrs. Dorwin Wile * Mr. & Mrs. Gordon Page Williams * Mr. & Mrs. John W. Williams, Jr. * Mr. & Mrs. Thomas H. Williams, Jr. * Ms. Cynthia Q. Wilmer * Mr. & Mrs. George Winterhalter * Mr. Bartley A. Wood * Mr. H. Graham Wood * Mr. & Mrs. Emerson T. Woodward * Mr. & Mrs. John A. Yacovelle * Mr. & Mrs. William L. Yates * Mr. & Mrs. Philip L. Yeats

In the winter issue the new CMM giving category, The Bugeye Society, was described. Formed last fall, The Bugeye Society now has the following corporate and individual supporters: Mr. & Mrs. Charles R. Bailey, Calvert Bank, Calvert Marina, Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company, Mr. P. Chrisman Iribe, Thomas J. Lipton Foundation, Inc., Merrick Properties, Inc., Mr. & Mrs. Donald A. Randall, and Mr. & Mrs. Theodore Stanley. This support is much appreciated. For information about membership in The Bugeye Society, call Patricia Tower in CMM's Development Office.
WORK ON DRAKETAIL PROGRESSES

During these cold winter months, CMM boatwright Jack Krolak and Patuxent Small Craft Guild volunteers have been carefully dismantling and documenting the deck of the 1936 Broomes Island draketail workboat. In the most ambitious small craft restoration to date, the museum intends to rebuild the historic thirty-six foot workboat for eventual in-water use as a working exhibit. She is one of the most important boats in the maritime history collection, representing a locally built version of a type of V-bottom boat once popular on the bay — the Hooper Island draketail. These boats were noted for their narrow hulls, graceful sheer, and reverse-rake transoms. Today, very few make their living working the bay.

The museum’s draketail was built by Alpheus Sewell of Broomes Island for his son Clarence who used her for crabbing, oystering, eeling, and fishing on the Patuxent River until 1988. The following year she was acquired by the museum.

By this time the fifty-two-year-old boat was beginning to show her age; many of the galvanized fastenings had corroded and fresh water had worked its way into seams, rotting part of the deck and sides. In 1992 she was moved to a site on land adjacent to the Small Craft Guild shed, with the generous assistance of Richard Gibbons and a crane from Allied Marine Systems Company of Solomons. Once on land, a fourteen- by forty-foot shed roof was built over the boat. This extension will eventually become part of an enlarged Small Craft Guild building.

George Surgent, president of the Patuxent Small Craft Guild, has since prepared measured drawings of the draketail to record the lines and major construction features. These will serve as a guide during her future restoration. Photographs and notes are also being taken as work progresses.

Funding for the project has been made possible by a $2,250 grant from the Maryland Historical and Cultural Museum Assistance Program, and from a generous gift of $3,000 from the employees of Washburn’s Boatyard of Solomons in memory of Timothy E. Gross. Former CMM curator of maritime history, Paula Johnson, and her husband, Carl Fleischhauer, have also donated to the project.

These funds will go a long way to help supplement the museum’s limited small craft collection budget. The museum, however, will still need to raise approximately $10,000 to complete the restoration. Although as much original material as possible will be saved, the chines and much of the deck, bottom boards, side planks, and frames will have to be replaced. This will involve dismantling most of the boat down to the keel before rebuilding can start. Volunteers from the Small Craft Guild will be used whenever possible.

If you would like to donate to this worthwhile preservation project, please send your contribution to the museum at the attention of Richard Dodds. Your support will help us restore the Broomes Island draketail to its natural element — the waters of the Patuxent River. (Richard Dodds)

TENNISON CRUISES DELAYED THIS SPRING

This spring’s cruises on the museum’s historic bugeye and passenger boat, Wm. B. Tennison, will be delayed until early June. The vessel has been undergoing major repairs this winter at Zahniser’s Sailing Center.

Built in 1899 at Crabb Island, Maryland, the Tennison is the oldest Coast Guard-licensed passenger-carrying vessel on the Chesapeake. Repair work has included recaulking all bottom seams, replacing numerous decayed side planks, rebuilding the patent stern, and replacing one-third of the bulwarks. With a repair bill of $44,330 above the amount budgeted for fiscal year 1993, the Calvert County Commissioners, owners of the Tennison since 1978, agreed to a budget adjustment of $20,000. The museum contributed over $12,000 from a contingency fund, the remainder to come from the Tennison budget planned for fiscal 1994.

The Wm. B. Tennison offers hour-long cruises of the Solomons harbor, the surrounding creeks, and the lower Patuxent River. She is also available for charter. In 1992, she ran 148 public cruises and forty-eight charters, carrying 5,024 passengers. Yearly income has averaged around $17,000.

Built as a “chunk” boat with a hull made of nine pine logs and rigged as a sailing bugeye, she was converted to power in 1907. From that year until 1979 the Tennison was used as an oyster buyboat and dredgeboat on leased oyster beds. For much of that time, she was owned by the J. C. Lore and Sons seafood company of Solomons. The Wm. B. Tennison is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Calvert Marine Museum is grateful for the continuing support by the Calvert County Commissioners for the operation of the Tennison. She has become a well-known symbol of Calvert County and serves as a floating ambassador in promoting tourism and economic development. The repairs will help ensure that the Tennison continues to sail through her hundredth birthday in 1999 and on into the twenty-first century. For a brochure on rates and other information, call the museum on (410) 326-2042.
construction even before America’s entry into the war in December 1941. Larger shipyards geared up to build steel-hulled warships and transports for the military as well as freighters for the War Shipping Administration. To meet the need for “small ships” (generally considered by the military as under one thousand gross tons and less than two hundred feet in length), the services had to turn to the yacht and pleasure-boat builders of the country—famous names like American Car and Foundry Company, Elco, Herreshoff, Luders, Mathis, Matthews, and Wheeler.

Small ships were especially critical in the Pacific with its many islands, amphibious assaults, and primitive ports. By war’s end, the Army possessed the largest fleet — 111,006 vessels — which included large numbers of amphibious and harbor craft. By contrast, the Navy’s fleet stood at 74,708 vessels. Although smaller in numbers, the naval ships were significantly larger, befitting a combat service.

Most wartime construction in Maryland was for the Army—for use either by the Transportation Corps or the Army Air Corps. The Navy’s Bureau of Ships, formed in 1940, was responsible for all naval new ship and boat construction. A representative of the Army or Navy was assigned to each boatyard to ensure compliance with the contract and to monitor delivery dates.

Most Chesapeake Bay builders sought government contracts as a way to restore business. Those that were successful received government assistance to expand facilities, acquire more machinery, and build more launching ways.

All potential boatyards had to be inspected by the government and a lengthy application completed before they were deemed eligible to bid.

The Builders

The following can only be a brief overview of those companies that distinguished themselves in building little ships for the United States government.

**Berg Boat Company, Inc.**, on the Sassafras River, was founded in 1930 by Norwegian-born Frederick C. Berg. During World War II it built ninety-six 33-foot plane-rearming boats and five 45-foot picket boats for the Navy.

**The Oxford Boatyard Company**, in the old colonial port of Oxford on the Eastern Shore, dated from at least 1866, but since 1940 had been owned by Arthur J. Grymes, Jr., of New York. A local man, Robert G. Henry, Jr., was vice-president and general manager. This prolific boatyard built 126 vessels for the Navy, including 36-foot aircraft rescue boats (crash boats), 45-foot picket boats, 24-1/2-foot plane personnel boats, and 33-foot plane-rearming boats.

Unlike other boatyards in Maryland, Oxford Boatyard actively solicited repair and alteration work from the Navy. These contracts totaled seventy-one, including the conversion of a 100-foot railroad-car float into a torpedo testing barge. At its peak of production in August 1943 the company employed 115 men.

**Cambridge Shipbuilders, Inc.**, was founded in 1941 with government contracts very much in mind. A group of businessmen leased property from two dormant boatyards, Cambridge Manufacturing Co. and George T. Johnson and Sons. With the award of their first contract in June 1941 to build nine 83-foot aircraft rescue boats for the Army Air Corps, the company erected a new building in order to construct three of these boats at a time. Frames and keels were of Dorchester County white oak; the hulls were double planked of mahogany over white cedar.

The company went on to build eighteen other crash boats, ten 65-foot T-boats (small freighters capable of carrying personnel and cargo, two converted to fireboats), and five 140-foot freight and passenger vessels (FS102 to FS106). The latter were the largest wooden boats built in Maryland during the war. At peak production in 1944 the company reached five hundred employees, working two shifts. All contracts were for the U.S. Army.

**M. M. Davis and Son.** Like a number of its contemporaries in Maryland, this local Solomons company was acquired by outside interests. George H. Townsend, of Greenwich, Connecticut, purchased the yard in 1937 after the sudden death of Clarence E. Davis, the son of Marcellus Mitchell Davis who had founded the company in the mid-1880s. By 1937 M. M. Davis and Son had acquired a reputation for building fine yachts, although it was by then on the verge of bankruptcy. The coming of hostilities brought a new lease on life to the company.
Contracts were won from the Army for two 114-foot freightboats (FS42 and FS43) which were built in 1942-43 (two others were canceled) and forty-eight 65-foot T-boats, similar to those built in Cambridge (of these, eight were converted to fireboats). M. M. Davis also constructed twenty 27-foot launches. These boats were originally developed by Higgins Industries for shallow-draft oil exploration and were built of plywood, upside down, in a covered shed.

The number of employees at the company grew from approximately thirty to 136 by April 1944. According to CMM master woodcarver and former wartime employee, LeRoy “Pepper” Langley, many of the pre-war skilled workers, trained for custom yacht building, found it hard to adjust to the cruder finish and production-line work necessary in wartime conditions. All government construction was under the direction of J. Barnes Lusby, vice-president and superintendent.

**Annapolis Yacht Yard, Inc.**, was founded in 1937 on the site of the Chance Marine Construction Company in Eastport. Chris B. Nelson of New York was president. Prior to the war its approximately sixty-man labor force made custom-built yachts, but the company was not slow to switch over to government work. In May 1941 Annapolis Yacht Yard began to build the original subchaser. Annapolis was one of forty boatyards building this type.

But the yard really established its reputation with the building of the 70-foot Vosper PT boat. PT boats were undoubtedly the glamour boats of the small classes and garnered more than their share of headlines. While several different designs were used during the war, Chris Nelson was successful in bringing back plans of a British design, the Vosper motor torpedo boat. Annapolis Yacht Yard eventually became the American design agent for the Vosper and work commenced on building these craft in June 1941. Hulls were double diagonally planked of mahogany, fastened with Everdur bronze screws to sawn white oak frames. The boats were powered by three Packard engines producing 3,000 horsepower for a top speed of forty-five knots. They typically carried two 21-inch torpedo tubes.

Vospers were built for allied navies under Lend-Lease. By the end of the war Annapolis had built one hundred for the USSR (including a number in knock-down form for assembly in the Soviet Union) and twenty-eight for the United Kingdom - more than any other shipyard in the country.6

The yard’s labor force went from sixty to six hundred at peak production, with skilled workers recruited from as far away as New York City. Owens Yacht Company was started in Annapolis in 1932, but moved to Dundalk in 1936. Unlike most other Maryland boatyards, the company had opted for prefabrication and straightline production methods even before the war. They had built an assembly line and concentrated on producing their popular 30-foot sedan cruiser. The switch to mass-produced wartime craft, therefore, was undoubtedly easier for Owens, which specialized in building 42-foot Army Air Corps crash boats during 1941-43. By war’s end, a total of fifty-four had been built.7

Owens was also one of the country’s largest producers of 36-foot landing craft (LCVPS) for the Navy. These craft were intended to be launched from attack transports and were of V-bottom construction with plywood sides covered in armor plate. Peak demand for landing craft occurred in 1944 when Owens was completing approximately forty-four each month. Total production was 2,150 LCVPs, making Owens one of the largest producers.8 The labor force reached a peak in 1944 of seven hundred, of whom fifty were women.

**Wills-Spedden Shipyard, Inc.**, was founded in 1885 by Captain Robert M. Spedden, at the foot of Broadway in Baltimore. Of all the private shipyards discussed here, it was the only yard building in steel. Three LT-class 119-foot tugs were built for the Army in 1943 for use in the Panama Canal. Five distribution-box boats were also built for the Army. These 64-foot craft were employed in tending the electrical systems that fed current to controlled mines off shore, linked by electrical cable. Wills-Spedden also built a 125-foot self-propelled barge.

Other steel barge builders for the Army included the Wiley Equipment Company of Port Deposit (seventeen barges and floating cranes), Maryland Steel Products of Baltimore (twenty knock-down barges), and Maryland Structural Steel of Baltimore (twenty-four knock-down barges).

**Conclusion**

Not surprisingly, such a huge small-craft-building program in so short a time produced its share of problems. Some boatyard owners shied away entirely from...
government work. Noted maritime historian and naval architect, Howard I. Chapelle, commented in 1942 that small bay builders were put off by unnecessarily high specifications and the abundant paperwork and inspections required by the government. Owners were also required to install wire fences, floodlights, and to hire a guard force to maintain security.

Once a contract was awarded, no money was forthcoming until the first keel was laid. New power tools, buildings, and other equipment were often necessary, and labor shortages in some boatyards were a problem. Difficulty was experienced in acquiring scarce fittings and parts specified in the contracts. In the wartime rush, unseasoned lumber was frequently used as the large quantity of the necessary oak, pine, and fir exceeded pre-war stockpiles. The government, in turn, complained of excessive profits made by contractors and was continually concerned with the lack of security and fire precautions taken by private yards.

Despite these inevitable difficulties, the boatbuilding industry did an amazing job in supplying large numbers of vessels of all kinds and descriptions for the Army, Navy, Coast Guard, and overseas allies. The Army-Navy Production Award for high achievement was bestowed on the Berg Boat Company in 1942, Annapolis Yacht Yard in 1943, and M. M. Davis and Son in 1944. Annapolis Yacht Yard received three further awards, and Berg Boat Company and Davis each received an additional award.

World War II taught some valuable lessons to Maryland's boatbuilders. New assembly-line production methods would largely replace working on one boat at a time—practices that were suited to the postwar demand for inexpensive recreational boats. The wartime use of laminated wood for stems, keels, and frames, and the use of plywood for decks, deck structures, and hulls carried over into the postwar era and made for cheaper and quicker construction.

Even before war's end, bay boatbuilders had their eyes on the postwar market. The Oxford Boatyard started advertising its new and ultimately very successful Oxford 400 auxiliary sailboat in 1945. Plans were laid by Robert Henry while the yard was still heavily involved with government contracts. Owens Yacht Company was accepting orders in 1944 for their 30-foot cruiser and a sport fisherman variation, even though they were not in production. The company was also planning a pleasure-yacht version of the 40-foot Army rescue boat that they were then building in large numbers.

M. M. Davis and Son, too, was not slow to recognize that government contracts would soon come to an end. During the war the shipyard built four 49-foot commercial fishing boats, and in March 1945 was advertising plans and prices for a new 56-foot fish and shrimp boat. More importantly to the company, plans had been drawn up before the war for an affordable family power cruiser. By war's end, owner George Townsend was able to pay off the company's debts, and the yard was in a position to take advantage of pent-up consumer demand. The result was a very successful production-model motor cruiser with the trade name of "Cruise-A-Long." First produced in 1946 as a 20-foot model, the boat was built of plywood and sold for $2,000. It would help the company carry on until it finally closed in 1974.

Many of the Davis wartime-built T-boats were sold after the war, to be converted into fishing boats or for other peacetime uses. One of these still afloat is the Laura B, the former T-57, built in 1943 and now serving as a ferry to Monhegan Island, Maine. She is surely a credit to her builder, a surviving wartime "little ship," and a reminder of the last great wooden boatbuilding era in Maryland.

Endnotes

5. Another, SC-533, was rebuilt from one constructed in 1931.
7. Grover, 150-52, 203. Some were designated as launches, some as patrol and rescue boats. Maryland in World War II gives a total of fifty-three.

Richard Dodds is CMM's curator of maritime history.

1993 SUPPER CRUISE SEASON OPENS

The Calvert Marine Museum opens its 1993 supper cruise season aboard the Wm. B. Tennison on Wednesday, June 16. (Rain date: Thursday, June 17.) Back by popular demand, the first cruise will follow the route taken up the Patuxent River to St. Leonard Creek by Commodore Joshua Barney and his men on their 1814 expedition to Washington, D. C. Our guide for the evening will be Burt Kummerow, executive director of Historic St. Mary's City. The Tennison will depart the CMM's boat basin at 4:30 p.m., and will return by twilight.

Cost of the supper cruise is $40 per person, $35 for museum members. Box suppers and beverages are included. Proceeds will benefit the endowment for the Drum Point Lighthouse and the Wm. B. Tennison. Space is limited; full payment must accompany reservations. For more information or reservations, please call Sue Chabot on (410) 326-2042.
VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT —

Recognition Dinner
Honors the Volunteer Commitment to Museum

On January 20, seventy-eight volunteers and their guests took advantage of one of the benefits of Volunteer Council membership — an invitation to the annual Recognition Dinner. New volunteer recruits with twenty-four hours of service were seated with individuals whose volunteer measure is taken by the thousands of hours they have donated to the Calvert Marine Museum. All were thanked by CMM director, Doug Alves, as museum staff — themselves volunteers for the evening — served the meal and attended their unpaid colleagues.

The annual dinner, held at the Solomons Island Yacht Club, is a small tribute to the contributions of CMM volunteers who work in every area of institutional endeavor. Collectively, over 11,000 hours, with a job market value of $108,200, were given in calendar year 1992.

Special recognition, in the form of a certificate of appreciation, was given to those who contributed one hundred hours or more: Paul Adams, Wallace Ashby, Jeane Bare, Doris Berry, Paul Berry, Don Brown, Sue Chabot, Marilyn Force, Betty Foyle, Kit Kearney, Dede King, “Pepper” Langley, Al Lavish, Deann Lesemann, Carroll Lusby, Cindy MacArthur, Lisa Mandell, Ethel Manley, Peter Margelos, Zelma Margelos, Linda McGilvery, Pat Miller, Ellie Mowbray, Dorothy Ordwein, Tom Ostertag, Ken Reid, Sandy Roberts, Charles Sands, Margaret Saville, Ruth Showalter, and Richard Simonds.

Gold-starred name badges, with each star representing one thousand hours of cumulative service, were presented to these volunteers: Paul Adams, three stars; Jeane Bare, one star; Peter Margelos, one star; Margaret Saville, one star; and George Surgent, one star. CMM librarian and editor of the Bugeye Times, Paul Berry, also received a new name badge with his over eight thousand hours of museum service reflected in the eight gold stars above his name.

Congratulations to Paul Adams who earned the Volunteer Achievement Award, the highest honor, for his untiring work with exhibit construction and projects for the maritime history department.

Calvert Marine Museum recognizes the value of its volunteer service, applauds its many dedicated volunteers, and encourages the continued support and loyalty of these museum friends. (Layne Bergin)

Attention, Travelers!

Are you interested in trip opportunities with fellow members? Do theme tours, ecotourism, and special itineraries appeal to you? Last fall, CMM sponsored “Down to the Sea” — a maritime history tour of England. Participants gave it high marks. Should we go again? Or someplace else? Please share your comments so that we can plan a travel program. Call Layne Bergin.