Chesapeake Bay and the Bugeye

The Chesapeake Bay's most distinctive craft was the Bugeye (Buckeye). Its wide shallow draft and large cargo capacity made it ideal for working oyster bars, and evolved from the smaller log constructed canoes.

Over the years the Skipjack, which was cheaper to build and easier to sail, replaced the bugeye so that by 1920 most of the bugeyes were converted to gasoline run oyster buy boats. The “Wm. B. Tennison”, a familiar sight in Solomons Harbor, is an excellent example.

Solomons Island produced thirteen and three-quarters per cent (13.75%) of all bugeyes listed in Brewington’s roster; *(1) making Calvert County third in total production behind only Somerset and Talbot counties. By individual towns, Solomons Island would probably rank first, but verification of such ranking is difficult as several vessels were never officially documented; while others were documented only after their original builder, or area where built, was lost or forgotten.

Solomons Island was described by George Barrie, Jr. *(2) in 1901 as “...a perfect nest of little ship-yards, where the bugeye is created in all its glory.”

Solomons best known builder to the outside world, because of its yacht building activities, was the M. M. Davis yard, later renamed “Cruis-Along” went out of business in 1972.

To the waterman of the Bay, however, the outstanding builder was James T. Marsh. Marsh probably contributed more towards the improvement of the bugeye than any other builder. In 1879 he conceived and built the first framed bugeye, the “Carrie”. Up until this time all bugeyes were log constructed.

Marsh also improved the bugeye design by providing additional deck space over the stern. Called the “duck-tail” stern, Marsh constructed it on the bugeye “Alexine” in 1880. All of Marsh’s vessels were noted for their beauty, speed and sound construction; distinctive on the Chesapeake Bay for their clipper bows and fine lines.

What is the origin of the work “bugeye”? No one knows

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Portico Decorated

Thanks to the work of Pepper Langley, the museum's front portico was beautifully enhanced by a bugeye silhouette, the museum's logo, and a name board, “Calvert Marine Museum”. It is projects such as these that your membership dues provide.

Original teak and Honduras mahogany hand-carvings of these works are in the museum’s lobby.

The Wye Oak

On April 11th a seedling from the over 200 year old State Tree, the Wye Oak, was planted at the CMM by the Maryland Forestry Department and the Calvert County Bicentennial Commission in observance of the Bicentennial Arbor Day.

The oak is a very fitting gesture as it was from such oaks that many early wooden vessels were built.
Watercolors by Commander E. C. Tufnell, R.N.

The collection of watercolors by Cdr. E. C. Tufnell is titled “A History of Sail”. These portraits have been given to the museum by Melvin A. and Christa G. Conant of Great Falls, Virginia, out of their own collection. The Calvert Marine Museum now has the largest number of any museum in the United States.

Cdr. Tufnell’s watercolors are to be found at St. Michael’s, South Street Seaport, U.S. Coast Guard Academy, Bath Marine Museum, San Francisco Maritime Museum, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, and the Queen’s Collection at Windsor Castle.

Cdr. Tufnell was born in 1888, joined the Royal Navy in 1903 and first retired in 1929. He served in the Submarine Service and on surface ships in the Far East, off Crimea, in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean. He finally retired after World War II. While serving in the Admiralty, he assisted Nordhoff and Hall in the research on “H.M.S. Bounty”.

He is a superb modeler of ships; his paintings speak for themselves.

In the CMM’s collection, the artist has relied on data as authoritative as the subjects provide. Necessarily, we have very little information on ships from earlier centuries.

Nevertheless, while experts will argue, our basic understanding is reflected faithfully in these scenes. Changes in rig, colors, and sails reflected experience, prejudices, and fancies of owners and captains. But here is this collection are examples of our maritime past, great and small ships whose captains were of the breed “...to whom no land was distant...to whom no sea was barred”.

Lore Steps Down As Chairman

Joseph C. Lore, Jr. Chairman of the CMM Committee since its inception in 1969, stepped down from office at the spring board meeting of the Calvert County Historical Society. Mr. Lore’s long dedication, hard work and many contributions to the museum are greatly appreciated.

Mr. Lore was one of a small group of individuals who founded the CMM. He was instrumental in securing many of the artifacts now owned by or loaned to the museum. From 1970 until the museum moved into its permanent home in June 1975, he scheduled the many volunteers who served as weekend hosts. Mr. Lore has helped the museum from a small temporary, one room museum, to a two story, 4 acre compound.

We all extend a fond “Well Done” to Mr. Lore.

James Buys, a faithful volunteer and member of the CMM Committee, has been designated the new chairman. Mr. Buys will be an able successor to Mr. Lore since he brings to his new position a long standing concern for the growth and development of the museum.

Ship’s Store Grows

Anyone visiting the museum between June 1975 and March 1976 has seen many changes as it is growing at a rapid rate. The Ship’s Store is a good example.

The original stock consisted of post cards, a few booklets, notepaper, and some jewelry. The total value of these items on opening day was very small.

Ten months later it’s a whole new ball game; limited display and storage space and a wide variety of items. For example:

- Books and pamphlets on seafood cookery, fossils, folklore; more than 14 different choices.
- Over 31 interesting gift ideas including telescopes, watchcaps, napkins, placemats, macrame, watercolors, and nautical charts.
- A variety of stationary and hundreds of postcards.
- Consignment items from 10 local craftsmen.

The “big sellers” will surprise you. Bay area watercolors and fossil books are favorites. But the items that sell the best are fossils and postcards. Prices to sell at 10 to 25¢ must constantly be restocked.

There are very few visitors who do not stop and browse at the Ship’s Store and enjoy a chat with the volunteer or staff member behind the counter.

Evening Lecture Series

The first in the spring-summer series of lectures sponsored by the museum was held April 6. Mr. Lore, chairman of the CMM Committee, introduced the lecturer, Mr. Max Chance, Exhibit Specialists, who revealed some trade secrets as he discussed the decisions necessary to put-together an interesting and informative display.

Slides of Smithsonian exhibits were shown to illustrate the points emphasized by Mr. Chance. A mock-up of the new exhibit room, “Life of the Waterman” was examined before the guided tour of the museum.

June 25 - Melvin Conant, Consultant of Foreign Energy and member of CMM Committee, will speak on American Clipper Ships, 1846-1860.

July 17 - Ben Williams, Anthropology Instructor, Calvert Senior High, will speak of Indians of Southern Maryland.

August 4 - Kent Mountford, of Philadelphia Academy of Sciences, working at the Benedict Laboratory, will speak on Ecology of Creeks in Calvert County.

These lectures are open to the public: $1.00; 50¢ for students. Members of the museum are admitted free. Since there will be many more lectures, a $5.00 individual or $7.50 family membership fee is a real bargain.

Watch the county newspapers for dates and titles of the slide shows to be held during June, July, and August. The first slide show will be entitled, “Scenes for Calvert 1971 to 76”, and will be by Augie Seleckmann at 7:30, June 12.
Drum Point Light Gets Old-Time Telephone

In commemoration of 100 years of telephone service to Calveri County, the community relations team of the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company installed an old magneto-type telephone in Drum Point Lighthouse at the Calvert Marine Museum. This type of set was used in the Solomons area in the early years and was replaced with the dial sets in the past few years.

Left to right: Dr. Ralph Eshelman, museum director; “Pepper” Langley, museum chief carpenter; Foley Mattingley, C&P community relations director for Southern Maryland; Dick Pitcher, C&P community relations for Calvert County; Stanley Pitcher, C&P installer and M. G. Swann, C&P service manager for Calvert County.

Recent Acquisitions

Mr. Frank P. Baccala donated a patent chain link.
Mr. Pepper Langley donated 2 Bill of Sales for the schooner “D. J. Ward”; 2 Pilot Rules for 1938; a 1914 Seagoing Vessels Number and Signal Letters; a 1918 Merchant Vessels of the U.S. Ms. Jean Ridgley loaned a marble-top chest, 2 pottery jugs, and a copper wasp poiler.
Mr. Charles Dowell, Sr., loaned two Palmer engines and two Myer engines.
Mr. R. L. Jones of the Washington Woodworking Co. donated lumber.
Mr. Eitel M. Files donated four mounted photos of the Dewey Drydock which originally hung in his father’s (W. H. Files) ice cream parlor at Solomons Island.

The CMM and Its Involvement in Education in Maryland

by Ruth Hulbert, Principal, Appeal School and member of the School-Museum Liaison Committee.

Our new museum in Solomons is frequented by many persons as indicated from the visitor’s book in the lobby; some of the visitors are children who are accompanied by an adult. My first visit several months ago caused me some embarrassment for not having been there sooner. That visit gave me cause to applaud the work which has been accomplished in so short a time. Subsequent visits have only increased my feeling of pride in Calvert County’s efforts to preserve its heritage and way of life in the Chesapeake Bay area. I viewed with interest the history of boats and shipbuilding; the cases filled with finds from the digs along the Cliffs, the display of the life cycle of the oyster and others.

It seems to me that the strength of this museum is its teaching aspect — its ability to impart knowledge, its ability to recreate the situation as nearly like life as it was. The boat building area is a good example of this since shipbuilding has ended and will probably never be revived.

Here the visitor can see the tools, examine the wood, and observe the process step-by-step. Here one is reminded of the importance that shipbuilding had in the Solomons area and, unless preserved in this fashion, would be lost forever — except perhaps for a brief account in a Maryland history book.

Museum Needs

Research Library: needs List of Merchant Vessels of the United States; late 1800’s and early 1900’s up to 1940.
Office: needs office equipment, desks, work tables.
Exhibits: needs 16mm motion picture projector.

Mr. Alton Kersey donated various equipment, tools, (scales, strainers, tally board, oyster scoop, etc.) used in the processing of oysters.
Ms. Pauline Simpson donated a century old white-oak bed and loaned a 1935 Merchant Vessels of the U.S.
Ms. Inez Jones Dianto donated post cards and cabin plan of the “George Washington”.

ATTENTION: NAUTICAL & DECOY WOODCARVING CLASS
June 2, 9, 16, & 23. Sessions begin promptly at 7:30 P.M. Instructors: Pepper Langley and Watson Algire.
Come prepared for the first session — bring (or buy here) the proper tools. Call 326-4162 or 326-3878 for information.
Volunteers Meet

Thirty-three weekend volunteers hosts met on May 6 to review policy, become acquainted with new policy and procedures, and learn the fine points of good exhibit presentation. Volunteer's duties in the Ship's Store and exhibit areas were clarified and in-house emergency and safety procedures were established.

Of special interest was the Exhibits Guide Information booklet which gives pertinent facts on each exhibit in the museum. This should be a real aid to the volunteer. A copy will be available at the Information Desk to the host and guide on duty. Continued support of the volunteer program is essential to the success of the museum.

Mac Chance, Exhibit Specialist, took the group on a tour of the “Life of the Waterman” exhibit room which he designed, pointing out the variety of considerations involved in the creation of exhibits. The room is scheduled for completion July 4th.

Chesapeake Bay and the Bugeye

Continued from page 1 for sure. But certainly Calvert County did much to make this craft popular. It is for this that the CMM staff chose the bugeye as the name of our museum's newsletter.

(The information contained in this feature was gathered and summarized from Brewington, M.V., 1963, Chesapeake Bay Log Canoes and Bugeyes, Cornell Maritime Press, Inc., Cambridge, Md., 171p.

*(1) Brewington, Chesapeake Bay Log Canoes and Bugeyes, appendix V.

*(2) Barrie, Cruises, p.123.)