Building a Skipjack

Research begun last summer continues for the forthcoming exhibition, "Built to Work: Boats and Boatbuilding in Southern Maryland." The project, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Maryland State Arts Council, focusses on the few local builders who still construct wooden workboats for use by watermen in the region. Since September 1982, researchers have documented the building of the Chesapeake Bay's newest skipjack, the *Connie Francis*, under construction in Piney Point, St. Mary's County. Builder Francis Goddard has built numerous workboats, ranging from skiffs to the 56-foot skipjack, the *Dee of St. Mary's*, built in 1979.

Boatbuilder Francis Goddard is dwarfed by the "timbers," or ribs, of the *Connie Francis*. This skipjack is 56 feet in length (not including the bowsprit and boom which will add another 25 to 30 feet), and is 21 feet wide. March 1983. Photograph by Paula Johnson, Calvert Marine Museum

Aquaculture: A WORLD VIEW OF SEAFARMING

An exciting temporary exhibit on loan from the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, "Aquaculture: A World View of Seafarming," surveys the uses of aquaculture in six Asian countries and Hawaii. Twenty-eight photographs by Robert Glenn Ketchum evoke the lifestyle of various seafarming communities, from milkfish ranches in the Philippines to seaweed harvesting in Japan. This exhibit will be available to visitors throughout the month of July during the museum's regular hours.
FROM THE PAGES OF RECORDED HISTORY:

Oystering in the Patuxent

Without the continuing assistance of volunteers, many of the projects and programs at the Calvert Marine Museum would never reach fruition. Production of this newsletter, for example, is due in part to time and expertise donated by individuals like Clara Dixon, who edits the newsletter, and Richard Roming, who has printed many of the photographs in this issue. Paul Berry, another volunteer, has single-handedly organized the museum's research library. In recent months, Paul has also made a significant contribution to our forthcoming exhibit on the commercial seafood industries of the Patuxent River region. He has spent many hours in Annapolis, at the Maryland State Law Library and the Maryland Hall of Records, pouring over government reports, documents, and ledgers, all toward the goal of providing the best historical background possible for our exhibition.

Mr. Berry has examined reports from the Maryland Oyster Commission, the Shell Fish Commission, the Bureau of Industrial Statistics, and the State Board of Health, some of which date from the 1870's. These reports include data on the volume of seafood harvested from various waters in the state, the dockside value of the harvests, the type of gear used, and in some cases, the cost of such gear to watermen. At the Maryland Hall of Records, Mr. Berry consulted indexes to records of the Comptroller of the Treasury and of Calvert County, which contain licensing records for oyster dredgers and tongers, traders, foot peddlers, and railroad-skiff pushers. These documents also include reports by oyster inspectors and dealers. Combined with information compiled by museum staff from sources of recorded history at the Library of Congress, the National Archives, and the Department of Natural Resources Library, we have a good deal of statistical data on the region's seafood industries over the last century. This information gives us an understanding of changes within the commercial fishing industries and will provide the necessary historic context for our new exhibition on the commercial fisheries of the Patuxent River region.

Following are samples from Mr. Berry's research which we thought would be of special interest to our readers.

Advocacy of conservation measures for the Chesapeake Bay dates back much further than many people imagine. This paragraph is from the “Report of the Commissioners of Fisheries” for the State of Maryland, January 1, 1876:

Ninety years ago the annual yield of oysters from the Patuxent River was about 500,000 bushels. Production today is far below that number, but the State of Maryland is attempting to revitalize the Patuxent's oyster grounds through its seed oyster program. Last spring, 143,000 bushels of seed oysters were moved to the Patuxent River, more than one quarter of the total 416,000 bushels “planted” in all of Maryland's waters. Here the skipjack, “Sigsbee,” from Tilghman Island, is loaded with seed oysters prior to dumping them overboard in the Patuxent. (Photograph by Paula Johnson, Calvert Marine Museum.)
It is much to be regretted that we are without reliable statistics of the annual yield of our waters, and have only to rely on information furnished from the memory of fishermen and fish-dealers, but enough has been obtained to satisfy us, that the most valuable fisheries are becoming less and less productive, and our waters are being depleted of their yield of fishfood, to an alarming extent, and we now feel that necessity for the protection of our fishes, and the resort to artificial means of fish culture to restore our waters... 

The Patuxent River as described in the following paragraph from a report of the “Bureau of Industrial Statistics” of the State of Maryland, 1894, contrasts sharply with the river’s oyster industry of the 1880’s:

In the Patuxent River the oyster reefs extend from the mouth to the southern border of Prince George’s County, a distance of twenty-four miles. It is reported that twenty-five years ago the reefs extended much further up the river than at present, and fossil shells have been found forty-five miles from the mouth of the river, but it is reported that no oysters are now caught along the shores of Prince George’s County, although a few were taken in 1885 and 1886... The water area of the Patuxent is about forty-six square miles and the area of the natural oyster-grounds approximates twelve square miles... The annual product of the reefs is about 500,000 bushels, for which the oystermen receive about $255,000, an average of 41,666 bushels and $19,583, to the square mile. The average value per square mile of the products from this river during the last five years has been greater than in any other tributary in the State, and the average quantity has been surpassed only by that from the Choptank River... These oysters are usually large and fat, and are marketed at a price fully equal to the average for the State, nearly all of them being sold in Baltimore at prices ranging from ten to fifteen cents more than received by the fishermen. The practice of “laying down” oysters to await a favorable market prevails here more extensively than in any other part of the Chesapeake.

From which village in Calvert County were more tonger’s licenses issued than in any other single place in the county in 1899? If you guessed Solomons or Broome’s Island, you’re wrong!

From the Tonger’s Licenses Records, Calvert County Circuit Court, 1896 - 1905: (the numbers indicate the number of licenses issued to oystermen residing in each town).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Licenses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adelina</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barstow</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowens</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broomes Island</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buena Vista</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frazier</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governors Run</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hellens</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Island Creek</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Marlboro</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusby</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackalls</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And finally, a glowing testimonial to the character of oyster tongers, from a report by the “Bureau of Industrial Statistics,” for the State of Maryland, 1890 - 91. The section reprinted here is preceded in the original document by several paragraphs defending the nature of oyster dredgers, apparently in an attempt to dispel popular notions that all oystermen were criminals and ruffians. The writer acknowledges that some dredgers took oysters illegally, but argues that the whole group should not be penalized and held accountable for the illegal actions of a few. This compassionate view of the character of Chesapeake Bay oystermen is offered in an attempt to curtail more rigid restrictions and penalties against oystermen, which were under consideration by State authorities.

A tonger will not steal — he will, however, “take” oysters, and it is useless to deny that in this respect (good citizen as he is), he is any better than the dredger. Yet his social life is a credit to the State. He constitutes a class with certain distinctive features, with certain absolute requirements and peculiar rights to government. In some communities, such as... along the shores of the Pocomoke, on St. George’s Island, or by the margins of the Patuxent and Potomac Rivers, ... wherever the waters flowing in with the tide from the Ocean creep up the rivers and inlets; dwelling in their own homes, surrounded always with pleasant gardens or well-tilled truck patches; clean and inviting, with the marks of industry everywhere, are the settlements of these toilers in the shell fisheries of the State. Less than one hundred thousand souls, living in

(continued on page 6)

In 1899, more tonger’s licenses were issued from Olivet than from any other place in Calvert County. Robert T. Johnson was undoubtedly one tonger who purchased his $3.50 license at Olivet. Mr. Johnson’s daughter, Mrs. George Curtis, believes her father had this portrait made around 1910. (Calvert Marine Museum copy photo.)
Sailing Crab Skiff Construction Completed by the Patuxent Small Craft Guild

The double-ended sailing skiff (sharp bow and stern) was popular among Chesapeake watermen from the 1880's through the early 1900's. Its slender design, low sides, and flat bottom made poling and rowing easy while working the shoreline for crabs. Additionally, the use of sail power made travel to and from preferred crabbing areas easy work. The number of sails used, their rigging, and configuration varied with the preference of the builder and user.

This particular skiff was constructed in accordance with a line drawing obtained from the Smithsonian Institution. Following the construction practices of yesteryear, the skiff was built from available building materials. Instead of white pine or cedar timber as used in earlier times, we used spruce and yellow pine. And since 4- or 5-oz. canvas sails are not generally available, we substituted a Dacron sail re-cut to proper size and shape. The final product, however, is in fact an excellent reproduction of an early day 18½ ft. crabbing skiff.

Launching and maiden voyage occurred on May 21, 1983, at the Drum Point Lighthouse. Although the wind was light, the vessel handled well. An attempt to sail with two people proved very awkward. It is obvious this type craft is best suited to a one-man operation.

In the future, the skiff will be used to demonstrate crabbing techniques as well as small craft handling to museum visitors. When not in use, it will be on static display in the CMM boat shed along with an Indian dugout canoe and Colonial punt also built by the Guild.

The Guild also represented CMM at St. Mary's City Maryland Day celebration and gave a lively presentation of Indian and Colonial canoe construction techniques as part of CMM's scheduled educational programs.

Anyone wanting additional information about the Patuxent Small Craft Guild may contact the museum.

Fossil Facts

Strange, curiously shaped, nodule-like fossils are often found in the cliffs, slumps and beachwash of Calvert Cliffs. These small, swollen bones have been identified as part of the skeleton of teleosts, or bony fish. Technically known as hyperostoses (Gr. hyper + osteos meaning abnormal bone), they are more commonly called "Tilly Bones" in honor of the late Dr. Tilly Edinger, a Harvard paleontologist who had long made a special study of them.

Hyperostoses are as common in certain families of modern salt water fish as they were in their teleost ancestors. Dr. Edinger's studies at Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology have shown that these swollen lumps can develop at the base of dorsal and lateral fins, at the base of the skull, and on the ribs and vertebrae of such bony fish as the jack, spade, haddock, and lancetfish. They are apparently caused by a normal aging process, though they can also be the result of disease.

Fossilized hyperostoses are heavy and composed of a dense, bony material. They are usually oblong or oval-shaped, convoluted, and vary in size and color according to the species of fish from which they came and the type of matrix in which they were buried.

Paleontologists have found that "Tilly Bones" have proven useful in their studies of the ecology and climate of geological periods and locals as well as helpful in establishing the evolutionary development of the modern bony fish.
BALLOON LAUNCH CELEBRATION

The museum is sponsoring a balloon launch as part of our Drum Point Lighthouse 100th birthday celebration. Tickets will go on sale July 1, in the museum gift shop. One dollar ($1.00) will buy you a balloon which will be launched on August 20, 1983 at 6:00 p.m.

The owner of the balloon returned from the farthest location and the person returning that balloon will receive a one-year membership in the Calvert Marine Society and a copy of Fred Tilp's latest book, The Chesapeake Bay of Yore.

Stop by our gift shop and join in the birthday fun!

Selected Acquisitions

Through the cooperation of the Radcliffe Maritime Museum, an oil painting of the tugboat Joseph Zane was loaned. Built in 1873, at the M. M. Davis Shipyard, the Zane is portrayed negotiating a tow with a bark lying to. Painted by Samuel Hamilton (1842 - 1920), a Baltimore artist, this is the earliest known painting of any Davis-built ship. Also on loan from Radcliffe is the engine room plate from the tugboat Esther Phillips, another Davis tug built in 1908. The Phillips was owned by the Atlantic Transport Co. of Baltimore. Their successor, the United States Lines, continued to use the Phillips in Baltimore Harbor until 1959 when she was sold for scrap.

The museum also obtained two more pen-and-ink drawings of the Weems Line steamers Eagle and Wenonah. Drawn by Samuel Ward Stanton, they were acquired through his daughter, Mrs. Bern Anderson.

Three experimental drift bottles were field collected from a bottle dump in Calvert County. They were made specifically for Chesapeake Biological Laboratory, Solomons, in 1938, by Mr. R. A. Blunt, Buck Glass Co., Baltimore, Maryland. Nearly 3,000 were made.

The museum also acquired by purchase an August H. O. Rolle watercolor of a Solomons Harbor scene entitled, Wharf and Sailboats.

Donations for Commercial Fisheries Collection

It is always gratifying to know that our newsletter is actually read. Within a few days of mailing the last issue, we received several responses to our request for donations of artifacts and photographs for our commercial fisheries exhibit. Mr. and Mrs. Ben Bradburn of Solomons donated a crab scrape; Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton Trossbach of Ridge donated three carved duck decoys, a crab scrape, photographs of Mr. Trossbach's boat shop, and two advertising thermometers; Mr. Tom Courtney of Ridge donated four chairs used by crab pickers at the Charles E. Davis crab house, merchandise ticket books, oyster can lids, and receipt books from that company; Mrs. Eleanor Balta of Ridge donated three copies of the book, Some Important People and Events of St. Mary's, which was written by Mrs. Balta's father, Clarence Bradburn.

Mr. Bass Holden of St. George's Island sent several photographs of fishermen using a haul seine; Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Sewell and Mr. and Mrs. Sanford Williams of Broome's Island lent us a number of old photographs which depict life and work along the Patuxent River. These photographs have been copied and added to our collection. Mrs. A. B. Lowery of Prince Frederick donated roe containers, advertisements, and business documents from the Lowery Seafood Company, as well as dozens of photographs of the company in the 1950's and '60's. Mr. Herman W. Dixon of Avenue lent us photographs of the boats he has built and his boat shop, and some wonderful pictures of the soft-shell clamming industry of two decades ago.

We wish to thank all of these people for their contributions to the Museum's collections.
independence on the products of the rivers and streams
and bays. Yes! an independent and fearless people, Ameri-
can Citizens, in all that the name implies. Accustomed
to express their views and to maintain what they believe
to be their rights, as against the opinion of the balance
of the world. I have journeyed far abroad, but never in
any State or under any government has it been my ex-
perience to come in contact with so marked an in-
dividuality as that bred and nourished among the oyster-
men of the Bay Counties of Maryland. To do anything
by legislation, which would tend to alter this condition,
would be an intolerable wrong. The laws should be made
to encourage and perpetuate this condition for there are
few places indeed, within the limits of this Republic, where
men can live so easily on . . . their individual industry,
and so independently of the assistance of their fellows,
as in this Old State of Maryland.

CALVERT MARINE SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

MEMBERSHIP PRIVILEGES INCLUDE:
1. Subscription to the quarterly “Bugeye Times” newsletter.
2. Quarterly calendar of events.
3. Free admission to Museum programs (films, lectures, slide-
   shows).
4. Invitations to previews and receptions for new exhibits.
5. Reduced rates for trips, tours, cruises and classes.
6. 10% discount on gifts, arts and crafts from Museum Gift Shop.
7. Charter discount on the 1899 oyster buyboat Wm. B.
   Tennison.

NOTE: One month prior to the expiration of your member-
ship a RENEWAL notice will be sent to you.

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:
Calvert Marine Museum
P. O. Box 97
Solomons, Maryland 20688

PLEASE ENTER MY ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FOR:
( ) $ 12.00 Individual
( ) $ 15.00 Family
( ) $ 50.00 Supporting
( ) $ 100.00 Sustaining
( ) $ 500.00 Patron
( ) $1,000.00 Benefactor

Name
Address
City
State
Zip

CONTRIBUTIONS OF $1,000.00 OR MORE QUALIFY FOR LIFE MEMBERSHIP
ALL CONTRIBUTIONS ARE INCOME TAX DEDUCTIBLE