A CENTURY OF SERVICE AS BUGEYE, BUYBOAT, AND TOUR BOAT

(Editor’s Note: Although the museum has operated the Tennison for twenty years, there has never been an extensive history of the vessel in the Bugeye Times. The present article is based largely on research done by Dr. Ralph E. Eshelman when he prepared the nomination in 1993 for the Tennison as a National Historic Landmark, an honor conferred in 1994 and reported in the Bugeye Times at that time. Other information comes from the museum archives. Gaps in the vessel’s history are the subject of continuing research.)

A ceremony on the morning of May 1, 1999, the museum’s tour boat, Wm. B. Tennison, began her 1999 season, marking her centennial year in service on the Chesapeake Bay. Local county officials joined Lore family descendants and museum staff in the first voyage of the season, and many more visitors enjoyed trips on the Tennison throughout the day. In addition to the regular cruises offered visitors during the summer and early fall, there will be several special cruises to mark the centennial. Although visitors are told of the beginning of the Tennison as a sailing bugeye (a two-masted oyster dredge boat), with the hull built of nine logs, and of her later use as a powered oyster buyboat, few are aware of the full history, so far as it can be reconstructed.

Unfortunately, much of the early history is lost, including the source of the vessel’s name. It is known from official records in the National Archives that the Wm. B. Tennison was documented in 1899 at the Customs House in Crisfield, Maryland. A carpenter’s certificate filed at that time stated the builder as Frank Laird of Monie, Maryland, who built her at Crab Island (sometimes listed as Crabb Island) where St. Peters Creek joins the Manokin River in Somerset County. (Crab Island in 1899 had a very small settlement which has since disappeared, recognized currently only by the name of a road.) Mr. Laird was a local boatbuilder of some fame, since he is credited by maritime historian Marion V. Brewington with building in 1906 the largest bugeye ever — the A. von Nyvenheim. The first owners of the Tennison were Benjamin P. and Rufus L. Miles, also of Monie (Rufus later owned the A. von Nyvenheim).

In the early history of bugeyes as oyster dredge boats, dating back to the late 1860s, they were typically built of logs laid together to form the basic hull. As bugeyes increased in size, and as the availability of suitable logs declined, boatbuilders turned increasingly to the more traditional method of frame-and-plank construction. Two of the earliest examples of this type of construction came from shipyards in Solomons: the Clyde of 1877 from Solomon & Sons and Davis, and the Carrie of 1879 from James T. Marsh. It is especially noteworthy, however, that log bugeyes were still being built on the Eastern Shore, exemplified by both the Wm. B. Tennison and the A. von Nyvenheim. Nine logs were used in the construction of the hull of the Tennison.

For reasons now unknown, the Miles brothers took the Tennison south to Hampton Roads where they sold her in 1902 to Messrs. G. C. Wainright, C. Evans, and John Evans. These gentlemen evidently planned a different use for the vessel, since in September 1907 they removed one of the (Continued on Page 6)
BEFORE CAVIAR...

... there were sturgeon, and the CMM Fossil Club plans to highlight their multi-million-year geologic record by sponsoring several special exhibits and seminars on Sunday, August 29, to supplement the new, ongoing sturgeon exhibit. Regional fossil clubs' members, as well as CMM members, have been invited to display their private collections of fossil sturgeon material, and paleontologists Stephen Godfrey from CMM and David Bohaska from the Smithsonian are working on a comparative exhibit of the various types of scutes — sturgeon, turtle, crocodile — that are common to the fossil record. In addition, talks on the biogeography of sturgeon, the geologic history of the sturgeon family (Acipenseridae), and the making of the new sturgeon model and ontogeny of the skull are planned. Exhibits in the lobby will be open by 11 a.m., and the lectures in the auditorium begin at 2:30 p.m.; both are free. (Pat Fink)
The River Recognized in Spring and Summer Activities

Several activities involving the history of our Patuxent River took place this past spring, and other activities are planned for this summer and fall — a particularly busy season during 1999.

The Modern and the Ancient

CMM opened the spring season with a living history program to “Meet the Lighthouse Keeper” in the Drum Point Lighthouse. The following weekend was the Solomons Spring Launch (including the annual opening of the Tiki Bar on the island). On Saturday, April 24, the museum and Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum jointly sponsored a day-long symposium that highlighted the breadth of current research on cultural resources of the Patuxent. Under the general title, “Tales of the Patuxent: An Archeological Journey Along the Patuxent River,” nine distinguished lecturers traced the river from its geological origins, through several periods of settlement, the underwater resources, and on to more recent building in the watershed. It is planned to issue the lectures in book form. On May 1, CMM held its annual Patuxent Family Discovery Day with a variety of fun activities for families, as well as the first trip of the 1999 season on the Win. B. Tennison (see page 1), a vessel with strong Patuxent River associations for over half a century. Sunday, May 18, saw the sixth annual Waterman’s Memorial Ceremony at the “Bugeye Memorial” in Solomons’ Patuxent Riverwalk Park, followed by the annual Blessing of the Fleet.

War of 1812

There are significant developments this year involving the War of 1812 along the Patuxent. Continuing for the third summer is the Flotilla Project, the effort to search for the remains of Commodore Barney’s flotilla of 1814 that provided defensive action on the river, with two significant battles in St. Leonard Creek. As in former years, students from East Carolina University will assist archaeologists and others in searching sites at St. Leonard Creek, Benedict, Nottingham, and the area at Pig Point. Much of this summer’s work will be funded under a grant from the National Park Service’s American Battlefields Protection Program in partnership with the Maryland Office of Tourism and the Maryland Historical Trust. Additional field work will be supported by the United States Navy in the Pig Point area. Maryland Senators Paul Sarbanes and Barbara Mikulski have introduced legislation to establish a “Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail,” to include sites on St. Leonard Creek and other appropriate locations along the river. Congressmen Ben Cardin and Wayne Gilcrest have introduced similar legislation in the House. Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum has secured capital design funds for an exhibit that will include interpretation within the new Goldstein Gallery of the First and Second Battles of St. Leonard Creek. On July 17 and 18, Patterson Park will hold a War of 1812 reenactment from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. each day.

World War II Reenactment

Again this summer the museum will present “Solomons: Cradle of Invasion,” celebrating the United States Navy at Solomons during World War II.

Patuxent River Appreciation Days

The annual PRAD celebration will be on October 9 and 10. This is always an opportunity to enjoy exhibits by the many research organizations working on the Patuxent River, as well as to enjoy cruises in Solomons harbor, entertainment, and food served by local civic organizations. This year, PRAD will honor the Tennison centennial, with former owners, Alton and Joanne Lore Kersey, serving as the grand marshals of the PRAD parade.
PATUXENT FAMILY DISCOVERY DAY
Several events took place at this year’s Discovery Day on May 1.

CMM director, Doug Alves (left), and guests at the ceremony marking the beginning of the centennial year of the Wm. B. Tennison (see story, page 1). CMM photo by Bob Hall

Young visitors made toy boats, an activity that raised over $150 in donations for the Patuxent Small Craft Guild. CMM photo by Bob Hall

LeRoy “Pepper” Langley signed copies of his book, I Remember. CMM photo by Bob Hall

WILLIE NELSON Breaks all Waterside Records
Calvert Marine Museum Society’s most recent Waterside Music Series concert headlined country artist and American music icon Willie Nelson on May 15 in the Washington Gas Pavilion. His sold-out performance (premier seats were sold in four days!) attracted 4,500 fans and raised an unprecedented $69,000 in operating funds for the museum. The local Southern Maryland band, Six Gun South, opened the concert with a rousing rock and roll set of cover songs and originals.

Nelson’s performance gained the highest net income figures ever earned in “Waterside’s” fourteen-year history. Adding to the ticket revenue, title sponsors 97.7 The Bay and Ralph’s Dodge-Jeep led a sponsorship list that reads as a “Who’s Who” in the Southern Maryland business community: Solomons Landing; Cumberland and Erly, LLC; Bozick Distributors/Coors, Coors Light & Killian’s; Woodburns of Solomons; Cole Travel; Waste Management; Jones Communications; Mom’s in the Kitchen; Holiday Inn Select Solomons; Main Message Center; New Bay Times; DM Group; and SMECO. Waterside corporate contributors support the museum’s fundraising efforts and make this event the huge success it is today.

Calvert Marine Museum staff encourage all members to use the sponsors’ products and services in thanks for all they do for us.

Waterside events now in the planning stages include Little Feat for Saturday, September 4, for an end-of-summer rock ‘n roll celebration. Our October auditorium concert will feature blues and R&B singer Deanna Bogart. Check your Bugeye Times for detailed information or call the CMM development department at 410-326-2042.
YEAR-END APPEAL DONORS FOR 1998

The boards of the Calvert Marine Museum and the Calvert Marine Museum Society, the director, and the museum’s staff thank the following 157 donors to the 1998 Year-End Appeal for their contributions of over $12,400.

This support enables the museum to carry out educational and other important programs.

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MUSEUM STAFF CHANGES

Members visiting the museum this summer will note several new staff members. In the museum store is Becky Dennee, newly appointed assistant manager; the interpretive staff in the education department has been augmented by Belinda Capuano and Tommy Simmons; Shaveson “Jeff” Johnson has been appointed a weekend custodian; and Andrews Winters is a summer grounds maintenance worker. The Wm. B. Tennison has Don Prescott as the new captain, with Charles Svenson as mate. Melinda Quinn has returned for a second summer as intern in the estuarine biology department. A former staff member, George Surgen, is returning in July to duties as boatwright, replacing Jack Krolak who has moved to North Carolina. Another staff member who left recently is Teresa Baird.

A THIRD AWARD

for the

Bugeye Times

Heritage Printing and Graphics, the producer of the museum’s newsletter, has received its third award from the Printing Industry of Maryland for the Bugeye Times:

THE 1999 AWARD OF EXCELLENCE.
masts, installed a thirty-seven horsepower Palmer gasoline engine, and presumably added a pilot house, thus creating the buyboat appearance of the present vessel. The Tennison, despite her Maryland origins, spent the next forty-three years in Virginia waters, under the following owners: G. C. Wainright (1902-1916); J. L. Bradshaw (1916-1918); Alphonse L. Hazelwood (1918-1931); Barney B. Winall (1931-1943); and O. A. Bloxom (1943-1945). As far as can be determined, the vessel was used as an oyster buyboat during the oyster season and for general freight transportation or fishing at other times. It is known from an interview in 1981 with Ernest Hazelwood, son of Alphonse Hazelwood, that she was painted white with green trim, with green or gray decks. The forecastle at this time had three bunks, a table for eating, and a cooking stove. During this period there were two hatch openings in the deck, between which the dredge winders were formerly located.

In mid-1945, the Tennison returned to Maryland waters when O. A. Bloxom sold her to J. C. Lore & Sons of Solomons. She served the Lores as a buyboat and for dredging oysters on their private beds in the Patuxent River, where power dredging was allowed. A complete overhaul was made in 1952 at the H. Krentz Marine Railway in Harryhogan, Virginia — a company then known for excellent work on wooden workboats and a number of significant changes were made. The pilot house was rebuilt and the deck replaced, with a reconfiguration from two hatches to one, although the present large hold and hatch coaming configuration dates to the late 1960s. In 1955 a Gray Marine diesel engine (225 horsepower) was installed, possibly from a surplus naval landing craft.

The Lores owned the Tennison until 1978 when the company closed, with the vessel sold to the former company manager, Alton S. Kersey. Mr. Kersey, as owner and operator of the vessel, knew the end of the Tennison's career as a buyboat was near. To help maintain the vessel, he began taking onboard passengers for hire. In March 1979, Calvert County purchased the boat from Mr. Kersey for use by the Calvert Marine Museum as a passenger-carrying tour boat, thus continuing her active life. Today, the Tennison is the oldest Coast Guard-inspected passenger vessel in the Fifth Coast Guard district and reputedly the second oldest in the United States.

The Tennison has not been without vicissitudes during the past hundred years. During a trip in the 1920s across the Albemarle Sound, loaded with five hundred barrels of Carolina sweet potatoes, there was a collision with a tugboat in which the Tennison's port side was damaged and some cargo lost. The tug captain was reportedly drunk. The son of Barney Winall, owner during the 1930s, tells that lightning struck the gilded ball at the top of the mast and traveled along the forestay to the bow, which was stranded on the shore of the Poquoson River, Virginia, after Hurricane Hazel, October 1954. Gift of J. C. Lore Jr. (CMM photo P-1164)
severely damaged. In rebuilding the bow, it was straightened to its present appearance. Following the major overhaul in the spring of 1952, Hurricane Hazel in October drove her onto the shore of the Poquoson River in Virginia, but she was pulled back into the river with only a long scar on the hull resulting from being dragged over an obstruction. Finally, in the 1960s, the Tennison snagged an underwater power cable in St. Leonard Creek with her anchor, cutting power to a large group of residents.

The survival of the Wm. B. Tennison for one hundred years is a notable accomplishment, reflecting credit on her builder and owners. Only two other log-built bugeyes exist today: the Edna E. Lockwood (1889), at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in St. Michaels, and the Dorothy A. Parsons (1901), displayed on land at the Harry Lundeberg School of Seamanship, Piney Point, Maryland. At least two older frame-and-plank bugeyes are known to exist: Little Jenny (1884) and O. A. Bloxom (ex Nora Phillips, 1901), both built at Solomons. CMM is very proud of its stewardship of such a historic vessel.

In honor of the Tennison centennial, a variety of commemorative items are available for purchase in the Museum Store.

TENNISON'S CAPTAINS SINCE 1979

The following have captained the Tennison since 1979 when the county acquired the vessel:

William H. Hall Jr.
Served as the first captain from July 1979 until March 1980. Prior to this he was CMM's boatwright and documented a number of boats in the small craft collection.

James G. Tallant
Captain from May 1980 until November 1984, Jim's career began as a U. S. Navy diver. Commissioned in 1958, he held various assignments ashore and afloat, including his appointment in 1967 as Officer-in-Charge of the Naval Ordnance Laboratory Test Facility at Solomons. Jim now lives with his wife Peggy in Florida.

Rudolph H. Bennett
Captain from 1985 until his retirement in February 1999, Rudy's roots lie on the Eastern Shore. He has worked as a state tax assessor and licensed charter boat captain, and in 1990 started a successful water taxi service in Solomons. He and his wife Nancy live in Solomons.

Donald M. Prescott
The current captain was first appointed as a substitute mate in 1995, later becoming the full-time mate. He was also a captain with the Solomons Water Taxi and currently serves as a seasonal captain with Solomons Marine Towing. He and his wife Katherine live in Lusby.
VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT –

The Volunteer Recognition Reception

By Leslie Scher Brown

Out of 250 volunteers, 120 joined the staff of the Calvert Marine Museum on Tuesday evening, May 18, for a celebration of their 1998 accomplishments. A reception in the museum lobby featured a variable feast provided by the Lighthouse Inn, along with spirited beverages and scrumptious desserts made by the museum staff.

The centennial of the Wm. B. Tennison was the event theme. Before the reception, hostess Melissa McCormick (group services coordinator) and museum director Doug Alves entertained forty-two volunteers on an hour-long cruise aboard the oldest Coast Guard-inspected passenger vessel on the Chesapeake Bay. Models of the Tennison, on loan from the Museum Store, served as table decorations. Award certificates featured the boat in a logo created by Tom Ewart. Volunteers who had passed the 1000-hour marks also received coffee mugs printed with a painting of the Tennison by marine artist John M. Barber.

After mingling and munching, there was an award ceremony in the museum auditorium. Leslie Scher Brown, volunteer coordinator, provided welcoming remarks. During the 1998 calendar year, volunteers contributed over seventeen thousand hours, which in monetary terms reflect around $200,000. The m.c. for the evening, Doug Alves, introduced Calvert County Commissioner President, Linda Kelly, who was very gracious with her praise of the museum’s role in the county and the support given by its volunteers. Keynote speaker, Maryland Delegate Van T. Mitchell, who is the president of the Southern Maryland Delegation, gave an informative view on Maryland governmental proceedings.

Hundred-hour awards followed Delegate Mitchell’s remarks. These certificates are for those whose volunteer service within the calendar year reached one hundred or more hours. Included were: Janet Addiss, Dave Aldridge, Doris Berry, Paul Berry, Cynthia Bonora, Rick Brice, Lori Cole, Mel Conant, Fran Damerell, Ron Elwell, Doris Federline, Doris Fisk, Bob Fleming, Kathleen Haberny, Bob Hall, George Halvosa, Liz Halvosa, Darryl Hansen, Philis Hurley, Kit Kearney, Dede King, Frank King, Mary Konrad, Tom Konrad, Gail Kurfees, Bill Lake, Al Lavish, Zelma Margelos, Jim Marsh, Buck McClellan, Kay McClellan, Shirley Mihursky, Don Miller, Pat Miller, Walter Nelson, Scott Nieman, Gale Parks, Hazel Pinkerton, Bill Pofenbarger, Eleanor Prince, Sandy Roberts, Fred Ruark, Marilyn Ruark, Margaret Saville, Jack Schnell, Ruth Showalter, Cheryl Snelson, Skip Snelson, Ned Sprague, Pat Sprague, Margaret Stamper, Joan Sweeney, Doris Sweet, Rhoda Switzer, Ginny Thayer, Bev Walker, Margie Wilbar, and Nicky Zagala.

For those volunteers who during 1998 reached a thousand-hour mark in their service to the museum, Delegate Mitchell presented a certificate from the Governor, a new name badge engraved with a gold star for each thousand hours, and a Tennison coffee mug. Those honored were Paul Berry, Bill Lake, Al Lavish, Buck McClellan, Kay McClellan, Don Miller, Margaret Saville, Skip Snelson, and Bev Walker. Ruth Showalter reached the twenty-five

(Continued on Page 2)