The wisdom of Solomon — in this case, Isaac Solomon of Baltimore — was to realize that there was an area of Maryland on the Chesapeake Bay south of Baltimore that would be productive for processing the bounty of the bay. Prior to the War Between the States, the commercial processing of seafood was largely concentrated in Baltimore — at the terminus of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and accessible to the bay and ships. In this period, the commercial industry involved oysters — abundant in the bay — and these were steamed and canned before shipping. In the summer months, the companies would pack fruit, berries, and vegetables to maximize efficient use of the cannery.

Isaac Solomon was engaged in this activity in Baltimore, but saw an advantage in setting up a cannery elsewhere on the bay, nearer to the source of oysters and away from competition. In 1866 he established a steam packing plant on the island that today bears his name. This island offered an excellent harbor just off of the bay within easy reach of the local oyster beds. He began operations on the island: a plant to process and can oysters; a marine railway to supply, repair, and build the sail vessels that harvested the oyster crop and moved the finished product to Baltimore for shipping; and recruitment of workers for the plant and shipyard, providing them with housing. Isaac Solomon developed a canning method that promised to make his plant profitable, as it most likely was in its early years.

A few other canneries appeared on the bay, but Baltimore continued to be the center of this activity during the 1880s, the highpoint of the Chesapeake oyster industry, when in one year (1887) 11,632,730 bushels were harvested in Maryland and 5,984,636 bushels in Virginia. Maryland alone accounted for one-third of the world’s total harvest. The Chesapeake’s bounty was almost twice as great as that of all foreign countries combined.

Isaac Solomon did not benefit from this bounty, however, because he lost his island and business in the mid-1870s. His successors, Thomas Moore and John Farren, took over his cannery but soon closed it and moved their oyster processing back to Baltimore, retaining a shipyard on the island to service the many oyster boats that did profit from the bounty of the 1880s. But Solomon’s efforts pointed the way to a new enterprise for Southern Maryland — seafood processing.

Seafood Processing in Southern Maryland

Seafood processing in Southern Maryland developed slowly, when, over time, the raw oyster trade largely replaced steamed oysters, resulting from changes in processing and transportation. In the “raw trade,” shuckers opened the oysters and then packed them in tubs with ice. Later, the industry introduced cans of various sizes that were kept refrigerated. By 1887, thirty to forty railroad cars a day filled with raw oysters headed west from Baltimore. Altogether in the 1880s nearly 10,000 persons were engaged in oyster shucking in Baltimore alone.

The later years of the nineteenth century saw seafood processing elsewhere in Maryland, including Southern Maryland, and the industry flourished during the twentieth century. Oyster packing houses, also known as shuck houses

**Oyster Packing Houses in Southern Maryland**

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**This issue includes the Annual Report for fiscal year 2005.**
BUGEYE TIMES COMPLETES THIRTY YEARS

In the spring of 1976 the first issue of the *Bugeye Times* was distributed to members of the museum. This was less than a year after the museum moved from its first location on Solomons Island into the modified Solomons School — the present Administration Building. Even though still under the guidance of the Calvert County Historical Society, the young museum was moving forward toward visibility as an institution in Calvert County and Southern Maryland. A means of communicating with its members and other museums was important for its new image. This became even more important when CMM became part of Calvert County government in 1979, and further in 1984 when the support of membership activities changed to the newly incorporated Calvert Marine Society, Inc. — now the Calvert Marine Museum Society, Inc. — responsible for raising funds for the museum.

Although limited at first to four pages, the *Bugeye Times* began a tradition of reporting activities and plans for the future. Within five years the newsletter expanded to six pages and included short, substantive articles on research in the museum’s fields of interest. By 1986 the newsletter increased in size to eight pages, changed format, and adopted two colors to add visual interest. That size has continued to the present, with a few issues larger to accommodate an annual report or a significant article, and a few issues have appeared in full color. Regardless of size or format, the *Bugeye Times* has held to its mission of informing museum members of activities and of special items of interest within the museum’s three themes: estuarine biology, maritime and local history, and local paleontology.

The first editors were the director, Ralph E. Eshelman, and a volunteer, Clara A. Dixon. The present volunteer editor began in 1984, with able assistance from museum staff members as writers and photographers. Since 1992, the exhibits department has prepared the quarterly calendar, and the development staff has provided inserts for concerts, trips, and annual reports. Museum members and volunteers have contributed occasional articles. Printers for the newsletter have included Printing Press Inc., Leonardtown, and from 1986 to present, Heritage Printing and Graphics, also of Leonardtown.

Issues of the *Bugeye Times* from 1997 are carried on the museum’s website, www.calvertmarinemuseum.com, under “News & Events.”

MUSEUM LOSES THREE SUPPORTERS

CMM has lost three important board members and donors recently. George C. Tilghman, an architect and long-time resident of Calvert County, died this month. He was a member of the museum’s Board of Governors from 1989 through 1994, serving as vice-chairman in 1990 and chairman in 1991. He also participated actively in many museum committees and events. In an earlier association with CMM, he was consulting architect during the construction of the exhibition building from 1985 until 1989, working as the local representative of the principal architects, Cambridge Seven Associates, who had their headquarters in Cambridge, Massachusetts. George Tilghman’s work is seen in many buildings in the county, and he was also actively involved in other county committees and commissions, especially in the past few years with the Calvert County Historical Society in its restoration of Linden in Prince Frederick. George was a World War II veteran, having served in the U. S. Army Air Corps. In his memory, the museum will purchase a brick to go in the World War II memorial, “On Watch.”

Last fall F. Ross Holland died in New Hampshire where he moved a few years ago. After a distinguished career of three decades as historian and cultural resources specialist in the National Park Service, Ross retired and worked for the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation. His interest in maritime preservation and research on lighthouse history eventually brought him to the Calvert Marine Museum where he presented several lectures and joined the CMM board from 1990 until 1992. After several books on lighthouses, the Maryland Historical Trust sought his help with a study of Maryland lighthouses, resulting in a book published in 1997. A most significant contribution to CMM was the donation of his large library, thereby strengthening of museum library collections. For many years he lived in Colesville, Maryland, but lived briefly in Solomons in the late 1990s.

Baltimore resident L. Byrne Waterman was not directly involved with the museum, but followed developments here through his connections with the Maritime Committee of the Maryland Historical Society and long-time participation in the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Forum. Last fall he donated a significant portion of his book collection to the museum library. He also died in recent weeks.
2006 MEMBERS TRIP
Outlet Shopping & Dinner Theatre

Limited tickets still remain for the April 30 CMM members’ group trip to Arundel Mills Mall for outlet shopping and a dinner performance at Medieval Times Dinner and Tournament.

After three hours of bargain hunting at the outlets, we will all enjoy a trip to the Middle Ages as we dine with a four-course feast and cheer on Knights and their Andalusian stallions as they compete in a thrilling contest of sport. Shopping will be from 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Dinner and show begin at 5:00 p.m.

Tickets are $46 for adults and $39 for children under 12. Your ticket fee includes bus service to and from Arundel Mills, three hours of shopping, dinner and performance, tax and tips. Please see the flyer in this Bugeye Times to reserve space. For more information, please call Debbie at 410-326-2042, ext. 16.

BASKET BINGO – April 23
Tickets going fast!

CMMS will host its 3rd annual Spring Basket Bingo Extravaganza on Sunday, April 23, at the Calvert County Fairgrounds in Prince Frederick. Doors open at 11:00 a.m.; games begin at 12:30 p.m. Over $10,000 in collectible Longaberger prizes to be given away. Tickets are $20 each and can be purchased by calling 410-326-2042, ext. 17. This event sells out quickly, so if you’d like to attend, purchase tickets in advance. Everyone must have a ticket to enter the event. To view a complete list of prizes and game prices, visit our website at www.calvertmarinemuseum.com.

The Calvert Marine Museum Presents the

Solomons Maritime Folklife Festival
Saturday, May 6, 2006
10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Celebrating Southern Maryland Traditions

Visit the Antique Boat & Marine Engine Show; Taste Traditional Foods; Learn Crab Picking, Oyster Shucking & Fish Filleting; Enjoy Gospel & Old Time Music All Day; Participate in Children’s Games & Races; Ride on a Bugeye & Draketail Work Boat; Talk with Carvers, Crab Pot Makers, Net Riggers; Watch Model Boat Demonstrations in the Basin; Test Your Dog at the Chesapeake Bay Retriever Trials; Build a Toy Boat in the Boat Shed.

U.S. Navy Band’s “Country Current”
5 p.m. at the Pavilion
 Bring your lawn chairs – Food Vendors on site
Admission for the Day: $3 (including CMM members)
Antique Boat & Marine Engine Show continues Sunday from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. free

COUNTRY STAR TRACE ADKINS COMING TO CMM ON MAY 14

On Sunday, May 14, Ralph’s Dodge-Jeep and Cumberland & Erly, LLC, present country star Trace Adkins - Live in Concert at Calvert Marine Museum’s Washington Gas Pavilion. Tickets go on sale to members on Monday, April 10, at 9:00 a.m. Tickets are $45 for Premium Seating and $35 for Reserved Seating.

One of the most powerful and distinctive voices in country music history, Adkins is one of the genre’s true rugged individualists. The booming baritone and unshakable sense of self have made Trace Adkins a star, but it is the indelible stamp of authenticity he brings to his life and music that have made his body of work so important to so many people.

For ordering information, please see the flyer inserted in this Bugeye Times. Members may reserve up to eight tickets. For further information, please contact the Development Department at 410-326-2042, ext. 16, 17, or 18.

Concert sponsors are Ralph’s Dodge-Jeep; Cumberland & Erly, LLC; Coors, Coors Light, & Killian’s; G&H Jewelers; RadioShack – Prince Frederick/Dunkirk/Charlotte Hall; Solomons Landing; DM Group; 98 Star FM; Mom’s in the Kitchen Catering; Southern Maryland Newspapers; Bay Weekly; Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative; The McNelis Group; Quick Connections; Comcast; Harley Davidson; Patuxent Architects, Inc.; and Holiday Inn Select Solomons. For more information, call 410-326-2042, ext. 16, 17 or 18 or visit www.calvertmarinemuseum.com.
This annual winter program drew exhibitors from a distance. Members of the New Jersey Lighthouse Society staffed a booth in the museum lobby.

CMM photo by Bob Hall

“Winter Lights”
January 14 and 25

The lighthouse keeper’s wife, Mrs. Yeatman (left), entertained interested visitors to the Drum Point Lighthouse, as portrayed by CMM’s Diane Milgrim.

CMM photo by Bob Hall

On Sunday, January 15, museum visitors were treated to two maritime concerts that included the local group, Scurvy Crew, at left, and then a solo performance by artist and singer Bob Zentz, at right. CMM photo by Bob Hall

Development Department Volunteers

Staff of the development department recognized their corps of volunteers at a luncheon at Nicolletti’s in California on February 24. CMM photo by Bob Hall
A group from the Calvert Middle School built a skiff under the direction of the Patuxent Small Craft Guild and then painted it, naming the result the “Starry Starry Night.” It is displayed in the museum lobby.

CMM’s exhibit department joined with the Calvert County Public School Art Teachers in celebrating Youth Art Month with a special exhibit of artwork of students in the public schools. The works of art in the exhibit represented what students remembered about growing up in the area, and the artists were inspired by the colors, shapes, and textures found in and around the Chesapeake Bay.

“Life on the Chesapeake”

Waterside Music Series 2006

The concert season started with two performances on March 4 in the auditorium featuring the popular pop musician Edwin McCain (center). CMM photo by Bob Hall

Young Buccaneers

A new Saturday morning program in 2006 for children aged seven to nine was developed by the education department. The topic for the “Young Buccaneers” on March 4 was lighthouses, with a special tour of the Drum Point Lighthouse. Interpreter Diane Milgrim, center, describes the structure, assisted by Marilyn Ruark, right.

CMM photo by Bob Hall

“Life on the Chesapeake”

Three of the six panels exhibiting the work of the artists from the public schools.

CMM photo by Bob Hall
The Wisdom of Solomon

(Continued from page 1)

or oyster processing plants, served as the receiving points of the oyster harvest collected by watermen. Individual watermen or buyboats would deliver oysters to the packing house where they would be unloaded and moved to the shucking room. Shucking was the heart of the operation, employing most of the workers. After shucking and cleaning, the oysters were drained and packed into retail containers or storage cans and kept refrigerated until ready for shipment to market.

Seafood processing in Southern Maryland was not limited to oysters, but over the years included crabs, clams, finfish, and eels. The harvesting of the blue crab in earlier periods was not as important as the oyster industry, but since 1983 it has become the most valuable species caught in the Chesapeake. Crabmeat was traditionally packed in cans, hermetically sealed, and heated to kill bacteria. The cans were then shipped mainly to the south and west. For local markets, fresh crabmeat was packed into cans and then shipped in barrels with ice. Many packers also handled soft crabs, shipped alive in shallow boxes packed with eelgrass and ice. Today, most crabs are sold as hard-shelled crabs for steaming, or the meat is packed in plastic containers, refrigerated, and sold as fresh crabmeat.

As the result of a typhoid fever outbreak traced to sewage-polluted oysters, the U. S. Public Health Service created the National Shellfish Sanitation Program in 1925, a cooperative oversight group that is still in effect and coordinates state laws, federal assistance and advice, and the voluntary participation of the shellfish industry. In addition, each producing state established a shellfish control authority to issue “certificates of compliance,” or a permit to operate, to shippers that meet agreed-upon sanitary standards. The numerous and complex health requirements and regulations instituted at all levels of government resulted in a much higher cost for the industry, forcing many smaller processors out of business, unable to comply with the frequently changing standards.

In many cases, commercial crab picking was carried out in the same processing plants that shucked oysters, as these operations occur at different times of the year — the oyster season during the “R” months, September through April, and the height of the crab season in the summer. But crab picking was not as widespread in Southern Maryland as elsewhere in the state. In 1931, for example, there were sixty-four licensed crab-picking houses in Maryland, with the greatest concentration (twenty) at Crisfield, on the Eastern Shore; only five plants were licensed on the entire Western Shore of Maryland.

A few packing houses in Southern Maryland became involved in the soft-shell clam boom starting in the 1950s. Soft-shell clams drew little attention in Maryland until the mid-twentieth century when New England buyers turned their attention to this region when their own native resources were exhausted. At the
same time, Fletcher Hanks of Oxford, Maryland, developed a hydraulic clam dredge that was put into commercial use in 1952—the first effective means of harvesting clams. The combination led to a boom in clam harvesting that saw production rise from 252,000 pounds in 1952 to 5,569,000 pounds in 1960. Initially, clams were shipped directly north, but around 1957 clam shucking plants began opening locally. In Southern Maryland the largest were Lowery Seafood in Calvert County and Capt. Sam’s in St. Mary’s County.

But the boom days didn’t last. State-imposed catch limits and harvest depths, declining water quality, over-harvesting, and the effects of Hurricane Agnes in 1972, which covered many of the beds with tons of silt and fresh water, led to a decline in the packing industry from which it never recovered. Soft-shell clams are still harvested but no longer packed in Southern Maryland.

The other seafood processing—finfish and eels—was generally limited to specific companies, but in Southern Maryland never reached the extent of the processing of oysters, crabs, and clams.

The Museum’s Exhibit on Seafood Processing

Seafood processing in Southern Maryland is the general theme of the exhibit to open on the exhibition building mezzanine this spring. In addition to the information on the overall industry as summarized above, the exhibit will trace the history of the many processing plants in each of the three counties. In Calvert County, for example, there were nineteen certified processors over the years (beginning with Isaac Solomon), including several that were long-lived—J. C. Lore & Sons in Solomons and Warren Denton Seafood on Broomes Island. The only current licensed processor is also located at Solomons—Bunky’s Charter Boats, Inc. In Charles County there were about fifteen over time, located both on the Potomac and Patuxent Rivers. St. Mary’s County was home to more seafood packing houses than Calvert and Charles counties combined. Bordered by the Patuxent, Potomac, and Wicomico Rivers, as well as the Chesapeake Bay, the county includes tidal creeks, bays, and rivers that make up its over 400 miles of shoreline. Since 1882 over seventy seafood-packing businesses are known to have operated in the county. Most were small, often family owned operations, but the county was also home to one of the largest companies in the region: Charles E. Davis Seafood.

The details of each of these seafood processors will be found in the exhibit, with many photographs to tell their story. To accompany the exhibit and fill out more of the details, a book will be published by the museum. Entitled “It Ain’t Like It Was Then”—The Seafood Packing Industry of Southern Maryland and written by Richard Dodds and Robert Hurry, the book will be available in late spring. Museum members will be invited to an exhibit opening when the date is announced.
DISCOVERY ROOM OPENING DELAYED

Although the Discovery Room renovation is moving right along, the opening to the public has been delayed until May 1. The new exhibits will be tested during the month of April with scheduled groups. Teaching children about the process necessary to get the touch tank up and running, getting the animals here, and getting them acclimated will all become part of the learning experience. We are also pleased to announce that Booz Allen has donated two touch screens that will be used in the paleontology area, now called “Clues from the Cliffs,” and with the touch tank in “Life in the Bay.”

Nominees for the Volunteer of the Year Award

Staff members of the museum have nominated the following volunteers for consideration for the Volunteer of Year (2005) award. Debbie Carlson has served well in supporting the Volunteer Council and its many activities. Darryl Hansen is active with the education department, teaching the Chespax program and helping with the docent-training program. He also filled in as acting volunteer coordinator while the staff position was vacant. Anne Harrison has worked in the museum store and helped with special projects in the maritime history department. The paleontology department has benefited greatly from the behind-the-scenes work of Ilse Metz, and the museum library has benefited equally from the indexing work performed by Joan Sweeney over a period of many years. Tom and Sandy Younger, as a husband and wife team, have taken on many projects, from the model boat shop, to the exhibit department, to events for the Volunteer Council.

The winner of the Volunteer of the Year award will be announced at the volunteer recognition event in May. Of course, we know that they are all winners. (Sherry Reid)