This past fall the Calvert Marine Museum Canoe and Kayak Club explored Mallows Bay on the Potomac River in Charles County. This was the most bizarre and interesting trip that the club has undertaken in the twenty-plus years that I have been a member. We paddled around, through, and over the hulks of sunken ships, most dating back to the 1920s. Although access to Mallows Bay has been restricted until recently, Charles County will open it to the public in April 2009 (call 1-800-766-3386 for a free map and guide).

The crucial event in the history of the bay was the blockade of England by the German fleet in the beginning of the first World War. President Woodrow Wilson decided in 1917 to come to the aid of the British by supplying them with goods using U.S. merchant vessels. Since our existing fleet was inadequate for the task at hand, a new class of supply ships needed to be built to save the British. Wilson’s choice of an admiralty lawyer with close ties to the timber industry and wooden boatbuilding shipyards led, not surprisingly, to the proposal to build a massive fleet of steam-powered, wooden transport ships. Criticisms of this proposal by seasoned navy officers, naval architects, and other experts fell on deaf ears as the shipping board director was also the Democrat party chairman in San Francisco. In a very short time, a plan was drafted to build 800 to 1,000 wooden steamships in eighteen months. Objections by such experts as Major General George W. Goethels, builder of the Panama Canal, that such ships represented Civil War era technology that had long been discarded in favor of steel hulls and modern engines were overruled and construction plans were drawn by a New York naval architect, Theodore Ferris. The design was for a 3,500 ton steamship, 281 feet long, 46-foot beam, with a draft of 23 feet, constructed with oak frames and about 1.5 million board feet of yellow pine or Douglas fir planking per ship. When propelled by two
THE MUSEUM JOINS “IT’S SO CAMP 2009”

Spring means figuring out what to do with the kids for the summer, and we are here to help. This year Camp CMM has exciting, action based camps for kids entering first grade through ninth. Our youngest campers will live like natives while learning about the original Americans in Chesapeake Indians. Upper elementary kids can jump into Shark Attack camp where they can explore these incredible predators of the sea – including a trip to the Baltimore Aquarium. Middle school kids can participate in the Cardboard Boat Regatta, where they will design, build, and actually race a two-person cardboard boat in the Patuxent River. And for Girl Scouts we have a Brownie Try-It camp and a Girl Scout Badger camp where girls can have fun and earn badges all at the same time. We are once again partnering with CHESPAX to offer the Summer Center for Paleontology; open to students entering grades 7 to 9. For a complete schedule and registration information, please go to our web site: http://www.calvertmarinemuseum.com/education-children-and-family.htm.

If none of our camps fits your child’s interest or schedule, don’t despair. This year the museum is collaborating with sister organizations to make finding the perfect summer experience a whole lot easier for you. IT’S SO CAMP! SOUTHERN CALVERT SUMMER CAMPS 2009 brings Annmarie Garden, Calvert County Natural Resources Division, the Calvert Marine Museum, and Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum together to offer a kaleidoscope of summer camp opportunities to choose from. Fun, affordable, educational, and led by professionals in the field, these programs offer something to engage every child’s interest. For a complete schedule, fees, and contact information on all the camps being offered, go to our web site and click on IT’S SO CAMP! SOUTHERN CALVERT SUMMER CAMPS 2009.

Representatives from all sites will be available to talk about these opportunities and to take registrations during So Camp Fair at First Free Friday event, April 3, from 5 to 8 p.m.

John Smith Shallop Returns to CMM

In partnership with Sultana Projects, the museum received a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network to host a seven-month exhibit (April-November) of the John Smith Shallop. The shallop is a twenty-eight-foot, full-scale replica of the small boat used by Capt. John Smith during his 1608 exploration of the Chesapeake Bay. The shallop and accompanying exhibit will help visitors to the Calvert Marine Museum better understand the historical context and impact of Smith’s 1608 voyages while highlighting the National Park Service’s new Capt. John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail and its relationship to the Gateways Network. The shallop will arrive in early April. Over the course of the summer and fall, a volunteer crew will sail the shallop to Historic St. Mary’s City and Jefferson Patterson Park for events at those sites. For details on the shallop’s stay and events planned around her visit, check the CMM web site. If you’re interested in training as a crew member, contact Sherrod Sturrock at the museum, sturrosa@co.cal.md.us or 410-326-2042 ext. 32.
MEMBERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT

HANK WILLIAMS JR. is COMING TO SOLOMONS!

Cumberland and Erly, LLC, and Prince Frederick Chrysler/Jeep/Dodge kick off the 2009 benefit concert season at the Calvert Marine Museum with country music legend Hank Williams Jr., Saturday, May 23.

In the music industry, Hank Williams Jr. is one of only a few artists who surpass superstar status to become true American icons. Over the years, Hank Jr. has blazed a trail with such classic hits as *Whiskey Bent and Hell Bound*, *All My Rowdy Friends*, *Old Habits* and *Born to Boogie*. He has long been the voice of the common man, serving up observations on life and society that have made his fans listen intently as he puts words and music to their thoughts, hopes, and everyday life.

Gates open at 6:00 p.m; show time is 7:30 p.m. Tickets are $55 for premium seats and $45 for reserved seats; service charges are additional. Tickets go on sale to CMMS members Tuesday, April 7, at 10 a.m. Please use the following members’ passcode: dixie. Sales open up to the public on Tuesday, April 14 at 10:00 a.m. Tickets can be purchased by calling 1-800-787-9454 or online at www.calvertmarinemuseum.com.

Presale tickets per membership/per show:
- Individual – up to 4
- Family & Sustaining – up to 6
- Associate & Patron – up to 8
- Benefactor – 2 free to 1 show; up to 8 extra
- Bugeye Society – 2 free to 2 shows; up to 12 extra

STEVE MILLER BAND HEADS TO CMM

Get ready to rock on Friday, August 21, as the Steve Miller Band hits the stage in Solomons. Known for classics such as *Fly Like an Eagle*, *Take the Money and Run*, *The Joker*, and *Jet Airliner*, the Steve Miller Band has sold a cumulative 25 million records in its 40 years as a mainstay in rock music. With its fresh and vibrant style of rock, blues, jazz, and pop, the band attracts a multi-generational following.

Tickets are $55 for premium seats and $45 for reserved seats; service charges are additional. Tickets go on sale to members Tuesday, July 7 at 10:00 a.m. Please use the following members’ passcode: joker. Public sales begin Tuesday, July 14, at 10:00 a.m. Tickets can be purchased at www.calvertmarinemuseum.com or by calling 1-800-787-9454.

For all outdoor CMM concerts, there are no refunds or exchanges permitted. Food and drink are available on the grounds; no outside food or drink is permitted. For additional information, please call 410-326-2042, ext. 16, 17, or 18, or visit www.calvertmarinemuseum.com.


Hank Jr. members’ passcode: dixie
Steve Miller Band members’ passcode: joker
The first free Friday programs each month were especially popular. On March 6, visitors were treated to the tight harmonies of barbershop, including a performance by The Patuxent Pearls. They also were able to enjoy the new exhibit of “Solomons Then and Now,” described on the next page. CMM photo by Bob Hall

Cheapeake Lights was the feature of the weekend of January 12 and 13. Visitors were treated to exhibits and tours of the two local lighthouses. Here exhibitors from St. Mary’s County display information about the lighthouses on the Potomac and especially the newly rebuilt Blackistone Island lighthouse on St. Clement’s Island. CMM photo by Bob Hall

On February 26 Joe Stead, on tour from England, gave a presentation/performance about life on the great sailing ships. CMM photo by Bob Hall

In March, the lobby was enlivened by the annual exhibit of student art from the local schools as part of Youth Art Month. CMM photo by Bob Hall

The First Free Friday programs each month were especially popular. On March 6, visitors were treated to the tight harmonies of barbershop, including a performance by The Patuxent Pearls. They also were able to enjoy the new exhibit of “Solomons Then and Now,” described on the next page. CMM photo by Bob Hall

Friends, staff, and volunteers said a sad “goodbye” to long-time volunteers Pat and Ned Sprague, although Pat was unable to attend. Peggy Hovermale, volunteer council president (center), presents Ned with framed paintings of the lighthouses where he spent many hours as a docent. CMM director Doug Alves looks on after offering words of praise for these two special volunteers. CMM photo by Bob Hall

WINTER AT CMM

Although the winter is less active at the museum, there were still many things going on during January through March.
The Calvert Marine Museum has always been associated with Solomons Island and the nearby areas. Those who worked to start the museum were residents, and the objective of their efforts was to preserve the record of the place. To this end, the museum has continued to collect artifacts and information, its exhibits have depicted the area and its various activities, and it has issued several historical publications. The latest exhibit of photographs, opened in March, compares some scenes from the early Solomons with the same places today, and was inspired by the recently published book, *Islands in a River: Solomons and Broomes Island, Maryland*, by Richard J. Dodds, CMM’s curator of maritime history.

Solomons has been a special place in Calvert County ever since the island was purchased by Isaac Solomon immediately after the Civil War. Isaac Solomon established an oyster-canning factory, planned a town on the island, hired workers from around the bay, and set up facilities for building and servicing the boats that were essential for supplying the oysters for his factory. Although Isaac Solomon’s enterprise did not survive more than a decade, the place he established continued to thrive and to spread northward onto the adjacent mainland. Other communities developed around the adjacent waterways – Dowel, Olivet, and Rousby Hall. During the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century, Solomons was the most thickly settled community in Calvert County, a county that consisted mostly of farms. In the U.S. Census for 1880, for example, Solomons Island was the only community in the county to be enumerated separately from its surrounding area, reporting over 250 residents (almost 3 percent of the county’s population). By 1900, Solomons and Chesapeake Beach were the only towns separately reported. Although the situation changed as the county grew in the twentieth century, Solomons retained its status as a special place.

It is interesting that the basic structure of Solomons Island can still be seen today, despite much modernization. Using photographs of Solomons dating back fifty to one hundred years, paired with current photographs of the same site, the exhibit is a revealing snapshot of this town at the mouth of the Patuxent River. Using large maps of the island and adjacent areas, the exhibit goes beyond just the island to include the places that developed later but are still part of the historic Solomons: Avondale and the area from Lore Road to Dowell Road. These comparative photographs of stores, sailing schooners in the harbor, churches, an early hotel, and changes in the Solomons pier will bring back memories to those who grew up here or who have visited over the years.

Visitors are invited to write down their memories of early Solomons and submit them to the museum through the web site at www.calvertmarinemuseum.com. Some will be chosen to become an ongoing part of the exhibit. Copies of the most recent book on the history of Solomons, *Islands in a River: Solomons and Broomes Islands, Maryland*, are available for sale in the museum store.

The *Solomons Then and Now* exhibit is a joint effort of the exhibits and maritime history departments and is located on the mezzanine level overlooking the maritime hall in the exhibition building. It will remain there for the next several months. Information about the exhibit and visiting the museum can be found on our website.
700-horsepower steam engines, these ships were expected to travel at ten knots.

Ferris’s ship design called for huge oak timbers, as large as 16’ by 2’ by 40’, and very soon local forests were depleted. So much wood had to be shipped from the west coast of the U.S. that trains were not available to carry coal to the cities of the northeast and significant shortages developed in the winter of 1917. There was no time for the wood to be dried so it was used green with disastrous results. One ship’s captain is quoted as saying “They sent out oak shoots in spring and provided pine cones for Christmas.” There were the usual logistical and organizational problems that plague all government enterprises of this scale, and the first ship of the east coast fleet was finally ready to sail in December 1918. It never went to Europe but was used in U.S. coastwise trade. In addition to a massive quantity of wood, each ship required 715,000 pounds of metal fastenings, 58,000 pounds of steel strapping, 2,800 pounds of oakum (to seal the seams), 2,600 pounds of pitch for caulking, 6,000 gallons of paint, and 4,000 pounds of white lead and oil.

By the time war ended, 189 companies in twenty-six states had been contracted to build ships, but only fifty-five had actually transported goods, none ever making it to England. The vessels were deemed inferior in design and construction and too small and expensive to transport cargo long distances. After a number of heated exchanges between Shipping Board members and Congress, the program headed for cancellation. In the meantime, ships kept being launched and used for merchant purposes. By the middle of 1919, 174 ships had been placed into service with 462 more under construction. At the same time, the government began selling the fleet. Although the ships cost between $750,000 and $1,000,000 each in 1918, they were offered for sale at $100,000 each. The lack of buyers led the Shipping Board to auction over 300 of these leaky “white elephants” since it was costing $50,000 a month to keep them afloat in storage, and 227 of them were eventually sold for a total of $750,000, the cost of construction of a single vessel. The buyer was a company set up by two well-connected California lawyers who organized a ship breaking activity in Alexandria, Virginia, and moved the fleet to the Potomac River.

The ship breakers began removal of the largest and most valuable metal components, such as the boilers, engines, and deck hardware, and moved the stripped hulls into the Potomac River near Alexandria. All sort of disasters resulted, including several fires, one so large that the marines from Quantico were mobilized, drifting of groups of burned hulks during windstorms with resultant obstruction of navigation, and pollution that completely devastated the commercial fishing industry in both the Maryland and Virginia portions of the Potomac. The political connections of the owners led to the government assuming much of the cost and logistics for securing the fleet. By 1925, the problems of drifting ships, burning hulks, and debris became so severe that many of the ships were towed to shallow water in Mallows Bay, filled with concrete, and “sunk.” In the fall of 1925, thirty-one ships were cabled together and set on fire. This was one of the greatest conflagrations in the history of the country with the flames visible for miles around. By the end of this fiasco, a total of 169 ships had been grounded in Mallows Bay.

By 1932, the ship-breaking company had been dissolved, the wrecks abandoned by the government, and Mallows Bay became a graveyard. Since this was the depth of the Great Depression, locals immediately began stripping salvageable metal from the hulks with as many as seventy-five men working simultaneously.
They used dynamite to get to the interior of the hulks, and large chunks of debris and timbers began floating into the shipping channel in the Potomac causing a number of incidents. Some of the hulks drifted as far as fifteen miles downriver before being retrieved. Much of the metal salvaged was sold to the Japanese who were paying top dollar, later to use the material in their weapons. By 1940, the price of scrap metal had risen so high that the U.S. government decided to salvage the estimated 20,000 tons remaining in the Mallows Bay graveyard. They hired Bethlehem Steel to recover the metal and process it in their Baltimore plant. Bethlehem acquired the Wilson Farm property bordering Mallows Creek and Bay and began a completely unsuccessful effort to dry dock the hulks. They built an access road, and some cofferdams that provided the launching area used by the CMM Canoe/Kayak Club in our recent adventure.

One of the strangest aspects of the Mallows Bay fleet resulted from all of the material dumped into the hulks to keep them in place. A variety of plants grew in the hulks, followed by trees and a complete miniature island ecosystem developed with bird nests, etc. Thus when we paddled through this area, we were surrounded by huge chunks of wood, thousands of bolts, metal straps and parts of the ships, lovely bushes, egrets, herons, hydrilla, and fish. So a twisted, scarred Mallows Bay has been returned to us, eighty years after it was destroyed by the concerted efforts of the government and industry. It is reminiscent of a visit to the ghostly ruins of some long lost, failed civilization, and I highly recommend it.

See the calendar in this issue for information about joining the club.

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**NEW PAVILION FOR CMM**

The Corbin Nature Pavilion, currently under construction in the museum’s south field, is a thirty-by-forty-foot open pavilion that will be used for educational programs, museum events, and for rentals to bring revenue into the museum. The design, inspired by the Cedar Point Lighthouse, will feature a sunburst on the end gables and a cupola on top. It will also feature a rain garden, designed and planted by Master Gardeners under the direction of CMM volunteer Peg Dann.

The pavilion is given in memory of S. Edward Corbin Sr. and Elizabeth R. Corbin. In addition to their initial gift, it was made possible by contributions from Richard Fischer, COA, Inc. for the site work, Chaney Enterprises, and W. M. Davis, the contractor.

The pavilion will be officially opened for the Solomons Maritime Festival, May 2.

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**Solomons – Paint the Town: A Plein Air Festival**

The words “plein air” come from the French phrase “en plein air” which translates as “in the open air.” Well-known artists, including Claude Monet and Pierre-August Renoir, created some of their best and most famous works in this style. Once plein air artists have chosen a desirable outdoor location, they set up their easels and paints and set to work. This popular event takes place in scenic towns all around the Chesapeake Bay, and now Solomons is hosting its own version.

**Solomons – Paint the Town**, sponsored by The Solomons Business Association and the Mid-Atlantic Plein Air Painters Association, will take place May 14 to May 17, 2009. Over the first three days of the festival, artists will create works “in the open air,” drawing inspiration from the scenery around the town of Solomons, Maryland. On Sunday, the art works will be shown and offered for sale in Annmarie Garden’s beautiful new gallery, complete with reception and cash prize awards. Many events for the public are also being planned throughout the weekend in and around Solomons, including a Quick Draw at the Calvert Marine Museum Saturday morning, where artists have two hours to create a piece inspired by the scenes at the museum. A judge will award prizes, and the works will be available for sale, with a percentage of the proceeds going to the museum. For more information and a detailed schedule, visit http://www.sba.solomons.md.us/ or http://www.ecalvert.com/content/tourism/visitorsguide/index.asp.
VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT
By Sherry Reid, Volunteer/Events Coordinator

Nominees for the Volunteer of the Year Award

Please join me in congratulating the following volunteers for receiving nominations for the Volunteer of the Year 2008.

**Debbie Carlson** volunteers regularly in the office assisting Gale Parks with everything from counting money to filing paperwork. Debbie also bakes goodies and volunteers to help with the events. **Kay Collins** volunteers in the museum store as well as volunteering for special events. Kay is always willing to do any task needed to make an event successful. **Sylvia Dry** volunteers regularly in the development department at CMM. Sylvia helps prepare and process memberships, organizes files and spreadsheets, helps with events, and so much more. **Karl Garland** has volunteered in the library as well as in the Skates and Rays exhibit. Karl is here rain or shine! **Bruce Hargreaves** volunteers regularly in the paleontology prep lab and also helps to quarry fossils from Calvert Cliffs. As president of the fossil club for several years, Bruce helps to direct and participates in various functions of the fossil club such as field trips and museum events. **Zelma Margelos** currently volunteers in the library with keeping current news clippings and reorganizing the files to make them more accessible. Zelma is in the library three days a week when she is in town. **Bob & Pam Platt** is our husband and wife team in the paleontology department. Bob works on the collections and does a lot of cataloging and Pam is found regularly in the paleontology prep lab. Both Bob and Pam help with many special events at the museum such as the First Free Fridays and Sharkfest!

The winner for the Volunteer of the Year Award will be announced at the volunteer recognition event on April 23. Congratulations and thank you for all of your time and expertise you shared with the staff, volunteers, and visitors at CMM! 🎉

CMM NOW OFFERS PREPAID GIFT PASSES

As gifts for family or friends, the museum now offers prepaid gift admission passes with an appropriate design. The passes are the regular admission prices of $7.00 each for a pass for adults; $6.00 each for seniors; $2.00 each for a child 5 to 12. Also available on a prepaid basis are tickets for the May to October cruises on the **Wm. B. Tennison**, at $7.00 each for adults, and $4.00 for children 5 to 12. All prepaid passes/tickets are sold at the admissions desk in the exhibition building, or they may be ordered by calling 410-326-2042, extension 12 or 21, with a credit card (VISA or MC). 🎈