

The Broadside



The voice of The Mathews Maritime Foundation

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President Benouameur's Message...

In this issue of the Broadside we intend to give you and all our friends and members some insight into what we have been doing since you last heard from us and what our plans are for the future. The Corona virus pandemic has definitely put a damper on our activities this past year. It is our hope as conditions improve, we can get back to a semblance of "normal" life.

This time around we hope you will find ways to join us in some of the worthwhile and interesting endeavors that are planned. New ideas are always welcome and your participation will be greatly appreciated.

Our main goal for now is to increase awareness about what MMF is doing and planning to do in the future and find a way to get more people interested and involved. We especially hope to offer more hands-on activities for young people since they are the future of any successful non-profit organization.

In the planning stage for this year are: a museum exhibit honoring the 20th Century boat builders of Mathews County; youth maritime programs on safe boat handling, navigation, and boat building; family boat building event; and boat trips for members.

Volunteer Opportunities...

The success of the Foundation lies largely on volunteers. The various programs and activities offered to the citizens of Mathews depend on volunteer participation to organize and run. The

pandemic has put a damper on many of our programs that require group participation. However, this down time provides us with the opportunity to review our programs, tune up where needed, and seek additional volunteers to be ready when things get back to normal.

Programs needing additional volunteer help are: Museum needs help building and setting up displays as well as docents; our deck boat Peggy of New Point is in need of a steady crew to maintain and transport her to various maritime events around the Bay; the proposed Maritime Park (see article on p.3) will need help with planning, landscaping and maintenance; Gil Klingel's Freya needs help with restoration; and our Gwynn's Island Boat Shop needs individuals interested in learning boat building skills.

We continue to look for a suitable site for a new museum and at some point along the way will need individuals who can assist with site planning, fund raising and grant writing.

Museum Continues search for new quarters...

For several years now Mathews Maritime Foundation efforts have been focused on finding a new location for our museum. Our current location on Main Street, Mathews has been running out of exhibit, storage and meeting space which has limited our ability to showcase the rich maritime history of the County. Many months have been spent searching for, examining and visiting various potential properties.

Keeping the Past in the Present Preserving it for the Future

Our “perfect/ideal” property has to meet the following criteria. There has to be easy access to the site. It has to be visible from a main road. It is essential to have deep water on a protected harbor and have easy access to the Chesapeake Bay.

Our search efforts led us to the the historic Gwynn’s Island Boat Yard built by Gilbert Klingel in the 1950’s. The criteria we needed happened to be the same as Gilbert’s when he was searching for a location for a boat yard and a place for the National Geographic underwater research project .

We have been leasing a portion of this property from owner Scott Gray since 2009. During that time we have, on several occasions, discussed purchasing the property. Early on he was willing to sell but wanted considerably more money than an appraisal indicated it was worth. More than we were willing to pay. So we kept looking at other suitable locations. Then in June of 2020 we approached him again. This time he said he was starting an oyster growing business and was not interested in selling, period. We continue to lease the space at this location that we refer to and call the Gwynn’s Island Boat Shop (GIBS) while we continue our search.

Model Deadrise Boat to be Raffled...

MMF Director and model builder Don Good is building a 1/12 scale model deadrise work boat to be raffled off to raise funds for the Riverside Walter Reed Hospital in Gloucester, Virginia. The hull, 41 inches long, is expected to be completed this spring. At that time we will be selling tickets for a drawing to take place in early Fall. For more information on ticket sales and to follow along as Don completes the build, see our Facebook page and web site.



Steamboats Era in Mathews...

Mathews Maritime Museum has a new exhibit on The Steamboat Era (1813 to 1962) and its importance to Mathews County. With no railroads and our poor public road system, steamboats were the major transportation link between Mathews and the outside world (Baltimore, Washington, Norfolk). The exhibit includes written documents and photographs depicting the activities that took place in and around the many steamboat landings in Mathews County. Among them were William’s Wharf, Digg’s Wharf, and Green Point Wharf.

Peter Wrike is MMF Vessel Registrar...

Local maritime historian Peter Wrike has volunteered as Vessel Registrar to the Mathews Maritime Foundation and Museum. He also volunteers his time as librarian and archivist for the the Museum and will act as a museum docent while working on these projects. His professional expertise raises the quality of the exhibits in our museum and has brought our museum collections to a higher level.

A Moment in Mathews History...

In 1861 the Union vessel USS Mount Vernon, a 174 foot side paddle steamer, had taken aboard a number of freed and enslaved African-Americans, some from Mathews County. The Secretary of the Navy determined that these people be received as free persons and could be employed in the Union Navy. This was the first step by the U.S. Government towards emancipation of all Americans held in bondage.

By March of 1863 Fort Monroe was overflowing with African-Americans fleeing the Confederacy. 442 African-Americans, some from Mathews County, were sent to Ile a Vache, Haiti aboard the “Ocean Ranger” to be resettled, but the settlement failed in less than a year. President Lincoln then determined that this approach was a failure and morally wrong. The full list of persons sent to Haiti is on display at the MMF Museum. Come visit the Museum exhibit for the rest of the story.

Klingel Film Wins Awards...

In late April we got some surprising news from film Director/Producer Dave Miller that the 2018 film, *The Legacy of Gilbert Klingel: Man of Steel*, sponsored by MMF had won the Platinum Remi award for a documentary at the Houston International World Fest. This is the third big award that this film has won. The other two are: RVA Environmental Film Festival Grand Prize (February 2019) and the Richmond International Film Festival award (April 2019)

The news about this award spread from Texas out to the West Coast. Stuart Coleman of Los Angeles, webmaster of the inaguabook.com website, posted the news on that website. Stuart is the son of MMF member Walt Coleman (son of Wally Coleman who was Gilbert's shipmate in the Inagua book story). Stuart will gladly work with MMF in posting other related news.

GI Maritime Park...

In hopes of establishing an outdoor maritime history museum and park on Gwynn's Island, a proposal was made to the County of Mathews to lease a two-acre parcel of waterfront property on South Bay Haven Road. A presentation of the concept was presented to the Gwynn's Island Civic League to a less than enthusiastic audience. An official presentation, complete with a conceptual drawing was later presented before the Board of Supervisors and the Mathews Planning Commission. Reactions from both groups were much more supportive.

Initially the park proposal, if approved, will include on-site parking, a quarter-mile history/exercise trail, complete with maritime artifacts, signage and aerobics stations along the way. A small beach area will be established to allow for launching and retrieving kayaks and canoes.

Future amenities will include a picnic pavilion and a rebuilt fishing pier to replace the deteriorated pier now on-site. Every effort will be taken to provide security and privacy for the adjacent neighbor. For the near future, the park will only be open during daylight hours. Ade-

quate signage will be posted to discourage anyone from trespassing after dark. "No Parking" signs will be posted along the road. If the parking lot is filled, park visitors will have to return at a later time.

Although some members of the Gwynn's Island Civic League are opposed to ANYTHING at that location, we have received overwhelming letters of support from nearby neighbors on the Island.

Both the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors feel that our proposal is the best plan submitted for the property, and I feel that our chances at approval remain very promising. The MMF has needed a very visible project like this for a long time. It will result in an increase of membership, volunteers, funding, and overall positive publicity for our foundation. *(Article by MMF Vice-president Tom Robinson)*

Boating Safety Classes Planned...

The Mathew Maritime Foundation for 2021 is preparing Boating Safety classes for youth 10 to 18 years old, boys and girls, to prepare them for water activities and to obtain their Boat Virginia Operator license. The classes will be limited to 10 or less and can include parents.

Classes will be held at the MMF Museum, Saturday or Sunday mornings. Six, hour-long classes will complete the course. At the conclusion of the course Flotilla 66 of the USCG auxiliary will administer the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries "Boat Virginia" boating license test.

We also expect to have available for Kids 6-10, color and activity books that introduce water safety. Classes, held at the Museum, are free. Sign up at the Museum when open and by going to www.mathewsmaritime.com.

We are also looking for an opportunity for the kids to participate in water activities using canoes, kayaks, and dinghies for some on the water training

Donor Boat Sales...

Donor boat sales are the lifeblood of the Foundation. 2020 saw 15 boats sold along with 4

outboard motors. Boats ranged in size from 9 foot up to 34 feet. Our web site lists current boats for sale as well as a brief description of each. Most boats are donated, but a few are sold on consignment, where the owner maintains ownership and the Foundation takes a commission on the sale, usually 10 to 15 percent. Visit our web site <www.mathewsmaritime.com> to view boats currently for sale.

Boats sold recently include a 15' flat bottom skiff and a 32' yawl shown below.



Klingel boats in need of restoration...

Many of you have heard of Gilbert Klingel. He wore many hats in his lifetime: Naturalist, underwater explorer, boat builder, and author of “The Bay” and “Inagua”. We have been gifted two of his steel hulled boats, the Freya and the Green Heron. The Freya, a 30’ full keel sloop, was built in 1953 at Gilbert’s boat yard on Gwynns Island. The Green Heron, nicknamed “Creek Crawler”, a 30’ Klingel design was built in 1977 for exploring the upper reaches of local waterways. Freya was the first boat built at his Gwynns Island boatyard and Green Heron was the last.

The Green Heron was removed from its resting spot in Urbanna in 2007, by a group of volunteers with plans to refurbish her. She is stored near the Cobbs Creek Post Office. The Freya was returned to her birth place in 2017. Volunteers are needed to give both boats extensive restoration. Here are pictures of our “Green Heron” rescue efforts (left) and of the “Freya” in her slip at our Gwynn’s Island Boat Shop.



New Exhibit Depicts Mathews Boatbuilding...

Mathews County Virginia’s most significant and enduring contribution to the County, this region, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the United States, was her shipbuilding prowess from the American Revolution to the U.S. Civil War and beyond.

Maritime historian Peter Wrike has put together an exhibit that traces the ships built by Lewis Hudgins at Fitchett’s Wharf on Stutts Creek, from early times through the Civil War. Two examples of ships built by Lewis Hudgins are shown here.



The “Constitution”



The “Elizabeth”



The largest ship built in Mathews, was the “Orozimbo” at 118 feet in length, built by Hunley, Gayle 1803 - 5