

The Broadside



The voice of The Mathews Maritime Foundation

Museum Located at 482 Main Street, Mathews, VA Mail to PO Box 1201, Mathews, VA 23109 804-725-4444

Come Celebrate Maritime Heritage Day

The third Mathews Maritime Heritage Day will be held on September 27 at Horn Harbor Marina from 10 am to 4 pm. This is truly a day for the entire county to reflect on its impressive history as a major ship building location and its relationship to the water that surrounds it.

We are honoring the watermen this year, those still working and those retired. Though original hopes included a work boat parade, their work schedules probably won't permit this. There will be some watermen demonstrating their unique skill of making crab pots or oyster scrape bags, and others eager to tell you about the jobs they have had on the water.

Peggy, the 54 foot deck boat built in 1925 on Horn Harbor will be on display with information about her and one of her previous owners, Captain Ed Grinnell. Terry Grinnell Hudgins and several others who are familiar with the *Peggy* will be on hand to share their stories with you.

A *Peggy* endowment fund has been set up to cover conservation and restoration of this lovely vessel. A generous member of our group has offered up to five thousand dollars in matching funds for money contributed through Heritage Day, an opportunity we are most grateful to have! We urge you to take advantage of this member's generosity to see your money doubled. Donations are tax deductible.

Boatbuilder Gilbert Klingel - The Early Years

Mathews boat builder, Gilbert Klingel (1908-1983) would have been 100 years old this October. Many in

these parts knew him as a skilled craftsmen who built steel-hull sailboats at his Gwynn's Island Boatyard but few knew about his other talents as a naturalist, explorer, writer, diver and inventor.

Unless you have seen the exhibit about him at the Gwynn's Island Museum or read the recent article "The Man Who Loved Gwynn's Island" in the August issue of the Chesapeake Bay Magazine, you may not be aware that Gil (as his friends called him) was equally talented in other fields aside from boatbuilding. We will try to summarize, in this newsletter and in future issues, his early years as an explorer and naturalist, his years as a writer and inventor of underwater diving devices, and his later years as a well-known boatbuilder.

Sometimes we underestimate the importance of the steamers and how they influenced everyday life in the Tidewater area. They carried people and goods from one end of the Chesapeake Bay to the other, making many stops from Baltimore all the way to Norfolk. It was one of these steamers from Baltimore – most likely the Piankatank – that brought Gilbert Klingel to Mathews County in 1917 as a boy of eight.

Spending summers with his family at Hudgins House across the Narrows from Gwynn's Island, he learned to swim and sail and to appreciate the Chesapeake Bay. This love of the water lasted a lifetime and his love for the area brought him back many years later to settle permanently.

In his hometown of Baltimore, at the age of ten Klingel was already a budding naturalist. He began by observing and photographing anything he could find in nature and because of this strong interest in the natural

Keeping the Past in the Present Preserving it for the Future

sciences, he soon joined the Maryland Academy of Sciences. He and his close friend Wally Coleman spent much of their free time studying plant and animal life along the shores of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. When the Natural History Society of Maryland was formed in 1929, both he and Coleman joined that organization and became curators as well as charter members. For several years Klingel served as vice-president and curator of the Department of Marine Life.

A trip to the American Museum of Natural History in New York so impressed Klingel that he wanted to document more of the strange tropical creatures he saw on display. These were West Indian lizards, four and five feet in length, which were strongly reminiscent of a dinosaur. In the winter of 1928/29 he went to Haiti on a small tramp ship. He spent four months there studying the wildlife and took the first moving pictures ever made of rhinoceros iguana colonies. This study was published in the Journal of the American Museum of Natural History in 1929. (*Marcie Benouameur, daughter of Gil Klingel, contributed this article.*)

Peggy of New Point History

In this and subsequent issues of the Broadside we will present the history of the *Peggy* as told by Terry Grinnell Hudgins, daughter of Captain Ed Grinnell who owned the *Peggy* from 1961 to 2001.

Peggy of New Point, or the *Peggy* as most folks call her, was built in 1925 by Harry Hudgins of Peary, Virginia for Captain Walter Burroughs of New Point, Virginia and his brother-in-law Raymond Hudgins. When built she was 49 feet in length with a draft of four feet two inches and a beam of twelve and a half feet. She had a box or square stern and was an open boat powered by a 35HP Palmer engine. Later in her life six feet was added to her stern to make it a round stern and the Palmer engine was replaced with a Grey Marine diesel.

Captain Walter and a crew of eight men fished pound nets on the Chesapeake Bay and did quite well. They got six cents per pound for their fish at that time. By 1948-49, the fish population in the Bay started to decline.

In later years as Captain Walter grew older, his son Richard went into business with him. It seemed like the luck changed once again for the better. The Burroughs sold their fish to Walter Garrett, Isaac Fass, Baylord Fish

& Rock Company, and others. Fishing turned out to be prosperous and the price of fish continued to rise.

In 1950, Richard decked the *Peggy* over and dredged crabs in the waters of the Chesapeake Bay for the next eleven years. Father and son did quite well during this time but Captain Walter was getting on in years. So, in 1961 the *Peggy* was sold to a young Edward Grinnell.

Edward or Captain Ed as he would come to be known, was 23 years old at the time and about to become a father. His daughter Terry Lynn was born in April of 1961. Edward and his father Carl were crab potters. In the winter months, Edward dredged crabs with the *Peggy*. In 1964 Edward's father passed away.

During the late 1960's, Edward took a position as Chief Engineer on a fish steamer owned by Zapata Haynie Corporation (now Omega Protein). Six months out of the year he traveled to Louisiana to work. In 1970, Edward quit Zapata Haynie and returned home to work the waters of the Bay.



Shortly after returning home he went into partnership with Paul Haywood to fish pound nets. Together they bought three pound nets at a cost of \$120,000.00. They had two deck boats, the *Peggy* and the *L.B. Travis* and two tow bats. They hired a nine man crew that included Paul's two sons, William Nelson (Bubba) and Vernon Grady. They set and fished three pound nets over at Cape Charles.

Each day they would catch the tide just right for fishing the pounds. They would catch boatloads of croaker, trout and flounder. They then took the catch into Cape Charles to Don Edgeton, their Broker. On many a day they sold for \$10,000. On one occasion Edward motored the *Peggy* to Portsmouth to Western Branch Inc.,

had an 871 Detroit diesel installed in three days, and returned to fishing the pounds.

Edward and Paul weren't the only Mathews watermen fishing pound nets. Captain Henry Owens and his sons fished pound nets over at Cape Charles as well. Owens owned the *Thomas E.* Quite often the *Peggy*, the *L.B. Travis* and the *Thomas E.* would be seen running alongside each other on their way to or from Cape Charles.

Due to Paul's failing health, Edward bought him out in 1974. He continued fishing the pounds across the Bay and Paul's sons continued on as part of the crew. Edward stayed in the fishing business until the latter part of 1977. At that time he returned to crab potting in the summer and dredging crabs with the *Peggy* during the winter months.

On one occasion during dredge season, Owens & Sons were short a man on deck. Edward boarded the *Thomas E.* at the helm in an effort to help out. It just so happened that on that day the Virginia Employment Commission was out doing research on Chesapeake Bay watermen. A commercial was filmed with Edward in the pilot house of the *Thomas E.* and viewed on television by many.

Captain Edward continued working the *Peggy* until 2001 when with failing health he made the decision to sell her and retire from the water. This was a very difficult decision for Captain Ed to make. He had worked her for forty years. *Peggy* was part of the family.

In our next installment we'll introduce you to Kim and Gretchen Granbery, who purchased the *Peggy* from Edward.

Volunteers Needed

The MMF/M is a strictly volunteer organization. Volunteers are needed as we continue to grow our membership and the size of our collection of objects and photos in the museum. If you are interested in boats or the local maritime history we invite you to join us as we continue on our mission: keeping our maritime history of the past in the present and preserving it for the future.

We have various programs and projects that we provide in a effort to keep our Mathews County maritime heritage alive. They include...

A model boat building class held after school at the Boys & Girls Club last Spring has given many children the opportunity to build a small model boat in the manner of a traditional Bay skiff. Several volunteers have generously given of their time to prepare the model boat kits and to assist the children in the building process. Surely an enjoyable time for all. We are repeating the boat building class this Fall with a class of twenty eager students.

A Chesapeake Day is planned for November 13th at Thomas Hunter Middle School. At this event sixth graders will learn about the water that surrounds them. This exciting event will be fun and informative as well as necessary according to a quiz devised by MMF to see what kids do know about their County.

Maritime Heritage Day takes the efforts of many volunteers to provide a full day of interesting displays, exhibits, nautical art, food, and entertainment. *See article elsewhere in this newsletter.*

Family Boat Building provides an heirloom for each participating family and is done through the preparation and assistance of many volunteers. Special thanks go out to MMF Board Member Joe Ortiz for his expertise as a boat builder and for the use of his shop where the pieces and parts for the boats have been produced.

The Museum is generally open Friday and Saturday from 10-1. Volunteers are needed on these days to welcome visitors so that they can see the artifacts, photographs, and memorabilia already in our collection.

Pictured left, completed model and kit parts (made by Dave Montgomery) for traditional Bay skiff built by students in the model boat building class at the Boys & Girls Club



Superstitions...Superstitions

Throughout the centuries sailors have always had superstitions regarding what one could do or put on a boat. All of which, if not heeded, would bring bad luck to the crew and the ship. Captain Ed and crew of the Peggy were no exception. Captain Ed said one must never have

anything blue on a boat. Meaning you could not wear any blue clothes or paint the boat blue. Another belief held by Ed was no hogs or pigs onboard. He was also superstitious about starting a new task on a Friday. This he would never do. Likewise, women onboard or on the dock was said to bring bad luck.

New Items in Museum Gift Shop

We have several new items in our Gift Shop that will surely make nice presents for those on your Xmas list. They include: note cards with artists rendering of the Peggy; numbered artist prints of an oil painting of the Peggy done by local artist Anne Smith; the MMF 2009 calendar honoring the generations of Mathews watermen; and a line of T-shirts with a line drawing of the Peggy on the back. The note cards are priced at \$5.00 for a pack of five cards with envelopes, the Peggy prints are \$20.00 each; the calendars \$10.00 and the t-shirts at \$15.00

Members please note that your membership entitles you to a ten percent discount on these and all other items in the Gift Shop.