



Issue 3 Winter 2014-15

# The Maritime Messenger

Newsletter of the Havre de Grace Maritime Museum

## President's Letter

For the past week or so I have been hearing the far off songs of the tundra swans calling; I walk along the promenade. Yesterday I finally saw a large flock in the distance on the flats, just before dusk. I am in awe of these fine creatures whose elegant grace reminds me of what brought me to Havre de Grace three years ago. As I look around at our museum, our exhibits, our classes and our programs, I must offer a collective thanks to all of our volunteers, donors, grantors, corporate partners, city staff, story-tellers, instructors, and performers. They are some of the people and organizations that contribute to the recognition of Havre de Grace being among our country's best small towns. In 2015 we will again host our maritime and folk music concert series with support from the Maryland State Arts Council, our volunteer concert managers, and of course Janie Meneely who books our musicians on our behalf. We also look forward this summer to "Story Time," in our Kids' Corner; U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Boating Safety Classes and innovative and hands-on kids programs in collaboration with our public library. Our boat shop volunteers launched our shop-made wooden 19' crabbing skiff on a blustery day in late October. This was a preliminary "shakedown cruise," to identify what works and what did not. More on this boat later in this newsletter. The boat, known as a "Sharpie," is on temporary display in the main gallery. One of the objectives of our Board of Directors is to place outside exhibits on our property. The renovation of our Shad Shack/Shanty is complete. In the early spring we plan to relocate it to the north side of our property just above the tugboat propeller on Lafayette Street. Our new fog bell is now mounted adjacent to the entrance to the museum. The bell base will be painted and signage installed when the weather warms up...more on the fog bell later in the newsletter. The US Coast Guard nun buoy that has been lying on its side outside the boat shop will be installed in a new and informative exhibit this spring. This project has taken some engineering and clever designing. We look forward to seeing it in place. It should be quite stunning. Our exhibits' committee installed several smaller exhibits in our galleries from newly donated artifacts and interesting nautical pieces in our collection. More are planned for this year and into next year. We are all learning how much time and work it takes to mount an exhibit. The layout and display are important aspects of an exhibit...artistic talent, engineering and craft can bring an artifact or collection of artifacts to life. The exhibit must tell a story to educate. Part of telling the story is to display the unique attributes and construction of the objects and to show how the object would have been used. The other part is to design the exhibit to relate the object to other aspects of local maritime history by presenting the object in the context of the times.

Please read on in our newsletter. We have much to report.

Bruce Russell, President

Welcome to our newest members!

Shonn and Barbara Moore  
 Jack Shagena  
 Henry and Barbara Hoffman  
 Roy and Carol Albert  
 Carol and William Allen  
 James S. Carson  
 Ronald G. Browning  
 Mark T. VerValin

### Upcoming Events:

**Bass Class, Feb. February 7, from 10am-4pm.**

**Geoff Kaufman Live in Concert, February 12, from 7-9pm.**

**Striper School, February 14, from 10am-4pm.**

**MD Boating Safety Course, February 21-22, 9am-1pm on both days.**

**"Going to the Birds" Birdhouse Workshop, February 28 at 10:30am.**



# Notes from the Committee

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Our Executive Committee is made up of our President (Bruce Russell), Vice President (Dave Dulik), Secretary (Laura Rothenberg Haug), Treasurer (Cecil Hill) and Vice President for Public Relations (Phil Barker).

Our Executive Director informed us in November of last year that she would not be returning after the birth of her child, a baby boy. We wish her and her family all the best. Working with the very capable Juliette Moore, our museum administrative assistant, the Committee has assumed the role of museum executive director for the interim. We are now conducting a job search for a new director, whose initial responsibilities will primarily focus on our new environmental center. We intend to fill this position by April 1.

## Environmental Education Center

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Work on the Environmental Center continues. The space on our ground floor where the Center will be housed is awaiting the installation of a new elevator. We just secured funding for it and have let a contract. Once the elevator project is completed, sometime in May or early June, we will hold an open house. The steering committee for the Environmental Center is developing programming, and an equipment, furnishings and supplies list. We are working with the Harford County Schools, the Harford County Library in Havre de Grace, the JM Huber Corporation, Kuzma Technologies, the City of Havre de Grace, the Chesapeake Bay Trust, the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company and others to develop our programs.

Last spring and fall we began work on the wetland and wooded areas between our building and the promenade. About fifty small native woodland trees were planted. Invasive plant species were cut back or pulled out. In the fall, working with City and County staff and in cooperation with the Decoy Museum, invasive plant species were sprayed as part of a new multi-year program. The Chesapeake Bay Trust awarded us a small grant to develop a long term program to stabilize and restore this area; we will be working with City staff on this project. We plan on using this area as a teaching and learning laboratory. We are looking for volunteers, educators and project and program partners.

This is an exciting time for our museum. We are grateful for all of our volunteers, members and supporters.

All our best,

Bruce Russell, President

## Board of Directors

**Bruce Russell**, President  
**David Dulik**, Vice President  
**Philip Barker**,  
Vice Pres. for Public Relations  
**Cecil Hill**, Treasurer  
**Laura Rothenberg Haug**,  
Secretary  
**Evelyn "Toni" Bench**  
**Henry "Butch" Bradley**  
**C. David Brown**  
**Robert Hickey**  
**Emory Plitt**  
**Bill Putland**

## Staff

**Juliette Moore**,  
Museum Assistant



# Our Historic Fog Bell

**Thank you to our recent donors!**

**Henry Bradley  
Daniel Roane  
Heather Rose  
Louis Friedman  
E. Stuart Bailey  
Joann M. Roesler  
Maggie and Joseph Brock  
George and Helene Klair  
C. David Brown  
H. Rodney Sharp III  
M. Kenneth McQuage  
R.F. Bolen  
Bruce Russell  
Laura and John Haug**

Last spring we received a fog bell on loan from the U.S. Coast Guard's historian's office. A fog bell is a type of signal that uses sound, in this case the rhythmic clanging of a very loud bell, to warn vessels of navigational hazards or the presence of other vessels, in foggy conditions.

When visual navigation aids such as lighthouses are obscured, fog bells provide an audible warning of the presence of rocks, shoals, headlands, or other dangers.



Unfortunately, we do not know much about the provenance of this bell. Research indicates that, several years ago, the U.S. Navy transferred this and several other bells to the US Coast Guard. We were unable to find records as to why the U.S. Navy had these bells, and why these were transferred back to the U.S. Coast Guard, as those records end in 1968. Our bell was cast at the McShane Foundry in Baltimore, Maryland. Now in Glen Burnie, Maryland, they restored the bell for the Museum. They advised that our bell was NOT cast for the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Coast Guard or the U.S. Lighthouse Service. It may have been a church bell, fitted as an automated fog bell with a solenoid (simple motor) atop the bell and below the yoke. The mechanism was completely rusted out when we received the bell. There are no markings on the bell as to its date of casting. Bells cast by McShane and others for use in a marine environment were of a high quality silicon brass. Our bell is not, thus the pitting on its surface. However, the yoke on the bell is typical for a U.S. Light Service and U.S. Coast Guard bell.

One possibility is that this bell was requisitioned by the government during World War II. The allied forces were moving cargo, equipment and personal by ship in the North Atlantic to Europe, Russia, North Africa and the Middle East. German submarines stalked the U.S. East and Gulf Coasts and the Caribbean. In the Pacific, allied forces were pushing towards Japan, China and Southeast Asia. The U.S. Coast Guard aids to navigation (ATON) programs deployed with the U.S. Navy to establish aids to navigation at newly established naval facilities in those theaters. Such ATON included buoys, electronic navigation, and fixed aids including lights, beacons and fog signaling devices in those new harbors. As materiel was in short supply, and time was of the essence, this bell could have been acquired, fitted and deployed.

Over time the Navy de-commissioned these facilities and returned the bells to the Coast Guard. Incidentally, a group of bells that was transferred from the Navy to the Coast Guard came from the Bainbridge U.S. Naval Training Center in Port Deposit, Maryland.

Those who generously donated and contributed to the display of the bell are Bill Nelson, Bill Putland and friends, Maggie and Joseph Brock, Bruce Russell, Leslie Kaufman, and John and Laura Haug.

# Traditional 19' Crabbing Sail Skiff

100 Lafayette Street  
Havre de Grace, MD 21078

(410) 939-4800

[www.hdgmaritimemuseum.com](http://www.hdgmaritimemuseum.com)  
[hdgmaritimemuseum@verizon.net](mailto:hdgmaritimemuseum@verizon.net)

*Also known as a "Sharpie" or "Flattie."*

This wooden sail boat was built in the museum's boat shop located on our ground floor. Typically between 18'-35' this type of boat is believed to have originated in Connecticut as an easy-to-build, shallow draft, stable and fast sailing and rowing craft used for oystering and fishing. In the Upper Chesapeake Bay, it was also used for crabbing by a crew of one or two, depending on its size. The larger boats were sometimes fitted with two masts. Our boat is based on roughly drawn plans of Howard I. Chapelle, who chronicled wooden boat building styles designs and techniques.

The design was modified with crowned fore and aft decking made of brightly finished cypress for aesthetic purposes. The space below the fore and aft decks is used for storage. This boat had its maiden "shake down" launch in October of 2014. The mood among friends, families and our team of boat builders in attendance was one of excitement, unhampered by the identification of several small but critical corrections needed on the boat. To those who asked as we were building the boat, will it [she] float? The answer is a resounding "Yes!" This boat will see regular use on the Bay, when not on display in the main gallery or in the boat shop. The poplar hull with oak ribs and oak stem and stern posts was first laid in 1999. Over the years, the boat was used as a teaching platform for boat building classes held at the museum.

Construction resumed in late 2013, when the plans for the boat were resurrected and a team of museum volunteers decided to complete the job. Changes were made to the hull and stem and stern posts. Oak thwart struts were crafted and installed along with poplar, oak and cypress gunwales.



The fore and aft decks on a working boat would have been flat and used as a work space. Ours has an elegant crown and is of brightly finished southern Cyprus. The centerboard and rudder are also poplar; the bronze pintles on the rudder were salvaged from an old rudder. The 19' mast is fir, and the thwart seat is maple. The hand-crafted sprit boom and helm are oak. Most of the brass and wooden fittings are bronze retrieved and re-purposed from old boat parts collected by the boat shop over the years. The interior hull is left unfinished, though sealed with a preservative and water-resistant product, Cuprinol.

## Hours:

**April 1 - October 14**

Wed - Sat: 10am - 5pm

Sun: 1pm - 5pm

**October 15 - March 31**

Sat: 10am - 5pm

Sun: 1pm - 5pm

