



The Finer Points

A newsletter from Friends of the St. Clements Island and Piney Point Museums Newsletter

SUMMER 2024

The mission of Friends of the St. Clement's Island and Piney Point Museums is to raise funds in order to support historical interpretation, education programs and special needs of the sites managed by the Museum Division of St. Mary's County Department of Recreation and Parks.

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From Museum Division Manager to First-Time Published Author

By: Emily Gilroy



The St. Mary's Museum Division is proud to announce that our very own Karen Stone will officially become a published author of the first-ever book on a "forgotten" piece of local Civil War history. Currently, Stone is the Museum Division Manager for St. Mary's County Department of Recreation & Parks, and while museum work may be her passion, she has also made it a point to keep her love of history alive through her dedication to this book.

Unveiling History (the current working title) is a tribute to the 87 men who lost their lives in a tragedy that took place on the Potomac River in the early hours of April 23, 1865. Shortly after the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, a ship by the name of *Black Diamond* was sent out into the Potomac to prevent the infamous assassin John Wilkes Booth from crossing the river into Confederate Virginia. While the *Black Diamond* was stationed off the coast of St. Clement's Island, the steamer ship *Massachusetts* was heading in the same direction. Unfortunately, the two ships collided when the steamer struck *Black Diamond* on its port side. This collision ultimately led to the sinking of the *Black Diamond* and the loss of 87 lives.

Stone announced her book at this year's annual event commemorating the Black Diamond Disaster. She said that she has been fascinated by the story since she first heard it and created this book to honor the memory of those who lost their lives that fateful night. Her research and dedication have led to the identification of over 30 of the individuals who were previously unknown, and she has said that she will continue her work until all 87 are identified.

**2024
CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**June 18-20, July 9-11, 23-25,
August 6-8**
St. Clement's Island Museum
Art Kids

July 8-11
Outdoor Adventure @ PPLM

July 12-14
Potomac Jazz and Seafood
Festival

July 22-25
Outdoor Adventure at PPLM

August 3-4
National Lighthouse Weekend
@ PPLM

August 17
Children's Day at SCIM

September 14
FamilyFest on the Potomac
@ PPLM

October 25-26
Haunting at PPLM

**Drayden African American
Schoolhouse Open Houses**
June 15, 16 & 19
July 6
August 3
September 7
October 5

Holiday Open House
December 1
PPLM & SCIM



One of a Kind Saxophone Auction

Win a custom saxophone in support of the museums! This one of a kind saxophone was created by the Marcus H. Mitchell instrument collection, the first African American owned multi - instrument manufacturing company in the world and will be auctioned off to support the Friends. The auction will go live on June 10, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. and will run until July 13, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. The opening bid will be \$1,000; this saxophone is valued at \$3,500. Follow the QR code to find the auction information.

This auction is a fundraiser for the Friends of the St. Clement's Island and Piney Point Museums.



In Memory of John Eckstine

By Jennifer Brown and Christina Barbour

This spring, the St. Mary's County Museum Division bade a sad farewell to longtime staff member John Eckstine, who passed on May 7, 2024. John started working for the Museum Division as a Museum Assistant in 2007 after retiring from the Smithsonian Institution. He was a dedicated employee and a fervent supporter of all museums. He personally donated several items that were put on permanent display during the most recent revitalization of the Piney Point Lighthouse Museum exhibit gallery. He also served on the Corporate Committee of the Maryland Veterans Museum. The Museum Division will miss his presence and treasure his memory.



Photo taken at SCIM in 2014. John is third from the left.

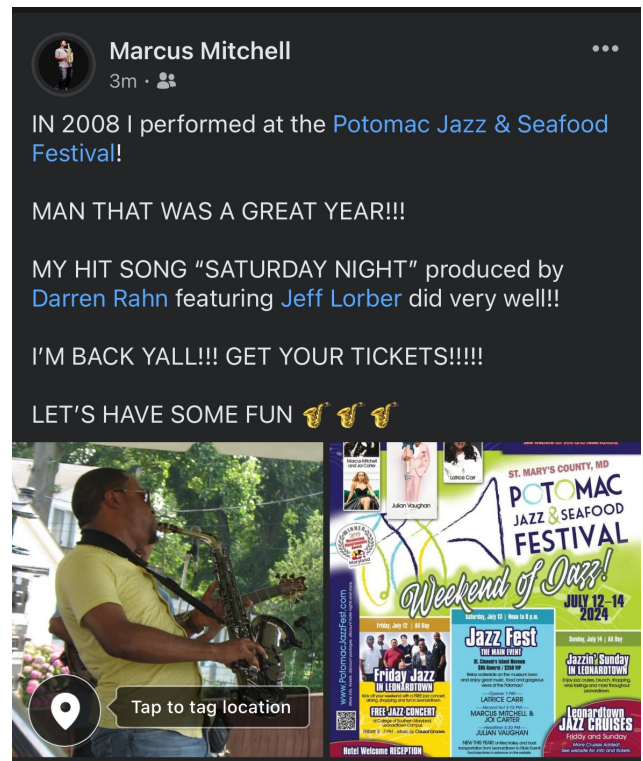


July 12-14, 2024
Tickets now available
<https://www.potomacjazzfest.com/>

Jazz Notes

By Marcus Mitchell

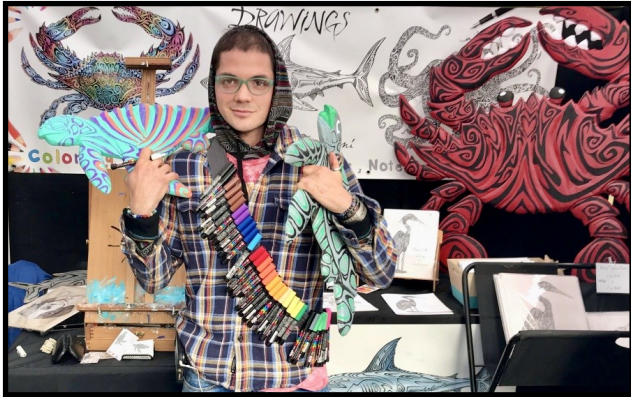
This is “Social Music Artist” Marcus Mitchell, and let me tell you! I’m excited to return to this years Potomac Jazz Seafood Festival! Over 20 years ago, I had the pleasure of performing during the early stages of the festival. I had just released my second album R&R which was doing very well on the charts. My hit single “Saturday Night” produced by acclaimed producer Darren Rahn and featuring legendary keyboardist Jeff Lorber continued to climb the charts! Kimberley Cullins reached out to us asking for us to perform! I was so excited, Kim and the entire museum understood the vision and knew how to treat an artist. Fast forward several years later, I’m now back for the 24th annual Potomac Jazz & Seafood Jazz Festival! Words can’t express how excited I am! This year, the line up is incredible, Joi Carter, Latrice Carr and myself and the headliner, with several other events throughout the week! When I tell you this year will be EPIC, it certainly will. The fun continues, 2025 will be incredible! The line up will consist of vocals Rebecca Jade, violinist Chelsey Green and an amazing headliner being announced soon! The Potomac Jazz and Seafood Festival is one of the premiere festivals in the country! I’m thankful for the opportunity and want to thank the Friends for having me and the wonderful staff. Adrienne, Sara, Janet, Andrew and Karen! As I always say, “LET’S HAVE SOME FUN”!



Scan me

A Legacy of Love, Michael Tomassoni Art Community Outreach at the Museums

By: Jayne Walsh



The Friends of the St. Clements Island and Piney Point Lighthouse Museum Stores have been advocating for Southern Maryland artists and authors by providing them a venue to sell their merchandise at the museum stores for the last several years.

As the new manager of the museum stores, one of the first artists I met was Michael Tomassoni, a student at St. Mary's College in 2015. When he shared his Chesapeake Bay Series of incredible pen & ink drawings with me, I was blown away. He had created a coloring book from his portfolio of

drawings, notecards and prints. Mike's love of nature and animals that inhabit the Potomac and Chesapeake Bay detailed in his work were a perfect fit for the consignment program and the museums' mission. Over the years, I continued to carry his artwork as Michael grew as an artist. It was wonderful to stay in touch with him and see where life was leading him as an artist and a colleague.

It was with great sadness that in April 2020 we learned of the heartbreaking loss of our friend Mike. On April 18, 2020, Michael Guy Tomassoni, 32, died tragically in Annapolis, MD. Mike was such a kind, gentle soul with huge heart.

Michael's Dad reached out to me and wants his son's collection of art to live on. We have a restock of Michael Tomassoni's artwork notecards at the Friends Museum Stores, generously donated by his loving family. Your purchase supports art outreach programs for children at the museums. Mike passed away in 2020 but his love of the fabulous animals, creatures and nature of the Potomac and Chesapeake region continues to inspire us all.

Summer Art Classes Drawing from Local Heritage

By: Christina Barbour

A man standing on the edge of his boat plunges his tongs into the river and pulls up a load of oysters that he drops into his boat. He, along with other watermen, are captured in black and white photos hung in a museum where children sketch. The children, drawing inspiration from the images, apply newly learned techniques to create a work of art called the "Watermen's Hands." This art lesson teaches a rising generation a way of life that is disappearing from the Potomac River landscape.

Retired art teacher, Ellen Duke Wilson, will return this summer to inspire artistic talent while imparting local heritage in the St. Clement's Island Museum Art Kids summer program. The following classes offered are: Drawing - Plotting the Course (June 18, 19, 20); Painting - Seascapes (July 9, 10, 11); Sculpting - Emerging Sea Creatures (July 23, 24, 25); Collage - Piecing Together Clues from the Past (August 6, 7, 8).

Each class is \$5 per child and consists of three sessions starting at 12:00 p.m. and ending at 3:00 p.m. Preregistration is required; for ages 7 to 17 years old. All materials are provided. Participants should bring a light snack. Participants will create a work of art to share in an exhibit opening on August 17, 2024, during Children's Day.

For more information regarding St. Clement's Island Museum Art Kids, or to register your child, please call Christina Barbour at 301-769-4723.





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Your Membership Allows Us To...

Potomac River Dory Boats Require Seldom Found Skills

By: Christina Barbour

When watermen traversed the Potomac River in wooden vessels not only did they use special expertise to acquire their daily harvest, but they also practiced distinct carpentry skills to maintain the seaworthiness of their vessels. The arrival of low maintenance fiberglass boats enticed watermen to abandon their wood ones. In time, the routine practice of maintaining wood vessels became a lost art.

The St. Mary's County Museum Division has two Potomac River Dory boats, *The Early Times* and the *Doris C.* Both are wood vessels constructed by St. Mary's County boatbuilders and were once owned by St. Mary's County residents. The Potomac River Dory is a style of boat that originated in St. Mary's County. Only seven remain today.

Vessels like these require the specialized handywork of a boatwright, a carpenter skilled in

the traditional construction of wood vessels. However, most of the boatwrights in Southern Maryland with these skills have retired from the trade. The closest one has a shop in Trappe, a town located in the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The cost for his expertise and labor is \$174,000 per vessel.

The Museum Division's budget alone cannot cover this expense; therefore, the Museum Division is seeking grant funding to help defray the cost. The Friends of the St. Clement's Island and Piney Point Museums raise funds through their membership to pay for programs that help provide matching grant funds for restoration projects such as these.

Preserving these unique and now rare vessels helps the St. Mary's County Museum Division preserve way of life that is disappearing from the St. Mary's County landscape.

U-1105 at Piney Point Museum

By: Ken Burke

The U-1105 is a World War II— era German submarine purposefully sunk off the coast of Piney Point in the Potomac River in 1949. The wreck was designated as Maryland's first Historic Shipwreck Preserve in 1994.

The museum recently acquired additional items related to the U-1105, such as this chronometer from the family of Lt. Commander Hubert Thomas Murphy, USN, that had been aboard the U-1105. Lt. Commander Murphy served as the captain of the U-1105 during its crossing of the

North Atlantic from Ireland to Portsmouth, New Hampshire in the winter of 1945/1946.

The Museum will be redesigning its U-1105 exhibition to highlight the chronometer and other items to tell the U-1105's story. Funding from Friends of the St. Clement's Island and Piney Point Museums will support the Museum in this effort.

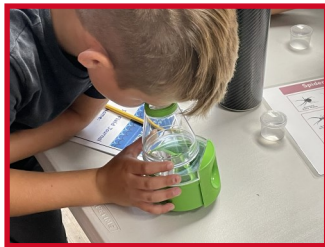


Summer Opportunities

By: Sara Saunders

Is your family spending too much time on electronic devices over the summer? Need to quench the boredom? St. Mary's County Museums has the events and activities you're looking for to engage minds of all ages.

Second Saturdays Program: Outdoor nature play for all takes place on the second Saturday of each month, year round. Program information can be found in the events sections of the St. Clement's Island Museum and Piney Point Lighthouse Museum Facebook pages. Regular offerings include: bamboo shelter building activities and knot tying for elementary age children/wooden block and natural item building and sensory materials for baby and preschool age children. Seasonal rotating options may include STEAM experiments, painting with natural items, beach combing, insect collection and identification, and much more.



Outdoor Adventures: Expanded to two sessions this year due to popular demand! Four days of outdoor play and learning at Piney Point Lighthouse Museum during the cooler mornings. Join us for STEAM activities, insect hunts, fishing, crabbing, and much more. Information can be found on the events section of the Piney Point Lighthouse Facebook page.

Historic Skillset and Social Hour: Summer break activity series geared toward upper elementary school and middle school students. Enjoy an easy craft or activity while practicing your social skills with the art of conversation. Located in the lower sitting rooms of the Old Jail in Leonardtown. Check out our event listing on the Old Jail Museum Facebook page.



Dinner & a Cruise Series: Adults only, water cruise evenings complete with a seafood dinner and detailed discussion on local history and events. Topics include The Black Diamond Disaster, "The Lights Are Not Safe", WWII on the Potomac, The Piscataway, the Blackistone Lighthouse, and Potomac Ecology and the Environment. Cruise dates, times, prices, and details can be found on EventBrite.

Don't see anything that fits your schedule? Looking for a more tailored experience for your group or homeschool co-op? Contact our museums for topic availability and personalized tours with our Education Coordinator.



Photo Credit: Mancil Gray



Rebels & Redcoats: A Southern Maryland Revolutionary War Family Event

By: Ken Burke

The Piney Point Lighthouse Museum and Historic Park hosted *Rebels & Redcoats: A Southern Maryland Revolutionary War Family Event* on Saturday, April 6, 2024. Rebels & Redcoats served as the inaugural event for Southern Maryland's celebration of the 250th anniversary of the establishment of the United States in 1776.

Working with the Southern Maryland 250th Committee, Southern Maryland National Heritage Area, and numerous Southern Maryland civic organizations, the museum hosted over 300 visitors who conversed with military reenactors, viewed a period encampment, observed military demonstrations, and witnessed a musket and canon fire demonstration that shook the grounds.

In July 1776, British forces under Lord Dunmore landed on St. George Island, but were eventually rebuffed by local militias. As the month-long skirmish was the only American Revolutionary War battle to happen in Maryland, and due to Piney Point's proximity to St. George Island, the museum became the logical host for this first observance.

There will be numerous other events observing the 250th anniversary throughout Southern Maryland over the next two years, and museum staff here at Piney Point already plan on hosting our next 250th event here at the museum on Saturday, April 5, 2025. Details to follow in the coming months.



Friends of St. Clement's Island and Piney Point Museums
And Stewards of Drayden African American Schoolhouse and the Old Jail Museum
38370 Point Breeze Road



Maryland Day 2024 at St. Clement's Island Museum: A Resounding Success!

By: Andrew Ponti

The 2024 Maryland Day celebration at St. Clement's Island Museum was, once again, a resounding success! Each year, on March 25th, this event draws in visitors from all over who come to commemorate the founding of Maryland where the settlers first landed in 1634. On this day of celebration, St. Clement's Island Museum offers free admission, children's activities and informative lighthouse tours by the members of the St. Clement's Hundred. There is something for everyone to do while honoring Maryland's founding!

This year's official ceremony was held in front of the museum and featured guest speakers Randy Guy, President of the Commissioners of St. Mary's County; Francis Gray, Piscataway Tribal Leader; and other dignitaries. Following the ceremony was a reenactment of the exchange of gifts between the Piscataway people and the English settlers. The day's attendees not only had a day filled with fun and history, but they also gained greater understanding of the principles Maryland was built on.



Photo by: Wes Stone