

Maryland begins here!

the finer points

A newsletter from the Friends of the
St. Clement's Island and Piney Point Museums

June 2008

The Friends support historical interpretation, educational programs and special needs of the sites managed by the St. Mary's County Department of Recreation, Parks and Community Services' Museum Division: St. Clement's Island Museum, the Little Red Schoolhouse, the Piney Point Lighthouse, Museum and Historic Park, the Drayden African-American Schoolhouse, and the U-1105 Black Panther German submarine shipwreck preserve. A non-profit organization, the Friends sponsor special events, assist with acquisitions and publish this newsletter to broaden understanding of and interest in these important historic sites.

Inside: Blackstone Lighthouse Gets Crowning Touch, Maryland Day Memories, Lighthouse Keeper Program for Kids, Friends News and more!

Progress Ahead: Pardon Our Dust! *Piney Point site prepares for major improvements*

By Kimberley Cullins

Progress is the culmination of diligence, vision, luck, and the support of many. The Piney Point Lighthouse, Museum and Historic Park is undergoing major site enhancements designed to enrich the learning experience of visitors and accent the site's wonderful natural features. In the name of progress, we ask that you pardon our dust!

The most obvious alterations will be to the grounds. Plans are in place to provide new parking areas in front of the museum and maritime exhibit building, and add landscaping and native plantings that are environmentally friendly as well as practical. A shelter will be erected in front of the military workshop building to cover the restored "Early Times" dory boat, and the torpedo exhibit will be moved from the South Campus to the North Campus.

A boardwalk and sidewalks are also planned to create a route for visitors from one campus to the other. During your visits, you may see old sidewalks and pavement being removed, or piles of lumber or gravel awaiting work crews.

The Potomac River Maritime Exhibit has already begun its transformation. This building will house state-of-the-art exhibits (including lifelike mannequins), lighting, and interpretation that will offer a much higher-quality experience to visitors. Some permanent exhibits were

installed this spring with more to be fabricated and installed this summer. Partial sails will sit above the skipjack and bugeye – you'll almost feel the wind in your hair!



The exterior of the building will greet the visitor with a splashy logo and nautically themed entrance. The transition here will be dramatic!

It's also a goal to replace the pier on Piney Point Creek that incorporates a kayak launch.

Less noticeable, but equally important, is the staff's effort to implement environmental programs and techniques that are not only responsible but inspiring. The

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Bringing Reality to the Surface

By Sheila Gibbons Hiebert, President

There it was: a black and white film showing the destruction of the captured U-1105 "Black Panther" World War II German submarine. It was blowing up right before the audience's eyes on the TV screen at the Piney Point Lighthouse Museum.

Wrapped in synthetic rubber, the U-1105 Black Panther had been able to escape detection by sonar and therefore was able to wreak havoc with the Allies' ships during the war. The U.S. Navy had carefully studied the sub after its capture, conducting salvage and towing tests. When the analysis was complete, plans were made for its demolition. In September 1949, the sub was anchored off Piney Point and exposed to a powerful depth charge. The U-1105's hull cracked and the sub settled in 90 feet of Potomac River water, where it remains, largely intact.

Thanks to camera-carrying divers, the Piney Point film also gives us images of the sunken sub, which in 1994 was declared Maryland's first historic shipwreck preserve.

In 1949, it was understandable why there was no sentiment for preserving a lethal enemy weapon. But as I watched the film of the explosion that sent it to the bottom of the river, I thought with some regret, how interesting it would be if museum visitors were to see it up close today as Navy analysts had in the 1940s.

The Piney Point Lighthouse Museum, like all museums, does the next best thing: It surrounds you with the story, the people, and the breathtaking moments conveyed by the objects the museum displays or references. So it is with the U-1105 – you can look into the eyes of the submarine commander, who looks at visitors from a photo. You can learn about the sub's devastating stealth and the Allies' elation at capturing it. You can feel the challenges of war at sea.

This is the magic of museums. They take you to places in time you could never go on your own. Our terrific Museum Division staff members at Piney Point and the St. Clement's Island Museum work tirelessly to create these moments for you. Thank you for supporting them through the Friends.

Diving to the Black Panther is considered an advanced dive. It is open to divers who can handle the Potomac's strong tides and currents, low water visibility, and heavy boat traffic. It is illegal to remove artifacts or disturb the site in any way. For information and specifications regarding recreational diving on the U-1105, please contact the Maryland State Underwater Archaeologist at 410-514-7662; the Piney Point Lighthouse Museum at 301-994-1471; or the St. Clement's Island Museum at 301-769-2222.

The Crowning Touch!



(Photo by Greg Mora)

A crane lifts the lantern deck to the lighthouse roof while workers watch anxiously.

Blackistone Lighthouse Update

The much-anticipated fabrication of the Blackistone Lighthouse lantern deck and cupola by Triton Metals of Hollywood, MD, was completed in April. The next challenging step was to transport them to St. Clement's Island, secure and transport a crane to set them, and wait for weather that wasn't wet or windy. It all came together on April 17, when the lantern deck and cupola were set in place. The final touches will be guttering, shutters and some interior work slated for completion by early summer. Take the museum water taxi to visit the new lighthouse in its beautiful island setting!



First, Triton Metals employees prepare the replicated lantern deck and cupola for transport by barge to St. Clement's Island. (Photo by Jesse Yeatman, published by permission of The Enterprise.)

Finally, the cupola is gently and safely lowered onto the lantern deck, completing the last major stage of the lighthouse construction.
(Photo by Greg Mora)



Kids' Stuff ...

Assistant Lighthouse Keeper Program for Kids

The Piney Point Lighthouse, Museum and Historic Park will offer a new program this summer geared to "little" lighthouse lovers and adventure seekers age 7 to 11. According to site supervisor April Havens, the Assistant Lighthouse Keeper Program is in the creative stage with ideas for hands-on activities and learning adventures that focus on life as a lighthouse keeper, Piney Point society in the 1900s, and the uniqueness and variety of lighthouses in the United States.

Keep the kids off the couch this summer and get them out into a safe environment for a fun learning experience in their own back yard. Call April at the Piney Point Lighthouse Museum at 301-994-1471 for dates, times and details.

It's A Wrap ...

Local Students' Video Chosen for Papal Visit

St. Clement's Island was featured in one of three videos selected for viewing at Nationals Park prior to the mass celebrated by Pope Benedict XVI during his visit to Washington in April.

The Island, St. Mary's City and Chapel Point in Port Tobacco were the principal locales for a joint video production by students from 12 Southern Maryland Catholic schools. Their video told the story of Catholicism in the nation's first days, with special attention to the Maryland colony.

The three winning videos were chosen from 47 entries submitted to the Archdiocese of Washington.

A Letter From Debra

The Storm Before the Calm

The Museum Division is sailing headfirst into gales of progress. Members and visitors should expect to see big changes in the landscape of the Piney Point Lighthouse, Museum and Historic Park. Some of the activities include the initiation of the Piney Point Shore Stabilization project set to begin this spring. Work will commence to stabilize and reinforce the shoreline located behind the lighthouse and keeper's quarters facing the NuStar Transportation Terminal. Dump trucks and cranes will help move the giant stones into place.

As you read this, our engineering firm is working hard to get the plans for the new parking and walkways approved by the county and state permit offices. This work will update and enhance all of our walkways, parking areas and outdoor exhibits. St. Mary's County Master Gardeners are meeting with County environmental planner Sue Veith to review critical area mitigation and plan a landscape and planting plan to enhance the park's beauty and "baywise/greenways" teaching opportunities. Before the facelift is complete, we will have to tear out old useless pavement and demolish structures that no longer serve a useful purpose or may actually present health hazards.

Construction will not be limited to the grounds. Big changes are in store for the Potomac River Maritime Exhibit building as well. The temporary exhibits are being taken down and we are preparing for the fabrication and installation of the new permanent exhibits to help show and tell the story of the watermen on the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay. The U-1105 German submarine exhibit inside the Piney Point Museum has been completed, which wraps up the construction for the downstairs of the main museum building.

Grant applications have been submitted to replace the small North Campus pier located on Piney Point Creek, to continue with parking, walkway and landscape enhancements and lastly, to replace the roof on the keeper's quarters. Each of these projects is scheduled to begin in fall of 2008. So hold on to your hats as we embrace the storm of organized chaos before the calm of progress is recognizable.

Friends members are encouraged to inquire about volunteer activities as we get all of these projects underway—helping hands are always welcome!



MARYLAND DAY MEMORIES

The Honorable Steny Hoyer, U.S. Congressman and Majority Whip, shares a quip with the audience.

Keynote speaker Dan Patrell, editor and publisher of Maryland Life magazine, explains how he shares his love for Maryland in every issue.

No birthday would be complete without a cake. Maryland's birthday March 25 was celebrated in grand style thanks to the creative genius of pastry chef Peter Schmitter of Wildewood Pastry Shop in California, MD. *(Photos by Kimberley Cullins)*





The **Piney Point Lighthouse Waterfront Festival**, held mid-May, was enjoyed by many, especially the students of the local schools who participated in the annual art show. Pictured here are students from The King's Christian Academy, Little Flower Catholic School and the Piney Point Elementary School who received ribbons or certificates of participation from site supervisor April Havens (top right) and art show coordinator Shirley Leyland (top left).

The **Potomac River Wade In** was led by St. Mary's County Commissioner President Jackie Russell, pointing to the 4' 6" mark on the measuring stick, accompanied by Mike Bilek (middle) of the Maryland Tributary Strategies Program and David Waring (right) vice chair of the Lower Potomac Tributary Team. The purpose of the wade in is to measure water clarity by walking as far as you can until you no longer see your feet. The 2008 depth surpassed last year by 24 inches!



Q&A with Chris

Q: What can you tell us about John Donahoo, who built the Piney Point and St. Clement's Island lighthouses?

A: John Donahoo designed and built 13 lighthouses in the Chesapeake Bay region, including our own Piney Point and Blackstone Island (now St. Clement's Island) lighthouses, yet he did not have a degree in engineering or architecture. According to research done by his great-great-granddaughter, Lauren Donahoo, he is listed in the 1850 Census records as a "farmer." Just a year later, he completed the Blackstone Island lighthouse.

During the War of 1812, he fought in the Maryland Militia. In his hometown of Havre de Grace, MD, he served as a local judge for four terms and as town commissioner for 16 years. Donahoo was initially hired by the Federal government to build his first lighthouse on Pooles Island because he and his colleague, Simon Frieze, offered the lowest bid. Donahoo won other contracts for building lighthouses because he frequently came in as the low bidder, usually met his building deadlines, and his lighthouses passed inspection for structural soundness.

A tribute to Donahoo is the fact that seven of his lighthouses still stand: Pooles Island, Concord Point, Cove Point, Point Lookout, Turkey Point, Fishing Battery and Piney Point. The others perished from circumstances other than architectural inferiority. To learn more about the lighthouses of the Chesapeake Bay region, visit www.cheslights.org.

Christina Barbour is the Historic Site Manager at the St. Clement's Island Museum and also serves as Education Curator and Collections Manager.

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Our heartfelt THANKS to these donors who contributed \$7,165 to our Annual Appeal.

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Once the Dust Settles, a Renovated Piney Point Sure to Sparkle

Renovations, continued from page 1

museum and park are already using a recycling program as a museum division initiative. Recycling containers have been installed to collect paper, plastic bottles, aluminum cans and other waste matter that is then taken to the local convenience centers.

Plans are also afoot to employ conservation techniques such as rain barrels, compost bins, and practical “baywise” landscaping, an initiative that utilizes native plantings (grasses, bayberry, wild azaleas, etc.) that

are aesthetically pleasing but do not require the use of fertilizers and pesticides. Hopefully, this initiative will inspire our visitors to reconsider the earth-friendliness of their own landscaping.

We hope that our visitors will understand that the improvement process may bring occasional minor inconvenience, and that the site won't be picture-perfect until the projects are finished. Like a diamond in the rough, however, once cut and polished, Piney Point will be an even more magnificent gem for all to enjoy.

UP AND COMING . . .

Set a course for these exciting events

Visit www.stmarysmd.com/recreate/museums or call 301-769-2222 for more information on these events.

Weekend Water Taxi Service – June through September

The St. Clement's Island Museum will resume seasonal water taxi service to St. Clement's Island on weekends, weather permitting. Tickets can be purchased inside the museum for \$5 per adult or child. The water taxi departs from the St. Clement's Island Museum pier at 12:30 p.m. with intermittent departures until the final return to the museum at 3:30 p.m. The water taxi is U.S. Coast Guard approved and follows all policies and procedures in its operation. In the event of inclement weather, high winds, or rough water, taxi service will be cancelled; please call ahead to confirm operation the day of your arrival.

Potomac Jazz and Seafood Festival – Saturday, July 12

Now in its 9th year, the Potomac Jazz & Seafood Festival has morphed into a “go to” jazz event for the Washington area as evidenced by last year's sellout! Don't miss the stellar lineup for 2008: Marcus Mitchell at 4 p.m., the Urban Jazz Coalition at 6 p.m., and national recording artist Nick Colionne at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$40 for Friends members, \$45 for the general public and \$55 at the gate (if still available.) Purchase tickets at the museum, by phone or from our website.

St. Clement's Island History and Heritage Day – Saturday, July 19

Formerly known as “Black-eyed Susan Day,” this program is being revamped to incorporate a broader range of interests, activities and history of St. Clement's Island. Free water taxi service will be offered to the Island, where visitors can still enjoy the spectacle of more than 4,000 Black-eyed Susans in full bloom, plus an array of children's games, refreshing watermelon, Blackistone Lighthouse tours, and more! Bring a picnic lunch, walking shoes, sun block, and don't forget the camera! Call for times and details.

Children's Day – Saturday, August 2

Kids of all ages will enjoy a day of fun, learning and activities at the St. Clement's Island Museum! There will be hands-on crafts, heritage games, face painting, kiddie tractor pull and food provided by the 7th District Optimist Club. Be sure to meet our community heroes from the 7th District Volunteer Fire Department and Rescue Squad, St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office, Health Department, and Health Connections Van. The hours are 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Museum admission is free for all and the water taxi is free for children and available through 3:30 p.m.

Interactive Murder Mystery Dinner – Friday, September 5

Mark your calendars now for this incredibly fun fundraiser, an uproarious evening of over-the-top acting and unrehearsed performances with a theme perfect for an election year: “Murder They Vote.” Scripts will be handed out to those willing to participate and “ham” it up! The event will take place at Olde Breton Inn, Leonardtown, MD, a charming setting for a politically-motivated murder! A buffet dinner is included, with a cash bar and a live auction. Tickets are \$60 per person for Friends members and \$65 for the general public. Only 120 tickets available. The murderer could be YOU!

Maryland Lighthouse Challenge – September 20 and 21

The Chesapeake Bay Lighthouse Society will once again present this challenge to lighthouse lovers everywhere: see all the land-based lighthouses in Maryland in two days! That includes the Piney Point Lighthouse and—new this year—the rebuilt Blackistone Lighthouse on St. Clement's Island! Visit all or just one. Maryland lighthouses open to the public both days from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. For more information, log on to the Chesapeake Lighthouse Society's website at www.cheslights.org.

Member News

Welcome Aboard!

The Friends welcome these new members:

Family

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Berry, Solomons, MD

Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Guy,
Leonardtown, MD

Mr. and Mrs. Ed Hughes,
Valley Lee, MD

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Steele Pogue,
Bushwood, MD

Heritage

Carole and Don Thieme, Solomons, MD

The Friends thank **Bo and Louanne Bailey** of Colton's Point for continuing to make contributions in honor of the special people in their lives. Most recently, Bo and Louanne made donations to honor the 80th birthday of their dear friend, Mary Jane Alvey, and brother-in-law Bernie Doepkins. They also made a contribution to the Friends marking the 50th wedding anniversary of Robert and Liliane Jarboe.

Special thanks go to **Shirley and Walter Leyland** who donated their \$50 prize from the Leonardtown Volunteer Fire Department Christmas tree decorating competition in honor of Chuck and Trudi Oertly, who donated the tree.

The Friends also thank the **7th District Optimist Club** for donating \$500 for the Friends' upgrade of the electrical system at the St. Clement's Island Museum as well as a \$1,870 donation from gate proceeds of the 2007 Blessing of the Fleet. The Optimists continue to be a valued community partner in the many programs and projects that take place at the St. Clement's Island Museum.

A hearty thanks to the **Chesapeake Bay Running Club (CBRC)** for its \$2,200 donation, a share of the proceeds from the Lower Potomac River Marathon held in the Piney Point/St. George Island area in March. The CBRC initiated the donation to help with the recovery of the Piney Point Lighthouse Museum after Hurricane Isabel in 2003. The club has made a donation each year earmarked for projects at Piney Point.



Friends board member and St. Mary's County Commissioner Tommy Mattingly greets Chesapeake Bay Running Club (CBRC) Vice President Travis Priest and Lower Potomac River Marathon Race Director Liza Recto as Dennie Mattingly looks on. The 2007 President's Award was presented at Volunteer Appreciation Night by Friends President Sheila Gibbons Hiebert to Recto and the CBRC officers: Treasurer Paul Serra, Secretary Sierra Schenk, President Vic Papagno, and Priest. (All photos by Kimberley Cullins)



The 2008 Volunteer Appreciation Night, held in April at the Cedar Point Officers' Club at NAS Patuxent River, recognized the many hours of dedicated service given by volunteers at the St. Clement's Island and Piney Point Museums in 2007. Each year the volunteer coordinators, along with the museum site supervisors, choose an outstanding volunteer to be recognized as Volunteer of the Year. Pictured are this year's recipients: St. Clement's Island Museum volunteer and Friends board secretary Ann Davis with volunteer coordinator Jean Hoffman (left) and site manager Chris Barbour (right), and Piney Point Lighthouse Museum volunteer Kay Zimmerman with volunteer coordinator Shirley Leyland (left) and site supervisor April Havens (right).

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