

THE MUSEUM NEWS

CELEBRATING THE HISTORY AND COMMUNITY OF CAPE CHARLES

June 2023 VOL. 19, ISSUE 2

Museum Opening: New Exhibits & Lecture Series

The museum opened on May 6 with a new exhibit created by Laura Smith featuring archival photographs from the first four decades of Cape Charles City history. More than 60 archival photos from our collections capture key sites, happenings, and the people who came to build, work and live in the town during those early years and shaped its future. Many of the images had not been seen for many years if ever – CCHS archives include more than 4,000 physical photographs and digital images so there is a lot to choose from! There are also updates to the A/V exhibits and the ever popular engine and generator, model steamers, ferries, railroad and railroad memorabilia – with silver RR dishes newly polished. Also new this year is a bi-monthly lecture series from May through October on a variety of topics: decoys, E.S women in the Revolution, CBBT and more. See the website or Facebook for details. They are already a big hit!

Docents – from Dora Sullivan

"A great way to learn your local history is to join me or one of the other docents. We are a great group of people who are not only serious about preserving our history but also have a great time together. I'm there every Thursday from 10-1. Stop by and see how easy and fun it is. If you enjoy it, you might want to give three hours a week to the museum."

Memberships and Donations; Board Elections

New memberships and renewals continue to be received in response to the February newsletter, Shrimp Boil, lecture series, and museum visits. Please continue to send them in! Memberships and donations are the lifeblood of the museum's operating essentials: A/C, insurance, building maintenance, and Laura Smith, our contract employee. Checks mailed to PO Box 11, by cash or credit card at the museum, or credit card over our web site all work. In addition to a wealth of information, the website features items from our museum shop including books that can be viewed and purchased online. If you have an IRA and are of an age that requires you to withdraw funds every year, remember that any portion of that distribution which you contribute to a 501c3 non-profit like CCHS avoids the capital gains tax.

Many people continue to donate \$250 or more as membership or special funds and thereby receive plates in memory or honor of people they choose. Plates are mounted on plaques at the museum, which by now cover a large wall. Eleven plates were added this year for 2022 contributions: DOCTOR RENATO CARDANO, SHEILA MULLIN CARDANO, JOHN DANIEL SHEPPARD SR., MARJORIE HOFF SHEPPARD, JANE ELIZABETH SHEPPARD, JOHNNY B. PELLICER, LOIS A. ROONEY, ROBERT T. KERN, PHILLIP GLENN EMRICH, LOUISE ORLANDO, LOUIS AARON SAKS & FANNIE IDA SAKS. **Biannual CCHS board elections will be held in November. Let us know if you are interested or know of others who may be interested. It's an active committed board!**

April Shrimp Boil Fundraiser

A dedicated group of board members and volunteers went to work in early spring to plan and organize this long popular event – the first Shrimp Boil was in 2003! The weather wizard once again smiled and gave us a beautiful day with rainy ones on either side. Most important, it was a very enjoyable event for both customers and volunteers. A new layout worked very smoothly, food was great, with an excellent band. As ticket sales were initially slow, a smaller event was planned, but in the end ticket sales reached 143, just 23 fewer than the two previous boils. Thanks to careful work, a ticket price increase, and a number of generous sponsors, profit came to over \$8,000, a few hundred dollars more than 2022. Hopefully shrimp boils will continue to be enjoyed.

Invisible History of African Americans in Cape Charles Walking Tour

In February 2021, the Invisible History of African Americans in Cape Charles, a special committee of the Cape Charles Rotary Club, was formed to uncover and document the hidden history of the African American community and their contributions to Cape Charles. In May 2022, the Committee received a matching grant from the George and Frances Bibbins Latimer Fund at Virginia Humanities to create a virtual walking tour of African American sites of interest in downtown Cape Charles. The project was guided by an advisory board of members of the African American community who selected the stops and themes to be addressed. The tour has just launched to the public and provides an honest depiction of life under Jim Crow laws and segregation, but also tells the story of African American entrepreneurs and the vibrant community that prospered despite this marginalization. Utilizing oral histories, historic documents, and photographs - many from the Museum's collection, the tour offers a glimpse into African American life in Cape Charles both past and present. The walking tour was created using Clio, a website and mobile app that connects people to cultural and historical sites and museums and can be accessed through the Clio website: <https://www.theclio.com/tour/2388>, from the Cape Charles Museum website, or you can pick up a flyer at the Museum that lists the stops and features a QR code to access the tour from your mobile device.

Hollywood Farm

Hollywood Farm is an apt accompaniment to the new exhibits. The town itself became known as the terminus of the railroad and ships which transported the produce and seafood responsible for the livelihood of Virginia's Eastern Shore, as well as people and mail. But the largest and most famous single source of produce in that time was William Lawrence Scott's truck (vegetable) farm. After acquiring the land and donating a small portion for the town of Cape Charles, Scott took a much larger portion (over 90%) for his own farm. Back in 2000 Eric deBoer, a historically minded and gifted painter/engineer CCHS member, wrote a description of Scott's farm. It was intended to be part of an ongoing Historical Digest, which unfortunately stopped at Volume 1 Number 1. Eric's article is transcribed below.

THE HOLLYWOOD FARM OF NORTHAMPTON COUNTY

Imagine for a moment that you are walking in the world's largest truck farm in the 1880s, enjoying the beautifully maintained fields, roads and lanes. The place just described was Hollywood Farm, and you might very well have been walking along the acres now in use for the town of Cape Charles. With its 1,153 acres of cleared land, Hollywood Farm, owned by William Lawrence Scott, was the largest farm of the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Mr. Scott, who may still be the wealthiest man ever to live on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, was not exactly a farmer. A man of many trades and interests, this "Father of Cape Charles" bought Hollywood Farm primarily to establish a railroad terminus, a harbor and a town for the services of the terminus. The establishment of the town of Cape Charles required only a few hundred of the 2,200 acres of "Hollywood Place" ... The large colored map of Hollywood Farm on display at the Cape Charles Museum provides an impression of the size of "Hollywood Place".

WHO WAS MR. SCOTT?

William Lawrence Scott was born in 1828 in Washington, DC but raised in Hampton, Virginia. He began his career as a shipping clerk for a coal forwarding company in Erie, Pennsylvania where he became a resident until his death in 1891. His strong business instinct made him owner of or controlling vast coal mining operations covering 70,000 acres of coal producing land. With 12,000 employees he was probably the largest employer of his time in the US. Through his marriage, he became involved in the railroad business and with his energy, his connections and business zeal he created a coal, iron and railroad empire that stretched from Pennsylvania to the Midwest. He also had interests in banking and real estate and owned farms in Erie county, Pennsylvania besides Northampton county. Scott was the earliest promoter of

the New York-Philadelphia-Norfolk railroad (of which he was president from 1883-1885) and that, with the acquisition of Hollywood place it brought him back to his Virginia roots.

A shrewd businessman, possessed of vision and great leadership abilities, Scott was also interested in politics and was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives (1884-1888) as a conservative Democrat. Among his friends was President Grover Cleveland. Prior to serving in Congress, Scott built the W.L. Scott Company and served two terms as mayor of Erie, Pennsylvania.

THE HOLLYWOOD FARM

Hollywood Farm was but one of the places that Scott called home. He quite frequently entertained his many friends in high positions at the beautifully maintained place. He had also a passion for racehorses. He built a one mile track for them shortly after the purchase of Hollywood Farm. The Farm had facilities to breed and winter 35 northern owned race horses.

The daily management of the farm was left to competent managers. The first, Carl H. Walbridge, who served as manager from 1884-1888, was appointed as the first mayor of Cape Charles. Walbridge was succeeded as manager by Orris A. Brown at the end of 1888. Brown, who was well educated, had enjoyed a good reputation as a well known business and public relations person prior to his appointment as manager of Hollywood Farm. During his tenure Brown made sure that Hollywood Farms was often in the news and he organized guided tours of the farm. Brown also served as a member of the State Board of Agriculture, a Board member of the Margaret Academy and President of the Eastern Shore of Virginia Historical Society.

The truck farm produced a large variety of products including kale, potatoes, strawberries, blackberries, spinach, cabbage, tomatoes, peaches, onions, eggplants, watermelons, peanuts and corn. The harbor of Cape Charles housed a cluster of large buildings for the manufacturing of boxes and barrels etc. to accommodate daily shipments to New York and other large cities. Scott, as the first president of the Chesapeake Agricultural Fair Association, was also instrumental in establishing the Cape Charles Fair, which had splendid fairgrounds and substantial buildings in Cape Charles. The annual fair was usually held in early fall.

All in all a truly remarkable accomplishment thanks to the initiative of one man who did this on the side!
Note: *In the early 2000s Hollywood Farm land was incorporated into the town as Bay Creek.*

Newsletters by Email

If you would like to receive the newsletters by email instead of postal mail, please let us know via Capecharleshistory@gmail.com. If you no longer wish to receive the newsletters altogether send an email telling us you wish to unsubscribe. Note that current and past newsletters are available on our website, along with federal tax form 990 and links to interesting places.

Books

Books related to Eastern Shore continue to be our best sellers. Purchase of these books is now possible over the website, capecharlesmuseum.org. You might be interested in *Cape Charles: A Railroad Town* (soft cover \$40; hard cover \$60), *True Tales of the Eastern Shore* by Kirk Mariner, and *Northampton County* by Tom & Curtis Badger. Of course, shipping and sales tax must be added to online orders.