

THE MUSEUM NEWS

CELEBRATING THE HISTORY AND COMMUNITY OF CAPE CHARLES

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Robert J. Lewis Photos

If you should browse through the CCHS collection of archival photos you will notice that many were donated by Robert J. Lewis of Bethany Beach DE, a longtime CCHS member. Starting as a young man Bob built a vast collection of archival photos covering the entire Delmarva peninsula and Tidewater Virginia: railroad, tugs, steamers, barges, and waterways. Early in 2003 Bob wrote us asking if it might be possible to get copies of some of our photos, noting his Delmarva railroad affiliations. He paid us a visit; we loaned him some photos. In return over the years we have received from Bob more than 500 excellent photos both color and black and white. In 2017 Bob decided it was time to disburse his collection and donated a last group which included tugboats and ferries from Virginia Beach/Norfolk and C&D canal. Those not relevant to Cape Charles were not accessioned but have been carefully retained in special binders.

Last spring Bill and Jan Neville and I realized we had not heard from Bob in some months. Calling his home it turned out he had had a bad fall and was considerably less mobile than before. So we decided to pay him and his wife, both of whom are in their 90s, a visit and did so last June. Bob was happy to talk and we learned about his family history and more about his own life. Though born and raised in Philadelphia his family roots are on the Barrier Islands. Both his father and grandfather were in the oyster business, and for many years his grandfather Rufus Lewis ran a shop in Exmore. Bob worked for many years for Bell of PA, later Verizon, then a chemical company in NJ, also serving in the U.S. Army 1st Division in Korea doing telephone construction.

Throughout his life, Bob always loved railroads and made them a part of his life. In Philadelphia he was in a volunteer group which worked on rail cars and included trips by rail all over the country, many of which he took advantage of. Most memorable was a famous trip in the 1960s across the country by steam engine pulling 16 cars and in which John Wayne was a passenger. Bob served as a fireman! More recently Bob was an active organizer and participant in the annual Santa train which operated on the Shore until recently. Bob's collecting of photos was a natural part of this love of railroads and their maritime partners. We are most grateful for the many treasures he bestowed on us.

Celebrating Marion Naar: 27 Years of Dedication and Achievements

After 27 years of service to the Cape Charles Historical Society and Museum, we bid farewell to one of our most dedicated board members, Marion Naar.

For over a quarter of a century Marion has been the cornerstone of our organization, lending her expertise, boundless energy, and commitment to our mission. She leaves an indelible mark of integrity and professionalism on our organization and the Cape Charles community.

One of Marion's many contributions has been creating and organizing this triannual newsletter, which is a vital conduit of information and stories connecting our members with the history of Cape Charles and the challenges and efforts of the Historical Society. As Marion steps down from various roles on the Board at the end of the year, we wish to honor her achievements and reflect on the monumental impact she has had on our organization in this final newsletter of her tenure.

A Legacy of Leadership

Marion's journey with the Cape Charles Historical Society and Museum began in 1995 when she and her husband moved to the Eastern Shore. She brought a wealth of experience in IT, project management, and database development, coupled with an educator's heart. It was clear from the outset that Marion's multifaceted background would play a pivotal role in shaping the future of our organization. Based on her many years of management experience, early on she was able to recognize and reach out to capable people who would make important contributions to the organization.

Flashes

Please note: We will be offering an electronic version of the newsletter as a delivery option in the new year and would like your feedback as we consider this transition. Please email us at capecharleshistory@gmail.com or call us at 757-442-2821. If you would prefer to receive the newsletter by email let us know and provide your name and email address/es.

Delivery of the traditional paper copy by postal mail will continue to be the default delivery option. As always, if you no longer wish to receive the newsletter, we would greatly appreciate your letting us know.

Elections for a new Board will take place in mid November. As Cape Charles continues to thrive in new ways, new board members are especially welcome. Meetings are held monthly – always lots to talk about and undertake. If you would like to consider being on the Board, call Dora Sullivan at 757 695 0966 for more information. 2023 CCHS members may vote by emailing capecharleshistory@gmail.com or contacting any current board member. A board slate will be available on the website by early November.

And YES, we are planning an **Oyster Roast** on the traditional Saturday after Thanksgiving. Watch Facebook and/or the website for details.

Looking for a Christmas present for a history loving person, check the website for a list of available titles and how to order.

Marion's expertise in databases and IT proved invaluable in the organization and management of our collections and membership information. She created robust database systems that continue to serve as the backbone of our operations. Her skills in this area have ensured that the museum's collections and legacy can be meticulously preserved and readily accessible for generations to come.

Many members may not be aware that Marion began her career as a teacher and as such has promoted and contributed to the educational mission of the Museum. Over the years, she has organized lectures and historic preservation workshops, upgraded and reissued the Cape Charles Walking Tour brochure several times, brought in traveling exhibitions, facilitated visiting school groups, and created text and captions for museum displays. The Smithsonian Traveling Exhibit 'Yesterday's Tomorrows' was brought to life under Marion's guidance, enriching our community's understanding of its own past. She hired the Museum's first Executive Director and provided support to host another Smithsonian Museum on Main Street exhibit "Waterways" and create "Building A Community: The Cape Charles Elementary Rosenwald School" exhibit.

Finances, Funding, and Forging Relationships

As Treasurer of the Historical Society for most of her tenure, Marion with guidance from professional accountants put in place systems to ensure the financial procedures of our organization met the highest standards for a nonprofit museum and that the Board had the regular detailed information needed to make informed decisions regarding the sustainability and financial wellbeing of our organization. Her financial oversight and management allowed the organization to build and maintain a robust financial position throughout her tenure and survive during times of economic crisis and funding cuts from state and local sources.

Marion's prowess in fundraising has been nothing short of extraordinary. Over the years, her tenacity and strategic approach secured over half a million dollars in grants and solicitations for the museum. Her tireless efforts were instrumental in realizing the museum's vision, enabling us to undertake projects that have left a lasting impact on Cape Charles. Two of our most critical fundraising events, the Shrimp Boil and Oyster Roast, owe much of their success to Marion's meticulous logistical planning. For decades these gatherings have not only brought the community together but also provided invaluable support for our operations.

Early on, Marion understood the necessity of applying museum-standard processes to the identification, recording, and preservation of the thousands of archival items and collections which had been donated and procured from members of the community. In 2007, she obtained grant funding to hire a museum professional to organize and provide guidance on the long-term preservation and management of the Historical Society's collections.

I was that museum professional, and I personally have Marion to thank for introducing me to the Eastern Shore and its remarkable history. It is due to her that I have continued as a board member and supporter of the Cape Charles Museum and other Eastern Shore historical endeavors ever since!

Marion's enthusiasm for the Museum and its mission and devotion to our membership has forged many community relationships and created life-long friends and supporters of our organization. In 2011, the Northampton County Chamber of Commerce recognized her steadfast dedication to the Museum and the community by honoring her as Citizen of the Year.

Laying the Groundwork

Marion's contributions extend far beyond her former roles as President and Treasurer of the organization. Her influence can be seen in the very infrastructure of the museum's foundations and buildings. The Cape Charles Historical Society operated for nearly a decade prior to acquiring the former Delmarva Power Plant in 1993. The weekend long highly successful Grand Opening of the Museum in 1996 set us on a new path of regular exhibits and extended visitation hours. Marion was largely responsible for obtaining funding and providing oversight of the multiple major building renovation projects required to transform the former Delmarva Power peaking plant into our museum. This included major brick repointing, a new roof, new UV protected windows, new doors, HVAC systems, handicapped accessibility, and security to properly house the exhibits and collections of the Historical Society. Not simple fixes by any means!

Perseverance and grant writing skills were also key to the acquisition, restoration, and signage of the Bloxom Station, Jetty House, and railcars. In partnership with the Town, she obtained two Transportation Enhancement grants totaling \$185,000 to fund professional reconstruction of the Bloxom Station, including the creation of a dedicated collections storage area to better preserve the archives and collections held by the Historical Society. What took many years to realize and complete now stands proudly as a testament to her dedication to preserving our cultural and railroad heritage.

A Future Built on a Solid Foundation

As we bid farewell to Marion's daily presence, we know that her legacy will endure in every exhibit, every database entry, and every smiling face that walks through our doors. Marion has been more than a board member; she has been the heartbeat of our organization. Next year, as we embark on new endeavors and face fresh challenges, we do so with profound gratitude for Marion's unwavering commitment. Her spirit will guide us as we continue our mission to build awareness, and to preserve, educate, and inspire.

—Melinda McPeek, Board Member, Cape Charles Historical Society and Museum