



# MUSEUM NEWS

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## CELEBRATING THE HISTORY AND COMMUNITY OF CAPE CHARLES & LOWER EASTERN SHORE

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### RAILROAD ARTIFACTS ACQUISITION PROJECT

This year marks the sad passing of a mode of transportation and commerce on the Eastern Shore that lasted for over 130 years. The railroad on the shore finally shut down operations earlier this year.

In October of 1884, the first steam engine arrived at what was then the newly completed New York Pennsylvania & Norfolk Railroad terminus at Cape Charles. At the time, Cape Charles was little more than an area of windswept sand dunes and marsh next to a shallow mud creek.

As the railroad and town evolved, railroad shops, yards, buildings, a newly dug harbor, barge landings and a steamer terminal soon followed. The railroad flourished and provided work for hundreds of Eastern Shore people for generations. In its later years, it began to diminish as new and better roads filled with cars, busses and trucks slowly replaced the railroads in the movement of people, produce and manufactured goods throughout the country.

Only a few things remain as reminders of the once thriving railroad on the Shore. Last May, Bay Coast Railroad, which had leased and operated the railroad line, ceased operations in Cape Charles. The Cape Charles Yard and the associated buildings west of the

railroad overpass (the Hump), along with most of the remaining equipment and tracks are to be scrapped or auctioned in the very near future, and the land eventually sold and incorporated into the town. An operable line will remain to connect the industrial area to the south of the harbor with the main line. With all of this in mind the CCHS is working, with the help of our county supervisors, railroad veterans, volunteers from the Peninsula Tractor Organization, the Cape Charles Main Street Initiative, and many more to save a portion of our railroad history. The owners, Canonic Atlantic Co., along with the Accomack Northampton Transportation District Commission, have offered to donate several cars, a diesel locomotive, signage, photos and ephemera, historic tools and equipment, and more.

Our effort to identify items that we believe are or will be of historical significance in order to preserve them for future generations has been underway for a while now. County Supervisor John Coker addressed the Board at our August meeting and the Board voted to pursue the project. Executive director Kimb Denny took action immediately, forming a subcommittee which to address both historical and practical aspects of the project: which items and rolling stock will best serve our mission and are in stable condition, where to put them, required track work, how to get them there, what repairs are needed. She is also working with associated issues of town permitting, liability, contractors, etc. The subcommittee has been amazing, and on-site artifact collection is near completion.

### THE CAPTAIN EDWARD RICHARDSON PILOT HOUSE

One piece of the railroad acquisition project is particularly exciting: the offer of the old railroad office building, which originally was the pilot house of the "Captain Edward Richardson/Nandua", a railroad barge first put into service in 1949. It famously sank in the CC harbor in 1981. At some point the barge's pilot house was placed in the railroad yard where it has served as the railroad office - first for the Eastern Shore Railroad, then the Bay Coast Railroad. It quickly dawned on us that through adaptive reuse, the Pilot House might find a new life with us, as both an artifact in its own right as well as museum display space.

In 2009, architect Leon Parham provided plans for an annex to be located at the western end of the museum building and connected to it by an enclosed walkway. Leon looked at the Pilot House and agreed that, with some restoration and conditioning, it would be a great fit. We will have a key element of Cape Charles' transportation history providing expanded exhibition space for the museum! This year, we aim to build the foundation, get the structure cleared of debris and non-original accretions, moved to our site, and installed on a new foundation. Structural engineer Deborah Cacace PE, of Engineering and Testing Consultants Inc. has already assessed the building and created a scope of work for the foundation. Permission for relocation has cleared the Harbor District Commission and the Cape Charles Town Council will clear it in November. Then the work begins!

# HOLIDAY MARKETS THIS YEAR!

**Saturday November 17th and December 15th from 1-4pm**

**EXPANDED ARRAY OF VENDORS, INCLUDING LOCAL ARTISANS! WOULD YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW LIKE TO BE A VOLUNTEER OR VENDOR? PLEASE CALL KIMB (757) 607-6483**

## **MUSEUM BUILDING REPAIRS**

This seems to be our year for major projects. As reported in the July newsletter, the engineering survey of the Museum building exterior last spring revealed structural issues critical to the integrity of the building. Required work includes brick and mortar repairs on all four sides of the building, replacement of exterior safety straps and anchors, extensive repairs to the terra cotta coping at the top of the building, and replacing the deteriorating steel window lintels.

Because of its size and complexity, at least four contractors have looked at the project and declined to bid. We have at last obtained an estimate from Johnson Masonry & Repair of Virginia Beach, a well established company approved by our engineering consultant, Deborah Cacace PE. As expected, the estimate is high: \$51,000. It is, however, a no choice project.

The Museum dates from 1946, and structural repairs on old buildings are very expensive. The Museum roof, installed in 2012, cost \$40,250, which followed repair of the interior concrete ceiling for another \$16,000. Grants, one of which was a matching grant, funded about half of that work. The Board has approved the project bid and we have begun searching for grants. As we look towards continuing to preserve our building and collections for the future, your contributions are very appreciated.

## **BUILDING A COMMUNITY: THE CAPE CHARLES ELEMENTARY ROSENWALD SCHOOL**

Visitor response to this exhibition has been quite overwhelming. As we had hoped, the former students and faculty members as well as their families are very pleased, but interest extends to a wide spectrum of long time residents

and visitors to the area. We plan to extend its time at the museum until the start of summer, 2019.

The CCHS hosted a Smithsonian Traveling Exhibition last year that increased our annual visitor count by nearly 65% over the previous year, largely through student field trips. In total, we saw about 5,500 people. But this year, even without the school trips, our preliminary headcount results for 2018 "Building a Community" indicate a slight uptick in our visitation, which means this exhibition will have reached more than 5,500 people by the time we close for the winter in November, and this number may possibly swell to 7500 if the schools organize field trips in the spring of 2019. It has proven to be a subject that is almost universally related to on some level, regardless of ethnicity, as nearly everyone has been to school. Our docents report many people spending hours with the exhibition, reading the quotes and information, watching the video, and chatting with them about their own school or segregation experience.

Our volunteers took the "Voices from Over the Hump" oral history interviews and cleaned them up for ease of reading. These are available for reference in the museum, and electronically by request. Jim Garrison, edited the original video interviews around themes we used in the exhibition, and created a 45 minute DVD that we have running in a loop as part of the exhibition. This is also available on our website page at <https://capecharlesmuseum.org/2018-building-a-community>, and at YouTube through the link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gP89O05wMAI>. We intend to leave this page up on our website and it will remain searchable after the exhibition is removed from the museum.

## **INTERNET ACCESS AND THE FARMERS MARKET**

In addition to the Cape Charles Museum, we also function as a community Welcome Center. Therefore, our director Kimb Denny has applied to the Eastern Shore of Virginia Broadband Authority to be the site of a free community broadband internet hotspot. Installation of this antenna on our site will allow visitors and local residents alike to access the web. We will be able to help visitors search available accommodations, look up local business hours, and find additional information about local history and sites.

It will also provide our farmers market with a wifi signal so that we can continue to accept SNAP EBT payments on behalf of our vendors when the Farm Fresh grant we received runs out. The use of SNAP EBT at the market by our low income, disabled, and senior neighbors has dramatically increased as word has gotten around this year. Our vendors' outreach through their Double Up Bucks Fund and generous monthly produce donations to the Cape Charles Food Pantry has really helped. Double Up Bucks allow us to double the value of all SNAP benefits and Senior Nutrition Vouchers spent at the market, up to \$10.

We have seen an almost 30% overall increase in market patrons this year. Increased traffic at the market also means increased visits to the museum, as we keep the building open late on Tuesdays.

## **VOLUNTEER WITH CCHS IN 2018**

Are you interested in volunteering during our railroad artifact acquisition, at the oyster roast, or in the artifacts office this winter? We would love to have you! Please provide your phone number and email on your membership form, or call Kimb at (757) 607-6483

# **2018 OYSTER ROAST SATURDAY NOVEMBER 24TH**

**Tickets available now! Check our website at [capecharlesmuseum.org/oyster-roast-2018](http://capecharlesmuseum.org/oyster-roast-2018) for updates!**

**HIGH QUALITY SILENT AUCTION FUNDRAISER ITEMS GRATEFULLY ACCEPTED, ESPECIALLY ORIGINAL ART & ANTIQUES, LOCAL BUSINESS DONATIONS AND GIFT CERTIFICATE BASKETS, AND NICE NEW ITEMS! DUE TO SPACE CONSTRAINTS WE REGRET THAT WE ARE UNABLE TO ACCEPT HOME DECOR, SERVING, OR KITCHEN DONATIONS AT THIS TIME. PLEASE CALL (757) 607-6483**