

Fall 2016

Northumberland Preservation, Inc. (NPI)
PO Box 65, Wicomico Church, VA 22579

Steamboat Memories -- Picturing a Bay Steamer Sail

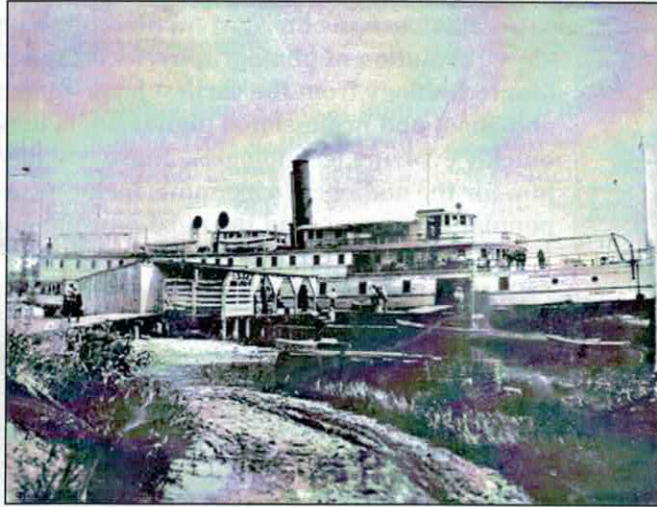
“Picture yourself in a boat on a river with tangerine trees and marmalade skies.”

OK, enough channeling of the Beatles’ “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds.”

Instead, sit back. Relax. And picture yourself on one of those grand old river steamboats that plied the Northern Neck rivers back around the turn of the century. The century, that is, that started the 1900s more than a century ago, and not just the 2000s a scant decade and a half ago.

To help you do so, we’ll give you some “steamboat memories” penned in 2001 by Ditchley resident Barton Marshall:

From as far back as I can remember, my summers were spent on my grandparents’ small waterfront farm adjoining what is now du Pont property at Ditchley. My wife and I now live there. Before my father had a reli-



able car that could make the five-hour (now three-hours) trip from Washington, D.C., suburbs to Ditchley, he would put Mom and us kids on a train to Baltimore. There we boarded the bay steamer, Piankatank, for the overnight trip down the Bay to Ditchley wharf. Grandfather would meet us with horse and wagon. It was an easy and delightful way to visit grandparents.

The bay steamer was a favorite way, for some places the only way, to ship and receive freight

for the small localities along the bay from Baltimore to Norfolk. It was fun to watch the stevedores loading and unloading all kinds of freight, from live animals to automobiles, at each stop. The Piankatank made three stops twice a week on Dividing Creek. One stop was our own Ditchley wharf, and from there up the creek to Hardings Wharf and Harveys Wharf (Cobbs Hall).

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We’re Shaking up the Ground at the Shiloh Schools Site

It’s true, but in a good sense of course.

Our way to make much-needed improvements was paved with the decision of site neighbor Margaret Welch to provide a 20-year no-cost lease of about seven-tenths of an acre abutting the Shiloh Schools property. Perfect, and just what we need to provide the room to move forward with several actions that certain to enhance the ambiance and usefulness of the site for special activities.

Not all the enhancements we’re making to the site will be instantly obvious to the casual observer. And that’s a good thing, as some of the most important advances actually are under-ground. In part, at least, it’s actually what you don’t see that makes the changes so important.

Take a look at a few brief descriptions of the major projects we’re excited about here:

- A well. We have a well. No small thing that. We had the new well drilled over the summer, and we’re now well into (no pun) having the plumbing completed and having it go fully operational. This new well is key to the NPI commitment to make only the most modest landscaping changes needed, keeping the site loyal to the period of 1884 to 1929, when it was daily serving the educational needs of children in the local community. We’re planning now for a native plant garden as a visual complement to the functionality of the well.

Shaking up continued on page 4

Programs, We've Got Fall Programs

The leaves soon will start turning, so it's time to turn too to three upcoming Northumberland Preservation Inc. fall programs.



“The Evolution of Photography” on Sunday September 18 at 3 p.m.

We'll kick-off our season with a Sunday, September 18, 3 p.m. program at the new and improved -- yet, as always, historically preserved just as it was when it was teaching students between 1884 and 1929—Shiloh School.

Steve Kancianic, Certified Professional Photographer and owner of Yours Truly Photography on N. Main Street in Kilmarnock, will provide insights on the evolution of photography, focusing on improvements in camera and film technology from the earliest large-format “box cameras through point-and-shoot and professional digital single lens reflex cameras to today’s quickly evolving technologies. Steve will have plenty of old cameras with him for the audience to examine, including samples of some of the most popular cameras...and the most unusual ones.

“A Half-Century of the Northern Neck’s Evenripe Tomatoes and the J. W. W. Steveelch Canneries” on Sunday, October 9 at 3 p.m.

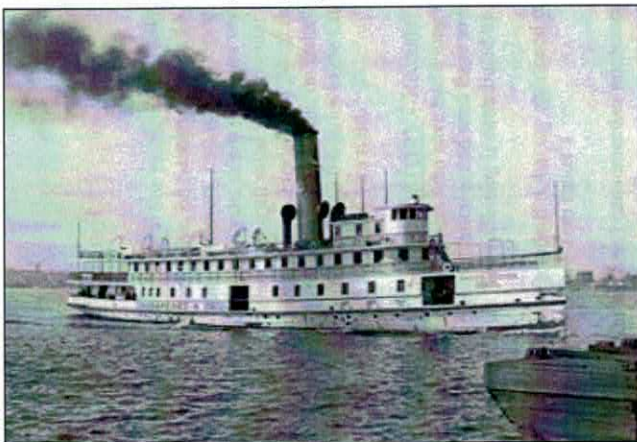


Among the many historic landmarks and activities that make Virginia’s Northern Neck the very special place it is...is its past in the artful canning of tomatoes. Operated by the Welch family of Warsaw, the Welches had canneries in Lottsburg, Horsehead, and Downings. And it wasn’t just tomatoes that carried their name and work far and wide – they also packed white sweet corn.

Join Paul Welch as he describes his family’s colorful half-century history of what many locals long referred to as “Mato canning.” Perhaps more widely known today as good ole-fashioned tomato canning.

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As kids we would stand on our northernmost point of land and wave as the steamer went by, the captain always blew the whistle for us. The great storm of August 1933 ended this. It knocked out many wharves along the Bay, needed by the steamers for docking. However, the storm was just the final nail in the bay steamers’ coffin: For a number of reasons – war, roads, bridges, the trucking industry – steamboats had reached their end by the mid-1930s. Some of the Bay steamers went on to other maritime uses. But the Piantatank, sad to say, was cut up for scrap in 1940. I like to think of our favorite Bay steamer as going to war...albeit in pieces. I don’t like to think that she may have ended up on the wrong side. The U.S. was selling a lot of scrap metal to Japan in those pre-Pearl Harbor days.

This photo does not show the Piantatank, but it is a river steamer -- ‘river’ means it has smaller and fewer stories and ‘bay’ boats stayed within the limits of the bay.

All-Aboard Captain Danny Crabbe's 'Kit II'

Nearly 20 friends of Northern Preservation Inc. stepped aboard Captain Danny Crabbe's "Kit II" on a recent summer Saturday in Ophelia for a unique ECO-TOUR educational outing on the Little Wicomico River and the Bay.

Meeting at Shiloh School at 8:30 a.m. and car-pooling to Captain Crabbe's boat dock – brown-bag lunches, snacks, water bottles, drinks, and cameras in-hand – the group learned firsthand about the ecology of the Chesapeake Bay from a true and seasoned waterman. "Up-close and personal" as TV folks like to say.



Developing their skills at holding crabs while avoiding getting pinched. Learning how to tong. How to pull a crab trap. How to open an oyster. All-important skills for any would-be real Northern Neck resident. And all while in the company of friends in close proximity to herons, gulls, cormorants, and eagles while cozying-up to historic Smith Point Light.

"Such an interested, bright, curious, and willing group of new friends for us to work with!" a Crabbe Charter Fishing representative said after the event in a note to NPI member and event planner Jane M. Towner. "Our hats off to you.... Sharing the water with you and your group was a true pleasure."

It sounds like a cliché, but the truth's the truth: A good time was had by all. And all showed their gratitude to Captain Crabbe for a great day on our great Bay. NPI is thankful for the leadership that Crabbe and Towner provided for the ECO-TOUR and appreciative of the involvement of those who enjoyed the outing.

Programs continued from page 2

"Northern Neck's Options for a Sustainable Supply of Potable Water,"
Sunday, October 30 at 3 p.m.

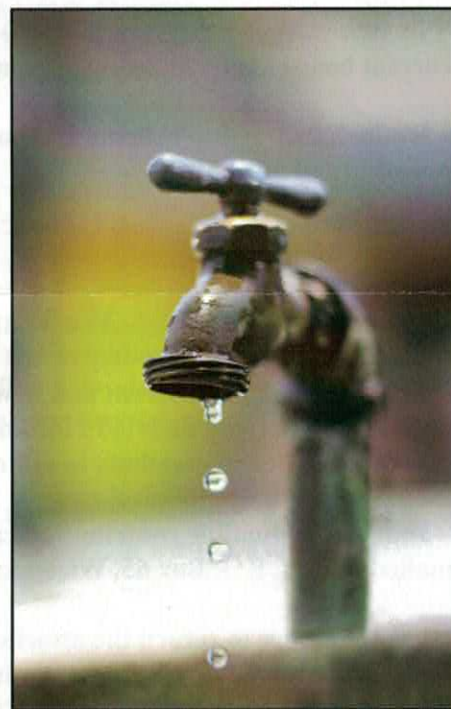
Water, water everywhere, nor any drop to drink." Let's hope those words, penned by poet, philosopher, and leader of the British Romantic Period Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in the 1700s in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", never come to hold sway in the Northern Neck. But there are reasons for concern... and for action to prevent it.

"Shallow wells tapping the unconfined aquifer supply about 25% of the potable water used in the Northern Neck," says speaker Lynton Land, PhD, professor emeritus of geological sciences at the University of Texas in Austin. "Deep artesian aquifers are being depleted unsustainably, and water levels are falling about one foot per year." His research and publications caution that "small developments unable to connect to water sourced from reservoirs or shallow groundwater well fields may need to rely on desalinization for potable water."

Hear this nationally recognized water resources expert bring his special expertise right home here to the Northern Neck, where he is a resident of Ophelia.

Directions to Shiloh School

Heading north on Route 200 from Kilmarnock, toward Wicomico Church and Reedville, pass Ditchley Road on your right and keep an eye out for the red building on the left.... just opposite Shiloh School Road. Turn right on to Shiloh School Road and follow it to the "T" intersection, where you will find the Shiloh Schools on your left and can turn into the parking lot.



● **A second important amenity:** We're building a small (12' by 18') handicap-accessible building on the site with a water supply and flush toilet that will accommodate the many diverse visitors we have to the Shiloh schools site. Thanks to the financial support of some "friends" of Shiloh, we'll have a new septic tank and tile field, fully compliant with county public health requirements. With these new conveniences contained in a building located to minimize adverse visual impacts from within the main school building itself, we look forward to expanding the kinds of educational programs that teachers and students in area elementary school grades have found so informative and entertaining.

This new building is under construction on a concrete slab, and in addition to the toilet (No more Porta-johns!), it will provide space for storage and tools for on-site maintenance and repairs.

There's painting and fine-tuning still ahead, but with needed help from NPI friends – we're speaking to YOU here! – we hope to have the site fully finished before the fall leaves have dropped.

What comes next? How about some picnic tables, maybe five or six? Right now, they're just a gleam in the eye. But perhaps a winter project?

In this newsletter, we describe the three fall 2016 programs soon to take place. We invite you to use one or each of them to personally visit the Shiloh schools site, speak with us about our own plans moving forward and also about your possible role in making those plans come true. We need you just as the historic Northern Neck needs to keep fresh the memories of this iconic one-room school house that stands as a testament to all who have come before us.

As a small nonprofit, it's unquestionably the case that all of these activities are primarily done with volunteer help. Our needs are real: We need painters, and in coming months will need gardeners, perhaps some carpentry talent to help construct those picnic tables. There is clapboard siding to be installed on the new building, and our education committee is developing new school-oriented programs for which we will need performers/educators and in particular persons with teaching experience.

To express your interest or ideas. Don't hesitate to call or email me or other NPI Board members. See the box with current board names and e-mail addresses...and let us hear from you.

We look forward to hearing from and working with you in the best interests of this incredible place we're all so proud to call our home.

Jack Moore, NPI President

We Want to Hear from You.... How to Reach Us

NPI members and current and new NPI members and friends are encouraged to use the form below to pay their annual membership dues (\$15 for an individual membership, \$25 for family membership) and to contact any of the current NPI Board members to ask questions or to volunteer to support our work.

Your tax-deductible contribution can be made payable to Northumberland Preservation, Inc., or to NPI, and mailed to NPI, P.O. Box 65, Wicomico Church, VA 22579.

Please be sure to return the attached form, and provide us your e-mail address so we can use it to contact you most efficiently and cost-effectively in the future. We NEED those e-mail addresses.
Our current Board and how to reach us:

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Syd Garriss, sydgarriss@gmail.com

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