



Overfalls: 'We've Come a Long Way Together'

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Those who have weathered a project that was sometimes rough going celebrated under sunny skies the completion of restoration of the Lightship Overfalls.

Hundreds attended the Friday, Sept. 10 party held next to the ship in its new Lewes-Rehoboth Canal slip.

The ship is one of seven in the country of its type still open to the public. The newly landscaped grounds feature a compass rose with a granite monolith in its center bearing the names of those inducted into the Delaware Maritime Hall of Fame.

Also on the grounds is an area recognizing those who have contributed money to the project, sitting areas, a kayak and small boat launch ramp, Overfalls-era buoys and the ship's propeller and anchor.

Slip and ground improvements cost about \$675,000. In 2009, work to restore the ship's 72-year-old hull was completed at a Norfolk, Va. shipyard. The repairs cost about \$1.2 million.

The celebration marked the end - more or less - of a project under way for more than a decade that had taken thousands of volunteer hours to complete. Now the task will be raising money to maintain it all.

Volunteers known as "The Dirty Hands Gang" scraped, pol-

ished, patched, painted and repaired the ship.

"The Dirty Hands Gang is just the tip of the volunteer iceberg. Behind the scenes are all sorts of people who have done marvelous work - fundraising, outreach, information, administrative and financial - all of those things necessary to make the restoration and groundwork succeed," said David Bernheisel, president of the Overfalls Maritime Museum Foundation.

Mayor Jim Ford said completion of the project is another example of Lewes residents successfully working together.

"I only have one other thing to say and that would be this - Yeeeeee Haaaaaa!" Ford belted, crouching into a clenched-fist show of exuberance that has become his distinctive way of marking the end of canal front projects.



CELEBRATING COMPLETION OF the Overfalls project at the Friday, Sept. 10 event are (l-r,) Bill Reader, chairman of the restoration committee and leader of the Dirty Hands Gang; Sen. Gary Simpson; Lewes Mayor Jim Ford; Polly Magargal, ship's store creator and manager; Merrill Kaegi, party organizer; Elaine Simmerman, chairwoman of the \$1.2 million fundraising campaign; and Dave Bernheisel, Overfalls Maritime Museum Foundation president.

HENRY J. EVANS JR. PHOTOS



Overfalls party celebrants enjoy the day as speakers talk about completion of the new boat slip and landscaping connecting the grounds to the Lewes Canalfront Park.



Overfalls party organizer Linda Gibson, left, oversees the dessert table at the celebration.

Delaware Maritime Hall of Fame induction to be held Oct. 9 in Lewes

A new group of inductees will be honored at the annual Delaware Maritime Hall of Fame banquet from 6 to 9 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 9, at the Lewes Yacht Club. This year's inductees will receive special recognition, and their achievements will be highlighted. Tickets are \$75 per person and are only available from Marjorie Miller at 644-1040.

This year's inductees are Henry Fisher, Joseph Sudler Lofland III, Dr. James E. Marvil, Capt. James S. Roberts and Wilson M. Vinyard. The recipient of the Meritorious Service Award is John Robert Warren.

Since its initial 1631 whaling settlement, Delaware has had an intimate relationship with the sea. Watermen, pilots, lifesavers, navigators, tradesmen, businessmen and military personnel depend on their proximity to the Delaware Bay and the Atlantic Ocean for their life's work. The Delaware Maritime Hall of Fame will educate future generations about Delaware's maritime heritage.

Henry Fisher (1735-92) was a native and lifelong resident of Lewes and was one of Delaware's foremost leaders in the struggle for American independence. The first Committee of Safety in Philadelphia engaged the pilot-patriot to remain permanently in Lewes to oversee the defenses of the entrance to the bay. He was commissioned as a major in the state's militia, and he continued to play a key role throughout the Revolution, helping to protect maritime commerce that was vital to the young nation's survival and communicating valuable intelligence about British activities.

Fisher selected the site upon which the first lighthouse at Cape Henlopen was erected in 1765. He did soundings of the river to determine the proper locations for the buoys which improved navigation and safety on the bay and river.

Joseph Sudler Lofland III grew up with a deep appreciation for the Wilson M. Vinyard Shipyard on the banks of the Mispillion River in Milford. Lofland turned



J. Lofland III

his attention to restoring the once-thriving shipyard in 1996.

Lofland was able to locate three of the ships originally built at the Vinyard Yard. He recruited local craftsmen to restore them. The very first luxury yacht built at Vinyard was the Augusta in 1927. In June 2010, this refurbished 50-foot boat was refloated. The other two restored ships are The Kismet built in 1938 and the Vignette built in 1953.

Lofland joined with the Milford Museum to secure a Delaware Humanities Forum grant to produce two videos: "Wood Shavings to Hot Sparks," which documents the history of the Vinyard Shipyard and shipbuilding in Delaware, and a video which will highlight the restoration of the yacht Augusta.

Through Lofland's dedication,

hard work and personal financial backing, Milford's historic shipbuilding industry is receiving the acknowledgement it so richly deserves.

Dr. James E. Marvil was born in Laurel in 1904, and practiced medicine in Laurel and Lewes. During World War II, he served overseas in the Army Medical Corps.

Marvil was one of the founders and the first president of the Lewes Historical Society and began the practice of moving historic houses to its historic complex grounds. After the great response to the opening of the Cannonball House as a marine museum in Lewes, he procured the Lightship Overfalls from the U.S. Coast Guard and started the first Friends of the Overfalls group.

In 1977, Marvil received the Delaware Distinguished Service Award for Achievements in the Field of Historical Preservation. He published three books about the Delaware Bay: "Sailing Rams," "The Pilots of the Bay &

River Delaware" and "A Pictorial History of Lewes."

His daughter, Trenny, wrote in the Lewes Historical Journal VII in 2004 about his many roles as yachtsman, soldier, hunter, fisherman, benefactor, woodworker, artist, photographer, author, historian, visionary and scholar.



J. Roberts

Capt. James S. Roberts was appointed to the state Board of Pilot Commissioners by three separate governors. He became its president and was instrumental in designing and implementing the initial drug and alcohol detection and treatment program used in Delaware and Pennsylvania. Roberts was involved in improving pilot training by formulating higher qualification criteria for apprentice applicants and requiring more

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