

THE MARITIMES



THE MAGAZINE OF THE NORTH CAROLINA MARITIME MUSEUMS

BEAUFORT • HATTERAS • SOUTHPORT

WINTER/SPRING 2017

*LaRosa de Bilbao cannon.
See story on page 4.*





NORTH CAROLINA
**MARITIME
MUSEUMS**
BEAUFORT HATTERAS SOUTHPORT

Museums Director:
Joseph K. Schwarzer, II
Public Relations Coordinator:
David Cartier
david.cartier@ncdcr.gov

HATTERAS
(252) 986-2995

Administrative Assistant:
Clara Scarborough
Friends President:
Danny Couch

BEAUFORT
(252) 728-7317

Site Manager:
Randy Mann
Friends President:
Elwyn Wood

SOUTHPORT
(910) 457-0003

Site Manager:
Mary Strickland
Friends Chairman:
Shirley Wilson

THE MARITIMES

Editor:
John Hairr
Associate Editor
Ben Wunderly
Design:
Stephanie Davis

*One historic coast.
Three unique museums.*



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Rittmaster Lauded by NC Coastal Federation

By John Hairr

Keith Rittmaster, Natural Science Curator at the NC Maritime Museum in Beaufort, was presented with a Pelican Award by the North Carolina Coastal Federation at their annual meeting in August of 2016. The award was to recognize Rittmaster's "Dedication to the Research and Protection of Marine Mammals."

The NCCF explained why it chose Rittmaster for the accolade. "Biologist Keith Rittmaster has spent over 30 years protecting and studying marine mammals. During his work, he witnessed the devastating effect that marine debris has had on whales, dolphins, sea turtles and sea birds. He saw them entangled in fishing lines and felt compelled to do something about it. He's a member of the North Carolina Marine Mammal Stranding Network and the Atlantic Large Whale Disentanglement Network and always responds to entanglement incidents. He started the North Carolina Monofilament Recovery and Recycling Program to encourage the proper disposal of fishing line and has placed 42 recycling receptacles along the coast, collecting over 2,400 miles of line. Through his work as a natural science curator with the North Carolina Maritime Museum, Keith has shared his knowledge through presentations, workshops, publications and displays."

The Pelican Award is presented to people, businesses and organizations who have shown exemplary commitment and undertaken meaningful actions to protect and restore the North Carolina coast. The award is so named for the brown pelican, which is the official logo of the North Carolina Coastal Federation. ■



Sam Bland presents Keith Rittmaster with the North Carolina Coastal Federation's Pelican Award.

From The Friends

SOUTHPORT: Ribbon Cutting and Grand Reopening

July 4, 2016 was an exciting day for the NC Maritime Museum at Southport, as our long-awaited addition to the Museum became a reality. The 2,500 square foot addition would not have happened without our generous members, donors and community. Our fundraising was accomplished in approximately fifteen short months and highlights the faith our supporters had in the project. The ribbon cutting for this addition was celebrated by the Museum and all the donors and supporters that made our dream possible, and was made even more special by the attendance of special guests including Governor Pat McCrory; Department of Natural and Cultural Resources Secretary Susan Kluttz; Senator William Rabon; Representative Frank Iler; Southport Mayor Jerry Dove; NC Museum of History Director, Ken Howard; NC Maritime Museums Director, Joe Schwarzer. We thank them for making the time to attend on an extremely busy holiday.

We want to extend a special thanks and kudos to board members who went above and beyond to make the dream a reality. Jim Crum, Finance Chairman, worked tirelessly to fundraise and monitor our progress. Walt Madsen and Wayne Strickland shepherded the construction progress admirably. Bob Springle, Friends Administrator, helped make certain we were following our timeline and budget and also moved furniture and supplies. Connie Keller was our able architect and Mary Strickland added her design expertise as well. All board members were supportive and helped bring this project to fruition. We enjoyed a wonderful working relationship with our general contractor, Mark Williams, who made the process as painless as possible.

We would not have met our July 4, 2016 goal without the extraordinary efforts by museum staff members Mary Strickland, Lori Sanderlin and Meredith Jones. They moved furniture and supplies, cleaned endlessly and stayed late repeatedly to make certain our grand reopening would happen on time. Kudos to everyone!

We are excited to welcome Irene Hoffman, our newest Friends' board member. Irene's talent and expertise adds yet another dimension to our board that will take us confidently into the future.

Shirley Wilson

Chair,

Friends of the NC Maritime Museum at Southport ■

HATTERAS: Remembering World War II

The recent NOAA expeditions to discover the locations of the sunken World War II vessels off our coast has reemphasized the importance of the Outer Banks during that period of history. I grew up hearing the stories of my neighbors who had lived during the blackouts and walked the beach to school in the morning to discover debris and sometimes bodies from battles of the previous night. However, when these same neighbors were questioned about what they had seen by those who lived "off island," they became mute. Even after the war had ended, they felt the government had sworn them to secrecy about what they had observed and they were uncomfortable discussing their experiences. It has

only been in the last twenty-five to thirty years that their recollections have finally been recorded.

Over the last two decades, the Friends of the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum and the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum have had the honor of working with the United States Coast Guard, the National Park Service Cape Hatteras National Seashore, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and the Hatteras and Ocracoke communities and schools in maintaining the British cemeteries in Buxton and Ocracoke and in organizing the annual observance of the loss of the *San Delfino* and HMT *Bedfordshire* and their crews. On May 11th and 12th, we will commemorate the 75th anniversary of these actions. Exhibits, special talks, and presentations are scheduled. Family members, including those of Sub Lieutenant Cunningham of the HMT *Bedfordshire*, and guests and dignitaries from the British Isles, Canada, Germany, Washington DC, and throughout America will be in attendance. The ceremonies will include speakers, a laying of wreaths, a twenty-one-gun salute, and the pipe band. Probably the most poignant moment is the reading of the names of *San Delfino* and the *Bedfordshire* crews by local high school students. As they read the names and ages, one has a realization that these men gave up everything. It is important to remember their sacrifice. We hope many of you will join us as we honor them. The Friends of the Museum are proud to play a key role in perpetuating these ceremonies.

Danny Couch

President of the Board

Friends of the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum ■

BEAUFORT: Gallant's Channel

As we approach our 40th anniversary year, the Friends of the Museum in Beaufort are hard at work on plans for the Museum's expansion site at Gallants Channel. On the drawing board are an Events Center for museum and community activities and a Boating Center to house the museum's sailing schools and rowing clubs. The 30-acre campus will eventually include a permanent home for the natural science programs and a second museum exhibit building featuring artifacts recovered from *Queen Anne's Revenge*, Blackbeard's pirate ship.

The Gallants Channel land, formerly a menhaden processing complex, was first acquired by the Friends in 1997 and subsequently deeded to DNCR. An earlier effort by the Friends restored the deep-water frontage with modern piers and docks. When the new U.S. 70 bridge over Gallants Channel opens in 2017, the museum site will become the gateway into Beaufort.

Currently, the Friends leadership and staff, assisted by fundraising consultants, are engaged in planning a major capital campaign to fund the improvements described above. Beginning early next year, the campaign will mark the start of our fifth decade of support for the North Carolina Maritime Museum in Beaufort.

David DuBuisson

President

Friends of the Maritime Museum in Beaufort ■

North Carolina Maritime Museum at Southport

History of the LaRosa Cannon

By Mary Strickland

Lieutenant Joseph Gardner Swift, 1st West Point graduate, Corps of Engineers, executed the rebuilding of Fort Johnston in 1804 under orders from the War Department, completing the battery of tapia at the site of "Old Fort Johnston." The fort would include an epaulement of concrete, an enclosure of planks, a block-house, a powder magazine, brick officer's quarters, barracks, guardhouse, and a wooden storehouse.

At the end of November, a large Spanish ship called the *La Rosa de Bilbao* was cast away on Cape Fear in a storm. Witnessing the event, Swift, as quoted by Ellery, noted that "It was alleged by the crew, who were brought by pilot Davis to my quarters, that the ship was laden with sugar, and that there was much specie in 'the run;' that the captain and mate had died at sea, and that having no naviga-

tor on board they had put the ship before the wind and run her on shore near the Cape.

There were twenty-one in this crew, a villainous looking set of rascals, that I had no doubt they were. Lieutenant Fergus (Fort Commandant) detained them in the block-house at the fort until the collector sent inspectors to conduct the crew to Charleston, where the ship was known

to some merchant. These men all had more or less of dollars in their red woolen sashes tied around their waists. On their arrival in Charleston they were detained some time, but no proof could be found against them, and they went free. The pilots and others were for some time after this exploring the remains of the wreck, but there was no valuable found among the drift save spars and rigging."

According to Richard Lawrence of the Underwater Archeology Branch, "Just off the mouth of the Cape Fear River, a shipwreck dating to the early 1800's was found by a private research group working out of Southport,

North Carolina. Based on historical research conducted in the National Archives and in Spain, the group, directed by Denny Breese and Grant Mitchell, believed that the wreck was a Spanish merchantman, *La Rosa de Bilbao*, which was lost in this vicinity in 1804. *La Rosa* wrecked under suspicious circumstances when it was found that the captain and first mate were missing causing local authorities to suspect mutiny."

In November of 1987, a team of divers brought up the 16-foot long ship's rudder, and six months later, a 9-pounder cannon was recovered from the site by the group with the assistance of the NC Underwater Archaeology Branch. The rudder had bronze pintles and showed remnants of the copper sheathing that covered the ship's hull. The cannon was of British origin having been proofed at the Woolich Arsenal in 1796. After

spending years at Indigo Plantation Marina, the cannon was sent to conservation at the NC Underwater Archaeology Lab at Fort Fisher. Its final journey in May, 2016 led the preserved artifact to its present home, the NC Maritime Museum at Southport, located on the old Fort Johnston bluff.

A particular note of interest is

the cannon's origin. The British crown seal is still clearly visible, begging the question, "How did a British cannon come to be mounted on a Spanish merchantman?" ■

Cover Story: Pictured is Claude "Sandy" Jackson III who worked with NC Underwater Archaeology on the *La Rosa* project and also compiled "A Maritime History of the Cape Far and Northeast Cape Fear Rivers, Wilmington Harbor, N.C., Vol. I"



Cape Fear Quarantine Station at Southport

By Mary Strickland

In 1928, the front-line fight against the introduction of contagious diseases into this country was carried out at the boundary outposts, the Quarantine Stations. There was an epidemic of plague and cholera in India that year, and a severe outbreak of dengue fever in Athens and Piraeus in August and September; yellow fever in Brazil, and meningococcus meningitis was prevalent in Chinese ports. The pandemic of influenza began on the United States Pacific coast, and diphtheria and scarlet fever incidence was higher during this year in practically all of the European countries than in previous years. One of the important public health duties of the Federal government was the prevention and spread of infectious diseases in the United States from foreign countries. All these facts were reported to the Cape Fear Quarantine Station at Southport, situated only 18 miles below Wilmington, and telegraphic bulletins kept the data complete and up to date.

The station was located between "the upper end of Battery Island and Price's Creek Lighthouse on the east side of the Cape Fear River channel, about one and a half mile from Southport." Ten little trim white houses, erected along boulevards and side-streets of wooden planking, stood on long black creosote pilings in mid-stream. The 400-foot long fumigation wharf greeted the Quarantine steamer Woodworth, three tenders, a boathouse, and occasional family outings. There were three houses where sailors were cared for, washed and deloused while their ship was being fumigated with sprayed sulphur, an electric-power house for the station's complete lighting system, a water station, a laundry, and living dwelling for the six attendants. The kitchen, bedrooms, dining room, and sizable library provided a comfortable existence for the visiting interned sailor. A two-story building on the mainland housed the dispensary and general offices of the station. The station was very active in 1907. Eighty-six vessels—19 steamers and 11 sailing ships—passed through the station. Two steamers and 3 sailing ships were disinfected and 610 crew members and 3 passengers were disinfected.

Reports were received in 1936 that the U.S. Public Health Service was planning to close the Cape Fear Quarantine Station. Only one tender would be kept in service and would be used merely for boarding ships from foreign ports for a brief inspection. Fumigation facilities and quarantine quarters were to be abandoned. The last report of the station hospital building mentioned that forty-five cases were admitted to the hospital at a daily cost per patient of \$1.70, including 1 surgical case, and multiple venereal cases.

This once-valuable station was put on a surplus status under the care of a custodian in 1937, when "new international public health laws and a system of bills of health rendered it out of date.

Aerial of quarantine station.

It was turned into a relief station in 1946." The old quarantine station "burned to the ground" in 1953, leaving only the concrete slab that had supported the water tower to mark the location of the complex. It sticks up out of the shipping channel in the river near Battery Island, and is all that is left of the little white city on stilts.

On July 4, 2016, the NC Maritime Museum at Southport dedicated a remarkable new exhibit, a 4'x5' tabletop lighted diorama, designed and built by Walt Madsen, Richard Norwood and Steve Montee. It is so accurate, you can all but smell the sulphur! ■



Fall Fun, Holiday Cheer and Summer Camp Sign-Ups are Near!

By Lori Sanderlin

Programming for 2016 – 2017 is packed with new and exciting hands-on activities for all ages. We have developed fresh, non-traditional activities for our seasonal programs that will intrigue and interest everyone.

FALL IS HERE!

It would not be Halloween Ghost Ship without our Trick-or-Treat bag activity; however, this year we are creating maritime ghosts and sea monsters! Join us on Saturday, October 22nd from 1 – 3 p.m. for a hauntingly good time as we step up our maritime spookiness for children and adults. If you are hungry for something to nosh,



participants will also be creating their own creepy crawlies to gobble up! Don't forget, before you leave to get a photo with our favorite skeleton pirate Captain Bones!

As Winter approaches, remember that we have two program offerings, Winterfest and Victorian Holiday. In conjunction with the City of Southport's festival, the



museum will be hosting a free costumed interpretive tour on Friday, December 9th at 3:00 p.m. The festivities continue with Victorian Holiday on Saturday, December 17th from 1:00–3:00 p.m. Like Ghost Ship, we have added new activities with maritime focus. Ornaments will include seascapes with sand and shells to hang on your tree and shell painting. We will also discuss Victorian holiday customs,

create dreidels out of clay and dip candles to take home.

Registration is required for Halloween Ghost Ship and Victorian Holiday. The fee is \$5.34 per participant and promises to be a great time for all! Call the museum for more information or to register.

SUMMER ALREADY?

Yes, you read that column correctly – summer is approaching and the Maritime Museum at Southport already has ALL of the summer programs for children planned! Registration starts January 3, 2017, so make plans early. We have great new programs scheduled for half-days, Saturday camps, and more Little Mariners on Wednesdays.

In collaboration with the Annual Southport Wooden Boat Show, our "Mariner's Camp," August 16–19, will be filled with hands-on activities tracing the town's maritime history from shrimping and crabbing to menhaden. It would not be a class without on-the-water programming and colorful, messy fun. Scheduled from 8 a.m. to 12 noon, this program will be convenient for both working parents and vacationers.



In the same vein, our "Civil War Fortifications of the Lower Cape Fear" will explore all of the forts in the region including Fisher, Johnston, Anderson, Holmes, and Caswell. Each location will have a tour and interactive activity associated with Civil War History. This class will be so much fun; the parents will want to attend! Sorry, kids only!



To help give families more educational opportunities, we have moved our one day camps to Saturday and extended the time for more hands-on history! We also added more topics to our Little Mariner's class (which includes reading time) for your seafarer and you to work on projects together! Titles include *Leave Only Footprints*, *Mermaids*, *Sea Turtles*, and *Feeling Crabby*! All classes are engaging, age appropriate, and educational!

Call the museum at 910-457-0003 to reserve your spot! Registration forms are available on our website ncmaritimemuseums.com/southport or please pick up a brochure at the museum. Make this summer the one your child is excited to write about when they return to school. ■

Museum Expansion Phase II/III Grand Opening July 4, 2016

By Lori Sanderlin

Joined by Governor Pat McCrory, NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources Secretary Susan Kluttz, NC Maritime Museums System Director Joe Schwarzer, Museum Manager Mary Strickland, and a host of Friends Board Members, museum staff, and general public, the museum opened its new expansion during the NC July 4th Festival in Southport. This project gives the museum storage for collections, meeting space, dedicated education areas and desperately needed amenities for the public. ■



Museum Manager Mary Strickland, Friends Board Chair Shirley Wilson, Governor Pat McCrory, NCMM Director Joe Schwarzer, and NCDNCR Secretary Susan Kluttz.

Volunteer Spotlight: A. J. Potter

By Lori Sanderlin

I first met A.J. as I stood on a dock along the Old Yacht Basin. The sun sparkled on the water around his parents' shrimp boat, *Cape Point*. He was three years old, and his mother April held him on her hip; his bright green cast ran up the length of his leg; a brace was needed to keep it immobile. The purpose of my visit was to discuss with Royce and April the possibility of helping with our museum summer camps for children. We really wanted to have a class where participants could learn the importance of the rich history of shrimping in Southport and have a unique experience on the water. The Potters answered with a resounding yes. And, for the next three years, it would be the most popular summer camp of my career. Asking nothing in return, the family has shared their knowledge, expertise, and history with kindness and generosity.

A.J. comes from five-generations of fishermen. His parents and relatives also served in the Coast Guard. To say the Cape Fear River flowed in his veins is an understatement. What I found most interesting is that, at 6-years old, he is just as selfless and kind as his parents. While the Friends of the NC Maritime Museum at Southport was working on the Phase II/III expansion, an idea for a donor board with a symbol of the Lower Cape Fear/Southport area was broached. Unanimously, it was decided that the *Cape Point* should be that symbol. Thanks to Royce's images, atop the beautiful wood with brass nameplates affixed in simple rows, is an exquisite half model of the shrimp boat by John Vang. That spring, A.J. walks in, and of his own volition had created a very neat and intricate "Easter Card" with money he had earned, on his own, to donate to the museum. He wrote out "thank you for picking my shrimp boat," on the card.

A. J. Potter

As time went on, A.J. would bring in sea glass and "treasures" he found while wandering out along the Cape Fear. Sharing with the true wonder of a child, he was always pleased to be here and to talk about his Mom, Dad, Uncle Tookie, or his latest excursion. Smiling, I always appreciated his anecdotes and carefree spirit. Early this summer, A.J. and April walked in, and A.J. shyly asked if he could have a "job" at the museum. He wanted to work here with us.

I quickly came up with an idea – Could he water the plants outside this summer? We really needed the help. Pleased beyond words, he quickly set to work, watering the raised beds around the museum. Mom or Dad diligently brought him several days a week all summer. He received a volunteer nametag and our museum manager gave him his very own vest with a museum pin to wear while he is working at the museum.

This remarkable dedication of a child, who will certainly grow into an adult with an irreplaceable love and appreciation for the water and maritime history is inspiring. A child, who three years ago, on a sunny day in Southport, knew that the museum truly cared about his family's history and the maritime culture of Southport.

Like all of our young volunteers who help with summer classes, projects, and special programs, A.J. is an exemplary example of the next generation which will be entrusted, as were we, to preserve and interpret the past ■



North Carolina Maritime Museum in Beaufort

Those “Verdammt” Little Red and Yellow Planes: The Untold Story of North Carolina’s Coastal Patrol

By Christine Brin

Thanks to essential assistance from Lt. Col. Phil Saleet, Civil Air Patrol Historical Projects Division Head, a new temporary exhibit featuring the early history of the Civil Air Patrol, focusing on the Coastal Patrol based out of North Carolina, opened in Beaufort during the winter of 2015. The exhibit gives the story of the Coastal Patrol and Operation Drumbeat, an often overlooked aspect of World War II that transpired along the east coast of the United States.

Exhibit designer Stephanie Davis planned the exhibit to showcase the heroic history of the men and women of the Coastal Patrol whose contributions during World War II have gone largely unrecognized. Oral histories up and down the East Coast, especially in North Carolina, are full of stories of burning vessels, floating victims and tragic losses following hundreds of attacks by Nazi U-boats. These histories have remained largely oral as a result of the federal government’s wartime censorship efforts that suppressed the news stories of these attacks. Reports of enemy activity along the coast were suppressed in order to prevent panic among Americans. The museum’s new exhibit features narratives, quotes, uniforms, and artifacts telling the history of these attacks and the over 3,000 men and women who defended the coast.



SS Henry F. Sinclair Jr. 34-25N 76-30W.



Long before America officially entered World War II, German U-boats investigated America’s coastline. What they found

was an Eastern Seaboard that had the potential to be a prime hunting ground for merchant vessels transporting goods to and from the United States. Fortunately, the Germans were not the only ones planning for the possibility of America entering the war. Gill Rob Wilson, former World War I pilot and president of the National Aeronautics Association, was convinced as early as 1936 of a potential need for civilian American aviators to unite and train for what he felt was inevitable war. Following a tour of Germany in 1936 Wilson stated he, “...began to think of the private and business pilots and the miscellaneous aircraft fleet as shock troops to gain time should the United States coast be attacked.” It would be almost six years before the Civil Air Patrol would be officially established on December 1, 1941.

Only six days later America was attacked by the armed forces of Japan. This attack resulted in the destruction of eight battleships, three cruisers, three destroyers, one anti-aircraft training ship, one mine layer, 188 U.S. aircraft, and thousands of American lives. As a result, America simultaneously found itself entering World War II and proceeding without its full number of ships, planes, and personnel. This resulted, in part, to the first eighteen months of the war being disastrous on the East Coast as Nazi Germany took advantage of this gap in America’s defense.

Starting in January of 1942, Nazi Germany launched Operation Paukenschlag (Drumbeat) to take advantage of America’s vulnerable East Coast. This attack brought over eighty German U-boats to the East Coast of America with the purpose of disrupting the movement of supplies by targeting merchant vessels. In the first half of 1942, German

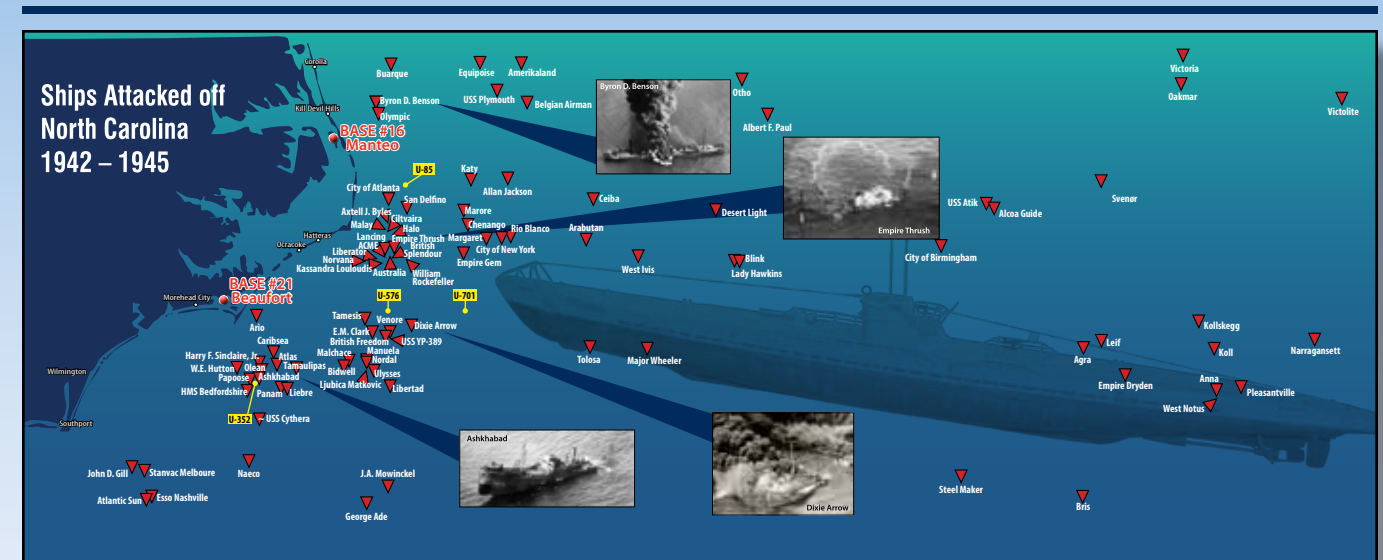


forces sank over three million tons of materials in the North Atlantic. Some historians argue that these attacks ultimately resulted in the loss of more lives and resources than the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The museum’s exhibit includes a detailed list of the different merchant vessels that were attacked during Operation Drumbeat. Interestingly, the information was retrieved from detailed records kept by the captains of the German U-boats based off the East Coast.

The Germans found that the waters off of North Carolina were a prime hunting area for merchant vessels. As a result of North Carolina’s barrier islands, unique currents, and harsh storms, sailors had already nicknamed the North Carolina coast the “Graveyard of the Atlantic.” For those same reasons the waters off North Carolina became a focal point for the Germans and the coast earned a new nickname, “Torpedo Junction.” Soon insurance companies refused to insure merchant vessels traveling along the East Coast. The oil companies ultimately lost so much capital to these attacks they were compelled to fund the first three experimental Civil Air Patrol bases in New Jersey and Florida with hopes of stemming these attacks.

Fortunately the civilian aviators of North Carolina had begun to unite and plan ahead prior to the official creation of the Civil Air Patrol. Despite their early start the military and North Carolina’s State Government were reluctant to establish a civilian coastal patrol. Ultimately, the Civil Air Patrol established twenty-one Coastal Patrol bases along the East Coast, with two located in North Carolina. North Carolina would host



Base 16 at Manteo starting in July of 1942 and Base 21 in Beaufort starting in September 1942.

The men and women who manned the Coastal Patrol bases were sorely underpaid and poorly recognized at the time for what they did to protect the coast during World War II. Upon arriving at these primitive sites in North Carolina the men were expected to prepare and maintain these sites, usually paying out of their own pockets for supplies such as their own uniforms and housing. The pilots of the Coastal Patrol flew small single-engine aircraft from primitive airfields in Manteo and Beaufort in an effort to spot U-boats and other dangers. These heroic men overcame weather, poor equipment, and vast ocean distances, sometimes at the cost of their own lives to patrol and protect the coast. These planes proved to be such a menace against U-boat attacks that Admiral Karl Doenitz of the U-boat fleet, when asked why he had withdrawn from our coast is credited with saying, “It was those damned little red and yellow planes.” The admiral’s description of the Coastal Patrol’s planes inspired the title for the museum’s exhibit, “Civil Air Patrol: North Carolina’s Coastal Patrol Bases of WWII, “Those verdammt little red and yellow planes.” ■

Civil Air Patrol: North Carolina's Coastal Patrol Bases of WWII



“Those ‘verdammt’ little red and yellow planes”

“Jene verdammt kleinen roten und gelben Flugzeuge.”

Beaufort

Surfing NC Project Continues

by John Hairr and Ben Wunderly

The North Carolina Maritime Museum in Beaufort opened an exhibit during the summer of 2016 focusing on North Carolina's surfing history. The exhibit highlights several facets of the sport in our state, providing a glimpse into how surfing has evolved here along the North Carolina coast. From surfboard shaping to wetsuits and surf wax, all facets of the sport in this state are examined.

Some might ask why would a maritime museum cover such an obscure activity and could there possibly really be that much history related to surfing in North Carolina. Surfing is without question a maritime activity, since the sport is played out on the waves of the sea. The sport only exists in the coastal region of our state because of the maritime environment where waves meet the ever shifting sands of North Carolina's barrier islands. Our research has shown that folks have been surfing here for quite some time, with the sport arriving in North Carolina more than a century ago. Just how far back is uncertain, but there is evidence that people were engaging in some form of wave riding here along the North Carolina coast by the last decade of the nineteenth century.

But the story is more than just history. Surfing has become a subculture amongst those who ride the waves, so when we embarked on our work to uncover as much as possible about the history of the sport of surfing along the entire North Carolina coast, we also wanted to record and compile information on the pioneer surfers and surfboard makers in the state and document the influence of the sport on local communities. The end result is the work *Surfing NC: A Timeline of the History of the Sport of Surfing in North Carolina*, a publication that relays the findings to the public.

Among the highlights of the history of the sport in North Carolina was the story of the group of surfers led



Surfers could order custom made DANPRI boards by Sonny Danner and Herman Pritchard at Atlantic Surf Shop in Kure Beach. This photo of the shop was taken in 1965. Photo courtesy of The News & Observer.

by Burke Bridgers who, back in the summer of 1909 in New Hanover County, tested out some homemade juniper surfboards at Wrightsville Beach. Bridgers and fellow surfers of the area were some of the pioneers of the sport, not just in North Carolina, but for the entire country.

Since the North Carolina coast encompasses approximately three hundred miles of oceanfront beaches where surfing can take place, we needed to find out when surfing was introduced at other locations along the coast, and to identify any other adventurous souls who were experimenting with riding the waves on a wooden board. Some of the Outer Banks surfing pioneers we uncovered include native Hawaiian Willie Kaiama and his troupe of Polynesian performers who put on surfing demonstrations at Virginia Dare Shores for the annual Virginia Dare Day festivities in 1928. The demonstrations may have inspired Dare County native Thomas Fearing to design and build his own hollow wooden surfboard which he used at the local beaches.



Young surfers carry a surfboard towards the water in Kure Beach, July 1965. The early boards of this time period were quite cumbersome. Photo courtesy of The News & Observer.

With widespread magazine publications, television shows and films highlighting the sport in the 1960's, surfing experienced a boom in popularity across the country. North Carolina was not immune. Surf shops and surfboard rentals started popping up at Kitty Hawk, Atlantic Beach, Wrightsville Beach, Carolina Beach and Kure Beach. Some talented craftsmen in the state even took the initiative to create their own versions of more modern foam and fiberglass surfboards to ride and, in some cases sell, since most boards were coming from California at the time. Surfboards under the labels, Dan-Pri, East Coast Surfboards, Spencer and Surfboards by Don were all custom made in North Carolina.

So the interest was there and surfboards were available but what about the actual waves for riding? Most people may not realize that the North Carolina coast is arranged geographically to get very exceptional waves and conditions for surfing. Beaches along the state are open to receive ocean swells anywhere from the north to the southwest with three major points or capes jutting out into the Atlantic. The natural curving of the coastline increases the chances that when the surf arrives a person is able to find a beach where the wind is off-shore, grooming the waves to perfection. From strong winter nor'easters to summer and fall hurricanes, there is bound to be rideable waves breaking along North Carolina beaches throughout the year.

If you want to learn more about the history of the sport of surfing in North Carolina make sure to come explore our new exhibit, *Riding the Right Coast, Surfing NC*, displayed at the North Carolina Maritime Museum in Beaufort at 315 Front Street in Beaufort. Museum hours are Monday through Friday 9 am to 5 pm, Saturday 10 am to 5 pm and Sunday 1 to 5 pm. There is no admission fee to the museum, donations are greatly appreciated. ■



George Jackson of Elizabeth City catches a wave at Nags Head during the summer of 1967. The popularity of the sport was on the rise in North Carolina during the late 1960s. Photo courtesy of George Jackson.

Mark your calendar
for these
upcoming events!

Oct. 22 Fall In-The-Water Meet

Nov. 5 Boatshop Bash

Nov. 15 Oyster Harvesting Sail

Dec. 3 Crystal Coast Christmas Flotilla

Jan. 20 6th Annual Clam Chowder Cook-Off

May 6 Wooden Boat Show

For more details about events and programs,
call (252) 728-7317 or visit
www.ncmaritimemuseums.com.

Registration! Summer Science School & Junior Sailing Program

February 13 is the first day parents can submit their children's application to participate in our Summer Science School classes or the Junior Sailing Program.

Summer Science School offers courses for children entering preschool through tenth grade. Each class provides an opportunity to learn about the maritime history, culture and environment of coastal North Carolina through classroom and field trip experiences. The most popular class topics include seashore life, pirates and fishing.

The Junior Sailing Program offers basic through advanced sailing instruction to youth ages 8 and older. This exciting program teaches the arts of rigging, sailing and seamanship, and introduces students to maritime traditions and history. The program is designed to teach the basic skills of sailing to beginners and to hone the skills of more advanced students, using a combination of time in the classroom and on the water. Early Junior Sailing registration for Friends members at the Benefactor Level and up is February 1-7. For more information on early registration, contact the Friends office at 252-728-1638.

For more information on these summer camp opportunities, visit www.ncmaritimemuseums.com. Information about the 2017 camps will be posted on the museum's website a month prior to the beginning of registration.



Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum in Hatteras

Richard Etheridge: Civil War Veteran and Pea Island Lifesaver

By Mary Ellen Riddle

Richard Etheridge was born in 1842, the son of enslaved laborer Rachel Dough on Roanoke Island. He and his mother were the property of John B. Etheridge, who was a farmer and boatman from a local land-owning family of captains, inlet pilots, and fisherman. Etheridge led a traditional coastal life that gave rise to remarkable events. He became the first African-American Keeper in the United States Life-Saving Service, overseeing the award-winning Pea Island Life-Saving Service Station.

It's been proposed that Etheridge was his owner's son due to the fact that he was born in Etheridge's home and received preferential treatment by the family. He and his brother were taught to read and write despite the North Carolina codes forbidding it. Nevertheless, ownership was passed from Etheridge senior to son, Jesse Etheridge. Although they had been raised together as boys, and are said to have had a relatively close relationship, the men still operated under the owner/slave relationship.

Etheridge's daily life included helping John B. Etheridge in the terrapin trade, building boats, piloting vessels, dredging for oysters, mending and setting nets, hauling in mullet, and cutting whale blubber. Over time, he gained an understanding of the environment - the weather, tides, and the sea. In the early months of the Civil War, when Richard was in his late teens, the Outer Banks became a Union military target.

With the fall of Hatteras and Ocracoke Islands to Union forces, the hope of freedom for those enslaved became a reality. Escaping blacks began to arrive on Hatteras and a structure called *Hotel de' Afrique* was constructed to house them. It was the first safe haven for African-Americans in North Carolina.

In February 1862, Union Brigadier General Ambrose Burnside led an assault on Roanoke Island approximately sixty miles north of Hatteras. The resulting Union victory encouraged those escaping slavery to make their way to Roanoke Island. Work was available with the Union building earthwork forts, or serving as spies, guides and scouts. Newcomers mingled with the Roanoke Island black community. Squatting on federally appropriated land confiscated from local white landowners, the burgeoning black settlement erected churches and a school. The influx of black labor freed up more white troops for combat operations.

In 1863, a movement was started in Massachusetts to enlist African-Americans as soldiers and North Carolina became an important source for black troops. On August 28, 1863, at age 21, Richard Etheridge enlisted in the Second North Carolina Colored Volunteer Infantry (Second NCCV) regiment later

re-designated as the 36th Infantry United States Colored Troop (USCT). With the formation of black regiments, the Confederacy enacted a law stipulating that any black soldier caught fighting for the Union be put to death.

Understandably, black soldiers demanded that, should they be killed or wounded in the field, provision be made for their families and loved ones. As a result, an official Freedman's Colony was set up with small parcels of land given to families of Union soldiers. The Federal Government also provided rations and agreed to build a hospital and schools. At its height, there were more than 3,500 residents in the colony.

Some colonists experienced abuse at the hands of the Union officials, and word of their hardships reached Etheridge. Complaints included wounded soldiers not receiving their pay, whites pilfering private gardens and cutting rations, and the assistant superintendent of the colony selling rations for profit and pressing children into labor duty in New Bern without permission from their families. When complaints from the colony went unheard, Etheridge represented his Regiment and wrote a letter to the commissioner of the Freedman's Bureau.

He implored the commissioner, "in behalf of humanity," to investigate conditions in the Freedmen's Colony. He cited the soldiers' faithful service to the country, and the fact that wounded soldiers in the colony were not getting rations and had not been paid for their service. "...some soldiers are sick in Hospitals that have never been paid a cent and their families are suffering and their children going crying without anything to eat." An investigation was made, and the assistant superintendent of the colony was fired.

Black soldiers also experienced privation. White soldiers and officers believed they were inferior and it was not unusual for blacks to be relegated to menial labor or to be maligned despite honorable service. As Etheridge could read and write, he was promoted to sergeant in Company F. However, he only received a private's wage, which was considerably less than that earned by white soldiers in the same position.

Fortunately, Colonel Alonzo G. Draper was put in charge of the 36th Infantry USCT and was a staunch believer in the equality of black soldiers. Under Draper, Etheridge's regiment participated in a successful African Brigade campaign to free slaves and stamp out guerilla action in coastal North Carolina and Virginia. Subsequently, the regiment was transferred to Point Lookout, Maryland to guard a military prison.

Etheridge and the 36th Infantry USCT along with other USC Troops went on to participate in regional combat operations. They participated in the siege of Petersburg and Rich-

mond, the battles of Chaffin's Farm, New Market Heights, Fair Oaks, and the Appomattox campaign. The 36th may have been the first troops to arrive at Richmond as it was engulfed in flames despite an order for them to hold back and let a white regiment claim the honor. Their bravery and success proved the black man was every bit the soldier as his white counterpart.

By the end of the War, Etheridge was a Regimental Commissary Sergeant. He and the black troops of the Army of the James were regrouped into the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry, sent to Texas, and became famous as "Buffalo Soldiers." Although the Civil War ended slavery, it did not abolish racism and instances of abuse were common. The soldiers were due ten months back-pay, had their rations cut in half, and were uncomfortable over the continued reports of mistreatment that from their families on Roanoke Island.

Following Lincoln's assassination, Andrew Johnson became president and Reconstruction began throughout the former Confederacy. Land was restored to the original white landowners on Roanoke Island, which resulted in the removal of families and veterans living in the Freedmen's Colony. Once again, Etheridge took up the cause and fought for the rights of the people who resisted eviction. Letters of protest were written and colonists offered to pay rent to remain on their parcels of land. Nonetheless, rations were cut, the hospital and schools closed, and large groups were moved off the island.

In December 1866, Etheridge left the service at Brazos Santiago, Texas. He returned to Roanoke Island and lived with his former owner for less than

a year before marrying Frances Aydllett. In 1867, the population of the African-American community had fallen to 950 residents. However, despite relocation, resistance paid off and the black community began to rebound. Two years later, Etheridge became the father of a baby girl, Oneida. He was a respected leader in the community and served as an advocate for war veterans.

He and Frances farmed the 116 acres of land they owned bordering the sound. With easy access to the water, Etheridge worked as a fisherman, hunter, and a pilot navigating the coastal waters. In 1874, the government erected seven United States Life-Saving Service (USLSS) Stations on the Outer Banks from Jones Hill in the north to Little Kinnakeet in the south. The stations were placed fifteen miles apart and those that had black and white surfmen were called "checkerboard crews." Many of the black surfmen were temporary hires or substitutes, were assigned lower ranks, and put in charge of chores such as cooking.

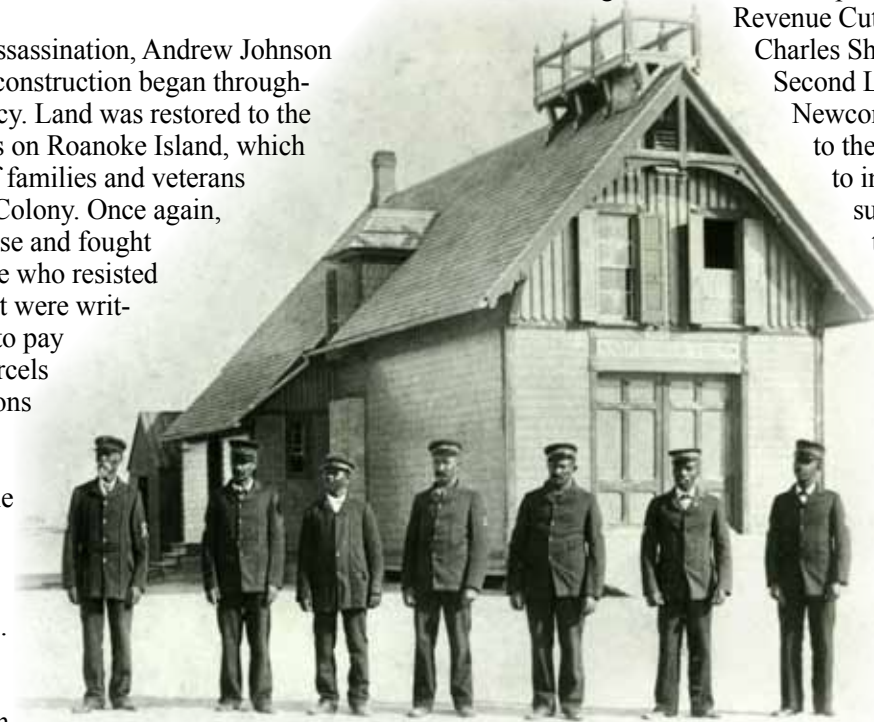
In 1875, Richard Etheridge was a surfman at the Bodie Island Station. Occasionally, a black surfman would achieve a higher position, but a new Keeper could be assigned and fire all the crewmen. The early years of the USLSS were characterized by political appointments, nepotism, incompetence, and corruption. Courage, knowledge of the sea, and genuine lifesaving skills were all too scarce. Four shipwreck disasters between 1876 and 1879 generated public outrage, exposed deficiencies in, and resulted in a close examination of the Service. In response, Congress passed a bill to increase the months of operation, assign Revenue Cutter Service inspectors, increase Keeper pay, and fund the construction of more stations.

Following the wreck of *M & E Henderson* on November 30, 1879, reports of negligence on the part of the Pea Island Life-Saving Station were widespread. Two men, Revenue Cutter Lieutenant Charles Shoemaker and Second Lieutenant Frank Newcomb, were sent to the Outer Banks to investigate and survey the effectiveness of all the stations. They fired the Keeper and two surfmen at Pea Island and, remarkably, despite warnings from locals, recommended Richard Etheridge for the Keeper's position. Shoemaker

stated Etheridge "... seems to be a superior man for the position, ... he is thirty-eight years of age, [of] strong robust physique, intelligent, and able to read and write sufficiently well to keep the journal of a station. [He is] one of the best surfmen on this part of the North Carolina coast". The report concluded: "[I am] ... aware that no colored man holds the position of keeper in the Life-Saving Service, and yet such as are surfmen are found to be among the best on the coast of North Carolina.... I am fully convinced that the interests of the Life-Saving Service here, in point of efficiency, will be greatly advanced by the appointment of this man to the Keepership of Station No. 17."

On February 1, 1880, Etheridge took the oath of office. His appointment was not without repercussions. The remaining four Pea Island surfmen who were white refused to work under Etheridge. This prompted the reorganization of the "checkerboard crews" to create a segregated station at Pea Island. As the Keeper

continued...



Richard Etheridge and the Pea Island Life-Saving Station ...continued

was in charge of hiring surfmen, this reform ensured that black men would continue to work for the USLSS.

Etheridge's promotion also may have prompted the act of arson that destroyed the Pea Island Life-Saving Station. Subsequent investigation implicated several disgruntled white men affiliated with the Service including two Etheridges, possible cousins of the new Keeper if Richard Etheridge was, in fact, John Etheridge's son. However, conclusive evidence was not found. With a guard placed in the dunes to watch over construction supplies, a new station was erected and opened by January 26, 1881.

Given the scrutiny he and his men were under, Etheridge knew that the slightest error could result in his or one of his crewmen's dismissal, that inadequacies, no matter how small, could result in the reinstatement of a white Keeper and crew. Consequently, propelled by his own work ethic and racial pressures, he ran the station with military ardor. If a surfman could not keep up, he was discharged.

During the first thirty years of the Life-Saving Service, 33 Medals of Honor were awarded to North Carolina lifesavers. Multiple men became legendary for their courage. But the Pea Island lifesavers received no such recognition despite their exemplary record including their lifesaving efforts during the wreck of *E. S. Newman*.

Sailing from Providence, Rhode Island to Norfolk, Virginia, the three-masted, 393-ton schooner *E. S. Newman* ran into a hurricane. Onboard the vessel was Captain Sylvester Gardiner, his wife and three-year-old son, and a crew of six. Gardiner tried to outrun the storm and make it to the Chesapeake Bay. Unfortunately, the storm rapidly intensified; the ship lost most sails, and drifted nearly 100 miles south. At 7:00 p.m. on October 11, 1896, Captain Gardiner ran *E. S. Newman* aground just south of Pea Island. It was their only hope for survival. It was the worst hurricane in fifty years, a blinding storm. Ocean and sound had become one as wind and rain ravaged the island.

Gardiner ordered the crew to climb as high into the riggings as possible. He tied his wife and son to the mizenmast and eventually joined them. As seas crashed upon it, the ship began to come apart, losing her remaining sails and yawl. A wave stove in the cabin, the rails collapsed, and the jib was stripped from its mooring. Water poured into the hold. With the yawl gone, swimming was the only lifesaving alternative if assistance did not come from the shore.

The storm was so brutal; Keeper Etheridge had suspended beach patrols. Watches in the station observation tower were limited to fifteen minute shifts per man. Dur-

ing his turn at watch, surfman Theodore Meekins, thought he saw a distress signal, fired off a Coston flare and sent a surfman to alert Etheridge. The keeper returned and had Meekins release a red rocket to see if there would be a response. Meekins and Etheridge saw the schooner acknowledge with a flare of her own. A ship was clearly in distress.

With the help of a mule team, the Pea Island crew pulled the beach cart with the rescue equipment and surfboat along the shore. Meekins and Bill Irving were harnessed to the front of the half-ton beach cart as W.

H. Wescott and Stanley Wise pushed from the rear. Etheridge and Ben Bowser were posted at the wheels to help keep them from becoming stuck in the sand.

The mule-led driving cart was steered by Dorman Pugh. The hurricane winds and waves, made moving through the sand difficult. In fits and starts, the men forged through an almost unrecognizable landscape with many of the usual landmarks obliterated by sea and wind.

Moving down the beach, the men began to find debris, indicating a ship was breaking up. It took them two hours to arrive at the scene of a schooner stranded on an inner sandbar. They heard what Etheridge called "The voices of gladdened hearts" emanating from a quickly deteriorating ship. *E. S. Newman* was keeled over on her starboard side. The distance to the ship was fifty yards, the seas were running high, and even the surfmen had to be careful not to be swept away.

The lifesavers unloaded and attempted to set up their equipment, but they were thwarted by weather conditions. With the beach constantly being soaked by the sea, there was nowhere to safely place the Lyle gun. They attempted to build a mound but it didn't last, and there was no safe place in sight to erect the equipment. Each time they dug a hole in which to bury the sand anchor it quickly was inundated with seawater. It became clear that there was no safe ground remaining.

With standard means of rescue impracticable, Etheridge called for volunteers to swim out to the wreck. Wearing cork lifebelts, the first two volunteers, Meekins and Wise, were lashed to "between eight and ten feet of No. 7 braided line, and, another section, connect(ed) them to the lifesavers on shore." They carried a heaving stick attached to a separate line to toss aboard the ship.

Meekins, reputed to be the best swimmer among the surfmen, and Wise, swam through seas obstructed with dangerous flotsam, their lifebelts hindered their ability to dive under the debris. They alternated swimming, diving, and walking on shoals, all the time dodging lethal wreckage and a deadly surge threatening to pull them out to sea. Meekins and Wise arrived at the vessel and climbed up a rope ladder lowered down the side of the ship.



Richard Etheridge

Captain Gardiner met the lifesavers and handed them his son who was the first to be brought to shore by the surfmen. The line from the heaving stick was secured to the beach cart. With the guideline in place, the men became a human breeches buoy. Nine trips were made back and forth through raging seas to rescue all on board. Island lore has it that Theodore Meekins made every trip. By 1 a.m. the Pea Island crew and survivors were back at the station.

In the following days, Captain Gardiner searched for and found *E. S. Newman*'s nameplate and donated it to the crew as a token of his thanks. The 1896 Pea Island crew voted to give the wooden sideboard of *Newman* to Theodore Meekins, the young surfman who first spotted the distress signal and who swam out to the wreck nine times during the rescue. Meekins took the board to his farm on Roanoke Island and nailed it to the top of his barn. For a century, this would be the only award the Pea Island crew received for their efforts. Meekins served at Pea Island for 21 more years, until his death in 1917, when, while boating home on leave,

a storm came up at Oregon Inlet, and he drowned trying to swim to shore.

Despite their courage in what appeared impossible circumstances, the Station crew did not receive any medals of honor. Less than four years after the rescue of *E. S. Newman*, Keeper Etheridge fell ill and passed away May 8, 1900. Benjamin Bowser became the new keeper but, like Etheridge, became ill from an unknown sickness, and died two months later. The Pea Island Life-Saving Station was manned by an all black crew from 1880 until it was decommissioned in 1947.

On February 29, 1992, the United States Coast Guard christened the 110-foot cutter *Pea Island*. On March 5, 1996, Richard Etheridge, Benjamin Bowser, Dorman Pugh, Theodore Meekins, Lewis Wescott, Stanley Wise, and William Irving were posthumously awarded a Gold Life-Saving Medal. It is the service's highest peacetime honor. Etheridge is buried on the grounds of the North Carolina Aquarium on Roanoke Island. His legacy is that of one who rose up from slavery to die a free man and a genuine American hero. ■

4th Annual Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum Underwater Heritage Symposium 2017

By Mary Ellen Riddle

The 4th Annual Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum Underwater Heritage Symposium will be held on April 1, 2017, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. This popular daylong event features divers, underwater archaeologists, scientists and historians sharing fascinating presentations on underwater heritage to include diving adventures, research projects, environmental issues, maritime history and culture. Speaker's for this year's event include Jim Bunch, J.T. Barker, Joyce Steinmetz, Dave Sommers, Leonard Rich, Marc Corbett, Hal Good, Penny Good and Sean DiGeorge.

The keynote speaker for 2017 symposium is Mike Boring, a professional diver and talented shipwreck photographer. He has been diving wrecks since 1971 when he made his first dive off the New Jersey coast. Boring has explored and photographed many wrecks over the years and was part of the dive team that recovered the ship's bell from *Andrea*

Doria. He organized a team to dive *Wilhelm Gustloff*, a German liner that was sunk by a Russian U-boat in 1945. It is said to be the deadliest shipwreck in history with 9,000 lives lost. Boring is credited with discovering *Eureka*, the American schooner that collided with the British steamship, *Benison*, approximately 58 miles southeast of Cape Henry, Virginia. ■

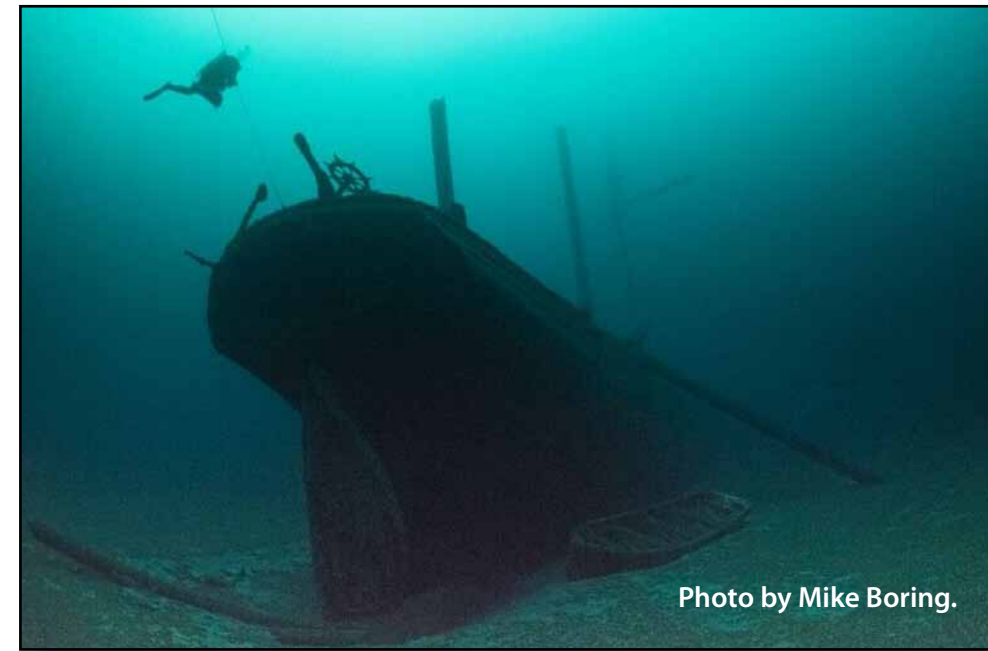


Photo by Mike Boring.

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