



Port Norris

Be a Part of History Today

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Port Norris Historical Society is dedicated to preserving the history of our unique village, located in Commercial Township in Cumberland County, NJ.



Current Happenings:

PNHS Next meeting: April 11, 2017 • 7:00 pm • 1723 Main Street

Delaware Bay Watermen's Memorial

A collaboration for the creation of a waterfront memorial park at the historic Bivalve Wharves in remembrance of the watermen who lost their lives working on the Delaware Bay. Three local organizations, The McBride Family Enterprises, The Bayshore Center at Bivalve and The Port Norris Historical Society, have partnered to tell the stories and remember those lost in the time honored pursuit of harvesting food from the sea. Watermen have risked life and limb for family and community since the first log was carved to make a boat; some left the warmth of hearth and home and loving families never to return. We honor the sacrifice of these hard working men and women.

The Delaware Bay and its tributaries are both beautiful and dangerous. Many a vessel has gone down and many an oysterman, fisherman, sailor or crew has gone overboard or lost their lives in pursuit of their livelihood.

The Delaware Bay Watermen's Memorial Committee DBWMC has been meeting since 2013 creating a plan to celebrate the legacy, mourn the loss, and honor the heritage of these watermen.

The DBWMC envisions a place of quiet contemplation, reflection, remembrance and connection with the Bay's past, present and future. The memorial will incorporate local materials where practical and will be impervious to the outdoor elements. Watermen's memorials around the world were identified and considered for inspiration. Family and friends of Delaware Bay watermen who lost their lives were engaged in the dialogue to determine how best to actualize a memorial in Bivalve. Artists and community leaders who participated in other memorials were also consulted for their lessons learned.

The DBWMC put out a call to artists asking them for their vision for a sculpture or sculptures to live on the waterfront at the historic oyster shipping sheds and wharves at the



Rachel Cobb

Bayshore Center at Bivalve. Many wonderful proposals were put forth and after careful consideration, three pieces were chosen to create the Delaware Bay Watermen's Memorial. These three pieces include a ship's bell on an obelisk base with names inscribed on the four sides, a traditional bronze statue depicting a waterman, his wife and child, and a reflective glass bejeweled schooner in a crescent moon.

Together these three sculptures will cost in the range of \$100,000 to design, create and install. The DBWMC has embarked on a multiyear fundraising campaign to bring this memorial park to life. Concurrently, a task force is collecting



commercial fishing boat caught something on the bottom of the Bay, causing the boat to capsize.

While the U.S Coast Guard said Friday that the search for missing fisherman, and Port Norris resident, Josh Catlett would remain suspended, Jones said that state police continued their search Friday.

“State Police have been out there all day hoping to find him,” Jones said.

Officials believe the 24-year-old Catlett is dead.

On Friday afternoon, people were going about their normal business around the docks in Bivalve, but the somber look on their faces showed the state of shock that the small fishing village is in a day after the local fisherman was lost in the bay.

Catlett was one of three crew members aboard the Linda Claire that went into the 44-degree waters of the bay after the boat capsized and sank Thursday morning around 8:30 a.m.

The other men on board — Chris Serra, 27, of Vineland, and Dave Wood, 25, believed to be a resident of Port Norris — were rescued by crew members from other nearby fishing boats, the Captain Brown and the Sandra Lee.

Jones said that the Linda Claire is about 50 feet below the surface, almost right under the spot where it sank about six miles west of Cape May Point.

The search for Catlett covers a large area around the boat, according to Jones.

“The cause of the accident is still under investigation by the U.S. Coast Guard,” Jones said. “But it looks what happened is the dredge got snagged on something at the bottom of the bay, causing the boat to capsize.”

The Coast Guard launched boat crews from Cape May and a helicopter crew from Atlantic City to begin the search after they were alerted to the sinking at around 8:30 a.m. Thursday by a crew member from the Captain Brown. State police units also joined in the search on Thursday.

Wood and Serra were taken to the Coast Guard Station in Cape May where they were turned over to medical personnel before being taken to Cape Regional Medical Center for treatment of symptoms of hypothermia. They were later released.

According to U.S. Coast Guard Petty Officer Nick Ameen, search and rescue coordinators had to make the difficult decision to suspend the search at around 8 p.m. Thursday.

Jones said that the Linda Claire’s owner will attempt to salvage the boat with the permission of the U.S. Coast Guard.

At the docks Friday, people couldn’t believe such a tragedy struck their close-knit community.

Catlett and his whole family were from Port Norris, one person said. Everyone knew them.

Nobody was sure exactly how long Catlett had been working on the crab boat, but Catlett had been out on the water his whole life.

names and stories of watermen lost in the Delaware Bay region to include on the panels.

The memorial will be located at the Bayshore Center at Bivalve’s Shipping Sheds and wharves overlooking the Maurice River. It will be fully accessible to the public and viewed by land or from the river. An integral part of the memorial will be an opportunity for families to remember loved-ones and experience meaningful moments wrapped in the sights, sounds and smells of the Bay and river. Additional plans call for benches and further memorials throughout the wharves to accentuate the atmosphere of spiritual connection to loved ones, to the past and to the water.

The DBWMC invites Bayshore community members, families, friends and artists, who recognize the importance of memorializing many who have been lost in the Delaware Bay, to help envision, support and bring into being this Delaware Bay Watermen’s Memorial.



Josh Catlett April 5, 2013

Missing Port Norris fisherman: Sinking caused by dredge line snag, officials say

By Alex Young |
For NJ.com on April 05, 2013

PORT NORRIS —
Authorities believe that a dredge line snag led to the

sinking of the crabbing boat the Linda Claire on Thursday that left one of its crew members lost in the waters of the Delaware Bay.

New Jersey State Police Lt. Stephen Jones said Friday investigators believe the dredge line being pulled by the

Captain James Elwood McBride (1913 – 1963)



Mr. & Mrs. McBride

The only African American man to own and operate a fleet of oyster boats in the State of New Jersey, along with his wife, Lucy M. McBride

Work Experience

- Joined his wife, Lucy, in pursuing a business venture in the Shellfishing Industry in Port Norris in 1945.
- Was an entrepreneur in the McBride commercial oyster and clam enterprises

Civic Contributions

- Philanthropist
- Friend and helper to those in need

Church Participation

- A devout member and supporter of John Wesley United Methodist Church

Organizations

- Master Mason

The McBride Family was honored at the Port Norris Historical Society annual Legends Dinner December, 2012.



Oysterman Drowned Daniel Gaskill Loses His Life

Bridgeton Evening News Article
Saturday, April 16, 1898

Fell Overboard at the Mouth of the Cohansey and quickly Perished.

Daniel Gaskill, aged 81 years, an oysterman, was drowned at the mouth of the Cohansey River at 10 o'clock Thursday night.

He was one of a crew of three on the Mayflower, captained by Morton Hughes. He was a resident of Millville and when not on the water he lived with his mother on Cedar Street. Only one of the crew was with him when he was drowned and the one was Ammel Aiken, who is badly affected by the sad calamity. Aiken was in Bridgeton yesterday afternoon and he related to a News reporter how the drowning occurred.

He said that about 9 o'clock in the evening Gaskill and he took a yawl boat and rowed away from the Mayflower to get a string of fish of James Dilks, who was in a boat some distance from where they lay anchored.

They were returning and stopped at another schooner whose name Aiken did not know. As they started for the rowboat Gaskill went ahead. He was wearing a pair of rubber boots two sizes too large for him, borrowed of Captain Hughes.

Then Aiken tells of the drowning as follows, "As Dan stepped into the yawl he either stubbed his toe, or jumped overboard, I don't know which. As he cut the water I said, "Oh Dan's drowned!" I shoved an oar out over the boat's side and thought if he did come up he could grab it but he did not come up. Then I don't know what happened. A man who was standing near explained that Aiken fainted and knew no more till he recovered in the cabin of Mayflower. Aiken continued : "The rubber boots he wore brought up his feet and kept his head under water. Yes, he could swim well but he did not have a chance. I thought a good deal of Dan and would have lost a fortune rather than have him drowned."

The crew of the Mayflower, as soon as apprised of the drowning, grappled for the body but without success. The undertow is very strong at the point and the body had evidently been washed quite a distance from where it entered the water. All of the crew were in the city yesterday afternoon. Adverse winds and tides held them back. Consequently no news of the drowning reached this place earlier. It was necessary for the crew to notify Coroner Davis and the Custom House official. All expressed to the most intense regret at the death of their companion whom they had known for several years. Up to a late hour last night the body had not been recovered. Gaskill was not married.

watermensmemorial.org
Donate Now

WE RAISED THE ROOF, NOW THE CEILING'S COMING DOWN

Since 2013 we have been working to restore this great building to be our HISTORICAL SOCIETY home. We could not have completed the projects without your help. From the ground up, a new heater followed by repairs to foundation and sills. The siding was replaced with New Jersey white cedar where necessary. Then many of you generously donated a window in honor of a loved one. Volunteers painted the exterior with donated paint. This work is all crowned by a wonderful metal roof. Read the building's history and follow all our work at historicportnorris.org/building.htm

Next is the interior of 1890's meeting hall.

The unsightly ceilings above the first floor must come down. This will allow us to check that all is well between the floors and make the electrical wiring upgrade more efficient and less costly. We are hoping to save the old horse hair plaster walls. In order to accomplish our mission of education to school children and tourists, we must install an ADA approved rest room. Plans have been made, estimates obtained, we are anxious to begin. We are so grateful for all the donations and volunteer work to date. If you can help in anyway with this next phase please let us know. pnhs@historicportnorris.org



**All contributions are always appreciated.
Thank you in advance.
historicportnorris.org/donate.htm**

Pickings of the Month

March 5, 1888 Two prominent young ladies out walking on Saturday afternoon were chased by a horse and were compelled to take refuge in a certain store until the horse had gone up the street again. Never mind girls; as this won't get in the NEWS and the horse afterward caused a couple of boys to come to grief by dumping them off his back, you are about even. See More Pickings at historicportnorris.org/pickings.htm



NORRIS ASKS

How many Port Norris Living Legends do you know?

It's that time once again. We are searching for the 2017 Living Legends. This yearly tradition honors those who have made a significant impact on our community. They may be business owners, community leaders or simply great citizens and represent what is unique about Port Norris. A form is provided on our website to nominate your choice of a Living Legend. We look forward to hearing from you. historicportnorris.org/legends.htm

Membership and Renew for 2017

We would love to add your name to our growing list of members. Please give some thought to joining the PNHS.

Membership fees are for Individual - \$10, Family - \$15, Benefactor - \$50 and over, and Student - \$1 (no voting privileges) and entitles you to discounts on our merchandise.

Click here to renew or join, historicportnorris.org/membership.htm

Or mail your check to: Port Norris Historical Society, PO Box 187, Port Norris, NJ 08349.

Thank you for your support. Membership is key to applying for grants as well as your dollars help us continue with all of our endeavours.

**See us on Facebook and our website
historicportnorris.org**

If you are getting this email from a friend and would like to be added to our list, please [click here](#) and we will add you. If we received your email at one of our events and you do not wish to receive this newsletter, click here web@historicportnorris.org, we will remove you from the list. We do not sell or share your email with anyone!



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