



Port Norris

The Past for the Future

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.

PNHS Next meeting: August 14, 2018 7:00 pm • 1723 Main Street

No July Meeting - Happy Summer!

[Visit our website for more details.](#)



Dedication of the Bell

“Remembering Those Who Died on the Bay”

Far beneath the waves so restless,
Hides the bell whose tones so fine
Gave us each such cheery greeting
In the happy olden time.

Loved ones too, who bravely manned her,
Now to us have said farewell.
Seems sometimes even now we listen
For the ringing [“Captains”] bell.

The poem was written in honor of a waterman by Margaret Elsh-Penns Grove, Nov. 1, 1928

On June 2, 2018, the Delaware Bay Watermen’s Memorial (DBWM) Committee Dedication Ceremony was held at the Bayshore Center at Bivalve (BCB). The DBWM Bell was installed on the floating dock. The DBWM Committee worked for five years to make this happen. Our first meeting took place on June 2, 2013 and it was a very proud moment, indeed, to see it all come together at last and to honor those watermen who died on the Delaware Bay.

It was truly a wonderful day! The turnout of folks was more than we anticipated. Each honored waterman’s name was read aloud and The Bell was rung simultaneously. Many people took turns reading names and ringing The Bell. Pastor Ronald Elwood McBride gave a blessing for The Bell and Lois Smith graced us with two songs. Thank you to everyone who came out and celebrated this momentous occasion with us.

You may view The Bell and pay respects anytime during regular BCB hours. In addition to The Bell, there is an information storyboard. We hope you will find the time to visit the memorial. The full program is available on the DBWM website, which has a complete list of names along with many stories. The website will be ongoing. If you have names, stories, images or information to add, we will be happy to make that happen.

Please contact us at watermensmemorial.org



Photo: Rachel Cobb



The family of watermen, Randy Thompson reading his name and ringing the bell in his honor.



Pastor Ronald Elwood McBride ringing the bell for his father Captain James Elwood McBride and grandfather Raymond Coursey.



PNHS Member Eileen Bernhart rang the bell for her two uncles, Paul "Mac" Robbins and Willard S. Robbins.



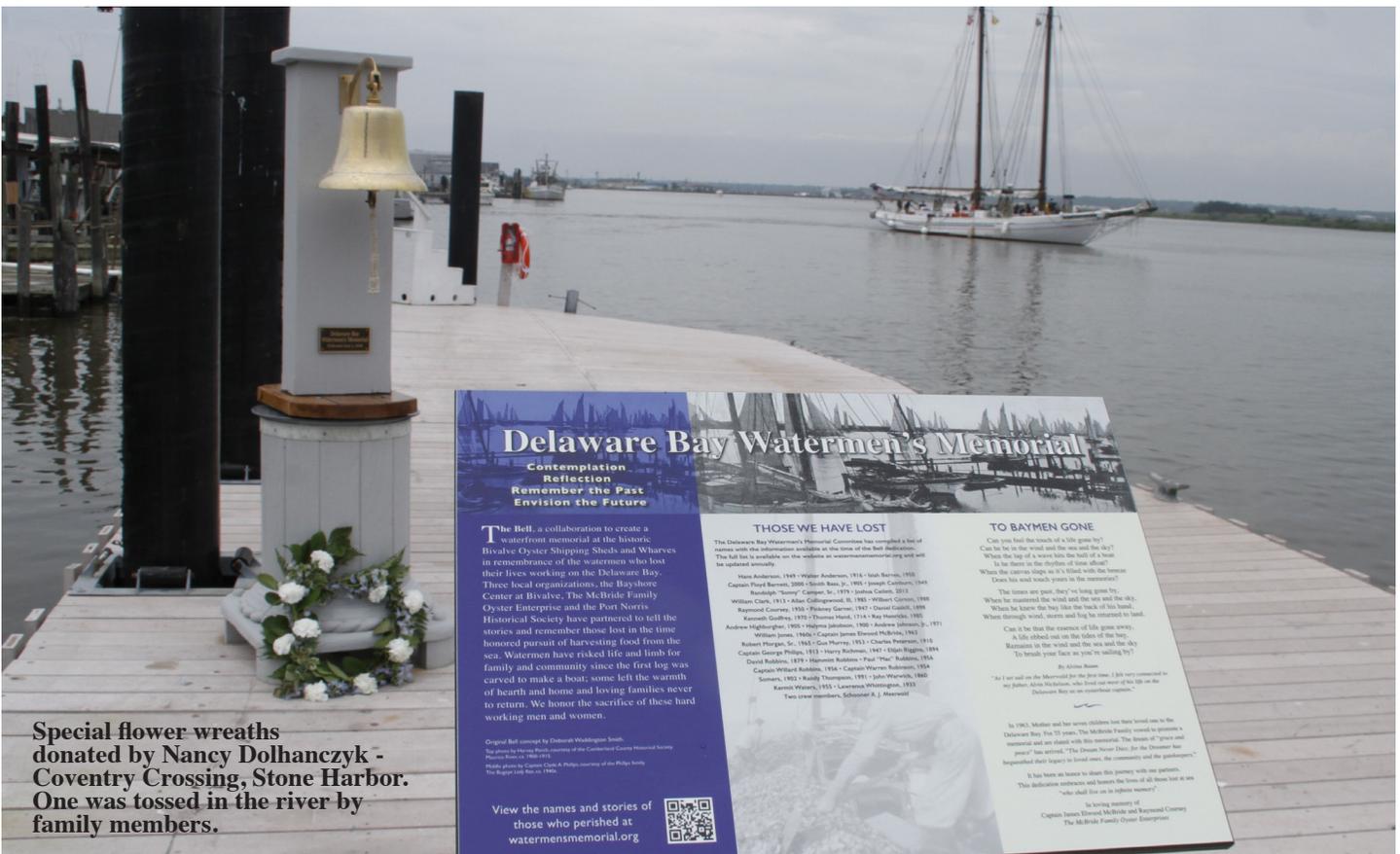
Melvina "Scarlett" Chin read and rang the bell for Sonny Camper and Kermit Waters.



Closing remarks and prayer by Reverend Clyde A. Phillips. Clyde is also a PNHS Legend.



Everyone was under the sheds for the dedication due to the rain.



Special flower wreaths donated by Nancy Dolhanczyk - Coventry Crossing, Stone Harbor. One was tossed in the river by family members.



A Special Gift

A Portfolio of Schooners

The Port Norris Historical Society received this special donation from Ralph “Stu” Polhamus and his wife Cathy Polhamus. It is a collection of 11 x 14 black and white original prints mainly of schooners that were built in the Dorchester Shipyard. The photographer is unknown at this time. It is exciting to see the names of members and people we know on their name sake schooners and sloops. We will share more in the future but we start with the Mary Ella, named for our Living Legend, Mary Ella (Nickelson) Morie. [See her Legends Page](#)

The Schooner Mary Ella Nickelson” was built by Captain Henry Nickelson and named her for his granddaughter.

She was 104 feet overrail, 24 feet 10 inches wide with a 6 1/2 foot draft. She carried a crew of 20 men with a stockload of 2000 bushels. She was built in 1925 and was equipped with steel spars. The vessel was sold out of state.

Mary Ella was only five and doesn’t remember much about the ship’s christening except that it was a beautiful day. She was too little to swing the bottle and that is all she remembers. In retrospect she knows it was a great honor and wishes the ship were still sailing. She also told us that the Mary Ella and the Ethalinda Blackman were called sister ships both being longer than the other ships of the day.



Schooners William Veale and Mary Ella



The Ethalinda Blackman was built in 1929. It was the longest one built at that time. It was 102 feet long and 24 feet wide and carried 96 tons. It also was a participant in the Great Schooner Race of 1929.

Following excerpt from "Lots of excitement but little sportsmanship in oyster boat race" by Gretchen Coyle of The NJ Maritime Museum, Beach Haven, Nov. 17, 2016 [Read the full article](#)

...Fortescue was the site for the Aug. 23 and 24 1929 races. The wind never came up on the first day, so racing was cancelled. On the morning of the 24th, there was plenty of wind. Originally, the oyster boats were to be divided into three classes and sail triangular courses. But the race committee decided to lump them altogether. Racing started at Fortescue and went up to the Ledge; then down to Hog Island, and back to Fortescue.

The wind kept rising, and a few reefs were taken in the big canvas sails. Most boats were sailing along fine until the first buoy rounding.

Tacking suddenly brought out the worst in skippers and their crew members. Ethelinda Blackman had been leading, but other boats started to pull ahead. Three classes were mixed together: big and small, heavy and light. With much confusion, the winner was declared to be the J and E Riggin.

Wishfully, the Bridgeton Evening News proclaimed that "Oyster schooner racing has come to stay, as the result of the first

contest between the representative boats of the Maurice River Cove on the lower Delaware River off Fortescue."

Owners and skippers completely disagreed. There was too much competition and strife as the boats raced. Arguments broke out among the sailors and their heated talk was resumed back at shore. One boat threatened to ram another. Some skippers accused others of lightening their boats by taking off heavy equipment such as anchors, a yawlboat, and other necessities for oystering when the rules had specifically stated that the boats were to be raced as-is with all their equipment aboard.

The Delaware Bay oystermen were extremely independent and feisty; each boat and skipper pushed their limits with a complete lack of sportsmanship and total disregard for the other racers. It was the boat owners who decided "Never again," not the race committee who wanted the race to be an annual competition.

"Under Sail: The Dredgeboats of Delaware Bay" by Donald Rolfs summed up the problem:

"There was a lot of contention in the race, both during and after competition. Everyone wanted to win and no man was willing to give a quarter. The heat of completion was maddening.

"Fierce, independent and seafaring pride, (they) apparently scuttled the workboat regatta, and it lives on only in the memory of the spectators and the surviving skippers." ...



Men working on the Schooner, Ethalinda Blackman.



Local Ancestors: Family Portraits Exhibit

Exhibit features historical photographs of ancestors of Cumberland County residents, historical groups and the Bayshore Center archives. The Exhibit runs from Now to August 26. The Gallery is open 11am to 3 pm, Wednesdays through Sundays at the Bayshore Center at Bivalve. The image on the far left is from the Port Norris Historical Society collection. Donated by Ethalinda Blackman, the photo is the child is Linda Lore and parents are Robert and Emma Lore. Linda was born in 1884. She married Harvey Hand and they lived in a house on Main Street. The Hands were Ethalinda Blackman's maternal grandparents.

Visit bayshorecenter.org for more information.

Don't miss this exhibit.

The Port Norris Historical Society Recognized
Joshua Cremin on June 20, 2018
For Outstanding Efforts in History for 2017-2018
Academic Year at the Port Norris Middle School



Alvina Baum presents Joshua his award.

See our past student awards
historicportnorris.org/awards.htm

Port Norris Pickings

May 31, 1888

Several are going to raise tomatoes here for the Newport can house. It is thought before another season we will have a can house here. Let it come.

May 1, 1889

Tabor Fagan has started a truck and berry farm at North Port Norris He has put in a large patch of strawberries and will no doubt be able to supply our town with all kinds of produce. We wish him success in this new enterprise.

SAVE THE DATE

Legends of Port Norris Annual Fund Raiser Saturday, November 3, 2018

Details on our website

Membership and Renew for 2018

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.

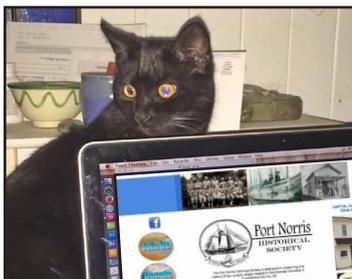
See us on Facebook
and our website
historicportnorris.org

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!

NORRIS ASKS

Do you know the difference between a Schooner and a Sloop?

A schooner has 2 masts, the 2nd mast is taller. It may also have additional masts, up to 7. Normal configuration consists of jib, staysail, foresail and main. You can add topsail, and/or yankee jib and fisherman sail. A sloop rig has 1 mast, with a jib and mainsail. Source: ionianyachtsales.com



Officers

Rachel Cobb, President
Richard Smith, Vice-President
Alvina Baum, Secretary
Mary Linda Locotte,
Assoc. Secretary
Faye Hickman, Treasurer

Trustees

Rev. E. Barnes
Eileen Bernhardt
Virginia Campbell
John Hickman
Sam Ricci

Please Note: Meeting dates and times are posted on the website each month along with the approved minutes from the last meeting. Everyone is always welcome. [Click here to view.](#)

For a complete list of committees see our website. [View Here](#)

