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(ST MICHAELS, MD – November 22, 2011)

CBMM restores 1931 Potomac River Dory Boat



A 37-foot, 10-1/2" x 12' 7" 1931 Potomac River Dory, originally built by Francis Raymond "Peg Leg" Hayden in Banks O'Dee, MD, is now undergoing restoration inside the boat shop of the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum (CBMM) in St. Michaels, MD.

Over the next several months, museum shipwrights, apprentices and volunteers will be working on several aspects of the boat's restoration, including replacing all bottom planks. They will also be fabricating a new forefoot piece on the stem and a new section of deadwood with the shaft alley drilled into it. Approximately sixty percent of the boat will also be reframed, with cosmetic upgrades and reinstallation of her engine completing the project. She will be painted in traditional dory colors: green, red, and yellow stripes on the lapped sheer strake, with the topsides and decks painted white.

Like other Potomac River Dories, this one is planked fore and aft, and the chine rises high above the waterline at her bow. Towards the bow, the sawn frames reach from the keel to the top of the side planks, stopping just short of the lapped sheer strake. Farther aft, the bottom frames are bolted to the side frames,

but there is no chine log. The frames are spread at variable intervals. Her tuck stern and shield-shaped transom are typical of the Potomac River Dory. The bottom planks rise out of the water at the stern and the transom only touches the water in the center. Washboards reach back to the transom, where there is a curved seat but no decking. The boat is equipped with a six-cylinder Ford engine and two gas tanks.

Potomac River Dories were built in southern Maryland on the Potomac River and used primarily for oystering. These boats are descendants of the Black Nancy, a type of small (18 to 27 foot) and narrow Potomac River workboat dating pre-Civil War. J. Richley Delahay of Compton, MD bought the boat around 1938 in a sunken condition and refitted her. Later he passed the boat on to his sons, Kenneth and Ronald, who used her for oyster tonging. Always called the “big dory,” she was one of the few of her type to be refitted with wheel steering. Arthur Puchetti bought the boat in 1972, and had the cabin widened, raised, and extended aft. The Calvert Marine Museum donated the boat to CBMM in 1988.

For more information about boat restoration and other projects, visit the museum in St. Michaels or on line at www.cbmm.org.

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PHOTO: “CBMM_DoryBoat.jpg”

This 1931 Potomac River Dory Boat is now under restoration in the boat shop of the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in St. Michaels, MD. Potomac River Dories were built in southern Maryland on the Potomac River and used primarily for oystering. Always called the “big dory,” she was one of the few of her type to be refitted with wheel steering.