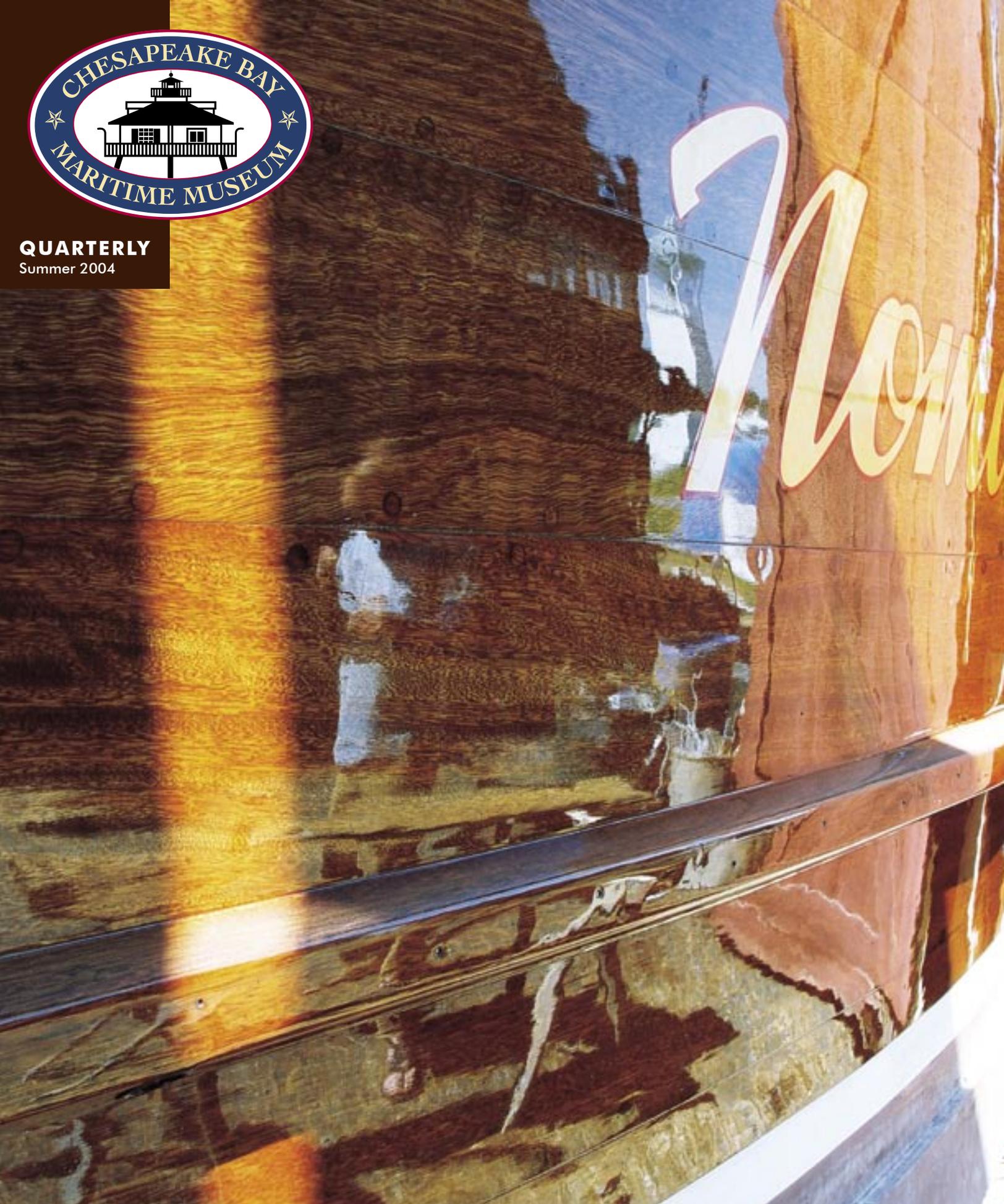




QUARTERLY
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130 Years of Chris-Craft • CBMM's Historic Houses



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Editor

Michael Valliant

Graphic Design

Rob Brownlee-Tomasso

Contributors

Ben Armiger, Cathy Connelly,
Kerry Wargo Clough,
Pete Leshner, Melissa McCloud,
John Miller, Rachel Rébert,
Lindsley Rice,
Leigh Ann Schaefer

Photography

Rob Brownlee-Tomasso,
Bill Thompson, Laura Vlahovich

Illustrations

Eric T. Applegarth

Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum
Navy Point, P.O. Box 636
St. Michaels, MD 21663-0636
410-745-2916 ♦ Fax 410-745-6088
www.cbmm.org ♦ editor@cbmm.org

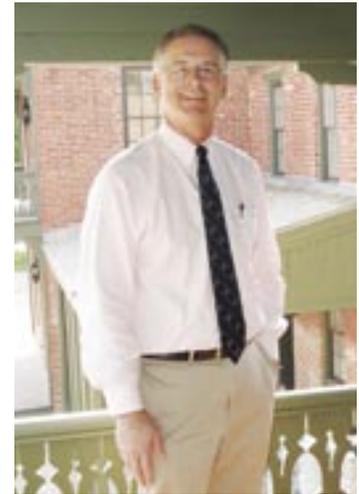
The Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum is a private not-for-profit 501(c)(3) educational institution. A copy of the current financial statement is available on request by writing the Controller, P.O. Box 636, St. Michaels, MD 21663 or by calling 410-745-2916 ext. 238. Documents and information submitted under the Maryland Charitable Solicitations Act are also available, for the cost of postage and copies, from the Maryland Secretary of State, State House, Annapolis, MD 21401, 410-974-5534.

On the Cover

Attention to Detail—The Owens Cruiser *Nomad* is being restored by CBMM shipwrights and apprentices for its new home in the upcoming *At Play on the Bay* exhibit. The boat's high-gloss, reflective shine is the result of more than ten coats of varnish and indicative of the attention to detail given to restoring these historic vessels. The boat is a gift of the Owens family.

President's Message

We practice innovative stewardship here at the Museum. We restore skipjacks to prevent those remaining vessels from ending up solely in a museum exhibit. We took apart the Hooper Strait Lighthouse and transported it by barge some sixty miles to Navy Point, so visitors could have access to a real Chesapeake Bay lighthouse. We moved the former Knapps Narrows drawbridge from Tilghman Island to become our entrance.



Not exactly an orthodox approach to building a museum, but our members and visitors continue to enjoy an experience like no other on the Bay. In fact, creating a unique visitor experience is the driving force behind our stewardship efforts. We strive to bring our visitors the real thing—creating for them a backdrop of authentic Chesapeake Bay culture, artifacts, and historic structures.

Among the first things our visitors see as they walk down the brick path to our Admissions Building are three historic waterfront houses: Higgins, Dodson, and Eagle. The houses are a living part of St. Michaels history—a reminder of the town's historic waterfront landscape. Our curator Pete Leshner recounts the history of these buildings and the families that lived in them in this issue of CBMM Quarterly.

Since the Museum began in 1965, the three houses have been home to our exhibits, staff, and volunteers. When the Bay History exhibit opened twenty years ago, the last public display moved out of Eagle House—providing us with a dynamic, accessible workplace, and adding new life and function to these storied historic structures.

Weather, flooding, and age contributed to the deterioration of the buildings. Many of our staff recall boxing up our things and setting files and computers on shelves whenever storm surges were forecasted. Restoring the three houses and raising them above the flood plain quickly became one of the highest priorities for our "Campaign for Preserving the Heritage of the Bay."

In October 2001, CBMM staff moved out of Higgins, Dodson, and Eagle Houses, and were dispersed to facilities throughout town—most of us a fair distance from the Museum campus and visitors. This spring, we began the process of moving back into a fully restored, handicapped and visitor accessible workplace for our board, staff, and volunteers. As we re-inhabit the houses, we are reconnecting with our visitors.

As we begin to write the next chapter in the story these houses will tell, I think about our style of innovative stewardship and how well it has served us. I am moved by our efforts to preserve and present the real symbols of our cultural history. And I remember this past fall when Hurricane Isabel pushed the highest tides in one hundred years onto Navy Point, and looking at our houses as the water from the surge remained safely outside.

John R. Valliant
President

jvalliant@cbmm.org



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Shipwright apprentice Ann Needham demonstrates boat building techniques to a group of students.

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Robert de Gast



Cedar Point lighthouse, marking the southern side of the mouth of Patuxent River, was the victim of erosion. Built in 1896, it was decommissioned in 1927, and it had nearly collapsed when in 1996 the Calvert Marine Museum salvaged parts of it and the remainder was demolished by the Navy to clear sight lines for the Patuxent Naval Air Station.

Thimble Shoal lighthouse guards the busy shipping lanes leading to Hampton Roads, and the screwpile lighthouse was hit at least three times by passing vessels. The third, a coal barge that struck in 1909, hit it hard enough to knock over the coal stove and burn it down. The damaged pilings survive, but the lighthouse was replaced by an adjacent caisson structure.



documented this region's surviving lighthouses with black and white photographs published in his 1973 book *The Lighthouses of the Chesapeake*. For twenty years, his book was the only comprehensive work on the region's lighthouses, and his photographs now provide some historical perspective on this time of change for the Chesapeake's distinctive beacons. The Coast Guard's lighthouse automation program accelerated in the 1950s, and by the time de Gast photographed them, most of the Bay's distinctive cottage-style lighthouses with

their screwpile foundations had already been dismantled. However, looking back at these photographs a little more than thirty years later, much more has changed: the automation program has been completed, several lighthouses have been relocated or destroyed, and now the Coast Guard has begun to transfer these properties to private or other government interests, maintaining only the aids to navigation, while leaving the structures to others.

The photographer made his first mark in the Chesapeake region with a book on *The Oystermen of the Chesapeake*, and a selection of the more than 5,000 photographs he shot on that subject are in the Museum's exhibit, *Oystering on the Chesapeake*, which opened two years ago. He is also known as a single-handed yachtsman, having published accounts of solo voyages on the lower Chesapeake and a circumnavigation of the Delmarva Peninsula in *Five Fair Rivers* and *Western Wind, Eastern Shore*. A few more of his images will appear in the Museum's forthcoming exhibit *At Play on the Bay*.

De Gast's Chesapeake photographs were purchased for the collections of the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in 2000.



Right: Drum Point lighthouse had an unusual problem. Originally built in the water near navigable water, the point built up until the lighthouse was on the beach and too far from the channel, and the light was deactivated in 1962. In 1975 its pilings were cut at ground level and the structure moved to the nearby Calvert Marine Museum.

Far right: Thomas Point Shoal lighthouse is the only screwpile lighthouse on the Chesapeake still in use as a navigational aid. The stone riprap has helped this lighthouse survive over a century despite its exposed location.



White Shoals lighthouse on the James River was replaced by a nearby steel tower in 1934, then abandoned. It was not dismantled but allowed to fall into disrepair, and since de Gast photographed it the wooden structure has collapsed and disappeared.



Wolf Trap lighthouse was automated in 1971 shortly before de Gast captured it in this image. The antennas for its radio beacon have since been removed.



Sharp's Island lighthouse, slightly tilted in de Gast's photo, took a much more noticeable, fifteen-degree list when ice and tides canted it in the winter of 1977. Despite its precarious angle, it remains an active aid to navigation.

