

Maryland begins here!

the finer points

*A newsletter from the Friends of the
St. Clement's Island and Piney Point Museums*



September 2007

The Friends support historical interpretation, educational programs and special needs of the sites managed by the St. Mary's County Department of Recreation, Parks and Community Services' Museum Division: St. Clement's Island Museum, the Little Red Schoolhouse, the Piney Point Lighthouse, Museum and Historic Park, the Drayden African-American Schoolhouse, and the U-1105 Black Panther German submarine shipwreck preserve. A non-profit organization, the Friends sponsor special events, assist with acquisitions and publish this newsletter to broaden understanding of and interest in these important historic sites.

Inside: Jazz Fest Sells Out, Murder Mystery Solved, Captain Jack, Friends News and more!

Helping Visitors Get the Message

Creating comprehensive signage is a professional process

By Kimberley Cullins

What do the Smithsonian Institution and the museums of the St. Mary's County Museum Division have in common? Exhibits! History! Time travel! A learning experience!

What sets our museums apart is our own regional history and the diverse educational messages conveyed within each museum that are unlike any others.

Convey a message? It sounds so simple a cave man could do it, but it's more complex than just markings on a wall. A message has to be legible, concise, accurate and interesting to the viewer. In the museum world, how you convey the message is often as important as the message itself.

According to an Australia-based expert on exhibition text, Jennifer Blunden, research has identified certain social groups and their corresponding behaviors at museums. Social groups were identified as groups with children, "singletons," couples, and adult social groups, each having specific behaviors during museum visits that determined the length and intensity of reading exhibit panels. Content, environment, grammar and style also play a role in conveying the mes-

sage and enhancing a reader's interest, comprehension, and retention of the information.

To better understand the intricacies of creating the various interpretive signage and exhibit panels, *The Finer Points* asked Museum Division Manager Debra Pence for her professional perspective:

FP: *Can you explain the term "interpretation" and how you relate that to your reader?*

Debra: The word "interpretation" implies the translation of research material to public-friendly information. Content and presentation are important partners in the context of interpretive signage. The appearance and text layout must "grab and hold" the

reader. The text must be accurate and interesting without requiring the reader to spend too much time at any given sign or exhibit.

FP: *What are the key factors you keep in mind when designing interpretive signage or developing exhibits panels?*

Debra: It's important to focus on the site-specific mission and key interpretive themes.



Museum Division Manager Debra Pence and St. Mary's County Commissioner Tom Mattingly unveil the new interpretive signs on St. Clement's Island.

**The Friends of the
St. Clement's Island and
Piney Point Museums**

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Support Our Corporate Members!

By Sheila Gibbons Hiebert, President

We're often amazed at how much our members make possible. As our membership grows, we are thankful to each and every one of you for your contributions.

A vital segment of our membership is local businesses that purchase corporate memberships and renew them faithfully. Their steadfast support is a key element in the Friends' growth and advancement. In addition to their dues, they provide in-kind donations, sponsor Friends fundraisers and Museum Division events, and give other assistance when asked.

It's our great pleasure to acknowledge our corporate members here and to urge all our members to patronize their fine enterprises.

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Guiding Our Visitors: New Signs Point the Way

A Maryland State Highway signage project to offer directional signs to important sites throughout the state was recently implemented in St. Mary's County. The signs should add visibility to our sites and boost tourism within the county.





It's all about the music – and the seafood, of course! (Above) Headliner Eric Darius, backed by a gifted band, jumped off the stage and danced through the crowd while jamming on his saxophone – eventually finding a place to sit down. (Below) Three friends enjoyed the oysters during a break between acts.

Sold Out Crowd Rocks Jazz Fest '07

The *2007 Potomac Jazz & Seafood Festival* made history on July 14. For the first time since the inception of the event in 1999, the festival played to a sold-out crowd. Only 800 tickets were available for this very successful annual Friends fundraiser, which has grown consistently in popularity every year. It seems the word is out around the Beltway and well beyond about this very unique and intimate jazz experience.

It was so nice to see the regulars: the Lampkins from Baltimore; the Lee family from New Jersey; the Eisenhauers from Virginia, who are having to share the now-full lawn with newcomers like Tawana Hawkins of Temple Hills, MD, who brought 19 of her best friends (The Divas) to enjoy outrageous jazz and delectable seafood with a scenic riverside view unparalleled by any venue in the state – or maybe anywhere.

It doesn't hurt, either, to book an up-and-coming national recording artist like Eric Darius, who traveled from Tampa, FL, to rock Colton's Point right off the map. Eric actually helped put us *on* the map, thanks to his intense popularity and performance-following fans. As Amanda Pritchett of Waldorf, MD, wrote in an e-mail, "I just had to tell you that it [the festival] was OFF THE HOOK!" and, "You have definitely made a fan for life!"

It's a good idea to get your tickets early next year. There is no consolation prize for missing the best jazz event in Southern Maryland!



Museum Division Rack Card Promotes Multiple Sites/Events

Who doesn't care about the bottom line, budgets, or getting the greatest bang for their buck? When it comes to marketing, the Museum Division is challenged with a limited budget to promote its multiple sites, museums, programs, and special events that take place during the year.

One way to streamline marketing is to create a rack card that promotes all sites and prompts the visitor to call or visit the Museum Division website (www.stmarysmd.com/recreate/museums) for more information. Our new rack card has a collage of site photos on one side and location information and maps on the back. These cards are being displayed at every Maryland State Welcome Center.





(Left) The new interpretive signs at the Drayden African American Schoolhouse give the visitor interesting facts and information for a unique look at early American education. (Right) “You Are Here” sign orients visitors at the St. Clement’s Island Museum pier to their location on the Potomac River.

Informative Signs Enhance Visitor’s Experience

Signage: continued from page 1

FP: *What are the steps in developing interpretive signage or exhibits? Who is involved in the process?*

Debra: Well-planned exhibits and signs should be a collaboration of specialists including researchers, curators, designers, fabrication specialists, educators, writers/editors, and individuals with special expertise in the subject matter.

In most cases a given project will begin as a result of projects and themes identified in a strategic plan. Strategic plans are the most productive when developed by an advisory panel composed of the individuals listed above and other community or museum representatives.

Strategic plans include identifying topic themes and presentation methods such as signs, exhibits, programs or events. The integrity of a project rests strongly on the quality of research conducted and the translation of the research into engaging and accurate messages accompanied by graphics and artifacts. Once the rough materials are pulled together, professional writers and designers take over to produce a concise, visually pleasing design sometimes accompanied by audio or electronically visual components.

From the design stage, the product is then sent to the fabricator for the manufacture of the sign(s), frame(s) and exhibit components. Some fabrication is completed “in-house” by trained staff and/or volunteers. In each case the final steps include installation and in many cases evaluation of public effectiveness.

In my opinion, permanent exhibits should be updated on regular intervals not to exceed 5-6 years, and signage should be updated or replaced approximately every 10 years. Smaller or temporary exhibits should be layered into exhibit spaces and rotated on 3-6 month and one-year intervals. All of this is subject to the availability of adequate funding for a given project.

FP: *What are some of the new signage/exhibit panels designed or in the process of being designed for the Museum Division? And what are the challenges of cost and implementation?*

Debra: In the last 12 months, new interpretive signage has been placed at Drayden African-American Schoolhouse, St. Clement’s Island Museum, St. Clement’s Island, and Piney Point Lighthouse, Museum and Historic Park. The latter three sites will receive additional interpretive panels as funding and staff time permit.

The writing/editing, design, frame fabrication, and panel fabrication average \$1,420 per sign. Research, graphics procurement, sign installation and administrative time cost extra or are calculated as in-kind matches to grants. The Museum Division combines in-house and contracted services for the production and installation of its interpretive signs and exhibits.

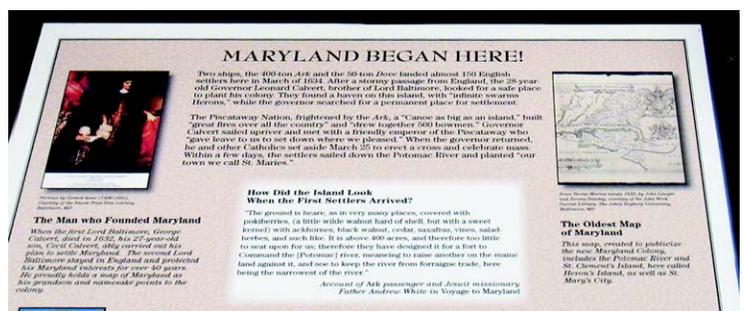
FP: *Are there challenges or obstacles in grant implementation for interpretive signage? Are there strict guidelines to adhere to according to the granting agency?*

Debra: Each granting agency has its own set of standards and procedures for grants they fund. We have been using federal, state, county and private funding for our four separate interpretive signage projects. When matching grants, the coordinator must adhere to the procedures and guidelines of the most stringent agency. Often, there are various boards that review the physical placement of the signage, accuracy of content and adherence to specific writing standards.

Our own challenges are primarily related to availability of staff to work on a given project within a given time frame while maintaining their daily and seasonal operational duties.

For the St. Mary’s County Museum Division, introducing new, contemporary signage to its sites not only enhances the visitor experience but illustrates a new level of professionalism. Come out to see the advancements of your museums and historic sites soon! It’s a new day and a new way to experience history!

This professionally fabricated sign on St. Clement’s Island, which is weatherproof to withstand the sun, wind and rain, offers visitors detailed information about the 1634 colonial landing.



A Letter From Debra

Dear Friends:

We've had a great summer with programs, audiences and projects galore! Each event has entertained capacity audiences, with fundraisers bringing in record revenues. We extend our thanks to our members, visitors, sponsors and hard-working organizers and volunteers. We are kicking into gear for the fall events, school tours and continued exhibit work.

Of special interest are the oral history projects being conducted by Christina Barbour and Lydia Wood with videography by Olivia Cribbs. We are striving to capture stories that will enhance our exhibits and programs designed for the Potomac River Maritime Exhibit. Project contributors such as Bo Bailey, Sam Brown, and Jim Banagan, with support from Steve Dunlap and The Chesapeake Bay Field Lab, will make a top-notch record to illustrate the workings of Chesapeake Bay skipjacks. Even Joy Parks, the namesake of Captain Daniel Murphy's skipjack on display at the Potomac River Maritime Exhibit, and her family are contributing to the work by taping her memories of the years her dad worked the boat. We have many more projects in mind but are happy to see this one now in progress.

Other Museum Division projects include the Shoreline Stabilization project at Piney Point, along with the engineering work for parking and walkway development. We continue our work on the Potomac River Maritime Exhibit building with Marketech, Inc. The St. Clement's Hundred is moving full steam ahead, under the professional direction of Don Cropp, to make great strides on progress of the Blackstone Lighthouse reconstruction. It is an exciting time to watch the evolution and changes taking place in St. Mary's County and particularly at our Museum Division sites!

These projects are made possible by the continued support of our members and their community contacts. This year, of all years, we hope to see new members joining the Friends organization and becoming involved in our County Museum sites. Please consider giving memberships as gifts this holiday season and sharing our successes with friends and neighbors by visiting sites and participating in our events!



SOLVED!

The Friends' mystery dinner fundraiser at the Piney Point Lighthouse campus Sept. 8 was a smash, with over-the-top acting by volunteers including Ellyne Brice Davis, pictured here practicing her part as a psychic. Below, lead character Crystal Ellington (aka Kim Cullins) lines up suspects to await the audience's verdict on their guilt.



Q&A with Chris

Q: Did the settlers who arrived at St. Clement's Island in 1634 bring animals with them to help them survive?

A: According to *Your Maryland: A History* by Vera Foster Rollo, the Maryland colonists purchased pigs and cows when they stopped in Virginia prior to their arrival on St. Clement's Island. The colonists had brought along items to trade for livestock from the Virginia colonists and for furs from the Indians, according to Lois Green Carr, author of *The First Expedition to Maryland*, an article published in a 350th Maryland anniversary reprint of *A Relation of the Successful Beginnings of the Lord Baltimore's Plantation in Maryland*.

The Maryland-bound colonists aboard the Ark and the Dove brought cloth, glass beads, ivory combs, brass kettles, axes, Sheffield knives, hoes and hawks' bells for trading with the Indians. ("Hawks' bells" are small bells tied to a hawk's leg. The hawk's movements — flying, landing or plucking game — would cause the bell to ring in ways that told a hunter how the hawk was performing in the hunt.)

Joe Greeley, the Maryland Dove Site Supervisor at Historic St. Mary's City, says the colonists most likely would have brought very different types of things to trade with the Virginia colonists: guns, powder, and lead shot.

Christina Barbour is the Historic Site Manager at the St. Clement's Island Museum and Education Curator and Collections Manager.

Museum Stores Offer Convenient Holiday Gifts

It's not too early to start your holiday shopping! This year, have a more creative gift-buying experience by shopping at the stores at the St. Clement's Island Museum and the Piney Point Lighthouse Museum; they've got gifts for everyone on your list.

Here are some great reasons to shop with us:

- Friends members get a 10 percent discount.
- All proceeds benefit museum programs, projects and exhibits so your dollars make a difference.
- We offer convenient hours to shop. Both museum stores are open during museum regular visiting hours weekdays and weekends. The Piney Point Lighthouse will offer special evening hours on Dec. 7 and 14 and an afternoon Open House on Dec. 9. There will be free gift wrapping, refreshments, and children can enjoy Santa's Secret Shop where they can buy special gifts for \$5 and under.
- Gift memberships to the Friends are available in person or by phone with a personal check, Mastercard or Visa.

- Gift certificates are available in person or by phone using a check or credit card.
- We have a great selection of gift items: nautical gifts, books, Maryland and St. Mary's County flags, scarves, ties, tote bags, sweatshirts, jewelry, children's games, gifts and books, coffee, teas, soups, ceramics, and so much more!
- Gift items can be purchased by phone and shipped directly to you or your gift recipient.

Please call Museum Stores Manager Carol Cribbs at 301-769-2222 for gift ideas, shipping information, and to make special arrangements for businesses or corporate gifts.

Museum Stores Manager Carol Cribbs models the new St. Mary's County scarf she commissioned, available only at the Crab Claw and Lighthouse Lens museum stores.



UP AND COMING . . .

Set a course for these exciting events

Visit www.stmarysmd.com/recreate/museums or call 301-769-2222 for more information on these events.

Blessing of the Fleet – Oct. 6 & 7
The St. Clement's Island Museum will be the host site for the 40th Annual Blessing of the Fleet, a two-day event featuring delicious foods, live music, parade, fireworks, children's activities, demos, and more! This event is presented by the 7th District Optimist Club and all proceeds benefit community programs and projects.

St. Clement's Island Museum Winter Hours Begin and Water Taxi Ends – Oct. 8

The St. Clement's Island Museum will begin winter hours of Wednesday through Sunday, noon to 4 p.m. Water taxi service to St. Clement's Island concludes and will resume Memorial Day weekend 2008.

Piney Point Lighthouse, Museum and Historic Park Begins Winter Hours – Nov. 1 to Dec. 16
Visitor hours are offered weekends

only from noon to 4 p.m. After Dec. 16, the site will be closed until spring.

Christmas Doll & Train Exhibit – Dec. 1

This 22nd annual event opens at the St. Clement's Island Museum to enthrall everyone with the spirit of the holidays! The museum will be filled with antique and collectible dolls and toys, holiday decorations and music. A miniature train station will fill the Little Red Schoolhouse. *Exhibit open through Jan. 6.*

Ladies' Shopping Night – Dec. 7

The Lighthouse Lens Museum Store at the Piney Point Lighthouse Museum will offer a special night for ladies and children to shop for the special men in their lives. Many unique items to choose from! *Store open from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.*

St. Clement's Island Museum Christmas Open House – Dec. 8
Free admission. Don't miss this oppor-

tunity to see the Christmas Doll & Train Exhibit. Santa and Mrs. Claus will be on hand to listen to children's holiday wishes. Visit the Crab Claw Museum Store for unique holiday gifts. Free cookies and punch. *Noon to 4 p.m.*

Piney Point Lighthouse Museum Christmas Open House – Dec. 9

Free Admission. Shop at the Lighthouse Lens Museum Store for one-of-a-kind gifts and souvenirs. Enjoy holiday music and warm hospitality. Free gift wrapping and refreshments. *Noon to 4 p.m.*

Gentlemen's Shopping Night – Dec. 14

It's the guys' turn to shop for the ladies! Come alone or bring the kids and shop for Mom at the Lighthouse Lens Museum Store! Free gift wrapping and refreshments. *Store open from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.*

Member News

Welcome Aboard!

The Friends welcome these new members:

Senior Citizen:

Eddie and Teeny Kennett, Avenue, MD

Individual:

Joe Gantt, Prince Frederick, MD

Family:

James and Donna Attick, Colton's Point, MD
Lorraine Leonard Family, La Plata, MD

Benefactor:

Christine Wray and John Felicitas, Leonardtown, MD

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Sherry Leicht, ADF Bingo, Inc., Charlotte Hall, MD

THANK YOU, EVENT SPONSORS!

The Friends would like to thank the following sponsors of the 2007 Potomac Jazz & Seafood Festival: **St. Mary's County Arts Council, The Show Place Arena, Bozick Distributors, Colton's Point Marina, W. M. Davis, Inc., Gutter Helmet Systems, Lenny's Restaurant/Sleep Inn & Suites, Aldridge Ford, Community Bank of Tri-County, Dara Mills of Keller Williams Realty of Southern Maryland, Café Des Artistes, and the Law Office of Shane Mattingly.**

Special thanks are also extended to the sponsors of Children's Day: **Combs & Drury Insurance, Dean Lumber Company, Cullins Trucking Inc., Tidewater Dental, and Delegate John F. Wood, Jr.**

DONATIONS

The Friends thank members **Bo and Louanne Bailey** for donations sent in honor of the 80th birthday of **Gladys Guy** of Leonardtown, MD, and the 25th anniversary of **Anne Mary and David Cullins** of Clements, MD.

BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

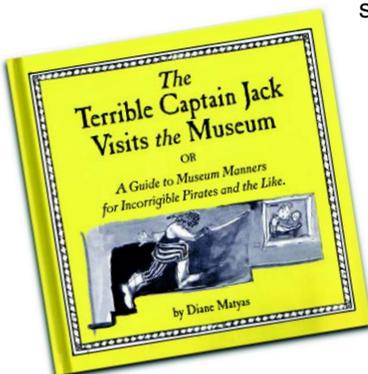
The Friends co-hosted the Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours in July at the Piney Point Lighthouse, Museum and Historic Park. We gratefully acknowledge Bob Eaton and all our friends from **BB&T (Branch Banking & Trust)** for making this event possible. The "Pirates of Piney Point" mixer offered more than 70 Chamber members, guests, and museum volunteers hearty grub and grog provided by Lenny's Restaurant and Caribbean-spirited music by Reggie Rice of HyperSpace Fun Center. Many thanks to new Friends member **Capt. Phil Langley** of Fish the Bay Charters and Tours for providing the treasure hunt door prize of a lighthouse tour (for 12 people!) on the Chesapeake Bay.



In the swashbuckling spirit: Chamber members Mark Markovich of J.F. Taylor Engineering (left photo), Sarah Dale from Hampton Inn and Jennifer Misner from Fairfield Inn get into character.

Kids Practice Museum Etiquette with 'Terrible Captain Jack'

Ahoy, Mateys! Your museum stores now feature a delightful children's book that helps them understand, through the tale of a museum-loving pirate, how to enjoy a museum and learn museum-going etiquette at the same time.



In *The Terrible Captain Jack Visits the Museum, or, A Guide to Museum Manners for Incurable Pirates and the Like*, young readers join Captain Jack on his first visit to a museum, where he is advised by the ship's monkey, Steve, to "keep his bloomin' fingers off the paintings and the

walls" and reminded that "museum voices are quiet ones, but ask lots of questions." Steve also urges young visitors to use their "eyes, ears and imaginations" inside museums and to find special objects to sketch.

This delightfully illustrated book was produced by the Noble Maritime Collection in Staten Island, NY, and sells for \$10. Pick up a copy, and look for other children's books also available in the Crab Claw museum store at the St. Clement's Island Museum and at the Lighthouse Lens at the Piney Point Lighthouse Museum.

FRIENDS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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__MC __Visa Card #: _____ Expires _____

Make checks payable to Friends of the St. Clement's Island and Piney Point Museums. Your membership is tax deductible.

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