

The Broadside

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2026

Candid.

The voice of The Mathews Maritime Foundation

Museum Located at 482 Main Street, Mathews, VA Mail to PO Box 1201, Mathews, VA 23109
804-725-4444 on the web at www.mathewsmaritime.com

Message from our President...

We're excited going into the 2026 season. Two new board members bring a new perspective to our mission to preserve and present the maritime history that is Mathews County.

Along with that, we are anxious for you to see the changes in our Museum collection with more emphasis on the early shipbuilding history of Mathews.

Added to our collections is a rare model of the "Eugenia" built by Gabriel Miller in 1843.

Our Gwynn's Island Boat shop is gearing up to build a replica of an Edward Diggs 12' row boat that may become the boat we'll offer up to participants in a family boat building event.

Museum Opening...

The Museum opened Friday, April 17 for the summer season. Our schedule of openings will be Friday and Saturday each week from 10AM to 2PM. Off hour tours can be arranged by calling Dennis Crawford at 804-366-5337.

Call for Docents...

Are you a history buff? Can you spare 4 hours a week on a Friday or Saturday? We are calling for volunteers to become docents at the Mathews Maritime Museum. The docent's job is to open the museum on designated days, to welcome visitors, and to give them a guided tour of the museum if they wish. Or visitors can do a self guided tour. In addition, docents will record visitor purchases from the gift shop. Dennis Crawford, curator of collections, will meet with prospective docent volunteers individually or in a group, de-

pending on scheduling, to familiarize them with the Museum's collection and procedures. Give Dennis a call at 804-366-5337.

Gabriel Miller's "Eugenia"...

The Mathews Maritime Museum has acquired a model of the 61' (length on deck) "Eugenia", a Mathews vessel built in 1843 at Gabriel Miller's shipyard, Mathews Virginia. It is the earliest known model of a Chesapeake Bay Schooner, with a documented history tracing it back to the Gabriel Miller Boatyard on Blackwater Creek, Mathews, Virginia. Models of this era are quite rare, and with its provenance as a Mathews vessel, it is a meaningful addition to the Museum's collection.

We would like to acknowledge Henry Schlenk and Peter Wrike who were instrumental in the Museum acquiring this model. The encased model is now on display in the Museum.



Keeping the Past in the Present Preserving it for the Future

Museum collection...

The Museum has undergone a re-arrangement of its collections to better convey the maritime history of Mathews County as one of the premier shipbuilding areas on the East Coast of America from the Revolutionary War through the War of 1812

The Peter Wrike exhibit, a condensed history of shipbuilding in Mathews, has been relocated to a separate room where visitors can watch a film, “Mathews Maritime Heritage”, created by Adam Vrooman for his Eagle Scout badge requirement.

We’ve added a lighthouse room featuring Floyd Crew, keeper of Wolf Trap Light from 1955 to 1968, schematics of the types of lighthouse built on the Chesapeake Bay, and associated memorabilia. Also included with this exhibit is a history of Gilbert Klingel’s Gwynn’s Island boat yard.

A Rare English Dinghy**Finds Harbor in Mathews ...**

By Carolyn August

A remarkable piece of maritime craftsmanship has crossed an ocean and more than half a century of history to arrive in Mathews County.

The Mathews Maritime Foundation recently received the donation of an exceptionally rare all-wood sailing dinghy built around 1970 by renowned English boatbuilder Norman Newell.

The beautifully crafted 8-foot sail-and-oar dinghy is far more than a small boat. It represents a disappearing era of traditional wooden boatbuilding and the extraordinary skills of craftsmen who shaped vessels entirely by hand.

Newell, who worked in Seaview on the Isle of Wight, England, was widely respected in the local community for building and maintaining elegant traditional wooden boats at a time when fiberglass construction was rapidly taking over the marine industry. He became particularly well known for building 10 of the famed Sea

View One Design dinghies and for his work on the classic vessel “Luccomber Shanklin.”

Known as a meticulous craftsman, Newell specialized in traditional construction techniques that today are increasingly rare. His boats were admired not only for their beauty but also for their seaworthiness and graceful handling on the water.

The dinghy now in Mathews has an unusual story of its own.

Originally commissioned by a Swiss customer, the boat was completed by Newell after the buyer placed a deposit. But the customer never returned to claim it. After many years, Newell eventually sold the dinghy to a visitor from America, and the little vessel made its way across the Atlantic to Baltimore.

Now, decades later, the handcrafted boat has found yet another chapter in its long journey through its donation to the Mathews Maritime Foundation.

The Foundation’s mission is to preserve, present, and participate in the rich maritime and cultural heritage of Mathews County through research, documentation, conservation, and education. Operating both the Mathews Maritime Museum on Main Street and the Gwynn’s Island Boat Shop, the organization has become an important steward of the county’s working-water-front traditions.

The Newell dinghy arrived through the Foundation’s Boat Donor Program, which serves as a major source of funding for MMF’s preservation and educational efforts. Through the program, donated boats are sold to the public, with proceeds supporting restoration projects, educational outreach, vocational training, and museum operations.





Mike Moore in Newel Dinghy

Gilbert Klingel’s FREYA Becomes a Reef

By Laura Hines-Acosta
for the Bay Journal

Naturalist’s boat becomes fish habitat in Chesapeake Bay...The Gilbert Klingel built sloop “Freya” was sunk off Windmill Point (N37.61749 W076.23168) by VMRC (Virginia Marine Resources Commission) on April 10 present to form a reef for oyster growth and habitat for fish.

She was brought back to Mathews from a Florida boat yard in June of 2017 to the place of her building on Gwynn’s Island and Milford



Haven sound.

After a life of traversing the Chesapeake Bay and open sea, the steel hull of Freya, a 30-foot sailboat, arrived under tow on April 10 at its final destination on Virginia’s Windmill Point Reef. After a contractor opened the drain valves to let water rush in, Hunter Smith, an artificial reef specialist with the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, watched the water fill the hull. After the last bubble of air escaped with a

burp, Freya sank to the bottom of the Bay in a blink.

The boat was built and owned by Gilbert Klingel, a Mathews County boatbuilder, Bay naturalist and author who died in 1983. It is the latest item to be donated to the marine commission’s [Artificial Reef Program](#). The program creates underwater habitat in the lower Bay and at a handful of sites offshore, using everything from purpose-made concrete “reef balls” to enormous sections of demolished bridges and other discarded steel and concrete infrastructure. And of course, demodded boat hulls.

The reefs provide shelter and places for organisms to hide from predators. Over time, algae and oysters form on the surface. This in turn attracts small fish, then bigger fish, as the site becomes a place of food and safety.

Virginia’s artificial reef program has been operating since the 1970s and has created 18 reef sites in the Bay watershed. People can donate materials, like Freya, to the commission. Smith then tests and preps the material, stripping it of potential pollutants.

“You can ship [materials] inland and have it chipped up and recycled, and that costs money and time,” he said. “Or we could use it for something good, to build habitat.”

The Mathews Maritime Foundation, which had cared for Klingel’s boat since 2017, donated it to the marine commission because maintenance had become too costly. The foundation, based on Virginia’s middle peninsula, preserves the maritime and cultural history of Mathews County, including the legacy of Gilbert Klingel.



Klingel was a self-taught naturalist and wrote articles based on his observations of the Bay. He studied marine life using a diving chamber he built in 1954, called an “aquascope,” in which he and one other person could lie on the Bay floor off Windmill Point and watch fish swim by.

“I think, as a sailboat, [Freya] lives on,” said foundation president Peter Hall. “The memories of Gilbert, the work that he did, lives on.”



Artificial reefs can be suitable habitat for fish populations. A study published in *Frontiers of Marine Science* found that such reefs in North Carolina’s Pamlico Sound attracted three times more fish than the surrounding unstructured areas.

Study author James Morley, though, said it’s still not clear whether artificial reefs boost fish populations or just attract more fish. Plus, there are concerns that those concentrations of fish in turn attract people fishing for them, diminishing the natural benefits of built habitat.

To enhance fish populations, Morley recommends placing artificial reefs in places that are difficult for anglers to reach.

Smith plans on revisiting Freya in June. Now, the boat can enjoy all the wonders at the Bay floor, just as its owner did.

Freya Reef marker



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Mathews Maritime Foundation recently earned a Candid Platinum Seal of Transparency! Check out our nonprofit profile to keep up to date with our impact. Click on this link <https://www.guidestar.org/profile/shared/010a4f1c-5157-4613-b30f-8fda39b29026>



Keep this link handy, we want to make sure you always have the information you need to support our work with trust and confidence.

More Exposure for MMF...

To keep abreast of our activities and sponsored events follow us on Facebook and our blog. You can follow both of these, receiving posts to your email or phone if you like, and get the latest info as soon as it is posted. Check out these features through the links on our home page, www.mathewsmaritime.com, or directly at <https://www.facebook.com/mathewsmaritime> for Facebook, and for Peggy’s blog go to <http://peggyofnewpoint.blogspot.com/>.

Peggy of New Point Prints...

We have a number of the limited edition prints of the John Barber painting of “Peggy of New Point”. They are available at \$76.50 each for Foundation members and \$85.00 for non-members. Call Pete Hall at 434.917.5281 to order.

