Deal Island Peninsula Project

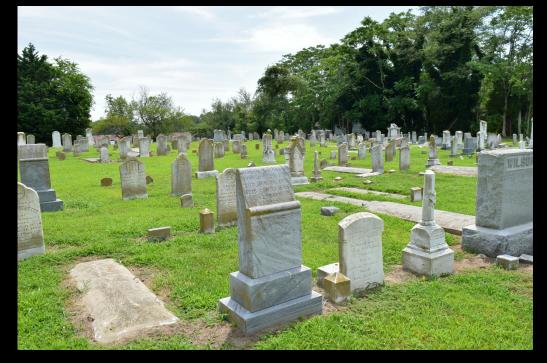
Photos by Julia Keane University of Maryland

September 2016



Churches on Deal Island, Chance, and Wenona hold centuries of history in their walls and generations of families in their graveyards. The churches around Deal Island play an integral role in the community as the center point to most community gatherings such as congregations, communions, and a general celebration of God. Preserving this history and protecting these important places from future flooding vulnerabilities is critical.

The historic African American John Wesley Church is one of the most vulnerable churches in the area due to its current state of disrepair and its location right along the marshland, yet it remains a special place for community members. The John Wesley Historical Trust has initiated a restoration project to ensure that this important piece of heritage survives in the coming years. For more information about the project, please contact the John Wesley Historic Trust (410-784-2678 or 410-430-3201).







Danny Ray Webster, the manager at Island Seafood, speaks with Elizabeth Van Dolah about the Deal Island Peninsula Project, pointing out the most vulnerable areas around the Deal Island Harbor to flooding and erosion. Danny Ray oversees the entire process of selling and distributing soft shell crabs for his business. In the second photo he is pointing out the importance of maintaining all the right conditions to ensure that shedding crabs can survive in holding tanks, where they are kept until they are ready to be processed and packaged for sale around the world.



"Miss Behavin" and "Hum Dinger" are just a couple of the unique names watermen give to their boats. Often named after family members, workboats are essential to the livelihood of the watermen and a quintessential aspect of the Deal Island landscape. These boats are where watermen spend much of their time during crabbing season, which runs from approximately April until December.









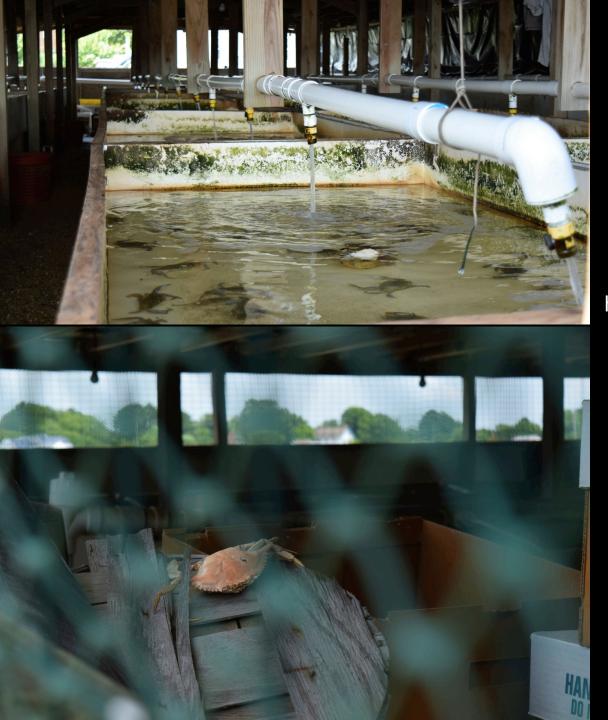
Deal Island's marshes are known for being a place of refuge for wildlife, weekend crabbers, and kayakers while also being enjoyed by hunters. These marshes also act as protective buffers for residents during storms and flooding events. However, with climate change, they are becoming increasingly vulnerable to flooding and inundation from rising sea levels. Many parts of the Deal Island Peninsula coastline are also subject to high rates of erosion. Residents have addressed these concerns with bulkheads and riprap. Where bulkheads are not maintained, property owners find their backyards are eroding away as pictured in the top left photo.







The bow of the famed skipjack, Helen Virginia, overlooks the docked boats as the watermen come into the Deal Island Harbor. She is being painted and repaired in preparation for the 57th Annual Skipjack Race and Festival. Skipjacks are the iconic boat of Maryland's Eastern Shore. With a rich history in oyster dredging and exploration of the Chesapeake Bay, skipjacks have become a symbol of Maryland's watermen culture. With the changing dynamics of the Bay's ecosystem, skipjacks are not seen regularly working the Bay these days, except for in the Deal Island area, deemed the "home of the skipjacks". At Scott's Cove Marina, many skipjacks are restored to their full capacity, ready for the oystering season in the winter. This is just one of the examples showing how resilient this culture is to a changing world.



Crab shanties like this one are essential to having a thriving crabbing business. Captains check on their crabs every couple of hours, ensuring that the conditions in their holding tanks are perfect, while picking out the crabs that have just shed their shells and are ready for sale. These shanties are critical to watermen businesses, but are prone to flooding. Just this past year, two local crab shanties were destroyed in a storm.



When soft shell crabs are ready for sale, they are cleaned and packaged. They are first trimmed and weighed then packaged into boxes to be shipped to restaurants and customers ranging from the Chesapeake Bay to across the US and the world. Often times, the job of prepping crabs, managing shipments and overseeing business matters are carried out by the women and children of watermen families who have a detailed knowledge of the business and the crabs themselves.





Arby and Debby Holland own Arby's General Store, the main spot in Wenona to relax after a long day out on the boat. This store and café is the watering hole of Wenona where watermen gather early in the mornings before heading out to their crab pots, and locals enjoy nights reconnecting with friends over music and food. Arby's and the surrounding homes experienced some flooding during Hurricane Sandy. Those with non-elevated houses frequently deal with flooding as part of their routine, especially during big storms and high-high tides.









At the annual Camp Meeting, residents of Deal, Chance, and Wenona islands gather to worship God, led by a local pastor introduced by Pastor Dave Webster, pictured here. The Church and faith are an integral aspect of the watermen culture. Their faith permeates every part of their daily routine; it is the lens through which they see the world. The strength of the Church gives them hope as they navigate the unpredictability of the water.

Mr. Jack Willing, Sr., owner and manager of Scott's Cove Marina oversees the daily activities at the marina, a place where one can always find a slew of work and pleasure boats. Scott's Cove Marina is where many of the area's boats are dry-docked for repair, restoration, or storage, and has always been an important asset to the community since Jack's father created it in the 1950s. The marina shop that Jack manages is where one can stock up on supplies, cold drinks, or catch up with locals, including a neighbor's dog.



