

Cape Charles celebrates 125 years

July 6, 2011 Eastern Shore News

Written by
Gloria Bradley

CAPE CHARLES -- Celebrating a milestone 125th anniversary deserves no less than a month long celebration, and that is just what the Town of Cape Charles is planning, starting with its event-filled Opening Celebration Weekend on Aug. 5-7.



Cape Charles is pictured above in an undated photo.

"We are so excited to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the town of Cape Charles," said Town Manager Heather Arcos. "And happy to see, that after all these years, this small town has retained its unique charm, feeling of togetherness and a sense of community."

The town of Cape Charles was laid out in 1884 to be the southern terminus of the New York, Philadelphia & Norfolk Railroad and was incorporated on March 1, 1886.

The opening celebration weekend events include the Chesapeake Bay Buy Boat Reunion to be held at the Cape Charles Harbor for the first time. The historic oyster boats will be open to the public on Aug. 5 from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. and on Aug. 6 from noon-4 p.m.

"Having the Shriners Parade will add such a dimension to the opening celebration weekend," said Jen Lewis, community events/recreation coordinator, commenting on the parade set for Aug. 6 at 10 a.m. "I remember having seeing one as a child, and it making such a lasting impression."

Marie Brady, anniversary parade organizer, has been involved with organizing parades in the town since the early 1980s, beginning with the Cape Charles Fall Festivals, annual events from 1976 to 1995. She said the opening celebration weekend will have a "homecoming weekend feel" like the Cape Charles Fall Festivals.

Smith Island Skiff Races will take place on Aug. 6 from 1-3 p.m., and the skiffs will also be tied up at the docks and available for view.

There will be festivities at the harbor with live music from 6-10 p.m. on Aug. 5, and the Northampton County Chamber of Commerce will sponsor a harbor party from 6-10 p.m. on Aug. 6.

The inaugural Cape Charles Town Harbor Boat Docking Contest is set to begin at 1:30 p.m. on Aug. 7, and Dize said he hopes this is the beginning of an annual event for the harbor.

Lewis said other anniversary events during the month include the showing of a documentary to be filmed by Rachel Isabelle of Cape Charles with interviews of residents for a history of the town.

The Cape Charles Historical Society will recreate a country store for the occasion on Mason Avenue to give people a feeling of times past.

The Cape Charles Memorial Library will display old yearbooks of Cape Charles High School during the month.

"We are trying to highlight all the different areas that were important to the growth of Cape Charles," said Lewis about the month of anniversary events planned.

On Aug. 13, the focus will be on the buildings of Cape Charles, and Sears House Tours will be conducted.

Tom Bonadeo, town planner, said Sears, Roebuck and Co. sold its mail-order, ready-to-assemble Sears Kit Homes between 1908 and 1940 and "wherever in America you found towns near a railroad, you would find Sears Kit Homes."

He said each of the Sears Kit Homes was shipped to Cape Charles on two railroad boxcars in 30,000 pieces with 48 hours to unload. The house came with virtually everything, and it took a community effort -- like a barn raising, to aid the homeowner with the unloading and building of the house.

He said Rose Thornton, the authority on kit homes, came to Cape Charles and identified the Sears Kit Homes.

On Aug. 27, the historical focus will be on transportation, including the railroad, boats, and ferries.

As the southern terminus of the railroad, Cape Charles was the transfer point for travel across the Chesapeake Bay to Norfolk for passenger travel and commercial shipping.

Events for the Grand Finale Weekend, Sept. 3-4, will include a harbor party sponsored by Northampton County Chamber of Commerce on Saturday evening, and an end of summer event will be held in Central Park on Sunday.

"I want to extend a personal invitation to the community to join us and help us to celebrate the history of the last 125 years," said Arcos.

For information and a full schedule of events, call Lewis at 757-331-3259, ext. 18, or visit www.capecharles.org.