

Thousands celebrate Cape Charles anniversary

Home tour highlights history

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CAPE CHARLES -- Thousands have attended events commemorating the history and heritage of a town and of the Eastern Shore during this year's celebration of the 125th anniversary of the incorporating of the Town of Cape Charles.

Hundreds more were added to that list Friday when a holiday tradition included this historic anniversary in its annual event.

Organizers of the 16th annual Northampton County Holiday Progressive Dinner Tour incorporated a theme of "Echoes of the Past" with performances of five historical vignettes in this year's tour of nine historic locations including homes, a church, a former church that is now a school, an inn, a theater, and a railcar.

Historical performances were a highlight of this year's Progressive Dinner Tour.

"We sold almost 100 tickets over last year," said Carol Evans, co-chair of the event, saying they had 450 attendees and had to open up four additional time slots due to the demand.

The holiday tour began in 1996 in Cape Charles as a fundraising event for the Northampton County Chamber of Commerce and local nonprofit organizations.

Cape Charles was founded in 1884 by Alexander Cassatt and William L. Scott as the southern terminus of the New York, Philadelphia & Norfolk Railroad and was incorporated in 1886.

"We were founded as a railroad town and that was our vitality and our economy," said Evans.

Clelia Sheppard, president and executive director of Arts Enter Cape Charles, wrote the vignettes for costumed actors, and Bill Neville, director with the Cape Charles Historical Society, provided historical information.

Evans said the 125th anniversary celebration was a "golden opportunity" to partner with these organizations "to add the element of historical theater to our already much anticipated event."

"This has further enhanced the holiday tour by including more of our very talented community," said Evans.

Historic sites on the tour included the Historic Palace Theatre; The No. 316 -- Bay Creek Railway's restored 1913 dining and excursion car; Trinity United Methodist Church; Fig Street Inn; Heyward Hall, the sanctuary of the former First Presbyterian Church, a Gothic Revival building that now houses Cape Charles Christian School; and four homes.

The Town of Cape Charles is listed as a National Register Historic District.

The walking tour took attendees down streets of a town plan that is unique in Virginia while viewing a collection of historic architectural styles in addition to the designated historic sites on the tour.

Music included the Chime Choir; Sarah Scott, flute; Malcolm and Carol Russ, violin and accordion; and Acclaim, a barbershop quartet.

Those sponsoring the evening's menu include Amy B Catering; AQUA Restaurant; Chatham Vineyards; Eastern Shore Coastal Roasting Company; Exmore Diner; Gull Hummock Gourmet Market; Holly Grove Vineyards; Little Italy Ristorante; Kelly's Gingernut Pub; Great Machipongo Clam Shack; The No. 316 -- A Dining & Excursion Car; and Virginia Originals and Chesapeake Grill.



A lesson in history was part of the dinner and home tour in Cape Charles.