



What do a chicken and a
steamboat have in common?



What kind of cargo did a steamboat carry?

Exotic fruits like bananas, goats, chickens and Sears Roebuck House Kits as well as sewing machines, ribbons, buttons, canned goods and passengers! Just about anything you can think of was shipped to the hundreds of country stores on the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers.

And other burning questions...



Eric F. Nost

2015 was a transformative year for the museum. More than 2,000 visitors – double the visitor count in 2014 – enjoyed our exhibits and activities. So how did we take attendance to the next level? We began our year with a healthy dose of introspection and asked some tough questions:

How can we better tell the story about steamboats and their importance to our region's history and development?

How can we attract more visitors – especially children – and contribute to the economic growth of Irvington and the surrounding communities?

How do we continue to grow our mission to preserve the history and heritage of the Chesapeake Bay and the Northern Neck?

As a result, the museum initiated exciting new programs and exhibits which broadened our appeal and strengthened our purpose. None of this could have been accomplished without the support of our members, donors and dedicated volunteers. We thank you for joining us as stakeholders in a rich legacy.

We also want to thank our Board of Directors. In addition to steering our financial success, the Board urges the museum to play a strong role in the community. Their vision for our museum underwrites our efforts to produce superb exhibits, programs and activities. In addition, the support which the Town of Irvington provides is invaluable to our success.

We hope our annual report addresses all of your questions about our record-setting year. But first, let's answer the most asked question of 2015:



Barbara D. Brecher



*Detail from a painting of the Luray
by John MacLeod*

What do a chicken and a steamboat have in common?

Some steamboats, like the Luray, ran at approximately nine miles per hour. That's a chicken's top running speed.

The museum got a lot of mileage using this fun fact in our promotional campaigns. Using humor is one more way we can tell compelling stories about the Steamboat Era. With your continued support, we'll build on our many successes in 2015.



Eric F. Nost
President



Barbara D. Brecher
Executive Director

What attracted more than 2000 visitors in 2015?

Lots of Summer Fun at the Steamboat Era Museum

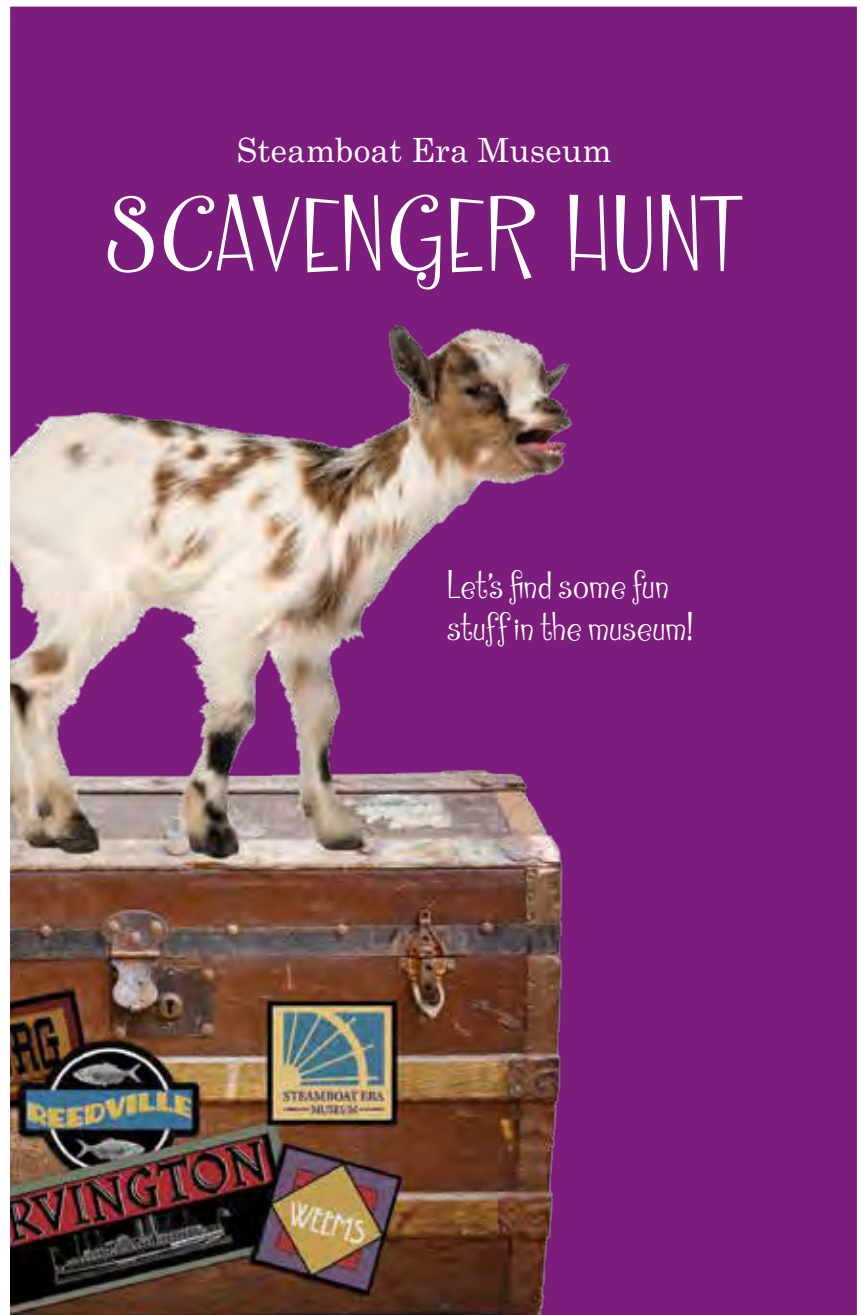
New Summer Hours!

Tuesday-Saturday

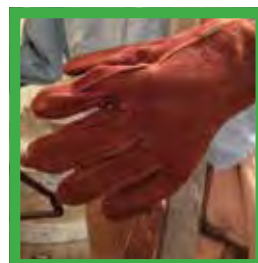
10:00 am-4:00 pm

Summer visitors took advantage of extended hours. From Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend, the museum was open Tuesday through Saturday, adding three days to its normal Friday/Saturday schedule.

Tuesday tours were led by a lady in 19th century costume. Every Tuesday afternoon, visitors were greeted by a guide in period dress who regaled them with tales of her life while moving through the exhibits.



Our scavenger hunt attracted more than 400 children. Six challenging questions awaited young visitors at the museum's front desk. Successful scavengers received a yo-yo – a toy popular in the Steamboat Era.



Can you find these items in the museum?

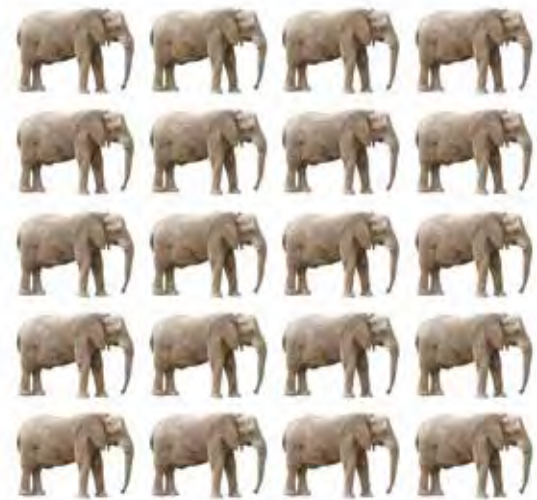


Kids ages 6 – 12 also enjoyed a new Friday morning summer program. A special museum tour with stories, games and other activities enabled children and their parents to learn about Steamboat Era life.

The museum integrated touch tablets into our exhibits, engaging visitors with compelling oral histories. Thanks to a grant from the H. Hiter Harris III Foundation, we were able to purchase the equipment to make twelve oral histories available to visitors, using touch screen technology to tell steamboat stories.



A new exhibit called *Did You Know?* was developed for our younger audience. It takes an innovative approach to learning by relating artifacts from the Steamboat Era to modern day objects.



Which weighs more, the amount of coal a steamboat carried or 20 African elephants?

At nearly 200,000 pounds they weigh about the same.



The museum hosted *Tea with Emily Dickinson* with more than 40 attendees. While Dickinson was not a local resident, the interview and readings reflected the Steamboat Era times. Jane Tims, a local author, “interviewed” Miss Dickinson, played by Julia Tilley, about her life and times in Amherst, Massachusetts. Ms. Tilley, reprised her starring role from *The Belle of Amherst*. An English Tea was served during the performance.

What high-profile project launched in 2015 will secure a national reputation for our museum?

On December 2, 2015, the museum took its first steps in an ambitious new project. We moved the pilothouse from the Steamboat Potomac from a field in White Stone to the workshop of a local craftsman where restoration will begin. As the only known surviving intact pilothouse from a Chesapeake Bay steamboat, this unique artifact represents a real coup for our collection. Our museum will be the only place where a visitor can experience how it feels to pilot a steamboat and see where a captain and his crew lived and worked.



Detail of a painting of the Potomac by John MacLeod

Why is this pilothouse so rare? In many parts of the country, when a steamboat was decommissioned, it was sold intact. You can see some of these boats today serving as museums or entertainment venues. But when a Chesapeake Bay steamboat was decommissioned, it was typically burned to the waterline and then used as a barge.

The Potomac Pilothouse survives thanks to a shipyard owner named Captain Colona who envisioned using it as a summer cottage. In 1938, just before the Potomac was decommissioned, Colona had the pilothouse removed from the boat and barged to Taft Beach. Today it is the largest surviving section of a Chesapeake Bay steamboat.



Randall J. Kipp, a local Irvington architect who designed the museum, has always supported our organization. Continuing this tradition, his firm has prepared drawings of what the pilothouse will look like once it is placed in the main exhibition hall. When the pilothouse comes to the museum, the design of the exhibits and museum will be changed to accommodate this exciting artifact and new interactive exhibits.



In September 2015, the Potomac Pilothouse was named one of Virginia's top ten endangered artifacts by an independent panel of collections and conservation experts. The museum has launched a fundraising campaign to help restore the pilothouse. We plan to move it into the museum as the centerpiece of our exhibits. This is a unique opportunity for our museum to establish itself as the nation's leading institution on the Steamboat Era.

How did we successfully promote the museum in our community?



A new advertising campaign used humor – and a thought-provoking question – to intrigue and engage local readers.



Museum volunteers at the 4th Annual Irvington Crab Festival were featured on the cover of the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce's annual magazine.

For the second year in a row, *Virginia Living* magazine named our museum Best Historic Museum in Eastern Virginia.



We became a stakeholder in the new Oyster Trail program, established in 2015 by Gov. Terry McAuliffe and the Virginia Tourism Corporation and the Artisan Trail Network, gaining recognition as a point of interest along the Northern Neck Artisan Trail.



Museum representatives were featured speakers at the Indian Creek Yacht and Country Club, the Northern Neck Sailing Association, Kilmarnock Rotary Club and the Hague Winery Dinner Club.



How did the museum support our community in 2015?

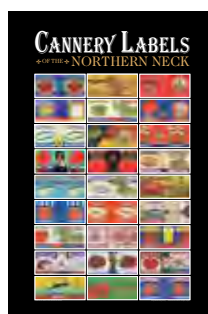
We joined 13 area organizations in Menokin Homeschool Day. Over 100 homeschoolers learned about the Steamboat Era then made steamboats of their own.

The museum supported the local *History-on-the-Go* educational program by participating in local school events, engaging young minds and providing teachers with follow-up facts for the classroom.



We participated in the Irvington Fourth of July parade with a car carrying ladies in Steamboat Era costumes and we won second place in the Town of Irvington Holiday Decoration Contest. The museum supported the Irvington Village Improvement Association by making the museum available to the members of the U. S. Air Force Band for the annual *Concert on the Commons*.

The museum supported other cultural organizations by buying ads in their event programs or donating items for silent auctions.



We held a Friends of the Museum holiday reception to extend a special thank-you to community members who unfailingly support our mission.

How did we raise funds in 2015?

With a crab pickin' event

The annual Irvington Crab Festival is our largest fundraising event. Once again, it was a sell-out. The festival took place under a big tent in front of the Museum. We hosted over 750 people who picked their way through 68 bushels of crabs. Jumbo Lump Daddy and the Backfin Boys returned to rock the crowd with their genre-crossing music. Between pickin' crabs and tappin' their toes, folks found time to place their bids in our silent auction which featured items donated by local merchants, residents and artists.



With a strategic partnership

On the evening before the Crab Festival, members of the Indian Creek Yacht and Country Club were honored guests at our museum. We hosted a steamboat dinner as part of a "Cruise-Inn" weekend sponsored by the Yacht Club. Our guests were transported to the Steamboat Era by costumed docents and a candlelit dinner of soft shell crabs and steamboat round of beef. The Yacht Club members returned the next evening to reserved seats at the Irvington Crab Festival. We thank the Yacht Club for partnering with us to create a memorable weekend for the attendees.

An event of this scale would not be possible without our loyal sponsors.



**Fourth Annual
IRVINGTON
CRAB FESTIVAL**

**THANK YOU TO OUR
2015 SPONSORS**

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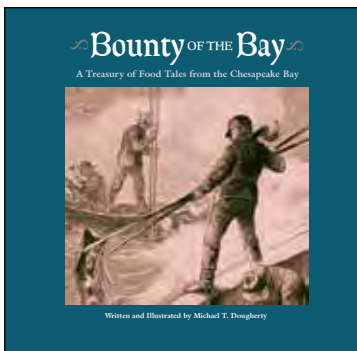
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**And a
BIG THANK YOU TO OUR
AMAZING VOLUNTEERS!**

All Proceeds Support the Steamboat Era Museum.

With a holiday marketplace

The Steamboat Museum held its second annual Holiday Marketplace on the Friday and Saturday following Thanksgiving. Over 15 local artisans were represented, with work in wood, jewelry, fiber, satin glass and more. Merchandise included the 2016 Steamboat Era Museum Calendar as well as holiday gifts like scented candles, notecards and tree ornaments. Author Michael Dougherty was on hand to sign copies of his newly released book, *Bounty of the Bay: A Treasury of Food Tales from the Chesapeake Bay*. Patrons also shopped our silent auction display with artisanal works, posters and other treats.



HOLIDAY MARKETPLACE STEAMBOAT ERA MUSEUM

NOVEMBER 27 & 28

TEN AM – FOUR PM

ALSO SHOP ON DECEMBER 5, 12 & 19 10AM-4PM

CRAFTS & MORE!
HOLIDAY GIFTS • STOCKING STUFFERS
LOCAL AUTHORS SIGNING BOOKS

156 KING CARTER DRIVE • IRVINGTON, VA
438.6888 • STEAMBOATERAMUSEUM.ORG

BRING THIS AD AND RECEIVE 20% OFF ONE ITEM
CRAFT ITEMS NOT INCLUDED • ONE OFFER PER PERSON

With grants for new products and programs

The Museum received four grants in 2015. The Rappahannock River Counties Foundation grant enabled us to select Patty Richards, an Irvington artist, to paint watercolors of four key people of the Steamboat Era: a steamboat captain, a stevedore, a cannery worker, and a steamboat stoker. These images have already been put to work as four note cards that were sold at this year's Holiday Marketplace. They will be used in future educational projects and fundraising endeavors.



Another grant came from the Wiley Foundation and was originally intended for curriculum development for local schools. However, after collaborating with educators, we refocused our efforts on developing a museum program for groups of children. This spawned a new summer program on Friday mornings, with age-appropriate stories and activities about the Steamboat Era. The experience ranged from interactive displays to hands-on crafts and demonstrations.

Other grants were provided by the H. Hiter Harris III Foundation for tablets for our oral history interactive exhibits and the Tidewater Foundation, which we used for exhibit signage.

Who form the backbone of the museum?

Our volunteers – of course! Often a volunteer is the first person to greet a visitor at our front desk. They wear period costumes and serve as museum guides. And behind the scenes, they process mail and help plan and stage events. Our volunteers make sure museum guests have the best possible experience.

Kudos go to Barbara Baxter and Fran Kelly who recruit caring, talented people to fill our volunteer roles and to Susan Judd Ellis who continued to handle our membership lists. She ensured renewals and thank-you letters went out on time – and that any questions were answered promptly.



Listed below are the museum's 2015 volunteers

THANK YOU!

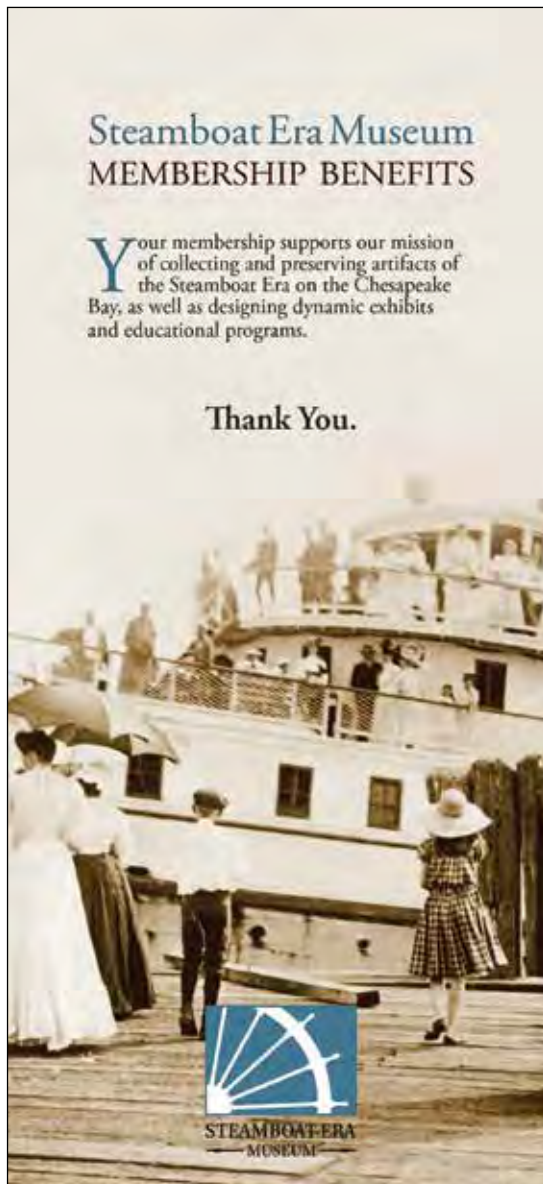
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Virginia Fleet	Mary Ann McKay	Kay Somers	
Penny Gilmour	Kathy Meyer	Nina Thompson	
Carolyn Graham	Kay Micklem	Julia Tilley	
Randy Graham	Eric Nost	Jane Vogel	



Why are members vital to our future?

If volunteers are the backbone of our museum then members are its lifeblood. It is only through the support of a strong, loyal membership that we continue to fulfill our mission to preserve and interpret the importance of the Steamboat Era to the Northern Neck.

Membership has its benefits – including free admission to the museum and discounts on museum merchandise. In December, we host a members-only Holiday Party. There's no one we'd rather toast with a cup of holiday cheer than our dedicated members!



In April, members turned out in force to participate in our Annual Meeting. They were warmly greeted by two costumed docents, "Matilda," the wife of a country store owner and "Mary," a steamboat passenger. Members had the opportunity to experience our newest additions: the *Did You Know?* exhibit and 12 oral histories on interactive tablets.



Board President Eric Nost provided a review of the museum's activities and achievements during the past year – a list that included recognition as Best Historic Museum in Eastern Virginia by *Virginia Living* magazine.

We said goodbye to long term board members Jane Higgins, Cheryl Sadler-Pugh and Richard Wilson and the membership elected Barbara Baxter, Timothy Ward and Helen Slatford to the Board.



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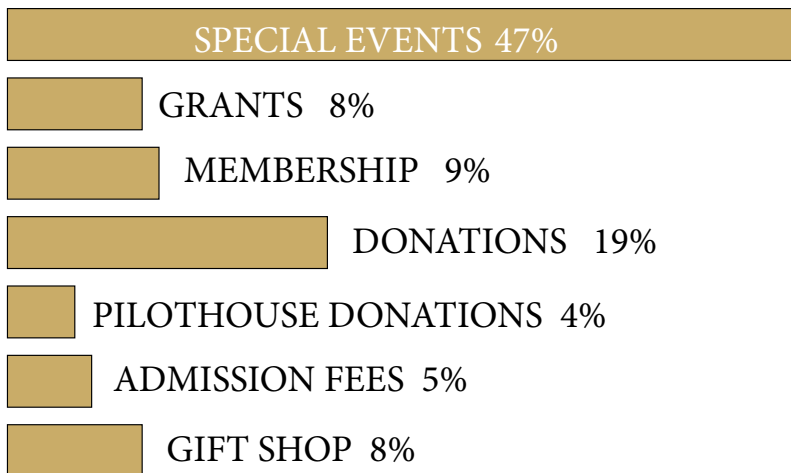
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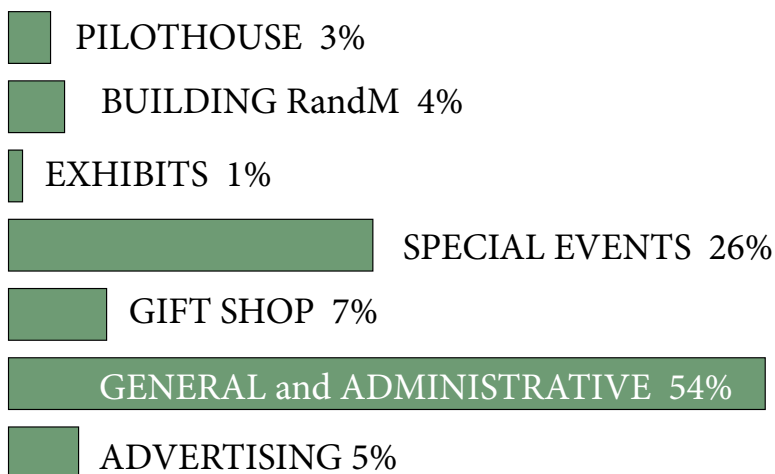
Wiley Foundation

2015 Finances

Income



Expenses



*This report includes donations and memberships from 1/1/15- 12/31/15
While every effort has been made to include all donors and members
some errors may have occurred. Please contact us with any concerns.
We apologize for any omissions.*

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The Board of Directors
Dedicate this Annual Report
in Memory of

William Philip "Flip" Morrisette, IV
1978 - 2016

for His Volunteer Work and Dedication
to the
Steamboat Era Museum

How much did steamboat meals cost?

In 1900, a dinner including meat,
fish, dessert and more, cost 75¢.
Today, that would be equivalent to \$22.00.



What was the first commercial steamboat on the Chesapeake Bay?

The Chesapeake, built by
Captain Edward Trippe in
1813, carried mostly mail
but also cargo and passengers.

