

The Wildfowler



OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2006

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- Oct 3 Tuesday
General Guild meeting, Virginia Beach Law Enforcement Training Academy. 6pm social, 7pm meeting/program
- Oct 7-8
BACK BAY WILDFOWL GUILD 28th WILDLIFE FESTIVAL!
- Oct 11 (Wednesday)
BBBC quarterly meeting, election of officers & program, 7pm, AWHM
- Oct 13-15
Ward Museum Wildfowl Expo, Salisbury, MD
- Oct 16
Edgar Brown plague dedication, 5:00 pm, AWHM
- Oct 17
Museum Management Committee meeting, 1:30pm, AWHM
- Nov 6
Guild meeting, AWHM, 6pm social, 7pm meeting/program
- Nov 13
Board of Directors meeting, AWHM, 7pm
- Nov 18
BBBC birdwalk, Chincoteague NWR
- Dec 1
AWHM annual hosting of Virginia Society of Ornithology for Virginia Beach birding weekend
- Dec. 11
Christmas Party/ Auction, 6pm social, 7pm dinner
- Dec 25
Christmas Day, Museum closed
- Dec 31
New Year's Eve, Museum closed




Tom Beatty

Last month's article about the de Witt Cottage seemed to be well received throughout the Guild and brought some renewed interest in the Cottage and Museum. This newsletter will take you back to early Virginia Beach and how the Cottage became the historic site it is today. The development of Virginia Beach commenced in 1880 when a group of people from Norfolk built a clubhouse for hunting, fishing and weekend outings. The members of this club called the area Virginia Beach. At that time there was only limited accessibility via country roads. In 1883 a group of investors, realizing the potential of the area, organized the Norfolk and Virginia Beach Railroad and Improvement Company. The company built a narrow gauge railroad which began service to the oceanfront from Broad Creek in Norfolk on July 17, 1883. The company acquired land for development and constructed the Virginia Beach Hotel, which was the first hotel in the area. In 1887 and 1888 the investment company was sold. The new owners included the Vanderbilts from New York, and the hotel was substantially improved and reopened as the Princess Anne Hotel. During the same period lots were sold near the hotel and several oceanfront "cottages" were built. Some of these were only for summer use but others were permanent residences. The development company intended to create a year-round upper class resort where hotel guests and permanent residents could mingle socially. The company's plans were apparently successful since many residents and a large number of prominent persons visited the Princess Anne Hotel including Grover Cleveland, Benjamin Harrison and Alexander Graham Bell. Prominent citizens from

Continued on next page



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Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum
Back Bay Wildfowl Guild
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Virginia Beach, Virginia 23451



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www.AWHM.org

Norfolk and Princess Anne County also built cottages.

From 1887 to 1890 sixteen hundred acres around the hotel were subdivided and by 1889 there were fourteen cottages and another small hotel in the community. A survey of the area prepared by S. F. Day, C. E. (civil engineer) in April 1901 shows that there were at least two hotels and approximately forty-five oceanfront cottages in the area between 8th Street and 24th Street. On March 6, 1906, the General Assembly of Virginia approved an act which incorporated the town of Virginia Beach in the county of Princess Anne. It is interesting to note that this act listed B. P. Holland, who built the de Witt Cottage, as the mayor of the town until a regular election could be held in June of that year. The 1910 federal census listed 300 residents in the town of Virginia Beach.

The development of Virginia Beach coincided with that of other oceanside resorts along the Atlantic Coast. The de Witt Cottage's period of significance commences with the date of its construction, 1895, and continues until the present. The property has sustained ongoing significance beyond its date of construction because it has continued to function for its intended purposes with little or no change in its historic integrity. It was occupied as a single-family residence by the Holland family until 1905. After that it was rented for several years, again as a single family dwelling, until it was purchased by the de Witt family on November 1, 1909. The de Witt family continuously occupied the house as a permanent residence from 1909 until January 1988. They also operated the cottage as a guesthouse from approximately 1932 to 1970. Paying guests, who were frequently friends and acquaintances, were accepted on a limited basis while the property continued to be occupied as a residence by the family. It is important that there were no "modernizations" or changes made to accommodate the guesthouse function that have had an adverse effect upon the integrity of the property. In fact, the cottage's operation as a guesthouse may also be considered as contributing to its significance since

this was frequently a means by which oceanfront property owners could continue to support their properties during the depression years of the thirties.

The significant dates of 1895 and 1909 are, respectively, the dates when the cottage was built for Bernard Peabody Holland and the date it was purchased from Holland by Cornelius de Witt. The property had been previously known as the Holland Cottage but the Holland name was abandoned when Mr. Holland built a new house directly across Atlantic Avenue from his original cottage. The cottage was also briefly called "Wittenzand", Dutch for "white sand" by Cornelius de Witt.

—Tom

PASSING OF A FRIEND

On August 22, 2006 Winfred Jester, one of the Museum's most admired and likeable individuals, passed away at Bayside Hospital in Virginia Beach. We all enjoyed his weekly visits bringing his decoys for consignment and talking about his most recent trip to the Eastern Shore. Win will be missed by all, especially the Museum staff and his regular friends on Wednesday.

—Karen



Raffle tickets for a full-size decorative Wood Duck carved and painted by Al Brandtner are still available.

NEWSLETTER CHANGE

I hope everyone noticed that this newsletter is for October & November. We will continue to publish a bimonthly newsletter until June 2007 at which time we will resume our regular monthly newsletter. We began this practice last year and it seemed to work well. We were able to get the important information out to members and at the same time save money on printing and postage during the traditionally "slow" months.

Published by the
Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum
at the deWitt Cottage
1115 Atlantic Avenue
Virginia Beach, VA 23451
(757) 437-8432
email: atlanticwildfowl@rcn.com
Under the auspices of:
The Back Bay Wildfowl Guild, Inc.
(A not for profit organization)

BACK BAY BIRDING CLUB

On September 9th the BBBC went to the Dismal Swamp Canal Trail for an enjoyable morning of birding. A large Black Bear greeted us at the entrance of the eight-mile trail. That got your attention...right? Well, the bear was carved and we didn't walk the entire length of the trail! We did walk far enough to identify 25 species of birds and had a great time getting together again after the long summer break. Many thanks to Herb & Ann Verhaagen for planning the trip for us. Our next adventure will be on the Eastern Shore of Virginia where Jim & Linda Mehne are planning an exciting trip for us. You can read all about our bird trips and see the birding schedule on the website (AWHM.org) by clicking on the BBBC button.

Don't forget our quarterly meeting on Wednesday, October 11th at the Museum at 7pm. We will be electing a new President, Secretary and Field Trip Coordinator. See you there!



Photos of the wildfowl sculpture following the recent landscaping



DONATIONS

In memory of Winfred Jester:
Tom & Karen Beatty
Bill & Alice Walsh
Herb & Pat Videll
Archie & Betty Johnson

Museum operations:
Tommy Deary
John & Janet Miller

Parking is available at the Raven Restaurant across the street and the Newcastle Motel next door for members during meetings and gatherings at the cottage.

—Herb

PRESIDENT'S CORNER



OCTOBER MEETING

Our next Guild meeting will be Tuesday, October 3rd, at the site of our 28th Wildlife Festival, the Virginia Beach Law Enforcement Training Academy (VBLETA), at the intersection of I-264 and Birdneck road.

The meeting agenda is Show preparation. This is our final meeting before the Show. We will prepare vendor packets, put the show prints in envelopes, define volunteer jobs as best we can, organize our signs and show traffic pattern.

2006 VIRGINIA BEACH WILDLIFE FESTIVAL

OCTOBER 7th & 8th

Come and enjoy. If you would like to work fine, if you want to just wander around and enjoy the festival, feel free to do so but by all means don't miss this event. Remember your membership entitles you to free access and a numbered show print.

NOVEMBER MEETING

Our November Guild meeting will be on November 6th at the Museum. The agenda will be our regular business meeting and the election of the Board of Directors. Our scheduled speaker for November is Reggie Birch from Chincoteague, a highly respected decoy carver.