

Crossroads

NEWS AND ADVERTISING FROM MIDDLETOWN, ODESSA,
TOWNSEND, SMYRNA AND NEARBY COMMUNITIES

136 *****CROSSROADS-002 PRST STD
RESIDENT 36 US POSTAGE PAID
128 4
SMYRNA

Business
& Service
Directory
Inside



Under full sail

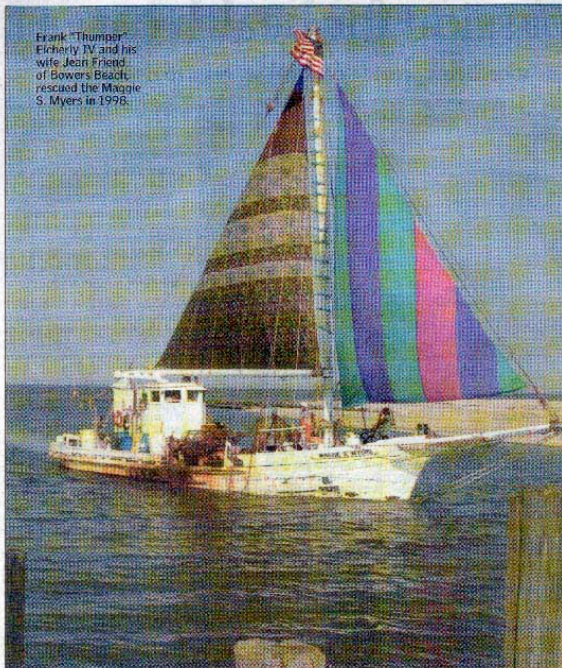
Historic schooner
restored, fit to board

Page 6

www.delawareonline.com

Cover story

THURSDAY JULY 24, 2008 THE NEWS JOURNAL MT7



Frank "Thumper" Eicherly IV and his wife Jean Friedl of Bowers Beach rescued the Maggie S. Myers in 1998.



Eicherly unloads oysters from his historic schooner.



Above: Marlene Koniewicz unloads coal dredged from a sunken ship. Left: Rich Jones unloads more of the day's catch that includes oysters, conchs and toadfish.



Century-old Maggie S. Myers still working the Delaware Bay, returns home with a day's catch.



The Ma Myers'

Painstakingly restored from shipwreck to shipshape

By CA
Special to

SMYRNA — An old wooden schooner, long forgotten on the sand by the creek, has been the fate of the Maggie S. "Thumper" Eicherly IV, a wife of Bowers Beach, had not res-

The vessel, which can ocr dents in the Bowers Beach ar tinuously working oyster s States.

"The moment we saw th Maggie, it was love at fir sight," Friend said.

"She looks so cool," sa Eicherly, its captain. "She low to the water and dredg by hand. She turns on a son like a snow goose flyir around in the air."

These days, the ship is oi of the few that still dredges oy ters. However, because of co servation efforts, the amou of oysters she is allowed to tal has diminished.

Its owners, while lamentu the old way of life, have bo involved in conservation a preservation efforts.

"We're down to 60 bush from 600 bushels somewhe between five and 10 years ago Eicherly said.

The couple had plannu use the Maggie for pleasu when they bought her f \$5,000. But when their worki boat the Phragmites w crushed by ice while sitt right next to the Maggie their Bowers Beach dock th put the oyster schooner to and the amount of oysters al

She had holes the size "Once we had 13 pumps to ke It took a hundred trips to get rail."

When they had made eno get her restored, they took h

The ship was built as a t ers boat builders in Bridgeto since 1833.

"Below deck the Maggie t cooking," Eicherly said. "It working as an oyster schoo would stay out all week. The tain had to close the window wouldn't come through. The by the end of the week so th phia and sell them on Frida to be with their families."

The couple loves telli s and Friend want to use the l about the life of the waterm

"We want her to become want to pass her down as a l



The Maggie S. Myers' rescue

Painstakingly restored from shipwreck to shipshape working oyster schooner

By CAROL CHILD
Special to The News-Journal

SMYRNA — An old wooden schooner, hull rotted, lying on her side on the sand by the creek, gutted of her soul. That could have been the fate of the Maggie S. Myers if midstate residents Frank "Thumper" Eicherly IV, a waterman, and his wife, Jean Friend, of Bowers Beach, had not rescued her 10 years ago.

The vessel, which can occasionally be spotted by area residents in the Bowers Beach area, is believed to be the oldest, continuously working oyster schooner under sail in the United States.

"The moment we saw the Maggie, it was love at first sight," Friend said.

"She looks so cool," said Eicherly, its captain. "She's low to the water and dredges by hand. She turns on a song, like a snow goose flying around in the air."

These days, the ship is one of the few that still dredges oysters. However, because of conservation efforts, the amount of oysters she is allowed to take has diminished.

Its owners, while lamenting the old way of life, have been involved in conservation and preservation efforts.

"We're down to 60 bushels from 600 bushels somewhere between five and 10 years ago," Eicherly said.

The couple had planned to use the Maggie for pleasure when they bought her for \$5,000. But when their working boat the Phragmites was crushed by ice while sitting right next to the Maggie at their Bowers Beach dock, they put the oyster schooner to work. They dredged conchs, crabs and the amount of oysters allowed.

"She had holes the size of golf balls," Eicherly recalled. "Once we had 13 pumps to keep afloat. She looked like a fireboat. It took a hundred trips to get the down payment to take her to the rail."

When they had made enough money for the down payment to get her restored, they took her to a boatyard in New Jersey.

The ship was built as a two-masted schooner by Rice Brothers boat builders in Bridgeton, N.J., and has been in commission since 1893.

"Below deck the Maggie had four berths and a wood stove for cooking," Eicherly said. "In the early days when Maggie was working as an oyster schooner, before she was motorized, they would stay out all week. The oysters were piled so high the captain had to close the windows of the wheelhouse so the oysters wouldn't come through. The crew hurried to harvest the oysters by the end of the week so they could take them up to Philadelphia and sell them on Friday to get back home for the weekend to be with their families."

The couple loves telling similar stories. Ultimately, Eicherly and Friend want to use the Maggie Myers to educate the public about the life of the watermen on the bay.

"We want her to become an educational living museum. We want to pass her down as a living archive in Delaware."

ONLINE:

To see photos of the ship's ongoing restoration, go to www.flaniganbros.com.

ABOUT THE MAGGIE S. MYERS

The 115-year-old Delaware Bay dredge schooner must work to earn her keep. Her owners have taken her out on the bay to tag horseshoe crabs, in addition to dredging for conchs, crabs and oysters. She is listed on the National Historic Register. She is 50 feet long and 18 feet wide. The 24.62-ton schooner can carry her weight in oysters. In 2004, Maggie's mast and sails were restored. In 2007, she received a new bowsprit, the pole that extends forward from the front of the vessel, to which stays for the masts are secured.