

Toms River Seaport Society's New A Cat Building

By Patricia H. Burke



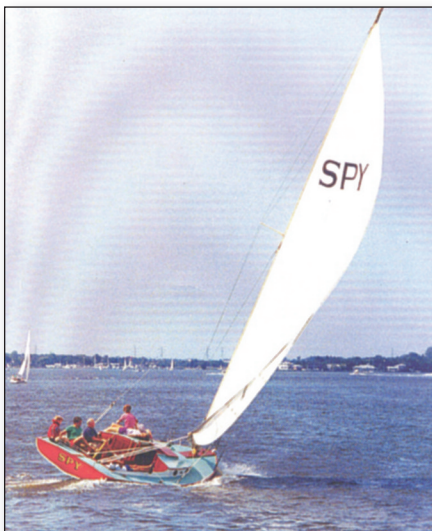
Photo Credit: Toms River Seaport Society

Artists' rendering of the new building

The Toms River Seaport Society & Maritime Museum is adding a new building to its site which will house the A Cat *Spy* and other Barnegat Bay watercraft. In the fall, site preparation was accomplished and the materials for the building were delivered. The severity of this past winter made it impossible to have the footings poured and to have construction begun. But soon that will all change and according to Society President Dan Crabbe, the new 36 foot x 30 foot building will be dedicated in late summer or early fall.

It will be an imposing museum building located on the corner of Water Street and Hooper Avenue in Toms River and it will make the Society's presence more visible. According to past president Jim Lenox, the building will double the display space for the Society's historic watercraft collection. It will house the A Cat *Spy* plus a Sea Bright Skiff built by Charles Hankins of Lavallette and a Jet-14 built in Island Heights by Howard Siddons and Harry Sindle.

The new building has been in the planning stage since 2001 when the Roy Wilkins family and the *Spy* Group donated the A Cat *Spy* to the Toms River Seaport Society. *Spy* was transported to the Independence Seaport Museum's Workshop on the Water, in Philadelphia, where it was cosmetically restored, not to be sailed again. After its restoration, *Spy* was displayed at Charles Hankins Boat Builders in Lavallette until the building was sold in 2008. *Spy* was then moved to de Rouville's Boat Shop in Bayville where it has remained in storage. *Spy* is one of the Barnegat Bay Class A Racing Catboats that has been placed on the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places.



Spy was built in 1924 at the Morton Johnson Boat Works in Point Pleasant, New Jersey. The first A Cat to be built was *Mary Ann* (1922) also built by Morton Johnson. The history of the A Cat fleet, beginning with the original seven, will be one of the exhibitions in the new museum building. The history of the Toms River Yacht Club's 1871 Challenge Cup, which is the second oldest American sailing trophy in continuous competition, second

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only to the America's Cup, will be highlighted in the new ACat Building. The A Cat fleet has raced for this cup since 1922. Since 1871 the race was "open to all yachts" but starting in 1922 only A Cats have won the Challenge Cup.

There will also be a Sea Bright Skiff, built by Charles Hankins of Lavallette, on display with a history of this indigenous watercraft. And there will be the Jet-14 sailboat, which was built in Island Heights by Howard Siddons and Harry Sindle, exhibited with the story of its local history.

The new museum building will help the society preserve the maritime history of the Barnegat Bay, the Toms River and the surrounding waters. It has the enthusiastic support of the Ocean County Board of Chosen Freeholders, especially Freeholder John C. Bartlett, Jr. who is the Seaport Society's liaison. The property is owned by the County of Ocean but all of the buildings have been paid for by the Seaport Society which is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization.

The historic watercraft collection has grown since the Seaport Society was founded in 1976. The collection includes the Barnegat Bay Sneakbox *Sheldrake* which was sailed by F. Slade Dale of Bay Head, an Eight Ball Sneakbox built by Alan Chadwick, a Perrine Sneakbox built in 1902, a Beaton Sneakbox, a 1963 Melges Boatworks E Scow, an M Scow, a circa 1940 chicken-breasted (wishbone) tunnel hull/pocket drive Garvey, a William Krippendorf Snipe, an Atlantic City Surf Lifesaving Rowing Skiff built by Stanley Van Sant, a 1936 Comet, a 1963 *Black Jack* Powerboat built by Hubert Johnson, a Beardslee Rowboat, a Diamond Sailboat, a Catboat, a 1943 Lightning built in Skaneateles, a 1937 Snyder Skiff, a G Sloop, an early 1900s Moth, and an Old Town Canoe. There are two boat sheds where the collection is displayed and the volunteers in the Joe Lappin Boat Restoration Workshop keep the boats in good condition. The Seaport Society's offices, library, and gift shop are housed in a restored carriage house.

The Maritime Museum is open on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. To schedule a group tour call **732-349-9209**. The Seaport Society's annual Wooden Boat Festival will be held on July 16, 2011, in Huddy Park, Toms River from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. For additional information go to www.tomsriverseaport.org.

Patricia H. Burke is the former Executive Director of the Toms River Seaport Society and Maritime Museum.



Ocean County Historical Society
25th Olde Time Antiques & Collectibles Faire

Saturday, September 3

9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Ocean County Parking Garage
(between Hooper and Madison Avenues,
Downtown Toms River)

www.oceancountyhistory.org

For Information: 732.341.1880

This popular event will include antique vendors and antique appraisals at \$5.00 per item, the offerings of food vendors, talented musicians in our Music Garden, early craft demonstrators in the OCHS Garden, and the works of local artists in the Artists' Garden. The Pineland Engine Club and antique cars will also be on display. Free tours of the OCHS Museum and its current exhibition, *When Chickens Roosted in Ocean County* are available. Test your luck to win the 50/50 Raffle!

