



Dear Friend of the Camden Shipyard Museum,

As you may know, we are in the midst of restoring the former Church of Our Saviour, located at Broadway and Viola Streets in Camden City, as the home of the new Camden Shipyard & Maritime Museum. The Museum will be a family oriented, interactive, cultural and educational facility situated in the heart of the historic district of Waterfront South. This maritime neighborhood is currently undergoing extensive revitalization with new housing, a new theater, parks, community center, and an arts complex. As a major component of this exciting renewal, the Museum will present a variety of programs and exhibitions related to local and regional maritime history and host a variety of recreational boating programs for children and their families.

The Museum has a special interest in developing programs and exhibits celebrating the quest to reach the North Pole by the internationally renowned Arctic explorers Admiral Robert and Mrs. Josephine Peary and Mr. Matthew Henson. Sadly, Henson, an African-American, saw his contributions go unrecognized at the time of the discovery of the North Pole. However belatedly, today both Henson and Peary are acknowledged as “Co-Discoverers” of the North Pole. This interest in establishing this Museum stems from the fact that both Robert Peary and Matthew Henson lived and worked locally and that local scientific institutions sponsored their famous Greenland expedition of 1891. Moreover, one of the buildings housing the Museum was constructed using ballast stones brought from Greenland in their ship the “Kite” after these famous explorations.

At our museum, we have already sponsored the building of two full sized replica’s of the dog sleds made by Henson to reach the North Pole. Also, the world’s only life sized statue of Henson and his faithful dog King designed by the renowned local artist, John Giannotti, graces the front of our museum. Each year, on April 6th the day he reached the Pole, we will offer a public celebration honoring Henson’s accomplishments.

Accordingly, I would like to invite you to attend our 3rd Annual Henson Day Celebration and Open House at the museum at 3:00 p.m., April 6th 2011 at 1910 Broadway in Camden, NJ.

We will offer a wonderful program of music and dramatic re-enactments by the Sacred Heart School Choir and local Camden artists. Our musical director, Richard Wolf, has composed beautiful new music for the occasion. There will be opportunity to meet with our architect William Leatherbee who will explain the plans for the museum, representatives of some of the museum’s partner organizations as well as members of local maritime organizations.

On April 6th we will also offer tours of our museum exhibits and our new boat shop, home to “Urban BoatWorks” a unique and inspiring program that combines wooden boatbuilding, swimming and sail-training. This program pairs city youth from local middle and high schools with adult mentors who guide the boatbuilding process. To date some ten full sized boats (row boats, sailboats and canoes) have been constructed, launched and skippered by the youths at the Cooper River Yacht Club in Collingswood.

So come by on April 6th to see the performance, as well as the boats and the sleds that are now on display at the museum; talk with the boatwrights, sled builders and see demonstrations of their skills. I look forward to welcoming you to our museum. Refreshments will be served. Parking is available on the street as well as in the new, secure parking lot located close to the museum on the 1800 block of Broadway.

This event is free and open to the public. While this event is free, I ask you to support the museum by becoming a Sponsor at this time. All funds collected will go towards the physical restoration and maintenance of the museum buildings. Our pledge form is on page two of this letter. We are a 501c3 organization staffed by volunteers. All donations are tax deductible.

Sincerely,

Michael H. Lang, Director
Camden Shipyard & Maritime Museum, Professor Emeritus, Rutgers U. Camden, NJ