



# THE NAVY YARD NEWS

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE FRIENDS OF THE CHARLESTOWN NAVY YARD

Summer 2011

## Museum Interprets 'Old Ironsides,' Plans a War Bicentennial Exhibit



**Old Ironsides' moves from her berth to make a 21-gun salute at Fort Independence to celebrate on the fourth of July.**



**"A Sailor's Life for Me" lets visitors imagine working on the Constitution in early 19th century at the Museum, but they make it fun.**

"It's a private nonprofit museum, on the grounds of a national park, that interprets a U.S. naval vessel," is the way Anne Grimes Rand places the USS Constitution Museum in Charlestown Navy Yard.

Many visitors arrive with multiple confusions — they've

walked the Freedom Trail seeing Revolutionary War sites only to jump forward in time to exhibits on the War of 1812; some people catch a glimpse of the World War II destroyer Cassin Young and think they are seeing "Old Ironsides;" other visitors arrive expecting to see the actual U.S. Constitution document! The museum helps unravel these melded strands of history in the Navy Yard.

Opened in 1976, the USS Constitution Museum was established to serve as the "memory and educational voice" of the world's oldest commissioned warship afloat, docked just a few hundred feet away.

Rand, who has been on the staff for 24 years, was appointed president in March 2010. Originally a curator, she has been active in museum societies nationally for many years. She is a graduate of Dartmouth College and Brown University, and started focusing on maritime history as an undergraduate. Over the past 10 years at the museum, Rand has led researchers to find biographical information on 1,180 enlisted crew members who served on "Constitution" in the War of 1812. Museum exhibits today tell many of the stories of those crew.

The USS Constitution Museum is easily accessible in the Navy Yard, admission by donation, seven days a week; it has developed its exhibits and programs for a range of ages, assuring a family that all members will find something of interest. And some families, Rand notes, have been known to come several times a week. Games engage the children, and adults delve more deeply into the layers of history of the ship and her crew. Last year the museum hosted 340,000 visitors.

Museum exhibits invite visitor participation, but before galleries are opened to the public, they may go through months of testing and refining. One notable exhibit received a national award this past May from the American Association of Museums "in recognition of the highest standards of excellence in the use of media and technology."

As a museum press release describes it, "this isn't your ordinary history lesson! Students, families and educators are invited to join the fight for freedom on the high seas when they virtually enlist as sailors on board "USS Constitution" and travel back in time to prepare for the War of 1812. Users can explore the ship, scrub

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## Summer Solstice Marks Longest Day

The Friends of the Charlestown Navy Yard held its annual Summer Solstice program in Shipyard Park on June 21, a day of high sunshine. The event was co-sponsored by the Boston Redevelopment Authority and Charlestown Against Drugs with assistance from the Charlestown

Working Theater. The Charlestown Mothers Association joined the Friends' celebration and announced their annual scholarship awards. The event was attended by approximately 200 children and adults. Magician Michael Bent performed for a rapt crowd of youngsters,

and Abrakidabra and the band Made in the Shade made music for all. Ice cream was provided by the Hood company. Co-sponsors and volunteers made this a very successful event.

— by Lois Siegelman,  
President, Friends of the  
Charlestown Navy Yard



**Troubadours "Made in the Shade" band lead the crowd through the park to celebrate solstice.**

## Museum *continued from page 1*

a filthy deck, or fire a cannon! Meeting real sailors who served on "Constitution" in 1812 helps today's online users feel connected and compels them not just to learn history, but experience it. The voyage of discovery on board "USS Constitution" through 'A Sailor's Life for Me!' is a primary example of what is truly at the heart of the Museum: education, interpretation and the memory of 'Old Ironsides.'"

"USS Constitution" was launched on October 21, 1797, saw service in the Barbary wars, then achieved its lasting fame during the War of 1812. The nickname "Old Ironsides" comes from its tough resistance to cannonballs from the British frigate "Guerriere", which in an August 19, 1812, skirmish, were deflected off a plank and dropped into the ocean, according to the museum's website. Seaman Moses Smith wrote, "This was afterwards noticed, and the cry arose: 'Huzza! Her sides are made of iron! See where the shot fell out!'" The website continues, "As early as 1813 both the press and the ship's officers used the name 'Old Ironsides' in print, and she



USS Constitution Museum President Anne Grimes Rand

has been called by that name ever since."

At Charlestown Navy Yard planning is intensifying and anticipation is building toward the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812, sometimes called America's Second War of Independence. Central to the

bicentennial event will be "Old Ironsides"; and the Navy and the museum are preparing for an international event focused on July 4, 2012.

Tall ships from many nations will arrive in a parade of sail after visiting four other American cities. The event is being planned by the U.S. Navy and OpSail. Anticipating the summer festivities, the museum will open the 1812 Discovery Center next spring -- an exhibit and program space where visitors can explore the causes, course, and impact of the War of 1812. Throughout this year, as planning progresses, as more information becomes available, the USS Constitution Museum may be the best source for events to come.

Here are some links for further exploration: *USS Constitution Museum:* <http://www.usconstitutionmuseum.org/about/index.htm> *War of 1812:* <http://www.history.navy.mil/ussconstitution/history.html> *A Sailor's Life for Me:* <http://www.asailorslifeforme.org/> *All Hands on Deck:* <http://www.allhandsondeck.org/>

## Gardening in the Yard



The Navy Yard's three traffic circles contribute soothing plant oases to the Yard's hard industrial character. And next to Eighth Street Circle at Flagship is a larger L-shaped garden edging HarborWalk. A few volunteers, who are chronically short of funds and regularly need additional help, maintain all the gardens. Contact people are: for Eighth Street, Dodie Boyle; for Ninth Street, Cathy Becker; and for Thirteenth Street, Kitty Moloney and Barbara Mackey. To reach these people,

contact the Friends of Charlestown Navy Yard at [info@friendscny.org](mailto:info@friendscny.org).



Oasis of plants in the three traffic circles are maintained by volunteers.



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The organization is a 501(c)3 non-profit.

# DEVELOPMENT in the NAVY YARD

The Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) owns approximately two-thirds of the Navy Yard, having acquired it from the federal government when U.S. Navy ceased operation of the shipyard in the late 1970s. The yard was split between the BRA, extending from Fifth Street to Yard's End, and the National Park Service which owns the portion from Fifth Street west. At the time of transfer, the BRA developed guidelines for development of parcels slated to be improved over time. Currently the BRA has three parcels in some stage of exploration for development: Parcel 39A, Pier 5, and the Chain Forge (Building 105).

The mission of the Friends of the Charlestown Navy Yard (FCNY) includes promoting responsible development while improving the quality of life for residents and visitors. FCNY follows projects in the pipeline and attempts to keep abreast of all the projects.

## Pier 5

The latest effort by the BRA to develop this vacant pier in front of Flagship Wharf, enters a new phase this summer. A Request for Proposals (RFP) issued on April 20 produced a single submission by the closing date of July 8. "We are studying it internally," says the BRA's Geoffrey Lewis, senior project manager, "so I cannot comment on it yet." Whereas in the past, the BRA has specified the type of use in its previous RFPs, this RFP was open ended.

The property, a nearly two-acre parcel, sits on a pier that has been closed to the public by chain-link fence for years. It is regarded as a prime parcel in the Navy Yard for its prominence among the piers, its harbor views, and its potential for development. There has been significant



**Pier 5 continues to produce weeds in one of the harbor's most prominent spots.**

deterioration of the pier which would require major work for a new development. Until now, the most recent attempt by the BRA to designate a developer came in 2005 and was later revoked. Controversy within the community continues over what that development should be.

For updated information later this summer, go to the Friends of the Charlestown Navy Yard website.

## Parcel 39A



**Parcel 39A on 1st Avenue and 9th Street remains vacant except for parking by the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA).**

Ten years ago, Kenney Development Co. received temporary designation as developer of the quarter-acre property known as Parcel 39A, at the corner of First Avenue and Ninth Street. The agreement specified the intended use to be commercial but the developer, encountering changing market conditions, attempted to change to residential use. However, the designation expired this spring with no development on the horizon.

The BRA expects to issue a new Request for Proposal later this summer to seek a new developer, according to the BRA's Lewis. "This time it will be wide open, similar to Pier 5," he said. "The applicant will need to conform to design guidelines, but the type of use will not be specified." He expects the process to take about three months.

## Chain Forge

The Chain Forge (Building 105) is one of the two great challenges in the Navy Yard for developers. (The other is the Rope Walk, Building 58.) According to an August 9, 2009, press release from Mayor Thomas M. Menino, the BRA granted tentative designation to the Kavanaugh Advisory Group LLC (KAG) of Danvers to develop Building 105. The announcement said that KAG is "seeking to redevelop the building in order to provide up to 100,000 square feet of laboratory/research space for the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary (MEEL). The BRA issued a Request for Interest (RFI) for the Chain Forge Building in September 2008. The purpose of the RFI was to ascertain private developer interest in and analysis of the feasibility to redevelop the Chain Forge Building..." Currently, according to Lewis, the designation has been renewed and Kavanaugh continues to develop a program, although no concrete proposals have been announced.

"There are huge issues with this building," Lewis says. "The machinery inside is gigantic, it's got historic designation, and is owned by the National Park Service. The forges and presses are 30 feet tall and made of solid steel." He referred to an informative video showing the machinery inside Chain Forge, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXveKuExkWI>, for an idea of the size of the machinery and historic footage showing its work in the 1940s.

Information on the building also appeared in articles on July 4 and 5 in the *Charlestown Patch*; background on Chain Forge is at this link: <http://charlestown.patch.com/articles/chain-forge-and-foundry#>.



**Early evening sunshine extends the day on the June 21st solstice celebration at Shipyard Park.**

**Comments? Questions? Letters to the Editor? Send an email to Friends of Charlestown Navy Yard at [info@friendscny.org](mailto:info@friendscny.org)**

## Dennis McLaughlin House, Home at the Inn

It was planned as part of the Constitution Inn, built in 1992, and continues today with the same mission in the same quarters. The Dennis McLaughlin House is a residential facility for 10 women at a time who have graduated from addiction programs and live here for up to 24 months as they make the transition to permanent housing and new lives.

Renee Suchy, executive director who heads a staff of three, says "Women get their sea legs here. There aren't many services like this for women. We work with a range of programs outside the center, so this is their residence and the women go out to various support programs. They are required to either work or go to school for at least 20 hours a week. And they pay 30 percent of their income as rent," she says.

The Dennis McLaughlin House occupies a corridor in the Constitution Inn containing 10 efficiency rooms, an office, and a children's playroom. The young women residents can have their children under 10 years old with them, and for many, that means reunifying a family.

Residents spend their time in support programs, at school, or at work. Most are taking major steps by reentering the job market or importantly, to Suchy, advancing their education. Typically, over the years, approximately 25 women annually benefit from living there. "Women need to negotiate their way back into a stable world," says Suchy, and living there provides that opportunity.



**Space is tight at Dennis McLaughlin House. Executive Director Renee Suchy shows ways they manage to store donated goods for the residents — in an unused shower.**

Outside organizations that run programs and services in collaboration with the McLaughlin House include Charlestown Health Center of MGH, Horizons for Homeless Children, Home Start, Bunker Hill Community College, and Charlestown Community Center.

The Horizons program, for example, meets in a colorful playroom where volunteers come in the evening to play with the children and create an environment of

"learning readiness," says Suchy, who has managed the residence since 1999.

The impetus for this transitional housing facility came from Dennis McLaughlin, a Charlestown community leader who became engaged with the idea of a transitional home for young women, but who, regrettably, died before he could see his idea realized. The board then chose to name the facility after him, and following initial planning, the house welcomed its first families in 1995.

As might be expected, there is a year round need for donated goods. Suchy lists the following as among the staples always needed:

- Housewares (dishes, utensils, pots & pans, mugs, glasses)
- Toiletries (for hair and skin, toothbrushes, toothpaste)
- First aid (band aids, infant & children's analgesics, thermometers)
- Linens (crib sheets, bumpers, twin sheets, pillows, blankets)
- Household items (round tablecloths, picture frames, shower curtains, area rugs, towels)
- Baby items (cribs, high chairs, strollers, diapers)
- Women's and children's clothing and shoes
- And, donations of cash are always welcome.

Arrangements for donations may be made by calling the executive director at 617 242 0251.

### "Go Fish" Food Truck

The Navy Yard will have a new lunch option on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays starting in late July. "Go Fish" food truck will arrive on First Avenue, near Fifth Street and Terry Ring Road for mid-day meals from 11:00 to 2:30. Expect to find New England classics — chowder, fried fish sandwich, smoked cod cakes — but not convenience store items such as soda, chips, and snacks, says Chef/proprietor David Stein. Boston's food trucks, have been licensed to serve their specialties throughout neighborhoods and downtown in the past year. Stein knows the Navy Yard from his previous stint as executive chef at the MGH facility. Check his website for more information: <http://www.brothertrucker.biz>



### HarborWalk Evaluation

The Boston Harbor Association's (TBHA) "Grading the HarborWalk" Day on May 21 was the first-ever effort to involve citizens in evaluating the 39-mile HarborWalk public access system. Charlestown volunteers noted that significant progress had been made in the past decade to complete the HarborWalk system.

High traffic areas, like the segment around Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) facilities, were observed to be well maintained with little litter. Suggestions for improvement include the need for more HarborWalk signage; repairs to Pier 6 and Dry Dock 2, where the boardwalk is currently decayed and difficult for the public, including those with limited mobility, to access; and the need for more public rest rooms along the HarborWalk. Paul Revere Park was also

cited in need of better upkeep, including the need for mowing, pruning, and weeding, as well as the need for dog owners to clean up after their dogs. A fall tour of Charlestown's HarborWalk by TBHA is being planned; for more information, please visit [www.tbha.org](http://www.tbha.org).

— by Vivian Li, President, The Boston Harbor Association



### CALENDAR

- Daily: *USS Constitution*, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
- Daily: *USS Constitution Museum*, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.
- Daily: *Tours of USS Cassin Young* in Drydock 1. Call 617-242-5601 for details.
- Aug 11, 6-8 p.m. *Harvard Jazz Band*. Shipyard Park. Friends of Charlestown Navy Yard
- Aug 19, 1:30-3:00 p.m. *Dog Gone Birthday Bash*, USS Constitution Museum, commemorating the naming of "Old Ironsides."

*All events are free of charge.*