



## Delaware Bay

### I. SYNOPSIS

Local historian Donald H. Rolfs says that the town of Bivalve on the Maurice River in southern New Jersey was once the center of oystering on Delaware Bay. At one time the river was lined with wooden schooners used to dredge oysters on the bay. He explains that oystering is a lot like farming in that the baby oysters are dredged up from the "seed grounds" and then dumped in the "planting grounds" to grow to maturity. Finally, they are dredged up again and brought to the packing plant. Oystering under sail was a natural conservation method, but eventually the boats were converted to power.

John DuBois describes how he learned to build wooden boats by observing men working in the shipyards. Eventually, he bought his own shipyard and began building and maintaining oyster schooners. He says the oystermen used to talk about the boats in human terms: boats are "christened," they "breathe," they "die," and they are "put in coffins." Oysterman Fenton Anderson tells a story about how in the old days "they didn't talk about the boat, they talked about the man."

Mr. DuBois talks about the schooner Isaac Evans that was abandoned along the Maurice River, but was purchased by an individual from Maine and restored to sail. That individual was Doug Lee from Camden, Maine, who describes how he bought the Isaac Evans and now uses it in the windjammer business. The video clip ends with a re-enactment of a race between two New Jersey schooners on Penobscot Bay.

### II. KEY WORDS

**Schooner** - A wooden, sailboat with two masts

**Oyster** - A bivalve shell fish

**Bivalve** - a shell fish with two shells, such as an oyster or a clam. Also, the name of a town in southern New Jersey

**Dredge** - A metal scoop that is dragged along the bottom of the bay to bring up or harvest oysters. Also, used as a verb, i.e., to dredge for oysters

**Caulking** - To make a wooden boat watertight by installing a cloth material between the wooden planks.

**Historic Restoration** - To fix up an antique object, such as a house or a piece of furniture or a boat, so that it works or appears as if it were new.

**Windjammer** - A schooner restored to sail and used to take tourists on cruises.

### **III. SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES**

#### **A. SCHOONER HISTORY**

##### **1. Objective**

Students will understand a region by studying an example of the material culture from that region.

##### **2. Before Viewing the Program**

The teacher should download and reproduce the Schooner History question sheet. She should begin the class by having a student volunteer locate Delaware Bay on a map of New Jersey. She should then explain that they will be seeing one or several video clips about a boat type built in New Jersey and used in oystering on Delaware Bay. She should define all or some of the key terms listed above. Finally, the teacher should distribute and go over the questions and ask the class to pay special attention to finding the answers while they view the program.

##### **3. After Viewing the Program**

The teacher should divide the class into groups of four and ask the students to discuss and write the answers to the questions on their sheets. Then, she should reconvene the entire class to go over their answers.

## **B. HISTORIC RESTORATION**

### **1. Objective**

Students will analyze how the restoration of material culture helps bring history alive.

### **2. Before Viewing the Program**

The teacher should download and reproduce Schooner History and the Schooner Restoration question sheets. She should do both Activity A and Activity C together in order to be able to answer all the questions. Then the teacher should explain that the class will be seeing a video clip about the restoration of boat type built along Delaware Bay and used in oystering. She should define all or some of the key terms listed above. Finally, the teacher should distribute and go over the questions and ask the class to pay special attention to finding the answers while they view the program.

### **3. After Viewing the Program**

The teacher should divide the class into groups of four and ask the students to discuss and write the answers to the questions on their sheets. Then, she should reconvene the entire class to go over their answers. If the teacher is using more than one activity, she should reconvene the class after showing all the video clips.

## **IV. SUGGESTED READING**

Cohen, David Steven. "Traditional Boats," pp. 112.-123. In *The Folklore and Folklife of New Jersey*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1983.

Rolfs, Donald H. *Under Sail: The Dredgeboats of Delaware Bay*. Millville: Wheaton Historical Association, 1971.