



*Published in the Sun Herald on Wednesday, Oct. 30, 2013

Museum celebrates shrimping heritage

When Katrina blew through the Coast in 2005, she took one of Biloxi's most prized possessions — The Maritime & Seafood Industry Museum located at the tip of Point Cadet. The old Coast Guard barracks building constructed in 1935 that housed the museum sustained a devastating washout and only a few hints of heritage were left behind.

However, like the sunrise that has greeted fishermen on Gulf waters for decades, residents and visitors will be given a new museum that shines a great light on a place that was once known as the Seafood Capital of the World. The grand opening of the 20,000-square-foot, multi-level Point Cadet building is scheduled for May 2014.

Robin Krohn-David, executive director of the museum for the last 25 years, says rebuilding the museum is a cause for celebration that honors the backbreaking work of past generations dedicated to the seafood industry, but also leaves a legacy for present and future generations to always know what built the Gulf Coast.

“It’s so important to have this museum because it is made of all the families and ancestors that ever worked or had anything to do with the seafood and maritime industry,” Krohn-David said. “This is our history and heritage. This was our livelihood, and the seafood industry is what put Biloxi and the rest of the Gulf Coast on the map. This museum is all about keeping that history alive so we can still teach all of our children how important our seafood was to us and still is.”

Although shrimping, oystering and crabbing are the three primary seafood pursuits that will be covered in the museum, Krohn-David says it’s the shrimping industry that gave Biloxi the renowned title as the Seafood Capital of the World. To commemorate this significant piece of history, multiple exhibits will showcase various aspects of how shrimp became the Coast’s lifeline.

Dr. Val Husley, owner of Husley & Sons, specializes in exhibit design and construction, artifact restoration and extensive research. After spearheading the museum’s opening in 1986, as well as a major renovation and expansion in 2003, the knowledgeable veteran is

once again at the helm of the project because Krohn-David says “he knows our history inside and out.”

Husley has poured hours of research into the new museum, collected thousands of photographs, and has secured unique artifacts such as a shrimp peeling machine, a steam kettle that factories used to cook shrimp in the can, and a labeling machine for cans. In addition, exhibits will feature the history of shrimping dating back to Native Americans, factories and factory labor, fishermen, fishing vessels, and more.

“There are so many stories out there about shrimping that it’s mind blowing,” Husley said. “By the time you get to the 1920s, Biloxi is No. 1 in the world in shrimp production. This museum is a way to show where Biloxi came from.”

To learn more about The Maritime & Seafood Industry Museum, and to keep up to date with the building progress, visit www.maritimemuseum.org, or visit the museum’s temporary location in Edgewater Mall.

This story is part of the Gulf Coast Seafood Fall Shrimp Celebration, a campaign by the Mississippi Hospitality & Restaurant Association and its partners Gulf Seafood Trace and the Gulf Seafood Marketing Coalition to promote area restaurants serving traceable Gulf shrimp. Visit gulfshrimptales.com to learn more about Gulf shrimp and the celebration.