

Cape-tip trap boat hauled from grave

By MARY KLEIN
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PROVINCETOWN — The last Provincetown trap boat in its original condition was salvaged this week through the efforts of the local historical association.

For the past 11 years the 60-year-old Charlotte lay abandoned on the beach by the West End breakwater. When Provincetown's trap fishing industry died, the vessel's last owner, George Colley, put the suddenly useless vessel in the town's ship graveyard.

The boat was partially covered by water at high tide and became encased in mud. Under such adverse conditions, time has not been kind to it. The weather-beaten Charlotte became worm infested and decayed.

When the president of the historical association, Cyril Patrick, spotted the derelict vessel several years ago he felt that it should be saved. The Charlotte is one of the last historical links the town has with its trap fishing era. But the association could not afford to restore the boat.

But last fall the situation brightened. George Colley gave the boat to the historical association. The Cape Cod Technical Regional Vocational High School offered to restore the Charlotte for the cost of materials plus 15 per cent of that cost to cover miscellaneous expenses. The project will be done by students and will provide them with invaluable hands-on experience, Patrick noted.

Then several other people "generously donated their services," to get the vessel to the school, Patrick continued. Provincetown contractor Warren (Pinky) Silva Jr. offered to remove the boat from the beach at cost. Because his crane was not large enough to lift the boat 12 feet up from its beach site, Silva contacted Frederick Pina who operates a crane service in Harwich. He also offered to do the job at cost.

The only remaining problem was how to transport the 40 by 14 foot boat to Harwich. Philip Deschamps of the Nauset Marine shop in Orleans solved it by volunteering the use of a flat trailer.

The water logged boat, which Silva es-

timated to weigh 14 tons, had to be lifted over a stone wall located at the west end of the Provincetown Inn, over a four-foot fence and onto the truck. One of the workmen noted that the problem was not just to remove it, but to remove it in one piece.

After digging the boat out of the mud, the work crew attached wire cables around it and a nylon sling. Next they braced the inside ribs with wood planks to prevent them from cracking. As the crane began to lift it, the Charlotte creaked and groaned, but did not come apart. The operation was successful.

The workmen had initially attempted the project on Monday, but the strong winds on that rainy, cold day curtailed their efforts. They were afraid that the wind would knock over the crane. They returned to the project when the weather cleared up on Wednesday.

After the vessel is restored the historical association will donate it to the Provincetown Heritage Museum, Patrick said. The museum will probably build a structure to house it, he added.

The association is planning to hold a fund raising buffet dinner at the Moors restaurant on May 31 to help pay for the trap boat project. The dinner will cost \$10 a plate.

The Charlotte has a long and productive history. The True family of Amesbury built it in 1918, Joseph Oliver, one of the boat's former owners, said. The boat was then purchased by the Provincetown Cold Storage company.

The next owner was Fillmore Miller who sold it to the Monument Fish Company. Oliver, along with four partners, bought it for \$500 in 1955 and eight years later sold it to Colley.

Oliver, 75, named the vessel after his younger sister. He was the skipper and employed a four-man crew. It was not a fast moving boat, he said, as its engine was only 12 horsepower. But the Charlotte was seaworthy, Oliver fondly recalled, and he earned a good living trap fishing.

"I'm tickled to death that she's being saved. The best part of my life was spent on that boat."



(Staff Photo by Mary Klein)

The archaic trap boat, Charlotte, this week was gingerly hoisted out of the mud and water on the beach by the West End breakwater in Provincetown, where she had been neglected for the last 11 years. Her destiny now is to be restored by Cape Tech students, then dry docked at the Provincetown Heritage Museum.