



Historic Oyster cannon on display at Discovery Center

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POCOMOKE CITY -- The Maryland Department of Natural Resources is pairing with the Delmarva Discovery Center to exhibit a historic cannon -- a relic of the Oyster Police of the 1800s -- from now until Sept. 12.

The cannon was used to protect the Chesapeake Bay's oysters during the "Oyster Wars" of the 19th century.

"We are thrilled to have this wonderful piece of DNR and Chesapeake Bay history on display. The Oyster Wars were a dramatic time in the history of the bay and are part of the history of so many communities on the Eastern Shore," said Brian Garrett, executive director at the center.

The center has exhibits that highlight the culture of the bay in the 1900s and the cannon adds a unique and tangible perspective on this turbulent period of time.

The cannon was acquired by Hunter Davidson, the first Commander of the State Oyster Police Force, in 1868. It was installed on the original steam-powered patrol boat of Maryland's "Oyster Navy," the Leila.

In 1884, this ship was replaced by Governor R. M. McLane, which fought many spectacular battles against the oyster pirates.

The McLane was equipped with a 12-pound Dahlgren boat howitzer in 1888. While accounts are not definitive, authorities believe that this gun may have been the original cannon from the Leila.

DNR acquired the cannon in December from the American Legion Post 116, which owned it since 1950s. The Legion regularly loaned it to a group of Civil War re-enactors who took part in the North-South Skirmish Association competitions.

For more information, visit dnr.maryland.gov/mdconservationhistory/Oyster_Wars_Cannon.asp.

The center is open from 10 a.m.- 4 p.m., seven days a week. Call or visit www.delmarva.discoverycenter.org.

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