

## A Tall Ship for Washington

A few years from now, along the Anacostia River, Washingtonians will see something new rising up on the waterfront. Two tall masts will tower over the landscape, the signs of a new project bringing the adventure of sailing and the story of America's maritime history to the people of Washington, D.C., the metropolitan area, and the nation.

The masts will stretch up from the deck of the tall ship *Spirit of Enterprize*, a topsail schooner 140 feet long and weighing 160 tons. The ship will be modeled on an illustrious ancestor, the *Enterprize*, which defended American shores and shipping some 200 years ago.

The *Spirit of Enterprize* is the centerpiece of a new maritime center under development by the National Maritime Heritage Foundation. The National Maritime Heritage Foundation will build the ship right on the Washington waterfront. By constructing the *Spirit of Enterprize* in the nation's capital, local residents will have a stake in the project and a chance to watch the progress of their tall ship from keel to topmasts. The Maritime Heritage Shipyard will be a working re-creation of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century original. Carpenters, joiners, caulkers, and other workers will demonstrate time-honored techniques for contemporary visitors and teach children and adults some of the basics of shipbuilding. More experienced volunteers will use their time and skills to build a proud symbol of the capital's capital. Day by day, the ship will take shape, from a wooden skeleton to a sleek, solid vessel.

From the moment of the ship's christening, the *Spirit of Enterprize* will be a floating classroom, part of the long and exciting story of American maritime history. For every visitor who steps aboard, the ship holds a hands-on lesson about the lives of seamen, the beauty and craftsmanship of wooden sailing vessels, and the importance of waterborne commerce in building Washington, D.C. and the nation. The true ability of a tall ship is to teach.

The *Spirit of Enterprize* will be a grand addition to the existing programs of the National Maritime Heritage Foundation. Located near the tall ship, National Maritime Heritage Foundation plans to build and berth the ship, new Community Sailing Center gives visitors and residents the chance to enjoy ongoing programs, such as Kids Set Sail and DC Sail, which have brought the excitement of sailing to local residents for many years. A smaller vessel, the schooner *American Spirit*, continues to offer Washingtonians and others the experience of sailing, sailing education, and pleasure trips for groups and special events.

The ship will be a working vessel, too, and a source of support for the initiatives of the Foundation. The *Spirit of Enterprize* will be available for cruises and special events, and shipmates from landlubbers to experienced sailors can improve their skills with the guidance of her professional crew. Another vital role for the *Spirit of Enterprize* will be to help Americans understand the central role of sailing vessels in the nation's history.

When its sails fill with wind and the *Spirit of Enterprize* slices down the Potomac into Chesapeake Bay and beyond, the ship becomes Washington's ambassador. On every voyage and at every port, the ship represents the city. Port cities across the globe host international gatherings of tall ships, and at these celebrations the city and the nation will have representation in the *Spirit of Enterprize*

The Potomac and Anacostia Rivers put the city of Washington on the map, but today's Washingtonians have lost touch with the water. Two hundreds years ago, the United States was a maritime nation, linked internally and internationally by waterways and oceans. The navigable channels of Washington's two rivers helped persuade George Washington to locate the nation's capital here, and he envisioned the city as a major inland seaport—a connection between the commerce of the Ohio Valley, the Chesapeake, and the ports of Europe.

For a century, immigrants, soldiers, slaves, statesmen, and other Americans entered and left the city at the waterfront, which was piled high with tobacco, flour, fish, and the rest

of the nation's commerce. For much of its history, the city of Washington lived on the water. *The Spirit of Enterprize* will be a symbol of this maritime heritage and will allow modern Washingtonians to reconnect with their rivers.

The *Spirit of Enterprize* also has an important role to play in revitalizing the Anacostia Waterfront. Today, the city center had been the focus of development, and city planners are looking for ways to enlarge the circle of attractions that draw millions of tourists every year. The areas on both sides of the river are the best candidates for the next wave of development in Washington. Along with a new baseball stadium and other attractions, the *Spirit of Enterprize* will help bring the waterfront inside that circle and bring new business and opportunity to the river's edge. The community sailing center and the educational programs of the National Maritime Heritage Foundation will allow families closest to the new development to share in its benefits as the new maritime center will be a neighborhood resource as well as a national destination.

In the future, the *Spirit of Enterprize* may be only a first step—building the ship could open the way to a grander attraction. The Foundation is developing long-range plans for a Washington Maritime Center on the waterfront for sustainability of its programs. This facility is envisioned as a maritime museum, sailing school, and research center—with exhibition space, maritime collections, theaters, classrooms, activity centers, a maritime art gallery, a restaurant, retail stores, and a re-creation of historic shops and business that lined 19<sup>th</sup>-century waterfronts. The museum will include immersive experiences, such as a “Storm at Sea,” playscapes where visitors can safely “climb the rigging” or load and fire a cannon, a daily live maritime show, a navigation simulator, and much more. And the surrounding waterfront will harbor tall ships and small, to offer Washingtonians and other visitors everything from sailing classes to sea voyages.