

Deibert Bros. Barge Building at Elk Landing

In 1887 barge and boat building began on the Little Elk Creek by Henry Deibert of Landingville, Pennsylvania. Henry brought his family and 7 workmen to Elkton in preparation to build schooner barges and canal boats. The shipbuilding soon expanded under Henry and his sons. Consequently, a second yard was established nearer the Hollingsworth House at Elk Landing and was known as E. (Elmore) Deibert and Bros.

The Deibert's, along with other boat building operations built "Schooner Barges." Schooner barges played a short but important role in maritime history. A schooner barge was a vessel that was towed from port to port by a tugboat, usually 2-3 at a time and sometimes up to 6 at one time. It was different from other barges as it had some sails that were reduced in size from those found on a traditional schooner.

Business was brisk and by 1902 the Deibert's had constructed upwards of 70 barges. By 1906 the business had more than doubled, requiring a third yard and allowing three barges to be built at a time.

Elmore Deibert was forced to move to Chesapeake City in 1911 when the U.S. Government decided to stop dredging the Elk River causing silt to fill the waterways. They continued to build barges as large as 235 feet and were the largest industry in town employing 90 to 100 men.

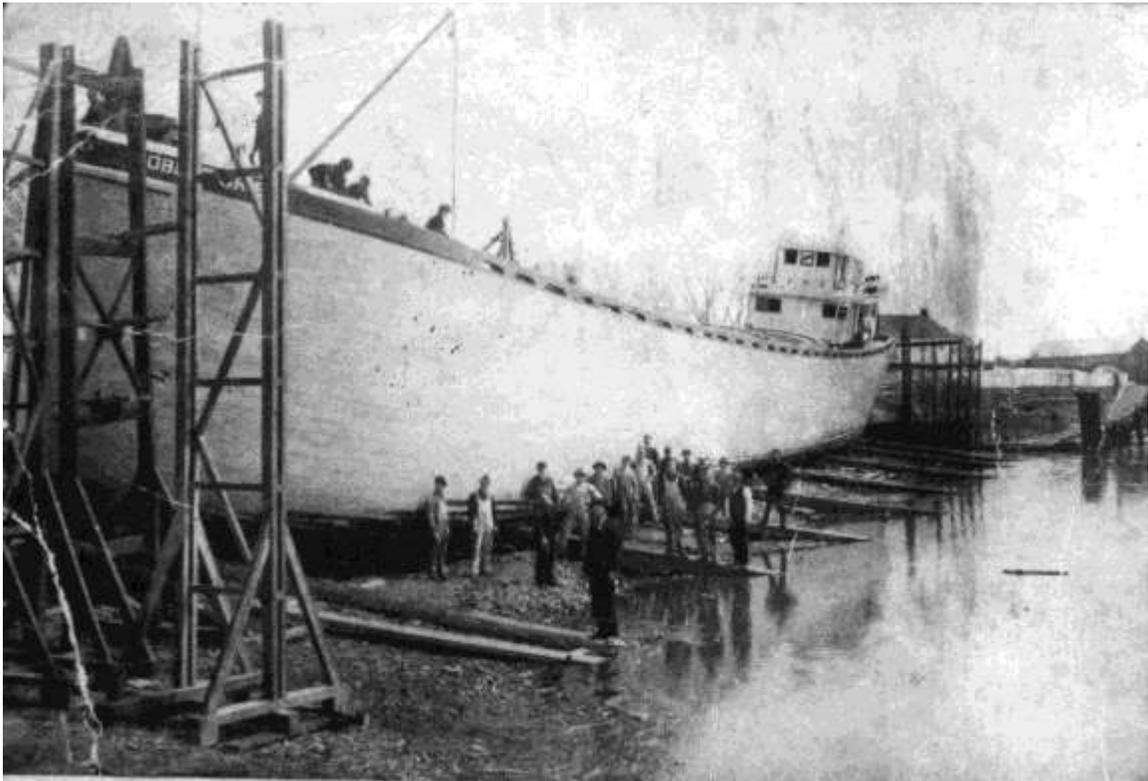
The Southern Transportation Company (STC) bought many of Deibert's barges and in 1913 the STC bought the Deibert yard. The Deibert's had not wanted to sell but the STC was building their new yard which would have eventually forced Deibert out of business.



The 193 ft. barge “Wicomico” built in 1902. Carrying capacity of barges ranged from 100 to 900 tons. Construction averaged only about 2 months and cost for a completed boat ranged from \$1,250 to \$11,250.

About 20 skilled and rough carpenters, caulkers and laborers were employed. The men worked through heat and cold as the boat yard scarcely shut down. Employment could reach as high as 45 hands increasing the payroll to \$1,500 a month.

Notice the Old Stone house, in the background, which still stands today.



Mr. Elmore Deibert (in suit) and his brother Mr. William Deibert, foreman, (in overalls) pose in front of the “Robert Green” with their workers for a 1905 postcard print.



Workers outfitting anchor chain on the “Arundel” in the lower yard nearer the Hollingsworth House. She was 215 ft. long, 30 ft. wide and 25 ft. deep. Notice the large expanse of marshland across the Elk Creek in the area of Fort Defiance.

Excerpts from a local 1909 Newspaper Article

BUILDING BOATS AND BARGES

Deibert Bros. Busy Yard Which Runs Continually the Whole Year Round
A FINE THRIVING PLANT AT ELK LANDING WHERE BUSINESS STEADILY
BOOMS

“One of the most important industrial features of Elkton is the work of building canal-boats and barges carried on at Elk Landing.”

“The excellence of the work done by the Messrs. Deibert is shown by the constancy of orders that come to them.”

“The Messrs. Deibert have done and are doing good service to the community as is shown by the amount of money which they have distributed here for work of all kinds, which will reach, if it does not pass, the \$150,000 mark.”



Photograph courtesy of The Historical Society of Cecil County, Maryland.

The “John H. McNally” being launched sideways on large oak timbers called “ways”. This was a delicate operation as the barge slid, at a 16 degree angle, down the greased ways into the creek. After launching the vessels were towed to their destinations, mostly in Baltimore and Philadelphia.

Notice the “Clayton House”, in the background on Landing Lane, which is now a beautifully restored residential stone home.