It all started in 1985 when an idealistic young woman from Millville began a search to find herself and her “place.” It was a quest that took her ultimately to work on the “Tall Ship for Texas” and a realization that the sea and ships were magical places that she wanted to become part of.

The woman was Meghan Wren, who was to return to her hometown of Millville and, three years later, begin the restoration of the A.J. Meerwald, now known as the official “tall ship” of New Jersey. She said part of her motivation was to “build a persona for the Delaware Bay, one that celebrates pride of place.”

The vessel is celebrating its 85th birthday, and the organization that transformed her from an oyster dredging schooner into an educational and touring vehicle—the Bayshore Center in Bivalve, Commercial Township—is celebrating its 25th anniversary. Now Executive Director of the Bayshore Center, Ms. Wren comments, “The most amazing aspect of the Bayshore Center is the community of wonderful people who have pitched in to bring it to life.”

To mark the occasion, the Bayshore Center designated its monthly Second Friday event on Sept. 13 as an apt time to honor both the Meerwald and the organization. In the Gallery, the new exhibit, “Salute to a Schooner: A Visual Celebration of the A.J. Meerwald” featured images of the ship throughout the years in several kinds of media, including paintings, drawings, and photographs. It was also the setting for tasting the official birthday cake.

Oyster Fest, a Major Event
The anniversary celebration will continue at the annual “Oyster Fest” on Nov. 1 at the Greenview Inn of Eastlyn Golf Course in Vineland. The evening features oysters served every which way: oysters Rockefeller, oyster stew, and fried oysters. There is also an ample selection of non-seafood items for those who prefer them. A silent art auction will also be part of the attractions. For tickets at $85 per person, visit the web site at www.bayshorecenter.org.

History
The Bayshore Center at Bivalve was founded in 1988 to “motivate people to take care of the history, the culture and the environment of New Jersey’s Bayshore region through education, preservation and example.” First came the restoration of the Meerwald as a sailing classroom. Next the Bivalve Center was created—Bayshore’s Maurice Riverfront home where the restored 1904 Bivalve Shipping Sheds and Wharves serve as a maritime center of national significance, home port to the Meerwald and the Delaware Bay Museum & Folklife Center.

Launched in 1928, the A.J. Meerwald was one of hundreds of schooners built along South Jersey’s bayshore before the decline of the shipbuilding industry, which coincided with the Great Depression.

Today, the A.J. Meerwald is used by the Bayshore Center for onboard educational programs in the Delaware Bay near Bivalve, and at other ports in the New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware region.

The A.J. Meerwald was added to the National Register of Historic Places on November 7, 1995.
For 42 consecutive years, the riverside town of Greenwich, has welcomed hundreds of visitors interested in the handiwork of skilled crafts people and artists from all over the northeast to the Greenwich Artisans’ Faire & Marketplace.

This year’s annual weekend celebration on September 28 and 29 is an authentic representation of an early American rendezvous of farmers, artisans, entertainers, cooks and bakers. Held on the grounds of a restored colonial residence—the 1730 Gibbon House—the Faire is open to the public on Saturday from 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. and Sunday from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M., rain or shine. The admission fee is $5. Children 12 and under are admitted free. Parking is free.

Demonstrations, Exhibits

More than 40 artisans and craftsmen (10 new crafters this year) from throughout New Jersey and Pennsylvania will visit the fairgrounds. The artisans will demonstrate the crafts of weaving, spinning, knitting, lace making, basketry, jewelry-making, red-ware fabrication, pottery and folk art. The exhibits include homemade honey, brooms, woodcarving, all-natural soaps, leather bags, wreaths, floral designs, woodworking, whimsical seasonal ornaments, homemade jams and jellies, cloth dolls, fairies, watercolor paintings, clay items, photography, ready-made food mixes, famous barbecue sauces, scrollwork in wood, and much more.

The blue grass and country music band, Home Cookin,’ will provide free, live “family style” entertainment during the weekend. For the children, there will be face painting and more. And be sure to stop by the Lummis Library to see the display of local Civil War memorabilia.

Fireplace cooking demonstrations may be seen in the colonial kitchen of the Gibbon House. In addition, you may tour the Alan Ewing Carman Museum of Prehistory in Cumberland County and visit the John DuBois Maritime Museum. They are all in walking distance of the Craft Faire.

New Jersey’s official tall ship—the 1928 Schooner A. J. Meerwald—will be docked at Greenwich at the town’s Hancock Harbor Marina. For information about the ship’s cruises, contact the Meerwald Project Office at 856-785-2060.

Those with questions concerning the Craft Faire or antique appraisals, may call the Cumberland County Historical Society at 856-455-8580.