

NEWS RELEASE

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Change of Command

Will Gates to turn over command of Maryland Dove after 34 years of service

St. Mary's County native Angela Laaro is scheduled to assume duties from Will Gates as master of *Maryland Dove* during a change-of-command ceremony at 10:30 a.m. July 13 at Historic St. Mary's City (HSMC) waterfront.

Maryland Dove is Historic St. Mary's City's floating ambassador and one of its most popular exhibits. The wooden ship design is based on the original *Dove*, a 17th-century trading ship that sailed to the Maryland colony with *Ark* in 1634.

Angela Laaro embarked on her museum journey at the age of fourteen through HSMC's Terra Mariae Society homeschool program. Initially, she volunteered at the plantation exhibit area before transitioning to the *Maryland Dove* under the mentorship of Will Gates. This experience sparked Angela's fascination with sailing and maritime commerce. A St. Mary's College of Maryland graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology, Angela Laaro now serves as the Sailing Yacht Charter Chef and Captain at Paradise Yacht Management, offering all-inclusive trips in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Previously, she held roles as the Fleet Manager and Captain at Buffalo Boat Tours, overseeing the day-to-day operations of various sailing vessels in Buffalo Harbor and Lake Erie. These vessels included the *Spirit of Buffalo*, a 72 ft Square Topsail Schooner, *Harbor Queen*, a 63 ft Double Decker Catamaran, and *Big Kahuna*, a 50 ft Pontoon. In 2020, Laaro captained the Junk-rigged Schooner *Summer Wind*, a 49 ft steel-hulled vessel with a single engine in Baltimore. She also gained experience on the tall ship *Lynx*, a replica War of 1812 Square Topsail Schooner, serving as the Chief Mate, supervising a crew of 6-12 during educational sails and voyages along the East and Gulf coasts.

Will Gates has been master of the *Maryland Dove* for over thirty-four years, and during that time has overseen the build of a new *Maryland Dove* and a new dock, and educated countless people on maritime history and sailing. Captain Gates began his career apprenticing as a rigger at [Mystic Seaport Museum](#) where he became interested in history, specifically the sailing and rigging trades. Gates graduated with high honors from Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, where he studied Geography and Archaeology. While in college Will attended Archaeology Field School at [Old Sturbridge Village](#). He served as their first Archaeology Intern, and then volunteered as an excavation supervisor for two additional summers. From 1978 to 1984 Gates alternated between educational sailing and historic rigging projects, including several trips along the East Coast from Maine to the Caribbean aboard Schooner *Harvey Gamage* with the “Seamester” program, Southern New England cruises with Schooner *Rachael & Ebenezer*, and built a new rig for the 1877 iron barque [Elissa](#) in Galveston, Texas. In 1984 Captain Gates took a position as Chief Rigger aboard the [Mayflower II](#) in Plymouth, Massachusetts, and then joined HSMC in 1989 as the Captain of *Maryland Dove*.

Will Gates retired from Historic St. Mary’s City in December but has been volunteering his time to help ease the transition before Laaro takes over the command.

“I am beyond excited to bring my maritime career full circle with HSMC! Captain Gates has, throughout my career, been an incredible friend and mentor.” wrote Angela Laaro. “ From the early days of teaching me to tie a bowline with my eyes closed, to providing support, resources, and connections while I grew and studied for my licenses, Will has always made me at home onboard *Dove* and at home on the water. Will has always inspired a family-like crew atmosphere, building us up, teaching new skills, and providing opportunities to encourage growth as a mariner. I hope to continue in his footsteps, providing opportunities for other mariners, young and old, to explore the freedom of the water and the fantastic history of this region we call home.”

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