In 2001, the Bayshore Center at Bivalve purchased six sheds with funds from the Cumberland County Empowerment Zone. One shed was purchased in 1995. By 2011, the sheds had been restored to their 1920s appearance with funds provided by the New Jersey Historic Trust and New Jersey Department of Transportation.

The sheds serve as a “portal of discovery” for the history, culture, and environment of the Delaware Bayshore region; are the home port for New Jersey’s Official Tall Ship, the 1928 schooner A.J. Meerwald; house the Delaware Bay Museum; and stand as a regional green practices site, showcasing the use of recycled materials, alternative energy sources and other eco-friendly options.

The mission of the Bayshore Center at Bivalve is to advance the understanding of the human impact on New Jersey’s aquatic environment through education, advocacy, and programming.

Bayshore Center at Bivalve
2800 High Street (Bivalve)
Port Norris, New Jersey 08349
(856) 785-2060
www.bayshorecenter.org

Funding for this brochure was made possible with a grant from the Garden State Historic Preservation Trust administered by the New Jersey Historic Trust.
The Central Railroad of New Jersey built this long complex of 30 sheds in 1904 to process oysters that were harvested from the Delaware Bay. The railroad knew that they would reap the monetary rewards of building an infrastructure to move oysters efficiently from the water to the plate. The sheds housed numerous oyster-related businesses and served as a “main street” for the community.

Prior to 1875, oysters were shipped by boats and a long wharf was built parallel to the river. By the 1880s, there were buildings of varying sizes and shapes and a railroad platform.

In 1904, the current structure was constructed. Throughout the years the roof lines over the wharves and buildings changed.

Oystermen and packing companies operated out of here, leasing a two-story office/store front and storeroom, and railroad buildings to left and railroad tracks are no longer there.

The public’s appetite for oysters was the driving force to harvest the oyster. The oyster industry was managed much like farming. Oysters grew naturally in the upper Delaware Bay public seedbeds. In the spring, they were transplanted to the privately leased harvest grounds located in the Maurice River Cove. Oysters grew fatter and tastier in the higher salinity waters and were harvested during the winter season.

The practice of floating oysters was banned around 1927 after an outbreak of typhoid fever was blamed on the Delaware Bay oysters. The practice of shucking (removing oyster from shell) was put in place. An almost exclusively African American migrant work force was brought from the Chesapeake Bay to work as shuckers in the packinghouses.

The workers lived in deplorable conditions in company towns such as Shellpile. They were seasonal workers and returned to their homes along the Chesapeake. Eventually, many workers and their families settled permanently in the Bayshore Region. By 1950, the trucking industry had supplanted the harvesting of oysters and the tracks were removed from Bivalve to Mauriceville. This preceded the oyster blight in 1957 that killed 99% of the oysters and destroyed the regional economy.

In 1879-80, 69,800 sacks of oysters were shipped in their shell with an average of 80 freight cars a day. By the mid 1920s, 55-60 million oysters or 700,000 sacks of oysters were shipped annually with an average of 10 freight cars a day. By the mid 1920s, 55-60 million oysters or 700,000 sacks of oysters were shipped annually with an average of 10 freight cars a day. By the mid 1920s, 55-60 million oysters or 700,000 sacks of oysters were shipped annually with an average of 10 freight cars a day.

The Bivalve Shipping Sheds and Wharves were listed on the New Jersey Register of Historic Places in 1985 and on the National Register of Historic Places in 1996.