

The Little Jennie Goes Public

By JUNE PARIS

Public momentum in support of the restoration of the 101-year old American merchant sailing vessel, the Little Jennie, appears to be building. Recent articles in this newspaper as well as a report on CBS News, have drawn considerable attention to the backyard of Bill Perks in Centerport where the Little Jennie is being painstakingly restored.

Buoyed by the public's interest, Bill Perks and supporters will hold their first public meeting on Flag Day, Friday, June 14 at the Shamrock Pub East at 138 New York Avenue in Halesite. The evening, which will include free admission and complimentary buffet from 5-8 donated by owner Kevin Morrison, will give people the opportunity to become part of the project.

For the 86-foot bug-eye ketch,

that began her colorful life as an oyster boat in Chesapeake Bay, to take her place among the Tall Ships as they sail into Huntington Harbor and then New York Harbor for the Salute to the Statue of Liberty next July, from \$300,000 to \$500,000, according to Mr. Perks, is required.

When asked to comment about the importance of this project to the people of Huntington, Frank Braynard, curator of the U.S. Merchant Marine Museum in Kings Point said: "This is a fun project right in your area, of real historic value. I'd like to see as many people as possible assist in any way they can either with labor or with funds to see that this very rare vessel is restored."

The project began last year when Mr. Perks, who is Huntington's Senior Bay Constable bought her from Knutsen's

Shipyard. Recalling her as the awesome boat he had seen in Huntington Bay as a child, he was determined not to let her die. His obsession for bringing Little Jennie back to life has in fact caught on among friends and boat enthusiasts who have already contributed to the project in one way or another.

At the public meeting at the Shamrock Pub this Friday, Mr. Perks expects to explain in detail what needs to be done and the time schedule so that the Little Jennie will be ready next July. "Not everyone can paint or saw lumber," he said. "We need volunteers to work on publicity, solicitation, scheduling, writing and even on our tee shirts.

All proceeds from the bar will go toward the restoration of the Little Jennie, which, according to Mr. Perks, became an official non-profit organi-

zation in the State of New York on May 16. To become a supporting member of Operation Little Jennie, Inc., brochures (Printing costs were donated by Citicorp, Perks said), will be available to explain the membership fees and benefits.

And you will be able to view the professional production of the videotape, "The Ladies Worth Saving." From it you will learn the significance of the Little Jennie, not just to Bill Perks who saved it from oblivion, but to the community whose boat it will become.

"This is not going to be a luxury yacht to be used by a small group of people," said Mr. Perks. "This is a boat that will be made available for the entire community to enjoy." Mr. Perks is trying to get Little Jennie listed on the National Register of Historical Places.