A New Exhibit Opens—

“ESTUARY PATUXENT: A RIVER AND ITS LIFE”

February 22 marked the opening of the second of CMM’s three permanent exhibits. “Estuary Patuxent: A River and Its Life,” familiarly known as the “Estuarium,” was the scene of a reception for the museum’s members on that Saturday evening, during which time the members were able to walk through and enjoy the new exhibit area. The exhibit was opened to general visitors the following day, February 23, but the formal opening is not scheduled until Sunday, May 3.

When the museum’s new exhibition building opened in January 1989, only a small, temporary exhibit area was open. By the end of 1989, however, the first permanent exhibit opened: “Maritime Patuxent: A River and Its People,” incorporating a few of the familiar maritime exhibits from the original exhibition building, but adding many new items in an exhibit organized chronologically. The design of the new exhibition building, however, intended that this permanent exhibit be at the end of a sequence of three permanent exhibits. The approach to “Maritime Patuxent,” therefore, was the reverse of the intended order. The opening of the Estuarium has corrected this situation, allowing visitors to proceed in the planned sequence (see plan on page--2). When visitors leave the Estuarium, they are at the beginning of the maritime history exhibit as originally intended. Not only is the Estuarium a wonderful experience in itself, but it now provides the proper flow for viewing the museum’s permanent exhibits.

As has been reported in earlier issues of the Bugeye Times, “Estuary Patuxent: A River and Its Life” presents the aquatic life of the Patuxent River through a series of tanks, displaying live specimens taken from the river and bay. The first and largest tank (3,500 gallons) has fish from the higher salinity area where the river enters the Chesapeake Bay. Moving upstream, subsequent tanks display submerged aquatic vegetation as might be found in St. John Creek, an oyster reef at the mouth of Hellen Creek, a salt marsh on St. Leonard Creek, blue crabs at Broome Island, the river at Solomons, a tidal creek such as Hunting Creek, and ending with a freshwater marsh at Jug Bay. Adjoining the tanks are graphic panels explaining the natural history of the habitats displayed in the tanks and of the region of the river that is covered. The tanks have identification labels for the specimens that are to be seen. The final tank of the present Estuarium is a touch tank where actual specimens may be handled under supervision.

Because of the location of the Estuarium exhibit, many visitors to CMM have not been aware of the developmental work that has been in progress. The area was part of the initial 1979 master plan for the new exhibition building as drafted by Cambridge Seven Associates of Cambridge, Massachusetts. Much of the basic layout was incorporated into the building construction, but considerable further work was required to develop a viable exhibit. Serious work on this started soon after the appointment in 1988 of Kenneth Kaumeyer as the museum’s curator of estuarine biology. The consultant services of the firm of Lyons and Zaremba were utilized in the final design of the exhibit and in the creation of exhibit graphics. Other firms were engaged to supply the fiberglass tanks and the special habitats. Most of the graphics were the work of the museum’s exhibits department.

There is still some work to do on the Estuarium exhibit: a tank will be added for jellyfish and plans for display of live river otters are being finalized.

(Continued on page 2)
The museum's third permanent exhibit, "A Window in Time: Maryland in the Miocene," is currently under development. Museum visitors in the future will be able to watch some of the work being done to mount this exhibit, since the access to the Estuarium will pass through the area where work will be in progress. A tentative completion date is 1994, but opening will depend on the availability of funds. Museum members will be kept informed on the status of efforts to complete the paleontology exhibit.

Plan a visit to CMM this spring to enjoy the Estuarium. Your membership card is your ticket for free admission to the museum, so be sure to renew your membership when it expires.

MARK MAY 3 ON YOUR CALENDAR for the formal opening of "Estuary Patuxent: A River and Its Life," since no separate invitations will be sent out.
LOOKING FORWARD TO SUMMER PROGRAMS

This winter, we've opened the Drum Point Lighthouse on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, have offered a second "Young Salts" program each month, and have added "Sunday Stories" to the schedule of family fun. We'll be continuing these popular programs throughout the spring and summer, so if you haven't visited the museum in a while, do plan to join us soon!

Drum Point Lighthouse tours will be offered hourly on weekends in April, and beginning in May will be scheduled seven days a week, with special twilight tours on Friday and Saturday evenings in July and August. The J. C. Lore Oyster House will be open 1:30 to 5:00 p.m. on weekends in May, and seven days a week starting in June. Openings are available for volunteer lighthouse and oyster house guides. If you're interested, call Layne Bergin at (410) 326-2042.

Special news for the young set: a sixteen-foot sail sloop you can climb into and a costume trunk for dress-up fun are coming to the Discovery Room, thanks to the enthusiasm and hard work of our volunteer development team. The summer program for 7-12 year olds will be offered July 13-17, July 20-24, August 10-14, and August 17-21. Please call the Education Office for topics and for information on registration and fees.

Adult education continues this spring with the annual Skiff Building course taught by George Surgent (register by April 3). Check your summer Bugeye Times for more information on courses for children and adults (such as the fossil field trip described below), and for a schedule of informal summer programs in different areas of the museum. We appreciate your continued support for education at the museum. And remember, we're always looking for good ideas—so if you have a suggestion for a new or better program, please let us hear from you.

"PALEONTOLOGY IN THE FIELD"

It's not too early to think about summer fossil collecting! CMM has arranged for a collecting opportunity at Saltville, Virginia. The fossils at Saltville range in age from ten to fifteen million years old. They include musk oxen, mastodons (Thomas Jefferson was sent a mastodon tooth from Saltville in 1782), mammoths, and giant ground sloths. There are also Clovis spear points.

Participants will use archaeological methods to collect both paleontological and archaeological materials. The project goals include locating and investigating paleoindian sites, recovering fossils, and reconstructing the environment and climate of the Saltville valley. The field experience starts on July 26 and ends on August 8. The cost is $660 for CMM members and $680 for non-members, including meals and housing in Saltville. Transportation is not included. For more information and to register, please call the Education Office at (410) 326-2042.

TAKE A BRITISH MARITIME HOLIDAY WITH CMM


Program fees for DOWN TO THE SEAS AGAIN are $2,145 per person, double occupancy, including roundtrip airfare from Dulles Airport. A donation of $200 to CMM is included in the price. There is a single supplement for an additional $300, and singles certainly are invited. Fees take care of everything, except lunches (pub fare as a rule), two dinners in London, and airport transfers.

For further information and a full registration packet, call or write Lord Addison Travel identifying yourself as a member of the Calvert Marine Museum Society. (See the flyer in this issue of the Bugeye Times.)
Director Doug Alves and volunteer coordinator Layne Bergin during award to Zelma Margelos (see story on page 8).

Photo by Richard Dodds

CMM volunteers with more than 100 hours of service during 1991 (see story on page 8).

Photo by Richard Dodds
At the Head of Tide and Navigation on the Patuxent
Part 2 — From the Late Nineteenth Century Until the Present
By Richard J. Dolesh

(Editor's Note: Part 1 of this article appeared in the winter 1991/1992 issue. Mr. Dolesh described in that part the tremendous changes that occurred in the section of the Patuxent River from Laurel to Hills Bridge (Wayson's Corner area) from colonial times through the Civil War. This second part brings forward the report on the upper river.)

Following the Civil War, the Patuxent River was filling in with each passing year. At the time of the printing of the atlas of G. M. Hopkins in 1878, Hills Landing (Route 4) was "the highest navigable point on the Patuxent River." In 1888, the Chief of Engineers reported to the Secretary of War that "a preliminary examination of the upper river, made with the object of determining whether the river is worthy of improvement," determined that the Patuxent is navigable for three masted schooners drawing from 10 to 12 feet of water, as far as Hollands Wharf, 28 miles from the mouth. And steamers until recently ascended to Hills Landing. They now stop at Bristol, 46 miles above the mouth of the river, which is at present the head of steam navigation. Between Hills Landing and Bristol, a distance of about 2 miles, the channel has shoaled to such an extent that it is used only by lighters.

The survey agent, S. T. Albert, stated that "schooners, steamers, and light draught vessels" ship tobacco, corn, wheat, poultry, fruit, oysters and fish from the Patuxent. Approximately 12,000 hogsheads of tobacco were shipped annually on sailing vessels and steamers. Also, a new article has been mined on the banks of the river... This is silica which is employed as a filler for bank safes and a non-conducting covering for boilers and hot air pipes. The entire trade of the river, I am credibly informed, amounts to about $5 million.

S. T. Albert described a shoal of mud and sand known as the Bristol Bar which obstructed the wharf at Bristol Landing. The width of the river on the bar within the 6 foot curves is between 160 and 240 feet. The depth of the bar where the steamer has to approach her wharf is about 7-1/2 feet and opposite the county wharf about 4.7 feet at low water.

In borings taken in the sediment, only soft mud was found to a depth of almost twenty feet. An even larger bar at the south end of Jug Bay, called Swann's Point Bar, also required removal in order to reopen the river to steamer traffic.

In 1908 the Coast and Geodetic Survey conducted a resurvey of the river and its tributaries to update its survey of 1857. By this time the upriver landings had declined so precipitously that even the surveyors held them in low esteem. J. B. Boutelle wrote:

The town of Nottingham was formerly of considerable importance as a shipping point, but at the present time there is no business done here. The town has one small country store which supplies a few goods and much bad whiskey to the neighboring population. The majority of the houses in the place are very old and rapidly falling into decay.

Regrettably, the age of steam on the bay was declining. Sedimentation, however, was not the ultimate cause. Rather it was a combination of competition from truck and rail traffic, the diminished economy created by World War I, and the Great Depression that made it unprofitable to ship by water. With the end of steamboats on the Patuxent, commercial traffic virtually ceased in the upper river. Silica and "diatomaceous earth" did continue to be shipped by barge from a mine near Nottingham, but the Patuxent River never regained its importance as a route of trade and commerce.

In 1930 the Chief of Engineers reported to the War Department that a depth of 12 feet extend to mile 36 (Lower Marlboro) and 8 feet to mile 43 (Lyons Creek Wharf). The district engineer finds that it would cost approximately $4,000,000 to extend the navigable depth upstream a distance of 25 miles. Dredging would be required in the first 10 miles and six low dams and locks in the next 15 miles.

No improvements were ever made due to the high cost and minimal benefits.

In fewer than three centuries more than twenty-five miles of the river filled in so much that it could not be navigated. How did the river fill in so much, and why is it continuing to fill in? The answers are not clear. In fact, recent results of geomorphological studies of sediments...
from the marshes of Jug Bay seemingly contradict some of the documented historical evidence of massive sedimentation in the river channel.

Humaira Khan of Johns Hopkins University cored sediments at various locations in Jug Bay in 1989 and found an assortment of organic and inorganic substances preserved in the sediments that reflect environmental conditions at different periods in history. The identification of seeds and pollen deposited in past years provides intriguing, yet still puzzling clues about the changes in the river over the past three centuries. Among her findings are the appearance of marshes after 1650 where there formerly were none, and the decline of arboresal (tree) pollen coupled with the increase of ragweed pollen in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This was due to the clearing of large amounts of land for tobacco farming.

The most visible effects of the evidence of long-term sedimentation are vegetative. As the flood plain of the river fills in with sediments, there is a distinct pattern in the succession of plant communities living in this flood plain. Generally the cycle follows this pattern: open water becomes mud flats, mud flats become low marsh, low marsh becomes high marsh, high marsh becomes scrub/scrub swamp, scrub/scrub swamp becomes hardwood swamp, and hardwood swamp becomes upland.

Nowhere is this pattern of natural succession more visible than in the vicinity of Jug Bay. The upper tidal limits of the river always trapped the most sediments, but the damming of three-fourths of the river flood plain in the 1880s for the construction of the railroad track bed of the Chesapeake Beach Railway accelerated the capture of sediment in Jug Bay. Today, numerous examples of the distinct “zonation” of plant communities can be seen from the observation tower at the Patuxent River Park or the overlook at the Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary.

Brooke Meanley, the well-known field biologist and author, has carefully observed the changes in the fresh water marshes of the upper Patuxent River for more than fifty years. In a yet-to-be published manuscript entitled “Patuxent River Wildrice Marsh,” he notes that the fresh tidal marsh of the Patuxent is one of the richest of that type in the state in terms of the variety of wetland plants and in marsh bird life. However, the fresh tidal river marsh is slowly changing from what fifty years ago was a more extensive stand of wild rice to sizable areas of other emergent aquatic plants. Sedimentation is largely responsible for this transition.

In recent decades there has been a growing recognition of the destructive impact of sedimentation, particularly as it affects the living resources of the river. The loss of submerged aquatic vegetation, the increase in turbidity, and the filling-in of valuable wetlands have all diminished the overall quality and productivity of the river. Sediment control ordinances at both the state and local level have been enacted and are being vigorously enforced, but the problems of sedimentation continue.

Sedimentation may be one of the easiest pollution problems to identify, but is also one of the most difficult to solve. Those who love the Patuxent River must speak loudly and clearly to policy makers and lawmakers that solving the problems of sedimentation must be of the highest priority if we are to save the river. For good or bad, the legacy of the sediments in the Patuxent has been a rich repository of river history. Let us not allow further sedimentation to bury it due to neglect.

CORRECTIONS

Readers have noted several errors in the first part of Mr. Dolesh’s article, specifically in the description of the steamboats Mary Washington and Planter. Mary Washington did not begin service on the Patuxent River until 1855. Planter’s length was 160 feet, not 60; 500 tons was her capacity, not “weight”; and she most likely drew nearer to six feet of water, not twelve. Full information about Patuxent River steamboats can be found in David C. Holly’s recently published Tidewater by Steamboat (Johns Hopkins University Press and Calvert Marine Museum Press), available in bookstores and libraries.

CHANGE IN FAMILY MEMBERSHIPS

On July 1, 1992, the annual family membership fee will increase from $20 to $25, but there will be an added benefit: grandchildren (regardless of their residence), as well as resident children, both under age eighteen, will be included in the family membership. Remember that museum memberships provide free admission when a valid membership card is presented at the time of the visit.

On International Museum Day, Monday, May 18, new or gift memberships (no renewals) will be available at half price. There is no admission fee to the museum on that day.

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING RENOVATION STARTS

After several years of planning, work on renovating the “schoolhouse” building will begin this spring. A contract has been awarded by Calvert County to WACO, Inc., of Sandston, Virginia, for work to require some nine months for completion. Most members will remember the “schoolhouse” as the principal museum building until the new exhibition building opened in January 1989. At that time all activities in the building were moved to other buildings on the museum campus. When renovation is completed, the building will become the museum’s Administration Building, housing the offices, library and archives, and some storage for maritime and paleontological collections. Visitors during the spring and summer will be aware of construction work in progress, but access to the museum’s exhibitions, boat basin, Drum Point Lighthouse, Wm. B. Tennison, and parking should not be affected.
YEAR-END APPEAL CONTRIBUTORS FOR 1991

The Board of Director of the Calvert Marine Museum Society, the museum director, and staff thank all of the following members and friends who contributed nearly $13,000 through this year's Year-End Appeal to benefit the museum.

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VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT —
1991 Volunteer Recognition Dinner

There was a down-home meal of country fried chicken and mashed potatoes, but the quality of achievements was strictly uptown.

Eighty volunteers, guests, and staff gathered at the Solomons Island Yacht Club on January 22 for a dinner and recognition program honoring members of the Volunteer Council for their hours of service in 1991. Although volunteer contributions are appreciated year round, the annual dinner is a chance to give a tangible thank-you, along with well-deserved praise. The director and staff of the Calvert Marine Museum are also thanked for assistance at the dinner, and support of the volunteer program. (See photographs on page 4.)

At the January event, volunteers who gave 100 or more hours in the past year received certificates of appreciation presented by the staff members with whom they worked. Departments included museum store, exhibits, Patuxent Small Craft Guild, education, clerical, and special events. Sincere apologies to George Surgent who, although present at the dinner, was not recognized for his hours. The officers of the CMM Volunteer Council were introduced, and special mention was made of the nearly 700 hours given by the museum’s junior volunteer group. Eight young people, all under sixteen, contributed the bulk of the hours, assisting weekends in the Discovery Room and with summer programs. They are: Cory Watts, 113 hours; Joshua Otts, 105 hours; Jennifer McDonald, 98 hours; Court Britt, 88 hours; Emily Alves, 80.5 hours; Glenda McDonald, 79 hours; Sterling Britt, 58 hours; and Heather Phelps, 40.5 hours.

Paul Berry, CMM librarian and Bugeye Times editor, received the spotlight as the volunteer with the most hours in 1991, nearly one thousand. The 1991 Volunteer Achievement Award was presented to Zelma Margelos for outstanding service to CMM through her tireless work in the museum store. A special group of volunteers were honored for cumulative service by promotion to one, two, and even seven star “generals”: new name badges with gold stars for each one thousand hours of donated time since the counting of volunteer hours started in 1983.

Museum volunteers with more than one hundred hours in 1991 were: Paul Adams, Wally Ashby, Jeane Bare, Doris Berry, Paul Berry, Don Brown, Sue Chabot, Marilyn Force, Dana Fountain, Betty Foyle, Alfred Holmes, Helen Hooper, Dede King, Fredda Kunz, “Pepper” Langley, Al Lash, Lisa Mandell, Ethel Manley, Peter Margelos, Zelma Margelos, Linda McGilvery, Leslie Moore, Ellen Mowbray, Jean Murray, Dorothy Ordwine, Joshua Otts, Joan Pore, Carey Randall, Sandy Roberts, Margaret Saville, Ruth Showalter, George Surgent, Cory Watts, and Margie Wilbar.

Total volunteer hours for the past year, including non-council volunteers, numbered 12,620, a thirteen-hundred hour increase over 1990. The value of last year’s volunteer service is computed at $103,133.55, a tremendous contribution to the museum. Many thanks again to all who took the time to give of themselves, and especially those who make a continuing commitment. To request information on our volunteer program and opportunities, contact Layne Bergin, volunteer coordinator.

BOATING SEASON ALERT

With the start of the boating season, don’t forget the museum’s good “reads” about boats on the bay: Geoffrey Footner’s The Last Generation at $37.50, and David Holly’s Tidewater by Steamboat at $29.95, both available from the museum store (discounts to members; Maryland sales tax applies).

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