At the Head of Tide and Navigation on the Patuxent
Part 1 - - From Colonial Days Through the Civil War

By Richard J. Dolesh

Every year in the late spring or early summer someone contacts the staff of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission's Patuxent River Park at the Jug Bay Natural Area and declares the intention to canoe the Patuxent River from Laurel to Jug Bay. The staff asks, "Are you sure you want to do this?" Upon ascertaining a true resolve, the staff offers the best advice they can about put-in spots, where to camp, and where to get help in an emergency.

A couple of days later they see the formerly intrepid canoeist wearily drift up to the park dock at Jug Bay, dotted with mosquito bites, streaked with mud, and sprouting welts from greenbriar thorns. As he loads his canoe he recounts a few of his hundred or more portages over trees, shoals, and deadfalls while absent-mindedly scratching crimson poison ivy blotches about his head and neck.

To our knowledge, no one who has completed this trip has ever attempted to do it a second time!

Someone who has been through such an ordeal is amazed to learn that less than three hundred years ago this same stretch of the Patuxent River was bustling with trade and commerce. Ocean-going sailing ships traveled as far up the river as Jug Bay; ships of one hundred tons traveled up to Queen Anne (Route 214); and barges

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FOSSIL FACTS - SCUTA AND TERGA

By Sandy Roberts

Parts of barnacles called the scuta and terga are probably often seen but seldom recognized by amateur fossil collectors at Calvert Cliffs.

The Miocene barnacle, *Balanus concavus* Bronn, like the modern acorn barnacle, probably lived between the high- and low-tide lines securely cemented to a hard surface. The famous nineteenth-century biologist, Louis Agassiz, once described a barnacle as "nothing more than a little shrimp-like animal standing on its head in a limestone house and kicking food into its mouth." This is an accurate description — barnacles are shrimp-like, and their cup-shaped houses are composed of six overlapping calcareous plates. In addition to these six stationary plates, there are four movable interlocking plates that form a domed cover or "door" that may be opened for feeding or tightly closed when danger or low tides threaten. These are known as the scuta (Latin for "shield") and the terga ("posterior"). There are two of each.

The scuta, or the anterior plates, are roughly triangular and wing-like in shape. They are easily distinguished from the posterior tergal plates by the absence of a projecting spur. Tergal plates are slightly beaked at the top. They have a vertical (Continued on page 3)

SELECTED ACQUISITIONS

The museum acquired a number of important items recently, some of which are listed below. Thanks to all those who have donated or lent materials to the collections.

- The collection of the work of Baltimore artist C. Leslie Oursler, described in a short article in the *Bugeye Times* for summer 1991, was strengthened by donations from John H. Shaum, Jr., of eighty-four working sketches made by Mr. Oursler, as well as two painted sketches. Mr. Shaum is a collector and was a close friend of Leslie Oursler. Some of these items were included in the museum's exhibit last summer of Oursler's work.
- A large collection of archival material has been donated by David C. Holly, author of three books on Chesapeake Bay steamboats. In 1969, Mr. Holly wrote *Exodus 1947*, and several years later wrote *Steamboat on the Chesapeake: Emma Giles and the Tolchester Line*. Just this fall Mr. Holly's latest book was issued: *Tidewater by Steamboat: A Saga of the Chesapeake: The Weems Line on the Patuxent, Potomac, and Rappahannock*, published jointly by the Johns Hopkins University Press and the Calvert Marine Museum. Mr. Holly donated his research notes on all three books, along with a large number of photographs and copies of pertinent manuscripts. This collection is available to researchers upon application.
- Clarence E. Davis, Jr., strengthened CMM's photographic collections by the gift of an album prepared in 1902 by his mother, Edna Marsh Davis. Several other photographs of the family of Dr. William Marsh were also donated.
- Richard Sunderland loaned early twentieth-century promotional material and photographs from the former C. H. Pearson Oyster Company located near Cedar Point in St. Mary's County. These will be copied for CMM collections
GEARING UP AT CMM

When you visit CMM during the coming months you will see a set of large gears in place to the east of the entrance walk into the exhibition building. This exhibit has a particular significance to Solomons and the maritime theme of CMM.

Shipyards, used either for building or repairing boats, have traditionally had marine railways — sets of tracks running from the work area out into and beneath the water. The marine railway is used with a "truck" or "cradle," usually of wood, to remove a boat from the water for repairs. Given the inclination of the tracks and the weight of boats of even moderate size, a mechanism is needed to move the boat and cradle from the water. The large set of gears placed on display was used in the M. M. Davis & Son shipyard on Mill Creek for a number of years prior to the closing of the yard in the early 1970s. Interested friends of the museum were able to salvage the cast-iron gears, which have now been cleaned and painted for display.

In an early period of the Davis shipyard, the power for moving these gears would have been supplied by a steam engine, but the power source was later changed to electricity. The Davis shipyard also maintained several marine ways for boat construction, but in those instances the boats were launched on cradles using their own weight for moving into the water. Only in removing boats would it be necessary to use the power winch. Davis built vessels in a number of sizes, mostly in the range of fifty to one-hundred feet, and would have offered repairs on vessels of similar size.

CMM LOSES TWO STRONG SUPPORTERS

The loss of two museum supporters in recent months has been noted with sadness. John W. Hansen, last keeper of the Drum Point Lighthouse, died in July; Mrs. Margaret S. King, former CMM board member, died in early October.

John Hansen spent twenty years of his working life as the lighthouse keeper at Drum Point, retiring when the light was automated in 1960. He continued to live in the area and thus was able to assist CMM when the lighthouse was moved to its present location on museum property in 1975. He was a frequent visitor to CMM and delighted in regaling staff and visitors with stories of his days in the lighthouse. CMM's presentation of the Drum Point Lighthouse has been more accurate because of the personal experiences communicated by Mr. Hansen, and also by former lighthouse resident, Anna Weems Ewalt.

Mrs. Margaret King, a retired Calvert County teacher of languages, was on the museum's Board of Governors from 1988 through 1990. She was active in fundraising efforts and chaired the board's membership committee. She was also active in a number of other county organizations.

SCUTA AND TERGA

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groove running down their centers and a process or projection called the tergal spur running down one side. Both scuta and terga are etched with growth lines and striations. The size and color of the fossilized plates depend on the size of the barnacle from which they came and the type of sediment in which they were buried. Fossilized barnacles seldom contain their scuta and terga because these usually separate from the rest of the barnacle soon after it dies.

OPENING OF ESTUARIUM

According to present plans, the exhibit "Estuary Patuxent: A River and Its Life," also known as the "estuarium," will open to the public in late January or early February. There will be a separate announcement to museum members and also in the local newspapers. Although not all of the seventeen aquarium tanks will be stocked at first, there will be a great deal of interest to see, and repeat visitors may have the pleasure of identifying new fish as they are collected. The otter exhibit will be constructed at a later date.
CMM FALL ACTIVITIES

A horseshoe crab attracts attention at Patuxent River Appreciation Days in October.

Photo by Douglass Alves

Battle Creek Cypress Swamp naturalist Mary Piotrowski displays an opossum at Patuxent River Appreciation Days in October.

Photo by Douglass Alves

The second Bugeye Ball at the Holiday Inn, Solomons, on September 27 was enjoyed by over 150 members and guests.

Photo by William McGilvery, Ill
New Developments at CMM to note in 1992

Expanded Hours: Beginning with January 2, 1992, the operating hours of the museum will increase. The museum will be open from 10:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. each day, Monday through Sunday. The only exceptions will be the following holidays: New Years Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day. These new hours, year round, should end the present confusion caused by changes in different seasons. Parts of the museum will still maintain special or seasonal hours:

Discovery Room will be closed on Mondays in the winter, except for the observed Monday holidays of January 20 and February 17.

Drum Point Lighthouse has limited openings in winter (see calendar) and will open weekends in April. May through September it will follow the regular museum hours, with weekend tours, October through December, as announced each year.

J.C. Lore Oyster House will open weekends in May of each year. June through August it will follow regular museum hours. Fall openings will be announced later.

Complimentary Passes: Members of the Calvert Marine Museum Society at certain levels of contribution are given complimentary admission passes to use when bringing visitors to CMM. Beginning January 2, 1992, these passes will supersede the Drum Point Lighthouse\ Lore Oyster House passes issued in earlier years. (The earlier passes will no longer be valid.) Any members with questions about complimentary passes should call the membership office.

CHANGES ON MUSEUM BOARD

There are several changes in the coming year on the Calvert Marine Museum Board of Governors—the volunteer group appointed by the County Commissioners to guide the museum’s policies and to raise funds to augment county support. Five of the fifteen appointed members of the board change each year, but some carry over from a previous three-year term. Under present policies, the members of the museum board also serve as directors of the Calvert Marine Museum Society, Inc., the non-profit corporation also engaged in raising funds for the support of CMM.

Leaving the board at the end of 1991 were Mrs. Grace M. Rymer, Griffith S. Oursler, Jr., and Mrs. Ellen W. Zahniser. All have contributed most effectively to the board during their terms. Mrs. Zahniser served on the board for nine years, with a break in 1988, and was board chairman from 1984 through 1986.

New members on the board in 1992 include: J. Patrick Collins, a local businessman; Mrs. Jodie Lee Marinelli, on the professional staff of the Veterans Administration in Baltimore and wife of a Calvert County doctor; and John W. Williams, Jr., retired businessman in Calvert County, returning to the board for a third term. Another new member, filling a vacancy from an earlier year, is Robert Jeffries, retired local educator. Two members on the present board were reappointed: W. Lee Phillips and George C. Tilghman. Board members continuing include: C. R. Bailey, Jr.; J. Matthew Gambrill; F. Ross Holland, Jr.; Phillip S. Hughes; Harold J. Kahl; Linda A. McGilvery; L. G. Raley; Carey O. Randall; and Thomas H. Williams. County Commissioner Mary M. Krug and director C. Douglass Alves, Jr., are board members ex officio. C. D. Bare serves as board treasurer, but is not a board member.

YULETIDE 1991

Events during the weekend of December 13-16 were a bit different this year. The Solomons Christmas Walk began on Friday and proceeded through Saturday evening, but the members’ Yule Party was on Sunday evening rather than on the traditional Friday evening. This change made it possible for visitors to Solomons to enjoy the museum during the Christmas Walk period and to shop at the museum store. Santa Claus visited CMM’s exhibition building to entertain young visitors, a live tree in the lobby was decorated with ornaments contributed by staff, and all enjoyed the children’s artwork display. As in the past, volunteers assisted with museum decorations, holiday hosting, placing luminaries, and serving at the Yule Party. A handmade pinecone tree, contributed by volunteer Betty Foyle, was raffled as a fundraiser. Chances on a twelve-foot skiff made money for the Patuxent Small Craft Guild.

Festive holiday arrangements were in place in the Drum Point Lighthouse during weekend openings in December, thanks again to Mr. and Mrs. Philip Lines and assisting volunteers. A cedar tree and other decorations appropriate to a turn-of-the-century home were used.

With the change in this year’s schedule, the J. C. Lore Oyster House was not open. Thanks are due to all who helped make this season especially memorable.

THE MUSEUM’S ANNUAL APPEAL FOR UNRESTRICTED FUNDS

Among the greetings and other correspondence of this time of year, museum members received in late November or early December the annual Year-End Appeal request. This is to provide members and friends with an opportunity to support the programs of CMM through a donation of unrestricted funds. This type of support augments the budgeted funds and makes possible a number of projects and purchases not otherwise budgeted.

In last year’s appeal, members and friends contributed over $17,000, and it is hoped they will be equally or more generous this year. The Year-End Appeal campaign closes on February 14, 1992. The names of those who contribute will be listed in the spring issue of the Bugeye Times.

Please help the museum grow with your unrestricted gifts!
From Colonial Days Through the Civil War

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and river boats went all the way to Laurel, nearly eighty miles above the mouth of the river.

The Chesapeake Bay is an ancient drainage system of rivers that have periodically emerged from the sea and then have been drowned by subsequent rises in sea level. The successive stages of deposition and washing away of the coastal plain sediments over vast geologic time created the present-day topographic features of the Patuxent River valley. It is a diverse and productive river system that changed relatively little for thousands of years until just the last few centuries.

Like the other large western shore rivers, the head of the Patuxent lies above the fall line and erosional forces have shaped the river valley considerably. The good natural drainage, the well-defined stream divides, and the relative ease with which strata eroded all contributed to the original forming of a long, deep estuary. Yet these same topographic features that enabled early shipping traffic to proceed very far up the river also contributed to vigorous upland erosion, thus filling in the flood plain and shaping the rolling hills of the Patuxent uplands.

Near Mt. Airy, over one hundred miles from its mouth, the headwaters of the Patuxent River flow briskly out of the Piedmont Plateau in rock-lined streams. Near Savage, the Middle Patuxent flows into the Little Patuxent, and near Bowie the Little Patuxent combines with the Big Patuxent to form a slow-moving, mud-lined stream that meanders across a broad wooded flood plain for sixteen miles to Upper Marlboro.

The U.S. Geological Survey upper tidal limit is in this stretch of the river at the old Queen Anne bridge just below Central Avenue (Route 214). At Hills Bridge (Route 4), near Wayson's Corner, the forested flood plain of the river has broadened into shrub swamps and tidal marshlands. From this point south, the predominantly freshwater marsh plants of the upper tidal river gradually give way to estuarine (brackish) water plants by the time the river reaches Benedict. This thirty-mile stretch of the upper river, between Laurel and Upper Marlboro, has changed more than any other in recorded history.

To say that man has shaped the river over the years to suit his needs is a self-evident truth, but in some ways the river shaped man even more. The native Americans who lived in the vast forests along the river for thousands of years had little effect on the landscape. It was not until European colonists advanced up the river in the mid-1600s and settled widely along the shores that changes began to occur rapidly. Just how rapidly the river filled in during the next three centuries is astonishing.

Today, the northern-most point a small boat can travel up the Patuxent is just above Spyglass Island (also known as Snake Island) about fifty miles above the mouth of the river and two miles above Hills Bridge at Route 4. Above Spyglass Island the river narrows to a shallow stream about thirty feet wide and is blocked by numerous vine-covered trees that have toppled from the river banks. At a low tide even a small skiff with a six-horsepower outboard motor cannot reach the head of tide at Queen Anne Bridge. In colonial times, however, the river was considerably wider and deeper. There was a navigable channel, and substantial commercial traffic traveled up and down the river for more than one hundred years.

The absolute highest historical point of navigation on the Patuxent is somewhat shrouded in the mists of time, but it seems that it was at the confluence of the Little Patuxent and the Big Patuxent just above Priest Bridge (Route 450). An order of the governor in 1654 stated the new county of “Calvert” was to be formed by appointing “both sides of the Putuxent [sic] River into one County by the name of Calvert County, bounded on the north side with the creeke upon the western side of Chesapeake Bay called the Herring Creeke and from thence through the woods to the head of the Patuxent river being the southerly bound of Anne Arundel County.” The “head” of the river in 1654 was sixty-four miles above the mouth.

By the mid-1600s, numerous land grants were patented in the upper river, among them being Mt. Pleasant in 1658, Mt. Calvert in 1658, Billingsley Point in 1662, and Grammar Parrott in 1658. A large tract of one thousand acres was patented and surveyed by Richard Snowden in the “forks” of the Patuxent in 1686, and by the early 1700s the Snowden iron ore furnace was in operation producing iron “pigs” that were reshaped into iron implements.

The earliest colonists in Maryland developed a diversified agricultural system, but the extraordinary value of tobacco caused them to plant this crop above all others even to the exclusion of basic foodstuffs. Until 1730 tobacco production was unregulated, and wild fluctuations in the market value occurred regularly. Instead of lessening production in lean times, however, planters grew even more tobacco to make up for depressed value. The modest forest clearings of the late 1600s led to an insatiable demand for more land in order to produce more tobacco. Early soil losses from erosion were accelerated as increasing amounts of land were cleared for tobacco production and the fertility of many fields was exhausted.

The river landing of Queen Anne, eight miles above Hills Bridge, became in the early 1700s a prosperous town and tobacco export center. A ferry service across the river was established in 1726. Louise Hienton, in Prince George’s Heritage (1972), noted: “In 1733 the river was cleared for twenty-five miles upstream, but there were shoals and rapids, so that the banks had to be cleared and roads made around these places, in order that men or horses could drag their boats up and around these difficult spots of navigation. In 1750 the river made a breach across the main street of the town, which had to be filled in, and in 1770 the channel again had to be widened above the town for the benefit of the

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Volunteer Council Holds Annual Meeting

The full Volunteer Council held its annual meeting in the museum auditorium on September 18.

Activities of the council during its first year of existence were described, including the signing up of many volunteers as council members. Most members have taken the special volunteer orientation. Other details of this meeting were reported to council members in The Anchor, the council’s monthly publication.

One of the highlights of the meeting was the announcement of the new category of “volunteer emeritus” for those volunteers who have performed long and valuable service. The first two volunteers under this category were recognized: James LeRoy “Pepper” Langley and Paul Kraft. Museum director Doug Alves presented both men with new badges with the “Volunteer Emeritus” designation. In addition, a small gold star has been added for each one thousand hours of volunteer service.

New officers were elected for the coming year: Paul Adams, president; Donald Brown, vice president; Dorothy Ordwein, corresponding secretary; and Paul Berry, secretary/treasurer. The board of the Volunteer Council meets monthly; interested volunteers are invited to attend.

At the close of the annual meeting there was a videotape showing of an interview by Sylvia Beall with Layne Bergin and Don Brown that aired on the cable Channel 6 show “Surprise Yourself.”
VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT —

Lisa Mandell
An "All-Around" Volunteer

“I’ve been a volunteer since 1952 wherever I’ve been needed.” Lisa Mandell easily fits in an interview while working on an Anchor newsletter mailing. “I like to do it,” she says.

With her World War II nurses’ training in England, and a strong desire to be active, Lisa discovered volunteering as an Air Force wife. In the military she had many opportunities, in many different locales, to offer her services. She has her twenty-one-year pin from the Red Cross, gave ten years as an aide to special children, has assisted at a charity clinic, library, and even as a State Department greeter for foreign students at National Airport. Lisa was also the first volunteer at Brookgreen Gardens in South Carolina.

Since 1985 Lisa has been a CMM volunteer, first as a host in the former exhibition building, then adding clerical projects, cleaning, and party help. She is informally known as the “plant lady” for the museum’s indoor greenery. “I like the parties best,” she says, recalling an exhibit opening when she wielded a silver tray to offer shrimp to the guests.

While on duty as a frequent weekend host, Lisa recommends volunteering to local visitors and always encourages museum memberships. Part of the fun is meeting people from other countries and occasionally practicing her Spanish. Her Danish is pretty good, too, as that is her first language.

Lisa views volunteering as her way of paying something back to this country. But she also finds time for personal pursuits: Happy Hearts aerobics, traveling, and having fun with her granddaughter.

And would she volunteer at the museum, even if she weren’t the volunteer coordinator’s mother? “Oh, sure,” says Lisa.

For more information on volunteering at CMM, call Layne Bergin and join the crew.

Photo by Richard Dodds

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