

The Chesapeake Dispatcher



Bi-Annual Newsletter of the Friends of the Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum

Volume 36, Issue 1, Number 70

May 2017

Belvedere Mystery

by Brenda J. Proctor, Museum Volunteer

At the March “Calvert Conversations” meeting at the Calvert Library Twin Beaches Branch, the topic of discussion was the grand Belvedere Hotel of Chesapeake Beach in the early 1900s. Our presenter was CBRM’s Collections Manager, Kris DeGrace, who described early development of the Chesapeake Beach resort. The ambitious goal of Otto Mears and his associates was to create a “Monte Carlo of the East” destination to be served by the Chesapeake Beach Railway. Early projects included a clubhouse, a casino, and a racetrack with stables.

The clubhouse built in 1900 later became the Belvedere Hotel. It was situated near the end of present-day 17th Street on a hill overlooking the Bay. Kris quoted news articles of the day describing the luxurious interior of the hotel. Here is where the mystery came in. Reportedly, stained glass from a Tiffany screen that once graced the White House was installed in the Belvedere, but there was no definitive proof of this. Joanie Kilmon,



The Belvedere Hotel



Tiffany screens in the White House as depicted in “The Grand Illumination: Sunset of the Gaslight Age,” 1891, a painting by Peter Waddell.

library branch manager and facilitator of Calvert Conversations, stated that she had seen a shipping log that cited a large shipment to a Mr. Wickersham of Chesapeake Beach, around the right time frame, but she didn’t know whether it was the Tiffany glass or not. Because the Belvedere was destroyed by fire in 1923, it is assumed that the Tiffany glass would also have been lost.

After our discussion, I was curious about this Tiffany glass screen. What began as casual Googling, soon became an engrossing dig into the mystery.

The first thing I discovered was a posting dated March 25, 2015 on the Facebook page of the White House Historical Society. It stated the screen was “one of the most beautiful features ever to adorn” the White House, describing it as a 338-square-foot mosaic screen in ruby, crimson, white, cobalt, and blue opalescent glass that suggested the colors

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Belvedere Mystery (continued)
by Brenda J. Proctor, Museum Volunteer

of the American flag. Most interesting of all was this quote:

“The Tiffany screen was removed during the 1902 renovation of the White House and sold at auction as boxes of glass for \$275. Part of it was installed in the Belvedere Hotel at Chesapeake Beach, Maryland, which was destroyed by fire in 1923.”

The only photos of the famous screen are black and white, but the Facebook post included the picture of the Tiffany screen as portrayed in “*The Grand Illumination: Sunset of the Gaslight Age*,” 1891, a painting by Peter Waddell. (in this Newsletter, page 1).

Hmmm...seems to confirm the story of the glass ending up at the Belvedere, but wait! In an article from *The Washington Post*, 05/25/1998, entitled “*Jewels from Tiffany’s*” there are conflicting reports. John Loring, Tiffany Company historian and design director, says “Roosevelt had the Tiffany screen shattered with hammers.” In the next paragraphs, White House curator Betty Monkman and her assistant tell a different tale. “Their records show that during the extensive renovation...the screen was removed in sections and sold at auction January 21, 1903. The buyer was Turner Wickersham, owner of a Chesapeake Beach hotel. In 1923, the curators said, the hotel was destroyed by fire and presumably the Tiffany screen along with it.”



A rare image of the Belvedere Hotel adorned with patrons,
donated by Kathleen Masterson

Armed with some additional clues, these references were found in books about the history of the White House. Speaking of Tiffany’s redecoration and installation of the stained glass screen in the Entrance Hall in 1882, *The White House: Its Historic Furnishings & First Families* by Betty C. Monkman, said:

“Tiffany’s *piece de resistance*, and the first thing visitors saw as they entered the house through the front door, was the large stained-glass screen he made.... The screen was composed of sheets of opalescent glass encrusted with vitreous jewels of topaz, ruby, and amethyst arranged in abstract panels on the sides. The doors in the central space comprised a large oval composition of patriotic motifs that included four eagles surrounding a shield and the monogram “US” in vivid red, white, and blue colors.Louis C. Tiffany & Co. billed the White House \$10 a square foot for 338 square feet of glass mosaic for the screen, for a total cost of \$3,380.

“All of the glass was removed in 1902.... The glass was broken up and sold at an auction of discarded White House property in 1903, where a local real estate agent for a resort development on the Chesapeake Bay purchased the glass for \$275. The glass may have ended up in a hotel at Chesapeake Beach, Maryland, which burned to the ground in 1923. No example of the glass has ever been brought to the attention of the White House. Of all the work done by Tiffany in 1882-1883, it is his glass screen that is of most interest to White House visitors of the twentieth century, when Tiffany’s work is highly admired and valued.”

A footnote in the above book, led to *The White House: An Architectural History* by William Ryan and Desmond Guinness which commented on the size of the screen: “This may have been the greatest area of Tiffany glass executed in the United States.”

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Belvedere Mystery (continued)

by Brenda J. Proctor, Museum Volunteer

And also stated concerning the auction in 1903: "The Tiffany screen was sold to Turner A. Wickersham for \$275, the highest price of the sale. Mr. Wickersham, a real estate agent for the Chesapeake Beach Railway, developer of a resort 30 miles east of Washington, was determined to get it and had been willing to pay any price necessary. The Tiffany screen probably ended its days in the Belvedere Hotel at Chesapeake Beach, Maryland; the building burned to the ground in 1923."

A third book, *The President's House* by Margaret Truman also mentions that the Tiffany screen was snapped up by a real estate developer for \$275 and was believed to have ended up in the Belvedere Hotel.

So, it seems that Mr. Wickersham indeed got the Tiffany glass at a bargain price! Unfortunately, now the trail went cold and the dots are still not connected to trace the Tiffany glass directly from Mr. Wickersham to the Belvedere Hotel. It seems plausible, but it's still a mystery! Can you help? If you have any "clues," please contact the Museum at 410-257-3892.

Railway Museum Expanded Hours in 2017

by Corrine E. Moore, Museum Staff

We are pleased to announce that the Railway Museum's 2017 schedule will include expanded weekday hours.

The Museum will now be open seven days a week from 11AM to 5PM, June through August.

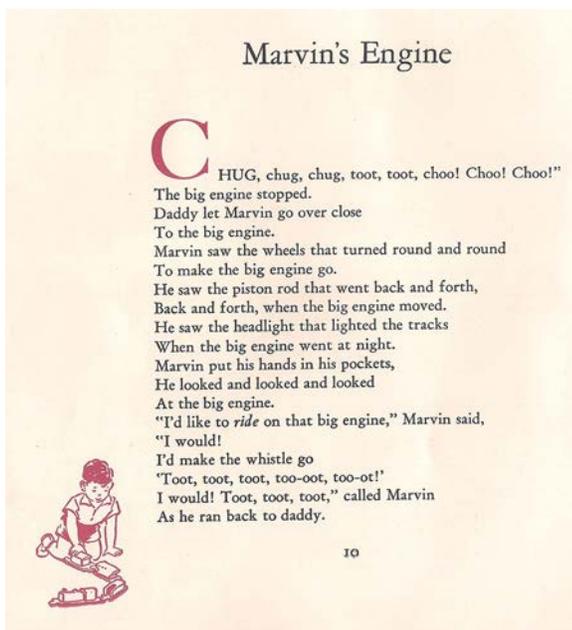


The regular schedule for all other open times/months will remain the same. Plan to drop by with family and friends sometime this year to visit the Museum or attend one of our many public free events which are co-sponsored by the Museum and the Friends of the Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum.

You're Invited!



Join CBRM Historians on a ride back in time on Fishing Creek at our annual **Heritage Tour on Saturday, May 13**. Free tours leave at 9, 10 & 11 am. Meet in the gravel parking lot next to Abner's. First come, first served! (boat holds 10 passengers) call Mike for details: 410-440-6499



An excerpt from "My Book" from the collection of museum volunteer, Larry Brown by Mary Edna Lloyd, copyright 1942 by Whitmore and Stone.

Message from the President
by Mike Sweeney, President of the Friends

At last!..... Spring is finally here! I am putting up the winter tools and clothes and breaking out the spring ones. A happy chore to say the least, however the happiness in breaking out the warm weather stuff is tempered with the work that is ahead. Gardens, painting, fixing what winter weather had broken and catching up on projects that had been sidelined due to the cold. The same can be said for the Museum. The very welcome spring celebrations are tempered with what lies ahead this season. But unlike home chores, we can look forward to the fulfilment that our work at our Museum brings.

The new season brings a new enthusiasm to the work we must do, and has started off with a bang. We have welcomed two new volunteers; Susan Mills and Nate Horn. An old friend and volunteer Brenda Proctor has been trained as a Stationmaster, as well as Larry Brown and Bette Quigley attending refresher training.



Stationmaster trainer and trainees (from left to right): Mike Sweeney, Brenda Proctor, Larry Brown, Bette Quigley, Nate Horn.

We have gotten upgraded tools to help us with the gift shop, and the sign outside the baggage room door has been refurbished. Most importantly, we look forward to celebrating the Friends' 20th anniversary on June 9th, with the dedication of the Dolores as the Loveless Finlon Education Center, a general membership meeting and a picnic dinner.

These are just a start to what will be a wonderful season to welcome visitors, and celebrate the history of our museum and the town.

Message from the Curator
by J. Carey Crane, Railway Museum Curator

I am pleased to announce the Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum's participation in cooperative programming on the theme **At the Water's Edge: Recreation in Calvert County**, scheduled September 2017 thru March 2018. Our partners are the Bayside History Museum, Calvert County Historical Society, Calvert Marine Museum, and the Calvert Library. The theme of recreation along our county's waterways is a good fit for each of our institutional missions.

Presentations include: African American Leisure Destinations around Washington, D.C. with author Patsy Mose Fletcher; The History of Chesapeake Beach Park, 1946-1972 presented by our own Joan Kilmon for Calvert Library; Hotels & Boarding Houses with Grace Mary Brady, Director, Bayside History Museum; Pleasure Boats & Marinas by Richard Dodds, Curator of Maritime History at CMM; The Swimsuit Edition: Where we swam and what we were wearing presented by Joan Kilmon; and Boats, Roads, Trains and Planes: A Look Back in Calvert County by renowned historian and friend to our respective institutions, Ralph Eshelman. Corrine Moore has booked Ms. Fletcher and Mr. Eshelman for their CBRM presentations in the Chesapeake Beach Town Hall. Thanks to Station Master Toni Hopkins for connecting with Patsy Mose Fletcher during a museum outreach event last spring.

Sustaining one another and sharing our resources as Calvert County based institutions helps us to serve the public and our visitors more effectively. A special thanks to the Board of County Commissioners and the Town Councils of Chesapeake Beach and North Beach for supporting the preservation and communication of our shared historical and cultural resources.

You're Invited to Celebrate!

Friday, June 9, 2017

June 9 Celebration

by Joanie Kilmon, Friends Board Member

June 9 has long been a significant day in the history of the Chesapeake Beach Railway – it was opening day in 1900! By that date, all the rails had been laid from Washington, D.C., the stations built, steamboat schedules set and the long pier ready to meet the folks traveling from Baltimore. More than 5,000 people showed up to experience the “first day” of all that Chesapeake Beach had to offer.

For many years The Friends of the Chesapeake Beach Railway have recognized and honored the “Founders” who had the vision and foresight to create a resort on the bay. A long boardwalk, parallel to the shore, offered games of chance, eating establishments, amusement rides and a dance pavilion!

The Founders in 1900 included Otto Mears, a Colorado railroad builder. In the ensuing 117 years many other names can be included in the founding and remembering of the Chesapeake Beach Railway.



Bernie Loveless, 1975



Dorothy Loveless, 1975

In 1979, Gerald and Fred Donovan, owners of the Rod ‘n Reel Restaurant, entered a 99 year contract with the Calvert County government, to run the depot station as a museum. Bernie & Dorothy Loveless and Mildred Finlon, along with scores of volunteers, led the way creating The Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum.

Many members of the Calvert County Historical Society also lent their talents in creating a lasting memorial to times gone by.

In 1997, The Friends of the Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum were founded to continue the pleasurable work of sharing the history of the railway and the eras of amusements in town. 2017 marks the 20th anniversary of the Friends.

It is time to celebrate! Please consider joining us on **Friday, June 9, 2017** on the porch of the Railway Museum beginning at **6:00 pm** to toast our accomplishments and to dedicate the parlor car, “*Dolores*”, to the memory of Bernie & Dorothy Loveless and Mildred Finlon. You will be invited to tour “*Dolores*”, which will henceforth be known as the **Loveless Finlon Education Center**. Whereas *Dolores* used to transport visitors to town, she will now be used to transport visitors down memory lane. Moving into the Rod ‘n Reel by 7:00 pm on June 9, enjoy a picnic style dinner which will remind everyone of the picnics held in the park for many, many years. A short historical presentation will highlight our history.

Tickets for the dinner and historical presentation portion of the evening are \$25 and are available for purchase online here: <http://tinyurl.com/n56amtx> We would love to see everyone there who has been touched by the Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum. Please call or email Friends Vice-President, Hilary Dailey for more information: CBRMVolunteer@gmail.com or 301-855-4028.



Our beloved parlor car, the “Dolores” will be dedicated on June 9 as the Loveless Finlon Education Center

TARANTULA on the beach!
by Kris DeGrace, Collections Manager

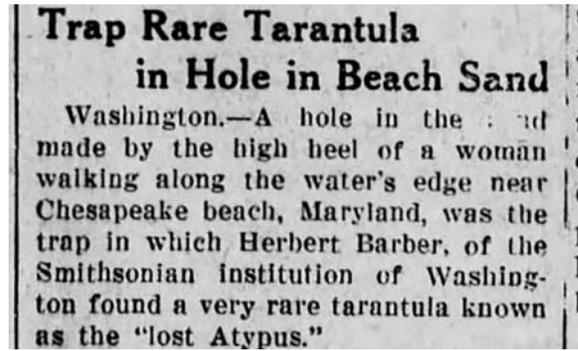
Summer is coming, which means sun and fun on the beach. Building sand castles, kayaking, fishing, playing frisbee, searching for sharks teeth, collecting tarantulas... yes, you read that right... collecting tarantulas. But that's only if you are lucky.

The headline from an April 18, 1930 article in *The Black Hills Weekly* (Deadwood, South Dakota), reads "Trap Rare Tarantula in Hole in Beach Sand." The first sentence in this short article spoke volumes, so much that I am including it here: "A hole in the sand made by the high heel of a woman walking along the water's edge near Chesapeake Beach was the trap in which Herbert Barber, of the Smithsonian Institution of Washington found a very rare tarantula known as the 'lost Atypus.'"



postcard: Promenading on the Beach at Chesapeake Beach, Md
(in high heels no doubt!)

That quote is simply full of gems that caught my attention both practically and philosophically. First, clearly high heels have changed over the years, a hole made in the sand by today's high heels would at best only catch the "itsy bitsy" spider. Second, walking on the beach in high heels, is thankfully a thing of the past! Third, how lucky it was for an entomologist from the Smithsonian to be at the right place at the right time to catch this spider... timing certainly is everything in life! Fourth, and what I think is most important and notable... a TARANTULA on the beach in Chesapeake Beach?!? EEEEEEEK!! A little more research was needed.



Article: April 18, 1930, *The Black Hills Weekly*
(Deadwood, South Dakota)

This rare find was reported in several newspapers across the country, so apparently it was somewhat of a big deal. This spider has many names, Lost Atypus, Shodros Rufipes, Mygalomorph Spider, Atypus Bicolor, Red-legged Pursweb Spider... and yes, it is a cousin of the tarantula family. For those of you who would like to add searching for this spider to your beachcombing activities, it does not look like the huge, hairy spider, that the word "tarantula" brings to mind. Rather it has a jet back body with bright red/orange legs. Whatever its appearance, I will be happy to never meet this distant relative!

There seems to be some disagreement about whether this particular spider is on the endangered species list or not. What does seem to be agreed upon is that it is found throughout the U.S., but is apparently more rare in the state of Maryland. Which, I suppose, is why finding it in the sand at Chesapeake Beach was such an exciting discovery.

My take away from this article, is to be thankful for flip flops, as well as to keep my eyes peeled on the sand while strolling on the beach! And I thought applying sunscreen was all I needed to worry about!



A 1930's era high heeled shoe (note the chunky heel, capable of making quite a large puncture hole in the sand!)

Upcoming 2017 Summer Events

Come Ride the Carousel

by Joanie Kilmon, Friends Board Member

On Saturday, **July 29**, beginning at noon, the Friends will continue their 20th anniversary celebration by meeting up at R.M. Watkins Regional Park in Largo, Maryland to ride the Chesapeake Carousel, which was a main attraction in Chesapeake Beach for many years.

This is a bring-your-own picnic as we continue the tradition of celebrating Mildred Finlon's birthday in the park! She so loved the Merry-Go-Round! We will also be celebrating the birthday of our longest, still serving Museum volunteer, Janet Bates!

This will be a happy day of celebration for all of us. Please contact Hilary Dailey to let her know if you will be attending the festivities! Hilary: CBRMVolunteer@gmail.com or 301-855-4028.



Mildred Finlon rides the Chesapeake Carousel at Watkins Regional Park

Summer Programs and Concerts

by Correine E. Moore, Museum Staff

The summer children's programs will be held on **Thursdays from 10am to 11am, June 29, July 6, 13, 20 and 27**. These educational programs include story time, crafts, activities or games. This year's themes will be Recreation at the Water's Edge (Jun 29), Aquaponics (July 6), Eco-Printing (July 13), S.T.E.A.M. (Jul 20) along with our grand finale, Bring a Picnic to the Station (Jul 27).



Museum volunteer, John Riedesel, leads children in a game at a Summer Children's Program

Our annual Bay Breeze Concert Series will run on the **second Tuesday of the month from June through September at 7:30PM** on the porch of the Museum (inclement weather location will be the Northeast Community Center). Appearing at our first concert on **June 13th** will be the award-winning and critic's choice recipient, **The Patty Reese Band**.

Appearing at our other concerts will be **The Dixie Ramblers - July 11; The Dave Chappell Band August 8; and The Dixie Power Trio with the New Line Brass - September 12**.

Seating will be provided on the porch or bring your own lawn chairs to sit outside the porch area. Come enjoy, weather permitting, a night under the stars listening to the stars!

Friends of the Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum
PO Box 1227
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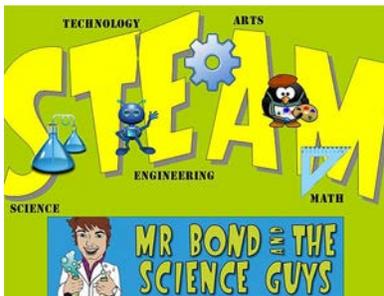


**Sunday, May 21: Spring Family Fun Day
at the Northeast Community Center
in Chesapeake Beach
1:00 - 4:00 pm**

Activities will include :

- * Bingo * Games * Crafts * Prizes*
- * Face-painting * Moon Bounce *
- * Refreshments*

and a special show by
Mr. Bond and the Science Guys



*There is no fee for this event.
Spring Family Fun Day is sponsored by the Calvert County
Board of County Commissioners and the Friends of the
Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum.*



Graduates of the Calvert County Government Citizens' Academy including Friends' board members: Mike Sweeney & Larry Brown.

Spring 2017 Newsletter

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