Who Was Wickersham?
by Brenda Proctor, Friends of CBRM, VP

In a previous newsletter article, Turner A. Wickersham was introduced as the purchaser of some Tiffany glass panels that may have graced the grand Belvedere Hotel. Researching the mystery of those glass panels led to the discovery of Mr. Wickersham as another interesting character associated with the Chesapeake Beach Railway (CBRy).

Recently, the Museum acquired some early documents including a November 1898 letter from Mr. Wickersham to Otto Mears. It appears that he was following up on a business arrangement they already had in place, for he tells Mears that “I have my affairs here in shape to leave on two hours notice. I would be very glad to hear from you as to when I will be needed.” The letterhead shows T. A. Wickersham Real Estate located in Salt Lake City, Utah.

According to Poor’s Manual of Railroads, 1901, page 192, T. A. Wickersham was a director of the Chesapeake Beach Railway Company, along with Otto Mears and several others.

However, he was most often referred to as the General Agent of the Land Department of the Railway. He is listed that way on an (Continued on page 2)
Who Was Wickersham?
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(Continued from page 1)

ad for “Chesapeake Beach Lots, $10 cash and $10 a month,” in the Evening Star newspaper of 09/24/1900. Mr. Wickersham was really giving the hard sell in his ad from the Evening Star of 07/27/1901 in which he hints that Chesapeake Beach is a booming place not unlike Atlantic City and urges buying “a lot while a choice one may be had” and “don’t wait... until prices get sky high.”

The Prince George’s Enquirer of 01/06/1911 had this tidbit:

“Mr. Turner A. Wickersham, of Washington, is the promoter of a new town called ‘West Chesapeake Beach,’ contiguous to Chesapeake Beach, the Calvert County summer resort. Fifty acres have been platted for building lots and filed for record at the Clerk’s office. As a residential location the situation is attractive, convenient to train accommodations and the enjoyments of Chesapeake Beach, the popular summer resort.”

In addition, Maryland State Archives had a plat of lots that Mr. Wickersham purchased in 1910 for ten dollars! Those properties can be found today along the south side of Route 260 from E Street (next to Papa John’s Pizza) up to Cox Road, ending near the entrance of Bay View Hills, and over to the marsh. Mr. Wickersham owned a bath house on the boardwalk, where his office was also located. It appears he owned a section of the beach as well. One news article described him as an ardent fisherman, so dedicated to it that “very few days escape that he does not wet his line.” Sadly for him, his “motor launch” was driven from its moorings and sank about a mile offshore during the hurricane of August 1915 that also destroyed a portion of the Long Pier and damaged the boardwalk.

Other newspaper articles and online books give more details about Mr. Wickersham’s life. He was originally from Indiana, the son of a doctor, and studied medicine for a while. Later, he was business manager of a graphics company that painted ads on fences and barns. He also was a member of an entertainment group, his talent being the whistling of bird songs. By 1883, Mr. Wickersham was living in Leadville, Colorado where he received a party of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen & Engineers who had traveled from Denver to Leadville on the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad. They described him as a “successful merchant” with a beautiful home. Mr. Wickersham’s hospitality included a nighttime, gaslight tour of Leadville, where the visitors were surprised to see open gambling houses, dance houses, and other less reputable houses. He also took them up into the mountains for a boat ride on a lake and a tour of mining operations. In 1895, Wickersham was Vice President of a mining company in Utah.

While he worked for the CBRy, he lived in Washington, DC. He was well connected and well-to-do. From 1898, Wickersham was private secretary and agent for Colorado mining millionaire Thomas F. Walsh until Walsh died in 1910. T. A. Wickersham is listed on the inaugural committee for President Taft, and he was related to James Wickersham, an influential District Court Judge in Alaska. In 1912-1913, he had a new 7,700 square foot home built in Woodley Park at a cost of $25,000. It had an elevator installed that cost as much as the average new house, around $2,000! The first floor contained rooms where his wife was to give Christian
Who Was Wickersham?
by Brenda Proctor, Friends of CBRM, VP
(Continued from page 2)
Science treatments. Today the building is part of Syracuse University.

He died at age 64 in 1915 leaving an estate of $90,000. His obituary in The Washington Post November 5, 1915 says: "He was president of the Fussell Ice Cream Company, general land agent of the Chesapeake Railway Company, and proprietor of the Chesapeake bathing beach. He was a popular member of the Commercial Club, the Columbia Country Club, and National Press Club."

Interestingly, in a codicil to his will, he left "$500 to Louise D. Bagnum, and directs that she be employed to conduct the bathhouses at Chesapeake Beach for a period of five years, or until Morgan W. Wickersham [son] becomes twenty-five years old. Her salary is fixed at 10 percent of the net earnings of the baths."

Model Train Fun
by Hilary Dailey, Volunteer

If you haven’t stopped by the Railway Museum lately, you’re missing out on an afternoon of fun. Our Model Railway Club has been working hard on the scale model of the Chesapeake Beach Railway and the train leaves the station every few minutes! We’ve shared some of the beautiful details here. Be sure to stop in soon to see it for yourself.
Message from the President
by Mike Sweeney, Friends CBRM, President

“Keep your fork”. Age-old advice given to children by their moms when dining out. What moms meant by saying that was for everyone to keep their forks when the dinner dishes are removed from the table, because dessert may be on the way.

In the same way, we at the museum are “keeping our forks” because we see that good things may be coming our way, and we want to be prepared. We have applied to the Maryland Heritage Area Authority (MHAA) for a $100,000 grant to renovate and update the museum, and we should know if this is approved sometime in June. The Friends have put $15,000 toward the required $50,000 matching funds to apply for this grant. Additionally we are now, and have been for some time, negotiating with the Calvert County Government to occupy the now-vacant Randle Cliffs Elementary School, which will give us much needed artifact storage and maintenance space.

The model railroad became operational upon the museum opening in March. It is being enjoyed by our visitors and is about 95% completed. This fully-to-scale and historically accurate model replicates the railway and the beach in the 1920s, complete with an operating carousel. The Model Railroad Committee of the Friends has invested about 1200 man-hours to design and build this very popular, visitor-operated addition to the museum. It is expected that the layout will be fully completed very soon well under budget. Stop by and run the train, blow its whistle, ring its bell, spin the carousel and take in all of its fantastic artwork.

Despite the construction at the Rod N Reel, we were able to continue with most all of our programs, including the reading of the Polar Express, the Christmas reception, children’s programs, family fun days and our volunteer workshop. And I am happy to report that due to the Rod N Reel parking garage being scheduled to be completed in late May, our Summer Breeze concert series will commence in June, followed by concerts in July and August.

The museum will run its normal season until November. Then, if the grant materializes, we will close and start the renovations that will be completed in August 2020.

Keep your fork, good things are coming indeed. All aboard!

Message from the Director
by Sherrod Sturrock, Director
Calvert Marine Museum & Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum

The world surrounding the Railway Museum is undergoing a dramatic transformation. Rather than sticking our heads in the sand, it seems a good time to make some dramatic changes of our own. The Friends have submitted a $52,600 grant request to the Maryland Heritage Area Program Maryland Historical Trust, matched by $45,000 cash and $7,600 in-kind contributions. This $105,200 project will accomplish a number of key goals for the museum.

Since the CBRM opened to the public in 1979, the main exhibit has not changed substantively. Things have been added, but without a clear plan. The resulting accretion of material has resulted in a lot of information being presented in a somewhat haphazard way. Last year, we went through the process of developing an interpretive master plan that helped clarify the museum’s goals. This project is the next step. If funded, it will allow us to redesign the core exhibit to tell the compelling and remarkable story of the train journey to this man-made destination resort by the sea.

Grant funds are earmarked to hire an exhibits team to design, fabricate, and install a new, interactive, and dynamic exhibit using
Message from the Director  
by Sherrod Sturrock, Director  
Calvert Marine Museum & Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum  
(Continued from page 4) 
both the depot and the Dolores. In order to do this work, it is necessary to temporarily relocate all of the artifacts, collections, and staff to another facility. We have negotiated an arrangement with the Calvert County Board of Commissioners to use the Randle Cliff School as temporary staff space, and as an on-going satellite location for the museum’s collection.

The Randle Cliff School, located 1.8 miles south, has been sitting vacant for a number of years. It was built in 1939 for African-American children and operated until 1966. In 1972, it was turned over to Calvert County Government. In 1975, it was leased to the Southern Maryland Tri-County Action Committee for a Head Start Center and remained operational until 2012, when the center closed. This two-room facility will provide space for the museum to properly house, catalogue, and store its collection. It can also offer people interested in research a place to come and work with the materials. The matching funds will go toward renovating the building to make it suitable for this purpose.

The cash match is coming from the Friends, the Calvert County Commissioners, the Town of Chesapeake Beach, and private donations. The Calvert Marine Museum is providing in-kind services through the Curator of Maritime History and the Exhibits Department, which helps make up the full match.

We will hear about the grant in June, and if approved, can begin work on the project in the fall. The museum will be closed for a time while the work is being done, but activities will continue at the Northeast Community Center and through outreach programs. Watch the website for updates.

Upcoming Spring/Summer Events  
by Correine E. Moore, Museum Staff

May 19th will kick off the 2019 season with our annual Spring Family Fun Day event held at the Northeast Community Center from 1pm - 4pm. This spring-themed day will include a moon bounce, crafts, bingo, raffles, face painting by Lily Barber and Ming Diaz, and balloon artist Brian Garner will be providing balloon creations as part of the day’s activity. The Chesapeake Beach Railroad Committee will be on hand as well with a special model railroad display for all to enjoy. Come join us for FREE light refreshments, fun, and more fun!

Next, our free children’s programs will be every Thursday, 10AM-11AM June 27-July 25. (Please note: There will be no children’s program on July 4th). The programs will be held at the Northeast Community Center due to the ongoing construction at the Rod ’N’ Reel Resort. Each week’s program will be full of fun activities and crafts along with a story time relevant to that week’s activity. These popular programs, while geared towards two to eight year olds, have been enjoyed by all age groups and are a great family activity. Please note any organizations or groups that have five or more in their group can schedule a separate visit to tour the museum.

Lastly, our Bay Breeze Concert Series has returned! The series will start off on June 11 with Dave Chappell and Friends. The Dixie Ramblers will perform on July 9 and the Dixie Power Trio will be performing on August 13. The concerts are scheduled to take place at the museum but are subject to change pending construction plans.

Please visit www.cbrm.org or call the museum on 410.257.3892 for additional information or updates.
It’s Time for the Annual Shad Bake!
Wait… what’s a Shad Bake?
by Kris DeGrace, Museum Registrar

In the Railway Museum, we have a picture of many men seated on small boats, looking happy, waving and posed for a picture at what I am fairly certain was a shad bake in Chesapeake Beach. We also have a photograph of a large group of men, dressed in long overcoats, suits and ties, wearing derby hats, posed in front of the “Casino” building in Chesapeake Beach, to remember their May 13, 1916 annual Shad Bake outing.

I had seen these pictures many times, but never knew exactly what a shad bake was. So, I figured it was time to find out. And as usual, there are many more layers to this story.

The easy answer is that in the late 1800s many people began visiting local beaches, resorts, and parks for big shad bakes. I found many early newspaper articles, announcing “The Annual Shad Bake” for a variety of groups. It turns out that lawyers, business groups and bankers seemed to love a good shad bake! I even found a Mother’s Day celebration held by the Elks Club.

The majority of these outings appear to be from about 1912 through the 1920s. Shad Bakes were the thing to do, and Chesapeake Beach was the place to do it!

So, what exactly was a shad bake? In a nutshell, it was a big picnic and a grand, fun time! For those that don’t know, shad is a type of fish, so of course, shad were the main attraction of this shindig.

Rows of shad nailed to planks would be set up around a fire pit, and slow cooked for the feast. There would be fun activities including, fishing, athletic games, card games, baseball, entertainment, and tons of “merri-ment”!

Examples of souvenirs that were given out to remember this fantastic day were note books, puzzles, pencils, face powder, shaving soap and my favorite, bottles of ketchup. How better to remember your day than with a delicious bottle of ketchup! Sign me up!

There is however a little more to the story. Shad spend the majority of their lives in the ocean, but migrate to spawn in fresh water rivers, which means they would swim up
It’s Time for the Annual Shad Bake!  
Wait... what’s a Shad Bake?  
by Kris DeGrace, Museum Registrar  
(Continued from page 6)

the Chesapeake Bay to get to their spawning grounds. Early on, there were a lot of shad to be had! They were extremely plentiful up and down the East Coast. They were easy to catch and could feed many. They were a well-known and valued food source by Native-Americans and Colonists. An interesting legend has it that the shad supply saved the lives of the Continental Army at Valley Forge in 1778.

An oversimplified version of this story is that while shad were once plentiful, they were overfished. Pollution has had a detrimental effect on the shad population. Dams built on the rivers blocked the migration pattern for the shad to spawn. These factors led to a dramatic decrease in the shad population. As there is now a scramble to replenish the oysters in the bay because of overharvesting, there are also restoration efforts to rebuild the shad population, which thankfully appear to be making a rebound!

Maybe it’s time to bring back the shad bake... but in an ecologically responsible way this time. So get your bottles of ketchup ready and I’ll see you at the bake!

A Little Track Goes a Long Way  
by Correine E. Moore, Museum Staff

The U.S. standard railroad gauge is four feet, eight and one half inches.

Why? That’s the way England built them and English engineers designed U.S. railroads.

Why? The first rail lines were built by the same people who built the wagon tramways and that’s the gauge they used.

Why? People who built the tramways used the same jigs and tools for building wagons using the same wheel spacing.

Why? Any other spacing resulted in the wagon wheels breaking more often on old roads in England. The wheel ruts were the key to spacing.

Who? Imperial Rome built the first long distance roads in Europe including England for their legions and those roads have been used ever since. Roman war chariots formed the initial ruts which everyone had to match or risk destroying their wagon wheels. Imperial Roman Army chariots were made wide enough to accommodate the rear ends of two war horses.

But Wait, There’s More.

The Space Shuttle solid rocket boosters, or SRB’s, have to be shipped by train from the manufacturer’s site in Utah to the launch site. The engineers would have preferred to make the SRB’s “fatter”. However, the railroad line from the factory runs through a tunnel and the SRB’s have to fit through the tunnel that has tracks which were designed to accommodate the rear ends of two Roman war horses. The imagination can only expound on this concept.

The above edited information was provided from a Facebook posting through a fellow historian who shared this with me. I do not know if this is accurate or not but it sure was entertaining to think, as I have paraphrased from the FB posting, “and you thought a horse’s behind wasn’t important.”
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Spring 2019 Newsletter

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SWEET FUNDRAISER

Join us at a Friends of Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum Fundraiser

July 17, 2019 from 6:00-9:00 pm at Rita’s Italian Ice & Frozen Custard of Dunkirk, located at 10331 Southern Maryland Blvd, Suite 101, Dunkirk, MD.

Bring the family for a sweet treat and Rita’s will donate a portion of your purchase to the Railway Museum.