

The Chesapeake Dispatcher



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

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Not Just Any Watery Tale!

Out of Tragedy...a Silver Lining

by Kris DeGrace, Museum Registrar

With the summer coming, a little history of water safety seems in order. But as usual, this is a tale of one thing leading to another, then another... and so on... my favorite kind of tale.

Have you ever heard of the General Slocum? This tale starts with a horrible disaster that occurred aboard the General Slocum excursion steamer, in New York City, on June 15, 1904. The excursion was carrying approximately 1300 people, mostly women and children, for an end-of-the-year picnic. An uncontrollable fire broke out on the steamer, and to escape the flames, many of the passengers jumped overboard, despite not knowing how to swim. There were life jackets and fire hoses on board, however they were old, rotted and of no use. Just over 1000 people, mostly women and children died in this disaster.

Without too many details, the second part of this tale belongs to Commodore Wilbert E. Longfellow. His story starts as a reporter in Rhode Island. After the General Slocum disaster, he was nominated to be head of life saving in Rhode Island's Dept of U.S. Volunteer Life Saving Corps (U.S.V.L.S.C.). He could not swim, and knew very little regarding water safety, but took his new role very seriously. His successful approach to spreading water safety, was reflected in the significantly decreased number of drown-



Wilbert E. Longfellow (courtesy of The Library of Congress)

ings in the state. This was noted, and he moved on to a new position in New York, where he was appointed Commodore of the U.S.V.L.S.C. He initiated water safety training for the Y.M.C.A. & Y.W.C.A., and reached out to the Boy Scouts of America.

It was this connection with the Y's and Boy Scouts, that led to the next part of the story! In 1913, the Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A., and the Boy Scouts, reached out to the American Red Cross, asking them to hire Longfellow as its National Field Representative, which is exactly what happened in 1914. Here he could take his ambitious idea of the "waterproofing of America" to the next level! This is where our tale and his tale start to blur.

Commodore Longfellow's slogan was "every swimmer is a potential life-saver." This was the impetus for his next step. He, and his volunteer corps, visited beaches, taught life-saving techniques, held "learn to swim weeks" and further organized a local corps. Which FINALLY, brings Longfellow to us!

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Not Just Any Watery Tale!
Out of Tragedy...a Silver Lining
 by Kris DeGrace, Museum Registrar
(Continued from page 1)

I found a news article in the Washington Times, on July 19, 1914, that announced a volunteer Life-Saving Corps at Chesapeake Beach was being organized by the American Red Cross, under W.E. Longfellow. Two very familiar names of old Chesapeake Beach were mentioned as lead members. Arnold Freedley [owner of the photograph/postcard shop on the boardwalk] was elected president and Victor F. Marinelli [proprietor of the Water's Edge Hotel] was elected secretary treasurer.

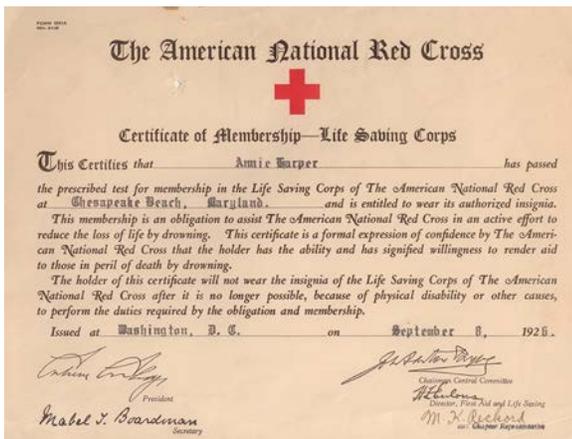
So we have almost come full circle in our tale. Commodore Longfellow made waves (yes, that WAS intentional!) Out of disaster, his ambition and passion brought about great change. So our tale is tied up in a bow with a bright silver lining.



Annie Maud Harper: A member of the Life Saving Corps in Chesapeake Beach, 1926, note her Red Cross swim suit. Donated by her daughter, Joan Heinicke



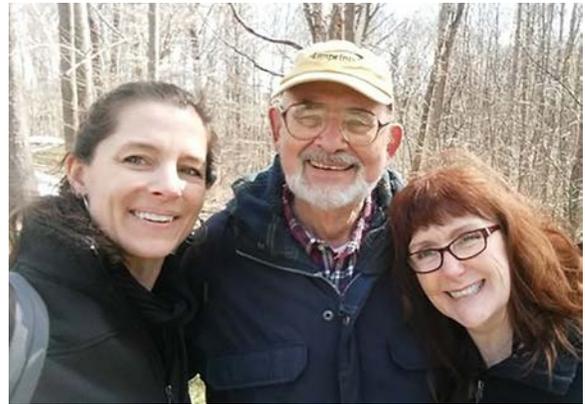
Member of the Life Saving Corps, Chesapeake Beach from the collection of the CBRM



The American National Red Cross Certificate of Membership - Life Saving Corps, issued to Annie Harper. Donated by her daughter, Joan Heinicke

Roads and Rails at Lyons Creek
 by John Riedesel, Volunteer

It all started when a local citizen contacted the Museum recently to describe what appeared to be old boundary markers on his property. He wondered if they had anything to do with the Chesapeake Beach Railway (CBRY). So three intrepid explorers—Correine Moore, Kris DeGrace, and an old guy (the author)—decided to go exploring and investigate this find.



(from left to right) Museum Registrar Kris DeGrace, Volunteer John Riedesel & Museum Staff Member Correine Moore

Our target was the western end of Route 260, near where it joins Route 4. It is well-known that most of Route 260 was built on the old CBRY right-of-way. Where 260 now curves into northbound Route 4, the railroad went straight across Lyons Creek Valley on a long, high trestle. On the west side of Route 4, one can still see the two massive concrete piers that were once part of the trestle.

With the property owner's permission, we parked our cars at the vegetable stand across from the strip mall at the end of 260 and began searching the roadside. Thirty feet off the road, on the south side, we found three or four concrete posts, each about four inches square and a couple of feet high, clearly marked with the letters "SRC." What could it be but "State Roads Commission"? It is known that about 1955, two decades after the demise of CBRY, the State built a paved road—our present Route 260—along that portion of the old railroad right-of-way. (Before that, there was a dirt road running alongside or atop the old CBRY roadbed.)

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Roads and Rails at Lyons Creek

by John Riedesel, Volunteer

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State Roads Commission boundary marker from the 1950s.

We decided that the markers must have been property boundaries placed by the State when the paved road was built.

After our first foray, we dodged traffic on 260 to look for markers on the north side. We did find a marker or two, but more fascinating was the scramble down a long, steep hill to a creek valley at the bottom, and the culvert which carried that little creek under the massive right-of-way fill from railroad days. We also found the remains of an abandoned farm road and the crumbling bridge which took it over the creek.



Culvert carrying a little creek deep under Route 260

We finished our field trip by driving across Route 4 to the site of the well-known concrete bridge piers, the only remaining evidence of CBRY's Lyons Creek Trestle. Over time it gets harder to bushwhack through the brambles to get to the very bottom of Lyons Creek Valley, to the remains of the original 1930 alignment of what is now Route 4, the road that went between the concrete piers, the very first hard-surfaced road in Calvert County. We stood between the pillars on remnants of a road built 90 years ago which ran under a railroad trestle.

As with many right-of-way discoveries, our explorations left us with more tantalizing questions than answers. One such question is, where did the Route 260 of 1955 connect with the 1930's alignment of Route 4 (then called Route 416)? The present dual lane road has obscured any evidence of that intersection.

Upcoming Summer Events

Sunday, May 20: Spring Family Fun Day
1-4pm

Northeast Community Center

Thursday, June 28: Summer Children's Program
10-11am

Porch of the Railway Museum

Thursday, July 5: Summer Children's Program
10-11am

Porch of the Railway Museum

Thursday, July 12: Summer Children's Program
10-11am

Porch of the Railway Museum

Thursday, July 19: Summer Children's Program
10-11am

Porch of the Railway Museum

Thursday, July 26: Summer Children's Program
10-11am

Porch of the Railway Museum

All Events are Free and Open to the Public.

Events are sponsored by the

Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum and

Friends of the Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum

The Bay Breeze Concert Series has been suspended this year due to impending construction of the Rod 'N' Reel complex anticipated to begin mid-2018.

Stay "tuned" for updates on the future of the series.

Message from the President

by Mike Sweeney, Friends President

A new season starts with much “behind the scenes” work completed to enable us to better serve our community.

We have embarked on new endeavors, cleaned up some issues that were hanging at the end of our last season, and improved on those which we need to carry on with into the future.

Many initiatives have been undertaken for the new season. Using Friends funds and a matching grant, an external analysis of our museum was completed by a professional group to determine how we could improve our displays, operations and community outreach. Their results are presently being studied to determine our best courses of action to enhance our service to the public.

Another notable project that has begun is a model railroad layout for the museum. (see Larry Brown’s article on page 5). This has been anticipated for years, has been funded, and is now under construction at the museum by Friends Model Railroad Committee members. This layout will closely replicate the route of the railway between Seat Pleasant and Chesapeake Beach, and will be operable by visitors. The Friends who are constructing the layout will also offer workshops to those in the public who are interested in railroad modeling techniques.

Continuing events include the Volunteer Workshop, the Last Train Farewell Ceremony, Heritage Walk, Family Fun Days and other scheduled outreach programs. And as the season progresses, we will be adjusting to the construction activities at the Rod ‘N Reel complex.

We had a very productive season last year, and are looking forward to an even better season this year. All aboard!

Message from the Curator

by J. Carey Crane, Museum Curator

How do we practically and effectively serve a wider potential audience throughout the year? How will we best make the twined stories of the railway and earlier days of the area relevant to today’s visitors? We are responsive to our community and guests, and these questions direct our ever-evolving goals. Periodically it is good for us to see ourselves through fresh eyes. A formal way of achieving this is by commissioning an Interpretive Master Plan.

In December, the Southern Maryland Heritage Area Consortium (SMHAC) awarded us a 2017 Mini Grant for interpretive planning. In the words of Lucille W. Walker, Executive Director SMHAC. The “Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum Interpretive Plan’ was one of six projects awarded in the three county Heritage Area. This grant award speaks to our great confidence in your proposed project and the positive impact on the Southern Maryland region.” The grant was matched with funds from the Friends of the Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum. Through a selective process, we chose Creative Content Studios (CCS) to develop the interpretive plan.

Over the years, stories, artifacts, and ephemera have been added to the core exhibits designed in the early 1980’s, and our staff and volunteers are still making discoveries. This layering of added information is challenging for the uninitiated visitor to navigate. A primary concern of CCS will be to offer alternatives for visitor flow through the story in a fresh and logical way – how does the museum “journey” clearly unfold as you arrive at destination Chesapeake Beach?

Our interpretive plan will provide a foundation moving forward for both reinvigorating the exhibits and considering the complete visitor approach and experience in light of

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Message from the Curator

by J. Carey Crane, Museum Curator

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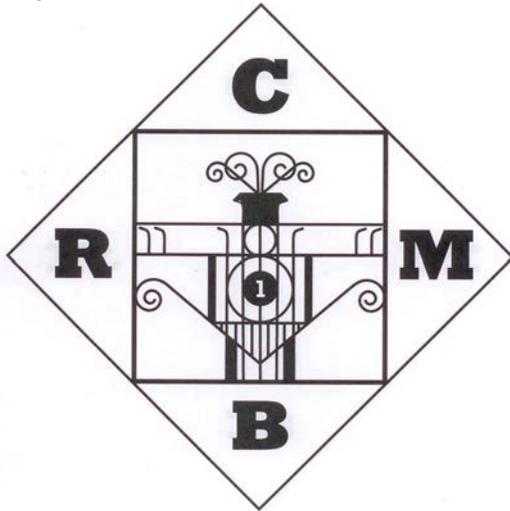
the major renovations planned for the Rod 'n Reel resort.

The meetings and subsequent discussions with CCS have gone beyond my initial expectations of a plan centered on the exhibit content, to considering the complete experience we offer to the public. How exciting it is to explore new ways to reach people, while keeping our reputation for telling this remarkable local story with the personal touch.

Barn Quilt Trail

by Corrine E. Moore, Museum Staff

The CBRM Barn Quilt Project has progressed to its final design and color selections. The design below was provided by the Calvert County Museums exhibits team.



The Friends of the CBRM are sponsoring the project which is estimated to be completed within the next two to three months for display on the grounds of the CBRM.

The CBRM Barn Quilt Project is part of the Calvert Barn Quilt Trail ("Calvert barn quilt trail, 2018,"), connecting our community and visitors with the exhibition of hand-painted wooden quilt squares on barns and buildings throughout Calvert County. The quilt project is a part of a national effort to high-

light local regions and attract visitors to the sponsored sites. Calvert County is the first to do so in Southern Maryland and is a project of the Arts Council of Calvert County.

Reference: Calvert barn quilt trail. (2018).

Retrieved from <http://www.calvertbarnquilttrail.org/index.htm>

I've Been Working on the Railroad

by Larry Brown, Volunteer

A number of the Friends of the Chesapeake Railway Museum have always felt that the museum needed a model of the railway to help in our explanations to our visitors about the museum and Chesapeake Beach. It has been almost a year ago now since I introduced a plan to the board of 'The Friends' to try to accomplish this. The big question was who would build the model.

In the spring of 2017, we discovered that there were enough like-minded train nuts to form a model railroad club. The group of a few people began meeting monthly at the Northeast Community Center. Fortunately, there were a number of great people who joined our group. As the group grew, we quickly found that enough people with model railroad experience had joined so we would be able to build a model railroad that would represent our long gone railroad in its heyday, 1920s. As our plans started to develop, we became an official part of the Friends of the Chesapeake Beach Railway with the purpose of building this museum quality model railroad. We will not only finish this project but also build a club that will be a strong group of friends in a strong model railroad club.

We began working out our first plans. The Museum Curator showed the group where the railroad would go. After a number of attempts and twice monthly meetings, we arrived at a plan approved by everyone. We are now ready to start building. Our next problem is where do you build a model rail-

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I've Been Working on the Railroad

by Larry Brown, Volunteer

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road without making several hundred saw-dust piles. To the rescue are Rich and Lee Coleman who had built a large room over their garage for their trains but had not built their planned model railroad in it yet.



Rich shows Bob his future train room. It not only fits our plans but a full-size Skipjack boat could be built here at the same time!

We received most of the money needed to build the railroad from the Friends of the Chesapeake Beach Railway. We also received money from Sneade's ACE Hardware and Home Depot. The foundation of the layout was built, but us train nuts had to stop and put track on it so it could be moved to the Railway Museum in time for the initial unveiling at the Volunteer Workshop in March. Next up: Scenery!



Had to put some track down even if it is in the wrong place.

I'd like to acknowledge the support of the CBRM staff and the Friends on this project. Corrine, Kris, and Calvert County Buildings and Grounds staff did a lot of work to move collections to storage and to prepare the freight room for the layout.



Moving Day!



Progress so far...

If you or someone you know is interested in joining the model railroad club, please contact Larry Brown: 301-855-7477.

Otto Mears, Entrepreneur - PART 2

by Brenda J. Proctor, Museum Volunteer

(Continued from the Fall 2017 Chesapeake Dispatcher)

Summarizing part one of this article, Otto Mears had invested in the Chesapeake Beach Railway (CBRY), obtained capital, built the railroad and resort, and succeeded in attracting a large crowd for the official opening on June 9, 1900. However, despite good attendance throughout that first summer of operation, the CBRY and resort end the year in deep debt. Needless to say, financier David Moffat, who was the primary stakeholder at this point, was extremely unhappy but too heavily invested to give up. Otto Mears had planned to open the race-track and casino in 1901, but the Chesapeake Beach Improvement Company responsible for them had gone into bankruptcy. Mears did not obtain the necessary County license to operate them and the County closes the

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Otto Mears, Entrepreneur - PART 2

by Brenda J. Proctor, Museum Volunteer

racetrack. The grandstand and stables are dismantled. The casino becomes a restaurant. The railway and resort continue to operate with extreme losses. In 1902, Mears convinces Moffat that electrification of the railway will turn fortunes around, but this effort fails. Mears then resigns from CBRY on November 1, 1902 and new management is put in place.

The Ames Williams book, "Otto Mears Goes East, The Chesapeake Beach Railway," describes Otto Mears this way in regard to his interactions with his construction workers:

"Mears, a forceful and energetic man who liked to get things done as expeditiously as possible, frequently overruled the decisions of his engineering staff in what he believed to be the interests of speed and economy."

Whatever his faults in judgment or management, Otto Mears got the CBRY going and forever changed Chesapeake Beach.

The CBRY was just one of an amazing number of endeavors that Otto Mears was involved in during his lifetime. He was born in Russia in 1840, the son of a Jewish Englishman and a Jewish Russian woman. Orphaned at a young age, he was passed between a series of family members in England, New York, and finally arriving in San Francisco in 1851. His family member there could not be found, so he was placed in a boarding house, where this eleven year old boy helped support himself selling newspapers. He married in 1870 and had 3 daughters. He died in 1931.

Before Otto Mears built the Chesapeake Beach Railway, he was a pioneer in building the toll roads and railroads that opened southwestern Colorado for settlement and mining, earning him the nickname "Pathfinder of the San Juan." In total, he built over 450 miles of toll roads. His narrow gauge



Otto Mears

railroads, which traversed some extremely tough terrain, included the Silverton Railway, Silverton Northern Railway, and the Rio Grande Southern Railway.

Here are some of his other businesses/accomplishments:

- Newspaper boy.
- Shopkeeper, then store owner.
- Tinsmith.
- Gold prospector.
- Manager/owner of mining properties and speculator in mining stocks.
- Volunteer in the Civil War for 3 years.
- Owner of lumber and grain mills in CO. He also acquired land on which he cultivated oats, potatoes.
- Appointed Treasurer of the new Saguache County. He accepted farm produce as taxes in place of money from many poor immigrant farmers, helping to keep the new county solvent and settlers on their land.
- Newspaper publisher.
- Negotiator/interpreter between the Government and the Ute Indians.
- Operator of mail delivery routes between the various southern counties of Colorado.
- Elected representative to the Colorado legislature. A stained glass portrait of Otto Mears memorializes him in the State Capitol.
- President of the Mack Brothers Motor Company, today known for Mack trucks. While working there, was instrumental in developing the first gasoline-powered motor car for use on narrow-gauge railways.
- Chairman of the Board of Capitol Managers which oversaw the construction of the Colorado State Capitol. The 272-foot-high dome of the Capitol was originally covered in copper, and residents complained when it became tarnished. Otto Mears persuaded the Colorado Mining Association to donate 200 ounces of 24-karat gold leaf, which was used to gild the copper dome in 1908.

At the railway museum, you can view a copy of "The Ballad of Otto Mears," a 24-stanza song that pays tribute to his many accomplishments. Please come by!

Friends of the Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum
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Long-time Volunteer "Conductor John" Riedesel led the Polar Express Program at the Railway Museum this past December



Volunteers Sheila Poole and Claudia Stout helped out at the recent National Train Day in May of this year

Spring 2018 Newsletter

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If you would like to
volunteer to help out with any future events,
please contact Hilary: 301-855-4028