

# The Chesapeake Dispatcher



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

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May 2025

## Lost and Found in Chesapeake Beach & our New Rotating Exhibit

by Kris DeGrace  
Museum Registrar

In 2017 the museum displayed a fantastic exhibit of loaned items that were found in Chesapeake Beach. These were not just any items found in the beach, they were from the early 1900s. There were bottles, rings, brooches, cufflinks, lipstick cases, compact cases, pocket watches, pocket-knives, coins, and a World War I dog tag... to name just a few! (*read more about this on page 5!*)



*Horse themed cufflinks*

Rob Taylor, the finder of these gems, was gracious enough to give us the opportunity to purchase his collection. We jumped at the chance! Rob, a true historian to his core, not only found these objects, but cleaned them, researched them, & dug deep to learn more about them. Some left him wondering 'what in the world could this be?'... but being the sleuth he is, he found out! And we are the lucky recipients of his collection and his research!



*Lipstick cases*

The beauty of his collection is that the pieces capture a slice of life at a moment in time. These items are what visitors had when they came to the beach and somehow lost them. Possibly they were lost when the boardwalk collapsed in 1921, or while swimming, or maybe a cufflink flew off while riding the Great Derby... the scenarios are great fun to ponder. We are thrilled that Rob wanted these items to come home to Chesapeake Beach.



*Pocket watch remnants & Lady's compact*

We will be re-exhibiting some of this collection in a new exhibit titled "*Lost & Found in Chesapeake Beach.*" This is something we can all relate to; we've all been there! And who knows, maybe something you've lost today will show up in an exhibit 100 years from now! Now **THAT** is a fun scenario to ponder!

## Springtime in Calvert

by Mike Sweeney  
President, Friends of the CBRM

Hooray for Spring in Calvert County! After a most challenging winter, spring has finally arrived, bringing a rebirth of nature and the start of a new season at the museum. The beginning of another season brings a newness of spirit and the renewal of a sense of purpose, not only within our museum family, but in the entire Chesapeake Beach community.

There is a new administration in Town Hall that brings fresh ideas with a sense of purpose to see these ideas to fruition. Our neighbors at the Rod 'N' Reel Resort are set to open the final piece of their new complex, replete with a new restaurant, banquet rooms, 74 new hotel guest rooms, a stunning atrium to welcome guests, the re-opening of the indoor pool and many other amenities to enhance tourism.

What is our part in all of this? Simple. The time has come to concentrate our efforts in enhancing the outdoor grounds of the museum to provide visitors to the resort and the museum with a connected atmosphere of welcoming that includes positive surroundings in which to enjoy their visit.

Curator Jeff Murray and I have been talking and meeting about these improvements for some time now, and fortunately we share the same enthusiasm about improving the museum grounds. Although the County has serious fiduciary concerns, the Friends are ready and able to assist in any way we can.

A recent decision from our Board of Directors voted to approve funds to have the exposed piping in the museum painted, which the County could not afford. This, along with other projects are on our radar and will be addressed. That is what we are here for, and what we are chartered to do.

Lastly, I want to take the opportunity to welcome our newest Board member, Mayor Bruce Wahl. A decades-long advocate and fan of the museum, he brings a welcome new sense of connection of the Museum with the Town. Good things to come indeed not only for us, but for the entire beach community as well.

So, "All Aboard!" Take a seat and hang on. This train is on the move and will soon be at track speed this year!

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### Join us at the Founders' Day Meeting

**June 8: Founders' Day  
General Membership Meeting  
1:00pm at the Museum**

*All current Friends' members are welcome!*

In the late 1890's, Otto Mears planned a Chesapeake Bay shoreline resort with railroad service from Washington and Baltimore. Mears and a group of Denver business associates designed a resort town with hotels, bathhouses and beaches, casinos, a race track and a 1600 foot boardwalk. The boardwalk was built out over the water and supported a band shell, a carousel, a dance pavilion, a roller coaster and many entertainment booths. Passenger steamers arrived daily from Baltimore during the summer months and tied up at a mile-long pier.

The first train arrived in Chesapeake Beach in early June, 1900, which was 125 years ago!

Current Friends' members, please join us at the Railway Museum at 1:00pm on Sunday, June 8th for our Annual Friends of the CBRM Board Meeting to vote on board members and hear about upcoming events.



*Donation to the Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum.  
The donor's father was a lifeguard at our salt-water pool!*

### **A worthy use of your time, come volunteer at the Museum!**

We are always in need of new Volunteers to help us interpret the Museum's mission - in the museum - and out and about, in the community!

FAQs about becoming a Museum Volunteer:

- Exhibits and displays are designed to be self-interpretive. This means that our interaction with visitors is minimal.
- Volunteers do not need to have the breadth of knowledge that was required in the "old days."
- We require only three hours of your time every so often, here and there from 1 to 4 pm.
- Docent training takes an hour, tops. This is preferably completed in an evening, but we're flexible!

If you are interested in joining the ranks of the Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum Volunteers, please contact **Mike Sweeney** at **410-440-6499** or **avn29@hotmail.com**

## **We Need your Support!**

by Mike Zitzmann

Membership Committee, Friends of CBRM

Dear Friends,

First of all, thank you for your support of the Friends of Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum over the years!

It's that time of year again - time to renew your membership in the Friends of the Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum.

The mission of the Friends is to support the Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum by fundraising and recruiting volunteers, in addition to helping maintain the museum's programs and collections. Your support also contributes to the ongoing restoration of the parlor car "Dolores", a project the Friends are very proud to support.

If you feel you can help in our endeavors, please make a check out to the "Friends of the Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum" and mail it to:

**Friends of the Chesapeake Beach  
Railway Museum  
P.O. Box 82  
Chesapeake Beach, MD 20732**

For those of you who would prefer to renew your membership virtually, please visit our updated website:

**[chesapeakebeachrailwaymuseum.com](http://chesapeakebeachrailwaymuseum.com)**  
and click on "Support."

Thank you,  
Mike Zitzmann  
Membership Committee Chair

Individual Membership: \$20 annually  
Family Membership: \$30 annually  
Business Membership: \$50 annually  
Life Membership: \$100



## Springtime at the Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum, the Friends are "here to help!"

by Jeff Murray  
Museum Director

Spring is a time of renewal, and it's so good to see the museum open and greeting visitors from near and far once again! With new interpretive stories on the museum's horizon and a short list of planned upgrades and fixes in store, 2025 will be a transformative year!

As you most likely know, the Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum is owned and operated by Calvert County Government. As such, it is the county that provides the overwhelming majority of the funding for the museum's staffing and operations each year.

This year, as the county prepares to pass a budget for the fiscal year the begins on July 1, there are significant shortfalls where projected revenues do not meet spending projections. This has required some very creative thinking for all the county's various leaders and resulted in proposed spending cuts in nearly every county department. For the Railway Museum, the good news is that the current proposed budget keeps the museum open with current staffing levels. However, the shortfall means that in the upcoming fiscal year the county is unable to support the museum's education programs and other operational expenses in the same ways that they have in the past.

When I reported these developments to the board members of the Friends of the Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum a few weeks ago, they were nothing less than completely supportive of the museum's fiscal situation. Board President Mike Sweeney got out the organization's charter and proclaimed that the Friends were "here to help." I am so grateful and appreciative that this organization is willing to support the museum through thick and thin with both its volun-

teer service and financial support. Further, the addition of Mayor Wahl to the board will provide opportunities to build new relationships with the Town of Chesapeake Beach that should further strengthen the museum's ability to deliver on its mission.

With the Rod and Reel approaching the finish line on their redevelopment project, 2025 brings a multitude of possibilities for the Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum to succeed in new ways. I'm betting we can break some attendance records soon, and here's to those like you who will make it possible for us to try!



**Get your daily dose of local history  
on Facebook  
(including the images above!)**

**Search on Facebook for:  
Friends of the Chesapeake Beach  
Railway Museum**

## Captain George William Gibson

by Fred Bumgarner

Board Member, Friends of the CBRM

As Kris DeGrace mentioned in the story on page 1, the museum recently purchased an amazing collection of items found in the waters adjacent to the old amusement park boardwalk and pier. The finder of these items was Rob Taylor, a local historian and treasure hunter. Among the many remarkable objects in the purchase, was a World War I era dog tag issued to Captain George W. Gibson. Although the metal tag was worn and corroded after being in the water for 100 years, there was enough information available to provide a positive identification and to permit the retrieval of some fascinating facts about Captain Gibson.

When Rob found this dog tag, he went through great lengths to find out more about George W. Gibson, and if possible, return it to a family member. He was not able to find any descendants, however he took the time and found the gravesite of Mr. Gibson in Arlington Cemetery and laid some flowers to honor him and his service.

Between Rob's research, several databases, including Fold3, Ancestry.com and Newspapers.com, Museum Registrar Kris DeGrace and myself, we were able to weave together a story of this immigrant's life and service as well as suggest a possible scenario that led to the dog tag ending up in Chesapeake Bay just a few yards from the Railway Museum.



George W. Gibson's dog tag

New York, U.S., Spanish-American War Military & Naval Service Records  
1898-1902

5-23-25-3000 (40-1577)

U. S. ARMY

SURNAME <b>Gibson</b>	CHRISTIAN NAME <b>George</b>	MIDDLE NAME <b>W.</b>	RANK <b>Pvt</b>	COMPANY <b>L</b>	REGIMENT <b>8th Inf</b>
ENLISTED WHEN <b>April 21, 1899</b> for <b>3 years</b>			RESIDENCE AT TIME OF ENLISTMENT <b>NY City</b>		
ORGANIZATION(S) SERVED IN <b>Co L, 8th Infantry, USA</b>					
ARMED WITH SERVICE <b>Pvt</b>					
DATE AND CAUSE OF, AND RANK HELD, AT SEPARATION FROM SERVICE <b>April 20, 1902--Hon. discharged--Pvt</b>					
LAST SERVED IN <b>None</b>					
BIRTHPLACE <b>Glasgow, Scotland</b>		AGE AT ENL. <b>24 1/2 yrs</b>	OCCUPATION <b>Drapery Blue</b>	COLOR OF EYES <b>Blue</b>	HAIR <b>Black</b>
COMPLEXION <b>Dark</b>					
CHARACTER <b>excellent</b>					

Bureau of War Records

New York, U.S., Abstracts of World War I Military Service, 1917-1919

Gibson, George W. OFFICER-RA  
(Surname) (Christian name) White

\* Residence: 354, 8th Ave., New York, NEW YORK  
(Street and house number) (Town or city) (Country) (State)

† Born in: Scotland, Sep 29, 75

† Appointed: 2 Lt (Temp) A S Sig C. Nov 23/17; FR R A

† Attended: Training Camp

† Promotions: Capt (Temp) Apr 2/18

† Organizations and staff assignments: Aviation Gen Sup Dep Adj & Fire Marshall Aberdeen Repl Sup.

† Principal stations: Kelly Field Tex. Urbana Ill; San Antonio Tex. Wash D. C. Cp Meade Me; Wash., D. C.

Engagements: ---

Wounds received in action: None

† Served overseas: June 11/18 to Aug 23/19

REMARKS: Enl. Serv. Hon Disch. Sept 31/20.

\* For graduates U. S. M. A., give residence at date of appointment thereto; for officers appointed from the Army, residence at date of enlistment; for all other officers, residence at date of appointment to Army. † Insert place and date. ‡ For data concerning appointment, promotion, and organizations and staff assignments, see Army Register. § Strike out if he did not attend a training camp. ¶ Give date of departure from and return to the United States.

Form No. 84a-1  
A. G. O.  
Mar. 17, 1921.

DUPLICATE

George W. Gibson's military cards

George was born in Glasgow, Scotland on September 29, 1874, or 1875 to David Gibson and Annie Sinclair Gibson. It appears that he had many brothers and sisters but only one came to America - Hugh Sinclair Gibson who lived in Oregon. His mother Ann Gibson lived on the island of Orkney, Scotland, at the time of Captain Gibson's voyage home from the war in France in August 1919. He would be separated from the Army on September 31, 1920, and was living at 354 8th Avenue, New York, NY, at that time.

A Naturalization Petition for George William Gibson was completed on August 15, 1917, and was signed and witnessed by two soldiers at the Presidio, San Francisco, CA, who were in the 63rd Infantry Regiment. Gibson's "Occupation" was listed as "soldier."

Continued on page 6



## Captain George William Gibson

by Fred Bumgarner

Board Member, Friends of the CBRM

*continued from page 5*

The petition states that he emigrated from Glasgow, Scotland to New York City, November 15-25, 1898, aboard the vessel *Lusitania*. As an aside, this vessel was not THE *Lusitania*, that would help draw the U.S. into WWI - that *Lusitania* vessel was not launched until 1906.



*The vessel that George W. Gibson sailed on*

The petition states: "The petitioner is an honorably discharged soldier and applies for citizenship under Section 2166...." He renounces his allegiance to the King and his British citizenship. "He enlisted in the US Army on April 21, 1899, and is still in the service." He certified that he had lived in the United States since November 25, 1898, and the State of California for at least one year prior to the date of the petition.

SS *Lusitania* (launched 1871), the vessel George W. Gibson would arrive on, would later wreck off the coast of Nova Scotia in 1901 and be destroyed. This vessel was in regular service from England to the US and had accommodation for about 200 emigrants in addition to first-class passengers.

George Gibson first enlisted as a Private in the United States Army April 29, 1899, in New York City. He was 5' 11 ½ inches tall, had blue eyes, black hair, and a dark complexion. The Bureau of War Records indicate he had "excellent" character. His draft card listed his occupation as "draper". At the time of his enlistment in Company L, 8th US Infantry, the Spanish-American War,

which lasted for ten weeks in 1898, had ended just a few months earlier. Members of the 8th Infantry had fought in Santiago, Cuba, during the brief war, and Private Gibson would have served with those veterans.

At the time of his first naturalization petition (not approved) in August 1917, the 63rd Infantry Regiment had just been organized at the Presidio Army Base, San Francisco, California, and would become part of the 11th Infantry which was formed in the summer of 1918 by 15,000 soldiers at Camp Meade, MD. The 11th Division was organized for service in France and was nicknamed the "Lafayette Division." As indicated on his Officer record, Gibson was stationed at Camp Meade.

A World War I Regular Army identification card issued to George W. Gibson at the time of his honorable discharge from military service on September 31, 1920, reveals that he was commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant in the Army Air Service Signal Corps, on November 23, 1917, and would receive a promotion to captain on April 2, 1918. His staff assignments were listed as Aviation General Supply Depot Adjutant (Kelly Field, TX), and Fire Marshall Aberdeen (MD?) Replacement Supervisor. His principal duty stations were listed as Kelly Field, TX; Urbana, Illinois; San Antonio, TX; Washington, D.C; and Camp Meade, MD. The card further indicates that he served overseas from June 11, 1918, until August 23, 1919.

Returning to the dog tag inscription, it reads - "George W. Gibson, Captain, Signal Corps, U.S.A." With each promotion he would have been issued a new dog tag, so we can know with certainty that the item found in the bay dates to at least April of 1918.

A passenger manifest for the US Army Transport vessel *Prince Frederick Wilhelm* dated August 14, 1919, lists Captain Gibson, as a passenger sailing from Brest, France, to Hoboken, NJ, after serving in France with

*Continued on page 7*

the "HQS (Headquarters Squadron?) B. S. #5." His duties in France involved logistics and supply. On the ship manifest, Captain Gibson's mother was listed as his next of kin and she was still living in Orkney, Scotland. His officer identification card indicates that he was not wounded in France.

A second naturalization petition signed May 17, 1922, after his release from active duty, shows him living at 713 C St. N.E. Washington, DC. His friend and fellow Army officer Joseph Matheison witnessed his petition. Gibson worked as a clerk. In a will executed on June 4, 1929, in Washington, DC, he left his assets to Joseph and Ethel Matheison equally, including monies in his Civil Service Retirement Fund.

George Gibson died on October 19, 1932 at Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C. and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

So how did the dog tag come to Chesapeake Beach? Perhaps George Gibson was just a visitor after his early 1920's move to Washington, DC, and the tag slipped from his neck while swimming. Or possibly on one of the many outings to the beach by veterans from Walter Reed Hospital who came for rest and relaxation, or most interesting, perhaps George was attending a reunion of Spanish-American War veterans who visited the beach resort.

We discovered several newspaper articles in the early 1900's that show a history of Spanish American War Veterans holding outings in Chesapeake Beach to celebrate "Santiago Day." When Private Gibson first enlisted in the US Army, his unit, the 8th Infantry, included veterans who had served in Cuba and who had participated in the attack on Santiago.

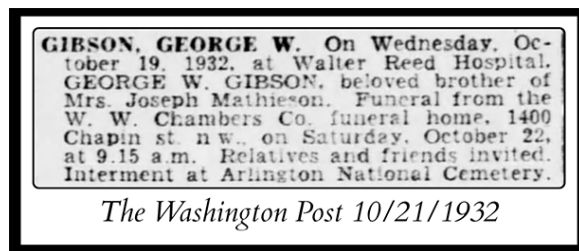
While the war had ended five months before he enlisted, could his association with those

veterans have resulted in his attending a reunion at the beach many years later?

We will never know the answer, but we do know that the individual who once wore the dog tag discovered in the bay had a fascinating life. Born in Scotland in 1875, emigrating to the United States in November 1898, enlisting as a Private in the U.S. Army on April 21, 1899, serving continuously until his honorable discharge as a Captain on September 31, 1920, and becoming a naturalized citizen on May 17, 1922. It might just be worth a trip to Arlington to pay respects to this veteran.



Rob Taylor's visit to Arlington National Cemetery  
To Honor George W. Gibson & his service  
Section 7, Grave 8323-NH



Headlines from: The Evening Star 7/16/1913; The Washington Herald 6/25/1922; The Evening Star 7/17/1923