

# The Chesapeake Dispatcher



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

Volume 43, Issue 2, Number 87

November 2025

## Janet Bates: A Century of Memories

by Joanie Kilmon  
Museum Volunteer

July 30, 2025 was the perfect summer day for a party, and Janet Bates was in for a surprise! On the porch of the Railway Museum, friends and family gathered from near and far to celebrate her 100th birthday. It was a fitting location, given the century of history she shares with the Chesapeake Beach Railway.

Janet first stepped onto that porch as a 5-year-old child, arriving in Chesapeake Beach with her grandmother in 1930. A big part of the Chesapeake Beach Railway's living history, she went on to become one of the founding parents of the Friends of the Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum. After becoming the museum's first volunteer stationmaster in the 1980s, she continued to lend her time well into her 90s, helping with children's programs, Christmas parties, and other celebrations.

In recognition of her enduring commitment, President Mike Sweeney dedicated a plaque to Janet and her husband, Charles "Butch" Bates. He carved a special spot for it on one of the porch benches, a permanent tribute to their years of devoted service. He also retired the volunteer vest she has joyfully worn.

The party's atmosphere was set by the lively and meaningful music of Bruce "Lucky" Swaim on tenor sax and Mike Noonan on



photo credit: Bessie Y. Hoskins

keyboard. Following the heartfelt tribute and music, the celebration moved inside the Dolores, where guests enjoyed strawberry shortcake, lemonade, air conditioning and Janet's perpetual smile!

*The following article is a reprint  
from "The Chesapeake Dispatcher" 2007*

## Janet Bates: Volunteer Spotlight

by Kristen Scott

Treasurer, Friends of the CBRM

On a hot July summer day in 1930, a woman and her five year old granddaughter disembarked from the train that had just arrived in Chesapeake Beach. "Dawa," as the grandmother was called, had her beach chair and the granddaughter had her pretty cardboard suitcase. A new cottage had just been purchased in North Beach and they were going to spend the summer.

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## Janet Bates: Volunteer Spotlight

by Kristen Scott

**Treasurer, Friends of the CBRM**

*(Continued from page 2)*

Unfortunately the jitney was out of service “as it usually was” and it was a long walk for a little girl with her suitcase in the hot summer sun.

That little girl was Janet Bates, one of our most active volunteers and a part of the Museum family since before the Museum opened. She has many memories of the Chesapeake Beach and North Beach area, and now lives in the cottage that her grandparents purchased as a summer place. She remembers the first Fourth of July spent down here, the train ride with the windows open and the cinders coming in. “Wonderful little boys walking down the alley with tin pans and flags.” She remembers being here as a teenager and going to see movies in the Ballroom at Chesapeake Beach Park during World War II. And how she didn’t like roller coasters, but her friends encouraged her to go for one last ride on the roller coaster before it shut down. But fortunately her father arrived to take her home and saved the day.

Janet has been an active volunteer since before the Museum even opened. Bernie Loveless, a founding member of the Museum, was Janet’s next door neighbor. When teams of volunteers would go to the East Washington Railway office and bring cartons of artifacts back, it was Janet who would spend her weekends cataloging them. When Ames Williams “wrote his wonderful book”, Janet catalogued all the photos used, putting them in a loose leaf binder, positioning them exactly how they would be found in the book. All the early cataloging that Janet has done has been a lifesaver for all those coming behind her and searching for items for research.

Since those early years, Janet has been an all around help, including being Vice-President of the Board of the Friends of the Museum for the last two years. For the last 14 years,

she has been the membership chair for the Friends of the Museum. She loves attending the Holiday Open House and meeting all the people whose membership cards she has signed over the years.

She was there on the first day the Museum opened and you can still find her there as Station Master on the first Sunday of every month, so come and visit her and let her share her knowledge and enthusiasm with you!

**December 19, 2025**  
**Annual Dramatic Reading of**  
***The Polar Express***  
**5:30pm at the Museum**

*This free event is magical for ages 1 to 100!*

## President’s Message

by Mike Zitzmann

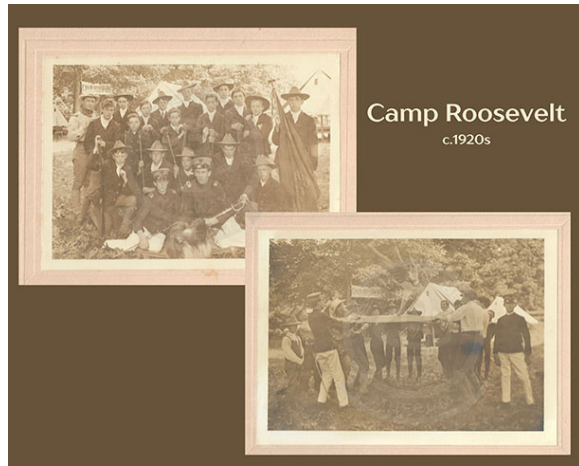
**Vice-President, Friends of the CBRM**

Unfortunately, Mike Sweeney has recently fallen ill. While he recovers, I am writing this message in his stead.

Winter is just around the corner already! The sprinkler pipes in the museum have been painted, and we are working on the grounds of the building.

On May 9th, we took a road trip to the Bowie Railroad Museum, where we watched trains passing along the busy main line between Baltimore and Washington. The historic station served as an active stop until 1989, when it was closed to make way for a new facility at Bowie State University. Recognizing the station’s significance in the city’s history, the City of Bowie restored the original buildings in the early 1990s, preserving this important piece of local heritage.

Best wishes for a speedy recovery to President Mike Sweeney!



*These Camp Roosevelt photos are newly acquired images.  
Check out all new donations and purchases on page 5.*

### **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 **Kristen Scott** at **KreScott@aol.com**

## **We Need your Support!**

by Mike Zitzmann

Membership Committee, Friends of the 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**  
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



## Fall Refresh: Taking Care of our Facilities

by Jeff Murray  
Museum Director

This year the museum's fall closure brings with it a hint of fresh paint and some new HVAC! That's right, just in time for the holidays the museum is getting a freshening up and some TLC, some of which the Friends of the Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum helped fund. First up, to keep you nice and cool next summer, is a replacement HVAC system, which will take place the week of November 10. Following that, and assuming good weather, the museum building will be softly power washed (to preserve its delicate construction and features) and minor repairs conducted, with a new exterior paint job to follow!

And if that's not enough, the flagpole will be painted, rotted porch boards will be repaired and the porch/deck itself will also be painted. If we get lucky with the weather, by the time Thanksgiving rolls around the museum exterior should look like a brand-new place, and the interior should be warm and dry with the new HVAC system.

We thank the Friends of the Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum for agreeing to fund the repair of the porch and to power wash and paint the entire porch area. Without this critical assistance, the museum would still require additional work that falls outside of the county's budget to make the spring opening a good one for visitors.

Have a safe and wonderful holiday season!

Get your daily dose of local history  
on Facebook Social Media

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

## Thank You Calvert Library, Twin Beaches Branch!

by Kris DeGrace  
Museum Registrar



June / July display at the Calvert Library, Twin Beaches Branch

The Twin Beaches Branch has a lovely display case that allows guest exhibitors to share and display items and information. We are thrilled we had the opportunity to install an exhibit in the library this past June & July. And we are looking forward to installing another display during our "off-months" in December & January!

It has not only been great fun, but a wonderful way to be a part of our larger community, and a fantastic way to share more of our collections & story! Thank you Twin Beaches Branch!

Be sure to check us out too while you are checking out your books in December & January!



A newly acquired image: Photograph from scrapbook page of Twin Beaches. c. 1930s.  
Check out all new donations and purchases on page 5.

# Donations and Purchases

## Photographs:

Plane Crash near Chesapeake Beach, Army Drill 1939  
Camp Roosevelt Pictures, Sepia toned  
Engine #7, Engine #101, Engine #390 (previously CBRy #4)  
Negatives of Engine #7, #10, #2, #5, #9  
Digital Born: Copy Sales Notebook [donation]  
Rail bird hunting



*New - East Washington Railway Engine #101 at Seat Pleasant Roundhouse. Note the men pushing the turntable by hand. c.1965*

## Postcard:

Casino & Providence Hospital DC [donation]  
Freedley Photo Postcards

## Documents:

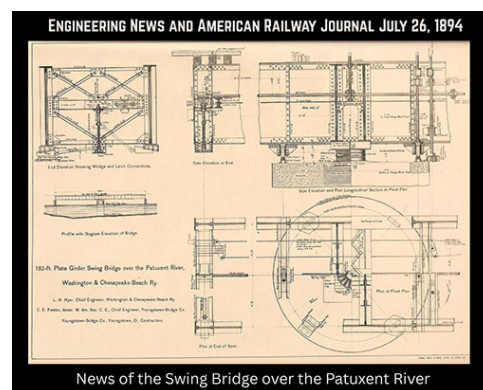
Newsletter, Camp Theodore Roosevelt Rough Rider 7/7/1940 [donation]  
Engineering News & American Railway Journal - Swing Bridge  
Ticket CBRy Excursion Letter Carrier's Association 6/20/1912 [donation]

## 3-Dimensional

Headley Chocolate Box c.1900  
Camera: Brownie #2 Model D, early 1900s  
Purse: Popcorn Stitch handmade c.1930s  
Woman's Hat, black with pink silk flowers c.1920s

## Educational

Cracker Jack Box Replicas  
RR Train Teachers kit

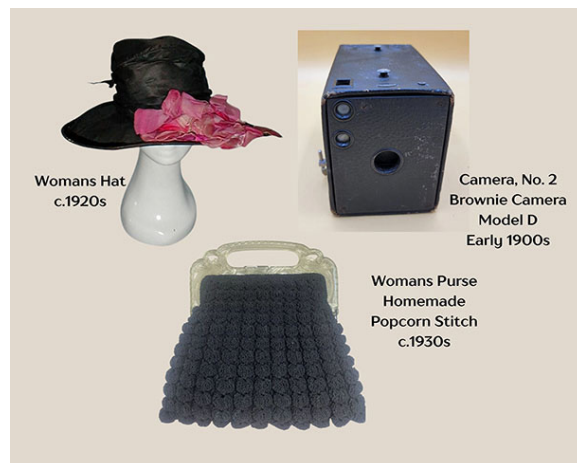


*Engineering notes on the Swing Bridge built over the Patuxent River by the Washington and Chesapeake Beach Railway Co. -- Engineering News & American Railway Journal, July 26, 1894.*



*Headley Chocolates, packed and produced in Baltimore, MD. Presumably sold in Chesapeake Beach.*

*The box was a purchased acquisition to accompany a previous donation of the metal "Headley" candy tongs and the metal "Headley" label that were found in the waters off Chesapeake Beach.*



*New Acquisitions purchased to represent the early time period of visitation to Chesapeake Beach*



## An Extra Special Donation with a Story!

by Kris DeGrace  
Museum Registrar

Our own Brenda Proctor, member of and prior secretary for the Friends of the CBRM, has donated two wonderful Freedley Photo/Postcards! They are, of course, great images on their own, as they are Freedley Photos that were taken on the Chesapeake Beach Boardwalk. But what makes them extra special is the story they tell!



*Freedley Photographs: taken June 29, 1915 of Nellie Rebecca (Brady) Armiger & Eliel Wilson Armiger; they are donor Brenda Proctor's grandparents*

The woman in the photo/postcard is Nellie Rebecca (Brady) Armiger, the man in the other photo/postcard is Eliel Wilson Armiger. They are Brenda's grandparents!

Brenda told us that Eliel was an employee of the CBRy from 1922-1930, and Nellie's father, Joseph Cephus Brady also worked for the railroad and as a "pusher" who took hunters out in a skiff to shoot rail birds in the creeks and marshes of Chesapeake Beach and elsewhere. It was all in the family, Nellie's brother, Joseph Thomas Brady also worked for the railroad!

Now, that alone makes this a great story, but wait, there is more! The note on the back of both the postcards says they were taken on June 29, 1915. Here is where it gets really sweet! June 29 was Nellie's 18th birthday... and they must have been here at the beach celebrating her special day!

Now it gets even sweeter... they were married on September 8, 1915... just about 3 months later. How wonderful is that for a full circle story!

To read Brenda's full story about Rail Birding, check out our [November 2022 Fall newsletter, Pg. 4](#)



*Photograph: Joseph Cephus Brady, standing on skiff, hunting rail birds. 2nd man is unknown; Joseph Brady is donor Brenda Proctor's great grandfather.*

## Our Storymaps!

by Kris DeGrace  
Museum Registrar

We hope you've had a chance to explore our storymaps. We've put together some fun maps with "then & now" pictures for you to check out. You can access them while you are out and about exploring the Twin Beaches, or explore at the convenience of your own home computer... either way enjoy!

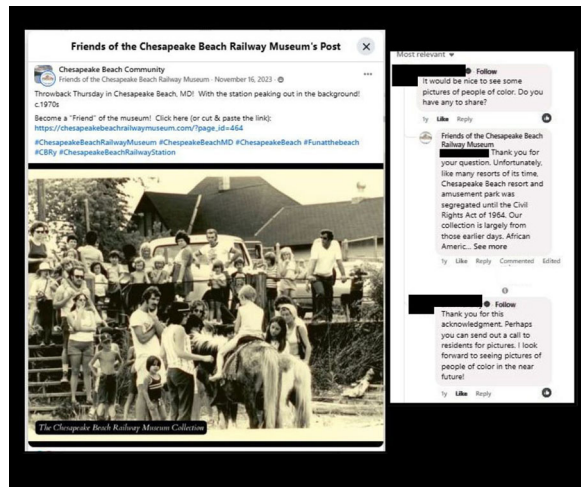
The QR code and the original link have changed, so we present the updated link: <https://arcg.is/S1qKH1> and QR code:



*Scan the QR code to access the Twin Beaches Storymaps!*

## Responses to Segregation --The Facebook comment that led to an exhibit 2 years later -- by Kris DeGrace Museum Registrar

*"It would be nice to see some pictures of people of color. Do you have any to share?"* This was the facebook comment that led to an addition to our permanent exhibit two years later. In my response to the posted comment, I answered truthfully, that like many resorts of its time, Chesapeake Beach was a segregated resort and remained so until the Civil Rights Act of 1964. We know African Americans played an integral role in the building of the railroad and in the service industry in Chesapeake Beach, but our collections have very little supporting documentation. And that we were working to address this.



After some deep dives to figure out the "how" to tell this story in a more meaningful way, I am pleased and proud of the exhibit that was produced. I wanted to tell as much of the story as possible, in a respectful and honest way, given the parameters of our small museum. To address and acknowledge segregation, and the responses to it. To share the connection of time and how we are not so far from those significant dates. And to hopefully provide insight into the broader conversation of our story as a community, and as a country.

It has been well-received by the community, and we have had some exciting visitors. Maryland Senator Michael Jackson took time out of his schedule to visit the museum in

August, and Dr. Marlin Griffith, a member of *The Hounds Band*, that played in Sea Gull Beach (a segregated beach in Prince Frederick) visited with his extended family!



A shout-out to Michael Kent, local historian, who was kind enough to find families with photographs of Sea Gull Beach that they were willing to share for the exhibit. And a hearty thank-you to Michael for sharing the opening of the exhibit far and wide!

With this new portion of our exhibit beginning with steamboats, I chose to add it to "The Journey" section. It seemed a logical place, both literally and figuratively.

If you are interested in learning more about how this exhibit came to be, read our Side Tracks Blog: [Responses to Segregation](#)

