

Scheduled Steamboat Service and Special Excursions, 1871-1925

Patuxent River Route, Calvert County, Maryland

Parkers Creek Heritage Trail Research Report

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Background: Governors Run Wharf and Dare's Wharf on Calvert County's Bayside Shore

This research report was prepared for the Parkers Creek Heritage Trail project, an activity of the American Chestnut Land Trust. The project documents the history of the area around Parkers Creek and Governors Run, two streams that flow into the Chesapeake Bay in central Calvert County, Maryland.*

From 1871 through 1925, the vicinity of the Parkers Creek watershed had access to varying levels of steamboat service. During this period, steamboat wharves were constructed at two locations in the area. Governors Run Wharf was built in 1871 and steamboat service ended in 1925. Dare's Wharf was in operation from 1890 to 1920. Each wharf was owned and maintained by a separate commercial wharf company. Deterioration from age and damage from the forces of nature required both wharves to be rebuilt, reconfigured, or replaced over time.

A succession of steamboat companies provided regularly scheduled service to the area's wharves, connecting them with Baltimore and other communities during this era. Governors Run Wharf was also an occasional stop for passengers participating in chartered steamer excursions.

Part 1: Weems Steamboat Company's Patuxent River Route

When the Weems Steamboat Company began regularly scheduled steamer service at Governors Run Wharf along its Patuxent River Route, it was a boon to passengers, shippers, and merchants. Prior to the beginning of service there in September 1871, the nearest steamboat wharf was at Plum Point on the bay or the landings along the Patuxent River.

* This report provides additional information about topics introduced in "Governors Run: Farm to Market, Schooners, Steamboats, & More," <https://www.pcheritagetrail.org/governors-run>. The home page for the Parkers Creek Heritage Trail project is <https://www.pcheritagetrail.org/>.

In 1871, the steamer *Planter* began stopping at Governors Run on Wednesday and Saturday mornings to drop off passengers and deliver freight on its way from Baltimore to the Patuxent River landings. On its return trips from the Patuxent on Thursdays and Mondays, the boat stopped at all landings to receive freight and passengers enroute to Baltimore. Meanwhile, the *Mary Washington* expressed to Hills Landing Thursday night. Leaving there Monday morning for Nottingham, it departed for Baltimore Tuesday morning, calling only for passengers at landings below Benedict.¹

At the time Governors Run Wharf opened, the only competition for the Weems steamers operating between Baltimore and the Patuxent River and bay landings were sailing vessels. Although its monopoly had been challenged from 1859 to 1861 by the steamer *Express*,² by the 1870s there was no other competition for regularly scheduled steamboat service.

The predictable steamboat service arrangement was a convenience for passengers who could rely on the schedule. It also benefited shippers of fresh and perishable freight who could reliably get their produce and livestock to the Baltimore market. The timely delivery of merchandise, commodities, and mail from the city to the rural landings was another advantage of regular steamboat service.

A first-class passenger fare to Baltimore from Plum Point, Governors Run, or the Patuxent River landings was advertised as \$1.50 in the Fall of 1877. A second-class fare was \$1.25. The fall arrangement for the Patuxent River Route at that time involved three steamers. The *Wenona* left Baltimore at 9:00 p.m. Sunday and proceeded directly to Bristol. It departed Bristol at noon Monday and called at landings for passengers only. The *Matilda* followed the same schedule Wednesday night for passengers only, proceeding directly to Hill's Landing. It returned to Baltimore Thursday. The *Planter* ran twice a week, leaving Baltimore at 6:30 a.m. on Wednesdays and Saturdays for all landings as far north as Benedict. After a layover, it departed Benedict at 6:00 a.m. Thursdays and Mondays, receiving passengers and freight bound for Baltimore.³

In addition to passengers and perishable freight, the Weems Company shipped the cash crop of tobacco from the wharves along the Patuxent River Route. In 1879, it advertised that its freight on tobacco was one dollar per hogshead from all river and bay landings. Additionally, wharfage at Governors Run and Plum Point was twenty-five cents.⁴

Arrival of a Weems steamer at a rural landing was an occasion for celebration and might attract a small crowd of locals. The boats brought passengers and merchandise and also carried the U.S. mail. Local folks could board and disembark the steamer while freight was being transferred. Some, it appears, also took advantage of the steamboat's services while docked, such as its bars where alcohol was served. But celebrations were muted a bit beginning in 1877 when Calvert County adopted the Local Option law prohibiting sale of alcohol. The Weems boats responded by instructing their barkeepers not to open their bars when landing at a Calvert County wharf.⁵

In July 1890, the Weems steamers began calling at the long-anticipated Dare's Wharf along its Patuxent River Route.⁶ Situated south of Plum Point and north of Governors Run, the new wharf

increased the convenience of underserved passengers, shippers, and business people in the vicinity of Prince Frederick.

The Weems Steamboat Company held a near monopoly on carrying passengers and hauling perishable freight to and from Calvert County through the 19th century. Weems advertised its timetables in local and regional newspapers and varied its schedules seasonally. The service was reliable except on occasions when its steamers were affected by adverse weather conditions or machinery breakdowns that caused delays or cancellations.

Weems ran additional service to satisfy the needs of shippers of perishable freight during harvest season.⁷ In 1888, for instance, in addition to its regular schedule, a steamer landed at Governors Run every day except Sundays for the “Fruit Season” to accommodate growers who needed to get their perishable crops to the Baltimore market.⁸ Weems advertised early in the year to growers of fruit and vegetables that “additional trips will be made and the time of arrival and departure of the steamers will be arranged to suit the shippers.”⁹

The Weems Company continued to provide relatively reliable and consistent service along the Patuxent River Route with seasonal variations in schedule. Through the 1890s, scheduled service departed Baltimore on Wednesdays and Saturdays, stopping at all landings, with return trips to the city arriving on Thursdays and Mondays. In the mid-1890s, as additional landings were added, return trips changed to Thursdays and Tuesdays. Meanwhile, another boat departed Baltimore on Fridays or Saturdays, proceeding directly to the Patuxent and stopping on its return trip at selected landings and when flagged to collect passengers and perishable freight. Additional boats continued to be added to the schedule as needed to accommodate shippers during the harvest season.¹⁰

Although the Weems Company had little competition when it came to transporting passengers and freight between Baltimore and Calvert County landings during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, sailing vessels still hauled heavy bulk cargoes that were not perishable, like timber products and some building materials. For instance, when a wharf was planned at Dare’s Landing in 1889, the company purchased material for stringers and decking at Sharp’s Wharf on the Rappahannock River and arranged to have the lumber freighted by schooner to the landing.¹¹ In 1888, drain pipes for use by the contractors working on the Drum Point Railroad were landed at Governors Run.¹² Similarly, in 1901, 181 tons of granite for building the new Emmanuel Methodist Episcopal Church South were procured from the Falls Road Quarry in Baltimore County and transported to Dare’s by sailing vessels.¹³

Some shipments imported and exported from the area were also carried by sailing vessels. In 1877, for instance, the schooner *Annie E. Predmore* made weekly trips between the Patuxent and Baltimore to “take and land freight at every accessible point on the river and bay.”¹⁴ Heavy and bulky freight relied on sailing vessels. For instance, in August 1889, the Calvert Brick Company employed the schooners *Thomas B. Travers*, *Thomas W. Warner*, and *A.J. Bradshaw* to ship 69,000 bricks to Baltimore.¹⁵

Heavy shipments destined for distant markets also relied on sailing vessels. In 1895, 75,000 feet of white oak was harvested from the First District and shipped to Maine for shipbuilding.¹⁶ In

1902, the owner of the Calvert Brick Company moved the operation to Baltimore and hired the Toomey Brothers' schooner *Lewis Jane* to freight all their equipment and other moveable assets there.¹⁷

Part 2: Steamboat Excursions

In addition to the advertised arrangements for scheduled service, Weems and other steamboat companies made their steamers available for charter for special excursion cruises. These excursions involved a steamboat travelling to specified wharves to collect passengers with the intention of visiting a site or attending an event. Newspaper accounts show these chartered trips were popular and well attended in Calvert County in the 1880s and 1890s.

Some companies specialized in excursions and operated larger steamers with expansive sheltered deck spaces that were designed to carry passengers to a destination during day trips. But the smaller Weems steamboats transported passengers and handled large quantities of freight while visiting landings along the bay and its tributaries. They were built as packet steamers with staterooms for first-class passengers and ample sleeping accommodations for second-class passengers for long overnight trips. Some Weems boats, like the *Matilda* and *Theodore Weems*, also had sheltered decks where excursionists could congregate during chartered day trip cruises to their destination.¹⁸

Most excursion cruises from Calvert County landings were chartered to raise funds for a church or civic group or to support a cause. Popular destinations for these fundraising trips were amusement parks or resorts such as Bay Ridge, Tolchester, or Chesapeake Beach. For example, in July of 1895, the *Calvert Gazette* reported on a special excursion to the Bay Ridge resort for the benefit of Smithville M.E. Church. The Weems Line steamer *St. Mary's* collected from 700 to 800 passengers from Governors Run, Plum Point, and Fair Haven wharves and carried them to Bay Ridge to enjoy the rides and amusements for several hours before returning the excursionists down the bay.¹⁹ The Smithville M.E. Church also held an annual excursion to other destinations in 1896 and 1897.²⁰

Other excursion destinations were towns and cities including Baltimore, Annapolis, and Cambridge. In September 1884, for instance, the Weems Line steamer *Wenonah* departed Governors Run at 5:30 a.m. and stopped to collect additional passengers at Plum Point and Fair Haven enroute to Baltimore. The round-trip fare of 75 cents benefitted Mount Hope and Patuxent churches.²¹ Similarly, in September of 1886, the *Wenonah* left Governors Run at 10:00 p.m. Friday and stopped to collect more passengers at Plum Point and Fair Haven. It carried nearly 600 African American excursionists to Baltimore where they arrived early Saturday morning and spent the day in the city. Returning Saturday night, the excursion raised about \$150 for a fund to build a new church at Parkers Creek.²²

An example of an event destination was a special excursion aboard the *Westmoreland*, advertised in 1889, to attend "Baltimore's Big Show." The steamer left Bristol and collected passengers along the Patuxent landings, Governors Run, Plum Point, and Fair Haven. A round-trip fare from Governors Run was \$1.50.²³ The gala celebration commemorated the 1814 defense of Baltimore from the British attack and featured parades, races, battle reenactments, and fireworks.²⁴

Some excursions were smaller affairs to reward students while raising money for a cause. For example, in 1896, the steamer *St. Mary's* departed Fair Haven on a Tuesday at 10:00 a.m. to take excursionists to Governors Run. Given by the ladies of St. James' Church and St. Mark's Chapel "for the pleasure of the scholars of their Sabbath school," it returned from Governors Run at 4:00 p.m. While raising funds to purchase books for the Sunday school, it gave "the lovers of a sail on the beautiful bay another chance to enjoy meeting their friends and viewing the beautiful scenery."²⁵

Religious camp meetings were destinations for some cruises, but not all excursions were successful. In September 1895, the Tolchester Company's steamer *Emma Giles* was chartered to carry about 600 African American excursionists from Baltimore to a camp meeting at Rice's Grove in Calvert County. However, when the boat encountered stormy conditions at Governors Run Wharf and was unable to land, it returned its disappointed passengers, many of whom suffered from sea sickness, to Baltimore.²⁶

Other excursions to take passengers to camp meetings originated in Calvert County. In 1896, for instance, the Sunday School of Brooks Church gave an excursion to Kent Island to attend the camp meeting. The steamboat departed on a Saturday from Duke's Wharf and called at wharves at Parker's, St. Leonard, Solomons Island, and Governors Run. The steamer left Kent Island on Sunday evening to return its passengers to the Calvert County landings. Round trip tickets were 50 cents for adults and 25 cents for children.²⁷

Some short excursions by steamboat took advantage of the regularly scheduled service. For instance, in 1894 a group of 14 women and men boarded the steamer at Governors Run to attend a musical feature and dance at the Solomons Town Hall. The party returned to Governors Run by steamer the following day. Proceeds from the evening of entertainment benefitted Middleham Chapel and the party was granted free passage aboard the steamer by Henry Williams, general manager of the Weems Line.²⁸

Unlike Governors Run and Plum Point, Dare's Wharf was not a desirable embarkation place for excursionists due to its lack of a bridge connecting the shore to its pier head. For instance, in 1898, an advertised excursion to Annapolis aboard the *St. Mary's* to benefit the Calvert Circuit Methodist Episcopal Church planned stops at the bayside landings at Governors Run, Dare's, Plum Point, and Fair Haven to collect passengers. However, due to the "inconvenience of excursionists getting out to the pier at Dare's," a retraction was printed in the newspaper stating the steamer would not stop there. An 1898 excursion to Bay Ridge to raise money to liquidate the debt for the parsonage of the Methodist Episcopal Church South also skipped Dare's Wharf.²⁹ A bridge connecting the pier head to the shore was finally built in 1899.³⁰

Occasional steamboat excursions continued into the early 20th century. In 1904, for instance, a steamer collected passengers from Spencer's, Solomons, Pearson, Millstone Landing, and Governors Run and brought them for a day of amusements at Chesapeake Beach. Half of the excursionists took advantage of the railway to travel to Washington, D.C., returning to the beach to catch the steamboat home that evening.³¹

The Sunday School of Brooks Methodist Episcopal Church at Island Creek chartered the steamer *Jane Moseley* for a moonlight excursion cruise to Baltimore in 1904. Departing Duke's Wharf at 3:00 p.m. on September 22, the steamer called at seven other wharves along the Patuxent in Calvert and St. Mary's before collecting additional passengers at Governors Run, Plum Point, and Fair Haven. Meals and refreshments were available at a moderate price and a band provided musical entertainment during the cruise. The steamer departed Baltimore the next day at 2:30 p.m. and stopped at the bay and river wharves to return its passengers.³²

As a side note, it is likely that the decision of the Brooks Sunday School committee to charter the *Jane Moseley* for the excursion to Baltimore was influenced by the political climate resulting from Maryland's "Jim Crow" laws that went into effect on July 1, 1904. Groups advocating civil and political rights for African Americans in Maryland denounced the Jim Crow laws and argued that Black churches should support only African American-owned excursion boat companies.³³ The *Jane Moseley* was owned by Black businessman and entrepreneur Lewis Jefferson.³⁴

Although chartered steamboat excursions continued, their heyday along Calvert County's bayside landings seems to have been in the 1880s and 1890s. Steamer excursions stopping at Governors Run are not mentioned in the local newspapers after the Weems Steamboat Company was sold in 1905.

Part 3: Segregation on Steamboats

Throughout the steamboat era, chartered excursions and scheduled service aboard steamboats were racially segregated. Each steamboat company defined its own set of rules and regulations that governed policies and practices aboard its boats but all common carriers in the Chesapeake Bay region practiced policies of racial segregation in the late 19th century. Accommodations for passengers aboard the Weems Steamboat Company boats were segregated based on class, race, and gender.³⁵

African Americans passengers were negatively impacted by segregation policies that might include separate seating, dining, and sleeping arrangements and denial of access to certain parts of the vessel. Jim Crow policies to legally enforce racial segregation aboard common carriers were codified when state laws were enacted in Virginia and Maryland in the early 20th century.³⁶ Virginia passed its Jim Crow laws in 1900. Maryland enacted nearly identical legislation in 1904.³⁷

In response to the new laws, the Weems Company "designated separate sides of their boats for white and colored passengers."³⁸ As reported in the *Calvert Gazette*,

Compliance with its provisions is carried out by assigning the colored passengers to one side of the saloon and white passengers to the other. These vessels are freighters. The transportation of passengers is, therefore, a secondary consideration, although the boats are equipped with every convenience. The room is so ample that this arrangement can be made without inconveniencing anyone, and as the colored passengers are sometimes in excess of the white, the latter profit from the arrangement.³⁹

The practice of racial segregation in Calvert County and aboard steamboats continued throughout the period when the wharves at Governors Run and Dare's were in operation.

Part 4: Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company Era

Negotiations for the sale of the Weems Steamboat Company to the Pennsylvania Railroad began in 1904 and the sale was completed in early 1905. Henry Williams resigned as president of the Weems Steamboat Company in October 1904 as part of the consolidation of Weems and other companies under the Pennsylvania Railroad.⁴⁰ Williams, who had represented the Weems Steamboat Company as a director on the boards of the Chesapeake Wharf Company, the Governor's Run Wharf Company, and the Dare Wharf Company, stepped down from the boards. William L. Rothstein, representing the interests of the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company, replaced Williams on the boards of the three wharf companies in elections held in 1905.⁴¹

When the Weems Steamboat Company sold its business in 1905, the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company assumed the Patuxent River Route and many of its predecessor's practices. In addition to the steamboats and other floating equipment, the company acquired "its wharves, wharf rights, landings, leases, privileges, stores, and materials."⁴²

As was the case during the Weems era, adverse weather conditions and mechanical breakdowns inconvenienced passengers and shippers by delaying regularly scheduled service, but social issues were also a factor. Steamboat service was disrupted by a labor strike by captains, mates, and pilots that began October 1, 1906, and extended nearly two weeks until wages were increased.⁴³

During the winter of 1906/1907, Dare's Wharf sustained serious damage when part of the structure was carried away by ice and needed to be completely rebuilt. The primary stock holder in the wharf company, the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company, detailed the repairs in its 1907 annual report. "Part of this Wharf was carried away by ice, and it was necessary to rebuild the entire wharf." The company installed 301 pine piles measuring 14 to 24 feet in length, four 20-foot oak piles, 1,705 feet of two-inch chestnut decking and 2,000 feet of two-inch white oak decking. The warehouse and waiting room were also repaired.⁴⁴

Interestingly, no report of the ice damage or repairs at Dare's Wharf was found in local newspapers, but the incident was reflected in the company's published timetables. The landing was not listed as a scheduled stop in its timetable published in February 1907.⁴⁵ The wharf had been rebuilt by March when it was listed in the Spring timetable.⁴⁶

The first few years, the Patuxent River Line schedule was maintained as it had operated under Weems with Saturday down trips returning Monday after a Sunday layover at Benedict, and Wednesday down trips returning to Baltimore on Thursdays. It stopped at all landings and, on its return trip, was scheduled to arrive at Governors Run at noon. Another boat left Baltimore Wednesday evening direct to Bristol. Returning to Baltimore on Thursday, it had scheduled stops along the river and would stop for passengers or perishable freight if signaled.⁴⁷

Revenue earned by the Patuxent River Line steamers was generated by fees charged for shipping commodities and from passenger fares. In 1907, for instance, the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company advertised its Patuxent River Line passenger fare rates. A first-class fare to or from Baltimore was \$2.00 and second-class fare was \$1.50. A first-class roundtrip ticket was \$3.00 and was good for 60 days. Meals were 75-cents.⁴⁸

In 1907, Governors Run Wharf generated \$2,472.00 in local freight, \$56.74 in through freight, and \$3,240.83 for passengers, for a total revenue of \$5,769.57.68 for the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company. Of the wharves along the Patuxent River Line, based on the steamboat company's revenue totals, Governors Run was the third busiest after Solomons Island (\$9,039.02) and Millstone Landing (\$6,462.15). In terms of revenues from passenger services, it was the second busiest after Solomons.

Dare's Wharf generated less revenue for the steamboat company in 1907 than Governors Run Wharf. Local freight was \$1,733.35, through freight earned \$89.79, and passenger services amounted to \$1,682.48. In terms of total revenue earned for the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company, Dare's Wharf was the fifth busiest of the Patuxent Line landings, just ahead of Plum Point and behind Fair Haven.

Overall, revenue earned by the steamboat company for shipping freight was greater than that generated from passenger service along the Patuxent Line. In 1907, for instance, total freight revenue from the line amounted to \$103,844.70 whereas passenger revenue was \$45,590.72. At Governors Run Wharf, on the other hand, revenue earned from passenger service exceeded freight shipping revenue that year.⁴⁹

In addition to freight fees charged by the steamboat company, wharfage fees were earned by the company that owned the wharf. Expenses incurred by the company included wages paid to the wharf agent and the costs of maintaining, repairing, and rebuilding the wharf and accessory buildings as needed. If profits exceeded costs, the directors of the wharf company might approve an annual dividend payment to its stockholders.

In early 1908, the U.S. Postal service discontinued mail delivery via steamboat in several sections of the Chesapeake, including on the Patuxent River Line. Shippers complained about the change because the land routes were slower and less reliable than the water routes. Whereas they could send a letter to their commission merchant in Baltimore notifying him of a pending delivery of perishable goods, after the change in service the notice might not be delivered until after the shipment had arrived at the docks.⁵⁰

After years of maintaining basically the same timetables with seasonal variations, the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company changed its Patuxent River Line schedule in 1908 to down trips on Thursday and Saturday with return trips on Friday and Sunday. In April 1908, a correspondent to the *Calvert Journal* complained that this change in schedule disadvantaged shippers along the bay who lost the ability to send their fresh produce to Baltimore for the early-week market.⁵¹

It was reported in the *Calvert Gazette* that farmers, fruit growers, and other shippers were especially unhappy with the schedule changes:

For Better Boat Service. —The patrons of Governor's Run wharf held a largely attended meeting at Port Republic Monday afternoon to protest against the present schedule that went into effect Tuesday on Patuxent River Line, of the Maryland, Delaware and Virginia Railway Company. The people are very indignant over the present boat service from all points on the bay to and from Baltimore. The farmers and fruit growers along the bay, it is predicted, will lose hundreds of dollars unless a different and better service is rendered. They are very indignant over what they consider unfair treatment by the company, and unless they are given proper facilities for shipping their produce to Baltimore they will at once take steps to secure the service that will give the desired relief...⁵²

The *Baltimore Sun* also reported on the protest meeting.⁵³

The previous service arrangement was restored for a while in July 1908.⁵⁴ Beginning that year, perhaps in response to scheduling complaints, the company's advertised timetables also included this notice:

This time-table shows the times at which steamers may be expected to arrive at or depart from the several wharves, but their arrival or departure from the wharves at the times stated are not guaranteed, nor does the company hold itself responsible for any delay or consequences arising therefrom.⁵⁵

In September 1908, the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company announced another schedule change for the Patuxent River Line, making it a "night route."⁵⁶ Its new schedule included three weekly trips. The down boats ran Tuesday and Thursday and returned to Baltimore on Wednesdays and Fridays. Another boat left Baltimore on Saturday, laid over at Nottingham, and returned on Monday.⁵⁷ These schedule changes meant the steamer arrived at the bayside landings, like Governors Run and Dare's, in the dark.

Accustomed to daytime steamboat arrivals and departures, some passengers were displeased with the schedule change. But the new timetable proved to be more favorable to shippers by enabling them to send perishable freight at night to be at the Baltimore market early the next day.⁵⁸

Some outspoken complaints about changes in service, delayed arrivals, general conditions aboard the steamers, and insufficient accommodations at the wharves for waiting passengers continued. One correspondent recounted several complaints, including "the crying need for light and railings around dangerous parts of the ends of the wharves, as proven when a stranger walked overboard and drowned at Dare's wharf."⁵⁹

Complaints included the accommodations for passengers waiting for the steamboats. In 1909, "A Sufferer" lamented an incident in which it was alleged that a woman with two small children had to wait at Dare's Wharf for four hours "in a small room with eight negro men, with the biggest mouths and loudest voices, who took up the whole space around the stove." Then the steamer

passed the wharf without stopping.⁶⁰ A week later, indignant wharf agent Charles E. Lyles replied that part of that complaint was in error. He stated that “There are two waiting rooms at Dare’s, one for each color, and at no time have colored people been accommodated in the room reserved for white people when white ladies were in waiting.”⁶¹ Clearly, the Jim Crow segregation practices of the time prevailed ashore and afloat.

Goodman Goldstine, who operated a general merchandise store at Prince Frederick, wrote in 1909 complaining about a trip from Baltimore to Dare’s Wharf aboard the steamer *Westmoreland*. Due to delays caused by fog and other factors, by his account, the six-hour trip took 30 hours and he and other passengers had to pay for state rooms and meals. He concluded his letter “I sincerely sympathize with anybody who is unfortunate enough to be compelled to travel this route, for if anything in the world is worse, I have not seen it yet...”⁶²

Despite criticisms, the company generally maintained the same service schedule into 1915. It also continued its practice of increasing service to accommodate shippers of fruit and produce. For instance, for the peach season, commencing August 22, 1910, it ran a steamer every day except Sunday that left Baltimore at 6:30 a.m. for Governors Run to load freight where it departed at noon and proceeded north to Dare’s, Plum Point, and Fair Haven, arriving back in Baltimore at 8:00 p.m.⁶³ The company also provided additional service for the holiday trade. For instance, in December 1910, the *Essex* joined the *Anne Arundel* to handle the additional shipments along the Patuxent River Line of turkeys, oysters, and other goods bound for Baltimore for the Christmas trade.⁶⁴

Sailing vessels continued to compete with the steamers for hauling heavy bulk freight. In 1911, for instance, Asa Ketcham and Overton Brothers sent a schooner load of barreled fish oil to Baltimore.⁶⁵

A 1912 Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company brochure lists ticket prices along the Patuxent River Line. A one-way passenger fare was \$2.00 and a round-trip ticket, good for 60 days, was \$3.00. A stateroom ranged from an extra \$1.00 to \$2.00 per trip and a meal was 50 cents. Children aged five to 12 were charged half the fare rate.

Along the Patuxent River Line, the company continued to run a steamboat three times a week, departing Baltimore’s at 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. On Tuesdays, it stopped at 16 landings along the route to Benedict. Departing Benedict at 5:30 a.m. on Wednesday, it returned to the same landings, arriving at Governors Run at noon and reaching Baltimore at 7:00 p.m. The Thursday boat stopped at 18 landings. Departing Benedict at noon Friday, it returned to the same landings, arriving at Governors Run at 8:00 p.m. and Dare’s at 8:20 p.m. and got to Baltimore the next morning. The Saturday boat schedule called for stops at all 28 landings along the bay and river. Monday morning, the boat proceeded to Lyons Creek. Departing Lyons Creek at 7:30 a.m., it reached Governors Run at 8:00 p.m. and Dare’s at 8:20 p.m. and arrived in Baltimore the next morning.⁶⁶

Some potential competition to the Maryland, Delaware and Virginia Railway Company’s monopoly of Patuxent River transportation emerged in 1912. The Maryland Steamboat Company announced plans to offer a passenger and freight service in the Chesapeake Bay and its

tributaries.⁶⁷ The short-lived company had a wharf built at Solomons and intended to establish daily service but became insolvent when it failed to raise sufficient capital stock.⁶⁸

Another potential steamboat service competitor was the Eastern Shore Development Company. It announced in August 1913 that it intended to establish day service for passengers and perishable freight connecting Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and Patuxent River landings. The steamer ran between the Patuxent and Annapolis where railroad connections with Baltimore and Washington could be made.⁶⁹ The published schedule does not list stops at any bayside landings and its service to the Patuxent was suspended after a few months.⁷⁰

In early 1914, the Public Service Commission received an application to sell capital stock to organize the Eastern and Western Shore Steamship Company. The application claimed “the present steamboat service on the Patuxent River is irregular and inadequate.” Intending to conduct a daily freight and passenger service on the Patuxent to compete with the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company, the venture failed.⁷¹

Continuing its monopoly, the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company accommodated shippers of produce and other perishable goods in July 1915 by adding another steamer to its regular Patuxent River Line. This steamer left Baltimore Monday and Wednesday afternoons, stopping only at the river landings. The steamer returned Tuesday and Thursday mornings and included stops at the bayside wharves. Another boat proceeded directly to Lower Marlboro, leaving there at noon on Saturday and stopping at river landings to arrive at Baltimore Monday morning.⁷²

There was still competition to the Patuxent River Line steamer service from sailing vessels for the export of nonperishable bulk freight from the area. For instance, in 1910 a large, four-masted schooner loaded railroad ties at Governors Run that were bound for Boston.⁷³ When the Solomons Fish Company needed to ship 402 barrels of cut herring and 70 cases of canned herring roe to Norfolk in 1909, it used the schooner *J.J. Saunders*.⁷⁴ As late as 1923, Swepson Earl observed: “off Governor’s Run Wharf schooners anchor in the bay and load wood and other material to be freighted elsewhere.”⁷⁵

Other competition to the steamboat service began to emerge as land transportation routes in Calvert County, considered inadequate and often impassable during certain seasons, were gradually improving in the early 20th century. As private automobile travel was growing, the state began developing a system of more reliable public roads. In 1915, it completed a section of public road from Solomons to Prince Frederick.⁷⁶ That year, the West Shore Transit Company began a scheduled daily passenger bus service from Solomons to Annapolis. There, it connected to the Annapolis Short Line railroad to Baltimore.⁷⁷ The bus service also shipped packages and light freight.⁷⁸

Citing the inflated costs of maintaining and operating its steamboats, the companies in the bay region appealed to the Interstate Commerce Committee to seek a 15% increase to passenger fares and freight charges in 1917. Steamboat officials asserted that they were operating at a loss and without an increase in rates they may be forced to go out of business.⁷⁹

In addition to unexpected delays caused by weather or mechanical breakdowns, scheduled steamboat service was occasionally suspended for extended periods when events damaged a wharf. For instance, after a 75-foot section of Dare's Wharf collapsed in June 1911,⁸⁰ service was suspended until repairs were made the following December.⁸¹ Similarly, when drifting ice carried away nearly 150 feet of Dare's Wharf in February 1917,⁸² a local farmer complained of the inconvenience caused by the wharf being closed for three months after it was "damaged to a small extent." By June, no attempt had been made to repair it, causing local shippers to travel to other, more distant, wharves.⁸³ It was finally repaired in July.⁸⁴ During this period of suspended service, the Patuxent River Line timetable published in local newspapers stated "Dare's Wharf temporarily abandoned on account of repairs."⁸⁵

From 1916 to 1918, the steamer schedule continued with boats leaving Baltimore on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday afternoons and returning Wednesday, Friday, and Monday mornings, respectively.⁸⁶ The winter schedule, effective January 1, 1918, eliminated the Thursday/Friday trip.⁸⁷

Shippers were increasingly relying on alternatives to the steamer. In February 1918, for example, Captain John Greenwell of the schooner *Adele Bosley* shipped shucked oysters from his cargo of 1,350 bushels by motor truck to Baltimore. Meanwhile, Harry Woodburn shipped the cargo of 1,150 bushels of oysters in the shell from the schooner *Fannie Myers* to Baltimore by truck.⁸⁸

Although storms and drift ice damaged wharves and affected steamboat service, fire was also a concern. Governors Run Wharf was damaged by fire in June 1919 and steamboat service was suspended until repairs were made in December.⁸⁹

A February 1920, gale forced drifting ice to the western shore causing damage to the bayside wharves again. At the 1,900-foot Dare's Wharf, the structure was submerged and its decking was swept away. The warehouse on its pier head was also wrecked. Governors Run, which had been rebuilt recently, fared better under the force of the heavy drift ice until the second day of the storm when a 300 to 400-foot section of its bridge gave way. Plum Point was also damaged.⁹⁰ The storm rendered Dare's and Plum Point out of commission while Governors Run was open only to light freight. As the *Calvert Journal* summed up: "It will take a considerable time to put all the damaged wharves in shape."⁹¹ In November 1920, repairs were underway at Fair Haven but Plum Point and Dare's Wharf were still closed.⁹²

In late February 1920, two weeks after a five-week ice blockade that had closed navigation in the Patuxent River, the *Calvert Gazette* lamented the slow response of the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company to the needs of the people:

The tardy movement of supplies occasion but little loss of freightage to the transportation company, we are aware, for there is scarcely any competition on the Patuxent River route. Then, are we to assume they are operating on the assumption that what is coming to them, they will get anyhow, sooner or later, regardless the convenience to the consignee?⁹³

A month later, a correspondent to the *Baltimore Sun* from Prince Frederick, complained about the impassable condition of the state road and commented:

We are doubly dependent on this road at this time. The ice carried away all of the wharves on the Chesapeake Bay and merchants and other shippers cannot ship by steamboat, nor can they get goods to and from the railroad because this is the only road leading to it and all hauling over it is impossible.”⁹⁴

The dependence of shippers along the Patuxent River Line on reliable steamboat service is evidenced in a December 1920 *Calvert Gazette* report of the *Anne Arundel* landing in Baltimore with “the largest cargo of inbound freight that vessel had transported to the city this season.” Among the cargo were “115 coops of turkeys and 45 coops of chickens...83 hogsheads of tobacco, and 79 carriers of shucked oysters and other miscellaneous freight.”⁹⁵

By the early 1920s, perhaps as a reflection of declining trade on the Patuxent River Line, the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company cut its service to two steamers a week. According to historian David Holly, the company had not returned a profit since 1911 and was in financial trouble. In mid-1922, the Pennsylvania Railroad foreclosed on the company. Bankruptcy proceedings extended into 1924⁹⁶ and the receivers began selling off its assets as separate parcels beginning in 1923. Parcel Number 3 included interests in wharf properties. In addition to controlling interest in the Chesapeake Wharf Company that operated Plum Point (69 of 84 ½ shares of common capital stock) and the Dare Wharf Company (106 of 152 shares), it included ten of the 50 shares of the Governors Run Wharf Company.⁹⁷

Part 5: Baltimore and Virginia Steamboat Company, End of an Era

In May 1923, local newspapers announced that the Patuxent River Line, along with several steamboats, were sold to N.W. Smith, an assistant manager of the Pennsylvania Railroad.⁹⁸ The trustee, the Girard Trust Company, conveyed to Smith the wharf properties, including interests in the bay wharves at Fair Haven, Plum Point, and Governors Run. Smith conveyed the property to Manor Real Estate and Trust Company.⁹⁹ Pennsylvania Railroad rebranded its subsidiary the Baltimore and Virginia Steamboat Company and curtailed steamboat service to the Patuxent.¹⁰⁰

In a 1924 letter to the editor of the *Baltimore Sun*, Prince Frederick attorney John B. Gray, arguing for the need of a railroad to serve Calvert County, lamented the lack of adequate transportation. He stated “There is not a steamboat plying up and down the Patuxent river today and has not been since last fall.” Further, he stated:

There are two steamboat wharves on the bay, one at Plum Point and one at Governor’s Run, which should take care of all the freight on the east side of the ridge of Calvert County. The freight from both points has heretofore been heavy, necessitating extra boats when there was good service. There is now only one boat calling at these wharves on the down and one on the up trip, each of these calling at night. The up trip is on Friday night. No cattle, poultry or other produce that has to go on the market can be shipped by this boat, as there is no market on Saturday for such goods. People consequently are forced to ship everything perishable by truck at exorbitant rates.¹⁰¹

By the time Gray submitted his letter in February 1924, Dare's Wharf was no longer in operation. It had been badly damaged by ice in February 1920, when its pier head and warehouse collapsed.¹⁰² It was still out of commission a year later when it was reported that the Public Service Commission, answering a petition by 75 citizens, would issue a preemptory order for the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company, at that time the principle stockholder of the wharf company, to rebuild the wharf.¹⁰³ It does not appear that the debt-ridden company had the means to repair or rebuild the wharf.

In March 1924, the Baltimore and Virginia Steamboat Company advertised "that sufficient service will be placed in operation on the Patuxent River, during seasonable periods to move crops produced."¹⁰⁴ But the routinely scheduled passenger and freight steamboat service that had been in operation along the Patuxent River Route for generations was never restored.

In early January 1925, the board of directors of the Governor's Run Wharf Company met to discuss the future of its corporation. Equity Case Number 729 documents the final throes of the company and the decision to dissolve it. The directors advised the dissolution of the corporation. In the stockholders meeting held in late January a majority of the 12 stockholders, representing 35 shares, voted in favor of dissolution. At the time, William A. Dorsey served as president of the company's board of directors and owned nine shares of stock. He also controlled by proxy eight shares owned by his sister, Mary Peterson.¹⁰⁵

The closing of Governors Run Wharf on March 31, 1925, was announced in a notice published in the local newspapers. The notice was signed by John B. Gray as the secretary of the Governor's Run Wharf Company.¹⁰⁶

On April 6, 1925, John B. Gray, appointed as receiver of the wharf company by the court, contacted the Baltimore and Virginia Steamboat Company requesting that they consider restoring service to two boats per week in the summer. However, the company responded that, if the wharf continued to operate, they could resume the same one boat a week service provided in 1924.¹⁰⁷

Gray petitioned the court to grant him permission to expend funds for temporary repairs to make the wharf safe for use during the summer of 1925. He stated "there is great demand in the neighborhood of Governors Run that the wharf be kept open for the summer season." He speculated that revenue from wharfage fees from the summer season would amount to between \$300 and \$400.

From April 1 to November 3, 1925, only \$292.18 was earned from wharfage fees at Governors Run. Among the expenses incurred in 1925 was \$64.61 for wharf repairs paid to George D. Turner and \$50 paid to wharf agent J. Latimer Ireland.

Gray, in a petition to the court, cited unsatisfactory steamboat service, poor patronage by the local community, and disappointing income as his rationale for closing the wharf and liquidating the company assets in 1925. Gray stated that:

. . . he had made some repairs to the wharf at Governor's Run and opened the same for wharfage purposes during the summer season, but owing to the fact that the boat service was but once a week on each trip, that is down on Saturdays and up on Mondays, the service was anything but satisfactory to the people and the wharf was poorly patronized and the income therefrom was not very satisfactory and your receiver concluded it wise to close the wharf and has therefore given notice that the same will be closed on or after November 3rd, 1925, subject to the approval of the Court.

Exhibit Number 3 in the Equity filing listed among the assets of the company "One Wharf in bad condition extending from Governor's Run, Calvert County, Maryland, into the Chesapeake Bay and one waiting room at the shore end of said Wharf." An advertisement for the November 17, 1925, public sale of the wharf property was published in local newspapers.¹⁰⁸ The Equity Case reports the property was purchased by William A. Dorsey for \$150. Dorsey already owned the land adjacent to the wharf.

Given its "bad condition" and exposure to the forces of nature, it is unlikely the steamboat wharf at Governors Run continued in use after 1925 due to maintenance issues. Subject to the damaging effects of storms and ice throughout the 54 years it was in operation, the wharf required capital investment to ensure it was repaired, rebuilt, or replaced to remain safe and serviceable. With the phasing out of scheduled steamboat service, the commercial wharf company that had maintained it was dissolved. New owner William A. Dorsey may have used the wharf to some extent after purchasing it, but in time the old structure fell prey to the effects of nature.

By 1926 when the Manor Real Estate and Trust Company conveyed 14 wharf properties on the Patuxent River and its tributaries to the Pennsylvania Railroad's rebranded Baltimore and Virginia Steamboat Company,¹⁰⁹ the bayside wharves at Dare's and Governors Run had ceased operations and the Pennsylvania Railroad had ended steamboat service to the Patuxent.¹¹⁰

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