



**QUARTERLY**  
Spring 2006



**Robert H. Burgess • Michener's Chesapeake Diary**



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## On the Cover

Mixed use waterfront—feathered visitors stake their claim to the finger piers on Foggs Landing before warm weather draws out our more traditional visitors in later spring and summer.

## President's Message

This issue of *CBMM Quarterly* features several articles about partnerships we have with other organizations, and individuals. Such relationships enable us to extend our reach beyond campus, to secure assets we might not otherwise receive, and to develop programs and articles that benefit our members and visitors.



We are fortunate to collaborate this summer with Washington College's Center for the Environment and Society. Students will participate in a field school that will study boat builders in Wittman, Maryland. Students will talk with boat builders, survey their shops, and document the work they have done. The field school will give students an extraordinary hands-on experience to supplement what they learn in the classroom.

Practically everyone has read James Michener's *Chesapeake*. Many of you may also know that Michener lived in St. Michaels while doing research for his book, and that he spent a lot of time at CBMM going through our archives. But how many of you know that Michener donated everything he had relating to the book—notes, correspondence, maps, galleys—to the Talbot County Library in Easton? We are indebted to the Talbot County Library and the estate of James Michener for allowing us to publish, for the first time, excerpts of Michener's *Chesapeake Diary*.

Tidewater Publishers has released a revised and expanded edition of *Chesapeake Sailing Craft: Recollections of Robert H. Burgess*. The late Bob Burgess, former curator of the Mariners' Museum in Newport News, is the undisputed "dean" of Chesapeake maritime historians. He was a member of our Board of Governors, and I had the privilege of knowing him, as did our Curator, Pete Leshner, who provided advice and counsel on captions and photos for this edition. Burgess's book about Chesapeake sailing craft contains photographs and information about the Bay's long-lost maritime culture. It's a must read!

"A picture is worth a thousand words." However, most picture postcards get thrown away once they reach their destination. Fortunately Dr. Laurence "Pinny" Claggett had the foresight to collect Maryland postcards. And thanks to Pinny's generosity in making his postcard collection a gift to the Museum, we will be able to preserve and use these cards to give the public insight into the daily lives of earlier generations.

It is fitting that my farewell issue of the *CBMM Quarterly* is filled with articles about partnerships. I attribute much of the success of this institution and my tenure here to our ability to forge mutually beneficial relationships with other like minds. It has been my privilege to have served the Museum for nearly twenty years and I leave it with a solid hull and a worthy and talented crew.

You, our members, have been most gracious and hospitable to me, and your well-wishes mean more than you might realize. Thank you for a great sail!

John R. Valliant  
*President*



Boat Yard Program Manager Bob Savage planes the bottom of the Journeyman's Special sailing skiff.

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\* Events Calendar is a special pull-out section that can be found between pages 11 and 12.

## Features

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The scenic Chesapeake Bay creates countless scenes worthy of picture postcards, which vacationers sent home from bayside resorts. Over the years Pinny Claggett acquired more than a few cards. By Pete Leshner.

### From Books to the Field 6

Historian Dr. Michael Chiarappa has studied maritime communities from the Delaware Bay to the Great Lakes. Now he explores the environment and society with students at Washington College. By Michael Valliant.

### Chesapeake Sailing Craft 14

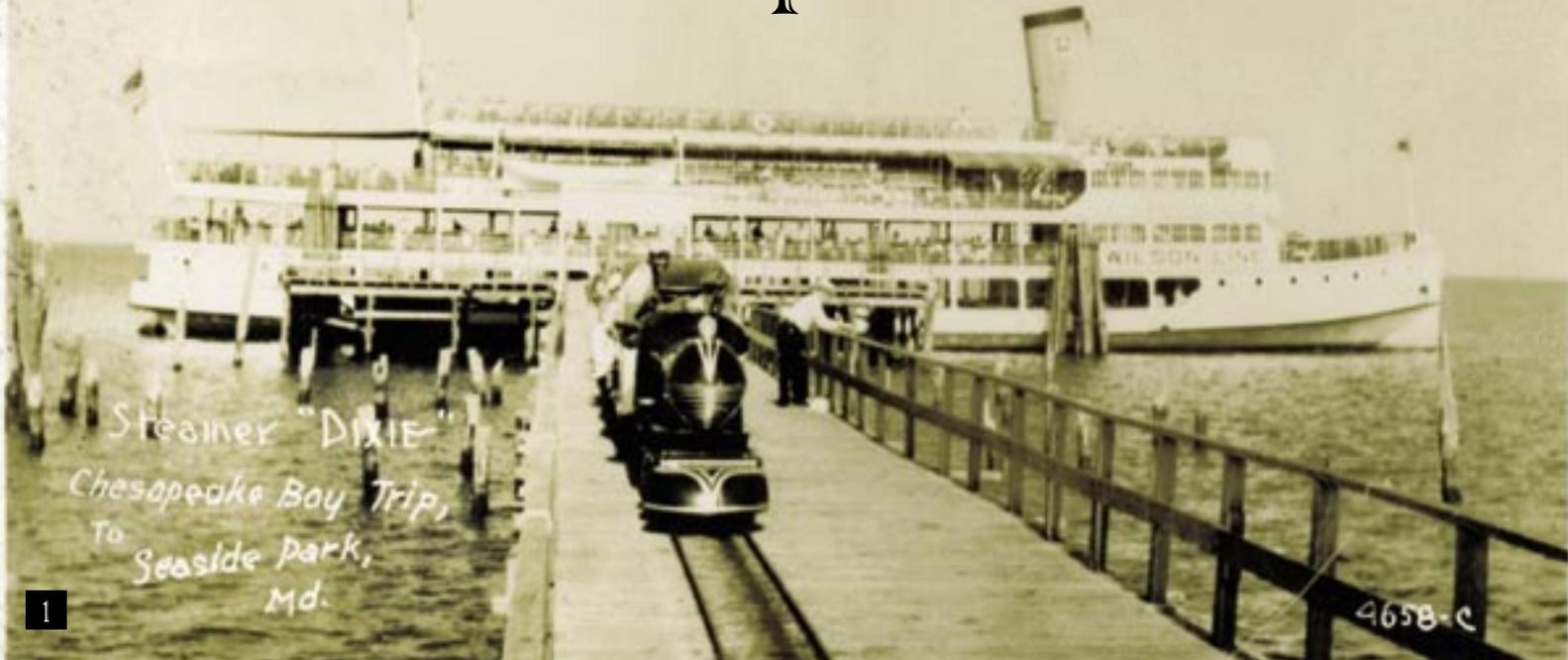
In this introduction to an expanded edition of his classic book on the Bay's sailing vessels, the late Robert H. Burgess recounts his fascination with documenting a quickly-vanishing culture. By Robert Burgess.

### Michener's Chesapeake Diary 19

While writing his bestselling novel *Chesapeake*, James Michener kept a diary chronicling his thoughts and travels on the Bay. Here, for the first time in print, his notes share his experiences. By James Michener.

# Vacation Postcards from the of the Chesapeake

By Pete Leshar, *Curator*



REED BIRD SHOOTING, HAYRE DE GRACE, MD.

2

*Grow*

“Don’t you wish you were with me,” wrote a 1905 vacationer from the bayside resort Chesapeake Beach to her friend in Prince Frederick. Almost from the beginning, the picture postcard has been associated with the traveler writing to family and friends back home.

The shores of the Chesapeake offered an easy retreat for residents of Washington and Baltimore in the first half of the twentieth century. Rail and trolley lines carrying day excursionists terminated at waterside resorts like Chesapeake Beach and Bay Shore, a park near the mouth of the Patapsco River. Steamboats took others down the Potomac from Washington or down the Patapsco and Chesapeake from Baltimore. After the First World War, Maryland built a modern highway system that made travel by automobile faster and easier, opening up many more locations along the Bay for vacationers and day trippers.

Until Ocean City became more accessible, bayside resorts had water activities and beautiful views to lure ever larger numbers of pleasure seekers. The larger resorts added piers, boardwalks, band shells, arcades, and other attractions that were later eclipsed by ocean resorts. Every one of these locations sold postcards to

# Banks

their visitors, so that the pictures mailed home might lure others.

These postcards are part of a collection of over 15,000 Maryland postcards given to the Museum by Dr. Laurence G. Claggett. The images on these pages were selected from waterside locations along the Potomac and the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay.

**1** For visitors arriving by boat at Seaside Park (a new name for the amusement park at Chesapeake Beach in the 1930s), the pier was so long that a miniature train was added to save a few steps.

**2** Reed bird shooting, a fast and challenging sport, was popular in the marshes along the Patuxent River and around the head of the Bay. It required a small skiff, in this case, a double-ended Delaware ducker, and a hired guide to pole the boat through the marsh.

**3** Bathing costumes were modest for this mixed group wading in the shallows off Chesapeake Beach in Calvert County. Hydrodynamic swim suits did not arrive on the scene for another ten years.

**4** "Dear Mother," wrote the sender in July 1937 from a camp on the bank of the Potomac River; "I wish you would come down and visit me Sunday. . . bring me some extra money cause I want to go to Qantaco and [it will] cost a dollar." He signed it "Boy." The collage of photographs shows all the distractions offered by the camp for a homesick boy: tennis, boating, swimming, fishing, sack races, and more.

**5** Planked shad is a Maryland tradition as venerable as the crab feast or oyster roast. Shad is split down the back, nailed to a hardwood plank, and baked along an open fire. These cooks were preparing such a feast for early twentieth century guests at Marshall Hall, just a short distance below Washington on the Potomac River.

**6** Mago Vista Beach on the Magothy River was built by Harold Benson, who sold cottages along the shore, dredged the river to create a beach, then built picnic tables, row boats, bath houses, and, eventually, an amusement park with a kiddie roller coaster that extended out over the water. Like several other Chesapeake resorts, it posted a "Gentiles only" sign and excluded African-Americans, a policy that lasted until Benson sold the property in 1964.

## Sources

<sup>1</sup> Richard J. S. Dodds, "Gunning for Rail: Railbird Skiffs on Chesapeake Bay," *The Weather Gauge* XXXIV:2 (Fall 1998), 5, 10.

<sup>2</sup> Wendi Winters, "Around Broadneck: Man Digs Up History on Amusement Park," *The Capital* [Annapolis] 9 Jan. 2006.



Some Activities At Camp Nanjemoy - Maryland Point, Maryland.



PLANKING SHAD AT MARSHALL HALL, MD

