

Somerset 350



WHERE HISTORY LIVES
1666-2016



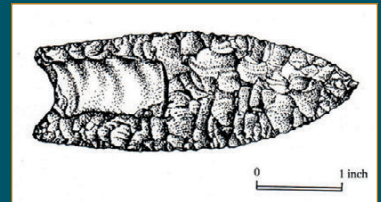
Annesmessex River landscape, Aerial photograph by Joey Gardner, 2016

Native Americans, Explorers and Settlement of Somerset

On August 22, 1666, Cecil Calvert, Lord proprietor of the province of Maryland, authorized legislation creating Somerset County, and 350 years later in this anniversary year, we look back as well as forward in celebration to honor and cherish our past as we continue to live here in the present and future.

Somerset's first inhabitants, however, were the native tribes of the lower Eastern Shore. Native American occupation of the region dates back thousands of years; its earliest inhabitants occupied a landscape far different than today with much lower sea levels. Spanning over fifteen to twenty thousand years, native American habitation matured from hunter-gathers to settled communities of tribes who resided along the region's numerous waterways, many of which still carry their names. The Pocomoke, Manokin, Annesmessex, Monie and Wicomico waterways are named for these native tribes.

Native American occupation is also represented by the thousands of artifacts that turn up in the soil, or through the written historical record as Anglo-American explorers, traders and ultimately settlers interacted with them across the peninsula.



A characteristic Paleo-Indian fluted projectile point from Maryland's Eastern Shore, Nancy Kurtz.



John White drawing of natives making a log canoe, 1580s, British Museum and Dover Publications

One of the earliest explorers to leave a written record of his visit, describing the local inhabitants as well as their activities was Giovanni da Verrazano, who, during the 1520s, traveled along what later became Somerset County. Among his writings about the region's natives, he penned a description of the means by which they moved about their watery world. They crafted

Little boats made out of a single tree, twenty feet long and four wide, which are put together without stone, iron, or any kind of metal...[they] use the fourth element (fire) and burn the wood as much as necessary to hollow out the boat; they do the same for the stern and prow so when it sails it can plow through the waves of the sea (Giovanni da Verrazano, quote c. 1524-28)

1608 Jamestown Colony in Virginia is founded; marking the initial Anglo-American settlement of the Chesapeake Bay

1614-1630s Early settlements are established on the Eastern Shore of Virginia and on Kent Island; Anglo-American traders and trappers establish agreements with local native tribes

1657 First European inhabitants recorded on Smith Island

1661-65 First period of patenting begins on the lower Eastern Shore of Maryland

Over the course of the early to mid-17th century Anglo-Americans entered the Chesapeake, ultimately laying claim to lands occupied for centuries by native American tribes, who were relegated to constricted reservations and Indian towns as the lower Shore was planted by Anglo-American settlers, many of whom came from the Eastern and Western shores of Virginia. As originally laid out in 1666, the bounds of Somerset stretched from the waters of the Chesapeake to the Atlantic Ocean, and north to the Nanticoke River. Despite definite territorial limits determined by these major bodies of water, more exacting boundary lines to the south and northeast remained in question and dispute for more than a hundred years following. Nevertheless, the Maryland proprietor, Cecil Calvert, the second Lord Baltimore, proclaimed that

we for the ease & benefit of the people of this our province & for the Speedy & more exact Administration of Justice have erected & do by these presents erect all that Tract of land within this our province of Maryland bounded on the South with a line drawn from Watkins Point to the Ocean on the East, Nanticoke River on the North & the sound of Chesapeake on the West into a County by the name of Somerset County in honor to our Dear Sister Lady Mary Somerset...
(Archives of Maryland, Vol. III, p. 553-55)

Lady Mary Somerset was the sister of Anne Arundel, who was Cecil Calvert's wife. The proclamation was justified due to a massive land rush into the lower Shore region after Cecil Calvert had signed an earlier directive in 1661 encouraging people "now or late inhabitants of Northampton, otherwise Accomack, in Virginia," to move into that part of unsettled territory, "upon the Eastern Shore of the province in any part below Choptank River." Between 1661 and 1665, over 40,000 acres were patented, tracts that were principally on the Chesapeake Bay or along its tributaries, thereby securing the young Maryland province from encroachments from competing colonial powers. Adjacent forces on the Eastern Shore of Virginia contested settlement in Somerset, and Dutch plantations on the Delaware Bay refused to owe allegiance to the Calvert proprietors. Despite uncertainty with external boundaries, the new Somerset County officials and settlers moved swiftly to establish themselves along the Annesmessex and Manokin rivers and other bay tributaries. In the process of the initial land rush, the native American inhabitants, eventually losing their ancestral hunting grounds through the English-based land patent process, moved to more remote sections of the lower Shore and gathered in large reservation-type villages such as Chicone on the Nanticoke and Askiminikansen on the upper Pocomoke River.



1666 John Ogilby, *Nova Terrae-Mariae tabula*, 1671, William T. Snyder Collection, MdHR G 1213-367

1660s First records of free black planters, Anthony and Mary Johnson and family; relocated to Somerset County from Northampton County, Virginia

1663 Patent is taken out for the tract called Emessex by Benjamin Summers (Somers)

1666 Founding of Somerset County by an act of Maryland Provincial Council

1672 George Fox (1624-1691), English founder of the Society of Friends, visits newly-formed Quakers' meetings on the lower Eastern Shore



Rehoboth Presbyterian Church

principal places such as the Manokin settlement and Somerset Town on Revel's Neck are clearly labeled as are the Pocomoke and Wicomico rivers and Dividing Creek. In bold face type is "Watkins Point," the critical land reference anchoring the southern limits of the Maryland province on the Eastern Shore. Populating the shorelines of all the bayside tributaries are Herrman's symbol for plantations.

As the county evolved during the 1660s, a rudimentary "highway" system was developed that stretched across the Chesapeake Bay side of the lower Shore. The location of the county courthouse was shifted several times until a more permanent, central site at "Courthouse Hill" was established on Dividing Creek in 1692. Serving the entire lower Shore, the Dividing Creek Courthouse was more convenient to the expansive county due to its proximity to the navigable Pocomoke River.

During the late seventeenth century, the agricultural society of early Somerset County ranged from wealthy merchant-planters to medium-sized farmers to smaller freeholders, their wives and families. While largely of Anglo-American heritage, the settlers of early Somerset included a small population of free black planters who participated in plantation agriculture during the early settlement period. Indentured servants and imported slaves from Africa or the Caribbean provided sources of manual labor that were essential to the growth and development of early Somerset.

The first generation of Anglo-American settlers who arrived in Somerset County were for the most part from the Eastern Shore of Virginia who abided in the Quaker, Presbyterian and Anglican denominations rather than the Catholic faith of the Calvert proprietors. Somerset County was a new land of economic opportunity and religious freedom; the Colony of Virginia in 1659 had passed a law forbidding the expression of the Quaker religion. Several Presbyterian ministers or officiating "clerks" surfaced in Somerset County during the 1670s and 1680s, principal among them were Francis Makemie, Robert Maddox, William Traile, Samuel Davis and Thomas Wilson.

By the time Augustine Herrman assembled his highly detailed map, *Virginia and Maryland*, in 1670, key place names were identified on the lower Shore.

Although Somerset County in name was not identified, many of its



Augustine Herrman, Virginia and Maryland, 1670 [1673] Library of Congress

- 1672 Initial petition is presented for the Manokin Presbyterian congregation to worship on the north bank of the Manokin River
- 1681 The tract, Beckford, meaning in English translation, a crossing of a creek or river, is repatented

- 1686 Founding of Snow Hill Town
- 1692 Anglican Church is established as the official religion in Maryland; Somerset County divided into parishes, Coventry, Somerset, Snow Hill and Stepney
- 1693-96 Somerset County Courthouse is relocated to a site on Dividing Creek

As the seventeenth century came to a close, Anglo-American settlers had spread over much of Somerset County, and into contested territory along the Indian River drainage and Delaware Bay. Working plantations, large and small, were well established along the region's waterways, and the seat of county government was established in a central location on Dividing Creek. A rudimentary highway system stretched across the region, although transportation to and from the county court or weekly church services relied on the convenient locations near navigable water.

The Eighteenth Century

Over the course of the eighteenth century, the nature of Somerset's boundaries, economy and society changed distinctly. As the century neared its mid-point, land parents had obligated land to the county's limits from the Chesapeake to the Atlantic and well into the contested region along Delaware Bay and the Indian River drainage. The early to mid-eighteenth century also witnessed a wave of rebuilding on plantations that included dwellings that have lasted to modern times and represent a very high quality of design and construction. Many of the early congregations of Presbyterian and Anglican faiths rebuilt their churches as well.

The Somerset County population, measured in 1740, included about 12,100 inhabitants—free whites and a small society of free blacks—as well as indentured and slave, white, black or mulatto. While occupying a largely forested landscape with intermittent clearings for plantations, the inhabitants of early Somerset County, with the prompting of several legislative acts, started to establish towns across the region; Snow Hill in 1686, Salisbury in 1732, and Princess Anne in 1733. The founding of Princess Anne was authorized by an Act of General Assembly with the following passage:

Whereas, several inhabitants of Somerset County, have, by their Petition to this General Assembly, set forth, That there is a very convenient Place for a Town, near the Head of the Manokin River, on the South Side thereof, by the Bridge, on a Tract of Land now in the Possession of David Brown...Be it therefore Enacted by Right Honourable Lord Proprietary... That Col. Levin Gale, Capt. George Dashiels, Major Robert King, Captain Henry Ballard, and Mr. George Gale, or any three of them, shall be and are hereby appointed Commissioners for Somerset County aforesaid; and are hereby authorized and empowered, as well to agree for the Buying and Purchasing Twenty Five Acres of Land out of the Tract aforesaid...as lies most convenient to the Water, as for Surveying and Laying out the same, in the most convenient manner, into Thirty equal Lots, to be erected into a Town. (Archives of Maryland, 1733-36, pp. 20 and 128)

Laid out on a level, elevated plain on the south side of the Manokin River, the town site for Princess Anne was directly across from the place occupied by the Manokin Presbyterians since the late seventeenth century. The town's situation near the headwaters of the Manokin was located along the north/south “highway” that traversed Somerset County as it was a convenient place where the river could be forded at what was known as “the wading place.”



Dennis Griffith, Map of the State of Maryland, 1794 [1795], Maryland Law Library.

1732 Founding of Salisbury Town

1733 Founding of Princess Anne Town

1742-44 Partition of Somerset County, creation of Worcester County, relocation of county court from Dividing Creek to Princess Anne Town, Snow Hill Town is named the county seat for Worcester

1751 Transpeninsular Line established locating the middle point to the peninsula

1754-63 French and Indian War



Manokin Presbyterian Church, photograph c. 1870, Collection of Robert Withey

Within the following decade, Somerset County was divided in half, creating Worcester County along the seaboard side in 1742. Shortly thereafter, new county seats were established in Princess Anne Town for Somerset and Snow Hill Town for Worcester. The first courthouse and jail in Princess Anne were located on the northeast corner of Bridge Street (Somerset Avenue) and Broad Street. In addition to the Manokin Presbyterian Church, the town was the new site for

the relocated Somerset Parish Chapel of Ease when it was moved from King's Mill to the Princess Anne town lots 27 & 28 in 1767. The Flemish bond brick Somerset Parish Chapel of Ease was completed in 1773, and it was later renamed St. Andrew's P. E. Church.

While the Flemish bond walls of the Somerset Parish Chapel of Ease were contemplated and erected in Princess Anne Town, events on a wider scope across the American colonies—the British imposed Stamp Act of 1765, the Townshend Acts of 1767 and the Boston Tea Party of 1773—to name just three, fomented discontent with British rule that led ultimately to the American Revolution. Somerset County and Eastern Shore residents were not without worry as British troops and Tories wreaked havoc across the region.

Somerset's native son, Samuel Chase (1741-1811), only child of Reverend Thomas Chase and Matilda Walker, studied law after leaving Somerset around 1759. Elected to the Maryland General Assembly in 1764, he served



St. Andrew's P. E. Church, built 1767-73. Southwest elevation, Paul B. Touart, photographer.

1763-67 English surveyors Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon establish the Mason-Dixon line separating Maryland from Pennsylvania, with New Castle, Kent and Sussex counties on the Delaware Bay and River

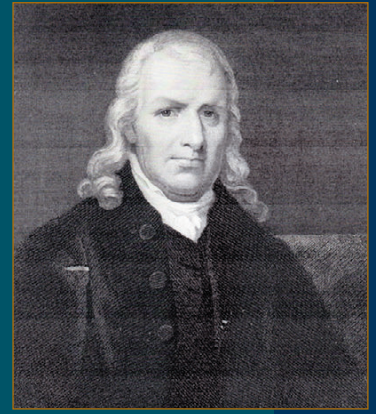
1767 Planter Samuel Wilson sponsors creation and construction of the Back Creek Academy (later Washington Academy), as a private school that educated young men from across the Chesapeake region

in that capacity for twenty years, and represented the colony at the Continental Congress, ultimately signing the Declaration of Independence. Of the Revolutionary War years he wrote in 1777, "Tories have been gathering in Sussex, Worcester and Somerset counties for several days. They have 250 men collected at Parker's Mill about nine miles from Salisbury with the intention to Seise (sic) the Magazine and destroy the property of the Whiggs." Another prominent local resident during the Revolutionary War years, Luther Martin, who later became Maryland's first Attorney General, resided near Princess Anne in 1777 and commented that

There was a period of considerable duration throughout which, not only myself but many Others, did not lay down one night in our beds without the hazard of waking on board a British armed ship, or in the other world.

The lower Eastern Shore patriots had much to protect along the region's navigable waterways, where Tory activists preyed on plantations and shipbuilding sites. While loyal patriots fought local Tory insurgents as well as British raiding parties, lower Eastern Shore planters also aided in feeding the Continental Army by sending foodstuffs north to the Head of Elk (later Elkton).

During the decades before and after the American Revolution, many successful planters were able to finance the first generation of permanent dwellings that have lasted to modern times. Somerset County retains a sizable number of eighteenth-century dwellings ranging in date from c. 1720 to the end of the century.



*Portrait of Samuel Chase (1741-1811)
Courtesy of the University of Kentucky*



*Sudler's Conclusion, built c. 1720, Manokin vicinity,
Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress.*



Workington, built c. 1793, Westover vicinity, documentary photograph c. 1918, Courtesy of Mrs. Charles Wainwright



*Almodington, Oriole vicinity, built c. 1740-50,
Paul Baker Touart, photographer*



*Makepeace, Crisfield vicinity, built
c. 1725-40, Paul Baker Touart,
photographer*

1775-83 American War for Independence from Great Britain

1782 Battle of the Barges in Kedges' Straits

1789 George Washington is elected president of the new United States of America

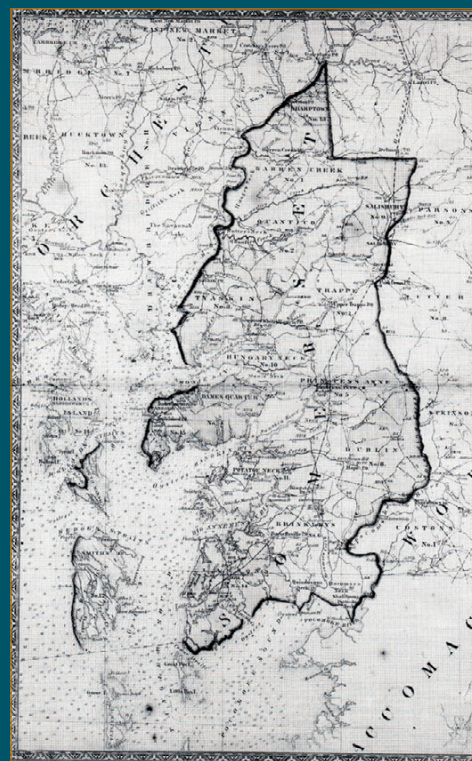


Cottage Hall Farm, historic image c. 1900, Collection of John Fitzgerald.

The Nineteenth Century

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Somerset County stretched from the Nanticoke south to the Pocomoke and east to Dividing Creek with Princess Anne as the county seat. Productive harvests in corn and wheat along with smaller amounts of tobacco contributed to diversified field crops that were combined with marketable supplies of virgin timber, livestock, and other local products that served local and distant populations. During the early to mid-nineteenth century, the population of white inhabitants in Somerset grew moderately and by 1860 had reached 15,332, one of the most populous on Shore. High as well were the number of slaves—counted at 5,089—on the eve of the Civil War. Somerset's economy during the period was based largely on agriculture and timber, the labor for which was based on a centuries old servant system centered on the growing slave population. Slaves were tasked with the lion's share of the back-breaking skilled and manual labor in fields, forests, marshes and around the plantation. It was also during the same period that increasing numbers of free blacks—numbering 4,571 in Somerset by 1860—created separate black communities across the region and organized the county's earliest African-American Methodist congregations.

One of the most prominent Somerset merchant-planters of the early nineteenth century was Littleton Dennis Teackle (1777-1848), a native of Accomack County, who moved to Princess Anne to conduct a merchant enterprise with his father, John Teackle of Accomack, and two uncles, John and Littleton Dennis, both residents of Somerset.



Martener's Map of Somerset County, 1866, (Courtesy of the Maryland State Archives (Special Collections (Maps) 286 (MdHR 1427; 005/1/2)

- 1801 Littleton Dennis Teackle joins in partnership with his father and two uncles; Teackle, Dennis & Teackle, the partnership erects a well-equipped store in the center of Princess Anne
- 1802 Littleton Dennis Teackle purchases part of the Beckford estate from his uncle John Dennis, and begins construction of the center section of his neoclassically inspired brick house

- 1804 Littleton Dennis Teackle acquires sole ownership of the mercantile firm and enters into large, international and regional contracts for the sale of timber, naval stores, livestock and crops harvested from vast tracts of land in Maryland and Virginia
- 1807-09 Jeffersonian Administration Embargo Act

In a summary of the local agricultural production and other exports, L. D. Teackle wrote to a Liverpool, England merchant house in 1806:

“Somerset is accounted one of the wealthiest Counties of Maryland, its exports are estimated at half a million dollars p[er] annum, the crop of tobacco is about two thousand hogsheads—its situation however being low and quite level (sic), is consequently subject to injury from the water in wet seasons—which particularly effected the Agricultural Interest during 1802 and 1803 but more especially during 1804 when great importations were actually required to supply the necessities of its inhabitants... The several prices affixed are such as are paid here and at which they would be delivered on Wicomico, in which a ship of 1000 tons may load... Besides lumber this county abounds in many substantial articles of export such as wheat, corn, oats, peas, beans, tobacco, pork, and oak bark. The amount of exports are estimated at \$500,000.” (Letter book of Littleton Dennis Teackle to Liverpool firm of Barclay and Salkeld & Co., February 1806)



Miniature Portrait of Littleton Dennis Teackle (1777-1848) Collection of the Somerset County Historical Society



Bank of Somerset \$10 note, dated 5.10.1814, Collection of the Somerset County Historical Society

As a young entrepreneur from the Virginia gentry, L. D. Teackle had returned recently from a nine-month tour of England and Scotland where he was introduced to many members of British royalty, and individuals of Great Britain’s merchant, manufacturing, and intellectual elite. Littleton Dennis Teackle’s aspirations were very high, and between 1802-04 he acquired thousands of acres in Somerset and secured property on the edge of Princess Anne Town where he dedicated resources to

create a finely appointed estate. He invested in state-of-the-art technology in the house and commercial developments in the town; he was the leading force behind the first Bank of Somerset, created in 1813 by an act of state legislature. He financed also the first steam-generated mill known for Somerset on his Manokin River property in 1815. Later on he served in the Maryland legislature as a delegate from Somerset between 1822 and 1835.

Littleton Dennis Teackle and his wife, Elizabeth Upshur, along with approximately twenty servants, occupied the center section of the mansion during the War of 1812, a period when Somerset County’s native son, Levin Winder (1757-1819), served as the Maryland’s governor.



Levin Winder (1757-1819), portrait with depiction of his estate Bloomsbury in the background, rendered by William Clarke c. 1793, (Collection of the Baltimore Museum of Art, Friends of the American Fund, BMA 1981.165)

Elizabeth Upshur Teackle wrote of the war years as the British entered the Chesapeake in February 1813 and raided plantations and burned towns and private property. In September 1813, Elizabeth Teackle

wrote her sister Ann Eyre of Northampton County, “Our Sept[embe]r court is sitting now & the town is full of Military, two recruiting offices being here—so that altogether we have quite a splutter in our city. The drums, fifes, marching and counter marching of the military... Major Martin call’d yesterday even[in]g—he is full of anecdotes about the enemy & Annapolis & St. Michaels & gallantry” (Letters of Elizabeth Upshur Teackle, Alderman Library, UVA)



Teackle Mansion, historic image c. 1900, Collection of Paul Baker Touart

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|---------|--|---------|---|
| 1812-15 | United States enters into war with Great Britain | 1812-16 | Somerset countian Levin Winder (1757-1819) serves as Governor of Maryland |
| 1812 | Elizabeth Upshur Teackle (1785-1837) comments on the start of the war with Great Britain | 1813 | Littleton Dennis Teackle establishes the Bank of Somerset |
| 1815 | Anna Ella Carroll is born at Kingston Hall on August 29 | 1815 | Littleton Dennis Teackle creates the Steam Company of Princess Anne; builds steam grist and saw mill on his estate on the Manokin River |



Somerset County Courthouse complex, historic image c. 1900, Collection of Robert Withey.

During the war years and especially afterwards, the county seat was improved with a new generation of dwellings, stores, hotels and other buildings. In 1831, the eighteenth century courthouse was destroyed by fire, and the county's courtroom and other offices were moved to a two-building complex that included the original Bank of Somerset at the corner of Bridge (Somerset Avenue) Street and Prince William, completed in 1833. In addition to a new courthouse complex, the membership of the Princess Anne Methodist congregation, organized around 1817, erected a new brick church in 1832.

The new brick Methodist church in Princess Anne can be viewed as reflective of the spread of Methodism throughout Somerset County during the period following the Revolutionary War. Early Methodist meetings were established in Somerset County during the 1780s: Curtis Chapel near Westover, Miles Chapel, later St. Peter's, near Hopewell, and a congregation on Deal Island were some of the earliest.



Joshua Thomas in his log canoe ministering to island communities.

Best remembered of the Methodist ministers of local birth is Reverend Joshua Thomas (1776-1853), who served congregations in various parts of the lower Shore. He became well-known among the island congregations in Maryland and Virginia, reaching them by sailing in his log canoe. He famously preached to the British troops on Tangier Island, predicting their eventual defeat in their attempts to capture Baltimore in 1814.

1818-19 Economic Panic across United States

1822 Littleton Dennis Teackle (1777-1848) is elected to the Maryland legislature, serving between 1822 and 1835

1830-31 Thomas King Carroll (1793-1873) of Kingston Hall serves as Governor of Maryland

1831 Eighteenth-century Somerset County Courthouse burns, court is moved to the former Teackle bank building

1832-33 New Courthouse is relocated to intersection of Bridge (Somerset) Street and Prince William Street



Thomas King Carroll (1793-1873)

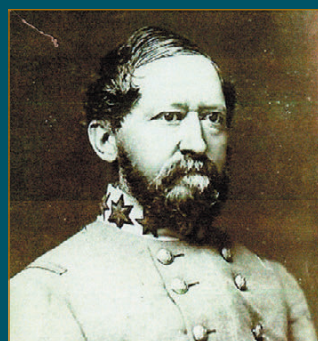
It was also during the early nineteenth century that another Somerset native, Thomas King Carroll (1793-1873), born on the family's Annemessex River plantation known as Kingston Hall, was elected Maryland's 21st governor. He served as governor for one year, in 1830-31, a term that had been preceded by many official positions as a judge and delegate in the Maryland legislature between 1816-17. Of his nine children with wife Julianna Stevenson, the best known is Anna Ella Carroll (1815-93). Anna Ella Carroll conducted a Female Academy at Kingston Hall, and later, wrote opinion papers for the Lincoln Administration on the Emancipation Proclamation and a plan of Union strategy in the Tennessee River campaign of the Civil War.

During the 1830s and 1840s, the limits of Princess Anne were defined on each compass point—north, south, east, and west—by imitative gable-front dwellings that echoed the center section of Teackletonia, the name used by the Teackles to identify their estate during

their residence in Princess Anne. Other gable-front dwellings were erected in the town, such as the Littleton Long House around 1830 as well as throughout the county and similar to Elmwood, built on the Manokin River around 1820. Elmwood was the childhood home of later-day Confederate general Arnold Elzey (Jones).

One of the most complete verbal descriptions of Princess Anne during the early to mid nineteenth century was written by Clerk of Somerset Court Levin Handy in 1841:

"The Town Princess Anne is situated at the head of Manokin River, about twenty miles from its mouth, is equidistant as to the most Northern & most Southern limits of Somerset County... The town is pleasantly situated—laid out with broad, airy, & rectangular streets... By reason of a mudflat extending about two miles the Manokin River is not navigable for large sized Bay Craft or larger vessels nearer than 12 miles from the Town and all the produce taken to or goods & freight brought from the vessels trading on this river are conveyed by means of scows and flat boats. Between the Mud spoken of and the town, the water is sufficiently deep to admit the approach of vessels of 50 tons within 1 mile from the Town. The Public buildings consist of a Court house—a large building adjoining it in which are the Clerk's and Register's offices and a county prison. The places of religious worship are a Presbyterian, an Episcopal, and a Methodist Episcopal Church. These buildings are all erected of brick and are quite capacious. There are about 70 dwelling houses and nearly an equal number of buildings consisting of offices, stores, shops, and other buildings... The number of inhabitants of the Town is I think correctly stated on the last census at 630. There has been a Small increase since 1830, but this has been a good deal diminished by the removal of several families to the south." (Levin Handy, Clerk of Somerset County, Letter to State Librarian David Ridgeley, 20 September 1841



General Arnold Elzey (Jones)
(1817-1871)



Anna Ella Carroll (1815-94)



Littleton Long House, historic image c. 1910, Collection of Anne Duer Gee.

1837 A second economic panic in twenty years spreads across the United States

1842 Residents of Annemessex petition for a public road and landing at Somers Cove

1855-60 Delaware Railroad constructed from Wilmington, Delaware to Salisbury, Maryland

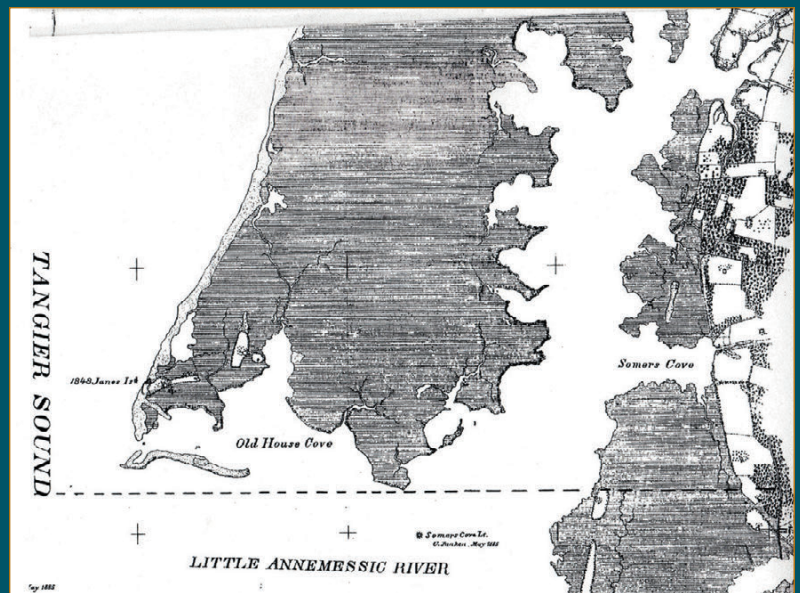
1861-65 Civil War engulfs northern and southern states in a tragic and costly conflict

While Princess Anne Town was growing at a moderate rate with new dwellings, stores, a courthouse complex and a new Methodist Church, residents of southern Somerset County in Annemessex were agitating for a new public road to provide access to open, protected water during the winter months. Entered into the public record was the following:

The petition of the subscribing citizens of Annemessex in said County, respectfully that we labor under great inconvenience for the want of a public road and landing at Somers Cove, which is our principal harbor and landing in the time of Ice, and whereas the way is nearly stopped up and we apprehend it soon will be unless a public road is opened...

(Somerset County Road Petitions, AH/514, 28 February 1842)

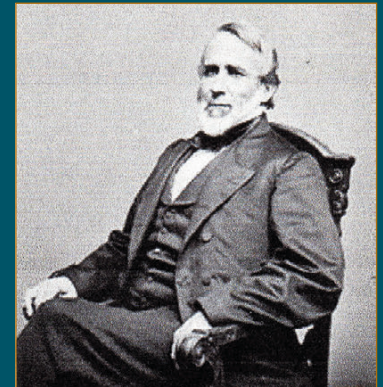
A new road and public landing at Somers Cove surely aided the rural inhabitants of Annemessex with more convenient access to the river and bay and their resources.



A.D. Bache, Superintendent, "Coastal survey of Little Annemesic River," Eastern Shore of the Chesapeake, No. 37, surveyed in 1849 and 1851, National Archives. The highly accurate coastal surveys executed by the Federal government during the mid-nineteenth century depict clearly the large areas of marsh that bordered Somers Cove as well as the patchwork of farm buildings, cleared fields and woodlands, roads and lanes that defined the location that was to become Crisfield in the next century. At the bottom of the neck of land (current location of McCready Hospital) there is a symbol indicating the location of a windmill.



Crisfield, stereoview of railroad and newly filled land with oyster shells, c. 1875, Joseph A. Maybin, photographer, Collection of William G. Bodenstein.



*John Woodland Crisfield (1808-1897)
Brady-Handy Collection, Library of Congress*

More momentous changes to the area were to come in the two decades that followed. Between 1855 and 1859, the Delaware Railroad was built between Wilmington and Delmar, Delaware. The year following the Civil War, in 1866, a line from Salisbury south to Somers Cove was completed, thereby joining the Annemessex fishing and farming community

- 1866 Eastern Shore Railroad, a continuation of the Delaware Railroad, is completed to Tangier Sound; serving as the catalyst for the renaming of Annemessex to Crisfield in honor of the president of the Eastern Shore Railroad, Princess Anne resident John Woodland Crisfield
- 1867 Somerset and Worcester counties are partitioned to create Wicomico County

- 1868 Maryland General Assembly creates the "Oyster Navy" to protect Chesapeake Bay oysterbeds
- 1872 Crisfield is formally incorporated
- 1876 Author Robert Wilson visits Crisfield and writes articles for Lippincott's Magazine

to the string of East coast cities. To honor the Eastern Shore Railroad's chief promoter and president, Annemessex was renamed for John Woodland Crisfield. Construction of the railroad down the spine of Delaware before the Civil War, and then to the Little Annemessex River by 1866, caused a writer from Princess Anne to state in 1868:

"What Railroads are Doing for the Eastern Shore—The Somerset Herald, in the following paragraph, shows very plainly the great advantages which the Eastern Shore has and is now deriving from railroads and other public improvements. A little more than two years ago, Crisfield Station was unknown to a portion of the inhabitants of the Peninsula. At that time it was nothing less than a body of marsh encircled by a copious and convenient supply of water and might have remained till this day had it not been for the energy and indomitable perseverance of the worthy president of the Eastern Shore Railroad, after whom the Chicago of Somerset rejoices in being christened. The contrast between the appearance of the little town with that of the days of yore is strikingly illustrative of the improvements which the 'iron horse' has made in this section of the country. Crisfield now boasts of being and is now a neat little village, containing two large hotels, four stores, two oyster packing establishments with a few dwellings and a port of entry for the convenience of vessels in this district, besides the line of steamers running in close connection with the railroad, between the Port of Norfolk and Baltimore. Should it continue increasing as it has already evidenced, we expect that it, in the course of five years or more, will outnumber us in of population." (Smyrna [Delaware] Times, 2.26.1868, Delaware State Archives)

The anonymous writer of the *Somerset Herald* article knew of what he wrote, for in the next half dozen years the City of Crisfield was incorporated (1872), and investments in businesses and property were pouring in as oysters were being shipped out by schooner or rail. Crisfield boomed in size, population and commerce during the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century. Discarded oyster shells were dumped into the surrounding marsh and shallow waters to create fast land along the Little Annemessex and on each side of Somers Cove. Clearly created out of forest and marsh, the new city and its commerce in seafood attracted thousands during the decades that followed the founding of the town. The quick profits provided by the oyster harvests and attendant commerce in finfish, crabs, wildfowl, and terrapin financed construction of a wide range of buildings from packing houses, workers' housing, stores, hotels, dwellings, churches and a range of other improvements. The boom in seafood also sponsored a wave of new construction that spread throughout the southeastern section of the Crisfield district between Jenkins and Apes Hole creeks.



Lake, Griffing and Stevenson, 1877, reprinted 1976, Wicomico County Bicentennial Commission.

- 1877 Maryland-Virginia boundary in lower Chesapeake established by Jenkins-Black Award
- 1878 Act of Maryland General Assembly enlarges boundary of the City of Crisfield
- 1879 Author and illustrator Howard Pyle visits Crisfield and writes articles for Harper's New Monthly magazine

- 1885 15,000,000 bushels of oysters are harvested from Tangier Sound and processed in Crisfield
- 1886 Delaware Conference Academy (now the University of Maryland Eastern Shore) is founded by the Centenary Biblical Institute; later renamed Princess Anne Academy

The prolific commercial trade in oysters attracted many who were curious to experience Crisfield for themselves. Authors and journalists hopped aboard the train and were deposited in the oyster exporting center in quick order. Robert Wilson, writing for *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, left the following passage about the bay-front town in its early years:

"To study the oyster-business thoroughly one should go to Crisfield, the 'Venice of the Eastern Shore.' This little town, which owes its existence and growth to the oyster-interests of Maryland, is the southern terminus of the Eastern Shore, and situated on the Little Annemessex 'River,' a little estuary making in from Tangier Sound. The town proper is embosomed in the woods on the main, and presents no features essentially different from other Eastern Shore villages. But a long causeway, over which the railroad passes, connects it with the Piraeus which has grown up about the steamboat wharf. The new town is literally built upon oyster-shells, and here we find the large packing houses, the depot, the two hotels, the principal stores, the wharves and many private dwellings. The building process is peculiar. A man purchases a 'water-lot' alongside the causeway and encloses it with piles. He then dumps in oyster shells until he has enough terra firma to support his house, which he proceeds to build, filling in his yard by degrees as he needs various out-buildings, connecting these by bridges with the main edifice."(Robert Wilson, *Lippincott's Magazine, The Bay*, 1876, as printed in *Rediscovery of the Eastern Shore: Delmarva Travelogues from the 1870s*, Wye Mills: Chesapeake College Press, 1986)



City of Norfolk at the Crisfield wharf, c. 1870, Collection of H. Graham Wood.

Profits realized from the commercial trade in oysters, crab, fish, and terrapin, and attendant businesses serving the seafood trade, led to a building boom in Crisfield during the last decades of the nineteenth century and first quarter of

the 20th century. Packinghouse owners and successful businessmen financed impressive Italianate or Queen Anne dwellings, some of the most elaborate in Somerset County. The population grew so quickly that by 1885 there were 2,000 residents in the seafood exporting center. And twelve years later, the population had jumped to 3,500, well out-distancing the much older county seat of Princess Anne. With the prodigious growth, the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation in 1878 that enlarged the city well to the north, south, and east.

The harbor and Annemessex River waterfront were punctuated with piers and choked with sailing vessels, steamers, schooners, and smaller boats carrying on the oyster and seafood



Crisfield Harbor, historic image c. 1910, Library of Congress.

1889 Harry C. (Curley) Byrd (1889-1970), University of Maryland president (1936-54) born in Crisfield

1894 Incorporation of Princess Anne

1904-05 New Somerset County Courthouse is constructed in Princess Anne

1906 Haman Act passes the Maryland legislature to establish programs for leasing oyster beds and to encourage the cultivation of seed oysters, and charting of Chesapeake Bay oyster beds



Aerial view of Crisfield, c. 1910-20, The city had expanded tremendously in the forty years since the railroad line was completed to deep water, but unfilled sections still remained when this aerial view was taken of the city's waterfront, Collection of the Image Preservation Company.

trades—leading to a significant trade in shipbuilding. In 1871, there were more than 1400 fishing vessels in the Crisfield area, although 700 of them were log canoes not large enough to warrant registration at the city's Custom House.

Crisfield's commerce sponsored employment for over six-hundred sailing vessels, and the Maryland oyster harvests were tremendous. Fourteen million bushels were extracted from bay waters in 1874, and ten years later, the harvests reached a peak of fifteen million barrels by 1885, an estimated value of three to four million dollars per annum. As oyster supplies diminished in quantity during the early twentieth century, Crisfielders and regional watermen turned to exploiting larger and larger quantities of blue crab, which was sold picked and packaged, in its hard or soft shell.

Over the course of the early to mid-nineteenth century, the seafood trade and enhanced agricultural commerce infused many communities across Somerset County with new-found vitality and energy that spurred the growth of villages of Ewell, Tylerton, and Rhodes Point on Smith Island, Deal Island and Wenona on the former Devil's Island, Frenchtown, Rumbley, Westover, Upper Fairmount and Mount Vernon. At the same time, free black villages emerged across Somerset County—Upper and Lower Freetown on either side of Upper Fairmount, Freemantown east of Crisfield, and Bowland's Hill and Greenwood on the western and southern edges of Princess Anne. As well a free black community was established by mariners, farmers, oystermen and their families on Devil's Island.

At mid-century the population of Somerset County included a large enslaved population, numbering 5,089 in the 1860 census. While some slaves were manumitted by their owners or purchased by ex-slaves when possible, others chose alternative routes to freedom with attempts to escape. Some courageous Somerset slaves made their way north, aided by friendly individuals and organizations such as the Methodist and remaining Quaker congregants on the Shore.

1908 First Somerset County Hospital opens in Marion Station

1909 General and Marine Hospital in Crisfield is dedicated

1911 Strawberry auction established at Marion Station

1914-18 World War I

1917 Tomato Growers Association is founded

1917 First Somerset Agricultural Show is held in Somerset County Courthouse

1923 McCready Hospital opens its doors with generous gift from Caroline McCready

Aided by his brother, one Henry Cotton, a slave owned by planter Nathaniel Dixon, hid out in the hollow of a tree in the Pocomoke River swamp for months before making his way north to Wilmington, Delaware, Philadelphia and ultimate freedom in Canada.

As the issue of slavery, and maintaining a labor system based on it, became increasingly challenged nationally, Somerset County's population, like the rest of the country, was bitterly divided. During the course of the ensuing Civil War, the lower Shore counties of Somerset and Worcester were occupied by Union troops. The Union troops protected newly established rail and telegraph lines and chased southern sympathizers, who were smuggling arms, ammunition and other contraband into neighboring Virginia. Under the command of General Henry H. Lockwood, troops headed from various locations on the lower Shore to Newtown (Pocomoke City) where it was rumored a sizable Confederate force had thrown up earthen defenses along the Pocomoke River.

They were chased well into Accomack County where the southern troops dispersed. It was probably during this campaign and other times that Union troops occupied the Coventry Parish Church at Rehobeth, one of the largest structures in Somerset at the time.

In the aftermath of the war, the Maryland legislature convened a new constitutional convention, and part of the proceedings included an act to partition Somerset and Worcester counties to create Wicomico County in 1867.



Metropolitan M. E. Church, Princess Anne, Paul Baker Touart, photographer



St. James M.E. Church, Oriole vicinity, Paul Baker Touart, photographer

The period before and after the Civil War included the formation and later expansion of old and new African-American Methodist congregations which financed the construction of an impressive array of Gothic inspired churches. In Princess Anne, the trustees of the John Wesley M. E. congregation purchased the former site of the Somerset County jail and erected an impressive Gothic Revival brick church in 1886 that was renamed Metropolitan M. E. Church. West of Princess Anne, another membership of African-Americans, including former slaves, established Manokin Chapel at the head of St. Peter's Creek, and later financed the construction of a Gothic inspired frame church, renamed St. James, in two phases between 1885 and 1910.

During the same period, on the northeast side of Princess Anne, the Centenary Biblical Institute and the Delaware Conference of the Methodist Church acquired the former Olney plantation on which was laid out the Delaware Conference Academy in 1886. Later known as Princess Anne Academy, the school was dedicated to the education of black youth, principally in the agricultural and domestic trades.

1928 Great fire of Crisfield burns commercial district on March 29

1929 Stock Market Failure occurs leading to Great Depression of the 1930s

1930-40 Crisfield population reaches 6,000 residents

1935 Clayton Torrence publishes *Old Somerset on the Eastern Shore of Maryland: A Study of Foundations and Founders*

1939-45 World War II

The school was defined by the two-story early nineteenth century brick Olney plantation house, augmented with a complex of frame dormitories, classrooms and farm buildings erected during the late nineteenth century.

The last quarter of the nineteenth century was a period when Princess Anne experienced a surge in growth with the expansion of the town beyond its mid-century limits, principally due to its location along the Eastern Shore Railroad. New commercial blocks were built in the central business district around the courthouse, and dozens of new dwellings were erected along Main Street (formerly Bridge Street), Beckford Avenue and Beechwood Street.



Princess Anne Academy, historic image c. 1916, Jackson Davis Collection, University of Virginia

The growth witnessed in Princess Anne at the end of the century was repeated countywide. Crisfield, in particular, boomed economically and physically, steadily increasing in population and commercial importance. The rural countryside also experienced distinct changes as many old farm complexes were modernized with a new generation of dwellings, barns, and outbuildings that suited innovations in agricultural production, especially canning and export of agricultural produce. Canning vegetables as well as seafood would expand exponentially in the years following the turn of the twentieth century, and which continued well into the succeeding decades.



Princess Anne Academy, historic image c. 1916, Jackson Davis Collection, University of Virginia

1954 Eleanor Roosevelt delivers commencement speech at Maryland State College (later renamed the University of Maryland Eastern Shore)

1954 Hurricane Hazel ravages Crisfield with high wind and water on October 15

1958 First fall celebration known as Olde Princess Anne Days is held

1959-67 Crisfield native, J. Millard Tawes (1894-1979) serves as Governor of Maryland

The Twentieth Century

The late nineteenth century industrial and agricultural improvements laid down in Somerset spurred on additional growth and investments within its principal towns of Princess Anne and Crisfield as well as the county's rural communities into the early twentieth century. Starting the new century was the design and construction of a finely crafted Georgian Revival courthouse, by Baltimore architects Henry R. and Frank E. Davis. The courthouse was built in finely jointed brickwork accented with an Ionic stone portico on its Prince William Street elevation. Along with the courthouse a new generation of dwellings, churches, banks, stores and farm buildings were erected across the county in response to the generally profitable decades of the early twentieth century. By 1910, the population peaked at 26,455, and the economy consisted of diverse agricultural and seafood-related interests. A vibrant county agriculture included cultivation of wheat, corn, and other grasses as well as vegetables—especially potatoes and tomatoes—and fruit, primarily strawberries. These crops were at times highly profitable, encouraging the formation of nearly 100 local canneries and packing houses between 1900 and 1930. Vegetable and seafood packing houses were often sited near railroad depots or navigable water for the convenience of shipping local produce and seafood harvests to distant places across the nation. Early twentieth century improvements in refrigerated rail cars facilitated the shipment of delicate fruit and seafood, which was sent to urban centers connected by the railroad to peninsular businesses.



Somerset County Courthouse, built 1904-05, Courtesy of W. Marshall Scott

1960 Somerset County Historical Society is organized

1973 Somerset County Historical Trust, Incorporated is created as local representative of the Maryland Historical Trust

1977 Crisfield Heritage Foundation is established

1987 Eastern Correctional Institution opens at Westover

By the turn of the twentieth century, the oyster, fish, and crab industries were the principal focus for businesses in Crisfield, Smith Island, Deal Island, Rumbley, Frenchtown and many places across Somerset. Between 1902 and 1913, hard crab output increased 100 percent, and the soft crab production increased 500 percent, surpassing oysters in importance. Crisfield was promoted as the “Seafood Capital of the U.S.A.” as early as 1936, which grew in magnitude in later years to the “Seafood Capital of the World.” In 1909, of a population of around 5000 people, roughly half were engaged in the seafood industry. In 1910, packing houses in Crisfield shipped 120 million soft crabs and 25 million hard crabs. A considerable business was also done in crabmeat, reaching as much as 70,000 gallons. According to the Crisfield Chamber of Commerce,



Loading tomatoes from the Long Brothers Packing House into refrigerated freight cars, Farm Securities Administration, July 1940, Library of Congress.

the town was home to 204 seafood packinghouses in 1915, and it was the largest seafood distributing point in the world.

The first quarter of the twentieth century was a period of extensive physical growth for the City of Crisfield and the surrounding region as seafood profits sponsored a wave of rebuilding of dwellings, churches, stores, schools and packing houses, many of which were erected in brick, stone, or concrete block. The city’s churches are particularly emblematic of the resources that were devoted to building fine cathedral sized structures by various congregations.



Crisfield, Oyster Shucking house, image c. 1900-20, Peter M. Tilghman, photographer, Collection of Karen Ruckman.



Crab floats at Crisfield, A. Aubrey Bodine, photographer, 1947, (Courtesy of the Mariners' Museum, Newport News, Virginia)



Crab pickers at Dryden Seafood Company, c. 1940-60, Courtesy of Frank Rhodes

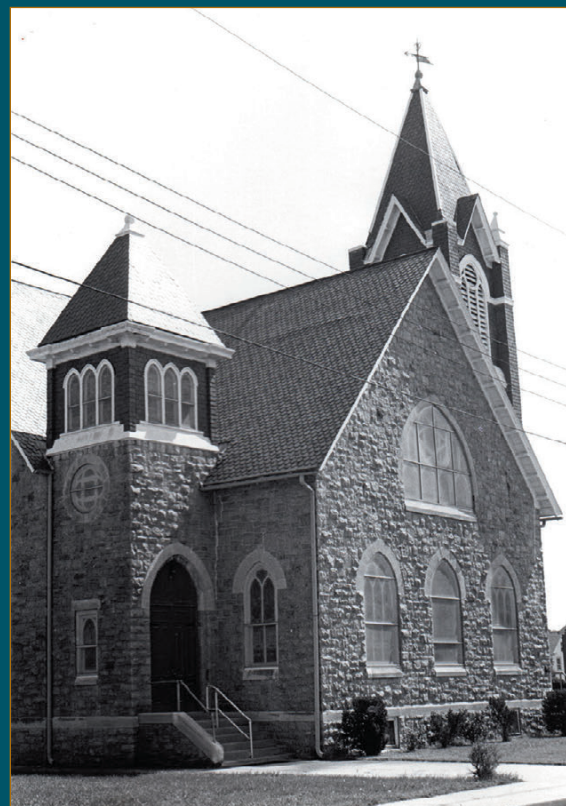
1996 Friends of Teackle Mansion, Inc. is formed to start restoration work at Teackle Mansion on behalf of the two ownership organizations

2012 Hurricane Sandy floods Crisfield and other low-lying areas on October 29-30

2000 Somerset County Historical Society and Olde Princess Anne Days, Inc. merge assets

Crisfield's explosive growth during the early 20th century led to a diverse population that topped 6,000 residents by the 1930s, making it one of the largest urban and commercial centers on the lower Shore. Within the surrounding communities "Down the Neck" and northeast to Hopewell were hundreds of additional residents that contributed to a diverse population engaged in farming, seafood-related activities, and a wide scope of other pursuits. A few individuals rose to state and national prominence.

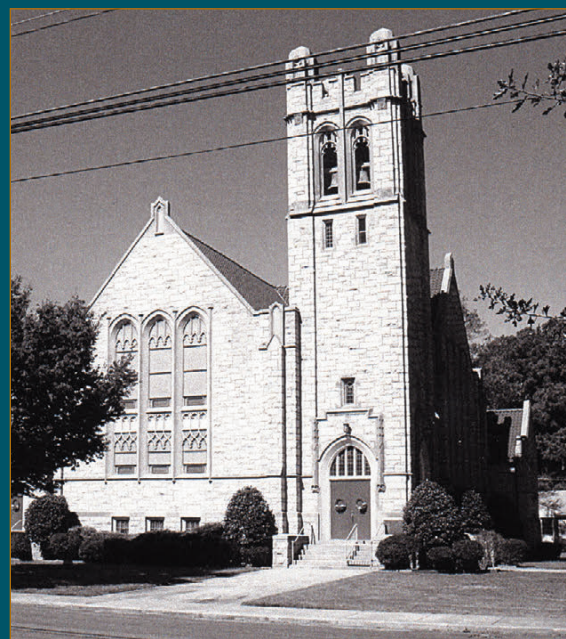
Born in the "Down the Neck" section of Crisfield were brothers, Lemuel and Steve Ward from Lawsonia, who grew up on the edge of Ape's Hole Creek. The brothers developed skills in recreating indigenous waterfowl in the form of working and decorative decoys. Recognized for their superior skills, the brothers won a National Decoy Contest in New York City in 1948, and their renown in the world of decoy carving led to the creation of the Ward Foundation, and later, the construction of a museum in their name in nearby Salisbury.



Immanuel United Methodist Church, built in 1909, Paul Baker Touart, photographer



St. Paul's A.M.E. Church, built in 1906, Paul Baker Touart, photographer



Asbury United Methodist Church, built 1923-26, rebuilt after a devastating fire in 1926, Paul Baker Touart, photographer



Baptist Temple, built in 1921, Paul Baker Touart, photographer



"Lem and Steve Ward at work circa 1958," Dick Moore, photographer, Courtesy of the Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art, Salisbury, Md.

Dames Quarter native Lorraine Henry and her husband George created Henry's Beach, a property on Tangier Sound where nationally renowned bands and musicians performed before busloads of visitors between 1952 and 1982.

The property also was the site of Negro league baseball games, bathing, fishing, crabbing and home-cooked meals. A historic marker on Deal Island Road pays tribute to the site.

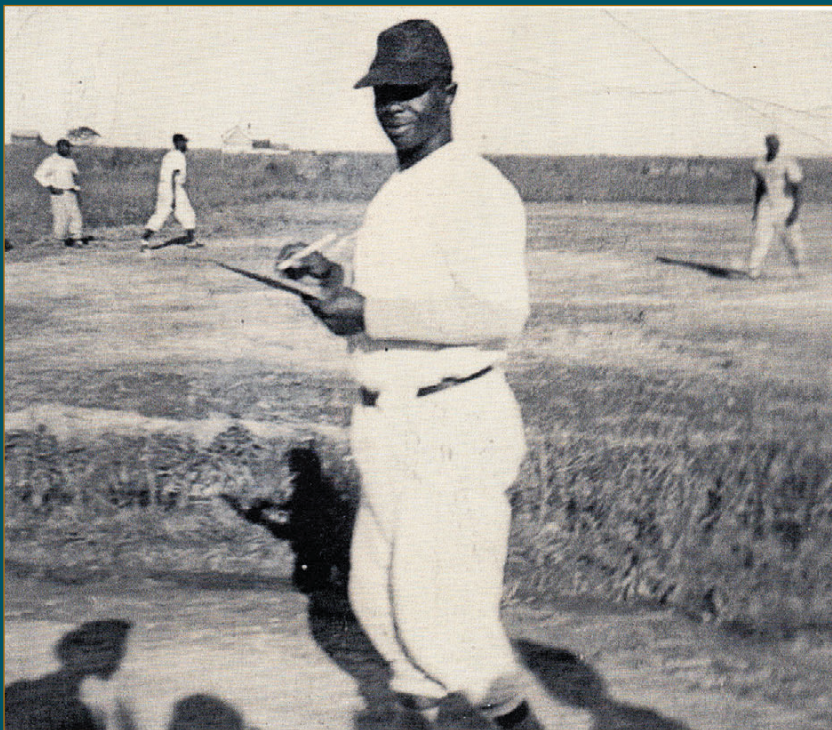
On the east side of Somerset County, another group of African-American ball players established the Oakville Eagles around 1910, and the community baseball team competed nationally. The Oakville Ball Park was established in 1949, and the site has been recognized with a state historical road marker as well.

Another native son, J. Millard Tawes (1894-1979) grew up in the seafood capital and pursued a career in public service as the local Clerk of Somerset Court, then State Comptroller, State Banking Commissioner, and ultimately, in 1958, he was elected the 54th governor of the State of Maryland, serving between 1959 and 1967.

The Civil Rights movement took place during the Tawes Administration, and it was while J. Millard Tawes was governor that Maryland enacted laws reforming segregated accommodation of public places. Despite early efforts to reform segregation and limit discrimination, most recreational groups and places of entertainment were divided. In a rare effort to bring nationally prominent entertainers to Somerset County,



J. Millard Tawes (1894-1979), 54th Governor of the State of Maryland.



Henry's Beach, Negro league ball game, c. 1960, Courtesy of Lorraine Henry.

Modern Somerset



Princess Anne, Aerial photograph by Patrick Hendrickson, 2013



Deal Island and Chance, Aerial photograph by Joey Gardner, 2016



Smith Island, Aerial Photograph by Joey Gardner, 2016



Mt. Vernon and Monie Creek, Aerial photograph by Joey Gardner, 2016



Crisfield, Aerial photograph by Joey Gardner, 2016



Back Creek landscape, Aerial photograph by Patrick Hendrickson, 2013



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Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore

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PNC Bank

Princess Anne Lions Club

Somerset County Commissioners

Somerset County Historical Trust

Somerset County Republican Club

