

THE SEA COAST OF MARYLAND¹

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On a map of the Atlantic coast between Chincoteague Inlet and Fenwick's Island, drawn in the year 1835 by the well known engineer and geologist, John Henry Alexander, there is indicated a "wreck" on shore about five miles south of the present inlet at Ocean City.² It is hardly necessary to point out that a wreck sufficiently conspicuous to merit such notice must have represented a considerable loss, if not in lives, at least in property. And yet, at this late date, to identify the respective ship and to ascertain her name (for a wreck, let it be remembered, is no more a ship than a corpse is a human being), would be very difficult, if not impossible. With these facts in mind one approaches the business of writing an historical account of the Maryland sea coast in a spirit of due humility and with the realization of the contrast between the never-to-be-written drama and tragedy of foundered ships and the less interesting and less important matters, which our researches have succeeded in bringing to light.

CHANGING NOMENCLATURE

In the later decades of the seventeenth century and for some years afterwards the barrier of sands, salt marshes, dunes and hummocks, which lies between the Atlantic Ocean and the sounds or bays now variously called Chincoteague, Sinepuxent, Isle of

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² "Chart of the Waters between Chincoteague Inlet and Fenwick's Island surveyed with a view to a canal connection of the Chesapeake and Delaware." This unpublished chart bears the name of John H. Alexander, Topographical Office, and the date, December, 1835. It is in the collections of the Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, Maryland.

Wight and Assawoman, from Fenwick's Island down to Chincoteague Inlet in Virginia, was known as Assateague, or, more particularly, as Assateague Beach or Assateague Island. At that time the several sounds above mentioned went under the name of Assateague Bay, but the waters between South Point, at the southern end of Sinepuxent Neck, and the head of Assawoman Bay had still another name: New Haven Sound. The name "Assawomen" then belonged to what is now called Little Assawoman Bay, in Delaware. Newport Bay was called Mobjack Bay and Newport River, Assateague River.

THE FIRST SURVEYS AND LAND GRANTS

At a meeting of Lord Baltimore's Council, on March 5th, 1686, Captain (later Colonel) William Whittington presented a memorial concerning a "certain Isthmus (sic) or Peninsula of Marish & Piney Hummocks called and known by the name of Assateague Island lying and being on the Seaboard side within this Province containing at least 15,000 acres the southward end of which is reputed to be within the bounds of Virga."³ It appears that the dividing line between the two colonies had not yet been run from the mainland to the sea, and encroachments on the part of Virginians were feared. A few days later the Council, acting upon the request of Colonels Vincent Lowe and William Diggs, that "Assateague Island" be laid out in their names, ordered Captain Whittington to survey the same, to report the number of acres which were found to be contained within the bounds of the aforesaid "island" and to apprise the board as to whether or not any earlier surveys had been made within this area.⁴ No such survey and report as the Council expected of Whittington appears to be on record. On September 16th, 1702, he took up, in his own right, a tract of one thousand acres on Assateague Island proper, and called it by the suggestive name of "Baltimore's Gift."⁵ On October 18th, 1704, Madam Elizabeth Digges, the widow of William Digges, made over to the aforesaid Whittington all of her interest in that "Peninsula of land and marshes" called Assateague, which was to have been granted to

³ *Archives of Maryland*, V, 536, 537.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 538.

⁵ Land Office of Maryland, Patent Records for Land, Liber W. D., f. 407.

her by order of Lord Baltimore.⁶ The intermediate stages of the title have not been uncovered. That the whole of the present sea coast of Maryland, and not merely Assateague Island proper, was intended to be included in this grant is amply demonstrated by subsequent events.

Within the following decade long stretches of beach were laid out by Captain Whittington under the warrant aforesaid in the names of divers persons, himself included. On Assateague Island proper two earlier surveys were met with, namely, "Baltimore's Gift" and "Winter Pasture."⁷ This last appears to have been popularly known as Winter Quarter, a charming place-name which still attaches to a section of shore on the bay side of the island. Here, too, we find Winter Quarter Creek, while out at sea lie the Winter Quarter Shoals.⁸

From Fenwick's Island, or thereabouts, southwards, between ocean and sound, as far as an inlet which was situate between three and four miles below the present new inlet at Ocean City, Whittington laid out an unbroken chain of surveys varying in area from one hundred and ten to five hundred acres.⁹ For many

⁶ Land Office, Warrants, Liber A, 1694-1706, f. 231.

⁷ Land Office, Patent Records for Land, Liber 22, f. 286. "Winter Pasture" is called "Winter Quarter" in Whittington's certificate of survey, "Baltimore's Gift." A rent-roll of Somerset County (Calvert Papers No. 885) contains the following entry (f. 126): "500 acres—Winter Pasture surv^d. 5 May 1686, for Coll. William Stevens suppose it is Winter Quarter on Assateague Island, or beaches," &c.

⁸ Modern Maryland Geological Survey maps of Worcester County show Winter Quarter on the bay side, opposite to an island called Beacon (Bacon) Clumps. (Query: is this not a localism for "tumps," as "hammocks" is local for "hummocks?"). Winter Quarter is entered on James B. Robins' MS Map of Worcester County, c. 1800 (For fuller account of this map see Note 46), which also has "Baltimore Gift." "Privilege," patented to Adam Spence and William Fassett, 16 Nov., 1769, begins at a bounded tree standing near the mouth of Winter Quarter Creek, opposite to Bacon Island (now called Beacon Clumps). (Land Office, Patent Records for Land, Liber B. C. & G. S. No. 37, folio 405). "Fishing Camp," surveyed for the same parties, June 13, 1772, lies on Winter Quarter Beach, on the west side of Winter Quarter Creek. (Land Office, Unpatented Certificate No. 484, Worcester County). Winter Quarter Shoals are indicated on a map styled *Chart of Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and the Sea Coast from Cape May to Cape Henry*, revised edition, 1882.

⁹ The author has deposited at the Land Office a plat of these lands, drawn according to the respective certificates of survey, together with all the necessary references. From south to north they run as follows: "Bald Beach," "Assateague" (site of Ocean City), "Adam's Fall" (site of Ocean City), "Winter Range," "Spence's Lot," "Sand Beach," "Tower's Pasture," "Pentland Hills," "The Cellar," "Hudson's Purchase," and "The Upper Pines." The certificate of survey of "Bald Beach" (1706) calls for an inlet as its southern boundary. "The Upper Pines," surveyed for William Whittington (1714) and patented to his

years afterwards these seaside lands or beaches were bought, sold and inherited, until little by little, one by one, the titles to these properties were apparently abandoned. Needless to say, these beaches were not as yet thought of as possible "resorts" of "vacationists" on pleasure bent; but it is difficult to see how they came to be looked upon as wholly valueless. Years later, when the great vacation and "tripper" era began to dawn upon our local sea shores, and speculators began to patent extensive stretches of beach all the way from Fenwick's Island to the Virginia line, these ancient land-grants were conveniently forgotten or ignored, and the sands and marshes so taken up are described in the patents, not as escheat, as was proper, but as "vacant" lands and surveyed under common warrants.

ABORIGINES AND EARLY SETTLERS

At what period of history the Maryland sea coast began to be inhabited by white men is no longer clear; but it seems likely that the persons, whose lands on the beach were surveyed by Whittington between 1704 and 1714, in most cases were not slow in setting up "quarters" on these properties. Certain it is that by 1711 there were white people living on Assateague Island.¹⁰

daughter, Hannah Hough (1736), includes the grove or woods known as The Upper Pines. In his will, Feb. 28, 1718/19, Whittington left this land to his daughter, describing it as "joining on the north with the beach of Henry Hudson," by which "Hudson's Purchase" is meant. (Baldwin, *Maryland Calendar of Wills*, V, 15, 16). All the other surveys are joined to one another by their "calls," except "Sand Beach" and "Tower's Pasture." In that case other considerations leave no reasonable doubt that they bound one upon another. This chain of surveys occupies about eleven and a half miles of beach from The Upper Pines to the inlet. The northern limits of the Upper Pines were situated a short distance below Fenwick's Island, the southern boundary of which was, at one time, considered to lie about three quarters of a mile below the Delaware line. These conclusions have been reached by the author after a study of two surveys and plats, viz, "Fassett's Luck Enlarged," surveyed, 1807, for James Fassett (Land Office, Patented Certificate No. 907, Worcester County), and "Harford," surveyed for Charles H. Weir, 1884 (Land Office, Patented Certificate No. 1214, Worcester County). On the basis of these facts it seems safe to assume that the old inlet, which bounded Sinepuxent Island on the north, was situated between three miles and three and three-quarters miles south of the new inlet at Ocean City.

¹⁰ "Assoeteague Beach," 1300 acres, surveyed for William Whittington, February 29, 1711, takes up that part of Assateague Island between the Virginia line and "Baltimore's Gift." The survey calls for a boundary standing near a cove or gut called the Three Run Cove, which issues out of the sound "to the eastward of the now dwelling house, being also a boundary of another tract of land surveyed for the said Whittington called Baltimore's Gift." The "dwelling house" aforesaid doubtless stood on the earlier survey, "Baltimore's Gift." Also called for is the "neck fence where James Taylor now dwells." Land Office, Patent Records for Land, Liber E. E., No. 6, f. 291.)

Fishing, obviously, always attracted men to the shore, and salt-making, as we shall see presently, was one of its industries. There was timber, too, on the coast, notably in the pine woods south of Fenwick's Island, which were known as the Upper, Middle and Lower Pines. Otherwise attractive was the somewhat irregular business of dismantling wrecked ships, in which the simpler human elements dwelling on or near the Maryland seaboard seem to have shown no little capacity and enterprise, as we shall observe later. Perhaps the principal attraction which awakened a rather early interest in this once desolate and not easily accessible part of Maryland is to be inferred from the names of three of its earlier land-grants: "Towers' Pasture," "Winter Quarter" or "Winter Pasture" and "Winter Range": It was pasturage for cattle and horses. The Chincoteague pony of Assateague Island is probably a stunted descendant of horses which were turned loose on that island upwards of two hundred years ago.¹¹

Of Indian inhabitants of these ocean shores we know nothing, as both history and archaeology seem to be silent on this subject.¹² In the year 1704 two "strange" Indians were taken up on Assateague Island in Virginia on the assumption that they were runaway slaves, but seem to have been released upon giving good evidence that they were "Spanish" Indians and came from Florida. The mystery of their being found in a place so remote from their home is unexplained, and lends itself to the supposition that they were survivors of a shipwreck.¹³

¹¹ For mention of the Chincoteague pony see "The Equine F. F. V.'s" in *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, XXXV (1927), p. 365, note 18. For a sensible, unromantic explanation of the breed as stunted stock descended from ordinary horses turned loose on the beach in colonial times see J. C. Wise, *Ye Kingdom of Accawmacke or the Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century* (1911), p. 307 et seq.

¹² This state of affairs is apparently in contrast to that of the North Carolina coast, where, in historical times, there was an Indian town at Cape Hatteras (See Hon. William Reed's grant of 502 acres in Curratuck Precinct, which runs "to a post by ye sound of Cape Hatteras Indian town," Jan. 18, 1711/12. Recorded in North Carolina Land Grants, Liber 1, 1688-1720, f. 175). Signs of an Indian settlement were lately to be seen farther up this coast, at Kittyhawk, between the southern end of the Fresh Ponds and the sand hills, and along the sand hills to the south. There the author found in the sands fragments of a clay pottery vessel, now in the Smithsonian Institution; also a number of short, thick, sharpened stakes arranged in a circle.

¹³ *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia*, II, 400.

FAUNA

Now, as to fauna, today there are deer on Assateague Island, but there is good reason to believe that they are not the descendants of the ancient original breed, which died out in Worcester County years ago.¹⁴ Wolves were probably at one time denizens of this coast, inasmuch as the Indians, who rescued Henry Norwood and his party from their dire predicament in the winter of 1650, informed him that these animals infested the island on which those hapless English people were marooned, although far too sly to be seen by them.¹⁵ Foxes are still to be met with on the beach.¹⁶ The wildcat, too, was doubtless once an inhabitant of those parts.¹⁷ For lack of water-courses the beaver was probably always absent from the shore although common on the mainland. Panthers, bears and elk, for all we know, might have been seen there from time to time, as they were certainly indigenous to the interior.

A CHAIN OF ISLANDS

In his report to Governor Thomas Ward Veazey, dated February 15th, 1837, John H. Alexander, Esq., then State Topographical Engineer, later our first State Geologist, gives some very interesting information concerning the history and former condition of the Maryland coast line:¹⁸

At the time of writing, as would still be the case today, but for the new inlet at Ocean City, there was no inlet between Indian River Inlet and Chincoteague Inlet, a distance of nearly fifty miles. Alexander tells us that neither of these two inlets, for reasons which he carefully explains, was of much use.¹⁹ He adds:

¹⁴ Letter of Dr. R. V. Truitt to the author, February 3, 1945.

¹⁵ A wild goose shot by Norwood was suspended from a tree, while he went to fetch the cook, who was one of the marooned party. On returning with the cook, Norwood found the goose gone, all but the head, "the body stollen by wolves, which, the Indians told us after, do abound greatly in that island." (Force's *Tracts*, Vol. III, No. 10, p. 26.)

¹⁶ Dr. Truitt's letter above cited.

¹⁷ On Alexander's "Chart of the Waters between Chincoteague Inlet and Fenwick's Island" (note 2), we find the word *Wildcat* (*Point?*) with reference to the northern end of Chincoteague Island.

¹⁸ Alexander to Governor Veazey, 1837, p. 76. Alexander suggested the construction of an inlet opposite to the mouth of Saint Martin's River (*Ibid.*, p. 93).

¹⁹ Chincoteague Inlet, according to Alexander, had such a winding channel, that vessels lay there for two or three weeks, waiting for favorable winds and tide.

"There used to be an inlet off against South Point about 30 miles below Indian river inlet, but this has been, since 1819, closed up entirely."²⁰ Continuing his report, Mr. Alexander makes the following significant remarks:

It must be recollected that the main-land of the eastern slope of Worcester County does not reach the ocean; but that it is protected by a beach, consisting originally (by that is meant, hardly 100 years ago) of a number of small islands. . . . At present that original arrangement is broken up to a certain degree by the junction into one of all the islands, and their connection with the main land at the northern end, so that in fact from Indian river inlet down to Chincoteague the beach is a long peninsula of 50 miles, varying in width from one hundred yards to nearly a mile.²¹ . . . The ancient names, which were attributed to the different islands when they were islands, are still in a good many places retained for different portions of the peninsula. Thus we have Assatigue Island, now the southernmost extremity of the peninsula; Sinepuxent, against Sinepuxent Neck, and joining on to Assatigue—the Rocking Islands, the middle Pines, Fenwick's Island, and others whose names will occur to those familiar with those localities.

If we ignore Green Run Inlet, which, apparently, did not come into being until later,²² Assateague Island had a length (measured along its beach) of about twenty-five miles, more than half of which lay in Virginia. Its northern limit was the south shore of

As for Indian River Inlet, the depth of water rarely exceeded six feet at high tide, and was sometimes not more than three feet at ebb. Alexander considered this inlet likely to be closed at any time, and that a new inlet might replace it farther north on Rehoboth Bay. (*Ibid.*, p. 78.) Recorded among the court proceedings of Somerset County is a deposition, taken in November, 1724, in which it is stated that Indian River Inlet was formerly fordable. (Somerset County Court Proceedings, "Judicials," 1722-1724, f. 264.)

²⁰ This refers to old Sinepuxent Inlet.

²¹ The "beach," in places, is a little over a mile wide, including the marshes, on Assateague Island proper.

²² Green Run Inlet, which cut across Assateague Island about four miles north of the Virginia line, and for which a life saving station is named, is shown on a map styled *General Chart of Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and the Seacoast from Cape May to Cape Henry*, 1855; but on the revised edition of the same chart (1882) the inlet is marked "closed." It is marked "closed" on Martinet's *Atlas of Maryland*—section "Worcester County," 1866. It is not entered on J. H. Alexander's chart, 1835 (Note 2), nor is it mentioned in his report to Governor Veazey, 1837 (see above). From these facts we infer that Green Run Inlet, as a thing of use, lasted less than thirty years. Dr. R. V. Truitt, a native of Worcester County, has enjoyed the advantage of hearing the old people of those parts talk about this inlet. In a letter addressed to the author, February 3, 1945, he contributes the following information: "It is my understanding that the Inlet was deep enough to take care of navigation, but that its entrance to the Bay was exceedingly shallow and, therefore, virtually worthless to coastal trading." There was formerly a beach settlement at Green Run, and in the early '80's there was a summer hotel at that place called Scott's Ocean House.

Old Sinepuxent Inlet, approximately opposite to the southern end of Tingle's Island. Sinepuxent Island stretched from Sinepuxent Inlet, about half a mile below the site of the North Beach Life Saving Station, northwards some five and a half miles. North Beach and South Beach²³ were so called, because of their position relative to Sinepuxent Inlet, which divided them from each other. Another inlet, name unknown, bounded Sinepuxent Island on the north. Its site is about three and a half miles²⁴ below the present new inlet at Ocean City.²⁵ In 1920, during a violent storm, the sea broke through the sand barrier at or near this spot, thus recreating, though for a few years only, the old, and, perhaps, wholly forgotten inlet of colonial times.²⁶

The limits of the Rocking Islands are not definitely known. There is good reason to suppose that these islands occupied the whole site of Ocean City, since the upper part of this site was certainly known as *Upper Rocking Islands*, as far as a point opposite to the mouth of Turville's Creek on Isle of Wight Bay.²⁷ *Quaking hummocks* is the only explanation we have to offer of this curious and by no means unlovely place-name.

It is a reasonable inference that the Middle Pines lay between two pine woods known, respectively, as the Upper and Lower Pines. The northern limits of the Lower Pines lay opposite to the north end of an island in Assawoman Bay called Devil's Island.²⁸ The southern edge of the Upper Pines was nearly opposite to Horse Island.²⁹ It is not unlikely that the Upper,

²³ On Robins' Map of Worcester County, we find both "S. Beach" and "North Beach." The latter is a place-name still in use; but, with the disappearance of old Sinepuxent Inlet more than a hundred years ago, its significance by now must be locally forgotten. A reference to South Beach, as well as to the inlet, will be found in the certificate of survey of "Addition to Mount Pleasant," a resurvey on "Mount Pleasant," as laid out for Daniel Tingle, for whom Tingle's Island is named: Beginning "at a marked sassafras post set up on the west side of the South Beach bearing north north east thirty yards from a salt house built by Thomas Selby and Moses Johnson and now owned by Thomas Purnell . . . and running . . . to the waters of the bay at the edge of a channel called the South Channel making round a part of Beach from Synapuxen Inlet," &c. (Land Office of Maryland, Unpatented Certificate No. 89, Worcester County.)

²⁴ This distance is computed from data set forth in Note 9, *q. v.*

²⁵ The new inlet at Ocean City was constructed in 1932.

²⁶ This inlet was closed by a north-easter on May 9, 1928.

²⁷ The *Upper Rocking Islands* are shown on the Alexander chart of 1835, which is cited above (Note 2).

²⁸ The situation of the Lower Pines is worked out from data given in the certificate of survey of "Fassett's Luck Enlarged" (Note 9).

²⁹ The situation of the Upper Pines has been determined from data given in the certificates of survey of "Harford" and of "Fassett's Luck Enlarged" (Note 9).

Middle and Lower Pines all were situated within the compass of one island. There is still an extensive pine woods today on the coast immediately south of Fenwick's Island. The matter is not without historical interest, for it seems not unlikely that in these pineries, and on this stretch of seashore, we have the very spot where Colonel Henry Norwood's remarkable adventure and rescue in the dead of winter, 1650, took place.³⁰

FENWICK'S ISLAND

The claim that Fenwick's Island was the scene of the dramatic episode so graphically narrated in Henry Norwood's "Voyage to Virginia" falls down in the face of the fact this "island" was a peninsula in colonial times, attached to the mainland by Rumley Marsh, across the head of Assawoman or New Haven Bay, which in those times no thoroughfare united with the waters of (Little) Assawoman Bay in Delaware. It is asserted on the best authority

³⁰ Norwood's own account of this adventure, "A Voyage to Virginia," is published in Force's *Tracts*, Vol. III, Part 10. A very interesting commentary on the subject by Mr. Louis Dow Scisco was printed in this Magazine, Vol. XVIII, p. 130 *et seq.* (June, 1923). Norwood does not tell us enough about his island to enable us to identify it after nearly three hundred years and in view of the changes which have taken place on this coast. The island had a small stream of fresh water on it, which saved the lives of Norwood and his party. (*Ibid.*, p. 20.) They existed principally on oysters, wild fowl and on "a sort of weed some four inches long, as thick as houseleek, and the only green (except pines) that the island afforded." (*Ibid.*, pp. 23, 24.) It must be remembered that this was in winter time, when deciduous trees and shrubs were bare. The stream of water may have had its origin in a bog, which dried up in summer. In April, 1941, the author found such a stream on Fenwick's Island and drank out of it. About an hour was required by Francis Cary, one of the party, to walk around the island and, in so doing, to determine its insular character. (*Ibid.*, p. 23.) At one time Norwood was on the point of swimming the "creek" (inlet), "which was not above one hundred yards over," "to the main," "and being there" intended "to coast along the woods to the south west (which was the bearing of Virginia) until I should meet with Indians who would either relieve or destroy us." (*Ibid.*, p. 26.) The place where the Indian rescuers were first seen was "on the main," on the other side of the "creek" (inlet). (*Ibid.*) This creek and its branches made up inland to Kickotank, the seat of the friendly Indian chief, who received the helpless English with so much kindness and hospitality. Nothing is said by Norwood about any broad waters, sounds or bays being crossed on his way to Kickotank. This journey was made in two stages, both by water. The first stage took Norwood and his party to a fisherman's "house," and consumed only the latter part of a short winter's afternoon. The next day the English were transported by water three miles to the Indian queen's house and from thence they walked half a mile to the king's house. (*Ibid.*, p. 32 *et seq.*) At Kickotank they were informed by Jenkin Price, an Indian trader, whom they met there, that they were fifty miles from the nearest English settlements on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. (*Ibid.*, p. 44.) From Kickotank Norwood, with several companions and a guide, walked in one day to the Indian town of Gingo Teague, which seems to have been not far

that Fenwick's Island (Fennix Island to the local inhabitants) "was formerly connected by a strip of low and partially fast land to the main" (so runs an official report of the year 1834), until "through the narrowest part of the isthmus, it is now thirty years since a ditch was cut to divide a pasture—four feet wide and three feet deep was all the labour bestowed upon it. It has long since assumed the shape of a Bosphorus or straits, more than forty feet wide and twenty deep";³¹ and so The Ditch, as it is still called, dating from 1804, remains today.

Fenwick's Island was taken up by Colonel William Stevens, 23rd March, 1680, under the name of "Fishing Harbour," but owes its present name to a certain Thomas Fenwick, an early settler of those parts.³² Slightly higher than the adjoining sea coast, this "island" differs from it otherwise in that its loamy, arable soil supports a growth of oak, maple and gum. Two centuries ago there was a "high woods," one hundred acres in extent, on Fenwick's Island.³³ The southern limits of the island

from the present state line. (*Ibid.*, p. 45. See also *Indian Towns of the South Eastern Part of Sussex County, Delaware*, by William B. Marye, published by the Delaware Archaeological Society, 1940, p. 10, note 37.) Remembering that Norwood's island was separated from the mainland by a "creek," which, in one spot, was no more than one hundred yards wide, and that there is no mention in his journal of coming out into broad waters on the way to Kickotank, we find only two places on this coast, which might, in the far past, have answered these and the other conditions: (1) the island called The Middle Pines and (2) a hypothetical island, situated in Delaware, between the ocean and the head of Little Assawoman Bay.

³¹ *Report of a Commission for the Survey of Sounds on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, Maryland and Delaware*, 1834, p. 6. Commissioners: Messrs. Solomon Prettyman, Henry F. Rodney, John C. Dirickson, C. B. Shaw and J. H. Alexander. In his *History of Delaware* (1888) the historian, Scharf, has this to say about Fenwick's Island in connection with his remarks concerning the manor laid out for the Duke of York, March 4, 1683: "The tract [Fenwick's Island] was not then an island but many years ago a ditch was dug on its landward side, which, through the action of the tide, has become a channel, fifty yards wide and fifteen feet deep, completely isolating it from the mainland." (Vol. 2, p. 1340.)

³² *Indian Towns of the Southeastern Part of Sussex County, Delaware*, by William B. Marye, p. 11. In a rent-roll of Somerset County, Maryland (Calvert Papers No. 885, f. 261) it is recorded after "Fishing Harbour," that the land was then possessed "By Thomas Fenwick att Sussex County—Hore Kill." (Whore-kills, now Lewes.) Thomas Fenwick sold "Fishing Harbour" to William Fausitt (Fassett), February 26, 1707/8. (Land Office, Rent-roll, Somerset County, Vol. I, f. 123.) In the will of William Fassitt, merchant, of Somerset County, dated January 22, 1734/5, the testator left to his sons, William and John Fassitt, jointly, Fishing Harbour alias Fenixes Island. (Baldwin's *Maryland Calendar of Wills*, VII, 140.) The certificate of survey of "Fishing Harbour" describes the land as "an island." It calls for the heads of the two inlets, Assawoman and Mattapany. (Land Office, Patent Records for Land, Liber 21, f. 296.)

³³ See deposition of William Burton, aet. 62, before the Boundary Commission,

were formerly considered to lie about three-quarters of a mile below the Delaware line.³⁴ Hereabouts, there was probably once an inlet. The island's northern bounds were old Assawoman Inlet, which entered the sea at or very near the state line.³⁵ The western end of this inlet is still commemorated by the name of a projection of marsh on the east side of Little Assawoman Bay—*Old Inlet Point*.³⁶ A vestige of Assawoman Inlet is, in all probability, to be seen in the fresh water pond, which lies between Fenwick's Island Lighthouse and the ocean, and is bisected by the coastal highway.³⁷ Descried from the sea for the first time, the tall woods on the island, the break in the shore line at the entrance to Assawoman Inlet, and the elevation of the land above the low, treeless strand to the northward—all combined to deceive the inexperienced mariner by creating the illusion of a headland, which vanished as he sailed nearer, and gave credence to the testimony of those who maintained that this was the

1740. (*Pennsylvania Archives*, 2nd Series, XVI, 675.) Burton testified that he "has been in a high wood of about 100 Acres on Fenwick's Island." Boudoin Robins testified before the same commission that the land at "Phenix Island" was "somewhat higher than the rest of the Land about." (*Ibid.*, p. 782.) A Maryland Geological Survey soil-map of Worcester County shows soil on Fenwick's Island in contrast to the adjacent sands.

³⁴ See Note 9.

³⁵ *Marye, op. cit.*, pp. 3, 9, 10, 11. The statement that Fenwick's Island lay between the two inlets, Assawoman and Mattapany, is untrue. The "Island" lay south of these inlets, and, upon the fixing of the boundary line, fell almost wholly in Maryland. The theory that it was the scene of Henry Norwood's adventure in 1650, has been abandoned by this author. Assawoman (Assawarmett) Inlet was also known as Fenicks or Fenwick's Inlet (deposition of William Waples before Boundary Commission, 1740, *Pennsylvania Archives*, 2nd Series, XVI, 668).

³⁶ In the interest of accuracy it should be admitted that this place-name may refer to Mattapany Inlet. The heads of these inlets seem to have been close to one another. On March 8, 1743, Thomas Dorsey took up a tract of land called "Fowls Delight," "Beginning at a marked cedar Post standing about a Quarter of a Mile from the sea in a large Marsh called *the Old Inlet Marsh* and on the south side of a Bay called Assawaman Bay" (Land Office, Patent Records, Liber B. Y. & G. S. No. 1, f. 499). Assawoman Bay is now Little Assawoman Bay (see above). It is a pity that we have been unable to ascertain the situation of this land exactly, for it is certainly significant.

³⁷ This information is contained in a letter addressed, December 8, 1939, by Mr. John W. Hudson to Mr. C. A. Weslager, now President of the Delaware Archaeological Society, for which this author is indebted to Mr. Weslager. Mr. Hudson, at the time of writing, had been, since 1907, with the United States Coast Guard stationed at Fenwick's Island:

"... there is or was a fresh pond of considerable extent to the Eastward of the lighthouse property (i. e., at Fenwick's Island). 'It was approximately 1/4 mile in length and from 50 yards to 100 yards in breadth and of an approximate depth from 12 to 20 inches.' But last year they ran the Coastal Highway up the beach and right through the pond; therefore that makes it rather small now owing to the extensive fill required to make the roadway. . . ."

so-called False Cape.³⁸ According to seemingly reliable deponents, the Dutch, now more than three hundred years ago, affixed to a tree on this island a brass plate stamped with the figure of a ship, to mark the southern boundary of their claims.³⁹

North of Fenwick's Island the insular aspects of the seashore continued. There Assawoman Inlet formed with Mattapan^y ⁴⁰ Inlet still another coastal island; nor is it certain that this was the end of the island chain which belted this stretch of coast far down into Virginia.⁴¹

³⁸ See deposition of William Burton referred to in Note 33: "... Fenick's Island . . . he has been informed by Sailors, has the Appearance of a Cape from the Sea; but as it is approached, that Appearance vanishes, and there is no Cape at all; That is by some People called False Cape, and by other Fenick's Island." Taken, A. D. 1740, before Boundary Commission. The False Cape was shuttled up and down the coast, from Cape Henlopen to Fenwick's Island, by eighteenth century cartographers. On Joshua Fisher's rare *Chart of Delaware Bay*, 1756, the False Cape is placed between Rehoboth and Cape Henlopen; but on Lewis Evans' *Map of Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York*, 1749, it is situated at Fenwick's Island.

³⁹ *Pennsylvania Archives*, 2nd Series, XVI, 663, 665, 665, 670, 672, 778: depositions of Elizabeth Morris, Samuel Preston, John Teague, John Prettyman, John Anderson and Margaret Simpson, before Boundary Commission, 1740. According to Teague's deposition (he was aged 85), the brass plate in the course of years had been grown over with bark and was entirely forgotten, until the tree, to which it was nailed, was cut down and split up into fence rails, whereupon it was discovered. This discovery seems to have been made, when Thomas Fenwick was the owner of the island, i. e., before 1708.

⁴⁰ For Mattapan^y Inlet see *Indian Towns of the Southeastern Part of Sussex County*, cited above (Note 39). These inlets, heading up in the marshes of (Little) Assawoman Bay, formed an island, which was composed partly of sands, partly of marshes. This section of the Delaware coast, as seen from Fenwick's Island Lighthouse, is practically treeless. *Mattapan^y* was one of the commonest place-names of the Algonkian Indians in tidewater Virginia and Maryland.

⁴¹ There is certainly some significance in the fact that the upper part, or head, of (Little) Assawoman Bay above the Narrows was formerly called *Inlet Creek*. It suggests the former existence of an inlet between Mattapan^y Inlet and a place two miles south of Bethany Beach, where the mainland and the seashore are united. For early references to Inlet Creek see the following certificates of survey: "Cowes Quarter," for Thomas Fenwick, April 12, 1686; "Cowe Pasture," for William Stevens, April 19, 1686; "Howard's Desire," for ditto, April 13, 1686; "Coard's Lott," for Col. William Digges, April 27, 1688. (Land Office, Patent Records, Liber 22, pp. 276, 281, 305, 387). North of Bethany Beach lies "Scarborough's Adventure," 500 acres, surveyed for Mathew Scarborough, May 3, 1687, situate between the sea and two ponds, both of which are still to be seen: The Fresh Pond and the Salt Pond, which are called for in the certificate of survey. (Land Office, Patent Records, Liber 22, f. 354.) This certificate also calls for "a small inlet issueing out of the sea," which, apparently, at that time connected the Salt Pond with the ocean. Surveyed the same day for the aforesaid Scarborough was "Middlesex," 500 acres, adjoining "Scarborough's Adventure" on the south (*Ibid.*). The following year Scarborough took up "North Petherton" and "South Petherton." The former extends southwards along the coast from the southeastern end of the Salt Pond. (Land Office, Patent Records, Liber 22, f. 392.) The latter lies between the sea and Inlet Creek. (Land Office, Patent Records, Liber

The welding of so many islands into a continuous, unbroken beach as a result of the obliteration of inlets is a remarkable fact. Violent storms account for the change in separate instances; but this does not explain why the new inlets, which the same forces created, were apparently short lived, so that not a single natural inlet remains within the area under consideration. Is it possible that an elevation of our coast line has taken place in the past three centuries?

In most cases little or nothing is known as to the navigability and usefulness of these inlets. Assawoman Inlet seems to have afforded a harbor for small seagoing ships, but it is doubtful if it was navigable, except, of course for small craft, all the way from the sea into Little Assawoman Bay.⁴² Of one of the "creeks" or inlets, which made an island of the desolate pine woods where Norwood and his shipmates were marooned, it is recorded, that "it could harbour our ship" and had a "depth of water on the bar sufficient for her draught when she was light."⁴³ Norwood's cousin, Francis Cary, who explored the island, reported that "he had seen its whole extent, surrounded (as he believed) with water deeper than his head."⁴⁴ The valiant Norwood at first considered the chances of swimming "to the main" at a place where the "creek" was only one hundred yards wide,⁴⁵ a project which was abandoned as foolhardy, because of the bitter cold.

OLD SINEPUXENT INLET

Sinepuxent Inlet emerges from the obscurity of unrecorded history in the last decade of the seventeenth century. It is shown on divers maps, notably, on Lewis Evans' *General Map of the Middle British Colonies in America*, 1755; on Griffith's *Map of Maryland*, 1794; on a *Map of the States of Maryland and Delaware from the latest Surveys*, published by Messrs. Weyland, Reid and

C. No. 3, f. 286). "North Petherton" and "South Petherton" are tied together by a later survey, "Evans' Part," which was patented to William Evans, June 30, 1741. (Land Office, Patent Records, Liber E. I. No. 5, f. 564.) These were Maryland surveys, taken up within the confines of the Duke of York's Manor.

⁴² John Prettyman, aged forty-two years, deposing before the Boundary Commission in the year 1740, declared that "his father about forty-three years ago removed from Virginia and came into the Inlett near Fenwick's Island and loaded his goods upon the same Island," &c. (*Pennsylvania Archives*, 2nd Series, XVI, 670.)

⁴³ Henry Norwood, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

Smith, 1795; and on an unpublished map of Worcester County, Maryland, drawn about 1800 by James Bowdoin Robins.⁴⁶ Griffith shows a break or opening in the coast nearly four miles wide. The channel of the inlet, according to the same authority, has a width of only three-quarters of a mile, however. It is bounded on the north by shoals or quicksands three miles in extent from north to south. Shallows or quaking sands of lesser extent lie between it and South Beach. The main channel of Sinepuxent Inlet lay almost due east of the southeastern side of an island, which Griffith calls Drum Island, and which is known today as Tingle's Island.⁴⁷ The northern point of its entrance from the sound appears to have lain approximately east of the island called Lumber Marsh. Shoals included, the width of the inlet, according to Griffith, seems exaggerated.

Drama attends the first recorded mention of Sinepuxent Inlet. On September 3rd, 1698, the Justices of the Peace of the town of

⁴⁶ This valuable, unpublished map, a photograph of which was kindly given to the author by Mr. Arthur Trader, bears this endorsement: "The property of Geo Wm. Smith, Snow Hill, Md. Copied in 1852 by Miss Fannie Piper of Balti[more] from a very old map said to be drawn by Hon. James B. Robins about the year — [pre]vious to his appointment as Judge. Copied in September 1927 from the Copy in 1852 by Wm. D. Pitts, Berlin, Md." James B. Robins (1771-1826), son of Major John and Anna (Spence) Robins, of "Fairfield," Worcester County, was appointed Judge of the Fourth District Bench in 1804. (*Maryland Historical Magazine*, XXI, 167-169.) "Fairfield" lies directly opposite South Beach and south-east of the site of Old Sinepuxent Inlet.

⁴⁷ Tingle's Island was taken up by Captain Daniel Tingle, February 19, 1813, under the name of "Tingle's Discovery." (Land Office, Patented Certificate No. 2520, Worcester County.) The survey is described as comprising all the land on an island (92 acres), "beginning at a marked sassafras post set up on the south east side of a shold (*sic*) or Island called and known by the name of the Great Shold abreast of Synepuxent Inlet and from thence running Round the said should or Island by & with the waters of the bay at high water mark," &c. On August 11, 1813, there was surveyed for James B. Robins "The Isles of May," 18¾ acres, "Beginning at the Northwesternmost extreme of two Islands contiguous to each other, in Cynepuxent Bay, *nearly opposite the Inlet* & from whence the sd. Robins Dwelling house bears S. 86¾ W., thence bounding on the waters edge at low water mark . . . to a thoroughfare dividing these Islands from an Island surveyed for Daniel Tingle," &c. (Land Office, Unpatented Certificate No. 706, Worcester County.) Another mention of Sinepuxent Inlet will be found in the certificate of survey of a tract of land called "Mount Pleasant," laid out for Daniel Tingle, June 11, 1819, and afterwards resurveyed for him and called "Addition to Mount Pleasant" (Note 23). "Mount Pleasant" begins at a sassafras post set up "on the South beach near the edge of the south channel about one mile from Synepuxent Inlet" (Land Office, Unpatented Certificate No. 1758, Worcester County). Unidentified as to location is "Robins Pasture," surveyed for John Purnell Robins, April 1, 1772, beginning "at the west end of the first sand Joining to the south end of a Thorrafare commonly called the Old Inlet and on the east side of the Aforesaid Inlet," &c. (Land Office, Unpatented Certificate No. 1130, Worcester County).

Lewes, in a letter addressed to the Governor of Pennsylvania, reported the plundering of this settlement by fifty armed men from a "snug-ship" and a sloop. England was then at war with the French. The Justices added that the aforesaid sloop was supposed to be the property of John Redwood, of Philadelphia, "taken coming out of Cinnepuxon Inlett."⁴⁸ Here we have an interesting intimation of trade between the principal port of Pennsylvania, then only sixteen years old, and the Maryland seaboard plantations, via this inlet. In the year 1744 divers inhabitants of the upper parts of Worcester County took steps to bring about the erection of towns at Sinepuxent Inlet and Indian River, respectively.⁴⁹ As regards the inlet, nothing came of this petition, the main object of which seems to have been "to repel any enemy's Landing on the sea-side of the county."⁵⁰ On March 6th, 1776, Cumberland Dugan, a well-known Baltimore merchant, proposed to the Council of Maryland that it give its approval of his shipping a quantity of corn to Maryland in a brig then lying at Boston, of which he was the owner. He explains, that, in case British ships should be in the Chesapeake, when the brig arrived at the capes, her master could learn of this fact in time to put in at "Chincoteague, Sinepuxent, or some other inlet there."⁵¹ Two years later Sinepuxent Inlet was fortified and a company of the local militia was stationed there.⁵² In 1780 the Council directed the Justices of Worcester County to ship certain stores of corn, which had been requisitioned in that county, to the Quartermaster General at Trenton, via Sinepuxent Inlet.⁵³ This sporadic mention of Sinepuxent Inlet down the years, like the occasional lightning of a weak electrical storm, illuminates momentarily a darkness, under cover of which, we may be sure, not a few unrecorded events of human, if not of historical, interest took place. In the report of a commission appointed to survey the ocean sounds of Maryland, Delaware and Virginia, to which reference has already been made, we find the following

⁴⁸ *Some Records of Sussex County, Delaware*, compiled by the Rev. C. H. B. Turner (Lewes, 1909), p. 41.

⁴⁹ *Archives of Maryland*, Vol. 42, p. 457.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 625.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, IX, 204. See also *ibid.*, XVI, 328: Advice of the Council to captain of a privateer (1777); Sinepuxent Inlet best port for a prize.

⁵² *Ibid.*, XVI, 286.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, XLIII, 151.

interesting remarks, written only fifteen years after Sinepuxent Inlet had ceased to be of use:

Violent storms, north-easters, as they are familiarly termed by those who frequently witness and suffer from their invasions, occasionally pass the ocean waters and sand across the line of beach and open for a short period old Sinepuxent Inlet, which has not been, since 1819, of any continued importance. And its present openings, so far from affording any advantages, seem only to precede, as they afford a better opportunity for, new and harrassing changes in the channel of the sound. Attempts have been several times, and again of late, made to open by artificial means, an inlet rather higher up the point than the point of the Old Inlet.⁵⁴

A photograph, taken on the site of Old Sinepuxent Inlet, will be found in the late Swepson Earle's *Maryland's Colonial Eastern Shore*.⁵⁵

FORMER OCCUPATIONS AND DIVERSIONS OF THE SHORE

Among the minor occupations and interests which drew people to the sea coast of Maryland in times past was that of gathering sea birds' eggs in season. The chief centres of this activity seem to have been two sandy islands lying side by side off the South Point of Sinepuxent Neck, but near to the beach. These islands, the breeding places of a multitude of sea birds, are known, respectively, as Great Egg Beach and Little Egg Beach, otherwise called Great and Little Egging Beaches. In the 90's of the past century and earlier they were the goal of annual picnics organized on the adjacent mainland. The poetical, if destructive, business of searching for eggs in the sand was the principal diversion of these frolics, from which the visitors returned with buckets full of the wild harvest.⁵⁶ Those were the happy days before a glance from the stern face of Conservation made it impossible for any one of adult age to enjoy such simple delights with a clear conscience. How far back in the past this local custom should be

⁵⁴ *Report of a Commission for the Survey of Sounds . . .* (1834), p. 11.

⁵⁵ *Maryland's Colonial Eastern Shore* (1916), p. 11.

⁵⁶ Dr. R. V. Truitt to William B. Marye, January 26, 1945. Little Egging Beach (Little Egg Island, Little Egg Beach) was more productive of eggs than its neighbor, Great (Big) Egging Beach. Other "egging" areas on the Maryland coast were: (1) in the Green Run Beach section and (2) near North Beach. Members of the old beach communities used regularly to supplement their diet in season with eggs from these beaches. (Information from Dr. Truitt.)

dated we have no means of telling, but the oviferous sands of these islands were certainly known already in colonial times.⁵⁷

Another beach "crop" appears to have been the driftwood and ships' timbers cast up by the waves. We base this inference on the name of an island, Lumber Marsh,⁵⁸ which lies in the sound at the old entrance of Sinepuxent Inlet, where, no doubt, it formerly intercepted much floating debris drawn into, or towards, that inlet on the racing, eddying tides.

Not the least of the legitimate occupations of the coast of Maryland was salt-making. Already in aboriginal times the natives made salt by the sea in the Carolinas,⁵⁹ and it is not excluded that the Indians of Maryland followed the same practice. As early as 1628 the Council of Virginia took steps to find places on the Eastern Shore convenient "for experimenting in making salt by the sun,"⁶⁰ and by 1630 a salt-works was in operation "at Accomack."⁶¹ It may be worthy of note that as late as 1852 there were salt-works on Chincoteague Inlet, at the southernmost end of Assateague Island.⁶² The history of this seaside industry

⁵⁷ On April 1, 1772, there was surveyed for James Purnell Robins a tract of land called "Robins Convenience," "beginning at the North West end of the Highest Sand hill on an Island or beach called the Egg beach," &c. (Land Office, Unpatented Certificate No. 1129, Worcester County). This land was resurveyed for James B. Robbins, June 4, 1807, and called "Egg Beach Island" (46¾ acres). (Land Office, Patented Certificate No. 856A, Worcester County). It is described as lying off the thoroughfare (inlet?) at South Point. On June 21, 1809, Benjamin Purnell took up "Brant Island," 2¼ acres, situated "between the Islands called the large Egg Beach Island and the Lumber Marsh." (Land Office, Unpatented Certificate No. 225, Worcester County.) "Purnell's Choice," 3 acres, surveyed for Benjamin Purnell and Nathaniel Davis, on the same day, lies between Brant Island and Large Egg Beach Island, according to the certificate of survey. (Land Office, Unpatented Certificate No. 1091, Worcester County.) On his Chart of the Waters between Chincoteague Inlet and Fenwick's Island, 1835, J. H. Alexander calls the Egg Islands "Sinepuxent Hammock." Martinet, *Atlas of Maryland*, 1866, has "Egging Beach." Great and Little Egging Beach are both shown on Lake, Griffing and Stevenson's *Atlas of Worcester County*, 1877.

⁵⁸ Lumber Marsh is mentioned in the certificate of survey of "Brant Island," June 21, 1809. (Note 57.) This marsh was not taken up until 1922. (Land Office, Patented Certificate No. 1610A, Worcester County.)

⁵⁹ "Original Narratives of Early American History," *Narratives of Early Carolina, 1650-1708*, Alexander S. Salley, Jr., Editor (1911), p. 28: Francis Yeardley to John Farrar, Esq., dated, Virginia, Lynn Haven, May 8, 1656, recounting a journey into a wilderness now part of North Carolina: "There is another great nation by these [the Cacoes] called the Haynokes, who valiantly resist the Spaniards further northern attempts. The Tuscaroras told them, the way to the sea was a plain road, much travelled for salt and copper; the salt is made by the sea itself, and some of it brought in to me."

⁶⁰ *Minutes of the Council of Colonial Virginia*, p. 174.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 480.

⁶² Fielding Lucas, *Map of Maryland*, 1852, shows these salt works. Chincoteague Inlet is called "Monroe Inlet."

in Maryland is more obscure than it probably deserves to be. During the first half of the eighteenth century salt was scarce in this Province, being insufficient in quantity to meet the demands of its fisheries and the needs of the stock belonging to backwoods plantations. More than once the Assembly took steps with a view to obtaining permission of Parliament to import salt from Europe, particularly from Portugal, where it was cheap.⁶³ But if this constant demand resulted in the building of salt-works on the seaside, we have not as yet found any records to that effect. In later Republican times works for obtaining salt from the ocean were situated on the beach in at least two places, namely, (1) on a creek making up from the sound a little over a mile below the Delaware line; ⁶⁴ (2) on the northern side of Sinepuxent Inlet.

The salt-works at Sinepuxent Inlet doubtless came into being under the impetus and necessity of the Revolution. They were operated by the Baltimore Salt Company, of which Mr. Mark Alexander and the Messrs. Lemmon were members. In the year 1777 the Council instructed a certain Captain Furnivall to take nine Hessian prisoners to these salt-works under an order of the Board of War, or as many of them as were willing to go.⁶⁵ A chart of 1835 shows these salt-works as situated on the beach due east of Lumber Marsh,⁶⁶ while maps of a much later date—1877

⁶³ *Archives of Maryland*, XXVII, 27, 457; XXXIX, 306; XL, 2; XLVI, 68, 80, 81; L, 266, 267.

⁶⁴ These salt-works are mentioned and their location given in the certificate of survey and plat of "Fassett's Luck Enlarged," July 24, 1807 (Note 9). A resurvey called "Addition to Fassett's Luck Enlarged" was made for James Fassett, Sr., October 20, 1813. (Land Office, Patented Certificate No. 81, Worcester County.) On the vacant land which was included in this resurvey there were found "3 old slab salt houses." These salt works appear to have been the property of the Fassett family. On July 25, 1857, Mary C. Hall sold to James Burch all those lands known as the Fenwick's Island property, lying partly in Maryland and partly in Delaware, which she inherited by the will of her father, James Fassitt, including "Fishing Harbour" and "Fassitt's Luck Enlarged" (Land Office, Abstracts of Deeds, Worcester County, Liber W. C. No. 4, 1855-1861, p. 336). This deed is interesting, because of the connection of the Burch family with the salt-works at North Beach.

⁶⁵ *Archives of Maryland*, XVI, 435; XLV, 48. In connection with these salt-works Dr. Truitt, in a letter to this author, February 3, 1945, gives the following interesting and valuable information:

"... I remember quite well being told about the colonists or the British (it was always indefinite and seemingly far removed) having run tremendous evaporation plants in that area" (North Beach). "The story was that the salt was lightered across the Bay and freighted by ox cart up the Peninsula, on the one hand, or shipped to New York by schooner, on the other."

⁶⁶ This refers to Alexander's Chart of the Waters Between Chincoteague Inlet and Fenwick's Island, 1835.

and 1885, respectively—show them in approximately the same location.⁶⁷

WRECKS AND WRECKMASTERS

Wrecks are no longer thought of as useful and much-to-be-desired by-products of the shipping industry, but the inhabitants of our sea coast and of all the other sea coasts in the civilized world used to regard them in this light, until wreck-wardens, beach patrols and coast guards reduced salvage to the amount prescribed by law and discouraged seaside looting. It is related that a certain clergyman in the Orkneys, in offering prayers "for those in peril on the sea," was known to have adjured the Almighty not to forget the shores of his parish and the good people thereof, in the even that, in His infinite wisdom, shipwrecks there must be. While there is not enough evidence to convict the former dwellers on Maryland's seaboard of having been habitual plunderers of lost vessels which conveniently foundered within their bailiwick, local history has salvaged from the sands of time certain key fragments of a story from which the structure of the whole may be partly guessed.

In the year 1750 a Spanish ship, *The Greyhound*, Daniel Huony, master, came ashore on Assateague Island in Maryland and there lay, a prey to the elements, less than twice her length above the Virginia line. News of this disaster, or rather, of this windfall, soon drew people to the scene both from Maryland and Virginia, who cut up her decks and carried away everything of value they could lay their hands on, excepting a cargo consisting of some two hundred planks of mahogany, which, on being cast on shore during a storm that broke up the hull of the vessel, was transported to Snow Hill by an enterprising gentleman, and there sold to a local merchant.⁶⁸

With the establishment of the office of Commissioner of Wrecks, in 1782,⁶⁹ Virginians were enabled to assume a virtuous attitude towards the people of Maryland, who were tardy in creating a similar post. The county of Accomac is held in great

⁶⁷ Lake, Griffing and Stevenson's *Atlas of Worcester County*, 1877, pp. 50-51, shows Birch's Salt Works somewhat south of east with reference to Lumber Marsh. Martinet's *Map of Maryland*, 1885, shows salt-works definitely south-east of Lumber Marsh.

⁶⁸ *Archives of Maryland*, XXVIII, 493, 494.

⁶⁹ Hening's *Statutes*, IX, 51.

odium on account of the "robberies made on Wrecked vessels," writes John Teackle, the then Commissioner of Wrecks, to the Governor of Virginia, under date of April 8th, 1784. This ill repute of his county he blames upon the Marylanders, who seem to consider themselves "privileged to embezzle from wrecked vessels," for which nefarious business the island of Assateague, famous for its shoals, and on which three valuable ships have lately been stranded, affords all too many opportunities. Notice of shipwrecks, he alleges, was commonly sent to Marylanders on the mainland, involved in these illicit practices, by the island people, their confederates.⁷⁰ Seventeen years behind her sister state in the matter of breaking up the looting of wrecked ships, the Maryland Assembly, in 1799, passed an act for appointing a wreck-master in Worcester County.⁷¹ Reviewing the situation which called for this appointment, the legislators took cognizance of the fact that "from the exposure of the south east bounds of Worcester County to the Atlantic Ocean many vessels have been and may hereafter be stranded on the seacoast of the county aforesaid, and the goods and other property belonging to such vessels may be embezzled and stolen to the great injury of the owners and insurers." The wreck-master of the county was empowered, upon notice of a shipwreck or of the imminence of such disaster, to command constables to press as many men into service as might be needed, and was further authorized to demand assistance of commanders of vessels which might be riding in the vicinity of the disaster, under forfeit of £100. The law further provided that persons found stealing from vessels in distress pumps or other articles the loss of which could contribute to a shipwreck, should suffer death without benefit of clergy.

In this way law and order came to the seacoast of Maryland about a century and a half ago.

The dwellers on the seashore of Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina were known as "bankers" from the fact that they lived among, or adjacent to, the sand banks of the coast. In North Carolina, long years ago, they appear to have exhibited a wildness which, perhaps, was not so characteristic of them farther north. It is recorded of the North Carolina "bankers" that they were "a set of People who live on certain sandy Islands lying

⁷⁰ *Virginia State Papers*, III, 1782-1784, p. 572.

⁷¹ *Acts of the Maryland Assembly, November Session, 1799*, Chapter 82.

between the Sound and the Ocean, and who are very wild and ungovernable, so that it is seldom possible to execute any Civil or Criminal Writs among them." This was in connection with the wreck of a Spanish ship, which bore the sonorous name of the *Neustra Señiora de Guadalupe*, and was laden with a cargo valued at 100,000 pieces of eight. This disaster occurred "at Ocacock" (Ocracoke) in the year 1750. It was feared that the "bankers" might descend upon the hapless ship in a body and pillage her, the more so as they, themselves, had suffered from the depredations of a Spanish crew some three years before, having had all their cattle and hogs taken from them.⁷² From this it appears that the "bankers" were sometimes the victims of seafaring people.

EVOLUTION OF A SEASHORE RESORT

The business of putting up hotels and boarding houses and of laying out the beach in lots as sites for seaside cottages, all primarily with a view to sea-bathing, was the last and greatest of the economic possibilities of Maryland's sea coast to be developed. It arrived relatively late on these shores, with respect to the Jersey coast, for example. Casual sea-bathing in Maryland doubtless goes back to prehistoric times, but the mass movement to the sea, which began only in the past century, was probably largely hydropathic and owed its beginnings to the recommendations of the "medicos."

More than a decade before the founding of the town the site of Ocean City was drawing people in summer to that beach, where, we may safely imagine, some more or less primitive bath-houses had already been erected for their convenience. On Martinet's map of Worcester County, 1866, we find the arresting words "Ocean House" with respect to a spot on the western side of Sinepuxent Bay, at the place where that estuary is narrowest, that is, directly opposite the site of the future "resort." A friend

⁷² *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, IV, 1305. Five other Spanish ships came to grief on this coast in a great storm which occurred on August 18, 1750. (*Ibid.*, pp. 1304 *et seq.*). Spanish wrecks, of which, it would seem, there were not a few, are the favorite subject of romantic tradition. Not far below Ocean City is "Money Beach," where, it is said, Spanish gold pieces indicative of a Spanish wreck are occasionally found. One of these gold coins, which was seen by the late Miss Emily Emerson Lantz, bears the date "1801." (*Lantz, The Spirit of Maryland* (1929), p. 347).

of this author tells him that his mother, whose home was in Salisbury, used to get up at midnight and drive to a farm on Sinepuxent Bay, in order to enjoy a day's picnic on the beach. This, as I understood it, was in the '60's, and must have represented what was by that time a pretty general custom. An implication that such was the fact is to be found in the name of a land-grant—"The Ladies' Resort to the Ocean"⁷³—which was patented by Messrs. Benson and Taber in the year 1868, on the site of Ocean City proper. In our mind's eye we see the ladies of those distant, mid-Victorian days timorously "resorting" to the surf from the then almost uninhabited beach, clad in sleeved and skirted bathing-suits, stockings and hats, which left only their faces and hands chastely visible. Very lady-like indeed were their cries of more or less assumed fright and their tittering as the first receding surge tugged at their nether extremities and threatened to draw them out towards the deep.

It is reliably reported that Ocean City was founded by a company of well meaning Eastern Shoremen and was formally opened to visitors on July 4th, 1875. The first hotels were the Atlantic (John Tracy, Proprietor), the Seaside and Congress Hall,⁷⁴ names simple, obvious, almost, as it were, unavoidable, except for that of Congress Hall, which was borrowed from that of an already well known hostelry at Cape May. To this day an Atlantic Hotel stands on the site of the old Atlantic, but Congress Hall, which was situated at the southern end of town, near the present new inlet, ended its days about forty years ago, and is remembered by this author only as a wretched-looking lodging house for professional fishermen.

Not until 1881 (or so it is said on good authority) was the

⁷³ "The Ladies Resort to the Ocean," 280 acres, surveyed for Hepburn S. Benson, of Washington, D. C., and Stephen Taber, of New York City, February 11, 1868, takes up the site of the oldest part of Ocean City (Land Office, Patented Certificate No. 1474, Worcester County). For the same parties was surveyed "Beach House Island," September 18, 1868, on the beach, at the head of Sinepuxent Bay, including Duck Island and Brant Island. (Patented Certificate No. 280, Worcester County.)

⁷⁴ The Seaside is reported to have been the first hotel built at Ocean City. The Atlantic Hotel was advertised in the *Baltimore American* of July 1, 1876. It is described as a "new sea-side resort" situated at Ocean City, Sinepuxent Beach, Maryland, affording "splendid bathing, either Ocean or Bay." The Seaside was advertised in the *American* of July 2, 1880, where also we find an advertisement of Scott's Ocean House, Green Run Beach. Congress Hall was advertised in the *American* of July 2, 1881.

railroad extended to Ocean City from a terminus on the western side of Sinepuxent Bay, and before that time, visitors already disheartened by what used to be one of the sootiest rides ever known in the realm of the Iron Horse, piled out of the coaches at the bayside landing and were transported across the bay in scows to their destination. Realizing, no doubt, that the prospect of this inconvenience might have a distressing effect on persons in Baltimore and elsewhere, who contemplated a trip to Ocean City for their health, the gentlemen, who wrote advertisements of the local hotels for Baltimore newspapers, considerably forbore to call it to the attention of prospective guests. Well may we imagine the sensations of these excursionists, as they crossed the Sinepuxent in a violent thunderstorm or a north-easter, or departed in a contrary direction under similar dramatic circumstances.

Judged by its apparent success, Ocean City made many friends and advocates at the outset, and we know of only one dissenting voice, which was that of a distinguished Baltimore lawyer, who always referred to the town as "O Shun City," little dreaming that he, himself, in spite of his aversion to the place, was destined to die there!⁷⁵

Of somewhat later date than the hostelries above mentioned, the Plimhimmon, named for the old Tilghman estate near Oxford, Talbot County, and long associated with the personality of the clever and capable Mr. Ijams, its manager, was built in the 1880's by Mrs. Rosalie (Tilghman) Shreve, whom this author will always pleasantly remember. In the summer of 1896 the author, then, of course, a mere child, was a guest at the "Plim" for the first time, and even then Mr. Ijams was already installed in the position which he still held forty years later. His manifest love of the sea did not preclude a seeming distaste for active personal contact with that element, and he was seldom, if ever, seen in a bathing suit.

BOARDING AND BAITING *SUPER MARE*

In the early days of Ocean City the rates at the best hotels ranged from \$12.00 to \$15.00 per week. In view of the modera-

⁷⁵ This gentleman was Richard James Gittings, law partner of Messrs. Arthur W. Machen, Sr., and David McIntosh, who died at Congress Hall, August 2nd, 1882, while on a visit to Ocean City in search of health on the recommendation of his physician.

tion of these charges waste and lavishness were hardly in order. So, at least, thought one of the local proprietors, who sat at the head of a vast dining-room table, facing his guests, as was then the custom. It is related that this gentleman was such a deft and expert carver and could divide a ham into portions so thin, that the floor of the dining-room might have been covered with the slices!

Another man of affairs, to whom the destinies of a local hotel were entrusted, was no less adept in his way. The "victim" of a prank played by this quick-witted individual related the episode to this author many years ago, and not without acerbity. This gentleman, a Baltimorean, had gone to Ocean City, suffering from an internal ailment and with strict orders from his physician to drink nothing but pure spring water. Accordingly, he requested the manager of his hotel to see that he was supplied daily, at his own charge, with certain well-known, commercialized, bottled waters. On hearing this, the manager, a somewhat disillusioned man, exclaimed: "Why, my dear sir, it's quite unnecessary for you to put yourself to all that expense, when this hotel supplies its guests with the very same water, free." So saying, he pointed to a large inverted glass bottle bearing on its side in relief the name of the company which marketed the aforesaid spring water. Accordingly, the trusting gentleman from Baltimore helped himself freely and exclusively to water from this drinking-fountain, and in a few days was confined to bed with a severe attack of his ailment, as to the true cause of which "setback" he did not entertain the slightest doubt.

Society at Ocean City in old times was a happy-go-lucky, informal, but eminently genteel "consolation party." Differences in this respect as between hotels were to be noted, and more or less voluntary segregation was not unknown.

THE BOARDWALK AND THE BUNGALOW INVADE THE SOLITUDES

In spite of its early growth, popularity and prosperity, Ocean City, for many years after it was founded, extended ("straggled" would be a better word) no further up the beach than the Catholic monastery, and there stopped, as if some sort of a spell held it in check. From the monastery to Fenwick's Island, between the ocean and the sounds, there stretched a waste of dunes and

salt marshes, forever fluttered and sailed over by sea birds. The dream of transforming this briny wilderness into hundreds of geometrical building lots for cottages and bungalows did not begin to be realized until the road up the beach to Rehoboth was built. With the progressive extinction of these solitudes even the majesty and magic of the sea seems to us somehow diminished at Ocean City; and the remark we once read in a semi-official prospectus, which set forth the advantages of the town as a vacation resort, sounds less odd today than it did two or three decades ago. It ran something like this:

Among the attractions of Ocean City we must not forget to mention the Ocean.⁷⁶

Perhaps, after all, poets alone are qualified to speak of the obsessing mystery of a solitude by the sea. At least, when they do so, they only are listened to with respect, and are not glibly accused of sentimentality. Therefore, let a poet bear witness to the sorrow which haunts a seaside waste:

"One with the ruined sunset,
The strange forsaken sands,
What is it waits and wanders
And signs with desperate hands?"

"What is it calls in the twilight—
Calls as its chance were vain?
The cry of a gull sent seaward
Or the voice of an ancient pain?"

When the sands are no longer "forsaken" and the surveyor drives his stakes into them and lays off the beach in lots, the plaintive, disembodied voice, which the poet heard at sundown among the dunes and on the borders of the salt marshes, grows fainter and fainter. Soon it is audible no longer. The swarm of intruding strangers has exorcised the ghost. Progress and improvement, as they affect "nature," are almost always attended by loss. This is the lesson.

⁷⁶ This artless admission that the ocean was one of the chief features of Ocean City attracted the observant eye of a Baltimore author, the late Jesse Lee Bennett, who called it to the attention of his friends, to the accompaniment of bursts of merriment. It was one of the many charms of this much lamented Baltimorean that in his wide reading he found and imparted to others cause for mirth in printed matter which was never so humble as to be beneath his notice.