

The Steamboat Wharf at Dare's, 1885-1922

Parkers Creek Heritage Trail Research Report

Robert J. Hurry
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Introduction and Abstract: Dare's Wharf, 1885-1922

This research report was prepared for the Parkers Creek Heritage Trail project, an activity of the American Chestnut Land Trust. The project concerns the history of the area around Parkers Creek and Governors Run, two streams that flow into the Chesapeake Bay in central Calvert County, Maryland. One of the commercial bayside landings that served this area was Dare's Wharf.

Incorporated in 1885, the Dare Wharf Company got off to a slow start. In 1889 it hired Nathaniel Clow to construct an offshore dock and shoreside platform in the vicinity of Allnut's Landing on the Chesapeake Bay. A scow was used to ferry freight and passengers between the landing platform and the pier head. Rough weather made the ferry passage across open water between the platform and the wharf inconvenient and potentially dangerous.

The Weems steamers added Dare's as a regular stop on its Patuxent River Route in July 1890. As a convenience to shippers, the wharf company built a warehouse on shore for stowing freight in 1891. In 1898, George D. Turner was contracted to build a trestle that connected the wharf to the shore, but an October storm and tidal surge washed away about 4,000 feet of timber. After delays, the project was completed the following April, increasing accessibility and convenience for passengers and shippers. When completed, Dare Wharf extended 1,900 feet out into the bay. A passenger waiting room was added to the shore end of the wharf in 1900.

Like all bayside wharves, Dare's was subject to the forces of nature. Drifting ice in February 1902 forced some pilings out of position, causing a bend in the bridge. Damage from drifting ice caused the entire wharf to be rebuilt in the spring of 1907. In June 1911, about 50 feet of the trestle collapsed under the weight of a rail car of freight being pushed ashore. The steamer suspended its stops until after the wharf

was repaired the following February. In February 1917, 150 feet of the trestle was carried away by ice. It was repaired by George Turner the following July.

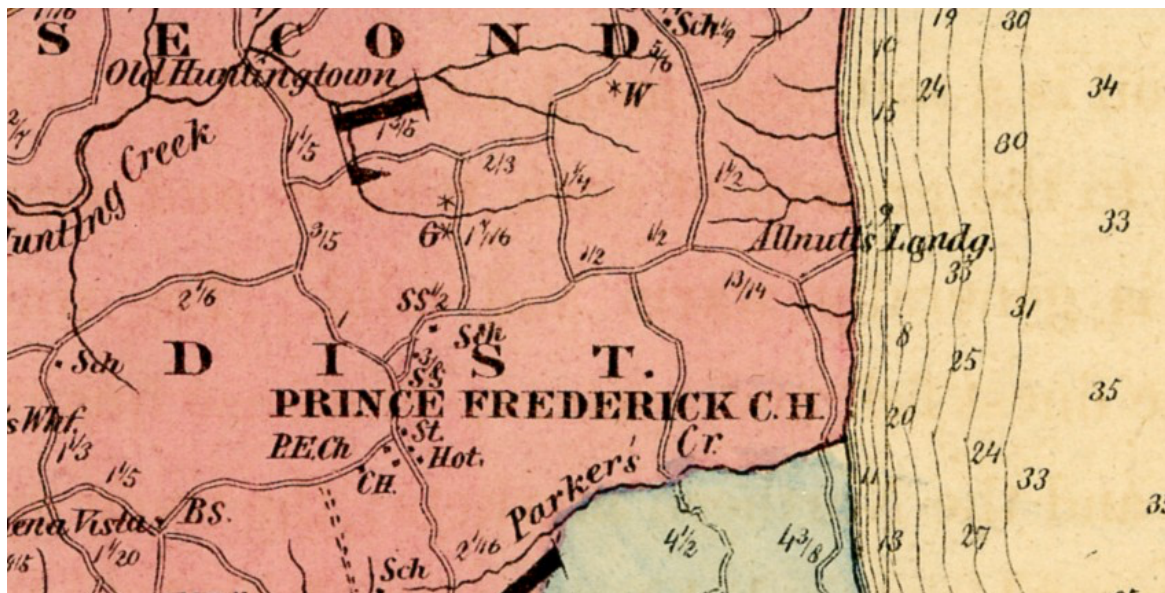
In February 1920, a northeast gale blew drifting ice onto the Calvert shoreline that wrecked the pier head and warehouse and forced the decking from the pilings. The wharf was still out of commission with no steamboat service a year later. The Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company that owned controlling interest in the Dare Wharf Company went bankrupt in 1922 and it is unlikely the wharf was repaired.

Part 1: Dare Wharf Company of Calvert County, Established 1885

The Dare Wharf Company of Calvert County was incorporated on February 24, 1885. The incorporators were John W. Shemwell, George T. Freeland, John G. Roberts, and William A. Parran of Calvert County and Henry Williams of Baltimore City. The purpose of the company was to “construct, purchase, buy, or lease a wharf or wharves, a pier or piers, in the Chesapeake Bay in and adjacent to Calvert County.” The capital stock was \$10,000 with each share valued at \$25. The five incorporators acted as directors of the company until the first Monday of January 1886 when an election of directors was held at the stockholders meeting. Subsequently, elections were held annually.¹

On May 9, 1885, the *Calvert Gazette* reported that the “Dare Wharf Company will soon begin the building of a new wharf at Dare's Landing, on the Chesapeake Bay, about four miles from this place...”²

On July 27, 1885, the Dare Wharf Company of Calvert County purchased one acre of land from Horatio J. Brewer and wife of New York City for one dollar “for use as a Wharf, Pier, or landing place for boats or vessels or for the merchandise or passengers from boats or vessels plying upon the Chesapeake Bay.” If the company ceased to exist or abandoned its stated purpose for a period of one year, the land would revert to the Brewers. The one-acre waterfront lot was adjacent to and immediately north of property owned by Howe S. Allnutt.³ The vicinity had formerly been called Allnutt's Landing and later became known as Dare's Landing.



Detail showing Allnutt's Landing in Calvert County's Second District, *Martenet's Map of Maryland, Atlas Edition, 1865* (courtesy, Maryland State Archives, Huntingfield Collection MSA SC 1339-1-75)

In September 1885, the *Baltimore Sun* ran an item stating that a “wharf is about to be built at Dare’s Landing, on the Chesapeake bay, about four miles from Prince Frederick. It will be two miles nearer the latter place than any other landing on the bay.”⁴

The 1885 newspaper reports on the wharf construction at Dare’s Landing were premature. The following Spring, the benefits of a prospective shipping wharf at Dare’s Landing were extolled in a local news item printed in the *Calvert Gazette*:

Dare's Wharf Company. - Interest in the proposed wharf at Dare's Landing, on the Chesapeake Bay, is being aroused, and the prospects now are that the enterprise will be pushed to a successful termination in the near future. There can be no question of doubt that a wharf at the above point will prove a great convenience not only to a large number of our inhabitants living near the Bay. And what is of still greater importance the public road leading to Dare's landing is comparatively good at all seasons of the year. The steep hills encountered in hauling from this place to either Plum Point or Governor's Run would be obviated in hauling to Dare's Landing. Our farmers are not noted for raising the finest oxen and horses in the world and in hauling their farm products to the steamboat wharves the question of good roads and consequent saving of labor to their teams is one that appeals at once to the farmers' interests and humanity. Mr. J.W. Shemwell, one of the directors of the company, will leave Baltimore on Wednesday evening next on the steamer for the Rappahannock River to ascertain the cost of procuring the lumber for erecting the wharf. He thinks a superior quality of oak lumber can be had along the banks of the Rappahannock, and it is the purpose of the company to use none but the very best material in the wharf. The well-known wharf builders, Messrs. Hewitt Brothers, of Middlesex county, Va, have been figuring on an estimate of the cost of building the Dare wharf, and the directors expect to have a hearing from them at an early date. The stock of the company has been rather liberally subscribed to already, but as yet the amount raised not sufficient to complete the enterprise. It can hardly be doubted, however, that an undertaking of such great advantage and convenience to so large a number of our people will fail for want of necessary support.⁵

The *Calvert Gazette* item promoting the advantages of a wharf at Dare's was intended to attract local interest among mid-county farmers and other shippers to encourage investment in the wharf company. The editor of the newspaper, George W. Dowell, had a financial interest in the success of the venture. He was an investor who later served on the Dare Wharf Company’s board of directors.

Dowell’s promotion of the advantages of Dare’s location reflects the competition that existed among the companies that operated the bayside wharves. Although the Weems Steamboat Line and its successors became stockholders in these wharf companies, much of the initiative and investment depended on local farmers and businessmen who stood to benefit from their proximity to a more convenient shipping point. Local investors also anticipated earning dividend income from wharf operations.

Part 2: First Dare’s Wharf, 1889-1898

In 1889, the Dare Wharf Company finally hired a contractor to begin construction. It was estimated that 100 pilings would be needed to build the pier head and construction would begin in May and be completed in time for the peach season.⁶ The acquisition of building materials delayed construction. In August, 12,700 feet of Number 1 oak timber was acquired from Sharp’s Wharf on the Rappahannock River for stringers and decking and freighted to the landing by schooner. In September, contractor Nathaniel Clow of Annapolis began driving oak and chestnut foundation pilings to support the wharf. In addition to the offshore dock or pier head, a shoreside platform extending 40-50 feet into the bay was built for landing freight and passengers. A ferry boat would be used to transport passengers and freight between the landing platform and the wharf. The platform had facilities for hoisting and lowering freight and steps for landing passengers.⁷

The wharf was completed and became a scheduled stop on the Weems Patuxent River Route in July 1890. A large flat-boat or scow was used to ferry freight and passengers between the pier head and shoreside platform and a second smaller boat was available if needed. By the end of the year, the directors of the Dare Wharf Company were encouraged about the amount of shipping from the wharf and confident that a trestle connecting the pier head to the shore would make it one of the most profitable landings on the bay.⁸ As a convenience to shippers, a warehouse was built on the shore for stowing freight in the spring of 1891.⁹

Attempting to force existing subscribers to its capital stock to fulfill their financial obligations, the Dare Wharf Company directors sued five parties over unsettled subscriptions in 1891. The judge found in favor of the company, but Alexander and Uriah Buckler, W.W.L. Dalrymple, Webster Tabbs, and Dr. Thornton Dorsey appealed the case. On appeal the decision was reversed. The court ruled that, according to its charter, the company could not enforce payment of subscriptions until the total amount of authorized stock (\$10,000.00) had been subscribed. By the time of the lawsuit, capital stock subscriptions amounted to only \$1,300.00.¹⁰

Some excitement occurred in June 1891 when the training ship *Constellation* ran aground just below Dare's Wharf on a Wednesday morning while cruising down the bay. On board were U.S. Naval Academy cadets who "passed the time Wednesday evening in music and dancing." The ship was refloated Thursday morning and proceeded on its summer cadet cruise.¹¹

An application for the establishment of a post office at Dare's Wharf was submitted in July 1891. W.V. Watson was recommended as the postmaster.¹² In February 1892, William Virgil Watson became its first postmaster.¹³

The directors of the company recognized that using a boat to transfer passengers and freight between the offshore dock and shoreside platform was not ideal in terms of convenience, safety, or efficiency. In July 1892, an undetected leak caused the large scow used to transport freight across the expanse of open water between shoreside platform and pier head to sink while carrying nine hogsheads of tobacco and an old printing press. The boat had already made two trips to deposit tobacco on the pier head that day. The tobacco on the boat was the property of D. B. Gott, W.W.L. Dalrymple, Sutton Fowler, and David Brooks. It was reported that the press would be salvaged if all the parts could be quickly secured, but some of the tobacco was water damaged. The newspaper item commented on the inconvenience of not having a bridge to the pier head and that one would be built when freighting would justify the expenditure.¹⁴

In early 1898, the *Calvert Journal* reiterated the situation:

The pier was built about eight years ago and a large scow built to ferry passengers to and from the shore. This method is not only inconvenient and at times disagreeable, but in very rough weather the boat cannot get out. The volume of shipping at that point is quite heavy and will be considerably augmented when the bridge is built to the shore.¹⁵

Part 3: Recreational Offerings at Dare's, 1890s

By facilitating easier and more reliable communication and travel, steamboat landings appealed to those who sought to visit the area for recreational pursuits. Dare's Wharf was no exception.

There were two boarding houses known to exist in the vicinity of Dare's Wharf for vacationers seeking bayside recreation. In June 1895, Mrs. H.S. Allnutt advertised for boarders at Dare's Wharf in the *Baltimore Sun*:

DARE'S WHARF – Chesapeake bay; good country BOARD: crabbing fishing and bathing.
Address MRS. H.S. ALLNUTT, Dare's Wharf, Calvert county, Md.¹⁶

Later that month, she elaborated on her description, perhaps to make her boarding house appear more enticing to prospective boarders:

DARE'S WHARF, Chesapeake bay, good COUNTRY BOARD; fishing, crabbing. rowboats free; salt baths; dwelling-house ten minutes' walk from shore; terms moderate. MRS. ALLNUTT, Dare's Wharf. Calvert county. Md. je26-2t

DARE'S WHARF – Chesapeake bay good COUNTRY BOARD: fishing, crabbing, rowboats free; salt baths; dwelling-house ten minutes' walk from shore; terms moderate. MRS. ALLNUTT, Dare's Wharf, Calvert county, Md.¹⁷

Mrs. D.B. Gott advertised her boarding house at Dare's Wharf in a Weems Steamboat Company booklet in 1897:

Dare's Wharf. Directly on the Chesapeake Bay. Good Bathing, Fishing and Boating. Well Furnished Table and Charming Situation. Will accommodate Boarders for July and August. Rates Reasonable. Mrs. D. B. Gott, Dare's Wharf, Calvert County, Md.¹⁸

Not having a bridge from the shore to the pier head was an inconvenience for shippers and passengers. In 1898, for instance, an advertised excursion to Annapolis aboard the Weems steamer *St. Mary's* to benefit the Calvert Circuit Methodist Episcopal Church planned stops at the bayside landings at Governor's Run, Dare's, Plum Point, and Fair Haven to collect passengers. However, due to the "inconvenience of excursionists getting out to the pier at Dare's," a retraction was printed in the newspaper stating the steamer would not stop there.¹⁹ Similarly, an excursion to Bay Ridge to raise money to liquidate the debt for the parsonage of the Methodist Episcopal Church South also skipped Dare's Wharf that summer.²⁰ Local residents wishing to attend a steamboat excursion could travel to other wharves, like Governors Run or Plum Point, to catch the boat.

Part 4: Dare's Wharf Rebuilt with Improvements, 1898-1904

After nearly a decade, it was reported in March 1898 that the wharf at Dare's would finally be completed with the building of a bridge to connect the pier head with the shoreside platform.²¹ In May, the contract was awarded to George B. Turner²² and the project was reported to be completed in October.²³

Some of the wood used in the construction of Dare's Wharf was locally sourced. The *Calvert Journal* reported on a huge log cut from the woods of Miss Virginia Freeland that was sawn by W. J. Spicer at the steam mill of William H. Robinson, located near Dare's Wharf. The white oak log was 21 feet long and 46 inches in diameter at its smaller end. It produced 904 feet of lumber for the Dare Wharf Company. Spicer described his equipment as a pony mill with a 48-inch circular saw blade.²⁴

The October report of the anticipated completion of the wharf at Dare's was premature. That month, an abnormally high tide submerged the beach road and about 4,000 feet of lumber stored on the shore that had been provided for wharf construction was washed away.²⁵

In April 1899, the newspaper reported that after weather delays the wharf was finally completed and was brand new except for the warehouse.²⁶ Later that month, the Dare Wharf Company announced that it planned to build a waiting room for passengers on the shore adjacent to the wharf and make other shoreside improvements.²⁷ “A comfortable waiting-room” was completed in November 1900.²⁸

The waters off Dare’s Wharf had long been fertile grounds for harvesting oysters. The improved wharf opened new markets for local oystermen. The newspaper reported in 1900 that “Dare’s has become quite the shipping point for barreled oysters. They are consigned to Baltimore and Philadelphia markets.”²⁹ The following year, watermen were shipping their oysters to Baltimore from Dare’s for \$4 per barrel.³⁰

The January 1901 Dare Wharf Company stockholders meeting elected directors George W. Dowell, president; John W. Shemwell, treasurer; and J.B. Bunting, secretary; and members Henry Williams and G. Frank Hardesty. Shemwell and Williams were founding directors of the Dare Wharf Company. Capt. William V. Watson, who listed his occupation in the 1900 census as wharf agent, was reappointed to the position in 1901.³¹

In 1903, the stockholders reelected George W. Dowell, president; John W. Shemwell, treasurer; J. Briscoe Bunting, secretary; and members G. Frank Hardesty and Henry Williams. Capt. William V. Watson was continued as wharf agent.³² Director John Wesley Shemwell died in March 1903. (Buried in St. Paul’s Episcopal Church Cemetery, Prince Frederick, Maryland).

In September 1903, William Watson advertised that a round bottom sailboat named *Maggie* had been found adrift on August 22 and the owner could claim the vessel at Dare’s Wharf.³³ A week later J. Frank Parran advertised a reward for information leading to a sailboat named *Carrie M.* that was stolen from Dare’s Wharf on August 29.³⁴

Severe weather in the early 1900s caused damage to Dare’s Wharf. In February 1902, drifting ice forced several piles out of position.³⁵ In the spring of 1903, a nor’easter caused a tidal surge that submerged the area’s wharves and it was reported that only the warehouses were visible. Aside from causing “considerable damage” to oyster boats, “A number of piles dropped on the beach for the repair of Dare’s wharf were swept away.”³⁶ After Dare’s Wharf sustained damage from drifting ice in January 1904, George Turner installed 15 new pilings to support its bridge.³⁷

The Dare Wharf Company stockholders elected George W. Dowell, president; J. Briscoe Bunting, secretary; G. Frank Hardesty, treasurer; and George D. Turner in 1904. The newspaper neglected to name the fifth director. Charles E. Lyles was appointed agent of the wharf.³⁸

Part 5: Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company Era, Initial Phase, 1905-1907

The board of directors of the Dare Wharf Company changed in 1905 when the Weems Steamboat Company, which had controlled a majority of its capital stock, was sold and founding director Henry Williams stepped down. The Pennsylvania Railroad, a large transportation conglomerate, consolidated the assets of Weems and other regional steamboat and railroad companies to form the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company. The newly formed company assumed operation of the Patuxent River Route. In addition to the Weems steamboats and other floating equipment, the company acquired “its wharves, wharf rights, landings, leases, privileges, stores, and materials.”³⁹

In 1905 and 1906, the wharf company stockholders elected George W. Dowell, J. Briscoe Bunting, G. Frank Hardesty, George D. Turner, and W.L. Rothstein as directors. Rothstein was the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company’s treasurer. At a meeting of the directors, they selected George W.

Dowell, president; J. Briscoe Bunting, secretary; and G. Frank Hardesty, treasurer. Charles E. Lyles was continued as wharf agent.⁴⁰

In 1905, Charles Lyles rescued Captain Charles Getchell from his sinking 28-foot yacht named *Defender* that was anchored near the end of Dare's Wharf. Getchell was near exhaustion from trying to keep his boat afloat during the storm. Lyles succeeded in getting him onto the wharf and brought him ashore for dry clothes and food. The little yacht went to pieces that evening.⁴¹



Facsimile of Dares (sic) Wharf Company stock certificate number 25 for 103 shares issued in 1905 to the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company. (CMM history file. Courtesy, Calvert Marine Museum)

Another change in the board membership occurred in 1907 when two new directors were elected. The 1907 board included Willard Thomson, W.L. Rothstein, J.H.C. Williams, George W. Dowell, and J. Briscoe Bunting.⁴² Willard Thomson was the vice-president and general manager of the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company.⁴³ Charles E. Lyles, wharf agent for the Dare Wharf Company since 1904, succeeded William Virgil Watson to become the postmaster at Dare's Wharf in 1907.⁴⁴

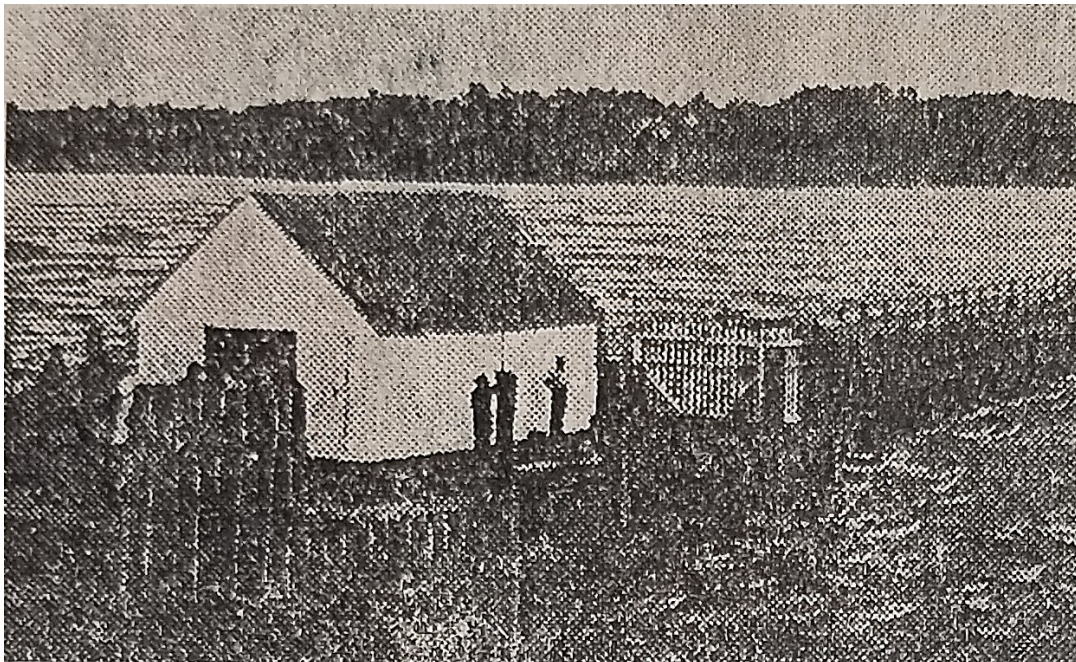
According to the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company's 1907 annual report, Dare's Wharf was rebuilt after being seriously damaged by ice during the winter of 1906/1907. It sustained the damage when part of the structure was carried away by ice and needed to be completely rebuilt. The company detailed the repairs in its 1907 annual report. The company's contractor installed 301 pine piles measuring 14 to 24 feet in length, four 20-foot oak piles, 1,705 feet of two-inch chestnut decking and 2,000 feet of two-inch white oak decking. The warehouse and waiting room were also repaired.⁴⁵

Interestingly, no specific mention of the wharf damage was found in local newspapers, but Dare's Wharf is listed in the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company schedule in effect December 26, 1906.⁴⁶ It was omitted from the revised schedule in effect February 1, 1907.⁴⁷

Incidental references to the rebuilding of the wharf were included in an account in the *Calvert Gazette* about the inquest of a corpse found washed ashore between Plum Point and Dare's. It mentioned that the body was discovered by two of George Turner's workmen who were employed making repairs at Dare's Wharf in April 1907. The same article mentioned that the steam pile driver of Jack Thomas was working at Dare's Wharf at the time.⁴⁸ It appears that Thomas and Turner were both working on the wharf rebuilding project in the spring of 1907.

In a 1907 article on "Prince Fredericktown" in the *Baltimore Sun*, Dare's Wharf was described as being: typical of the shipping stations to be found on the Chesapeake and its tributaries. It consists of a rough pier extending perhaps an eighth of a mile from land – that is, far enough into the bay to reach deep water for the light-draft steamers. The pier at the far end bears a small, whitewashed shed which serves for the storage of freight, and at the land end are two more sheds, one being a waiting room for white passengers and the other answering a similar purpose for the colored patrons of the line.⁴⁹

An image that accompanied the 1907 article shows the wharf at Dare's. Assuming the photograph was contemporaneous with the article, the illustration dates to after the wharf was rebuilt earlier that year.



This view captioned "Dare's Wharf Landing" was originally printed in a 1907 *Baltimore Sun* article titled "MARYLAND COUNTY SEATS: TODAY AND IN HISTORY: I--Prince Fredericktown." This image, extracted from a newspaper clipping of the article, is from the "Can You Identify?" column printed in the 11/08/1978 issue of the *Calvert Independent*. (courtesy, Calvert County Historical Society)

The relative success of Dare's Wharf is reflected in the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company Annual Report. In 1907, Dare's Wharf generated \$1,733.35 in local freight, \$89.79 in through freight charges, and \$1,682.48 in passenger fares, for a total revenue of \$3,505.62 earned by the railway company.⁵⁰ In terms of total revenue earned for the company in 1907, Dare's Wharf was the fifth busiest of the Patuxent Line landings, just ahead of Plum Point and behind Fair Haven. (The top three wharves, based on gross revenue that year, were Solomons Island, Millstone Landing, and Governors Run.) Of course, its revenue in 1907 may have been tempered by the fact that the steamboats could do no business there until the wharf was rebuilt that spring.

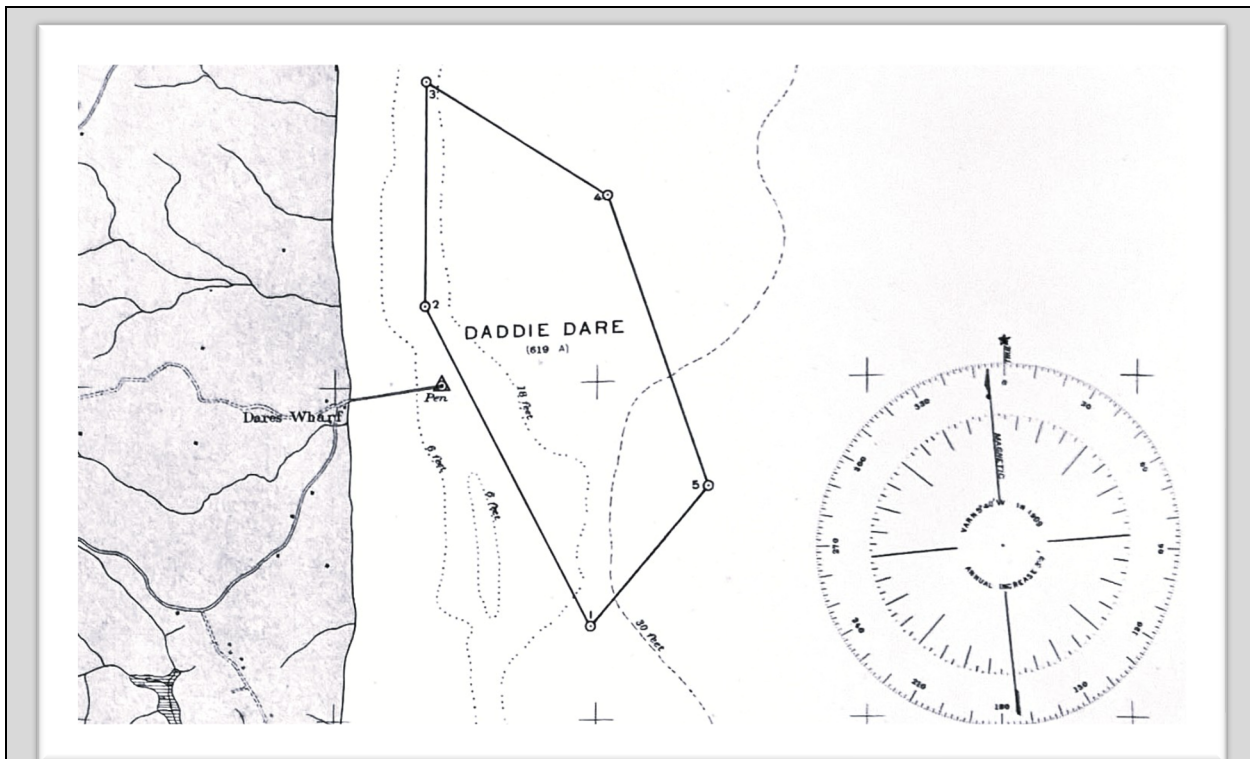
Sidebar: Oyster Survey and Management off Dare's Wharf, 1908

Natural oyster bars throughout Maryland waters were identified by a comprehensive survey of the bottom carried out by the Maryland Shellfish Commission in cooperation with the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey and the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries from 1906 to 1912. The survey of the Calvert County portion of the bay was conducted in 1908.

The publication *Survey of Oyster Bars of Calvert County, Maryland, 1910*, provides narrative descriptions of stations and observed benchmarks used in mapping Chart No. 17 in 1908, including the waters off Dare's Wharf. To map the oyster bars, the team located existing shore stations or established new ones in order to conduct a triangulation survey. On the outer end of Dare's Wharf, a survey station named "Pen" was established. Among the reference points on the wharf were the northwest and southwest corners of the cattle pen and warehouse, north and south edges of the wharf, and south rails of the curved and straight sections of the tracks. The survey station was used in mapping the boundaries of the natural oyster bars and reference points were recorded in case the stations needed to be reestablished at a later date.⁵¹

PEN.		
<i>General locality.</i> —Western shore of Chesapeake Bay about half way between Plum Point and Governors Run on the outer end of Dares Wharf. (See Chart No. 17.)		
<i>Immediate locality.</i> —Observed station is on outer part of Dares Wharf about 30 yards from the extreme end, 12 yards west of warehouse, and 1 yard north of south side of wharf.		
<i>Marks.</i> —Observed station is auger hole in plank flooring surrounded by a triangle marked by nails.		
<i>References.</i> —		
Southwest corner of warehouse.....	East by south.....	11.10 meters.
Inside corner on angle in wharf.....	East by south.....	5.09 meters.
South edge of wharf.....	South.....	0.95 meter.
South rail of straight track at point of frog.....	North.....	2.13 meters.
South rail of curved track.....	North.....	0.90 meter.
North edge of wharf.....	North.....	4.15 meters.
Southwest corner of cattle pen.....	Northeast.....	7.12 meters.
Southeast corner of cattle pen.....	Northeast by north.....	9.63 meters.
Northwest corner of warehouse.....	Northeast by north.....	12.80 meters.

Detail of *Survey of Oyster Bars, Calvert County, Maryland*, describing locality and listing reference points of station "Pen." (*Survey of Oyster Bars, Calvert County, Maryland.*, Government Printing Office, 1910: 28-30)



Detail of *Chart No. 17*, surveyed in 1908 and published in 1909, shows the 619-acre Daddie Dare Natural Oyster Bar just off Dare's Wharf. (*Chart No. 17, Natural Oyster Bars Calvert County, surveyed 1908, published by Coast and Geodetic Survey, September 1909*)

The State Fisheries Force had experimented with transplanting seed oysters and shells harvested from the upper Chesapeake Bay on the bottom off Dare's Wharf in 1911.⁵² Based on the success of the experiment, legislation was passed in 1914 that allowed the state to reserve select natural oyster bars to conduct an experiment with replanting seed oysters and shells on a large scale to benefit the public fishery. The first oyster reserve area was established at the 619-acre Daddie Dare natural oyster bar located just east of Dare's Wharf. The reserve area was closed to dredgers and patrolled by an oyster police boat stationed at Dare's Wharf.

The newly formed the Maryland Conservation Commission assumed control of the oyster reserve program, the State Fishery Force, and other government entities in 1916. Based on the success of the oyster replanting program at Daddie Dare, it extended its reserve areas to encompass 4,815 acres of protected natural oyster bars stretching from Plum Point wharf to Governors Run wharf in 1916 and 1917.⁵³

Part 6: Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company, Night Route Era, 1908-1920

In September 1908, the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company announced an abrupt schedule change for the Patuxent River Line, making it a "night route."⁵⁴ Its new schedule included three weekly trips.⁵⁵ These schedule changes meant the steamer arrived at the bayside landings, like Dare's, in the dark. Accustomed to daytime steamboat arrivals and departures, some passengers were displeased with the schedule change and community meetings were held to protest it. But the new timetable proved to be more favorable to shippers by enabling them to send perishable freight at night to be at the Baltimore market early the next day.⁵⁶

The schedule change to nighttime arrivals at Dare's Wharf brought some potential danger to disembarking passengers navigating an unfamiliar wharf in the dark. In November 1908, two young Baltimore men leaving the steamer *Westmoreland* around 9:00 p.m. accidentally stepped overboard. Joseph Idellwitz and his cousin Harry Pence landed at the wharf to visit Idellwitz's aunt, Mrs. Goodman Goldstein, in Prince Frederick. Although Pence was rescued, his cousin drowned.⁵⁷ A correspondent to a local newspaper complained about the danger, including "the crying need for light and railings around dangerous parts of the ends of the wharves, as proven when a stranger walked overboard and drowned at Dare's wharf."⁵⁸



View of the Reverend Benjamin Lovett waiting for a steamboat. The scene is believed to depict Dare's Wharf. Note the rail tracks, rail freight car containing a hogshead of tobacco, passenger waiting rooms, and safety guard rails on the wharf. Reverend Lovett was rector at St. Paul's Church at Prince Frederick and Christ Church at Port Republic in the early 1900s.⁵⁹ Photograph courtesy Emily Ferris and the Calvert Marine Museum.

The 1909 election of the board of the Dare Wharf Company showed another membership change. Willard Thomson, George W. Dowell, J. Briscoe Bunting, and W.L. Rothstein were reelected and A.H. Seth replaced J.H.C. Williams who died in 1908. This board was reelected from 1910 to 1913.⁶⁰

In 1909, in a letter to the *Calvert Gazette*, "A Sufferer" lamented an incident in which it was alleged that a woman with two small children had to wait at Dare's Wharf for four hours "in a small room with eight negro men, with the biggest mouths and loudest voices, who took up the whole space around the stove." Then the steamer passed the wharf without stopping.⁶¹ A week later, indignant wharf agent Charles E. Lyles replied that part of that complaint was in error. He stated that "There are two waiting rooms at Dare's, one for each color, and at no time have colored people been accommodated in the room reserved for white people when white ladies were in waiting."⁶² Clearly, the Jim Crow segregation practices of the time prevailed ashore and afloat.

Prince Frederick retail merchant Goodman Goldstein wrote the newspaper in January 1909 complaining about a trip from Baltimore to Dare's Wharf aboard the steamer *Westmoreland*. By his account, fog and

other factors caused delays and made the usual six-hour trip last 30 hours. He and other passengers needed to rent staterooms and buy meals due to the delay. He concluded his letter “I sincerely sympathize with anybody who is unfortunate enough to be compelled to travel this route, for if anything in the world is worse, I have not seen it yet”⁶³

In 1911, a 65-page promotional booklet contained a section on the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company’s Patuxent Line trip. The narrative states that after departing Baltimore, the stops included Fair Haven and Plum Point: “many vacationists congregate at Plum Point during the summer, as they do also at Dare’s Wharf, the next wharf below, where the bathing beach is also inviting.”⁶⁴

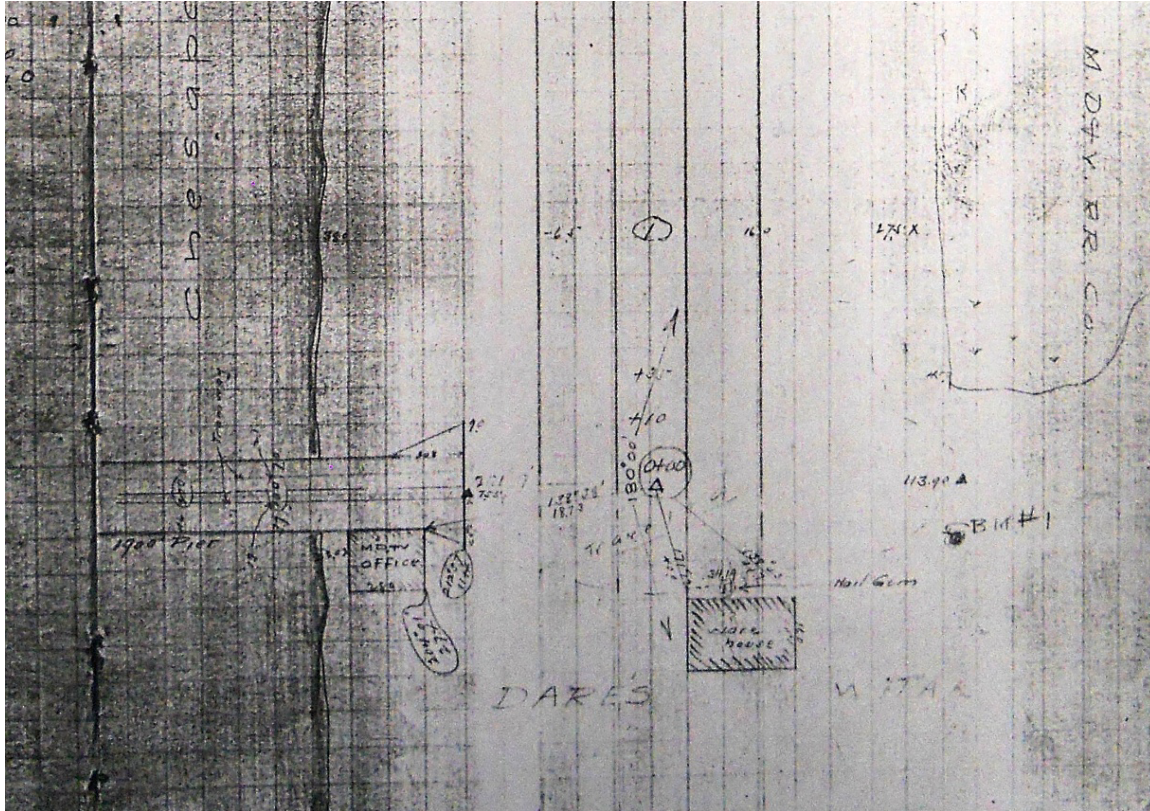
Just after the steamer *Anne Arundel* had departed Dare’s Wharf in June 1911, about 75 feet of the trestle collapsed under the weight of a rail car of freight being pushed by several men. While 850 feet from shore, the men, rail car, and about \$1,000 worth of freight toppled into the bay. The newspaper reported that even though the structure had been repaired recently, it was speculated that the weakened state of the bridge was caused by shipworm damage.⁶⁵ After the collapse, the pier head was accessible only by boat until repairs could be made. Someone took advantage of the situation and robbed merchandise from the warehouse:

Some miscreant broke into the warehouse on Dares wharf Sunday or Sunday night last, and appropriated three articles—a box of cigars belonging to Mr. Thomas B. Turner, a box of tobacco, the property of Mr. Thomas R. King, and a bunch of bananas, owned by Mr. Julius G. Hall. The break in the wharf prevented any one getting to the ware house other than by boat.”⁶⁶

The steamer suspended its stops at Dare’s until the wharf was repaired in November.⁶⁷

The pressure of drifting winter ice had caused a bend in the trestle. In February 1913, Richard F. Simmons had disembarked the steamer at night and made for shore but came into contact with the safety guard rail at the bend and it gave way. He, his belongings, and sections of the railing went overboard in about ten feet of water. His overcoat and the detached railing he grasped kept him afloat long enough for other to help him onto the wharf.⁶⁸

A storm in January 1914 washed away some of the decking at Dare’s Wharf. The same storm drove a revenue cutter ashore off Governors Run and swamped and damaged George Turner’s launch at Plum Point.⁶⁹



Survey plat showing terminus of road in vicinity of Dare’s Wharf, 1915. (Maryland State Archives, MdHR T-1211, Box 7, 1915 Survey Record)

A 1915 plat showing the terminus of the road to Dare’s Wharf depicts structures in the vicinity of the wharf. It shows the shoreside end of the “1900’ Pier.” Running down the pier are rail tracks identified as “Tramway.” Abutting the north side of the wharf is the “MD&V Office.” A short distance to the west on shore is the “store house.”⁷⁰ It is presumed the “office” contained passenger waiting rooms and the “store house” was the warehouse for freight.

The same board of directors first elected in 1910 was reelected in 1916 and 1917.⁷¹ Meanwhile, Charles Lyles, postmaster at Dare’s Wharf since 1907, was succeeded by Lillie Freeland in 1916.⁷² The post office moved in April 1916 to a new location along Dare’s Wharf Road, about a mile and a half west of the Chesapeake Bay.⁷³

Drifting ice carried away nearly 150 feet of Dare’s Wharf in February 1917.⁷⁴ In June, a local farmer with the postal address of Dare’s Wharf complained in a letter to the *Baltimore Sun* of the inconvenience caused by the wharf being closed for months after it was “damaged to a small extent.” He claimed that no attempt had been made to repair it, causing local shippers to travel to other, more distant wharves.⁷⁵ George Turner repaired the pier in early July.⁷⁶

A change in the wharf company’s board membership occurred in 1918. T. Murdoch, general manager for the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company, replaced Willard Thomson, deceased.⁷⁷ The 1918 slate of officers was reelected in 1919 and 1920.⁷⁸

Unlike other corporations reported in the local newspapers, the Dare Wharf Company is not listed as paying any annual dividends to its stockholders. The company's profitability was tempered by expenses incurred with repair and maintenance of its wharf complex due to an aging infrastructure and periodic damage from storms and other forces of nature.

A February 1920 gale forced drifting ice to the western shore wrecking the bayside wharves again. Dare's Wharf was submerged, its decking was swept away, and warehouse wrecked.⁷⁹ The storm rendered the wharves at Dare's and Plum Point out of commission while Governors Run was open to only light freight. As the *Calvert Journal* summed up: "It will take a considerable time to put all the damaged wharves in shape."⁸⁰ In November 1920, repairs were underway at Fair Haven but Plum Point and Dare's Wharf were still out of commission.⁸¹

Dare's Wharf was still closed a year later. Although the newspaper reported in 1921 that the Public Service Commission, answering a petition by 75 citizens, would issue a peremptory order for the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company to rebuild the wharf,⁸² it is unclear if the debt-ridden company had the means to effect repairs. It does not appear the wharf was ever rebuilt following the February 1920 storm.

Part 7. End of Steamboat Service at Dare's, Waterfront Community Begins, 1920-1928

Struggling with financial woes throughout its existence, the Dare Wharf Company appears to have ceased to exist in the early 1920s. In 1923, 106 shares of a total 152 shares of capital stock in the company were controlled by the Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company. In mid-1922, the Pennsylvania Railroad foreclosed on the railway company's mortgage. Bankruptcy proceedings extended into 1924,⁸³ and the receivers began selling off its assets as separate parcels beginning in 1923. Parcel Number 3 included interests in wharf properties.⁸⁴

In a February 1924 letter to the editor of the *Baltimore Sun*, Prince Frederick attorney John B. Gray lamented the lack of adequate transportation serving the area. He stated, "There is not a steamboat plying up and down the Patuxent river today and has not been since last fall." Further, he stated:

There are two steamboat wharves on the bay, one at Plum Point and one at Governor's Run, which should take care of all the freight on the east side of the ridge of Calvert County. The freight from both points has heretofore been heavy, necessitating extra boats when there was good service. There is now only one boat calling at these wharves on the down and one on the up trip, each of these calling at night. The up trip is on Friday night. No cattle, poultry or other produce that has to go on the market can be shipped by this boat, as there is no market on Saturday for such goods. People consequently are forced to ship everything perishable by truck at exorbitant rates."⁸⁵

The Dare's Wharf Post Office was discontinued March 31, 1927, with its mail going to Prince Frederick. It was reestablished July 28, 1928, with Lillie Freeland as postmaster,⁸⁶ but was later closed permanently. In 1927, the area adjacent to the former wharf property was subdivided to develop a waterfront community.⁸⁷ The Dare's Beach Company's Articles of Incorporation are dated May 31, 1928.⁸⁸

Endnotes

¹ Calvert County Circuit Court, Articles of Incorporation, liber SS 6, folios 477-480

² "Another Wharf on the Bay," *Calvert Gazette*, 05/09/1885: 3

³ Calvert County Circuit Court, Deed, liber GWD 3, folio 143 (Document dated 07/22/1885 and recorded 07/19/1902)

⁴ "Maryland Items," *Baltimore Sun*, 09/07/1885: 6

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- ⁵ "Dare Wharf Company," *Calvert Gazette*, 04/24/1886: 3
- ⁶ "A New Landing on the Bay," *Calvert Gazette*, 03/16/1889: 3
- ⁷ "A New Wharf," *Calvert Gazette*, 09/28/1889: 3
- ⁸ "Encouraging Prospects," *Calvert Gazette*, 01/24/1891: 3
- ⁹ "Local Brevities," *Calvert Gazette*, 04/18/1891: 1
- ¹⁰ "The Wharf Company Loses," 05/09/1891, *Calvert Gazette*: 3
- ¹¹ "They Ran Ashore," *Calvert Journal*, 06/13/1891: 3
- ¹² "Postal Changes," *Baltimore Sun*, 07/23/1891: 3
- ¹³ "Calvert County, Maryland, Tercentenary Edition, 1654-1954," *Calvert Independent*: 217
- ¹⁴ "The Boat Capsized," *Calvert Journal*, 07/30/1892: 3; "Freight Tumbles into the Bay," *Calvert Gazette*, 07/30/1892: 3
- ¹⁵ "To Build Dare's Wharf" *Calvert Journal*, 03/19/1898: 3
- ¹⁶ "Country Board," *Baltimore Sun*, 06/18/1895: 3
- ¹⁷ "Country Board," *Baltimore Sun*, 06/27/1895: 3
- ¹⁸ *Summer Homes and Historical Points Along the Routes of The Weems Steamboat Company*, Williams & Wilkins Company Press, Baltimore: 1897; 55, CMM MS 037, Box 1 Folder 1
- ¹⁹ "Excursion to Annapolis," *Calvert Gazette*, 07/09/1898: 3
- ²⁰ "The Bay Ridge Excursion," *Calvert Gazette*, 07/16/1898: 3
- ²¹ "To Build Dare's Wharf" *Calvert Journal*, 03/19/1898: 3
- ²² "Local Brevities," *Calvert Gazette*, 05/21/1898: 1
- ²³ "Wharf Completed," *Calvert Gazette*, 10/08/1898: 3
- ²⁴ "A Good Size Stick," *Calvert Journal*, 08/20/1898: 3
- ²⁵ "Tuesday's Storm," *Calvert Journal*, 10/22/1898: 3
- ²⁶ "Local Briefs," *Calvert Journal*, 04/01/1899: 3
- ²⁷ "Local Briefs," *Calvert Journal*, 04/29/1899: 3
- ²⁸ "Local Brevities," *Calvert Gazette*, 11/10/1900: 3
- ²⁹ "Local Brevities," *Calvert Gazette*, 03/31/1900: 3
- ³⁰ "Local Brevities," *Calvert Gazette*, 02/16/1901: 3
- ³¹ "Corporation Officers," *Calvert Gazette*, 01/12/1901: 3
- ³² "Officers of Corporations," *Calvert Gazette*, 01/10/1903: 3
- ³³ "Taken Up Adrift" *Baltimore Sun*, 09/11/1903: 3
- ³⁴ "Reward for Information," *Baltimore Sun*, 09/18/1903: 3
- ³⁵ "Local Brevities," *Calvert Gazette*, 02/22/1902: 3
- ³⁶ "Monday's Storm," *Calvert Gazette* 04/04/1903: 3
- ³⁷ "Local Brevities," *Calvert Gazette*, 01/30/1904: 1
- ³⁸ "Stockholders Meetings," *Calvert Journal*, 01/09/1904: 3
- ³⁹ Calvert County Circuit Court, Deed, liber GWD 5, folios 196-197
- ⁴⁰ "Stockholders Meeting," *Calvert Journal*, 01/07/1905: 2; "Stockholders Meeting," *Calvert Journal*, 01/06/1906: 3
- ⁴¹ "Wrecked at Dare's," *Calvert Journal*, 06/10/1905: 3
- ⁴² "Stockholders Meeting," *Calvert Journal*, 01/12/1907: 3
- ⁴³ "Capt. Thomson President," *Baltimore Sun*, 11/02/1904: 12
- ⁴⁴ "Calvert County, Maryland, Tercentenary Edition, 1654-1954," *Calvert Independent*: 217
- ⁴⁵ "Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company Annual Report, 1907: 65
- ⁴⁶ "Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company. Patuxent River Route. Winter Arrangement. 1906-1907," *Calvert Gazette*, 01/05/1907: 2
- ⁴⁷ "Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company. Patuxent River Route, Winter Arrangement. 1907," *Calvert Gazette*, 01/26/1907: 3
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- ⁴⁹ "MARYLAND COUNTY SEATS: TODAY AND IN HISTORY: I--Prince Fredericktown," *Baltimore Sun*, 08/18/1907: 15
- ⁵⁰ "Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Company Annual Report, Statement of Freight and Passenger Revenue by Wharves for the Fiscal Year Ending December 31st, 1907." Original in private ownership, copy deposited in collections of Calvert Marine Museum.
- ⁵¹ *Survey of Oyster Bars, Calvert County, Maryland.*, Government Printing Office, 1910: 28-30
- ⁵² "Oysters Were Transplanted," *Calvert Gazette*, 09/16/1911: 1

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- ⁵³ “Notice of Reservation of Natural Oyster Bars for Conservation Purposes,” *Calvert Journal*, 09/16/1916: 1;
“Notice,” *Calvert Journal*, 02/24/1917: 1
- ⁵⁴ “New Steamboat Schedule,” *Calvert Gazette*, 09/12/1908: 3
- ⁵⁵ “Maryland, Delaware & Virginia Railway Co. Patuxent River Line. Schedule In Effect September 19, 1908: 3,”
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- ⁶⁰ “The Late J.H.C. Williams,” *Baltimore Sun*, 03/28/1908: 9; “Stockholders Meeting,” *Calvert Journal*,
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01/11/1913: 3
- ⁶¹ “The Annoyance of Steamboat Travel,” *Calvert Gazette*, 01/23/1909: 3
- ⁶² “A Correction,” *Calvert Gazette*, 01/30/1909: 3
- ⁶³ “Communicated,” *Calvert Journal*, 01/30/1909: 3
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Virginia Railway Company, 1911: pages 55, CMM MS-272
- ⁶⁵ “Disaster at Dare’s Wharf,” *Calvert Gazette*, 06/17/1911: 1; “Dare’s Wharf Sinks,” *Baltimore Sun*, 06/18/1911: 2
- ⁶⁶ “Local Brevities,” *Calvert Gazette*, 06/24/1911: 1
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- ⁶⁸ “Overboard at Dares,” *Calvert Gazette*, 02/08/1913: 1
- ⁶⁹ “Storm Damages,” *Calvert Gazette*, 01/10/1914: 1
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- ⁷¹ “Stockholders Meeting,” *Calvert Gazette*, 01/03/1916: 1; “Officers of Corporations,” *Calvert Gazette*,
01/06/1917: 1
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- ⁷³ Lillie D. Freeland to Post Office Department, 04/04/1916: Post Office Department, Reports of Site Location,
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- ⁷⁴ “Local Brevities,” *Calvert Gazette* 02/24/1917: 1
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- ⁷⁹ “Bay Wharves Damaged by Storm,” *Calvert Gazette*, 02/07/1920: 1; “North East Blizzard,” *Calvert Journal*,
02/07/1920: 1
- ⁸⁰ “Many Wharves Damaged,” *Calvert Journal*, 02/14/1920: 1
- ⁸¹ “Local Brevities,” *Calvert Gazette*, 11/13/1920: 1
- ⁸² “Dare’s Wharf to be Repaired,” *Calvert Journal*, 02/26/1921: 1
- ⁸³ David C. Holly, *Tidewater by Steamboat*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991:188-189
- ⁸⁴ “Foreclosure Sale of Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia Railway Company,” *Baltimore Sun*, 04/09/1923: 23
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