

The Claiborne Clarion

A Newsletter For The
Claiborne Community

February 2022

Volume 14, Number 2

Pat Flory, Editor

Barbara Reisert, Clarion Founder and Editor Emerita
Mary Gregorio, President Claiborne Association

Note the Dates:

Monday, February 14 –
Valentine's Day

Thursday, February 17, 7 PM -
Claiborne Association Board
Meeting. All are welcome to
attend. Please contact Mary
Gregorio if you wish to attend
this zoom meeting. Meeting
minutes are available at
[Association Board Meeting
Minutes](#)

February Birthdays

Beja Marshall	11
Anna Kabler	13
Kim Titus	14
Susan Cornish	14
Marie Deck	16
Terry Boos	24

Please contact Pat Flory at
patflory@gmail.com to add your
name and birthday to
the Claiborne Birthday List.

Hello Claiborne Friends and Neighbors!

I don't know about you, but Groundhog Day has taken on a whole new meaning for me as we navigate these challenging times. Perhaps Punxatawny Phil will signal an early and healthy Spring. By the way, while Punxatawny Phil is the Pennsylvania prognosticator, he is not alone. Cumberland MD relies on Western Maryland Murray who lives in a stump at the Tri-State Zoo. He is named for the mall manager in downtown Cumberland. I don't know why. Is there an Eastern Shore equivalent? and if not, should we have one?

For the time being, we continue to follow the CDC guidelines and take steps to stay healthy. There are no meetings or events scheduled at the Village Hall; we'll re-evaluate again in two weeks.

Since, we were not able to hold the traditional in-person December General Meeting, we have scheduled a virtual February Board Meeting time: Thursday, February 10, 2022 at 7:00pm. Please join us for a brief update on finances, renovation projects and other goings on. We'll share a proposed sketch for a new front entrance to the main hall. And then please stay for a virtual chinwag. It is not necessary to be a member to attend the meeting and it would be wonderful to see your faces.

I will send minutes from the last General Meeting (August) for your review and a Zoom link via email.

A special thank you those of you who met the match challenge and made generous donations to the Claiborne Village Hall operating fund!

Mary

Clarion Guest Editor

A guest editor is needed for the March Clarion. If willing, please contact Pat Flory at

patflory@gmail.com or [443-472-6800](tel:443-472-6800).

Claiborne Program Committee News

We wait, yet again, for a safe time to gather. When local Covid rates and hospitalizations go down, we'll be the first to figure out some way to see one another! Until then, keep a list of all the best movies you've seen so that we can submit them to Movie Czar Renny.

The St. Michaels Community Center continues to distribute pantry items to neighbors in need. The collection box at the Hall didn't work so well, so please deliver your generous donations to the SMCC at their 103 Railroad Avenue site.

There are often volunteers in the building, but you'll be sure to find someone there on

- Mondays from 3 – 5
- Wednesdays from 1 – 3
- Fridays from 11 - 3.

Claiborne Village Association General Meeting

In order to vote, please make sure that you are a member in good standing with dues paid!

You can send your dues to us via mail, drop off and a PayPal link on the website. And, if you are in a position to make a donation to the Claiborne Association, please do so!

[Claiborne Association PayPal link](#)

Claiborne Village Association
10403 Claiborne Rd
Claiborne, MD 21624
Attn: Megan McCoy

Drop a check in the Donation Box at the Village if more convenient. The box is checked regularly.

Talbot County Free Library Public WiFi

Talbot County Free Library has recently announced that both branches will now be offering a limited number of WiFi hotspots with a longer loan period.

Library card holders will be able to borrow the extended loan hotspot for four weeks and renew it once if needed. The WiFi Hotspot is a small portable device that enables users to connect their laptops, Chromebooks, smartphones, tablets and other WiFi-enabled.

Thanks to funding from the Emergency Connectivity Fund, internet connectivity will now be available to those in the community who otherwise would have to go without access to equipment or services.

“The pandemic has made it even more clear that access to the internet is not a luxury, but is essential for all to have regular and reliable access to complete everyday tasks such as applying for a job, paying bills, making a doctor’s appointment, completing work assignments and research, doing homework, and communicating with family and friends,” Newman said. “The library will continue to look for ways to help residents have easily available access to information on the Internet, and through library eResources.”

For more information about the WiFi Hotspots, schedule an appointment through email at askus@tcfl.org, or call the Easton branch at (410) 822-1626 or St. Michaels branch at (410) 745-5877.

The Covid Trap



[The Covid Trap - by Sarah Sayre](#)

Please click on the above link and view the video description of the trap and how it works.

Special thanks to Sarah inventing and for sharing with the Claiborne Community.

[Claiborne Photographs?](#)

Help!

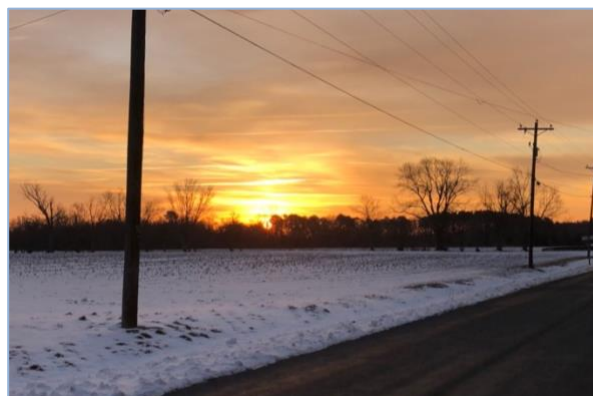
Did you take some pictures at a Claiborne event? Last year or ten years ago?

Unfortunately, we find that, as a community, we have fewer photos of holiday gatherings, dances, picnics and parades than we would like to have. If you could scroll through your photos and send us your favorites we would be very, very grateful! Please send to patflory@gmail.com

January Scenes

A beautiful start to 2022!

Photographs by Elizabeth Crenshaw, Pat Flory, Kirke Harper, Jim Richardson, and Sarah Sayre taken between January 5 and sunrise on January 31.



[Now You See Them, Now You Don't](#) - by Rob Todd



Photo by Chesapeake Bay Program

On most winter days at Claiborne Landing, if you look out toward the jetty on your right, or to the left toward the cove, you'll notice small groups of skittish little birds that disappear under the water.

Guessing where they'll come back up is half the fun as it's usually in a different place. But don't get too close as they'll quickly take flight, skimming just inches above the water. These are Buffleheads (referred to by some as Dippy Ducks); a small sea duck that winters here, as well as in other parts of North America. In spring, they'll return to Canada to breed.

According to the Audubon Field Guide, the name "Bufflehead" is derived from "Buffalo-Head," for the male's odd puffy head shape. The reason they disappear below the surface is to forage for mollusks and plant material. Usually found in small groups, at least one duck will stay surfaced, on guard for predators like bald eagles and hawks.

So, if you have a few moments to spare, check out the Dippy Ducks at the Landing. It's great fun and a way to help the winter pass. Plus, you might also see a few gaggles of geese and a flock or two of swans. Not as entertaining but beautiful to see.

[The First Claiborne Ferry](#) - by Marty Bollinger

The third installment of the history of Claiborne Ferry begins on the next page. Please contact Marty at if you have questions, comments, or just want to say thanks for the information. He can be reached via email at mjb87@verizon.net

The First Claiborne Ferry - Marty Bollinger

The third article in this series on Claiborne ferries introduces the account of the *first* ferry to connect our community to the broader region. This is the story of the steamer *Olive* and the ferry operation established by the Dodson family of St. Michaels. It operated more than a decade before the emergence of Claiborne's more publicized role as the eastern-shore terminus of ferry and rail service across the bay.

Olive had been constructed in 1869. However, accounts of its origin (and, as we shall see later, its ultimate fate) are confused. It is often written in error that *Olive* it was built in Philadelphia, and one source erroneously places its origin as North Carolina. In reality, *Olive* was constructed in Norfolk by John Luke Porter, who years before had been involved in the design of many Confederate warships, including CSS *Virginia*. The probable site of construction was the Atlantic Iron Works shipyard.¹

Accounts of *Olive's* size are also inaccurate. Some sources report that *Olive* measured 987 gross register tons (GRT). In reality, it was far smaller. It started its career at 181 GRT and was later rebuilt to 288 GRT, at which point the maximum capacity was 300 passengers, though it rarely operated with such a large passenger load. A screw-driven wooden steamship, *Olive* was only one-half the size of the steamships that would later connect Claiborne with Annapolis and Baltimore.

Olive was constructed for the Albemarle Steamship Navigation Company. It was placed into service in the second half of 1869, and for the next seven years ferried passengers and cargo through the Albemarle-Chesapeake Canal between Norfolk and Washington, North Carolina.



The ferry Olive, most likely at a wharf in Norfolk

There were ongoing financial challenges on the line and by 1872 authorities seized *Olive* and put the steamer up for public auction. It eventually ended up in the hands of the Old Dominion Steamship Company and continued to operate out of Norfolk on various river routes in Virginia and North Carolina.

On February 11, 1876, Richard S. Dodson of St. Michaels purchased *Olive* from the Old Dominion Steamship Company.² Under the command of Richard's uncle, Captain Edward N. Dodson, *Olive* was placed into service in April 1876 on the route from Baltimore to the Miles River. Local destinations included St. Michaels, "Tunis' Wharf" (up Leeds Creek near Tunis Mills), "Trimble's Wharf" (most likely the property of David C. Trimble in Wye Heights), and Wye Landing. The steamer left Baltimore for the Miles River on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays and made the return journeys on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

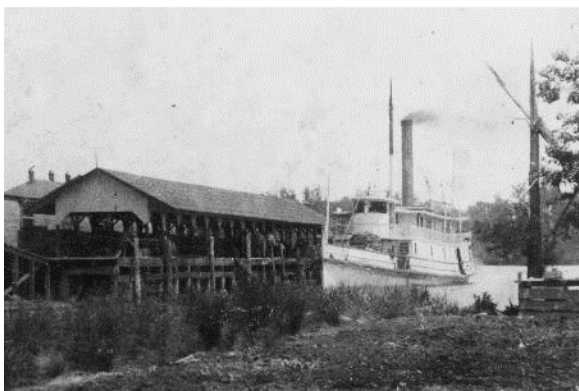
In May of the following year, the schedule was expanded and a new destination was added: Claiborne. *Olive* did not dock in the area of the current Claiborne rail/ferry wharf off Eastern Bay -- that would not be constructed for another 13 years. Instead, the ferry went up Tilghman Creek and dropped off passengers and cargo at what is now Old Claiborne, alongside the property of Maple Hall.

The expansion of service and selection of the wharf was most likely driven by the efforts underway in 1877 to expand the Claiborne community, under the direction of property owner Joseph T. Tunis. In March of that year Tunis held a drawing for 100 new property lots, an effort to attract new residents to the small community. Tunis was hoping that an influx of additional residents would create a boom in Claiborne, and reliable ferry service would support those aspirations. A new wharf had been constructed alongside a sawmill, gristmill, and oyster-packing facility.

The service to Old Claiborne continued for about a decade, with occasional interruptions. In 1887 Dodson acquired a larger ferry, *Emma Giles*, to serve St. Michaels from Baltimore directly, and Claiborne was dropped from the route. The expected economic boom in Claiborne had not materialized. *Olive* and its route were put up for sale in January of 1888, though apparently without immediate success: a few months later *Olive* was placed by Dodson into service out of Baltimore, connecting the city's downtown with Sparrows Point and Middle River's Rockaway Beach.

But *Olive's* days of ferrying passengers to Claiborne were not over just yet. When the Baltimore & Eastern Railroad initiated ferry service to Claiborne's new ferry/rail wharf in 1890, its proposed service was disrupted by the fire that destroyed the ferry *Groton* and by delays in the introduction of *Thames River* into service. As an interim measure, the railroad chartered *Olive* from the Dodson family in October 1890 and placed it on the Baltimore to Claiborne route, albeit only for a few months.

In 1891 *Olive* was sold by the Dodson family to the Suffolk and Carolina Railway Company, and it went back into service out of Norfolk, serving destinations in Virginia and North Carolina. These excursions were not without tragedy. While on a voyage in February 1903 up North Carolina's Chowan River, a sudden squall wrecked the 34-year-old steamer with the loss of 17 of the 30 souls on board.

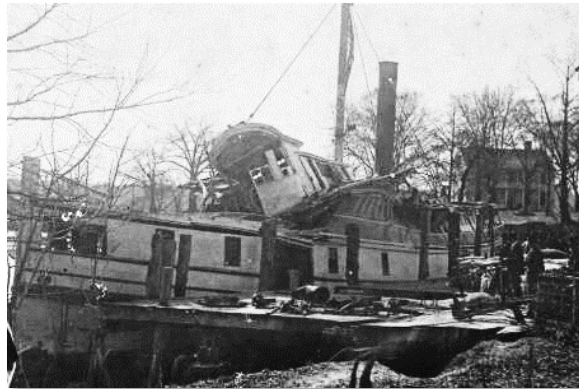


Olive on the Chowan River at Tunis Landing, N.C.



Olive in the Chowan River, after the storm

But the old steamer was to live on in a second life. It was salvaged and rebuilt in 1904. Renamed *Hertford*, it would continue to operate on routes across North Carolina and southern Virginia for another decade. At the ripe old age of 45, *Hertford* was finally replaced by a newer and larger vessel.



The wrecked Olive, before its reconstruction in 1904 as Hertford

It has often been reported that the steamer was sent in 1914 to Newport News for scrapping. But was that in fact the end of the steamer? Reports of his scrapping in 1914 are inaccurate, and the steamer had a third life, though perhaps an inactive one. The official register *Merchant Vessels of the United States* reports that *Hertford* was still listed through 1924, the year it is reported as “abandoned.” For most of this last decade, *Hertford* seems to have been tied up in North Carolina at the Elizabeth City Iron Works and Supply Company, along with the former Claiborne ferry *Texas*.

Its end was quiet. in May of 1924, *Hertford*, which for more than a decade served Claiborne as *Olive*, gently sank at its berth in Elizabeth City and was written off. After 55 years, the history of the only ferry to serve Claiborne from both Eastern Bay *and* Tilghman Creek had come to an end.

Marty Bollinger

Photos of Olive on the Chowan River are from the Frank Stephenson Jr. Collection (#692), East Carolina Manuscript Collection, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina. The author is very grateful for the outstanding service of this library.

¹ This is surmised. First, Porter ran the shipbuilding business of Atlantic Iron Works in Norfolk until it was discontinued in 1871, and we know that he was building ferries there. Second, there are references in August 1869 to a newly constructed steamer, under the command of a Captain Slacum, initiating the Norfolk to Washington (NC) route through the Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal. This steamer was identified as having been built at Atlantic Iron Works but is not named. There are multiple other references to a newly built steamer, identified as *Olive*, under the command of Captain Slacum, running the Norfolk to Washington (NC) route through that same canal in the second half of 1869, though these do not identify the place of construction. No other steamers on this route in 1869 have been identified. It is logical, therefore, to assume that these references refer to the same steamer. It is possible that Porter built the steamer using the facilities of the Atlantic Iron Works, but that the Atlantic Iron Works itself did not execute the contract.

² There are files on the steamer *Olive* and its ownership by the Dodson family in the library of the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. The author has attempted to gain access to these but the CBMM library has not been available for two years, initially due to the pandemic and more recently due to reconstruction of the library space. If at some point the library does open for research, and new information is discovered, an updated article may be issued.