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From The Desk Of... 3 January 1989
A United States Daughter Of 1812

Dear Willis,

It was a pleasure for me to share lunch with you and Ed Beetem when we went to the dedication of the Francis Scott Key plaque in St. Anne's Church.

At that time we talked about the Parson of the Islands- Joshua Thomas. I told you that I would send a copy of my talk about the Deammarva Peninsula in the War of 1812.

It is enclosed. I shall be coming to Baltimore this Wednesday to a meeting for Flag Day, and of, course will be coming for Defender's Day.

I do hope to see you again at one of our 1812 celebrations. We are planning for one in Kent County this spring.

Sincerely,

Fran Moore

Mrs. Robert J. Moore

THE DELMARVA PENINSULA - VICTIM OF THE BRITISH MIGHT 1812-1814

The Delmarva Peninsula has always been a special place, since Claiborne established a trading post and settlement on Kent Island on 1 August 1631, three years before the Ark and the Dove arrived in St. Mary's. Because of the fertile land, the wealth of seafood, and the many ports, the peninsula developed, making it a prosperous area that attracted the British during the Revolution. Thirty years later, because of the humiliation of their losing the Battle of the Chesapeake, the British wanted to "Chastise the Americans into submission!"

To obtain seamen to fight on British ships to control the seas against France and other nations, the British Royal Navy Captains had been impressing American Seamen since 1800. James Monroe, while in England, tried to negotiate to end the impressment, but in May 1807, at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, the British 52 gun Frigate, Leopold, attacked the U.S. Chesapeake when they resisted. In the battle, 3 Americans were Killed and 18 wounded.

The Congress under President Jefferson had passed 3 Embargo Acts to restrict American shipping, which seriously effected the peninsula trade and economy, based on shipbuilding and trade with Europe, the West Indies and China. As Congress fluctuated between being pro-French and pro-British, it became more confusing. Britain continued with her "Orders of Council" restricting Americans from trading in foreign ports in competition with her ships.

When Congress empowered President Madison to call up militia, Brigadier Perry Benson, a hero of the Revolution from Talbot County, was made the head of the Maryland Militia. On 18 June the Congress passed the Declaration of War against Britain, and by December of 1812, the British Council declared the ports and harbors in the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays to be in a state of rigorous blockade. The first appearance of blockading vessels, was on the 4th February, when four 74 gun ships and several smaller armed vessels entered the Virginia Capes. The fleet was under the command of Admiral Cockburn (on the flagship, Marlborough), with a land force of eighteen hundred men, and well supplied with small surf-boats for landing. Their appearance alarmed all lower Virginia, and the militia of the Peninsula. Cockburn took Lynn Haven Bay and sent out marauding expeditions along the shores to take supplies, destroy property and seize public stores. As they plundered and burned farm-houses, and seized live-stock, they carried off negroes and armed them against their masters. Because of being sparsely settled, it was difficult to concentrate military at one point in time to be effective against the enemy. The records of recruiting militia for the 27th VA Regiment on 8 March to 14th April, and 30th September to 28th October 1813 give evidence of scattered attacks. There are also reports of attacks on Accomac.

Admiral Sir John Beresford, on the Poicters arrived in March and was sent along with Captain Bryan on the Belvidera and some smaller vessels to the Delaware Bay to "teach the inhabitants along their shores the duty of submission." On the 16th March he demanded of the magistrate of Lewestown, "25 live bullocks, vegetables, and hay for the use of his Britannic Majesty's Squadron." The reply was, "We solemnly refuse to commit legal or moral treason at your command. Do your worst." At Dover, the drum beat to arms, and 1000 responded to the call. At Smyrna, they turned out with spades or muskets prepared to dig the trenches and meet the foe. Beresford continued to threaten and started the attack on 6th

April, sending heavy round-shot into the town. Colonel Samuel B. Davis, who commanded the fort repeated the refusal, and returned the fire. The bombardment kept up for 24 hours, but most of the 900 shots did not reach the town, and the Congreve rockets passed over it. (Evidence is still in the "Cannonball House" built in 1797, and the home of David Rowland.) Powder had been sent down from Dupont's and the enemy's balls that fitted the American cannons were sent back to them disabling one of the enemy's gun boats and cannon. On the 7th, the British attempted to land but were driven back by the militia. Being unsuccessful, the British later went south, seven miles, to Newbold's Pond, where they were again driven back by the militia. Without supplies, they sailed for Bermuda, where Admiral Warren was getting reinforcements for his fleet.

The British were not really finished with the ocean side of the peninsula, as reports of their entering the Sinepuxent Inlet and burning the Fassitt House and Bayside Farm where the "gunnery of the British in their 1813 bombardment severely battered the house" is still evident today. Dirickson House on Sandy Point in Sinepuxent Neck, Worcester County is now only a shell as the mansion was burned. Stories are also told about Mt. Ephraim, and the landing party who foraged both plantation and home, the redcoats setting fire to the kitchen floor, and cannon balls were found in the nearby ground of Chincoteague Bay, Worcester County.

It was time for the British to go "up the Bay". The British Squadron led by Admiral John Warren siezed Sharp's Island in the mouth of the Choptank River. It then was larger and included the farm of Jacob Gibson. They also took Tighman's, and Poplar Islands to create bases for the supplies that had been taken. Poole's Island became a base of operations for the northern Eastern Shore Counties. After attacking Frenchtown and Havre de Grace, Cockburn with 600 men, in eighteen barges went up the Sassafras River, (Cecil County to the North and Kent County, the south side of the river) on 6 May to Georgetown, which had a flourishing trade with Baltimore. Less than 100 militiamen under Colonel Veazy opened fire from the little breastwork, Duffy's Fort, with one cannon. The village was set in flames after the houses were plundered. Most of the women and children raced to the thick woods for safety. Miss Kitty Knight, with her head erect and eyes flashing confronted the officer with "I shall not leave. If you burn this house, you burn me with it." Twice when the British soldiers attempted to fire the house, Miss Kitty extinguished the flames. The officer gave the order to spare her house and the one next to it of an elderly woman. The property losses were later reported and recorded by 30 of surviving residents: Bagwell, Smith, Downes, Donlvey, Dollis, Jackson, Arthur Nicholson, Mary Nicholson, Nicholson's heirs, Jarvis, Archibald McNeil, Fanny McNeil, Rasin Targget, Usilton, Wilson, Ireland, Bearer, Everett, Roads, Pope, Staugurses, Freeman Henney Elliott, Congo, Pearce, Jackson, Spuran and Williamson for dwellings and other property.

On the return out of the river, the British stopped at Still Pond, where the citizens were so frightened, that they gave all that they had without resistance.

Many American ships had been captured including the Queenstown Packet on 16 April. Mr. William Pacca and his son made their escape in a small boat. The other passengers were returned to Queen's Town the following day, but the British retained the packet and property valued at \$4,000, that belonged to

Messrs. Meredith and Bromwell of Easton. So delighted was Cockburn with his success in plundering and destroying unprotected towns, that with characteristic swagger, he declared he should not be satisfied until he had burned every building in Baltimore.

By 1 June, Admiral Warren had joined Cockburn with 2 more ships-of-the-line and 3 more frigates with naval re-enforcements with 2,650 land troops and marines under the command of Sir Sidney Beckwith. The whole force of the enemy was now over 5,000 trained men. On 5 August the British took Kent Island as a "base of operations" and camping, and erected a battery at the Narrows while they planned an attack on St. Michael's in Talbot County. St. Michaels was a town of 60 houses and 300 persons with many vessels in the shipyards under construction. Besides a barge for Commodore Joshua Barney, there were larger vessels, schooners, of the type known as "Baltimore Clippers, armed as privateers. Of those who sailed from the Chesapeake Bay in 1812-1814, 28 were built in the shipyards in Talbot County. This was the principal reason for the British attack. The militia under the command of Brigadier General Benson at Easton had been preparing. There were companies from Wye Landing, Miles River Neck, and the Chapel District as well as Easton and St. Michaels. As night came, lights were placed in the tops of the tallest trees and high on the masts of the vessels in the harbor. After midnight on 10 August 1813, the British brig, Conflict, towed 11 barges up the the Saint Michaels River to Deepwater Point. It was dark and rainy. At 4:00 AM 300 British marines landed above Parrott's point. The militia fired two cannons before the British stormed the fort, but further advance was checked by fire from the batteries of Lieuts. Graham and Vickers. There was much blood on the grass at the water. The enemy commenced a cannonade upon the town, but the misty lights in the treetops misdirected their fire, and the British overshot the town. One cannon ball crashed through the wall and rolled down the stairs of the house, known as the Cannon Ball House. The British were unable to destroy the shipyards and vessels which prompted their attack. Two weeks later was a second unsuccessful attempt to capture St. Michaels.

The next point of attack was on 13 August in Queenstown, Queen Anne's County. The 38th Regiment of 244 Queen Anne's men, 100 Cavalry, and 35 Artillery with two light six pounders heard the British open fire at 4:00 AM. They were against two experienced British detachments from 20 barges, whom had come ashore at Blakefore, then the residence of Governor Robert Wright. Major Emory committed his cavalry, but the enemy was advancing in such force as to make resistance at Queenstown imposible. Major Nicholson had his picket stationed on the Kent Island Road, known as Slippery Hill, because the blood on the grass and in the water made it too silppery to climb. They fired, retreated and fired again. General Beckwith's horse was shot under him and several of the enemy were killed. With overwhelming odds, a retreat gave the British possession of the town to take the needed supplies. Robert Gardner, of Kent Island, was suspected of piloting the British up to Queenstown. General Sir Charles Napier who was with Beckwith in this attack wrote back to England-"Much I dislike sacking and burning towns; it is bad employment for British troops. this authorized, perhaps needful plundering, though to think so is difficult, is very disgusting, and I will, with my own hand, kill any perpetrator of brutality under my command." However he was the one who proposed the campaign, to incite a rebellion of negro slaves, and inflict upon the country all the horrors of servile war.

26 August 1813, the enemy again apperaed in the vicinity of St. Michael's, burned two small vessels, plundered inhabitants in the vicinity of their clothing, food and animals, etc, and they returned to their ships which were anchored off Kent Point. Queen Anne's men, such as Col. Hindman and Captain Nicholson who had been recognized for bravery on the Canadian frontier in May 1813. The Easton Packet Messenger, Captain Clement Vickars, was captured by one of the enemy barges off the north end of Poplar Island.

At Dartmoor Prison, England between 2 April 1813, when the first draft of Americans arrived, and 24 July 1815, when the last American prisoner was released, a total of about 6560 Americans were held as prisoners of war. Of these, 531 were born in Maryland and 97 in Delaware, many of them from the peninsula. They were sailors from privateers, merchant vessels and Navy ships taken by the Royal Navy, plus Americans earlier impressed into the British service who refused to serve in the war against the United States.

The main might of the British activity decreased in the winter as the force returned to Bermuda and the West Indies. However some remained for the blockade and one British Tender commanded by Lieutenant Phipps, entered the Little Choptand River, landing at several farms to "take supplies." When off of Tobacco Stick, (now Madison) they set fire to a vessel and were attacked and driven off by the men of that village. When they reached the mouth of the Little Choptank River, they anchored off James Island and became icebound. Captain Joseph Stewart with mem from Tobacco Stick, Taylors Island, and James Island attacked across the ice. The captain and 17 men of the crew were taken prisoners to Cambridge. A 1,000 pound cannon from the ship was later auctioned off with the other spoils. The cannon became the prized possession of Taylors Island and named "Becky Phipps" for the colored cook who had been on the ship and the British Lieutenant who had commanded the ship. It is now mounted and marked in ~~Cambridge~~ *TAYLORS ISLAND*.

By the spring of 1814, with Napoleon defeated in Europe, England found herself able to step up the war effort in America. Admirals Cockburn and Warren were joined by Admirals Cockrane and Malcolm with 50 "ships-of-the-line". Major General Robert Ross added 3 battalions of infantry, a brigade of artillery, sappers and miners, as well as medical and the Royal Scots Fusilers with 900 Bayonets. This time they chose Tangier Island, VA as the "base of operations" from which they burned our U.S. Capital, Washington. They cast anchor in Tangier harbor and cleared the ground for tents and forts. Parson Joshua Thomas explained to the Admiral Cockburn that he should not cut down the trees in the Methodist Camp Ground, so two forts were erected to the south of the camp ground, east and west, with the tents for the army in a semicircle on the north side, and a summer house in the center. Brother Thomas obtained favor with the officers and soldiers of the army and in turn the officers paid for the food and others needs that the islanders provided. However, from this base they could plunder the mainland, so that when the islanders went there, they were jailed and accused of being spies. In August 1814, the islanders were aware of preparations being made to leave and Admiral Cockburn asked Brother Thomas to worship before going into battle. On the last Sunday that they were in camp, the flags were hoisted, the drums beat, and bands of music played. The soldiers were drawn up in solid columns, about 12,000 men, under the pines of the old camp ground. After singing and prayer, and thanking the admiral for all of his kindnesses, " I warned them of the danger and distress they would bring on themselves and others by going to Baltimore. God had said, Thou shall

not kill. It was given to me that they would not take Baltimore, and would not succeed in their expedition. Prepare for death for many would die including one of your great leaders." The islanders could hear the booming of heavy ordnance. When the officers returned, he was told that "our best general was killed, and hundreds of our brave men have been slain. We have had a bloody battle, and all the time we were fighting, we thought of you, and what you told us." In January 1815, there was much excitement. A large vessel had a White Flag at her mast head as the signal of peace. For many years the fort construction could be seen as well as the graves along the shore to the south, where their dead were buried, with other traces of the history of the occupancy by the British army.

While the main force of the British was on Baltimore, Captain Peter Parker had been ordered to make a diversion on the Eastern Shore to prevent the troops from crossing the bay to the assistance of Baltimore. He was to capture small bodies of American soldiers, burn farm houses along the bay shore, and harass the people in every possible way. On 28 August, his men put "the torch" to John Waltham's farm, "Skidmore", and next day fired Richard Frisby's farm, part of the tract known as "Great Oak Manor." On 30 August, the Menelaus anchored off the shore about a mile north of the farm on which Tolchester is now located, called "Chantilly." A negro told Captain Parker where to go ashore to reach Chestertown. Colonel Philip Reed had the 21 Regiment camped at Belle Air (now known as Fairlee.) At midnight, Reed got the message that the British had landed and were advancing. Our militia proceeded toward the bay to Isaac Caulk's farm. In front of the American positions was the open low land. When the British column appeared, the firing began. The British pressed forward, were repulsed, then attacked the left flank. Heavy firing on both sides, then the British firing ceased, and they retreated. Sir Peter Parker had been killed along with 9 men and 9 wounded of which 6 died. The Americans had all but "run out of ammunition." This defeat also cast a shadow over the British attack on North Point, Baltimore.

The Delmarva Peninsula was indeed "A Victim of the British Might from 1812 to 1814. When Brig. Col. Benson wrote to the Governor of Maryland about the shortage of arms at the armory built in Easton as an arsenal for the entire Eastern Shore, Governor Winder replied that he was unable to give the inhabitants any further security. No help came from the western shore or from the National Government. WE DID IT ALL OURSELVES.