The Eastern Shore of Virginia In the Civil War

Matthew Ostergaard Krogh

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James I. Robertson, Jr.
William C. Davis
Justin Nystrom

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Gen. John Adams Dix, the Union commander of the Department of Maryland, wrote in an 1861 letter to Francis Blair of President Lincoln’s administration that “we are in the most danger on the Eastern Shore [of Virginia].” Dix did not exaggerate when he implied that Accomac and Northampton County embodied secessionist sentiment on the Delmarva Peninsula in 1861. Dix knew that the Eastern Shore of Virginia, the most southern region of Delmarva, heavily influenced its neighbors to the north. If it made a strong demonstration in favor of the Confederacy, the Eastern Shore of Maryland might go spiraling toward secession. It could also decrease Union sentiment and progress in lower Delaware. With this in mind, Dix decided to make a preemptive strike on the Eastern Shore of Virginia in late 1861. Although this campaign describes only part of the question that this thesis entails it embodies the overarching importance of what occurred in the area.
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Figure 1. The Eastern Shore Front, 1861-1865.
Figure 2. Blockade Running on the Eastern Shore, 1861-1865.
CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

Goals of the Study

Gen. John Adams Dix, the Union commander of the Department of Maryland, wrote in an 1861 letter to Francis Blair of President Lincoln’s administration that “we are in the most danger on the Eastern Shore [of Virginia].”¹ Dix did not exaggerate when he implied that Accomac and Northampton County embodied secessionist sentiment on the Delmarva Peninsula in 1861. Dix knew that the Eastern Shore of Virginia, the most southern region of Delmarva, heavily influenced its neighbors to the north. If it made a strong demonstration in favor of the Confederacy, the Eastern Shore of Maryland might go spiraling toward secession. It could also decrease Union sentiment and progress in lower Delaware. With this in mind, Dix decided to make a preemptive strike on the Eastern Shore of Virginia in late 1861. Although this campaign describes only part of the question that this thesis entails it embodies the overarching importance of what occurred in the area.²

The events that transpired have been incorporated in this study of two isolated borderland Confederate communities, Accomac and Northampton County. This is a military, maritime and social history. It is a military history because of the many skirmishes and raids that occurred there. It is a maritime history owing to the ramifications of blockade running on the Atlantic and the Chesapeake during this period. Lastly, it is a social history because of the Union occupation that its civilians had to undergo throughout most of the war. Hopefully, these themes will assure

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² Delmarva is a modern connotation denoting the peninsula made up by parts of Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia.
a fresh scholastic view of an academically dusty topic in addition to enabling it to glean a sufficient amount of information that ties together the Eastern Shore and the Civil War.

Although this time period and this area have been discussed in various literary works, it has never been argued that this area was significant. That study argues that the Shore underwent important military duress in the form of raids, skirmishes, and tactical maneuvers. The reason these clashes were important is because they helped shape Union protocol in other campaigns. The campaign for the Shore also stands out as an example of a fairly bloodless fight. This exemplifies the Union’s true capabilities in the first year of the Civil War which were overshadowed by glorious Confederate victories. This thesis also argues that the Atlantic and Chesapeake, which virtually surrounded the Shore, played an important role in the way it fought the war. Rather than detract from its significance by isolating it, these waters added to its role. Southern and Northern sympathizers found ways to aid the South and the North via the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. Lastly, this survey argues that the Shore underwent an almost unprecedented occupation by Union forces which created a peaceful, yet resentful enclave of Southern territory. The Eastern Shore of Virginia, isolated and alone, found itself far away from military action after 1861 although it bordered the most important region of the war. Yet from 1862 to 1865 the Shore became engulfed with a war of its own.

A Critique of the Literature

The current state of literature on the Eastern Shore and the Civil War is stagnant but well rounded. Most secondary sources predate 1950. Yet, only oral and genealogical histories have come out of the present. A secondary source predating 1950 that has probably impacted the literature more than any other source is James Mears’ The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of
Secession and in the Reconstruction Period. Mears’ book is unabridged and complete in its storytelling, which makes it indispensable as a basis for further exploration. Mears included military, maritime and social history. Another example is Eric Mills’ Chesapeake Bay in the Civil War. This book, the most current publication regarding something akin to this study is close in methodology to this thesis. Mills moved chronologically, cited military and social events while also using the Chesapeake region to connect the various events and people. Unlike Mills, however, this thesis will discuss only the Shore.

Also key to this study is a regimental history of the 39th Virginia Infantry, the only Confederate regiment formed on the Shore. Well researched and full of information, this work by G. L. Sherwood and Jeffrey C. Weaver is a basis for any military study of the Shore in 1861. Another scholastic work is Revival’s Children: A Religious History of the Eastern Shore, by Kirk Mariner. This study includes short histories of every church and often cites events from the Civil War. The secondary oral and genealogical sources referred to contain many short tales and stories that were written more for entertainment purposes than scholarly purposes. Examples include Kirk Mariner’s True Tales of the Eastern Shore and Drummondtown: A One Horse Town, by L. Floyd Nock. The book serves as a historical and architectural tour guide through the small town, providing many important tidbits on the Civil War such as the uses of homes by Federal troops and backgrounds of the town’s residents.

In the secondary literature examined, most writers fall into a master narrative or storytelling mode when answering this question. Although very useful for telling history, narratives often leave little room for analysis of people, places, and events with a bias or intent.
One book that is a complete history of the Shore from 1603 to 1964 gives the Civil War less than ten pages!

In short, writers include a few key facts and move on. This self-defeating interpretation is not conducive to further study. The sources authors consulted for these works mostly include family histories, manuscripts, and court documents. Except for Mills and Mears, these social histories did not incorporate newspapers, or state and federal records regarding the actions of the Confederate and Union soldiers and civilians in the Chesapeake. The mindset that the Shore is insignificant caused many authors to look for the odd and unusual in order to set the Shore apart. Yet it is highly unlikely that Union authorities considered the Shore unimportant, since the Official Records of the War of the Rebellion delegated over 200 pages to it.

Primary sources include family papers, diaries, inventories, receipts, journals, letters, trials, laws, wills, censuses, proclamations, battle summaries, newspapers, and magazines. Four places hold these sources: the Eastern Shore Public Library in Accomac, the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond, Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia, and the Library of Congress in Washington, D. C.

A variety of primary sources encompass personal stories. Nathaniel J. W. LeCato, an officer of the 39th Virginia, wrote a satiric autobiographical novel. Tom Burton; or the Days of ‘61 told his story of the Union invasion of the Shore. Union General John A. Dix also wrote his memoirs, which discussed the invasion as well. Gen. Lockwood’s papers exist in manuscript form in the National Archives.

Prominent officers and families aside, stories about wage-earning adventurers also endure. Middle class blockade runners left their clues in letters, business transactions, and personal papers.
Many included sets of seafaring brothers and cousins who acted for patriotic as well as rebellious reasons. Others had small stakes in the war including profit. These men, who were often merchants and sometimes scoundrels, show how civilians impacted the war without toting rifles.³

Court records supply various samples of Shore life during the Civil War. One example is Accomac County wills which spanned the war. These provide interesting accounts of family possessions and property. County record books typify the chaos and inconsistency that the Shore experienced before and after the occupation.

State and Federal records also display useful information. On the state level is a book, edited by James I. Robertson, Jr., entitled Proceedings of the Advisory Council of Virginia, April 21 - June 19 1861. This work functioned as a forum of communication between the Shore and Richmond providing details such as the type of arms employed by the 39th Virginia, as well as the appointment of its officers. State records also provide lists of Mexican War veterans, some of whom later served in the 39th Virginia.

Newspapers also abound in this study as primary and secondary sources. These include the Richmond Times, the Richmond Examiner, the Richmond Enquirer, the New York Herald, the Charleston Mercury, and The Regimental Flag. These periodicals reported the war as it transpired on the Shore, and they often chronicled people, places, and events that official records did not.

Postwar newspapers from the Eastern Shore mixed historical fact with popular memory, creating a Lost Cause interpretation. The articles included are sometimes considered primary because they were written by someone who lived through the Civil War but are mostly secondary

³ See James E. Mears, *The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession Period* (Onancock, Va.: Published by the author, 1957) for an extensive assortment of blockade runner stories.
sources because they were researched by journalists. These papers include the *Peninsula Enterprise, Eastern Shore News, Eastern Shore Herald*, and *Accomac News*. Dating to the mid-Twentieth Century, the articles published stories of people and events and lists of rosters and casualties.

My sources also range chronologically, covering years prior to, during, and after the war. Doris Adler, a local historian, put together a very informative work on the 1850s that consisted mostly of diary entries with explanations and interpretation of said entries. The value in this source is its background information on people who became semi-important actors in the Civil War. Howard Pyle wrote a monumental article for *Harper’s Weekly*. In his article, Pyle described the area and interviewed locals. The article discussed the Shore in 1879, but it harkened back to the Civil War in a manner that gave crucial insight and information.

Diaries and ledgers include business transactions, court cases, and military operations. This includes *The Ker Papers*, a set of economic transactions, and diary entries from 1812 to 1865. The Kers were one of the wealthiest and most influential families in Northampton County. They eventually fled the Shore upon hearing of the Union invasion.4 George Bonsall of the Union army documented a soldier’s life. Bonsall recorded thoughts and ideas while on duty in Northampton County, including a stint on one of its barrier islands.5 Another variation of a diary is that of Sally Cary Graves. Her postbellum reminiscences of the invasion and subsequent blockade running add a feminine point of view to a tragic situation.

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Obviously, as with any set of primary and secondary sources, these too have their shortcomings. The first one is relevance. The sources of this thesis do not always make relevant contributions to the topic and question at hand. They do not always provide insight, information, or even a point of view. The Ker Papers survive as an example of this. First, of all, the pages covering the years 1861 through 1865 make up only an eighth of the book. This is problematic, as it does not leave much to be interpreted or analyzed. In addition, much of the information is in the form of short blurbs concerning receipts and payments.

Another failure of the literature is its incompleteness. Much information, for example, is given on blockade runners in James Mears’ book on the Shore and the Civil War. Yet little concerning their actual backgrounds is known. No one has been able to compile truly significant data regarding blockade running in the area because of the secretive nature of the business. In addition, Union forces on the Shore only reported it when they chased or caught a blockade runner, hence giving us only part of the story.

A final failure of the literature is the folkloric status much of it has assumed. It is difficult to separate fact from fiction in tales that have been melded together in a nostalgic story about the Shore. These publications manipulate people and places such as Peninsular Canaan, which suffers academically because it twisted people’s words and embellish events in order to increase dramatic effect. Overall, there is almost no way to confirm whether or not such oral histories are legend, lore, or lies.

As already stated, this is a history of a wartime community. Yet as a whole, the interpretive thread used to discuss the topic is a social one. From here, the study can branch out in other directions while maintaining the same overall perspective. For example, it incorporates
relevant political and military events into the broader social history. Several works, such as
Mears’ book, were consulted for their theoretical approaches such as Mears’ book, which strove
to tie in many factors of the war while using an overall social theme, and Mills’ book which
approached the topic geographically.

Going back to 1861, it is plain to see that Dix’s ensuing invasion of Accomac and
Northampton County acted as the crux of the Civil War on the Eastern Shore of Virginia.6
However, throughout the Civil War, the Union and the Confederacy were still in danger on this
submissive, yet seditious, and certainly significant Shore.

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6 The remainder of this thesis will refer to the Eastern Shore of Virginia as the Shore. Other places such as the Western Shore or the Eastern Shore of Maryland will be fully identified.
CHAPTER II - SECESSION & STRATEGY

The Accomac & Northampton County Mainland & Secession

The lights of secession burnt brightly on the Eastern Shore of Virginia when, in February 1861, delegates from Accomac and Northampton County went to Richmond to consider a referendum whether to remain in the Union or to secede and join the Confederacy. A series of letters between Thomas James of Accomac and a friend in Baltimore documented the election of officials which caused havoc on the Shore. Said his friend; “I never dreamed that a mere election of a sett of Delegates, for a State convention, would cause such bitter, and unpleasant feeling amongst Old Friends and acquaintances, as I hear was manifested in your County.”

Various civilians ordered several Unionists to leave the county although to no avail. The Commonwealth finally decided to hold a statewide session in May to debate the issue in a proper forum. Miers Fisher and William H. B. Custis, two Eastern Shore delegates, attended. Fisher, a prominent Northampton lawyer and planer, had been involved in local politics for decades. At both the April 4 and the April 17 secession conventions, he voted to secede. Custis, of Accomac County, also made a living as a planter and politician. In contrast to Fisher, he voted against secession both times. Yet on May 23 most of the counties of Virginia, including Accomac and Northampton, ratified the Ordinance of Secession passed by the secession convention.¹

Northampton had a very conservative climate. Southern fervor ran high in Northampton County which sat directly across the Chesapeake Bay from Hampton Roads. Its politicians, such as

as Miers Fisher, owned large amounts of land and many slaves. Northampton grew large amounts
of cotton, a crop that required lots of slave labor. The landed gentry controlled affairs in the
extremely isolated and rural society where small farmers and free blacks were very poor. Small
farming and manumission encouraged a breakdown of planter supremacy; therefore, planters did
not encourage it. The county also lacked extended infrastructure and had only two main roads to
bring in outsiders. In addition, agriculture, not aqua-culture, dominated the economy. Indeed,
only a handful of people lived on the Northampton barrier islands, and only the town of
Broadwater on Hog Island had a significant population. In addition, Northampton had 3,872
slaves and only 962 free blacks. Northampton’s slave population had increased by 628 from 1790
to 1860 while its population of free blacks doubled. Many of its slaves were being sold south
although many were also acquiring freedom. There were also five blacks for every three whites in
Northampton, which indicates that slavery still dominated its society. Yet, all of these slaves were
owned by only 400 people, and half owned more than six slaves, a significant number in that day.
Overall, secession fever ran high in Northampton (the less populous of the two counties), which
provided 65 percent of the initial recruits for the 39th Virginia.²

Accomac County, although it had much in common with its neighbor to the South, had a
more moderate climate. The landed gentry made up a smaller percentage of the county (which
bordered the Union state of Maryland). Although large plantations existed, the numerous
manumissions caused partly by the Quaker population, led to a less structured society. One
eexample existed in the lower part of the county. Boston, a free black community created in 1803,

² James E. Mears, The Virginia Eastern Shore in the War of Secession and in the Reconstruction
Period (Onancock, Va.: by the author, 1957), 1-2; Weaver and Sherwood, 39th Virginia Infantry,
92-93.
resulted as the legacy of a dead planter who freed his slaves in his will. Because Northampton cornered the market in selling slaves south, Accomac planters tended to free theirs instead. Slaves, especially skilled craftsmen, also made money to purchase their freedom. In turn, almost as many free blacks as slaves lived in Accomac. In 1860 Accomac had 4,507 slaves and 3,418 free blacks, although the latter had increased fourfold since 1790. This helped create a larger population of small farmers because planters, with fewer slaves available, could not cultivate massive amounts of land as in Northampton. Therefore, farmers were able to purchase tracts of land. For example, Accomac had more slave owners than in Northampton, the total coming to 773. This number is significant because there were fewer slaves allotted to each slave owner in Accomac than Northampton. In turn, there existed only a small gap between planters and farmers. Both classes grew truck crops such as sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, wheat, and corn. These crops did not require as much slave labor as cotton limiting the amount of slaves in the area.  

Yet, despite the fact that slavery had less dominance, it remained a viable part of Accomac’s culture. Henry Alexander Wise, a Virginia congressman and governor from Accomac, owned from ten to twenty slaves in the 1850s and he ranked in the top ten slave owners in the county. Such powerful men wielded massive influence over local politics and helped to keep slavery intact on the Shore. In both counties there lived only 5,469 slaves, and 7,290 free blacks making them roughly equal on the Shore.  

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Secession hinged on many factors including occupations and trade routes. Different trade routes and vocations created problems regarding the Shore’s secession because of the ideas exchanged in ports and the ideas created in occupations. Planters and businessmen who traded with the Hampton Roads and Baltimore were more likely to favor secession. Yet, watermen (fishermen) and sailors who traded with Philadelphia and New York were more likely to favor Union. Which ones people traded with was not decided by whether or not they lived on the bayside or seaside, however. Planters on the seaside traded west while watermen on the bayside traded northeast. This means that no section of the Shore was unanimously secessionist or Unionist, with the exceptions of the islands. Indeed, although many accounts speak of a Unionist section in northern Accomac, it was also the area where Southern sympathizers demonstrated most rabidly and violently.5

Secession on the Shore also hinged on the continuation of slavery. Although there were already more free blacks than slaves in both counties, Southern sympathizers wished to maintain the status quo. Those who owned land favored slavery because they had the power and means to own slaves. Even those who did not own land sometimes favored slavery because they did not wish to allow blacks to become their equals. The reason some farmers decided against secession probably had more to do with their disdain for planter society or their appreciation for Northern markets rather than a dislike of slavery. Some Quakers also resided on the Shore and they generally frowned on slavery. The islands especially held anti-slavery views but they did not dominate politics on the Shore because they were only a small fraction of the population.

5 Turman, The Eastern Shore, 182.
Additionally, many Northern sympathizers decided in favor of secession after Lincoln’s call for troops in April, as they felt in danger of being invaded.6

The Barrier Islands & Chesapeake Islands of Virginia & Secession

In the vote on whether or not to secede from the commonwealth of Virginia, the islands of Northampton and Accomac overwhelmingly voted in favor of union. The 411 residents of Tangier Island,7 which included six free blacks, voted not to secede. Hog Island also voted not to secede. The only secessionist on Hog Island was the lighthouse keeper and he left soon after the vote. Chincoteague, the largest bastion of Northern sentiment on the Shore, voted against joining the Confederacy almost unanimously.8

Strong ties to the Northern economy overrode all other factors influencing the islands’ Unionist sentiment. John Whealton said in 1903 that he had been a strong Southern man but, convinced that the South would not succeed, kept his interests with the North in order to keep up trade and avoid privation. Their methods of catching, processing, and transporting seafood did not require slave labor. Only one slave ever lived on Tangier and merely a handful lived on Chincoteague. Hog Island had no slaves at all.9


7 Presently, there is only one Tangier Island. In 1861, however, the smaller surrounding islands caused many to refer to the group as the Tangier Islands. This study will utilize both depending on the source cited.


9 Susie M. Ames, “Chincoteague Island During the Civil War,” Peninsula Enterprise, 15 June 1961; Bogardus, Dear Eagle, 38; Mariner, Once Upon An Island, 41-42; idem, God’s Island, 60.
Islanders did not incorporate slavery into their livelihoods. Most of the inhabitants hunted for a living, and sold their game to the wealthier inhabitants of the mainland. Lacking grand sea island plantations such as those found in the Deep South, modest islanders in the Chesapeake lived in unassuming homes, and raised large families. Often they worked as watermen, farmers, and market hunters, spending much of their time in their marine vessels. Many of the Hog Islanders salvaged wood from the wreckage of ships to construct homes and fences. Slavery also wasn’t popular because islanders did not practice large scale agriculture. The richest man on the Hog Island, William Doughty, left the duties of his small farm to his wife and daughters.10

In addition, islanders had no large property holdings. The few who did have extensive real estate on the islands lived on mainland plantations. Robert E. Lee’s father-in-law, George Washington Parke Custis, pastured his sheep on Smith Island, which he also owned. Richard B. Winder, an Accomac planter, also owned island real estate. However, he sold his portion of Hog Island in 1852 to the United States government so it could build the lighthouse.11

Lastly, many Chincoteague Islanders came from, or had ancestors, from the North, including Delaware and New Jersey. John Caulk, for example, a Chincoteague politician and later Union official, came from Delaware. Other men came from New Jersey, Philadelphia, and the Eastern Shore of Maryland.12

Federal patrols helped protect the Unionist islands. Union ships patrolling the bay stopped at the islands because of the relative safety offered them and the small dangers the populations

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11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.
posed. In addition, as noted in a report by the *USS Resolute* in July 1861, the inhabitants of Tangier and Watt’s Island were under constant threat from attacks by marauding parties on the Eastern Shore. Using their Northern sympathies to advantage, Federals gathered information from islanders while giving supplies and protection to them. Chincoteague experienced similar terrorism and hailed the arrival of the *USS Louisiana* in August 1861 as a godsend.\(^\text{13}\)

Everyone on the islands took the Union oath at some point during the war. On August 11, 1861, Union Lt. Pierce Crosby landed on Tangier in the steamer, *Fanny* and administered the oath of allegiance to all thirty-five of the men present on the island. Crosby also warned them not to communicate with the coasts of Virginia under penalty of imprisonment and a confiscation of their vessels. The lighthouse keeper on Watts Island likewise wanted protection from rabidly violent Southerners on the Shore. Only a few islanders did not take the oath or seek protection but because of apathy rather than Southern sympathies. Sometimes these island dwellers became so apathetic that they hoisted whichever flag made port nearby.\(^\text{14}\)

**Union Strategy Regarding the Eastern Shore & the Chesapeake**

Both sides considered the Chesapeake Bay important. The bay led to both the Union capital and Confederate capitals. The bay also was access to four major Virginia rivers as well as a plethora of inlets, bays, coves, creeks, branches, and guts. At least fifteen creeks existed on the Eastern Shore bayside, some of them stretching over halfway across the peninsula. In addition, the Chesapeake remained a thoroughfare for supplies, soldiers, and munitions. It provided


\(^\text{14}\) Ibid.
springboards for running the blockade, attacking defenses, and placement of men, materials and munitions.

The Union sought to strangle the Chesapeake region by choking off its waterways, an idea masterminded by Gen. Winfield Scott. This in mind, President Abraham Lincoln ordered Virginia’s coast and ports surrounded with a naval blockade. The blockade sought to seal off the South to prevent goods or people from entering or leaving. It eventually consisted of a massive number of ships. The blockade also demanded a wide variety of vessels, including steamers, sloops, schooners, brigs and ironclads. The different sailing vessels enabled the Union navy to perform different missions and travel in different areas. While steamers moved quickly, sail-powered schooners were quiet. Likewise, brigs and sloops traveled in shallow waters and ironclads were impervious to most enemy fire. This strategy was vital to Union war aims in the Eastern Theater. Union leaders designed the blockade to shut down the South’s seagoing trade which thrived on Northern and European markets.\(^{15}\) After closing up Southern commerce in the Chesapeake, the subjugation of the South fell to the Union army. The Union knew it had to invade the South and control it by force. This plan, for the Shore, would not be in place for several months.

The Union had many reasons for an early invasion of the Eastern Shore. The relocation of the Confederate capital to Richmond made the Shore vital to the Union war effort as a supply and communications line, as well as a source of 13,659 loyal white citizens, soldiers, and contraband. The Shore also flanked the eastern side of the Commonwealth and was useful as a possible backdoor to Southeastern Virginia. If the Shore could be gained, then Maryland and Delaware

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might follow suit. This would keep the Union from fighting dual fronts on the Eastern and Western Shore. Moreover, the Union could establish lines of communication all the way from Washington to Fort Monroe via the Shore. Other reasons, according to the *Richmond Dispatch*, included putting a stop to trade between the Eastern and Western Shore, gaining access to grain stores, and obtaining the Cherrystone oysters raised in the area.\(^{16}\)

**Confederate Strategy Regarding the Eastern Shore & the Chesapeake**

The Confederate government, however, did not have many reasons to defend the Shore. The Confederacy wanted to concentrate its armies in large, significant areas such as northern Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley. It did not consider the Shore significant. Regardless of the pleas sent to it by local delegates such as Miers Fisher, the Confederacy did not intend to defend or hold the Eastern Shore. It decided to defend other points of land, such as Fort Monroe and the Norfolk Naval Yard. The Commonwealth did dispense advice freely, however. The Virginia General Assembly declared that all tidewater counties were to take measures to protect the coast from the enemy. It advised each county to form a home guard and establish convenient places of rendezvous, and select suitable points for rifle pits and signal stations for the purpose of common defense. That left the defense of the Shore to the 39\(^{th}\) Virginia and local officials.\(^{17}\)

Fortunately, the regiment dedicated itself to protecting the Shore even if the rest of the commonwealth would not. While officials did not raise the 39\(^{th}\) for that purpose, it nonetheless operated with that objective in mind in 1861. Although Cape Charles held no fort, it could have

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\(^{16}\) “Invasion of the Eastern Shore,” *Richmond Dispatch*, 21 November 1861.

served the Confederacy as a point of control over the entrance to the Chesapeake Bay. The 39th Virginia even placed a company near the cape after realizing its significance. Regimental commanders spread companies all over the peninsula from the seaside to the bayside. However, it may have been better for the regiment to defend one or two key points on the Shore rather than four different creeks and towns over a fifty-mile distance. This policy of defending all important points would be a losing one. By remaining on the defensive and not performing a raid into Maryland, the 39th Virginia forfeited the initiative to Union forces. This policy cost the regiment potential recruits as well as arms, munitions, supplies, and information. Most importantly, it cost the unit the chance to intimidate the Union enough to keep it on the defensive. The officers of the 39th failed to realize that they did not need to fight, only maneuver, spread propaganda, and increase morale. In the end, a force in such a campaign might have won over Maryland and Delaware.

In hindsight, this decision had both positives and negatives. It kept the Confederacy from overextending itself, isolating its forces, and taking unnecessary risks. Yet, the decision to omit the Shore from the overall strategy left the key to the Eastern Shore of Maryland and lower Delaware in the hands of the Union. The Shore also could have served as a backdoor for invading forces such as the Army of Northern Virginia. If Lee had entered the North partially through the Eastern Shore of Virginia and Maryland in Autumn 1862 his army would have found more support because these two areas were plantation societies in contrast to the western parts of Virginia and Maryland. Though the Shore was narrow, and hard to access, it served as a minor strategic avenue.

18 Weaver and Sherwood, 39th Virginia Infantry, 92-93.
The Southern government could have found some middle ground regarding the Shore’s place in the war. It should have placed a small division of a few thousand men on the state line between Maryland and Virginia, to discourage any Union advances. The South could then have encouraged secession on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, as well as the flow of more men and materials into the South. This force also might have threatened the capital, forcing the Union to take the defensive. Furthermore, the Confederacy should have fought the Union blockade in the Chesapeake Bay more intensely. Because no such campaign ever took place, Confederate strategists set other ideas into motion.

Regardless, Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory, created a strong maritime strategy. Mallory, a gifted strategist, thought that by using steam-powered ironclads, the Confederacy could break the Union blockade. He intended to unleash privateers on Northern maritime commerce. Commissioned high-seas raiders, armed with rifled naval guns, Mallory theorized, were capable of destroying the North’s shipping. This practice would have put the South on a more level playing field with the industrial giant. However, with secession and strategy behind it, the Shore moved toward the units and battles that would determine its fate.

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CHAPTER III - THE FIGHT FOR THE SHORE

The 39th Virginia Infantry

The 39th Virginia Infantry began with recruitment throughout Accomac and Northampton. This resulted in the 39th Virginia Infantry, a regiment of 800 men, divided into eleven companies of infantry, cavalry, and light artillery.\(^1\)

Officials established camps at places such as Drummondtown (Accomac Courthouse) and Eastville, known as Camp Wise and Camp Huger, respectively. Other camps included Camp Lee, in northern Accomac, and Camp Johnson, in southern Accomac. These training facilities honored the names of Confederate Gen. Henry A. Wise, Gen. Benjamin Huger, Gen. Robert E. Lee, and Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, respectively.\(^2\)

The 39th Virginia defended the Shore during this time but did not take the military offensive because the regiment served the Commonwealth, not the Shore. Once fully organized and armed, the regiment would journey to the mainland. The transportation of the 39th, however, could only be achieved through great logistical difficulties because the Confederates would first have to break through the blockade. Second, they would have to commandeer a number of sloops, scows, and canoes to do so. In turn, until a plan could be formed, the 39th remained on the Shore to train, drill, and equip.\(^3\)

The officers who organized the 39th in mid-1861 made up the Shore’s elite. Col. Charles Smith, a Northampton County planter, practiced medicine while also serving as a militia colonel.

\(^1\) Weaver and Sherwood, *39th Virginia Infantry*, 92-93.


\(^3\) *Ibid.*, 92.
He received the commission as colonel because Gen. Mitchell W. West, had retired. West recommended Smith because of his youth, status, and verve. Lt. Col. Louis C. H. Finney, a planter from Accomac County, had also served as a militia officer. Major Nathaniel Robert Cary, a Northampton physician, served on Smith’s staff as well. A veteran of the militia and Mexican War, Cary was one of the best soldiers in the regiment. The state appointed Peter F. Browne of Drummondstown as surgeon with the rank of captain. Surgeon William A. Thom a Northampton planter and Assistant Surgeon William S. Stoakley, also received appointments as well. Hugh Ker, a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute from Northampton, acted as the unit’s adjutant. Accomac planter Richard B. Winder served as the Assistant Quartermaster. Winder served in lieu of Thomas R. Joynes who declined his appointment. Overall, the officers of the 39th Virginia were educated and familiar with military practice, although few had seen action.4

Colonel Smith and his subordinates organized the Northampton companies in June. Company A, under Capt. William C. Wickings, enlisted on June 8, and took its post at Camp Huger, three miles west of Eastville. Company B, under Capt. Francis M. Ironmonger, enlisted for twelve months and took positions at Camp Huger. Company C, a cavalry unit, enlisted under Capt. Thomas Z. Henderson and originated at Franktown. Capt. James S. Kellam’s unit, Company D, mustered at Downing’s Wharf on the seaside. Kellam, a Mexican War veteran, had been promoted to second lieutenant in that conflict. Capt. Peter B. Smith’s artillery, Company K, formed later at Camp Huger and consisted of men from companies A and B. The unit had three brass cannons as well, although the militia also possessed artillery. Maryland Governor Thomas

4 Doris Adler, The Neglected Decade: The 1850s on the Eastern Shore (Eastville, Va.: Hickory House, 1999), 80; Robertson, Proceedings of the Advisory Council, 125-126; Weaver and Sherwood, 39th Virginia Infantry, 84, 92, 93.
Hicks estimated that the Shore possessed an eight-gun battery, while Capt. T. T. Craven, commanding the Potomac flotilla, noted in August that six brass cannons had been forwarded to the 39th from Richmond.5

Companies A, B, and D had eighty, eighty-nine, and sixty-three men, respectively. The artillery unit and the cavalry troop had twenty-seven and seventy-three men, respectively. The occupations of the men who comprised these units from Northampton ranged from school teacher and student to farm laborer and waterman. No men from Hog Island or any other Northampton island joined the 39th Virginia.6


6 Weaver and Sherwood, 39th Virginia Infantry, 84-86.
September 28, at Onancock, a hotbed of secession by all Union accounts. Otho Kerr West, a young merchant and militia veteran, enlisted in Company L. He was also the son of the general of the 21st Militia Brigade, Mitchell. W. West. Edmund R. Bagwell, a twenty year old school teacher, was another favorite son of the unit. After the war, he became the general of the Eastern Shore militia.  

The Accomac companies had sixty-eight, seventy-three, fifty-four, seventy-two, sixty-five, and sixty-seven men from companies E through L, respectively. Before the war, these men were merchants, sailors, and even carriage makers. No troops from Tangier or Chincoteague joined the 39th Virginia. 

Equipping the 39th Virginia proved a difficult task. In June, Gen. Robert E. Lee, military aide to President Jefferson Davis, informed Col. Smith that he had ordered flintlock muskets for Smith’s forces but could not furnish caps as the supply had to go to more important areas. However, the Commonwealth soon issued the 39th Virginia hundreds of arms, four six-pounder iron guns and carriages complete with 100 rounds of fixed ammunition. Lt. George Croswell received fifty flint muskets and seventy-five flints for distribution in southern Accomac while Capt. Fletcher distributed fifty flint muskets, 1,000 cartridges, and fifty flints in northern Accomac. The regiment’s commanders received even more. The Commonwealth gave Col.  

7 Weaver and Sherwood, 39th Virginia Infantry 86-89, 110, 113, 139.  
8 Ibid.  
9 Although Lee’s attitude may have seemed apathetic toward the Shore, he visited Smith Island off Cape Charles in 1832 to inspect his father-in-law’s land and sheep. In addition, Lee married into the Custis family which had originated on the Shore. See Barnes and Truitt, Seashore Chronicles, 25, for Lee’s letter concerning his trip to Smith Island. Weaver and Sherwood, 39th Virginia Infantry, 92.
Louis Finney, of Accomac, 5,000 cartridges, 2,000 caps, forty-two fixed shot, fifty-six canister, three lanyards, and 175 flints. In Northampton Col. Charles Smith received four six-pounder iron guns, four six-pounder carriages, four sets wheel harness, 4,000 cartridges, 5,000 caps, twenty-eight fixed shot, seventy-five tubes, and 100 six-pounder rounds fixed ammunition.\textsuperscript{10}

Despite acquiring the necessary materials, Smith still had questions. He asked the General Assembly for advice concerning arms, munitions, and local protocol. The General Assembly replied on June 15 that Smith could commandeer the artillery pieces forwarded to the two counties, as well as the powder and ammunition purchased by the civil authorities. Smith also realized that the flint muskets given to the 39\textsuperscript{th} would not serve its needs appropriately. He felt confident that he could obtain 900 .54 caliber Merrill carbines for ten dollars each and received authorization from the Commonwealth to make the purchase.\textsuperscript{11}

On July 11 Col. Smith issued his first report at Camp Huger. Although the regiment had made progress, the letter was truly a cry for help. Smith informed Confederate Secretary of War Leroy P. Walker that he had mustered four companies. The 220 Northampton recruits had been drilling at Camp Huger for four weeks. Smith also stated that the Union blockade had nearly cut off the Shore from the rest of the Confederacy. Moreover, he wondered what guarantees the government would make concerning payment for supplies since the assistant quartermaster, Richard B. Winder, had no funds. “You can readily perceive, sir,” wrote Smith, “that we would

\textsuperscript{10} Virginia Executive Department, \textit{Message from the Executive [sic] of the Commonwealth: With Accompanying Documents, Showing the Military and Naval Preparations for the Defence of the State of Virginia, \&c. \&c.} (Richmond: S. N., 1861), 19, 33, 40, 45, 61.

\textsuperscript{11} Although it is not known whether Smith ever obtained the desired firearms the 1858 Merrill carbine was somewhat defective and saw minimal use in the Civil War. Robertson, \textit{Proceedings of the Advisory Council}, 156-158.
be glad to receive all the information and instructions as to our duty with which you can furnish us.”

Smith’s report reveals some intriguing points. Recruitment had not completed and the regiment could not leave until it reached full strength. This left the unit sequestered on the Shore where it made an inviting target for Union forces. Smith’s force had been at Camp Huger for four weeks and was now becoming restless. He also realized if he was to transport his regiment across the Chesapeake Bay he needed several vessels. He was not clear as to his or the regiment’s duties other than to recruit and drill, even though militia Gen. Mitchell W. West had received instructions from the Advisory Council of Virginia in May relating the purpose of forces on the Shore. A constant lack of communication hampered the 39th Virginia’s contact with the Confederate government, thus leaving it on its own.

Because the blockade effectively severed the Shore from the mainland, Smith dispatched former sailors and watermen to cross the bay in order to maintain some modicum of communication with Richmond. These men from Northampton were William C. Colonna, John W. Crockett, John Johnson, Thomas Savage, and Samuel R. Taylor. In December 1861, Crockett received payment for twenty-one days of crossing the Chesapeake Bay in a boat. If Crockett traveled only during the waning of the moon and the new moon, then he crossed the bay only once a month. If he took four days to travel to Richmond and return, then Crockett made six trips, the last one only one way. He had run the blockade for six months, right up through the Federal invasion. In November 1861, Private John E. Johnson, whose gravestone marks him as a

12 Weaver and Sherwood, 39th Virginia Infantry, 93-94.
13 Ibid., Robertson, Proceedings of the Advisory Council, 124.
sea captain, became a prisoner of war. Thomas Savage and Samuel Taylor also became prisoners of war in November.\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{Raiding & Skirmishing on the Eastern Shore}

Federal forces at Fort Monroe stayed well attuned to the 39\textsuperscript{th}'s activities and even sent an expeditionary force to the Shore. This resulted in the first engagement on the Shore which took place in northern Accomac County. On July 31, Union Lt. Pierce Crosby entered the Pocomoke Bay, after leaving Fort Monroe the day before with the \textit{Fanny}, \textit{Adnatic}, \textit{Cadwalader}, and two barges with 250 to 300 infantrymen. Crosby and his force raided Pitt’s Wharf, a frequent blockade runner rendezvous point on Holden Creek near the mouth of the bay. The soldiers seized boots, meat, and $300 from George Croswell’s store. They pushed a mile or two southward on land but soon ran into Spencer D. Fletcher’s company of the 39\textsuperscript{th} Virginia. The 39\textsuperscript{th} drove the intruders back to their landing place. Yet the numerically superior Federals retreated from the Confederates because they intended not to invade the area but to break up illegal traffic in the area. In addition, Union reports suggested upward of 3,000 Southerners on the Eastern Shore. The \textit{Richmond Dispatch} reported the skirmish six days later.\textsuperscript{15}

Moving south that same day, Lt. Crosby appeared in Chesconessex Creek in Accomac County, where he and his men killed a few sheep and towed away two vessels. Two of Crosby’s small ships then returned to Fort Monroe. Crosby later steamed into Pungoteague Creek and dueled with artillery manned by the local militia under Maj. Benjamin T. Gunter. The Union vessel fired a shot at the single Confederate cannon on the shoreline. No return fire came because

\textsuperscript{14} Weaver and Sherwood, \textit{39\textsuperscript{th} Virginia Infantry}, 93, 117, 135, 136.

\textsuperscript{15} Chesapeake, “From the Eastern Shore,” \textit{Richmond Dispatch}, 12 August 1861; Weaver and Sherwood, \textit{39\textsuperscript{th} Virginia Infantry}, 105.
a Northern sympathizer commanded the artillery! When news arrived that Union gunboats were going to attack Pungoteague Creek, the local militia forced Dr. J. G. Potts, a former British soldier, to oversee the loading and firing of the piece. The physician, accompanied by an “ignorant German,” took command of the piece but had the German load the muzzle ball first. When they attempted to fire it nothing occurred. Consequently, the Confederates were shelled from their stronghold. Upon questioning Dr. Potts blamed his bumbling accomplice. In November Confederates burned the wharf at Mt. Airey plantation where the duel had taken place to prevent Federal ships from landing there.16

Crosby continued moving south and attacked Cherrystone Creek in Northampton.17 On Friday, August 2, three of Crosby’s vessels entered the creek, fired at a nearby home and then abandoned their efforts. While attempting to leave, one of their ships became caught on a shoal. Intrepid Federals transferred men and munitions from one boat to the other, which, along with the incoming tide, succeeded in floating the vessel. Col. Smith ordered companies A and B to take positions on the north side of the creek while companies C and D marched quickly to the south side of the creek at Old Plantation Point, fourteen miles away. In addition to small arms, the Southerners had a six-pounder field piece they employed. Neither side claimed any lives, however, even though the engagement lasted three hours. Confederates did come close to being struck many times, as the gnarled trees along the shoreline attested to. In retreating, the Federals


17 An article in the *Richmond Dispatch* dated August 12, 1861, identified the skirmish as occurring in King’s Creek. However, the mouth of Cherrystone Creek and King’s Creek meet at the same point, which probably accounts for the confusion.
boarded and burned two crafts belonging to local citizens to put an end to blockade running although locals claimed the ships had been used to prevent escaped slaves from passing down the creek and into the Chesapeake. Gen. Benjamin Butler wrote to his superiors about the affair claiming that his forces had successfully interrupted commerce between Virginia and Maryland. Both sides claimed victory in the only skirmish in Northampton, which became signatory of later skirmishes on the Shore.\(^\text{18}\)

On August 6 Butler ordered Crosby to embark on another mission to the Shore. Leaving a few days later, Crosby took the steamer *Fanny* for the purpose of capturing the blockade runner, *Wilson Small*. It plied between Baltimore and Newtown, Maryland, and transported slaves and other contraband to the Confederacy. As he had done before, Crosby steamed up to Tangier Island and by August 24, had captured the schooner and returned to Fort Monroe.\(^\text{19}\)

In Accomac, the feud between Confederate home guards and Chincoteague Island Unionists was spiraling out of control. With only three known secessionists on Chincoteague Island, Confederate sympathizers on the mainland were enacting a reign of terror on the loyal islanders. These vigilantes, which Union authorities termed “disaffected persons,” were local constables, militiamen, and laborers. Some, such as John S. D. Holland, belonged to one of the many slave patrols that chased runaway slaves. Armed with guns, knives, ropes, and dogs, these men were empowered to track down runaway slaves and intimidate Southerners disloyal to the Confederacy. Described as extremely violent, Holland ran a local tavern which gave him the


power and money to become a constable. Others, such as Spencer Fletcher, were officers in the 39th Virginia. In addition, Union records named three Drummondstown lawyers, two physicians, a coach maker, a sea captain, and a postmaster in the conspiracy to subdue Northern sympathizers.20

The intimidation continued with raids on Unionist symbols and exile of Union men. First, the Accomac home guard raided the Assateague Island lighthouse. This caused at least two succeeding Union ships to drift astray off the coast. Yet, John A. M. Whealton, the pro-Unionist leader of the area, and six others replaced the light soon after. John Caulk, a Unionist from Chincoteague reported this raid to Union authorities. Caulk had a price on his head by late 1861. Twice he had escaped capture by Southern sympathizers from the mainland. The first time, fourteen civilians, headed by the captain of a vessel from Accomac attempted to capture the rogue Unionist. Two weeks later, a force with soldiers traveled from the Shore to Chincoteague Island. It found Caulk at church and although the Confederates secured him, Caulk fired a pistol that dispersed the small gang. Caulk subsequently left the Shore for Philadelphia where he provided a list of the Southern scalawags that had been terrifying Chincoteague. The vigilantes continued harassing Unionist and drove away Accomac Judge E. P. Pitts, another Union sympathizer. Even Union Flag Officer L. M. Goldsborough in Hampton Roads noted that the self proclaimed home guard of Accomac County frequently ousted Unionist from Chincoteague.21

With their goods en route to the North captured by the Confederates and their own ships not legally able to trade with the North, Chincoteague Island sought help. On July 4, 1861, 418


men from Chincoteague and other islands signed a declaration and gave it to Dr. George Scherer to deliver to the Federal government and plead on their behalf. The declaration pledge support for the United States against her enemies and also informed the Union government of the plethora of blockade running and smuggling occurring in the area. Capt. Edward Whaley, a veteran of the War of 1812 asserted, “I will defend the old flag to my last drop of blood, against the lazy, salve-holding aristocrats and their lackeys in Richmond.”

They sent the unprecedented resolution on the Jenny Sharpley to the flag officer S. H. Stringham of the U. S. Navy at Hampton Roads. Although this did not directly cause the Union to take action a letter from Edward Donaldson, commander in the U. S. Navy, did. In a July 20, Donaldson informed the Secretary of the Navy that the plight of Chincoteague and loyal residents on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia was dire. This, however, still did not cause the government to send protection.

On September 19, the situation became serious. The Loyal Chincoteague Islanders spied eight small boats with lanterns in Chincoteague Bay. Moving quickly, the islanders sounded the alarm and armed ninety-four local men. They took positions along the various wharves. Soon two sloops and a large schooner entered the bay. By dawn, the three ships had anchored at Wishart’s Point, on the mainland. A Confederate flag replaced the British pennant that had been flying on the new Confederate privateer, Venus. The schooner, armed with several cannons, could wreak havoc on seaside shipping if let loose on the Delmarva coast. In response, Chincoteague dispatched a sloop under Edward Whaley and a crew of four men. They eventually

22 Mariner, Once Upon an Island, NUMBER.

made their way to the *USS Minnesota* and Acting Rear Admiral L. M. Goldsborough. After relating the story, the Chincoteaguers returned to the Shore with four sailors, armed with rifles and cutlasses.\textsuperscript{24}

The *USS Louisiana* under Lt. Alexander Murray arrived eleven days later to protect the faithful island. In October the *Louisiana* attempted to destroy the *Venus* at Wishart’s Point. With ninety men and several thirty-two pounder guns, the *Louisiana*, shelled the Confederate position. Only Capt. Spencer Fletcher’s company and Capt. George West’s company fought in this engagement. Federals exaggerated the Confederate numbers at 300 men.\textsuperscript{25}

Advancing 300 yards in two boats under fire from Confederates, but with supporting artillery from the *Louisiana*, the Union squad took cover behind the Southern privateer. However, the schooner, which belonged to sea Captain David Taylor (a member of the local pro-Confederate home guard in northern Accomac) was grounded. The Federals eventually broke off the fight because of “deadly fire” from the Southerners, but not before burning the privateer. Lt. Murray claimed eight Confederate casualties but in reality, only Pvt. John W. Taylor was wounded. Union casualties reported by Lt. Murray were one man seriously wounded and three slightly injured. Although the Confederates lost a ship, many viewed the action as a victory for the 39\textsuperscript{th} Virginia.\textsuperscript{26}

On October 27, the *Louisiana* struck for the last time at Swan’s Gut Creek, on the Virginia-Maryland border. Rumors circulated that Southern sympathizers had built both a shore

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.; *OR Navies*, ser. I, 6:380, 289; Weaver and Sherwood, 39\textsuperscript{th} *Virginia Infantry*, 99.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
battery to repel Union soldiers and a floating battery to attack the *Louisiana*. Murray dispatched a party with three officers, twenty-five sailors, and five Chincoteaguers. Finding no evidence of Confederate activity, the band advanced up the creek. Federals successfully burned one schooner and two sloops, before returning to the *Louisiana* the next morning. By November 18 the steamer was receiving provisions from Flag Officer Goldsborough who promised another steamer to relieve the *Louisiana*. For the time, however, Chincoteague had averted tragedy and checked local Confederate activity.\textsuperscript{27}

**Blockade Running & Blockading on the Eastern Shore**

The *Louisiana* enforced the Union blockade and began an embargo that would last the duration of the war. Yet, with the advent of the blockade came one of the most enterprising adventurers of the war; the blockade runner. Fed by the urge to transfer people, goods, and supplies to mainland Virginia out of patriotism, greed, or rabble rousing, the Shore blockade runner was the scourge of Union forces throughout the Chesapeake Bay. By running amuck of Union laws, Federals considered them outlaws. By traveling across the Chesapeake, Confederates considered them saviors.

The underground waterway that blockade runners used was a land and water route that brought supplies, men, and information into the South. This Confederate strategy of importation developed quickly after the 1861 declaration of a Union blockade. Southerners, owing to loyalty or money, transported various commodities from the North to the South.\textsuperscript{28}

The underground waterway began in Salisbury, on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. The town

\textsuperscript{27} *OR Navies*, ser. I, 6:366, 418, 442.

was ideal because it not only marked the southern terminus of the Delaware Railroad but also because it was less than thirty miles from the Virginia border, and on the Wicomico River. Newtown (present-day Pocomoke) was also used, but not because it was on a river. Stephen H. Bogardus, Jr., of the 5th New York described the Pocomoke as a crooked and impassable river.29

Instead, Newtown became a border crossing town. Goods arrived from the North and were sent to other points of rendezvous in Maryland, and at Somers Cove on the Little Annemessex River. Runners left here and stopped at an island near the state line before making a dash for the Western Shore. Smith Island, near the border, provided a plethora of coves, creeks, guts, and marshes as hiding places.30

If goods continued on to the Eastern Shore before crossing the bay then horse and wagon took them to Pitt’s Wharf. Located a few miles below the Maryland line on the bayside, the wharf became a popular Confederate port. Southerners loaded contraband goods onto small vessels and carried them across the Chesapeake to either the Rappahannock or York River. This route often included a nighttime stopover at Tangier, Goose, Fox, or Little Fox Island. A blockade runner named Pruitt utilized this opportunity but inhabitants of Tangier Island seized him and his vessel after he had been laying in wait to cross the bay. They subsequently turned him over to the Union Navy.31

Other routes extended from the North via Chincoteague Bay, then overland to the bayside and to the Western Shore. Southerners utilized this route because Chincoteague Bay and other


inlets to the south created a network of interior waterways that stretched from the Delaware border to Accomac. Barrier islands guarded these bays on the east while the mainland guarded them on the west. Overall, the underground waterway consisted of safe storage sites facilitated by Southern sympathizers from lower Delaware to eastern Virginia and involved several forms of transportation from railroad to horse and cart to maritime vessel. This was reported by the Collector’s Office, Custom-House in New York as early as August 1861. The report stated the frequency with which vessels transported goods by way of Delaware and Maryland to the Eastern Shore.\textsuperscript{32}

Blockade runners carried a variety of goods across the Bay. First and foremost were munitions such as muskets, rifles, ammunition, powder, and pig iron. Oftentimes these provisions were of Northern manufacture. A factory in Fredericksburg, Virginia, also manufactured arms. In August, six brass cannon for the 39\textsuperscript{th} Virginia Infantry were shipped across the bay via Rappahannock River.\textsuperscript{33}

Runners also carried food across the bay. Union Naval vessels in the York River captured the sloop \textit{Josephus} loaded with corn, oats, eighteen chickens, and six bushels of clams. Runners also carried newspapers, mail, and gossip. In this way Shore citizens kept track of family members and events. On average, the \textit{Richmond Dispatch} received news of events on the Shore a week or less after they occurred. In 1863, Emma LeCato, a young Accomac student, heard

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{OR Navies}, ser. I, 6:76.

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{OR Navies}, ser. I, 4:646.
about the battle of Chancellorsville only six days after it occurred.³⁴

Lastly, blockade runners carried people. Passengers included disaffected Unionists, Southern refugees, Confederate soldiers, and businessmen. A merchant named Samuel Hunter served the firm, Hopkins, Hull & Atkinson, of Baltimore. Hunter, only twenty-one years old, had been engaged in collecting bills for goods sold by the firm. He claimed to have traveled through the Shore when he was arrested by Union forces on the Potomac River.³⁵

Strangely enough, some early blockade runners on the Shore were Unionist. John A. M. Whealton, a merchant and justice of the peace on Chincoteague Island, had to run the blockade from the seaside of Accomac all the way to New York City. There he delivered his shipment of oysters and other goods and picked up another cargo. Despite Whealton’s Union sympathies, Federal authorities and impounded his ship as a blockade runner. However, Whealton declared that he had no way of obtaining the necessary papers since any issued by his home county would not be recognized as legitimate. Eventually, this caused the Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles to issue a proclamation allowing Chincoteague merchants to ship their goods north if they showed sufficient signs of loyalty to the Union. In a letter to Secretary Welles, Flag-Officer L. M. Goldsborough acknowledged that the 150 people on Chincoteague were loyal. He pleaded that they would starve if not allowed to trade freely in the North.³⁶

On October 15, in tandem with this, the Chincoteague Island citizens issued a

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³⁴ Emma LeCato, “Diary,” ; OR Navies, .


³⁶ Mariner, Once Upon An Island, 47-48; OR Navies, ser. I, 6:298.
proclamation. They stated that they were law-abiding people who dearly loved the Constitution and the Union. They abhorred slavery and without the *Louisiana*, would have surely capitulated under Confederate pressures. John Whealton and James Connor read this under a flagpole bearing a Union banner. Lt. Murray, who witnessed the affirmation, labeled the list as incomplete. An oath and allegiance, signed by 123 of the 150 voters (on behalf of the 806 inhabitants), accompanied the proclamation. This resolution ended the blockade for Chincoteague.37

Although it sounds glorious, Chesapeake blockade runners led generally inglorious careers. By concealing their ventures and consistently remaining aloof from civilians and Union forces, they created the normalcy that most people experience from daily work. In addition, most blockade runners from the counties of Northampton and Accomac did not make a great deal of money off of their exploits. No Rhett Butlers with expensive tastes existed to provide financial security for these excursions because the Shore was too close to Northern waters. Only the communities which blockade runners served gave them refuge, food, and supplies to continue their efforts. Shore blockade runners, like the region they hailed from, were understated, low level, and unflattering. They rarely defended their vessels and goods. As a result, they were captured without a fight when found. Union forces captured most of these men, although usually on the land rather than water.

Shore blockade runners depended on their wits and their knowledge of the coastline to guide them. Coming from maritime backgrounds, many runners had traded up and down the waters of the Chesapeake during the antebellum period. They knew the depths of the waters, the distances between various points, and the locations of islands, creeks, bays, and marshes.

Because of the generally shallow waters and narrow breadth of the Chesapeake, large ships were more of a hindrance than a boon. Schooners, scows, canoes, sloops, and other small sailing craft that constituted their fleet allowed blockade runners to travel quickly on the Bay. These small vessels also made it more difficult for Union blockaders to spy them on the horizon. One trick of the trade included painting the hull, spars, and sails black to make the craft invisible at night. Additionally, runners sunk their vessels in creeks and coves to keep them hidden from Union authorities. When the time came for another illegal cruise, runners simply raised their crafts by hauling them out of the water, pouring out the water, and attaching the rigging. In the end, if captured, a blockade runner would lose very little, considering the small investment in his vessel. The only threat facing a runner consisted of a term of imprisonment.38

Shore blockade runners also depended on deception to protect them from prowling Yankee ships. Ship captains who could not acquire licenses legally obtained fake ones. The SS Wilson Small, a blockade runner, plied the waters between Baltimore and the Eastern Shore as a legal vessel from Maryland. Union authorities also indicted the SS Dispatch in the underground waterway. The Dispatch obtained a permit from the US collector at Deal Island, although permits were also obtained by other vessels from the collector at Snow Hill, Maryland. Often these men did not have Maryland citizenship. This made them enemies of the Union. In addition, Virginia merchants often fictitiously sold their vessels to friends in Maryland who were then able to secure licenses. Runners such as the Josephus, simply scratched or erased the name off their hull to fool Union authorities familiar with their dimensions.

Soldiers posing as civilians, merchants, or stowaways also fled south on this waterway.

Examples included men from Worcester County, Maryland, who either enlisted in Confederate forces at Accomac, or who fled south on their own. Lastly, information from spies found its way south from Maryland and Delaware to the Virginia Peninsula and across the Bay. Gossip regarding Union forces, movements, and numbers quickly went through the chain that took shape throughout 1861.39

Union raids on the Shore made a large impact on blockade running. Yet Union blockaders standing vigil in the brackish waters of the bay made it succeed. The earliest evidence of the Union blockade on the Shore occurred on May 12, 1861 when Acting Master Charles Germain made a reconnaissance with the USS Yankee, of Cherrystone Inlet. What the Yankee reported led to a raid on the area a couple months later. On July 25, Acting Master William Budd, commanding the USS Resolute, reconnoitered the Pocomoke River, and discovered that large numbers of men and quantities of supplies were being transferred to the York and Rappahannock River from the Shore. A man named Wilson, of Princess Anne, Maryland, received the supplies and recruits, which he transferred by wagons to Newtown, Maryland. A man named Dryden, of the Union Hotel, then forwarded them to Virginia.40

Union blockaders used a variety of methods to trap Southern quarry. Often they simply overtook them in the bay with steam and sail. Before this could happen, however, blockaders had to identify their prey. Through loyal informants, confiscation of personal property, and scouting missions, Federal officials learned the names of blockade runners operating in the underground waterway. They then patrolled the bay. If unsuccessful, Union ships proceeded to the runners’


rendezvous points. There they sacked buildings, burned wharves, and captured runners.

Sometimes this method shut down blockade running operations for a time because it forced Southerners to find new places to store their goods. Other times, they simply had to patrol an area in hopes of catching runners they knew by name and description. Such was the case of James Bennett, a runner from lower Accomac. Union soldiers regularly patrolled Hacks Neck, where Bennett lived, and inspected the homes of his friends. Although they captured him once, he soon escaped. New information occasionally came to light from civilians whose lives were damaged by Yankee vandalism. This usually put fear in Southern sympathizers which sometimes brought even greater rewards.41

More often, Northern sympathizers aided Union blockading efforts. In June 1861, an unidentified man in Worcester County, Maryland informed Gen. Winfield Scott that Southerners were landing contraband articles at Smith Island, south of Cape Charles. The author, a former resident of Virginia, insinuated that he would be in danger if others found out that he had written the letter.42

Other reports confirmed that steamers, such as the SS Hurl, were plying the waters between Baltimore and the Pocomoke River. J. B. Mannar, a Baltimore resident, observed that goods and people passed down the Delmarva peninsula via the railroad and the Chesapeake Bay. Mannar even mentioned blockade runner, Andrew Scoot, who succeeded so well that “letters reach Virginia with as much facility through this route as through the regular mail when it was in

41 Mears, The Virginia Eastern Shore, 390-400.

42 OR Navies, ser. I, 5:715.
George Douglas Wise, a Unionist, also sent a letter identifying small vessels that left Baltimore under the auspices of traveling to the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Although they sometimes did proceed to the Shore, the ships also rendezvoused among the bayside islands of Accomac County, then proceeded up the Rappahannock or York River. Alerted of the Southerners’ ruse, the USS Monticello made a trip to Smith Island on the Maryland-Virginia border and checked various vessels.

In contrast, Union blockaders sometimes found the search of an area to be unwarranted. On June 21, Commander J. H. Ward of the Potomac Blockade detained two sea captains from Snow Hill, Maryland. They informed him that no vessel had been molested on the Pocomoke River by parties from Virginia. They added that bay traders had abandoned their efforts to carry freight and passengers to lower Accomac because the extensive Union blockade. Ward decided to forgo any inspection of the Shore in lieu of more important duties in the Potomac River.

In early October, USS Louisiana captured the schooner S. T. Garrison in Chincoteague Inlet. The vessel, which had no papers and whose captain had fled, was not involved in any illicit trade; for it had only wood on board. The Navy sent the vessel to Baltimore for disposition. Union officials advised Lt. Murray to exercise precaution and restraint in seizing vessels but to also protect the rights of loyal traders from the area of Chincoteague Island as long as they had

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44 Ibid.

45 Ibid., ser. I, 4:532,
proper licenses.\textsuperscript{46}

Union blockaders also helped inhabitants of the Shore. In one case, Mrs. M. A. F. Stratton, an invalid from Northampton County, received transportation across the Bay. A Philadelphia merchant carried Mrs. Stratton from the Maryland’s Western Shore to Accomac.\textsuperscript{47}

In return, Shore citizens often helped Union blockaders’ efforts. Some residents on the mainland (such as Francis Johnson) were avowed Unionists. Of German heritage, he lived on Swan’s Gut Creek in Accomac County. Although Johnson portrayed himself as a secessionist, he was actually a Unionist. Flag-Officer Goldsborough claimed that Johnson would supply information about Accomac in order to aide the coming invasion.\textsuperscript{48}

The 39\textsuperscript{th} Virginia, raids and skirmishes, and the underground waterway all contributed to the fight for the Shore in 1861. Although forces had been mustered, blood had been spilled, and maritime networks had been developed, the most decisive campaign in the area had not yet taken place. The Shore remained a target for Union forces, who prodded it in order to determine its strength and usefulness. For the Confederacy, the Shore remained an intangible ally that hopefully would become a tangible Southern bastion. Regardless, the campaign and other events that lay ahead for the two counties across the bay proved decisive in the war for the Chesapeake.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., ser. I, 6:336.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., ser. I, 4:511.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., ser. I, 6:442.
CHAPTER IV - THE UNION OCCUPATION

The Expedition Through Accomac and Northampton Counties

By late autumn, the Shore would be in dire straights. The blockade had cut if off from the rest of Virginia. The Shore had only raw recruits known as the 39th Virginia as its main line of defense. Lastly, a massive Union force of 4,500 men intended to invade it. Yet the Shore did have some things in its favor.

The blockade had been run quite successfully to keep supplies and communications steady. Creeks sliced up the Shore; marshes and swamps made it difficult to traverse. Additionally, the peninsula was narrow, and had only three main roads, some of which the Confederates had blocked. Southern sympathizers filled the lower Eastern Shore of Maryland. These factors would slow Union forces significantly.¹

In August 1861, secessionists in Accomac County wrote President Jefferson Davis. Aware of the imminent Union threat, they argued the advantages of defending the little peninsula. Needed were supplies, wealth, and the Eastern Shore of Maryland could be made to join them. They remained disorganized because of the lack of an intelligent and proficient commanding officer. If one was provided, citizens suggested, another regiment could be recruited.

Although this letter may have been tainted with jealousy or envy of Smith, it shows that divided loyalties did exist. The stalwart Southerners, chagrined at the lack of attention the area had received, promised that others would accept positions as officers if Davis responded to their requests.²

² OR Armies, ser. I, 51:242
A month later, a letter from Northampton politician Miers Fisher made its way to Davis’s desk. Fisher expressed the need for an experienced general officer in the 39th Virginia. Disorganization, Fisher stated, lay in the fact that its officers could not be present in all five camps. Although the regiment should have been concentrated in one camp, those in command wanted to maintain vigilance at several points. Prophetically, Fisher discussed the threat of a Union invasion of Maryland and cited the importance of holding the Shore.

A final letter from another Eastern Shoreman to the Confederate Secretary of War confirmed Fisher’s assertions. It alluded to a coming Federal invasion and it reported the inadequacy of the 39th’s officers. The author of this missive claimed that Shore forces could not even repel a small force. The writer asked only for advice because he knew the Secretary of War could do nothing more.3

Immediately after Union Gen. John Dix took command of the Department of Maryland, he urged an invasion of the Shore. Dix, a New Yorker, had fought in the War of 1812 and had served as a senator and postmaster for the state. He wanted to arm more companies in Maryland, for they might be able to keep Confederate forces and blockade runners in check. Additionally, Dix advocated a political and military revolution in order to bring peaceful negotiations. Dix informed Gen. George B. McClellan that a preemptive Union invasion would “break up an immense traffic in contraband, disperse the Southerners and give courage to the friends of the Union.”

On August 21, Dix wrote that “two regiments, with a discreet commander, could march through this important district and put down all opposition.” The next month, he claimed that

secessionists passed through the Eastern Shore of Maryland to Virginia, where a formidable force had been organized. By October, an invasion lay on the horizon. The only thing Dix needed was a commander to lead it.⁴

Dix chose Gen. Henry Hayes Lockwood, a native of Delaware, to lead the occupying force. Lockwood, a West Pointer and veteran of the Seminole Wars, had been a professor at the Naval Academy. In May 1861, his troops elected him colonel of the 1st Delaware. Lockwood was strict, cautious and not popular with his troops because he was a slaveholder. However, Dix chose Lockwood because he was from a place similar to the Shore. Lockwood understood the plight of the planters and slave owners in the area. He would be able to allay Southern suspicions. Dix called on Lockwood to prevent any outrages upon persons or property. Although Lockwood pursued a conciliatory course, Dix instructed him to disarm and disperse the Southerners and take prisoners.

Lockwood’s brigade, or the Peninsular Brigade, amounted to almost 4,500 men with regiments from New York, Indiana, Massachusetts, Ohio, Wisconsin, Michigan, Maryland, and Delaware. Col. G. K. Warren led the 5th New York. Another influential figure was Sgt. Stephen Bogardus whose writings to the Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle throughout 1861 kept his countrymen apprised of the ensuing expedition.

Containing infantry, cavalry, and artillery, the Union force encamped first at Camp Federal Hill, Maryland. Early in November, the brigade crossed the Chesapeake Bay, moved up the Pocomoke River, and arrived at Newtown, Maryland. On November 16, Lockwood began the

march south into Virginia on a pivotal campaign for the Union.\textsuperscript{5}

While the Federals moved into Accomac County, Confederate Gen. John B. Magruder informed Adjt. Gen. Samuel Cooper of the situation on the Shore. He noted that he had been in contact with Col. Smith concerning reinforcements. Although Magruder sympathized with Smith’s situation, he had no reinforcements to send except for six thirty-two pounder cannon. Magruder advised Smith to attack the Federals as soon as they crossed the Virginia border (although he simultaneously confided to Gen. Cooper that it was impossible to prevent the Union force from overrunning the Confederates). Magruder also doubted whether or the 39\textsuperscript{th} Virginia was attached to his command, and waited for the government to confirm its status.\textsuperscript{6}

Smith, aware of his opponent’s moves (thanks to Southern sympathizers in Newtown) received word that 5,000 Federals planned to invade Accomac. Smith quickly advanced north with the 39\textsuperscript{th} Virginia and two militia regiments. On November 12, they were four miles from the Maryland line. There they entrenched, felled timber, and burned bridges. The 39\textsuperscript{th}’s held a hastily built three-sided fort on the south side of a creek just south of Nashville.\textsuperscript{7}

In mid-November, Stephen H. Bogardus and the 5\textsuperscript{th} New York became stuck on a sand bar while aboard the steamer \textit{Pocahontas}. Having left Baltimore with much fanfare, the Zouaves found themselves aground in the Pocomoke Sound, northeast of Tangier Island. Soon, the stranded Federals spied three vessels that turned out to be the \textit{USS Hercules} and two Union

\textsuperscript{5} \textit{Ibid.}, ser. I, 5:426.

\textsuperscript{6} \textit{OR Armies}, ser. I, 4:699-700.

gunboats. The steamer eventually got afloat at dawn and proceeded to its rendezvous point with the Star. The 5th New York reached Newtown by nightfall. There it joined the 6th Michigan, 4th Wisconsin, 2nd Delaware, Reading Pennsylvania Cavalry, and Nim’s Massachusetts Battery. Now the 5th New York became the rearguard of the invading force, much to its dismay.8

On November 13, the Union brigade gained additional reinforcements with the arrival of 500 men of the 17th Massachusetts. The brigade then consolidated in Newtown. According to Smith this gave them 8,000 men. South of the border, 600 infantry, 140 cavalry, and an artillery battery including three cannons and at least one Quaker gun (a log mounted on a wooden swivel, that resembled a cannon at a distance) stood ready to repulse the Federals. On November 15, Smith summoned his men for a council of war. It included himself, two militia officers (Col. Ben Gunter, and Col. James Northam), and the field and staff officers of all three regiments at his headquarters in Oak Hall. They debated whether or not to make a stand or fall back to a stronger position ten miles to the south.9

At this critical point, a picket brought a copy of Dix’s proclamation.10 The soldier claimed that copies had already been distributed to local citizens and soldiers. Notified of the Union’s intentions, the overmatched Confederates decided to retreat. In turn, the officers of the 39th Virginia signed a resolution justifying the retreat. Smith then changed his strategy from defense to evacuation.

Some Union officers later stated that Smith made an agreement with Lockwood not to

8 Bogardus, Dear Eagle, 13-14.

9 Bogardus, Dear Eagle, 17; Smith, “Narrative of the Retreat.”

10 See OR Armies, ser. I, 5:431-432 for the entirety of “To the People of Accomac and Northampton Counties, Virginia.”
fight if Lockwood allowed him to retreat in peace. Lockwood’s slow pursuit of Confederate forces, and the continual communication by Smith and Lockwood from Accomac to Worcester County, support this argument. Whether several Confederate officers, or two opposing commanders decided it, the retreat made sense. Lockwood outmatched Smith with better weapons, and more experienced soldiers, a much larger force, and initiative. Smith also held a poor defensive point and did not have the confidence of local citizens. Smith later wrote, “No sane man would counsel resistance in the face of such odds.”

All Confederate units retreated southward that night, much to the dismay of the soldiers. The commanders ordered the artillery, small arms, and accouterments to Pungoteague, where soldiers loaded the goods on a ship. Yet the prevailing high winds made it impossible for the ship to depart so they abandoned their efforts. Smith and his men buried or destroyed these weapons to prevent them from falling into the hands of the Federals.

After retreating, Smith dispatched a resolution signed by leading citizens of Accomac. These men of Accomac, unionists and secessionists, planters and politicians, stated their belief that the 39th Virginia had done all in its power for the defense of the Shore. They also agreed that a lack of munitions had caused them to succumb to honorable and sanguinary terms that avoided useless bloodshed, thereby exonerating the unit from any accusations of cowardice.

The vanguard of the Peninsula Brigade, Purnell’s Maryland Legion, witnessed firsthand the disarray on the Shore. In a letter to Dix from Temperanceville (ten miles south of the

11 Smith, “Narrative of the Reatreat.”

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.
Maryland border), Asst. Adjt. Gen. John H. Knight described his advance. The command first arrived at Beaver Dam Bridge, near the farm of John A. Brittingham, just across the border in Virginia. Company K of the 39th Virginia had encamped in Brittingham’s yard and its officers slept on his floor. Brittingham told Knight that the Southerners had dispersed the night before and agreed to be a guide for the Federals.14

It is doubtful that any other Union soldiers had such a wayward trip during the war. Brittingham led the Union contingent over the backroads of the seaside where they encountered felled trees. After taking a detour through the woods, they rode for ten more miles, and arrived at New Church. There they met several bedraggled men and boys who had been in the Confederate cavalry. A mile farther, a Confederate breastwork halted Knight’s advance. After finding another route, Knight and his vanguard arrived at Oak Hall, where Brittingham met a young boy whom Knight instructed to be a guide.15

In Temperanceville, Knight read to the inhabitants Dix’s proclamation that Union forces came as friends and would “invade no rights of person or property. On the contrary, your laws, your institutions, your usages, will be scrupulously respected” Knight declared. The proclamation also stressed the fact that Lockwood came from a place similar to the Shore and that the Union wished to reestablish commerce with Virginia.16

Traveling farther, the legion chased some stragglers from Smith’s command. James G. Smith of Company A drowned while attempting to escape by swimming across a creek. From

14 Mariner, True Tales, 53-56.


what the Legion ascertained, most Confederates had thrown away or hidden their arms and
returned home. In the piecemeal chase that ensued, Federals captured two captains and a
lieutenant. They also seized two iron cannons near Oak Hall and two six-pounder guns in
Accomac. The Baltimore American, after interviewing a Federal captain in December, claimed
that Federals retrieved eight guns at a battery between Oak Hall and Drummondtown. In
addition, Knight took several hundred old flintlock muskets with rough flints that only ignited one
out of six times. The American noted that the 39th had abandoned Camp Johnson, eight miles
south of Drummondtown.17

On November 18 Lockwood arrived in Drummondtown and made his headquarters at Dr.
Peter F. Browne’s home. He notified Dix that day that the Southerners had disbanded. Dix
congratulated Lockwood on a job well done and urged him to continue on to Northampton
County. Dix also ordered him to capture all of the Confederate artillery, and to keep in mind the
objective of the invasion: to bring the Shore back into the Union fold by its own accord.
Lockwood arrived at Eastville a couple weeks later. With him went the 21st Indiana, one section
of Nims’ Battery, and seventy cavalrmen while Purnell’s Legion had been left at Oak Hall.18

On November 20, Sgt. Bogardus arrived at Oak Hall after a march of seventeen miles.
Although the most direct route was only eleven miles, the 5th New York made detours that
consumed eight hours. Moreover, Federals took their time marching down the Shore. As with
Purnell’s Legion, delays such as felled trees, destroyed bridges, and constructed entrenchments,
slowed progress. Bogardus claimed that the entrenchments made for a poor defense because a

17 “Late Northern News,” Richmond Dispatch, 4 December 1861; OR Armies, ser. I, 5:433-435;
Weaver and Sherwood, 39th Virginia Infantry, 105-106.

“blow of the foot would crumble [the dirt] half a yard down.” The earthwork had in front of it a small ditch, hardly enough to keep the Federals at bay. Moreover, it had embrasures for only four guns.

Here the only Union casualty of the invasion occurred. During the march south, a soldier from Michigan died from wounds from an accidental shooting. Federals buried him in Oak Hall and the Zouaves resumed their march. They advanced south through Temperanceville, Modest Town, to Drummondstown, eighteen miles from Temperanceville. This trek took two days.

Several men gave out from fatigue, had blistered feet, or lame ankles. The Federals noticed two Union flags, one in Modest Town at the hotel, and another at an abandoned house along Seaside Road. Apparently the inhabitants of this “Union neighborhood” truly did have Northern sympathies. Displaying a Union flag also would have discouraged abuse of their homes. Yet, they fled for fear of retribution from both Northern and Southern forces.

Later, the 5th New York came upon a sawmill and sawyer. Beyond lay two miles of downed trees that blocked the road. Although the sawyer denied any knowledge of the trees or an alternative route, a Union officer brandishing a pistol coaxed him into showing them another way. After the sawyer departed, the Zouaves started the primitive sawmill, whereupon it finished cutting through a log and began to cut through the metal sides, although in vain, sending its teeth flying in all directions. Young Bogardus did not make the connection, but the incident embodied the Shore’s situation. Having rid themselves of Confederate leadership (the sawyer), the Federals freely scattered the remnants of Confederate resistance (the sawteeth). En route to

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19 Bogardus, Dear Eagle, 16-18.

20 Ibid., 19.
Drummondtown the 5th New York encountered an embrasure that could accommodate fourteen guns, but the positions had been built so cockeyed that if the cannons had fired, they would have destroyed the fortification.\(^\text{21}\)

Arriving at Drummondtown on November 21, the New Yorkers noted the town’s lack of vigor. Its homes needed painting, and its businesses needed running. They freed an imprisoned Union man, and commandeered weapons, accouterments and seven pieces of artillery. After establishing the unit camp nine miles to the south on the seaside, the regimental surgeon prohibited Col. Warren from marching so far again in a day. Warren pushed his men despite Lockwood’s agreement with Smith. Lockwood, however, sauntered ahead of the 5th New York and had ordered them to move out after his advance elements in order to give the Confederates time. Warren may have been apprised of the arrangement, since he offered to take his regiment and a battery and push through to the end of the Shore in pursuit of the retreating Confederates.\(^\text{22}\)

Although the Union troops generally behaved themselves, some problems did arise. A Zouave private, although forbidden by Lockwood’s order, ventured out of camp into Drummondtown. He arrived at a house, knocked on the door and entered. After seeing two of his superiors warming themselves by the fire, he beat a hasty retreat. His superiors, Col. Warren and another officer rushed out to capture the rogue private. Unfortunately, for them, he dove into a pig sty to hide and although they searched a nearby cellar, they did not find their quarry.\(^\text{23}\)


Further confrontations ensued when two former Confederates met some unarmed Zouaves in the woods. The intoxicated Southerners pulled their pistols on the Union soldiers and a chaotic struggle ensued. The New Yorkers disarmed the drunk ex-Confederates and took them before Col. Warren. After a night of confinement the colonel visited the now penitent Southerners. Warren coolly explained his principles and the folly of their position then dismissed them.24

Trouble ensued further south as well. Having found the flag belonging to the 39th Virginia in Northampton, soldiers of the 5th New York put it upon a pole, Union down, and brandished it as they marched into Eastville. This gave the Federals great delight and, as a final insult, they trailed the flag in the dirt as they passed by the Union vanguard. Men from the 21st Indiana also committed depredations in Eastville. They stole the silver and other costly furnishings from the Masonic Hall. Consequently, Dix had the men sent back in irons, stating that he wanted no thieves under his command.25

Newspapers throughout the country reported on the campaign. On November 21 The Richmond Dispatch wrote that 8,000 Federals had invaded the area. The article also vindicated Col. Smith, who probably “considered discretion the better part of valor in this instance, especially since the means of resistance were very limited.” The Dispatch also mustered sympathy for those who had to “submit to a humiliating military oppression forced upon them by detestable Black

24 Ibid., Bogardus, Dear Eagle, 21-22.

Republican rulers.” The Shore would have to accept its fate with patience, the newspaper stated, until the Confederacy achieved more victories to compensate the loss.26

The Charleston Mercury wrote on November 18 that 4,000 Federals had overtaken the Eastern Shore. Surprised that the North had not invaded the Shore earlier, the paper lamented that the area lay at their mercy. The South could do nothing “to save that portion of the State from rapine and arson.”27

On December 4, 1861, The Baltimore American reported that a Union contingent had proceeded to Eastville, and would arrive there before the end of the week. Once there, Lockwood set up his headquarters in Cessford, the home of the Ker family, who had fled across the bay weeks earlier to avoid the occupation.28

The New York Herald cheered the capture of Accomac and Northampton in late November as a gourmet accomplishment. “All hail, Old Accomac!” exclaimed the paper. The article went on to lambast ex-governor Henry Wise, who had proposed a tax on exports of seafood and wildfowl to the North. Now, the Herald claimed, “we have the lion’s share of the good things of the Chesapeake; including, with the new supplies of Accomac and Northampton, an abundance of oysters, to the end of the war.”29

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27 “Our Richmond Correspondence,” The Charleston Mercury, 18 November 1861.

28 “Late Northern News,” Richmond Dispatch, 4 December 1861; Latimer, Running the Blockade, 21.

The Shore’s plight even made it into debates in Southern capital cities such as Raleigh. Delegate William A. Graham of Orange County, North Carolina, was shocked at the actions taken by Gen. Dix. “But, who before ever heard of a government professing to be free, undertaking to drive from its borders or disfranchise its whole population, if they would not . . . submit to the . . . oath” said Graham as he lamented the Shore’s loss of political freedom.30

On November 23, Lt. Alexander Murray of the Louisiana reported that the “quelling of the insurrection on the peninsula” had occurred. He endeavored to reestablish the lights at Hog Island and Cape Charles. Trade, which required the reestablishment of the lighthouses, was of great importance, for the Shore wanted contact with the mainland (especially Baltimore, where it had familial connections). Dix even wrote Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase about the restrictions for Accomac and Northampton. He claimed that the citizens there badly needed necessities and that “by bringing about open intercourse with Maryland and other loyal States the object we have in view will be promoted.”26

Lockwood informed Gen. Dix from Drummondtown that the people of the Shore had submitted to the authority of the Union. “They appear to receive the power of the Government as their deliverance from misery and great suffering.” Lockwood also thought that the two counties wished to ally with Maryland as soon as the Loyal Virginia Governor, Francis Pierpont, could arrange it. An 1861 letter from Dr. Arthur Watson, of Modest Town stated that because the Shore had no interests in common with Western Virginia, its citizens desired to become part of


Maryland no later than the end of the war. Watson also circulated a petition asking that the Union government join the two. Watson claimed that even the most violent secessionists wanted to join Maryland.  

Watson’s brother, Gillet, later state senator from Accomac and Northampton in Wheeling, Virginia, wrote in the January issue of *The Regimental Flag*, “What the future condition of these two counties are to be, is a matter of speculation. Will they remain permanent parts of Virginia, or will they form a part of our sister State, Maryland?”  

In February 1862, the General Assembly of Loyal Virginia passed an act that put forth the question of annexation with Maryland to citizens of Accomac and Northampton. That month the courts appointed commissioners for each district to oversee the polls in areas from Capeville to New Church. Although no results have been found, the vote went against annexation.  

On December 7, the Poughkeepsie boys arrived in the Northampton County seat, Eastville to the tune “Yankee Doodle.” After the unit passed through the town of Belle Haven they learned that a hotel owner had laced 200 small pies with strychnine in order to poison the Union troops. Although the legitimacy of this story is doubtful, it does bring to the forefront the theme of the Union invasion: reconciliation. In order to keep his troops in line Col. Warren had withheld the information. Consequently, the 5th New York found Eastville to be very much like

Drummondtown, its businesses and homes empty. The retreat and subsequent invasion left many of the towns on the Shore bereft, although Eastville did manage to hold some festivities.30

On December 11, Col. Warren invited some leading secessionists of Northampton to dine with him. Afterwards, they enjoyed a concert that included “The Star Spangled Banner.” The formerly solid Southerners, inebriated with whiskey and enlivened with music, joined in the chorus claiming that “they had an interest in the old flag” and “that one-half of it belonged to the South, and it was a shame to divide it.”31

On December 14, Lockwood held a grand review, followed by some drilling, that blacks in the area witnessed. This final show of pomp and strength cemented relations between the Union government and the Shore. Bogardus and others concluded that these festivities did more to mollify Southerners on the Shore than anything else.32

His objective concluded, Dix immediately began contemplating when he could remove his forces from the Shore. While Lockwood’s adjutant felt that the Union needed only two companies to guard the entire region, Dix thought 500 men in each county sufficed. The 5th New York, however, retraced its steps and headed back to Baltimore.33

As a consequence of the successful invasion, Lockwood penned a proclamation to the two counties. In it he acknowledged that they had laid down their arms peaceably and were entitled to the protection of the Federal government. He further authorized Confederate public officials to


continue in office and discharge their duties as long as they took the oath of allegiance to the
United States in his presence.\textsuperscript{34}

\textbf{Blockade Running & Blockading on the Eastern Shore}

By December Smith and his men had escaped across the bay. Although Union
Commodore Louis Goldsborough watched the peninsula, his blockade did not completely stop
Southern traffic. The \textit{USS Hercules}, which delivered supplies, also helped to prevent the escape
of the “rebel corps” in Accomac and Northampton. As of January 31, thirty officers and 150
privates had escaped the Shore to rally with forces in Richmond. Gen. Henry A. Wise attempted
to procure these men as reinforcements for his own command. Fortunately for him, more
refugees followed in 1862. By February newspapers reported that 200 men of the 39\textsuperscript{th} Virginia
had arrived on the Western Shore. By way of Towne Fields Wharf and Fisherman’s Island near
Cape Charles the embattled refugees fled in small scows and sloops to the Western Shore. Not
far behind, Lockwood’s forces sought to take the Cape Charles lighthouse and assure Dix that the
Confederates were gone.\textsuperscript{35}

On November 21, the \textit{Richmond Dispatch} reported that blockade runner Lewis M.
Hudgins had brought forty men of Capt. Spencer D. Fletcher’s company across the bay to
Gloucester County. The party was made up of Col. Benjamin T. Gunter, Capt. John J. H. Wise,
and other officers. All lacked clothing and other necessities. Those who had not run the

\textsuperscript{34} See “Proceedings of the Enemy on the Eastern Shore,” \textit{Richmond Dispatch}, 3 December
1861, for “Proclamation to the People of Accomac and Northampton.”

\textsuperscript{35} Most of the soldiers who fled the Shore joined the 46\textsuperscript{th} Virginia Infantry, Wise’s Brigade as
Company F, “Eastern Shore Refugees.” See Darrell L. Collins, 46\textsuperscript{th} Virginia Infantry
blockade, the Richmond papers guessed, had taken the oath of allegiance in order to retain their property.\(^\text{36}\)

Capt. Nathaniel J. W. LeCato, of the 39\(^{\text{th}}\) Virginia began his exodus by bidding goodbye to his betrothed. In a small dugout canoe LeCato ran the blockade from Northampton County to Princess Anne County. With only a lightship off the entrance to the bay to guide them, LeCato and two runners carrying whiskey and quinine managed to evade all Union ships except one Yankee cruiser that bore down on them halfway across the bay. The captain had both men lie down while he attempted to evade the Federal ship, albeit in vain. A sailor in the pilot-house spotted them and shouted “Boat ahoy!”

The Southern captain, thinking quickly, had his first mate and LeCato stand up boldly while he mimicked the voice of a slave. Calling out to the Northerners to take them on board because they were slaves looking for freedom, the Southern captain correctly guessed that the Union sailors would disregard their pleas and send them on their way. They arrived by morning where they received breakfast from their compatriots.\(^\text{37}\)

Some Southern Refugees returned to the Shore for more trouble. In January 1862, the soldiers stationed at Hunting Creek found a note from Lt. Thomas G. Clayton and Charles Mason, formerly of the 39\(^{\text{th}}\) Virginia. The duo had crossed the Chesapeake to Guilford, where they had recruited men to join the Confederate army. Their note, found on Half Moon Island, in

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\(^{37}\) Although LeCato’s book is a fanciful recreation of events, he nevertheless experienced them firsthand, which led him to write his autobiography. Nathaniel J. W. LeCato, Tom Burton; or the Days of ’61 (Chicago: Belford, Clarke & Company, 1888), 7-10, 13-15.
lower Accomac, thanked the owner of a small house for secreting them as well as warning them before Union soldiers arrived. The Federals, however, did not take kindly to the note after having pursued the two Southerners through the marshes of the bayside in the early morning.  

Not all refugees served the purposes of the Southern military. The Cary family of Eastville fled to stay far away from the purported horrors of war. Susan Fisher Cary was the wife of Maj. Nathaniel R. Cary of the 39th Virginia. Upon hearing of the impending Union encroachment, she began to plan her family’s escape. She had her slave, Tabby, put two sets of clothes on the children. The children along with Mrs. Cary’s father, Miers Fisher, and slaves, Tabby and John, drove twelve miles to Towne Fields Wharf in the dark of the night. Carrying only a few trunks, Mr. and Mrs. Fisher, Mrs. Cary, Tabby, John, and the Cary children boarded a vessel that shoved off into the dark waters with two men rowing and one in command. The small sloop, equipped with sails, eventually passed between two Federal gunboats near Old Point, whereupon the captain threw water on the sails to make them look dark. By the end of the voyage, the party was soaked, because the vessel had been weighted down to the water line. They had made it to Newport News, across seventeen miles of open water in a small boat with nothing more than a few clothes and some determination.  

Another Shore family also ran the blockade. Catherine Winder Howard, the sister of an officer in the 39th Virginia, was married with three children. Her husband was in the Confederate army. When Mrs. Howard left the Shore to be closer to her husband, she brought her seventy year old aunt and her invalid mother. The parents of the 39th’s adjutant, Dr. John Kerr and his

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39 Latimer, *Running the Blockade*, 1-5.
wife accompanied them. On November 7, 1861, they crossed the bay, passed by a blockading squadron and reached the York River. While sailing the captain warned Mrs. Howard that if the children made noise it would betray them to the Northerners who would probably lock them up in Fort Monroe. Mrs. Howard gave her children doses of paregoric, which put them to sleep. Silence accomplished, the refugees landed and proceeded to Norfolk where they sought refuge with family.40

Despite these successful crossings, blockaders often captured Southern vessels. By February, Maj. Robert Andrews had managed to confiscate twenty-nine sloops and several schooners. The major, who commanded elements of the 2nd Delaware in Pungoteague, took the vessels because they attempted to run the blockade, and their captain held irregular papers, or “disobeyed orders promulgated for the regulation of vessels in the waters of the Eastern Shore.” Federals sank the sloops in creeks and utilized the schooners for transports.41

Blockaders also confiscated goods. In January, a blockade runner swamped his boat while attempting to land near Eastville. The passengers lost a bag of mail which members of Purnell’s Legion discovered the next morning. Unfortunately, the mail implicated citizens in both counties. A letter from Dr. Peter F. Browne directed his wife to forward him a box of his papers which Lockwood later secured. Ups and downs characterized blockading and blockade running on the Shore, forcing both sides to continued until one gained a distinct advantage.42

40 Ibid., 21-22.

41 “A List of the Field and Staff, Line Officers, and Non-Commissioned Staff of Second Regiment Del., Vols.,” The Regimental Flag, 16 January 1862; “From Accomac, Va - A Fleet Captured,” Richmond Dispatch, 7 February 1862; “Southern Harbors to be Obstructed,” Richmond Dispatch, 17 August 1862.

42 “Secesh Mail Seized,” The Regimental Flag, 16 January 1862.
Union Occupation of the Eastern Shore

In January 1862, President Lincoln observed in his state of the Union address that because the Shore had put down its arms, no armed insurrectionists existed east of the Chesapeake Bay. This buffer zone between the North and South in the eastern theater would have to be held; hence the importance of continued occupation of the Shore, the tip of the sword of what had been Confederate sympathies on the Delmarva peninsula.43

The point of the sword having been broken, Lockwood proceeded with the arrests that Gen. Dix’s proclamation claimed would not occur. Yet as the advancing cavalry showed during the invasion, some examples would need to be made of the secessionists in order to subjugate the remaining populace.

Although he had successfully crossed the bay Col. Gunter returned on hearing that Gen. Lockwood had honored his proclamation of general amnesty. On December 8, 1861, an armed contingent of the 2nd Delaware arrested him. They transferred Gunter to the Drummondstown jail and then to Fort McHenry. In February Dix labeled him as a dangerous person who should not be released at that time.44

By April, however, Gunter had come home after accepting a parole but not the oath of allegiance. This resulted after repeated appeals to Gen. Dix who questioned Gunter on April 2 on his conduct on hearing of the proclamation delivered to the Shore in November 1861. Lastly, Dix also asked about Gunter’s future course of action if he returned to the Shore. Satisfied with the colonel’s answers, Dix paroled Gunter on the condition that he report to Fort McHenry a week

43 OR Armies, ser. III, 1:719.

later. On June 23, Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, discussed the terms of Gunter’s release with the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Dix revealed that Gunter had received parole from the commissioners of state prisoners.\textsuperscript{45}

Although Gunter claimed he had been implicated by his personal enemy, Judge E. P. Pitts, the judge did not escape retribution. The judge had sent the Virginia legislature a letter Dix deemed disloyal. Dix rebuked Pitts, who claimed he had forwarded the letter through Gen. John Wool at Fort Monroe. Dix, not believing this story, wrote to the Unionist governor of Virginia, Francis H. Pierpont, and asked that Judge Pitts be replaced by civil, rather than military, authorities in order to keep the peace with the inhabitants of Accomac County. In February 1862, the Committee of Courts of Justice charged the judge with adhering to the enemies of the United States of America and giving them aid and comfort.\textsuperscript{46}

Most of the important arrests over, Lockwood rested on his laurels in Drummondtown, where his main headquarters were. His home, “The Rectory,” was described by \textit{The Regimental Flag} as “a large and commodious one, and the grounds laid out with taste.” It also had an office, which later served as the Union telegraph office. The owner, Dr. Browne, left the Shore when the Federals arrived leaving his wife to defend the home.\textsuperscript{47}

While Lockwood settled into his stately new home, his troops in Northampton settled into quarters on a neck of land between King’s Creek and Cherrystone Creek, where the first raid and

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.


skirmish had taken place back in June 1861. In Accomac the Federals occupied over Camp Wise and renamed it Camp Wilkes in honor of the colonel of the 2nd Delaware.\textsuperscript{48}

In addition to these field quarters, the Yankees used several churches on the Shore as stables, and barracks. The Methodist and Presbyterian churches in Drummondstown suffered the most. In the Methodist sanctuary, Union soldiers damaged windows and window panes, destroyed the chancel rail, and vandalized, burned, or removed pews. The church congregation returned in 1871. Makemie Presbyterian Church fared worse as a stable for horses, although a parishioner managed to save the pulpit and chairs, which he returned to the congregation after the war. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the Federal government reimbursed the congregations for damages. The Methodist church received $300 while Makemie Church gained $400.\textsuperscript{49}

St. James Episcopal church did not suffer under the hand of the occupying Yanks for two reasons. One reason was that an unnamed elderly lady influenced Gen. Lockwood not to use it while the other, more believably, states that Lockwood decided not to subject the church to such offenses because he was an Episcopalian. In Oak Hall Downing’s Chapel was used to stable troops’ horses, albeit only briefly in 1861. Still, the bullet peppered ceiling and chopped up pews testified to the destruction.\textsuperscript{48}

The most destruction, however, took place in St. George’s Episcopal Church in Pungoteague. The historic structure was 123 years old at the time it Union troops occupied it.

\textsuperscript{48} Bogardus, \textit{Dear Eagle}, 31.

For the rest of the war Federals removed or burned the floors, galleries, and all interior woodwork. One wing of the building was partially dismantled when bricks were seized in order to build a cookhouse. By the end of the war it was a mere shell of its former self with gaping holes in its sides and no congregation to restore it although funds were allotted by the Committee on War Claims in 1900 to restore the church.49

The confiscating habits of the Federals did not stop with churches. Before the campaign began Dix sent Lockwood a copy of the August 1861 measure entitled “An act to confiscate property used for insurrectionary purposes.” This allowed Lockwood to take property belonging to former Confederates. While Dix asked to be apprised of any measures Lockwood took regarding this act, he gave the forces on the Shore a free hand in using it. In fact, Capt. Charles H. Christman, in command at Onancock, captured twenty-five stands of arms in January 1862, and sent them to the Provost Marshall of the 2nd Delaware. Federals also confiscated horses, food, and homes belonging to former Confederates.50

By winter Federal soldiers realized that the war for the Eastern Shore had ended. The 2nd Delaware began publishing a newspaper, The Regimental Flag, with Capt. J. M. Barr as editor. The first issue appeared January 16, 1862, from Camp Wilkes in Drummondstown. The paper contained wartime events, unusual stories, letters from camp, advertisements, locations of brigade offices, rosters, and even brain teasers. Articles discussed camp life, the building of the Shore telegraph, an incident involving the seizure of mail, a regimental snowball fight, and even a notice


for missing slaves. Issues of the newspaper flourished but discontinued after the 2nd Delaware left for the Peninsula in June 1862.51

No such regimental newspaper existed in Northampton. Purnell’s Legion instead spent its time “overhauling rebels.” This included the defense of Camp Bayview, the Federal base in Northampton. Bogardus wrote on January 15 that the Federals had grain in their possession, which the local Southern sympathizers wished to destroy, along with a house in which the Northerners dwelled. Citizens of Northampton had counted on burning the storage shed at Towne Fields Wharf in order to starve the occupants. They did not succeed even though they attacked front and rear. In addition to occupying enemy territory Union soldiers acted as blockaders. Purnell’s Legion captured a Southern vessel containing tobacco and mail that had run the blockade. In concert with the policies of Gen. Dix, however, Lockwood returned the harmless goods to their owners. Undiscouraged by Lockwood’s seeming generosity, the Legion and its brother companies continued to search for arms and munitions. They even managed to make time for the fairer sex as long as they had Union sympathies.52

Other such demonstrations occurred farther north on Chincoteague Bay. Flag Officer L. M. Goldsborough addressed the matter stating that an armed vessel had to protect Chincoteague Island, an extremely Unionist place, from hostile and unruly Shoremen who had made demonstrations against them. Although Lockwood gave Inspector John Caulk a howitzer, 


52 Bogardus, Dear Eagle, 31-32; Latimer, Running the Blockade, 3.
ammunition, and fifty stand of arms, the inspector felt a gunboat necessary to protect the island and its waterborne commerce. In February, Union officials made the island an official port of entry in connection with the United States Customs Service. In addition, they sent two companies of the 2nd Delaware to Temperanceville and Horntown.53

Union occupation resulted in the building of a telegraph line, a chief concern of Washington officials. Union soldiers protected the telegraph line that workers extended from Wilmington, Delaware, to Old Point Comfort, Virginia at a rate of twenty miles a day. To help the contractors reach their deadline, a train of wagons traveled from Camp Wilkes to Salisbury, Maryland. They moved from Salisbury to Drummondtown in four days, completing the entire endeavor by February 1. By the thirteenth, the telegraph line had reached Cape Charles. Lockwood detailed the 2nd Maryland Regiment, under Col. Wilkins, to guard the line from Salisbury to Cape Charles, with each company guarding several miles of line.54

Federals also stayed busy maintaining maritime communications and supply routes on the Shore. In May the New York Herald reported that workers had completed the telegraph line from Cherrystone to Fort Monroe. This line, manufactured by the Bishop Gutta Percha Company on the East River, replaced another that gave way from weakness.55 For two months, officers under


55 Ibid.
Professor A. Bache of the U. S. Coast Survey took soundings of the creeks and inlets and to replace buoys that secessionists had destroyed.\textsuperscript{56}

Union soldiers had much time on their hands and invented interesting ways to pass the time. Lt. Bogardus and a comrade traveled to a bayside island where they inspected a shipwreck and examined the Cherrystone Bar Lighthouse. Soldiers took part in a lengthy snow ball fight took place at Camp Wilkes. Checkers, chess, and backgammon also became popular pastimes for the Peninsular Brigade. Music always played a large role. As a soldier wrote in \textit{The Regimental Flag}, “We have a lively set of boys with us, and generally spend our evenings in singing . . . songs, (for we have four excellent singers with our squad,).” This Hunting Creek quartet included a black crooner and his violinist companion.\textsuperscript{57}

Soldiers often found a hobby in drinking. In fact, it became such a common occurrence that Federal officials forbade the sale of liquor to any officer of soldier except by the permission of Lockwood or his lieutenants. The penalty for violating this order included hard labor for one month or imprisonment for the same period. Officials court martialed intoxicated commissioned officers. Overall, incidents involving sale of liquor by local whites and blacks to Union soldiers occurred more often than not.\textsuperscript{58}

Food also made an impact on soldiers. In Eastville, the 5\textsuperscript{th} New York ate ducks, brant, geese, and chickens. They also harvested sugar cane and oysters. “Sweet potatoes the boys eat

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{56} Mears, \textit{The Virginia Eastern Shore}, 143-144; “U. S. Coast Survey,” “The Weather,” \textit{The Regimental Flag}, 16 January 1862.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Bogardus, \textit{Dear Eagle}, ; “Letter from Hunting Creek Camp,” \textit{The Regimental Flag}, 16 January 1862.
\item \textsuperscript{58} \textit{Ibid.}, 140-142.
\end{enumerate}
from morning till night” Lt. Bogardus wrote. In Guilford, Accomac County, the 2nd Delaware boasted of the endless victuals, some provided by thankful locals. “As for Oysters there is no end to them” wrote a Union soldier. Although foraging accounted for much of their diet, most of the soldiers’ provisions came from Union sources such as the schooner Burdon that made port at Pungoteague Creek. Union families also sent packages south via a balloon that traveled from Salisbury, Maryland to Drummondtown. In addition, a sutler set up shop in Drummondtown to sell goods to soldiers.⁵⁹

Although roads in the area remained a constant danger, Union soldiers still had to travel over them on foot and on horseback. In January 1862 Lockwood dispatched a volunteer to Massongo in northern Accomac, to check on the companies stationed in the area. The volunteer reported taking the wrong route several times, and having to backtrack over very crooked roads. At one point he had to trek six miles out of the way because the Massongo Bridge had been burned during the retreat rendering it impassable. He even had to pass around a Confederate earthwork.⁶⁰

Soldiers also traveled to the islands. On March 8, 1862 Lt. Bogardus traveled to Hog Island, where all fifteen families were Unionist. While there, he visited Dr. J. G. Potts whom Lockwood had appointed as lighthouse keeper. The Northerners quickly realized Hog Island was


⁶⁰ “Letter from Hunting Creek Camp,” The Regimental Flag.
full of apathetic loyalists and left Potts as the only symbol of the Union government. The Hog Islanders wished only to hunt, fish, crab, and tong for oysters while the war passed by them.\(^{61}\)

Injury, illness, and death also accompanied camp life. James Chambers, of Snow’s Maryland Battery, was mangled and bruised in January when a horse threw him from a gun carriage. Eighteen-year-old Robert J. Campbell, also of Snow’s Battery, suffered from typhoid fever. After eight weeks Campbell died and the unit sent his remains home for burial. The most bizarre case involved a rabid soldier who a citizen reported because he did not want the mad soldier to infect his cattle. Not all was suffering, however. The Union hospital at “Rural Felicity” thanked the local sutler, John C. Burkhart, in *The Regimental Flag*. Burkhart had helped ease the sick men’s illnesses by providing care packages.\(^{62}\)

On March 16, 1862, by order of Gen. George B. McClellan, all troops serving on the Shore not actually needed for defense of the telegraph lines would be assigned duty elsewhere. This left only a skeleton force of Capt. Robert Duvall’s cavalry.\(^{63}\)


\(^{63}\) *OR Armies*, ser. I, 51:518, 552-553.
CHAPTER V - A SHIFTING SHORE

The Eastern Shore & Loyal Virginia

The Eastern Shore continued in the hands of loyal Virginia under Governor Francis Pierpont. The first mention of the Shore regarding its newfound loyalty came in November 1861, when Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase informed Gen. Dix that he wished to see a loyal member of Congress from “Wise’s district” by wintertime. On November 25, Lockwood ordered a meeting of the local citizenry to nominate candidates for legislative elections. He asked Dix what to do about those in certain civil offices but declared that the Shore would swear allegiance to the Federal government. Dix responded stating that the Shore did not want to be classed with the insurrectionary areas of Virginia and should be treated accordingly.1

The election remained the most symbolic issue on the Shore. Gillet F. Watson wrote of the coming event: “We are now in the midst of a revolution such as the world has rarely seen, and events hasten with such rapidity that we know not what a day may bring forth.” The Regimental Flag published his address to the people of Accomac and Northampton. Watson announced his candidacy as a Union senator from the Shore.2

Other offices open for Union candidates included the House of Delegates, Clerk of Circuit Court, Clerk of County Court, Commonwealth Attorney, Sheriff, Surveyor, and Commissioners of the Revenue. Watson took his seat in Wheeling on February 1, 1862, along with Samuel W. Powell, a member of the House from Accomac. Robert S. Costin, one of the elected officials to

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the Wheeling government, never accepted office. He deemed it too costly and detrimental to his business and his family. In March Costin resigned his seat.3

In 1862 political humorist Robert Henry Newell published the Orpheus C. Kerr Papers. Using the monicker, Orpheus C. Kerr (which was meant to sound like “office seeker”), Newell wrote a satiric version of the Civil War. In the chapter on the invasion of the Shore, Newell criticized Lockwood’s strict attitude toward his brigade and his conciliatory attitude toward Southerners. He paraphrased Lockwood’s decrees of conciliation by writing sarcastically, “Any soldier found guilty of shooting the Southern Confederacy, or bothering him in any manner . . . shall be deemed guilty of disorderly conduct.” Untrusting of the conquered Southerners, Newell also wrote, “The citizen of Accomac . . . received this proclamation favorably, and said he would not go hunting Union pickets until the weather was warmer.” Newell also noted the relative insignificance of the Shore and commented with contempt that “the Union Army . . . now holds undisputed possession . . . over six inches of the sacred soil of Accomac, and this unnatural rebellion has received a blow which shakes the rotten fabric to its shivering centre.”4

Racial Problems

The Union occupation of the Shore proceeded well until June 1862. By that time, however, race relations and policies were strained in Accomac and Northampton County. Throughout 1862, Union officials at Fort Monroe allowed slaves and free blacks to visit the Eastern Shore. Northampton officials objected to this because it violated the laws of Virginia and did damage to citizens. The court ordered that authorities issue no more passes from Hampton

3 Ibid.

Roads to slaves or free blacks.  

The situation worsened. The next month, four slaves named Custis, Henry, Levin, and John, attempted to rob a storehouse in Birdsnest, Northampton County. A clerk prevented the robbery. Officials convicted the slaves at Eastville. However, Gen. Lockwood objected to the sentencing. “The community . . . avows openly and freely the necessity for the exercise of the sternest measures of the law, even unto death.”

Virginia law, however, recognized the perpetrators as slaves, subject to execution by hanging. Lockwood saw this as a vindictive act directed toward Union forces on the Shore. He thought it illegal because the four blacks in question had been previously employed and therefore were free. Lockwood gathered evidence that would prove their freedom and sent it to Gov. Pierpont who had to sign the death warrant. This trial echoed the persecution of blacks and Unionists in the two counties, which Lockwood sought to stop by suggesting a declaration of martial law. It also led Lockwood to wonder if the Union government should continue to regard those who publicly expressed discontent as loyal to the Union.

In August a similar disturbance occurred at Drummondtown. Locals incited a ruckus at court when they referred to a Union Maryland regiment as abolitionists. Military reinforcements arrived at the scene and ordered all participants to return to their homes.

The political games concerning blacks had not yet ended. In September, President Lincoln


\(^7\) *Ibid.*

issued a preliminary Emancipation Proclamation freeing slaves in areas of the South still in rebellion. Dr. Gillett F. Watson, a Unionist planter Drummondtown, asked Gov. Pierpont for compensation for confiscated slaves belonging to “Unconditional Union men of Eastern Virginia” because President Lincoln had offered none in his proclamation. At that time Lockwood granted freedom to all blacks who belonged to disloyal persons on the Shore. This created excitement, unrest, and dissatisfaction. Lincoln responded that his proclamation intended to exempt the Shore but mistakenly omitted it. The final Emancipation Proclamation exempted Accomac and Northampton and its slaves remained in service.  

In order to bring more peace to the Shore Lockwood ordered civil authorities not to dispatch armed slave patrols under any pretense. Declaring that they acted counter to Federal forces, Lockwood treated them as public enemies and held public magistrates accountable for any such patrols.  

Maj. Frank White, who replaced Lockwood in 1863, also had trouble controlling the blacks on the Shore. He refused to release a company of Purnell’s Legion in exchange for a black unit by claiming this would only worsen race relations. In November 1864, White issued a series of special orders beginning with one concerning the idle blacks. Residents were complaining about them not only because they did not seek gainful employment, but also because they preyed upon the property of others. White decided to catalog the blacks on the Shore and to provide them with labor.  

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9 Ibid., 210.

10 Ibid., 213.

11 Frank J. White, “Special Order No. 81, No. 83, No. 85, and No. 87” (Eastville, Va.: Headquarters Provost Marshal’s Office, 1864).
Union Pvt. I. C. Randall of the 1st Eastern Shore Maryland Volunteers also wrote down his thoughts. In a November 1863 letter from Drummondtown, Randall described the Shore as a “howling wilderness” He also hoped that he would be sent to retrieve the regiment’s sick and wounded who lay bedridden from Rhode Island to Gettysburg to Washington, D. C. The regiment’s colonel was also enlisting local Negroes, although soldiers and officers alike did not like returning their salutes. Overall, the social aspects evident in these writings show how the civilian and military population dealt with race relations and problems.

John Yates Beall’s Raids

In autumn 1863, the partisan war found its way once again to the Shore. John Yates Beall, a native of Jefferson County, Virginia, had been educated at the University of Virginia and fought in the Civil War as an officer. After receiving a wound, Beall retired from active duty and turned to partisan service. He crossed the bay and stopped at Cape Charles Lighthouse. He won over the lighthouse keeper and received a tour of the facilities. Then he summoned his small band and ransacked the Union beacon. Carrying away lamps and breaking all the glass, his partisans gutted the structure. Before Beall left, he threatened to destroy the Hog Island Lighthouse and the Cherrystone Bar Lighthouse. He ordered the keeper not to leave for one day.

Subsequently the keeper traveled to Eastville and informed Maj. White, the Union commander on the Shore, of Beall’s words. Union forces at Fort Monroe then deployed Capt. Guert Gansevoort in August on the USS Roanoke to Hog Island to capture Beall. Gansevoort returned in September with only one prisoner, acting master E. McGuire, of the Confederate

12 I. C. Randall to Parents and Brothers, 14 November 1863, Private Collection, Accomac, Virginia.

13 Mariner, True Tales, 61-64; OR Navies, ser. I, 9:149.
Navy, who claimed to hail from that area.\textsuperscript{14}

“You will proceed with the forces under your command to Hog Island and take the necessary steps to protect the light-house . . . and take or kill this party of guerrillas” Asst. Adjt. Gen. Southard Hoffman wrote to his Prussian subordinate, Capt. Franz Von Schilling in September 1863. Schilling proceeded from Fort Monroe to the island with the intent of dispatching Confederate partisans. While on the Eastern Shore, Von Schilling visited Eastville, Chincoteague Island, and Smith Island. He captured a forged “coasting manifest” used for smuggling at Hog Island. As a consequence, Acting Rear Admiral S. P. Lee sent the \textit{USS Stepping Stones} to search all the entrances on the seaside and bayside of the Eastern Shore.

Von Schilling’s orders referred to Capt. John Yates Beall and his men, who did not go to Hog Island after all. Beall’s bluff had worked. By dropping the hint to the keeper at Cape Charles, he had started a rumor. Gen. John G. Foster had taken a hand in the matter, and appealed to Gen. Henry Halleck, who ordered a detachment to Hog Island even though the area did not fall under his command.\textsuperscript{15}

In October, Lt. Thomas Harris, of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} Pennsylvania Artillery, proceeded to the Eastern Shore on a similar mission. Harris believed that an attack on the Assateague Lighthouse was imminent. After being informed that the schooner \textit{Columbia} lay prostrate in Pocomoke Bay. Harris gathered his men and proceeded with a pilot to the ship. The Federals burned it to the water’s edge. Josiah Mason and his crew had used the \textit{Columbia} for plundering vessels on the Pocomoke Sound, as well as for smuggling. Although Mason and his crew escaped in three

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}

boats, Harris heard that a sloop had fired on three small vessels that night.\textsuperscript{16}

With confusion and chaos reigning in the Chesapeake, Beall struck his real target: Wachapreague Inlet, a large bay on the lower Accomac County seaside. Late in September, while the schooner \textit{Alliance} anchored at night in the inlet, Beall and his men overpowered its crew and seized the vessel in the name of the Confederacy. The \textit{Richmond Dispatch} claimed that twenty-five men, acting on information furnished to them by Nathan Cobb of Sand Shoal Island, made the attack on the schooners \textit{Alexander, Alliance, Davis, Ireland}, and \textit{John J. Houseman}. They burned the \textit{Alliance} with a cargo worth $200,000.\textsuperscript{17}

Beall outdid even himself. He also confiscated three fishing sloops during his expedition to keep from alerting other vessels. Beall and his partisans detained the captured crews for three days. Then they sent them to Richmond as prisoners. Beall took all the schooners out to sea, except the \textit{Alexander}, which he ran ashore. Just off Cape Charles, Beall set his prisoners adrift.\textsuperscript{18}

The chaos did not last much longer. The 1\textsuperscript{st} Eastern Shore Maryland Volunteers captured seven of Beall’s men in Accomac County in mid-November. Beall and eight other men fell into Union hands soon after. Union officials first carried them to Drummondtown, where they searched Beall and his men thoroughly before confining them to the town jail. Lockwood, who did not consider Beall a prisoner of war, sent him and his men in chains to Fort McHenry, Maryland. Convinced that twelve men could be found who would convict Beall, the general, wanted a trial in Accomac County. After all, Beall’s misdeeds had caused outrage among some

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}


\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid.}
Eastern Shore citizens who depended on the lighthouses and the Federal government for continued prosperity.19

Since Confederates had damaged the Cape Charles Lighthouse, it seemed only fitting that Southerners pay for its repair. At least this is what Anne Parker Thom (wife of a former surgeon in the 39th Virginia) of Northampton wrote in September 1863. She claimed that Secretary of War Edwin Stanton sent one of Gen. Robert Schenk’s staff and a number of infantry to make the people of Northampton pay for the destroyed lighthouse. Mrs. Thom was already economically weak, but Federals still required her to pay $90 for repairs to the lighthouse. Soldiers took what they wanted including butter, and two healthy slaves. They also forced Mrs. Thom to take the oath of allegiance.20

The Formation of Federal units on the Eastern Shore

By December 1863, black regiments were organized all over the South. No units having been organized from the Shore, Gen. Benjamin Butler offered to organize a recruiting party to the Shore for such a purpose. In response, Gen. R. S. Canby sent the 10th United States Colored Troops under Lt. Col. E. H. Powell to recruit men. Ex-slave Robert Dennis of Accomac enlisted with the 10th in July and served out the war. The 10th U. S. C. T. relieved the 1st Maryland at Drummondtown, Cherrystone, and Chincoteague Island.21

Over thirty blacks already joined Company F of the 9th U. S. C. T. Federals set up enlistment points at Pungoteague, Jenkins Bridge, Franktown, Bayside, Pitts Wharf, and

Drummondtown. In March 1864, the unit left for Hilton Head. While in South Carolina, the company took part in an expedition up the Asheepoo River and to John’s Island. Several black Eastern Shoremen became noncommissioned officers, including three sergeants, and four corporals. Men from the unit fell at Chaffin’s Farm, and Petersburg, Virginia. Unfortunately, fifteen of the original enlistees died from diseases such as cholera while on duty in Beaufort, South Carolina, and Brownsville, Louisiana. The regiment discharged four men for various reasons including wounds.22

Late in 1863 the Federal government decided to raise a unit of loyal white Virginians on the Eastern Shore. This arose in response to increasing demand from generals for more troops stationed in the area. Union officials thought that if they had to guard the Shore, why not enlist some of its locals to do so while removing better trained and more seasoned soldiers? The Loyal volunteers enlisted with a bounty for three years or the duration of the war. They would serve wherever ordered and the government appointed its officers. Benjamin F. Scott, a Hog Island native and resident of Chincoteague enlisted in December 1863. Sixty-two other Chincoteague residents volunteered, some of them hailing from the North and the Deep South. Scott claimed that he and a few companions had been sent on a scouting trip from Eastville to Smith Island. They had no provisions with them so they slaughtered a yearling. Eventually they returned to the mainland for provisions but remained stationed on the island for several months. Capt. Hazard Stephens acted as colonel of the 1st Regiment Loyal Eastern Virginia Volunteers until Gen. Butler

replaced him in March 1864, with Lt. Oliver G. Thomas.23

The regiment served out the war mostly as coast guards on the Shore. However, a small detachment also patrolled the waters off Sand Shoal Island in Northampton in July and August 1864. This detachment used the sloop, *Josephine*, confiscated from Southern sympathizer Nathan Cobb. He had moved to Sand Shoal Island in 1828, did a steady business in salvaging shipwrecks with his family. The Union army probably took his sloop after hearing of his disloyalty. The regiment traveled to Pungoteague in September and October for duty as coast guards. In November and December the 1st Eastern Virginia Infantry performed duty at Onancock; in the first two months of 1865 it served at Eastville. March and April found the unit at Drummondstown. That summer they moved around the Shore but then transferred them to Camp Hamilton, near Fort Monroe, to guard prisoners. They returned to the Shore in November 1865, for the final muster.24

**Fitzhugh’s Raid**

In March 1864, more Confederates came from Mathews County to raid the Eastern Shore. Cherrystone, so many times the target of raids, was plundered again, this time by an element of the 5th Virginia Cavalry under Capt. Thaddeus Fitzhugh. After meeting some people from Northampton, Fitzhugh and thirteen men (the Federals estimated fifty), sailed from Mobjack Bay to Cape Charles and marched to Cherrystone. Although Gen. J. E. B. Stuart initially rejected the idea of the expedition, Gen. Lindsay L. Lomax allowed it, not knowing the scope of the raid.


After sending a man to scout the Union forces’ locations, Fitzhugh’s encountered a crisis when his Northampton-born pilot deserted. Not wanting the scout to inform the enemy of his objective, the cavalryman rapidly marched up Bayside Road to Cherrystone Road. There he captured the Union sentinel. Surprising the rest of the garrison at daybreak, Fitzhugh’s band ransacked their stores, killed their horses, and cut the telegraph cable.25

He and three men then disguised themselves as Union soldiers and had the captain of the Æolas (whom they captured in a hotel) escort them aboard. Fitzhugh captured the Titan by surprising the captain as he moored his ship. Fitzhugh now had forty-nine prisoners, some of whom he liberated. Capt. Robert Duvall and the Purnell Legion, warned by a black porter from the hotel, arrived in time to see Fitzhugh leave on the Titan. The Confederates left the Æolas, after bonding and disabling it. Assessing the damage afterwards, Capt. Robert Duvall estimated that the Confederates had destroyed $2,000 worth of stores in addition to the guard house, the telegraph instrument, nine coats, and several stoves.26

Admiral S. P. Lee dispatched two gunboats to the Shore to find and capture Fitzhugh and his band of regulars. Union officials considered the Titan so important that Gen. Butler sent the USS Dawn under Lt. J. W. Simmons, to search the area between Cape Charles and Hog Island. Simmons returned empty-handed to Fort Monroe and Lee ordered six steamers to protect the Shore.27


26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.
Union Occupation of the Eastern Shore

In 1863, Emma LeCato, a college student at Atlantic Female College in Onancock began keeping a diary. During the Chancellorsville campaign, she heard that Gen. A. P. Hill had died (rather than Gen. Thomas J. Jackson). Yet, on May 18, she wrote that all the girls in her school were wearing mourning clothes for “our dear old ‘Stonewall.’” Although young Emma lay in bed sick, she wondered whether she would return to school because the Federals were going to make her teacher, Mr. Phillips, take the oath. Emma speculated on what the future would bring. In June she wrote “Another month has come and it is still War, War. Oh! That this war would end.”

More problems existed on the water where oyster-dredging brought constant headaches to local officials. On March 3, 1864, Theodore Reed, a sea captain from Philadelphia, traveled south through the Chesapeake Bay. Although a routine trip, it left an indelible mark on oyster dredging in the Chesapeake. Reed and his seven man crew dredged oysters in Hunting Creek on the Accomac County bayside. During this time a group of Accomac oystermen turned coast guards approached them. A Virginia statute empowered any oysterman possessing a license to arrest any foreigner dredging within a certain depth of water. After boarding Captain Reed’s ship, the Margaret Ann, James Shreaves and his guard of three men easily subdued the Yankee crew. While returning to Onancock, Reed attempted to throw the oystermen overboard. Although he seized a gun from a guardsman, a compatriot named Julius Twiford shot him in the arm and ended his threat.

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The coast guard brought the vessel to shore and took the captain and crew before a magistrate, who fined and discharged them. Two surgeons examined Reed’s wound and found it mortal. Reed died five days later. The provost marshal at Drummondstown then arrested the culprit, Twiford, and turned him over to civil authorities for trial. The jury acquitted Twiford. Yet the provost held him and two other men at Drummondstown to await a military hearing. In April, military authorities held a military deposition. The court decided that they had acted lawfully. It seems oyster depredations had been occurring all along. Back in January 1862, Dix had sent the steamer Hercules to Pocomoke Sound to drive off all who dredged illegally for the expensive shellfish with little effect.30

In July, 800 men of the 138th Regiment Ohio National Guard arrived to protect Cherrystone from further depredations. The Ohioans enjoyed themselves much more than their predecessors. One company marched a short distance on the mainland and bivouacked near two pear trees, which it picked clean of fruit. Other elements of the regiment proceeded to Eastville, where they established Camp Duvall in the town. They took salt water baths and hunted for crabs in the brackish marshes of Northampton County. After drilling and digging wells, Federals found that the mosquitoes were the worst foe they would face. Pvt. George W. Bonsall wrote, “We could not very well remember that we were in Virginia if there was nothing to torment us.”31

He also stated that he liked the area better than any he had been in since leaving western Virginia because of the delightful climate, cultivated farms and plantations, and the lack of ravages of war. Observing the quiet and the nominally loyal citizens, Bonsall wondered why the


government sent his regiment there. After he talked to an elderly black man it became clear that
the residents had Southern sympathies but would not give the Northerners trouble. Still,
Northampton remained quiet. At the end of July, the 138th Ohio received orders to proceed to
Hog Island to guard the lighthouse.32

In February 1863, Union officials established a government farm on the property of Miers
Fisher, an antebellum politician. However, by 1864 the 600-acre farm was unprogressive. Under
C. S. Henry, former professor of history and philosophy at the University of New York, and
William T. Aiken, a Northern farm manager, the farm had many crops. Corn filled 120 acres
while cotton, beans, and potatoes occupied forty, thirty, and ten, respectively. Although a
drought had contributed to the decay of the farm, over 160 men, women, and children kept it
functioning. Henry praised his workers and claimed that they had learned quickly, once they
knew how to read well. The layout of the farm consisted of a stockade, a large house, and several
log homes. Overall, the farm had potential for profit, but this ended with the war.33

In 1864 Federal officials placed much of the Shore under martial law because of the
increased partisan action, racial problems, and economic dilemmas. In November Lt. Col. White
issued decrees regarding economic restrictions. After revoking most permits, he decreed that
formal public markets be formed at Drummondtown, Onancock, and Eastville. White declared
residents desiring to export commodities were required to attempt to sell them first in one of the
public markets. If locals could not dispose of their goods at a fixed price, Union officials agreed
to issue them passes for fifty cents. White also decreed that anyone arrested would go on trial at

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., 126-130.
the Provost Court in Eastville. This included violation of orders, the peace, oyster laws, contracts, burglary, and the oath of allegiance as punishable by death or imprisonment.34

Martial law also affected churches. In northern Accomac, Downing’s Chapel, Ebenezer Methodist, and Guilford Methodist closed for several months. Other churches in Saxis, Temperanceville, and Grotons closed for various periods of time. In lower Accomac, Andrew Chapel and Bascom’s Chapel closed for the duration of the war. Hollies Baptist near Pungoteague had its Sunday school closed for two years while Locustville Methodist closed for only a few weeks. Nearby Oak Grove Southern Methodist only closed for a few months. In Northampton Franktown Methodist closed for several months.35

Northern sympathizing churches also had difficulties. While Cokesbury Methodist in Onancock returned to the Northern fold, by 1864 it was closed. Unionist parishioners closed it until the end of the war in order to hold it in trust. Northern sympathizing churches on Tangier Island also closed throughout the war because the blockade made it impossible for preachers to reach it.36

Yet, some Union churches remained open such as Garrison’s Chapel in lower Accomac. Union Baptist of Northampton (the Shore’s first black church) began meeting in 1863. Men from the 138th Ohio even walked six miles to Union Baptist in Eastville to attend service.37

Shore communities such as Saxis Island also felt the sting of martial law in 1864.

34 White, “Special Order No. 81, No. 83, No. 85, and No. 87.”
36 Ibid., 339, 601.
Blockade runners served as the main reason for this action, especially Gilbert Marshall, the most infamous blockade runner in the area. Although five Federal ships patrolled Pocomoke Sound around Saxis, they could not stop or capture Marshall and his band of runners. In twenty-five-foot canoes, they carried salt and food, although only on dark nights. Early in 1865, Federals came to Saxis to look for Marshall. They found him at a store and demanded that the owner give Marshall up or have his building burned. Marshall, who had crept up to the attic, surrendered. Union troops then held a party in a local house with a chained Marshall as their guest of honor. Using the celebration to his advantage, Marshall convinced his guard to loosen his cuffs. While they did this, Marshall fought his way free, fled the house, and hid in a nearby icehouse. Soldiers searched in vain for Marshall and left the island. The war ended shortly thereafter.38

Individuals also underwent harsh conditions because of martial law. Mrs. Elizabeth Lewis of Accomac County was accused of being a Southern spy. Although she was married to a slave owner and planter, William T. Lewis, Elizabeth had been raised as a Unionist on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Her brothers even fought for the Union making her the last choice for a Confederate spy. Despite her opinions, Mrs. Lewis remained true to her husband and Accomac County. It was her pride that led to her accusation by Union troops stationed in Onancock who wanted nothing more than to stir up some excitement amongst the local populace.39

While traveling through town she was stopped by a sentry who asked to see her loyalty papers. Because she was from Maryland, she had never taken the oath of allegiance, and therefore, had none. Union soldiers requested that she take the oath, and after a short quarrel,

arrested her. They carted Mrs. Lewis to Drummondtown where they threw her in jail. Meanwhile, the rumor had spread around the county to her husband who quickly rode to Drummondtown to his wife’s aide. Although William Lewis could not secure his wife’s release, a telegram from Gen. Dix stating that Elizabeth was the sister of Union Col. John Bell, cleared up the confusion. Federal officials released Mrs. Lewis to much fanfare and praise from those who previously thought she was a Northern sympathizer.  

Although Union elements dwindled on the Shore throughout the war, a strong Federal presence still existed. In January 1865 Lt. Col. Frank White had some 250 men and officers from Cape Charles to Maryland. Their duties consisted of guarding the telegraph line and preventing illegal communication between the Eastern and Western Shore.

The Last Confederate Raids

Although the glory days of Confederate raids had passed, the Shore saw a few, final gasps of Southern maritime partisan ingenuity. In February 1865, a ghost raid, or nonexistent raid, occurred on the Eastern Shore. This intended foray, led by an outlaw named Rice Airs, involved a large band of Confederates who crossed the Chesapeake to loot stores, capture vessels, round up deserters, rescue refugees, and cause general havoc. With captured vessels, they intended to destroy the lightships that guided Union ships in the bay. A loyal informant reported the band of partisans to be on the Little River near Smith’s Point in several boats (including the captured

\[40\] Ibid., 126-131.

\[41\] White’s command included Company L, 11\textsuperscript{th} Pennsylvania Cavalry; Company A, Purnell’s Legion; Company A, 1\textsuperscript{st} Loyal Virginia Volunteers (from Chincoteague Island); and a detachment of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} Pennsylvania Artillery. OR Armies, ser. I, 46:174.  

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steamer *Reliance*).\textsuperscript{42}

Lt. Col. Frank White requested two armed boats to patrol the coast as well as an infantry force to protect Cherrystone. He also posted a squad at Hog Island and alerted his units at Cherrystone, Pungoteague, and Onancock. He also requested two companies of cavalry from Maryland, thirty miles north of the state line. The Navy employed nine vessels under Commander F. A. Parker to search for the guerrillas. During the final days of February, telegraph messages flew to from shore to shore. On February 28, Union ships spotted two Confederate tugs in Tangier Sound, and heard firing near Point Lookout, Maryland.\textsuperscript{43}

Despite all of the rumors and sightings during that week’s time, no raid ever occurred. By March, only two vessels of the Potomac Flotilla remained on the Shore. The *Banshee*, armed with three guns, and the *Mystic*, armed with seven, continued in service until April when they were replaced by the *Pequot*, the *Pontoosuc*, and the *Tristram Shandy*. They cruised the bay for the duration of the war.\textsuperscript{44}

Early in April the last capture of a ship on the Eastern Shore by Confederates occurred off of Hog Island on the seaside. Twenty armed Confederates seized the 115-ton schooner *St. Mary’s* near the Patuxent River and took to sea. They encountered the schooner *J. B. Spafford*. After robbing all persons of their possessions, the small band placed the crew of the *St. Mary’s* on the *Spafford* and set them adrift. Heading southeast, the *St. Mary’s* captured and burned another


\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
ship on the night of April 1.45

War’s End & Tide’s Ebb

War’s end came a week later. With the ebb of war came chaos, which penetrated the waters around the Shore throughout April 1865. After an actor named John Wilkes Booth assassinated President Lincoln on April 12, he fled south to Maryland. On April 17, Union Navy Commander F. A. Parker ordered all vessels searched, all suspicious persons detained, and all river crossings guarded. That same day Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles ordered the Shore blockaded. On April 23, Welles ordered vigilance over all vessels departing from Hampton Roads in order to block Booth’s escape. He also directed that a gunboat sent to the bayside islands and the mainland of the Eastern Shore. On April 24, Lt. John Weidman of the U. S. Navy began traveling to all the shoals and islands between Pocomoke Bay and Chincoteague Inlet to prevent Booth from escaping.46

In all, five vessels cruised between Old Point and Cape Charles. Although Union soldiers eventually cornered Booth in a Virginia barn, excitement in the Chesapeake Bay intensified for a moment during the manhunt for the first presidential assassin.47

Now that the war was over, slaveowners on the Shore finally had to officially emancipate their slaves. Late in 1865 several slave owners on the Shore freed their slaves. Most of these blacks had served in the Union army. Nathaniel J. W. LeCato of the 39th Virginia freed one slave while Collomore Taylor of the northern Accomac home guard also freed one. Other planters


47 Ibid.
emancipated four, five, and even eleven slaves.\footnote{48}

Union officials continued to imprison Confederates even after the war ended. Richard Winder, of the 39\textsuperscript{th} Virginia, remained imprisoned for a year. Paroled in May 1865, in Georgia, Winder returned to the Shore and took the oath.\footnote{49}

With anger increasing over the atrocities at Andersonville Prison in Georgia, Union officials began to look for scapegoats. On August 26, two officers arrested Winder. His captors neither informed him of his crimes nor filed charges. Even though he had a large family, an estate, and a business, Winder was associated with Andersonville. Yet he claimed that he had been there only half a dozen times. Northern authorities, however, kept Winder imprisoned because they could not prosecute his dead relative who had been in charge of all Southern prisons. Seventy Accomac citizens came to Winder’s defense and even signed a petition which they sent to Union officials.\footnote{50}

In November Union authorities transferred him to Richmond and began preparing a case against him for cruel treatment of prisoners. Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, and Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant interceded on Winder’s behalf. Finally, in June, officials released Winder and he returned to Drummondtown.\footnote{51}

The war over for both sides, the Shore settled down and resumed peaceful interaction with North and South. The occupation, although it cost the Shore much in men and materials, helped

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\footnote{49} Mariner, \textit{True Tales}, 73-74; \textit{OR Armies}, ser. II, 8:797-798.

\footnote{50} \textit{Ibid.}

\footnote{51} \textit{Ibid.}
it cope with Reconstruction. In the end, the occupation proved a blessing because it had helped form county policy, enlighten the citizenry, preserve cultural traditions, open trade routes, and cause agricultural reform.

Years later in 1879, writer Howard Pyle of Harper’s Weekly ventured south to write an article on the Eastern Shore. Pyle visited many people including Orris A. Browne, a former Confederate officer on the CSS Shenandoah. One night while Pyle was busy sketching and interviewing Browne at his home, Judge Thomas Custis Parramore of Drummondstown sauntered in. Described as a taciturn man, Custis Parramore summed up the war without mentioning the many trials and tribulations the populace underwent. “We all marched out to protect the land from the invader - till the Yankees came down under Lockwood.” Pyle eagerly responded, “And what then?” Parramore puffed on his pipe and responded in an obvious tone, “Why, then - we all went home again.”

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52 Pyle, Peninsular Canaan, 24.
CHAPTER VI - CONCLUSION

Civil War on the Eastern Shore of Virginia turned out to be one of the most original, yet unnoticed and isolated epics to unfold in that era. The Shore’s inability to sustain its aims of Southern independence, military glory, and maritime dominance all contributed to its relegation to the ranks concerning Civil War history. Although it seceded, it did so half-heartedly, with the islands of the Chesapeake and the Atlantic vowing to stay in the Union. Many enclaves of Unionism also existed in upper Accomac County, dividing it into factions. Blacks, who accounted for a significant portion of the population, also supported the Union, making it difficult for secessionists on the Shore. They were, after all, without a base of support and too isolated. In addition, Accomac bordered a Union state, making it a target for Union endeavors.

These endeavors, military in nature, preemptively struck the Shore in autumn 1861. An invading Union force coupled with an unprepared Confederate force made for a debacle that never even made it to the battlefield. In turn, the Shore missed its only chance to achieve glory and saw its native sons run for the Western Shore.

Federal forces on the Shore brought the area back into the Union for the most part. Although minor conflagrations occurred, the Shore’s citizens accepted the Union occupation. Citizens fought the Union politically by deciding whether or not they wanted to join Maryland, as well as lobbying to keep their slaves. Furthermore, they pushed for participation in determining the future of the area’s agriculture and aqua-culture as an occupied Confederate enclave.

An early Union maritime presence subjected the citizens to an inglorious occupation that saw practically no bloodshed. Some fighting occurred on the waters where Shoremen and Confederate partisans attempted to compensate for the area’s lack of determination. Union ships,
however, patrolled the creeks, inlets, and bays, destroying privateers, blockade running vessels, and arresting partisans, runners, and refugees. The Shore’s maritime ascendancy came to an abrupt end with the arrival of the Union Navy, which remained there throughout the war.

Through it all, the Shore made indirect contributions to both sides with its underground trade, convoluted coasts, and resentful citizenry. Its trade distracted several Union ships at a time while bringing goods to the South and giving heart to secessionist in the two counties. This gave the Union Navy a training ground for future operations with much larger ramifications. The Shore’s coasts harbored such outlaws as John Yates Beall and other Confederate partisans who attempted to impact the war by preying on an important part of Union infrastructures and communications. However, the Shore’s seventy miles of coastline allowed Union forces to stretch down the entire eastern side of the Chesapeake.

In addition, the Shore demonstrated what an occupied Upper South Confederate territory had to do to preserve its culture, traditions, livelihood, and laws. Its Southern inhabitants gave information and aid to both sides for various reasons making the area undependable for either side. County officials frequently complained to Union authorities or simply passed laws on their own to keep slaves and oyster dredgers in line. The Shore also used Union forces to aid in the maintenance of local law and infrastructure. Col. Frank White succumbed to local pressure when he issued a series of mandates in 1864 concerning slaves, and open markets. Lastly, Northern sympathizing Shore politicians mediated between resentful Southerners and frustrated Federals. Judge E. Pitts attempted to help the Shore under both governments, although to the detriment of his reputation. Gillet Watson, a more prominent slave-owning politician, served as a Unionist in the Shore’s government and provided a guiding hand during its occupation by Union forces.
Overall, these people and events transformed Accomac and Northampton into truly comparative borderlands, neither North nor South. The fact that they journeyed through the same war and acted as borderlands to two different areas makes them all the more similar. Northampton bordered the lower Chesapeake where Hampton Roads acted as a hub for Union and Confederate activity while Accomac bordered rural Worcester County, Maryland, which sympathized with both sides throughout the war.

After the war, the Shore ceased to be a borderland and became, instead, a subsidiary of northern trade. Most of its products, agricultural and aquacultural, went north, creating a growing interest in the Shore. The steamboat era came to the Shore and it developed a network of trade with Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York. In the 1880s, a Northern company built a railroad down the center of the Shore insuring forever, its connection with the Union. In turn, Northerners visited on a regular basis, mostly for sport hunting, about which they left many accounts. Sport hunting was so renowned on the Shore that several presidents and ex-presidents, including Chester Arthur, Benjamin Harrison, and Grover Cleveland, visited the area. Writers, including the famous Howard Pyle also came to the Shore on numerous occasions to recount its local customs, events, and places. Many articles on the Shore during the postbellum period can be found in *Forest and Stream* magazine, *Harper’s Weekly*, and the *Baltimore Sun*. It is evident from these many visits by Northerners, that the Shore welcomed outsiders despite its traditionally isolationists attitudes. This brought a better economy to the area, helping it to recover quickly from the Civil War. Indeed, hardly any vestiges remained of the war when Pyle visited in 1879. He glazed over the war mentioning only veterans and the short lived campaign that put the area under Union control.
Today attitudes on the Eastern Shore concerning the Civil War reflect the lack of resentment and the quick rehabilitation it experienced. No grand Civil War battlefields or markers exist to tell the story of what once occurred on the isolated peninsula. In Eastville, a Confederate monument stands to commemorate the dead. Accomac County used their monument as a bargaining chip in local politics. This occurred in the late nineteenth century when some wished to move the county seat to the new railroad town of Parksley. The county voted against it but decided to place the Confederate monument in Parksley as a peace offering. The Harmonson-West Camp of Confederate Veterans erected it in honor of their dead comrades. Although many locals, including many residents of northern Accomac and Chincoteague Island, look to these monuments as symbols of their allegiance to the South, few realize what really happened during the war. Family folklore predominates creating a pro-Confederate myth ridden view of the Eastern Shore and the Civil War in popular memory. Confederate icons exist in the form of a local reenacting unit, the 46th Virginia, Company F. As a consequence, county no Union monuments exist and few lay claim to their Yankee ancestors. Yet, even fewer understand the war or its effect on the Eastern Shore.

In 1861 Gen. Dix wrote that “no distinction should be made between the citizens of those counties in regard to the past.” Distinction means a marked difference, outstanding excellence, or special recognition; and although Dix meant for the Unionist and secessionist citizens of the Shore to be treated alike, in present terms his statement is contradictory to scholarship. Distinction should be made between the citizens in regard to the past, especially when analyzing the most studied conflict in American history. Although it is difficult to make such a distinction concerning
the Shore, the interlocking historical facts have made it possible. These facts show how the Shore served as a microcosm of the war in the Chesapeake from secession to surrender.

This work made distinctions between the Shore’s people on the basis of rank, ethnicity, status, occupation, and talent. By showing how they acted in concert and individually, this thesis has relegated them not to obscurity but to legend as major players in the Chesapeake region. It has also shown how Northerners and Southerners were cast to the wind by war and dispersed throughout the region. All of these individuals contributed to the breadth and knowledge of Eastern Shore history during the war. In the end, it is hoped that distinctions have been made in regard to the past as it refers to the Eastern Shore of Virginia and the Civil War.1

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