



Chestertown Paddlers and the Schooner Sultana photo by Yvonne Thayer

Chestertown Tea Party Paddle

Despite the ominous weather predictions, several stalwart CPA paddlers gathered in the early morning on Saturday of Memorial Day weekend at the South East Creek public landing on a small tributary of the Chester River in Queen Anne's County, Maryland. Heading out under gray skies and a warm rain, the group of eight (Rich and Sue Stevens, Jill Dorosz, Steven Jancke, Cragg Howard, Jim Allen, Maryrose Whelley, and I) headed for Chestertown to attend the annual Tea Party Festival there. <http://www.chestertownteaparty.com/thefestival.htm>. In route we met up with fellow CPA paddlers Paula Hubbard and Rich Pieper, who live locally and who had put in from another location farther down river.

The rain lifted as we approached Chestertown. We could see the schooner Sultana (<http://www.sultanaprojects.org/schoonersultana.htm>) docked at the end of Main Street, as well as many other beautiful sailboats anchored out on the river. Among these was our own Yvonne Thayer who warmly greeted us from the deck of an impressive 47-foot Catalina.



Two Eye Patches? Now They 'r PYRATES! Photo by Jim Allen

After spending a few moments inspecting the Sultana from the water and posing for a group photo, we landed (after having secured permission in advance) on a small beach owned by Washington College. We were met there by CPA Coordinator Ed Hershon, who was with his son Alex and some friends and another CPA paddler, Jan Sheehan, paddled up.

We stashed our gear, changed clothes, locked up the boats, and went into town to enjoy the festival. En route we were offered free refreshments, which definitely set a festive mood. Best of all, we finally (after missing it the past few years) made it to Main Street in time to catch the colonial parade. Well worth the wait!

It turned into a beautiful, sunny day with mild temperatures. The group spent a few hours enjoying the food, music, activities, and vendors of the festival until it was time for the re-enactment with the Sultana. A few of us took to our boats and were afforded a ringside seat to the event. On the water we ran into some more CPA paddlers, including Lizzie O'Donaghue with (I believe) Laura Ventura and Sarah Hudson. We may have seen Greg and Luci Hollingsworth out there as well.

After listening to the musket fire approaching, certain of the Chestertown citizenry rowed out to the Sultana to toss the Tories and their cargo of (floatable) crates of tea overboard into the river, much to the delight of the crowd.

After a long day at the festival, the eight original paddlers headed back to the put-in on South East creek. We then capped off a fine day with a stop at Holly's for dinner, keeping up our club's finest tradition of "we paddle to eat"!

Suzanne Farace