

Chesapeake Paddler



Publication of the Chesapeake Paddlers Association, Inc. Volume 24, Issue 5

July, 2014

Paddling into a Tea Party—Chestertown 2014

By Sue Stevens



Kayakers watch the *Sultana* sail by on the Chester River
Photograph by Greg Welker

It started with sheep—yes, those four footed wooly varieties gathered for the 37th annual Sheep & Wool Festival in Howard County, Maryland (<http://www.sheepandwool.org/>), held in May that gave us the idea to paddle to the Chestertown Tea Party Festival. After munching a huge grilled lamb brisket sandwich, checking out the different sheep breeds from all across the eastern US, wandering around oodles of multicolored wool yarn displays, sheep dog herding trials, sheep shearing contests, more lamb BBQ, lamb judging, checking out huge crowds of visitors, and lots of people watching (and spotting several CPA members, obviously clad in our bright orange CPA logo shirt), we were attracted to the magic sounds of hammered dulcimer music (<http://www.maggiesmusic.com/>).

Spotting the display of dancing puppets and enjoying a bit of live music, we picked up a small flyer announcing their music schedule: May 10, The Creative Alliance in Baltimore, **May 25 - Chestertown Tea Party Festival (WOW-light bulb effect)**, and a bit later—North East Dulcimer Symposium on Blue Mountain Lake, New York. The North East Symposium is organized by yet another set of CPA members (thanks - David & Elizabeth: www.nedulcimer.org/contact). (This was too much of a coincidence!) There is also a week-long kayaking trip on the CPA calendar in September set on Blue Mountain Lake – and

lots of kayaking opportunities found on the surrounding lakes, now in its 11th year (<http://www.cpakayaker.com/calendar/85/1295-2014-Loons-of-the-Adirondacks/>).

The Chestertown Tea Party Festival (<http://www.chestertownteaparty.com/>) was scheduled for Memorial Day weekend, so we decided to put an announcement for a trip on the CPA calendar STAT! Several years back—there was always a CPA kayaking day trip to the Chestertown Tea Party Festival, but most of us had conflicting weekend plans last year to organize it. It's a fun idea—combining our favorite water hobby and a local river front festival. Checking the schedule for Saturday, May 24—meant starting a bit early—rather than driving all the way to Chestertown—so first we go kayaking!

Gathering a group of twelve paddlers for this trip, we all met early at Southeast Creek Landing in Queen Anne County (<http://crwt.org/chester-river-trail/points/southeast-creek-public-landing>). It's the very end of a dusty gravel road, and very much off the beaten track. By the way: Ever notice how frequently the older road names spell out their local landmarks—such as the ably named Southeast Creek Landing Road. Look around at other locations—and you can usually spot an historic church, corner school or store site, a Bay packet boat landing to service the nearby plantations and farms, or a revolutionary era ferry crossing location. It was quiet here except for the red-wing blackbirds calling from the top of the phragamite reeds (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phragmites>), which sheltered our launch location. Of course, Queen Anne County charges to launch and to park at all of their ramps and landings, so everyone procured their own annual or single day permits first. Good thing: the county inspector rolled in to check for permits twice as we assembled on the water.

Four new kayaking friends joined us from Delaware (Geri & Paul, Tim & Kate), plus eight more paddlers from the Western Shore (Paul & Carrie, Greg & Jenny, Bill, Carol, Rich & Sue), most had never paddled from this quiet landing. Only two other vehicles were parked at the landing—and the tide was going out, so the single boat concrete ramp was easy to navigate—nothing slippery here. It is part of the Chester River Water Trail (<http://srwt.org/partners-trail-chester>) and also the SassafRAS River Trail (<http://srwt.org/sassafRAS-river-trail/about-trail>). Heading west out of Southeast Creek, a pleasant northeast breeze hit us quickly—foretelling more wind. Soon we were on the Chester River at the gravelly point topped with tall scrub pine trees marking the main channel. It's only five miles worth of paddling up river. With Jenny in the lead and Greg volunteering to sweep, it was nice size group—with every color of kayak and hat! How nice is it to see all twelve of us quickly crossing the Chester in unison all abreast, and we stayed out of most of the wind following the wooded northern shore. With the tide out, we were paddling over a mere foot of water

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in some places. The whole northern edge of the shoreline is shallow and sandy, a great spot for leisure boaters to jump out and party. No one is out swimming yet—it's not even 10 a.m. We have come over three miles—the town church steeples and a round silver water tower glows in the morning sun—it's going to be a hot day!

Half way there, we re-group around a large red marker buoy at a wide turn in the Chester River to catch our breath. We could hear the morning parade's drums booming down the open river. Checking the view upriver, we spied the schooner Sultana in full sail—and headed straight for our group clustered at the red marker buoy! The schooner Sultana is the pride of Chestertown—built in town (<http://www.baygateways.net/general.cfm?id=92>). It is one of the tall ships in the fleet for the War of 1812 Reenactment set on the Patuxent River June 21-22.

Faster than expected in the light winds, the Sultana's full sails came straight toward our buoy. Moving a bit further safely toward the lee shore, we had a great view—and the folks on board got some great photos of us kayakers as they passed down river on their morning cruise. Seeing it so close up—we may be planning another kayak trip to Chestertown for the down rigging of the Sultana November 1 (<http://sultanaeducation.org/public-programs/downrigging-weekend/>).

With only a mile to go, we soon landed adjacent to the large wood pavilion next to Washington College's long, low rowing docks. Rich had emailed ahead to get permission from the college to land, so the coast was clear. Low tide still meant a lot of sticky black mud for everyone—our shoes were full of mud, as well as the kayaks. Another large bunch of kayakers on a shorter outing offered by the Chesapeake Adventure Kayakers: <http://www.meetup.com/Chesapeake-Kayak-Adventures/> landed at the same time (including several CPA members). This group had started from the public landing on Morgan Creek just east of Chestertown on MD 291. Suddenly, thirty-five kayaks were spread across the green lawn—what a colorful gaggle of kayakers.

A three year old hand-carry kayak launch, which is part of the Chester River Water Trail (<http://srwt.org/chester-river-trail/points/wilmer-park-chestertown>), is located on the north side of the wood pavilion's shoreline. It is part of the shady waterfront

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Kayaks parked at Washington College
 Photograph by Rich Stevens

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Public kayak launch at Washington College
Photograph by Rich Stevens

Wilmer Park, off a nice sunken pathway of wide concrete pavers. It is surrounded by a large shoreline buffer of native plantings to help restore the surrounding marsh area, which used to be horribly mucky at low tide. The concrete paver access still had a sandy berm visible even at low tide, which will make landing easier at high tide. It would be easy to miss from the water with the tall native grasses, and it is a long walk from the nearest parking lot at Wilmer Park: will need wheels for an easy carry here. There was a great view of the waterfront from the deck of the raised wood pavilion, which is a great place to eat lunch in the shade. On Sunday, the Festival holds a homemade silly raft race in this cove (http://www.chestertownteaparty.org/?page_id=131)—another great way to connect people to the water.

Next stop is the festival downtown. Changing out of wet shoes and damp gear into drier duds, we cabled all twelve of our kayaks together for a bit of security, and headed up Water Street toward the festival—now in full swing on High Street. The parade was just finishing, and the streets were full of costumed revolutionary colonials, summer soldiers in British red-coats, uniformed band members, all outnumbered by festival goers and children running amok.

With too many craft booths to check out, we scattered up the shady street toward the smells of lunch—and the food vendors. A big favorite is a local church group's huge fried fish sandwich—hot and tasty, served on top of two slices of white bread—too yummy! The church's stall, with hardly a waiting line this year, had moved to a new location across the crowded Monument Park Square. Music from the corner stage made a lively scene. The streets were full of food tents and tasty offerings—everything from Amish whoopee pies, homemade desserts, donuts, fried clams, hamburgers, someone selling lamb chops and steaks (note: sheep again!), fried dough, craft beer, strawberry shortcake, as well as carved house signs, voter registration booths, jewelry, rose bushes for sale and vendor booths—with more smoke from the grills: everything smelling great!

Next to the Emmanuel Episcopal Churchyard, we heard the magic sound of dulcimer Celtic music AGAIN! While in the shade of a huge magnolia tree full of climbing children, there were several very patient milking goats (sorry- no sheep at this location) that were getting “test” milked by the children. A big white tent in the shade held an exhibit of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Scales & Tails from Tuckahoe State Park (<http://www.dnr.state.md.us/publiclands/snt.asp>). The park rangers were displaying recovered hawks and owls, which cannot go out flying wild due to their injuries—usually because of their close encounters getting hit by cars. They had cages of local snakes (the hog nose snake was very actively going up the side of his screen cage and showing off his bands of color) and several kinds of box and water turtles to show to hordes of eager children and their grownups. There was so much to see, eat and sample, but we were ready to return to our kayaks in time to see the Tea Party reenactment from the water!

Back in our kayaks, everyone drifted toward the anchored Sultana, now flying a British flag for the show. Everyone was in costume, geared up and shooting white puffs of cannon smoke across the water back toward other reenactors stationed on the waterfront. A number of moored sailboats and motor boats circled the Sultana and there was plenty of space for kayakers to watch the action in the front row, so to speak. The local water patrol boat also kept the water view clear. The packs of sightseers crowded along the narrow harbor street to watch the shoreside action. Costumed Colonials and Redcoats backed down High Street through the middle of the crowds—their alternating gun volleys booming with more smoke. We could not see their street action, but could hear the guns booming when they arrived at the wharf. Suddenly, a whole bunch of costumed soldiers rowed into view—in full “retreat,” followed by colonials, who rowed out to the anchored Sultana. Immediately, various large brown “bales” of tea and red-coated people were flying through the air and landing in the river. The British colors were pulled and the Stars and Stripes appeared on board. The colonials threatened—and more red-coated guys jumped over board and hung onto the tea bales. Everyone was cheering to toss more red-coats and people overboard: the tea party was on!

With the tea-dunking done, our kayak fleet gathered up to head down the Chester. This time we crossed the open channel—12 abreast in one group—staying away from the other motor boaters leaving the reenactment scene. Many of the riverside houses' docks stretching out into the river gave us protection from the busier river traffic channel. The passing boats produced some nice rolling wakes—making easy surfing. The wind was behind us the whole way—we had smooth paddling for another four miles. We kayaked past Bogle's wharf—where the Maryland Swim for Life event will be held on July 12; it's on the CPA calendar (<http://www.cpakayaker.com/calendar/85/767-23nd-Maryland-Swim-for-Life---Swim-Support/>). This a fun day assisting experienced swimmers in a protected fresh water venue, with lots of good fun and an event T-shirt too.

We spotted a small noisy Great Blue Heron rookery below the Wharf—with a resident heron parent standing guard on the very top of a rather large pine tree. It had no shelter from the weather up there—we wondered how they survive to fledge! The point where the group turned into the creek was topped by more large pines growing on top of a short cliff of orange eroding rock—very unusual when most of the Chester River shoreline is sandy or marshy. Around the point into Southeast Creek, we kayakers spotted a huge stick nest of a bald eagle hidden inside the top of another large pine tree, which we missed when we paddled past on the way out. A large brown

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Chestertown Tea Party Reenactment
Photograph by Rich Stevens

Chesapeake Paddlers Association Tentative 2014 Calendar

Date	Title	Summary
7/18/14 to 7/19/14	Chesapeake Bay Voyagers Series #6	This is the sixth paddle of a series covering the entire east shore of the Bay. Intermediate trip. David Wilson, davidwilsonmd@gmail.com, 443-962-7612
7/19/14 to 7/20/14	Practice Kayak Kamper (Patuxent River)	A chance to try out camping from your kayak for one night, combined with an easy paddle each day, and with guidance and support from more experienced kayak kamperers. Suzanne Farace, sfarace@verizon.net, 410-446-5991, and Tom Heneghan (THIS TRIP IS NOW FULL.)
7/19/14	CPA Race Series #3	This is the third race in the series, five miles at Truxtun Park. Brian Blankinship, Brian@BayKayaking.com, 443-994-7990
7/19/14	Swim Ocean City Swim Support (Non CPA Event)	Support swimmers benefiting the Outpatient Neuro Rehab Program at Johns Hopkins Medical Center, working with all sorts of brain injuries from strokes or concussions. Corey Davis, Ocean Games Race Director, corey@swimocmd.com, 410-200-0761
7/19/14	Royal Oak & Miles River	Day paddle near St. Michael's. Sue & Rich Stevens, susiegreenthumb@verizon.net, 410-531-5641
7/27/14	Celebration Sprint Triathlon Swim Support (Non CPA Event)	Kayak swimmer support for Celebration Sprint Triathlon, Centennial Lake, Howard County, MD. Sue Stevens, susiegreenthumb@verizon.net, 410-531-5641
8/2/14	Turner Creek Lotus Tour	Trip to see the native lotus blooming in the coves on the upper Sassafras River. Sue Stevens, susiegreenthumb@verizon.net, 410-531-5641, Rich Stevens
8/2/14	Final CPA Race, #4	Final 2014 race in the CPA series, 4 and 8 miles, Occoquan Reservoir. Brian Blankinship, Brian@BayKayaking.com, 443-994-7990
8/2/14	Manhattan Circumnavigation by Kayak (Non CPA Event)	Yonkers Paddling & Rowing Club, Jerry Blackstone, gerrychem@aol.com, 914-318-4630 https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2014_Manhattan_Circumnavigation
8/3/14	Mattawoman Creek	Paddle to the lotus. Mike Cohn, mdcohn@verizon.net, 301-283-2391, cell 301-751-0368, Linda Witkin cell 301-385-3614
8/9/14	Kent Island Paddle (KIP-9 14')	The KIP series is for paddlers who want to have a distance challenge, build their skills and knowledge of paddling. The first two sessions will be open to advanced beginners, then the paddle will be closed. Marshall Woodruff, 202-345-0606, marshall.woodruff@gmail.com
8/10/14	Quantico Marine Base to the Ghost Ships of Mallow's Bay	Launch from Quantico Marine Base, cross the 2 mile wide Potomac and explore the ghost ships in Mallow's Bay. Tom Heneghan, tom@theneghan.com, 571-969-1866
8/15-17/14	Patuxent River Kayak Kamper	Pack your boat and come along for lazy days on the River. Ralph Heimlich, heimlichfamily@comcast.net, 301-498-0918 (leave a message).

Visit the CPA Web page, <http://www.cpakayaker.com/>, for more events, details and trip leader/organizer contact information. For a full listing of upcoming Club events, visit the CPA Calendar, <http://www.cpakayaker.com/index.php?page=calendar>.

CPA Classifieds

Kayak for sale. Klepper Tramp fiberglass river touring kayak (has scratches). 25" wide x 14' long. \$200. On Eastern Shore. George Hires, grhires@aol.com, 443-366-6564.

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immature eagle chick sat on its edge; it was not nearly noisy as the heron babies. There was no parent eagle with a fish for supper in sight—so the chick may be almost ready to fly. Our return trip was turning into a birding expedition!

Once we were back at our landing, which is hidden behind a huge bank of phragmites from the water view, and all kayakers loaded, our crowd was hungry again—craving something cold. While our Delaware paddlers headed north, toward a smoke-oven pizza spot in Newark, Delaware, the rest of the kayakers headed south. We soon discovered homemade ice cream at one of the best known places along US 50: Holly's Restaurant at Jackson Creek Road, right off US 50 on a westbound ramp, which may be changing a lot (http://www.myeasternshorem.com/news/queen_anne_county/article_ce9a215b-0715-5d6e-9d40-5666d27d58ba.html).

Another convenient sandy beach with a nice hand-carry kayak launch is hidden down the road behind Holly's, but again, you need a Queen Anne's County parking permit on your vehicle to launch here (<http://crwt.org/chester-river-trail/points/jackson-creek-landing>). This spot is a great sheltered kayaking area, with some nice sandy private beaches once you get past the backyard piers. Some kayakers have launched—for a really longer paddle—from this beach to go around Eastern Neck Island—shorter drive but a longer paddle trip. Our kayakers filled up on homemade ice cream milkshakes, homemade crab soup, pancakes, waffles, and a picture worthy chocolate brownie sundae—what a way to end a perfect paddling day. Thanks to everyone who made it a great day on the water. Who says kayakers just paddle—We paddle to eat and see the sights too!

Link to Rich's photographs: <https://plus.google.com/photos/100456121536050404533/albums/6017426365179743441>.