



## FROM THE QUARTERDECK

JUNE 2012



It is now May and our programs are full swing. The weekends find the Club full of members. It is great to see the good help being provided by members to members as we work on various projects involving our own boats or on Club issues. There is much laughter – a sure sign that we are doing something right.

Junior Week is just around the corner. Planning for this week has been underway for many months now. A lot of volunteers have been recruited and now the time is here. Two of my grandchildren will be participating this year, one in Beginner Opti and one in Intermediate Opti. Along with other member grandparents, I'm looking forward to watching them advance their skills, spend time with their friends and make new friends at FBYC.

This past weekend, (May 19th and 20th) several of our members took part in the Flying Scot District Championship. First place went to Rob Whittemore and John Wake and Second to Len and Barbara Guenther. Congratulations to all of you, skippers and crew. This speaks well for the level of competition to be found within the One Design Division at FBYC.

This same weekend, our One Design boats (Front Runners and Flying Scots) got in five good races on Sat. the 19th. This day presented my first opportunity to use and observe some of our new race management equipment, marks and flags. I can report that our system works well. The same day, the J 70 made its first appearance at our club. This was hull number four, just out of the box. It took a while to put it together

in the morning, but once it hit the water a lot of folks seemed very interested in this craft.

The Offshore Fleet has finished the Spring Series. Offshore racing this Spring has produced stiff competition. The weather has been challenging especially on the last day. Weather on that day led to the PRO, Mike Toms, decision to keep the racers close to Stove Point Neck. The Offshore fleet is now getting set for the summer distance races.

I would like to thank all of the PROs, race committee members and social chairs for your work during the Spring Series for both divisions. Your efforts have been greatly appreciated.

The sea wall replacement will have been completed by the time you read this issue of the Log. Discussions are underway concerning the condition of the launching ramp adjacent to the swimming pool. Consideration is being given to overall cost and time implications as well as potential longevity for the method of repair. At this time, Front Runner and Flying Scots are not experiencing any issues with the ramp. Larger sailboats and power boats are encouraged to use alternative launching facilities.

The Leukemia Cup Regatta is set to take place July 6th, 7th, and 8th. This is an important event in the FBYC schedule. Community involvement and support is an endeavor in which yacht clubs should become involved. FBYC has supported this event for many years now and will continue to do so. Nationwide, the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society has partnered with the sailing community and built a very strong entity in order to raise funds for their purpose. If you have not already done so, please visit the LLS website and follow the registration process in order to sign up for this event.

A lot of discussion has taken place lately concerning recruitment of new members. Part of that dialog has inevitably led to comparisons of our club, its facilities and programs with those of

other yacht clubs around the country. Within the context of these comparisons, it is important to recognize a few major elements which set us apart from other clubs. We are not an urban club and we are an **all volunteer** organization. We don't have a restaurant or a bar/lounge. We don't employ an administrative manager or a staff. Even without all that, we have an amazing sailing program and top flight facilities. We accomplish this by means of our member volunteers. As a sometimes event manager, I tend to recruit people I know and who are likely to agree to work. I know other event managers very often do the same. Spending time working in some capacity on one of our events is a good way to become acquainted with other members and to be integrated into the culture of FBYC. There are a couple of our signature events coming up on our schedule this summer - Annual One Design Regatta in August and Stingray Point Regatta on Labor Day weekend. Volunteer help is essential. Don't wait to be called. If you are available and would agree to work for one or both of these events, please contact David Hinckle (804 -370-7650 or [david@bluprintingservicesva.com](mailto:david@bluprintingservicesva.com)). David heads the Regatta Management Committee and he will be glad to find a position for you. With all of us helping, we can remain a premier Club on the Bay without stressing anyone too much.

Until next time, I wish you fair winds and following seas.

Alex Alvis



Test sailing J70 hull #4 in Fishing Bay on May 19

**FBYC BOARD HIGHLIGHTS May 2012**

*Meeting called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Commodore Alex Alvis.*

**REAR COMMODORE – JOHN B. WAKE JR.**

**TREASURER – Elizabeth Staas** would like for all Board members to receive the Reimbursement Request form again and for all race and social chairs to also receive it. The form that is on the web site is outdated and it was requested that a new form replace it.

**HOUSE** – The refrigerator has been installed thanks to some remodeling by Arthur Wilton to enlarge the space. The new dishwasher is in and running. Ted Bennett is waiting for an estimate to repair the stove.

**DOCKS – Brad Miller** advised that the equipment is on site to start on the bulkhead replacement and construction will begin as soon as final approval has been received from Middlesex County.

**WEB MASTER – Strother Scott's** programmer, **Eugene Morozov**, has been making steady progress improving some of the programming of our online registration system. **Anthony Burton**, a new FBYC member has also volunteered to help Strother find a better payment system for online registration, and will likely be able to program the changes necessary. Separately, Strother is attempting to find someone who can do some preliminary style sheet work that would then enable us to build a FBYC iPad App.

**MARKETING – Jay Buhl** reported on the status of his 2012 goals as marketing chair. The Club Branding Initiative is ongoing and underway and he asked that members be encouraged to transition to the new stickers. The Marketing Brochures are in use. Jay has an outline of the Publicity Initiative and hopes to implement it during the 2013 sailing season. He is now focused on the Electronic Communications Initiative to upgrade the quality of what and how we market to our members.

**VICE COMMODORE – GEORGE W. BURKE III**

**OFFSHORE DIVISION – Mike Chesser** advised that he has received requests about how to handle “throw-outs” and some changes may be made in the Fall. He also circulated to all of the offshore PRO’s an article relating to race committees and severe weather that should be helpful in determining whether a race should be called off because of the weather. **Paul Wash** reported there were 28 boats registered for the Spring Series with an average of 23 per day. There have been some requests to increase the \$100 budget for after-race socials; however, it is not going to be increased at this time. A new printer has been donated and is in Fannie’s House.

**ONE DESIGN DIVISION** – The One Design Opening Day races were called off because of the weather.

**CRUISING DIVISION** – Ten boats participated in the recent Mathews Cruise. **George Sadler** is making plans for the Southern Bay Cruise and OpSail 2012. He expects there to be at least eight FBYC boats “in the thick of things” at OpSail.

**JUNIOR DIVISION** – The Laser Race Team coach had his visa approved last week and airline tickets for both coaches have now been purchased. **Ted Steadman** and **Christine Levy** held an Opti Race Team planning session on May 3. The Race Team Kick-Off dinner is scheduled for June 9 at the club. At this time, 36 juniors are signed up for the two race teams. A draft of the Junior Division Safety Manual and Risk Management policy prepared by **Alison Lennarz** and **Mark Hayes** has been distributed to various club members for input. Because most Board members had not seen the manual or had time to review it, **George Burke** stated he would advise **David Lennarz** that he could plan to use the manual as a working document

pending endorsement of the Board.

**FLEET LT.** – There is still some work to be completed on *Mr. Roberts*. The new system for PRO equipment has been working satisfactorily.

**SAILING FLEET LT.** – **Mike Toms** has purchased all of the repair equipment for the club’s boats and everything should be ready by Junior Week.

**TROPHIES** – The trophies for one design are in Fannie’s House. The series trophies for offshore will be engraved photos of the winning boats.

**REGATTA COMMITTEE CHAIR – David Hinckle** hopes to have online registration for both big events on the web site soon. They ran into some pricing problems for the Annual One Design Regatta and that has held them up.

**NEW BUSINESS – Noel Clinard** reported that North Point Yacht out of Annapolis will bring a J-70 to the club and demonstrate it on May 19 and 20. The RIB will be put into use transporting people to and from the boat once it has been launched. **Lud Kimbrough** will be at the club to coordinate the activity.

*There being no additional business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.*

## *FBYC Spring Series Results*

PHRF A

- 1 - Afterthought
- 2 - Double Eagle
- 3 - Wavelength

J/105

- 1 - Loose Cannon
- 2 - Corryvreckan

PHRF B

- 1 - Nereid
- 2 - Shenanigan
- 3 - Elancer

PHRF C

- 1 - Prophet
- 2 - Play It Again
- 3 - Cheeky Monkey

PHRF Non Spin

- 1 - Reveille
- 2 - Nutcracker

MEMBERSHIP/MEMORIAM

*In Memoriam  
Mason Smith*

11/10/1914 – 5/12/2012

Mason Smith, 97, passed away on May 12, 2012. He was predeceased by his wife, Ramsay "Dolly" Smith. He is survived by his two sons, Allan M. Smith and Paul R. Smith. Dr. Smith was born in Richmond and graduated from John Marshall High School. He received his B.S. and M.D. degrees from the University of Virginia, served his internship at Baltimore Union Memorial Hospital, and his residency at New York Eye and Ear Infirmary. He entered the Navy but was reassigned to the Marine Corps, where he was stationed in Hawaii, Iwo Jima and Nagasaki during and immediately after World War II.



Dr. Smith maintained a practice in ophthalmology and ophthalmic surgery in Richmond from 1945 to his retirement at age 70 in 1984. He was a member of the American Medical Society, the Medical Society of Virginia, and was president of the Virginia, Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat Society. He was a clinical instructor and adjunct professor at the Medical College of Virginia and clinical faculty and faculty practice at McGuire Veterans Administration Hospital.

Mason and Dolly joined Fishing Bay Yacht Club in 1965 and were elected to Life membership in 1987. He served as Historian/Publicity Chair (1967-1968) and Fleet Captain (1969) before his ascent to Commodore in 1972. He donated the perpetual Performance Trophy to the club in 1972 and his boat *AVID* was awarded the trophy in 1973. This trophy was originally awarded to an IOR Class boat but that was changed in 1988 to a PHRF Class boat. He co-owned at least three boats during his sailing/racing years. *Makai*, a Challenger 21, was owned with Rudy Bruni. A Cal 28, *Capella*, was owned with Paul Middleton and Rudy Bruni. *AVID*, a Carter 33, was owned by the Stingray Syndicate that included Mason Smith, Paul Middleton, Bill Harding and Allen Fine. The boat name was derived from the names of the four wives - Anne, Virginia, Isabel and Dolly.

Dr. Smith taught navigation courses for FBYC as well as for the Coast Guard and he taught boating safety courses for the Power Squadron. During his retirement years, he volunteered at the Science Museum of Virginia, Virginia Voice, and AARP.

Graveside services were held on May 16 in Hollywood Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to The Old Dominion Eye Foundation, Alzheimer's Foundation of America, the Science Museum of Virginia, or to the charity of your choice.

**REQUIESCAT IN PACE**

**Membership News**

**FINAL APPROVAL:**  
Mr. & Mrs. William W. Crump  
Mr. & Mrs. Matthew Mika

**Membership News You Can Use**  
*By Doug Anderson, Secretary/Membership Chair*

This is "Take a Past Commodore to Lunch Month." Seriously? Yes, seriously! How many of our past Commodores do you know well? We owe each and every one of them our thanks for the hundreds of hours they invested in performing their duties. An act of appreciation, such as taking them to lunch, could prove to be the most enriching experience of your membership in FBYC. Past Commodores have stories to tell.

Thinking about the Commodores of the past decade, it is striking that every one of them continues to be vitally involved in the life of our Club. They are still serving in key roles and actively engaged in a broad range of activities. Except for David Hazlehurst who moved away, Mike Karn, Strother Scott, Dick Cole, Jay Buhl, Lud Kimbrough, Allan Heyward, Ric Bauer, Noel Clinard, Mayo Tabb and David Hinckle, all continue to be as involved as they were involved before they served as Commodore. They are still making things happen and getting things done.

Other former Commodores, too, continue working for FBYC, such as Jere Dennison, Case Whittemore, Bob Rock, Russ Collins, Waddy Garrett, Lydia Strickland, Whitey Lipscomb, Judith Buis and Bill Spencer. Others serve as leaders, doers and role models of the first order, such as David Lee and Wayland Rennie. All of these folks are worthy of your respect and appreciation. They represent the true character of FBYC.

There's no such thing as a free lunch. You are the direct beneficiary of the past and current investments made by our Commodores. They have earned their lunch. This month you have the opportunity to say "thank you," perhaps for the first time, to those who have served you so well. Take one or more of our past Commodores to lunch, even the current one, Alex Alvis. You'll be glad you did.

Showing respect and appreciation where it's due is not just good manners; it creates a climate for cultivating membership growth in FBYC. Let's go there.

Prospective Members are encouraged to see membership info on the Club website ([fbyc.net](http://fbyc.net)). In the line under the Logo, see "Club," and in the drop-down menu, "Membership." FBYC welcomes applications for membership.

**Training Continues for NYYC USQS**  
*By Noel Clinard*

The FBYC campaign team for the NYYC Qualifying Series in September, now consisting of Blake Kimbrough, John Wake and Matt Braun, with alternates Lud Kimbrough and Jay Buhl, will train this summer at FBYC. Depending on funds available, the team will compete in large fleets in events at Southern Bay Race Week, Sonar ACCs in Marblehead MA June 23-24, the Marblehead NOOD July 27-29, Sonar NE Champs in Falmouth MA August 4-5, and the Sonar North Americans in Rochester New York August 23-26. In addition, the team may have access to the "Prophet Syndicate" J70 in late August. Any wishing to support this campaign can send contributions to the FBYC P.O. Box with checks payable to "FBYC" with the notation "NYYC USQS".

RACING



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## 14th Annual Southern Chesapeake Leukemia Cup Regatta

**Presenting Sponsor:**  
**SunTrust Bank**  
**July 6-8, 2012**

The 14th Annual Southern Chesapeake Leukemia Cup Regatta, hosted by Stingray Point Marina, is sponsored by Fishing Bay and the Stingray Harbour Yacht Clubs with the Wilton Creek Cruising Club as a new supporting sponsor. The event is sanctioned by CBYRA. Regatta events combine sailing with the critical task of raising money to fight leukemia, lymphoma, and other blood cancers. Since the inception of the national Regatta series in 1993, more than \$25 million has been raised to fight blood cancers!

Please visit [www.leukemicup.org/va](http://www.leukemicup.org/va) for more details and online Registration or contact Debbie Bridwell at [Debbie.Bridwell@jls.org](mailto:Debbie.Bridwell@jls.org) or 673-5690.

Early Bird Registration is \$125 per boat if received by June 15 or \$150 if received after June 15. Website registration cut off is Thursday, July 5 at 6:00pm. If you register by June 15, your boat's name will appear on the official Regatta t-shirt!

### Schedule

#### Friday, July 6, 2012

@Stingray Point Marina at 5:30 pm Registration check-in, heavy hors d'oeuvres by J&W Seafood, cash bar, Gary Jobson presentation. Tickets are \$25/person (incl. 2 drinks)

#### Saturday, July 7, 2012

@Fishing Bay Yacht Club  
Racing begins at 11:00am  
@Stingray Point Marina  
Grand Gala and Awards Ceremony begins at 5:30pm. Silent & Live Auction, evening includes dinner, music by Premier, dancing, awards, and cash bar. Dinner tickets are \$20/person (One dinner ticket included with Registration)

#### Sunday, July 8, 2012

@Fishing Bay Yacht Club  
Racing begins at 11:00am  
@Stingray Point Marina  
Post race activities & awards presentation will follow the final race.

## FBYC Laser Clinic

On Sunday, April 29 the Laser Fleet hosted a Laser clinic for a dozen sailors on a cool windless day. Mike Toms and Jon Deutsch took the sailors through the various simple, intermediate and advanced ways to rig a Laser and covered topics on the methods of dress and techniques for the various maneuvers. After a break for Lunch Jon demonstrated various aspects of boat handling while Mike narrated from the dock. After that the boats rigged and everyone got a chance to try out a boat while drifting Fishing Bay. While it wasn't the best sailing day, it was a great day for sharing and learning knowledge about the Laser.



CRUZIN CORNER

## *Tiki “Bra”*

*By John Koedel, III*

We have been cruising to Little Bay for years. We enjoy the north face of Fleet’s Island. You can really only get there by dinghy, which makes it fun and secluded. There has always been so much lumber and debris washed up on the shore that we thought we would build something one day. So... Labor Day Weekend, 2010 we set to work building the Tiki “Bra.” It started with 4 posts and 3 walls. Over the last 2 years, we have added / enhanced the structure. Look closely at the photo and you will understand the name. Everything you see was found there except for the nails and the bras.

Little Bay is 3 hours or less from Jackson Creek. It is at the mouth of Antipoison Creek. There is plenty of room for many boats in 10’ of water. To get to the Tiki Bra, take a dinghy around to the north side. It is now a popular destination for many. Our last visit was Cinco De Mayo where we met many new friends. Come for a visit and “unleash the cannons.”



## *Father’s Day Cruise*

*June 16/17*

We will sail north around Windmill Point and settle into anchorage in Little Bay at the mouth of Antipoison Creek. This is a 3 hour trip or less. Once there, we will dinghy to the north face to hang out at the infamous Tiki “Bra” (see write up). This is a beach like you would find in the Caribbean. At the end of the day we will assemble for a bon fire and roasted hot dogs (FBYC provided). Please bring appetizers to share.

Please register on line or contact John Koedel @ 804 338-1158 / [jgkoedel@yahoo.com](mailto:jgkoedel@yahoo.com).

Friday night, meet at Fannie’s House at 8pm for ice cream sandwiches and a captain’s meeting.

Tiki Bra or bust.

## *Join the Parade!*

*by George Sadler, Cruising Division, Lt. Commander*

The cruisers of FBYC are going to join an international flotilla for this year’s bicentennial of the War of 1812. OpSail and the U.S. Navy are collecting the largest fleet of tall ships and international navy vessels ever gathered, for OpSail 2012. OpSail 2012 Virginia is teaming with Norfolk Harborfest to schedule events during the ship gathering, including opportunities to visit the ships, to enjoy live musical performances, to view fireworks, and to watch three Parades of Sail.

Participants in the FBYC Southern Bay Cruise are planning to watch the Sea and Air Parade on Wednesday, June 6, to join the Harborfest Parade of Sail on Friday, June 8 and to proceed with the fleet in a colossal parade up the Chesapeake Bay, leaving Norfolk on Tuesday, June 12. While participating in Harborfest, from the 8th to the 11th, the FBYC participants will have the option of docking on floating docks with walking access to all of the events, or to anchor across the river in the Hospital Point anchorage, in addition to possibly squeezing into one of the local marinas. On the way into and out of the Norfolk harbor, we are planning to gather at Norfolk Yacht and Country Club and at Hampton Yacht Club, respectively.

The parade route up the Bay will commence with leaving Norfolk on the Elizabeth River in the morning, traveling past Fort Monroe in Hampton, and then proceeding up the Bay. The fleet will maintain a speed of six knots, passing Smith Point at the mouth of the Potomac River around sunset on Tuesday, the 12th. Cruisers who choose not to travel as far as the Potomac may turn up the York River for one last night together at York River Yacht Haven. Others from FBYC are encouraged to join in the Parade by sailing with the fleet as it makes its way northward. This certainly is a unique opportunity to see firsthand a mighty collection of tall ships under sail.

For more details contact George and Frances Sadler or check out the three websites: [www.opsailvirginia.com](http://www.opsailvirginia.com), [www.opsail.com](http://www.opsail.com) and [www.starspangled200.org](http://www.starspangled200.org).



## HISTORY

## *The Sea Ghost of the Confederacy Haunts the Chesapeake (and Wilton Creek)*

*By Jere Dennison*

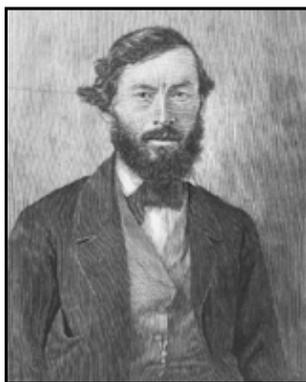
*While 2011 was an eventful year for FBYC, the year was also distinguished for the beginning of the Civil War Sesquicentennial commemorating the 150th anniversary of the conflict that began in 1861. As such, your Historian was recruited by the Deltaville Maritime Museum to help establish a four-year exhibit highlighting Civil War activities that occurred in Middlesex County and the Deltaville area in particular. One of the stories and its main character that I explored is especially intriguing.*

*For years I had believed that few, if any, wartime activities occurring in the area merited serious attention until I read a book entitled *Chesapeake Bay in the Civil War* by Eric Mills published in 1996. I was surprised to discover that a most notorious Confederate naval officer, John Taylor Wood, considered our normally placid waters of the Rappahannock, Piankatank, and even Wilton Creek his prime prowling grounds in 1863. This led me to further research that included additional sources including books, the internet, and even the Official Records containing dispatches from the Union Navy during the Civil War.*

*Logstreamer Cyane Crump felt that many of our members might find this topic of interest as you sail the region this summer. So here it is.*

While no massive armies nor thundering cavalry charges swept across the dusty roads and fertile fields of Middlesex County during the War Between the States, one prominent Confederate luminary did cast his shadow about the vicinity of Deltaville (then New Market according to an 1862 Union chart of the Bay), Virginia... Civil War Confederate Naval Officer John Taylor Wood, dubbed the Sea Ghost of the Confederacy by 20th century historians as the nautical equivalent to Confederate cavalry Col. John Singleton Mosby, known as the Grey Ghost, who commanded his notorious Ranger marauders in Northern Virginia.

Born 1830 in the Iowa Territory, he was the grandson of President Zachary Taylor and nephew by marriage of Confederate President Jefferson Davis. A graduate of the Annapolis Naval Academy in 1853, he served in the U.S. Navy until the War erupted. A staunch advocate of Southern independence, he entered Confederate service and, aided by his family connections, became one of the most influential men in the rebel capital.



**John Taylor Wood**

As Second Lieutenant aboard the *CSS Virginia*, he fought in the first duel between ironclads in March 1862. After the *Virginia* was destroyed to prevent its capture, its crew, led by Wood, manned heavy gun emplacements at Drewry's Bluff on the James River in May to repel a Union gunboat fleet that included the ironclad *Monitor*, rebuffing Major General George B. McClellan's best chance to take Richmond during his failed Peninsula Campaign. (As a side note, the short journey to Drewry's Bluff in Chesterfield County is highly recommended. After viewing the commanding heights and still-intact powerful gun emplacements at this strategic spot, one will understand why it is sometimes referred to as the "Gibraltar of the Confederacy." No Union gunboat was

ever able to penetrate these defenses until they were abandoned after the fall of Petersburg and Richmond near the end of the War.)

Largely for his success at Drewry's Bluff, Wood was promoted to First Lieutenant. As the Chesapeake was now controlled by blockading squadrons of Union gunboats, the resourceful naval officer approached Secretary of the Navy Stephen R. Mallory with a plan to strike Federal craft in a series of midnight naval raids. The attacks, dependent on surprise and speed, would be executed by a crew of 15 or 20 handpicked men in specially built shallow draft boats or whaleboats light enough to be hauled overland in wagons and launched in small streams and inlets.

On a dark night in October 1862 Lieutenant John Taylor Wood introduced a Confederate naval tactic, "partisan warfare at sea," that would evolve into modern amphibious commando warfare, such as now practiced by the Navy Seals. The tactic was ideally suited to the Confederate navy, which lacked both money and time to build a fleet capable of matching the vastly superior one of its foe.

Wood's proposal for shore-based small-boat raids in the Chesapeake appealed to Secretary of the Navy Stephen R. Mallory. To Wood's specifications, whaleboats were built in the Richmond Navy Yard at Rocketts, and wagons were especially outfitted to carry them overland, creating a navy on wheels that could be moved to any of the many peninsulas in the Chesapeake regions.

His first raid on October 7, 1862 marked the beginning of his reputation as a coastal raider to be feared. On that night, Wood and his men stormed the deck of the schooner *Frances Elmore* at anchor in the Potomac, stripped her of valuables, set her aflame, loaded wagons with their boats, and headed back to Richmond in triumph. Later that month, he deployed his boat-wagons to Mathews County where the merchant ship *Alleghanian*, with \$200,000 in cargo at anchor off Gwynns Island, became his second victim. Shipping interests on the Chesapeake Bay, the Union's primary supply route between Washington and Norfolk, became increasingly alarmed as Wood's notoriety spread, and the Union navy had now to divert substantial resources in an effort to stop Wood's raiders.

### **Ambush on Wilton Creek**

On August 12, 1863, John Taylor Wood with 11 officers and 71 men and four wagon-mounted raiding boats rolled out of Richmond with orders from Jefferson Davis to prey on Union gunboats rather than commercial shipping, i.e. commandeer a gunboat and wreak havoc with it. On August 16, his navy commandos rowed down the Piankatank to the Chesapeake but turned back after spotting two Union gunboats underway and thus unassailable.

It was to Wilton Creek that the rebels retired to bivouac before their next sortie. As most FBYC members who have visited know, Wilton Creek features a narrow entrance, high elevated banks, deep navigable water, and is bordered on the east by a narrow peninsula, known as Glebe Neck that overlooks the Piankatank with an unencumbered view to Gwynns Island and the Chesapeake Bay several miles to the east. It was a secure encampment from which to stage their operations and a perfect trap for ambushing hostile forces wandering into their lair.

## HISTORY

Five days after Wood encamped, the Union gunboat General Putman anchored off Wilton Creek pursuing rumors of suspicious secessionist activity on the creek. Acting Master Commanding the Putman, William Hotchkiss, led sixty men in five boats up the creek. Rounding a bend, they sighted a rebel lurking in the thick mountain laurels covering the high banks which soon erupted into heavy gunfire.

Outnumbered, outgunned, and over-exposed to a merciless hail of bullets and crossfire from hidden enemy positions occupying the high ground, the Union contingent made a hasty retreat to the *Putman* with their commanding officer dead from a neck wound and others seriously wounded. With a full head of steam, the gunboat escaped downriver, frantically shelling the Piankatank shoreline all the way to the Bay. (Perhaps this was the occasion when nearby Providence and Woodport plantations on the Piankatank are reported to have received damage from Union ordinance during the War.)

One can only speculate, of course, but perhaps this was an elaborate scheme to lure the gunboat into the narrow creek by circulating rumors of his presence there with the cooperation of local partisans. If the gunboat had taken the bait, it certainly might have been possible to entrap the vessel there, forcing its crew to surrender. However, there is no documentation to support this theory, even from the embedded correspondent for the *Richmond Dispatch* who detailed a sensational but exaggerated account in that newspaper for the benefit of his southern readers.

#### Capture of the USS *Satellite* and *Reliance* and three schooners

With his cover blown, Wood realized it was time to move. Besides he had bigger quarry to pursue, namely three gunboats of the Potomac Flotilla, *Currituck*, *Reliance*, and *Satellite*, which frequently anchored off Windmill Point on the north shore of the Rappahannock River.

The whaleboats were loaded on wagons and hauled a few miles across the Middlesex peninsula to Meachim Creek, a small tributary of the Rappahannock just west of Greys Point at which the current Norris Bridge crosses the river to Lancaster County. Three nights later under cover of darkness, the rebels spied two of the gunboats at anchor. Finding it necessary to attack both at the same time, they split into two boarding parties with two whaleboats each. With the element of surprise on their side and wearing white armbands to distinguish them from the enemy, they swarmed over the vessels with slashing cutlasses and blazing guns. In spite of some determined resistance from the Yanks, the gunboats quickly surrendered after sustaining significant casualties.

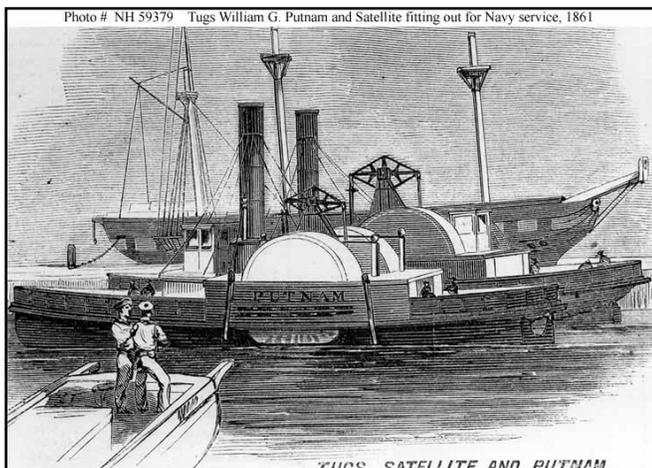


Photo # NH 59379 Tugs William G. Putnam and Satellite fitting out for Navy service, 1861

Wood commanded that the prizes be taken to Urbanna where prisoners were removed and the injured treated at Rosegill Plantation by local women. Two days later, the *Satellite* forayed down the river and into the Chesapeake searching for the third gunboat *Currituck*, which, unbeknownst to Wood, had steamed off to Norfolk for reinforcements. Instead he encountered and captured the Baltimore coal schooner *Golden Rod* off Gwynns Island and two Philadelphia schooners, *Two Brothers* and *Coquette*, in the mouth of the Rappahannock with a cargo of anchors and chains.

After returning to Urbanna with the new prizes in tow, *Satellite* loaded up with coal from the *Golden Rod* and then stripped and burned her off the mouth of Urbanna Creek to prevent her falling back into Union hands. That winter, the townspeople were able to dredge up remnants of the coal cargo from the sunken hulk to heat their homes while tonging for oysters to put food on their tables.

Fleeing Union gunboats, Wood headed up the river to Port Royal with *Satellite* and *Reliance* and the two schooners, *Two Brothers* and *Coquette*, in tow. There they stripped the prize ships of cannon, engines, more than twenty-six thousand dollars worth of anchors and chains, and “everything else of value except the boilers,” according to Wood’s account. After scuttling the vessels, Wood returned triumphant to Richmond again where he was promoted to Commander and was reassigned to operations in North Carolina waters where he employed his tactics to capture the *Underwriter*, the largest Federal gunboat, at New Berne, North Carolina.

Although John Taylor Wood abandoned the Chesapeake theater for the remainder of the War, his swashbuckling reputation earned on the Piankatank and Rappahannock rivers caused the North to attribute future acts of sabotage and plundering on the Bay by privateers who followed in his wake to the dreaded Sea Ghost of the Confederacy.

#### Beyond the Chesapeake

In July 1864 after his daring exploits in North Carolina, Wood took command of the steamer CSS *Tallahassee*, and terrorized the coast from New York to Maine, capturing or destroying 31 coastal and fishing craft. The *Tallahassee* was purported to be the fastest warship of the day, capable of 18 knot speeds. Promoted to Captain in February 1865, he was with Jefferson Davis at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Richmond when the President learned of General Robert E. Lee’s retreat from Petersburg.

Fleeing to Florida after Appomattox, he escaped to Cuba with Secretary of War John Breckinridge and several others on a perilous journey in an open lifeboat encountering pirates, storms, and extreme privations. From Cuba, he and his family emigrated to an expatriate community in Halifax, Nova Scotia where he established a profitable merchant commission house with a former Confederate blockade runner. He remained a devoted Confederate until his death and interment at Halifax in 1904.

*Afterword: The Deltaville Maritime Museum is currently leading an effort to have the Virginia Department of Historic Resources erect an historic marker on Route 33 near Wilton Creek Road to memorialize the exploits of Robert Taylor Wood on Wilton Creek and the Rappahannock. Currently there are precious few historic markers around the state dealing with events connected to the Confederate navy and its commanders.*

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**FOR RENT:** Waterfront townhouse condo, with 3 BR and 2.5 Baths, in Jackson Creek Harbor, fully equipped, sleeps 8, \$1,100 per wk., \$3150 per mo., including utilities, plus \$85 cleaning fee, avail. May to September. Contact **Noel Clinard**, 804-788-8594 or [nclinard@hunton.com](mailto:nclinard@hunton.com)

**FOR RENT:** Stove Point cottage on Fishing Bay with shared small boat dock. 3 BR, 2 baths, attached bunk house with bath and outside shower can accommodate another 6. \$1,500 per week, including utilities, plus \$85 cleaning fee. Contact **Tad Thompson**, 804-240-4993 (cell) or 804-784-3493 (home).

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**WANTED:** The Deltaville Maritime Museum is seeking boat and car donations. All proceeds benefit museum and park programs and future development.

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