



CHESAPEAKE

James A. Michener



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CHESAPEAKE



Acknowledgments

I first sailed upon the Chesapeake in 1927 and was a frequent passenger thereafter. From my earliest days on the bay I considered writing about it, but always postponed beginning until such time as I could live along its shores for some extended period. This opportunity came in 1975, when I lived near a small but historic fishing village for two years. During that time I met and worked with the many learned people whose ideas infuse this novel, and I should like here to give them the thanks they so richly earned.

The Chesapeake Bay: Walter Robinson of Swarthmore first took me boating and instilled in me his love of the area. Judge William O'Donnell of Phoenixville allowed me to crew his *Prince of Donegal* scores of times, and Larry Therien helped me to explore. Pearce Coady took me on his *Cleopatra's Barge* to parts of the bay.

The Choptank River: Lawrence McCormick and Richard Springs took me on small-boat excursions to the headwaters of the river. Edward J. Pizek arranged for helicopter explorations at low level. Judge O'Donnell sailed me to all parts of the river, as did Joseph A. Robinson.

Skipjacks: Three captains helped enormously. G.S. Pope, now retired, told me of the old days. Josef Liener instructed me as we sailed the *Rosie Parks*, and Eddie Farley took me out for long hours of oyster dredging on his *Stanley Norman*. I was also allowed to inspect various old boats as they stood on blocks.

Oysters: George Krantz of the University of Maryland's Center for Estuarine Studies shared with me his research findings, and Robert Inglis kept me informed as to his progress in growing oysters in the creek which formed his front yard. Levin Harrison told me casually of the rough old days.

Geese: Ron Vavra, twin brother of the man who provided the photographs for my book *Iberia*, introduced me to the basic research on the Canada goose, and dozens of hunters helped me understand its habits. William H. Julian, Manager of the Blackwater National Wild Life Refuge, showed me his 60,000 geese and was unfailingly helpful.

Hérons and ospreys: After I had done a good deal of field work on these enchanting water birds, I had the good luck to meet up with Jan Reese, a leading expert on both species, and he gave me advanced instruction on aspects I had not contemplated.

Big guns: Dr. Harry Walsh, the principal authority, showed me his collection, talked of the old days, and helped me to understand the functioning and mystique of these one-man cannons.

Trees: Stark McLaughlin, Project Forester, State of Maryland, gave much useful advice concerning various aspects of tree growth and culture.

Choptank life: Captain Bill Benson, of the nation's oldest ferry route, provided invaluable reminiscences. Ambassador Philip Crowe was most helpful in telling of recent developments. And Alyce Stocklin, a friend of many years, was hilarious as a constant commentator. H. Robins Hollyday was generous both with his time and his store of old photographs, and Peter Black was helpful in diverse ways.

Black history: Dickson Preston generously shared with me his remarkable discoveries relating to Frederick Douglass; these lend authority to my treatment of slavery in the area. He also read the complete manuscript and made valuable suggestions on historical details. My friend Dorothy Pittman convened some of her black neighbors to talk with me, particularly James Thomas and LeRoy Nichols. Judge William B. Yates provided sober and ecumenical reflections on the days of trouble.

Although for dramatic reasons the action of this novel takes place on the northern shore of the Choptank, much of my most effective research was conducted on the south bank, for which I have a special affection, and I am deeply indebted to the experts of that

region. Bayly Orem, of a distinguished Dorchester family, met me on a dove shoot and took it upon himself to introduce me to his neighbors who might prove helpful:

Boat building: James Richardson, famous for his reconstructions of historic boats, was constantly instructive, as were his sons-in-law, Tom Howell and James D. Brighton.

Turkling: State Senator Frederick C. Malkus, the region's premier turtle trapper, took me turkling, as that sport is called.

Gigging: Richard Drescher, one of Maryland's principal athletes, took me night frogging in the marshes of south Dorchester.

Little Choptank: Dale Price allowed me to inspect his place on the Little Choptank, the site occupied by Herman Cline's slave farm prior to the Civil War.

Indians: Judge William B. Yates told me of the Choptank Indians and other matters.

Marshland: Elmer Mowbray allowed me to accompany him on explorations of his privately owned marsh. He is an expert on estuarine life, and I am indebted to him.

Fishing: David Orem and Jay Alban taught me about fishing and the intricacies of nature in the bay area.

Research: Everyone at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, St. Michaels, was most helpful; the director, R.J. Holt, was especially so. The library in Easton, Maryland, has a distinguished collection of research materials; its director Elizabeth Carroll saw to it that I had assistance, and Mary Starin, custodian of the Maryland Room, was indefatigable in finding books, as she is with all who work in the library. Robert H. Burgess, of The Mariners Museum in Newport News, helped with both his books and his counsel.

Studies: Details of early activity were checked against *Tobacco Coast. A Maritime History of the Chesapeake Bay in the Colonial Period* by Arthur Pierce Middleton. The nature of commercial life on an Eastern Shore plantation during the Revolutionary War came from various sources, the most revealing being *In Pursuit of Profit* by Edward C. Papenfuse, which deals with a group of commercial families on the western shore. The significance of the naval battle fought at the mouth of the Chesapeake in September 1781 is not sufficiently appreciated. My account is based on recent research, particularly *Decision at the Chesapeake* by Harold A. Larrabee, which deserves wide attention from those interested in this period.

But my constant assistants were the citizens of the Choptank area. Scores of them talked with me at social gatherings or during investigative meetings held during one of the coldest winters the Eastern Shore has ever experienced and one of the hottest summers. They were provocative, perceptive, amusing . . . and often hopeful that I would quit my project and go elsewhere, lest my writing awaken the rest of the world as to what a sequestered paradise they were enjoying on the Eastern Shore.

*To
Mari Michener
who cared for the geese,
the herons, the ospreys and
the cardinals*

This book is a novel, and to construe it as anything else would be an error. The characters are imaginary; the Steeds, Turlocks, Paxmores, Caters and Caveney were invented by the author and were based on no real persons. The principal locales—Devon Island, Peace Cliff, the Turlock marshes and the town of Patamoke—are so completely imaginary that they have been located on land that does not even exist. The Refuge is on a creek that does not exist, and in south-central Africa there is no Xanga River or community of people with that name.

Details of the Choptank River are, however, correct insofar as possible, and there has been no invention here. English settlement of the Choptank came somewhat later than depicted, but it did occur at a spot only twenty-three miles to the north.

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Voyage One: 1583

FOR SOME TIME NOW THEY HAD BEEN SUSPICIOUS of him. Spies had monitored his movements, reporting to the priests, and in the tribal councils his advice against going to war with those beyond the bend had been ignored. Even more predictive, the family of the girl he had chosen to replace his dead wife had refused to accept the three lengths of roanoke he had offered as her purchase price.

Reluctantly he was coming to the conclusion that he must leave this tribe which had done everything but outlaw him publicly. As a child he had watched what happened to men declared outcasts, and he had no desire to experience what they had suffered: the isolation, the scorn, the bitter loneliness.

So now, as he fished along the great river or hunted in the meadows or merely sat in contemplation, always alone, he felt he must go. But how? And where?

The trouble had started that day when he voiced his apprehension over a raid proposed by the high chief. For more than a year now relations with tribes beyond the northern bend had been amicable, and during this interval the river had known prosperity, with more than normal trade passing north and south. But the Susquehannocks of the middle section had never in Pentaquod's life been easy in times of peace; they felt intuitively that they should be on the warpath, proving their manhood. So it was within tradition for the high chief to devise justifications for sending his warriors forth: if they triumphed, their victory would rebound on him; and if they lost, he would claim that he was merely protecting the boundaries of the tribe.

Pentaquod had argued, 'Those of the northern bend have respected their promises. They have not stolen our beaver nor trespassed on our