

Tilghman Island Maryland.

References; Tilghman's Island Capers. By Antoinette Covington
Verbal information from Bernice Leonard
and Talbot County land Records.

Tilghman Island or Tilghman's Island was granted to Seth Foster in 1659, at that time it was called The Great Choptank Island and consisted of about 1200 acres. Seth Foster built a home on the East side of the Island and near the center, some distance from a deep cove and protected on the west side by a pine forest. In 1675 Seth Foster passed away and requested to be buried in the soil of his beloved island and to my eldest daughter Elizabeth Lowe I give and bequeath all the land of "Great Choptank Island".

Vincent Lowe, husband of Elizabeth became the second owner of "The Great Choptank Island". Col. Vincent Lowe died in 1691. His will requested his wife Elizabeth, should she die without heirs of her body, to devise Great Choptank Island to her sister's son, Foster Turbutt. Col. Vincent Lowe and his wife Elizabeth were the last owners of the entire island to make their home on the island.

In 1693 Elizabeth Foster Lowe married Willian Coursey and in 1697 sold Great Choptank Island to John Hawkins of the Isle Kent for 500 pounds sterling. During this era indentured servants were being replaced by slaves. John Hawkins placed a large number of slaves on the island and two overseers. These white overseers lived on the island with their families, one on the upper part of the island and one on the lower part of the island.

John Hawkins mortgaged the island in 1704 to Capt. John Hyde of London. After a number of years, with no interest being paid by either John Hyde or his son Ernault Hawkins, John Hyde became the legal owner of the Great Choptank Island in 1720.

In 1724 Col. Mathew Ward obtained the island by bargain and sale from John Hyde of London.

Mathew Ward divided the island into four plantations, Lower plantation to specialize in peaches and apples, Little Neck plantation to specialize in tobacco and sheep, Middle plantation to specialize in pigs and corn, and Saw House plantation to specialize in Timber and Horses. Each plantation had its own overseer, dwelling house, garden and horse.

Mathew T. Ward died in 1741, stating in his will. "My wife shall have the use of my plantation upon the Choptank Island called "Saw House" plantation and the use of all the Negroes, stock of cattle, hoggs, and household goods belonging to the said plantation so long as she remains a widow, but no longer. To cousin Mathew Tilghman all that tract of land or Island called Choptank Island, with all the plantations, houses and other improvements belonging to him and his heirs forever, and also all the negroes, stock and all the necessary utensils belonging to the several plantations upon the island only reserving the use of that plantation upon the said island called "Saw House" plantation for the benefit of my dear wife Margaret Ward during her widowhood as before mentioned".

Mathew Tilghman died in 1790 and the Great Choptank Island was inherited by his son Lloyd Tilghman, who died in 1811 without a will, his estate was not settled until 1819. In 1818 Choptank Island was divided equally between Ann Tilghman and Henrietta Tilghman, daughters of Lloyd Tilghman and his first

cousin Henrietta Maria Tilghman whom he had married in 1785. Since Henrietta had died the court ruled that her husband, Alexander Hemsley, was to have his wife's half which was the southern half of the island for his life time. After his death it was to go to his two children, Lloyd Hemsley, wife of Dr. Frisby Tilghman of Washington County.

In 1838 Dr. Absolom Thompson bought Choptank Island, Now being called Tilghman's Island containing 1869 acres of land except for the "Graveyard" on the northern part of the island containing 1/2 acre. Dr. Thompson bought the island as an investment.

Dr. Thompson died in 1842 and his two sons sold Tilghman's island to Tench Tilghman of Oxford for \$24,000.00. Tench Tilghman intended to resell the island in smaller parcels. He never lived on the island but he had it surveyed and built a bridge and a road down the middle of the island with smaller bridges across the drains.

The bridge across Knapp's Narrows was built in 1843, prior to this date the former owners had to use a scow to cross the narrows. There was a sand bar at the west end of the narrows where a horse and buggy could cross.

John vallient a merchant from Baltimore bought 150 acres of land called "Black Walnut Point" for \$4,000.00 and this money provided Tench Tilghman with the means to build the bridge.

Black Walnut Point was part of the Lower plantation and still had many orchards of Apple, Peach, Pear, and Damson. Ennals Roszelle had been brought to Tilghman's Island by Tench Tilghman to clear the land and sell the timber using two steam sawmills, but Tench Tilghman failed to keep his part of the bargain and Ennals Roszelle placed a lien on 280 acres of Barneck.

In 1846 James M. Seth, a land speculator, bought all the rest of the unsold land on Tilghman's Island that was owned by Tench Tilghman, including the brick slave quarters. He built a large house on the island and moved his family to Tilghman's island, where he continued to sell the remaining land at a good profit.

Jerimiah Valliant bought 110 acres north of Black Walnut Point for \$1,155.00 where he built a house and moved his family to Tilghman's Island. Jerimiah bought an additional 74 acres of land along the northern line of J.S. Shannahan's farm on Barneck Point. This was used for orchards and was called "Sawyer's Garden" Jerimiah died in 1851.

Larrimore Cummings bought 100 acres on Tilghman's Island In 1847. Just north of Fairbank that was called "Hickory Ridge Farm". He had a large family but his life on Tilghman was short, he died in 1852. Margaret Gibson Cummings, His wife raised the children.

The following are excerpts from the will of Larrimore Cummings
"I give and devise to my dear wife Margaret Cummings during her widowhood or Until my youngest son Oakley Alfred Cummings shall arrive at the age of 21 Or which shall first happen, all the balance of my real or landed estate not herein devised to my son Lewis Cummings: consisting of the farm or plantation on which I now reside containing the quantity of ninety five acres more or less which was purchased by me of James M. Seth being part of a tract of land called Hickory Ridge situated on Tilghman Island"

"I also give and bequeath to my son Lewis Cummings the dwelling house in which Robert Gibson now resides on the lands of John Valliant."

"My Dear Wife being compelled to give a home and maintenance to my children" "until she marries or until my youngest son reaches the age of 21"

"It is then my will and desire that the above named plantation devised shall be divided share and share alike, between my children:

Sarah A. Harrison, wife of Joseph Skinner Harrison.
Eliza J. Collison, My illegitimate daughter.
Thomas P. Cummings, son
Rebecca H. Cummings, son
Charles W. L. Cummings, son
John W. R. Cummings, son
Margaret E. T. Cummings, daughter
Areanna A. Cummings, daughter.
Oakley Alfred Cummings, son
to them and their heirs"

"I devise and bequeath all the rest and residue of my estate real and personal to be divided among and between my wife Margaret Cummings, one third thereof and the remaining two thirds equally among my children." (Talbot County Wills #10)

In 1848 Edward Fairbanks bought 60 acres of land on Tilghman's Island for \$1,120.00, located on the South point of Hickory Ridge Plantation. He cleared the land and planned a road to connect with the public road through the island. He did some farming and some sailing.

In 1849 James S. Shannahan bought 120 acres of land located on Barneck point. Mr. Shannahan had 3 wives. (1835) Lydia Gibbs of Chapel district. (1859) Mary Kate Benson of St. Michaels and (1887) Jennie Douglas of Accomack Virginia.

In 1849 Mary Ann Cummings, Wife of Nicholas Cummings bought 40 acres of woodland along Chesapeake Bay. Saving and excepting a wood right to Alexander Beth and Robert Seth and ingress and egress to cut timber in the reserved woods. They had a house built and some land cleared. Mary named her land "BOOBY OWL GLORY" (Later owned by Marvin Caplin) Nicholas farmed a few years but in the 1860 census he is listed as a sailor.

At about the same time (1849) John H McQuay bought 59 acres, part of Paw-Paw woods (This area is about where the development called Tilghman Beach is now situated) Just north of the little Methodist Church and just south of the land of Nicholas and Mary Cummings. In 1865 John Mc Quay sold this land to William S. Phillips for \$1,000.00

In 1851 Captain Henry Cryer bought 30 acres on the north side of Dogwood Cove to the center of the main road from James A. Seth (This was about half of the land between Dogwood Cove and Knapps Narrows) He built a small house on the most Easterly part of this land. This house was later occupied by Dr. Denny Wilson and later still by Dr. Guy M. Reeser sr. Captain Cryer sold some of this land as building lots to local watermen.

Charles W. Banks was one of the watermen who bought land from Henry Cryer (Charles W. Banks was the first Black to own land on Tilghman's Island and The only one to date [1989]) (Taken from Talbot County land records folio 72 pg 249 12/14/1865).

At Captain Henry Cryers death his nephew Thomas Cryer inherited the unsold land. Thomas Cryer built and operated a grocery store with a Meeting Hall on the second floor for use of the Islanders. This building was on Gibsontown road

Near where Pauline and Wes Jenkins later built their home. The Store was moved from Gibsontown road to the main road and was sold to The Local order off Red men (Tuskanoooga Tribe #111 of the Tacoma Council #46 D. F. P. imp'd O. R. M.) This building Later become the Tilghman Volunteer Fire Hall and has recently been replaced with a new Fire House.