

Another indication that **Eltonhead Manor** had been sold to “foreigners” in the 1800s is a transfer during the Civil War. In 1864 William Frick, a trustee, sold 537 acres of land “near Cove Point on the West shore of Cheasapeake Bay near the Creek and the Swamp, also near the Poor House” for \$1800 to Levy Perry of Baltimore (Hutchins 1982, p.120). Furthermore, following the 1876 deaths of John and Dorcas Parran (O’Brien 1992, p. 219), Joseph Wilson, a trustee for their estate, sold the property to Samuel Burns and George Sloan. The former bought out the latter when he died, and a trustee subsequently sold the property to James J. Ryan. Curiously, it was a case where James Ryan et al. were plaintiffs in Circuit Court that led to the appointment of Harry Benzinger and the eventual sale of Ryan’s land in Calvert County to Cook Webster. It would be interesting to know more about James J. Ryan as well as Cook Webster’s motivations for buying the tract from Harry Benzinger. It seems curious that a storekeeper from Solomons Island was buying large tracts of land so far from his base of operations.

We know that Cook Webster’s tenant, James Fowler, had a small tobacco farm and one third of the crop was listed in the 1939 inventory of the former’s property. Although tenant farming no doubt could be profitable, it was not really the lucrative investment one might expect from a high-caliber risk-taker like Cook Webster. Don Gartman (pers. com., 1996) has confirmed that shortly after purchasing the Cherry Lane property, the Columbia LNG Corp. authorized the destruction of a tobacco barn near the present site of the administrative building. Interestingly, the beams and tobacco sticks were of chestnut, suggesting that a large supply of this timber was available in the vicinity when the barn was built. Indeed the rest of the acreage appears to have been part of an extensive logging/sawmill operation run by Wilbur Grover, at least until 1939 when Cook Webster died. It is possible that Cook Webster wanted the Cherry Lane property and the land to the north (i.e. **Devil’s Woodyard**), where the Calvert Cliffs State Park is now located, because he needed timber for the railroad he was in the process of building. We have a glimpse of Cook Webster again from Footner 1939 (p. 91) as he deals with Alice Weems (wife of the lighthouse keeper, Lock Weems, at Drum Point) who:

“owned a piece of land up the bay shore, and, hearing that Cook Webster was loading railway ties from her beach, she sent him a polite notification that it must stop until they had come to some agreement about beach age, or whatever is the proper term for use of a shore. As the loading went on and no answer to her letter came, she decided to take matters into her own hands. Next morning when the laborers arrived on the beach to start loading, the diminutive figure of Miss Alice rose from behind the pile of railroad ties with a gun. There was no argument. She was paid.”

We thought it might be interesting to follow up whether Alice Weems’ piece of beach property was at, or near Cove Point. A look through O’Brien (1992) indicted that Alice and Locke Weems had their three children James, Anna and John, baptized at

Christ Church in the 1880's, which was about the right time frame. Although it was definitely on our "to do list", we didn't get around to laboriously sifting through the lists of grantors and grantees in the Calvert Court House, to see if we could track Alice Weems further through the land records. However, procrastination sometimes pays! We found a 13 page typewritten speech by Hamilton Owens⁵¹ presented in 1956 to the Calvert Historical Society buried in their **Eltonhead Manor** file. In his speech (which we have transcribed verbatim in Appendix F), Owens describes a hike lasting several days early in the 20th century from Chesapeake Beach to Drum Point. He revealed that when he camped in what was reputed to be the original **Eltonhead Manor** house, he fell in love with it and made arrangements to buy it from its owners, Alice and Lock Weems who lived at Drum Point Light House. The property apparently belonged to Alice Weems and was located up the beach from Drum Point between Cove Point and Little Cove Point, and fit Footner's (1939) description remarkably well.

Not surprisingly, because they were both writers and outsiders in a close knit community, Hamilton Owens and Hurlbert (whom he calls Bill) Footner became friends. They also were about the same age and stumbled into Robert and Gertie de Barril at Drum Point about the same time. One fascinating vignette from Hamilton Owens speech is that while looking over the place he hoped to buy, he met a distinguished old man, Benjamin Franklin Catterton, who eventually showed him a log cabin where he was born. It was within walking distance of the **Eltonhead Manor** house. A search in O'Brien (1992) revealed that Benjamin Franklin Catterton was baptized on July 14, 1850 at Christ Church and his parents were Charles and Sarah Catterton. The couple was listed in the 1850 Census as living dwelling house #247, with one child. At the time, Charles O. Catterton was 26 and gave his occupation as a farmer. The value of his real estate was \$1,000. His wife, Sarah A. Catterton was only 18, and Benjamin F. was 3 months old. In 1886 Benjamin Franklin Catterton married Carrie E. Dalrymple from Anne Arundel County. This confirms the fact that although Jeremiah Catterton was one of the smallest landowners of **Eltonhead Manor** listed in the tax assessment of 1782 (Table 3) and with no slaves, there were still vestiges of the family name there, not only at mid-19th century, but into the 20th century as well.

Another interesting observation of Hamilton Owen's speech (Appendix F) is Benjamin Keenes's grave near the **Eltonhead Manor** house with the poignant message from his wife on the stone. Owens also suggested that the Keenes were originally from the Eastern Shore. This seems to be born out to some degree in the fragmentary land records we have left in the Hall of Records in Annapolis. In 1808 a Benjamin Keene had bought portions 193 acres of portions of **Timber Neck, Jarmins Quarter** from James J. Pattison of Baltimore (Calvert County Land Book #1, folio 346). These tracts were located on the west side of St. John Creek just to the west of the line of **Eltonhead Manor**. This places the Keenes in the neighborhood in early in the 19th

⁵¹ Hamilton Owens was from Baltimore County, but had roots in St. Marys. He worked for the Evening Sun in Baltimore and was also the author of a book on Baltimore (Owens 1941).

century. Although James J. Pattison is then listed in the deed as living in Baltimore, he had numerous kin in Dorchester County where the family had first settled on James Island in the late 1660s.

The previous quote from Footner (1939) which described the conflict between Alice Weems and Cook Webster over his right to use her beach for loading railroad ties, also reveals that the latter was involved in building the long proposed Drum Point Rail Line. The proposed route was clearly delineated on maps of the early 1900s (Fig. 25) and the rights of way had been secured in the land records after 1882. The final completion of this railroad might have brought Calvert County into the economic mainstream of Maryland early in the twentieth century (Footner 1939, p. 81):

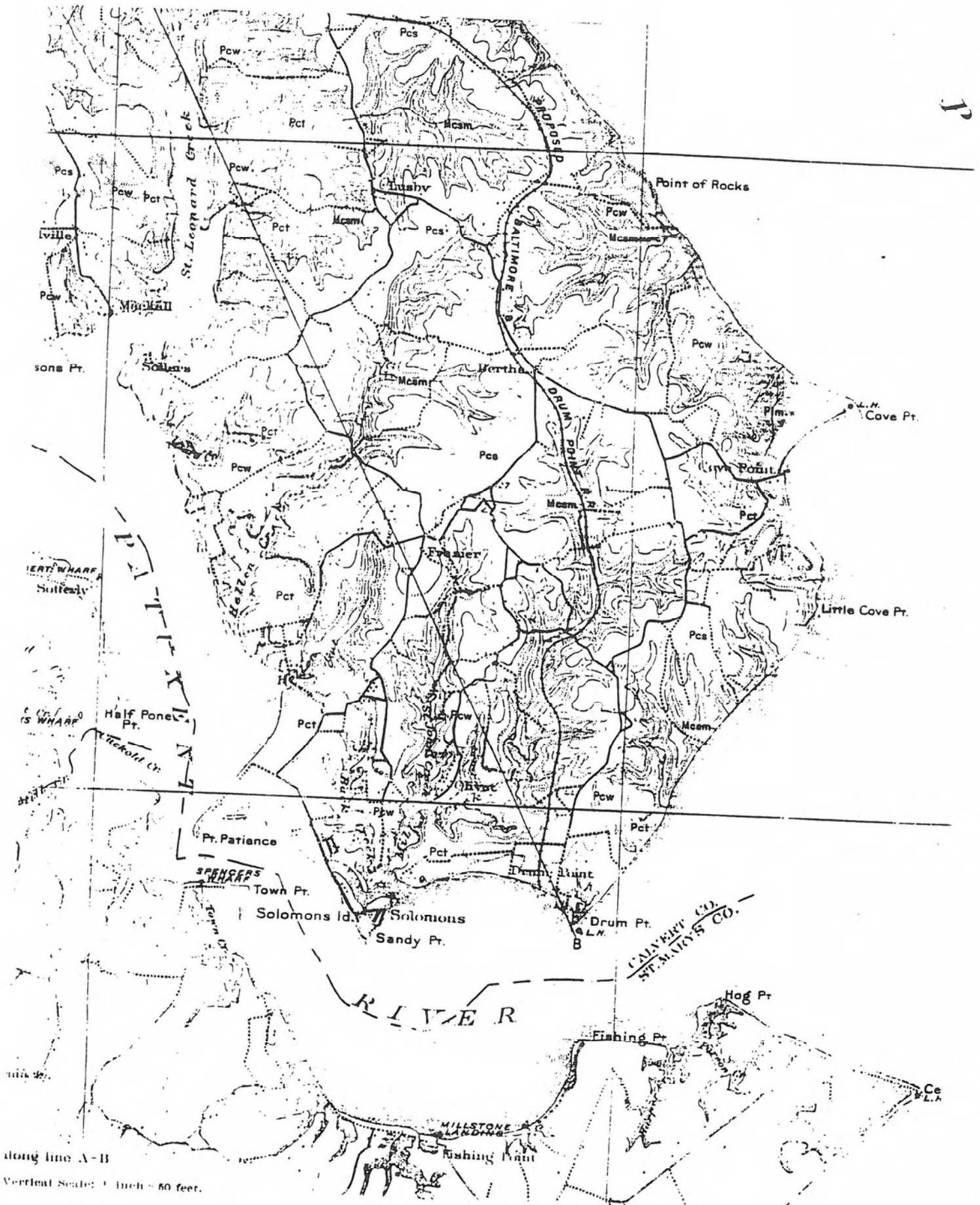
“The terminus and the town site were surveyed (on the property of Frederick Barreda at Drum Point). The road was planned to carry coal from mines to tidewater. The project dragged on for years; the road bed was actually graded and trestles built over gullies, but the rails were never laid. The story is, that the Baltimore Chamber of Commerce succeeded in spiking the enterprise. Baltimore keeps its harbor open only with continued dredging; while one of the finest natural harbors on the Eastern seaboard is that at Drum Point.”

It appears that speculation on the railroad was the reason relatively large portions of **Eltonhead Manor** were consolidated under one owner for the latter half of the 19th century and first four decades of the 20th century. Footner (1939) observed that there were few houses along the road out to Cove Point when he first bought **Charles Gift**. The undeveloped nature of **Eltonhead Manor** was also remarked upon by Hamilton Owens who described a tangle of vegetation which was difficult to hike through (Appendix F). Although Owens seemed to be offended by the name of “Purgatory” for this area, it is understandable that the local residents would attach that designation for that area. Much of it was dense secondary vegetation which was difficult to penetrate by the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Indeed Purgatory Creek still stands as a name on the 1942 U.S.G.S quadrangle of the area (Fig. 20).

When he first acquired it, Cook Webster, as suggested by the first passage from Footner (1939) above, may have used the present Cove Point LNG site for timber and hunting. The large ponds behind the beach still bear his name and it is a beautiful location for a blind for gunning waterfowl. However, when he developed Cove Point as a summer colony, it changed the face of the area significantly.

Ironically, one of our problems in tracking shoreline changes in this location is that the initial **Eltonhead Manor** was so large that initial property boundary lines did not intersect Cove Point. Although there may have been intersections in the 1730's after the partition mandated in Jesse Jacob Bourne's will, only conjectural lines can be drawn at present. When the tract was broken up we might have had a chance to analyze the shoreline changes, but the paucity of land records before 1882 stymied our efforts.

Figure 25. 1902 Maryland Geological Survey Map of Calvert County (Source: MD Hall of Records).

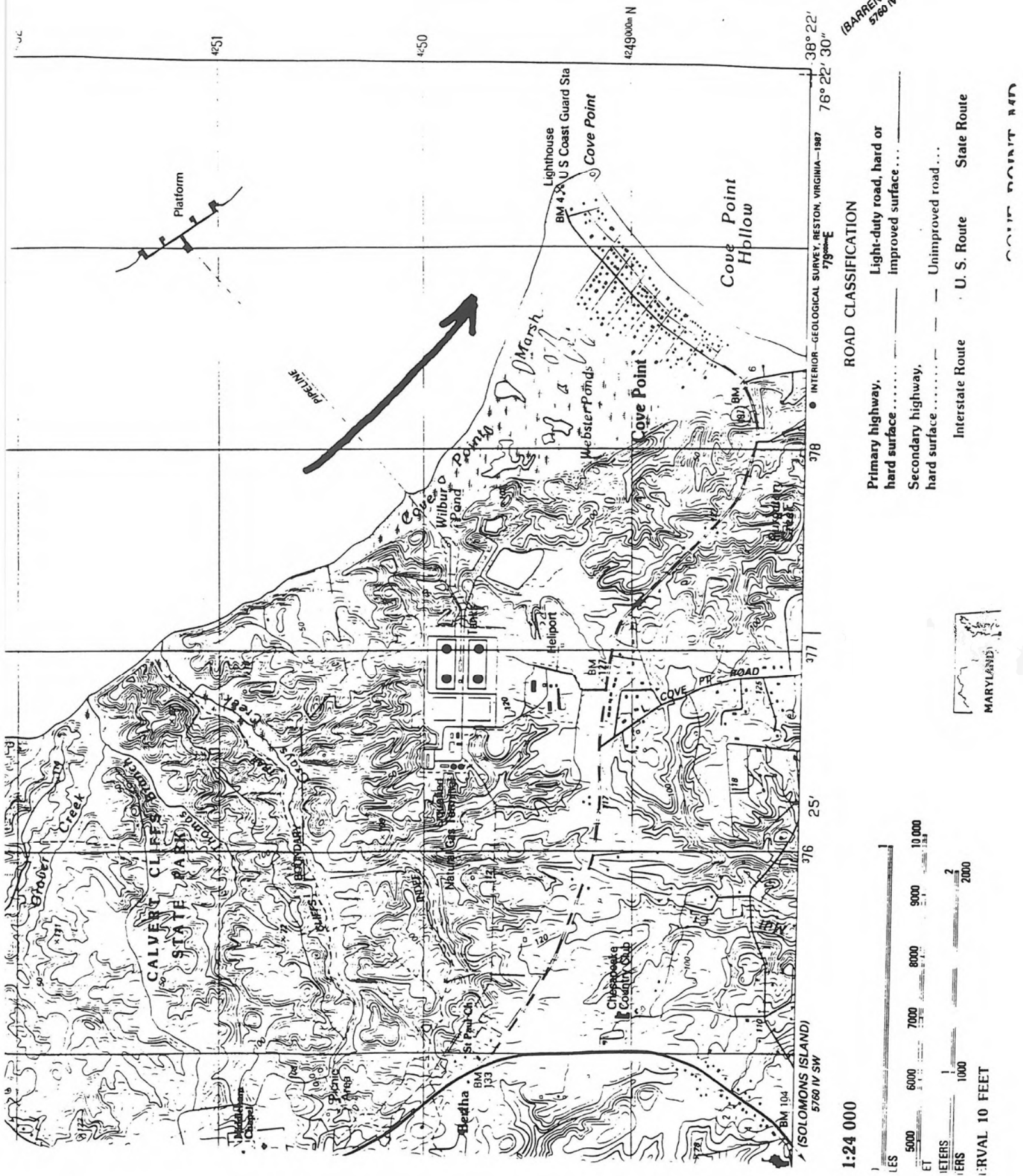


Thus the detailed shoreline mapping of the position of Cove Point from the time of settlement is hampered by the fragmentary data at hand. Of course this does not exclude usage of the post-1882 records, but this was beyond the scope of our original project.

At least we are now certain that the original patent of the Cove Point area was **Eltonhead Manor** and **Devils Woodyard** was the neighboring tract to the north (Fig. 5). In addition, when we looked at historical maps it was apparent that Cove Point was a conspicuous feature since the 17th century (Fig. 7). Although it is not clear from the record how much of the sloping land was used for tobacco, any disturbance of the very steep slopes **Eltonhead Manor** would have provided sediment to the littoral zone which could have helped nourish the progradation of Cove Point. However, more physical detail is needed of the area. Wetlands and ponds at the border of **Devils Woodyard** and **Eltonhead Manor** could have caught much of the excess sediment coming off the slope. Prior to that, beaver ponds may have helped trap sediments which otherwise might have run down Grover and Gray Creeks to nourish Cove Point. It remains to be seen whether maximum land clearance in the 19th century described for other parts of the Chesapeake watershed had a major impact on adding sediments which may have sustained and even expanded Cove Point during this period. One record suggests that **Devils's Woodyard** never was actually cleared of timber (Hungerford 1859, p. 28), so it could be argued that erosion north of **Eltonhead Manor** was minimal throughout the colonial and much of the post-colonial period. An early 20th century geological map (Fig. 25) indicates that at that time there was a extensive fringe marsh which extended from Cove Point northward almost to Rocky Point. The current U.S.G.S. Cove Point Quadrangle Map (Fig. 26) and field observations in 1996 indicate this fringe marsh (i.e north of the boardwalk) has been largely eroded with only a fragment of it now remaining (Stevenson and Sundberg, unpublished). This portends that with increasing relative sea-level in the region, the sediment supplies upstream over the next several centuries are critical to determining the ultimate stability of the entire Cove Point shoreline.

A final conclusion to our work is that after reviewing the preponderance of historical records in southern Calvert County, there is no indication that Cove Point had been moving rapidly south prior to 1828. Stein's mis-identification of **The Goare** as the original patent at Cove Point proved to be a red herring. The Augustine Herman map (Fig. 7) published in 1673 clearly shows **Eltonhead Manor** on both sides of Cove Point, as would be expected with little southern movement, and as we saw when we reconstructed the original survey and overlaid it on a recent U.S.G.S map (Fig.12). Indeed, compared to the Eastern Shore of Maryland where whole plantations and entire islands comprising thousands of acres have been lost since settlement, the changes in shorelines and marshes (although substantial) have been more subtle at Cove Point. The main difference is the availability of large sediment supplies on the western shore which renders shorelines more stable. The huge mass of material contained in Calvert Cliffs ultimately provides an excellent buffer to lateral erosion!

Figure 26. Portion of 1987 U.S.G.S. Cove Point Quadrangle Map Showing Direction of Sediment Transport (DMA 5760 IV NW-Series V833).



(BARREN ISLAND)
5760 IV SE

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway, hard surface	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface	Unimproved road
Interstate Route	U. S. Route
	State Route



1:24 000

0 5000 6000 7000 8000 9000 10 000

0 1 2

METERS 1000 2000

EQUAL 10 FEET

(SOLOMONS ISLAND)
5760 IV SW