

K-317

## Tolchester Beach, site (Tolchester Beach Amusement Park)

### **Architectural Survey File**

This is the architectural survey file for this MIHP record. The survey file is organized reverse-chronological (that is, with the latest material on top). It contains all MIHP inventory forms, National Register nomination forms, determinations of eligibility (DOE) forms, and accompanying documentation such as photographs and maps.

Users should be aware that additional undigitized material about this property may be found in on-site architectural reports, copies of HABS/HAER or other documentation, drawings, and the “vertical files” at the MHT Library in Crownsville. The vertical files may include newspaper clippings, field notes, draft versions of forms and architectural reports, photographs, maps, and drawings. Researchers who need a thorough understanding of this property should plan to visit the MHT Library as part of their research project; look at the MHT web site ([mht.maryland.gov](http://mht.maryland.gov)) for details about how to make an appointment.

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***Last Updated: 05-14-2004***

1. STATE Maryland  
COUNTY Kent  
TOWN Tolchester VICINITY  
STREET NO. Md. Rt. 21 at the Bay

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
INVENTORY K-317

2. NAME Tolchester  
(Tolchester Beach Amusement Park)

ORIGINAL OWNER  
ORIGINAL USE Amusement Park  
PRESENT OWNER David Bramble  
PRESENT USE vacant  
WALL CONSTRUCTION  
NO. OF STORIES

DATE OR PERIOD  
STYLE  
ARCHITECT  
BUILDER

4. NOTABLE FEATURES, HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND DESCRIPTION  
OPEN TO PUBLIC

Usilton, Fred G.  
1916 History of Kent County, Maryland. pp. 212-216.

*"Tolchester Beach Famed Far and Wide--The Life Work of One Man--Founded  
in 1877 and Used for Picnics.*

The history of the Tolchester Beach Improvement Company of Kent County is practically the life story of one man, who in his boyhood days heard the irresistible call of wind and wave and wisely yielded to their witchery. Even so practical a place as a man's business office gradually acquires a certain suggestion of the personality of its owner, and two objects framed and hung upon the walls of the office of the Tolchester Steamboat Company, on Light Street, Baltimore, convey to the observing eye and mind a strong suggestion of the mental characteristics of Captain William C. Eliason, organizer, president, and manager of this company. The first is a colored drawing of the model of the hull of a steamboat--the little craft Lamokin--that once plied upon the Delaware, and was the first boat with which the man was associated; the other is five lines of verse printed in large letters, neatly framed in dark wood and so hung that it meets the eye from almost any part of the room. The verse reads:

It is easy enough to be pleasant  
When life flows by like a song,  
But the man worth while  
Is the man who can smile  
When everything goes dead wrong.

For several years under the supervision of the Messrs. Taggart, Captain Eliason was identified with the excursion and regular steamboat navigation of the Delaware. Then the steamer Pilot Boy being for sale, the Messrs. Taggart conceived the idea of purchasing it, buying some land upon the bay shore of Maryland, securing a wharf in Baltimore and opening an excursion resort within a few hours' ride of the city. They offered Captain Eliason the management of the enterprise, provided he purchase a one-fourth interest in the boat and undertaking.

It was a big risk for a young man to stake his all upon an uncertainty, but the opportunity also had exceptional advantages. So the enterprise was launched in a very modest way in the year 1877. Ten acres of land comprised the company's possessions at Tolchester Beach, in Kent County, 23 miles east of Baltimore, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, and 12 miles from Chestertown.

The beach was then a crude picnic ground. There was a little wharf, one small building, a couple of sheds, a diminutive hand-propelled flying-horse machine and a hand organ. These were the modest improvements, but the tree-crowned bluff was a picturesque one, the beach a white-shelled, white-sanded slope, with bracing salt-water bathing.

The company opened its resort with the announcement that the place would be strictly under temperance management, with no liquor sold upon the boat. This was a distinct innovation, and it was predicted that an excursion line founded upon temperance principles was doomed to a brief and

profitless existence. Far from these gloomy predictions being realized, the example of temperance management set by the Tolchester Company has been followed since by most of the excursion boats now navigating the Chesapeake Bay.

So to this little bayside resort plied the tiny steamer Pilot Boy, whose capacity was 600 passengers. Captain Eliason was manager, clerk of the steamer, clerk of wharf, excursion agent--even deck-hand, as necessity required it. Under the energetic direction the enterprise expanded like the Biblical grain of mustard seed. Each year a few more acres of land or some improvements were added as the patronage steadily increased.

From the small beginning with the Pilot Boy the Tolchester Company has grown under the enthusiastic and progressive management of Captain Eliason to the proportions of one of the most important steamboat corporations of Maryland. Tolchester Beach now embraces 155 acres, with a picturesque and commodious hotel perched breezily upon a bluff. From its wide verandas a beautiful sweep of the Chesapeake Bay is visible, and the grounds surrounding this summer inn are terraced to the beach and shaded with wide-spreading trees. In early spring the sod is blue with violets, and locust trees, laden with white and perfumed blossoms, outline the curving shore. Inland from the beach are several lakes, hedged with green trees and flowering shrubs, on whose quiet waters float the broad leaves and wondrous blossoms of the water lily.

The Tolchester Company now owns and operates the steamers Louise, Emma Giles, Susquehanna and Annapolis. In addition to the Tolchester Hotel and excursion grounds the company has wharf property in Baltimore and Annapolis and on the West, Little Choptank, Sassafras and Susquehanna Rivers.

The officers of the company at the present time are: President and manager, William C. Eliason; secretary, William H. Hudson; treasurer, John M. Naudain. The offices of the company are at Piers 14, 15, 16 and 17 Light street.

In 1899 the Sassafras River Steamboat Company was absorbed by the Tolchester Line and the steamers and property of that company added to the latter company, thus securing the steamers Sassafras and Kitty Knight to the Tolchester fleet. Both of these boats were replaced by better boats. The Kitty Knight ran out of Worton Creek for many years and was known as the Trumpeter or Van Courlaer."

#### Kent County Bicentennial Committee

1976 Kent County Guide. Kent Co. Bicentennial Committee, Chestertown, Maryland, p. 28.

#### "TOLCHESTER

One of the pleasant memories of Kent County is Tolchester. With its turn-of-the-century buildings now gone, this once famous resort on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay has shared the fate of the steamboat, so closely associated with its rise and decline. No more do daily steamers from Baltimore and points further away bring excursionists to enjoy the amusement park, picnic pavilions, and the restaurants. The park is now a real estate development, and a modern marina brings visitors of a different era."

#### 9. NAME, ADDRESS AND TITLE OF RECORDER

Michael Bourne  
Maryland Historical Trust

DATE OF RECORD

New

1503177927

Form 10-445  
(5/62)

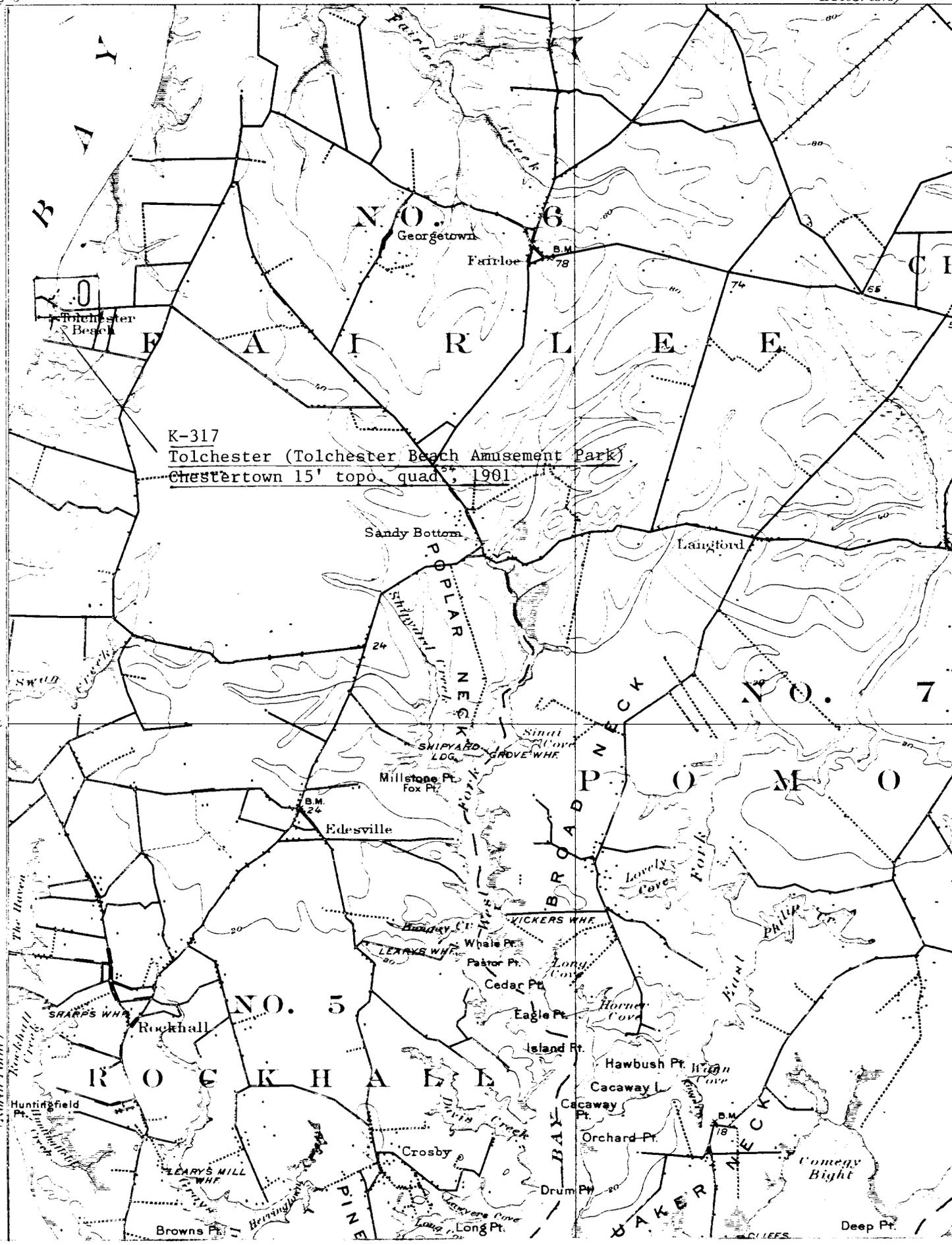
|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>1. STATE <u>Maryland</u><br/>         COUNTY <u>Kent</u><br/>         TOWN <u>Tolchester</u> VICINITY<br/>         STREET NO. <u>Mid. Rt 21 at the Bay</u></p> <p>ORIGINAL OWNER<br/>         ORIGINAL USE - <u>Amusement Park</u><br/>         PRESENT OWNER - <u>David Bromble</u><br/>         PRESENT USE - <u>vacant</u><br/>         WALL CONSTRUCTION - <u>x</u><br/>         NO. OF STORIES - <u>x</u></p> | <p>HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY<br/>         INVENTORY <u>K-317</u></p>   |
|   | <p>2. NAME <u>Tolchester</u></p> <p>DATE OR PERIOD -<br/>         STYLE<br/>         ARCHITECT<br/>         BUILDER</p> |
|   | <p>3. FOR LIBRARY OF CONGRESS USE</p>   |
| <p>4. NOTABLE FEATURES, HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND DESCRIPTION <span style="float: right;">OPEN TO PUBLIC</span></p>   |   |
| <p>5. PHYSICAL CONDITION OF STRUCTURE <span style="margin-left: 100px;">Endangered</span> <span style="margin-left: 100px;">Interior</span> <span style="margin-left: 100px;">Exterior</span></p>   |   |
| <p>6. LOCATION MAP (Plan Optional)</p>  | <p>7. PHOTOGRAPH</p>  |
| <p>8. PUBLISHED SOURCES (Author, Title, Pages)<br/>         INTERVIEWS, RECORDS, PHOTOS, ETC.</p>   | <p>9. NAME, ADDRESS AND TITLE OF RECORDER</p> <p>DATE OF RECORD</p>   |

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION AND PHOTOS MAY BE ADDED ON SHEET OF SAME SIZE



U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
CHARLES D. WALCOTT, DIRECTOR

(unpublished)  
39° 15'



K-317  
Tolchester (Tolchester Beach Amusement Park)  
Chestertown 15' topo. quad, 1901

(North Point)

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE  
CORPS OF ENGINEERS

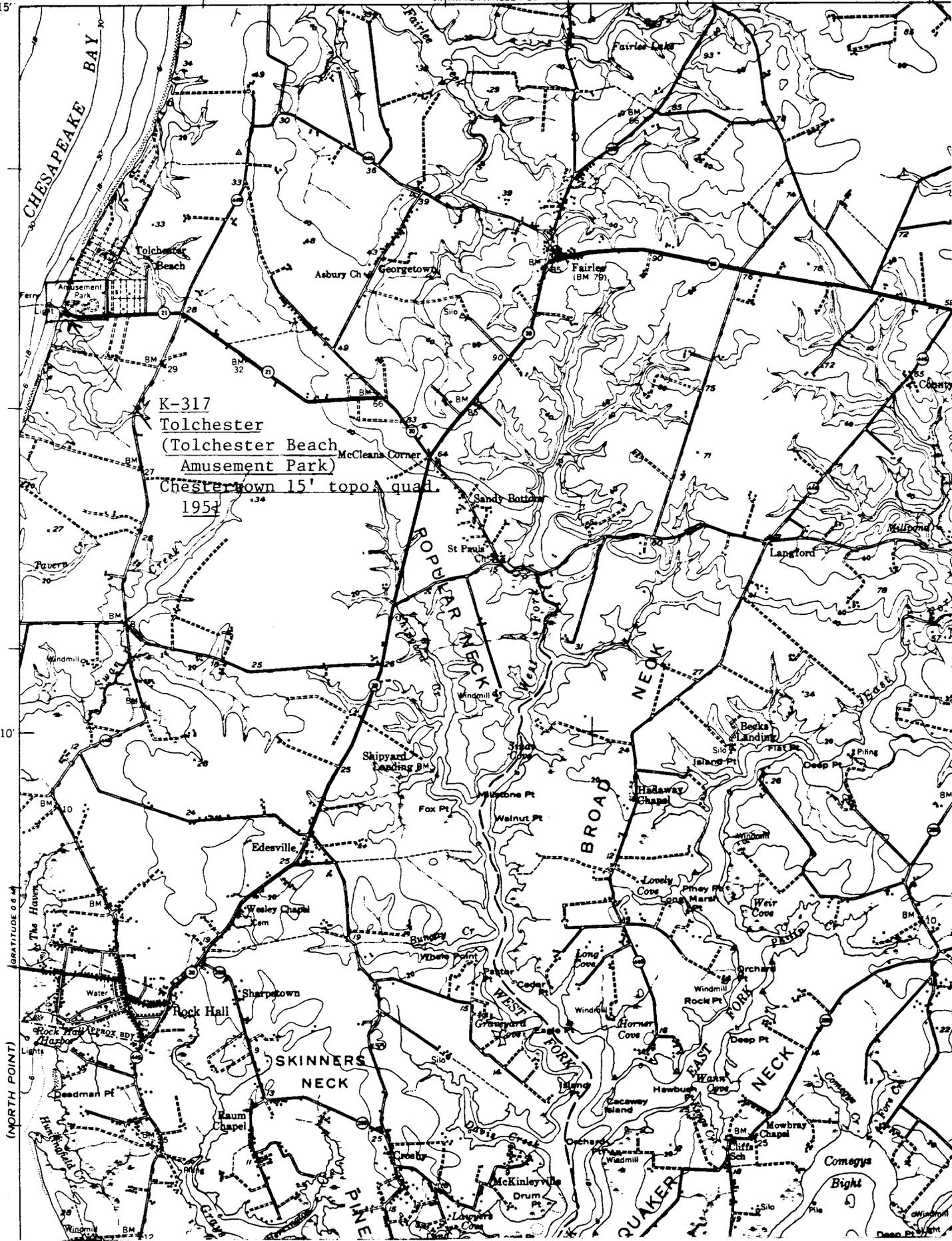
(GUNPOWDER)

76°15'  
39°15'

0.7 MI. TO FAIRLEE NECK RD. 10'

HANESVILLE 1.9 MI.  
MELITOTA 0.8 MI.

(BETTERTON)



K-317  
 Tolchester  
 (Tolchester Beach  
 Amusement Park)  
 Chester town 15' topo quad  
 1954

LONGITUDE U.S.M.  
NORTH POINT