

TANGIER ISLAND, AMERICA'S MOST UNIQUE SUMMER RESORT



Family Cemetery.

Private Canal.

JOHN SHERIDAN 1902



All the Women Wear Sunbonnets.



The Grand Canal of Tangier Island.



Star Route Billy.

A Practical If Not a Romantic Venice—Has a Grand Canal and Many Minor Canals, and the Inhabitants Use Them as Constantly and With as Little Thought as the People of Washington Use Their Avenues, Streets, and Alleys.

By CHARLES E. FAIRMAN.

DOWN in the Chesapeake Bay in that portion called Tangier Sound is situated the quaint Island of Tangier, an island that is without a counterpart in this country. It is Holland without its dykes and windmills; it is Venice without its picturesque architecture. It is the most unique summer resort in all America.

Tangier Island is situated 125 miles south of Baltimore, with which city it has steamer connections twice a week. The island is about five miles long and three-quarters of a mile in width, and

contains a population of about 1,400, and derives its revenues from the fish, crabs, and oysters which abound in the waters of the bay and sound.

The peculiar features of this island are many and of varied interest, for to the visitor everything seems strange and novel. There are no wagons, for the reason that there are no horses to draw them, and no roads over which the wagons could be driven. The streets seem to resemble country lanes, with the exception of the one street of the island known as King Street, which is only nine feet wide, and which follows the highest land of the island from the landing wharf at the south end to the bridge which connects the main part of

the island to that portion of the island farther north, known as Canaan.

Have Their Private Canals.

But the absence of streets is not a detriment to this island community, for each building lot has its own private canal, by which the occupants float their flat-bottomed boats out into the sound and bring from the larger boats out in the harbor their supplies of wood or other necessities needed for the demands of housekeeping—for the island is without wood, and gardening is carried on to a very limited extent, for the islanders are fishermen, oystermen, and crabbers, and agriculture is not depended on to any great extent, although the soil seems well adapted for gardening and corn raising; but the difficulties of tilling the ground seem to keep many from gardening, and there seems to be plenty of ground which might be used for the raising of corn and potatoes if there were a disposition to forsake the water for the land.

No Use for Horses.

And so, with the little canal running to the back yard of each house, and with each householder provided with one or more boats, the use of horses as beasts of burden or for purposes of pleasure seems to be fully supplied by the boats. But to the stranger the spectacle of a boat passing through what, at a distance, seems to be a flat meadow is one which is full of novelty and a constant source of amusement.

The landing stage at which the steamers land passengers and freight for Tangier is fully a mile from the nearest point of the island, and here you will find, upon the arrival of the steamer, a motley collection of boats waiting, some of them for passengers, others are waiting for freight—for there are five stores on the island; and others come from motives of curiosity, for there is no railroad station to interest the idle, and an old-fashioned stage coach would probably cause as much excitement as a circus parade, with its gayly-decorated wagons, causes in rural communities.

"Haven of Perpetual Rest."

But this is without doubt the haven of perpetual rest. Jealousy has never been awakened by the advent of a cavendish, pulled-down Panama hat, the quiet has never been disturbed by rag-time music, the hand organ with its accompanying monkey is but a tradition on this peaceful island; soda water except the bottled kind is unknown, ice cream is served on Saturday nights, the real gala night of the island, and the children lull their dolls to sleep with the music of gospel hymns.

And yet I would not have anyone think that the people are not musical, and that the children have no joys. To the contrary nearly every home possesses an organ, and the children are the gladdest, happiest children I have ever seen, and while it is true they do not have the same kind of toys used by the children of the mainland, every boy has his crabbing net and his flat-bottomed boat to pole about the shallow waters of the sound and the triumphal return of a small boy along the main street

with an edible crab in his net, closely followed by a crowd of admiring urchins of smaller growth is a common sight at Tangier.

Boys to Be Envied.

And what finer sport is indulged in by boys in any section of the country than the wading and the swimming, and jumping off from some of the anchored craft into the soft oozy mud at low tide. No one who has seen the Tangier youngsters at play and noticed their mud-spattered trousers, their torn straw hats, their bronzed and freckled faces, or has seen the skill and the facility with which boys of nine handle their boats around the island need feel any pity for these boys, and the chance is that instead of pity there will come a sensation of envy, and the wish for the return of days of boyhood.

I have said that Saturday night is the gala night of the island, and this is due to the fact that this is the night of all the week when the male population of the island is at home. During the remainder of the week, from daybreak Monday morning until Saturday afternoon, the fishers and the crabbers are away from home, but on Saturday afternoon the boats may be seen sailing homeward, and at the landings crowds of children are waiting to greet the fathers who have been absent all the week, and this is pay day for the children, and soon afterward they flock in swarms to the nearby stores to exchange their pennies for striped sticks of candy and animal crackers.

Their Saturday Afternoons.

On Saturday afternoons and Sundays the anchoring places around the eastern side of the island are well filled with the boats that have been absent during the week, and on shore the burden of conversation on Saturday afternoon rests to the catch of the week and the prices which different fishers or crabbers have received for their week's work. At the present time, owing to the scarcity of crabs, good prices prevail, and every soft-shell crab means a fat day to the crabber, and boats are stationed about the crabbing grounds which are ready to purchase the crabs as soon as caught. It is not uncommon for crabbers to receive from \$35 to \$50 for the week's catch.

No Old Horses or People.

One of the noticeable peculiarities of the island is the absence of any very old looking houses, and from appearances one would say that there are no buildings that have been standing over fifty years, but upon a little inquiry we find that the island has been inhabited for more than 200 years, but as the buildings are all frame structures, they have been remodeled, repainted, and enlarged as occasion required, so that with all of these changes the buildings have gone through a state of evolution which makes them very nearly up to date so far as the prevailing style of architecture is concerned.

None of the houses is supplied with a cellar, for the highest point of the island is only a little above high tide level, and the inhabitants have learned to do without the luxury of a cellar. In fact, the only structures which are built to any extent underground is one cistern and the hot water heating plant for the new Methodist Church, and the excavations for each of these structures will not exceed three feet.

Another strange feature of the island is the absence of any very old inhabitants. Whether the inhabitants as they become old have a fashion of moving to the mainland, or whether they have the faculty of always remaining young, I am

unable to explain. One thing is certain, the citizen who reaches the age of seventy is considered to be very old, and is respected to a point almost approaching veneration on account of the supposed accumulation of worldly knowledge due to the advanced years. The island seems to be blessed with good health, and, in fact, the place is rather too healthy to prove profitable for a physician. This seems to be due to the natural conditions of the island and the natural manner in which the inhabitants live.

Whole Island Methodist.

The whole island is Methodist in religious belief, and a very enthusiastic and prosperous Methodist Church is located on the island. This church is one of the first objects that is noticed upon nearing the island, as its tall spire is readily seen above the tops of the other buildings and the small trees which grow on the island. This church is the finest and most ambitious building on the island, and next to this the parsonage is probably the best building. Religion has secured a strong footing here, and the people are almost universally members of the church.

Outside of the church there is little in the way of entertainment for the islanders, and consequently the church is the leader in society as well as in morals. The Fourth of July is quietly sidetracked into a festival for church purposes, and the sisters of the church furnish the dinner, of which all the islanders are expected to partake at a reasonable expenditure. Other sisters preside at booths covered with the sails from the vessels at anchor during that day, and from these booths dispense lemonade, candy, and cakes, all for the benefit of the treasury of the church.

The women of Tangier are a hardy class, and not at all wanting in good looks, and greet the stranger upon the street in as cordial a manner as if it could not happen that any but gentlemen and gentlewomen would ever visit Tangier, and the formality of an introduction is waived. This kindly custom of speaking to strangers is also noticeable among the children, and Tangier is famous for the quantity of children that may be seen on the streets or playing at the water's edge at almost any seasonable hour.

Every Woman in a Sunbonnet.

The prevalence of the sunbonnet is one of the marked features of outdoor life in Tangier, and the sunbonnets can be seen in almost any direction. Sometimes the wearer may be seen punting a boat across the fields, for in that flat country the tiny canals are completely hidden at a short distance by the long marsh grass; at other times the sunbonnets sprinkle the one street of the island, and especially in this true at the hours when purchases are needed for the family table, or when the daily mail arrives from Crisfield, an event of moment, for there is no daily train to furnish excitement for this quiet spot.

At 3 o'clock on Saturday afternoons the sunbonnets vanish as if by magic, and the girls and the matrons who are now seen on the street are usually bareheaded or wearing becoming hats, the aprons have been put aside for the day, and perhaps you may meet on the street some very handsome women, tastefully groomed, whom you have seen at an earlier hour of the day going to the store or the post-office barefooted and wearing a grotesque sized sunbonnet. For the women do not seem to think it strange to go barefooted during the working hours of the day if they are so inclined.

One of the Few Places in the World Where the Women Wear Sunbonnets—Every Family Supplied With Its Own Private Cemetery, Which Is Usually Located in the Front Yard of the Home—Methodism the Only Religion of the Region.

Sunday, however, is the great day of the week. Not by any means a day given to mirth or sport, for the boats are all anchored and all of the islanders are at home for the purpose of attending church, and there is service of some kind for nearly every hour of the day from 9 in the morning until twilight. The one street at this time presents a busy appearance, for on account of its long narrow character it seems literally crowded from the time of the tolling of the church bell until the service has commenced. All of the services seem to be well attended and young and old are very constant in attendance upon church.

The final service of the day closes a little after sunset, and at its close the young men take the young women of their choice and promenade the narrow street, the only boulevard of the town.

There is noted an absence of the noise and gaiety that might be expected from so many young people. As they walk along some of them hum selections from the gospel hymns or converse in a quiet manner. Occasionally some young fellow without a partner stops a promenade couple with the inquiry, "Who's best?" and if the young lady desires a change of partners she accepts the arm of the new comer and leaves number one discolorate, but such affairs are few and far between, and love seems to run as smoothly as it might be expected in Arcadia.

The promenade lasts but a little time and at an early hour the street is deserted, for the men are obliged to be on the crabbing grounds at an early hour the next morning. The day of the week has passed and life until the next Saturday afternoon will be filled with the exciting struggle of dipping a livelihood from the sea.

◀ LITTLE MAIDEN OF THE BEACH ▶



"Won't You Come and Bathe With Me?"

◀ ON THE SANDS AT ATLANTIC CITY ▶



"Mamma Says I Can Go in Today."