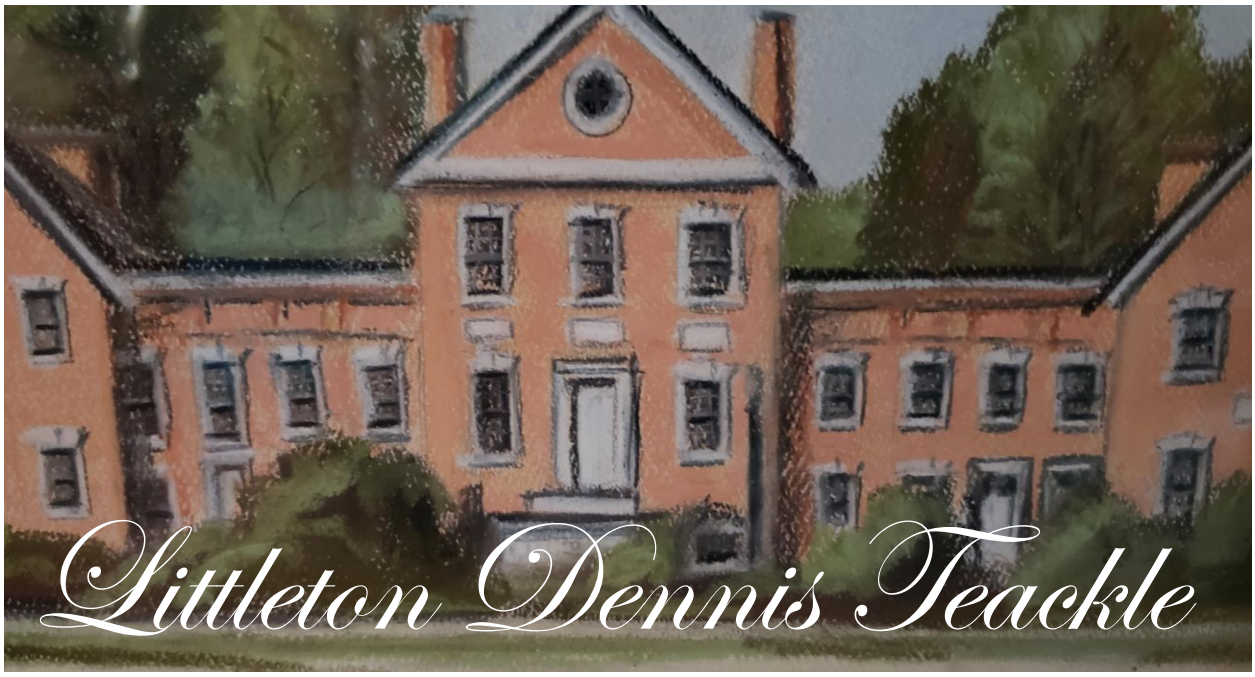
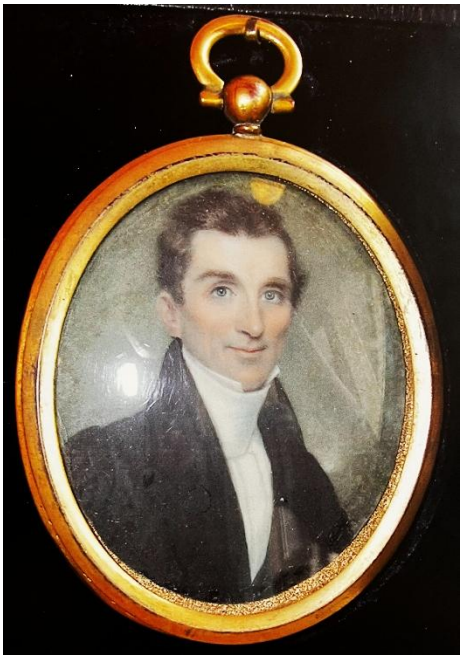


THE MAN AND HIS MANSION

PRESENTER: RANDY GEORGE

OCTOBER 27, 2026

Today I would like to share with you my reflections on someone out of the past whom I've spent some years getting to know - Littleton Dennis Teackle.



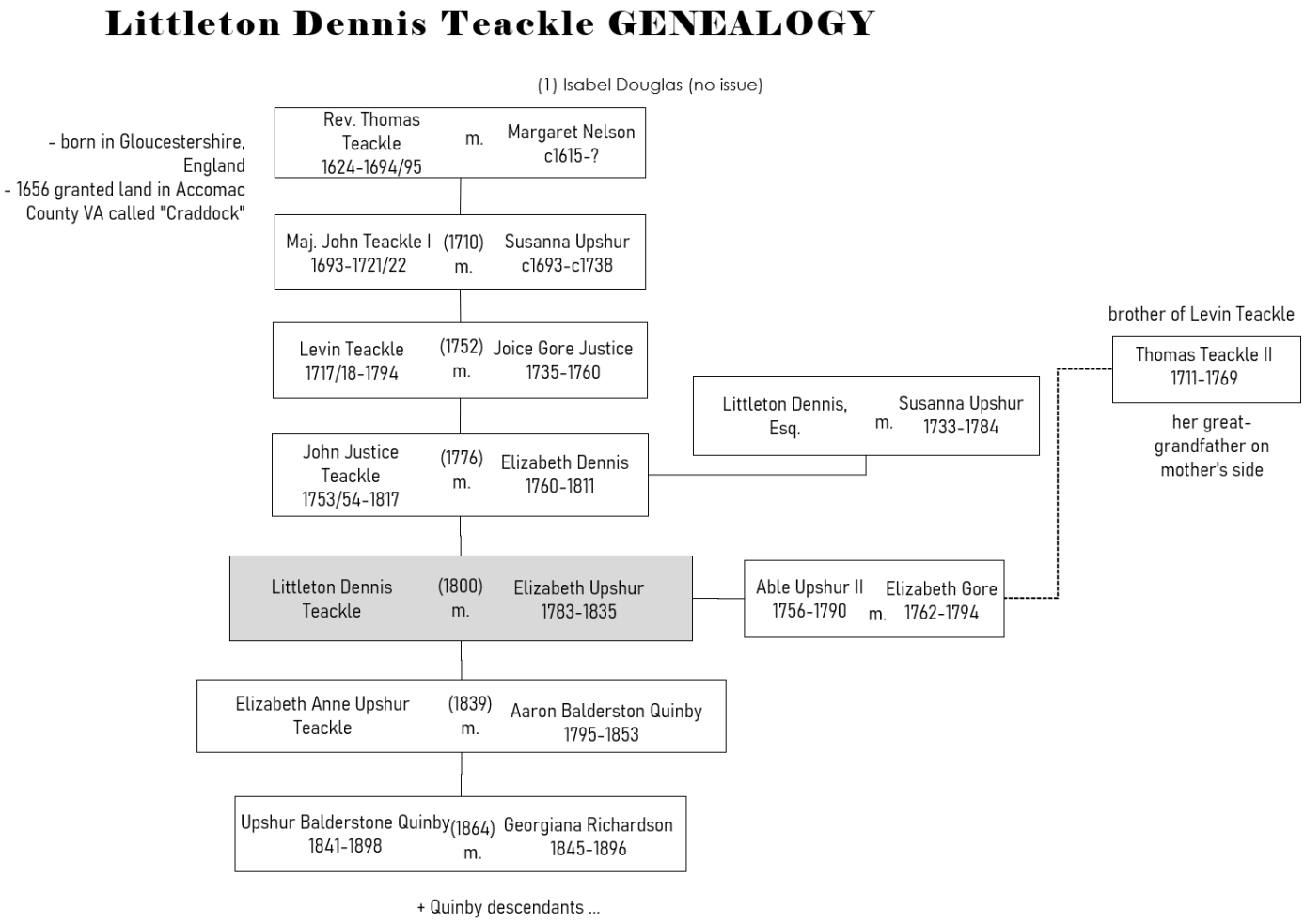
I have stayed countless hours in Littleton's home and have had the advantage of reading and transcribing many hundreds of pages of his letters and journals.

Years ago, many of his writings began to come out of private and public collections, and I started to read several of these that had been collected by architectural historian, Paul Touart.

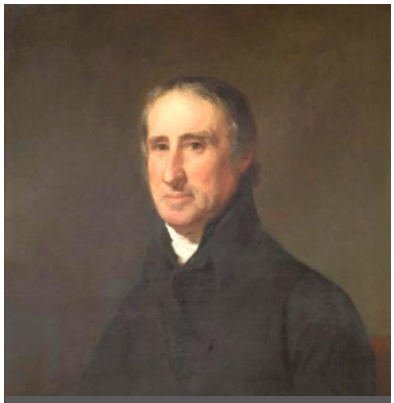
Since then, over 8,000 pages have been found. Through the efforts of Dr. Ray Thompson and Teackle descendent, Dreanna Belden, a goldmine of archived materials has been discovered, studied, and is now available to the public on the website, **Voices of the Eastern Shore** (voicesoftheeasternshore.org).

A fascinating individual, this Littleton Teackle now speaks to us from a time when a new country was just beginning to sort itself out, when our rules of engagement were just being written. Littleton came to Princess Anne as a 23-year-old man, not yet hardened by responsibility and loss. He came in partnership with his father and two uncles to set up a mercantile company. He was young, ambitious, just starting out on a life that held only possibilities.

He came from success, the success of four generations of enterprising Teackles in America. His great-great grandfather, Rev. Thomas Teackle, had fled from Gloucestershire to Accomack County, Virginia in 1652 during the Cromwellian upheaval in England.



Littleton's great grandfather, Maj. John Teackle, was a representative to the Assembly of Virginia, and his father John Justice Teackle was a wealthy planter and merchant in Accomack County. John probably started out working as a secretary to one of the wealthier planters in Accomack, Littleton Dennis, at his plantation, *Beverly,* on the Pocomoke River.



John Teackle 1753-1817

Littleton Dennis died in 1774, but two years later when John Teackle was 22 years old, he and Dennis's daughter, Elizabeth, age 16, eloped. John was renting a plantation which he later purchased in southeastern Accomack County called *Kegotank,* and the couple went there to be married. They had a successful life with nine children who survived. They named the eldest (born in 1777) after Elizabeth's father - Littleton Dennis Teackle.

Littleton and his 8 siblings grew up in a successful plantation society. Their brick house had "upward of 20 rooms" with gardens, a school room, icehouse and 2 granaries and a staff of enslaved people. It survived until it burned in about 1791 and we have no painting of it.

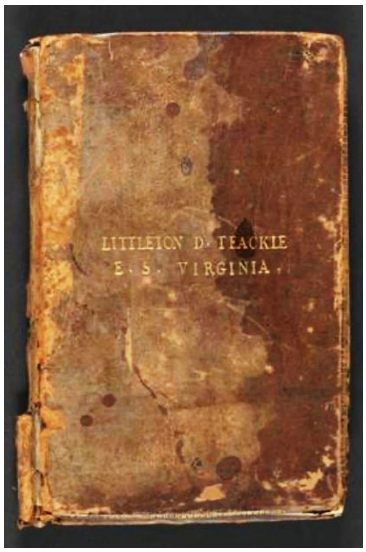


King's College, New York

John Teackle saw to it that his son Littleton was well educated at King's College in New York, where he learned to understand Latin and speak French.

However, in 1799 when he was 22 years old, his father saw reason for him to broaden his life experience and sent him on a tour of England and Scotland.

His father was well known to upper class business and political figures there, as was Littleton's congressman uncle, John Dennis. Littleton carried with him numerous letters of introduction to important English contacts. He kept a journal and copied 30 of these letters of introduction in the first of six volumes. Interestingly, this untried young man of 22 was given dispatches from our Secretary of State Timothy Pickering, for Rufus King, then the American ambassador to England.



He also carried letters from the British Consul General to his government and was instructed to sink them in case of capture. For this was 1799, a time when the U.S. was engaged in the Quasi-war with its former benefactor, France. Littleton and other passengers were armed, drilled, and given battle stations in case of French attack.

His travel journal recorded his daily adventures, experiences of visiting numerous historic sites, several factories, stately gardens, and of meeting many

prominent English men and women – among them, portrait artist Benjamin West, scientist Sir Benjamin Thompson (Count Rumford), and the Duke of York, Matthew Bolton (who, with James Watt, invented the steam engine). In Liverpool, Littleton went onboard a *Guineaman*, a slave ship, and wrote of his total disgust at the institution of slavery.

He was much taken with the finer homes that he encountered, the castles, the seats of important men, and he began to see himself as an amateur architect. One house, just across the Scottish border, may have been the inspiration for his future home. This is Mossknowe today, for sale.



He rode in postchaises, coaches and carriages and sometimes hired gigs and drove himself about the countryside in England and Scotland. He ate in the finer pubs with wealthy young men to whom he was introduced. He met with his family's business associates and concluded financial arrangements among them. He came away with a clearer understanding of his own position in society, and with a desire to be counted among the more important.

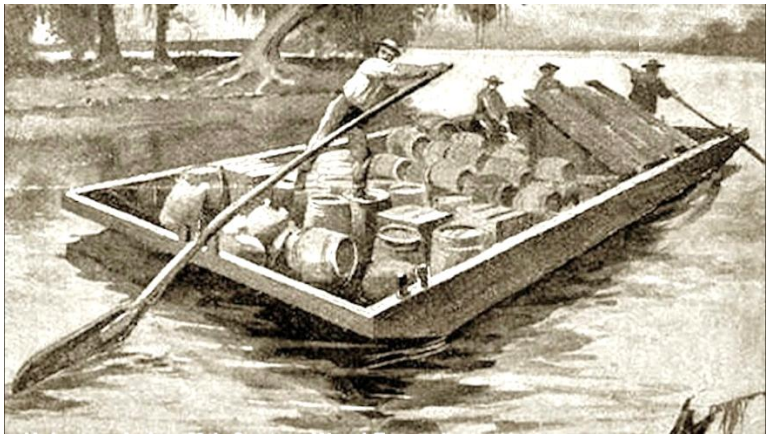


During his travels he corresponded with two sisters back home **-** Ann and Eliza Upshur, and 5 months after his return home, he and Eliza (Elizabeth) were married. She was a distant cousin of his, descending from Arthur Upshur who built his grand home called *Warwick* on a 2000-acre estate on Upshur's Neck, Accomack Co.

In 1800, for reasons unclear to me, the couple set out on their own to a small town in Maryland, Princess Anne, which was the seat of an agricultural county. It had a courthouse and 8 stores. Littleton was appointed postmaster.

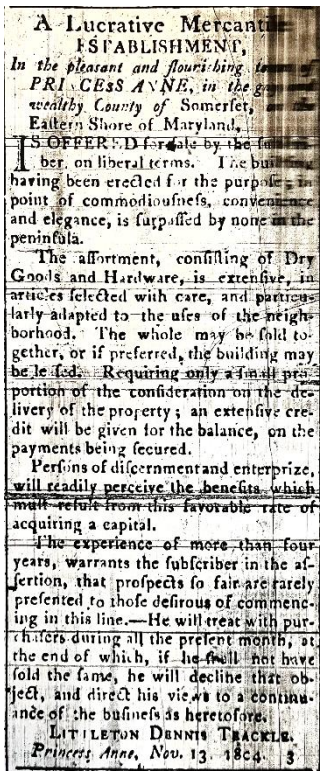
Elizabeth and Littleton quickly made family in 1801 and had a daughter whom they named Elizabeth Anne Upshur Teackle. We have not found her portrait. She was the only one to survive of their many attempts at parenthood, recovery from each of these miscarriages causing Elizabeth to be bedridden for many days.

Littleton's choice of location for their new home may not have optimal. The shallow Manokin River kept large vessels from coming nearer than 12 miles to town. Goods had to be transported by flatboats or landed at other sites in Somerset County.



Littleton was soon disappointed that the agricultural wealth of the area was not great, was vexed by bad weather, and that he had chosen a location far from the amenities that he had experienced in Accomack and England. And yet, once committed, he persisted.

He went into partnership in an import-export business with his father and two uncles for about 5 years. He bought several lots in Princess Anne and started a mercantile business with a store and warehouse, but soon advertised to sell it in 1804.



A Lucrative Mercantile
ESTABLISHMENT,
In the pleasant and flourishing town of
PRINCESS ANNE, in the
wealthy County of Somerset,
Eastern Shore of Maryland.

IS OFFERED for sale by the subscriber, on liberal terms. The building having been erected for the purpose in point of commodiousness, convenience and elegance, is surpassed by none in the peninsula.

The assortment, consisting of Dry Goods and Hardware, is extensive, in articles selected with care, and particularly adapted to the uses of the neighborhood. The whole may be sold together, or if preferred, the building may be leased. Requiring only a small proportion of the consideration on the delivery of the property; an extensive credit will be given for the balance, on the payments being secured.

Persons of discernment and enterprize, will readily perceive the benefits which must result from this favorable rate of acquiring a capital.

The experience of more than four years, warrants the subscriber in the assertion, that prospects so fair are rarely presented to those desirous of commencing in this line.—He will treat with purchasers during all the present month, at the end of which, if he shall not have sold the same, he will decline that object, and direct his views to a continuance of the business as heretofore.

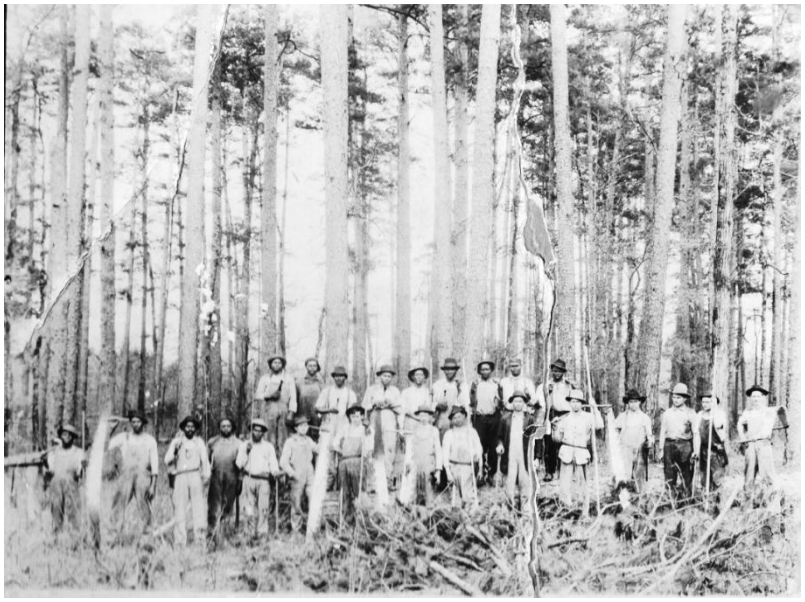
LITTLETON DENNIS TEACKLE.

Princess Anne, Nov. 13. 1804. 3

Meanwhile, beginning in May 1802, he purchased 9 acres just on the edge of Princess Anne on the Beckford grant from George Wilson Jackson and began to build a grand house, a two-story brick manse in Flemish bond with gable front. It boasted the symmetry and neoclassical embellishments which were the fashion of the times. He called it "Teackletonia".

Business interests took him away from home much of the time, mainly to Baltimore where he set up an office, and to Washington. He contracted with Robert Smith, Secretary of the Navy, to supply lumber for the building of small armed coasting vessels ordered by Thomas Jefferson, called gunboats, and at one point he held the sole contract to provide lumber to the Navy Yard for this purpose. He

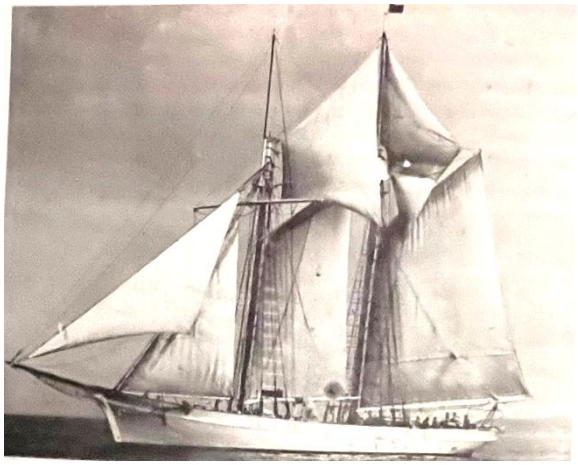
purchased upwards of 2000 acres of woodland near his home and wrote that he spent $100,000 for timberland.



He engaged in the business of harvesting yellow and white pine and white oak with a workforce for sawing and hewing planks, beams, and masts which he shipped to Washington.

He also held a contract to supply lumber to the government to build the new Capitol building. According to his 1805-1807 letter book, his lack of hands-on attention to detail resulted in complaints about the quality of his product, which he had to address by hiring an inspector and manager.

Between 1805 and 1807 he bought and sold thousands of dollars of merchandise, everything from household items to foodstuffs, livestock, lumber, tools of all sorts, paper, cotton. Littleton's extremely active trading business involved his building or owning or leasing no fewer than 20 sailing vessels, mainly schooners.



His flurry of correspondence often included excuses for delayed payments … personal reasons, weather, malfeasance or slow returns from his customers, including the Navy Department.

Littleton was already becoming overextended. He overpaid for land, and his growing debt caused him to dissolve his family partnership in 1805 and to assume sole management of the business. He began taking out bank loans, credits, to cover his expenses and the mortgages on his lands. In 1808, the Teackles sold Elizabeth's inheritance on Upshur's Neck, the 690 acres that her father had left her. By now Littleton was in debt to British merchants, among others, and sold his new house to his father and his father's banking associates in Philadelphia and Baltimore to pay off his bills.

We don't know John Teackle's thoughts about his son's business dealings, but we do know that John Teackle supported his son financially. His account book lists several

large loans to Littleton who was spending thousands of dollars, dollars being worth nearly 30 times what they are today.



Meanwhile, the English remained disdainful of their former colonists and began conscripting sailors from American ships that they claimed were British. They partly did this to man their naval forces in their ongoing wars with Napoleon.

Thomas Jefferson retaliated with embargoes on all trade with Britain and France, putting a near halt to American transatlantic business until he was forced to relax the embargoes. When James Madison had to respond to the same incursions on American naval sovereignty, he declared war on the greatest power on earth, all without the funds to do so, without an adequate army, and with an undersized, outgunned navy. This was 1812. Schooners now became valuable additions to naval warfare, with topsails fitted out to run the blockades and to serve as privateers.

The embargoes during this, our nation's "second war of independence", caused the American economy to falter as did wartime inflation. During the war life was austere at the mansion. Elizabeth wrote beseeching letters to her husband to send money to feed and clothe their nearly 20 servants.



The British burned Washington in late 1814, including the President's House. Then, after they left the Chesapeake in January 1815 with our capitol in ruins, the nation began to rebuild. It experienced a heady surge of relief, of optimism, and business and banking scrambled to recover.

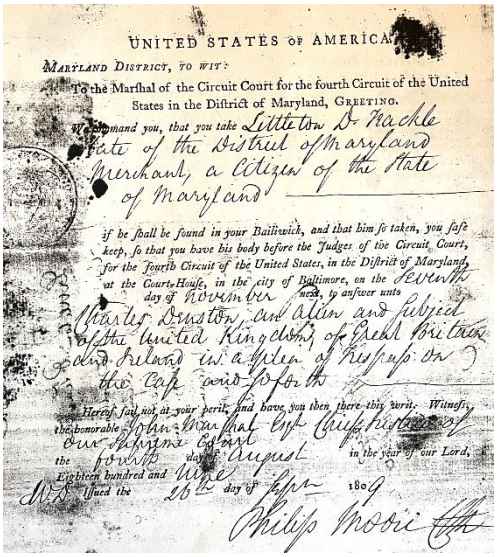
Speculation was rife and Littleton was swept up in the tide. In 1815 he set up a steam mill company near his house on the Manokin River, intending to reap profits from the grain harvest. He bought another schooner, planning to sell flour to the West Indies. He was able to buy back his house and other properties. Though the steam mill burned in 1818, by that year Littleton had regained enough financial confidence to allow him to begin construction on the two wings of his house, which was completed at significant cost, and included

among its 20 rooms an interior kitchen. The house was finished just before America's first depression, the Financial Panic of 1819.



During the war Littleton had started the first Bank of Somerset in Princess Anne, printed his own money, and served as its president, but his timing was unlucky. By 1817, farm prices had fallen and farmers could not repay loans. He left the bank board that year and left it holding significant unpaid loans to Teackle himself. Investors in the bank became restless as the bank failed, and the officers applied to the Maryland General Assembly to close it. This was granted in 1820.

Now, investors in the bank were angry. They sued and won judgements against Littleton for over $10,000. (nearly $300,000 today). He still had not paid English merchants for goods purchased in as early as 1807, and they brought suit in U.S. Federal Court.



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

MARYLAND DISTRICT, TO WIT:

To the Marshal of the Circuit Court for the fourth Circuit of the United States in the District of Maryland, GREETING.

We command you, that you take Littleton D. Teackle late of the District of Maryland Merchant, a Citizen of the State of Maryland

if he shall be found in your Bailiwick, and that him so taken, you safe keep, so that you have his body before the Judges of the Circuit Court, for the Fourth Circuit of the United States, in the District of Maryland, at the Court-House, in the city of Baltimore, on the Seventh day of November next, to answer unto Charles Denston, and alien and subject of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in a plea of trespass on the Case and so forth

Hereof fail not, at your peril, and have you then there this writ. Witness, the honorable John Marshall Esq. Chief Justice of our Supreme Court the fourth day of August in the year of our Lord, Eighteen hundred and nine and issued the 26th day of Sept. 1809

Philip Moore Clk

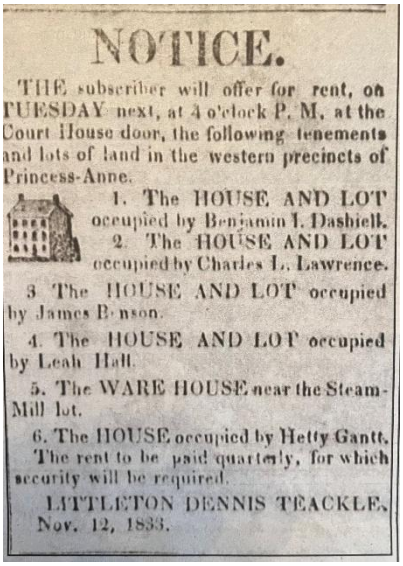
A warrant was issued for his arrest. At that time Supreme Court Justices served as circuit judges in the Federal Court, and Chief Justice John Marshall presided when judgement was passed against Littleton. In March 1821 he was declared an insolvent debtor and was thrown in jail in Baltimore. He was released after several days but came home broken. 1822 was another bad year for Littleton. He was expelled from the Somerset Lodge for "inappropriate behaviour" and published his rebuttal claiming that he had been libeled.

That year his holdings including 1600 acres, his large house and all its furnishings, 5 properties in Princess Anne, 80 head of animal stock, a coach, and 26 Negroes were all sold at the Court House door. There was only one bidder, and the properties went for pennies on the dollar. The bidder was John Eyre, one of the wealthiest men and largest slave holders in Accomack Co., Virginia. He was also the husband of Elizabeth Teackle's sister, Anne, and thus

Littleton's brother-in-law. The British merchants through the federal courts and all the local investors then turned their attention to John Eyre and sued him … without result. The Teackle family was thus allowed to live somewhat as they had before by the good graces of Elizabeth's family.

Littleton's fall from grace did not end his ambitions, however, nor did its calumny reflect severely on his standing in society. In 1822, the year that he was expelled from the Somerset Lodge, Somerset County elected him as its Delegate to the MD Legislature. He served at this post until 1835, except one year when he didn't win and another year when he ran unsuccessfully for US Congress. During his tenure he championed a state educational system and was appointed first Commissioner of Public Schools. The State, upon reflection, decided that it was not ready to support the idea and refused to fund it.

He was a strong advocate for placing light ships as buoys in the Chesapeake Bay for the safety of its marine economy. He was one of the most vocal adherents to the creation of an Eastern Shore railroad. Investors initially put up funds for surveys and acquisition of rights-of-way, but enthusiasm flagged and the railroad was not built until decades after Littleton's death. He wrote a regular column in the Princess Anne Herald reporting his energies on behalf of his constituents. I've read a few of these and found them lengthy, somewhat rambling, and self-aggrandizing. He communicated with Thomas Jefferson about his educational proposals, and with Henry Clay and Martin Van Buren seeking federal appointments. He chaired a legislative committee to consider petitions for a state bank that did not materialize.



NOTICE.

THE subscriber will offer for rent, on TUESDAY next, at 4 o'clock P. M. at the Court House door, the following tenements and lots of land in the western precincts of Princess-Anne.

1. The HOUSE AND LOT occupied by Benjamin I. Dashiell.
2. The HOUSE AND LOT occupied by Charles L. Lawrence.
3. The HOUSE AND LOT occupied by James Benson.
4. The HOUSE AND LOT occupied by Leah Hall.
5. The WARE HOUSE near the Steam-Mill lot.
6. The HOUSE occupied by Hetty Gantt.

The rent to be paid quarterly, for which security will be required.

LITTLETON DENNIS TEACKLE.
Nov. 12, 1833.

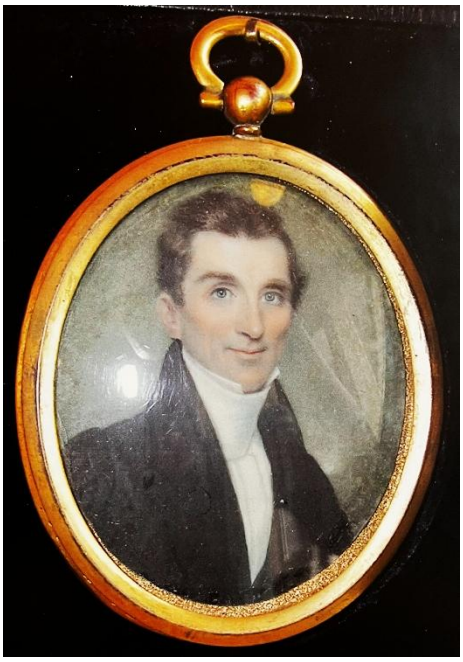
He still retained several lots in Princess Anne with tenements and a warehouse which he advertised for rent in 1833.

His long-suffering spouse, Elizabeth, died in 1836. They still did not own their home, which had been transferred by their family members to their daughter Elizabeth Ann. When Elizabeth Ann married Aaron B. Quinby in 1839, she sold their holdings, including the Great House.

In all, Littleton had had legal ownership of his mansion for only about 11 years of the 37 years that he lived there.
He retained a few acres between the Mansion and the town, where he had built two tenement houses in 1818, during the construction of the Mansion's two wings. In one of these, he lived with a few of his "servants" until he sold off these last holdings in 1848 to his creditors for $100 and moved to Baltimore.

When he died there that year in the Exchange Hotel, he was 71 years old and alone. His administrative account valued his estate at $122.35. ($5000 today). His body was brought back to Princess Anne to the Episcopal Cemetery.

In summary, Littleton Dennis Teackle had known and lived some of life's greatest promises during the heady times of our country's youth. He struggled to attain them, relied for assurances on enterprises not fully evolved, promised payments that he often could not meet, relied on his family, especially his father as collateral for his projects. He invested heavily in property and schemes that did not produce sufficient income.



And so, why have I devoted years to understanding this Littleton Dennis Teackle. The answer, I conclude, is that as a result of his life and writings he has opened a fascinating window into American history on our Eastern Shore, in the first decades of our republic. This has never been told before.



And, ironically, if he had not left us a brick-and-mortar monument to himself, we never would have known his name, nor cared about him, and would not have looked through that window that he opened into our past.

