

THE RECORD



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Ronald G. Brown, President

Mary Ann Scott, Editor

The Historical Society of Charles County



*Please join us for a Field Trip to
George Washington's Ferry Farm
and Historic Chatham Manor*

Thursday, May 18, 2023

- 9:00 am – Depart La Plata Courthouse Farmers Market Parking Lot
- 10:00 am – Tour of George Washington's Ferry Farm
- 11:30 am – Lunch at the Alpine Chef, (lunch costs on your own)
- 1:30 pm – Tour of Historic Chatham Manor
- 4:30 pm – Arrive back in La Plata



\$30.00 per person
(Ferry Farm, Chatham, School Bus)

Please r.s.v.p. to Carol Donohue by May 1, 2023
16401 Old Marshall Hall Road ~ Accokeek, MD 20607

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Email mjmazzeo55@gmail.com to receive the lunch menu. (Lunch choices are due by May 1, 2023)

Life in Maryland in the 17th Century

by John S. Morris, III

John S. Morris, III, is the editor of the 2022 edition of *The Speak/e/s Family of Southern Maryland*. This extensive, well documented work includes the history of the ancestors and descendants of Speake family of St. Mary's and Charles Counties, Virginia, North Carolina, and Kentucky. Published by the Speak/e/s Family Association, it includes 18 chapters, authored by various members of the Speak/e/s Family Association, including noted genealogist Joyce Candland, past president of the Historical Society. Both Joyce Candland and John Morris are members of the Friendship House Advisory Board and have family connections to the Dents and Grays of Friendship. Chapter 14, *Life in Maryland in the 17th Century*, will be featured in the next two editions of *The Record*.

Introduction

Since Thomas of St. Mary's came to Maryland as an indentured servant, most of this chapter will be based on life in Maryland for an indentured servant, both before and after the servant completed his or her servitude. To the extent possible, this chapter will focus on St. Mary's County and Charles County. However, since the same laws applied to all parts of Maryland, the circumstances throughout the colony were similar.

Indentured Servants

Most of the people who came to Maryland in the 17th century came as servants bound to a master for a term of years. They could not pay for their own transportation to the colonies. Instead, they agreed to work without compensation for a fixed period of time in return for being transported to the colony. The arrangement was spelled out in a contract that was called an "Indenture".¹ Such persons were the true "indentured servants". However, there were many who came to Maryland who did not have such a contract. Their situation was similar to indentured servants, except that the length and conditions of servitude were determined by the laws of the colony and the customs in place there rather than by an indenture. Nevertheless, they are generally also referred to as indentured servants.

Most of the persons who came to Maryland as indentured servants came from the low or middle classes and were attempting to escape from poverty.² However, some sons of the wealthy Englishmen came to Maryland because they were low in the birth order of their immediate family and sought a better life than could be expected as a younger son. They ordinarily had the means to pay for their transportation and did not become indentured servants.³ Male immigrants in the mid-1680s were rarely over the age of 28 and rarely under the age of 17.⁴ In the 17th century, indentured servants seldom came with family or friends, but rather generally traveled alone.⁵

Not all immigrants came voluntarily. Sometimes merchants and ship's captains kidnapped impoverished children and youth, forcing them into servitude. The practice was called "spiriting".⁶ In addition, courts in the British Isles began to realize that they could remove some of the less desirable citizens from society by sending them to the New

World. These transported convicts generally had to serve much more time and with less rights than indentured servants.⁷

The principal immigration points in England in the 17th century were Bristol, Liverpool and London. Although Liverpool may be the most likely port from which Thomas of St. Mary's sailed because of its proximity to Gisburn, it did not become a major port for immigration until after Thomas was already in Maryland. Most emigrants lived within 50 to 60 miles of the port from which they sailed.⁸ Crossing the Atlantic Ocean was an arduous and dangerous adventure. It took typically eight to ten weeks in a small vessel crowded with many other passengers. In addition to the dangers of wind and sea, they were subject to being threatened by pirates and hostile navies. Many passengers died in route, including those who could afford to pay for their passage.⁹

Upon arrival in Maryland, the indentured servants and convicts would be "sold" to planters and other citizens needing labor. Much like the subsequent slave trade, the servants would be displayed to the potential buyers. The ship captains could expect to be paid based on such factors as the health of the servant, the length of servitude that had to be performed and other factors that impacted how valuable the servant might be to the planter.¹⁰

For those servants having an indenture, the indenture set forth the length of time they were to serve. It may also have had provisions concerning the nature of their servitude, such as an agreement that they were not required to work in the soil or in the fields. For those servants lucky enough to have such an indenture, they had rights that exceeded those of servants without an indenture. The rights of the latter were subject to laws passed by the legislature and to the customs of the locality.

Maryland was the first colony in America to pass laws codifying the terms and length of servitude for those immigrants who did not have an indenture. In 1638, four years after the first ships arrived in Maryland, the Maryland General Assembly passed a law that provided that male servants over the age of 18 were to serve for four years and male servants under the age of 18 were to serve until they were 24. Female servants over the age of 12 were to serve for four years and those under the age of 12 were to serve for seven.¹¹

1 Nathan W. Murphy, "Origins of Colonial Chesapeake Indentured Servants: American and English Sources," *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 93 (March 2005), p. 5.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 7; Lois Green Carr, Russell R. Menard and Lorena S. Walsh, *Robert Cole's World*, Institute of Early American Historical Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, North Carolina (1991), p. 94.

3 Julia King, Christine Arnold-Lourie and Susan Shaffer, *Pathways to History, Charles County Maryland 1658-2008*, Smallwood Foundation, Inc., Mount Victoria, Maryland (2008), p. 26; Lois Green Carr, Russell R. Menard and Louis Peddicord, *Maryland...at the beginning*, Hall of Records Commission, Department of General Services, Annapolis, Maryland (1984), p. 10.

4 Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, "The Planter's Wife: The Experience of White Women in 17th

Century America," *William & Mary Quarterly*, Volume 34, 3rd Series, October 1977, p. 544.

5 Murphy, "Origins of Colonial Chesapeake Indentured Servants: American and English Sources," p. 7.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

9 Abbot Emerson Smith, *Colonists in Bondage, White Servitude and Convict Labor in America 1607-1776*, Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Virginia, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill (1947), page 207.

10 Smith, *Colonists in Bondage, White Servitude and Convict Labor in America 1607-1776*, pp. 221-223

11 *Ibid.*, p. 229.

In 1654, shortly before Thomas probably arrived, the Maryland legislature modified that act. The new act required that all indentures be recorded. In addition, masters were required to bring all servants that did not have indentures into open court to have the court determine in advance their age and therefore their remaining term of service. Accordingly, beginning in 1654, the years of service of all servants would have been a matter of record. That act also changed the years of service. Servants without indentures over the age of 20 were to serve four years. Such servants between the ages of 16 and 20 had to serve six years. Those between the age of 12 and 16 had to serve seven years and those under the age of 12 had to serve until they reached the age of 21.¹²

Although Thomas likely arrived shortly after 1654, there is no record of him being registered in the court. That is not surprising, since he was considered to be in St. Mary's County, whose records from that time period are lost.

Regardless of whether or not the servant had an indenture, he was considered personal property.¹³ His service could be bought and sold freely. That meant that his master could sell his services to another master,¹⁴ unless his indenture specified a specific plantation where he was to serve. He could be taken by the sheriff for the satisfaction of his master's debts. He also could be disposed of by will.¹⁵ In most colonies, masters were allowed to whip their servants.¹⁶

However, servants did have some protections. In addition to obtaining their freedom after serving the prescribed time, they had the right to adequate food, clothing, shelter and a Sunday free of hard labor.¹⁷ Unlike the treatment of slaves in most colonies, servants could appear in court to enforce their rights. If their master provided insufficient food, clothing, shelter or medical care or beat them too severely, Maryland law allowed servants to complain to the county court. The courts typically ordered masters to mend their ways if their treatment violated customary standards.¹⁸ In addition, a servant could sue a landowner for impregnating her. Typically, the offending master would be required to pay for the upkeep of the child,¹⁹ such as happened with Lucie Stratton and Arthur Turner, whom Thomas Speake later sued for a debt.²⁰ The most frequent issue contested between servants and master had to do with years of service or extension of time of service for actions by the servant.

In general, servants were fairly and sometimes generously treated by the courts.²¹ The local courts generally respected written indentures and tended to be just in those matters despite the servant's lower social status.²² However, a servant who had no indenture or had lost his or her indenture was at a great disadvantage.²³

A servant could not marry without the consent of his master.²⁴ As will be discussed later, marriages of servants without their masters' consent frequently led to severe consequences. Servants could also not vote, serve as jurors or hold office. Servants were allowed to hold property but were not allowed to engage in trade.²⁵ A servant's special abilities, if any, were exercised for the benefit of his master. If the servant earned money in his spare time, the money might be taken by the master. Any servant that ran away was brought back if caught and

was penalized. In Maryland, the servitude of a runaway was extended by ten days for every one day absent.²⁶ Furthermore, any person who harbored a runaway servant forfeited 500 pounds of tobacco for every night the servant was harbored.²⁷

A new servant also faced a very different and hostile disease environment from that to which he or she was accustomed. The heat and humidity in Maryland were much worse than in Great Britain, and immigrants were subject to diseases for which they had no natural immunization. These risks were borne by all immigrants, whether or not they paid for their passage and regardless of their social rank in the Old World. Endemic malaria, dysentery and typhoid were major hazards to immigrants. Even those that managed to survive were often left weakened and chronically ill.²⁸ It frequently took a year to "season" the immigrant.²⁹ As will be discussed later, there was therefore a high mortality rate among all immigrants in the 17th century, including indentured servants.

In addition, most male servants had to work in the fields. They worked from ten to fourteen hours a day, six days a week.³⁰ Tobacco was the principal crop and the key ingredient to growing tobacco was manual labor. For immigrants who were used to working on farms, it may not have been any harder work than that to which they were accustomed, except for the temperature and humidity. However, for those servants who had been raised for a trade or led a softer life, this was a much more severe experience. In addition to tilling the soil all day long, servants frequently had to go without fresh meat, had to eat Indian corn instead of wheat and rye, had to wear cotton or linen instead of wool, had to sleep in hammocks instead of beds and for the most part probably had to drink water.³¹

Many female servants had it better than male servants because significantly fewer were required to work in the fields. Their jobs generally consisted of cooking, cleaning, weaving and mending.³²

Despite all these disadvantages, the term of servitude of an ambitious and intelligent servant was not time wasted, if the servant survived servitude. He or she usually became seasoned to the climate and became knowledgeable of the methods of living and working under colonial conditions. The servant learned the best methods of farming or running a household and the system of marketing farm products. If the servant was an artisan, he or she likely developed a reputation and had a clientele ready upon gaining freedom.³³

Freedom from Servitude

The servant who had completed the prescribed period of service became a full-fledged citizen with the right to vote, serve on a jury and, most importantly, marry. In 1640, the Maryland General Assembly established the compensation to be paid a servant upon the completion of this servitude.

"...one good Cloth suite of Keirsy or broad cloth a Shift of white linen one new pair of stockings and Shoes two hoes one axe 3 barrells of Corne and fifty acres of land...women Servants a Years Provision of Corne and a like proportion of Cloths & Land."³⁴

12 Archives of Maryland On-line, Volume LIII, Preface, p. 28.

13 Smith, *Colonists in Bondage, White Servitude and Convict Labor in America 1607-1776*, pp. 233 and 278.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 233.

16 Carr, Menard and Walsh, *Robert Cole's World*, p. 110.

17 Carr, Menard and Peddicord, *Maryland...at the beginning*, p. 29.

18 Carr, Menard and Walsh, *Robert Cole's World*, p. 110.

19 Smith, *Colonists in Bondage, White Servitude and Convict Labor in America 1607-1776*, p. 271.

20 Proceedings of the County Court of Charles County, 1658-1662, pp. 7-45.

21 Smith, *Colonists in Bondage, White Servitude and Convict Labor in America 1607-1776*, p. 244.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 240.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 244.

24 Carr and Walsh, *The Planter's Wife: The Experience of White Women in 17th Century America*, p. 548;

Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches and Anxious Patriarchs*, Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill (1996), p. 193.

25 Smith, *Colonists in Bondage, White Servitude and Convict Labor in America 1607-1776*, p. 233.

26 *Ibid.*, pp. 267 and 277.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 277.

28 Carr, Menard and Walsh, *Robert Cole's World*, p. 17.

29 Smith, *Colonists in Bondage, White Servitude and Convict Labor in America 1607-1776*, p. 254.

30 Carr, Menard and Peddicord, *Maryland...at the beginning*, p. 29.

31 Smith, *Colonists in Bondage, White Servitude and Convict Labor in America 1607-1776*, p. 258.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 259.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 291.

34 *Ibid.*, pp. 239-240.

In 1683, the law was changed to delete the reference to giving fifty acres of land. It was changed again in 1699 when corn was omitted, and the servant was instead given a hat and a gun.³⁵ The court would enforce these entitlements if the master did not provide the required compensation to a servant on the completion of his or her service.³⁶

The fifty-acre entitlement did not mean that the former servant suddenly owned land or that his master had to provide him with fifty acres. His master only had to provide him with a fifty-acre headright, which was essentially a certificate stating that he was entitled to fifty acres. It was up to the servant to locate the land and pay both the surveyor's and the clerk's fees himself. Converting that headright into land ownership was usually impracticable. The freed servant had to locate the land and pay the surveyor and clerk, and then would have to clear the land, build a house, and obtain tools, seeds and livestock. Therefore, as a practical matter, most freed servants had three choices: to hire himself out for wages, agree to work someone else's land for a share of the profits, or lease land from a large planter and raise tobacco as a tenant.³⁷

Even the freed servant who succeeded in acquiring fifty acres did not become wealthy by any means. However, the soil in Maryland was generally good and tobacco was a major cash crop in the 17th century. Fifty acres was about the minimum size for a viable farm, although a family with more than one child would need more land.³⁸ Tobacco was a good beginner's crop in the 17th century. All an individual needed was a cleared patch of land and a few simple tools. Such a person working alone was nearly as efficient a producer of tobacco as a large planter with many servants or slaves.³⁹ During the time that Thomas was coming out of his servitude, there was a severe labor shortage.⁴⁰ Land was plentiful, but labor was scarce.⁴¹ Therefore, servants who wished or needed to work for others could enjoy high wages⁴² while they worked to obtain the funds needed to establish an independent plantation.⁴³

For these reasons, a 17th century male servant like Thomas, if he could survive the "seasoning" and the servitude, stood a fairly good chance to accumulate enough assets to make a good living, establish himself, and become the patriarch of a successful landowning family.⁴⁴ Indeed, one of the first servants in Maryland, Cuthbert Fenwick, became the Lord of a Manor and therefore part of the major gentry.⁴⁵

Land Ownership

Maryland was unique among the colonies by having a manorial system of ownership of land. King Charles I gave Charles Calvert, the first Lord Baltimore, a charter for the colony of Maryland, making him the Proprietor of Maryland. His son, Cecil Calvert, the second Lord Baltimore and second Proprietor, started the process of sending settlers to Maryland in 1634. He was established by the King as the sole ruler and given 10 million acres as absolute lord. Although he was vaguely answerable to the King of England, his powers were virtually

unlimited.⁴⁶ Lord Baltimore exported Great Britain's feudal system to Maryland. He sold manors, mainly to favorites,⁴⁷ that were then controlled by a manorial lord.⁴⁸

For the most part, these manors did not succeed economically. Nevertheless, they created a situation in which land was difficult to obtain even when a person had a right to obtain fifty acres for completing indentured service. Rather than land being deeded, patents were issued. The patent was a right to hold the land as long as certain conditions were met, principally that of paying an annual quit rent based on the size of the property. Failure to pay the quit rent usually resulted in the land being forfeited back to the lord of the manor. By 1683, the Proprietor stopped granting land based on the quit rent, but instead started charging a fee for the patent of tracts of land in Maryland.⁴⁹

The ability of servants to own land helped bring about the end of the manorial system. The flood of immigrants in the 1650s and 1660s helped "transform Maryland from a structured manorial society into a community of households mostly headed by small or middling planters".⁵⁰

Once a servant was freed and became entitled to his fifty acres of land, it was up to the servant to locate the parcel of land. One of the failings of the manorial system was that the land had not been granted in a systematic manner. Therefore, it became a challenge to locate a fifty-acre parcel that was on good land and in a reasonable configuration. Land that was not included from earlier surveys was generally in such small strips and irregular shapes that they tended to be of little value to anyone except adjoining owners.⁵¹

In the latter part of the 17th century, the Proprietor began leasing property rather than issuing patents. Initially, this method was fairly expensive to a prospective tenant. It did not become widely used until the early part of the 18th century when the population of Maryland greatly increased and the rent was lowered.⁵² In 1692, Maryland became a royal colony rather than a proprietary province.⁵³ However, that did remove the Calverts as the largest landowners in Maryland.

During the 1600s, households were much dispersed. There were no towns as such in Maryland in the 17th century.⁵⁴ The Maryland population grew from about 200 settlers in 1645 to about 8,000 people in 1665 during a 20-year tobacco boom. Tobacco production increased more than tenfold during that period. Nevertheless, in 1658, there were still only 100 households in Charles County.⁵⁵ In 1660, there were only 300 households with a total of 2,300 people in all of St. Mary's, Charles and Calvert counties combined.⁵⁶ However, by 1660, most free adult males in Maryland worked their own small plantations. Men who did not own land could expect to acquire farms soon. Planters of humble origins also began winning seats in the Maryland General Assembly and began to dominate government at the local level.⁵⁷ Even as late as 1705, however, there were only seven persons per square mile in Charles County.⁵⁸

35 *Ibid.*, p. 240.

36 *Archives of Maryland On-line*, Volume LIII, Preface p. 33.

37 Carr, Menard and Peddicord, *Maryland...at the beginning*, p. 30.

38 Carr, Menard and Walsh, *Robert Cole's World*, p. 35.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

41 Carr, Menard and Peddicord, *Maryland...at the beginning*, p. 17.

42 Carr, Menard and Walsh, *Robert Cole's World*, p. 22.

43 Carr, Menard and Peddicord, *Maryland...at the beginning*, p. 17.

44 Carr, Menard and Walsh, *Robert Cole's World*, pp. 16-17; Julia King, et al., *Pathways to History*, p. 18.

45 Peter Himmelheber, Philip Davis and Linda Davis Reno, *St. Mary's County, Maryland: Proprietary Manors*, St. Mary's Families, October 2002, p. 5.

46 Rev. Aloysius Plaisance, "Early Maryland Settlers," *Speak/e/s Family Association Bulletin*, August 2002, Vol. 23, No. 4, p. 24.

47 Gregory A. Stiverson, *Poverty in a Land of Plenty*, (1977), p. 3.

48 Himmelheber, Davis and Reno, *St. Mary's County, Maryland: Proprietary Manors*, p. 1.

49 Stiverson, *Poverty in a Land of Plenty*, p. 2.

50 Carr, Menard and Walsh, *Robert Cole's World*, p. 16.

51 Stiverson, *Poverty in a Land of Plenty*, p. 14.

52 *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

53 "Maryland Manual On-Line," *Maryland at a Glance, Historical Chronology, 1600-1699*.

54 Carr, Menard and Walsh, *Robert Cole's World*, p. 21.

55 King, Arnold-Lourie and Shaffer, *Pathways to History, Charles County Maryland, 1658-2008*, p. 13.

56 Carr, Menard and Walsh, *Robert Cole's World*, p. 21.

57 *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

58 King, Arnold-Lourie and Shaffer, *Pathways to History, Charles County Maryland, 1658-2008*, p. 14.

Religion

Maryland is unique among the American colonies in that it was formed with the goal of being friendly to Roman Catholics. While Lord Baltimore founded it as a place of refuge primarily for persons of the Roman Catholic faith,⁵⁹ he went out of his way to keep religion out of colonial politics. As a result, it was the only North American colony that initially had no established religion.⁶⁰ Therefore, there were almost as many Protestants as Catholics in Maryland from the beginning.

Most, if not all, of the gentlemen who came with the initial immigrants who were expected to be the lords of manors were Catholic.⁶¹ In addition, because of the stated intentions of Lord Baltimore, the chief early investors in the Maryland adventure were the Jesuits. They aided Lord Baltimore in his promotional campaign and invested significant capital into Maryland. The Jesuits financed the transportation and supply of about 20 immigrants in 1634 and another 30 or more before the end of the decade. The properties they developed supported missions that ministered to the religious needs of the Catholic population during the entire colonial period.⁶²

A Jesuit priest, Father Andrew White, was one of the passengers on the “Ark”, one of the two ships to bring the first settlers to Maryland in 1634.⁶³ Father White founded St. Thomas Manor at Chapel Point in Charles County.⁶⁴

Maryland had ceased to be a haven for Catholics prior to Thomas’ arrival in the late 1650s. In February 1645, the English Civil War reached Maryland when Richard Ingle invaded St. Mary’s City to overthrow the Catholic government. Without a stable government, the colonists were terrorized, their lives disrupted, and their estates plundered. The population of the colony fell from about 500 in 1644 to less than 200 in 1646, when Lord Baltimore’s brother Leonard Calvert reestablished his authority.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the tension between Catholics and Protestants had intensified and Maryland never returned to its status as a true haven for Catholics.

When Leonard Calvert died in 1647, Lord Baltimore chose William Stone, a Protestant from Virginia, to be governor of Maryland. Lord Baltimore drafted an Act Concerning Religion to guarantee religious freedom to all Christians.⁶⁶ That Act was enacted by the General Assembly on 21 April 1649.⁶⁷ That ushered in an extended period in which there was no established religion in Maryland.⁶⁸ However, the peace was illusory. Commissioners sent by Oliver Cromwell’s Parliament to establish authority in the Commonwealth in Virginia used the opportunity to assert their authority in Maryland. The dispute culminated in 1654 when the commissioners ousted Governor Stone and Lord Baltimore’s council and appointed a new council from the radical Protestant community. The first assembly of the new government abrogated the 1649 Act Concerning Religion and prohibited Catholics from voting and holding office.⁶⁹ Catholic Churches were forbidden and Catholics were barred from being school teachers.⁷⁰ Lord Baltimore was able to reassert control in

1657 and made a treaty with the Virginia leaders.⁷¹ The treaty not only restored him to full authority, but also stated that he would never permit a change in the religious policies laid down in 1649.⁷²

In 1660, Maryland Governor Josias Fendall rebelled against Lord Baltimore and tried to change the government into a type of commonwealth similar to Oliver Cromwell’s government. However, Lord Baltimore’s control was quickly reestablished with the restoration of King Charles II that year and Lord Baltimore’s guarantee of toleration of Catholics led to a measure of political and religious stability for the colonists for almost three decades.⁷³

The relative calm for Roman Catholics in Maryland began to unravel when England’s King James II was deposed by Protestants in 1689.⁷⁴ Three years later, the Act of 1692 established the Church of England as the official religion of the province. As a result, Catholics in the province were barred from all civil rights.⁷⁵ In February 1694/95, the capital of Maryland was moved from St. Mary’s City to Annapolis,⁷⁶ removing the seat of government permanently from southern Maryland.⁷⁷

By the end of the 17th century, Catholics were considered infidels and were forbidden to hold office. They were also taxed to support the Anglican Church. In addition, children were removed from their Catholic parents and, when special needs arose, a double tax was placed on Catholics. Catholics schools and churches were forbidden. Instead, the Catholics and the priests had to resort to private chapels⁷⁸ or private homes to hold services.⁷⁹ One such chapel was on the farm of Major William Boarman called “Boarman’s Rest” as early as 1696. That chapel was one of the early roots of St. Mary’s Church in Bryantown.⁸⁰ Major Boarman was a neighbor of James Bowling, Thomas Speake’s brother-in-law. The property owned by Thomas’ son Bowling also adjoined Major Boarman’s property.⁸¹

Earning a Living

Growing tobacco was practically the sole way settlers in Maryland made a living in the 17th century. Within a few years of the settlement of Maryland in 1634, tobacco had become the money of the province. The settlers traded with it, paid taxes with it, settled accounts with it, determined their worth in it and produced other goods according to its value.⁸² Indeed, tobacco farming was the only full-time occupation.⁸³ Most, if not all, of the households in Maryland were engaged in the cultivation of tobacco. Tobacco was truly the foundation of the Chesapeake economy.⁸⁴ It was the only crop with a fully developed marketing network between the Chesapeake area and England.⁸⁵

While producing tobacco was profitable, it was not easy. Orinoco tobacco was the variety that grew the best in Maryland soil. However, it required hard work. Fields had to be cleared of trees and other vegetation. The soil had to be prepared.⁸⁶ The plants had to be monitored continuously for weeds and pests. They had to be topped regularly to prevent them from flowering. The crop had to be cut by

59 Margaret Brown Klapthor and Paul Denis Brown, *The History of Charles County, Maryland*, Charles County Tercentenary, Inc., La Plata, Maryland (1958), p. 33; Carr, Menard and Peddicord, *Maryland...at the beginning*, p. 7.

60 King, Arnold-Lourie and Shaffer, *Pathways to History, Charles County Maryland, 1658-2008*, p. 15.

61 Carr, Menard and Peddicord, *Maryland...at the beginning*, p. 1.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

63 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

64 Jean B. Lee, *The Price of Nationhood*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, New York (1994), p. 15.

65 Carr, Menard and Walsh, *Robert Cole's World*, pp. 11-12.

66 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

67 “Maryland Manual On-Line,” *Maryland at a Glance, Historical Chronology, 1600-1699*.

68 King, Arnold-Lourie and Shaffer, *Pathways to History, Charles County Maryland, 1658-2008*, p. 15.

69 Carr, Menard and Walsh, *Robert Cole's World*, p. 19.

70 Plaisance, *Early Maryland Settlers*, p. 25.

71 Carr, Menard and Walsh, *Robert Cole's World*, p. 19.

72 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

73 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

74 *Ibid.*, pp. 164-165.

75 Klapthor and Brown, *The History of Charles County, Maryland*, p. 35.

76 Maryland Manual On-Line, *Maryland at a Glance, Historical Chronology, 1600-1699*.

77 King, Arnold-Lourie and Shaffer, *Pathways to History, Charles County Maryland, 1658-2008*, p. 16.

78 Plaisance, *Early Maryland Settlers*, p. 25.

79 St. Peter’s Church, Waldorf, Maryland, “300th Anniversary,” p. 3.

80 Klapthor and Brown, *The History of Charles County, Maryland*, p. 35.

81 St. Peter’s Church, Waldorf, “300th Anniversary,” p. 3.

82 Carr, Menard and Walsh, *Robert Cole's World*, page 13; Carr, Menard and Peddicord, *Maryland...at the beginning*, p. 22.

83 Plaisance, *Early Maryland Settlers*, p. 25.

84 King, Arnold-Lourie and Shaffer, *Pathways to History, Charles County Maryland, 1658-2008*, p. 13.

85 Carr, Menard and Peddicord, *Maryland...at the beginning*, page 13.

86 King, Arnold-Lourie and Shaffer, *Pathways to History, Charles County Maryland, 1658-2008*, p. 13.

hand when harvested and the heavy water-laden plants carried to a tobacco house for drying. Once they were sufficiently cured, the stalks and inferior leaves were removed and discarded. The dry, marketable leaves were then packed in large barrels called hogsheads and rolled to a wharf for purchase by English merchants.⁸⁷

Despite the hard work, tobacco was a good beginner's crop. All a farmer needed was a cleared patch of land and a few simple tools. A man working alone was nearly as efficient a producer of tobacco as a larger planter with many servants and slaves.⁸⁸ While fifty acres was about the minimum size for a viable farm,⁸⁹ that was the size of land to which a freed servant was entitled and therefore, was the amount of land available to almost any settler.⁹⁰

A planter could produce anywhere from 500 to 2,000 pounds of tobacco per year per person. That was sufficient to purchase goods and supplies from England.⁹¹ It was more effective to grow tobacco for trade than to manufacture goods locally.⁹²

However, growing tobacco was hard on the soil. Colonists refused to fertilize or otherwise fortify the soils in their fields because they believed that such practices created an undesirable taste to the tobacco. They would raise tobacco in a given field for several years until the soil was depleted of nutrients. They would then cultivate the second most common crop, corn, in the field. The crop rotation process went on for several years, after which the field would be left fallow for a number of years.⁹³ Ultimately, this led to the demise of the tobacco industry in Maryland and the exodus of its citizens for more fertile land west. However, in the 17th century there was more available land than the colonists could exhaust.

Thomas of St. Mary's arrived in Maryland during a 20-year boom in tobacco prices that lasted from the mid-1640s to the mid-1660s. While the boom was followed by a depression in the price of tobacco and the price fluctuated widely from thereon, gains in productivity were sufficient to sustain adequate profits for most settlers over the long run.⁹⁴ However, settlers who were struggling to make a living in good years likely suffered significantly in years that resulted in poor crops or lower prices.⁹⁵

Corn was not profitable like tobacco. However, it became vital to survival as a principal source of food.⁹⁶ Its importance is highlighted by the requirements in the legislation establishing the compensation to be paid a servant upon the completion of his servitude: a male servant was entitled to three barrels of corn and a female servant a year's provision of corn.⁹⁷ There were few water mills in 17th century Maryland, so a common task for a female servant or wife was pounding and grinding corn so that it could be used to make bread.⁹⁸

Livestock was also a major source for food. Fences were few and far between in 17th century Maryland. Livestock was allowed to roam more or less wild in the forests. To prevent disputes between owners, especially as to hogs, the Maryland General Assembly passed an Act

in 1649 requiring the registration of livestock marks, also known as cattle marks. In that manner, planters could identify their horses, cattle, sheep and hogs.⁹⁹ The mark would be registered with the court. As an example, Thomas of St. Mary's filed papers with the provincial court on 17 July 1668 requesting that his cattle be recorded as marked in the following manner "Cropt of both eares, Overkell'd of both eares and a nick under both eares".¹⁰⁰

Relatively few settlers had trades or skills. In 1642, only 28 of the 172 freemen in St. Mary's County had an identifiable trade. They consisted of 12 carpenters, 3 coopers, 3 tailors, 2 boat builders, 2 mariners, 2 barber-chirurgeons [surgeons], 1 joiner, 1 sawyer, 1 blacksmith and 1 brick mason. Even these 28 men were likely planters or tobacco laborers who practiced their trade part time.¹⁰¹

Even though these men had valuable skills, these skills were almost certainly used only part time to be traded off either for the services of another skilled trade or for assistance with planting or harvesting of crops.¹⁰² Thomas of St. Mary's was a tailor.¹⁰³ There were not enough households in Maryland to support a tailor full time. For example, in an examination of detailed records regarding the household of Robert Cole, it was noted that a tailor would come to Cole's house once a year to make and mend clothes for the children.¹⁰⁴ On average, the Cole household paid almost £1 ½ a year for tailor's wages, which was considerably less than it spent on clothing.¹⁰⁵ Given the dispersion and scarcity of farms and settlements at that time, such small amount of work and payment would not support a tailor.

Out of the 165 household estate inventories in St. Mary's County from its settlement in 1634 through 1677, only six had spinning wheels. None of the estates had any looms. Part of this was due to the likelihood that sheep were too easy a prey for wolves. But the more likely reason was that it was more cost effective to put labor into growing tobacco than manufacturing goods. In addition, only two estates had any shoemaking tools and none of the estates had blacksmith tools.¹⁰⁶

To be continued . . . This article will continue in the next edition of The Record.

87 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

88 Carr, Menard and Walsh, *Robert Cole's World*, p. 16.

89 *Ibid.*, pp. 25 and 35; King, Arnold-Lourie and Shaffer, *Pathways to History, Charles County Maryland, 1658-2008*, p. 25.

90 Smith, *Colonists in Bondage, White Servitude and Convict Labor in America 1607-1776*, pp. 239-240.

91 King, Arnold-Lourie and Shaffer, *Pathways to History, Charles County Maryland, 1658-2008*, p. 14.

92 Carr, Menard and Walsh, *Robert Cole's World*, p. 52.

93 King, Arnold-Lourie and Shaffer, *Pathways to History, Charles County Maryland, 1658-2008*, p. 14.

94 Carr, Menard and Walsh, *Robert Cole's World*, page 13; Carr, Menard and Peddicord, "Maryland...at the beginning," p. 24.

95 Carr, Menard and Walsh, *Robert Cole's World*, p. 81.

96 *Ibid.*, p. 95.

97 Smith, *Colonists in Bondage, White Servitude and Convict Labor in America 1607-1776*, pp. 239-240.

98 Carr and Walsh, *The Planter's Wife: The Experience of White Women in 17th Century America*, p. 561.

99 *Archives of Maryland On-line*, Volume LIII, Preface, p. 37.

100 *Maryland Archives*, Provincial Court Records, 1668, Vol. LVII, p. 345.

101 Carr, Menard and Peddicord, *Maryland...at the beginning*, p. 28.

102 Plaisance, *Early Maryland Settlers*, p. 25.

103 *Archives of Maryland On-line*, Volume LIII, Charles County Court proceedings 1662-1666, pp. 317 and 337.

104 Carr, Menard and Walsh, *Robert Cole's World*, p. 51.

105 *Ibid.*, p. 82.

106 *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.



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