“...Once the Metropolis of Maryland”

The History and Archaeology of Maryland’s First Capital

An exhibit in the museum’s Visitors Center tells the story of the founding and first sixty years of the Maryland Colony. All of the objects illustrated in this exhibit were recovered in the archaeological excavations by Historic St. Mary’s City.

**A New World Adventure**

English colonies began along North America’s east coast in the 1600s. British subjects left for many reasons, including religious turmoil and lack of opportunity. Cheap land, improved possibilities for making a living, and in Maryland, greater religious freedom attracted people to the New World.

**George Calvert (1580?-1632)**

*A Dream Awakened*

Long interested in colonization, Calvert was an early investor in the Virginia Company that founded Jamestown. In 1621, he established his own colony in Newfoundland. George Calvert moved there with his family in 1628. After a severe winter on the island, Calvert began to look to the south as a region better suited to “human habitation.” He lobbied King Charles I for a grant of land near Virginia on the Chesapeake Bay, but Calvert died before a charter was granted.

*Copy by Willem Wirtz of portrait of George Calvert painted by Daniel Mytens. Oil on canvas*
**Cecil Calvert (1606 - 1675) - A Dream Attained**

Cecil Calvert, the second Lord Baltimore, received the charter for the Province of Maryland shortly after the death of his father. Cecil was only twenty-seven in 1632 when he began the Maryland venture. Maryland was the first successful English proprietary colony which meant that an individual rather than a company owned the colony. The Calvert family hoped that the colony would prove a profitable investment while allowing Catholics to worship freely. In Maryland, Catholics and Protestants would participate equally in government.

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**Taking Sail, Taking Chances**

Two ships, the Ark and the Dove, departed the Isle of Wight in England in November of 1633 with Cecil Calvert’s younger brother, Leonard, and about 140 colonists to establish the colony. Cecil, the second Lord Baltimore, could not go. He remained in England to defend the Maryland charter. While the leaders of the new colony were predominantly Catholic, Catholics were not, and would never be, the majority population in Maryland. Most who settled here were Protestant indentured servants, who traded years of their labor for transportation to the New World.

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**... a hopeful Colony**

In early March of 1634, the colonists sailed up the Potomac River to St. Clement’s Island, Maryland. It was from there that they explored and chose a site for the new settlement. After negotiating with local Native American leaders, the settlers acquired part of an Indian village and lived in the existing dwellings until a fort and houses were built. The new settlement was named St. Mary’s.
**Cultures in Contact I**

Native American people have lived along the Chesapeake Bay for at least 12,000 years. When the first English colonists arrived, the people living here were the Yaocomaco Indians. Their principal settlement was on both sides of the St. Mary’s River and included the land that became St. Mary’s City. They taught the new settlers how to prepare the land and make fields to grow corn and other crops. These basic skills provided the means for colonists' survival in the Chesapeake. The relationship between the Yaocomaco and the colonists was peaceful but the lives of the Native Americans would be changed forever.

A. Yeocomico pottery was the most common type of pottery being used by the Indians who lived in St. Mary's City. This pottery is characterized as being relatively thin and contains finely crushed oyster shell as a temper. The exterior of the pottery is smoothed.

B. This Native American effigy pipe was found in the moat fill at Popes Fort and had to be deposited around 1645. It was designed so the human effigy faced the smoker. This pipe may have come to St. Mary's City as part of the early fur trade.

C. These red clay or terra cotta tobacco pipe bowls were made by Native American groups in the Chesapeake Tidewater. They are often decorated with incised dentate filled with white clay depicting the outline forms of animals or geometric patterns. These specimens are all decorated with what we call the running deer motif.

D. Small, white quartz triangular projectile points of this type were affixed to arrows. The bow and arrow was introduced in this area about A.D. 800.

**Yaocomaco or Yeocomico? Actually, both are correct and both are pronounced Yuh-kahm’-muh-ko. The meaning of the word, based on our current knowledge of Algonquin languages, is a place with several dwellings. Yeocomaco was the name of the Native American village which occupied both sides of the St. Mary’s River and was also used for the Native Americans who lived there. Yeocomico is the name of a river in Virginia near where archaeologists first described a type of Native American pottery used around the time when colonists arrived in the Chesapeake.**
**Early Progress**

Maryland's first decade was a time of great growth and progress. Between 1634 and 1645, the colony expanded from its initial settlement site with plantations appearing along the Patuxent and Potomac Rivers and across the Chesapeake Bay. The population grew to between 500 and 600 settlers and the cultivation of tobacco for export to England became the focus of the economy. In 1635, the first Assembly was held in St. Mary’s, beginning the legacy of citizen government. In 1638, the Assembly claimed the right to introduce its own laws. Maryland’s growth seemed assured, but events in England conspired to halt the progress.

"... the time of troubles"

In the 1640s, England experienced a period of massive political upheaval known as the English Civil War. This led to the execution of King Charles I and the proclamation of the “Commonwealth” and subsequent "Protectorate" under Oliver Cromwell. In 1645, the English Civil War came to America in the form of a Protestant privateer, Richard Ingle, who attacked, captured the young colony, and enclosed Leonard Calvert’s house with a fortification known as Pope’s Fort. Leonard Calvert recruited soldiers in Virginia and retook the colony in late 1646, but the Calverts lost control again to Protestant enemies between 1654 and 1657.
A Rare and Necessary Presence

Most women came to Maryland as indentured servants. They typically worked in and around the house, cooked and tended the household, and occasionally, worked in the fields alongside the men. Although women in early Maryland did not participate in public affairs, it was not uncommon to find them operating ordinaries or taverns. Women were in the minority throughout most of the 17th century since the immigrant population was dominated by male laborers. With high death rates and a surplus of men, unmarried women and widows were always in demand as spouses.

Margaret Brent - Assuming Leadership

Margaret Brent moved in the world of business and government at a time when it was dominated almost exclusively by men. As an unmarried woman, she migrated to Maryland in 1638 with a sister and two brothers, took up land at St. Mary’s, and ran her own business affairs. Margaret Brent was well-respected by Maryland's leaders. At his death in June 1647, Leonard Calvert named her as his executor with the order, “Take all and pay all.” Paying all meant paying the soldiers which Leonard Calvert had recruited to recapture the colony, but his estate was too small to pay all that was owed. In these perilous times, Brent probably saved the colony by avoiding a mutiny. The Provincial Court named her as the attorney for Cecil Calvert, the second Lord Baltimore, which allowed her to sell his cattle to raise money to pay the soldiers. In 1648, she asked the Assembly to admit her with two votes—one for herself and one for her position as Lord Baltimore’s attorney. The Governor refused her request. The Lord Baltimore was less than appreciative of Brent’s sale of his property and relations soured. In 1651, she migrated to Virginia where she lived the rest of her life on a plantation named Peace.

Artifacts associated with women in the 17th Century

A: Iron scissors
B: Small iron gardening hoe
C: Thimbles
D: Ear ring with a blue glass bead
E: Finger ring
F: Turned bone needle case
Cultures in Contact II

Few people of African descent appeared in Maryland during its founding decades. By the 1670s, encouraged by Englishmen relocating from the Caribbean, sizeable numbers of enslaved Africans were imported to replace the shrinking pool of indentured servants. Many of Maryland's leaders owned enslaved Africans. By 1700, individuals of African descent were the main source of bound labor in the tobacco fields. The use of forced labor had become established in Maryland and would continue until the American Civil War.

Mathias de Sousa - From Indentured Servant to Freeman

Mathias de Sousa was one of the first individuals of African descent to settle in the Maryland colony. De Sousa arrived with the Ark and the Dove in 1634. He was initially an indentured servant to the Jesuits and later a freeman and mariner. In March of 1642, he participated in a meeting of the Maryland Assembly in St. Mary's, making him the first person of African descent to participate in an English-American legislative body. Unfortunately, we know very little about his life.
The Calverts Restored

Cecil Calvert regained control over Maryland in 1658 and dispatched his youngest brother, Philip Calvert, to oversee a new governor, Josiah Fendall. In 1660, Fendall proved unfaithful and led a failed revolt against the Calverts. Philip took charge as interim governor until the arrival the following year of Charles Calvert, Cecil’s son and heir. The restoration in 1660 of King Charles II, king of England, reopened opportunity for the Calverts and helped bring stability to Maryland. From 1660 to nearly 1690, St. Mary’s City prospered and expanded into a true colonial capital.

Taking Shape

Archaeological excavations have proven that a baroque plan was used to develop the 17th-century Maryland capital. The city's road plan was similar in form to designs used in 16th-century Rome. St. Mary's City was laid out in the shape of two symmetrical triangles with the main streets meeting in the town center. Brick structures marked the corners, and principal roads closely followed the lines of the triangles. Today, visitors to Historic St. Mary’s City can walk the same paths as Maryland's early colonists.
An Archaeological Landscape

Much of what we know about the landscape and location of buildings in St. Mary's City is the result of a marriage of history and archaeology. History can help associate a name or an event with a general place. Archaeology can find a precise place and assemble evidence to describe the place based on what remains in the ground. In over thirty years of archaeology, more than 200 archaeological sites have been found in St. Mary's City.

St. John's

St. John's was built in 1638 by John Lewger, the first secretary of the colony. The house was subsequently owned by Simon Overzee, a merchant of a Dutch extraction, and later by Charles Calvert, Governor and third Lord Baltimore. The building was the site of early meetings of the Assembly, and was where Mathias de Sousa became the first man of African descent to vote in an American legislative body and where Margaret Brent asked for "voyce and vote." The building served as an ordinary later in the 17th century, and also housed the legal records of the colony before the capital was moved to Annapolis.

Chessman and die, both made from Bone

Tin glazed earthenware

Iron dagger pommel from Holland

Tin glazed earthenware bowl

Iron mason's trowel
In the 1660s, the colony built a special, unheated building to store the paper records of the province. Known as the Council Chamber, this building was later bought by Garrett Van Sweringen who added fireplaces and converted it into the most elegant private lodging house in the colony. Van Sweringen also operated the first coffee house in the English colonies in an outbuilding located on the same property.

The Calvert House

The Calvert House was built by Leonard Calvert in the early 17th century. During Ingle's Revolt, the rebels captured and fortified the house and used it as their stronghold. Leonard Calvert died at this house in 1647 after the recapture of the colony. The colonial government acquired the building in 1662 to use as the colony's first state house. The Calvert House also served as the largest public inn in Maryland from 1661 until about 1700.
The Chapel Site

Tension over religious differences was a dominant aspect of the settlement of early Maryland. The Chapel field site complex represents those tensions. The Jesuits surveyed a 25-acre parcel in 1639. A post-in-the-ground structure, 42 ft. long and 18 ft wide, was constructed here in the early days of the colony. It may have been burned during Ingle’s Rebellion in the 1640s. By 1660, toleration of Catholics in England was increasing. Around 1667, the Jesuits felt confident enough to build a new brick chapel. This structure was in the shape of a cross, 54 ft long 57 ft across the arms, and with a nave 28 ft wide. Imported stone covered the floor, and tile covered the roof. This church stayed in use until 1704 when the governor of Maryland ordered it locked.

Specially molded bricks

St. Maria de Pilar medal

Elaborate milk glass vessel

White clay pipes and glass bottle seal with initials “LID” for Laus Jesus Deo, Praise Jesus Lord
Out of the Wilderness

In 1667, Cecil Calvert ordered the incorporation of St. Mary's City as the first official city in Maryland. By using fashionable, urban design ideas, the Calverts may have wanted to make a statement with their new city in the "wilderness." The following decade saw the building of numerous ordinaries and dwelling houses as well as an elaborate brick church, a brick state house, and a brick jail. These brick structures were grand considering most people lived in crude wooden houses. All the functions of government - Assembly, the Courts, the Land Office—were centered in the town.
Where’s the City?

St. Mary’s City, Maryland and Jamestown, Virginia were unique in the 17th-century Chesapeake. Unlike the colonies in New England, this region’s population was never concentrated in towns. Instead, people lived on individual plantations spread along the Chesapeake’s many rivers and creeks. As a capital, St. Mary’s City was the most populous place in all of Maryland. Still, St. Mary’s City was never large by modern standards. Around 200 year-round residents lived here at any one time. The population swelled when the Assembly met and in court times, bringing periodic visitors to the city in search of food and lodging.
**Not So Ordinary**

In the 17th century, an "ordinary" was a combination hotel, restaurant, and bar which served as a center for social, economic, and political activity. In St. Mary's City, nearly every building which stood for more than ten years served as an ordinary at some point. They were strictly regulated by law with the Assembly setting prices for food, lodging, and drink. The ordinaries ranged in quality from Garrett Van Sweringen's fine establishment to the plainer ordinaries such as William Smith's in the town's center.

*Three legged iron pot*  
*Rhenish brown Belaramine (a gift of Thomas Waring)*  
*Staffordshire slipware*

*Glass square, or case bottles*  
*Slip-decorated earthenware Made in Donyatt, UK*  
*Rhenish stoneware mug*
Blue and gray Rhenish stoneware

Iberian olive jar

North Devon gravel tempered butter pot

Glass round bottles

Staffordshire slipware

Three pitchers by Morgan Jones, Maryland’s first potter

White clay tobacco pipes
English and Dutch
An Experiment in Toleration

Cecil Calvert, second Lord Baltimore, practiced Roman Catholicism at a time when it was unlawful to do so in England. In Maryland, the Calverts set policies which allowed Christians to worship freely, but Catholics were a minority during the entire colonial period. Eventually, other religious groups, such as Quakers and Presbyterians, settled in Maryland to take advantage of this liberal atmosphere.
A Rare Find: Three Lead Coffins

In 1992, archaeologists excavated three lead coffins at the site of the Brick Chapel in St. Mary's City. In the colonial period, burial in lead coffins was a sign of great wealth. An international, interdisciplinary team of scientists continues to explore this unique find today. Careful research demonstrates that the two largest coffins held the remains of Chancellor Philip Calvert and his wife, Anne Wolseley Calvert. The identity of the baby girl found in the third coffin remains unknown. The largest of the three lead contained the remains of Philip Calvert, the Chancellor of Maryland, who died between December 21, 1682 and January 12, 1683. The coffin was buried under the floor of the Catholic Chapel in St. Mary's City. Philip Calvert was one of the most prominent Maryland leaders in the 1600s and a key person in the efforts to develop St. Mary's City. The capital cities of the Maryland and Virginia colonies served as the burial places for many important persons. The coffin of Philip Calvert and those of his wife and daughter are the earliest known examples of lead coffin burials in British North America.
William Nuthead (? - 1695) - Colonial Printer

William Nuthead set up a printing press in St. Mary's City in 1685. His press was the first operated in the English colonies south of Massachusetts. Archaeologists have found pieces of his printing type on several sites in St. Mary's City. Nuthead's main business was in printing forms for the government. At his death in 1695, his wife Dinah took over the press. Although she could neither read nor write, Dinah Nuthead continued operating the press until the capital moved to Annapolis later that same year. She moved with her best client, the government.

Lead alloy printing type from St. Mary's City

A Dream Diverted

In 1689, a group of Protestant colonists led an uprising against Calvert rule and accused the Calverts of secretly plotting to betray the colony. This uprising followed the removal of James II in England, who was replaced with William and Mary as king and queen. In 1692, the Crown named a Royal Governor, Sir Lionel Copley, and the Calverts lost control of their colony until 1715. In 1695, the capital was moved to Annapolis, and St. Mary's City was abandoned. Soon, hardly any trace of the city could be seen. A land sale advertisement in 1774 referred to the site as "once the Metropolis of Maryland."
Remembering the Past

Although the physical remains of the city have disappeared, its story and legacies continue. The former state house was converted into an Anglican church and stood until 1829 when it was torn down. The bricks were used to build Trinity Church, which visitors can see today. In 1838, John Pendleton Kennedy, a Baltimore attorney and diplomat, wrote one of America's earliest historical novels entitled Rob of the Bowl, a legend of old St. Inigoes which described events in St. Mary's City in the late 17th century. In 1840, the Maryland legislature created what is now St. Mary's College of Maryland as "A Monument School to the People" and a celebration of Maryland's founding site. The 19th and early 20th centuries saw a series of commemorations and "pilgrimages" to the site of the old capital.

300 Years Later …

In 1934, Maryland marked the three hundredth anniversary of the colony's founding. In spite of the Great Depression which ravaged the economy, Maryland celebrated with a massive historical event known as "The Pageant." Land was donated to reconstruct the Maryland State House of 1676 and over a hundred thousand people flocked to St. Mary's City for the celebration. In the years following the tercentennial, archaeologist Dr. Henry Chandlee Forman pioneered excavations which began the process of rediscovering the old city.

Historic St. Mary's City - Past, Present, Future

In 1966, the state of Maryland began the process of preserving and interpreting the original site by establishing the Historic St. Mary's City Commission. Today, Historic St. Mary's City is an outdoor museum of history and archaeology. Recognized for its historical and archaeological research, Historic St. Mary's City is rediscovering the stories of life in early Maryland. Buildings are being reconstructed and stories told based on a research program which has led the way in many areas of 17th-century Chesapeake studies. Every turn of the shovel in the soil and every turn of the page in the historical documents sheds new light on the legacies of St. Mary's City and the role which it played during the founding of our country.