

## MARYLAND COLONIAL ERA HISTORY 1607-1776

### 3. Demographics

The following largely verbatim excerpts are taken from Brugger, Robert J., *Maryland A Middle Temperament: 1634-1980* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988) and cited as Brugger [page #]. Reprinted with permission of Johns Hopkins University Press.

In the mid-seventeenth century, uncertainty colored more than government in Maryland, for life could be as unpredictable as politics. The number of settlers in the province ebbed and flowed – dropping in the decade of [“Roundhead” shipmaster and merchant Richard] Ingle’s rebellion, then, after 1650, climbing sharply as troubles like the civil war, high food prices, and an oversupply of labor drove young people away from the British Isles. Nearly half of all these migrants landed in the Chesapeake region, many of them in Maryland. There in 1660 the population reached about twenty-five hundred – still only ten times the size of the original expedition. Twenty years later some twenty thousand persons lived in Lord Baltimore’s province.

Brugger 22

In seventeenth-century New England, males who reached the age of twenty generally lived for another forty-five years. By contrast, youthful immigrants to Maryland (most men made the voyage in their late teens) died on average only twenty-three years later. Almost one in five settlers who reached age twenty-two succumbed to disease before his thirtieth birthday. Seven of ten died before reaching age fifty. From another perspective, two-thirds of married or widowed men who died in these years left all minor children. Only a few fathers, about 6 percent, lived to see any offspring grow to maturity. Immigrant women, of whom the records spoke less clearly, did not live long lives, either. Roughly half the children born in seventeenth century Maryland died before reaching age twenty.

Brugger 23-24

Manors in the proprietary system

In 1642 Lord Baltimore’s settlement on the Lower Potomac had grown into St. Mary’s County. In it lived nearly four hundred persons, spread over several smaller jurisdictions or hundreds. Near St. Mary’s, where a dozen households occupied five square miles, there were hundreds named St. George’s and St. Michael’s. More distant were St. Clément’s, up the Potomac at the mouth of the Wicomico, and Mattapanient, five miles north of St. Mary’s on the Patuxent. On Kent Island settlers remained on the southern side, fearful of the Susquehannocks. Throughout the province there were sixteen manors, belonging to the men who had done the most to finance Lord Baltimore’s colony. While just four of the seventeen original gentlemen-immigrants remained in Maryland, large landholders \* \* \* offered proof that some of Baltimore’s subscribers had realized his vision of a replicated English gentry. More than 80 percent of the land surveyed at the time fell within a manor. Four-fifths of the freemen had not claimed land. In St. Mary’s, 136 out of 173 of them worked as tenant farmers or as wage-earning laborers who lived in dwellings the landholder supplied for them. Smaller tracts or “plantations” commonly adjoined the manor properties, a pattern suggesting that manorial gentlemen chose rich locations in the early province and also that manors might have provided security in the wilderness. But surveys of such

independent holdings also demonstrated that as long as land was abundant few freemen in the palatinate would choose to live as subjects on another's manor. [fn omitted]

Brugger 17-18

#### Convicts

One home measure that greatly angered [colonists] in the Chesapeake concerned crime and punishment. Great Britain, changing rapidly from a country of rural villages with common pasture lands to an industrial-commercial nation, spawned a huge number of urban vagrants and lawbreakers. Officials differed on how to punish these offenders until 1717, when Parliament, perfecting what had been a haphazard and small-scale enterprise, adopted a policy of transportation, banishing the convicts to the American colonies (usually for seven years). Though publicly subsidized, transportation remained a private business tied to shipping patterns. As a result, almost all of the convicts left England in vessels that made summer landings in Philadelphia or the Chesapeake to take on tobacco, corn, or wheat. In the half-century after Parliament enacted transportation, more than ten thousand British vagabonds, thieves, and cutthroats made their way to Maryland as laborers who during their sentences could be bought and sold as indentured servants.

Brugger 85-86