

Tour the Growing Colony – St. Mary's City



Town Landing - This is the location where most travelers entered St. Mary's City by water. The water was deep enough for boats to come close to the shore, and the sandy beach made it an ideal place to land small boats and unload merchandise. From here, goods could easily be carried up a gentle slope into the city, along Middle Street. This port would have also been the point of entry for thousands of enslaved Africans brought to St. Mary's City.

Prison of 1676 - A law was passed in St. Mary's City requiring a prison to be built by 1676. The prison was for criminals and debtors (people who didn't pay their bills).

Mulberry Tree - A legend in St. Mary's City says that Leonard Calvert met with the Yaocomico people under this tree in March of 1634 to sign a treaty for their lands. Later, it was said the tree was used as a place to post public announcements. This tree was still standing in 1885, nearly 250 years after the Calverts stood beneath its shade.

1676 State House - The State House of 1676 was Lord Baltimore's seat of government and the place where the Assembly and Provincial Council conducted the colony's business. Maryland colonists from outside of St. Mary's City traveled here to attend court. The location of St. Mary's City right near the Potomac River made boat travel the most convenient mode of transportation.

Pasture Land - Grazing land was needed for the many horses that carried overland travelers to St. Mary's City. Each public inn was required to have a stable for travelers' convenience. By the 1680's, horses were more common in Maryland. But in the early years, horses were both rare and expensive, as they were very hard to ship over from Europe.

Clocker's Choice - Daniel Clocker, a former indentured servant who became a planter and carpenter, built a house on this property. The large area of land and the small population of St. Mary's City meant the town was more spread out. Unlike in the densely populated towns of England, homes and properties were larger, even for those who were not born rich. Clocker probably planned to run an ordinary here. However, he died, and the house and lot had to be sold to pay his debts.

Gallows - The gallows were used for public hangings.

Triple Contract - This building was probably named for the three lawyers who owned it. It was used as an office for the lawyers. It was located close to the State House, which made it convenient for the lawyers and their clients whose cases were tried there.

Garret van Sweringen's Council Chamber Inn - This building was first used as a government meeting house and a place for storing official records. When the State House was built in 1676, it was no longer needed for that purpose and became a private inn. The owner, a Dutch colonist named Garrett van Sweringen, made it one of the colony's most luxurious inns. He also established a coffee house, which was a place to talk, drink, and smoke. This was the first known coffee house in the Chesapeake region.

Calvert House - Governor Leonard Calvert built this house in the 1630s. Since it was very large, the Assembly met here from time to time. Leonard Calvert probably died here in 1647. After his death, the house was used as a state house and an inn, and it became known as the Country's House. After the new brick State House was built in 1676, the house became an ordinary (a tavern or inn) until the capital was moved to Annapolis in 1695. The Calvert House was a very important building for nearly the entire history of St. Mary's City.

Printing House - William Nuthead was the first printer in Maryland and the southern colonies as a whole. He began printing in St. Mary's City in 1685. Nuthead produced mostly legal forms such as contracts and indentures. Because few people could read or write in Maryland, St. Mary's City did not produce newspapers in the 17th century. His wife, Dinah, assisted Nuthead. Following his death, Dinah moved to Annapolis and continued the business there, becoming one of the first women to run a printing press in America.

Catholic Chapel - Father Andrew White began his Maryland mission in a Yaocomico witchott (dwelling) at St. Mary's City in 1634. Soon after, the colonists constructed a small wooden chapel. By 1641, they had completed a second wooden chapel somewhere near this spot. Then, between 1667 and 1669, they built a very large brick chapel here.

St. Peter's ca. 1678 - Philip Calvert, the Chancellor of Maryland, began construction on this very large brick house in 1678. Several years after his death, the royal governor probably used it for meetings until the government moved to Annapolis in 1695. Gunpowder stored in the house mysteriously exploded in 1695 and destroyed it, but its remains were still visible nearly two hundred years later.

Town Mill - In 1638, Thomas Cornwallis, one of the original colonists, had his servants construct an earthen mill dam and grist mill at this location. Using water power, the grist mill was planned to grind all the colonists' grain into flour and meal. The mill operated off and on for more than 100 years. The large size of the earthen dam provided travelers a convenient path over the Mill Creek and formed the main land entrance to St. Mary's City for most of the early travelers.

Brick Yard - The earliest buildings in St. Mary's City were made of wood, using the abundant trees of the surrounding forests. By the 1660s, colonists used brick for chimneys, fireplaces, and other uses. The bricks were not made in one central location. Usually, they were produced as needed in places close to the building under construction. Numerous brick-making sites from colonial times have been found at various locations within St. Mary's City.

St. Barbara's - Philip Calvert owned this land and possibly leased both it and the buildings here to tenant farmers. Tenant farmers would pay the landowner part of their crop each year to rent the land. Some of Calvert's servants may also have lived here.

Corn Fields - St. Mary's City was bordered by fields of corn and other crops grown in the fertile riverside soil. Over the course of the 1600s, the colony grew more dependent on enslaved people to grow food crops and tobacco.

St. John's - St. John's served as a dwelling house and a place for public meetings. In this building, in 1642, a former indentured servant, Mathias de Sousa, served in the Maryland legislative assembly, possibly making him the first person of color to vote in Maryland. It was also the site where, in 1648, Margaret Brent requested two votes in the Assembly. Governor Charles Calvert lived in this house from 1661 until 1667. Beginning in the 1670s, the building became a public inn.

Chapel Road - In the 1600s, a road extended from the center of St. Mary's City to the Catholic chapel. It was the main road and the major entrance to the city from the south.

Mill Dam Road - This road was built around 1640. It ran from Governor Leonard Calvert's house to the mill dam. Using the dam as a path over the water, the road crossed Mill Creek and joined Mattapany Road, an Indigenous trail through the thick forests of the St. Mary's Peninsula that ended at the Patuxent River. Most travelers who came to St. Mary's City overland during the 1600s entered along this route.

Middle Street - In the 1630s, a road was cleared from Governor Leonard Calvert's house to the main boat landing. By the 1670s, several other homes dotted the path, and it became known as Middle Street. Instead of using addresses, the buildings along the road were given names such as Clocker's Choice, Providence, Jamaica, and Triple Contract.

Aldermanbury Street - In 1672, a roadway was created and named Aldermanbury Street. It was named this because the aldermen, or government representatives, owned the lots of land that bordered the street. This

street began at the town center and ran along the riverbank to where the new brick State House was to be built.

Tobacco Fields - Tobacco was the most important crop in the Maryland colony. It was central to the economy as an export to Europe and as a trade good in the colonies. The warm summers and fertile soil of the region created the perfect growing conditions for tobacco, and the nearby river made it easy to ship. By the 1680s, the colony depended on enslaved Africans to grow, pick, cure, and pack it.

Town Center - At the center of town, colonists would find a lawyer's office, a merchant's store, and ordinaries where they could eat, drink, or stay the night. The four main roads of the town met at this point. You can trace the roads to see the distance the founders put between civic life (i.e., the State House and the prison), and religious life (i.e., the church).

Outskirts of Town - As the town grew, land claimed by the colonists got closer and closer to the land of local tribes. A man named Mattagund brought his concerns to the General Assembly in 1666, speaking for the Anacostian, Piscataway, and Doeg people. He mentioned the problems caused by livestock and by colonists moving onto their land: "Your hogs & Cattle injure Us You come too near Us to live & drive Us from place to place."