

On Sunday, November 15, 1992, St. Margaret's Church, Westminster Parish, celebrated its 300th anniversary. As part of the observance the parish published a hardcover book that included the written account herein. A very few copies of the "green book" remain in the parish archives and a scanned version will become available. The version appearing here appeared on the first parish website in 1997. Research since 1992 makes some of the information here less than accurate.

Early History (1692-1792)

Introduction

For the sake of order we give anniversaries identifying brackets; we say, for instance, that St. Margaret's Church has existed from 1692 to 1992. These dates, by themselves, are certainly impressive, but when placed in a wider historical context the anniversary achieves a kind of eloquence. The roots of St. Margaret's are entwined with the roots of the Anglican and Episcopal Church in North America, and with the beginnings of Maryland and the United States.

I. Beginnings: Colonial Anglicanism The Church of England

Ecclesia Anglicana: so named, the official Church of England became an autonomous part of the Catholic Church in 1534. Through its birth, the Protestant Reformation reached its culmination in England, and Henry VIII was vested with the powers of the head of church and state. He used them harshly, restricting and persecuting other denominations. In the following century, however, the unfolding colonization of North America bred hope among dissenters. Separatist Puritans migrated to establish Plymouth Colony; Quakers settled Pennsylvania.

Roman Catholics were to realize their desire for a religious haven through the efforts of a convert named George Calvert, who in 1619 was made Secretary of State to King James 1. A talented businessman, Calvert sought to take part in the New World colonization, and was granted a tract in Newfoundland. When, in 1624, he became a Roman Catholic, Calvert risked the loss of his public office; James, who valued Calvert's business acumen and political instincts, retained his services on the Privy Council by elevating him to the peerage, making him the first Lord Baltimore (a title of the Irish nobility).

The Newfoundland colony failed, undone by bitter winters. Calvert, on his return to England, visited the Virginia colony and the Chesapeake region and was impressed by the mild and favorable climate. He applied for a grant for territory

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north of the Potomac River; the application was still pending when he died. King Charles I signed the grant on June 20, 1632, giving the Charter for the Colony of Maryland, (named for his wife Queen Henrietta Maria), to George Calvert's son Cecil, the second Lord Baltimore.

In November 1633, about 150 colonists set sail aboard the ships Ark and Dove. The company was led by Leonard Calvert, Cecelius' brother, who would serve as Governor while Lord Baltimore the Proprietor remained in England. Landing off St. Clement's Island in the Potomac, the colonists began the building of St. Mary's City near the southern tip of Maryland's Western Shore.

Early Maryland

Rules for the governance of the new colony were set forth in the Royal Charter as follows: an Assembly modeled after parliament would be set up, consisting of an upper house (Council) and a lower house (the House of Burgesses). Council members were to be appointed by the Governor, acting as agent for the Proprietor. Members of the lower house would be selected by vote of the landholders, one person being selected from each Hundred (or hundred families, an old English method of county division). The Assembly would enact laws brought before it by the Proprietor or the Governor. A High Sheriff would enforce County law, and in each Hundred a Constable would enforce the law locally.

Calvert mandated religious tolerance in Maryland. In the oath of office administered to governors, it was stated that "neither he nor any other person directly or indirectly will trouble, molest or restrict any person professing belief in Jesus Christ regardless of their Church." In 1638, the Third Assembly passed a law stating that the "Holy Church within this Province should have and enjoy all rights, liberties and franchises, wholly without blemish."

Calvert had been granted the right to donative advowsons, by which he could send ministers of the Church of England to serve in the colony, but he did not rush to exercise the right. A petition by the members of the Church of England in the province in 1638 contained the statement . . . in this heathen country where no godly Minister is to teach and instruct ignorant people in the grounds of religion, showing that four years after the landing no provision for ministrations by the clergy had been made.

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Nevertheless, in 1642, Trinity Church was erected in St. Mary's County, and in 1650, at St. George's Church, Valley Lee, the first permanently settled Church of England clergyman, the Reverend William Wilkerson, began his ministry.

The Puritans

Events in England invariably affected life in the colony. The English Civil War, which began in 1642, climaxed seven years later with the beheading of King Charles I and the ascension to power of the Puritans, or Roundheads, under Oliver Cromwell. Consequently, when Puritans fleeing from staunchly Anglican Virginia arrived in Maryland in 1649, Lord Baltimore offered them refuge, hoping to placate Cromwell. He also had enacted, on April 2, 1649, the Act Concerning Religion (the Religious Toleration Act) to ensure the Puritans of their safety and freedom to worship. This act was to become the foundation of religious freedom in America. The Puritans settled along the Severn River in what was to become Anne Arundel County (in 1650 - named for the wife of Cecil Calvert).

As tensions in England increased, good relations between the Proprietor and the growing population of Puritans fell apart. In 1651, Cromwell dismissed Parliament. The next year, he sent a force of 750 seasoned militia to place the colonies under his control. Use of the Book of Common Prayer was forbidden in England; in Maryland, Puritans took over the Assembly and called for the strict observance of the Sabbath - the precursor of later blue laws.

Armed confrontations occurred between Lord Baltimore's forces and those of the Puritans, coming to a head on May 26, 1655 in the Battle of the Severn, near Annapolis. The Puritan forces were led by Captain William Fuller and the Proprietor's by Governor William Stone. Calvert lost, but through diplomatic cleverness and an agreement signed November 30, 1658, he managed to obtain the return of his province.

In 1660, the Puritan government in England was overthrown; Charles II and the House of Stuart were restored as rulers. Calvert, much in favor with the new King, remained Proprietor of Maryland until his death in 1675. Then, his son and heir Charles, who was serving as Governor of the Province, sailed for England to take over his duties as Proprietor.

The Protestant Revolution in Maryland

The question of the position of the Church of England in Maryland had increasingly become a source of debate here and in the mother country. The provincial Church was administered throughout the colonial period as an outpost of the Diocese of London, under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of London, and in the early 1670s a representative of the Bishop was sent to Maryland. In 1676, the Reverend John Yeo, having surveyed the progress of the Church here, wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury of the "deplorable condition of the Province of Maryland for want of an established ministry." He further stated: "Here are ten or twelve counties, and in them at least 20,000 souls, and but three (Protestant) ministers of the Church of England . . . the (Roman Catholic) priests are provided for, and the Quakers take care of those that are speakers, but no care is taken to build up churches in the Anglican faith. The Lord's Day is profaned, religion is disputed and all notorious vices are committed so that it has become a Sodom of uncleanness and a pest house of iniquity." Parson Yeo pleaded for support of the ministry out of public funds.

In 1677, the Commissioners of Trade and Plantation met to discuss conditions in the Colony, including the Church of England's dilemma. They addressed a letter to Lord Baltimore, complaining of "having received very credible information that many inhabitants of Maryland live very dissolute lives, committing notorious vices and profaning the Lord's Day, and that this wicked kind of living proceed from there being no certain established allowance for ministers of the gospel, especially of the Protestant religion according to the Church of England."

James II's ascension to the throne in 1685 became an unexpected catalyst. A Roman Catholic, James wished to restore absolute monarchy and Roman Catholicism. He was widely disliked but tolerated, because his daughter and supposed heir, Mary, was Protestant. The birth of a son to James, however, made the reestablishment of Roman Catholicism a more solid probability. William of Orange, Mary's husband and the ruler of the Netherlands, was invited to invade England; he did so in 1688. James fled from the Glorious Revolution to France.

In Maryland, a roaring rift had developed between the Council (composed of Roman Catholics and Lord Baltimore's favorites) and the lower house, which was mostly Protestant, over several matters, resulting in a deadlocked session. Into this brew of bad feeling Lord Baltimore dropped an inadvertent match.

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He failed to speedily inform the colonists of William and Mary's ascension to the throne. When the news came to the province indirectly, through a ship's captain, the situation exploded. Wild rumors arose, of an alliance between Roman Catholics and Indians, of a coming massacre. A group of colonists formed an Association of Protestant Gentlemen in Arms for the Defense of the Anglican Religion and for Asserting the Right of King William and Queen Mary to the Province of Maryland and all the English Dominions. Their forces marched on St. Mary's City and took control of the government. In a declaration sent to England, the victors pledged their loyalty to the Crown.

William and Mary revoked Lord Baltimore's charter. They sent an address to the colonists, saying, "We have thought fit to take our Province of Maryland under our immediate care and protection." New elections took place in the Maryland Assembly; early in 1692 the first Royal Governor, Lionel Copley, arrived in St. Mary's City. A period of royal government which was to last until 1715 had begun.

William and Mary instructed Sir Lionel Copley to "take special care that God be devoutly and duly served, that the Book of Common Prayer be read and that the Blessed Sacrament [be] administered according to the Rites of the Church of England"; also, that "churches be built" and a "competent maintenance" be assigned to each minister.

II. THE ACT OF 1692

The first act of the Assembly of the Crown Colony was a proclamation affirming the ascension of William and Mary to the throne. The next Act, on May 10, 1692, began the process of making the Church of England the official church of Maryland.

An Act for the Service of Almighty God and the Establishment of the Protestant (i.e. Anglican) Religion within this Province was drawn up by the Governor's Council and the Assembly. It was designed as a vehicle in the province. The Act required that the Commissioners, Justices and Principal Freeholders of each county "divide and lay out their several and respective Counties" into parishes "to be laid out by meets and bounds" and that the Sheriff of each county collect a tax of forty pounds of tobacco for each taxable person in each parish and pay the tax to the parish vestry. (The Sheriff would keep five percent of the tobacco as his fee.) The vestry was instructed "after the building of the Church or Chapel" to apply the remaining revenue "to the use and benefit of the Minister" of the parish.

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The Governor, Council, and Freeholders (landowners) of the Province were to elect six vestrymen per parish.

The Church State was setup with the King as its Supreme Governor in all things secular, and in Maryland the Governor represented the King. There was no Bishop in Maryland (until 1792), so the ecclesiastical head of the Church was the Bishop of London. The clergy were licensed to practice by the Bishop, and assigned by the Governor.

The position of clergyman was seen as a political one. It had a lifetime tenure with an annual income depending on the number of inhabitants, of 200 - 300 pound sterling. Each parish was to own 100 acres of land, besides individual land gifts. Churches were to be large property owners, and from the rental of this property, the church and clergy were to receive a nominal income. Additional income was to come from the sale of property.

On June 9, 1692, Governor Copley put his signature on the Act beneath the statement: "On behalf of their Majesties King William and Queen Mary I will these to be laws."

Copley died the following year. Many of his efforts to benefit the Church fell short; the laws were full of loopholes. The next Royal Governor, Francis Nicholson, strengthened the original Act, and in 1702, the "Act for the Establishment of Religious Worship in this Province According to the Church of England and for the Maintenance of Ministers" filled in the holes. It governed Maryland church affairs until 1776.

In addition to these structural outlines for the Church, the Assembly sought to regulate behavior directly. They outlawed "drunkenness, swearing, gaming, fowling, fishing, hunting, or any other sports, Pastimes or Recreations at all on the Lord's Day." Sheriffs were even forbidden to serve warrants or make arrests that would discourage persons from attending services.

III. ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH

The Broadneck Peninsula

Woodland Indians lived in Maryland long before the arrival of the Ark and the Dove. The Tidewater tribes were not generally unfriendly to the early settlers; later, the Susquehannocks at the head of the Bay and their enemies, the Senecas, did clash with the colonists, but most often in pursuit of each other.

By 1642, no more than 390 English settlers had survived the period of sickness which most immigrants suffered through, known as seasoning. The Broadneck Peninsula had not yet attracted any of these colonists. Then, in the fall of 1649, a small company of Puritans from Nansemond, Virginia settled on 250 acres of land at Town Neck on the Severn River (now Greenbury Point) and founded the town of Providence. One of the most famous Maryland Puritans was Captain William Fuller. The Hero of the Severn received from the second Lord Baltimore a large tract of land toward the eastern end of the peninsula, which he named Fullor's Survey. Over the next decade, Puritans were joined by Quakers encouraged by the passage of the Act of Tolerance. Groups of English Protestants, including Anglicans, came mainly upon arrival from the mother country, rather than from neighboring colonies. Gradually, the Hundreds of Herring Creeke, West River, South River, Middle Neck and Broad Neck were established.

The Puritans built a place of worship on the south bank of the Magothy River near Westminster Towne on Deep Creek. This Old Meeting House was shared by families of other denominations who, because of the scarcity and impassability of roads, traveled to Sunday services by boat.

The colonists who would become the founding members of St. Margaret's were scattered about the peninsula on tobacco plantations large and small. Among the most important Anglican settlers were Colonel Nicholas Greenberry, who emigrated aboard the ship Constant Friendship in 1674. In 1680, he bought Fuller's Survey from colonel William Fuller (son of Captain Fuller), resurveying the land as Greenberry Forest. He was to become one of the most successful of the merchant-planters in the region: he was the Keeper of the Great Seal, a justice of the Province. He was put in charge of the erection of three forts against invading Indians, and briefly, on the death of Lionel Copley, discharged the duties

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of the Governor (1693-94). In 1695, he purchased Towne Neck, the first settlement on the Severn, renaming it Greenberry Point. He died there in 1697.

Greenberry Forest, which came to be called Whitehall, descended to his son, Colonel Charles Greenberry. Of Charles it has been written that "he bore many of the busy characteristics of his father," and that "he was the life and support of St. Margaret's Church."

The Hammond family would also play a role in the support of the church and in the politics of the area. John Hammond, an ardent member of the Church of England, wrote, in 1655, the influential pamphlet *Leah and Rachel, or, The Two Fruitful Sisters Virginia and Maryland*, which argued for religious peace between the colonies. He settled on the Severn and became a member of the Provincial Court, and later, a delegate to the Lower House. His son, Colonel Charles Hammond, became Treasurer of the Western Shore.

Another early resident, Maureen Duvall, was a Protestant Huguenot who fled Nantes, France in 1650 to escape persecution by Cardinal Richelieu. He and his descendants prospered in Anne Arundel County. They intermarried with prominent Anglican families (most notably the Ridouts, who arrived in the mid-1700s), and supported the church for many generations.

Broad Neck Parish

Thirty parishes had been created by the Act of 1692. By 1696, Anne Arundel County was laid out into four parishes: Herring Creeke (today's St. James in Lothian), South River (All Hallows, Davidsonville), Middle Neck (St. Anne's, Annapolis), and Broad Neck (St. Margaret's, Westminster). The Parish of Broad Neck was set out on the north side of the Severn River and originally included Towne Neck and Broad Neck Hundreds. It was bounded "on the east by the Chesapeake, on the north by a line between the Severn River and a ridge dividing the streams running into the Patapsco and Magothy Rivers to the Notched Pines two miles from the Annapolis Junction, and on the west by a line dividing Anne Arundel and Howard Counties to Jessup, continuing southeasterly from Jessup to the north shore of the Severn."

There were 223 taxables living in the parish (all freedmen, regardless of creed, were taxed for support of the church of England), and 8,920 pounds of tobacco were collected to support the parish. In the first election of vestries, the following

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six men were chosen to serve for Broad Neck Parish: John Bennett, Grover Eager, William Hopkins, Robert Eagle, Hugh Merrican and Edward Fuller.

By 1695, the congregation of the Church of England on the peninsula had outgrown the shared Old Meeting House. Under the leadership of Colonel Charles Greenberry, the vestry sought a minister from England to establish in the Living. At the time, only five or six Anglican ministers were in the province of Maryland, and these complained, with good evidence, of low salaries, and of what "a hard shift it is to live here" in letters home to England.

St. Margaret's

Nevertheless, Charles Greenberry and the vestry found their rector in the person of the Reverend Edward Topp, Jr. The church in Westminster Towne (now Cape St. Claire) at which he would serve was to be called St. Margaret's, named, it is believed, for St. Margaret's in London. (This church was founded in the eleventh or twelfth century as the parish church of Westminster, so that the monks might be left in undisturbed possession of the abbey. It stands between Big Ben and Westminster Abbey.) Priests in the region were so few that the Reverend Topp would contemporaneously become the first rector of St. Paul's (Patapsco) Parish in Baltimore.

The exact location of the first St. Margaret's is uncertain, as early records were destroyed by a fire at a later church building. What is known is that John Hammond, though himself a member of the vestry of St. Anne's, gave by deed in 1695 a tract of 200 feet square of land "upon Deep Creek for building a Church for Westminster Parish." His only consideration, it was said, was "the love he bore his neighbors." In 1695, the Assembly gave "the Rector, Vestrymen and Wardens of Westminster Parish permission to erect a church for the convenience of persons residing in the settlement of the Towne of Westminster."

One clue to the location of the church exists. Two tracts of land called Luck and Iron Stone Hills which had been granted to Mary Garner and passed down to her son Edward Gibbs, were conveyed by deed on February 24, 1707 to the vestry, to be held as glebe. (Archaically, glebe meant a plot of cultivated land. Its modern meaning is land belonging or yielding revenue to a parish church ecclesiastical benefice.) Situated on the Magothy near Persimmon Point, these 155 acres adjoined Westminster Towne; ruins of a brick foundation, thought to be that of St. Margaret's Church, were once to be found on the property. Dr. Ethan Allen, in his extensive history of the Anglican church in Maryland, observed, "There was a

meeting house at Towne Neck, where there is still to be seen the place where the chapel and burying ground was."

On October 25, 1710, a petition was presented to the Assembly from the vestrymen of the parish "praying that Philip Jones be licensed and approved by the President and Council to be their reader." The petition was granted, putting the vestry in compliance with an order of the Assembly in 1695: ". . . it is hereby further ordered, that where ministers are wanting in any [of] the said parishes, the Vestrymen for the same appointed [are to] take care to provide some sober, discreet person to read prayers on Sundays, etc." A reader was indeed a necessity, for ministers were scarce.

Early struggles

The Church of England was responsible for raising the level of public morality in Maryland and for providing the leavening effect of a church community. It was a tremendous challenge. Colonial life was still brutal for most: in a typical family with four children, one child could be expected to die in infancy, and another one or two would not reach adulthood. Also, the province was not a peaceful one. Intense religious and political competition had marked it from its inception, and the Act of 1692 did nothing to quell such feelings. Roman Catholics and Quakers chafed under the poll tax. (In June 1700, John Hammond wrote a letter to the Commissioners of Trade and Plantation refuting charges made by these groups that the tax was unfair.) The Church was a comfort that had long been desired and hard fought for - but the distractions of hard work and sheer survival meant that the fledgling churches had to struggle for support and stability.

These facts are reflected in the history of St. Margaret's by the short tenure of some of its rectors. The Reverend Mr. Topp was incumbent at St. Margaret's until 1698. He then served at St. Paul's, Baltimore, until 1702, and later at St. Anne's in Annapolis. Service ministers probably performed minimal parish duties in Westminster until 1705, when the Reverend James Wooten, a probationer, served long enough to be recorded. He too moved on to St. Anne's, where he became chaplain to the Provincial Assembly.

From 1709 to 1720, the Reverend Robert Walton enjoyed an unusually long term of service at St. Margaret's. In 1713, during Mr. Walton's incumbency, the church was given its silver Communion Set by Mr. John Brice, a rich Annapolis merchant and city official. The set consisted of a paten and one cup, and was inscribed, "The gift of John Brice, for the

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use of the Communion Table, Westminster Parish in Maryland - 1713." Mr. Walton's assistant, a probationer named Daniel Maynadier who served from 1712-14, was described by various sources as having been "a terrible preacher."

In 1721, Peter Tustian came from England as a missionary to the Carolinas. He was a probationer or curate at Westminster in July of that year. The next known rector was James Cox (1724-29). Samuel Edgar, an unmarried man, came to St. Margaret's in 1730, after having been "accused of drinking too much in his former parish in the Diocese of Virginia." He also later went to St. Anne's. Mr. Edgar was succeeded for a short time by Esdras Theodore Edzard.

Disorder among the clergy in these years was partially caused by confusion in the hierarchy. In 1715 the Calvert family, represented by Charles, the fifth Lord Baltimore, (who was raised an Anglican), had regained its privileges in the province. The Proprietor again had a hand in appointing priests to Maryland parishes, and conflicts in authority arose between Calvert and the Bishop of London. When scandals struck the clergy, as happened often in the wilds of Maryland, the lack of some jurisdiction in correcting offenders made the situation worse.

The Register

Despite these early upheavals in the ministry, the parish strove to keep its affairs in order. In 1687, before the building of the original church, a recording of births, baptisms, confirmations and burials was initiated in a Parish Register. The Register survived the previously mentioned fire and is kept today in the Rare Books collection of the [Maryland State Archives](#); its pigskin cover has been rebound. Its pages put through the process of preservation.

On the first paper leaf of the book is entered "Philip Jones, Clk. of Westminster Parish, was born one: 29th of September year of our Lord 1673." Mr. Jones signed his name, and subsequent qualified registers added their names and dates of tenure below his. The first entry reads: "Isach Hirst was borne the 15th of September 1686." "A Nicholas Greenberry, grandson of the Colonel, was born January 5th and baptized February 18, 1701." Some entries, in giving perhaps more information than is absolutely necessary, make human beings again of names: "John Stinchcomb was born in 1717, and lost his nose with a fall when he was very young." At other times the tone of the Register is grand and formal: "Be it remembered that John Ridout, Esq., a native of Dorset, England, departed this life on the 7th day of October, Anne Domino, 1797, and was buried at

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Whitehall, the ceremony being solemnized by the Rev. Ralph Higginbottom, of St. Anne's Parish."

Unusual names abound: Umphra, Yourruth, Bignall, Comfort.

ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH

by Margaret R. Grimes (late of St. Margaret's Church, Westminster Parish)

If you could speak and you could talk You would tell of strange things which hath been wrought. Your first home on the Severn shore is no more, but you could tell of strange things that happened at your door. Did George Washington ever sleep there, while your rector led in prayer?

Did the Indians come with their pipe of peace to pray for peace that should never cease? Were your folks friendly to the tribe or did they fear and run to hide? Did the Indians loan your people a canoe to come to church o'er the water blue?

Did the ladies come in silk and lace or was that too fancy for the pace? Did the men come with guns on their shoulder or was that too frightening for the Beholder? When the snow was deep and white, did they come to Church at night in a sleigh or did they have a better way?

What was the hue and cry when the taxes got too high? Did you know the ferry on the Severn tide would bring the last Tory Governor to hide beneath your floor? When the cruel flames were at your door did the people say St. Margaret's is no more or did they say we will build again?

The Quakers gave you shelter when you had nowhere to put the Book of Common Prayer. Other churches offered space while you prayed for grace. At last you were given a site that was just right. Did your people kneel and pray they would have a church one day? Then with saw and ax through the woods they went timbers bent. So with timber and bricks and some fancy tricks, they fashioned a church that would not long exist.

Cruel flames were again at your door. Did you cry in despair? No, your strength was still there. We will build again. You salvaged the bricks came up with some more fancy tricks. And that is the way you built the church we love today.

Past Rectors

This list of Incumbents at St. Margaret's Westminster Parish was gathered largely from Allen's *Manuscript of History of Maryland* and from *Maryland's Established Church* (1956). It was compiled in present form by The Rev. G. Albert Cooper, in December, 1956, and updated from the church registry.

Edward Topp, Jr.	Mason Locke Weems	Alexander Galt
James Wooten	Stephen Sykes	C. Haverstick
Robert Walton	R. Higginbotham	Alexander Galt
Daniel Maynadier	William Duke	James Mitchell Magruger
Peter Tustian	William Swann	R. Cleon Cowling
James Cox	W. Nende	Henry Powers
Samuel Edgar	W. Ninde	G. Albert Cooper
Richard E. Chase	G. Shaeffer	Robert Schenkel
N. Whittaker	Henry Asquith	Forrest L. Farris
Walter Chalmers	Orlando Hutton	Mary D. Glasspool
John Berkeley	Samuel Ridout	
William West	E. H. Harlow	
Robert Ranney	H. H. Hewitt	
Joseph Messenger	Samuel Ridout	
Daniel McKinnon	Samuel Spencer	
William Hanna	W. R. B. Turner	