# History of the Marshall Hall Property

by

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# Chapter 1

## *The Piscataway "Affiliation" to 1600*

If the past, in David Lowenthal's useful metaphor, is a foreign country, then discovering the history of the pre-contact Piscataway is like writing a travelogue without ever leaving the train. The bits of evidence are scattered, fragmentary, and open to fundamental debate. But even if there had been a Piscataway chronicler to set down the events of Potomac-area life before the Europeans came, it is unclear whether such a history would provide a neat, coherent narrative. Piscataway life was in a continual state of transition as smaller groups split from larger ones, formed alliances with others, went to war with former allies, made allies of former enemies, and sometimes assimilated into still other groups. To catch glimpses of the early Piscataway culture, it is necessary to examine a wide array of colonial documents, archaeological discoveries, historical reconstructions, and Piscataway oral history. The stretch of land that eventually would become the Marshall Hall site originally lay near the center of the Piscataway world. It was approximately two miles down river from Moyaone, the most important Piscataway town. Radiating out from Moyaone, numerous Piscataway villages dotted the landscape. It may be that one Piscataway village was located at the Marshall Hall site. Some evidence suggests an ossuary near the present-day Marshall family burial plot. The presence of the ossuary, in turn, is a strong indication that a Piscataway village once

existed there. Moreover, some colonial maps indicate a village at the site.[1] As late as 1674, Nicholas Spencer and John Washington patented a site on the western shore of the Potomac that was "neere oppositt to Piscattaway Indian Towne in Mariland"—this of course is the site where Mt. Vernon would be built by Washington's great grandson George.[2] The Marshall Hall site cannot be interpreted adequately without understanding the central place that stretch of the Potomac shoreline held in the Piscataway world. More than that, the Piscataway presence significantly affected the way the Potomac River Valley above and below the eventual site of Marshall Hall would be settled.

To speak of Piscataway villages suggests too strongly a thoroughly domesticated life. For the Piscataway, a village was merely one home site among several in which they lived through the seasons of the year. The traditional conception of a settled village also implies a continuity and cohesive identity that was not a hallmark of traditional Piscataway culture. While there was a thread of Piscataway identity that stretched back at least several decades before the 1630s -- when Europeans first began settling on the Western Shore in significant numbers -- the Piscataway nation was an open polity that did not emulate the controlled hierarchy of the neighboring Powhatan, either within its own domain or over that of neighboring, affiliated tribes.

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[1] See the maps in *The Maryland State Archives Atlas of Historical Maps of Maryland, 1608-1908*, ed. by Edward C. Papenfuse & Joseph M. Coale III (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 1-30 passim. See also Wayne E. Clark & Helen C. Rountree, "The Powhatans and the Maryland Mainland," in *Powhatan Foreign Relations, 1500-1722*, ed. Helen C. Rountree (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 114.

[2] William B. Marye, "Piscattaway," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 30 (September 1935): 239, citing Virginia Land Office, Richmond, Va., Patents, Liber VI, folio 614: 1 March 1674.

The Piscataway did not think of themselves as "Indians." No common identity encompassed Native North Americans until well after European colonization began. The Piscataway defined themselves as a particular group, but one that had developed out of others and that did not seek to impose its own vision on surrounding groups. This can be seen in the way the Piscataway named the world around them. In 1600, Moyaone gave the appearance of a settled town along the lines of a European village of the time. Built along the Potomac River's eastern shoreline at a significant point just south of where Piscataway Creek empties into the river, it was surrounded by a stockade of ten-foot-high palisades. This wall, which may have been covered with mats or bark, was set in an oval shape that measured about 400 feet across at its widest point. Inside the stockade, about 500 Piscataway lived during the spring, summer, and fall seasons. Their houses and activities gave the impression of permanency. But it is likely the name Moyaone was not heard in the town a generation before 1600.

Unlike the Powhatan, the Piscataways did not call their territories by one name. Place names strictly were a local affair. Moreover, place names could change over time. John Smith, for instance, called the main Piscataway town he visited in 1608 "Moyaone," and this is how later archaeologists and historians have referred to it. But some later colonials called the town Piscataway. Yet the Indians and other colonials seem to have named it after the reigning paramount chief at any given time. In the reign of Kittamaquund, for instance, one of the Jesuits then in Maryland followed Piscataway practice when he referred to the site as "Kittamaquund, the metropolis of Pascatoa

[Piscataway]."[3] It is quite likely Smith was unaware of this practice when he included Moyaone on his famous map of 1608. He called the site by the name of the then-reigning patriarch and believed this to be a permanent name rather than an ephemeral label.

There is also some confusion over what to call the Piscataway themselves. Following Smith, the Virginia colonists called them the Moyaones, at least into the 1620s. But as Maryland was settled by the English, this name gave way to "Piscataway" in both Maryland and Virginia colonial documents. The Iroquis called them and many of their associated tribes of the Western Shore yet another name: the Conoy. To this day, many anthropologists still use this label to denote Western Shore Indians. The question of names gets further complicated when one attempts to understand the Piscataways' history at the site of "Moyaone."

The Moyaone site has been populated for more than 5,000 years. This is not to say that a permanent settlement has been there throughout the millennia. The tribes who populated the site were semi-nomadic. The Piscataway themselves were not native to the area, but settled there somewhere around 1300. Two theories make competing claims about where the Piscataway came from. One holds that the Piscataway came from an area up the Potomac inhabited by Indians of the "Montgomery complex" (at present-day Montgomery County, Maryland).[4] The other claims that the Piscataway arrived from the

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[3] In "Extracts from the Annual Letters of the English Province of the Society of Jesus" [1639], in *Narratives of Early Maryland, 1633-1684*, ed. Clayton Colman Hall (1910, reprint: New York: Barnes & Noble, 1959), 124.

[4] Stephen R. Potter, *Commoners, Tribute, and Chiefs: The Development of Algonquian Culture in the Potomac Valley* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 126-30.

Eastern Shore and were descended from the Lenni Lenape (or Delaware).[5] These theories employ four key pieces of evidence: the diffusion of pottery techniques and aesthetics, ossuary burial, a 17th century Piscataway chief's testimonial, and oral history among surviving Piscataways.[6]

Potter contends that a similarity in ceramic technique and design shows the Piscataway to be derived from the Montgomery complex. But Clark and Rountree counter that the Montgomery complex peoples did not practice ossuary burial as did the Piscataway.[7] They and Tayac put much faith in the 1660 claim of a Piscataway chief that "long a goe there came a King from the Easterne Shoare who Comanded over all the Indians now inhabiting within the bounds of this Province (nameing every towne severally)...."[8] According to this tradition, the Piscataway once were Nanticoke, but split away from them, headed westward, and eventually arrived at the Potomac. Once there, they shed their Nanticoke identity as they interacted with aboriginal people and became the Piscataway. It is possible, of course, that both theories are valid and the Piscataway were a blended people of two distinct groups. This idea is given added credence in that Piscataway means "where the waters blend," that is, where the little Potomac and the

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[5] See Gabrielle Tayac, *Collective Identity Incorporation: The Piscataway as American Indians, 1608-1996* (PhD Diss., Harvard University, 1999) regarding the similarities of language (53) as well as the Piscataway oral tradition which holds the Delaware to be their "cousins" and the Nanticoke to be their "brothers" (55). See also Paul Byron Cissna, *The Piscataway Indians of Southern Maryland: An Ethnohistory from Pre-European Contact to the Present* (PhD Diss., The American University, 1986).

[6] Potter, *Commoners*, 126-38; Clark & Rountree, "Powhatan," 124-35; Tayac, *Collective Identity*, 55-56.

[7] Clark & Rountree, "Powhatan," 130. But see Clark's earlier assumption that the Piscataway were closely related to the Montgomery complex: Wayne E. Clark, "The Origins of the Piscataway and Related Indian Cultures," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 75.1 (March 1980): 8-22.

[8] *Archives of Maryland*, v. 3 (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1883— ), 403.

Anacostia meet to form the broad Potomac.[9] But this also could be a metaphoric representation of two peoples (one from the upper Potomac and another from the Eastern Shore) blending as the waters of the Potomac and the Anacostia.

**Piscataway: A Conservative Culture**

Over the next 200 years after their arrival at the Potomac shore, the Piscataway gained a unique geopolitical position. Powerful confederacies developed around them. To the north there was the Iroquois, to the south the Powhatan. By the middle 1500s, the Piscataway had developed a somewhat conservative culture that resisted outside influences. Archeological evidence strongly suggests that the Piscataway kept distinct from the tribes on their distant southern, western, and northern borders. They did not adapt what historian James Merrell calls the neighboring tribes' "more elaborate cultural practices."[10] One key example is Piscataway pottery found at Moyaone. Pots found there, even those from later periods, were decorated only in the simplest forms.[11] The Piscataway knew of the styles of these other groups, and clearly experimented with their techniques. But the Piscataway most often rejected these experiments, maintaining their own comfortable approaches. This suggests, too, the development of some distinct cultural boundaries that might be key to Piscataway identity. Yet, at the same time, the Piscataway shared numerous cultural traits with neighboring tribes.

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[9] Tayac, *Collective Identity*, 55-56.
[10] James Merrell, "Cultural Continuity Among the Piscataway Indians of Colonial Maryland," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 36 (1979): 550.
[11] Robert L. Stephenson, *The Prehistoric People of Accokeek Creek* (Accokeek, Md.: Alice Ferguson Foundation, 1984), 33.

Historical and archeological sources offer key data on Piscataway cultural traits and their relation to surrounding tribes. These tribes included several on the eastern shore of the Potomac as well as two on the western shore (which eventually became Virginia): the Patawomecks and the Dogues. The Patawomecks were the largest tribe on the far side of the Potomac. They were the region's key trading group, plying the great river along its length, but based to the south across the river from the Piscataway. The Dogues (whom Smith labeled "Tauxenants" on his 1608 map) were situated directly across the Potomac from Moyaone at or near the future site of Mt. Vernon.[12] All these groups on both sides of the Potomac spoke variants of the Algonquian language. They were related by ethnic heritage and by the economic and communication bonds forged by their mutual reliance on the Potomac River.

**Piscataway Daily Life**

Moyaone seems to have been the only Piscataway settlement surrounded by palisades for protection. The Piscataway built their houses in the same manner as the Powhatan. The houses were situated above ground. A sapling framework covered with a mat or bark cover supported a barrel roof. At the roof's peak, a smoke hole let out the fumes of a central fire. The houses varied in size, ranging from 20 to 100 feet long, 12 feet wide, and 10 feet high.[13]

Piscataway youth went naked until puberty. Men and women wore knee-length deerskin loincloths in the warmer months and added deerskin mantles in the winter. The

[12] John Smith, *The Complete Works of Captain John Smith (1580-1631)*, ed. Philip L. Barbour, v. 1 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).
[13] Clark & Rountree, "Powhatan," 119.

politically distinct Piscataway seem to have worn such mantles throughout the year (except, of course, when hunting or gardening). The Piscataway painted their faces red to keep away insect pests, and sometimes added other colors for decoration, particularly blue, or to indicate a special status, as during wartime.[14]

The necessities of producing and finding food had a vast influence over Piscataway life. The Piscataway were fortunate to have a wide diversity of staples beyond what their agriculture produced. But while agriculture tied the Piscataway to the land of their villages, other sources of food required those who lived along the Potomac to pick up and move to new locations during the winter months. In the early spring, Piscataway men cleared fields near their villages while the women planted maize, beans, and squash.[15] As these crops were sprouting, the Piscataway collected mussels in freshwater areas and crabs and oysters in saltwater or brackish zones.[16] By the early summer, they had access to fish, various berries, and green corn.[17] Men hunted small animals, such as squirrels, turkeys, and fish. In the fall, the Piscataway reaped the crops they had sown in the spring and supplemented these with bounteous nuts.[18] As the autumn bounty gave way to scarcity, the Piscataway moved to winter hunting grounds, where they could survive on preserved foods and a variety of game.[19] The diversity of staples created the necessary basis for Piscataway social stability. If one source failed

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[14] For more on Piscataway culture, see "A Briefe Relation of the Voyage unto Maryland, By Father Andrew White, 1634" and "A Relation of Maryland, 1635," in Hall, *Narratives*, 42-43, 86-88; and Clark & Rountree, "Powhatan," 119ff.
[15] Merrell, "Cultural Continuity," 550; Clark & Rountree, "Powhatan,"119, 247n30.
[16] Stephen Potter, "A New Look at the Accokeek Creek Complex," in Robert L. Stephenson, *The Prehistoric People of Accokeek Creek* (Accokeek, Md.: Alice Ferguson Foundation, 1984), 38.
[17] Potter, "New Look," 38.
[18] Potter, "New Look," 38.
[19] Merrell, "Cultural Continuity," 550; Potter, "New Look," 38.

during a particular year, others were readily available to prevent starvation and social fragmentation.[20]

**The Economy of the Piscataways' Potomac**

The Piscataway and their neighboring tribes did not see rivers as boundaries but rather as vital routes of transportation and information. The Piscataway themselves apparently did not travel great distances on the Potomac. But they did take advantage of goods and news communicated by the Patawomecks, the major trading group of the Potomac.[21] Moyaone was situated at a key point along the river, and gave the Piscataway a potentially powerful position. But their cultural conservatism prevented them from dreaming of a far-flung empire. No doubt, this conservatism also had political implications, for Piscataway expansion would have meant violent conflict with the two powerful empires and confederacies that surrounded them: Iroquois to the north and west and Powhatan to the south.

**Piscataway Religion**

The Piscataway shared many religious concepts and beliefs with their neighboring Algonquian groups. According to the Piscataway cosmology, the world was created by a beneficent, but distant, deity.[22] But this deity did not demand intense worship. The everyday world was populated by lesser deities, or *okees*. An okee was what John White called "a frantique spirit," or one who could cause "feare of harme" such as the spirit in

[20] Merrell, "Cultural Continuity," 550; Potter, "New Look," 38.
[21] Clark & Rountree, "Powhatan," 119.
[22] Clark & Rountree, "Powhatan," 123.

fire or in maize.[23] Okees were very involved in human life and could be swayed by offerings, such as those presented in the first-fruits ceremony that venerated maize. Other than these, and unlike the Powhatan, the Piscataway had few idols.

The evidence suggests there were no priests or specialists in religious matters among the Piscataway. Some colonial observers, however, reported the presence of individuals who could interpret dreams as well as some medicine men. French Jesuit priests, who had come to Maryland to convert the Indians to Catholicism, found forty such "conjurors" who attempted to heal the desperately ill chief Kittamaquund.[24] The Piscataway set aside no buildings to serve as temples, although they built "matchacomoco" houses for council sessions.

The Piscataway buried their dead in mass graves, or ossuaries. Leaders initially were buried individually, then transferred later to an ossuary. Chiefs after death walked among the Piscataway as living presences for at least four days and perhaps until the time their bones were transferred to the ossuaries. In both burials (the first grave and the second ossuary), the blood and bone of the chiefs intermingled with the earth of a specific site. Thus, burial sites were of vital importance to the Piscataway.[25] The ossuaries tied the people to the land as the land became the embodiment of past chiefs.

**Piscataway Internal Politics and Foreign Relations**

The various tribes of the Potomac, Patuxent, and Chesapeake watersheds forged a series of alliances. Tribes affiliated with the Piscataway by 1600 included the Anacostans,

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[23] White, "Briefe Relation," 45.
[24] "Jesuit Relations [1639]," in Hall, *Narratives of Early Maryland*, 138.
[25] Tayac, *Collective Identity*, 54.

Portobacs, Mattawomans, Nanjemoys, and (to varying degrees) the Pamunkeys, Yaocomacos, and the Virginia Dogues (orTauxenents).[26] By the early 1600s, this alliance accounted for as many as 8,400 individuals. [27] The Piscataway saw the relations among the Western Shore tribes as all being thrown into a "mixing bowl."[28] The Piscataway themselves were centralized around Moyaone.

The Piscataway arrayed themselves in a social and political hierarchy, albeit a weak one. The chiefs had certain responsibilities that mirrored to some degree the roles of European political leaders. They were charged with hosting visitors and carrying out certain diplomatic missions, for example. Even so, the Piscataway saw chiefs as individuals who served the entire polity, rather than as authorities who commanded the people.

English terms such as paramountcy and affiliation denote kinds of formal ties that were absent from the Piscataway-centered affiliation. Each Piscataway village along the Potomac had its own hereditary chief (*werowance*) and counselors (*cockarouses*) who were clearly distinguished from the rest of the group. They often had slightly larger houses, a signifying badge (perhaps a mantle worn more frequently than other Piscataway wore), and different burial practices. [29] Reigning over all werowances was the paramount chief, whom the Piscataway referred to as "tayac."[30] Cockarouses most likely gained their position of counselor to the chief through merit. But they also had to be members of

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[26] Clark & Rountree, "Powhatan," 116; Potter *Commoners*, 19; Tayac, *Collective Identity*, 56.
[27] Tayac, *Collective Identity*, 56.
[28] Tayac, *Collective Identity*, 55.
[29] Merrell, "Cultural Continuity," 550.
[30] Clark & Rountree, "Powhatan,"121.

certain families.[31] These counselors sometimes met in formal councils, particularly in regard to issues of war. These exalted positions did not absolve werowances and cockarouses from the necessity of daily labor. They planted their own crops, made their own bows, arrows, canoes, clothing, and accessories. [32] This lack of class division in labor suggests the fluid nature of Piscataway political relations, both internally and externally. While there were particular channels through which power flowed, these channels were shallow and easily rerouted. Another example of how Piscataway politics differed from European ideals is found in the rules of chiefly succession.

According to tradition, werowance and tayac succession was not from father to son as among the Europeans.[33] Chiefs inherited their power from their mothers, then passed it to their brothers and sometimes to their sisters. Colonial records mention at least two female *werowansquas* among the Piscataway, one in 1642 and another in 1661-1663.[34] If a chief died with no siblings, his children did not inherit his position. They held a definite position, called *tawzin*, but could not ascend to a chieftainship because of the matrilineal descent rule. Thus, in cases where there were no legitimate heirs, the cockarouses would gather and choose a successor from the descendants of an earlier chief's brothers. When a sixteenth-century tayac died with no proper heir, for example, the Piscataway werowances and cockarouses bestowed the tayacship on a chief from the Eastern Shore named Uttapoingassinem. The tayacship thereafter descended to a succession of Uttapoingassinem's brothers. At the death of the last of these brothers, the tayacship passed to a sister's son. This pattern held at least until the 1650s, the time

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[31] Clark & Rountree, "Powhatan,"122-23.
[32] "Jesuit Relations [1634]," in Hall, *Narratives of Early Maryland*, 84.
[33] Clark & Rountree, "Powhatan," 122.
[34] Clark & Rountree, "Powhatan," 122.

of Weghucasso, who died without an heir of any sort (although there were significant challenges to the system when Kittamaquund killed his older brother, the tayac Wannas in 1636). The Piscataway then gave the tayacship to the second Uttapoingassinem in the 1660s. The Piscataway looked on this Uttapoingassinem favorably because he was descended from one of the early tayacs and because they widely considered him to be "Jan Jan Wizous," that is, having the merits of a true king. [35]

The Piscataway alliances took on a quasi-formal cast sometime around 1500, although these relationships were evolving continuously. The first Uttapoingassinem made "Moyaone" the political center of several affiliated tribes that paid tribute of varying degrees to the Piscataway.[36] At times the affiliations seem to have stretched from the eastern shore of the Potomac (and may have included the Pawtamecks and Dogues on the far shore of the Potomac) across the Chesapeake to the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The Piscataway established a paramount chiefdom along the Potomac over four other petty chiefdoms (or polities) by the late 1500s. These other tribes consisted of the Anacostans, who lived to the north of Piscataway (in and around what is now Anacostia, Washington, D.C.). The other three groups -- the Mattawomans, Nanjemoys, and Portobaccos -- lived south of Piscataway in modern-day Charles County west of the old Zekiah Swamp. The Piscataway seem to have held sway over some Eastern Shore groups in the late 1500s. The Piscataway were closely allied with other tribes of the

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[35] *Archives of Maryland*, 3: 403. See also another mention of how the Piscataway determined their tayacs in *Archives of Maryland*, 3: 481-3. At this later point, the Piscataway chose their leaders from one of two families, the Wannys and the Wahocasso, which suggests an alternative method for deciding leadership when the normal succession was interrupted by lack of siblings and offspring.

[36] Merrell, "Cultural Continuity," 550-51n9.

Western Shore, meaning those to the east of the Zekiah Swamp along the Patuxent River valley, such as the Patuxents, Aquitanacks, Assamacomocos, and Mattapanients.

Piscataway paramountcy never was as strong or stable as that of Powhatan. For one thing, tayacs did not rule by force or coercion. The Piscataways never sought to punish affiliated groups that sought autonomy. For another, by the early 1600s, the somewhat distant Eastern Shore tribes formed a separate affiliation under the leadership of the Nanticokes. The closer Patuxent tribes showed signs of autonomy by the 1630s, using the arrival of English colonists to forge relations independent of the Piscataways' will. In 1639, one of the Jesuit fathers residing in Maryland believed the Patuxents to be key in the Catholic project of converting the Indians. He noted that it was vital to convert the king of the Patuxents as "he was said to be very powerful among the barbarians, on account of his reputation for wisdom and influence."[37] The Patuxent tribes made land and other economic transactions with the settlers on their own, without bothering to obtain permission from the Piscataway.[38] Several of the Patuxent Valley tribes, for instance, signed a treaty with the English setting up the Choptico Reservation in March 1651 in southern Charles County.[39]

Even within the more close-knit Piscataway paramountcy, relations could become quite strained, even broken. By the 1630s, the early British adventurer and trader Henry Fleet considered the Anacostans to be much disgruntled with the Piscataway: "There is but little friendship between the Emperor [of the Piscataway] and the Nacostines [Anacostans], he being fearful to punish them, because they are protected by the

[37] "Extracts from the Annual Letters [1639]," 124.
[38] Clark & Rountree, "Powhatan," 116
[39] For list of tribes see, *Archives of Maryland*, 1: 329.

Massomacks of Cannyda Indians, who have used to convey all such English truck as cometh into the river to the Massomacks."[40] No doubt, these blows to the Piscataway paramountcy reflect the destabilization effect the coming of European settlers had on Indian politics. But even before these foreigners were much of a presence, the Piscataway experienced conflict with other tribes.

This intratribal conflict, before 1600 at least, tended to be short-lived. The Piscataway, like so many groups around them, were an adaptive people who readily assimilated other peoples and just as readily accepted the (relative) autonomy of their allies. But the centralization, more settled life, and greater social complexity (both in internal political organization and in foreign relations) that the Piscataway developed by 1600 came with a great cost. It generated organized warfare as the Piscataway developed a distinct identity and a territorial sensibility. [41]

**History**

The Piscataway at Moyaone became the center of a fairly extensive affiliation through the 1500s. By 1600, Piscataway received tribute from numerous tribes, numbering anywhere from 7,000 to 9,500 people along the Potomac and Patuxent river valleys. The Piscataways' growing status is clearly seen in the expanding lines of Moyaone's stockades, the mass ossuaries, and the growing number and size of refuse pits.[42]

By the end of the 1500s, they were threatened by a series of incursions. The Powhatan were expanding from the south. A series of fierce Iroquoian tribes threatened

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[40] Henry Fleet, "Journal of a Voyage in Ship Warwick," in *The Founders of Maryland*, ed. Edward D. Neill (Albany, N.Y.: Joel Munsell, 1876), 25.
[41] Potter, "New Look,"38.
[42] Merrell, "Cultural Continuity,"552; Stephenson, *Prehistoric People*, 26-33.

from the north. The Iroquoian Erie began sent raiding parties from the northwest. The Iroquoian Nacotchtanks became a looming presence when they moved into Piscataway territory and formed a settlement a mere fifteen miles up the Potomac from Moyaone.[43]

The greatest threat came from the north: the Susquehannocks (Figure 1). The Susquehannocks were an Iroquoian group who developed a cohesive cultural identity after 1550 as they established a home base first along the north fork of the Susquehanna River in the Wyoming Valley and by 1580 along the Susquehanna in present-day Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. The Susquehannocks were marauders. Their raids on the Piscataway and neighboring tribes increasingly intensified after 1575. The effect of these raids seems to have strengthened the Piscataway paramountcy on the eve of European intrusion into Maryland's Eastern Shore.[44]



FIGURE 1. A Susquehannock from John Smith's 1624 Map of Virginia

[43] Merrell, "Cultural Continuity,"552.
[44] Francis Jennings, "Susquehannock," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, v. 15: *Northeast*, ed. Bruce Trigger (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian, 1978): 362; Clark & Rountree, "Powhatan," 117.

The first recorded meeting between the Piscataway and Europeans was John Smith's visit in 1608. They had clearly heard of the Europeans and had obtained some European goods in the years before Smith's arrival. And after the English adventurer left, the Europeans remained a distant concept for almost fifteen years. In 1622, events in Virginia brought English warriors to Piscataway. If the Piscataway experienced increasing cultural identity and political power among their affiliated tribes in the late 1500s, the arrival of the Virginia forces began a different process of political instability.[45] Within the paramountcy, the Piscataway and the Anacostans had become, by 1622, "mortall enemies" according to one contemporary observer.[46] To some extent this resulted from the increasing pressure Powhatan put on Potomac-area tribes to come under its sway in response to English military depravations. In response, the Patawomecks and the neighboring Dogues both seem to have allied themselves with Powhatan and turned against the Piscataway, who would develop a distinctly different relationship with the English who settled Maryland.

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[45] Merrell, "Cultural Continuity,"553-54.
[46] Merrell, "Cultural Continuity,"552n13, quoting W. Noel Sainsbury, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, 1574-1660*, v. 1 (London, 1860); and/or Smith, *Works*, 586.

# Chapter 2

## *The Piscataway Discover the English, 1600-1700*

Wannas had good cause to fear the white men sailing up the Potomac River. As the tayac of the Piscataway in the spring of 1634, it was his duty to judge the motives and intentions of strangers who entered the Piscataway territories. He was old enough to recall the first European to visit Piscataway. His people had received John Smith kindly twenty-six years earlier, seeing him as a potential ally in the Piscataways' conflicts with other Indian groups.[1] In the years that followed, the Piscataway met infrequently with Virginians, trading the necessities of life with them from time to time.[2]

All that changed in November 1623. The Virginians took their second war with the Powhatan across the Potomac. Wannas remembered how they struck at the Piscataway without warning and in a vicious way the Indians had never before experienced. Governor Francis Wyatt's force of ninety men attacked the Piscataway warriors. The soldiers then "burnt their Howses, [along] with a marvelous quantetie of

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[1] The "Moyaones" as Smith called the Piscataway, "did their best to content us." Smith, *Travels and Works of Captain John Smith*, part 1, ed. Edward Arber (1910, reprint New York: Burt Franklin, 1967), 113. It is possible that French or Spanish traders visited Piscataway before Smith, but his is the first recorded meeting of Europeans and Piscataway.

[2] "Madyson, before his building [was built] went to Moyaones, where hee got prouision for a moneth, and was promised much more" in the fall of 1622. Smith, *Travels*, 596.

Corne." Striking at the Piscataway warriors and burning Moyaone and their food supplies, it seemed that the Virginians wanted to destroy the Piscataway as a people.[3]

The English in Virginia were not the only threats Wannas's people faced in the years that followed. They fought rival Indian groups from the north and west, particularly the brutal Susquehannocks who staged periodic raids from their base near the mouth of the Susquehanna River at the top of the Chesapeake Bay. By 1631, Moyaone had been burned a second time, this time by the Erie. Wannas and the Piscataway "Great Men" worried that Moyaone was too exposed and so moved the center of the Piscataway world two miles up Piscataway Creek.[4]

Although the center of Piscataway moved away from the future site of Marshall Hall, the site remained vital in two ways. First it was very close to the Piscataway village of Accokeek.[5] Accokeek, situated about 3000 feet down the Potomac from Bryan's Point, thrived through most of the century before it faded away around 1700.[6] Beyond this cultural life, however, the area was crucial to one of the seminal events of American history: Bacon's Rebellion. The rebellion is usually associated with Virginia, but its

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[3] *The Records of the Virginia Company of London* (Washington, D.C., 1906-1935), v. 4: 450; James Merrell, "Cultural Continuity Among the Piscataway Indians of Colonial Maryland," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 36 (1979): 554. The Pamunkey, members of the loose Piscataway affiliation, were apparently the tribe that raised the Virginians' ire [*Virginia Company Records*, v. 4: 450-51]. Note, however, that Merrell contends it was the Nacotchtanks and perhaps their Iroquian allies from the northern Chesapeake region [Merrell, "Cultural Continuity," 554].

[4] Alice L.L. Ferguson, "The Susquehannock Fort on Piscataway Creek," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 36 (March 1941), 5; Robert L. Stephenson & Alice L.L. Ferguson, *The Accokeek Creek Site:A Middle Atlantic Seaboard Culture Sequence* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Museum of Anthropology, 1963), ,5; Merrell, "Cultural Continuity," 554; Gabrielle Tayac, *Collective Identity Incorporation: The Piscataway as American Indians, 1608-1996* (PhD Diss., Harvard University, 1999), 103.

[5] This village should not be confused with the inland town of the same name.

[6] Stephenson, *Accokeek Creek Site*, 31, 35.

roots were sunk deep in decisions made by Maryland provincial authorities. The actions that sparked the war took place largely along the few miles of shoreline between the future Marshall Hall and the vanished Moyaone. Central to the location were two adjoining propertyies called Charley and Hansonton, which abut the Marshall Hall site and which would pass into the Marshall family's hands at the end of the 1600s. Hansonton was a central scene of the first stage of the rebellion.

The chain of events that set off Bacon's Rebellion are complex and involve surprisingly distant places. Historians and the public at large long preconceived most colonial history as intensely local. But one of the key discoveries of colonial historians in the past twenty years or so is how even far-flung locations are part of world history.

To understand what happened at Hansonton in 1675, it is necessary to discuss some wide ranging and complicated events. These events are made all the more difficult to figure out because the historical evidence is fragmentary, sometimes obscure, and even contradictory. But decisions made in Europe frequently had as much impact on those who lived in the Marshall Hall vicinity before 1700 as choices made in St. Mary's City or at Piscataway. They took longer to travel across the ocean than they do in our modern day. But their effects were no less real for their slow travel time.

As Wannas watched those unfamiliar ships sail into the mouth of the Potomac, he had much reason to be cautious. He had heard from Englishmen and Indians close to the powerful Virginia leader and businessman William Claiborne that these were Spanish ships on a mission to destroy Piscataway. Wary of the "Canow[s] as bigg as an Iland, with so many men, as trees were in a wood," Wannas amassed a fighting force of 500

bowmen to await the ships' emissaries.[7] Leonard Calvert arrived in the smaller of the two ships, the *Dove*, sailing just beyond the point of land where Marshall Hall would be built a century later. Wannas boarded the ship to talk—whether due to a sense of bravery or to the presence among the newcomers of Henry Fleet is unclear. Fleet was a Virginia trader and interpreter well known to Indians all along the Potomac. He introduced Wannas to Leonard Calvert, Father Andrew White, and others who were leading a new colony of Englishmen and women into the Chesapeake region. Calvert asked the tayac's permission to settle in his dominion. Wannas, still unsure of what these men wanted, offered a noncommittal answer: "he would not bid him [Calvert] goe," as one contemporary recalled the scene, "neither would hee bid him stay, but that he might use his own discretion."[8] Calvert and his followers sailed back down the Potomac and chose a spot near the mouth of the river where the Yaocomacos were willing to "sell" them land. There, far from Piscataway, the first settlers of Maryland founded the seat of their empire, St. Mary's City.

The arrival of the Marylanders set off a power struggle among the Piscataway. Wannas remained aloof from the new Englishmen. His brother, Kitamaquund, argued that the English could be a valuable ally as well as a source of the powerful weapons that were quickly changing the nature of warfare among the Indians. Within two years of the English landing in Maryland, Kitamaquund murdered Wannas and assumed the leadership of the Piscataway. The new tayac sought close ties with the English. Not only

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[7] Quotation is from "A Briefe Relation of the Voyage unto Maryland, By Father Andrew White, 1634" in *Narratives of Early Maryland, 1633-1684*, ed. Clayton Colman Hall (1910, reprint: New York: Barnes & Noble, 1959), 41.

[8] Anonymous, "A Relation of Maryland," in Hall, *Narratives*, 72.

did he establish trade relations, he also converted to Catholicism and sent his daughter Mary to be educated at St. Mary's City.[9]

**Piscataway–Maryland Foreign Relations**

Kitamaquund and later tayacs discovered that they could manage the Marylanders to some extent, certainly far better than the Powhatan had managed the Virginians. For one thing, the Marylanders seemed to have little interest in the lands that surrounded Piscataway proper. Piscataway was separated from the growing Maryland colony by the sizable Zaciah Swamp and was quite distant from St. Mary's City. The number of English settlers in the area remained low for the first quarter century after Wannas's meeting with Leonard Calvert. The area of Charles County which incorporated the southern regions of Piscataway had only a few hundred settlers even as late as 1660. The Piscataway controlled several things the Marylanders wanted. They were a source of food and, potentially, of wealth in the beaver-pelt trade. Most importantly, the Piscataway served as a buffer zone for the Marylanders against the marauding Susquehannock and other Iroquian nations to the north. The Piscataway greatly welcomed the weapons the Marylanders supplied them and were quite willing to serve as a buffer. To the Piscataway, the relations with the Marylanders represented a military alliance among others and not a patron-client relation.

The Marylanders had a complicated set of attitudes toward the Piscataway, unlike the early Virginians who seemed bent on destroying the Powhatan. Maryland officials attempted in several ways to coexist peacefully with the Piscataway. Numerous treaties

[9] Mary Kitamaquund would later marry Giles Brent, brother to the celebrated Margaret Brent, in an attempt to force a racial bond between the English and the Piscataway.

promised the Piscataway equal justice for crimes committed against them by Marylanders. But interwoven with these promises were violent fears that led provincial authorities to mistrust the Piscataway and to attempt to place them in a subservient position. These different attitudes were evident in an early piece of legislation from 1638, "Act for Trade with the Indians."[10] The act banned traders, especially "forreiners," from trading with the Indians who resided in Maryland without first acquiring a license from the governor. The two reasons given for the law clearly reveal the attitudes of the first Marylanders toward the Indians. On the one hand, the Maryland English saw the Piscataway as a source of wealth and food supplies. The act derived from fears that unregulated trade would drive up the prices charged by Indians for beaver pelts and corn. To underscore this, small transactions by individuals dealing with Indians on their own plantations were exempt from the licensing requirement. On the other hand, the act revealed a deep mistrust of the Indians. It warned that the Indians were skittish, devious, and easily misled by "Jealousies[,] rumors and false newes." The first Marylanders also feared that the Indians would at any moment attack the trading vessels of individual traders to arm themselves for large-scale attacks on Lord Baltimore's province.

Similar contradictory sentiments would continue to mar the Marylanders attempts to forge amicable relations with the Piscataway and other allied tribes for decades thereafter. Treaties with the "friend" Indians sought to prevent them from gaining enough power to attack Marylanders in any concerted fashion. Treaties, even when they promised benefits to the Piscataway, imposed demeaning practices. Indians approaching a Maryland plantation had to shout to announce their arrival. They could travel only in

[10] *Archives of Maryland*, 1: 42-44.

small bands, usually of eight or less. They were even, at times, required to carry identity cards. But into the 1660s, the Piscataway could slough off these requirements. They rarely met with Englishmen.

If the Marylanders depended on the Piscataway for food and protection, the Piscataway depended increasingly on the Marylanders for protection from their own Indian enemies, especially the Susquehannocks. The alliance with Marylanders quickly became a dependency for the Piscataway. Kitamaquund converted to Catholicism after Father White saved him from a severe illness in 1639.[11] From that point on, there was a close association between the Piscataway and the Catholic faith.[12] Catholicism gravely diminished the Piscataways' ability to create and maintain a separate identity from the English until the end of the century. [13]

The Piscataway's dependence on the Maryland authorities was powerfully symbolized by one of Kitamaquund's last acts as tayac before his death in 1641. Governor Calvert had assiduously wooed the tayac, and referred to him as his "Brother," his "friend and servant."[14] The attention paid off handsomely: Kitamaquund gave Maryland authorities the right to choose or, or at least legitimate, new tayacs—a power

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[11] Jesuit Relations, "From the Annual Letter of 1639," in Hall, *Narratives*, 126.
[12] Cissna and Merrell disagree on this point. Merrell, noting that Father White and the Jesuits proselytized among the Maryland Indians for no more than three years, claims that Catholicism had little effect on the Piscataway [Merrell, "Cultural Continuity," 560]. Cissna, however, suggests that the "the fact that all or virtually all contemporary Piscataway are Catholic suggests that the missionary efforts were *at some point in time* highly successful" [Paul Byron Cissna, *The Piscataway Indians of Southern Maryland: An Ethnohistory from Pre-European Contact to the Present* (PhD Diss., The American University, 1986).142; emphasis in original].
[13] Tayac, *Collective Identity*, 8ff.
[14] Cited in Merrell, "Cultural Continuity," 557.

the Marylanders would use several times over the next several decades. This loss of sovereignty would severely undermine the Piscataways' indigenous authority.

While this loss of authority was real, its consequences were minor—until the 1670s. The quiet area along the Potomac south of where Moyaone once stood was to become a theater of rebellion and reprisal that would change forever Britain's southern colonies. To understand this development, we need to examine a conflict that engulfed the Potomac River Valley that served as the border between Maryland and Virginia.

**Warring Nations: Maryland and Virginia**

Before Lord Baltimore's settlers even set foot in Maryland, several Virginians plotted their ruin. Above all others was the sometime member of the Virginia council, William Claiborne. Claiborne had sought in the early 1630s to expand beyond the faltering tobacco trade. Appropriating Kent Island in the Chesapeake Bay (which Marylanders would later rightfully claim as their own territory), he forged a partnership with the Susquehannock Indians to supply him with beaver pelts for European markets. This was a significant moment in Chesapeake English–Indian relations. It represented a sharp shift away from the Virginians' genocidal Indian policy and lay the foundations for what one historian has called an "interethnic interest-group alliance" between Claiborne, English settlers, and the Susquehannocks.[15]

Maryland settlers saw from the start the threat Claiborne's Kent Island operation represented. They had come believing that beaver pelts would be their chief source of

[15] J. Frederick Fausz, "Merging and Emerging Worlds: Anglo-Indian Interest Groups and the Development of the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake," in *Colonial Chesapeake Society*, ed. Lois Green Carr et al. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 52.

income. Their early hopes that the Piscataway might rival the Susquehannocks in trapping and preparing beaver pelts were quickly dashed. They discovered that the Piscataway were "deer Indians" who had learned to cure beaver pelts only a decade or so before the Marylanders arrived.[16] Moreover, the lands controlled by the Piscataway did not produce the prime beavers—these were to be found at the headwaters of the Chesapeake in Susquehannock territory. The fact that Claiborne and Virginia's Protestant officials reviled the Marylanders' Catholic faith—mirroring the religious strife back in England—greatly intensified the enmity between the two colonies.

The conflict between Maryland and Virginia erupted into violence and even invasion in the 1640s and '50s. A brief hope that Maryland could claim the Chesapeake beaver peltry when Claiborne was exiled from Virginia in 1638 collapsed when the Susquehannocks spurned Maryland and chose to partner with Swedish traders along the Delaware River. For ten years, beginning in 1642, the Susquehannock staged periodic, destructive raids on Maryland, expelling Indian tribes allied with the Catholic governor, killing settlers as few as eight miles from St. Mary's City, and sacking Jesuit storehouses.[17] Maryland's attempts at finding peace either through treaty or warfare failed. The Susquehannock raids only ended in 1652 when Claiborne, allying with new Protestant immigrants to Maryland, invaded and wrested control of the province from its Catholic administrators. The new Protestant administration quickly negotiated a treaty with Claiborne's old trading partners the Susquehannocks.

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[16] Fausz, "Merging and Emerging Worlds," 70.
[17] Fausz, "Merging and Emerging Worlds," 76.

**Declining Nations: Susquehannock and Piscataway**

This treaty was highly favorable to the new Maryland authorities. The Susquehannocks, in 1652, were struggling to survive. Even as the Susquehannocks had become quite wealthy from the beaver trade through the 1640s, their fortunes simultaneously declined. European diseases decimated their population, their wealth made them increasingly dependent on European goods rather than self-made weapons and utensils, and their own Indian enemies of the northern Iroquis nations were increasingly attacking them. [18] It seems likely that they lost as much as half their population of 6000 in battle with the Iroquis.[19] These pressures led the Susquehannocks to give up a vast tract of land that spanned both sides of the upper Chesapeake. Significantly, the treaty designated Kent Island and another smaller island as the property of Claiborne, not the province of Maryland. The colonists demanded that any Susquehannocks traveling south must come by boat, not by land, and in groups of no more than eight persons. Both sides agreed to exchange runaway servants and to give a twenty-day warning before attacking the other side.[20] (This latter stipulation would be central to the events of 1675.)

The upshot of the treaty for the Susquehannocks was an end to hostilities with Marylanders and their allies (which included the Piscataway) and recognition of Susquehanna as a "Nation and State." This new state of affairs was vital to the

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[18] Aubrey C. Land, *Colonial Maryland: A History* (Millwood, N.Y.: KTO, 1981), 44; Bruce G. Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of Huron Peole to 1660*, 2 vols. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976), 2: 528; Francis Jennings, "Indians and Frontiers in Seventeenth-Century Maryland," in *Early Maryland in a Wider World*, ed. David B. Quinn (Detroit : Wayne State University Press, 1982), 221; Fausz, "Merging and Emerging Worlds," 76-77.

[19] Jennings, "Indians and Frontiers," 221.

[20] *Archives of Maryland*, 3: 277-78.

Susquehannocks. They needed to turn their attentions to the marauding Iroquis enemies who were mercilessly pressing down on them. No longer needing to worry about their English neighbors, the Susquehannocks could now prosecute their war with their northern enemies.

The Maryland–Susquehannock alliance would be an exceedingly precarious relationship throughout its lifespan. The 1655 Battle of the Severn, which pitted Maryland's pro- and anti-Calvert forces against one another, led to Claiborne's downfall. By 1660, his power in Virginia had been usurped by Governor Berkeley and Cromwell's government, offended by Claiborne's fanaticism and heavy handed tactics, had restored the Calverts' claims to Maryland. The restored Calverts had little interest in maintaining the Protestants' close ties with the Susquehannocks.

The Susquehannocks subsequently lost their power to influence Maryland's colonial governments through either the promise of riches in the beaver trade or large-scale attacks. Maryland's rapidly expanding population lost interest in peltry. Tobacco became their economic grail. With the end of the beaver-pelt trade and the growing number of Protestants in Maryland, tensions between the Calverts' province and its Virginia neighbors abated. The two colonies now moved toward a greater assertion of a common national heritage that did not include Indians.[21] The only power the Susquehannocks had left was the power to instill fear through relatively minor raids.

The Piscataway had little time to appreciate the Susquehannocks' downfall. By the early 1660s, they were feeling a new pressure: English settlers. The province of Maryland established Charles County, which encompass ed much Piscataway territory,

[21] Fausz, "Merging and Emerging Worlds," 88.

in 1658. The early settlement of the county was limited chiefly to its southern and eastern regions due to the sizable Zaciah Swamp that formed a natural barrier to the western side of the county where it ran along the Potomac and the northern portion where it ran along Piscataway Creek. Observing this westward movement, Maryland officials treated the western and northern regions in a contradictory fashion. On the one hand, they established the 10,000 acre Calvert Manor with the intention of creating an Indian reserve. On the other, they allowed numerous settlers to patent land that lay between the Potomac and Zaciah, even though these lands still belonged, by treaty, to the Piscataway and other Indian tribes. These patents stretched along the Potomac almost to the ruins of Moyaone. There at the edge of the Calvert Manor tract, Randall Hanson patented two pieces of property which he called Charley and Hansonton.

With rich new land waiting for them, it was not long before men like Hanson wanted to develop it. There were fewer than 400 settlers in Charles County in its first year,1658. The 900 Marylanders there in 1662 expanded to 1,500 in 1665.[22] Hanson led a movement of settlers pushing the Maryland frontier up the Potomac and beyond Zaciah.

This four-fold settler population increase in less than ten years put great pressure on the Piscataway. On April 12, 1666, a Piscataway werowance Mattaquund complained to the Maryland assembly that Indian–European violence had escalated and English cattle and hogs were ruining Piscataway crops. "You come too near Us to live & drive Us from place to place. We can fly no farther. Let us know where to live and how

[22] Arthur E. Karinen notes that this growth in pop was not consistent, as there was a slight decrease in population in certain years, most notably 1666 ["Maryland Population: 1631-1730," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 54 (December 1959): 388-89].

to be secure for the future from the Hogs & Cattle."[23] The supplicating tone of the request signified how dependent the Piscataway had become on Maryland authorities. The close ties of the Piscataway werowances and the provincial leaders and the expanding settler population fragmented the Piscataways into opposing factions. Some began to complain that it was time to turn against Maryland, either through violence or flight.[24]

Perhaps to forestall these internal divisions, Piscataway leaders agreed to a new treaty of peace between several affiliated Indian tribes and Maryland, signed April 20, 1666. They were following what had become old habits. The treaty hardly reflected the Piscataways' changed conditions, capturing instead the status quo of a decade earlier. The treaty was heavy on the Indians' responsibilities, and light on the duties the Marylanders would have to perform. Various articles of the treaty confirmed the right of Maryland's governor to appoint Piscataway tayacs, emphasized the punishments Indians would receive for murder and theft, demanded that Indians return runaway servants and slaves, forced them to build fences around their corn fields, limited them to residing in the territories they then occupied, severely circumscribed the manner in which they could approach "any English plantacon," and prevented them from negotiating treaties with or making war on Indian tribes hostile to Maryland. Only two provisions were potentially beneficial to the Piscataway: one gave them the perpetual "priviledge of hunting Crabbing fishing & fowleing," while another promised that any Englishman who killed

[23] *Archives of Maryland*, 2: 15.
[24] Cissna, *Piscataway Indians*, ch. 7.

an Indian who followed the rules for advancing toward Maryland farms would be executed (Figure 1).[25]




FIGURE 1: Susquehannock Village Along Piscataway Creek, ca. 1670

Source: Arloldus Montanus, *De Nieawe en Onbekende Weereld* (1671) in Alan Virta, *Prince George's County: A Pictorial History* (Virginia Beach: Donning, 1984)

**Warring Nations: Maryland and New Netherlands**

Two months after signing the Piscataway treaty, Charles Calvert signed a peace treaty with the Susquehannock. [26] Fearing that the leaders of a revived New Netherlands were about to incite the Iroquois to new attacks on Maryland, and perhaps with an eye to

[25] *Archives of Maryland*, 2: 25-27; Cissna, *Piscataway Indians*, 156-63. Other clauses in the treaty called for reparations to Indians for very specific depravations by individual settlers.

[26] For the treaty of 1666 and a preceding treaty of 1661, see *Archives of Maryland*, 3: 276-78, 420-21, 549-50; Francis Jennings, "Susquehannock," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, v. 15: *Northeast*, ed. Bruce Trigger (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian, 1978): 366.

conquering the Delaware Bay area for his own province, Calvert was deeply concerned to build on Maryland's earlier treaties with the Susquehannocks. While their motivations are difficult to recover, Calvert and his councilors seemed to have thought of the Susquehanna at this point as a buffer zone between the province and the Dutch settlement in Delaware. But the Susquehannocks were not the sort of people who instilled confidence in theirMaryland treaty partners. Belligerent and fickle, they were closely allied with the Delaware Lenape, who in turn were closely allied with the Dutch. They were former enemies of Maryland's closest Indian allies. And they were not averse to attacking Englishmen for perceived wrongs. Over the next decade,as the intensity of conflict and level of Maryland's fears of both the Iroquois and the Dutch increased precipitously, the great question for Maryland authorities became: What to do with the Susquehannocks?

By the mid 1670s, tensions with the Dutch came to a head. In 1673, the Dutch conquered New York and reasserted their authority in the Delaware Bay. Later that year, Maryland sent a force to sack the Dutch town of Whorekills. The Dutch governor girded for war. The Maryland authorities considered their options, which all seemed to come back to the question: What to do with the Susquehannocks?

Maryland's answer was fraught with exceedingly difficult considerations and obscure motivations. Driving Marylanders' concerns were the machinations of the small Dutch colony at the Delaware Bay. [27] Many in the Maryland assembly feared that the Dutch were protecting their beaver trade by instigating their Indian allies the Delaware

[27] Jennings, "Indians and Frontiers," 222-28.

Lenape to attack Maryland settlements from the east and the Iroquois from the north. Maryland authorities had to decide between a defensive or offensive response.

A defensive maneuver entailed either the creation of an Indian buffer zone of the Susquehannocks between Maryland's main settlements and New Holland or the forging of a peace treaty with the Iroquois. .[28] The former option seemed to have little merit. The Susquehannocks had already been greatly weakened in their wars with the Iroquois and it was unclear whether they could hold the line. Complicating this was the Susquehannocks alliance with the Lenape. It was by no means certain that the Susquehannocks would side with Maryland to make war against their own Indian allies. The latter option of an accord with the Iroquois also carried significant risks. Maryland had incited the Susquehannocks against their northern neighbor since the mid 1650s. The enmity between the two Indian groups seemed so intense that it could never be resolved except through the annihilation of one side or the other. The Maryland assembly, however, was far more concerned about the powerful Iroquois than the depleted Susquehannocks. After calculating the risks, they began making overtures to the Iroquois. Relatively sure the Susquehannocks would see this as a double cross, the Maryland assembly prepared to go to war with their erstwhile allies in June 1674 unless some other option could be found.[29]

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[28] On the buffer zone option see Jennings, in Trigger, 365.

[29] *Archives of Maryland*, 2: 377-78. The passage reads: "In Pursuance of the Vote for a Peace to be made wth the Cynicoes Indians [i.e., the Seneca, by which the assembly meant the Iroquois in general] passed at a Conference of both houses this day [June 1, 1674] the Upper House have Voted That a Peace be by the Governt made wth the sd Cynicoes Indians & forasmuch as tht Peace may bring a Warre wth the Susquahannoughs This house for the Securitie of the Province doe Vote tht an Act of Assembly be drawne up to Impower the Governr & Councell to make Warre even without the Province [i.e., beyond Maryland's borders] & to Leavie the Charges of the sd Warre by an Equall

Peace with the Iroquois was not the only option the Marylanders had available to fend off New Holland. It is possible that Calvert and his counselors contemplated conquering the southern portion of Delaware Bay(which Lord Baltimore claimed as his own) and incorporating it into Maryland. [30] But a major obstacle stood in the way of the military option: the Lenape's allies the Susquehannocks.

By February 1675, Maryland authorities devised a gambit that would allow them to follow both the defensive and offensive tracks, to make peace with the Iroquois and sever the alliance of the Susquehannocks and the Lanape in preparation for an invasion of New Holland.[31] They offered the Susquehannocks an ultimatum: Move to lower Maryland or, as the members of the upper house expressed it, "they shall be forced by Warr to remove" from their territory at the headwaters of the Chesapeake. [32] Governor Calvert wanted to resettle them among the "friend Indians" at Piscataway. But the lower house was deeply concerned at such a prospect. They warned the upper house that "the Susquehannahs in coming among the English and Claiming Protection may be out of

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Assessmt upon the Persons & Estates of the ffreemen of this Province anie formr Act or Law to the Contrarie hereof notwithstanding & doe desire the Concurrence of the Lower house to this Vote." Jennings interprets the phrase "without the Province" to mean that Maryland was preparing to invade New Holland [Jennings, "Indians and Frontiers," 226-27].

[30] Jennings, "Indians and Frontiers," 228.

[31] Jennings's theory of an invasion loses some of its power due to the fact that he reversed two historical events. He has the "invitation" to the Susquehannock to move to Maryland comingbefore the handover of New Holland to England and the Duke of York ("Indians and Frontiers," 227-28). In fact, England took over New Holland in early 1674 (although the news probably did not arrive until the new governor, Edmond Andros, arrived to administer the new colony, while the Susquehannock move occurred in February 1675 at the earliest. The basic thrust of Jennings's argument remains valid, however, if the Marylanders believed they would be presented with the area around Delaware Bay that Lord Baltimore believed had been assigned to him in Maryland's initial charter.

[32] *Archives of Maryland*, 2: 429.

Design Purposely to Discover the Strength of the Province and the Advantages they may for the future take should they be evily inclined which will be of very Dangerous Consequence should they be Admitted."[33] Indeed, as the Marylanders would later discover from an Indian traveler, "the Susq[s] laugh and jeare at the English saying they cann doe what mischief they please for that the English cannot see them."[34] Calvert disregarded the lower house's concerns and moved the Susquehannock into an old fort built in 1642 only yards from the ancient site of Moyaone. Now the Piscataway's ancient enemy lived less than two miles away in the shadow of their former capital.

**The Spark for Bacon's Rebellion**

In the early summer following the Susquehannocks' relocation to Piscataway, the stretch of the Potomac from Piscataway Creek south to the future site of Marshall Hall became the scene of English–Indian violence that would culminate in Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia.[35] The initiating event was common enough. Thomas Mathew, a substantial landholder in Virginia, angered members of Maryland's Doeg tribe who claimed that he was cheating them out of payment for goods they had supplied him.[36] They sought to balance accounts by stealing some of Mathew's hogs. But Virginians intercepted them before they could cross back to Maryland. The Virginians recovered the hogs and beat or killed several of the Indians. Indians, it would seem, now sought revenge.

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[33] *Archives of Maryland*, 2: 429.
[34] *Archives of Maryland*, 15: 239.
[35] On the events described below which sparked Bacon's rebellion, see *Archives of Maryland*, 2: 474-77, 481-83, 493, 501; *Narratives of the Insurrections*, 1675-1690, ed. Charles M. Andrews (New York: Scribner's, 1915), 16-22, 47-50, 105-108.
[36] It is possible that these were actually Piscataways. See Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: Norton, 1975), 250n2, citing Lurie, "American Indian Cultural Adjustment," 42.

A few days later, neighbors of Mathew's outlying plantation in Stafford County, Virginia, made a gruesome discoveryearly one Sunday in July 1675. Lying across the threshold of the cabin on Mathew's property was the mortally wounded Robert Hen, Mathew's overseer. Alongside him was a friend Indian, dead. Both had been "Chopt on their Heads, Arms and other Parts, as if done with Indian Hatchetts."[37] Hen spent his last breaths blaming the Doegs for the attack.

Militia Colonel George Mason and Captain George Brent wasted no time in rousting up 30 men to chase down the supposed murderers. Both these men seem to have long been antagonistic toward Indians.[38] The two, along with another pair of officials in Westmoreland and Stafford counties, had been convicted of wantonly capturing and holding a Patowameke chief in 1662. And although Brent had been barred from "bearing any office civil or military in this countrey" he was, by 1675, an officer in the Virginia militia. [39]

The Virginia militia pursued the Indians twenty miles north along the Potomac before following them into Maryland at or very near the future Marshall Hall site early the next day.[40] The Virginians came to a fork in the road and split into two parties. Brent soon discovered several Doegs holed up in a cabin. When the king of the Doeg group

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[37] Thomas Mathew, cited in *Narratives of the Insurrections*, 16.
[38] This is in spite of the fact that Brent was the half-Indian son of Giles Brent and Mary Kitamaquund.
[39] Morgan, *American Slavery*, 250.
[40] Mathew, cited in *Narratives of the Insurrections*, 17. Stephenson says "close to Bryan's Point" which is just over a mile from Marshall Hall [*Accokeek Creek Site*, 69]. There are three suitable places for crossing the Potomac in this area, one Marshall Hall, Bryan's Point, and Mockley Point. The last site is unlikely the place where the Mason-Brent force landed, because this would have put them right at the Susquehannock fort. Since no testimony about this crossing mentions the fort it seems likely that the Virginians landed at either the future Marshall Hall site or Bryan's Point.

purportedly attempted to escape while Brent questioned him, the captain's men killed him and then shot to death as many as ten Indians in the cabin.

Mason took the more fateful route. His troop too found a cabin full of Indians. Hearing the shots from Brent's gun battle, Mason attacked the Indians he had discovered. His men shot fourteen dead before one of them managed to reach Mason and proclaim that they were, as Mathew recalled it, "our friends the Susquehannoughs."[41] Mason's blunder had severe consequences.

The Maryland authorities were incensed. Not only had foreigners from Virginia invaded their territory (conjuring up memories perhaps of Claiborne's 1652 invasion), but the murder of the Susquehannocks threatened to destroy their carefully laid negotiations with the Iroquois and the fragile peace between the Susquehannocks and the Piscataway. The Maryland authorities girded for a round of bloody reprisals from Indians now living within the province's borders. Their Susquehannock strategy now threatened to be a devastating mistake.

Virginia's governor Sir William Berkeley hoped to mollify his neighbors across the Potomac by swiftly commissioning Colonel John Washington and Major Isaac Allerton to organize an investigative committee of several militia officers to discover what had happened. Ominously, Berkeley, in a meeting with Nathaniel Bacon and other Virginia counselors, charged the two militia leaders that, if they found proper grounds, they should "attacque and doe such Executions up[on] ye sd Indians as shall be found necessary & Just."[42] This provision of the commission exacerbated the tense situation.

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[41] Mathew, cited in *Narratives of the Insurrections*, 17.
[42] Lyon G. Tyler, "Washington and His Neighbors," *William and Mary Quarterly* 4 (1896), 86. This contradicts Wilcomb Washburn's thesis that Washington and Allerton

Washington and Allerton understood their mandate to be more punitive than judicial. They thus exceeded their mandate to organize only militia officers and instead raised a sizable militia force of about 750 men. They then wrote to Governor Calvert and the Maryland council, noting their charge to find the "true causes of the severall murthers and Spoiles" and to "demand Satisfaction and in case they [the guilty Indians] Correspond not with Our reasonable demand to levy such fforces as may compel them by armes to that which is right."[43] They went on to ask the Maryland authorities to provide a Maryland militia force to accompany them.

Apparently, the Maryland authorities had second thoughts about the wisdom of harboring the Susquehannock deep within the province's territory. The Virginia force seemed to offer a chance to prevent Susquehannock reprisals and perhaps rid the province of the Susquehannock altogether. Acutely unsure of the loyalties of their new residents, the Maryland authorities began to suspect the Susquehannocks of lying about their involvement in Hen's murder and other recent crimes. Instead of rebuking Washington and Allerton, they put Major Thomas Truman in charge of a force of 250 men and commanded him to meet with the Virginia militia on September 23 at the Choptico Bay, near the Susquehannock fort (Figure 2). Truman was given the authority to "prosecute the Warr against the Doages and susquehannough Indians till the

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recklessly ignored Berkeley's instructions. Washburn does not mention that Berkeley explicitly instructed his militia officers to use deadly force if necessary. See Wilcomb E. Washburn, *The Governor and the Rebel: A History of Bacon's Revolution in Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957), 21-22.

[43] Washington and Allerton to the governor and council of Maryland, 6 September 1675, *Archives of Maryland*, 15: 48.

murther[er]s are delivered and all possible Satisfaction Obtained...."[44] For the Maryland authorities, the Indian attacks amounted to war, and if the Susquehannock were involved, this would mean they had broken a key stipulation of their peace treaty with Maryland: Each side was required to give the other twenty days' warning before initiating war.

[44] *Archives of Maryland*, 15: 48. For the Susquehannock disturbances as a war, see also 2: 485-86; 15:150-51.

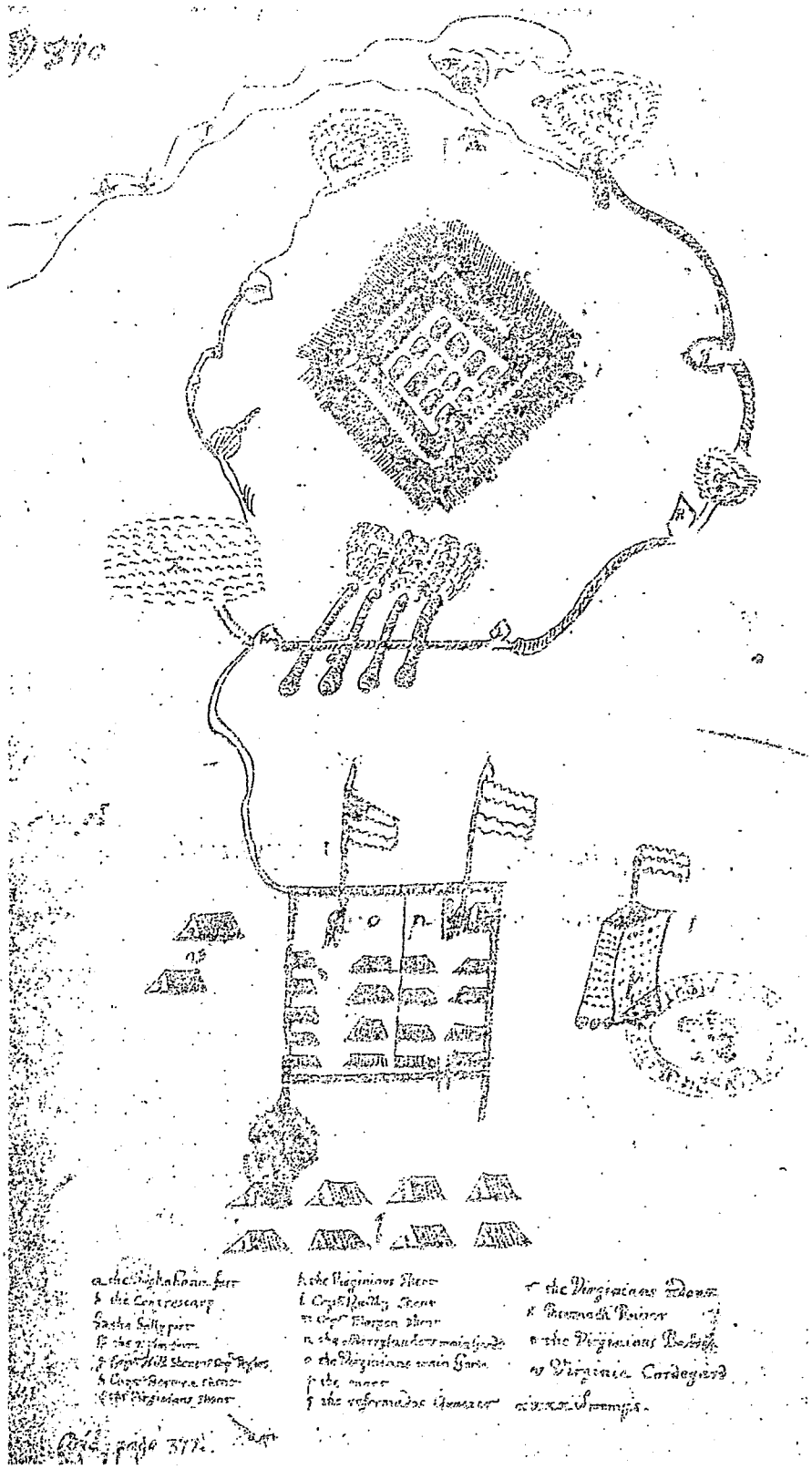


FIGURE 2. Diagram of Susquehannock Fort at the Mouth of Piscataway Creek, 1675

Source: Ferguson, "Susquehannock Fort," opposite p. 1

Even as the Virginia and Maryland militias weremarching toward their rendezous, a group of Indians attacked Randall Hanson's plantation at Hansonton on the Potomac shore just east of the Marshall Hall site, on September 25.[45] They killed several "Christians."[46] This event quickly became the central point of contention between the militias and the Susquehannock. It greatly increased the "genll Jmpetuosity of the Whole feild as well MaryLanders as Virginians."[47] Truman arrived at the fort a day ahead of the Virginians. Having heard of the sack of Hanson's property, he sent one of his men to gather evidence there while he met with several of the Susquehannock. The Susquehannock disclaimed any responsibility for the violent events that had recently taken place. They blamed all the trouble on the Seneca. The next day, Washington and Allerton arrived. A thousand Maryland and Virginia militiamen now surrounded the 300 or so warriors, women, and children residing in the fort. Truman, Washington, and Allerton called out the Susquehannock leaders for a second interview. Five of them left the fort with the understanding that they were protected by a truce. Truman confronted the chiefs with evidence collected at Hansonton which pointed to the Susquehannock. Again the Susquehannock blamed their enemies the Seneca. Washington and Allerton pushed the issue, claiming that witnesses had seen the Indians returning from Hen's murder enter the Susquehannock fort. Again the chiefs denied the allegations. One of

[45] *Archives of Maryland*, 2: 483; 15: 151-52. The MD assembly mentioned this atrocity in its instructions to a negotiator sent to forge a treaty with the Seneca. The instructions attempt to mollify the Seneca by claiming the Susquehannocks had led the Marylanders on, claiming that the Seneca had committed numerous crimes the Susquehannocks had in fact perpetrated.

[46] *Archives of Maryland*, 2: 500; Testimony of John Gerard & Robert Massey, in Lyon G. Tyler, "Col. John Washington," *William and Mary Quarterly* 2, 1st ser. (July 1893): 40, 41.

[47] *Archives of Maryland*, 2: 500.

them, nervous about the situation, pulled out a medallion of paper or silver given him by a former governor of Maryland which pledged Maryland authorities to protect the Susquehannock. But this meant nothing to the angry militia leaders. Truman then confronted the chiefs with the claim that there were nine Susquehannock buried at the Hansonton, solid proof in his eyes that it was the Susquehannock who had committed the murders. Truman suddenly ordered his men to tie up the chiefs and then had them summarily executed.[48]

Truman's act seemed to cause more problems than it solved in both Maryland and Virginia. The Maryland assembly feared the murder of the Susquehannock chiefs would lead to a violent recriminations. After this atrocity, the one hundred warriors and their families living in the fort, understandably refused to put themselves into the custody of the militia. The Virginia–Maryland forces then laid siege to the fort. The siege was poorly managed. [49] Susquehannock braves, according to one eye witness, made "frequent, fierce and Bloody Sallyes" to obtain food—the horses of the Virginia and Maryland forces being their favorite source.[50] And after six weeks, they were able to escape altogether, managing to spirit out all the fort's inhabitants after killing ten sleeping besiegers. Once out, the Susquehannocks made a series of raids throughout the

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[48] The testimony in the ensuing investigations into these murders is fragmentary and highly contradictory. Some witnesses claim it was Washington who suggested that the militia "knock the chiefs in the head." Trueman's motivation is unclear, although the lower house's summation of the testimony suggests that Truman acted "to prevent a mutiny of the whole army, as well Virginians as Marylanders" (*Archives of Maryland*, 2: 501). The upper house, diametrically opposed to the lower, claimed instead that "at the Said Trumans Tryall did [it] to[o] plainely appeare th[t] his first Comands for the killing of those Jndians were not obeyed and th[t] he had some difficulty to get his men To obey him" when he ordered the chiefs' execution (*Archives of Maryland*, 2: 504).

[49] Anonymous, in *Narratives of the Insurrections*, 47.

[50] Mathew, in *Narratives of the Insurrections*, 19; Anonymous, in *Narratives of the Insurrections*, 47; *Archives of Maryland*, 15: 56; Ferguson, "Susquehannock Fort ," 9

Chesapeake that spurred Nathaniel Bacon and his band to attack Virginia Indians indiscriminately.

Truman was eventually punished for his act. After an investigation and trial, Truman was convicted and fined by the lower house of the assembly. The upper house decried Truman's act as "barbarous and inhumane."[51] The upper house worried greatly that the light punishment handed out to Truman (a fine) would severely diminish the province's reputation. The surviving records suggest that the upper house believed Truman should have been executed.[52]

**Beginning of the End**

The siege and escape of the Susquehannocks effectively ended their presence in Maryland. After the brief war in Virginia, the Susquehannok later settled in Pennsylvania. The Piscataway saw the war as a way to drive a wedge between Maryland authorities and the Susquehannock. They were only too happy to heed the call when the Maryland assembly asked them to march on the Susquehannocks new fort and "otherwise to pursue the Susquehanoughs, and be obedient to the English Comanders...."[53] The Piscataway apparently fought well. The Maryland authorities provided them with corn, gunpowder, shot, and matchcoats in May 1676 in appreciation for remaining "friendly."[54]

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[51] May 1676, *Archives of Maryland*, 2: 475.
[52] *Archives of Maryland*, 2: 500-501. . Washington and Allerton were cleared of responsibility for the action by the Virginia authorities. See also Wm Penn's condemnation of the butchering of the five Susquehannocks as being beyond the pail?pale? Narratives 440 or so.
[53] *Archives of Maryland*, 15: 126.
[54] *Archives of Maryland*, 2, 488-89; Merrell, "Cultural Continuity," 565.

Yet, the war actually signaled the onset of a deteriorating relationship between the Piscataway and Marylanders. Continuing Indian attacks diminished the shrinking Piscataway tribe, forcing them to retreat into the Zaciah Swamp for refuge. Marylanders began building a series of forts for protection and no longer needed Indian buffers to fend off their enemies. Piscataway lands were swept away by waves of new settlers. By 1692, the Piscataway were again bitterly complaining about English encroachment.[55] By 1695, governor Francis Nicholson was actively encouraging the council to wrest land around Mattawoman Creek from the Piscataway for the production of tobacco. And by 1697, Nicholson forbid the sale of gunpowder to all Indians, revealing how Marylanders no long so a military role for Indians.

The end of the century saw the Piscataway give up their individual identity. While a few Piscataway remained in Maryland, most moved north to Pennsylvania after 1700. There they adopted the Iroquis's Great Law of Peace, entered the Covenant Chain, and began a long process of creating a pan-Indian identity.[56] This happened just at the time when the English were consolidating their racial identity as they transformed their agricultural labor force through the importation of African slaves.

This was also the moment when Randall Hanson's properties on the Potomac, Charley and Hansonton, passed into the Marshall family.

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[55] On the demise of the Piscataway, see Merrell, "Cultural Continuity," 568-70. Merrell (569) inexplicably claims this is the first time the Piscataway complained, neglecting the 1666 complaint from Mataquund.

[56] Tayac, *Collective Identity Incorporation*, chs. 5-8.

# Chapter 3

## *The Two William Marshalls: Imagining Land, Labor, and Community*

Not long after Kitamaquund converted to Catholicism, a man of strikingly different background entered Maryland. William Marshall was a Protestant and knew nothing of the Piscataway world. As the Piscataway fought to preserve that world and their place in it, a transformation was underway that would fundamentally alter the land, both figuratively and literally. In a sense, the land was changed due to the new social and economic systems that William Marshall and his descendents represented. He was the agent of massive and wide-ranging forces that would entangle the Piscataway world before replacing it and submerging its memory underneath new social, economic, and cultural strata.

William Marshall the immigrant never set foot on or saw the property where his descendents would build a fine home named after his family line. But his history is crucial to understanding how the English reworked and redefined the land. His early dreams of wealth would determine in great measure why his children would move westward and what his descendents would do with the land they would acquire on the banks of the Potomac just south of Piscataway Creek.

This chapter will not present a biography of William Marshall so much as a sketch of his world. The focus will be on his intentions and achievements as springboards for his descendents' attempts to build both cultural meaning and socioeconomic stature out of the land of western Charles County. This is a challenging

story to tell. There are few incontrovertible facts about Marshall outside of the information left in his will, early Maryland land and court records, and a handful of other documents. But it is possible to follow his rise from immigrant to provincial grandee and to show the world he left to his oldest son and namesake, William Marshall (II). There are intriguing suggestions in the old records, enough to create a portrait of the colonial world the immigrant William Marshall helped create.

**William Marshall the Immigrant**

William Marshall's beginnings in Maryland are wrapped in a historical haze. There are no conclusive records that either name the ship that transported him or detail whether he landed first in Virginia, Boston, Maryland, or some other North American port. He was clearly in Maryland by 1641 when he and several other men living in St. Clement's hundred selected George Pye to be their representative to the Maryland provincial assembly. This fact suggests (but *only* suggests, as will become clear below) that Marshall was able to purchase or otherwise obtain land early in his Maryland tenure. But there is mystery surrounding how Marshall got to Maryland, how free in fact he was, and how he avoided becoming an indentured servant.

Marshall did not fit either of the two prominent profiles of the early Maryland immigrants. First, he was not a Catholic. In fact, he seems to have come to Maryland at the behest of Thomas Weston, a shipbuilder and merchant responsible for the fleet that took the Puritans to Massachusetts. Weston, in a claim for land due under the headright

system, listed Marshall as someone he had transported into the province in 1640.[1] Second, Marshall was not a young indentured servant. As many as four out of five immigrants to Maryland—after the initial settlement of the province—were youths. [2] These youths came either as indentured servants or "servants by custom," that is, as servants with or without a binding contract already in place before their arrival in America.[3] Marshall appears to have been older than 32 when he arrived in Maryland, and there is no surviving record that he came under the bonds of indenture. It is *possible* that he came under an indenture since bonded immigrants tended to be older and skilled unlike the servants by custom. But even then, Marshall was unusual. He was much older than most immigrant servants. Less than 5% of immigrants entering Maryland as servants were over the age of 25.[4] Moreover, Marshall seems to have had some skills of a professional sort. He served as a lawyer within a few years of landing in Maryland (even though he was illiterate). He seems to have spent no time in the fields, despite the fact that Weston brought Marshall into the province under the headright system. (This system was a method for obtaining land and agricultural labor in a colonial frontier: a landholder or immigrant to Maryland could receive up to 50 acres of land for each person he brought into the province. Presumably, in a staple-crop economy where planters grew only one product to sell on international markets, landowners would quickly put such servants right to work among the tobacco leaves.)

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[1] *Archives of Maryland*, see entries for 10 January 1640 (v. X, p. X); 29 August 1642 (73: 69).
[2] Russell R. Menard, "British Migration to the Chesapeake Colonies in the Seventeenth Century," in *Colonial Chesapeake Society*, ed. Lois Green Carr et al. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 106.
[3] Lorena S. Walsh, *Charles County, Maryland, 1658-1705: A Study of Chesapeake Social and Political Structure* (Ph.D. diss., Michigan State University, 1977), 112-13.
[4] Walsh, *Charles County*, 114

Marshall's age and his status as some sort of property-owning freeman in the 1641 election of Pye suggest that he came to Maryland with a higher status than indentured servant. Young servants were required to work for a master for several years in conditions that approached those we usually associate with the slave system. Servants enjoyed none of the rights of freemen, such as the privilege of selecting representatives to the provincial government. But the fact that Marshall took part in the selection of a representative does prove conclusively that he owned any property: Until 1669, there were no effective property qualifications for voting. At the very least, Marshall came into the province with an important social and economic contact. Thomas Weston was one of the early large landholders of Maryland. He obtained the rights to create a feudal reserve in what would later become Charles County and was one of the sixteen largest landowners in early Maryland. Weston, however, surely did not bring Marshall into Maryland as a compatriot. Marshall clearly worked for Weston in some capacity and, in something of an unusual situation, he received wages from the feudal landlord. Marshall is listed as Weston's attorney (less a legal agent than a plantation manager) in a 1643 court proceeding and appears to have served the large landholder as his "steward" until Weston's death in 1647. He had been a manager of Weston's feudal property and apparently was deeply knowledgeable about Weston's affairs. After his benefactor's death, Marshall received an appointment from the county court to appraise the value of the shipbuilder-cum-feudal lord's estate.

Release from Weston's service and the task of appraising his estate may have set Marshall up quit well economically. The Weston estate paid Marshall 1820 pounds of tobacco in 1648 for various services. (Expressed in currency terms, this amount of

tobacco would have been worth between £8 to £10 sterling. That is, Marshall received in one payment more than the net worth of well over 30% of probated estates.[5] ) If a servant of some sort, he may have received lands and other compensation for fulfilling his term of service. As appraiser of the estate, he stood to make a 5% commission based on the value of the estate—and in the case of Weston's large landholdings, this could amount to an economic boon, especially in conjunction with the appraiser's fees. Indeed, land records show that Marshall obtained 500 acres of land along the Wicomico River in 1650, a year or so after receiving his appraiser's commission. (Figure 1)

[5] Gloria L. Main, *Tobacco Colony: Life in Early Maryland, 1650-1720* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), 54 Table II.1, 120

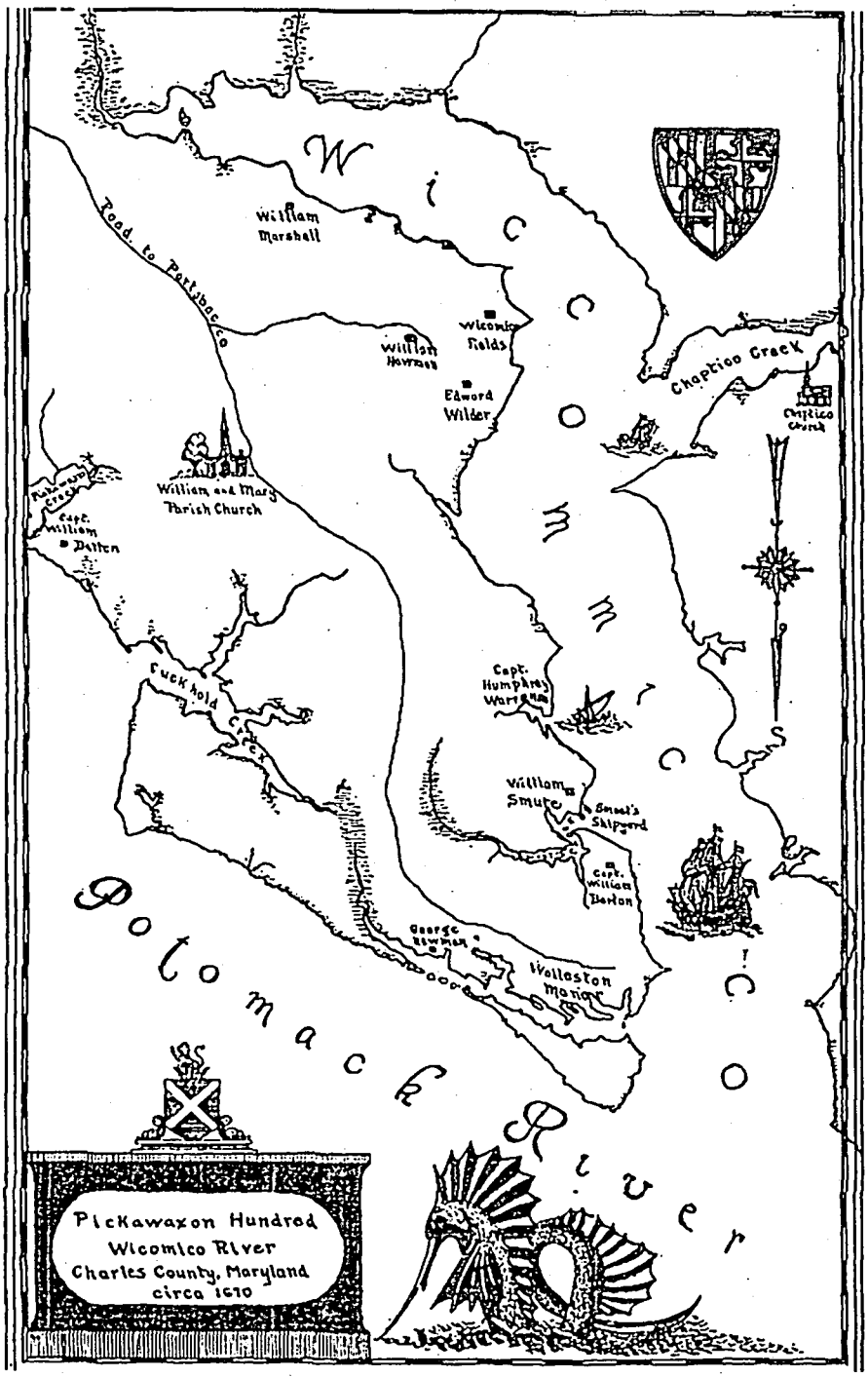



FIGURE 1. William Marshall's Land Along the Wicomico River, ca. 1670
Source: Harry Wright Newman, *Charles County Gentry* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 1971)

This is not to say that Marshall had an easy life. He faced the same process of "seasoning" as all immigrants to Maryland. Unused to the climate and disease

environment of the low-lying tidewater region, English immigrants were highly susceptible to an array of deadly pathogens. As many as four in ten servants died before they got free of their indentures, that is, within four to six years of arrival. Survival did not ensure social or economic success. But it was a good indicator of some future success.

The majority of immigrants to Maryland who survived the seasoning process eventually found some measure of economic stability. The majority of survivors went on to become landowners. Only a few, however, became large planters. The best option an impoverished freeman had for economic improvement was to hire himself out to a landlord for wages with the hope that he could both survive the seasoning period and acquire enough capital to purchase his own land. With some luck, landed freemen could make the jump from freehold to plantation.

Standing in the way of such luck was the vision Maryland's proprietor had for peopling his Chesapeake province. Lord Baltimore preferred large grants of land to a handful of investors (such as Weston) rather than multiple patents to small landowners who would set up self-sustaining farms. Even when land became increasingly available as the initial, quasi-feudal land grants were broken up, potential purchasers needed capital to buy not only land but tools, seeds, and livestock to work the land. This could be a tall order especially in a country where there was very little capital to be had and the main currency of exchange was neither gold nor silver, but tobacco.

A man's station in Maryland provincial life depended almost entirely on his ability to produce tobacco to be sold in distant European markets. It was possible for freemen to produce tobacco through their labor, since wages, as virtually all debts and

payments, were rendered in tobacco. Because of the perpetual shortage of labor, freemen could demand fairly high wages of fifteen to twenty pounds of tobacco a day. A freeman immigrant or freed servant who planned carefully could build on his grant of land when he completed his indenture and obtain enough capital to purchase more land, tools, and supplies within a few years. But to rise to the rank of gentleman, a provincial Marylander had to greatly increase the amount of tobacco he produced through the labor of others, whether indentured servants, tenants, wage laborers, or eventually African slaves.

Numerous hurdles could slow any tobacco planter's attempt to produce a healthy tobacco crop. [6] First and foremost was the delicate tobacco plant itself. Each tobacco crop required fifteen months of exhaustive labor and anxious attention. The seeds had to be planted in specially fertilized beds just before or after the new year. Approximately four months later, the seedlings had to be transplanted to the fields. This was a particularly fretful time for planters: Rain was required to loosen the soil to allow hands to remove the seedlings. Once the rains fell, transplanting demanded intensive, unpleasant labor for, depending on the size of a plantation, a month or longer. Planting did not end the attention tobacco necessitated. Every single plant called for continued care, weeding and eventually "topping" and removing suckers—that is, preventing the plants from flowering, sending out secondary shoots, and going to seed. Cutting the ripe tobacco was a delicate science, for the precise moment when tobacco was ripe could not be determined with accuracy. Too early a cutting would produce leaves too moist to cure properly and too late a cutting risked the destruction of the entire crop from an early frost. Once cut, tobacco had to be cured. The cut leaves were gathered and hung in barns to

[6] Timothy H. Breen, *Tobacco Culture: The Mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of the Revolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), 46-55.

dry. This in itself was an arduous task requiring further artful judgment as improperly cured tobacco could rot in shipment if it were too moist or crumble if too dry. Finally, in the following spring, the cured tobacco had to be readied for transport. The leaves stripped from the stalks, the remaining stems removed, and the leaves packed in hogsheads, or barrels made for storing the cured tobacco. By this time, workers would already have planted seeds for the next crop and be readying the fields for transplanting the seedlings.

Then there were the vagaries of the market, which few Chesapeake planters understood with any precision. [7] The great fact of Marshall's economic life as a planter was that, from the time he became involved in the production of tobacco to the end of his life, its price in the world market inexorably fell. After a period of stagnation in the early 1640s, just as Marshall arrived in Maryland's tobacco agriculture, the price began a sometimes slow, sometimes precipitous decline which lasted until the end of the century. [8] This meant one thing to a tobacco planter such as Marshall: Income could be increased only by increasing output, and output could be increased by either improving the process of production or putting more land into production, or a combination of both. This fact prevented planters like Marshall from settling into one parcel of land. The requirements of distant markets dictated that Marshall, like many other early Maryland landowners, had to spend much time trying to augment his holdings in order to create a greater income from the sale of tobacco. Unlike New England freeholders, the drive to reap profits from a staple crop, whose price was in continual decline, destabilized seventeenth-century

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[7] Breen, *Tobacco Culture*, ch. 3.
[8] John J. McCusker & Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British North America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 120-28.

Charles County society and community. Stability would only be reached several generations down the Marshall family tree.

William Marshall's neighborhood did have some continuity. But it was the continuity of contiguity. In frontier Chesapeake society, there was very little social differentiation into gentry, middling, and lower orders.[9] He had friends among both elites and the middling sorts. On the one hand, he consorted with other planters, politicians, and other societal leaders. He was business partner with Walter Beane in various ventures. For example, in 1660 Marshall sold Beane the 500-acre parcel that he had obtained a decade earlier with the proceeds from his administration of Weston's estate. He showed his affection for Beane by giving his friend's daughter the substantial gift of a cow. Marshall had at least one economic transaction with the infamous Protestant governor Josias Fendall in 1663.[10] Although Marshall usually shied away from politics, he did join Beane in becoming a Justice of the Peace for Charles County in 1660. But he also seems to have followed Beane off the appointment in 1667 when his friend became too ill to continue in the position any longer.

On the other hand, Marshall's best friend seems to have been a skilled craftsman, Francis Wyne, a cooper. Wyne, in appointing Marshall to be his attorney in a 1662 land deal referred to the planter as "my trusty and well beloved frind." Marshall returned the sentiment, stating in his will "It is my desire that my brother, Francis Wine be Executor." Moreover, he went on to instruct his executor that his youngest son Joshua should go to live with Wyne in the event that Marshall die before the boy attained the age of majority.

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[9] On Charles County in particular in this regard, see Walsh, *Charles County*.
[10] Charles County Land Records, Abstracts, vol. 1, 177/226.

(The term "brother" was apt: for all their evident love for one another they also fought each other in court at least twice—even in the last days of Marshall's life.[11])

William Marshall must have had as little interest in the politics of early Maryland as in political office (Figure 2). There is no evidence that he took part in or actively supported any one side in the quasi-religious battles over whether Catholics or Protestants would control the provincial government. One intriguing hint concerns a Thomas Marshall who threatened the Lord Proprietor at the time of Josias Fendall's 1681 attack on the provincial government. There is no evidence that this Marshall was related to William Marshall, but he operated a mill in the very neighborhood where both William Marshall and his son William Marshall II made their plantation. Of course, Thomas and William may not have seen eye to eye on politics, even if they were related. Walter Beane, in spite of being a ardent Presbyterian, appears to have supported Lord Baltimore against Fendall's various fulminations and attempted coups. [12] Nor do William Marshall's other associates seem to have supported Fendall, Godfrey, and the others implicated in the plots to overthrow the Catholic administration of Maryland.

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[11] *Archives of Maryland*, 53: 247; 60: 518.

[12] Margaret B. Klapthor and Paul D. Brown, *The History of Charles County, Maryland: Written in its Tercentenary Year of 1958* (LaPlata, Md., 1958), 35-36; Lois Green Carr et al., *Robert Cole's World: Agriculture and Society in Early Maryland* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 243.

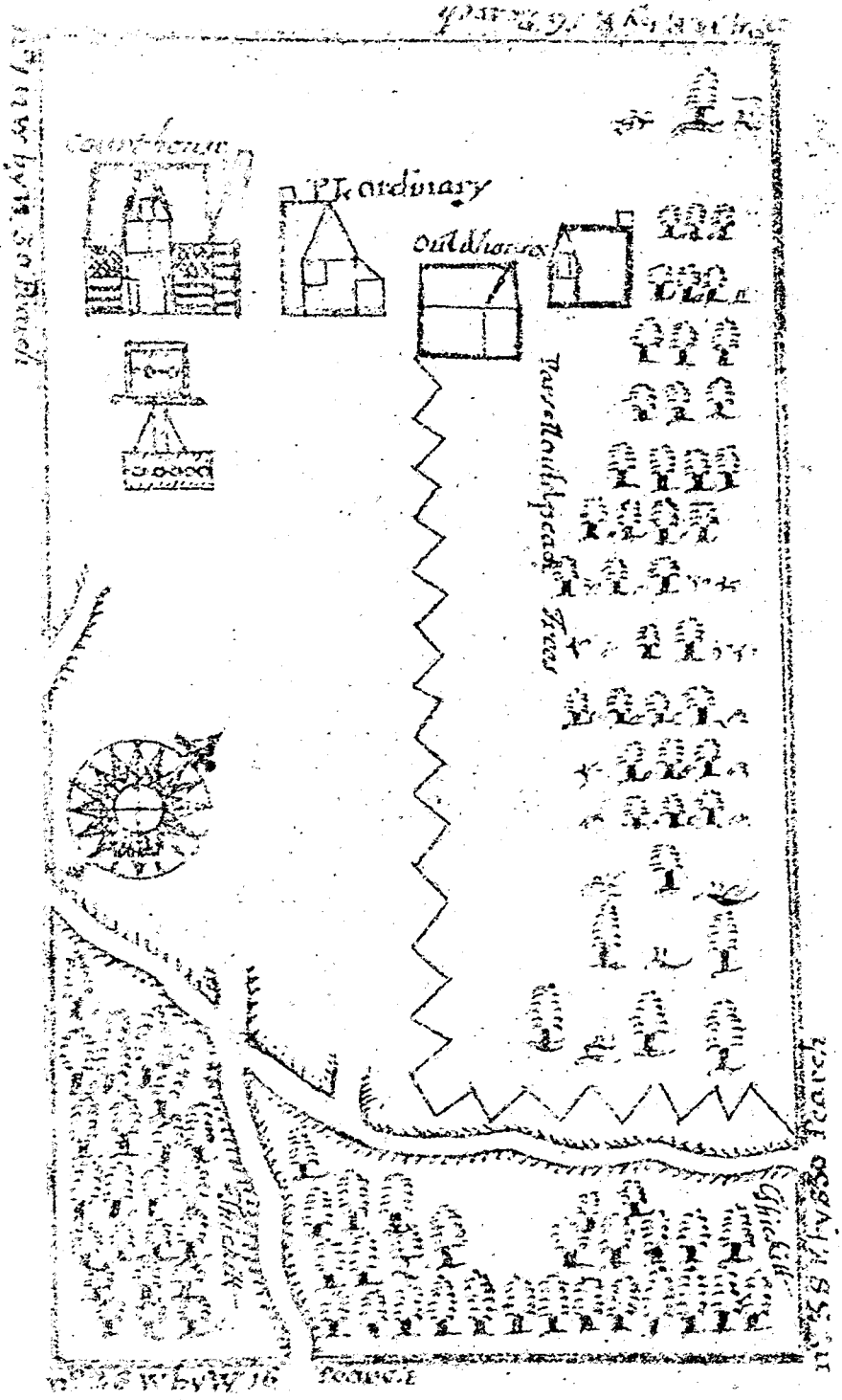



FIGURE 2. Plat of the Charles County Courthouse (1697) Where William Marshall Would Have Conducted His Legal Affairs

Source: Brugger, *Maryland*, 34

The other great political issue of the day, provincial relations with the Piscattaway and other Indians, appears to have drawn little of Marshall's attention. He is not listed among those taxed to raise money to fight Indians. Nor are there records indicating that he joined in expeditions against the Susquehannocks or other Native American tribes. The barest hints of Marshall's attitudes toward local Indians concern his associate George Pye. Governor Charles Calvert levied a stiff fine on Pye for leading a jury to acquit a Marylander in the murder of an Indian: Pye apparently scoffed that the death of an Indian was of little consequence to the citizens of the province.[13] This case occurred in 1642, just after Marshall had supported Pye to be a Charles County representative to the Maryland legislature. If Pye made known to his neighbors anything of his antipathy toward the Indians, it would suggest that Marshall held similar opinions. (His attitude might have been far different, of course, had he lived through the early 1680s. Following the conflicts of the middle 1670s, the Piscataway built a fort at Zachia Marsh not far from his dwelling house at the head of the Wicomico. This fort became a target of Piscataway enemies in 1680 and 1681, with fears of further attacks continuing through the decade. [14]

Marshall, to judge by surviving records, was more interested in religion than political affairs. He was clearly a Protestant, and perhaps considered himself to be a Presbyterian. If this were so he hardly could have been satisfied with the lack of ministerial representation in his neighborhood. There was only one Anglican minister in all of Maryland from 1650 to the time of Marshall's death. Of the other Protestant

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[13] Aubrey C. Land, *Colonial Maryland: A History* (Millwood, N.Y.: KTO, 1981), 44.
[14] For more on this see Marye, "Piscattaway," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 30 (September 1935): 214ff.

denominations, only the Presbyterians were represented by a minister in Charles County before 1658. There were two chief stumbling blocks, it seems, to finding any one to minister to the Christians in the neighborhood of Port Tobacco and the Wicomico River. First, Maryland's provincial charter allowed only Anglican churches to be built, so Catholics and non-Anglican Protestants were forced to meet in private chapels or individual homes. Second, the dispersed community, whose only medium of exchange was tobacco, offered few amenities for a professionally trained clergyman. Frustrated by the lack of ministers in the Wicomico neck, Marshall offered in 1654 an endowment of three cows toward "the Maintenance of a Minister which is to be in the now known Neck of Wicocomoco." Four years later, Francis Doughty, a nonconformist ex-communicant of the Anglican order, arrived in the newly organized Charles County to preach the gospel. It is unclear whether Marshall's bovine endowment had any effect on Doughty's decision to settle nearby. But it is clear that Doughty did not mix well with the citizens of the county. His ardent Puritanism, interest in ferreting out witches, and personal weaknesses made him noxious to his neighbors. His ignoble departure from Maryland in 1665 left Charles County with no minister.[15]

Matthew Hill, another preacher who seems to have had demons in his Anglican closet, arrived in Charles County in 1669. To hold the young minister in the county, Marshall and Beane apparently believed a more attractive and substantial endowment than cows would be needed. Within a year of Hill's arrival, he was married to Beane's daughter Edith and a little over a year after the wedding he had obtained a grant of estate

[15] Chapman 257; *Archives of Maryland*, 60, Intro, 29-32. There was one other Presbyterian leaning minister in the province in the early 1660s, Francis Legget, but his tenure seems to have been for only a few short years. He was dead by 1665.

for several hundred acres of land near Port Tobacco which he named "Poppleton." Marshall, seeking to sweeten the proposition of remaining in the county, created a new endowment in 1672, presumably to stock Hill's new estate. This was a donation of ten cows. But, clearly aware that few enticements could guarantee Hill's commitment, Marshall added a number of clauses directing the overseers of the donation what to do in the event Hill left the county. The key clause mandated that in the absence of a minister, the products and issue of the cattle should be doled out to the impoverished citizens of Charles County.

There is no evidence that William Marshall the immigrant was anti-Catholic, except for one intriguing instance. In 1658, one of Marshall's servants, a 20-year-old woman, gave her name in a deposition as "Margaret Brent." It seems clear that this was a sort of naming joke. American masters often gave exalted names to their servants and slaves.[16] If this is indeed the case here, Marshall was poking fun at the powerful Catholic landowner and agent of Lord Baltimore, Margaret Brent.[17]

By the end of his life Marshall, as evidenced by his various gifts and his will, was a pious and wealthy man. He opened his will by asking forgiveness from any man he may have wronged. The will and the inventory of his personal holdings show that he definitely did right by himself. He owned over 1,000 acres of land and had a personal estate valued at £261.18.10. Among his possessions were a "Great English drawing Table," six leather chairs, eleven cows and calves (valued at over 6600 pounds of tobacco), and last of all, five indentured servants and "a negro boy called Forgue and a

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[16] Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 57-58.

[17] *Archives of Maryland*, 53, 37; see also testimony concerning a possible proposal of marriage to Marshall's maid-servant Margaret in 1657 *Archives of Maryland*, 41, 26

negroe Wooman called Magistie" (in another clear naming joke: the black slave as "her majesty). The value of these latter workers came to 7500 pounds of tobacco. In land alone, Marshall's estate was over ten times the average 125-acre size of provincial Maryland plantations. [18]

Perhaps just as important, the final documents of Marshall's offer an expanded vision of the imagined community in which he lived. By the last years of his life he saw beyond a close circle of neighbors as his community. In his 1670 endowment of cows to Minister Hill, Marshall wanted to ensure that, if the minister followed tradition and quit the county, his gift would still go to good use in the local area. He instructed the overseers of the grant that, should the minister leave, they were to use the products and the issue of the cattle to help the poor of Charles County. What is fascinating here is the way he defined the county. It was both personal and corporate. Charles County for the aged planter William Marshall was comprised of all those citizens "liveing & being scituate betwixt the two rivers of Wicocomoco & Potomack from John Coates now dwelling plantation on Wicocomoco side & from Thomas Bakers now dwelling plantation on Potomack side downe wards the neck as farr as the point Commonly called Cobe-point."[19] Charles County, which had not existed when William Marshall arrived in Maryland, was now an extended community of plantations. This was Marshall's world.

**William Marshall II: Son of a Freeman**

It is unclear how much of that world was passed on to William Marshall's oldest son and namesake. William Marshall II's life was short and seeming rather unremarkable. He

[18] For the average size of early plantations, see Land, *Colonial Maryland*, 25
[19] *Archives of Maryland*, 60, pp. 264

left little mark in the records of the province of Maryland or in the courts of Charles County. It is unclear when he was born. Some historians place the date in 1670, but this seems unlikely.[20] His father and mother, Katherine Hebden, had married in 1658—most likely when the minister, Francis Doughty arrived in the county. William Marshall I had three children. But if the eldest, William II, had been born in 1670, this would mean that all three children had to be born in the short three years just before their father's death in 1672 at the age of at least 65. Moreover, this would mean a long spell of either no children or no surviving children for Katherine and William I. This seems all the more unlikely when one considers that Katherine had been a widow for eight years before she married William I. She could easily have been in her forties or even fifties by 1670. It is most likely that William II was born soon after his parents were married in 1658.[21] Indeed, William I's will, dated 25 February 1673, indicates that William I was not yet 21 and directs his friend Thomas Noteley to care for the boy until he should reach that age.

William Marshall II had many advantages growing up. He received two years of schooling in England sometime before 1672, most likely from the ages of ten to twelve.[22] He came into possession of much of his father's wealth: including 550 acres of land, including the Pickquascoe plantation on the west side of the Wickomico River where William I seems to have had his home. William I did not follow the British practice of

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[20] See for example the plaque placed at the site by the Daughters of the American Revolution; and Brady A. Hughes & Sarah S. Hughes, "A Historical Study of the Marshall Hall Site, 1634 to 1984," prepared for the National Park Service (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1985): 19, 21.

[21] Papenfuse et al. list 1658 as the year of William II's birth. See entry for Thomas Hanson Marshall, in *A Biographical Dictionary of the Maryland Legislature, 1635-1789*, v. 2 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 575.

[22] Assuming he was born in 1658 and that the suit demanding payment for his transportation and room and board took a number of months to arise. See suit for debt, *Archives of Maryland*, 67: 158.

primogeniture (that is, giving all of his property to his eldest son) and directed that his livestock and household goods be divided into equal thirds for his three children.[23] Nonetheless, one third of an estate the size of William I's represented impressive wealth for provincial Maryland.

Yet, Marshall's brief life seems to have been rather unproductive. He was orphaned, at least for a few years before reaching his majority. He was separated from his siblings, each of whom was sent to a different home (that is, if William I's executors adhered to his final wishes). It seems that his mother had died before his father. Thus, at the age of 15 or so, William II lost any sense of family cohesion.

After attaining his majority at age 21, William Marshall II displayed little of his father's drive to gain wealth. He had little concern with obtaining land (in fact his holdings in 1698 were only 710 acres, well below his father's total). There are very few land transactions associated with his name. He shows up in no extant court or legislative documents. He owned no indentured servants or slaves (if his will is accurate). The value of his probated estate was less than half that of his father (£112.10.2). It seems he lived off his inheritance rather than ambitiously setting about to increase his father's holdings.

To some degree, William Marshall II carried on his father's distaste for politics. The nature of politics changed drastically in the wake of Bacon's Rebellion in 1676. By then, the provincial government was more centralized. Charles Calvert, son of the founding proprietor of Maryland (Cecilius Calvert, Lord Baltimore), had taken over the two most important offices of the province: He was both the Lord Proprietor and the

[23] See will of William Marshall I dated 25 February 1673, in Wills, folio 592, Maryland State Archives.

governor. At his urging, the Maryland assembly limited the franchise from all freemen to only those with at least 50 acres of land or an estate worth at least £40 sterling.[24] Calvert had also established an upper house in the provincial legislature and cut the number of delegates to the lower house by half. Josias Fendall attempted once more to overthrow the Calvert family, and was again rebuffed. In the wake of his failed revolt, three areas of concern roiled Maryland politics: Protestants complained that Calvert was packing the provincial government with relatives and other Catholics; Protestant religious institutions seemed to be subverted by the province's policy of religious toleration; and the provincial authority's apparently came to disdain the crown's attempts to collect customs. Tensions roiled over into full-fledged transformation of the government by the early 1690s. But William Marshall II seemed little concerned.

The one thing that drew William Marshall II's attention was his family. He and his wife Elizabeth Hanson had four children between 1690 and 1697. But fate would remove William II from the family fold: He died the year after his fourth child was born, most likely the victim of an influenza epidemic. [25] The third child of William II and Elizabeth, Thomas, would take up where his grandfather left off. He fought through adversity to become a collector of land, including the parcel on which Marshall Hall would eventually be built. But he could hardly have learned this trade from his father. He was only three when William Marshall II died. To see how Thomas Marshall learned the ways of provincial Maryland to establish a country seat, it will be necessary to examine the family he grew up in and to examine one of the central continuities of provincial-era change: the colonial blended family.

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[24] Land, *Colonial Maryland*, 63.
[25] Walsh, *Charles County*, 39.

# Chapter 4

## *Land as Social Sign: Thomas Marshall I and the Formation of a Kin-Group Neighborhood*

Thomas Marshall became the last pioneer settler of the tidewater Potomac through a mistake.[1] Colonial surveyors were notoriously inexact in their measurements and boundary descriptions. Both their traditional practices and their crude surveying instruments were ill suited to the geography of the frontier Chesapeake. Even adequately trained surveyors could make significant miscalculations in laying out the sometimes vast acreage of provincial patents. The use of marked trees and other transient or difficult-to-interpret boundary markers often left property lines vague or subject to the faulty (or highly biased) memories of frontier neighbors who owned numerous widely scattered properties.[2] While conflicts over property boundaries often could lead to bitter feuds and even violent recriminations, surveying errors had a very different result for Thomas Marshall and his descendents.

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[1] The term "upper tidewater Potomac" refers to the length of river stretching from Maryland Point in southwestern Charles Co to the confluence of the Eastern Branch (now called the Anacostia) and the Potomac below Great Falls, or in other words that part of the river that runs north and south below present day Washington, D.C.

[2] On colonial surveying in early Maryland, see Carville Earle, *The Evolution of a Tidewater Settlement System: All Hallows Parish, Maryland, 1650-1783* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); Sarah S. Hughes, *Surveyors and Statesmen: Land Measuring in Colonial Virginia* (Richmond, 1979); Mary Catherine Wilheit, *Colonial Surveyors in Southern Maryland* (PhD Diss., Texas A&M University, 2003).

Long after most of the tidewater Potomac had been patented, Marshall discovered that a prime section of shoreline on Pomonkey neck still lay unclaimed. In 1727, armed with information most likely gained through a series of family relations, he began the process of procuring the land through a patent. He named his new property—66 acres squeezed between several pieces of property that had been patented more than six decades earlier—"Mistake." Soon after gaining title to the land, Marshall began to construct a house. And by the end of his life in 1759 he lived on his "Mistake" in one of the finest homes in the colonial Chesapeake region (the house that would many decades later come to be known as "Marshall Hall"). For the Marshall family, the inconsistent practices of colonial surveyors became the basis for the vast plantation and prominent family seat Thomas Marshall's descendents would control for over a century.

The Marshalls' place on the lower Western Shore of Maryland was, of course, the result of many more factors than a surveyor's mistake. Their evolving fortunes encompassed forces far beyond their Chesapeake world as well as bonds as intimate as those between brother and brother, husband and wife. From booming and busting European tobacco markets, to changing social norms about the purpose of families, to evolving ideas about the social and cultural significance of land, this is an intricately woven story. It involves growing numbers of Marshalls in succeeding generations, changing ideas about family relations, and movement across the Maryland frontier around the turn of the eighteenth century. At the heart of the story, however, is a quintessential American tale about a man who began his adulthood as a worker and rose to prominence as a member of Maryland's plantation gentry.

This chapter will describe that development in two ways. First, it will focus on the land transactions that led to Thomas Marshall's gaining possession of the land where Marshall Hall would one day stand. Second, it will examine the reasons underlying Marshall's actions and their ramifications for the members of generations of the Marshall family, particularly their relations to the land and to one another.

**Thomas Marshall's "Mistake"**

The story of the Marshall family's settlement along the upper tidewater Potomac began in 1662 and 1663, the years Randall Hanson patented Hansonton and Charley, respectively. Together these two properties comprised about 860 acres. Both were near Indian communities: Moyaone lay just to the east of Hansonton and Accokeek (the Indian village, not the modern town) probably lay within the Hansonton survey on the banks of the Potomac.[3] But this land was encumbered both legally and politically over the next decade. Legally, the Maryland legislature attempted to forge a bond of friendship with the Piscataway in 1668 and 1669 by creating a protectorate for them that stretched from the Potomac eastward to the Zekiah Swamp between the Piscataway and Mattawoman creeks—an area that surrounded and may have included Hanson's two Potomac shore properties. Apparently unmoved by the legislature's actions (indeed there were no provisions in the legislation for how to treat properties that already had been patented

[3]Very little is known about Accokeek's residents or its history. For more, see William B. Marye, "Piscattaway," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 30.3 (September 1935): 237-38; Robert L. Stephenson, *The Prehistoric People of Accokeek Creek* (Accokeek, Md.: Alice Ferguson Foundation, 1984), especially the map at page 5.

within the protectorate's boundaries), Hanson moved his growing family to Hansonton by the middle 1670s. [4]

His pioneering effort met with political disaster. In 1675, the match that ignited Bacon's Rebellion – one of the major events in late seventeenth century colonial American history – was the Susquehannahock attack on Hanson's home and the murder of several of his children. Hanson retreated with the remains of his family back toward English communities in eastern Charles County, where he came to dwell at "St. John's."[5] More broadly, the events of the 1670s seem to have blunted movement into the upper Potomac frontier for some two decades. In his famous 1708 map, Herbert Moll denoted the land bounded by the Potomac, Piscataway, and Mattawoman waterways as "Indian Land.".[6]

The Marshall family first gained a foothold in the neighborhood between 1696 and 1700. In 1696, Joshua Marshall (the younger brother of William II) and John Fendall initiated the purchase of Charley and Hansonton, respectively. But the sale was clouded by two factors. First, Randall Hanson was an old man in failing health. He was ill in 1698 and died in the winter of 1698/99. He had to leave instructions to his wife in his

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[4] Marye, "Piscattaway," 239-40, citing *Archives of Maryland*, v. 5, 165; and Land Office, Annapolis, Md., Patents, Liber XII, folio 339 (29 August 1669).

[5] By the end of his life in the late 1690s, he lived at "St John's," a property near the St. Mary's County border. He bought this property in the late 1670s, suggesting that he moved his diminished family there soon after the massacre. See Charles County Deed Book, Liber H., no. 1, 1679-1680, folio 299; Jane Baldwin Cotton, comp. & ed., *The Maryland Calendar of Wills*, 18 vols. (Baltimore: Kohn & Pollock, 1906- ), 173; Marye, "Piscattaway," 238; and Katherine A. Kellock, *Colonial Piscataway inMaryland* (Accokeek, Mary.: Alice Ferguson Foundation, 1962), 29.

[6] As late as 1732 a printer could publish Moll's map without feeling the need to alter the label. *The Maryland State Archives Atlas of Historical Maps of Maryland, 1608-1908*, ed. by Edward C. Papenfuse & Joseph M. Coale III (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 29 fig. 26.

will to consummate the sale. Second, Hanson's two properties lay in the domain the provincial authorities had set aside for the Piscataway. In 1692, the Piscataway had begun to complain to the Maryland provincial council that settlers were encroaching on their domain.[7] But by the middle of the decade, the onslaught of pioneers was a major factor in the Piscataways' decision to emigrate from their native homeland. Nonetheless, they still controlled rights to the land of Pomonkey Neck—at least nominally. Marshall and Fendall, to ensure their titles to the land, sought out John Ackatomacka, the reigning Emperor of the Piscataway. In 1700, Ackatomacka confirmed and condoned the sale. But provincial records offer no clue as to what swayed the emperor's decision. Marshall family lore holds that, during the Piscataways' final exodus from Maryland, the Piscataway worked several similar deals with other area land purchasers in exchange for tobacco to raise funds for the journey.[8] And for all his work to obtain Charley free and clear, Joshua Marshall saw no profits from it. He died in 1702.

"Charley" was in limbo for several years thereafter. Joshua Marshall left neither will nor children. His own siblings had died before him. His heir-at-law was thus his nephew, William Marshall III. But this William was still a minor. So for almost a decade "Charley" was under the effective control of John Fendall, stepfather to young William. If Fendall settled there with his Marshall step children or rented the land to tenant farmers, there are no extant records to show it. But it is certain that William

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[7] James Merrell, "Cultural Continuity Among the Piscataway Indians of Colonial Maryland," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 36 (1979): 569.

[8] See similar consent from the emperor to William Hutchinson, in *Archives of Maryland*, v. 202: 616; Horton G. Thompson, "Marshall Hall," family document detailing the loss of the original "deed" from Ackatomacka in 1870, copy in the possession of the author and in the Peggy Marshall Papers held at the National Park Service, Washington, D.C. See also Marye, "Piscattaway," 228-29

Marshall III moved there soon after attaining his majority in 1711.[9] By the mid 1720s, William's younger brother, Thomas, evinced a desire to live nearby his eldest sibling.

Thomas Marshall seems to have been a man in a hurry in the mid 1720s. In a very brief period of time he first married the widow of James Stoddert, a preeminent surveyor of provincial Maryland, and soon thereafter laid claim to the sixty-six acres of land adjacent to William Marshall III's "Charley." He called the plot "Mistake," a popular name for land in early Maryland due to the large number of errors surveyors made that resulted in scattered plots of unowned parcels across the province. By 1731, Thomas Marshall had constructed a house there. Whether this was the fine brick home later known as "Marshall Hall" is unclear. It is also unclear why Thomas Marshall wanted this small piece of land. Although it was in a prime location, "Mistake" was not large enough to support a full-scale plantation of the sort William Marshall III had devised at "Charley." To understand Thomas Marshall's motivations, it is necessary to examine some of the social and cultural transformations swirling through his world.

**New Populations, New Ideas on the Land**

By the time the immigrant William Marshall's grandson Thomas was born in 1695, there were about 35,000 people living in the province of Maryland as a whole. Fewer than 10 percent lived in Charles County. Although the county's population had increased six fold since its founding in 1658, the absolute number of residents was only about 2,400. The

[9] On 1 April 1719 a commission met at William Marshall's house to settle a dispute concerning the boundaries of the property once known as Calvert Manor. The manor was to the east of Hansonton, which was to the east of Charley. Because Marshall owned no other properties in the immediate vicinity of Calvert Manor at the time, there seems little doubt that the house mentioned was on the "Charley" property.

population of the county grew by 33 percent, to about 3000 (2411 whites, 578 slaves), by the time Thomas Marshall turned ten in 1705.[10] The first ten years of young Marshall's life were a time of significant and lasting change in Maryland as a whole and in the areas of Charles and Prince George's counties where Thomas would grow up, labor, and eventually amass wealth and land.

The very meaning of land underwent a transformation during Thomas Marshall's lifetime. The world into which he was born was crowded with land-hungry immigrants. But land became harder to find in the counties of the lower Western Shore. First the shorelines filled, and then latecomers pushed inland in search of available plots with suitable soils for growing tobacco. As the land filled up, immigrants found it increasingly difficult to obtain land through the old headright and patent mechanisms.[11] Obtaining land shifted from quasi-feudal proprietary system to two other systems that sometimes conflicted, and other times meshed. First, the demise of the patent process closed the possibility of obtaining land at relatively cheap costs. Land thereafter became

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[10] Lorena Walsh, *Charles County, Maryland, 1658-1705: A Study Of Chesapeake Social And Political Structure* (PhD Diss.: Michigan State University, 1977), 22.

[11] The headright system and patents were key mechanisms for apportioning land and creating a labor force in proprietary Maryland. The headright was a method devised by colonial business interests and administrators (such as Lord Baltimore) to populate North American colonies. Under the system, a proprietor awarded to any individual 50 acres of land for each person imported into a province or colony. The system provided labor as well, which in turn created commodities (chiefly tobacco in the Chesapeake). Taxes and fees levied on various aspects of production and transportation of these commodities created a vast income for provincial administrators, from the proprietor on down. A patent was a specific method for turning "unclaimed" land into property. An individual, once proving that a particular area of land was unowned, could apply to the provincial authorities for title to the land. An individual who imported two people into Maryland, for example, could demand of Lord Baltimore 100 acres of land. If Baltimore and his authorities were convinced that the claimant had indeed imported two immigrants and that the parcel of land was free of encumbrances, they granted a patent to the claimant. The proprietary patent system had vestiges of feudal land relations. Often, patents required an annual or semi-annual "quit-rent" payable to the proprietor.

a commodity to be bought and sold in the market. This new system benefited families that owned land by 1700, and created a growing disparity between landed planters and subsistence farmers and laborers. In addition, the amassing of larger domains of land led to a cultural shift in the way Marylanders thought about their property in the earth. They came to see it as a symbol of family status. But Maryland settlers also created legal bonds and traditions and reorganized their property holdings to give place to the ineffable feelings of family heritage. Land became the testament to a family's connection with past generations and its promise to future generations. By the early 1700s, Thomas Marshall and the third generation of his family were able to combine these two ways of thinking about land to deal successfully with a series of demographic changes that ramified throughout eighteenth-century Chesapeake society.

The lives of Chesapeake settlers underwent dramatic change in the years around 1700. The ratio of Maryland's native-born (or creole) population to its immigrants had begun to increase significantly. Immigration slowed, particularly as the province shifted its labor force from white indentures to African slaves. Creoles began to achieve natural increase and came to predominate in the lower Western Shore throughout the eighteenth century. Along with natural increase, creoles experienced longer life expectancy as more of them moved inland away from disease-ridden boggy river banks and as they improved both diet and general living conditions.[12]

Creole predominance, natural increase, and longer life expectancy, in turn, altered marriage patterns. In the era of William Marshall I, marriages were late, short, and

[12] Walsh, *Charles County*, 15; Russell R. Menard, "Population, Economy, and Society in Seventeenth-Century Maryland," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 79 (1984): 72; Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 33-34, 57-60.

relatively unproductive. Men outnumbered women by a ratio as high as 6:1. Most of these women were immigrants who came as indentured servants and thus were effectively barred from marrying until they were in their early twenties—late for the seventeenth century and particular for a region with a life expectancy as low as forty years. Short marriages meant small families due to the squeeze on the wife's fertile years. Short lives meant that numerous children were orphaned. Few children reached adulthood with two surviving parents.[13] Fewer still knew any of their grandparents. The children of the immigrant William Marshall, for example, lost both parents before the eldest sibling reached fifteen. At least some of the immigrant's land was administered by the Charles County orphans court after his death. Because both of William and Katherine Marshall were immigrants, it is unlikely their children met their grandparents, with the exception of William II, who did so during his two years of education in England.[14]

Beginning with the native-born generation of William Marshall, however, creoles experienced quite different circumstances. Creole marriages began to approximate the experiences of the home country after 1700. Natural increase reduced the ratio of males to females, although it was not nearly equivalent for several decades.[15] This increase widened the marriage pool for both men and women. Creole women did not have to serve indentures, which lowered the average age of marriage for women. Lower

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[13]Walsh, *Charles County*, 11; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 170 table 21. Note that Kulikoff's figures compare seventeenth-century Middlesex County, Virginia, with eighteenth-century Prince George's County, Maryland. The former figures probably better represent the situation faced by the first two generations of Maryland Marshalls.

[14] Walsh, *Charles County*, 15; Menard, "Population, Economy," 72; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 250-51.

[15] The ratio of male to female babies born in the province was virtually equivalent among creoles, but, due to continuing immigration, men still outnumbered women three to two in the first decade of the eighteenth century (Menard, "Population, Economy," 73).

marriage ages and longer life expectancies made longer marriages possible. In the middle third of the 1600s, marriages between immigrants lasted an average of only eleven years.[16] But by the early 1700s, the average had increased to twenty-two years. The marriage of Thomas Marshall and Elizabeth Bishop Stoddard in Prince George's County closely reflected this change: They were married for almost twenty-five years. Longer creole marriages, in turn, typically produced more children than the marriages of immigrants.[17]

But as the experience of William Marshall II demonstrates, these conditions were hardly the norm in 1700. He married much younger than his father, yet relatively late (his early thirties). His wife, Elizabeth—the daughter of the wealthy landowner Randall Hanson and survivor the infamous Doeg Indian attack in 1675—served no indenture and was thus free to marry at an early age. William II and Elizabeth had more children than William I and his wife Katherine Hebden. Whereas the immigrant couple had three children, their eldest son had four. Moreover, only one of William Marshall I's children married and procreated. William II and Elizabeth had at least three children who married and had children of their own. For their part, the children of the third Marshall generation created a demographic explosion. The fourth Marshall generation (born in the three decades following 1710) produced at least eighteen children. In this, the Marshalls closely mirrored the experiences of tidewater Marylanders at large. Earlier marriages

[16] William and Katherine Marshall were lucky to exceed the norm by almost four years with a marriage of about fifteen years.
[17] Walsh, *Charles County*, 11; Menard, "Population, Economy," 73; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 168-71.

combined with high fertility to rapidly swell the population between 1700 and 1750, with 2.5 children replacing *each* adult in each succeeding generation.[18]

These demographic changes drastically altered provincial ideas about the roles and duties of families. Longer lives and longer marriages had a significant impact on family politics and neighborhood structures. Parents gained a greater interest in controlling the lives of their children. They needed their children's labor. They required care in old age that only their children could be pressured to provide. They desired to pass on a cultural heritage expressed as the biological inheritance of succeeding generations. At the center of each of these issues was the idea of land.

Attaining old age meant that creole parents faced the prospect of becoming grandparents. Grandparents had a stabilizing effect on families, providing grandchildren with both a living familial heritage and a source of cultural continuity. Parents in the upper tidewater Potomac region underscored this continuity by changing the ways they named their children: Where in the seventeenth century they had named children after parents, in the eighteenth century more and more parents named their children for grandparents. This is evident from the name the immigrant William Marshall and his wife Katherine chose for their eldest son, and he in turn for his eldest son.[19] Thomas Marshall.I, however, initiated a different naming practice in the 1730s. He gave his first-born son a third name. Between the familiar first name "Thomas" and the family last name "Marshall,:" he inserted a family name "Hanson." This drew a direct link to the

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[18] Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 59. The numbers for the entire province were similar. See Menard, "Population, Economy," 72.

[19] On naming practices in general, see Daniel S. Smith, "Child-Naming Patterns, Kinship Ties, and Change in Family Attitudes in Hingham, Massachusetts, 1641-1800," *Journal of Social History* 18 (1985): 541-66; and for the Chesapeake in particular, see Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 245-50.

generation of Thomas Hanson Marshall (II)'s grandparents, proclaiming that this son was a member of two significant family lines, the Marshalls *and* the Hansons. This practice became standard for the eldest Marshall sons for the duration of their ownership of "Mistake" and Marshall Hall. Thomas Hanson (II) named his first-born son Thomas Marshall (III) (with no middle name thus signifying Thomas Hanson Marshall's father and Thomas Marshall (III)'s grandfather), Thomas Marshall (III) named his first-born son Thomas Hanson Marshall (IV) after the boy's grandfather, Thomas Hanson Marshall (II), and this Marshall (IV) named his son Thomas Marshall, a name that now referred both to a grandfather and a great, great grandfather. These Marshalls, then named their sons, not for their fathers as in the accidental neighborhood arrangement, but for the grandfathers. This practice of family naming signaled a greater reverence for preceding generations, a deepening desire to connect children to an ever-receding biological heritage.

**Forging the Kin-Group Neighborhood**

As families forged a living heritage, they began to change the way they associated with neighbors. The relations of neighbors shifted from accidental relations dependent on available land to tightly interwoven relations of a kin-group neighborhood. This process occurred in two stages. First, as families settled into neighborhoods and began to pass land to their children through inheritance and other methods, the second and third generations began to find marriage partners among their neighbors. These marriages expanded family relations by linking multiple families through the legal process of matrimony. The second stage in the development of a kin-group neighborhood began when the pool of eligible marriage partners became limited to neighborhood families.

Sometimes the radius of a "marriage market" was as little as two miles from the parental home. Often, siblings of one family married siblings of another in a form of marriage known as "sibling exchange." More and more marriages occurred between blood relations (third, second, and even first cousins). The number of family and given names declined. Intermarriage created relatively small neighborhoods in which neighbors were related by ever more complex blood ties.[20] The Marshalls are a perfect example of this process.

William Marshall I seems to have had little interest in relatives. The miller and rabble rouser Thomas Marshall, who resided at the head of the Wicomico River, was most likely a kinsman of William.[21] Although this Thomas Marshall lived in the general vicinity of William Marshall, the immigrant chose to associate with men in his immediate neighborhood. These men were from a variety of different social and economic statuses. Marshall's business associate Walter Beane (or Bayne) rose to the statues of gentleman just like Marshall. But Marshall also was very close with men of a lower rank. Francis Wyne, for instance, was a barrel maker. Indeed, in his will William Marshall ignored Thomas Marshall or any other blood relatives, and referred to Wyne as his "beloved frind" and "brother." The changes in life expectancy and community would shift this earlier order away from acquaintances and toward extended family. Tidewater men and women increasingly would turn away from haphazard collections of friends to social networks of cousins.[22]

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[20] Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 252-55.
[21] This assertion is based on two facts: The two Marshalls lived so close to one another and later Marshall generations commonly used the name Thomas.
[22] Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, ch. 6.

Marriage among the first generations of lower Western Shore creoles created kin-group communities by turning neighbors into relatives. Initially, short marriage spans combined with the low number of women to establish the practice of what Russell Menard calls "serial polyandry" (or what we now refer to popularly as "serial monogamy). This system emphasized single marriage, with successive marriage partners over time as spouses died.[23] (Polygamy -- taking multiple marriage partners at one time – never was tolerated.) Serial polyandry was crucial to the first stage of creating a kin-group neighborhood. It expanded the blood-kin relations of previously unrelated families.

The experience of Elizabeth Hanson Marshall, wife and then widow of William Marshall II, exemplifies the development of serial polyandry and the expansion of the kin-group network. The marriage of William Marshall II to Elizabeth Hanson significantly altered the Marshall family fortunes. Elizabeth Hanson was related by blood to three important figures of seventeenth-century Maryland. She was the daughter of Randall Hanson, the wealthy landowner who initially patented "Charley" and "Hansonton." Her maternal great uncle was Thomas Hatton, one of the key figures of Lord Baltimore's proprietary administration in the mid-to-late 1600s. Although a Protestant, Hatton demonstrated a deep loyalty to the Catholic proprietor, which cost him his life at the time of the Battle of the Severn.[24] Elizabeth Hanson's uncle was William

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[23] Menard, "Population, Economy," 72-73; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 168-72.
[24] Hatton held numerous official positions at the behest of Lord Baltimore and ranked with William Stone as one of the province's key administrators. At various times, he was Secretary of State, member of the Privy Council of State, Justice of the Provincial Court, Attorney General, Principal Officer and Keeper of the Acts and Proceedings of the Lieutenant General and Council, Commissioner of Land Grants, and Commissioner for the probate of Wills and the granting of Administration of decedent's estates. See

Hatton, a key figure in the politics of Prince George's County and the province beyond. This Hatton was a Provincial court justice, brother-in-law to the wealthy and influential Catholic Henry Darnall and business partner with John Addison, a leader of the Protestant Associators during the provincial revolution of government of 1689 and after.[25] (These relations to Catholics such as Lord Baltimore and Henry Darnall may explain why later generations of Marshalls evinced little anti-Catholic sentiment.) Another of Hatton's close business partners was William Hutchinson, who patented several pieces of land in lower Prince George's County and Pomonkey Neck, at least one of which would form a large component of the Marshall Hall plantation.[26]

The early death of William Marshall II drew his Marshall descendents into a wider kin network with another important family, one already well known to the Marshalls. Elizabeth Hanson Marshall married John Fendall. Fendall was the son of one of the most significant figures of seventeenth century Maryland, Josias Fendall, the sometimes loyal and sometimes rebellious governor of Lord Baltimore's proprietary province.[27] John Fendall may well have known William Marshall I, for Josias certainly

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Matthew Page Andrews, *History of Maryland: Province and State* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran, 1929), 92, 119, 124; Alexander Hamilton Bell, *A Daughter of Maryland Was the Mother of Texas, Mrs Jane Herbert (Wilkinson) Long* (Washington, D.C.: Law Reporter Printing Company, 1937), ch. 1.

[25] Addison, in turn, was deeply involved in real estate with William Hutchinson whose properties would one day form part of the Marshall Hall domain. For more on Addison, see Lois Green Carr & David William Jordan, *Maryland's Revolution of Government, 1689-1692* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1974), 220.

[26] This was "Carrick," patented by William Hutchinson in 1697.

[27] On Fendall, see Carr & Jordan, *Maryland's Revolution of Government*, chs. 1 & 2 *passim*; *A Biographical Dictionary of the Maryland Legislature, 1635-1789*, vol. 1: *A-H*, ed. by Edward C. Papenfuse et al. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 318; Aubrey C. Land, *Colonial Maryland: A History* (Millwood, N.Y.: KTO, 1981), 54-57, 79-80, 83-83; Robert J. Brugger, *Maryland: A Middle Temperament, 1634-1980* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 27, 36-37.

knew the immigrant Marshall and transacted business with him. Josias's cousin John Fendall, a mariner, appears to have administered the Marshall orphans' property for the Charles County orphans court in the 1670s.[28] Josias's son John apparently knew the Marshalls well enough to keep in touch with them even when his family immigrated to North Carolina in the early 1680s.[29] By the mid 1690s, just after attaining his age of majority, he was close enough with Joshua Marshall to become his partner in the purchase of Randall Hanson's "Charley" and "Hansonton." Then, Fendall literally entered the Marshall family by marrying the widow of his partner's brother. At the same time, the marriage of John Fendall and Elizabeth Hanson Marshall brought the children of William Marshall II into Fendall's household at "Clifden Hall." The young Marshalls certainly found their circle of relations expanded by becoming part of the Fendall family and consequently felt the full flush of the first stage of kin-group formation.

But it was Thomas Marshall who would become the linchpin in the Marshall family's shift to the second stage of kin-group formation. On the one hand, Thomas carried on elements of the first stage by significantly expanding his family's connections to the gentry of Pomonkey Neck with his two marriages. Like his father, he married relatively late but quite well in terms of status and landed wealth. His first wife, Elizabeth Bishop Stoddert, was the widow of the immigrant James Stoddert. Stoddert held a major influence in the development of Pomonkey and surrounding locales as both a large land owner and well-known surveyor. (Stoddert is well-known historically for

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[28] Josias's cousin John is mentioned in Papenfuse et al., *Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 1, 318.

[29] Papenfuse et al., *Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 1, 317, 318.

drawing a famous map of Annapolis.[30]) At his death, Stoddert left an estate of almost £800 (including 25 slaves and a number of books) and nearly 7,000 acres of land in Charles and Prince George's counties (much of it in the Pomonkey Neck).

When Thomas Marshall I married the widow Elizabeth Stoddert soon after James's death, they created a sizeable blended family. Elizabeth Stoddert brought two minor sons into her second marriage. Three other Stoddert sons already were twenty-one and settled in the neighborhood of Pomonkey Neck.[31] At least two had begun families of their own by 1728. This created extended family relations across Pomonkey Neck with numerous Stodderts. The Marshall-Stoddert marriage created a blended family within their household. Once they had children of their own, there were as many as six children from two different families living there. This family was augmented even further in 1734 when a number of the children of William Marshall III came to live with Thomas Marshall I after his brother's death.[32] Rather than being an anomaly, this sort of blended family -- with children from different sets of biological parents -- was the norm for early Chesapeake society.

On the other hand, Thomas Marshall's marriage to Elizabeth began the narrowing down process of the second stage of kin-group neighborhood formation. His marriage to

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[30] Papenfuse & Coale, *Atlas of Historical Maps of Maryland*, XX.

[31] James Stoddert must have been married previous to Elizabeth Bishop. She seems to have been born in 1693 and given the ages at which at least two of Stoddert's older children married, they would have to have been born between about 1700 and 1707. This seems highly unlikely. Moreover, Elizabeth Stoddert's last child with Thomas Marshall was born in 1735. If she were having children at the turn of the century, she would have had to be about fifty years old when this last child was born (assuming that she was at least fifteen when gave birth to her first child)—again, a highly unlikely scenario. Cotton, *Maryland Calendar of Wills*, vol. 6, 9-10; Papenfuse et al., *Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 2, 782.

[32] Peggy Marshall Papers, 69.

Elizabeth was a sibling exchange. Elizabeth's sister Rebecca Bishop had married Thomas's older brother, William Marshall II. As the kin group grew tighter, this form of marriage would recur down through the Marshall generations. Two of Thomas and Elizabeth's children married two of Col. George Dent's children. Thomas Hanson Marshall II married Rebecca Dent, whose brother John married Sarah Marshall, Thomas II's younger sister. The kin circle drew even tighter when Thomas and Elizabeth's grandson, Thomas Marshall III, took a second cousin (Margaret Marshall) as his second wife. This pattern was hardly unique to the Marshall family.[33]

Thomas Marshall I further cemented his preeminence in a kin network by taking as his second wife Sabina Trueman Greenfield. (Sabina, the daughter of Colonel Thomas Trueman Greenfield, was the niece of the Truman, who played an instrumental role in the skirmishes with the Susquehannocks in 1675.) Here the family connections get a bit dizzying, but they illustrate how the Marshalls were becoming intimately related with neighboring families. Sabina was the first cousin of Eleanor Hawkins, who married George Dent (?-1785). This George Dent was the brother to a son-in-law and daughter-in-law of Thomas Marshall when Thomas Hanson Marshall II married Rebecca Dent and Sarah Marshall married Rebecca and George's brother John (known as John Dent, of George, ca. 1733 – 1809). Sabina's sister (or perhaps half-sister) was Marianne Greenfield, who married John Stoddert, the stepson of Thomas Marshall I.[34] By the mid1700s, then, the Marshalls were related by blood to several of the important and

[33] As many as one in four marriages in Prince George's County by the 1760s were between blood relations. Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 252.
[34] See entries for the males mentioned in this paragraph in Papenfuse et al., *Biographical Dictionary, passim.*

historic families of Piscataway region: Fendalls, Hansons, Dents, Stodderts, Greenfields, as well as Clagetts and Magruders.

These marriage and blood relations expressed a close proximity of families. All of these families lived either within or right on the border of the twenty-seven square mile area of Pomonkey Neck. By 1748, these families were closely tied to one another. That year, they decided to demonstrate their solidarity in a highly distinctive way. They banded together to demand that the provincial legislature allow Pomonkey Neck to secede from Prince George's County (where the Neck had been put during the formation of Prince George's a half century earlier) to rejoin Charles County. Charles County, for the Marshalls and their blood kin, was in a sense their ancestral home.

This move represented a significant transformation of the Marshalls' concept of land and its symbolic value in inventing a family story, in expressing their kin group's status. In turn, the development of a kin-group neighborhood in the Pomonkey Hundred was crucial to a series of decisions made by Thomas Marshall I, decisions that would establish Marshall Hall.

**Generations of Land**

Thomas Marshall faced a potentially daunting problem in his teen years: He was a second son. This status could have tremendous ramifications on one's inheritance and future economic possibilities during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In England, the practice of primogeniture (devising virtually all of a father's property on

only the eldest son) often severely limited a younger son's access to family wealth.[35] And while growing numbers of American fathers abandoned the practice of giving virtually all of their land and wealth to the eldest son, they rarely divvied up their estates to all their sons (much less daughters) in equal amounts. This was the case for Thomas. William Marshall II left only 100 acres of land to his second son, while he gave more than 500 acres to William Marshall III. These 600 acres in the vicinity of the head of the Wicomico (part of the immigrant William Marshall's earliest patent/dwelling plantation) had several problems. The land had been worked for more than sixty-five years. While the soil was of the type that produced the best tobacco, it was most likely worn out after so many years of bearing tobacco. Even if the land were still productive, the plot was too small to allow for much more than a subsistence living. Moreover, its locale at the head of the Wicomico River was not attractive enough to sell or trade in hopes of obtaining better land elsewhere. From the moment of his birth, Thomas Marshall bore the fate of a younger son.

This accident of history left him in a precarious social and financial position. Where William Marshall III began adulthood with enough land to establish a plantation, Thomas could not simply assume that he too would become a planter. He would most likely have grown up understanding that if he were to become a planter like his brother, he would first have to raise capital through another occupation. His early chances did not look bright.

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[35] On the related issues of primogeniture, the immigration of younger sons to America, and the development of Chesapeake culture, see Martin H. Quitt, "Immigrant Origins of the Virginia Gentry: A Study of Cultural Transmission and Innovation," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 45 (1988): 629-55.

Second sons, especially those who grew up in the house of a stepfather, often were bound out to learn a trade. This is apparently what happened to young Thomas Marshall. By about 1710, he was learning the skills of a shipwright to become proficient at repairing and building boats.[36] Being a tradesman would explain one of the central questions of Thomas's biography: Why did he not marry until he was almost thirty, when his older brother married in his early twenties. William Marshall III could attract a fine marriage partner with his inherited wealth. But Thomas had few prospects of becoming a gentry planter on turning twenty-one. He had no significant inheritance and was an artisan in a region ill suited to artisan trade.

The lower Western Shore in general (and the upper tidewater Potomac in particular) was a difficult place for a craftsman to establish a lucrative trade. There were neither hamlets nor towns of any consequence in Charles County until well after 1700.[37] Without towns, there was no mechanism to focus economic activity into a market. Sparse settlement of only about seven settlers to the square mile in Charles County further diminished the possibility of plying a trade, much less achieving wealth through artisan production.[38] The "open country" pattern of settlement and land use continually re-enforced the primacy of the plantation as the region's sole means to economic wealth

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[36] Prince George's County Rent Rolls, 1651-1772, Piscataway Hundred; 1/23/5/44, Maryland State Archives. Marshall is denoted as a shipwright in a land transaction with John Hutchinson of Prince George's County. While this could indeed be a different Thomas Marshall than the grandson of the immigrant William Marshall, several aspects of the transaction suggest he is. First, his is listed as living in Charles County and there were no other Thomas Marshalls of proper age known to be living in the county in 1722. Second, John Hutchinson was a member of a family that lived and owned property along Piscataway Creek near Charley and Hansonton.

[37] Walsh, *Charles County*, 10.

[38] Even the most settled areas held only about twelve people per square mile (Walsh, *Charles County*), 8-9.

and social status.[39] To make matters worse for unpropertied men, planters increasingly consolidated land in the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries. Land prices doubled between 1680 and 1700, while tobacco prices stagnated at less than a penny per pound.[40]The long decline in tobacco prices throughout most of the second half of the seventeenth century created a widening gap among land owners. Those with greater amounts of land were able to procure more, while those with fewer acres found it difficult even to hold on to what they already had, much less obtain more.[41]

For all the ills associated with being born after the first son, Thomas Marshall's membership in the Marshall family gave him certain advantages. He had his hundred acres. He also had a wealthy brother. Through the 1720s, Thomas Marshall used these advantages to leverage his status from that coded in the official records of the day as "Mr." to that of "Gent." Like immigrants from time immemorial, he moved to a place where he already had relatives who could ease his way into a new world. For Thomas Marshall, that place was not terribly far from his 100 Wicomico acres as the crow flew. It lay in western Charles County, on the banks of the Potomac River, in a plot of land called "Charley."

William Marshall III already had immigrated westward across the county soon after attaining the age of majority. By the age of twenty-four, he was selling off his land

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[39] James T. Lemon, "Spatial Order: Households in Local Communities and Regions," in *Colonial British America: Essays in the New History of the Early Modern Era*, ed. by Jack P. Greene & J.R. Pole (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 86-122. Aware of the economic pitfalls represented by the lack of towns, the Maryland legislature periodically attempted to encourage the growth of towns and regional markets (Lemon, "Spatial Order," 104-14; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 104-107).

[40] Robert J. Brugger, *Maryland: A Middle Temperament, 1634-1980* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 61.

[41] Walsh, *Charles County*, 12, 14; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, chs. 6 & 7.

holdings in the eastern part of the county.[42] But he was doing it in a way that suggests that he did not think of the land merely as a commodity. The two major pieces of land he sold, "Two Friends" and "Paqueseat," both had been owned at one time by family forebears. And he sold both pieces to his youngest brother Richard. William's actions made sense in two ways. First, he was acting in his own economic self interest. By the 1710s, the Wicomico properties of his grandfather were located in backwater areas. The Potomac was a bustling commercial highway, its upper tidewater reaches were less settled, its soil less worn than the area at the head of the Wicomico. The chances of expanding his plantation holdings were greater at "Charley." By 1719, he had built a home at "Charley," his inheritance from his Uncle Joshua, and was living there with his wife Rebecca and their budding family.[43]

Second, William III was acting in a more familial way that mirrored changes in Chesapeake society. By selling land to his brother, he assisted in raising Richard's status to that of planter. But the sale also says something about the spatial relations of family as William Marshall saw them. The distance between "Charley" on the Pomonkey Neck and "Two Friends" and "Paqueseat" is more than twenty miles. This was a great distance in the early eighteenth century, a good day's travel. Thus, the sale of land to his brother shows William Marshall III to be on the cusp a major change in social relations. On the

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[42] 1714, March 29: William Marshall (III) of Prince George's County and Rebeckah his wife conveyed on 29 March 1714 a tract called "Two Friends", containing 525 acres, it being the half formerly sold (by?) Joshua Marshall to John Sothoron, to Berry Sothoron, and on 11 January 1719 conveyed to Richard Marshall, and 100 acres of land on the Wicomico R. granted to William Marshall Sr. for 200 acres. 1721, January 30: Richard Marshall (carpenter) and his wife Mary conveyed on 30 January 1721 part of a tract sold by William Marshall to Richard Marshall on the west side of the Wicomico River, bounded by "Paquaseat,",containing 60 acres.

[43] Prince George's County, Old Book of Land Commons, 1717-1720; Mayre, "Piscattaway," 35, 43.

one hand, he mixed economic decisions with fraternal bonding. On the other, he did not seem yet to conceive of his collateral family (that is, siblings and cousins) as a kin group that should be organized in spatially close community. This sense of community, however, seems to have been dawning on the brother born between William III and Richard.

Thomas Marshall did not wait long to follow William to western Charles County. He initiated the purchase of 262 acres of "Carrick," a parcel of land that bounded Charley to the south and east, in 1720.[44] But the process was fraught with difficulties. For eight years some unknown circumstance (or set of circumstances) prevented Marshall from culminating the sale. Even the deed of 1728 that proclaims title to the property "fully, clearly, and absolutely" did not give him clear title to the land. Seven years later Marshall was in court attempting to resolve a technical dispute that threatened to strip him of the property. For all this effort, Carrick was not an ideal property for a planter in the making. It was landlocked, which would be frustrating for both the planter and the shipwright in Thomas Marshall. The frustration of obtaining Carrick did not dampen Marshall's ardor for obtaining land. He bought 160acres of "Wheeler's Hope" (situated along Piscataway Creek north and east of Calvert Manor) in 1722.[45] He bought "The

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[44] Hughes and Hughes incorrectly claim that Thomas Marshall I owned no land in the vicinity of Charley when he patented Mistake [Brady A. Hughes & Sarah S. Hughes, "A Historical Study of the Marshall Hall Site, 1634 to 1984," prepared for the National Park Service (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1985): 23]. He clearly had bought Wheeler's Hope and held at least presumptive title to part of Carrick by 1625. See Prince George's County Rent Rolls, 1651-1772, Piscataway Hundred, 1/23/5/44, p. 365; Prince George's County Rent Rolls, 1651-1772, Piscataway Hundred, 1/23/5/44.

[45] In 1722, Thomas Marshall bought Wheeler's Hope (160 acres out of original 265 acre patent), located between Quarter Branch and Piscataway Branch on north side of fresh that ran into Piscataway Creek in Piscataway Hundred (that is, north of Calvert Manor

Pasture" (lying in Pomonkey Neck) and two nearby properties from his step-brother John Stoddart in 1727.[46] But the property that seems to have appealed to him most was one that he obtained not as a commodity in real estate market, but the old-fashioned way, through a patent. This was "Mistake."

Marshall would have had several opportunities to hear of the "Mistake" that lay just to the west of "Charley," right along the Potomac. His brother may have known about the unclaimed land by living at "Charley." Or, the wrangling over "Carrick" may have revealed the surveyor's mistake. Or Marshall's close association with the family of James Stoddart, the surveyor, may have given him access to key information; or the fact that he was the grandson of Randall Hanson (who patented "Charley"). Whatever the source of the information, Marshall applied for a patent for the sixty-six unclaimed acres on 7 January 1727, just two weeks after his marriage to Elizabeth Bishop Stoddard. The patent was approved a little more than a year later.

The 1720s were years of vast change in the fortunes of Thomas Marshall. He gave up work on boats and became a planter. He obtained hundreds of acres of land in and around Pomonkey Hundred. His social status rose from "Mr." to "Gent." While the source of capital for the purchase of so much land is unclear, it is evident that Marshall was amassing large tracts of land. But the significance he placed on this process was somewhat different for him from what it had been for his immigrant grandfather.

Thomas Marshall clearly was ambitious in an economic sense. But the logic of his ambition was shot through with family notions that had little influence on his father

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and perhaps east). For a map of Prince George's County hundreds, see Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 210.

[46] It may be that William Marshall III underwrote the early land transactions of Thomas Marshall.

and grandfather. Marshall bought land in the vicinity of his brother William III, seemingly desirous to be near close kin. Although he bought and patented multiple parcels of land, they were not scattered across the county at long distances from each other. Rather, they were all in the same general vicinity. Even when he bought 480 acres in Virginia, they were located directly across the river from "Mistake" in Fairfax County. His very intent to obtain "Mistake" reflects a different way of thinking about land than his parents and grandparents. There was little connection to the "ancestral" lands patented by the immigrant William Marshall. Thomas Marshall's commitment was to his living brother, William III. "Mistake" had relatively little economic potential. It was too small itself to form a plantation. It was in fact the size of plots usually associated with subsistence farming.

"Mistake" had a different purpose for Thomas. It was to serve as the seat of his plantation holdings, and it was equally to serve as the material basis for the family identity of future generations of Marshall.

In this new dispensation, land was intimately tied to the maintenance of the family line. Demographic changes had lengthened the spans of both individual lives and marriages. Eighteenth-century parents, unlike their seventeenth-century predecessors, dealt with these changes by conceptualizing land as a tool for powerfully influencing the behavior and loyalty of their children. This is clear in the way succeeding generations of Marshalls left their land to their children.

The first two William Marshalls left land to their children with no stipulations. Once the children came into possession of the land, they were free to do with it as they pleased. But by the time of the third generation, this had changed. William Marshall III,

for example, enforced the idea that there was an organic link between succeeding Marshall generations and the land by entailing the properties he devised to his children. That is, he gave parcels of "Charley" not only to his daughters Sarah and Rebecca, but also to "the heirs of their bodys lawfully begotten." This meant that they did not own the land in fee simple, nor could they simply sell the land if they wished. In essence, entail took land out of the market and made it, in the language of economists, non-fungible. Particular parcels of land became unique to a particular family. Just as one could not make children fungible and exchange them at will in the marketplace (except of course in the growing slave trade), one could not exchange entailed land for other pieces of land no matter their market value.[47]

A growing population, combined with disappearing opportunities for obtaining land, turned wills into parental instruments for determining their children's behavior. William Marshall III not only entailed land to his son Thomas, but also set a major condition for Thomas's inheritance. He was not to marry Susannah Smoot, on pain of losing every acre of land the will devised to him. Equally, the early seventeenth-century demographic changes gave children a strong incentive for pleasing their parents. Thomas Marshall (of William III) did not marry Miss Smoot.

If the will of William Marshall III served as an instrument for controlling future generations, it also was evidence for a cultural transformation in the ways the Marshalls thought about family relations. Control went hand in hand with benevolent forms of kin bonding. The will of William Marshall I mentioned no blood kin outside of his own

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[47] There were, however legal mechanisms for transforming entailed land back into a commodity. See, for example, the case of Rebecca Marshall, who exchanged land in Anne Arundell (?) for her part of Charley. But note it took an act of the legislature for this to occur.

children. William I even invoked the fraternal bond to refer to a non-kin friend. But the will of William Marshall III expressed a deep attachment to his younger sibling and, equally important, his kin neighbor. For William III, Thomas Marshall I was a "beloved brother."

Another difference between the wills of William Marshall I and his grandson William Marshall III is significant for the formation of a kin-group neighborhood. The immigrant William Marshall desired that his soon-to-be orphaned children would be well taken care of. To that end, he directed that William II, Joshua, and Elizabeth each be parceled out to a different guardian. None of these three guardians were blood kin to William I. William III was far less concerned that his children would be orphaned, even though his wife, like William I's wife, predeceased him.[48] At least four of his children were minors, so the issue of who would take them in would have been a great concern. But William Marshall III lived in a very different sort of community than his grandfather had. William III took part in the formation of a deeply integrated kin-group neighborhood. He could die assured that his children would remain in that neighborhood, well taken care of by his "beloved brother" and other close blood relatives. So powerful was this assurance by 1734 that he could simply assume it would happen, he did not have to spell out in his will who he wanted look after his minor children.

A third difference between the wills of the first and third William Marshalls reveals one last crucial difference between their worlds. William Marshall III gave his brother one specific direction in regard to the welfare of his children: "The money that I have in England and all the tobacco belonging to me, I desire may be applied to my

[48] This is inferred by the fact that Rebecca (Bishop) Marshall is not mentioned in William III's will.

brother Thomas Marshall in purchasing negroes for my sons, William and John [and] my daughters, Sarah and Rebeccah...."[49] Seventeenth-century wills sometimes gave guardians a direction in regard to children, but it was almost always religious in nature: In an era of sharp religious strife in proprietary Maryland, fathers wanted to ensure that their children would be raised as either Catholic or Protestant. But by the 1730s, the land of Charles and lower Prince George's counties was filled. The frontier had disappeared long before. The question of land was largely settled. If one either owned land or was closely related to someone who did, there was little question that one's children would also own land. The great question looming over the eighteenth century however, was not religious affiliation but access to labor. Income and status had come to rest on a planter's ability to forge a productive labor force. In other words, for tidewater Marylanders such as the Marshalls land could be assumed. But labor for the early eighteenth-century planters was and would remain a vexing question for decades to come, as we will see in chapter 6.

Thomas Marshall experienced a vast amount of social change in his life. The significance of that change is that its pace slowed as Marshall grew older, amassed more wealth, and constructed a fine home. His forebears pointed the way for him to establish himself: The linchpin was land as a source of wealth. But his forebears could not have predicted that land would become something other than either a commodity to be bought and sold like other items in the market or a medium for creating wealth through the production of a staple crop. Thomas Marshall, along with increasing numbers of

[49] William Marshall, Prince George's County Wills, Liber1: 232, 23 April 1734.

American colonists, imagined the land as a symbol of community. This was not just any community comprised of accidental acquaintances, nor was it the highly organized town of New England. Rather, Marshall and his neighbors in Charles and Prince George's counties created a rural community of blood kin. Through the accidents of history and the evolving social and cultural imperatives of his day, Thomas Marshall came to own a growing domain of land along the Potomac, a domain that signaled the power and authority of one family's high social status.

Land, of course, was not enough to display Thomas Marshall's growing status to his neighbors. The real sign of status was to be a fine house. By 1731, Thomas had the material resources and assurance in his rising status to enable him to build a substantial home on his "Mistake."[50] Not bad for a second son.

[50] The first mention of a house in a vicinity of "Mistake" is in a 1731 document relating to a boundary dispute: Prince George's County Land Records 1730-1733, CR49,519: 371-74.

# Chapter 5

## *"One Very Good Brick Dwelling House": The Marshalls and the Rise of Genteel Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake*

Randolph and Jacob Brandt, neighbors to Thomas Marshall, were worried in the fall of 1731. They found themselves in a dispute over a piece of property called Greenwich on the Potomac Shore, just to the south of Marshall's "Mistake." Their problems had nothing to do with Marshall's land, but the boundary dispute is of great value to historians. In trying to place the proper boundary of Greenwich, court administrators placed the northern line one half mile below the "dwelling house of Thomas Marshall."[1]

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[1] Prince George's County Land Records 1730-1733, CR49, 519: 371-74); patent of 1685 describes "Greenwigh on Patomac River" (Liber 22, folio 380; SR7363. There is no irrefutable evidence that this "dwelling house" is the structure that eventually became Marshall Hall. There has been much speculation, but certain things are clear. The house was not built in the 1690s as the historical marker placed at Marshall Hall by the DAR once proclaimed. Family history shows this. The general time frame during which the house was built is between the late 1720s and 1783 when the tax assessment of that year described the Marshall Hall house. The possibility that the house was built later in the period rest on the chances that Thomas Marshall built an inferior house at or soon after the time of his first marriage and then replaced this at a later date with the Marshall Hall house. But this is unlikely for two reasons. First, infrared studies performed by the National Park Service of the Marshall Hall property show no other spot where an earlier house could have been. Second, some colonials built fine homes on the same site as older, inferior houses by encasing the former. That is, they simply built the new house around the shell of the older one, as was done at Spye Park in another area of Charles County. But there is no evidence whatsoever that Thomas Marshall did this. The three major investigations (by Long, Hughes and Hughes, and Rivoire) into the house generally

Thomas Marshall's house would have stood out not only to the court's administrators but to anyone sailing the Potomac or living in Charles County. The house was an impressive and imposing structure. Its exterior gave the impression of a two-story house.[2] With its steeply pitched roof, the manse soared far above the usual height of Maryland homes. The double-pile brick construction was very unusual in a region dominated by rude, dilapidated, wooden buildings. The exterior design was rigorously symmetrical with a five-bay façade on both the lower and upper floors of the west side of the house (facing the Potomac), echoed by a similar design on the east side. Stylish molded, double-ogee-shaped arches crowned each of the first-floor windows.

The interior spaces created for public events would have awed visitors in a place where many houses possessed only one or two multipurpose rooms. Although small by later standards of mansion building, the original Marshall house was one of the largest built in Southern Maryland before 1740, with nearly 2000 square feet of living space. The main entrance of the westward facing façade opened directly into the house's largest and most richly decorated room. A visitor would have stepped directly from the outdoors

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accept a date earlier in the period. But there is one other possibility that might place the house's construction at the later date. What if Thomas Marshall built a wooden house on the very site where the brick one now stands and then tore it down to make way for the newer, more fashionable home? This is unlikely due to a variety of cultural, social, and economic reasons that the present chapter will lay out. For more on the dates of construction, see, Susan Long, "Historic Structure Report, Architectural Date Section for Marshall Hall, Piscataway Park" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1983); Brady A. Hughes & Sarah S. Hughes, "A Historical Study of the Marshall Hall Site, 1634 to 1984," prepared for the National Park Service (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1985): ch. 4; and J. Richard Rivoire, *Homeplaces: Traditional Domestic Architecture of Charles County, Maryland* (La Plata, Md.: Southern Maryland Studies Center, 1990), 54-61.

[2] In fact, the house was only one and one-half stories tall. It was one of only two truly one-and-one-half story houses in Charles County built in the early eighteenth century (Long, "Historic Structure Report," 36, citing the National Register Form, p. 5).

into a room adorned with floor-to-ceiling raised panels on all four walls, sumptuous ceiling cornices, and a large, arched fireplace framed by complex bolection molding. The panels were a marvel of carpentry – mortise-and-tenoned so carefully that they appeared to require no wooden pegs to fit together.[3] These were clearly the work of a joiner, such as a shipwright, who deeply appreciated the complexities of wood joinery and fine woodwork in general (Figure 1).[4]

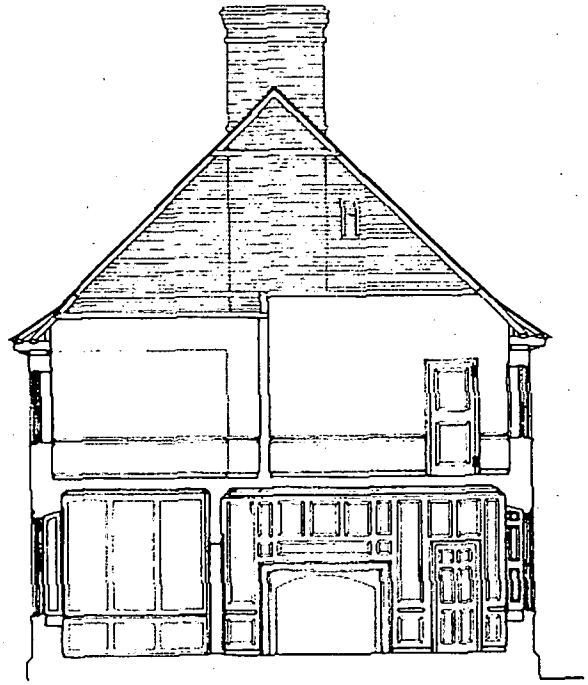


FIGURE 1: Diagram of Paneling in the Original Marshall House

Source: Rivoire, *Homeplaces*, fig. 70: 58

[3] Long, "Historic Structure Report," 46.

[4] Cary Carson notes that it is an "old wives' tale" that shipwrights built or finished houses as a side line. However, if Thomas Marshall was indeed a shipwright, this particular instance might prove to be the exception to the Carson's observation [Cary Carson, personal communication, 7 November 2006].

Marshall's house was instrumental in introducing the style that dominated the homes of wealthy Charles County merchant-planters throughout the rest of the eighteenth century.[5]The floor plan was comprised of four rooms at ground level. Most often these houses were only one story tall. Sometimes there was a half floor above the first, rarely a full second story. In those homes with second floor, one of the four ground-floor rooms was dedicated to a stairway, giving it the feel of a closet rather than a usable room. There was no fifth space for a dedicated central hall as developed in later architectural styles popular in the Chesapeake region.[6] Many original features of the Mistake house are typical of the earliest datable examples in Southern Maryland. These include the floor plan, the double-ogee designs above the first-floor windows, the gauged and moulded brick pattern used on the bay heads above all the exterior doors and windows, the arched blind panel located in the east chimney, the flared roof eaves, and the one and one-half story construction.[7]

The style of the Mistake house became so prevalent in Charles County through the eighteenth century that it we should perhaps designate it "Charlesian." It was a form to be emulated as a sign of the architectural ways of the wealthy. By the end of the century, local authorities recognized the value, if not the architectural significance, of Thomas Marshall's brick house. The usually taciturn Charles County appraiser assigned the house his highest monetary and conditional rating of "very good" in 1783, an opinion

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[5] Long, "Historic Structure Report," v; Rivoire, *Homeplaces*, 11.
[6] Dedicated central hall for stairway not popular in Charles County houses until late in 1700s. Rivoire, *Homeplaces*, 11.
[7] .Long, "Historic Structure Report," 36, citing the National Register Form, v, 5. Holly Hill, a house built in 1698, shared the attribute of flared roof eaves [Carson, personal communication].

with which he flattered very few other houses. A 1793 assessor listed the house and its outbuildings among the ten most highly valued properties in the county.

The building of the house at Mistake utterly changed the significance of the land on which it sat. The problem for historians is to determine first why Thomas Marshall built his house in 1730 or so, and second what he thought he was doing by constructing such an unusual and imposing structure. The dilemma in attacking this problem is that, unlike a number of Virginia homebuilders of the same period (such as George Washington and George Mason of Gunston Hall), the Marshalls left no personal, written documents explaining their motivations, interests, and desires. But the house can speak for itself. And there are also numerous documents—particularly wills, inventories, and final accounts—that make it possible to read the Marshalls' decisions in the context of Transatlantic and local changes in economy, society, and culture. Interweaving through all of these changes was the development of a new set of cultural ideals and practices that came to dominate the ways Americans conceived of social status. Thomas Marshall was at the forefront of establishing these ideals in Maryland. By the time his son moved into the Mistake house and renovated to his own purposes in the 1770s, these ideals had a name. They were known as gentility.

**Colonial Gentility**

Thomas Marshall made the move from artisan shipwright to planter-merchant at an extremely opportune historical moment. The 1720s were years of economic expansion in the Chesapeake, largely because of events far across the Atlantic. Decisions made in London, Edinburgh, and other European cities intimately tied the Chesapeake to

European fortunes. The first major development came with the end of Queen Anne's War in 1713. Over the next decade, Maryland and other New World English colonies were able to rebuild their decimated merchant marines.[8] It is possible that Thomas Marshall, the young shipwright, profited from this change of fortunes, both as one who worked on ships and as one who may have used his knowledge of shipping to take advantage of the opening up of Transatlantic trade in the new era of peace.

A second development had much wider ramifications for Thomas Marshall and the Chesapeake economy as a whole. A fifty year period of prosperity for tobacco planters began in the late 1720s or early 1730s.[9] The spark came when Walpole's administration, realizing that the tobacco trade was languishing, removed re-export fees in 1723. Soon after, the European market for tobacco grew rapidly, encouraged by the French government's bestowal of a monopoly on a company whose directors chose to import Chesapeake tobacco through Britain.[10] This was precisely the time when Thomas Marshall began his search for land and transformed himself from artisan to a planter. For a man with ambition and some access to economic resources, the 1720s and 1730s were an ideal time to seek a fortune. The same was true for a man intent on winning social status among his fellow provincials. The Tidewater Chesapeake simultaneously was undergoing a major social and cultural transformation. The improving economy made it

[8] Robert J. Brugger, *Maryland: A Middle Temperament, 1634-1980* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 64.
[9] Main, 69; Kulikoff, 69: Brugger, *Maryland*, 58; McCusker and Menard, *Economic History of British North America*.
[10] Brugger, *Maryland*, 58.

possible for growing numbers of Maryland gentry to emulate the latest fashions and cultural mores popular in the metropolis of London.[11]

**Changing Ideas of Social Status: The Rise of Genteel Life-Style**

When the economic fortunes of the Tidewater region brightened in the 1720s, the early eighteenth-century Marshalls already had begun to construct for themselves a kin network and a new sense of historical heritage. These forms of community and family were deeply tied to the demographic changes specific to the development of provincial Maryland, as described in the previous chapter. But as members of the Marshall family placed greater emphasis on its historical heritage and kin networks, they simultaneously involved themselves in the new Transatlantic cultural sensibility of gentility.

Gentility was a method by which wealthier Marylanders sought to distinguish themselves from the lower sorts as the frontier gave way to settled communities. It involved both the formation of cultural practices and the amassing of material goods. The tenets of gentility required that its adherents master new rituals of dining, entertaining, decorating, dressing, and interpersonal behavior with family and subordinates.[12] These rituals were at times intricate and worked to demonstrate one's mastery of social skills that had little or nothing to do with either the rigors of agricultural production or the crass bustle of commerce. While gentility entailed new modes of social relations and thought, it also embodied a new form of economic enterprise: fashionable

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[11] The transformation of the Chesapeake economy and its society were intimately tied to the planters' turn to a slave labor force. This is the subject of the next chapter.

[12] Bushman, Refinement of America; Cary Carson, "Consumption," in *A Companion to Colonial America*, ed. Daniel Vickers (New York: Blackwell, 2003); Timothy Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution* (New York, 2004).

consumerism. In this new world of gentility, consumer goods were a vital means through which Chesapeake elites could convey the transformation of their character. Items such as tea services, elaborate dinnerware, richly decorated homes, and wigs allowed elites to create a new identity that marked their social status. The existence of the Mistake house derives directly from the new genteel culture of the middle decades of the eighteenth century.

Thomas Marshall's house is a testament to a rapid transformation of Chesapeake cultural ideals. Its design can be read to give clues to the cultural aspirations of its builders. At the same time, situating the house and its builders in their cultural world allows us to comprehend choices the builders made. An exploration of the Mistake house through the culture it expresses serves to remind us that the Marshalls were not alone in doing what they did. They rode the crest of a socio-economic wave that swelled across the Atlantic Ocean from the churning economic waters of Edinburgh and London. When it crashed on the Chesapeake, it remade local culture. But its reverberations (in the flotsam of the tobacco trade and the jetsam of new ideals of independence) had vast repercussions for European markets and ultimately for European politics. And just as Charles County's economy was closely tied to the fortunes of British merchants, so also was its culture. The Marshalls and other members of the southern Maryland gentry used non-essential goods bought from England to create a new culture for themselves.

**The House at Mistake**

Thomas Marshall's house was very different from those of his father and grandfather. This was due to two major factors. The first, explored in the previous chapter, concerned

the founding of a family seat that could symbolize family heritage. The second derived in great measure from the necessity of displaying and protecting the new sorts of consumer goods that were integral to gentility. One of the key aspects of consumer goods was their fragility.[13] Being nondurable underscored their non-necessity and amply illustrated how such goods were material manifestations of the evanescence of the latest fashions. Correlatively, as the rising Chesapeake elite invested social capital in fragile impermanent goods, they simultaneously sought to build solid permanent structure to house their delicate wares. Tidewater gentry needed more substantial homes if they were to display their attachment to the culture of gentility.

The houses of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century Chesapeake were largely impermanent structures. Planters up and down the economic scale built houses with a life-span of only a decade or two because they were intent on concentrating both their land and labor to the higher priority of turning an agricultural profit. Seventeenth-century visitors to the Chesapeake often remarked on the rude state of all the region's homes.[14] The immigrant William Marshall and his son William II lived in houses that most likely used no brick whatsoever in their construction, not even for the chimnies. Their entire houses were almost without exception built of wood, from the frame to the clapboard siding to the shingles. The frames would have been anchored by posts set

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[13] Kevin M. Sweeney, "High-Style Vernacular: Lifestyles of the Colonial Elite," in *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Cary Carson et al. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994), 10-11

[14] On the state of seventeenth-century house architecture and construction in the Chesapeake, see Gloria Main, *Tobacco Colony: Life in Early Maryland, 1650-1720* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982), passim; Cary Carson et al., "Impermanent Architecture in the Southern Amer Colonies, Winterthur Portfolio 16.2-3 (Summer/Autumn 1981): 135-96; Dell Upton,:The Origins of Chesapeake Architecture," in *Three Centuries of Maryland Architecture* (Annapolis, Md.: Maryland Historical Trust, 1982), 44-45; Rivoire, *Homeplaces*, 2.

directly into holes in the ground (i.e., "hole-set" posts). These houses required frequent maintenance during their brief life spans. Even with great care, they lasted only two decades, three at the most: less time if a wooden chimney caught on fire, longer if the collapse came from the slower devastation of rot and termites.[15] The hazards of hole-set post building are demonstrated in the history of the first Charles County courthouse. It was first built in 1674, with an addition added several years later. By 1682, less than a decade after its initial construction, both the original structure and the addition were in dire need of repair. By 1699, less than thirty years after the initial construction, the building had to be completely rebuilt. The rebuilt courthouse required extensive renovations in 1715. County officials gave up on the dilapidated structure only ten years later, replacing the courthouse with a completely new brick building in a different locale.

There were multiple housing styles in the Chesapeake when the immigrant William Marshall arrived in Maryland in the 1640s. The variations were based on a wide array of traditional British models. Through the middle decades of the century, the wide variations winnowed down to a handful of standardized types. But by the time William II constructed a home for his new family in the 1680s, one type so dominated that it became known as the "Virginia house," although the style was prevalent on both shores of the Potomac.[16]

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[15] Carson et al, "Impermanent Arch,"169-70; Upton, *Three Centuries*, 47-48; Rivoire, *Homeplaces*, 5.

[16] Cary Carson, The "Virginia House in Maryland," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 69.2 (Summer 1982): 186; Dell Upton, "Vernacular Domestic Architecture in eighteenth-century Virginia," in *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture*, ed. by Dale Upton & John Vlatch (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 316-7; Gloria Main, *Tobacco Colony: Life in Early Maryland, 1650-1720* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982), 156.

The Virginia house was characterized by a one-and-a-half story wooden hole-set frame. The frame created one or two rooms on the ground floor. Most Virginia houses were only one story tall, but in those with a second floor (in effect, an attic used for purposes other than storage), the top floor was accessible only by a ladder. The ground floor of the two-room Virginia house plan consisted of a large main room known as "the hall." One entered directly into this room from the outside through a modest door way. The smaller room, or "chamber," could be entered only through the hall.[17]

At the same time that the Virginia house became predominant, Chesapeake home builders revised the standard elements used in British home building.[18] They made extensive use of local building materials. Wood in particular was abundant and allowed for easy construction and frequent, low-cost repair. The abundance of wood convinced American builders to give up on thatch roofs altogether and replace them with wooden shingles.[19] Rising Chesapeake fortunes made it possible for greater numbers of home builders to replace oiled paper (or gaping holes) with glass windows. And by the early eighteenth century, brick chimneys largely had replaced wooden ones.[20]

For all these adaptations, the Virginia house was quite modest, even by late eighteenth century standards. Into the early eighteenth century, Marylanders of all

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[17] Upton, "Vernacular Domestic Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Virginia," 317.
[18] On the major changes in Chesapeake building materials at the turn of the eighteenth century, see Gloria Main, *Tobacco Colony*, ch. 4.
[19] Main, *Tobacco Colony*, 145
[20] Main, *Tobacco Colony*, 145-47; Fraser D. Neiman, "Domestic Architecture at the Clifts Plantation: The Social Context of Early Virginia Building," in *Common Places*, 306. Wooden chimneys continued to be a feature of the homes of impoverished Marylanders into the twentieth century [George W. McDaniel, *Hearth and Home: Preserving a People's Culture* (Temple University Press 1982), 74-80].

economic levels built houses primarily for shelter.[21] The immigrant William Marshall, with his lack of interest in making social distinctions when choosing friends, would have cared little to make his house into a marker of his wealth and status. Wealthy Tidewater planters of his and his son's generations did not put much effort into creating large, well-apportioned homes.[22] As late as the 1720s, 85 percent of Virginia's wealthiest decedents had lived in Virginia houses. Two of these houses had only one room on the ground floor. In Maryland housing up until the early 1700s, as historian Gloria Main discovered, "the principle differences between rich and poor lay not in size and quality of housing, but in the number of structures."[23]

By the early eighteenth century, the gentry (and those who aspired to gentry status) began to turn away from the old methods and styles (or, more accurately, nonstyles) of building. Throughout the North American colonies, the twenty-five years between 1725 and 1750 brought an explosion of building mansion houses using new styles, floor plans, techniques, and materials.[24] These houses were built in a style and for purposes that starkly contrasted with those of the earlier era. Now, Marylanders desired larger houses in which they could enjoy and display their non-essential, consumer goods.[25] The tenets of gentility called for a separation of interior spaces into public and private venues. Planters thus began to construct houses that were two rooms wide and

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[21] Rivoire, *Homeplaces*, 2.
[22] Main, *Tobacco Colony*, XX; Cary Carson, The "Virginia House in Maryland, *Maryland Historical Magazine* CITATION; Upton, "Vernacular Domestic Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Virginia," 316-17. [USE DURAND QUOTE HERE FROM UPTON?, 316-7: "Whatever their ran, & I know not why, they build only two rooms with some closets on the ground floor, & two rooms in the attic above; but they build several like this, according to their means."]
[23] Main, *Tobacco Colony*, 148.
[24] Sweeney, "High-Style Vernacular," 11.
[25] Brugger, *Maryland*, 70.

two rooms deep, making a total of four rooms on the ground floor. The greater number of rooms allowed for increased specialization of function for each room. Soon, wealthy planters added second floors that were also two by two.[26] By the 1750s, this new development had blossomed into the full-blown Georgian style.

Georgian houses were a full two stories high, had hipped or gabled roofs, sashed windows placed symmetrically across the axial facades, and featured a paneled, pedimented door squarely in the middle of the structure.[27] Vital to the Georgian house was a central passageway that made possible four of the key elements of the style. The central hall set rooms apart and allowed for a separate entrance to each.[28] It served as a greeting space where visitors could, in a sense, be sorted and allowed to pass only into those rooms that their status or purpose warranted.[29] This central hall also complemented the elaborate doorway (and likely porch) through which visitors entered the house. Last of all, it housed the stairs that led to the upper chambers (Figures 2 and 3[30]).

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[26] Brugger, *Maryland*, 70; Rivoire, *Homeplaces*, 6.
[27] Upton, "Vernacular Domestic Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Virginia," 317-18; Brugger, *Maryland*, 80. In the third quarter of the eighteenth century, builders constructed additions to create mansions from earlier, small homes. These took the form of either hyphens or wings. The wings were sometimes balanced (as at Mount Vernon) or telescoped (as at Hard Bargain in Charles County [Brugger, *Maryland*, 70].
[28] Main, *Tobacco Colony*, 157.
[29] Sweeney, "High-Style Vernacular," 19.
[30] Both Gunston Hall on Mason's Neck, Virginia, and William Corbit's House in Cantwell's Bridge, Delaware, show the classic interior feature of Georgian floor plans.

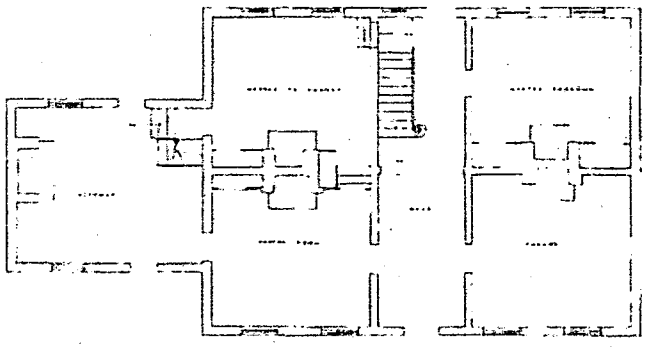


FIGURE 2: Corbet Hall, a classic Georgian floor plan from Kent County, Delaware.

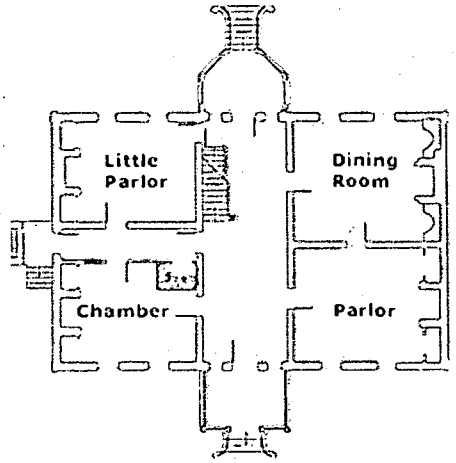



FIGURE 3: Gunston Hall, a classic Georgian floor Plan from Stafford County, Virginia.

Thomas Marshall's Mistake house is neither Virginian nor Georgian. It cropped up at a midpoint along the evolution from the former to the latter style, then developed into the unique Charlesian vernacular style. The floor plan of Mistake remained exceedingly popular in Charles County until the end of the eighteenth century. Of the forty or so unaltered eighteenth-century houses in Charles County, only three follow the

Georgian plan of two-room depth with central passage.[31] The rest were built on the Mistake house model. The Mistake house, then, represents something quite important in thinking about cultural influence: the meeting of a Transatlantic style with a local vernacular. This can be seen in a variety of ways.

**New Construction Techniques and Materials**

The key element of the Mistake house that separated it from the vast majority of houses that preceded it in Charles County was the turn to bricks. The use of bricks allowed the builders of the Mistake house greatly reduce the occurrence of dry rot and the infestation of termites. With the wood of the frame covered by masonry, the house was able to withstand centuries of use, rather than mere decades.

Bricks were the paramount reason for the longevity of the house at Mistake. Bricks had been available for some time as a building material, but were quite expensive. Their expense derived from the costs of transport to the use of far more bricks in building a masonry wall than can be seen from the exterior.[32] Moreover, bricklaying was a specialized skill. While there were numerous carpenters with the knowledge required to build hole-set post structure, there were few brick masons working the Tidewater until after the first third of the eighteenth century.

Bricks were not simply a building material. They also carried cultural significance. A Chesapeake homebuilder used brick to signal two vital claims about his family: permanency and stability.[33] The durability of a brick structure suggested that the

[31] Rivoire, *Homeplaces*, 11
[32] Carson, personal communication.
[33] Sweeney, "High-Style Vernacular," 15

family living within had a long heritage and expected the family line to continue far into the future. Moreover, because masonry required an artisan of a rare sort in the first third of the eighteenth century in the Chesapeake, it also signaled a homeowner's economic ability to engage the services of a craftsman. Hole-set post houses were quite affordable to most property owners, and could be built using readily available materials. Bricks also signaled a homeowners vaunted level of taste. A house like Thomas Marshall's, with its Flemish bond brickwork, displayed his aesthetic appreciation and revealed his reinterpretation of the function of a house.[34] No longer merely a shelter, a house in Marshall's eyes was a statement about family status.

**The Design of the Exterior**

This extended in the design of the house's exterior. The exterior of the original brick house at Mistake was intensely symmetrical. Visitors from the land side (or eastern elevation) would proceed down a straight drive that bisected the house and pointed directly at the rear door of the east side of the building (Figure 4). There were two windows, one on either side of the centered door, each equidistant from the door. At the second level, three windows rested directly above each of the bays on the ground floor. If one walked through the house with front and back doors open, the line of the drive would continue right down to the Potomac shore and onto the pier that carried the line of the drive out into the river. From the Potomac side of the house (or western elevation), a

[34] While English bond was the earliest pattern used in colonial brick buildings, Flemish bond came into use in the early eighteenth century. The builders of the Cole Diggs house, further down the Chesapeake at Yorktown, also employed the pattern in the 1720s. Marc R. Wenger et al., *Cole Digges House: A Historic Structure Report* (NPS 2004, www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/cole-digges/index.htm ).

visitor would again encounter the structure's symmetry (Figure 5). The only difference would be the five bays instead of three as on the eastern elevation.

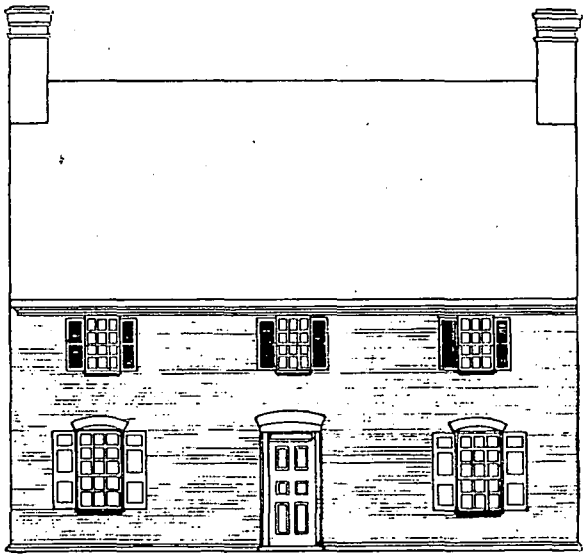


FIGURE 4: Mistake House, ca. 1725, East Elevation

Source: Long, "Historic Structure Report," 113



FIGURE 5: Mistake House, ca. 1725, West Elevation

Source: Long, "Historic Structure Report," 112

This rigorous symmetry was not simply a design motif. It was a cultural metaphor that expressed the occupants' desire for a genteel social order.[35] This social order—like the relations of the family residing within the household—was based on two sometimes confluent and sometimes conflicting principles at the heart of genteel culture. On the one hand, the genteel social order, based in notions of social division and hierarchy, was akin to the patriarchal division within the family. The father ruled the household. His legitimacy was backed up a legal order that gave him virtually all rights over his wife and her property, the couple's children, and all of the family's servants and slaves.[36] On the other hand, gentility in the Chesapeake was hardly an expression of naked power. Planters and elites legitimated gentility through a rhetoric of love and family nurture.[37] These two faces of gentility—patriarchal power and familial affection—created a new need in Chesapeake homes: a distinction between public and private. This could be seen in various aspects of the interior of Marshall's house and its furnishings.

**The Floor Plan and New Uses of Interior Space**

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[35] See Sweeney, "High-Style Vernacular," 19

[36] On the early American practice of "coverture," see Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Cornelia Hughes Dayton, *Women Before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639-1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); and Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1998).

[37] For more on family relations in the eighteenth-century Chesapeake, see Daniel Blake Smith, *Inside the Great House: Planter Family Life in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980); Jan Lewis, *The Pursuit of Happiness: Family and Values in Jefferson's Virginia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

The interior layout of Thomas Marshall's house suggests that it was an early experiment in creating a home with both public and private spaces. While the first-floor plan was rooted in vernacular English architecture, it was a clear advance over the rough-hewn Virginia house of the seventeenth century. There were four rooms, but they were neither symmetrical in layout nor set off from a central hallway (Figure 6). With no interior hallway, visitors entered directly into the "hall" (in the old sense of the term as a large room) just as they would have the homes of the first three William Marshalls. This was a continuation of the layout of older homes that had only two rooms on the ground level. With no hallway, there was no logic for creating an elaborate entryway. Moreover, the stairs were not in the center of the home, but rather were tucked in a small room.

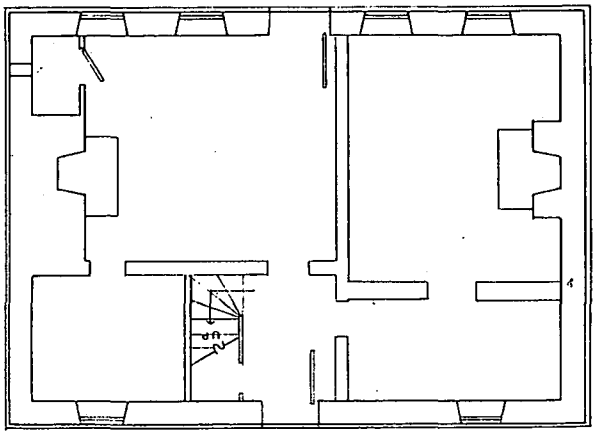


Figure 6: Mistake House, ca. 1725, First Floor Plan
(East Elevation Is at Bottom of Image)

Source: Long, "Historic Structure Report," 110

The Mistake house was not built on the Georgian model. In Virginia, the Charlesian house barely took hold. After 1750 or so, the Georgian design dominated house architecture in Virginia. There, homebuilders increasingly followed English

models.[38] George Mason, for example, brought over the English builder William Buckland as an indentured servant with the express purpose of creating a house in the latest English fashion. There was, if one is to judge by the Mistake house and those that followed on its floor plan, an expression of aesthetic independence vital to the identity of the Charles County gentry.

The floor plan of the Charlesian house suggests how the genteel gentry thought about the interior spaces of their houses in a significantly different fashion from their forebears. In the houses of the first three William Marshalls, rooms had multiple uses. A single lower floor room simultaneously could serve as sleeping and eating quarters, work room, and warehouse. Family and social activities were communal. Parents, children, other relatives, and visitors slept, ate, and worked together in the same room. There was little or no distinction between public and private spaces in the Virginia house.

The Mistake house floor plan, however, shows a real distinction in the use of rooms. The hall has built-in cupboards. This indicates that from the very inception of the house's design the hall was to be a room for the display of consumer goods.[39] The hall certainly was where the Marshalls entertained other Charles County gentry with dinners, teas, or parties. The use of the second main room on the first floor is not so easy to decipher because it represents the most unusual feature of the plan. Unlike the hall, which is but a doorway away from the outside, the inner first-floor chamber was not easy to enter. One had to pass through another room to get to it. Yet the decoration here was fully as sumptuous as that in the hall. Its decoration and its privacy suggest that this was a room where Thomas Marshall could do business or public service. Here he could have

[38] Sweeney, "High-Style Vernacular," 39.
[39] Sweeney, "High-Style Vernacular," 22.

engaged in trade or other business dealings relating to his plantations or the public ferry that connected his property Posey's land across the Potomac just below Mount Vernon. Or he could have performed his duties as a justice of the peace away from the more public hall.

The upstairs was separated off as a private realm (Figure 7). The stairs are narrow and snake around three walls before arriving at the upper floor. It is most likely that the Marshalls slept in two of the front upstairs rooms facing the Potomac. It is also possible that they had servants sleeping in the back two rooms: These rooms had less square footage, fewer windows, and ceilings that were two feet lower than the front bedrooms. One of these rooms also may have been used for storage, since colonial families often thought of rooms beneath the roof as storage space. The few rooms dedicated to sleeping also suggest that the Marshalls would have cramped quarters if they entertained long-term or even overnight guests. This was distinctly different from the house of their neighbor across the way: George Washington had plenty of room for overnight guests.

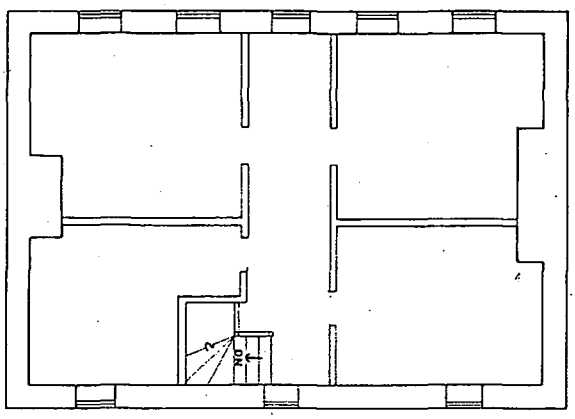


Figure 7: Mistake House, ca. 1725, Second Floor Plan

Source: Long, "Historic Structure Report," 111

**Thomas Marshall's Social Transformation**

The exploration of the construction and layout of the Mistake house enables the historian to conceptualize Thomas Marshall's place in upper Potomac society. His rise remains something of a mystery. As a shipwright he may have been involved in intercoastal or even transatlantic trade. As shipping returned to "normal" after Queen Anne's War (i.e., 1713, when Marshall would have been 18), a young man involved with ships would have been closely attuned to the upturn in merchant's fortunes. Moreover, Thomas Marshall was not the average artisan. He might be defined as "proto-gentry." His family connections may have allowed him opportunities to strike at the main chance on first word that tobacco prices and the provincial economy in general were picking up. His brother William Marshall III may have been able to offer outright economic assistance. Also, because he was close to his older brother, he would have been well aware of the one true way to create wealth in the Chesapeake: plant and trade tobacco. The combination of experience in shipping and a family heritage in planting put Thomas Marshall in an ideal place to rise up to become a merchant-planter.

Thomas Marshall's decision to forsake artisanry for planting set the stage for transforming the piece of land at Mistake into the center of a large plantation. But to some degree, the changes the house represented in Marshall's own life were not unique. Consumer goods became more prevalent throughout Chesapeake society throughout the middle decades of the eighteenth century, up and down the economic scale. They did so, as Lois Carr and Lorena Walsh have shown, without substantially altering general spending patterns.[40] The key difference in turning the use and display of consumer goods into a sign of genteel status was to procure a profusion of them. The only way to do this,

[40] Lois Carr & Lorena Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles and Consumer Behavior in the Colonial Chesapeake," in *Of Consuming Interest*, 112.

then, without altering the percentage of wealth one put into consumer spending, was to improve one's economic standing. This is what Thomas Marshall did by transforming himself from an artisan into a planter at an extremely opportune historical moment. The significance of Marshall's move is clear when one examines how he and his wives turned the Mistake house into a home.

**The Home at Mistake: Consumer Society and the Rudiments of Gentility**

Cultural changes began to infiltrate the top of Chesapeake society beginning around the mid 1680s.[41] Estate inventories of that time show the introduction of some of the comforts of the genteel life. Twenty years later estates worth more than about £500 generally contained a fair number of comforts and at least a handful of the luxury items.[42] By 1715, luxury items began to appear in a widening array of homes.[43] That is, there was a widening of consumerism among elites in general, not just the very top of society. The improving economic conditions of the 1720s meant that larger numbers of planters could buy more such goods while still spending the same percentage of income on them. This expansion led in the 1730s to intense competition among the growing number of stores that popped up in the Chesapeake. In turn, competition among merchants made consumer goods increasingly available to the middling sorts.[44] Such competition was all the more intense due to the fact that many planters were their own merchants.

It is quite likely this was the case for Thomas Marshall. As a shipbuilder he would have been quite familiar with both ships and the cargoes they carried. He probably

[41] Carr & Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles," Carr & Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles," 650.
[42] Carr & Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles," 65.
[43] Lorena Walsh, "Urban Amenities," 110-11.
[44] Walsh, "Urban Amenities," 110-11; Carr & Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles," 108.

learned early in life the advantages of controlling one's own economic destiny by refraining from falling into debt with economic representatives of large tobacco merchants. This fear of debt is borne out by Marshall's final accounts, which showed little if any debt to merchants. Moreover, in the accounts of John Glassford and Company's store at Piscataway (the closest such store to the Mistake property it would seem), there is no mention of Thomas Marshall I as customer, debtor, or seller of tobacco. Yet his son Thomas Hanson Marshall frequented the store in the 1760s. Thus it seems quite likely that by the 1750s Thomas Marshall I had become a well-established planter-merchant. No matter the source of his consumer purchases, the inventory of his estate demonstrates how enmeshed the Marshall's were in the culture of gentility.

Thomas Marshall's lifestyle was very different from that of his grandfather, his father, and even his elder brother. The difference was neither minor nor evolutionary. By the mid eighteenth century, as Carr and Walsh have demonstrated, Chesapeake colonists employed "different standards altogether" in evaluating status.[45] The immigrant William Marshall not only lived in a wooden home that provided temporary shelter, it is also highly likely that his family and friends drank from a single tankard passed round the table, ate from his one "great meals tray," and had no experience with cutlery or individual plates or bowls. When they sat down to a meal, they sat on the one or two chests in the hall, for the first William Marshall possessed no chairs. When it came time to sleep, the family of the immigrant unrolled their beds (they possessed no bedsteads) and slept together in a single room, perhaps along with some of their servants who would have used the flock (or stuffed woolen) mattress. The one luxury item in the immigrant's

[45] Carr & Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles," 64.

inventory was a looking glass. The lack of material comfort in William Marshall's home was not the product of some personal eccentricity. Rather, he lived his life like the vast majority of wealthy seventeenth-century Maryland planters, in strikingly modest circumstances.[46]

Some of the comforts of modern life appeared in the inventory of William Marshall II. Family members could eat their meals sitting in chairs, using individual plates. They slept off the floor on mattresses placed in bedsteads. They had a bit of earthenware and a bit of silver, but these were inconsequential as utensils because the appraiser simple noted a small "parcel" of the former and three ounces of the latter. These could hardly have represented items integral to daily activities or appreciated as symbols of status. The one item that set William II off from the vast majority of his Tidewater neighbors was the parcel of books he owned. The couple of years of English education had taken root, and would continue to blossom in the succeeding Marshall generations. The immigrant's foresight in providing his namesake with an education paid off handsomely. What he could not have foreseen was the rapid development of the consumerist world of genteel culture.

At the heart of this consumerism was a set of items that clearly separated the genteel from the middling and lesser sorts. To better ascertain the relationship between Tidewater planters, wealth, and the culture of gentility, Lois Carr and Lorena Walsh developed an "amenities index."[47] This index is comprised of a list of twelve items that

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[46] Main, *Tobacco Colony*, 158-62; James Horn, "Adapting to a New World: A Comparative Study of Local Society in England and Maryland, 1650-1700," in *Colonial Chesapeake Society*, ed. by Lois Carr et al. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 156-64.

[47] Carr & Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles," 69ff.

marked luxury spending from other forms of consumerism. By counting the number of items in an estate inventory, one can determine the level of a decedent's involvement in genteel consumerism. The items in Carr and Walsh's index are:

- coarse earthenware (for convenience and hygiene
- bed or table linen (for convenience and hygiene)
- table knives (as display of up-to-date taste)
- table forks (as display of up-to-date taste)
- fine earthenware (as display of up-to-date taste)
- spices (for dietary variety)
- books, religious
- books, secular (tools and symbols of education)
- wigs (signs of luxury)
- watches & clocks (signs of luxury)
- pictures (signs of luxury)
- silver plate (signs of luxury)

These items were, for the most part, newly introduced into colonial society during the eighteenth century. In the late seventeenth century, the mean number of amenities owned by Tidewater planters was only two.[48] William Marshall the immigrant was thus below the mean, owning only some bed and table linens. His son William Marshall II fared somewhat better. He owned several amenities, the small parcel of earthenware, the bit of silver, two Bibles and some books (whether religious or secular is unknown), and some bed and table linens. But these hardly set him high up on the amenities index. The amounts of each are exceedingly small.

To judge by the amenities index, Thomas Marshall was far more immersed in consumerism than his forebears. Seventy years after the death of William Marshall II, the mean amenities score for Chesapeake planters had risen to five. Thomas Marshall

[48] Carr & Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles," 70.

scored far above this number. He owned nine of the items on the amenities list, lacking only wigs, pictures, and spices (although the inventory of his widow, Sabina Trueman Marshall, lists both pictures and spices as well—so it is entirely possible that Thomas Marshall possessed eleven of the twelve amenities items).

Several of the amenities Thomas Marshall owned reveal how new ideals of public and private selves had become integral to the lives of his family members. The feather beds and five bedsteads mean that each of the Marshalls could sleep by themselves without needing to share with others. Multiple place settings, knife and fork sets, and numerous, specialized drinking vessels suggest that meals were less-communal affairs than they had been in days of grandfather William Marshall. The twenty-three chairs meant that the Marshalls could certainly sit separately at meals, as could many guests at teas or formal dinners. (Chairs were also a key marker of wealth. As Main pointed out, "The richer the planter, the more chairs." Planters worth between £299 and £399 in the 1720s were lucky to have a dozen chairs. [49] Marshall's twenty-three chairs represented a cornucopia of sittage.)

**Books and the Wider World**

Two items above all others were instrumental signs of the simultaneous rise of gentility and consumerism among Maryland gentry: books and tea. The use of these items required special training and involved Tidewater planters in cultural and economic systems that stretched far beyond the shores of the Chesapeake. Moreover, the use of each served as an indicator of the depth of one's commitment to the new culture.

[49] Main, *Tobacco Colony*, 250-51.

Books were an essential element in the development of the Chesapeake's consumer society. The ability to read was a gateway to gentility.[50] Those early eighteenth-century planters who owned books were more likely to own a diversity of consumer goods and more of them.[51] And the ownership of books closely correlated with three of the consumer goods most associated with gentility: silverware, items of household adornment (all sorts, inc. window curtains, china, pictures, clocks), and items for personal adornment (shoe buckles, silver watches, wigs, canes).[52] There was a direct correlation, throughout the century, between literacy and consumption. With each increase in the literacy rate, consumption also rose.[53]

From the time William Marshall II went to school in England, books were part of the Marshall family's world. Books are listed in all the inventories after the first generation. Apart from the two Bibles listed in William Marshall II's inventory, it is unclear what sort of books the others were. Thomas Marshall's inventory allows a better understanding. There were religious books, including a prayer book and almost certainly a Bible (though it is not explicitly noted). Some time after 1752 he obtained the works of John Tillotson, the practical rather than theological Dean of Canterbury from 1672 to 1689.[54] But, more importantly, Thomas Marshall owned secular books. These were extremely rare in eighteenth-century Chesapeake inventories.[55] He owned a copy of John Quincy's *English Dispensatory*, a medical book written in the 1720s that went through multiple editions over the ensuing decades. It also seems likely that Thomas

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[50] Carr & Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles," 130.
[51] Main, *Tobacco Colony*, 243-44.
[52] Main, *Tobacco Colony*, 244.
[53] Carr & Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles," 130.
[54] Tillotson's collected works were published in 1752.
[55] See tables 1-4 in Carr & Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles."

Marshall was familiar with *Don Quixote*, as the four-volume edition showed up in the inventory of his widow Sabina.

Thomas Marshall, then, was acquainted with the world of books. There is no evidence that he visited the famed Tuesday Club of Annapolis, although his neighbor John Addison did as an honorary member. It is easy to imagine them sitting in the hall of the Mistake house discussing literary matters over tea. Marshall must have hired tutors for his son, because Thomas Hanson Marshall could read Latin and had an interest in European history (as evidenced by his purchases of Voltaire's *History* and a book in Latin at the Piscataway store of John Glassford and Company in the 1760s[56]).

**A Cup of Gentility: Drinking Tea in the Mid-Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake**

Carr and Walsh did not include tea or its equipage in their list of amenities. But tea was crucial to the development of the culture of gentility.[57] Its growing popularity in the colonies wrought major changes in the Atlantic world. Tea drinking stimulated a demand for sugar that increased the use of slaves on West Indian sugar plantations. It required the development of cheap earthen- and chinaware, which in turn fostered the formation of integrated factories for large-scale production.[58] These connections involved the Marshalls in Transatlantic networks of culture and trade through a set of practices that were somewhat different from those of books, and which would prove to be a far more difficult method for forming a status boundary between the gentry and those below.

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[56] Glassford Papers, Library of Congress.
[57] Sweeney, "High-Style Vernacular," 8-10.
[58] Main, *Tobacco Colony*, 248.

In the early part of the eighteenth century, tea drinking became integral part of American culture in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. It was not the tea per se that changed American life, but the manner in which it was brewed, served, seasoned, and enjoyed. As a ritual, tea drinking required the creation of numerous specialized items: lidded containers light enough to pour with ease and made of a material that would not retain flavors and odors; cups with handles to hold hot beverage without burning hands and fingers; saucers to catch overflow; containers for sugar; spoons for transporting sugar from container to cup; and trays for carrying items from cupboards to table. In turn, use of these items called for new modes of imbibing. The fragility of the tea service (the china cups with their small handles, the china sugar bowls and tea pots) required great gentleness in their use. The use of sugar implied that each drinker had an individual taste—no more communal tankards—as he or she seasoned the tea to individual standards. Individual taste in turn necessitated individual utensils. The use of so many utensils required management, and management meant formalized training. Through the elaboration of a tea service in the early eighteenth century, then, families such as the Marshalls' learned how to promote new social graces. As these became ritualized, they developed into practices that could be taught and criticized. In short, they became signs for judging the level of one's immersion in the culture of gentility.

Thomas Marshall and his wife Elizabeth introduced the rituals of tea into the Marshall family. Thomas's brother William, a middling and perhaps even moderately wealthy planter, possessed no tea equipage and no tea at the time of his death in 1734. Thomas's estate however was awash in tea and its accouterments. He owned a tea chest with numerous tea canisters, several china teapots (as well as two metal ones), a tea

kettle, a tea strainer, forty-four china tea cups with thirty-eight china saucers, and various containers for holding milk and sugar. The Marshalls had a penchant for tea and for entertaining others over tea. This penchant placed them squarely in the Transatlantic culture of gentility. Through taking tea, they would have learned to think of themselves as individuals in ways quite foreign to their forebears. In Kevin Sweeney's apt formulation, they would have developed "a cultivated individuation, not an unfettered individualism."[59]

But the Marshalls would have discovered along with numerous other Tidewater gentry by mid-century that tea drinking alone could not set them apart from the nongentry. Tea was not like books. Where literacy required much training, the mysteries of tea were easily mastered. While tea represented the first inroads of gentility into Charles County (and throughout the colonies), it was hardly a luxury item in itself. Certainly one could purchase fine china cups and teapots, but, as now, one could find ways to enjoy tea cheaply without the expensive equipage. But tea drinking played a crucial role in the ways the Marshalls and others thought about their own colonial culture. As a commodity, tea spread far down the wealth scale in the course of the eighteenth century. It was relatively easily assimilated into even the poorest of cups. This ease suggested that the tenets of gentility, as well, could be made the province of all. For gentry families such as the Marshalls, this ease represented two contradictory beliefs. On the one hand, gentility in its consumerist mode was democratic: It was open to any who chose to pursue it. On the other hand, as a set of ritual practices, gentility could create social boundaries that cordoned off the gentry from the lesser sorts.

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[59] Sweeney, "High-Style Vernacular," 7.

What gentility required as a means for solidifying gentry identity was a set of ritual practices that codified far more of the interactions of daily life than the mere enjoyment of a single beverage. One can see the development of these codes in a list copied down by one of Thomas Marshall's young neighbors on the Virginia side of the Potomac, George Washington. In 1747, Washington, hoping to impress the wife of a neighbor, took up and studied an old English book. He condensed *Youth's Behavior, or Decency in Conversation among Men* (published in England in the previous century) into a battery of 110 manners to be employed in genteel company. Among the social graces Washington learned to observe were rules such as, "29th When you meet with one of Greater Quality than yourself, Stop, and retire especially if it be at a Door or any Straight place to give way for him to Pass"; "33rd They that are in Dignity or in office have in all places Precedency...."; "52nd In you Apparel be Modest and endeavour to accomodate Nature, rather than to procure Admiration keep to the Fashion of your equals Such as are Civil and orderly with respect to Times and Places"; and "99th Drink not too leisurely nor yet too hastily. Before and after Drinking wipe your Lips..."[60] Washington's rules give a taste of the sort of education gentility required. One had to train one's emotions, body, and very soul to act in certain ways in particular contexts. Unfortunately, we cannot be sure how much Thomas Marshall taught his son about the social graces of gentility so important to Washington. We can only read the tea cups.

**Sabina Trueman Marshall: Mistress of the Mistake**

[60]George Washington, "Rules of Civility & Decent Behaviour in Company and Conversation," in *George Washington: Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1997), 3-10.

After the death of Elizabeth Marshall in 1749, Thomas Marshall married Sabina Trueman Greenfield.[61] Very little is known about her beyond the fact that she was born in 1715. This is unfortunate because she held a rare position in colonial Maryland society. She was the mistress of the Mistake house for almost a decade after Thomas Marshall's death in 1759. She was clearly a woman of some means as the descendent of two important early Maryland families: the Greenfields and the Trumans. At her own death, she left an estate worth more than £800. This made her one of the wealthiest women in Charles County, if not the entire province of Maryland. The very fact that she left a will shows that she held some power and claimed rights that were exceedingly rare of colonial Tidewater women.[62]

Sabina Marshall began her widowhood well endowed with property. Thomas Marshall left her the Mistake property and several others, along with slaves. But the fact that he left Sabina with land and slaves does not necessarily mean that he intended for her to become a female planter. He left the property to her with a strict limitation: She would lose it all if she were to marry again. And the slaves he left her were hardly the sort to make a plantation go. A glance at the ages of the slaves she held at her own death indicates that she had only a small slave work force: ten of her fifteen chattels were unfit for fieldwork. These slaves would have been enough to work her land, but hardly enough

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[61] It is unclear when this second marriage took place. Gerald guesses it was 3 August 1756; *Maryland Historical Magazine* 24 (June 1929): 175, but the marriage may well have taken place anytime between Elizabeth Marshall's death in 1750 and the 1756 date.

[62] On women in the Chesapeake during the period of Sabina Marshall's widowhood, see Lorena Walsh, "The Experiences and Status of Women in the Chesapeake, 1750-1775," in *The Web of Southern Social Relations: Women, Family, and Education*, ed. by Walter J. Fraser, Jr., et al. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 1-18; and Jean B. Lee, "Land and Labor: Parental Bequest Practices in Charles County, Maryland, 1732-1783," in *Colonial Chesapeake Society*, 306-41.

to create much of a wealth-producing income. Moreover, her stepson Thomas Hanson Marshall was managing much of the land nominally under her control and reaping the profits for himself—as a suit filed against him by Sabina in 1761 charged (these charges will be examined at length in chapter 7). Having been twenty-eight at his father's death, he may have had none of the affections for his stepmother that a child would have experienced. Yet Sabina Marshall was producing some sort of wealth because the items listed in her inventory that are absent from her husbands suggest a robust income: eight new leather chairs, paintings, a large dressing glass with drawers, china, earthenware, kitchen utensils, and more.[63] Her inventory also shows that she had plenty of supplies on hand for either a plantation tailor or for the itinerant tailors who wandered the countryside and used whatever materials intermittent employers such as Sabina Marshall had on hand.

[63] The several items of jewelry in Sabina Marshall's inventory, absent from Thomas's, were probably hers before his death. If they were her property they probably would not have been included in the accounting of her husband's estate.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 30 yd Irish linen | 1/4 lb "ozn:s" thread | 2 3/4 lbs wool |
| 134 yds "ozng." | 2 1/2 lb "Oznag." thread | 13 yd bed ticking |
| 14 1/2 yds country cloth | 3 1/4 [oz? lb?] shoe thread | 3 lb spun cotton |
| 16 1/2 yd cotton | 1 1/4 lb stitching thread | 2 3/4 yd stamped cotton in a quilt |
| 5 yd lace | 1 oz "cold." thread | |
| 7 1/2 yds green taffeta | 1 "hank" sewing silk | 1/4 yds chintz |
| 7 1/2 yds black taffeta | 5 lb yarn | 1 diaper cloth |
| 4 yds blue ferret | 5 sets knitting needles | 11 jacket buttons |
| 3 1/2 yd stamped cotton "differt Sorts" | 2 Taylors steel thimbles | 3 crepe hat bands |
| | 2 brass thimbles | 3 yds "Snalg" |
| 100 needles | Silver shoe and knee buckles | 1 yd cambrick |
| 2000 pins | 3 sides tanned leather | 3/4 yd dowlass |
| 5 oz Nuns thread | 2 raw horsehide | |
| 5 oz fine Nuns thread | 2 raw hides | |

The presence of tanned hides and various buckles in the list raises the possibility that one of her slaves was a shoemaker.

**The Second Generation in the Mistake House: Regeneration, Renovation**

One of the key components of consumerist fashion was novelty. British factors often complained to their home offices that secondhand items were impossible to sell. Even ready-made items could be difficult to get rid of.[64] This sense of newness could apparently extend to houses.

Thomas Hanson Marshall inherited the Mistake house on the death of Sabina Marshall in 1768. But he did not move there until five years later. Three events it seems interceded in his move to the house of his father. First, he seems to have been

[64] Carr & Walsh, "Changing Lifestyles," 109.

determined to make the house an even grander home than it already was. There was a major addition added to the house in this era, and the most sensible explanation is that Thomas Hanson had it built before moving there.[65] Second, Thomas Hanson's wife died in 1770, leaving him with five children to care for. He clearly had his hands full as he placed advertisements in the *Maryland Gazette* searching for a girl to help look after his children.[66] The third event, which suggests that there was bad blood between Thomas Hanson Marshall and his stepmother Sabina, will be discussed below in chapter 7.

Thomas Hanson Marshall benefited much as his father had from a rising economy. Britain's prosecution of the French and Indian War increased government spending throughout the colonies, which led to increases in consumer spending. Annual British imports nearly doubled in value in the decade of the 1750s, rising from £1.1 million in 1750 to £2.1 million in 1760. In the wake of this increase, a wave of competitive consumption blurred the fragile lines between elites and lesser sorts. This in turn caused those who wanted to claim gentry status to create new rituals (such as more

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[65] Two dates have been offered for the renovation. Rivoire places the additions in the 1770s, while Susan Long offers 1760 as the date of the addition [*Homeplaces*, 56]. Rivoire's seems to be the better date, judging by historical events. The earlier date seems unlikely given the death of Thomas Marshall in 1759 and Sabina Marshall's sole ownership of the house for almost a decade thereafter. It is possible: there is a tantalizing clue in an addendum to Thomas Marshall's inventory. It notes that Marshall was in possession of 236 feet of Walnut inch plank, the sort of wood one would use to make panels in a finely crafted hall or chamber. There is one further clue in Sabina Marshall's inventory: 14,700 nails of various sorts. This suggests some sort of major construction in the planning stages. These two clues of course may be completely unrelated, and certainly do not add up to an addition before 1770.

[66] The advertisement reads: "Wanted by Thomas Hanson Marshall, a woman qualified for managing a house, and bringing up Girls, in a genteel way, such a one (being well recommended) will meet with the best Encouragement, by applying to the Subscriber [i.e., Marshall], living about Eight Miles below *Piscataway*, THOMAS HANSON MARSHALL." *Maryland Gazette*, no. 1328 (21 February 1771): 3. See the same advertisement repeated the following week.

elaborate dinners) and new consumer goods and decorations (such as rugs and wall papers that spread among elite homes just at this time) to distinguish themselves. These new rituals and goods required larger houses.

The requirements of gentility and higher status changed the look of the house in renovation of 1770s. Thomas Hanson's two-story addition to the north side of the house added 1350 square feet to the house, bringing the total square footage to about 3350. On the exterior, he kept the style of the façade, but, preferring utility over design, compromised its symmetry (Figure 8). The east elevation was greatly altered by the addition of a porch that extended along the eastern elevation of the addition (Figure 9)[67]. The porch was accessed by a large arched doorway. Although the symmetry was lost by the addition of new windows and the arched doorway, Marshall paid careful attention to the continuity of style, placing the same double-ogee pattern above the windows, for example.

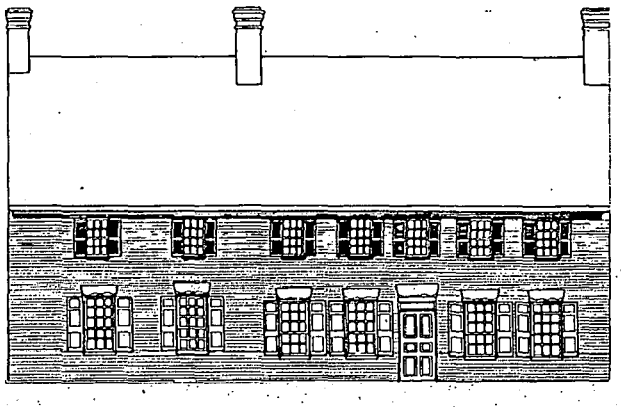


FIGURE 8: Western Elevation of Mistake House, ca. 1770

Source: Long, "Historic Structure Report," 113

[67] Long, "Historic Structure Report," 121; Rivoire, *Homeplaces*, Fig. 71: 59.

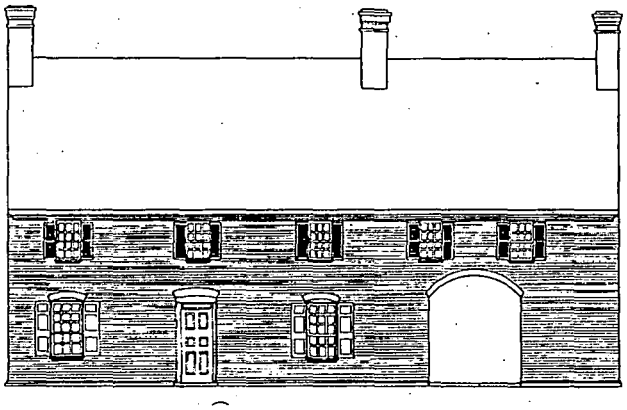


FIGURE 9: Eastern Elevation of Mistake House, ca. 1770

Source: Long, "Historic Structure Report," 113

The addition behind and above the porch must have been used as a kitchen and servants' quarters. It was, in effect, an attached outbuilding. There were no interior passageways to the rest of house on either floor. There was no staircase in the original addition. So servants would have climbed a ladder to use to gain access to the second floor where they could store kitchen items and perhaps sleep.

Thomas Hanson Marshall made other improvements to the property at this time. He built a small brick dependency, a brick carriage house-stable, and probably other buildings.[68] Once he decided to move to Mistake, he determined to make it one of the finest properties in the county. To judge by the tax assessments of 1783 and 1793, he succeeded handsomely.

**The Marshalls: Charles County Gentry**

Thomas Marshall did not travel far across Charles County during his lifetime. But in social and cultural terms he was a veritable Christopher Columbus. Compared with

[68] Rivoire, *Homeplaces*, 59.

earlier Tidewater Maryland generations, Thomas Marshall developed a very different social sensibility. A shipwright intent on shedding his workingman's background, he took advantage of favorable historical winds and made his way to a most favored status. The way he built and furnished his home at Mistake is clear sign that he was intent on displaying his difference from other men of a lesser sort.

This display was not idiosyncratic to Thomas Marshall. Far from trying to revel in an individual sensibility, the former shipwright desired to demonstrate that he understood the rituals, signs, and behaviors associated with the culture of gentility. He built the house at Mistake as a sign to others that the family who lived within could purchase non-essential consumer goods and more specialized furniture while dedicating rooms to specialized private and public functions.

Thomas Marshall's house was a symbol, and a quite substantial one by eighteenth century Charles County standards. Few houses could compare in size, style, or quality. It was one of the first examples of the Charlesian style, a distinct vernacular form that took elements of Transatlantic styles and molded them to local interests. It stood as a fine model for others to follow. In the 1783 tax list, the assessor labeled most houses as small, old, or "very old."[69] Fewer than 5 percent of principle dwellings merited descriptions of "good" or better. Yet the assessor list the Mistake house as "very good." The 1798 assessment placed the Mistake house as the ninth most valuable property in Charles County. The federal assessor counted 2500 houses in Charles County. Sixty percent of those were worth less than $100. The rest were valued at between $105 and $4000 (the Lee family house at Blenheim). The average value of those houses worth

[69] Rivoire, *Homeplaces*, 16ff.

more than $100 was between $350 and $385. Thomas Marshall and his son Thomas Hanson Marshall had transformed the land that had once been home to Piscataway Indians into commodity of high value in the Transatlantic economy.

But that value was not derived simply from the house. Rather, it was built on the backs of servants and slaves who worked the Marshall plantations and created the wealth the Thomas Marshalls displayed in their home, their genteel rituals, and their personal manners.

# Chapter 6

## *Forming a Slave Society at Mistake*

The 1734 will of William Marshall III contained a subtle sign of social changes that were radically altering life in the Chesapeake through the middle of the eighteenth century. The sign came in a list of various items he wanted to leave to his eldest child: "I give and bequeath to my son, Thomas, all my wearing apparel; negroes Rumboe, Jany, and Mulattoe Jacob; a feather bed and bolster, rugg, blankitt, and twelve head of hoggs...." Marshall III had joined hundreds of other tidewater planters in replacing indentured servants with black slaves. Marshall III was clearly aware that the use of "negro" labor was the key to future success for succeeding generations of Chesapeake gentry. He instructed his executor (his brother Thomas) to use all the money from the proceeds of his estate to "purchase negroes for my sons, William and John, my daughters Sarah and Rebeccah, and not in any other way...." The bequeathing of slaves to one's sons and especially to one's daughters was rapidly becoming the norm in the wills of the Maryland and Virginia gentry. This was not the sort of world envisioned by William and Thomas's forebears.

The immigrant William Marshall said nothing about slaves in his will, nor did his son William II. The first settlers of Maryland had no intention of creating a society whose wealth depended on the forced labor of African slaves. They preferred European laborers, as demonstrated by the dwindling yet persistent presence of indentured

servitude into the eighteenth century.[1] But the indentured servant system slowed abruptly at the end of the seventeenth century. An improving European economy and various imperial wars between England and its continental enemies diminished the number of emigrants to America just at a time when Chesapeake planters were desperate to find a cheap form of labor. Tobacco prices had been declining for decades. Falling prices simultaneously required greater production to raise income levels while ruling out a turn to wage labor to produce the finicky and delicate tobacco plant.[2] To cope with these dilemmas, Chesapeake planters increasingly turned to a solution with which they had long experimented: They forged a new labor system based almost entirely on slavery. This new economic system transformed Maryland in general, and Charles County in particular, into a slave society.[3]

Thomas Marshall prospered in this new slave society. On the backs of slaves, he rose quickly from the ranks of workers and artisans into the gentry. He amassed more than 2,000 acres of land. He built one of the finest houses in Charles County, if not the entire colony of Maryland. He established personal, legal, and familial relationships with some of the most powerful and well-known families of the Chesapeake region, including that quintessential member of the Chesapeake gentry, George Washington. Yet, while

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[1] Robert J. Brugger, *Maryland: A Middle Temperament, 1634-1980* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 45.
[2] Allen Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 37-44, ch. 8; Gloria Main, *Tobacco Colony: Life in Early Maryland, 1650-1720* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982), 100-101; Brugger, *Maryland*, 45.
[3] For recent overviews of the difference between "a society with slaves" and "slave society," see James Oakes, *Slavery and Freedom: An Interpretation of the Old South* (New York: Norton, 1998), 38; Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), Prologue, chs. 1 & 2.

Marshall's fortunes expanded along with the slave society of the Chesapeake, this very process narrowed the world of the African slaves he bought and forced to work on his plantation.

This world is extremely difficult to document with any specificity. The slaves of Charles County apparently produced no personal documents, and they left few footprints in the sorts of records historians use to reconstruct the lives of colonial Americans. But historians of the colonial Chesapeake have discovered ways to describe trends and general experiences in the lives of forced African immigrants and creole African American slaves. By taking these trends and eking out the few clues to the world of Thomas Marshall's slaves, it is possible to create at least a hazy picture of the slave world that revolved around the Mistake house. This picture, while far from detailed, nonetheless reveals that Thomas Marshall's rising fortunes closely mirrored those of the Chesapeake gentry, and that his experience with slavery closely paralleled the main trends in the development of forced African labor throughout the Potomac region.

**Founding a Slave Plantation: The Bare Facts**

Thomas Marshall's 1727 marriage to the widow of John Stoddert firmly established him as a slave-owning planter. Elizabeth Stoddert brought into the marriage land and slaves: a 140-acre tract along the Potomac River known as Marshall's Adventure and the use of from six to fourteen African American bondsmen.[4] While Marshall already had purchased land in Prince George's County twelve to thirteen miles to the northeast of his

[4] Brady A. Hughes & Sarah S. Hughes, "A Historical Study of the Marshall Hall Site, 1634 to 1984," prepared for the National Park Service (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1985): 38.

brother's plantation at Charley (Wheeler's Hope, on the north side of Piscattaway Creek nine miles inland from the Potomac River), it is unclear whether he worked this land with slave labor.[5] For that matter, most of Marshall's development and practice as a slave owner is unclear.

The data regarding Thomas Marshall's slave plantations come from three sources: a tax list for the Pomonkey district of Charles County in 1758, Marshall's 1759 will, and the inventory of his estate in that same year. The 1758 tax list recorded fourteen slaves on Marshall's plantations in the vicinity of Mistake.[6] The assessment contains no description of any sort. Marshall's will lists a number of slaves and specifies how he wanted them distributed. Six of the slaves mentioned in the will are not named in the inventory. There is only one clue in the will itself about the nature of the Marshall slaves' labor: a slave named Benjamin is described as "a carpenter." The instructions Marshall left for distributing his slaves offer several clues, however, about the family life of Marshall slaves and the ways Marshall conceptualized slavery as a social institution. The final source contains information useful for figuring out the extent of Marshall's slave holdings and the sorts of slaves he owned. The 1759 inventory named and described thirty-one slaves. Of these, eight are listed as "old" or "very old." One is described as "child," nine as "boy," and three as "girl." Two others are recorded as "youth."

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[5] It is unclear whether he worked this land at all. If he did, he could have done it himself, through slave or tenant labor, or through a combination of these.

[6] It is possible that there were more slaves living on Marshall's Pomonkey lands. Taking the number fourteen to be accurate assumes that all the slaves living there were taxable. If not, then there may have been a few more slaves on or near the Mistake mansion.

Marshall, then, held twelve adult slaves capable of working in the fields at the time of his death.[7]

Hughes and Hughes, in their 1985 report, surmised that all the slaves not categorized as old or very old (twenty-three) were laborers. But this is difficult to say with certainty. Clearly the "child" was too little to work. One male and one female were described as "young," but there is no indication of what age that labels signifies. Moreover, three of the youth's names repeat in Sabina Marshall's inventory of 1768. Calculating back to 1759, the girl Flora would have been nine years old, the boy James would have been seven, and Job only two. Job certainly was not a field hand, and if James and Flora were it is unlikely they were very productive. Moreover, the will labeled one girl, Jane, "an idiot." So it is unlikely that this child worked in the fields. The lack of ages given for the other boys and girls in the 1759 inventory makes it impossible to say whether they were toddlers or teens. If all of those listed as youth, child, boy, or girl are removed from the count, there were only twelve working adults in Marshall's labor force at the end of his life. If only Flora, James, Job, and Jane are removed, then there were nineteen working adults.

These are the bare facts of Thomas Marshall's involvement in the Chesapeake slave world. They put Marshall squarely in the middle of the formation of the "peculiar institution" in Maryland and Virginia. At the same time, it seems that Marshall was not a hard-driven capitalist. He clearly bought slaves, and did so with an eye to making a profit. But unlike planters of George Washington's ilk, Marshall seems to have been satisfied with a gradual development of his plantation. His ambitions were modest.

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[7] Hughes and Hughes ["Marshall Hall," 38] surmised that all the slaves not categorized as old or very old were laborers.

Placed in the context of broader developments, Marshall was a man satisfied to ride a long wave of improving economic fortunes. The way he organized his plantation suggests he had little interest in going beyond his means, taking on debt, and rising through the gentry ranks to a place of high status and political power.

**The Transformation of the Labor Force in Eighteenth-Century Maryland**

The slave trade had undergone major changes in the decades prior to Marshall's marriage to Elizabeth Stoddert. The Maryland legislature had defined slavery as a permanent racial status limited to "Negroes" and their children only in 1664.[8] This did not mean that all those of African descent immediately became slaves. The question of how slave and servant life differed is as difficult to unravel.

The life of seventeenth-century slaves along the upper Potomac was not much different from that of indentured servants. Servants had few legal rights, were under the almost total command of their masters, and were subject to violent methods of social control. There were African laborers present from the first years of Maryland settlement, to be sure. But their status was far from settled. Some were free laborers, others worked as indentured servants, and still others approximated the permanent chattel status we associate with plantation slavery. The differences between slave and servant status were, of course, significant: servants came mostly from Europe; servants worked under contracts that limited the number of years they served their masters; the children of

[8] On the changing legal conceptualization of slavery in colonial Maryland, see Jonathan L. Alpert, "The Origin of Slavery in the United States—The Maryland Precedent," *American Journal of Legal History* 14.3 (July 1970): 189-221. On the racial implications of the Maryland laws on slavery, see Kevin Mumford, "After Hugh: Statutory Race Segregation in Colonial America, 1630-1725," *American Journal of Legal History*, 43.3 (July 1999): 280-305.

servants did not inherit their parents' servile status (unless they opted to sign an indenture); and servants could look forward to gaining both their freedom and some property at some point in the future. (Whether such dreams were actually accomplished is of course quite a different matter.)

The "charter generations" of Chesapeake slaves -- those who arrived in the decades before 1695 -- had been largely Atlantic creoles.[9] These charter generations were of African descent, but they were not entirely of Africa. They were born either on the coast of Africa or in places rimming the Atlantic Ocean distant from their continent of origin. The accident of their births placed them in early and frequent contact with Europeans. Sometimes Atlantic creoles even shared European ancestry through one parent or another. This close contact with Europeans allowed charter generation creoles to gain fluency in European languages before arriving in the North America and to assimilate aspects of European culture and religion.[10]

The lives of free blacks suggest the dilemmas historians have in ascertaining how seventeenth-century Marylanders conceived of slavery both before and even after the 1664 act defining slave status.[11] In 1665, the free black Anthony Johnson moved with his white and black laborers into Maryland, where he settled on a 300-acre tract of land in Somerset County. Moreover, Johnson's widow (after his death in 1670), publicly gave

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[9] Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 23-31.
[10] Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 55ff, Kulikoff 320-21.
[11] Timothy Breen & Stephen Innes, *"Mine Own Ground": Race and Freedom on Virginia's Eastern Shore, 1640-1676* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); and J. Douglas Deal, *Race and Class in Colonial Virginia: Indians, Englishmen, and Africans on the Eastern Shore of Virginia during the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Garland, 1993), 217-50.

their son John Johnson power of attorney for all of her business and legal affairs.[12] Thomas Hagleton sued Major Thomas Trueman for his freedom on May 24, 1676, claiming that he was an indentured servant whose term of four years had passed—Hagleton won.[13] For several decades of the seventeenth century, black males married white and black women in roughly equal numbers.[14] Such figures suggest how some blacks, such as Johnson and Hagleton, were able to negotiate the world of property ownership and political freedom precisely because they had much experience with Europeans before they arrived in the New World.

Socioeconomic questions about the extent and nature of Maryland slavery were kept alive by the relative paucity of slave imports into the colony. There were only about 100 slaves in the four counties of Maryland's lower western shore in the early 1660s.[15] The directors of the Royal African Company, which enjoyed a British government monopoly on the importation of African slaves, preferred to send its "product" to the sugar plantations of the West Indies rather than the tobacco plantations of the Chesapeake.

The slow trickle of African immigrants into the colony contributed to a relative racial stability in seventeenth-century Maryland. The low number of slaves accorded

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[12] *Archives of Maryland*, 87: 159-60.
[13] *Archives of Maryland*, 66: xxi-xxii, 291; Major Trueman, perhaps still taken up with his recent disgraceful role in the September 1675 attack on the Susquehannocks at Piscataway Creek, did not actually appear for the court proceedings.
[14] Paul Heinegg, *Free African Americans of Maryland and Delaware: From the Colonial Period to 1810* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 69.
[15] Russell Menard, "The Maryland Slave Population, 1658-1730: A Demographic Profile of Blacks in Four Counties," *William & Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 32 (1975): 30. These four counties are Calvert, Charles, Prince George's, and St. Mary's. These were the counties where slavery made the greatest inroads in the colony in the first half of the eighteenth century. Over half of Maryland's slave population was located here until late in the eighteenth century.

with a labor force consisting mostly of indentured English servants and only leavened by slaves. Slavery at this point did not mean exclusively African slavery because some Native Americans ranked among unfree laborers. Most planters who owned African-descended slaves in this world held only one or two. These Europeans and Africans worked in the fields side by side, slept under the same roof, and might even eat at the same table. Masters working in such close proximity to their chattel laborers often had little interest in creating or maintaining either a strict racial hierarchy or social distance between the children of Europe and the children of Africa in the New World.[16] They were content to wield the power any master held over seventeenth-century laborers, whether slave or servant.

The lingering socioeconomic questions about Chesapeake slavery were closed by a political act in 1698. In that year, the British Parliament stripped the Royal African Company of its monopoly and opened the North American slave trade to any and all merchants willing to take it up. The number of slaves imported directly from Africa rose precipitately: slavers brought 470 Africans into the colony in summer of 1698 and 352 the following summer. Over the next five years, the number of slaves forced into Maryland would average 300 per year. Thus, the number of slaves importers brought into Maryland between 1698 and 1705 equaled the total number that arrived in the six decades between 1634 and 1698. While these numbers could not be sustained, they were clear harbingers of a new slave regime in the Chesapeake. At the same time, the importation of slaves directly from Africa severely altered the nature of African

[16] This is not to say that this was a world of quietude. Masters could be quite brutal to their laborers, but they were equal opportunity brutes, meting out the same violent punishments to English servants and black and Indian slaves with no racial distinction. See Main, *Tobacco Colony*, 128-30.

American society in the Chesapeake. This is particularly clear in the change face of the slave family over the first half of the eighteenth century.

The new forced immigration of the Middle Passage significantly changed creole slave marriage patterns and possibilities. Throughout the seventeenth century, creoles suffered from a male-to-female ratio imbalance as great as — and at times greater than — that experienced by English settlers in the first decades of settlement.[17] This imbalance made it difficult for the majority of slaves to form families. The problem was exacerbated by black settlement patterns. The small number of slaves per plantation meant few chances to forge social contacts with other blacks. Some larger slave owners placed their slaves in quarters, but these were often too small to set the conditions for the formation of families. On quarters with ten or fewer slaves (where the majority of slaves on the lower Western Shore lived into the 1720s), complete slave families (two parents and children) were rare.[18] The arrival of more black immigrants after 1698 made family formation more difficult.

Where whites saw a resolution of the sex imbalance by the late 1600s, the influx of forced immigrants created a more skewed sex ratio for blacks well into the 1700s. The imbalance derived directly from an economic decision: slave owners, looking for laborers to work their tobacco fields, favored the purchase of males over females by a ratio of about 2 to 1. The greater numbers of black slaves, which might have encouraged family formation, instead created deeper strains. Slave men often entered into intense competition for wives as the sex ratio worsened.[19]

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[17] Menard, "Maryland Slave Population," Table 1: 32, 33-35.
[18] Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 330; Table 36, p. 331.
[19] Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 334.

There was a cultural dimension to the problem of slave family formation as well. Where many charter-generation slaves had become at least somewhat acculturated to European society, the new immigrants came from myriad cultural backgrounds and religious systems. The Christianity of many creoles clashed with the Islamic and animist religious beliefs and practices of the Africans, who proclaimed their difference from both the English and creoles through ritual scarification, filed teeth, and plaited hair. Their music unnerved Europeans and their languages were unintelligible to masters and creole slaves alike.

By the early years of eighteenth century, almost 90 percent of Chesapeake slaves were newly arrived from Africa.[20] These new arrivals found themselves in a world not conducive to the formation of family or long-term survival. As many as one in four African immigrants died within the first year of their arrival in the Chesapeake.[21] The cultural differences they experienced with creoles were exacerbated by the residential practices forced on them by white masters. Where planters with larger numbers of slaves often allowed husbands and wives to live together with their children, they segregated new immigrants off into single-sex barracks. Throughout first third of the eighteenth century, masters often allowed seasoned immigrants to live in "conjugal units" but with children segregated off in separate quarters.[22] In this world, neither creoles nor recent immigrants had much success in naturally reproducing the black population of the Chesapeake. Still, massive importation in the end radically altered Maryland slave holding as it created new possibilities for slave family formation and natural increase.

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[20] Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 56.
[21] Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 326.
[22] Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 334.

**Slave Life at Mistake**

By the time Thomas Marshall began building his stock of slaves in the late 1720s, slaveholding had been transformed. The expense of imported slaves meant that only wealthier Tidewater planters could purchase them in great numbers. The long rise of tobacco prices through the middle of the eighteenth century made these purchases possible. As wealthier planters produced more tobacco with larger slave labor forces, they pushed smaller planters out of the market. The distribution of slaves became increasingly concentrated on larger plantations.[23] At the beginning of the first decade of Marshall's slave holding venture, 56 percent of slaves in Maryland's lower Western Shore lived on estates with five or fewer slaves. By 1730, 63 percent lived on plantations with eleven or more slaves, and only 15 percent resided with masters who owned five or fewer slaves. Only 6 percent of slaves now lived in the very small estates of only one or two slaves.[24] These changes augured the turn of the demographic tide.

The process of African American slave family formation benefited from this transformed slave society.[25] The increasing concentration of slaves on larger plantations allowed for greater daily contact with a black community, as well as more frequent

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[23] Menard, "Maryland Slave Population," 49-50.
[24] Menard, "Maryland Slave Population," Table 4: 50. Kulikoff's figures, using different sources, are quite similar. See *Tobacco and Slaves*, Table 36, p. 331.
[25] The terms "family formation," "marriage," "mate," and "spouse" all approximate the standard ideas of coupling and production of children. But when used in the context of creole and African slaves in the colonial Chesapeake, they should not be confused with either modern conceptions of marriage (elaborate ceremony to confirm matrimonial bonds, lifetime commitment, and strict prohibition against extramarital sexual unions) and family (a nuclear family in separated domicile) or those associated with the planter class. The violent economic nature of slavery made slave family formation an extremely tenuous enterprise.

contact with other plantations. Community formation meant the development of shared beliefs and practices among the slaves, whether creole or immigrant. Larger numbers of slaves and community bonds among them meant greater chances for finding a spouse and thus producing children. By the 1740s, the slave population began to reproduce itself through natural increase.[26] The sex ratio among blacks dropped precipitately by the mid 1750s in the lower Western Shore, with the sex ratio reaching an insignificant 1.105 (in favor of men).[27] These changes also benefited masters: natural increase allowed them to reduce the number of slaves they had to buy directly from Africa. Direct importation from Africa fell off after the 1740s.

The growth of Thomas Marshall's slave holdings seems to fit squarely in this pattern. The fact that the1758 tax assessment listed fourteen slaves on his Pomonkey plantation suggests that he concentrated slaves into at least one quarter. Moreover, he specifically mentions a quarter on the Pasture tract in his will. It is tempting to think that Benjamin the carpenter, Alexander, Nell, Nan, Marthy, Florought, Jane, James and Job, lived on one quarter, while another Benjamin, Long Harry, Cuffey, and Sippio lived on another. Marshall left these slaves to his wife, but named them in separate sections of his will. He also bequeathed them in different ways. The former set of slaves became

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[26] Menard, "Maryland Slave Population," 42; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 71; Brugger, *Maryland*, 62.

[27] Menard, "Maryland Slave Population," 53. Jean B. Lee, while generally supporting the general picture of demographic changes presented by Menard and Kulikoff, has argued that the ramifications of these changes were slower to develop than the earlier historians claim. See Lee, "The Problem of Slave Community in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake," *William & Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 43.3 (July 1986): 333-61.

Sabina Marshall's property outright.[28] But those in the second set were to devolve to Marshall's daughter Sarah Dent after Sabina's death. There is, of course, no way to confirm such a division of his slave property.

It is unclear how many slaves Marshall placed beyond his Pomonkey plantations. This is because Marshall probably held more than fourteen slaves on or near Mistake. Maryland law defined taxable persons as males (white or black, and of any age) and slave females over the age of fifteen.[29] The law also exempted from the status of taxable all those slaves "Adjudged by the County Court to be past Labour." It is therefore quite likely that more than fourteen of Marshall's slaves resided near the Mistake mansion. As many as ten of Marshall's slaves seem to fit the categories of "female less than sixteen" and "too old to work," and so there could have been as many as twenty-four slaves living on Marshall's Pomonkey plantations. Whatever the number, the slaves who lived outside Pomonkey most likely were concentrated in one or two other quarters given that Marshall's estate paid out money to overseers for the supervision of his slaves. They could have lived anywhere from his 100-acre Wicomico inheritance to his properties in Prince George's County. And they could have been organized in myriad ways, from a gang of adults working a tobacco plantation under the watchful eye of a white overseer to an all-black quarter of old slaves and children tending live stock.[30] Whatever the case,

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[28] Thomas Marshall's treatment of his second wife in his will was to become a sore point between her and her stepson, Thomas Hanson Marshall, as will become clear in chapter 7, below.

[29] According to the 1715 "Act for the Appointment of Constables and what relates to their Office and Ascertaining what persons are Taxables," *Archives of Maryland* 30: 276; Bacon's *Laws of Maryland* (1765), in *Archives of Maryland*, 75: 210.

[30] For the latter sort of arrangement existing in Charles County in 1697, see Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 5.

Marshall's concentration of slaves seems to have made it possible for at least some of his chattel to find a mate within his own labor force.

There were at least two married slave couples among Marshall's quarters at his death: "Negro man James" and his wife Echoe and "old Tom" and his wife Deborough.[31] Marshall had some sense of the sanctity of slave marriages. He did not break up these couples in his will. Rather, he gave both to his son Thomas. He also attempted to protect their family line in future generations, instructing his descendents that not only must James and Echoe remain together, but their children (their "increase" in the language of the will) were to remain the property of Thomas Hanson Marshall and then of *his* eldest son. There may have been one other married slave on Marshall's plantations. The slave Liddy (whom Marshall presented to his daughter Sarah Dent) had a son, Benjamin. Marshall gave this son to Sarah along with Liddy. He further mandated that all of Liddy's future increase must remain the property of Sarah or her children. This suggests that Liddy was both young enough to have children for some time to come, and that she had a relationship with a male slave that could produce more children. If this were the case, however, this husband would have lived at some distance from the Marshall plantation.

Like Liddy, others among the Marshall slaves had to look beyond Mistake and the other Marshall properties to create a family. They did not have to look far. Thomas Marshall's son Thomas Hanson Marshall owned seven slaves in Pomonkey, on land no doubt bordering his father's plantations. Thomas Marshall's stepson John Stoddert, who lived just a few miles down the Potomac River from Mistake, owned seventeen slaves.

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[31] Will of Thomas Marshall, Charles County Wills, Liber A.D. 5, folios 130-134. See 132 for mention of these two couples.

Indeed, there may have been family ties between the Stoddert and Marshall slaves dating back to the moment when Marshall moved Elizabeth Stoddert's slaves to his own plantations in 1727. In all, there were 159 slaves living in the Pomonkey district in 1758, all within relatively close proximity of Mistake. Visits to the quarters of other plantations would thus have been quite possible for Liddy and her fellow Marshall slaves.

Visits among plantation slave quarters yielded a significant number of slave marriages only when two criteria were met. There had to be a densely settled black population, and blacks had to comprise a large percentage of the total population. In 1730, there had been approximately four slaves per square mile in the four lower Western Shore counties. By 1755, this number had increased to over nine. In the Pomonkey district, the number ranged somewhere between 6 and 10 slaves per square mile, with the true number likely being closer to the higher figure.[32] Density rose as a function of the

[32] These numbers are almost certainly too low and too high, respectively. The upper number may be, however, closer to correct. The lower number is limited solely to the number of taxables on the Pomonkey tax enumeration, which would discount all slaves under the age of sixteen. The upper number is derived from taking Marshall's taxables list, adjusted for the maximum possible number of uncounted slaves, and using it as representative of the rest of the Pomonkey district. If all the slaves listed as "boy," "girl," or "child" were under sixteen, that would have left the possibility of twelve nontaxables living on Marshall's Pomonkey plantations. Moreover, planters had the option to petition the courts to remove aged, nonproductive slaves from the taxable category. In Marshall's estate inventory, three slaves were described as "very old" and thus potentially fell within this category. If all thirteen of Marshall's nontaxables lived in Pomonkey, this would mean that the fourteen taxable slaves listed actually represented 27 slaves. This is unlikely. There is no evidence that Marshall had his elderly slaves recategorized as nontaxable. And Lee points out that "less than 2 percent of the adult slaves in Charles County were nontaxables according to the census of 1755" ("Slave Community," 343). But, taking the number of children (10) and adding that to the number of taxables makes a possible total of twenty-four slaves living at Marshall's Pomonkey plantations, a figure 71 percent higher than the taxable enumeration. If this same rate were applied to the total number of slaves in the Pomonkey list, that would suggest a total Pomonkey slave population closer to 272 persons, or about ten slaves per square mile. This higher number may, of course, be inflated. But by the 1750s, the slave population had begun to

increasing number of blacks in Charles County. In 1710, blacks comprised only 19 percent of the county's total population. That percentage doubled to 38 in 1755, when the total population of the county was 13,056.[33] With 5000 blacks in the county by mid century, the chances for slaves to find spouses had radically improved over the first years of the century. But, given that many of these slaves would have been either children or elderly and that slaves were concentrated in particular areas, some slaves would still have had to travel far to make and maintain families.

Some time after Thomas Hanson Marshall took possession of the Mistake mansion, at least two of the Marshall slaves had found spouses across the Potomac River among George Washington's slaves. Washington's 1799 slave list shows that Billy Muclus, a bricklayer at the former president's Mansion House Farm, had married one of Marshall II's female slaves. And Lucy, a fifty-year-old laborer at Washington's Union Farm, had married one of Marshall's male slaves.[34]

Stable families frequently suffer deep strains when family members are separated by great spatial distances, even in the best of situations. Slaves did not live in the best of situations at any time. There were frequent temporal separations—sometimes born of distance or the difficulty of crossing a geological barrier as vast as the Potomac River, at other times the result of skilled slaves being hired out for long periods of time to distant planters to make barrels or shoes or wheels. And there was the debilitating fear of

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reproduce itself, indicating that there may have been a fairly large number of children in the Pomonkey region. And in 1755, one census found that there were in Charles County more children below the age of sixteen than there were adults sixteen or older (2,445 versus 2,264; see Lee, "Slave Community," 345n24).

[33] Jean B. Lee, *The Price of Nationhood: The American Revolution in Charles County* (New York: Norton, 1994), Table 1: 266.

[34] Mary V. Thompson, Mt. Vernon Ladies' Association Research Specialist, personal communication, 2 August 2004.

permanent separation through the sale of family members to far-away counties or remote colonies. The Marshall slaves saw the breakup of their community and perhaps their extended kin networks on the death of their master. Those who remained with his widow and passed to the ownership of his son nonetheless saw those bequeathed to Marshall's daughters move some distance from their homes and the black community at Mistake. Even those who stayed never could enjoy true stability, as the example of Thomas Marshalls half-brother Benjamin Fendall illustrates. Fendall owned a plantation somewhat larger than Marshall's at the mouth of the Wicomico River. He died in 1764, having given away some of his slaves to his children in preceding years but still owning twenty-nine chattels at his death. Unlike his half-brother, Fendall willed that these slaves be sold to pay off his substantial debts and to create legacies for his two minor children. Fendall's adult children, following his dictates, sold seven males above the age of fourteen, one woman, and three children in July 1764, and then the rest of the slaves six months later. Seventeen different masters bought Fendall's twenty-nine slaves.[35]

Beyond family life, the transition from small to large plantations may have been beneficial for some of Marshall's slaves in allowing them to escape the arduous tasks associated with tobacco production. Few if any slaves of the charter generations performed any labor other than the dull, repetitive, and unchallenging tasks of field work.[36] The majority of masters who held only one or two slaves could not afford to sacrifice their slave hands to learning and practicing skilled labor. But the larger plantations required specialized knowledge. With the introduction of slave labor forces of ten or twenty or more slaves, masters were able to divert some of their labor away

[35] Lee, "Slave Community," 360.
[36] Menard, "Maryland Slave Population," 36.

from the fields.[37] Thomas Marshall's Benjamin, for example, learned and practiced the trade of carpentry. Marshall, a former carpenter during his years as a shipwright, may well have taught Benjamin the ways of wood, auger, and plane himself. There were likely slaves with expertise in the shearing of wool, pressing and storing cider, and tanning hides—all products of Marshall's plantations.

But the main focus of labor was agricultural production, tobacco foremost. Marshall's plantations produced about 10,000 pounds of tobacco in 1758 and then again in 1759. Considering that the individual slave hand produced, on average, about 800 pounds of tobacco in a year in the 1750s, Marshall needed twelve to thirteen slaves working his tobacco fields alone.[38] His slaves also produced corn and wheat. The 1759 inventory of Marshall's estate counted 176.5 barrels of corn and 82 bushels of wheat, which would have required about eleven workers to produce the corn and only a couple to produce the wheat. Even taking into account several white tenants who paid a share of their crops to Marshall to rent his land, it is clear that most of the Marshall slaves were engaged in agricultural production.[39] Their labor would have been arduous: Marshall's estate inventory indicated no modern agricultural implements that could have speeded field work. Marshall's executors found no plows, harrows, or seeding drills among the old farm implements: two narrow hoes, ten hilling hoes, and eleven weeding hoes. This focus on traditional methods of agriculture, along with the other myriad tasks of

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[37] Brugger, *Maryland*, 63.
[38] Lorena Walsh, "Plantation Management in the Chesapeake, 1620-1820, *Journal of Economic History* 49 (1989): 395; Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 39. Hughes and Hughes's estimate of 1500 to 2000 pounds of tobacco per acre is much too high, by a factor of greater than 2 ("Marshall Hall," 37).
[39] One of Marshall's luckless tenants was Leonard Marbury: Marshall bought three tracts from Marbury in 1736 and then apparently allowed the dispossessed man to remain on one of the tracts, albeit as a landless farmer. Prince George's County Land Records.

maintaining the plantation and producing food (fishing with nets in the Potomac or processing milk into butter and cream[40]) would have left little time for slaves, beyond Benjamin the carpenter and maybe one or two others, to pursue any sort of skilled labor.

**Thomas Marshall as Slave Master**

Through the 1750s, Maryland's low taxes on the purchase of slave immigrants made the province a major slave market for Virginia planters who sought to avoid their colony's high taxes.[41] Some slave ships anchored in the mouth of Piscataway Creek, a mere stone's throw up the Potomac from Mistake, to sell their human chattels. Virginians carrying their new slaves across the Potomac would likely have crossed the Mistake property. It was there that a major ferry connected with Fairfax County at Posey's landing. One of the Virginians who likely transported slaves across Mistake was none other than George Washington. He instructed his agents to purchase slaves in Maryland for Mt. Vernon and his other plantations.[42] The Mistake house, then, was at a major nexus of the international trade in human property. For a while in the mid eighteenth century, Thomas Marshall's property was a conduit for one of the largest influxes of African immigrants in American history.

Just as it is impossible to say with any degree of confidence how the Mistake slaves understood and negotiated their world, it is virtually impossible to ascertain what

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[40] Site inventory for these items.

[41] Donald Sweig, "The Importation of African Slaves to the Potomac River, 1732-1772," *William & Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 42.4 (October 1985): 507-24.

[42] Washington Letters, n. 1769. George Washington eventually took control of the ferry landing on the Virginia side in the late 1760s. He foreclosed on mortgage held by Captain John Posey, and thus acquired the ferry rights from Posey's Landing to Marshall Hall [Katherine A. Kellock, *Colonial Piscataway in Maryland* (Accokeek, Md.: Alice Ferguson Foundation, 1962), 30].

Thomas Marshall thought of the parade of chattel that crossed his plantation, worked his fields, and built his fortune. But it is possible to piece together several elements of the atmosphere in which Charles County slaveholders such as Marshall approached the peculiar institution. The key dynamic was the increasing concentration of slave ownership.

The ballooning of slave quarters created a distinct social distance between whites and the mass of black slaves. Where the small slaveholders of the early eighteenth century had close relations with their black servants and slaves, white grandees such as Marshall lost access to much of the black community. This loss gave rise to fears of violence, personal attacks, and large-scale revolt. And these fears were not groundless.

Thomas Marshall likely would have known much about a slave plot to poison John Beall. Beall owned a plantation just over the Prince George's county line and was married to Marshall's half sister, Elizabeth Fendall. Fourteen slaves, including four of Beall's own, conspired in January 1738 to murder Beall. Though only his slave Bess was convicted and sentenced to hang, the diffusion of the plot was threatening enough that the Prince George's County authorities forced all area slave masters to post bonds to ensure that their slaves would not disturb the peace any further.[43] The plot against Marshall's in-law was not an isolated incident.[44] Yet, poisonings and other attacks on Charles County slave owners were not frequent events.[45] Although relatively rare, the mere threat of violence from one's own slave was the sort of thing that might unnerve Thomas Marshall.

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[43] Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 329.
[44] See e.g. the executions of three slaves for poisoning or attempting to poison their masters in no. 531, 10 July 1755.
[45] Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 74.

Even more unnerving for masters was the threat of widespread slave uprisings. Marshall would have heard about slave revolt from both far and near. The Maryland *Gazette*, for instance, reported the discovery of a vast conspiracy on the Caribbean slave island of Antigua in April 1729, in the early years of Marshall's plantation building. Antiguan authorities, the *Gazette* told its readers, brutally repressed the insurrection, condemning the conspirators "to be burnt, one to have his Head cut off and put upon a Pole, and his Body burned...."[46] Closer to home, the 1720s was a decade of unrest in southeastern Virginia. It culminated with an insurrection of 300 blacks in Princess Anne and Norfolk counties in October 1730.[47] Closer still, rumors spread that slaves in St. Paul's Parish, Prince George's County, spent eight months plotting to gain their freedom by murdering their masters and other whites if need be. But while whites in the neighborhood of the planned uprising believed that over two hundred purported conspirators hoped to murder their masters and marry white women before taking over all of Southern Maryland, only five plotters ultimately were indicted. And of these, only one was convicted and hanged. The other four were exonerated.[48]

More than likely the most common revolt was the act of running away. But even then, the act was more a gesture in local negotiations than any sort of permanent break. Most runaways departed for nearby plantations of friends and family and only for short periods of time before returning voluntarily or being recaptured. [49] In reality, as with poisoning and slave revolts, few slaves attempted to break the system, either by

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[46] *Maryland Gazette* (15 April 1729, no. 84: 2).
[47] Anthony S. Parent, Jr., *Foul Means: The Formation of a Slave Society in Virginia, 1660-1740* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 159-62.
[48] Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 329.
[49] Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 343-44, Lee "Slave Community," 358n46.

destroying it or by escaping from it[50]—and this even though Mistake was right on the Potomac River, one of the major riverine highways of North America.

As a slaveholder, Thomas Marshall had to use various methods to prevent unrest among his chattel. There is no extant evidence that details how Thomas Marshall treated his slaves. It is impossible to judge whether he was generous or violent, trusting or suspicious, pleasant or impassioned. One subtle suggestion of his control methods comes in the naming practices he employed for his slaves. Building a force of over thirty slaves in the 1730s and '40s, it is inconceivable that Marshall did not purchase at least several slaves directly from Africa. Renaming new immigrants was the first in a series of methods for initiating African immigrants into the Chesapeake slave community.[51] All but one of Marshall's slaves had English names. But these names often carried emotional weight. Marshall followed a long planter practice of mocking some slaves with ironic names, calling one of his bondsmen "Caeser" after the most powerful rulers of ancient Rome. Only one slave mentioned in his inventory and will carried an African name: Cuffe (or "Friday," following an African custom of naming children after the day on which they were born). Another was named Jack—which could have had two very different references. If could have been a version of "Jacko" (derived from "Quacko," or "Wednesday"). Or it may have been the diminutive of an English name. This popular form of slave naming forced slaves into a metaphorical child-parent relationship, with Africans having to adopt such names as "Jack," "Will," or "Moll" (three of the more popular diminutives, all found among Marshall's slaves[52]). No matter how humane

[50] Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 329-30.
[51] Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 325-26, Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 57-58.
[52] Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 326.

Marshall may have been in treating his slaves, each had suffered the dehumanizing experience of being stripped of their real names and forced to take others as a sign of new identity.

These names were the beginning of a process of transforming African immigrants into agricultural workers. Some of Marshall's slaves, of course, toiled long months producing tobacco. But others put their energies to a variety of other agricultural tasks that indicate that Marshall's plantations, while not fully diversified, nonetheless produced a variety of goods for subsistence as well as for the market. Besides tobacco, Marshall grew foodstuffs, particularly wheat and corn.[53] They also engaged in the production of other types of products as the numerous implements and containers in his final inventory reveal. There were 1,400 gallons of cider, eighty-nine pounds of wool, and numerous hides. There was a still, a spinning wheel. There were sheep sheers, axes, saws, wedges, froes, adzes, and hammers as well as nets for catching fish in the Potomac and the equipment for processing cow milk into butter and cream. But again the amounts produced were quite small, and most likely for home/plantation consumption—unless small amounts were sold to those waiting to take the ferry to Posey's landing. While Marshall produced surpluses of these grains that he could sell for a profit when he chose, producing for the market was not the focus of his grain agriculture. George Washington investigated grain production with an eye to diversification, economic survival, and maximizing profits. But not Marshall; his surpluses of grain seem to have been happy accidents, rather than capitalist calculation.

[53] Hughes and Hughes, "Marshall Hall," 37.

One potential source of substantial income beyond tobacco was the ferry that crossed the Potomac from Marshall's Mistake to the Virginia shore just south of Mt. Vernon. Marshall owned the land on both sides of the river by 1739, and could have charged hefty fees. But he sold the few acres of land opposite Mistake to Captain John Posey sometime in the early 1750s.

The vast transformation of the Chesapeake from a society with slaves to a slave society is abundantly evident in the way slavery dominated Marshall's will. Whereas slaves had hardly appeared in his brother's 1734 will, Thomas Marshall's final instructions gave detailed instructions for the fate of his human property. He gave some slaves to his wife outright. Others he gave to her with the proviso that on her death these slaves would go to his son Thomas Hanson Marshall or his daughter Sarah Dent. He also gave some slaves to his children outright. But he went further than this. In an attempt to strengthen the bonds of his own kin network, Marshall stretched and broke those of his slaves. While he clearly attempted to protect two slave families and perhaps three (James and Echoe, Tom and Deborough, Liddy and her son), he parceled out other slaves to relatives beyond his own immediate family. He gave Frank to his nephew Thomas Marshall (son of William Marshall III). He bequeathed money to Sarah Stoddart (his half niece) for the sole purpose of purchasing a slave once she married. He had already passed deeds for Boyes, Ned, Esaw, Charles, and Gail to Thomas Maccubbin (son of his daughter Mary Maccubbin) with the proviso "To be Delivered to my said grandson when [he] shall come to the age of twenty one years...." After Sabina's death, Marshall demanded that another slave youth named Charles should be given to Marshall's granddaughter Elizabeth Dent. Last of all, Marshall instructed his executors to give

"negro boy Jack" (over and above the gift of "negro boy Will" given via a deed of gift in possession of Thomas Hanson Marshall) to his youngest grandson Zacharia Maccubben once he reached age of twenty-one. In this slave society, black slaves became the bond of white gentry kin networks.

**One Man's Easy Ambition/A People's Struggle for Community**

Thomas Marshall's plantations were profitable. In the last years of his life, he averaged almost £100 per year in gross receipts. His overhead was low. He paid only £66.6.0 over the two years before his death to overseers for the supervision of slaves and to merchants for slaves' clothing and food. The income from his tenants alone took care of his slave maintenance (£75 per year). The average annual tobacco profit from his slave labor was another £65. Marshall's average annual income of £140 was quite handsome. He possessed enough land to produce a higher income. But greater production would have caused him to take on debt.

Marshall was unusual in this regard when compared with most other Chesapeake planters. He studiously avoided large debts. At the time of his death, he owed only £70 to a handful of debtors. His two largest debts were to two merchants, £26 to John Semple & Co of Virginia and 543 pounds of tobacco to John Glassford & Co of Maryland. But these debts were offset by the credits owed to Marshall by his debtors. These debts indicate a conservative management of the property as well as only a modest ambition. But even at this, Thomas Marshall rose from the meager status of his youth to elite status by his twilight years.

Thomas Marshall died a wealthy man. The net value of Marshall's estate was £1,856.4.8, a figure that placed well above the threshold for elite status in provincial Maryland.[54] This wealth certainly derived from Marshall's youthful desire to rise into the gentry of Charles County. But it equally developed out of the fact that Marshall lived at an opportune moment for a Chesapeake planter: consistently rising tobacco prices combined with the formation of a new sort of labor force and the consolidation of a white slave master identity to make possible the creation of concentrated slave labor force.

For the slaves on Marshall's plantations, there was no access to either wealth or social status as measured by gentry standards. By the time Marshall died, Charles County was well on its way to becoming half black and half white. This demographic change created the ground, albeit exceedingly thin, on which forced immigrants from Africa could forge a separate community of friends and family.

Thomas Marshall was in many ways quite typical of the new Chesapeake slave masters of the middle third of the eighteenth centuries. This is particularly true considering the size and growth of his holdings, the organization of his labor force, and his relations to his slaves. But in one vital respect, Marshall diverged from the dominant picture of the slave master. He was content to develop his wealth at a relatively slow pace, building a portfolio of properties that he worked only enough to achieve a comfortable gentry life.

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[54] Marshall's estate was almost three times the threshold for elite status as determined by historian Trevor Burnard (5, 265-69; although Burnard held all values at a constant value based on those of 1700, the value of the pound was virtually the same in 1758 as it was in 1700 [*Creole Gentlemen: The Maryland Elite, 1691-1776* (New York: Routledge, 2002]. See also John J. McCusker, *How Much Is That in Real Money?* (Worcester, Mass.: American Antiquarian Society, 2001), Table A-1: 50,52, in column "Composite Commodity Price Index"].

He seems to have lacked the naked ambition that marked the lives of the stereotypical tobacco planter. This lack of ambition, or rather, an ambition limited to the increasingly backwater community of Charles County, would become endemic to the succeeding generations of Marshalls who resided at Mistake.

# Chapter 7

## *Revolutionary Gambles: The Marshalls during the War for Independence*

Thomas Hanson Marshall was in many respects satisfied to walk in his father's serene gentry shoes—except in one powerful moment. He rushed to join the "glorious cause of liberty" in the middle 1770s.[1] He was not alone in this. Virtually all his friends, relatives, and fellow citizens of Charles County threw themselves into the revolutionary effort at the outset of the conflict. Unlike the debt-plagued planters depicted by some historians, the gentry planters of Charles County embraced independence in hopes of consolidating their local status and power rather than as a means of escaping economic bondage to British merchants.[2]

Marshall's ardor for battle quickly cooled, as did that of most of his neighbors. The potential glory of war apparently paled in comparison with the comforts of plantation hearth and agricultural routine. But through the war years, Marshall and his kin harbored optimism about the future. No sooner was the war won than they began planning for an

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[1] "Memorial of the Pomonkey Company to the Council of Safety," c. 1 March 1776, in Calendar of Maryland State Papers, *Red Books* (Annapolis, Md.: Hall of Records Commission, 1953), 13: 148.

[2] On debt as a spur to support for the Revolution among Tidewater planters, see e.g. Timothy H. Breen, *Tobacco Culture: The Mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of the Revolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985). See also Jean B. Lee, *The Price of Nationhood: The American Revolution in Charles County* (New York: Norton, 1994), ch. 3. This chapter is deeply indebted to Lee's insightful history of Charles County during the last half of the eighteenth century.

economic ascendancy they believed would take them to the zenith of economic and political power in the new country. The fact that they lived so close to George Washington's Mt. Vernon and that they could claim him as a member of their neighborhood network no doubt fueled their optimism. Their optimism, however, would not survive the peace that followed the war. The Revolution and independence transformed Charles County in ways Marshall and his kin and neighbors could not have imagined in the middle of the 1770s.

**"The Fullest Flowering of Maryland's Plantation Society"**

The colonial province of Maryland showed promise to become one of the leading states in the new country. The province was the fourth most populous of the colonies in 1770 (behind, in ascending rank, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts). The province's population was quite heterogeneous, with residents coming from a wider array of backgrounds than most of the other colonies (only those of New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania had a greater variety).[3] The population supported one of the most cultured towns in North America, as Annapolis became an intellectual center. The Carrolls, Dulaneys, and Bordleys supported an artistic and literary life, as Dr. Alexander Hamilton and a handful of others founded the renowned Tuesday Club.[4] Much of the colony's wealth derived from the tobacco trade of the Tidewater plantations. And at the head of this trade, Charles County represented, as historian Jean Lee put it, "the fullest flowering

[3] David C. Skaggs, "Maryland's Impulse Toward Social Revolution: 1750-1766," *Journal of American History* 54 (March 1968): 771.
[4] On the "golden age" of Annapolis, see Robert J. Brugger, *Maryland: A Middle Temperament, 1634-1980* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 77-83.

of Maryland's plantation society."[5] As Lee suggested, the gentry of Charles County in the 1760s and early 1770s were "[a] secure, self-confident, forward-looking elite [who] dominated a complex, hierarchical, and stable social order."[6]

The county's gentry welcomed the political upheaval of the 1770s as a prelude to greater political power and economic fortune.[7] The seven hundred or so landowners in the county in 1774 could afford to be optimistic. Ninety-five out of a hundred of them owned more than 50 acres of land, and 75 percent owned more than 100 acres. Three in five landowners commanded plantations of a middling size (between 100 and 500 acres). There were several Charlesians who held vast amounts of land totaling more than 1,000 acres. They accounted for just under 10 percent of the county's plantations. These great planters commanded local politics, holding public office for decades before passing their positions down to their sons. These sons—of the Stodderts, the Dents, the Hansons, and others—in turn passed the same offices down to their sons. But across the board, landowners had gotten accustomed to stability. These patterns of ownership and leadership had held for several decades (even with the changes wrought by deaths, bequests, and population growth), and few of the landed families wanted to change the status quo.

To maintain that status quo, the gentry of Charles County faced several problems from outside the region. These problems stemmed from their status as British colonials. While the patterns of land ownership and office holding remained stable, life in Charles County was frequently thrown into turmoil by the planters' dependence on their single

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[5] Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 7.
[6] Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 7.
[7] See Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, chs. 3 and 4.

staple crop. Prices rose and prices fell and then rose again, often without warning. High tobacco prices between 1766 and 1772 provided cause for optimism.[8] But a growing depression in Europe knocked the bottom out of the tobacco market. By the middle 1770s, Thomas Hanson Marshall and his Chesapeake neighbors were in the throes of a depression that stretched across the Atlantic Ocean.

Ties to Britain created a series of interrelated strictures that both the gentry and the citizens at large of Charles County wanted to break by the middle 1770s. Charles County planters began to see British mercantile policy as a barrier to improved markets. If the county were no longer subject to the crown's self-serving economic policies, new markets would be open that might smooth out the boom-and-bust cycle of the tobacco market. Moreover, a break with Britain might do away with a number of other economic drags on the county. These included the county's share of the roughly £12,500 due to the debauched, avaricious, and "much Despised" Baltimore dynasty -- Lord Frederick Baltimore, proprietor from 1751 to 1771, followed by his illegitimate son, Henry Harford -- as well as the mandatory fees required of all taxpayers to support Anglican clerics.[9] Last of all, the citizens of Charles County had begun imbibing new political ideas about the fundamental civil rights of Englishmen. Charles County lawyer Thomas Stone, for instance—who would later win fame as a signer of the Declaration of Independence—gained exposure to questions of republicanism and democracy in monthly debates at the Forensic Club of Annapolis. Such discussion occurred more informally throughout Charles County in the early 1770s, in taverns and at court days, in churches and at tobacco inspections warehouses, and in homes of the gentry as well the hovels of

[8] Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 104.
[9] Brugger, *Maryland*, 110, 117; Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 88.

common laborers. Ironically, such debates on the rights of English citizens started the men of Charles county -- from the lowest to the most exalted -- thinking that their best chance to gain these rights in full would be to break away from the mother country.

It is unclear how Thomas Hanson Marshall came to such ideas. What is clear, however, is that he was not introduced to them in Charles County. For, as the 1770s opened, Marshall did not live in the county where his father's house at Mistake stood.

**Prodigal Son**

Thomas Marshall's son had left his Charles County home to make his way in the world. But he didn't go far. Thomas Hanson Marshall spent his early adulthood in Prince George's county, working land that his father had given him and other lands he had acquired on his own. It is unclear what sort of home Marshall inhabited during this period of his life, or how many slaves he managed, or how much wealth he commanded. He had a house on land his father bought from Gilbert Sprigg, and he was living there at the time of Thomas Marshall's death.[10] In these years, Thomas Hanson rose to an elite status. In 1764, at the age of 33, Marshall gained an appointment as a Justice of the Peace for Prince George's County, a post he held for nine years, until 1773.[11]

But Marshall must have served with a certain lack of commitment. He had numerous reasons to believe that he would return to his childhood home in Pomonkey Neck after the eventual death of his father. For instance, Thomas Hanson was Thomas Marshall's only son. For generations, Maryland fathers had bequeathed the lion's share of their property, especially the family seat, to their eldest sons. And because young

[10] Will of Thomas Marshall, Charles County Wills, Liber AD 5, folios 130-34.
[11] Maryland Commission Records, 1726-1786.

Marshall had no brothers, he had no fear of competition for the house at Mistake. Moreover, his mother had died in 1750 and so would not stand as a barrier to his resettlement in the home of his childhood. Any sadness Marshall felt at the death of his parents would likely be mitigated by his knowledge that his return would bring him closer to his surviving sister and his Dent in-laws. Events, however, forced Thomas Hanson to wait long after his father's death to return to Pomonkey.

Thomas Marshall did not leave the house at Mistake and the surrounding properties to his son—at least not right away. Instead, he left the house and much land to his second wife, Sabina Trueman Greenfield Marshall. This may have shocked or at least surprised the son. His father and stepmother had been married for only a relatively short while, most likely only three years, seven at the most.[12] The couple had no children, but apparently they had developed a deep love for each other. Thomas Marshall bequeathed Mistake, Carrick, the Pasture, and half the land he bought from a William Hicks to Sabina for the rest of her life or until she remarried. The other half of the Hicks tract, as well as numerous other properties, fell to Thomas Hanson Marshall. Moreover, Thomas Marshall seems to have been engaging in a bit of family engineering. For not only were his second wife and son to share the Hicks property, they were both to serve as executors of his will. It may be that Marshall already was concerned that the two great loves of his twilight years did not get along. It may be that the son resented the meddling of the father or the generous bequest to his stepmother. Whatever the cause, this twist of

[12] Herbert P. Gerald guesses that Thomas Marshall married Sabina on 3 Aug 1756. See "Marshall Hall Burying Ground at Marshall Hall, Md.," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 24 (June 1929): 175

testatorial fate upset Thomas Hanson. He seems to have flaunted the directives of his father's will from the moment it went into effect.

Thomas Marshall's widow, however, was not a woman to be trifled with. Sabina Truman Greenfield Marshall knew a thing or two about both land and power. Her father, Thomas Truman Greenfield (b. ___? - d. 1733), had been a member of the lower provincial legislature for almost two decades. He was a planter and land surveyor (he laid out the town of Upper Marlboro) who commanded thousands of acres of property, much of which he had inherited from his great-uncle Thomas Trueman (ca. 1625-1685).[13] Sabina Marshall also was a niece of Major Thomas Truman, the man convicted of fomenting the massacre of the Susquehannock chiefs in the events around Randall Hanson's plantation in 1675.[14] With this heritage, she was not about to allow her stepson to take advantage of her. When he refused to live up to the provisions of his father's will, Sabina Marshall brought a suit against him.

Sabina Marshall sued her stepson in the fall of 1761, two years after her husband's death. She claimed that Thomas Hanson had reaped the profits from her half of the Hicks tract. She charged her stepson with selling wheat, corn, and tobacco that properly belonged to her. Adding insult to injury, Thomas Hanson had used the labor of slaves Thomas Marshall had left to her to harvest the crops he illicitly sold. The sums at issue were significant: 82 bushels of wheat (valued at 4 shillings per bushel), 170 barrels of "Indian corn" (valued at ten shillings per barrel) , and 3,800 pounds of tobacco produced by the tenants, as well as 9,221 pounds of tobacco (valued at 20 shillings per

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[13] *A Biographical Dictionary of the Maryland Legislature, 1635-1789*, vol. 1: *A-H*, ed. by Edward C. Papenfuse et al. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 375.
[14] Major Thomas Truman was the uncle of Sabina's father, Thomas Truman Greenfield.

hundred pounds) produced by slaves. Sabina also wanted her stepson to render to her half the rents due from tenants on the property. More than that, Sabina charged that her co-executor status with Thomas Hanson entitled her to half of the household furniture of Thomas Marshall's estate, or at least a sum of money equal to the value of that furniture. In all, Sabina demanded several hundred pounds sterling to settle the suit—a hefty sum of money in the 1760s. The governor of Maryland, Horatio Sharpe (or one of his deputies) saw enough merit in Sabina's charges to issue a subpoena for Thomas Hanson Marshall to come before the chancery(?) court. Unfortunately, there seems to be no record indicating the outcome of the suit. At the very least, the legal wrangling shows that Sabina and Thomas Hanson did not get along well.

To make matters more embarrassing for Thomas Hanson, Sabina Marshall thrived on the lands she directed from her house at Mistake. In the final year of her life, for example, she was making a handsome profit from her plantation. Though she owned a smaller workforce than her departed husband, she still managed to produce 5,387 pounds of tobacco in 1767. The crop sold for £61, an amount almost equal to the averages Thomas Marshall reached in the late 1750s. Subtracting the £5 expenses paid to an overseer for driving her labor force, her net profit of £56 was quite impressive. In the ten years since her husband's death, she had clearly managed to maintain the property he bequeathed to her and even made it prosper. Her net worth after the settlement of her estate was £938, about half the value of Thomas Marshall's net assets at the time of his death.

Whether this wealth derived chiefly from tobacco or was significantly augmented by other activities (such as the sewing mentioned in chapter 5), Sabina Marshall was a

wealthy woman, perhaps one of the wealthiest in the colony. She made herself worthy of the fine house at Mistake. It must have been with some sadness and perhaps even anger that she turned the property over to her stepson. She did not name him as an executor of her estate. She did not even mention him in her will, nor even acknowledge that the house she had lived in for well over a decade would devolve to Thomas Hanson Marshall.

Whether because of lingering animosity toward his stepmother or the difficulty of breaking ties in Prince George's County, Thomas Hanson Marshall did not move to the Mistake House immediately after Sabina Marshall's death 1768. Clearly, he was concerned about the house at that time, however. Apparently in legal procedures surrounding the settlement of Sabina Marshall's estate, her stepson discovered that the house at Mistake and the adjacent graveyard were not on the Marshalls' land. Thomas Marshall had compounded the mistake of "Mistake" by building his fine home on land that still belonged to the proprietor! Thomas Hanson quickly moved to patent the 9 3/4 acres surrounding the house and the graveyard in 1768.[15] But he did not then move into the house at that point.

It seems unlikely that Marshall made the house at Mistake his permanent residence until 1773. That was the last year he served as a Prince George's County justice. Residency requirements, of course, would have mandated that he live in that county so long as a he served as a Justice of the Peace. The house at Mistake, then, remained unoccupied for some five years. Thomas Hanson, of course, may have shifted

[15] Prince George's County Land Records, Liber I.L. #B, folio130; Land Office (Patents), Liber B.C. & G.S. #35, folios 4-6, at the Maryland State Archives, Annapolis.

back and forth between his house on Gilbert Sprigg's former property and the house at Mistake. But it is fairly certain that Charles County was not his official home until 1773.

On returning to Charles County, Thomas Hanson seemed intent on claiming his father's mantle and re-establishing his own elite status in his former neighborhood. Thomas Marshall I had been a Prince George's County Justice from 1737 to 1748, when Pomonkey seceded from Prince George's to join Charles County. After leaving public service, he continued to enjoy high social status due to the size of his land holdings, the sumptuous quality of his house, and his association with the leading citizens of Maryland and Virginia who lived around him in the Potomac River watershed. But he did not seek public office in Charles County. He seemed content to manage his plantation and enjoy his home.

Thomas Hanson Marshall would not have this luxury. World events threatened to bring chaos to the relatively stable, ordered world that his father had known in his last years.

**Ambivalent Revolution**

Thomas Hanson Marshall's return to the house at Mistake landed him squarely in a neighborhood and kin network that included some of Maryland's most important figures of the Revolutionary War era. Primary among them were the Dents. Marshall had of course married Rebecca Dent, and his sister Sarah (Figure 1) had married Rebecca's brother, John Dent. A series of other relations further intertwined the two Marshall siblings with the Dents and the cause of revolution. Thomas Hanson and Rebecca Dent Marshall named their second son George Dent Marshall (1763-1764) after Rebecca's

father (George Dent, 1690 – 1754, a former chief justice of the province of Maryland). And Sarah Marshall and John Dent named their second son Thomas Marshall Dent (1761–1823) in honor of Rebecca and Thomas Hanson Marshall's father.[16] Many of the Dents were deeply involved in the Revolutionary War. Rebecca's brother George was elected to several pre-revolutionary provincial conventions.[17] John Dent was a brigadier general in the first stages of the war. Thomas and Rebecca's nephew, George (1758–1813; son of John and Sarah Marshall Dent), was an officer in the famous "Flying Camp" and the Charles County militia. His brother Thomas Marshall Dent was also an officer in the Revolutionary army. John and Sarah's daughter Ann married William Mackall Wilkinson, a captain in the militia.[18] Kenelm Truman Stoddert, Thomas Hanson Marshall's half nephew (and the husband of his sister-in-law Lettie Dent as well), was also an officer in the militia.[19] Beyond the Dents, members of Thomas Hanson

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[16] To give an even more intricate idea of how close knit these familial networks could be: the Dents' brother George (? – 1785) married Eleanor Hawkins. She was the niece of Thomas Truman Greenfield, and thus the first cousin of Sabina Truman Greenfield Marshall. Sabina's sister and Eleanor's cousin Marianne married John Stoddert who was Thomas Hanson Marshall's half brother. That is, Sabina Marshall's cousin was married to her stepson's brother-in-law, and her sister was married to his half brother. Moreover, Sabina's brother, Kenelm Truman Greenfield, married Margaret Dent (Rebecca Dent Marshall's sister), thus making him Thomas Hanson Marshall's brother-in-law. By extension, then, Sabina Marshall was her stepson's sister-in-law.

[17] *Biographical Dictionary of the Maryland Legislature*, 1: 263.

[18] Alexander Hamilton Bell, *A Daughter of Maryland Was the Mother of Texas, Mrs Jane Herbert (Wilkinson) Long* (Washington, D.C.: Law Reporter Printing Company, 1937), 69.

[19] Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 138. Ironically, Thomas Hanson Marshall was not related to the most famous Hanson of the Revolutionary era. John Hanson, Jr., the first president of the United States (as president of the Articles of Confederation congress) was descended from John Hanson (? – 1714), who seems to have been an immigrant (*Biographical Dictionary of the Maryland Legislature*, 1: 407). John Hanson may have been a relative to Randall Hanson (father to Elizabeth, wife of William Marshall II), but only if Randall and John were brothers. This would John Hanson, Jr., and Thomas Hanson Marshall, at best, distant cousins linked through Marshall's great great grandfather.

Marshall's extended Charles County neighborhood network included Thomas Stone (mentioned above) and William Smallwood, a major general in the Continental Army. [20]




FIGURE 1: Sarah Dent, Sister of Thomas Hanson Marshall

Source: Southern Maryland Studies Center, College of Southern Maryland

Thomas Hanson Marshall quickly found a place among the elites of Charles County as the revolutionary crisis broke. In the first light of democracy, citizens gathered in Port Tobacco on June 14, 1774, to debate their response to Britain's closing the port of

[20] Thomas Hanson Marshall's daughter, Mary, would continue the family's close ties to the Revolution by marrying Revolutionary War officer Philip Stuart who would later serve as a general in the War of 1812. By then, however, his ties to the Marshalls may have been tenuous as Mary died in 1789 only a year or two after marrying him.

Boston in retaliation for the Tea Party. They argued over the merits of nonimportation of British goods and nonexportation of Chesapeake staples as protests against the crown's repressive policies. They then took a major step toward sundering the Lord Proprietor's rule over the province by electing eighteen men to serve as the county's first extra-legal committee of correspondence. Among the prominent gentlemen elected to the committee, men of stature akin to John Dent, William Smallwood, and Thomas Stone, was Thomas Hanson Marshall.[21] But it is difficult to gauge Marshall's commitment to the principles of democracy and republicanism. We have only bare hints of his ideology and they add up to a rather ambivalent commitment to the glorious cause of liberty.

Although the citizens of Charles County elected Thomas Hanson Marshall to the committee of correspondence, this act may say more about his status as a member of the gentry and less about his political beliefs. Marshall, for example, flaunted the letter if not the spirit of nonimportation. On September 29, 1774, the Maryland *Gazette* published the Continental Congress's appeal to American patriots to boycott British goods. The very next day, one of Marshall's neighbors, Walter Hanson, cancelled an order for cloth from a British merchant, noting that "I find it is the Sense of the General Congress Now held at Philadelphia that we send for no goods from Brittain Until Matters are better Settled Between the Mother Country & the Colonies."[22] Yet, four days later Marshall could not resist ordering for himself a bauble from Britain. He wrote to the British merchant James Russell on October 3 with hopes that the gathering political strains would soon subside and allow business to get back to normal: "[S]hould the unhappy Difference now Standing between our Mother Country & the Am$^{s}$ Subside, [I] hope to be

[21] *Maryland Gazette*, 16 June 1774 3:1; Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 111.
[22] Cited in Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 114.

more [Largs?] in the consinement way the next year. [T]hese unhappy affairs at this time, give ... greatest uneasiness to every [one's?] wishes to his Country." With this hope for a return to the old routines, Marshall then ordered "one small silver watch" to be delivered by "Capt. Brown or some safe hand...."[23] He may have felt justified in this for he had apparently already shipped a hogshead of tobacco to Russell before the boycott of British goods had begun. Nonetheless, the difference between his attitude and Walter Hanson's is striking.[24]

Marshall found himself elected to three of the province's revolutionary conventions, the second (November 21-25, 1774), the fourth (April 24-May 3, 1775), and the fifth (December 7, 1775-January 18, 1776). While he attended the second, he did not travel to Annapolis for the fourth or fifth. It is unclear why he chose to remain at home. One possibility is that he was suffering remorse over the death of his youngest son, George Hanson Marshall, in 1775 at the age of 5 years. Another, of course, is that he felt some ambivalence about the patriot cause.

If ambivalence were the case, then events quickly forced Marshall's hand. By the time of the fourth Maryland provincial convention, the "great uneasiness" had turned from political wrangling to outright war with the battles of Lexington and Concord. Then, on June 15, George Washington's selection as Commander in Chief of the Continental Army transformed Thomas Hanson Marshall's placid Potomac River from

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[23] Thomas Hanson Marshall to James Russell, 3 October 1774, Russell Papers, Bundle 14, Coutts & Co. London (microfilm in the Virginia Colonial Records Project, Library of Virginia, reel 556); Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 114.

[24] It may thus be that Marshall signed the 1775 petition to absolve one Patrick Graham of breaking the nonimportation regulations with a tinge of quiet guilt [*Archives of Maryland*, 11: 35-36.

what Lee called "[t]he colonial avenue of trade" into "an avenue of war."[25] With George Washington's Mt. Vernon home just across the river, there was every reason to fear that the house at Mistake and the surrounding Marshall properties soon would be the site of British incursions. If so, the war quickly would be transformed for Marshall from an abstract political debate into a personal fight for survival.

In the first full year of the war, as many as 20 percent of the able-bodied men of Charles County took up arms either in the regular army or in the county militia.[26] But they did so for a variety of reasons. Men of the lower orders saw the Revolution as an opportunity to augment their access to political power. Men of the gentry saw independence as a means for maintaining their elite status. These two opposing goals clashed early on in the rebellion, as Thomas Hanson Marshall came to understand quite clearly.

The formation of military units created a mad dash for officers' commissions in the Charles County militia in late 1775 and early 1776.[27] The chaos that ensued was exacerbated by the method for determining officers employed by the militia throughout Maryland and the other colonies. To underscore the militia's democratic spirit, its rules mandated that soldiers vote for their own officers. The provincial convention accepted these votes, except in rare circumstances. One such rare case involving Thomas Hanson Marshall reveals how the gentry used a time of revolution to consolidate their elite power.

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[25] Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 134.
[26] Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 161.
[27] Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 161-62.

The men of the Pomonkey militia quickly came to appreciate the newfound power represented by electing their own officers.[28] Soon after forming the 26th Battalion, they elected John Dent and Kenelm Truman Stoddert to serve as captain and first lieutenant, respectively.[29] The men of the company felt honored when the Provincial Convention soon thereafter promoted Dent and Stoddert, the former to brigadier general, the latter to battalion major, in February 1776. With little reason to suspect that they would be second guessed, the Pomonkey militiamen also elected a new captain, Henry Ward, and a new first lieutenant, George Dent (John Dent's son). But a surprise awaited the company. The Provincial Convention refused Ward his captaincy, and installed instead a man who was not even a member of the Pomonkey company: Thomas Hanson Marshall. T. H. Marshall was of course a gentleman and a close relation of both General Dentand Major Stoddert. Henry Ward was not. While it may be that the convention chose Marshall due to prior militia experience, this mattered little to the militia soldiers. [30]

Determined to hold on to their new-found powers, a majority of the rank and file objected to the Council of Safety. Ward, they argued, had won the captaincy with a fifteen-vote majority and was "a very proper person to entrust" to such an important office. They also warned of future hazard if their choice were to be passed over. The committee should approve their choice, the *democratic* choice, they argued because it "will be a means of keeping the said company in Harmony and Union... and will

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[28] *Archives of Maryland*, 11: 187 (26 February 1776); Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 138-39.
[29] Dent was of course T.H. Marshall's brother-in-law and Stoddert was T.H. Marshall's half-nephew and husband of his sister-in-law Lettie Dent.
[30] Marshall may have served as a captain in the Prince George's County militia in the 1760s. George Washington referred to a Captain Marshall in his diary entry for October 13, 1769 [*The Diaries of George Washington*, 6 vols., ed. Donald Jackson & Dorothy Twohig [Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976-1979), 2: 188], but this seems to be the only evidence of Marshall's prior militia service.

likewise remove all Suspicions of prejudice." Their protest fell on deaf gentry ears.[31] Marshall received his captain's commission on March 7, and with it the chance to prove his mettle as a military chieftain.

Marshall did not stay away from the house at Mistake for long. His military ardor seems to have dissipated in only a few months. He likely saw some limited action in July down near the mouth of the Potomac at St. George's Island. He may have been involved in a skirmish near Sandy Point.[32] But these minor clashes and the realities of war soured whatever dreams of martial glory Marshall may have harbored. He resigned his commission before the end of 1776, returned to the house at Mistake, and apparently remained there for the duration of the war.[33] Marshall hardly was alone in this. His kinsman General John Dent also resigned from the army before the end of 1776 and turned his attention to local pursuits in support of the Continental army.

Nothing convinced Marshall to return to the army. He was apparently not even moved by the fears of his neighbors George Washington and William Smallwood as they despaired over the undermanned Continental Army. It is possible he hired a substitute. Perhaps he felt it enough of a sacrifice that his eldest son was serving.[34] It may be too

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[31] Several months later, Henry Ward attempted to reclaim his captaincy. See his personal memorial to "the Honorable Convention of the Province of Maryland" (no date) in the Maryland State Papers, Revolutionary Papers (1775-1776), Box 9, Folder 34, MSA. It is not clear whether he was successful.

[32] Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 141-43.

[33] Marshall was not the only member of the gentry to have second thoughts about the value of military glory. John Dent resigned his generalship on August 1, 1776—before the first major campaigns of the war—and numerous other elites in Charles County opted to hire replacements to fill their places in the Continental Army rather than fighting themselves. And see the experience of Richard Hendley Courts reported in Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 162.

[34] The Revolutionary War service of Thomas Marshall III (i.e., Thomas Hanson Marshall's son) is unclear. There is no conclusive evidence that he actually served. By

that, with no wife at home, he believed his greater duty was to care for his three daughters (ages 8, 10, and 16 in 1775)—and he may have experienced lingering pain over his youngest son's death. Last of all, his resignation from the army may have had something to do with the fact that, contrary to any initial fears, no significant military action occurred on the upper Potomac at or near the house at Mistake. The major battles of the first years of the war occurred to the north of Maryland, and the theater of war shifted far south of the former province in the later years of conflict. There were raids from time to time, with property destroyed and slaves or provisions pillaged—indeed, the British burned down the "elegant Seat" of Marshall's brother-in-law George Dent in the southeast section of the county along Pope's Creek during the most intense of the

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the time of the Revolution, there were numerous Thomas Marshalls in Charles and Prince George's counties. One of Thomas Hanson Marshall's cousins was named Thomas Marshall (these two cousins died within weeks of one another in 1801). One Thomas Marshall signed up as a private in Thomas Hanson Marshall's unit. This is likely Thomas Marshall III. Various historians and family chroniclers have suggested that Thomas III then became a surgeon. There was a Thomas Marshall who served as "Senior Surgeon in the Hospital Department" and that the Council of Maryland ordered this person to be paid £28.2.2 in August 1781. But it is unclear that this is Thomas Hanson Marshall's son. The evidence for saying so is largely ex post facto. The Hugheses, for example, while recognizing the ease with which different Thomas Marshalls can be confused, offer as their only proof Thomas III and the surgeon were one that George Washington referred to Thomas Marshall III as "Dr. Marshall." Others rely on the fact this same inadequate proof, presuming there was only on Dr. Thomas Marshall in Charles County. It seems, however, that there was at least one other. The Maryland *Gazette* ran the following notice April 1, 1790: "A high bred horse is in great perfection, and horse *Hyder Alley* is standing this season at *Mt. Arrarat*, the seat of Dr. Thomas Marshall, 6 miles below Piscataway. Peter Corneil, groom." In that same year, the first United States census listed Thomas Marshall III as residing in Prince George's County. Moreover there were other Thomas Marshalls who lived on the Eastern Shore. Thus, it is difficult to say with any certainty that Thomas Hanson Marshall's son served for a long stint in the Continental army, much less that he was a surgeon in it. For the record of Thomas Hanson Marshall's Revolutionary War contributions, see Henry C. Peden, Jr., *Revolutionary Patriots of Charles County, Maryland: 1775-1783* (Westminster, Md.: Family Line, 1997), 187-88.

decidedly minor actions that occurred in Charles County.[35] There is no evidence that Marshall was involved with home defense by serving in the local militia.

Whatever the case, Marshall did not hold himself completely aloof from the patriot cause at his plantation. He turned land and laborers to the support of the American army. He received commendations from Maryland authorities at least twice during the war: once for providing clothing to the army in 1778, a second time for providing wheat in 1782.[36] Again, it is unclear whether Marshall offered these supplies out of a sense of duty or by dint of state compulsion.[37] He took the oath of allegiance to the state of Maryland in 1778 along with his son Thomas Marshall (III).[38] Significantly, the Marshalls' oath appears on John Dent's return. The two kinsmen were part of a large number of gentry who were satisfied to let others fight the war. By 1778, hired substitutes constituted the largest number of recruits for the militia. In that year, Charles County recruiters sent fifty-five men to the Continental army. There were forty-two hired substitutes, twelve draftees, and only one volunteer.[39]

**George Washington's Neighbor**

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[35] In April 1781. *Biographical Dictionary of the Maryland Legislature*, 1: 263; Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 144, 151.
[36] Peden, *Revolutionary Patriots*, 188.
[37] By 1778, the conditions of the American military were deplorable. One need only think of the horrifying winter at Valley Forge for proof of this. American governments had to force Americans to supply the war effort. Thus, the mere fact that Marshall was providing supplies to the army does not mean that his heart was fully with the patriot cause.
[38] Calendar of Maryland State Papers, *Blue Books* (Annapolis, Md.: Hall of Records Commission, 1969), 5: 38; Peden, *Revolutionary Patriots*, 188.
[39] Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 165.

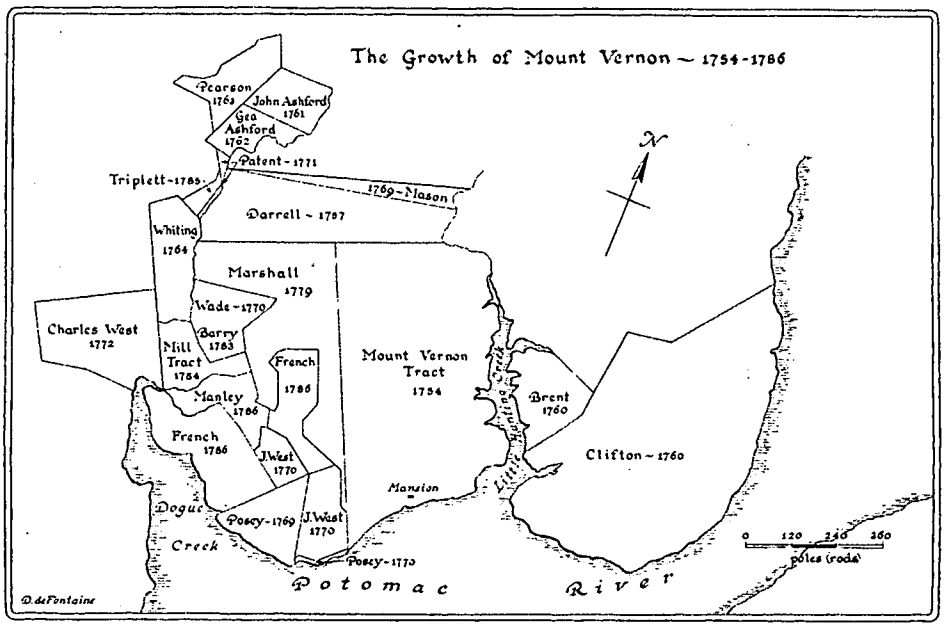
George Washington traveled to Annapolis, Maryland, in December of 1783 to officially resign his command of the Continental army. On leaving the Congress, which was in session there, Washington's only thoughts of the future were to return to Mt. Vernon.[40] It was thus likely that this Cincinnatus's path took him across Thomas Hanson Marshall's land to Posey's ferry.[41] This would not have been the first time Washington's and Marshall's paths had crossed. They knew each other quite well due to negotiations over a piece of land that bordered Mt. Vernon, and held strong mutual interests in agriculture. Washington also knew the third Marshall of Mistake, Thomas Marshall the doctor.

Washington had a somewhat strained relationship with Thomas Hanson Marshall in the years before and during the Revolution. Land was the cause of their tension. Washington's driving desire to improve and add to his Mt. Vernon plantation brought him to covet a parcel of land that lay on the south side of his property along Dogue Creek, opposite the house at Mistake. Thomas Marshall bought almost 500 acres there in 1739 from William Spencer, the original owner. Marshall's purchase included a six-acre strip of land along the Potomac, on which sat a ferry landing. (Figure 2)

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[40] Paul Wilstach, *Mount Vernon: Washington's Home and the Nation's Shrine* (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, Page, 1916) 376 .

[41] Washington's use of Posey's ferry is detailed in *Diaries of George Washington*, 1: 269-70n; and 3: 327.




The Growth of Mount Vernon, 1754–86

FIGURE 7-1. Showing the tracts of land sold by Thomas Hanson Marshall to George Washington and Thomas Posey, as well as the location of Posey's Ferry

Source: *The Diaries of George Washington*, v. 1, 240

For some unknown reason, Marshall sold the ferry landing to Thomas Posey in 1757.[42] He willed the inland portion to his son two years later. The very next year, Washington approached Thomas Hanson Marshall seeking to buy the 480 acres that bordered Mt. Vernon. Thomas Hanson curtly refused in a letter written on June 21, 1760.[43] But he did not close off the possibility altogether. Instead, he suggested that he would sell his

[42] See Deed, William Spencer To Thomas Marshall, 20 November 1739, Prince William County Deeds, Book D, 289-94; Deed, Thomas Marshall to Thomas Posey, 21 September 1757, Fairfax County Deed, Book D-1, 477-78. There are numerous references to the negotiations over land between Washington and Marshall in *The Diaries of George Washington*, especially volume 2.

[43] 21 June 1760, in *Letters to Washington and Accompanying Papers*, vol. 3: *1758-1770*, ed. Stanislaus Murray Hamilton (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, for the Society of the Colonial Dames of America, 1900).

Virginia land if he could purchase an equal amount adjacent to his Maryland holdings. There seemed to be little prospect of this happening, however. As Marshall told Washington, "the Lands [surrounding Marshall's] are in the hands of Gen[tlemen] who have not the Least thought of making Sale thereof ." In effect, he was engaging Washington as his land agent, hinting that he would trade the Virginia property to Washington if the Virginia squire could find a suitable equivalent in Pomonkey. To draw Washington into the deal, Thomas Hanson offered him the right of first refusal on any sale of his Virginia holdings. This was the beginning of a series of transactions that would stretch over three decades.

Washington was vexed by Marshall's Virginia parcel beyond just the desire to add to his Mt. Vernon estate. The western boundary of the estate was unclear. The addition of other grants in the early 1740s had altered the dividing line between Mt. Vernon and the Spencer tract, and this in turn had altered the relations between the original boundary markers—but just how they had been altered no one knew. To make matters worse, many of the boundary markers (old stones and trees) were simply missing. Washington's first option for solving these boundary problems was to buy up the land that once comprised the Spencer tract, part of which Marshall owned.

Ten years after trying to buy Marshall's Virginia land, Washington believed he finally had found a Maryland property to exchange with Marshall for the Dogue Creek parcel. Washington invited Marshall to Mt. Vernon on October 13, 1769. Washington recalled in his diary that "Captn. Marshall came over here & dined & I rid with him

around his Land."[44] The topic of conversation was Washington's impending purchase of a tract of land from Robert Alexander adjoining Marshall's in Maryland. Washington informed Marshall that Alexander, one of Washington's fellow foxhunting enthusiasts, had agreed to sell him a parcel of over 300 acres. At some point during the day, Marshall verbally consented to the exchange Washington had long sought—but only on the condition that he could begin using it right away. Washington was chagrined to discover, soon after obtaining Marshall's consent, a crucial stumbling block to the deal. Alexander did not hold title to the tract he had sold Washington. It was in fact the inheritance of Alexander's wife Marianne Stoddert (likely Thomas Hanson's half niece).[45] Because of this, Mrs. Alexander had the legal right to refuse the property's sale, and she exercised that right, thereby preventing Alexander from being able to transmit title to the parcel to Washington.[46] Washington was further frustrated by the fact that his purchase of 200 acres of another part of the Spencer tract that ran between Mt. Vernon and Dogue's Creek was embroiled in a bitter suit that concerned Posey's six acres and the validity of its sale to Posey by Thomas Marshall I.[47]

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[44] *Diaries of George Washington*, 2: 188. See also the reference to Posey's land "he bought of Mr. Marshall" in the same volume on the previous page (187).
[45] *Diaries of George Washington*, 2: 188.
[46] Marianne Stoddert Alexander was apparently quite adamant about retaining her inheritance. As late as 1777, Washington castigated Alexander for his inability to prevail on her "to do an act of justice, in fulfilling his Bargains and complying with his wishes" [Washington to Alexander, 20 March 1777, cited in *Diaries of George Washington*, 2: 255-56n]. Washington's ire was all the more sharp because he had actually paid Alexander £500 for the parcel. By the middle 1770s, Alexander had apparently hit hard times and could not pay the money back. Washington thus charged it to Alexander's account with interest. It was paid back only in 1789 by a Col. William Lyles who had assumed Alexander's debts [*Diaries of George Washington*, 2: 256n].
[47] The controversy is detailed in *Diaries of George Washington*, 2: 143n.

Washington decided that, with his hopes of purchasing the old Spencer tract apparently dashed, he would at least attempt to conduct a proper survey of Mt. Vernon's western boundaries. Washington wrote Marshall on April 8, 1770, inviting him to Virginia to undertake the project. But Marshall, citing ill health, declined the invitation. Three days later, Washington again urged Marshall to cross the Potomac.[48] Marshall again refused, this time over concern for his wife's health. (Indeed, by the end of the year, Rebecca Marshall had died.)[49] The resurvey remained incomplete.

By the end of the 1770s, in the midst of the Revolution, Thomas Hanson Marshall dropped his land-trade condition and informed Lund Washington (George Washington's distant cousin and land agent) that he was ready to sell his 480 Virginia acres. But Washington did not greet this shift in position with immediate joy. Taking time out from dueling with the British at White Plains, New York, on August 15, 1778, Washington wrote Lund a long letter about his frustration over Marshall's position:

> Dear Lund: Your Letter of the 29th. Ulto. [i.e., July 29], Inclosing a line from Captn. Marshall to you came to my hands Yesterday. I have no reason to doubt the truth of your observation, that this Gentleman's Land, and others equally well situated, and under like circumstances, will sell very high. The depreciation of our Money, the high prices of every article of produce, and the redundancy of circulating paper, will, I am persuaded, have an effect upon the price of land; nor is it to be wondered at, when a Barfl. of Corn which used to sell for 10/ will now fetch 40; when a Bark of Porke that formerly could be had for £3. sells for £15, and so with respect to other Articles which serves to enable the Man who has been fortunate enough to succeed in raising these things to pay accordingly; but, unfortunately for me, this is not my case; as my Estate in Virginia is scarce able to support itself whilst it is not possible for it to derive any benefit for my labors here.
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> I have premised these things to shew my inability, not my unwillingness, to purchase the Lands in my own Neck at (almost) any

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[48] *Diaries of George Washington*, 2: 227.

[49] Gerald, "Marshall Hall Burying Ground," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 24 (June 1929):173.

> price. and this I am yet very desirous of doing if it could be accomplished by any means in my power, in the way of Barter for other Land; for Negroes (of whom I every day long more and more to get clear of) or in short for any thing else (except Breeding Mares and Stock of other kinds) which I have in my possession; but for money I cannot, I want the means. Marshalls Land alone, at the rate he talks of, would amount to (if my memory of the quantity he holds, is right) upwards of £3000, a sum I have little chance, if I had much inclination, to pay; and therefore would not engage for it, as I am resolved not to incumber myself with Debt.
>
> Marshall is not a necessitous Man, is only induced to offer his Land for Sale in expectation of a high price; and knowing perhaps but too well my wish to become possessed of the Land in that Neck will practice every deception in his power to work me (or you in my behalf) up to his price, or he will not sell. this should be well looked into, and guarded against. If, as you think, and as I believe, there is little chance of getting more (at any rate) than the reversion of French's Land, I have no objection to the Land on which [Washington's Dogue Run overseer John] Morris lives going in exchange for Marshalls, or its being sold for the purpose of paying for it, but remember, it will not do to contract at a high price for the one, before you can be assured of an adequate sum for the other; without this, by means of the arts which may be practised, you may give much and receive little, which is neither my Inclination nor intention to do. If Negroes could be given in Exchange for this Land of Marshalls, or Sold at a proportionable price, I should prefer it to the Sale of Morris's Land as I still have some latent hope that Frenchs Lands may be had of D— for it. but either I wd. part with....[50]

Washington managed to raise the cash. By March 1779 he had purchased Marshall's 480 acres for £5,304 in Virginia currency.[51]

With the land question behind them, Washington and Marshall were able to turn their relationship to other ends in the 1780s. One key topic was agriculture. Washington had given up growing tobacco on his plantation before the Revolution. He experimented

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[50] George Washington to Lund Washington, August 15, 1778, in *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*, 39 volumes, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1931-1944), vol. 12, available at etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/WasFi12.html.

[51] Deed from George Washington to Lund Washington, 25 February 1785, Fairfax County Deeds, Book P-1, 415—17 cited in *Diaries of George Washington*, 6: 256n. See also the map and key of Washington's land acquisitions, *Diaries of George Washington*, 1: 240-41.

with a series of crops, including hemp, alfalfa, buckwheat, corn, and flax.[52] Apparently, Marshall too had begun experimenting with crops other than tobacco (although he did not give up the latter entirely as Washington had). A letter of 1788 suggests that the two planters met from time to time to discuss agricultural innovation. On August 24 of that year, Washington wrote his Potomac neighbor:

> Sir: Upon receipt of your letter of the 21st. instant I sent up to Alexandria to know what the cash price of wheat was at that place; and am informed that the highest that has been offered is four Shillings and sixpence for wheat at 60 lb. to the Bushel all Cash or 4/9 part Goods. As I do not incline to exceed the market price I cannot give 5/ unless it should rise to that; and whether this is probable, or not, is more than I can tell. The Sale of flour being dull, and the price low, I have no thoughts at present of buying this article for Manufacturing. My chief, indeed only object in applying to you for wheat, was for the benefit of exchanging seed from light to Stiff-land [i.e., a stiff clayey soil]; and vice versa; which every farmer would find [to] his account in doing. I therefore thought your wheat (if it grew as I expected it did on light land) would suit me as mine would do you, if the sorts were good and approved; but then as I am now seeding my ground it would not answer my purposes to wait long.[53]

Thomas Hanson Marshall was not the only member of his family to call on George Washington. His children seem to have had warm relations with their across-the-Potomac neighbor. One of Marshall's daughters accompanied Sarah Dent to dine with George and Martha in January of 1775.[54] Marshall's son, Dr. Thomas Marshall, visited in August 1785. As Washington noted in his diary, "In the Afternoon—Doctr. Marshall

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[52] See, e.g., Robert. F. Dalzell, Jr., & Lee Baldwin Dalzell, George Washington's Mount Vernon: At Home in Revolutionary America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 62.

[53] George Washington to Thomas Hanson Marshall, August 24, 1788, Letterbook 15, p. 244, Library of Congress. It may be that Washington relied to some degree on Marshall's slaves as well. In a diary entry for April 27, 1787, Washington noted that he was planting a bushel of sweet potatoes "wch was had from Marshalls Neg[roe]s." *Diaries of George Washington*, 5: 145. Unfortunately, it is unclear whether the Marshall mentioned here is the Maryland Marshall, or some other....

[54] *Diaries of George Washington*, 3: 305.

and his Sister, and Miss Hanson crossed the River, drank Tea, and returned."[55] Several weeks Dr. Marshall traveled to Mt. Vernon with two Maryland acquaintances where they had dinner and, as Washington recalled, "stayed all Night."[56] There is no record, however, that Thomas Hanson Marshall himself ever enjoyed the cordial relations his children seemingly had with Washington, at least as suggested by the first president's diary entries.

**Falling Fortunes in the Wake of the Revolution**

Marylanders significantly altered their society and government during and after the American Revolution. In the first year of independence, for example, the state's General Assembly disestablished the Church of England. This not only demolished a vestige of imperial rule, it also did away with the onerous church fees. The assembly went further in 1785 and passed legislation that barred the use of state money to support any religious institution. The churches were caught up in the democratic transformation: Ministers no longer gained their positions by proprietary appointment. After the Revolution, they gained their pulpits only by winning congregational elections. In a further sign of increased democratization, the post-revolutionary assembly removed the colonial ban on Catholics in public office.[57]

In politics, the gradations of freedom narrowed. The widening of the franchise and participation in government altered gentry power, but did not break it. State and local governments created more public offices, which allowed for nongentry Marylanders

[55] *Diaries of George Washington*, 4: 186-87.
[56] *Diaries of George Washington*, 4: 193.
[57] Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 190ff.

to obtain positions of status. But property qualifications for both voting and office holding meant that public offices from the governorship down remained largely in the hands of the gentry. These qualifications could be quite onerous: candidates for governor, for example, had to prove they were worth at least £5000, or about $100,000 in current U.S. dollars. (Property restrictions would remain in place until the early 1800s.)[58]

In a place like Charles County, such qualifications for office holding and voting meant that familiar names filled positions of authority. George Dent, for instance (Thomas Hanson Marshall's nephew), was a fifth generation assemblyman. He handily won election to the federal Congress in 1792 representing Charles, St. Mary's, and Calvert Counties. He resoundingly won his reelection bid in 1794, garnering 88 percent of the votes in Charles County. In the election of 1796, no one even bothered to oppose him.[59]

Gradations of freedom narrowed in the economy as well but did not disappear. On the one hand, there continued to be a vast disparity in wealth holding. The top 10 percent of taxpayers (estates assessed at greater than £878) owned 58 percent of the county's wealth. The top 25 percent of taxpayers held 82 percent of the wealth. And the bottom quarter of property owners controlled only 1 percent.[60] On the other hand, the Revolution ended the indentured labor system. Thus, the middle ground of indentures—in which labor led to freedom and, potentially at least, to property—was wiped away. Thereafter, slavery would become the predominant form of labor in Charles County. The arrival of freedom reduced the levels of economic status to two: slave or free.

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[58] Brugger, *Maryland*, 121, 166; Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 202-204.
[59] Lee, *Price of Nationhood* 199, 203.
[60] Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 189ff.

For Charles County whites in the immediate aftermath of the war, these political changes augured well. The gentry in particular emerged from the dislocations of the early 1780s with, as Lee put it, "a nearly palpable passion for improvement."[61] As the war clouds dispersed, it seemed that the depressed tobacco market would disappear. Tobacco prices doubled in 1783. The sudden increase in prices combined with the cessation of hostilities created a run on manufactured goods. As Charles tobacco planters looked forward to a tobacco boom in the coming years, they eagerly supported internal improvement projects. Key to their future success was transforming the Potomac River into an international trade route that would link the interior of the country with European markets. There were two problems. One was that the falls above Georgetown prevented continuous navigation the entire length of the river. The other was that the headwaters of the Potomac began twenty miles shy of the Ohio River. County gentry that avidly supported the Potomac Company, whose goal was to construct the nation's first large-scale canal to get around the falls and then build a road to link the Potomac and Ohio rivers. Both the Virginia and Maryland legislatures chartered the company in 1784 and 1785. The Charles County gentry's optimism for the future was further fueled by Congress's decision in 1790 to move the U.S. capital to a spot just north of the county, to the banks of the Potomac at its confluence with the Anacostia River.

But by 1790, economic optimism quickly was succumbing to a series of economic calamities.[62] Whatever hopes Charles County planters and merchants had that the old economic relations with Britain could be revived along pre-war lines were dashed

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[61] Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 190. The rest of the paragraph is based on Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 224-27.
[62] This paragraph is based on Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, ch. 8.

through the 1780s. British agreements to handle and tax Charles County tobacco according to earlier procedures collapsed in the new economy. First, local entrepreneurs competed with the Scotch and English factors who had dominated the pre-war tobacco trade. Then, in 1785, the American economy feel into a deep depression as Britain proved unwilling to resume commercial relations with its former colonies. Worst of all, the crown barred American merchants from trading in the lucrative West Indies markets.

Domestic economic problems only exacerbated the depression. Chesapeake planters discovered it was difficult to find new markets for their staple crop. The state of Maryland stimulated injurious deflation by retiring much of the paper money it had issued during the Revolution. The state's war debt dragged the economy deeper. The costs of organizing and maintaining a new government worsened the state's debt further. Counties were in arrears to the state, and none worse than Charles. The county owed the state government £50,000 in back taxes.

Debt also weighed heavily on individuals. A mob of a hundred common men rioted in Port Tobacco, Charles County, in June 1786, angered that a lawyer was trying to collect pre-war debts owed to a British factor. The justices on the court, friends of Thomas Hanson Marshall, prevailed on the lawyer to drop the suits. Whether they did so in the spirit of republican liberty or merely out of a desire to keep order is unclear. [63]

The economic turmoil began to devastate gentry friends and relations of the Marshalls. The key problem concerned the county's method for collecting taxes and fees. Sheriffs (who collected fees of various sorts, not to be confused with law enforcers) and tax collectors were members of the gentry who could afford to post a performance

[63] These events are detailed in Brugger, *Maryland*, 137; Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 232ff.

bond ensuring that they would do their fiduciary duty. These bonds personalized tax and fee collection. The sheriff or tax collector was personally responsible for the moneys owed the state. If he did not collect enough to cover the amounts, he would have to make up the difference with his own money. In economic flush times, such offices returned a handsome income.

But the 1780s depression revealed a fatal flaw in the system. Unlike the present day, the sheriffs and tax collectors of Charles County did their duty rather informally. They often allowed neighbors to pay what they could rather than what was due. But during economic hard times, sheriffs and tax collectors discovered that they could not collect even the bare minimum. As a result, the state sued them to collect on their performance bonds. Elites such as the eminent Francis Ware, a leading public figure in Charles County and a Revolutionary War officer, lost his entire fortune of £2,300 to the state. He was so broken that he could not even qualify as a voter by the early 1790s. In the ultimate humiliation, he was forced to become a tenant on the very land he once owned.

The system threatened more of the gentry than just the office holders. Sheriffs and tax collectors often distributed their performance bonds among other sureties. This meant that men who did not even hold public office sometimes had to pay thousands of pounds to cover the arrearages of others. The collection system disintegrated through the late 1780s. There was a raft of resignations from public office. Many offices stood vacant because no one was willing to risk property and security in such difficult times. As a result, the old court system -- the seat of gentry power -- collapsed and was reorganized by the state. The new judicial system revived the administration of justice in

Charles County, but the disarray of the rest of county government continued long afterward.

Economic and political calamities continued to pile up in the ensuing decades. Tobacco farming had exhausted much of the land in Charles County. Heavy fishing had largely depleted the Potomac. War in Europe stagnated the Chesapeake tobacco market, and would do so until after Napolean's defeat at Waterloo. Thomas Hanson Marshall most likely stood in shock at the number of his fellow elites who crashed into insolvency through the 1790s. The weight of debt and the unexpected financial burdens of independence had sapped the county of its economic promise. One of the few ways Charles County planters found to stay solvent, or at least to stave off debt, was to sell slaves.

The Revolution had a massive, if uneven, impact on the institution of slavery. In Massachusetts, for example, the rhetoric of freedom led directly to the abolition of chattel bondage. But the effect was not so radical in the Chesapeake. Whatever commitment slave holders there had to the ideals of freedom, they quickly discovered that their economic independence required them to keep the "children" of Africa in chains.

Of the 17,724 persons living in Charles County at the end of the Revolution, 55 percent were white. There were very few free blacks. Just below half (46.5 percent) of the county's white taxpayers owned slaves.[64] The indebtedness of planters would have a grave effect on these numbers. Not even the powerful principles of democracy and republicanism would alter their dependence on slave labor.

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[64] Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 189ff, 251.

The rhetoric of freedom did have some effect on planters in Thomas Hanson Marshall's neighborhood network. Samuel Hanson was one of several planters who gradually manumitted a number of his slaves (although the process was often exceedingly long, sometimes lasting two generations).[65] Marshall himself manumitted one slave in his will, a woman named Nancy, declaring that "she shall be free and cleare from all slavery in every sence of the word to my heirs, or any other person...." He gave no reason for his act, but stated that her freedom should be immediate. Recognizing that transforming a slave from property to free person could be a difficult task, Marshall added that his executors should "execute any further writings that may be requestet for the accomplishment of her the said woman, Nancy, her freedom to all intents and purposes." One can easily imagine that Nancy may have been instrumental in raising Marshall's three daughters after the death of his wife.[66] Or his relationship with Nancy may have been, in the manner of numerous Southern slave masters, of a more intimate sort.

The rest of Marshall's slaves did not fare so well. The one manumission was the exception that proved the rule of Marshall's fundamental reliance on slavery. He increased his slave holdings from 49 in 1783 to 57 in 1800—a rise of 25 percent.[67] This ran counter to the trend among most of his fellow slave-owning planters.

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[65] Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 209-10.
[66] That he was having some difficulty in this regard is evident from a notice he placed in the Maryland *Gazette* on February 21, 1771, a couple of months after his wife's death: "Wanted by Thomas Hanson Marshall, a woman qualified for managing a house, and bringing up Girls, in a genteel way." There is also the possibility that Nancy's duties were even more intimate, given that Marshall never remarried.
[67] Hughes & Hughes, "Marshall Hall," 43.

For many planters in the depression years of the 1780s and 1790s, slaves were one of their few sources of income. A sell off began, causing the precipitous dispersal of the county's slave population as gentry planters sold slaves to smaller planters. Whereas the number of white families owning slaves in 1782 had been 46.5 percent, that number increased almost 30 percent to six of every ten county households by 1790. This increase saddled Charles County with the highest proportion of slaveholders of any Maryland county. And while this suggests that some smaller and middling planters managed to negotiate the depression years, and even to expand, slaves experienced a severe disruption of family and community life.

**"A Most Dreary Aspect"**

On November 29, 1790 the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation that closed Posey's ferry, thus severing the Marshalls' direct link to the opposite shore of the Potomac. The reason? Lack of adequate patronage.[68] The problem had nothing to do with the management of the ferry. No one, it seemed, wanted to cross over into Charles County. The depression of the 1780s destabilized the local economy and sent it into a decline that would last for over a century. The county's population reached a peak of 20,600 black and white residents in 1790. Thereafter, people just left. The white population fell by 44 percent by the middle of the nineteenth century—a greater decline than that experienced in any other Maryland county.[69] By 1810, slaves constituted a majority of the population, numbering six of every ten Charlesians. Only after World War II would the county's total population return to the peak of 1790.

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[68] *Diaries of George Washington*, 5: 439n.
[69] Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 262.

The continual outmigration and the strains of economic depression gave Thomas Hanson Marshall's county what contemporary traveler Isaac Weld called "a most dreary aspect." Dilapidated barns, untended fields, and abandoned houses crowded the landscape. "The country," Weld noted, "appears as if it had been deserted by one half of its inhabitants."[70] In March of 1801, Thomas Hanson Marshall himself left the county on his final journey into eternity.

Marshall seems to have done relatively well through the last decades of the eighteenth century. He did not have to sell off any significant portion of his land holdings. He was even able to increase the number of slaves on his plantation. But the quality of his life was clearly diminished.

Thomas Hanson Marshall went through an intense period of transition in the chaotic years prior to the Revolution. He returned to his childhood home and reclaimed the family's gentry mantle. The move seems to have catapulted him into early support for the Revolution. And for a few months, he took on a public role unparalleled in the Marshall family's history, and indeed unequalled in the family's future. The first months of the war represented the high water mark of the Marshall family's involvement in politics. Thomas Hanson Marshall served as a judge on the Court of Appeals for Tax Assessment for brief period beginning in 1786. But this was hardly equivalent to the

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[70] Isaac Weld, Jr., *Travels through the States of North America, and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, during the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797*, 4th ed., 2 vols. (London: John Stockdale; New York: Augustus M. Kelly, 1970), 1:137-39; cited in Lee, *Price of Nationhood*, 9, 256.

gentry position of Justice of the Peace during the provincial era. It was the office of a functionary in a newly democratized political world.

Just as Thomas Hanson Marshall returned to Charles County with high hopes, the gentry hoped that independence would prove to be an economic boon for the county. Tobacco had made Charles County, as historian Lee put it, "the crown jewel of the British Empire." But the Revolution deluged the tobacco trade, and European events—from political decisions to continental wars—swamped the county's economy. The war, far from establishing Charles County as a center of commerce, initiated the county's decline into the backwaters of American political and economic life. The Marshalls of Marshall Hall, too, began a long fall from grace that would last into the middle of the nineteenth century before dwindling altogether.

# Chapter 8

## *From Mistake to Marshall Hall: The Decline of the Marshalls, the Slave Trade, and the Sale of the Family Plantation After the Civil War*

Dr. Thomas Marshall, the son of Thomas Hanson Marshall and the grandson of Thomas Marshall, did as his father had done in the years of his early adulthood. He moved to the family property in Prince George's County and there learned the ways of the Tidewater tobacco planter. Eventually he moved to the house at Mistake in Charles County, although it is not clear when. For that matter, not much is clear about either the history of this Thomas Marshall or the history of his son and grandson. All three died intestate. They left few scratches on the historical record. It was as if they were receding into history along with the fading prospects of Charles County in the first five decades of the nineteenth century. But, thanks to the foresight of the nation's founders, the Marshalls left one set of crucial data that the historian can examine, interpret, ponder. By examining the figures they left in the succeeding decades of the U.S. census, and comparing these with the various court records concerning the sale and management of the Marshall plantation, it is possible to sketch out the ways the last three generations of Thomas Marshalls negotiated the slave economy of the nineteenth century.

The fortunes of the nineteenth-century Marshalls fell roughly in line with those of other planters of their class. Exhausted soil, the fickle tobacco market, and the voracious

quest for slaves in the rapidly expanding cotton plantations of the Deep South marked the limits of possibility for the last Marshalls of Mistake. The third and fourth Thomas Marshalls attempted to negotiate the changing world of slavery in their declining county. But there was little they could do to revivify chattel bondage in the face of ever-mounting historical pressures. The best they could do was to keep up appearances and take solace in vaunted labels. To that end, they changed the name of their family seat. Thinning fortunes did not allow for much humor. They required something far more grandiose than "Mistake." By the end of the 1830s, the Marshalls began referring to Thomas Marshall's mistake with a name reminiscent of the wildly popular feudal romances of the Scottish novelist Sir Walter Scott: Marshall's Mistake now became "Marshall Hall."[1]

The masters of Marshall Hall continued to use slave labor as their fathers had done. But the institution of forced labor changed drastically, and the Marshalls must have changed with it. Slaves took on a new value with the rise of the cotton plantations in the black belt of Alabama and Mississippi and the westward movement of men who clung to slave labor as their path to riches. But even before the Civil War brought about the end of American slavery, the last Thomas Marshall of Marshall Hall tried, ambivalently it seems, to rid himself of the planter's concerns and the plantation of his ancestors.

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[1] On the popularity of Scott's novels in the plantation South, see Mark Twain's famous essay on his influence in *Life on the Mississippi*. Twain wrote, in part, "Sir Walter had so large a hand in making Southern character, as it existed before the war, that he is in great measure responsible for the war.... The Southerner of the American Revolution owned slaves; so did the Southerner of the Civil War: but the former resembles the latter as an Englishman resembles a Frenchman. The change of character can be traced rather more easily to Sir Walter's influence than to that of any other thing or person."

**The Dilemmas of Nineteenth-Century Chesapeake Planters**

Maryland governor and Wye River planter Edward Lloyd V left the governorship in 1811 deeply concerned about the future of his state. Beyond the bustling docks of Baltimore, the state's planters faced a massive crisis. As vice president of the Maryland Agricultural Society in November, 1818, Lloyd made a public appeal for agricultural reform. The outlook for the state's agriculture was bleak: "Lands generally in Maryland are nearly exhausted. [O]ur agriculture," he lamented, "is sinking to its lowest stage of degradation."[2] The habit of tobacco cultivation was apparently as difficult to break as the smoking of the "sot-weed." The Marshalls were not immune. Although they added grains and a few other crops to their agricultural practice, they remained heavily dependent on tobacco for their economic livelihood into the 1840s.

Soil exhaustion was not the only threat to the Marshalls' plantation world. A whole series of problems destabilized tobacco markets in general, and took a heavy toll on Chesapeake planters in particular.[3] European wars, competition from new tobacco varieties and regions, and attacks on the institution of slavery wore down the masters of Maryland.

By the time Dr. Thomas Marshall (grandson of the first Thomas Marshall) took the reins of Marshall Hall in the 1810s, the world of the Tidewater tobacco planter was undergoing major transformations. Planters were leaving the Chesapeake for new

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[2] Cited in Robert J. Brugger, *Maryland: A Middle Temperament, 1634-1980* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 206.

[3] On the history of tobacco in the nineteenth century United States, see Lewis Cecil Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860*, v. 2 (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1958), ch. 32, "The Tobacco Industry, 1795-1860"; and Jordan Goodman, *Tobacco in History: The Cultures of Dependence* (New York: Routledge, 1993), ch. 8: "A Poor Man's Crop? The Globalization of Tobacco Culture Since 1800."

fortunes to the south and west. Tobacco exports continued a decline that began after 1792. The Napoleonic Wars in Europe severely disrupted the markets for Tidewater tobacco. Exports plummeted to as low as 2.8 percent of their 1792 high.[4] If Dr. Marshall took some solace in the spike in exports after Napolean's defeat at Waterloo that drove up prices to 20 cents per pound, this comfort was short lived. There would be no more such spikes until after his death. When his son, Thomas Hanson Marshall IV, became master of the family lands in the 1830s, tobacco brought its cultivators a crushingly low 5 cents per pound.[5] The general outlook for U.S. tobacco production, domestic sales, and exports began to look up by the mid 1830s, although the country's annual average tobacco crop was still only 75 percent of what it had been in 1790. But even this good news would have been distressing to Marshall IV. It actually represented a threat to his fortunes because it came in the form of a new variety of tobacco grown far from the Chesapeake.

Bright leaf tobacco, first cultivated widely in the early 1800s, experienced a boom in the 1840s and '50s. Bright leaf flourished in relatively poor soil and could be cured in enclosed barns. These characteristics allowed it to be planted on what was once considered to be useless land. Cultivation of the new variety greatly extended the agricultural regions where tobacco could be grown, particularly inland areas to the south and west of the Chesapeake, such as North Carolina, Ohio, and Kentucky. Moreover, the prices for bright leaf tobacco were regularly double those of the Chesapeake Kite's-foot tobacco because it kept its color better and had a lighter aroma and flavor. Bright leaf

[4] The total amount of tobacco exported in 1814 amounted to only 3,125 hogsheads, compared to the 1790 high 118,460 (Gray, *History of Agriculture*, Table 47: 1035).
[5] Brugger, *Maryland*, 268.

quickly became the primary tobacco of the burgeoning domestic market for light smoking tobaccos, while Kite's-foot remained limited to foreign markets mostly in Holland and Germany. [6] And to add insult to injury in the 1840s, Baltimore became the main port for shipping bright leaf cultivated in the Ohio River Valley.[7]

Marshall IV likely and his son Thomas Marshall V certainly saw themselves as the end of the line of Marshall Hall tobacco planters.[8] Where tobacco had dominated Chesapeake agriculture in the heyday of Thomas Marshall I, accounting for 90 percent of Maryland's agricultural output, other crops had displaced it by the 1850s. Tobacco's place in the state's aggregate production had fallen to a mere 14 percent.[9] Planter after planter gave up the sot-weed ghost. They left the Chesapeake in increasing numbers and took their slaves with them. By 1840, tobacco had virtually disappeared from the Virginia side of the Potomac. [10] Charles County faded into obscurity through the mid 1800s as its cash crop fell from economic grace.

If soil exhaustion, the vagaries of the tobacco market, and economic competition from new tobacco lands were not enough for the Marshalls, they faced yet another onslaught against their tobacco dominion. By the 1820s, Baltimore had become a center of abolitionist sentiments. In the decades following 1790, Baltimore had quickly risen to

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[6] Gray, *History of Agriculture*, 756.
[7] Gray, *History of Agriculture*, 756.
[8] Tobacco prices actually swung up in the late 1850s, but, as we will see, it was too late for the Marshalls.
[9] Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland during the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985), 5.
[10] Gray, *History of Agriculture*, 758. On the early years of this migration, see Allan Kulikoff, "Uprooted Peoples: Black Migrants in the Age of the American Revolution, 1790-1820," in *Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution*, ed. Ira Berlin & Ronald Hoffman (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983).

become one of the country's busiest ports catering to the inland grain trade.[11] This new trade brought an influx of supporters of the ideal of "free" labor that mixed with the powerful critiques of slavery of the Revolutionary War era. These two forces combined in the early 1800s to form a movement for the manumission of all of Maryland's slaves. Some commentators, such as the eminent novelist James Fenimore Cooper, believed that slavery was dying of its own accord and that Marylanders' own self interest would lead them to see that "they would be richer and more powerful without their slaves than with them."[12] Others were not so patient. Some formed the Maryland State Colonization Society in 1831 to repatriate Maryland's forced African immigrants to a colony in Liberia.[13] The following year the state legislature supported the society's general aims with an appropriation of up to $200,000 over the next twenty years for removing free blacks from the state and forcing them to emigrate.[14] Others in Maryland called for a cataclysmic abolition. Believing with the antislavery Baltimorean Elisha Tyson that "[t]he history of emancipation in Maryland has proved that manumission begets manumission, that they increase even in a geometrical proportion," numerous abolitionists urged the end of slavery in the state.[15] By the mid 1820s, Baltimore was a hotbed of abolitionism. The infamous Benjamin Lundy relocated his abolitionist paper, *The Genius of Universal Emancipation*, to Baltimore in 1824, and persuaded the young

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[11] Joyce Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (New York: New York University Press, 1984); Fields, *Slavery and Freedom*, ch. 3: "Baltimore and the Problem of Slavery in Cities."
[12] Cooper, *Notions of the Americans* (1828), 69.
[13] Penelope Campbell, *Maryland in Africa: The Maryland State Colonization Society, 1831-1857* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971).
[14] Brugger, *Maryland*, 212-13.
[15] Cited in Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon ,1974), 30-31.

firebrand William Lloyd Garrison to join him there as an assistant editor in 1828. (A Baltimore jury made Garrison's national reputation a year later by declaring him guilty of libel for smearing Yankees engaged in the Maryland to New Orleans slave trade as "highway robbers and murderers."[16]) Even the established business community could look beyond its economic interests to condemn the immorality of slavery. Hezekiah Niles, for example, the Quaker publisher of one of the country's most important economic periodicals (*Niles' Weekly Register*) opposed slavery generally and the slave trade in particular.[17] Indeed, the number of free blacks in Maryland rose precipitately until, early in the nineteenth century, the Old Line State had the largest free black population of any state in the union.[18]

The Marshalls were only slightly touched by the sentiments of manumission. Thomas Hanson Marshall had manumitted one slave in his will. But, the next three Thomas Marshalls could not do this, even if they had wanted to. Dying intestate they did not leave any legal mechanism for liberating their own slaves. Moreover, in the face of the rapidly rising number of free blacks in areas such as Baltimore, the planters of Charles County became increasingly fearful of the portent of manumission for their chattel labor force through the 1830s and '40s. By the early 1840s, Charles County planters were clamoring for legislation to remove all free blacks from the county, in spite

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[16] Cited in Brugger, *Maryland*, 215

[17] Niles wrote in the *Register* [12 (19 July 1817): 323]: "If there is any thing that ought to be supremely hated,—it is the present infamous traffic that is carried on in several of the middle states, and especially *Maryland*, in negroes, for the *Georgia* and *Louisiana* markets. I blush for the honor of the art of printing when I see advertisements published in newspapers, openly avowing for the trade, and soliciting business, with the indifference of dealers in horses..." (268-69). See also Norval Neil Luxon, *Niles' Weekly Register: News Magazine of the Nineteenth Century* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1947).

[18] Fields, *Freedom and Slavery, passim.*

of the fact that there were only 819 such persons there in 1840—or hardly more than 5 percent of the county's total population.[19]

The Marshalls and their neighbors were clearly not solely concerned about this small group of free blacks. Their fear sprang from the clash of two demographic forces that created a significant shift in the population of Charles County. The first change, as noted above, was the massive outmigration of planters and other whites throughout the first half of the 1800s. In the sixty years between 1790 and 1850, the white population of the county fell by almost half, from 10,124 to 5,665.[20] The second change was part of one of the marvels in the history demography. Throughout the post–Revolutionary decades, the American slave population experienced astronomical growth by natural increase. The slave population expanded at a rate of over 2 percent per year after the closing of the African slave trade in 1808—and this in spite of high mortality rates for slave children. This meant that every slave woman who lived to the end of her childbearing years averaged between seven and eight children.[21] These numbers exceeded those for whites throughout the South and in Charles County as well. The two child-bearing wives of the nineteenth-century Marshalls who resided at Marshall Hall, for instance, averaged only three children.[22] Moreover, while the total number of free blacks in Charles County was insignificant, the growth of the free black population was rapidly

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[19] Campbell, *Maryland in Africa*, 180-81.
[20] Fields, *Slavery and Freedom*, Table 1.7: 13.
[21] Richard Sutch, "Breeding, Slave," & Stanley L. Engerman, "Demography," in *Dictionary of Afro-American Slavery*, ed. by Randall M. Miller & John David Smith (New York: Greenwood, 1988), 85, 182-83.
[22] This figure includes only those children who lived till adulthood. If all of their children are counted, the number rises to eleven, a figure still well below the average for black women of seven to eight children.

rising: It doubled between 1790 and 1850, rising from 404 to 913.[23] At the same time, the slave population had grown to comprise 65 percent of the county's population in 1850, whereas it had been only 51 percent in 1790.[24] (This gave Charles the largest percentage of slaves of any Maryland county.) In relative terms, then, the Marshalls and other Charles County whites were a shrinking minority of the population.

These two forces converged in a historical event that erased any liberal notions of manumission from the minds of Charles County planters. Nat Turner's insurrection in 1831, just down the Chesapeake in Southampton, Virginia, terrified Charles slaveholders. They gathered in the county seat of Port Tobacco, and there resolved "to adopt such measures as shall best guard against any attempt at insurrection of the colored population." No doubt, Thomas Hanson Marshall IV was among those who feared that free blacks in the county "were powerfully instrumental in producing and increasing the discontent, disobedience, hostility, and crime, among the slaves, and they are becoming more and more wretched, debased, wicked, injurious to the prosperity, and dangerous to the State, as they increase in number." The white citizens gathered at Port Tobacco called on various agencies of the state to step up efforts to quell the insurrectionary mood they sensed among free blacks and slaves alike. These included encouraging the African Colonization Society to repatriate blacks to Liberia and denying blacks a variety of rights, such as owning or renting land, being employed by whites, purchasing or possessing liquor, associating with slaves, or moving freely about the county. Marshall and his

[23] Fields, *Slavery and Freedom* , Table 1.7: 13.
[24] Fields, *Slavery and Freedom* , 11.

fellow citizens pledged themselves to forming local patrols, preventing gatherings of blacks whether free or slave, and controlling the movement of all blacks.[25]

**The Marshalls: Slave Traders?**

While the rise of slaves and free blacks may have represented a threat to the Marshalls' sense of place and position, the high birth rate among slaves created a distinct advantage for profit-minded Tidewater planters. It offered a solution to the question of how planters could maintain and expand slavery once Congress closed off the African slave trade in 1808. Theoretically, a well-established planter would be able not only to replace his aging slaves with their children and grandchildren, but he would also be able to increase the size of his slave labor force at a fairly consistent rate.

But a quick glance at the number of slaves owned by the Marshalls through the 1800s and the number of slaves in Charles County raises something of a mystery. (See Table 8.1) The size of the Marshalls' slave force fluctuated widely in the sixty years after 1790, even though the amount of land the Marshall's farmed stayed relatively constant during those sixty years. The number of slaves rose by 43 percent, for example, in the eight years between 1790 and 1798. This is greater than the rate of slaves a 2 percent per annum natural increase would produce. Then in the two years after 1798 the number of slaves dropped by 17 percent. The oddity is deepened by the fact that the sharp increases strongly suggest that the Marshalls were not relying on natural increase to

[25] "Resolutions Adopted by a Meeting of the Citizens of Charles County, Maryland, at Port Tobacco, in Relation to the Free People of Color," 1831, Maryland Department, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, Maryland. And see Howard L. Sacks & Judith Rose Sacks, *Way up North in Dixie: A Black Family's Claim to the Confederate Anthem* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 40.

grow their slave holdings. They were purchasing slaves. Why would slaveholders purchase slaves in an era when natural increase created a population explosion among slaves—especially when the Marshalls were not adding any large tracts to their plantation requiring a larger labor force?

| Year | Total | Male | Female | Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1790 | 49 | | | |
| 1798 | 69 | | | +43% |
| 1800 | 57 | | | -17% |
| 1810 | 75 | | | +32% |
| 1820 | 56 | 30 | 26 | -12% |
| 1830 | 84 | 40 | 44 | +52% |
| 1840 | 72 | | | -15% |

Table 8.1. Number of Slaves Owned by Marshalls of Marshall Hall, 1790 to 1840[26]

The total number of slaves in Charles County also presents an anomaly in the same sixty-year period. Even in the face of slave women's fecundity, the slave population fell by 5 percent , from 10,085 to 9,584 between 1790 and 1850. [27] So here is a mystery. Where did these slaves go?

The short answer to this second question is: the cotton gin pulled them down south. The invention of the cotton gin revivified slavery after its decline following the Revolutionary War. The gin allowed planters to cultivate a new variety of cotton—short-staple cotton—that could grow in poorer soils than the previously cultivated long-staple cotton. Planters could now move into the uncultivated lands of the Carolina upcountry and push far into the old Southwest of Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas.

[26] Unfortunately, the 1840 census data containing the Marshall slave schedules is missing from the original census book. This greatly diminishes the possibility of establishing firm trends for the Marshalls' pattern of slave holding and trading.
[27] Fields, *Slavery and Freedom*, Table 1.7: 13.

Cotton planters required a vast infusion of labor just at the moment when Congress outlawed the direct importation of slaves from Africa in 1808. The opening of new lands for short-staple cotton cultivation far to the south created a labor vacuum. Some planters left the Chesapeake and migrated south with all or some of their slaves. [28] (The Marshalls would have known about such planters very well, for their own kinsman, George Dent, left the Tidewater for the uplands of Georgia in 1802.) Other planters moved south hoping to purchase slaves at their destination. And after 1808, a major source of slaves for purchase was the Chesapeake.

A market for exporting Chesapeake slaves to the Deep South was clearly in operation by the 1790s. A Delaware Quaker, passing through Maryland in 1798, wrote to President John Adams that he was deeply disturbed by "the abominable Trade carried on through that part of the Country [i.e., the Chesapeake] by Negroe-Drovers, buying Drove after Drove of the poor afflicted Blacks, like droves of Cattel for Market; carrying them into the Southern States for Speculation; regardless of the separation of nearest Connections & natural ties."[29] By 1810s, the average number of slaves leaving Maryland rose above 30,000 per decade and would remain that high through the 1830s.[30]

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[28] The questions of migration (whether to stay or go, how many slaves to take, etc.) can be seen vividly in a series of letters written by Calvert planter Leonard Covington to his brother Alexander. These letters can be found in "Problems and Procedure of Migrating Slaveholders," *A Documentary History of American Industrial Society*, ed. John R. Commons et al. (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clarke, 1910), 201-18.

[29] Cited in Steven Deyle, "The Irony of Liberty: Origins of the Domestic Slave Trade," *Journal of the Early Republic* 12 (Spring 1992): 37.

[30] Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slave in the Old South* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), Table 2.1: 12. These migrations fell to around 21,000 per decade in the 1840s and 1850s. The total number of slaves forced to migrate out of the Upper South was over 200,000 in the 1820s alone [William Calderhead, "The Role of the Professional Slave Trader in a Slave Economy: Austin Woolfolk, A Case Study," Civil War History 23 (September 1977): 196]. The number

While many of these slaves left through either forced migration with their owners or manumission, a great number of them fell victim to the slave trade. Slave trading had become so active by the mid 1830s that the trader Jordan M. Saunders could greedily marvel about the "spirit for speculation and emigration." He believed that as many as one in four Upper South slaves were "preparing to go to the [deep] south and make cotton."[31] The Marshalls would have known very well about this trade. Alexandria, just up the Potomac River from Marshall Hall in Virginia, was a major depot of the slave trade. It was there, on Duke Street, that the largest slave trading operation of the day, the firm of Franklin and Armfield, had its headquarters.[32] In the middle 1830s, a Franklin and Armfield ship left the Alexandria ports every other week carrying a human cargo to the cotton South.[33] These ships and overland coffles of chained slaves walking the south-bound roads forced well over a thousand slaves a year out of the Tidewater region far to the South.[34]

The mere fact that a slave trade existed does not, of course, mean that the Thomas Marshalls were involved in it. There is in fact no direct evidence that they did. However,

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swelled to 300,000 in the 1830s [Tadman, 12; Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 168]. Note that Calderhead's estimates of the total number of slaves sold out of Maryland is significantly lower than estimates from Tadman. Tadman, however, had access to a much greater array of sources and so seems to be the more reliable source for slave trade data.

[31] Cited in Robert H. Gudmestad, *A Troublesome Commerce: The Transformation of the Interstate Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 20-21.

[32] Wendell Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin: Slave Trader of the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1938); Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*, 80-81; Janice G. Artemel et al., *The Alexandria Slave Pen: The Archaeology of Urban Captivity* (Washington, D.C.: Engineering Science, Inc., 1987), 11-56; and Gudmestad, *Troublesome Commerce*, esp. 26-27.

[33] Gudmestad, *Troublesome Commerce*, 27.

[34] Jim Barnett & H. Clark Burkett, "The Forks of the Road Slave Market at Natchez," *Journal of Mississippi History*63 (Fall 2001): 169-87

the few bits of data relating to the nineteenth-century Marshalls buried away in census records and court archives, all one to make a compelling circumstantial case.

The rising numbers of slaves at the Marshall Hall plantation in the 1830 census cannot be explained by natural increase, bequests, or other such possibilities. In 1820, there were 56 slaves. If the Marshall slave population increased at the standard 2 percent per year, then there should have been 68 Marshall Hall slaves in 1830. This number is well below the 84 slaves counted there for the census. Even at the upper limit of 3 percent growth per annum, the figure would have been 75. The fact that there was an increase of 28 slaves in one ten-year period strongly indicates that the Marshalls were adding slaves. (Whether they were adding them through purchase or bequests will be discussed in a moment.) First of all, there were only twenty-four slaves in the 0-10 age bracket, which means that the Marshalls would have definitely had to buy the four older ones. This leaves the question of how many of the children were the product of natural increase.

It is of course possible that the Marshall slave women of childbearing years were particularly fertile in the 1820s. But this is unlikely. There were between seven and ten slave women in their prime childbearing years in the 1820s.[35] This means that each of these women would have given birth to an average of between 2.8 and 3.4 children. Considering that these numbers account for *surviving* children and ignore infant deaths (recall that the rates of slave infant mortality were high during this period), the average number of children the Marshall slave women would have had to produce would have been higher than conceivably possible. Moreover, the ratio of children to women among

[35] Sutch explains his method for determining the number of slave women of childbearing age in "Breeding of Slaves," Table 6n: 183.

the Marshall slaves in 1830 was higher than the norm. For black Americans as a whole, the ratio of children (ages 0 to 4) to women (ages 20 to 44) was 10.1 to 10.[36] On the Marshall plantation (if, to take a somewhat arbitrary number, half the children on the plantation in 1830 were under five), the ratio of children to women was between 12 to 10 and 12 to 7. Both figures are well above the norm and strongly suggest that the Marshalls were obtaining young slaves from some other source than natural increase.

The other set of figures that needs some examination is the steep drop in the number of slaves in the decades alternating with the sharp rises. There are four possible explanations for these declines in the 1800, 1820, and 1840 censuses: gifts, death by either old age or disease, manumissions, and sales to slave traders. The possibility of decrease through death is clearly not part of the explanation. The drops are too sudden and too steep to be accounted for by the deaths of aged slaves, and there were no reports of epidemics of any sort in these decades. While the first two Thomas Marshalls had given away and/or manumitted slaves in their wills, this option was not available to the two nineteenth-century Thomas Marshalls who commanded Marshall Hall as slave masters. Dying intestate, they could not of course use a will as an instrument to redistribute their slave property. It is possible that Dr. Thomas Marshall III gave away slaves before his death in 1829. But if he had we would expect to see a decrease in the number of Marshall slaves in 1830, rather than the sharp increase. Indeed, there were more slaves at Marshall Hall in 1830 than in any previous census year. It is extremely

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[36] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975); U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1988* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987); Ansley J. Coale & Melvin Zelnick, *New Estimates of Fertility and Population in the United States* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963).

unlikely that Thomas Hanson Marshall IV gave away slaves since he died young, most likely due to a sudden disease or injury. [37] It is also hard to imagine that either Dr. Thomas Marshall or his son freed any of their slaves. Given the fears associated with the growth of the slave population and free blacks in Charles County, the Marshalls would have had to be radically opposed to slavery to even think of manumitting so many of their slaves.[38] Thus, the most likely explanation for the sharply rising and falling number of slaves at Marshall Hall is that the Marshalls engaged in the slave trade.

One of the key numbers supporting this claim is the change in the ratio of slave men to slave women on the Marshall plantation. Between 1820 and 1830, the number of females in every age group except the oldest (55 and above) increased. The group of girls under 13 in 1820 is particularly important to examine. While they became women of prime childbearing age during the 1820s, Dr. Thomas Marshall bought (or was given) four new female slaves in that age group. He also added two new slaves in each of the next two age groups (slave women ages 25 to 35 and 36 to 54). In other words, he altered the gender balance of his plantation distinctly in favor of women with the addition of these eight new female slaves. The skewing in favor of women is clearly evident in the changes among the male slave population in the same time period. Only the youngest male category (those under 14 years) showed an increase in numbers, from 11 to 14 young slaves. The number of male slaves in all of the older age categories decreased between 1820 and 1830.

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[37] Moreover, like his father, it is unlikely that the executors of his estate broke up his quarters since the census following his death again showed more slaves at Marshall Hall than even the 1830 census.

[38] Manumissions were significant in other Maryland Counties, such as Kent, where wills and other legal instruments freed three times the number of slaves as those sold to traders. (Calderhead, "Woolfolk," 203)

What a change from the preferences of the first Thomas Marshall! In his day, male slaves outnumbered female slaves by as much as two to one. The formation of families among blacks had been exceedingly difficult in such circumstances. But now, in the ear of slave trading, slave masters pushed their slaves to form families so they could turn the offspring into a new kind of commodity: labor to be bought and sold.

These numbers indicate that Dr. Marshall was positioning himself to take better advantage of the growing slave trade of the 1820s. He was adding female slaves to his chattel property at a faster rate than males—37 percent faster (18 females versus 10 males)—through both natural increases and other methods. The children of these women would then serve one of two purposes: They would either replace his current labor force as it aged or be sold if their numbers grew beyond the needs of the Marshall Hall plantation. This strategy was underscored by the fact that the only group of male slaves to increase was the youngest, those who rose into their teenage years from childhood during the 1820s. It seems that Dr. Marshall received some younger male slaves during the 1820s over and above the natural increase of his slaves, whether through purchase, bequest, or other gift it is impossible to tell. Whatever the reason, these young men would have been able to shoulder the labor burden of an increased number of female slaves prevented from working by the labors associated with bearing, birthing, and raising slaves children.

The possibility that Dr. Marshall was selling slaves to traders is further confirmed by two other key changes in his slave population. Slave losses occurred in four age groups between 1820 and 1830. Four men and one woman in the oldest age groups (above 45 years) disappeared from the Marshall slave population. It is almost certain that

these five people died. But two younger men fall off the Marshall slave count in the same time period, one in the 14-to-25 age bracket and another who was between 26 and 44. These were prime ages for the sale of slaves. [39] The most likely explanation for their loss is that Dr. Marshall sold them into the cotton fields of the South. It is of course possible that they either died or ran away. But if we recall that the decade of the 1820s was a time of growth for Marshall's slave population, this leaves us with a different set of numbers that make the sale explanation even more plausible.

The Marshall slaveholdings followed a hill and trough pattern throughout the last six decades of the peculiar institution. In each of the odd numbered decades (1790s, 1810s, 1830s) the Marshalls augmented their slave holdings by an average of 42 percent. In each of the even numbered decades (1800s, 1820s, 1840s), the Marshalls divested themselves of an average of 15 percent of their slaves. Because the slave population continually increased by natural births throughout these decades, this pattern of decreasing numbers of slaves every other decade indicates that the Marshalls were reducing their slave population artificially: that is, through the sale of slaves. The drops in the number of slaves in the even numbered decades average out to a sale of 14.7 slaves per decade, or three slaves every other year.

These numbers are consistent with those for Maryland as a whole. The rate of slaves sold in 1820 was 12 percent, and in 1840 it was 15 percent. Taking these numbers as a trend, the Marshalls, if they had continued their slave practices along the same lines,

[39] Sutch, "Breeding of Slaves, "181, Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*, appendix 6.

would have sold 18 percent of their slaves in 1850, a number nearly equal to the 19.7 percent for the state.[40]

The profits from slave sales would have been integral to the Marshalls' economic survival, as they were to most Tidewater planters.[41] The Marshall Hall plantation could produce about 20,000 pounds of tobacco in any given year.[42] This would mean that the Marshalls' annual potential income from the sot-weed ranged between a low of $1000 and a high of $4000. These numbers are of course independent of actual conditions such as European wars or weather crises, which would never increase the output, but would only decrease it. Thus, there are some years when the Marshalls may have made no money at all from the export of tobacco.

Slave sales, given these dismal prospects, would have added a significant income stream. The most conservative estimate of the price traders paid to purchase a slave is

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[40] Sutch, "Breeding of Slaves," Table 2: 178.
[41] Sutch, "Breeding of Slaves," 84.
[42] This number is derived from an estimate of the number of slaves working the fields combined with their average production. The estimate assumes that about 40 of his slave were working in the fields. This number is derived from combining the number of slaves ages 10 to 54 (52) and somewhat arbitrarily taking away twelve to account for slaves not in the fields. (They would be engaged in child birth/rearing, skilled labor such as carpentry, or serving in the house as cooks and servants. This number of about half the slaves of a plantation with thirty or more slaves working in the fields accords with the rule of thumb used by Lorena Walsh in calculating slave labor outputs for the early 1800s. See her article, "Summing the Parts: Implications for Estimating Chesapeake Output and Income Subregionally," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 56 (January 1999): 54. The next step in deriving an estimate of tobacco production is to multiply the number of workers by the average output of each laborer. The slaves of Thomas Marshall I had averaged 820 pounds of tobacco per year in the 1750s. But by the middle 1810s, the average had fallen drastically to around 500 pounds per slave [Lorena Walsh, "Plantation Management in the Chesapeake, 1620-1820, *Journal of Economic History* 49 (1989): 395]. Due to the exhaustion of the soils and the persistence of traditional methods of cultivation, it is unlikely that this number rose significantly if at all through the 1840s. If each of the Marshall slaves after 1815 or so produced 500 pounds of tobacco, then the Marshalls' plantation had the potential to produce about 20,000 pounds of tobacco annually.

about $200 at the end of the 1820s.[43] Selling an average of three slaves every two years would yield an annual income from the slave trade of at least $150 (that is, between 4 and 15 percent of their tobacco income). But these are the extreme lows. In 1840, slave traders paid Upper South planters an average of $660 per prime male field hand.[44] At this level, the Marshalls would have brought in almost $1000 per year from slave sales, or between 25 and 100 percent of their tobacco income. This would clearly be a significant addition to the Marshalls' wealth. Moreover, since there was a sharp decline in the number of Marshall slaves toward the end of the 1830s, it is evident that Thomas Marshall IV was watching the prices slaves could bring and acting as a businessman seeking profits.

**The Marshall Hall Slaves and the Slave Trade**

If it is difficult to discover the history of the Marshalls of Marshall Hall, it is almost impossible to detail the lives of their slaves. It is even more difficult to know how the Marshall slaves felt about the possibilities and realities of being traded away from home and family. The best the historian can do is to offer analogs. Fortunately, Maryland provides some excellent testimony about slavery from slaves themselves. There is, for example, the vivid and moving exposé of slavery on the Eastern Shore by Frederick Douglass in his three autobiographies. Closer to Marshall Hall there are the memoirs of slaves who testified to the grim effects of the coffle and the lashing fear of being sold into the slave trade. One such writer was Charles Ball.

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[43] Calderhead, "Woolfolk," 209.
[44] Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*, 285.

Ball was born and raised a slave in Calvert County, just over Charles County's eastern border. His life story details the two main causes of the break up of slave families through the market of chattels: a master's need for income and the death of a slave owner.[45] Ball was born on a tobacco plantation where his mother was a slave. There he passed his earliest years with her and his brothers and sisters. Ball's father was the property of the Hantzes who had a plantation near Leonardtown. He would come to visit whenever he could get permission from Mr. Hantz. Ball remembered his father as having "a gay social temper, and when he came to see us on a Saturday night, he always brought us some little present, such as the means of a poor slave would allow—apples, melons, sweet potatoes, or if he could procure nothing else, a little parched corn, which tasted better in our cabin because he had brought it." Besides the presents, Ball's father sought to pass on the rudiments of Chesapeake African American culture: "He spent the greater part of the time, which his master permitted him to pass with us, in relating such stories as he had learned from his companions, or in singing the rude songs common amongst the slaves of Maryland and Virginia." This all changed when Ball was about four years old around 1785. The tobacco planter died. To satisfy the old master's creditors, his executors sold several of his slaves, including Ball's mother and his siblings. The executors sold Ball to a Calvert planter and Ball's mother to a Georgia slave trader, while

[45] The following account of Charles Ball's experiences with the slave market and the separation of slave families is taken from his memoir, *Slavery in the United States: A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball, a Black Man, Who Lived Forty Years in Maryland, South Carolina, and Georgia, as a Slave...* (1837, rprnt: Pittsburgh: J.T. Shyrock, 1854), 11-16, 29-32. Josiah Henson of Charles County, the reputed model for Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom, wrote a memoir in which he described experiences closely paralleling those of Ball. See his memoir *The Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave, Now and Inhabitant of Canada, as Narrated by Himself* (Boston: Arthur D. Phelps, 1849).

they sold his siblings to a traders from Carolina. At the moment of separation, Ball's mother desperately attempted to cling to him, crying out "*Oh, master, do not take me from my child!*" But the Georgia trader raised his raw hide and crashed it down on her shoulders, stripped Charles from her arms, and dragged her away. The effect on Ball was to perversely drive him to his new master: "Frightened at the sight of the cruelties inflicted upon my poor mother, I forgot my own sorrows at parting from her and clung to my new master, as an angel and a saviour, when compared with the hardened fiend into whose power she had fallen." The only blood members of the family left in Calvert County were Ball, his father on the nearby Hantz plantation, and his father's father on a third plantation in the area. As Ball recalled, his father was mentally battered by the experience of separation from wife and children:

> My father never recovered from the effects of the shock which this sudden and overwhelming ruin of his family gave him.... After this time, I never heard him laugh heartily, or sing a song. He became gloomy and morose in his temper, to all but me; and spent nearly all his leisure time with my grand-father, who claimed kindred with some royal family in Africa, and had been a great warriar in his native country.

This change in temperament alarmed Mr. Hantz. The planter decided that Ball's father was too dangerous to keep around and so began arrangements to sell him to a Georgia slave trader. Before the transaction took place, however, Ball's grandfather caught wind of the plot and helped the father escape to freedom. Ball now had only one blood relative remaining in Maryland, the aged father of his missing father.

The heart-wrenching separations of Ball's youth did not deter him from starting a family of his own. In his early adulthood, Ball felt the separation from friends as Calvert County masters bought and sold him a couple of times. Yearning for some sort of

connection, he married and started a family of his own. Yet, he lived far from them and, like his father, had to travel some distance to visit in the moments when his master could spare him. A conflict with his master determined Ball to request that he be sold again, but this time to a master closer to his family. The conflict led Ball's owner to a different course of action. He sold Ball to a Georgia trader.

Surprising Ball as he was readying his oxen for a day of work, the trader and his assistants captured him and tied his hands. Ball asked to be allowed to see his wife and children before leaving. But his new master, the trader, denied his request, and threw cold comfort at him by saying the captured slave "would be able to get another wife in Georgia." The trader took Ball across the Patuxent River into Prince George's County to join his traveling inventory of human property. There, Ball found himself in a coffle of fifty-one slaves, sold by Maryland masters and bound for new masters in the South. The nineteen women were tied together at the neck with a rope, but the men bore iron collars, held shut by padlocks and connected by an iron chain. The men were also handcuffed in pairs.[46] This is a scene that the slaves of Marshall Hall, so near to the slave markets of Alexandria, would have experienced all too often.

There is little chance that historians will ever be able to discover whether any Marshall slaves were sold into the slave trade with the Deep South. But the slaves of Marshall Hall would most definitely have experienced the disruption of their community in the Marshall quarters at least twice in the 15 years following 1828. Dr. Thomas Marshall died in 1829 and it is likely that, even if his executors sold no slaves, there was a period of deep fear. The slaves could not have known whether they would be sold to

[46] Eventually, Ball escaped from his Georgia masters and returned to see his wife and children sometime before the War of 1812.

satisfy the intestate doctor's debts or the economic goals of his children. Their uncertainty may have lasted years while the estate was settled. It is certain, however, that the Marshall Hall slave community was broken up in the middle 1840s. Thomas Hanson Marshall IV died in 1843 at the age of 47. His death set in motion a cataract of changes at Marshall Hall that would scatter his slaves and his descendents as well.

**The Fall of the Marshalls**

Thomas Marshall IV left three minor children at the time of his death. Dying intestate, he left no instructions as to how he wanted his estate parceled out to his children and the wife who survived him. His eldest son, Thomas Marshall V, was seventeen and thus too young to handle the legal problems associated with an estate. To clarify the issue, Eleanor Ann Hardesty Marshall's kinsman John Hardesty brought a friendly suit to involve the Court of Chancery in the division of property. The court proceedings and a survey of the Marshalls' Pomonkey lands took years. So it was not until 1848 (five years after the death of Marshall IV) that the survivors of Marshall IV had a resolution to their plight. The court divided the Marshall Hall plantation into four properties of roughly equal proportions. The Marshall Hall house plot went to Thomas Marshall V (as the eldest son) and the other three went to his mother and siblings.

By the time Thomas Marshall V came into his inheritance, he had turned his back on the rural planter's life. This is understandable given the long decline in the profitability of Maryland tobacco and the exhaustion of the Tidewater lands. So the young Thomas married before the official age of majority (21), took some of his family slaves, and started his own family in the nation's capital, just up the Potomac River.

Sometime around 1847 the last Marshall heir of Marshall Hall moved to a Washington, D.C., neighborhood west of the Seventh Street Turnpike (sometimes referred to as the Brookeville Turnpike, and now known as Georgia Avenue).[47] He lived there with his young wife Sarah Lyles and, by 1850, three children. [48] He also owned nine slaves, four men, ages 15, 16, 18, and 40; three women ages 40, 50, and 50 (this woman was a mulatto); and two girls, ages 3 and 9. Also living with Marshall were two white servants, a laborer named, John E. Roland (25 years old) and his wife Julianna (23). Marshall still listed his occupation as farmer in the 1850 census, but the neighborhood along the turnpike was close to the hub of the District's business community. It seems that young Marshall V was looking for other opportunities.

If it is the case that Marshall was casting about for a new economic venture, the value of his real estate in 1850 ($7000, or about $175,000) was not enough to give him much leeway—much of this was probably tied up in the home he lived in with his family.[49] Thus, the heir to Marshall Hall decided to raise funds by selling his patrimony in 1850. (Also, acting as the trustee for the plots given to his brother George and sister Henrietta, he sold two of the other parcels of the old plantation in that same year.) This

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[47] US Census, 1850. The census records show that the Hugheses were mistaken in suggesting that Marshall V left the plantation in 1850 [Brady A. Hughes & Sarah S. Hughes, "A Historical Study of the Marshall Hall Site, 1634 to 1984," prepared for the National Park Service (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1985): 47]. Some of the land records involving the sale of Marshall Hall list his place of residence as Prince George's County. So it may be that at the time of his father's death he was living at the family's Prince George's property (perhaps the old Sprigg property) before moving to Washington in the later years of the 1840s.

[48] In the 1850 census, Marshall's children are all listed as having been born in Washington, D.C. Since Thomas Hanson Marshall VI was listed as being three years old in the 1850 census, it is rather certain that the young family had moved to the city three years earlier in 1847.

[49] The figure appears in the 1850 federal census.

sale, rather than being the end of the would-be business man's misfortunes, would instead sow the seeds of economic instability and reap a whirlwind of entangling legal problems.

Thomas Marshall sold Marshall Hall and the surrounding acres of his plot in 1850 for over $6,500 (Figure 1).[50] The sale would have also probably extended to his slaves. There is no indication in the court records about what happened to the plantation slaves when the Marshall lands were carved in quarters in 1848. But it is almost certain that Marshall sold numerous slaves and broke up their families in the process.

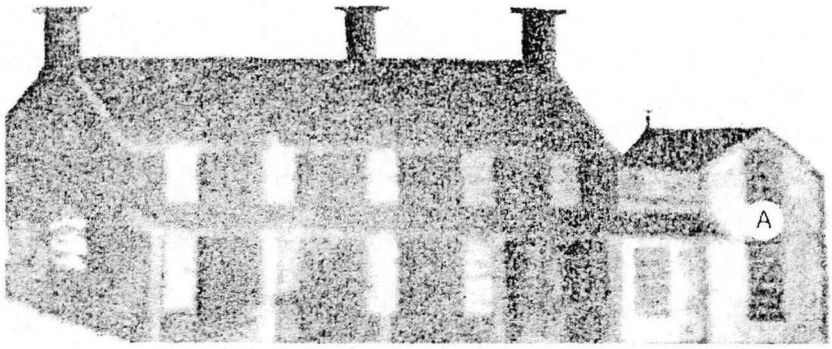



FIGURE 1. Marshall Hall Looking Westward, ca. 1850, with Kitchen Addition (A)

Marshall must have divested himself of all this property either to raise capital for some business venture, put the farming life behind him, or perhaps both. The buyer, William Page, appears not to have been the best choice of purchasers for Marshall Hall. He bought the house and property with a five-year mortgage instead of cash.[51] Page, for his part, seems to have had no intention of working the property himself. He turned around and conveyed the Marshall Hall property to Marshall's mother's kinsman, John

[50] Hughes & Hughes, "Marshall Hall," 48n6.
[51] This was far from being uncommon. Numerous properties were sold for mortgages of five or so years in the 1850s in Charles County.

Hardesty. Hardesty paid off the $6,500 mortgage for Page, even as he in turn conveyed Marshall Hall and its surrounding 377 acres to a Lawrence B. Taylor, thereby involving a whole series of other debts that Page owed. That Hardesty would buy the property through an agent such as Page seems odd. It may indicate that there was some bad blood between Eleanor Hardesty Marshall and her children. Perhaps Hardesty was buying the property back so that Eleanor could continue to live in the home she had known for much of her adulthood.

If Hardesty did indeed buy Marshall Hall for Eleanor, she was not able to live there long after this confusing series of transactions. William Page defaulted on his debt to Taylor in 1851. Taylor took control of Marshall Hall. (Eleanor Hardesty most likely left the home if she was living there and apparently suffered grievously. She died the following year at the relatively young age of 51.) Taylor, to satisfy his debt, put Marshall Hall up for auction in October 1851. The final price was a little more than $7,000. In an ironic twist, the man who won the auction was none other than the occupant of Mt. Vernon at the time, John Augustine Washington, a direct descendent of George Washington's brother (also called John Augustine Washington). The Revolutionary War general's ghost at last had his revenge on his old real estate nemesis, Thomas Hanson Marshall.

It is unclear how J.A. Washington used the land. All that the land records reveal is that Washington needed cash for the property more than the use of it. A year after selling George Washington's plantation to the Mt. Vernon Ladies Association in 1858, he also sold Marshall Hall. He made a hefty profit. He garnered over $5,000 more than he had paid for it, a gain of 71 percent!

Little is known about the man who bought Marshall Hall from Washington. It seems that he came from the Midwest but may have been a native Marylander.[52] By 1860, he had moved his family to Marshall Hall, but what he did there is not clear. What is clear is that the early 1860s were not an auspicious time to be living along the international border separating the Union and the Confederacy. Apparently, Robert E. Lee's 1862 invasion of the North and the continual warfare in Virginia and Maryland convinced Morris that his purchase had been ill-timed if not ill-chosen.

Meanwhile, Thomas Marshall V had attempted to leave the planter's life behind during the years of Morris's Marshall Hall residency. In the middle 1850s, Marshall had created some income by dealing in Prince George's County real estate.[53] As J.A. Washington was selling the Marshall plantation to Seaton Morris, Marshall moved across the Potomac to the thriving city of Alexandria. There he used his real estate as capital to invest around $10,000 ($240,000) in a dry goods concern with the Alexandria merchant Sydney Blacklock.[54]

The firm, known as "Blacklock,Marshall & Co." did well and developed a respectable reputation in its first two years, according the evaluators engaged by the

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[52] US Census, 1860; Bureau of Land Management, Patent 210 issued from the Sault Ste. Marie Land Office, 1 February 1849 (Accession/Serial Number: MI1960_.025), patent issued to Isaac H. Roll, Seaton W. Morris, and Henry P. Coburn, assignees of George Coggshall. There is also a Seton W. Morris who served as a school buildings commissioner in Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1847 [Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis: The History, the Industries, the Institutions, and the People of a City of Homes* (Chicago: Lewis, 1910), 111]. But the slightly different spellings of the first name and the far-flung geographical distribution of these three mentions of Seaton W. Morris in a period of less than fifteen years, suggest that there were at least one and perhaps two other Seaton W. Morrises than the one who purchased Marshall Hall.

[53] Dun Archives, Virginia, v. 3: Alexandria County, p. 218.

[54] The R.G. Dun evaluators estimated that Marshall was worth $25,000 to $30,000 at this time (or, in current dollars, $600,000 to $720,000). Note that H&H incorrectly spelled the name of Marshall's partner as "Blalock."

credit report firm R.G. Dun. But in the months before Lincoln's election to the presidency in 1860, troubles mounted. Another firm, Suckett & Young, claimed that Blacklock, Marshall had defaulted on a debt. The matter was complicated by the failure of a bank that held at least some of Blacklock, Marshall's capital. Several Dun reports through 1860 sound optimistic that Blacklock, Marshall would weather the financial storm. But on November 21, 1860 (just weeks after Lincoln won the presidency), a financial evaluator warned "Have a presentiment that B & M are precarious. This is only an impression for I have heard nothing to discredit them."[55] Two months later, in January 1861, the evaluator sounded even more dour: "I hope these gentlemen may struggle through, but their ability to do so is somewhat doubtful."[56] By June of 1864, the partnership of Blacklock, Marshall had disappeared. The terse report of evaluator #5484 on June 13, 1864was: "Not in Bus[iness]."[57] The only asset the firm still controlled was a prime real estate and warehouse property known as the Ferry Tavern Building along the Alexandria docks.

For some misguided reason, Thomas Marshall decided, even as the Civil War raged throughout northern Virginia and parts of Maryland, and even as his firm was foundering, to buy back Marshall Hall. He paid the retreating Seaton W. Norris $11,000 in 1863 to regain control over his ancestral home.[58] Apparently the chastened Marshall had not lost all of his capital in the crash of his store. He was able to pay $3,000 in cash. As a sign of his economic downfall, however, he had to obtain a mortgage from Morris

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[55] Dun Archives, Virginia v. 3, Alexandria, 259.
[56] Dun Archives, Virginia v. 3, Alexandria, 259
[57] Dun Archives, Virginia v. 3, Alexandria, 259
[58] Charles County Land Records, Liber GWC 1, 76-78, Charles County Circuit Court House.

for the remaining $8,000.[59] Wary of the economic straits that haunted him and no doubt fearful of creditors, Marshall sought to protect his new investment in his family past by having the deed listed under the name of his second wife (Sarah Lyles had died in 1855, and Marshall apparently married her sister or cousin, Henrietta Lyles, in 1857). But this sleight of economic hand did little to protect Marshall.

It may be that Marshall repurchased Marshall Hall in order to retire from the city and its commerce to rediscover the life of a planter. If so, his timing could hardly have been worse. In 1864, the Maryland legislature outlawed slavery. This meant that, whatever slaves were left on the plantation at the time the Marshalls retook control, they now had no labor force to speak of.

Marshall's economic problems became intractable as the wartime devastation of Northern Virginia's economy threatened Blacklock, Marshall's ownership of the Ferry Building. To stave off the loss of the Ferry Tavern Building and a second property along the Alexandria docks, Marshall and his wife took out mortgages on the Marshall Hall property from Edgar D. Hartt and George R.H. Marshall (Thomas's brother). These totaled $4,500.[60] This would not be enough to protect the Ferry Building and the other Alexandria properties. The ravages of war and the desperate decisions of Blacklock, Marshall doomed their chances of retaining the property. Blacklock, Marshall defaulted on a debt to Reuben Johnson sometime in 1865. By the end of the year, Johnson foreclosed and auctioned off the Ferry Tavern Building on November 21. A month later,

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[59] Charles County Land Records, Liber GWC 1, 267, Charles County Circuit Court House.

[60] Charles County Land Records, Liber GWC 2, 76 182, Charles County Circuit Court House

on December27, Johnson deeded the former properties of Blacklock, Marshall to Cassius Lee, Jr. Cornelia Lee, and Sally Lee, Jr.

Clearly shaken by the loss of the Alexandria properties and business, and perhaps still in debt, Marshall gave up on Marshall Hall. In December of 1867, Henrietta Marshall sold the old house and 377 surrounding acres to another immigrant to Charles County, John M. Little.[61] Little was from Pittsburgh, and as with Seaton, it is unclear what plans he had in Charles County. Whatever plans he had, they were worth $14,000 to him, the amount he paid the Marshalls for the old house and land. The Marshall had finally made a profit, receiving $3000 over the $11,000 they had paid for what had once been theirs many years before.

**Conclusion**

The Marshalls changed the name of their ancestral home from Mistake to Marshall Hall some time in the 1830s. But the change in name could not paper over the corroding luster of plantation life in the upper South of the 1840s and '50s. By then, the last Thomas Marshall to reside in Pomonkey Neck, turned away from the plantation of his fathers—albeit with some ambivalence. This decision was to have a hysterically ironic outcome: The sight of generations of enforced bondage, of numerous forced family separations, and hinted at violences, would be transformed after the Civil War. Then it would become a place where generations of country-bred, plaid-shirted knights jousted on the Lists by the Potomac while their friends and relations frolicked on the "appliances

[61] Thomas Marshall joined in the sale only "to pass a valid title" to her. Charles County Land Records, Liber GAH 1, 324-25, Charles County Circuit Court House.

of entertainment" in an amusement park that swarmed the Marshalls ancestral home at Mistake.

# Chapter 9

## *"Washington's Playground on the Beautiful Potomac": Marshall Hall Becomes a Victorian Pleasure Site, 1885*

A new type of American appeared in the second half of the nineteenth century: the middle class urbanite. This new American sought new forms of recreation, particularly in rural settings. Feeling cooped up in their small city dwellings, nostalgic for an imagined life of ease in the countryside of their forebears, middle-class Americans craved pastimes that allowed them to return to a past they never had. In the Washington, D.C., area, this recreational past was conjured up by two succeeding owners of Marshall Hall.

Marshall Hall passed out of the hands of the Marshall family soon after the Civil War. The men who purchased the site turned it into a series of parks. The evolution of these parks offers a unique insight into the changing ways Washingtonians, and indeed Americans in general, thought about themselves. During the century that followed the war, Marshall Hall went through four permutations—each one a park, but each one quite different from the one preceding it. A picnic grove in the era of Reconstruction, the site became a riverside resort in the 1890s. Soon after the turn of the twentieth century, the resort became an amusement park that catered chiefly to adults. But by the time of the Great Depression, the focus had shifted to children, as the park became more of a permanent summertime carnival. The present chapter will focus on the first two parks.

A combination of the Marshall family's mismanagement and the demise of slavery doomed Marshall Hall as a site for the production of agricultural products in the

1860s. The land was worn out, as was the last Thomas Marshall of Marshall Hall. Already living in the city of Washington in the 1850s, it seems that he could hardly conceive of the ancestral home as anything more than a source of capital. By 1865, the land could not support tobacco and, more generally, seemed to hold little value. But it did hold value to a man named Little.

On September 23, 1867, Thomas and Henrietta Marshall sold their 377 acres of Marshall Hall land to John M. Little of Pittsburgh. The Pittsburgher agreed to a price of $14,000 for the property, and paid with a combination of cash and a mortgage to the Marshalls for $2400.[1] He paid off the mortgage less than two years later, which apparently gave him time to consider what he would do with his prize. It is impossible to know what Little's initial thoughts were, whether he saw agricultural or commercial value in the land. Perhaps he didn't even fashion himself an entrepreneur. It is entirely likely that he bought Marshall Hall with an eye to building up the peach and apple orchards the Marshalls had established alongside their depleted tobacco fields. Whatever the case, it is clear that by the middle 1870s Little had discovered a way to make Marshall Hall productive without having to plant a single tobacco seed or pick a single fruit.

**The Pleasures of Nature**

Little turned the old plantation into a place where Washingtonians could escape the city during the stultifyingly hot and humid Potomac summers. He made Marshall Hall into a picnic grove, offering the verdant lawns for outdoor entertainments and eventually

[1] Charles County Land Records, Liber GAH 1: 324-25; & 2: 171.

building a covered pavilion where visitors could eat even in inclement weather. He transformed Marshall Hall from a private residence into a public escape from the urban hurly burly.

Little was not the first nineteenth-century entrepreneur to develop a picnic grove, but he was among the earliest. A handful of picnic groves appeared in the 1870s, responding to the needs and desires of rising American middle class. The developing middle strata of American society, those who worked as managers and professionals in the proliferating corporations such as U.S. Steel and Swift meats, became nostalgic for the rural amusements of their vanished youths. They increasingly sought leisure sites that took them out of the metastasizing cities and into the countryside. The picnic grove was one of the first commercial institutions to meet the leisure demands of the middle class. The idea of the picnic grove did not appear from out of nowhere. Rather, it developed chiefly out of three earlier attempts to bring urbanized Americans back to the country, or to bring the country into the cities: picnics, religious camps, and urban parks.

Americans, as a chiefly agricultural people, had little use for picnics in the early nineteenth century. Their European counterparts, already long down the path of industrialization, had begun to turn the picnic into a social event that signaled middle-class taste. Frances Trollope, the English author who visited the United States in the 1830s, was surprised to find that Americans seemed oblivious to the pleasures of the picnic:

> The only rural amusement in which we ever saw any of the natives engaged was eating strawberries and cream in a pretty garden about three miles from the town [of Cincinnati, Ohio]; here we actually met three or four carriages; a degree of dissipation that I never witnessed on any other occasion. The strawberries were tolerable strawberries, but the cream was the vilest sky-blue, and the charge half a dollar to each person; which

> being about the price of half a fat sheep, I thought "pretty considerable much," if I may be permitted to use an expressive phrase of the country.[2]

The first Americans to embark on picnics discovered that they were pioneers of a sort. To reach an appropriately beautiful site and then to clear it to create a suitable spot took a lot of work. Eliza Farnham described her first picnic outing in 1846: "On the very pinnacle of the bluff... we found a little shaded nook, just large enough to admit our number. Here, after the vines and light undergrowth had been cleared away, we spread our white napkins, table cloths, & c, and laid out our simple refreshments."[3] While these picnics were central to the creation of a sense of middle-class social cohesion, there was also a hint of the illicit.[4] A quick look at the numerous picnic genre paintings by artists such as Thomas Cole, shows youths in male-female pairs moving toward the margins of the group, speaking in intimate whispers, disappearing from view behind trees, deeper into the forest....

A new form of rural excursion offered a more morally rectified form of outdoor activity. Numerous Christian groups adapted the old evangelical practice of tent revivals to create permanent sites for religious recreation and contemplation. Camp meeting sites appeared around the country after the Civil War in places like Ocean Grove, New Jersey (opened in 1869). There, urban families could retreat from urban chaos and metropolitan temptations into natural surroundings under the auspices of the Methodist church. Soon, several of the major denominations followed suit.

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[2] *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832), ch. 16, para. 7.
[3] Cited in Donna R. Braden, *Leisure and Entertainment in America* (Dearborn, Mich.: Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village, 1988), 25. For other types of nineteenth-century outdoor amusements involving food, see Braden, *Leisure*, 25-29.
[4] Cite the Winterthur articles on picnic pix.

Urbanites sought the pleasures of nature near at hand, if they could create them. New York City officials began the construction of Central Park, designed by the century's preeminent landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, in 1859. Many municipalities began introducing green spaces among their crowding cityscapes in the following decades, although rarely on the same scale as Central Park. Washington, D.C., joined ranks with the park movement when Olmsted himself turned his sights on the capital city. He left his imprint on the U.S. Capital grounds and the National Zoological Park toward the end of the nineteenth century, while his son, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. – who became the nation's preeminent landscape architect -- was instrumental in the development of Rock Creek Park (built after 1890). These parks helped Washingtonians appreciate the value of green space. But there was something vital missing from the city's parks: amusement. The goal of Olmstedian parks was reverence for nature and aesthetic contemplation, not release from the psychic rigors created by the managerial revolution and corporate compulsions.

Picnic groves offered a combination of all three influences. Beginning in the years around the Civil War, a number of entrepreneurs around the country pioneered the development of permanent picnic sites. Perhaps the first was Parker's Grove, located about twenty miles outside of Cincinnati—not far from the strawberry outing Frances Trollope attended in the 1830s. There, on the banks of the Ohio River, Cincinnatians could bring their picnic lunches, eat at picnic tables, and relax under large shade trees. Another of the early picnic sites was Kenny's Grove, located along the Monongahela River about ten miles outside of Pittsburgh. This primitive picnic area may have been

instrumental in the development of Marshall Hall because John M. Little hailed from the Pittsburgh vicinity and likely was familiar with Kenny's Grove.[5]

Both Kenny's Grove and Parker's Grove were situated next to rivers. A river, to judge by the picnic genre paintings, was a crucial element of any successful picnic. Marshall Hall offered not only a river and picturesque views also but "the nation's river" and wealth of historical association.[6] It was situated in a distinctly historical locale, across the Potomac from Mount Vernon. If Little came to the nation's capital looking to establish a picnic grove, he could hardly have found a more appealing and picturesque site.

Little founded his picnic grove at Marshall Hall sometime around 1870, not long after his purchase of the property. He apparently met with an enthusiastic response. By the end of the decade, steamboats—such as the Express, the Arrow, the Mary Washington, the Corcoran, the Lady of the Lake, and the John W. Thompson—plied the Potomac bringing passengers down river on any day or night of the week. Passengers disembarked onto the "narrow and primitive wharf" and walked up the painted wooden stairs onto the wide lawn that stretched out below the grove of trees surrounding the old Marshall mansion and the new picnic pavilion. Some passengers came in small groups, such as the three hundred Washingtonians—families, circles of friends, young lovers—

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[5] William F. Mangels, *The Outdoor Amusement Industry: From Earliest Times to the Present* (New York: Vantage, 1952), 19, 23. Kenny's Grove would later be bought by Andrew Melon and transformed into a bona fide amusement park. Renamed "Kennywood," the park is still in operation.

[6] Stuart Udall, e.g., called the Potomac "the nation's river" in the title of the 1968 report by the Federal Interdepartmental Task Force on the Potomac. See *The Nation's River: A Report on the Potomac from the U.S. Department of the Interior* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968).

who boarded the steamboat Mattano on August 4, 1878, to escape the city's summer heat. Other passengers came as members of vast organized excursions.[7]

All manner of organizations traveled to the Marshall Hall grove. Religious, ethnic, social, labor, political, professional, philanthropic, fraternal, military, and other groups rented Little's site for celebrations, commemorations, relaxation, merrymaking -- and fund raising. An 1878 article in the Washington *Post* about the excursion of the mysteriously named "Departmental Dozen" noted that this was the group's eighth annual trip to the site.[8] The Dozen "secured exclusive use of the grounds" for more than 700 passengers to commemorate Decoration Day (the forerunner of Memorial Day) on May 30. The trip had a dual purpose: to offer select Washingtonians a day of frivolity and to raise money for a charitable cause.[9] Marshall Hall, through the 1870s, served these same two purposes for numerous other groups.

Some groups picnicked at Marshall Hall with an eye to emphasizing their group solidarity or social exclusivity. The *Post* announced on May 2, 1880, that the following Friday the Supreme Lodge of the Independent Order of Mechanics, with representatives from Washington, Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, would celebrate the completion of their annual meeting by taking an excursion to Marshall Hall. There, they would deepen their fraternal bonds with a "collation and shad-plank bake" and entertain their wives by dancing to the music of "Pistorio's fine band." A very different group secured

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[7] *Washington Post*, "Decoration Day," 29 May 1878: 2; "Acres of Peaches," 2 September 1879: 1; "Down the River," 5 August 1878: 4. Hereafter, all newspaper articles are from the *Post* unless otherwise noted.

[8] The *Post* was founded in December 1877 and so did not cover the early years of Marshall Hall as a picnic grove.

[9] "City News in Brief," 24 April 1878: 4; "Decoration Day," 2; "The Flight of Pleasure Seekers," 31 May 1878: 4.

the picnic grove later that summer. The *Post*'s "Social Intelligence" columnist reported in September 9, 1880, that on the previous Tuesday "lively excursionists embarked on the yacht Ella Tredwell for Marshall Hall, and spent the day dancing, singing and flirting, until a later hour." This well-heeled band of merrymakers included the Umplebys, Dwyers, Vogelsons, and their friends, children, and children's friends—eighteen in all.[10]

Other groups traveled to Marshall Hall to support various philanthropies. Groups such as the Dozen sold tickets for the excursions they organized in order both to cover their costs (chartering a steamboat, renting the grounds, providing food and music) as well as to generate philanthropic funds. One group of philanthropists hired out the John W. Thompson for a moonlight excursion to Little's picnic grove on Tuesday, September 17, 1878. The announcement for the excursion proclaimed that the proceeds from all ticket and bar sales would go to "the benefit of the fever sufferers." The following summer, the District police sold more than 1,000 Marshall Hall excursion tickets to raise funds for "deserving families of deceased policemen." Four days after the police excursion, the supporters of "Prof." Robert Odlum helped him raise funds for a swimming pool in Virginia by holding a water carnival replete with "the game of [water] polo, a four-mile swim by Prof. Donaldson, etc." (This charity event ended far more successfully than Odlum's later attempt to popularize water sports: In 1885, he died in a daredevil plungeoff of the recently completed Brooklyn Bridge.)[11]

At times, Marshall Hall itself was the philanthropic gift. In the summer of 1880, a committee of private individuals and public officials organized an excursion to the

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[10] "The Order of Mechanics," 2 May 1880: 1; "Social Intelligence," 19 September 1880: 2.

[11] "Alexandria Annals, " 13 September 1878: 3; "A Pic-nic for Charity," 23 August 1879: 1; "A Carnival in the Water," 26 August 1879: 4.

riverside picnic grove for the District's impoverished boys. More than 600 boys, answering to such monikers as "Jack," "Shorty," "Skinny," "Potato," and "Ice Cream," crowded onto the steamer Mary Washington for an all-day vacation from their usual ruts of poverty. There were boys, as the *Post* reporter snobbishly put it, "of all sizes and complexions, the majority barefooted, dirty and noisy. Boys mainly from the lower strata of society, who knew not the art of putting on company manners." There was also a sprinkling of young girls and women who, the reporter mused, "looked as if they needed to breathe the pure, fresh air, not for one day only but for many weeks." On reaching the Marshall Hall wharf, the boys unloaded the horde of food and then doffed their clothes on the sand to cool in waters of the Potomac. The organizers of the excursion (District restaurateur and German immigrant Edward Abner, a newsman named Burkhardt of the Washington *Journal*, pound master for the Washington, D.C., health department Samuel Einstein, a physician Dr. Walters, and police officers O'Hara and Thompson) served a snack of bread and milk, while others prepared a dinner of "lemonade by the tubful and coffee by the gallon," "immense hampers of sandwiches," watermelon, and peaches. On the return trip, a mock battle broke out among the boys. They attacked one another with green apples "harvested" from the orchards surrounding the picnic grove. Peace was declared when Mr. Abner broke out a fresh round of bread and milk. Similar scenes would be repeated for years to come as Marshall Hall became the site of an annual orphans' picnic that brought parentless youths out of their institutions and down the river for a rare experience of open space.

Another group that made use of Little's Marshall Hall was Charles County farmers, who used the wharf to ship their produce on Potomac steamboats. The "Mary

Washington", for example, when not transporting street kids to the countryside, carried tobacco and fruits (apples and peaches in particular) up the river to markets in Alexandria and Washington.[12]

**Marshall Hall, Inc.: The Picnic Grove Becomes a Commercial Property**

By the early 1880s, John Little apparently had tired of running a picnic grove. Perhaps he soured on playing host to increasing throngs of city folk. Perhaps he wanted to expand his agricultural production. Or perhaps he wanted to move his growing family to larger quarters. By 1880, he was crowding ten people into the old Marshall home: his wife Louisa, son John W., daughter-in-law Amelia, three grandchildren under the age of five, his elder brother James (the Marshall Hall postmaster), and an African American servant Rose Brown and her infant daughter Mary.[13] It is also possible that Little received a proposition he could not afford to turn down: a hefty offer to sell the property for nearly double what he had paid for it less than ten years earlier.

For whatever reason, John M. and Louisa Little sold the 377 acres of Marshall Hall, along with the residence and other buildings, in September 1884. Their price was $25,000, a profit of $11,000 (or $500,000 and $217,000, respectively, in 2007 U.S. dollars). The two men who bought the property hardly were strangers to the Little family. And one of them – Levi Lowell Blake – was quite well acquainted with the possibilities of a picnic grove within easy reach of Washington, D.C., by riverboat. He

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[12] See advertisement reproduced in Dorothy Troth Muir, *Potomac Interlude: The Story of Woodlawn Mansion and the Mount Vernon Neighborhood, 1846-1943* (Bowie, MD: Heritage, 2002).

[13] U.S. Census, 1880, E. D. 44, Pomonkey, Charles County, Maryland, National Archive Film Number: T9-0508, Page 463D.

had captained the Mary Washington, which not only visited Marshall Hall frequently, but also since 1878 he had owned the exclusive right to ferry patriotic pilgrims from the nation's capital to George Washington's fabled home at Mt. Vernon.[14]

Blake apparently was concerned about the future of his business in the summer of 1883. His monopoly on landing passengers at the Mount Vernon wharf was set to expire in June of that year. If he lost the contract, he would need some other enticing destination to prevent the loss of passengers. It seems likely that he set his eyes on Marshall Hall, believing that, if he lost the Mount Vernon trade altogether, the spot on the Maryland shore would be a suitable substitute. If he regained the contract *and* controlled Marshall Hall, his business would be vastly improved. Needing capital to obtain Marshall Hall, Blake naturally would have turned to an old friend, Joseph C. McKibbin, adventurer, pioneer, former member of Congress, and Civil War veteran.

Steamboat captain Blake and his partner McKibbin transformed Marshall Hall from a primitive riverside picnic grove into a polished commercial venture. They brought to the project wide experience as men who had traveled far in search of wealth and adventure, from the California gold fields of '49 to the halls of Congress.[15] They had

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[14] Liber BGS 7: 391; Jennifer Kittlaus, Director of Research, Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, personal communication, 23 February 2007.

[15] McKibbin and Blake first met in California. But the circumstances of their meeting and, indeed, much of their California lives are trumped up in myth. As a reporter once mockingly complained, the two "are so incessantly guying each other that it is almost impossible to get a connected account of their combined adventures...." As an example, he reported that Blake claimed the first time he ever saw McKibbin, the latter was "drilling for a blast in a mine shaft and the colonel retorts by telling of seeing the captain seated on a rock, waiting for an Indian to come along that he might have s/t to shoot at" ("Jolly Potomac Captains," 16 October 1892: 10). The Gold Rush loomed large in the two men's personal histories. They hosted annual meetings of the Society of California Pioneers of Washington at Marshall Hall throughout the 1880s and 1890s. See, e.g., "They Sought for Gold," 15 May1890: 2; "All Skilled Carvers," 15 May 1891: 2; and

become friends in the frenzied west and, now in the late 1870s, both looked to a leisured enterprise in which they could share their ebbing years. They bought Marshall Hall at a historically opportune moment, just as such sites of "rural" entertainment became fixtures of American cities. They ran the business smoothly and used it to establish themselves as fixtures of Washington's social scene. By the early 1890s, the Washington *Post* could proclaim the two of them "so well known in this city and the surrounding country that more than mention of their names is almost superfluous...."[16] The two men traveled far in life before reaching their exalted status in the nation's capital.

Levi Lowell Blake was born in New Haven,Vermont, in 1830. His father, Abijah Blake, was a tanner–turned-sea captain who sailed away from home often for as long as a year at a time. Abijah's voyages took him around Cape Horn to California, where he loaded up with wheat, which he then transported to Europe before returning to New England. He must have infected his son Levi with dreams of the West. The Mexican-American War of the middle 1840s drew him from the East. Levi soon thereafter traveled to California in the first crushing days of the gold rush, arriving in San Franciso in April 1849. Working gold fields throughout the state, he built and lost fortunes. As Blake recalled his mining days in California, "We made money freely and spent money like rain." He used the money to travel back East, making it as far as the Mississippi River, where he "secured a berth on the Hannah Moore, a famous steamboat of those days." He then drifted back West, rambling up to Washington and Montana territories in the years just before the Civil War. He worked for the railroad survey of Governor Isaac

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"The Gold Hunters of '49: The Surviving Pioneers and Their Friends at Marshall Hall," 13 May1893: 2. McKibbin served for a time as the treasurer of the society.
[16] "Jolly Potomac Captains," 10.

Stevens of the Washington territory. He also helped John Mullen open the first wagon road to Walla Walla, Washington. These connections apparently helped him win election to the territorial legislature in 1862; but the lure of gold fields around Boise Idaho distracted him. He never made it to the capital at Olympia to serve his term. Instead, he sat out the Civil War "conquering Montana from the savages...," according to his obituary. He served in the Indian Service, fighting in two or three campaigns (earning the rank of Major) and acting for several years in the 1860s as the Indian agent of the Flathead Indians at Jocko Reservation near Polson, Montana (created through a treaty negotiated by Blake's friend Governor Stevens). Even during these adventurous early years of his life, he managed to be a gracious host who could supply a sumptuous feast even in the gruff wilderness of the Bitter Root Valley in western Montana. One early pioneer recalled how Blake "got up a splendid supper. Stewd Birds Roast Duck. Summer Squash &c He is a prince of Caterers—A Splendid Shot & angler good company—Likes a toddy as all good men do."[17] Such sumptuous feasts, however, only seem to have reminded Blake of a more placid life elsewhere. He left Montana January 7, 1870, to return to the East for good. Blake settled in Washington in 1871 and, apparently employing skills he gained from his seafaring father and his stint on the Mississippi, set himself up as the shipmaster of the Mary Washington and other steamships.[18]

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[17] John Owen, *The Journals and Letters of Major John Owen: Pioneer of the Northwest, 1850-1871* (New York: Edward Eberstadt, 1927), vol. 2, 67: 15 August 1867.

[18] "The Territory," *New Northwest Deer Lodge Mountain News*, 7 January 1870: 1; "Jolly Potomac Captains," 10; "Capt. Blake a Forty-Niner: A Picture of the Captain of the Charles Macalaster," 23 July 1893: 9; and "Death of Capt. L.L. Blake," 14 May 1904: 10; *The Journals and Letters of Major John Owen, Pioneer of the Northwest, 1850-1871...* (New York: Eberstadt, 1927), *passim*; Dorothy M. Johnson, *The Bloody Bozeman: The Perilous Trail to Montana's Gold* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), 198; Lenora Koelbel, *Missoula the Way It Was* (Missoula, Mont.: Gateway, 1972), 20. Much of the

Joseph Chambers McKibbin (also spelled McKibben) also traveled far before settling at Marshall Hall. He was born on May 11, 1824, in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, where he attended the common schools and grew to an imposing height of six feet three inches. He may have spent much time in Washington, D.C., due to his father's prominence in Democratic Party circles.[19] He matriculated at Princeton College (later University) in 1840, but left in 1842 before completing his studies. He drifted for several years, ending up in Sierra County, California, at the time of the gold rush in 1849. There on the Pacific slope, as his obituary put it, he "rose to prominence in that collection of all types and classes." He studied law, gained admittance to the California bar in July 1852, and entered politics. He won a seat in the state senate in 1852 and again in 1853. At some point during this time, he first became involved in water transportation, running a steamship line along the coast of California.[20] In 1856, he won election to the U.S. Congress as an anti-Lecompton (that is, anti-slavery) Democrat. He served for one term (March 4 1857, to March 3, 1859), but failed to gain reelection to the House in 1858. On his return to California, he acted as "second" to State Senator David Broderick in his

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information in this biographical sketch was provided by Pat Close, an indefatigable chronicler of the Blake family. McKibbin is also mentioned in various materials relating to the San Francisco vigilance committee of 1856. See, for example, James O'Meara, *The Vigilance Committee of 1856: By a California Pioneer Journalist* (San Francisco: James H. Barry, 1887), chs. 2 and 7.

[19] A speaker at a reunion of forty-niners at Marshall Hall in 1890 recalled seeing McKibbin in Washington often as a child ("They Sought for Gold," 2). McKibbin's father Chambers McKibbin was an assistant quartermaster in Pittsburgh during Andrew Jackson's presidency and was a postmaster under President Polk. He later became a naval officer during the administration of his close associate, President James Buchanan, and served at the U.S. Mint and in the Department of the Treasury under President Andrew Johnson.

[20] For a while, he ran a steamship line between New Orleans and Havana, Cuba. While the exact time period of this exploit is not clear , it seems to have taken place before the Civil War ["Jolly Potomac Captains," 10].

infamous 1859 duel with Judge David Terry over the issue of slavery in California. Broderick's death at the hands of the pro-slavery judge gave McKibbin the resolve to join the Union army at the first call to war in 1861. He was one of the first six cavalry officers appointed to the Northern cavalry by Abraham Lincoln.[21] He achieved the rank of colonel while on the staffs of generals Halleck and Rosecrans.[22] His military career was cut short, however, by reports of disturbing drunken behavior. A fellow officer recommended to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton that McKibbin and another member of Rosecrans's staff be mustered out of the army because they had become "worthless fellows, who earn no part of their pay."[23] The final straw came when Union sentries arrested McKibbin for "attempting to break through pickets while drunk."[24] After his fall from grace, McKibbin left the army, returned to Washington, and there reunited with his forty-niner friend, Blake.

Blake and McKibbin became steamboat entrepreneurs on the Potomac River sometime in the middle 1870s. The competition with other steamboat lines was intense, as numerous ships plied the river between Washington and points south, carrying

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[21] McKibbin's official biography as a member of the Congress is available at bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=M000514. See also, Stephen J. Field, *Personal Reminiscences Of Early Days In California, With Other Sketches* (Printed Not Published, 1893); & Henry Wilson, *History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America*, v. 2 (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1874), 564-65.

[22] On McKibbin's Civil War service, see, Alexander Kelly McClure, *Recollections of Half a Century* (1902), 35-36; Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, *Campaigns in Kentucky and Tennessee Including the Battle of Chickamauga, 1862-1864* (1908), 248.

[23] C.A. Dana to Secretary of War E.M. Stanton, 1 November 1863, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ser. 1, vol. 31, pt. 2 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1890), 54.

[24] *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ser. 1, vol. 52, pt. 1 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1898), 494.

passengers to leisure sites and transporting produce from farmers' wharves to markets in the city. The most lucrative trip, however, was the voyage to Mt. Vernon.

Blake and McKibbin secured the exclusive right to convey passengers from Washington to Mount Vernon in the summer of 1878. Blake place an announcement in the May 29, 1878, edition of the Washington *Post* that proclaimed: "The steamer Mary Washington, which has been recently refitted and furnished, L.L. Blake, captain, is the only boat allowed to land passengers at Mount Vernon wharf." The announcement was authorized by J.McH. Hollingsworth, Superintendent of the Ladies's Mount Vernon Association, which owned (and continues to own) Mt. Vernon.[25] Blake and McKibbin replaced the Mary Washington in 1881 with a new boat they had built specifically for the Mount Vernon trade: the W.W. Corcoran.[26] They also began looking for ways to expand their business, but apparently were hindered by a lack of cash.

Blake and McKibbin approached John Little with an offer to buy Marshall Hall at the end of the 1884 summer season. But the squeeze on their resources is clear in that, of the $25,000 purchase price, the two riverboat men could manage to offer only 25 percent of the price in cash—$18,750 was in the form of a mortgage to Little.[27] The deed gave a limit of three years to pay off the debt. But this was to become, in hindsight, far too optimistic a time frame. Although Blake and McKibbin paid off $5,500 of their debt to Little in 1886, they still owed $7,506.59 eleven years later in 1897. At that point, Little

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[25] An article in the *Post* in May of 1878 notes that the boats Arrow and City of Washington would be sailing to Mount Vernon, thus suggesting that no ship had an exclusive right to the wharf there at the beginning of the summer ("Decoration Day," 2). The Blake announcement appeared three months later ("Notice to Mount Vernon Passengers," 8 August1878: 4).

[26] "Notice to Mount Vernon Passengers," 19 May 1881: 3.

[27] Deed of 29 September 1884, Charles County Land Records, Liber BGS bk. 7:394-99.

sold the debt to the Central Bank of Washington. It would be many years before the bank cleared its books of the Blake-McKibbin liability.[28]

Blake and McKibbin, possessing much experience with losing fortunes in the California gold rush, moved to protect their investment in Marshall Hall and their various steamship assets. The two former forty-niners sold their various properties in April 1889 to a new corporation—the Mount Vernon and Marshall Hall Steamboat Company—for a nominal price of $5.00.[29] The corporation was privately held by Blake and McKibbin. With this legal protection, the two entrepreneurs set about developing Marshall Hall to increase their audience and rebuild their fortunes. It seems that they divided their responsibilities: Blake was largely responsible for the steamships of the corporation while McKibbin looked to the park at Marshall Hall, even making the colonial house his personal home from 1888 until his death.[30] This shift to a corporate status marked the beginning of a process that would transform the Marshall family's once laconic shoreline property into a frenzied popular amusement park.

**From Picnic Grove to Amusement Park: Marshall Hall 1890 to 1905**

A reporter for the Washington *Post* put into words in the summer of 1892 an experience shared by thousands of inhabitants of the nation's capital:

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[28] Charles County Land Records, Liber JST 1: 179-83; and Liber JST 8: 689.
[29] Deed dated 15 April 1889, see Charles County Land Records, Liber JST 2: 544ff.
[30] While there is no hard and fast evidence that Blake and McKibbin divided their work strictly to the separate spheres of land and sea, the general sense one gets from reading the numerous articles on the pair in the *Washington Post* is that the two did indeed divide their responsibilities. This is further underscored by the fact that Blake listed his official residence as Washington, D.C., while McKibbin was a citizen of Charles County, Maryland.

> Everyone knows what an excursion to Marshall Hall is like—a ride down the majestic Potomac in company with the genial Capt. Blake and the other officials of the Macalester, a hearty welcome by the hospitable Col. McKibben to the old homestead of the Marshall family, planked shad, hot from the fire and washed down with foamy extract of malt or fragrant mint juleps, and afterward the various amusements of bowling alleys, rifle ranges, merry-go-rounds, strolling under the trees or loafing quietly in the shade which characterizes the happy-go-easy old hall.[31]

Ten years later, another reporter for the *Post* was equally taken by the bucolic scene. He or she languidly described the "magnificent oaks" that shaded the "old colonial mansion," where "the broad veranda of the old Marshall house" nestled "large comfortable rocking chairs in plenty." If those rockers were all taken, a visitor could go in search of other resting places, for "all through the park are seat and swings, hammocks and settees." This reporter took note of something more than the physical setting, however. He or she turned an artist's eye toward the people, some meandering and others cavorting through the park:

> At Marshall Hall one sees the tired business man, or department clerk, and his family lounging about on the grass and eating the dinner prepared at home and brought with them, while down at the café one observes the young man who has just begun to earn $100 per month [an annual salary of about $27,000 in current US dollars, i.e. this fellow believes he his living on a princely salary when he is actually at the low end of the earnings scale], or the man of wealth, enjoying a little outing, dining on sirloin or lobster a la Newburg. As they sit in the arm chairs on the balcony of the Marshall mansion they look at the river and the small craft skimming about over its surface from under the canopy of oaks.[32]

Blake and McKibbin significantly altered the picnic grove they had acquired from John Little. They sought to turn it into something quite unusual in the American landscape of the early 1890s. Adding what one deed called "the appliances of entertainment," the proprietors of the Mount Vernon and Marshall Hall Steamboat

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[31] "Fresh Planked Shad," 4 April 1892: 8.
[32] "Obtained Two Deeds: How Title to Marshall Hall Was Perfected," 13 July 1902: 26.

Company (MVMHSC) attempted to provide Washingtonians with a varied experience that included historical sites, a riverboat excursion, and the newest of thrill seeking rides even as the two managers carried on the recent tradition of the picnic grove.

The early 1890s seemed to augur great things for McKibbin and Blake. They had ensconced themselves in positions of rather exalted status in the District. Their entrepreneurial concern brought them in close contact with District residents of all ranks. They became well known throughout the capital. The beginning of the decade signaled happiness for personal reasons as well: Blake finally married in 1886 (at the age of 56) and was blessed with two recent children in 1890. Colonel McKibbin also decided finally to take a wife. At the age of 67, he married a young employee of Marshall Hall, the 28-year-old Aldisa Schrack. The couple, after a long wedding journey that took them to Niagara Falls, Montreal, Saratoga, New York City, and Boston, among other places, settled at old Marshall family home. Aldisa enlivened the house by displaying some of her own oil paintings on the walls.[33] By the end of 1891, Mr. and Mrs. McKibbin had become securely "domiciled in the quaint old mansion" on the banks of the Potomac.

The uniqueness of these personal events only underscored how the leisurely routine of steamboats on the Potomac and summer entertainment s at Marshall Hall had become well established. Blake's boats made two stops as they steamed down the Potomac: first Mount Vernon and then across the river to Marshall Hall. The two sites

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[33] "Col. M'Kibben Wedded," 18 September 1891: 5; "Memorable Close of a Memorable Season," 11 October 1891: 7, It seems that Miss Schrack was an orphan from Ohio. She was widely celebrated for orchestrating annual visits to Marshall Hall by the orphans of the District. Among the few wedding guests listed in the announcement of her marriage to McKibbin, none are mentioned as her relatives. Last of all, Aldisa's 1896 obituary notes that she was thirty-three and had been born in Ohio. The 1880 census lists an Eldisa Schrack, born in 1862, in Ohio living with her grandmother, suggesting that she was orphaned either by the death of or abandonment by her parents.

complemented each other. The home of the first president was a sacred site. It brought tourists from across the country and around the world. Visitors approached Mount Vernon in suppressed awe, proceeding in solemn reverence up the hill as patriotic pilgrims stepping on the nation's holiest ground. But as a sacred site, Mount Vernon did not allow for leisure and social activities such as picnicking, dancing, and sports. Often, excursion groups would travel to Mount Vernon for a somber ceremony of patriotic display, and then jump over to Marshall Hall for fun, games, and relaxation. But, as a somewhat historic site in its own right, Marshall Hall offered a sense of continuity with Mount Vernon. It was as if George Washington had given his imprimatur to mechanized versions of the hunt: riding wooden horses round the carousel, shooting rifles at paper targets, and bowling balls at imaginary armies of wooden pins.

McKibbin made history essential to the Marshall Hall experience. He shrouded the house with historical patina, if not outright myth, to link it to the distant past. He posted a history of the property on the veranda of the house. This narrative puffed numerous false claims and gilded commonplace facts. McKibbin's "memoir of Marshall Hall" ran from the mundane—with claims that the giant May Pole had once been bedecked with spring garlands by "the gentle maidens and the gallant youths of colonial times—to the fantastic. The hapless Joshua Marshall, for example, became an English gentleman and the first of the Marshalls to immigrate to America. He purchased the land of Marshall Hall from Randall Hanson and built "a very pretentious and stylish log house, a regular castle, in fact." This Joshua Marshall, according to McKibbin's spurious history, set up a large slave plantation and, to protect his claim to the land, Marshall sought to perfect his title by securing a second deed to the land from the "original and

first owners of the tract, the Piscattaway Indians," who at that time, according to McKibbin's history, still remained in the area. Joshua gained the deed by purchasing the land that he already owned from John Ackatamaka, "Emperor of the Piscattaway," for 3,000 pounds of tobacco. As proof of these historical claims, McKibbin also hung a purported "facsimile" of the deed from Ackatamaka for the Potomac shore property. [34]

McKibbin and Blake further added to Marshall Hall's historical patina by purchasing the steamer River Queen in 1892. The ship was closely identified with Abraham Lincoln, who cruised the Potomac on board to gain respite during the rigors of the Civil War. The River Queen also sailed had directly into history when it conveyed Lincoln down the long Chesapeake Bay to Hampton Roads, Virginia, in February 1865, for a conference with Confederate negotiators (including Confederate Vice President Alexander Stevens) looking to end the war. McKibbin removed the chairs, desk, and two Japanese vases that Lincoln and the Southern representatives had used aboard the old steamboat and set them in the living room of the Marshall mansion house as a historical shrine to the martyred president.[35]

The use of history was crucial for the success of Marshall Hall as a site for large gatherings. The authority of the past suppressed the entertainment venue's potentially depraving influence on youths of innocent experience and adults of weak character. McKibbin trumped up Marshall Hall's history, then overdetermined it with furniture

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[34] "May Day at Marshall Hall," 30 April 1892: 7; "Obtained Two Deeds," 26. A quick comparison with the history presented in the early chapters of the present report will show just how spurious McKibbin's historical account was.

[35] "Steamer River Queen," 30 April 1892: 4; James C. Wilfong, Jr., "Some Notes on Marshall Hall," Laurel *News-Leader*, 10 January 1957, 3. Wilfong based his article on an unnamed report from the Prince George's *Inquirer*, 1 August 1902. MVMHSC spent more than $16,000 renovating the old steamer.

touched by the secular saint Lincoln, to balance the fears of religious and upright patrons. This balancing act was crucial in attracting certain groups of visitors. Religious organizations maintained strict limits on leisure behavior at the turn of the century, and long after. Into the 1920s, for example, the Methodist church forbade such activities as "dancing, playing at games of chance; attending theaters, horse-races, circuses, dancing parties, or patronizing dancing-schools, or taking such other amusements as are obviously of misleading or questionable moral tendency...."[36] The historical patina also was crucial in drawing to the grounds of Marshall Hall political groups that could justify use of the site as something more than a mere pleasure zone.

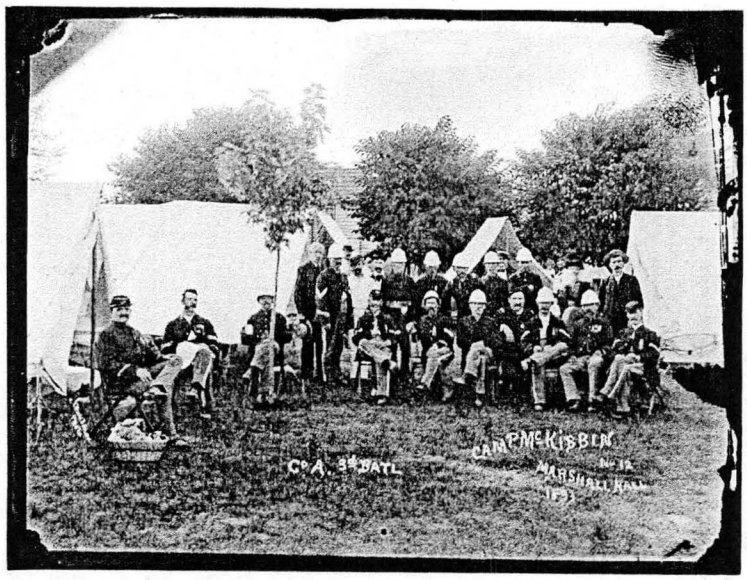
But the site's success was also highly dependent on keeping pace with the latest of popular trends in entertainment. McKibbin constantly altered the grounds and the attractions of Marshall Hall to increase attendance. In 1891, for example, MVMHSC added a dance pavilion to the picnic grounds. The dance floor, 125 by 65 feet, was one of the largest in the United States at that time. Surrounding the floor was a gallery promenade, eight feet wide. To maximize comfort and vistas, the walls were capped halfway up, leaving long views of the Potomac River for the dancers as they twirled around the spacious interior.[37] McKibbin opened the 1891 summer season by dedicating the new pavilion on May 14 at a reunion gathering of California forty-niners. Apparently, construction was not complete, for McKibbin dedicated the pavilion a second time on July 11. On that day, Professor Schroeder's Orchestra played for dancers

[36] Rules devised by the Methodist General Conference of 1872, meeting in Brooklyn, New York, cited in "Lifting the Methodist Amusement Ban," *Literary Digest* 81 (26 April 1924), 33.

[37] "All Skilled Carvers," 2; "Marshall Hall's New Pavilion Dedication" 11 July 1891: 5; "Midsummer Festival at Marshall Hall," 12 August 1891: 8; "Holiday at Marshall Hall," 5 July 1897: 10.

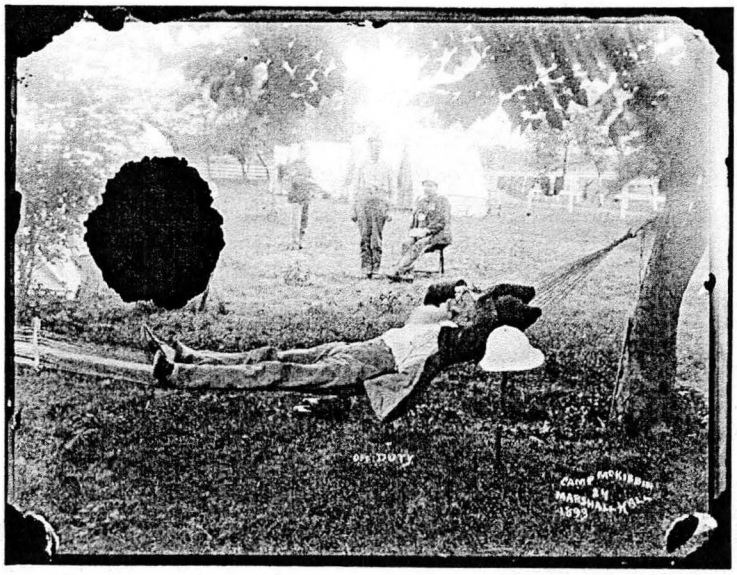
all day and into the night. The Washington Mandolin, Banjo, and Guitar Club serenaded voyagers on the Corcoran and a new MVMHSC ship, the "Macalester," while also relieving Schroeder's players at the dance pavilion. The evening was topped off with a grand ball that no doubt was mobbed by excited Washingtonians.

McKibbin underscored the historical significance of Marshall Hall by hosting numerous military encampments whose soldiers staged mock battles. In the summer of 1893, for instance, 140 men of the Third Battalion" of the District National Guard set up "Camp McKibbin" on one of the great lawn s near the house.




Company A, Third Battalion, Camp McKibbin, 1893

(Library of Congress)




"Off Duty at Camp McKibbin, Marshall Hall, 1893"

(Library of Congress)

They pitched tents, took rifle and drill practice, staged a dress parade for more than 2,000 spectators, and held numerous "sham" battles. Many of these shams were recreations of historic events, such as Sheridan's famous ride to rally Union troops at Chickamauga in October 1864. Members of the 8th and 9th US Cavalry camped out at Marshall Hall in the summer of 1894 and performed feats of horse-back riding that rivaled those of the most popular entertainments of the day. According to an enraptured reporter for the Washington *Post* "The impromptu bareback drills and feats of horsemanship by these troopers surpass even Buffalo Bill's famous Wild West Show." These encampments gave rise to some tensions with local residents. Members of the Third Battalion were distressed that they had not located two local men named Clagett and Depro who had insulted some of the soldiers' wives and attacked two of the Guardsmen. When camp broke on a Sunday without the "local toughs" having been captured, the *Post* reported

that there was "considerable sorrow in camp that the Sabbath could not be celebrated by a lynching."[38]

Groups of all sorts made Marshall Hall the destination of summer excursions, in even greater variety than during the era of Little's picnic grove. The site became a sort of register of the proliferation of organization building in the Gilded Age of the late 1800s. Memorable dates, for instance, drew particular types of Washingtonians. The Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution, for example, joined forces to celebrate the 118th anniversary of Ethan Allen's victory at Fort Ticonderoga during the American Revolution. They advertised widely to encourage members of the two organizations and their families to sail to Marshall Hall on the "Macalester" on May 10, 1893, for a series of related festivities. The Knights of Labor sponsored a Labor Day festival in September 1902 for 3,500 of its members, including representatives of numerous trades: carpenters, house painters, musicians, mineral water drivers, bakers, plasterers, mixed clerks, metallic and sheet iron workers, bakers' drivers, mixed wall scrapers, engineers, metal lathers, and fresco painters. This "distinctively family crowd," according to the *Post*, enjoyed a multitude of then-popular activities. There was a pig chase, an apple race, a three-legged race, a hundred-yard dash, a girls' fifty-yard race, a boys' egg race, and a sausage-eating contest. The big event of the day was the pig chase in which twelve young men battled each other to win both the pig and the token $1.50 prize.[39]

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[38] "Militia in Camp," 31 July 1893: 8; "Old Times on the Potomac," 19 August 1893: 2; "Ready for the Camp," 27 July 1894: 8; "Marshall Hall as a Military Post," 27 July 1894: 8; "Soldiers Play at War," 1 August 1894: 2; "Strike Tents To-Day," 6 August 1894: 5.
[39] "Ethan Allen's Victory: Its 118th Anniversary to Be Observed by Sons of the American Revolution," 23 April 1893: 10; "Knights of Labor Outing," 2 September 1902: 2.

Marshall Hall served other groups as well. Aldisa Schrack, Col. McKibbin's long-time assistant manager, arranged an annual visit by the city's orphans, bringing hundreds of young boys out for a day of nature play every July through the early 1890s.[40] In 1892, German immigrants used the services of MVMHSC to celebrate their loyalty both to the fatherland and to their new homeland. The North American Turnerbund (a German-American immigrant/patriotic society that advocated gymnastics and other physical activities) sailed on the "Macalester" to Mount Vernon to pay their respects to George Washington. In the shadow of the first president's home, Hugo Muench, president of the Turnerbund's national organization, called on all those present to "renew our pledges of unselfish devotion to human liberty and enlightened patriotism." He urged the audience to hold dear Washington's example of "firm and unswerving devotion to public duty, his urbane bearing and kindly consideration toward those whom rank had placed beneath him, his modesty of personal demeanor, and, last and greatest of all, that grand republican spirit which made him spurn the thought of personal dictatorship or crowned royalty, and to voluntarily retire at the conclusion of two terms at the head of this country's Government to the no less exalted duties of private citizenship." After this moment of homage, the assembled throng of German Americans hopped back onto the Macalester, jumped across the Potomac to Marshall Hall, and there, according to a *Post* article, "they spent the afternoon and evening in a genuine German good time." The crowd swelled as the River Queen brought down a second boat load of the German Americans. The members of the Turnerbund then offered a gymnastic exhibition that included such activities as calisthenics, vaulting, and running. The festivities were

[40] "Col. M'Kibben Wedded," 5; "Orphans at Marshall Hall," 22 July 1892: 7.

capped off by the prize bowling contest sponsored by the Washington Saengerbund Bowling Club. Such events apparently happened with some regularity. Fifteen years later, for instance, more than 1,000 German immigrants of the United German Societies (representing some twenty-three different social organizations) traveled to Marshall Hall for a day-long excursion that included singing German songs, eating food from the old country, and traditional games and pastimes.[41]

The Knights of Pythias used Marshall Hall in the summer of 1893 to raise funds for its mission of fostering universal peace and understanding. To attract a large audience, the Knights staged William Shakespeare's play *As You Like It*. Pythian Charles B. Hanford traveled to New York to engage actors for the production, among whom were Edwin Booth's nephew Creson Clarke and Alberta Gallatin, a nationally acclaimed actress and granddaughter of Albert Gallatin, Virginia signer of the Declaration of Independence.

[41] "At Washington's Tomb," 23 June 1892: 5; "1,000 at Germania Picnic," 17 August 1908: 5.




Alberta Gallatin in *The Emotional Actress* (c. 1906)

(Library of Congress)

The cast was supported by an orchestra of thirty-five musicians. A special feature of the presentation was that the outdoor stage was to be "brilliantly lighted with electricity." The social significance of the event was underscored by the fact that one of the leading patrons of the event was the widow of the Civil War general and Republican politician, John A. Logan.[42]

Outdoor meals of all sorts in the nineteenth century often revolved around a local or regional delicacy.[43] This was particularly true at Marshall Hall. The Chesapeake

[42] "A Play Given as of Old: 'As You Like It' to be Presented at Marshall Hall," 6 September1893: 5.
[43] Braden, *Leisure and Entertainment*, 26.

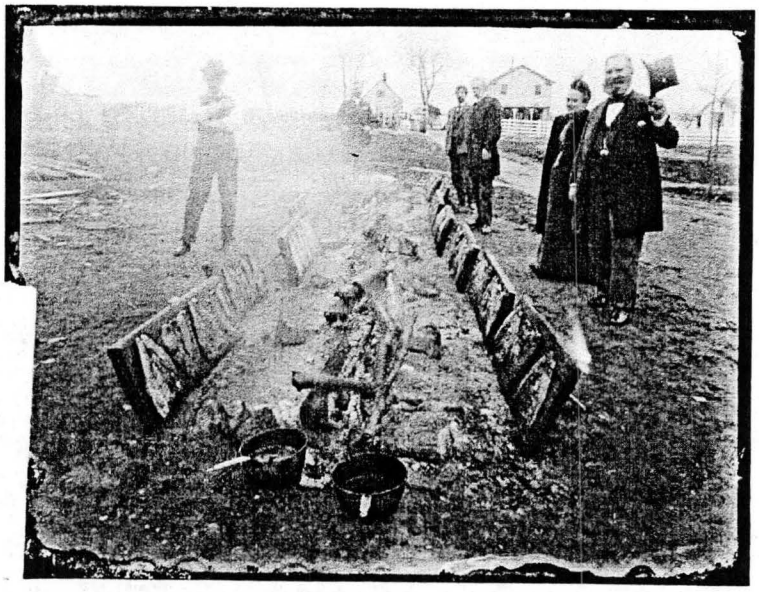
region was renowned in the late nineteenth century for its vast production of shad.[44] Shad, which typically weighs between two and three pounds, is a type of herring that comes upriver to spawn in the spring, with the season for capturing and cooking shad limited chiefly to the month of May. But during that month, McKibbin made shad into a famous regional treat.[45] "Liverpool," Marshall Hall's "celebrated negro cook" (as the Washington *Post* referred to him), used purportedly ancient methods to create a dish that was as crucial to Marshall Hall's fame as was its proximity to Mount Vernon.

Liverpool employed a method to cook the shad called "planking" that purportedly had been devised by the Piscattaway, picked up by Joshua Marshall, then passed down to succeeding generations of Marshalls and their slaves, until the method was finally mastered by Liverpool. But reports of the introduction of shad planking suggest that it was Liverpool who introduced the method at Marshall Hall. As the *Post* noted in 1902, for instance, "It was not, however, until the captain [Blake] made a summer resort out of the place, and employed 'Liverpool' ... that planked shad became a feature of the place."[46] Planking was not only a delicious method, it was also visually striking.

Liverpool organized a large pyre of oak limbs, each twenty to thirty feet long. He took hundreds of shad caught only hours before just off the shore in the Potomac and stretched them on oak planks that had been used and reused in the planking process for several years.

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[44] The late nineteenth century represented the peak in shad production. It has steadily declined since then.
[45] "Down the River," 10.
[46] "Obtained Two Deeds," 26.



Shad Planking, 1895

Photographer: William Cruikshank

(Library of Congress)

Then, as a *Post* reporter described the scene, "[a]t intervals two stout colored men, inured by long practice to the heat, moved actively from plant to plank dabbing or basting the sizzling fish with a tempting mixture of sherry and Worcestershire sauce..." (This mixture was Liverpool's prized power: he kept it secret, no doubt to increase the excitement over the dish, but also to retain some measure of power over his employers.) Once the slow cooking process was complete, Liverpool decorated the fish with flowers, such as spireas, yellow roses, and snowballs, and passed the dishes on to waiters who served the desperately hungry throng of visitors.[47]

Shad plankings was only one of several ways Marshall Hall visitors could satisfy of their gustatory cravings. McKibbin had catered numerous excursions through the late

[47] "All Skilled Carvers," 2.

1880s and early 1890s.[48] Then, in 1893, McKibbin opened a permanent restaurant next to the colonial house. The "café," as contemporary reports refer to it, offered two methods of dining: the "old arrangement of the European plan" (food items served à la carte) and a "regular dinner" available for the flat rate of 75¢. On June 15, 1893, a visitor to the café could choose from a menu of tomato and chicken soups; Spanish mackerel, trout, and salt water tailer [bluefish]; roulette of lamb w tomato sauce; prime rib of beef and roasted spring lamb; potatoes, beets, tomatoes, green peas; tea, coffee; English plum pudding.[49]

To work up an appetite for so much food, visitors to Marshall Hall played all sorts of sports on the land and in the river. Amateur baseball teams met on the lawn in civil combat.[50] Swimmers competed for significant prizes. Dr. F.W. Greenfell (the District's swim champion), for example, defeated the Navy's former champion, J.J. McCarthy in both the 100- and 250-yard races held on September 5, 1896. Greenfell carried home both a gold medal and the $1,000 wager he had made with McCarthy. More than 2,000 spectators gathered on the banks of the Potomac at Marshall Hall to witness the Greenfell-McCarthy races. But most of the contests were spontaneous.

The most celebrated sporting event at Marshall Hall occurred every year. McKibbin and Blake closed every summer season with a grand entertainment that wove together Maryland's heritage of horse racing and two strands of the state's mythic history, slavery and Indians. The gala event was a tournament with youths on horses pointing wooden lances at tiny rings hung along a dirt course, with the winner claiming

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[48] See, e.g., the arrangements made for the reunion of the California pioneers of 1849, "All Skilled Carvers," 2.
[49] "Menu at Marshall Hall," 15 June 1893: 4.
[50] "Amateur Baseball," 20 August 1892: 6.

the right to name his lady. These "Gala Days" harkened to symbols of the Old South, with its hoary claims to standing as the last bastion of the chivalric code of armor-clad feudal knights.[51] But McKibbin was not satisfied with this one set of myths. So he wove into his history of Marshall Hall the claim that the heralded Emperor of the Piscattaway, John Ackatamaka (the purported Indian realtor who sold Joshua Marshall the second deed to Marshall Hall), had founded the tradition of manly sports there. According to the *Post*'s reporter, the emperor

> gathered together on the green lawns the most athletic of the young braves from all the neighboring nations of Indians and gave prizes of rich ornaments, with bows and arrows of elegant workmanship, to those who excelled in feats of strength and expertness. This annual custom, it is recorded, continued throughout the colonial period of Marshall Hall's history, varied, of course, by the higher civilization of the gentry who came to the green lawns upon the invitation of the Marshall who at the time was proprietary lord of the manor.[52]

Knights and ladies and the rabble of the Chesapeake realm gathered at the end of each summer (usually the first Wednesday of September) beginning in 1894.[53] They came to see the medieval dress, witness the horsemanship of local young men, and revel in the pomp and circumstance of tournament officials, local politicians, music concerts, and a fancy ball. The day got underway just after noon. As many as twenty young men with *noms de guerre* such as "Maryland Boy," "Potomac," "Sweepstakes," and the enigmatic "In-the-eleventh-hour" brought their favorite horses and lined up for the

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[51] See, for instance, Mark famous Twain's gripe about Sir Walter Scott's influence on the South in *Life on the Mississippi*.

[52] "Gala Days at Marshall Hall," 4 September 1892: 3.

[53] "Gala Days at Marshall Hall," 3. Marshall Hall advertisements suggest the 1884 date as the first tournament. This would have coincided with Blake and McKibbin's purchase of the property. But historian Jason Rhodes lists 1895 as the first year of the tournament [*Maryland's Amusement Parks* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia, 2005), 94]. It may be that he obtained this date from that found in the SMSC's finding aid for Marshall Hall (p. 4). But this document offers no proof for the claim.

competition. Although encouraged by tournament officials to dress in period costume, the riders apparently preferred to wear contemporary clothes. Once on their horses, however, they rode like knights on the ancient lists. They clutched their lances, galloped hard round the course, and tilted at tiny rings only one inch in diameter. Honored guests officiated over the list -- men such as W.T. Dement, a renowned veteran of the Civil War. Dement and his successors dressed in fancifully imagined costumes dripping with plumage and draped with a crimson sash, supposedly reminiscent of King Arthur's court. The five knights with the greatest number of rings captured on their lances won the field, a small purse, and, most importantly, the right to crown the "lady" of their choice. Once the ladies were crowned, the honored orator of the day addressed the time traveling throng. Sometimes they spoke to political issues of the day, but most often they paid homage to the chivalric deeds and legends of the days when dragons challenged knights who sat at vast round tables and pulled swords from stones. Judge Edward Stake, for example, gave the 1899 oration. According to the *Post*, he "referred to the history of knight errantry from the time of the Crusades to the day of Don Quixote. He passed high compliments on the sport, and advocated the theory that it encouraged chivalry and respect for noble womanhood." The tournament's court led a procession into the pavilion where knights and their ladies danced to a wide variety of songs that Sir Lancelot and Guinnevere could never have imagined—a number of them with titles meant to recall the time-dislodged to the present, titles such as "The Green Lawns of Marshall Hall," or "Macalester, Queen of the Waves," or "I Dreamed I Dwelt at Marshall Hall." The dancing ceased only once during the course of the evening, when a beplumed official would halt the merriment for a solemn ceremony. He charged all present to choose the

annual "queen of love and beauty." The queen chosen, the dancing resumed until the dancers no longer could lift their feet another step. Toward 11:00, all turned their attention to the river. There, McKibbin and Blake concluded the medieval evening with a decidedly anachronistic fire works barrage.[54]

The dancers in the pavilion were only a small part of the crowd. As many as 8,000 people thronged Marshall Hall to take part in and witness the festivities in the 1890s. They were a diverse lot, coming from surrounding Charles County, neighboring Prince George's County, the District, and distant parts of Maryland. For the country jakes, the event was the highpoint of the year. It was in effect a harvest celebration. The locals arrived, not by boat of course, but by horse-drawn vehicles. The *Post* reported in 1899 that "The Maryland farmer was there with the old family carriage, with its bevy of pretty girls and freckle-nosed boys. The young gallants from the country had their best sidebar buggles and the best-looking damsels of the countryside." And whether one lived nearby or up the river in the nation's capital, one of the key draws was the lure of gambling on which knights would capture the most rings. The sons of the Maryland farmer tended to take the city fellows' cash, because, as a reporter observed, "their knowledge of the skill of the various horsemen made them walking 'dope books.'" The

[54] "A Tournament at Marshall Hall," 2 September 1890: 7; "The Marshall Hall Tournament," 3 September 1890: 6; "Riding at Three Rings: A Score of Knights Appear in the Marshall Hall Tournament," 5 September 1890: 5; "Tournament Dances at Marshall Hall," 2 September 1891: 5; "Knights of the Tourney: The Days of Chivalry Revived at Historic Marshall Hall," 8 September 1892: 5; "Gala Day Down the River," 30 August 1893: 5; "As in Chivalric Days: Knights Joust for Fair Ladies at Marshall Hall," 29 August 1895: 2; "All Eager for Prize: Gallant Knights in the Tourney at Marshall Hall," 24 August 1899: 4. For more on the history of jousting in Maryland in the nineteenth-century, see Kelley N. Seay, "Jousting and the Evolution of Southernness in Maryland," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 99 (Spring 2004): 51-79.

victorious knights, no matter the level of stakes bet on their skills, took home only a modest prize. The first place finisher in 1899 received, for instance, a modest $43.20.[55]

The hint of illicit dealings suggested by the tournament gambling pointed to a larger problem Blake and McKibbin faced in maintaining their audience. The pair constantly feared that they were one scandal away from disaster. Their advertisements emphasized that the boats of the MVMHSC and the Marshall Hall site itself were free of rakes and grifters. They must have been chagrined, then, to see the headline in the July 13, 1892, edition of the Washington *Post*: "Bertha's in a Plight: So Is Her Sweetheart She Picked up at Marshall Hall." The article detailed a secret affair between 26-year-old Peter Voight and Bertha Harbaugh, a minor. The pair met during the July 4 festivities at Marshall Hall, and apparently fell in love at first sight. They spent the afternoon together, and the next evening as well. But too many prying eyes in the city prevented them from consummating their relationship. So, Bertha lied to her parents the following Sunday and claimed she was going to church. Instead, she met Peter. The two boarded the "Macalester" and chugged down the Potomac toward Marshall Hall—and into infamy. After disembarking from the Macalaster onto the Marshall Hall wharf, giddy with anticipation, the two youths waltzed past the dance pavilion, ignored the picnic tables, and passed up the history lesson that hung from the Marshall family mansion. Then, as the *Post* report chastely put it, they "took a stroll in the country, and it was here that the young lady took her first downward step." The following day, Bertha's mother discovered her daughter's true Sunday destination and her purpose in going there. Within days the police arrested Peter for "carnal knowledge of a female under sixteen years of

[55] "Gala Day Down the River,"24 August 1899: 4, "All Eager for Prize: Gallant Knights in the Tourney at Marshall Hall," 5.

age." By early August, the *Post* reported that the couple had married and that, as a sort of wedding present, Bertha's mother had dropped the charges against her new son-in-law. [56]

Yet such scandals paled in comparison to the woes McKibbin and Blake began to face by the mid 1890s. Their attempts to boost attendance at Marshall Hall, while apparently successful in terms of absolute numbers, had only increased their burden of debt. In April 1893, they borrowed $25,000 to shore up their finances in advance of the coming summer season.[57] They were forced to borrow more than $15,000 the following year to pay off expenses related to building and furnishing the steamboat, the "Charles Macalester," some years earlier. [58] Their fortunes worsened over the next two years, and in March 1896, McKibbin and Blake were forced to sell Marshall Hall at auction to satisfy their debts.[59] A syndicate of District businessmen, represented by attorney Henry F. Woodward, bought the site for $46,000. But McKibbin and Blake did not lose Marshall Hall. Woodward's syndicate actually included Blake and other entrepreneurs who were already invested in MVMHSC. Once the auction was complete, the syndicate turned around and sold Marshall Hall back to Blake for a nominal price of $1.00.

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[56] "Bertha's in a Plight: So Is Her Sweetheart She Picked up at Marshall Hall," 13 July 1892: 2; "The Wrong Righted by Marriage," 6 August 1892:4. The latter article ended on an ominous note, however: Peter and Bertha "were not yet living together,... the girl being with her mother, while Voight is stopping at Meyer's Hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue."

[57] Deed of Trust, MVMHSC to James Edwards and Job Bernard, Administrators for Central National Bank (William E. Clark as beneficiary), Charles County Land Records, Liber JST 3: 541-53.

[58] Charles County Land Records, Liber JST 6: 390-400. They apparently paid off this debt by the end of the year. See Charles County Land Records, Liber JST 7: 243.

[59] The D.C. court actually ordered MVMHSC to sell Marshall Hall the previous year, in the summer of 1895. But when no bids came in, the court delayed the auction for a year ["Sale of Marshall Hall," 29 March 1896: 11].

These financial maneuvers were complicated by, and in part were necessitated by, a separate crisis. McKibbin had been diagnosed with Bright's disease, an illness of the kidneys, in 1895. Worse, as he sank toward death in the summer of 1896, his young wife Aldisia succumbed to her own months-long illness. She died on June 4, 1896, three months shy of her fifth wedding anniversary.[60] Colonel McKibbin, bereft over her death, mired in debt, and ravaged by the Bright's, died only a short while later, on July 2, 1896.[61]

The next several years were rough for Captain Blake. He did not become the sole master of the Mount Vernon and Marshall Hall Steamboat Company and its prime piece of real estate. Rather, he presided over the ruins of the corporation with a new board of directors under the close supervision of an array of creditors. Numerous court documents reveal that the company skirted bankruptcy often, was ensnared in debt, and slipped into receivership by 1897.[62] Levi Blake lived another seven years. But by the time of his death he no longer controlled the company he had built up with McKibbin. Marshall Hall and the steamboats of the MVMHSC passed out of his control. The properties, throughout the twentieth century, would never again have the aura of domestic hospitality so sought after by McKibbin and Blake. The boats, the mansion, the picnic groves, and the "appliances of entertainment" would be instead merely small parts of larger corporations, investments to be bought and sold and evaluated for their contributions to accountants' ledger sheets.

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[60] "Death of Mrs. Joseph C. McKibbin," 5 June 1896: 7.
[61] "Col. M'Kibbin Is Dead," 3 July 1896: 4.
[62] "Capt. Blake to Succeed Col. McKibbin," 11 August 1896: 10; Charles County Land Records, Liber JST 8: 499ff; Liber JST 9: 120-30; JST 9: 202; Supreme Court of the District of Col., in Equity Cause 18,539, in Docket 43, June 15, 1897; JST 9: 688-97; "Creditor's Petition Granted," 19 April 1898; "Order to Receivers," 30 June 1898: 10.

# Chapter 10

## *From Resort to Amusement Park*

Marshall Hall was no Coney Island. The first three amusement parks conjured up in that "Sodom by the Sea"—Sea Lion Park in 1895, Luna Park in 1903, and Dreamland in 1904—certainly had some influence on the evolution of the amusement park on the Potomac. [1] But the massive fantasy worlds at Coney had as much similarity to Marshall Hall as a fire-breathing dragon has to a chameleon. They were of the same phylum of entertainment perhaps, but hardly the same species.

The Coney Island parks formulated an ethos vastly different from Marshall Hall's, and catered to a different clientele. They offered terrifying physical thrills, enthralling spectacles of natural and manmade disasters, and titillating activities that lurched men and women into uncommonly intimate contact with both friends and strangers. The attraction of Coney was "movement, movement, movement everywhere," according to Frederick Thompson, the creator of Luna Park.[2] The overarching aim of Luna and the other parks, as historian Woody Register put it, was to allow adults to engage "in a dramatic reenactment of their lost juvenile primitivism."[3] To enable adults in their quests

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[1] "Sodom by the Sea" was a common epithet used by moralists to condemn the vice they believed to be endemic to these early amusement parks.
[2] Cited in Woody Register, *The Kid of Coney Island: Fred Thompson and the Rise of American Amusements* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 86.
[3] Register, *Kid of Coney Island*, 116.

for their inner Peter Pans, Thompson and his Coney competitors created enveloping fantasy environments. These mysterious worlds were, again according to Register, "composed of nonstop action, unceasing variety and novelty, pleasures without end, unlimited abundance."[4] In short, there was a freneticism at Coney Island that was neither matched nor attempted by the amusement park at Marshall Hall.

Marshall Hall was much more like the hundreds of smaller, local parks that sprang up around most of the nation's cities after 1900. Whereas Dreamland and the other Coney Island parks created an all-embracing "architecture of pleasure," in historian John Kasson's apt phrase, the smaller local parks offered instead a diverting landscape of entertainment. Whereas Coney was sensual, the smaller parks were convivial. Whereas Coney intensified modern feelings of technological speed and urban masses, the smaller parks fostered older sentiments of levity and fraternity. The local parks reflected their origins in the old picnic groves and rural retreats. Most could be found on the outskirts of cities at the end of trolley lines, thus linking themselves to an idealized rural past.[5] The buildings tended to be of a much simpler design scheme, smaller and more functional than the "oriental orgasmic" (again Kasson) spectacles of Coney. Some of the local parks continued to allow picnicking (indeed, Kennywood Park outside of Pittsburgh still does). Virtually all, however, blended in the five hallmarks of the modern amusement park's mechanized entertainment: a carousel of gaily painted beasts forever chasing one another round and round, a spinning Ferris wheel, a clacking-zipping-hurtling roller

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[4] Register, *Kid of Coney Island*, 11.

[5] Douglas V. Shaw, "Making Leisure Pay: Street Railway Owned Amusement Parks in the United States, 1900-1925," *Journal of Cultural Economics* 10:2 (December 1986): 67-81. Glen Echo, Maryland, was such a trolley park.

coaster, and an arcade brimming with all manner of mechanical games of chance and skill.[6]

While Marshall Hall exemplified all these key elements of the twentieth-century amusement park, it also differed in several key aspects. The park by the Potomac conveyed the vestiges of older forms of entertainment, particularly of a rural nature. Field sports, river travel, shooting galleries, and equine sports such as jousting all took place in a largely bucolic setting. Marshall Hall was not fenced in—its edges blended into vistas of the Potomac, the surrounding stands of ancient trees, and the fields of tobacco plants lolling in the Chesapeake sun. Most other parks were fully integrated into that most urban phenomenon: the suburb. Urban transport companies built amusement parks at the end of their suburban rail lines to drum up ridership during evenings and weekends, times outside the work-related rush hours. Moreover, whereas the vast majority of other parks fully embraced the Coney notion of novelty, Marshall Hall bore at its very heart a constant reminder of the nation's colonial past. The Marshall family's ancestral home stood amid the din and whir of the "appliances of entertainment," offering a wide veranda (added to the house by the turn of the century) where tired revelers could sway gently forward and back on rocking chairs, consume their cotton candy, drink their sodas, ponder whether George Washington would have ridden the roller coaster with his hands gripping the safety bar or thrown up over his head to prove his courage in

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[6] Judith A. Adams, *The American Amusement Park Industry* (Boston: Twayne, 1991), 59; Karal Ann Marling, "Thrills and Nostalgia: The Amusement Parks of Hennepin County," *Hennepin History* 49.4 (Fall 1990): 13-22. For a concise history of four local parks, see Adams, *American Amusement Park Industry*, 68-83. See also David Nasaw, *Going Out: The Rise and Fall of Public Amusements* (New York: Basic, 1993), ch. 7: "The Summer Show."

whipping down the steep and creaky wooden hills. Frivolity at Marshall Hall Amusement Park was always underwritten by American history.

The fun at Marshall Hall throughout its sixty-year run as an amusement park, however, cannot hide the fact that it was a money-making venture—or at least that was the hope of numerous investors. After Joseph McKibbin's death, the park passed through a series of owners and managers in a variety of complex relationships to one another. From the mid 1890s until the park's demise in the 1970s, Marshall Hall's financial state resembled nothing more than the cars of its roller coaster. The park climbed the hills of profit, yanked up by precarious chains of loans and creative financing. Once reaching the summit, it never rested. It inevitably plunged downward toward seeming ruin only to be jerked from oblivion by a last-second turn. But unlike the roller coaster, there was no safe end to Marshall Hall's financial ups and downs. The park foundered in the 1970s, without rage at the dying of the colored lights, without fierce tears over the silencing of the carousel's calliope.

The various owners of Marshall Hall discovered that the business of "amusing the million" was excruciatingly difficult.[7] Their product was ephemeral. Their audiences were fleeting and fickle. Their season was quite short, lasting only for the summer months. The inchoate practice of amusing people hardly provided a sound basis for solid business decisions. And beyond the intrinsic dilemmas of finding ways to entice thousands of paying customers down the river each summer, Marshall Hall competed for leisure dollars with the growing array of entertainment media and venues developed over the twentieth century. First there were the rival area amusement parks, from Glen Echo

[7] The phrase "amusing the million" is the title of an article by Frederick Thompson in *Everybody's Magazine* 19 (September 1908): 378.

on the other side of the District of Columbia to River View Park, situated on the Potomac above Marshall Hall and thus closer to Washington. Later there would be the new generation of theme parks such as Six Flags, King's Dominion, and Disneyworld. Then there were the electronic media of film and television. Through it all, the owners and operators of Marshall Hall slowly developed their park, within their numerous constraints, in a gradual evolution of entertainment—the park was an increasingly endangered beast searching in its plodding way for new methods to draw customers and to turn a profit. For a brief few years in the 1950s, the park's managers hit upon a combination of activities that took Marshall Hall to a new summit, and seemed to spearhead the promise of a wildly successful future to rival Las Vegas, the Catskills, and the Poconos as a regional center of nightclubs, gambling, and resort entertainment. But the moment was brief, the cars paused at the summit then careened toward oblivion in a series of corporate conflicts and legal battles.

Amusement was a potentially lucrative business in the early twentieth century. But it was also extremely chancy. A succession of new owners transformed Marshall Hall from its earlier organization as a rather informal affair into a corporate enterprise. They experimented with finding new audiences and different forms of amusement. All the while they competed with other types of amusement parks in a constant battle for a public identity. One the one hand, the new managers of Marshall Hall tried to style themselves after some aspects of the much larger amusement venues at places such as Coney Island. On the other hand, they struggled to maintain a unique identity anchored always in the old mansion house of Marshall Hall.

**The Business of Amusement: Marshall Hall Park in the Early Twentieth Century**

A syndicate of Washington, D.C., bankers and lawyers saved Marshall Hall from bankruptcy in the two years following Joseph McKibbin's last days. The group, led by Washington lawyer Henry F. Woodard, bought the MVMHSC at auction in for $46,000 in March 1898.[8] The syndicate thereby staved off the organization's creditors and brought the company out of a receivership that had lasted more than a year. The purchase led the Washington *Post* to declare that, according to one headline, Marshall Hall was "To Continue as [a] River Resort." This sanguine assertion avoided mention of a continuing financial dilemma: the park's future was still clouded by the high cost of running and transforming the park into an up-to-date amusement venue. Two things seemed crucial to Woodard and his partners in making MVMHSC solvent. First, they need to retain the corporation's figurehead, "Captain" Levi Lowell Blake. To give the impression that the company was still under the captain's guiding hand, Woodard sold Marshall Hall back to MVMHSC for the nominal price of $10.00.[9] Blake continued on, then, as the symbolic commander of the enterprise, although his participation in the business of the park was as slight as his captaining of the boats of the MVMHSC. His position in both was mostly ceremonial. The second vital move was to raise capital to invest in park improvements. With the ownership of the park and the ships now settled,

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[8] "Sale of Marshall Hall," 29 March 1898: 11; "To Continue as River Resort," 31 March 1898: 12; "Creditor's Petition Granted," 19 April 1898: 10; "Order to Receivers," 30 June 1898: 10. Hereafter, all newspaper articles are from the *Post* unless otherwise noted.

[9] Charles County Land Records, Liber BGS 9: 1, 11. The various financial transactions surrounding these purchases and assigns can be traced in the following Charles County Land Records; Liber JST 5: 541-53; Liber JST 6: 390-400; Liber JST 7: 243; Liber JST 8: 499ff.; Liber JST 8: 689; Liber JST 9: 120-30; JST 9: 202. The debts that McKibbin and Blake took in 1895 would not be satisfied until 1917.

Woodard's MVMHSC took out a promissory note on itself for $15,000. In this transaction, a new figure in the ownership of Marshall Hall entered the picture. The legal papers recording the loan listed a new president of MVMHSC: Frederick Mertens.

### *The Mertens Family: Owners of Marshall Hall*

Somewhere around 1900, the Mertens family of western Maryland became deeply involved in the ownership and management of the amusement park and the 377 acres that John M. Little had bought from the Marshall family in 1867 and then sold to McKibbin and Blake in 1884. The members of the Mertens family, like all the others after 1867, were not locals. They came from the west. The patriarch of the family, Frederick, was a German immigrant who settled in Cumberland, Maryland, in 1852 after wandering from Germany through South America to New York following the boat-building business. He quickly established a company that constructed various vessels, particularly for transport along the C&O Canal, which terminated at Cumberland. Mertens's choice of Cumberland was fortuitous. The city boomed after the Civil War, and emerged by the 1880s as Maryland's second most populous city.[10] Mertens took advantage of this rapid growth by branching out into other industries, such as coal and lumber. He died in 1886 and left a vast fortune to his widow Mary and his six children.[11] Mertens's eldest son, Frederick, Jr., seems to have been intent on expanding the family's fortunes even further. He and his brothers added cement production and a glass factory to the family's business

[10] Amanda Paul, *Cumberland* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia, 2003), 17. Mertens and Sons bought the lumber concern of Peter Hein, another German immigrant, in 1885 on Hein's retirement [*Cumberland Times*, 11 July 1886].
[11] Al Feldstein, *Gone But Not Forgotten*, vol.1 (Cumberland, Md.: Commercial Press Printing Co., 1988), 80

empire.[12] This empire was severely disrupted by the great flood of 1889 that destroyed the C&O Canal at Cumberland.[13] The canal was inoperable for a year and a half, and the canal company went bankrupt. The B&O Railroad, long a rival for Cumberland's burgeoning transportation needs, took away most of the canal's business. Production of canal craft at the Mertens' boatyard dwindled to nothing. But Frederick Mertens, Jr., saw this as an opportunity rather than a setback. He expanded the family's holdings in other locales beyond Cumberland. By the early twentieth century, the Washington *Post* could declare the Mertens family "the richest in Western Maryland," with interests in Maryland, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia.[14] As a long-time waterman who knew the C&O Canal and the Potomac River well, Frederick Mertens, Jr., would have been keenly aware of the prospects afforded by Marshall Hall. By 1904, Mertens had taken over the ownership of the park and the land on which it sat.

Mertens would exert much influence over Marshall Hall for the next thirty years. He was the MVMHSC president into the 1930s. Yet even his wealth could not put Marshall Hall on solid economic footing. The park continually required infusions of capital from loans. The precarious financial nature of the amusement business eventually drove Mertens from active involvement in the management of the Marshall Hall Park.

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[12] Charles Carroll Brown, *Directory of American Cement Industries*, 4th ed. (Indianapolis: Municipal Engineering Co.,'1906), 193. And in 1889 Frederick Mertens, Jr. bought the Warren Glassworks in Cumberland, and set up the Southern Glass Co., changing the name to the Queen City Glass Co in November 1890. The company made flint glass for a variety of beverages, foods, and condiments, inc. beer, soda, pickles, ketchup, candy, as well as vials for medicine. "Warren Glass Works," http://www.cumberlandglass.org/warren.htm.

[13] "The Canal Arrives in Cumberland," http://www.nps.gov/choh/historyculture/thecanalarrivesincumberland.htm.

[14] "Maryland Obituary—Mary Mertens," 27 May 1904: 11.

Beyond this bare outline of the financial state of the MVMHSC, little more can be said with any certainty. The economic history of Marshall Hall is difficult to piece together. The principles were either lax in recording deeds and other transactions, or intent on obscuring them for some reason. The progression of ownership and management of the park is made more confusing by the fact that, during the early decades of the twentieth century, the real property of Marshall Hall was separated from the corporate property of "Marshall Hall Park." One entity owned and managed the appliances of entertainment in the park, while another owned and managed the real estate beneath the spectral amusement corporation.

**Finding Audiences: Appealing to Children in Fits and Starts**

The men who operated Marshall Hall—from McKibbin in the 1880s to Fred A. Eberle in the 1910s and 1920s—faced a perennial challenge: enticing Washingtonians to take the long boat ride down the Potomac to their park.[15] The first component of the problem had to do with economies of scale. The audience in the District and surrounding counties was much smaller than that of Coney. Luna Park alone counted as many as 5 million admissions in 1906 and all the Coney parks brought in over 20 million visitors in 1909. After the subway stretched out to Coney Island in 1920, as many as 2 million visitors could crowd into the parks *in a single day*.[16] Marshall Hall attracted a seasonal total of only a few hundred thousand visitors even in its most successful summers of the 1950s.[17] These numbers, of course, were largely the product of the relative populations of New

[15] On Eberle, see "Fred A. Eberle, A Waterfront Figure, Is Dead," 29 September 1935: 18.
[16] Adams, *American Amusement Park Industry*, 56.
[17] Register, *Kid of Coney Island*, 93.

York and Washington. But even when compared with metropolitan districts of similar size, Marshall Hall's distance from its urban source of customers and the limitations thrown up by steamship transportation greatly restricted the size of its audience. Electric Park and Forest Park were both accessible to the 250,000 citizens of Kansas City, Missouri, by streetcar. In the summer of 1911, these two parks sold 1,336,000 tickets, or more than five tickets per citizen on average. Washington, D.C., had a greater population of 330,000 in 1911, but Marshall Hall drew no more than 300,000 customers in that same year, or roughly one ticket per Washingtonian.[18]

By the end of the 1890s, the old attractions (shooting gallery, bowling alley, swings for adults, picnic grounds, merry-go-round, and so on[19]) seemed somewhat outdated in the new era of entertainment inaugurated by the Midway Plaisance of the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. This mile-long stretch of international temptations (including a German beer hall, the hootchie-kootchie dancer Little Egypt, "ethnological" villages of "primitive" peoples, not to mention the first towering Ferris Wheel) gave rise to a new sense of entertainment. Coney Island was one manifestation, with its emphasis on adult-as-child amusement. But at the other end of the entertainment pole, local parks such as Marshall Hall increasingly focused on actual children.

The hope was to create a park that attracted family members from across the generations. The managers of Marshall Hall played around with appealing to audiences

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[18] This estimate is based on the number of trips regularly scheduled to the park by the Charles Macalaster and the River Queen multiplied by their passenger capacities and multiplied again by the eighteen weeks of the park's season. The estimate is confirmed by Margaret Addison's 1963 estimate that about 350,000 visitors would pass through Marshall Hall [Winzola McLendon, "Making People Happy Is Her Business,"7 July 1963: F7.]

[19] These attractions are mentioned in "They Sought for Gold," 15 May 1890: 2; and Charles County Land Records, Liber JST 5: 541-53 (April 10, 1893).

of three different generations. They clearly wanted to hold onto their traditional audience: adults searching for their lost youth, as well as a growing audience of grandparents who sought both leisure and nostalgia for their earlier visits to the Hall. Increasingly, though, the Marshall Hall managers threw innovative straws into the winds of children's entertainment to find ways to draw in a new audience of kids who brought their parents, rather than the other way round.

The first ride additions to the park at Marshall Hall around the turn of the twentieth century were geared toward adults. One of McKibbin's last acts was to introduce "water bicycles." These were small boats with paddle wheels turned by peddles linked to the wheels by a chain.[20] The next major acquisition was a roller coaster, constructed sometime before 1899.[21] By 1905, and perhaps as much as a decade earlier, there was a Ferris wheel.[22] These rides were, of course, on a much smaller scale than those of the Chicago World's Fair and Coney Island. The Marshall Hall Ferris

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[20] "The Water Bicycle at Marshall Hall," 16 August 1896: 12.

[21] The first mention of a roller coaster at Marshall Hall appears only in passing in an 1899 article about the annual jousting tournament ["All Eager for Prize: Gallant Knights in the Tourney at Marshall Hall," 24 August 1899: 4].

[22] This would have been a far different affair than the original built by George Washington Ferris in Chicago. That wheel stood 264 feet high. It carried thirty-six cars each with a capacity of sixty riders. This meant that, when fully loaded, the Chicago World's Fair wheel spun over 2000 people around its axis. But such a structure was so massive that it had little future at the smaller fairs strewn across the countryside. There were plans to build a scaled-down Ferris wheel at Marshall Hall in May 1895. The *Washington Post* reported that MVMHSC had leased ground the Washington Construction Co., of Alexandria, to build a wheel 80 feet in diameter with 20 cars, each holding 8 passengers, or one third the height of the Chicago wheel, and less than one-tenth the capacity. The article seems certain that the wheel was to be built. The reporter noted that it was to be built at the Phoenix Iron Company of Pennsylvania, delivered May 10, and constructed by May 25 ["Ferris Wheel at Marshall Hall," 5 May 1895: 3]. But there is no record of such a large wheel at Marshall Hall. The wheel there in 1905 was of a much smaller scale, more along the lines of those built by Eli Bridge: instead of cars, passengers rode in bucket seats that held only two or three persons [Rhodes, *Maryland's Amusement Parks*, 94].

wheel, for example, featured only ten cars and a passenger capacity of about forty (or about 1.8 percent of Ferris's original wheel at Chicago). But they still suggested an adult orientation to the park's amusement appliances.

Into the early twentieth century, Marshall Hall's excursions still were aimed mainly toward adult groups. The League of Republican State Clubs brought as many as 10,000 of its members to the park in July 1912. Veterans of the Spanish-American War amassed there in 1915, and the Council of Jewish Women followed in 1916.[23] When Supreme Court Justice John Marshall Harlan came out for the annual Shad Bake River Excursion of the Bar Association of the District of Columbia in 1908, he did not bring his grandchildren. Rather, it was he who played baseball (and even smacked a home run at the ripe old age of 75!—one of his law clerks ran the base path for him). Afterward, Harlan strolled to the shooting gallery, where he wowed the crowd by hitting nine bull's eyes in twelve shots. He wandered the grounds with a great air of familiarity. He ritually came to Marshall Hall for the Bar Association's annual excursion and on other occasions as well. Harlan was the quintessential man in search of his Peter Pan self. As one observer recalled, "From the time when he got on the steamer at the Seventh Street Wharf until he said good-by on his return he was always the center of interest and admiration. He entered with youthful zest into the enjoyment of the day, told stories and exchanged repartee, took part in the athletic sports especially baseball, shot at the mark in the shooting gallery, bowled in the bowling alley, ate the planked shad dinner with obvious pleasure, led in the singing of college songs, and generally was the jolliest and apparently

[23] "Managers Expect Ten Thousand to Go on Excursion to Marshall Hall," 27 July 1912: 12; "Excursion Santiago Day: Spanish War Veterans Going to Celebrate at Marshall Hall," 14 July 1915: 5; "Many to Visit Marshall Hall," 22 August 1916: 3.

the youngest member of the party. Everybody agreed that he contributed to it more than any one else." Nor was he the only justice to come: so did Chief Justice Melville Fuller and Associate Justices David Brewer and Horace Gray. [24]

The fact that the Marshall Hall park managers did not yet see children as a potential source of significant income is evident in the very few special days set aside for kids. The park sponsored a only a single annual "Children's Day" in the early twentieth century, much as it had provided a single day each year for orphans during the reign of Joseph and Aldisa McKibbin.[25] Every once in a while an organization from the District would organize a children's day of its own, as when three Presbyterian churches organized an excursion to Marshall Hall for their Sunday Schools in July 1897.[26] But such events were the exceptions that proved the rule: the park was chiefly an adult play ground rarely given over to children.

The push to reach new audiences was intensified by competing parks from around the District. Glen Echo, a former Chautauqua center, converted to an amusement park after 1898. Five years later, in 1903, the Washington Railway and Electric Company took control of the park and officially connected it to the District via its streetcar lines. The ease of transportation offered by the suburban rails made Glen Echo easily accessible to Washingtonians. The park's greater array of rides and closer similarity to the rides and experiences of Coney Island made it Marshall Hall's closest competitor throughout the

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[24] "Harlan Diamond Star: Justice Takes Honors in Baseball Game," 10 May 1908: 2; quotation cited in Loren P. Beth, *John Marshall Harlan: The Last Whig Justice* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992): 171.
[25] "Great Day for Tots: Children Are Guests of Steamboat Company at Marshall Hall," 24 July 1909: 7.
[26] "Big Sunday-School Outing: How 4,500 Children Enjoyed Themselves at Marshall Hall," 3 July 1897: 2.

twentieth century.[27] The difference between Glen Echo and Marshall Hall is clearly demonstrated in two competing advertisements that appeared side by side in the *Post* on August 16, 1920. On the one hand, the Glen Echo piece touted its status as "Washington's Only Real Outdoor Pleasure Place/Forty Amusements." On the other hand, the Marshall Hall announcement heralded the upcoming "36th Annual Grand Tournament and Dress Ball." Glen Echo was thus modeled more on the suburban Coney Island plan, while Marshall Hall embraced the vestiges of past forms of rural amusement.[28]

Beyond Glen Echo, there were several competing parks. Cabin John Park, while never a major success, nonetheless offered its patrons unique experiences. It was, for a while, closely associated with two of the biggest names in amusement park ride development. L.A. Thompson created his wildly popular scenic railway rides at Cabin John, and Gustav Dentzel pioneered numerous elements of the modern-day carousel there. [29] River View Park operated up the river from Marshall Hall. Although it shared certain features with Marshall Hall (including a roller coaster, a dance pavilion, a carousel, a bowling alley, and a picnic grove), it appealed to a somewhat different clientele normally associated with traveling carnivals. At River View, one could enjoy such sensational entertainments as Herr Blatt catching canon balls "red-hot from the gun's muzzle" or Miss Minerva, a strong woman who could easily lift a 470-pound

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[27] Rhodes, *Maryland's Amusement Parks*, 15-36.
[28] Two ads, *Washington Post*, 16 August 1920: 12.
[29] Rhodes, *Maryland's Amusement Parks*, 37-38. For more on Thompson, see Mike Schafer, *Roller Coasters* (Osceola, Wisc.: MBI, 1998), 15; Scott Rutherford, *The American Roller Coaster* (Osceola, Wisc.: MBI, 2004), 14-16. On Dentzel, see Tobin Fraley, *Carousel Animals: Artistry in Motion* (San Francisco: Chronicle, 2002), 48-73.

weight or a platform on laden with eighteen men.[30] River View was not averse to freaks and stunts to drum up customers, a strategy that Mertens disdained.

The competition for customers intensified in the 1910s. The managers of Marshall Hall responded by making their first overt appeal to Washington's youth. They built a "modern playground for children" in 1915.[31] In the next decade, Marshall Hall added other rides to appeal directly to the younger set, such as a miniature railway, the scooter (or Roto Scooter, a bumper car ride), the aeroplane swings (four two-seater planes hung from a spinning tower that used centrifugal force to raise the planes high off the ground), and the whip (three-person cars slung around a track).[32] This strategy seems to have been key to Marshall Hall surviving the wave of park failures through the World War I era, a wave that carried off River View and Cabin John.

Yet, the era of Prohibition presented a debilitating barrier to building an audience of children at Marshall Hall. Charles County became a well-know site for the production of illicit liquor. Numerous stills produced the outlawed beverage along the Potomac's shores, where it was easy for bootleggers to run bottles of hootch up to Washington, or, for Washingtonians to drop down for a bottle.[33] The easy presence of alcohol could have disastrous consequences for the public image of a business attempting to build a reputation as safe for the entire family.

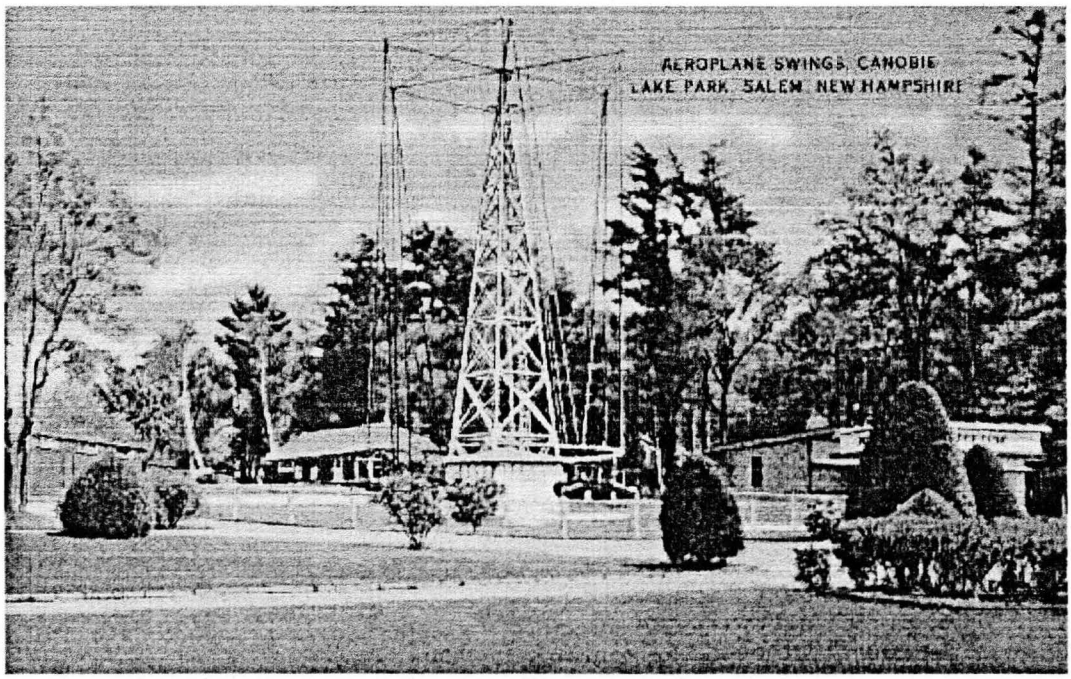
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[30] "River Resorts Popular," 1 July 1895: 2; Rhodes, *Maryland's Amusement Parks*, 39-41. River View was near present-day Fort Washington, Maryland.
[31] "Coming to the Theaters: Marshall Hall," 22 June 1915: 4; "Marshall Hall," 11 July 1915: SM3.
[32] "Marshall Hall," 27 July 1924: AA3; "River Resort Has Great Crowd When New Season Opens," 18 June 1933: S7.
[33] Frederick C. Tilp, *This Was the Potomac River* (Alexandria, Va.: Author, 1978), 290.

There was a liquor-fueled melee on the *Charlie Mac* during the return trip from Marshall Hall on June 14, 1922. One man, Louis D. McCormack died. Earnest L. Watson claimed he was stabbed five times on the same voyage. Their injuries were part of a riot that swept through the lower decks of the venerable steam ship that day. More than 400 passengers jumped into the fray. At the root of it all, apparently, was bootleg liquor. Illegal whisky had been "flowing like water" on the boat and earlier at Marshall Hall as well according to numerous witnesses. Fighting also broke out earlier in the day behind the dance pavilion. John E. Hitson told the coroner's jury that he had been selected to referee the fight, but it had gotten out of hand before it even began. As he pushed the crowd back to give the two angry men room to pummel one another, someone knocked him down and kicked him in the face. Hitson did not recall McCormack being involved in that fight. But it certainly set the drunken, violent tone for the return journey. This was hardly the sort of atmosphere Frederick Mertens and the MVMHSC board of directors wanted for their park. Worse, the event amply illustrates the imminent danger that confronted families while at Marshall Hall. Cass Curtis, of Del Ray, Virginia, testified that "a man...had attempted to approach his 15-year-old daughter..." during the confusion of the melee. Another father complained that the perambulator cradling his 4-month-old daughter "was nearly pushed overboard by drink-crazed fighters."[34] Such publicity had to be countered if the park was ever to shake its image as a place chiefly for adults.

In the early 1930s, the park's advertisements began to announce specially

[34] "Seek Alexandria Man in Riot Death," 16 June 1922: 1. See also, in regard to a later incident regarding the problem of liquor at Marshall Hall, "Two Wamplers and Author Arrested in Orgy Slaying," 4 May 1938: X1. The article notes that the accused went to Marshall Hall "and had several drinks of liquor."




The Aeroplane Swings at Canobie Fairground, Salem, New Hampshire, 1946




The Whip at Rexford Amusement Park, Saratoga, New York, 1926

designated "Kiddies' Days" on Mondays and Fridays to entice children to Marshall Hall on a regular basis.[35] But by then, Marshall Hall was under new management. And this new team of managers was bent on raising the park's profile and its profitability even higher.

**The Wilson Line Takes Control**

The 1920s was an ironic era for the American amusement park. On the one hand, it was the era of decadent entertainment—flappers dancing the Charleston in speakeasies. The nation's economy expanded rapidly, thus making leisure dollars more available than ever before. More than that, religious strictures on amusements of various sorts loosened as the Methodists and other groups sought to conform to modern lifestyles[36] On the other hand, amusement parks faced stiff competition from two rival forms of entertainment. Radio allowed Americans to find entertainment without leaving home. Automobiles enabled Americans to travel much farther from home than ever before. And the rising economy made it possible for more and more Americans to take advantage of both the radio and the car. Amusement parks were beset by several historical events as well: the great railroad strike of 1921, excruciating summer weather in the early years of the decade, and a wave of park sell-offs by transit companies to private investors.[37] Marshall Hall weathered the storm, but only barely.

One of the park's life lines came with the building of a road to the park. In July 1931, Bryan Point Road opened. The road gave easy access to Marshall Hall from inland

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[35] "Special Rates Are Attracting Crowds to New River Park [i.e., a refurbished Marshall Hall under new management]," 23 July 1933: S7.
[36] See, e.g., "Lifting the Methodist Amusement Ban," *Literary Digest* 81 (26 April 1924): 33.
[37] Adams, *American Amusement Park*, 66.

roads for the very first time. Now, motorists did not have to wait for the MVMHSC boats at the Seventh Street Wharf.[38] They could scamper down to the park whenever the mood struck them.

Another road had as great an effect on the park, but for a very different reason. The Mount Vernon Memorial Highway opened George Washington's home to motor travel for the first time. On February 17, 1933, MVMHSC president Frederick Mertens complained to the District Wharf Committee that the highway had seriously diminished ridership of the Charles Macalaster. Moreover, competition from the Wilson Line of steamships already had stolen away much of the ridership of the old Macalaster. It became clear to Mertens that the old, slow side-paddle steamboat had to be retired. The turn in fortunes had so undermined the business of the "Charlie Mac" that Mertens was requesting to be freed from MVMHSC's lease for the wharf (which still had over a year to go). But, when reached by a reporter for comment, Mertens did not sound downcast. Rather, he promised "startling news.[39]

Mertens had no interest in sinking more money into building a modern steamship to compete against the much larger Wilson Line. He also seems to have tired of running the park at Marshall Hall. His startling news, then, was that he was going to give up the steamship business altogether and sell the appliances of entertainment at Marshall Hall to the Wilson Line. The Wilson Line thus became the management firm for the amusement park, while Mertens retained title to the land underneath.

**The Wilson Line and Marshall Hall**

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[38] "Road Opened," 12 July 1931: S7.
[39] "Boulevard to Mt. Vernon Has Ruined Business of Boat," 18 February 1933: 18.

The Wilson Line had operated steamboats in the Delaware River and Bay running mostly between Philadelphia and Wilmington since the early 1880s. The line also ran boats out to Riverview Beach Amusement Park in Pennsville, New Jersey (just south of the current Delaware Memorial Bridge). Riverview had begun much as Marshall Hall, offering a picnic grove in the 1880s and adding amusement park rides through the early twentieth century. The management of the Wilson Line saw the lucrative trade that a downriver amusement park could provide a steamboat company. Through the 1920s, as many as 500,000 Philadelphians took the Wilson ships down to Riverview.[40] And in the midst of the Depression, the president of the Wilson Line, George B. Junkin, saw chances to expand the company beyond its longtime Delaware River base.

Junkin was determined to build the Wilson Line into a major transportation firm. A Kansas-born former navy man, he had commanded a submarine (alternately known as the USS S-6 or the SS-111) in the early 1920s. He resigned his commission after the 1924 Disarmament Conference that promised to greatly reduce the size of the U.S. Navy (and hence the chances of Junkin's advancement up the ranks). But his navy experiences steeled him for the economic battle that raged the year after the syndicate he led purchased the Wilson Line. The 1928 sale, of course, preceded the Great Depression by only a year. Junkin, far from becoming discouraged, decided to use the nation's economic collapse to expand his line into new markets. Thus, on May 30 the Wilson Line ship *City of Washington* (known as *City of Chester* only six weeks earlier) entered the Potomac River trade, ferrying Washingtonians from the city down to Chapel Point,

[40] Richard V. Elliott, *Last of the Steamboats: The Saga of the Wilson Line* (Cambridge, Md.: Tidewater, 1970), 52.

Maryland, and Colonial Beach, Virginia.[41] Soon thereafter Junkin opened up a Baltimore and Chesapeake service. The Wilson line, while it did not exactly flourish, continued to grow and yield increasing profits. Junkin plowed those profits into a new venture: the takeover of Marshall Hall and the MVMHSC's run to both the park and Mount Vernon.[42]

Junkin understood that his expertise was on the water, and so arranged with an experienced firm to actually manage Marshall Hall. Harry Baker Amusements, Inc., was headed by Harry C. Baker, one of the key innovators of the roller coaster. His great fame rested on the 1927 construction of Coney Island's best known coaster, the Cyclone, with its remarkably steep 58-degree drop. Baker had branched out from the one ride in the 1920s into both a wider array of rides and the management of amusement parks such as Rye Playland north of New York City. Baker appointed Lorenzo C. Addison, one of his trusted employees, to run Marshall Hall. And so it was that Addison, along with his wife Margaret and their two daughters, moved into the old Marshall house in the early spring of 1933.[43]

**Marshall Hall during the Great Depression**

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[41] Elliott, *Last of the Steamboats*, 67-69; *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, v. 6 (U.S. Naval Historical Center, 1976), 179-80.
[42] Elliott, *Last of the Steamboats*, 77.
[43] "A Super-Coaster Promised to Fair," 17 December 1938: 34; "Harry Baker, 52, Amusement Man," 24 August 1939: 25; "'Happyland' - 185 Slot Machines," *Washington Daily News*, July 23, 1958: 25; "Study Center Harbors Fun Memories of Marshall Hall Park," *The Times-Crescent* (26 July 1989): B14-15. Addison hailed from Rayne, Louisiana and had spent most of his adult life in the amusement industry. He started out as a projectionist for various traveling shows, worked for a while as a manager of a "road stock" theatrical company, and then became a builder and designer of roller coasters, fun houses, and concession stands for Fred W. Pierce. Through the 1920s he gained experience in the amusement park industry by managing parks in Detroit and Minneapolis for Baker, before moving on to Marshall Hall ("Lorenzo C. Addison, Amusement Park Head," 7 November 1958: D2).

Addison and Baker decided that the only way to beat the Depression was to invest in numerous additions and improvements to the park. They immediately enhanced several features of the park for the 1933 season, including a new sand bathing beach, a better, larger athletic playing field, and "community grills" for cookouts. They also built a roller skating rink, which they claimed was "the largest open-air rink south of Atlantic City." They opened the new season (albeit a bit later than usual) in June. The crowd was the largest in years—the offer of free admission and free parking certainly enhanced attendance. To further entice the masses, the Wilson Line placed ads in Washington papers extolling its new ship, the *City of Washington*, as a "de luxe super-steamboat," one of the new "modern, steel, oil-burning ships." As a last signal of change, Addison, Baker, and the Wilson Line officially changed Marshall Hall's name to "Marshall Hall Park."[44]

Addison and Baker further developed the park over the winter of 1933-34. They put in a raft of new attractions, including the Dangler, Laff in the Dark, and the Custer Car. They also replaced the old Ferris wheel and the worn out Miniature Railroad. So great were the changes that the managers could claim that the park had "been entirely made over...."[45]

The managers envisioned these improvements as reaching out more aggressively to a new audience. The rides themselves were increasingly oriented, not toward adults, but toward children and teens. Marshall Hall Park ads called greater attention to biweekly "Kiddies' Days" (every Monday and Friday). Moreover, in a time of tight dollars,

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[44] Display Ad, 9 May 1933 12; "River Resort Has Great Crowd When New Season Opens," S7.

[45] "Potomac Resort Announces Its Holiday Debut," 27 May 1934: L1; "New Thrills to Be Introduced at River Park," 1 July 1934: A2.

Addison and Baker developed what they called a "saving plan." That is, they reduced prices for children on Kiddies' Days by making all rides in park only four cents.[46]

These developments brought the desired results. By the second summer under the Wilson Line/Baker Amusements management, the park announced that the popularity of the Kiddies' Days had set new attendance records. Excursions to Marshall Hall became even more popular than under Mertens's MVMHSC. With the Oklahoma State Society's First Annual Watermelon Festival in August of 1935, the Wilson Line celebrated the sailing of its eight hundredth organized excursion since beginning its Potomac service in 1930. More than 200 groups—including the Washington Board of Trade, the National Press Club, the Knights of Columbus, the B.P.O. Elks, the Finance Club of the War Department, and the stalwart District of Columbia Bar Association—had sailed to Marshall Hall in the summer of 1935 alone. Two years later the number of planned excursions had risen 50 percent to more than 300 organizations. The increased profits from all this business allowed manager Addison to add even more "novelties," including two high-speed Miami speed boats that could skim patrons over the Potomac waves at 40 miles per hour. Attendance continued to rise thanks to both these improvements and further reductions in kids' fares on Mondays and Fridays to half the regular price for all rides.[47]

The upsurge in passengers traveling to Marshall Hall required the Wilson Line to expand its steamship service. Even its newest, refurbished ship the *City of Washington*,

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[46] "Potomac Resort Announces Its Holiday Debut," L1; "New Thrills to Be Introduced at River Park," A2; "Special Rates Are Attracting Crowds to New River Park," S7.
[47] "New Thrills to Be Introduced at River Park," A2; "River Steamer Sets a Record," 18 August 1935: MA2; "Marshall Hall Is Favorite Resort for Picknickers," 25 July 1937: T6; "Many Novelties, Season Booming at Marshall Hall," 5 June 1938: TT3; "'Kiddies' Days' Prove Popular," 28 August 1938: TT4.

could not accommodate the expanding number of excursionists. So the line ordered a new ship the *Mount Vernon* and introduced it into the Potomac in summer of 1940. This new ship carried as many as 2400 passengers at a time. It had numerous advantages over earlier Potomac steamers: its main deck was tiled, there were several observation lounges with comfortable, home-style couches and chairs, and, most impressive of all, the dance deck was unobstructed by columns or posts and provided room for as many as a thousand hoofers at a time. This ample, indirectly lit space gave passengers plenty of room to try out the latest dance moves to the sounds of the McWilliams Orchestra under the direction of Davy Crocker—apparently a frontiersman of modern music, playing as one add proclaimed, "the swingiest of swing music, as well as soft waltz tempo...."[48]

But just when it seemed that the Wilson Line and Baker Management had created an amusement goldmine for themselves, fate intervened. Before the *Mount Vernon* hardly had its hull wet, events in Europe began to change—drastically change—leisure life in the U.S. Although the first years of World War II saw numerous fetes for small bands of servicemen at Marshall Hall, the war devastated the Wilson Line's business. This was not due to a lack of interest. Indeed, the summer of 1942 was extremely hot, and brought Washingtonians out to the amusement park in droves to escape the urban swelter—this in spite of the gas rationing that prevented most visitors from driving to Marshall Hall. But, after the U.S. entry into the war, fuel requirements robbed Junkin's steamship company of its life line. The Office of Price Administration banned all Potomac pleasure cruises in order to divert fuel to the war effort. The Wilson Line saw its passenger business—with travel to Marshall Hall, Mount Vernon, and other sites—

[48] "Fun Afloat," 30 June 1940: A3; Display Ads, 21 July 1940: D3; Display Ads, 2 August 1940: 18; Elliott, *Last of the Steamships*, 69.

evaporate. Park manager Addison was forced to shutter Marshall Hall for three summers. The ban on pleasure cruises would not be lifted until the summer of 1946.[49]

Mertens's sale of Marshall Hall Park to the Wilson Line transformed the park into a bona fide corporate entity. This shift altered the way managers thought about the park's services and functions. The Wilson Line introduced the concept of economies of scale and sought ways to increase Marshall Hall's audience. Junkin, Baker, and Addison thus sought ways to bring greater numbers of children to the park. This in turn began a subtle shift in the park's reputation: By the end of the 1930s it was as much a child's playground as an adult's haven. The drive to bring in more children caused the managers to make Marshall Hall Park more like other parks, thus undermining the uniqueness of the site. The park's distance from Washington began to lose its appeal: less an integral element of the experience, it became a hindrance to easy access to the rides and other activities. These consequences would have a tremendous impact on Marshall Hall in the post-World War II era. The Wilson Line took over management of the park (after Baker's death in 1939). Its task, through the continued direction of Addison, was to reemphasize its adult audience. To do this, the park managers searched for new ways to appeal to grown ups.

This search would lead the managers to emphasize both tradition and innovation. The long custom of the annual jousting tournament became a key element of Marshall Hall's public identity in the years after World War II. But growing up alongside the

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[49] "2 Drowned, 3 Saved as Heat Hits 91; Resorts Deserted, " 8 June 1942: 1; "Extra Man Problem Neatly Solved by Service Men," 25 July 1942; "William Jenkins Fetes Soldiers," 7 August 1942; "Summer Sails Down Potomac Ended by War; OPA Forbids Fuel to River Excursion Boats," 10 May 1943: 13; Emily Towe, "Attendance Discouraged; Is Off 90% This Year," 1 August 1943:L1; Cameron Macrae Year, "Beach, Mountain Resorts Prepare for Big Season," 21 May 1944: S5.

tournament was a brand new way of bringing in crowds and turning an amusing profit: legalized gambling. The last owner of Marshall Hall pinned his anxious hopes for the park's future on the piles of money he could make in five, ten, and twenty-five cent increments in the "one-armed bandits" of slot machines. But his hopes would become mired in his own rash business judgment and a series of historical events beyond his control.

# Chapter 11

## *Heyday and Demise*

Jane Hadley had little reason to believe that her evening cruise to Marshall Hall would be particularly momentous. Sure, she was to sail on a private yacht with some of the most powerful men in Washington and their wives. But she was just a widowed secretary from St. Louis, visiting old friends, expecting to carry home a few stories of Washington's power brokers as would most any tourist. Something happened on the Marshall Hall trip, however—some little magic that would end up making her, in a few short months, the wife of the Vice President of the United States.

Hadley was a fifty-ish Kentucky-born friend of Clark and Marnie Clifford in Washington that summer of 1949. She had come to know the Cliffords in St. Louis, where she now supported herself by doing clerical work for the Wabash Railroad. Clark Clifford had come to political prominence as Harry Truman's White House Counsel and as a driving force of Truman's victory in the tough presidential campaign of 1948. On the night of July 8, he used his influence to borrow the White House's Potomac cruiser the *Margy* (although it was hardly a stately vessel, as Hadley recalled that it was a "little wooden thing... bigger than a cabin cruiser, smaller than a yacht") for an evening excursion down the Potomac to Marshall Hall Park. While the *Margy* did not live up to Hadley's preconceptions, the guests invited by Clifford constituted a crowd of

Washington powerbrokers, including senators J. William Fulbright and Millard Tydings, Secretary of State Dean Acheson, the Belgian ambassador to the U.S. Baron Silvercruys, and, most significantly (for Hadly, that is) United States Vice President Alben Barkley. The crowd was rounded out with the wives of these powerful men, all that is except the widower Barkley, who came stag.

Even before the ensemble had boarded the *Margy*, Barkley was smitten with Hadley. They exchanged a few brief words on the boat, flirted even until Hadley was struck by "a schoolgirl panic." The vice president seemed too attentive. She broke away and avoided him during the on-board supper and for the remainder of the journey down river. At the Marshall Hall wharf, Hadley disembarked with Gene and Ceci Carusi and zipped away before Barkley could approach her. The vice president went with Fulbright to the shooting gallery, but his mind was far from the targets. He was enchanted with the lady from St. Louis. Hadley went straightaway with the Carusis to the merry-go-round, but almost immediately felt annoyed with herself for acting "rude" to the vice president. She was soon in the right place to deal with her frustration: she and the Carusis jumped into the bumper cars. As she realized that she had acted "as silly as a goat," her pluck returned and "With renewed energy I plowed my little car into Gene Carusi's." For the rest of the evening, Hadley tried to become a child again, but could not find her inner child. "It should have been fun," she recalled. "I pretended it was."

Hadley turned wistful on the return cruise. The night was delightfully romantic. She was on a sleek boat on the Potomac River, under the Washington stars, as a young guitar player first played lovely melodies, then led some of the passengers in song -- "all the wonderful, nostalgic songs," Hadley recalled, "that we'd known when we were

younger." The scene was all the more moving as it was simultaneously singular and typical to Hadley: "Except for the fact that the people on the deck—holding hands and swaying to the music—were among the most famous in America, it could have been a picnic-boat outing for a bunch of college kids." She noticed that the vice president was not among them. No sooner did she begin to wonder about him than Fulbright (whom she knew through his sister, who lived in St. Louis) slid next to her and asked her what she had done to Vice President Barkley! Fulbright reported that his old friend had rustled up two plates of food for them to share during the supper going down river. He was so chagrined on not finding her when he returned that he did not touch any of it. This, the senator assured her, was exceedingly unusual: "I've never—in all the time I've known Alben—seen him act like this." She asked him to invite the VP to join the singing. After a few moments, Hadley and Barkley were swaying next to one another when the guitar player struck up "Some Enchanted Evening," from the popular musical *South Pacific*. Barkley took her hand, as she took his heart. The romance, sparked during the cruise to Marshall Hall, became a national obsession while Barkley courted Hadley, and within four months the couple married.[1] Such was the magic of Marshall Hall Park in the 1950s: the river cruise, the playing at childhood, the rollick of emotions outside the mundane events of the everyday. It catered to virtually the entire swath of Washington society, from the mightiest politicians to the youngest of children.

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[1] "Barkley Will Marry Mrs. Hadley Nov. 18," *Los Angeles Times*, 31 October 1949: 1; Alben W. Barkley, *That Reminds Me*— (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1954), 215-18; Jane R, Barkley, *I Married the Veep* (New York: Vanguard, 1958), 13-26; Jane R. Barkley, "Ballad and Moonlight Set Scene But Veep Holds Out for Invitation," *Washington Post*, 11 November 1958: D2. Hereafter, all newspaper articles are from the *Post* unless otherwise noted.

Marshall Hall manager Lorenzo Addison endeavored to keep the park desirable for these two different constituencies after World War II and through the 1950s. He replaced the old wooden roller coaster with a new steel coaster in 1949. This addition gave the park two roller coasters: the Coaster for adults and adventurous teens and the Mad Mouse for the younger set. He maintained a number of the old rides (such as the bumper cars, the carousel, and the miniature railroad), and added some of the most recent in thrill appliances, including the Twister, the Caterpillar, the Tilt-a-Whirl, and the Sky Diver.[2] (The park now had a total of sixteen amusement rides.) He maintained, for the children, the Kiddie Park, with rides especially designed for the youngest visitors. For those uninterested in the mechanical rides, the park offered a sizable swimming pool, a series of concession booths, and the perennial arcade with its games of skill and chance.

In some ways, despite the addition of new rides, the activities available at Marshall Hall Park had taken on the patina of ancient tradition. The park remained a favorite site for excursions, including a gathering of forty-eight veterans of the Spanish-American War who escaped the Soldiers' Home to embark on a very different sort of expedition. One picture from the outing shows a grizzled veteran of '98 as a cigar-chomping Peter Pan, reliving his youthful charge up San Juan Hill on one of the frozen-in-rowdy horses of the merry-go-round. The reporter's description of the day seemed to give the sense that the amusements at Marshall Hall Park were timeless: "children were running a potato race, people were eating sandwiches, a chicken was foraging under the

[2] Winzola McLendon "Making People Happy Is Her Business," 7 July1963: F7; "Study Center Harbors Fun Memories of Marshall Hall Park," *Times-Crescent*, 26 July 1989: B15.

picnic tables.... In the background was the roar of the roller coaster."[3] But vast change was on the way in the two postwar decades.



Veteran of the Spanish American War Reliving His Past (July 1951)

The fifteen years after 1945 were the heyday of Marshall Hall Park. Two activities were central to the park's success, one old, another new (at least as a legal activity). The long-standing tradition of ring jousting became a major community activity in the 1950s that drew together the widely disparate publics Marshall Hall served, from the slickest of city slickers to the saltiest-of-the-earth country folk, from white

[3] Lee Grove "Old Soldier Tales Fill Air at Spanish-American Outing," 15 July 1951:M13.

suburbanites to rural blacks, men as well as women, aged farmers and urban kids. The end-of-the-summer tournament was a powerful seasonal rite celebrated by thousands, one that marked the passing of the summer season. The glue that held the momentary community together was the numerous wagers placed by spectators with one another as the various riders thundered down the track. The second key activity was a new form of gambling: legalized slot machines. The slots were part-and-parcel of the rapid rise of a Potomac gold coast that brought to Charles County some of the best-known entertainers of the day. The demise of these two activities, along with a series of financial setbacks and social changes, eventually would spell disaster for Marshall Hall Park.

**Tilting Toward Community: Jousting at Marshall Hall**

Jousting had been an end-of-summer ritual at Marshall Hall since 1885. The event tied together the numerous strands of Potomac culture, from urban Washington to rural Charles County. So numerous were the groups that attended that a reporter in 1899 threw up his hands and admitted that "A description of the crowd would be impossible, as it had too many elements to render such a thing possible." That year, there were as many as 8000 in the stands and along the fences to watch riders tricked out in medieval costumes, to gamble on which riders could collect the greatest number of metal rings with their lances, and to listen to politicians offering orations that drew a direct link between the knight errantry of old and contemporary chivalry and respect for noble womanhood. At

the end of the day, the contestant who collected the most rings won the grand prize: $43.20 in cash and the right to name the lady of the tournament.[4]

The joust maintained this basic format throughout the twentieth century, although there were stylistic changes. The costumes (at least for the riders) largely faded out of use by the 1920s. Some riders dressed in medieval costume in the opening ceremonies. But most riders wore jeans and plaid shirts or some other uniform of modern daily life. A few wore riding breeches. The growing number of contestants meant that any fancy opening parade would have delayed the tournament itself beyond the bounds of tournament patience.[5]

Attendance was sometimes low, as during the 50th Annual Tournament held in the depth of the Depression in 1934. That year, only about a thousand spectators turned out to watch the tournament. But the jousters came to compete, nonetheless. Anyone who had a horse, a lance, and the entry fee could ride. By the '30s, there was a class of professional riders who treated the tournament as a bona fide sport. The tournaments were open to professional and amateur alike, but it was the latter riders who most excited the crowd surrounding the track.[6]

The professional riders of the 1950s were sired by a sort of nobility. Fathers taught their sons and daughters. Brothers taught their siblings, who in turn passed the skills down to their children. Sometimes neighbors taught neighbors, as when the second generation of Fleurry boys of Baltimore County, taught their seven-year-old friend

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[4] "All Eager for Prize: Gallant Knights in the Tourney at Marshall Hall," 24 August 1899: 4; Jason Rhodes, *Maryland's Amusement Parks* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia, 2005), 94.
[5] Rhodes, *Maryland's Amusement Parks*, 94; George Bartram, Personal Communication, 21 March 2007; Mary Lou Bartram, Personal Communication, 21 March 2007.
[6] "1,000 Watch Marshall Hall Jousting Test," 16 August 1934: 7,

George Bartram how to capture the metal rings with a lance while racing at a full gallop. Lances typically were handed down from one generation to the next. They were hard to come by as no company produced them. Jousters had to make their own if they did not inherit one.[7]

The rules of twentieth-century American jousting were vastly different from those of Henry the II of France or the medieval English knight William Marshal (a distant forebear of the Marshalls of Maryland?). Tournaments in feudal Europe were practice for battle. Knights engaged in a series of mock combats with the aim of besting their comrades, though not of killing them (except in the accidental death of knights such as Henry). Events included various weapons, but the most exciting event was the joust: two knights mounted on horseback galloped full tilt down the list, each lowering and aiming his lance at the other in an attempt to knock his opponent off his horse.

American jousting might better be called "ring" jousting. Contestants did not oppose one another in pairs. Rather, they competed against a field of as many as seventy or eighty other riders. The goal was to lance a series of three rings hanging from three wooden frames along the track. These frames were placed forty yards from one another on a 100-yard-long track. The rider began twenty yards in front of the first frame, set his or her horse to a gallop, and tilted the lance toward each of the rings as he or she passed through the three frames. The contest took place in rounds, with the rings getting progressively smaller throughout the day. The first round rings were one inch in diameter. The contestants who collected all three rings (usually no more then twenty or so riders) proceeded to the next round, when the rings were three quarters of an inch.

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[7] "Jousters To Meet at Marshall Hall" 23 August 1955: 19; George Bartram, Personal Communication, 21 March 2007.

The third round rings were five eighths of an inch in diameter, and the fourth round rings only one half inch around—barely large enough to fit over the tip of the lance.[8]



Ed Gibbons, "The Knight of Maryland Bay," Captures a Ring at the 1949 Marshall Hall Tournament[9]

The key to success was practice, practice, and more practice, for both the rider and the horse. George Bartram, perhaps the best jouster in Maryland in the late 1950s,

[8] George Bartram, Personal Communication, 21 March 2007.
[9] "9000 Attend Marshall Hall Tilting Event," 21 August 1947:B1.

recalled his "excessive" amount of practice. He rode for two hours every day after work. Bartram claimed that training the horse "was nine tenths of the job." His jousting horse was Tony, an "amazingly consistent horse." Bartram attributed his great success in the tournaments of the 1950s and 1960s to Tony's amazing power of concentration. "If a photographer accidentally wandered out on the course to get the perfect picture," he noted as an example, "Tony would knock him down."

Jousting was popular throughout the Potomac region and beyond in the states of Maryland and Virginia. Bartram and other riders (such as the Fleurrys) traveled the circuit of ring jousting tournaments throughout the Chesapeake region, and even as far away as South Carolina. But in the Chesapeake, the biggest and most prestigious tournament was the one at Marshall Hall. As another fabled jouster, George's sister Mary Lou Bartram, recalled, Marshall Hall was "the one tournament every one wanted to go to and win...." Jousting was hugely popular at Marshall Hall from the park's reopening in 1946 on through into the early 1960s. In 1947, the tournament brought in 9000 spectators—a number often reached and surpassed over the next fifteen years.[10]

The track there was "a spectacular place to ride," declared George. The entire track was flat, and it was all fenced in to keep the field clearly separated from the spectators. There was also a handsome prize purse: $50.00 to the first place winner. (This was enough, George Bartram recalled, to pay for most of the expenses of getting rider and horse to the event). There was also a large, hefty trophy (the L.C. Campbell cup) for the winner to keep until the next year, when he or she had to hand it over to the succeeding champion. (Although George ruined this aspect, winning the tournament

[10] "9000 Attend Marshall Hall Tilting Event," B1; "Miss Bartram Wins Jousting," 21 August 1953: 22; "Jousters To Meet at Marshall Hall," 23 August 1955: 19.

three years in a row and thus gaining permanent possession of the trophy—the Wilson Line never put up the money to purchase a second one.)[11]

For all George's prowess, however, it was his sister who created the greatest stir in jousting circles in the post-World War II period. Mary Lou Bartram was born in Baltimore County in 1927. She started jousting at age 4, following her brother, under the tutelage of Paul A. Fleury, of Kingsville, Maryland. She was not the only woman to ride. State delegate Henry Fowler (a major supporter of the sport of jousting in Maryland) had trained his own daughter how to ride and lance the rings. But Mary Lou was the first woman to compete at the professional level. She had won her first amateur-class championship when she was only twelve years old in 1949. She won numerous tournaments over the next years, then faced her most difficult test in August 1953. She entered the Marshall Hall Park tournament.

The tournament was open to all comers. There was no rules committee or registration review. There were no prerequisites for entering the event. All one had to do to participate was show up, pay the fee, choose a courtly name (Henry Fowler's, for example, was "Knight of Mechanicsville," and George Bartram's was "Knight of Cedar Lane").

[11] "Jousters To Meet at Marshall Hall," 19; Aubrey Graves, "Jousting from Jeep's Hood; Gimmicks a Grand Tradition," 18 September 1955: E2; Mary Lou Bartram, Personal Communication, 21 March 2007; George Bartram, Personal Communication, 21 March 2007.



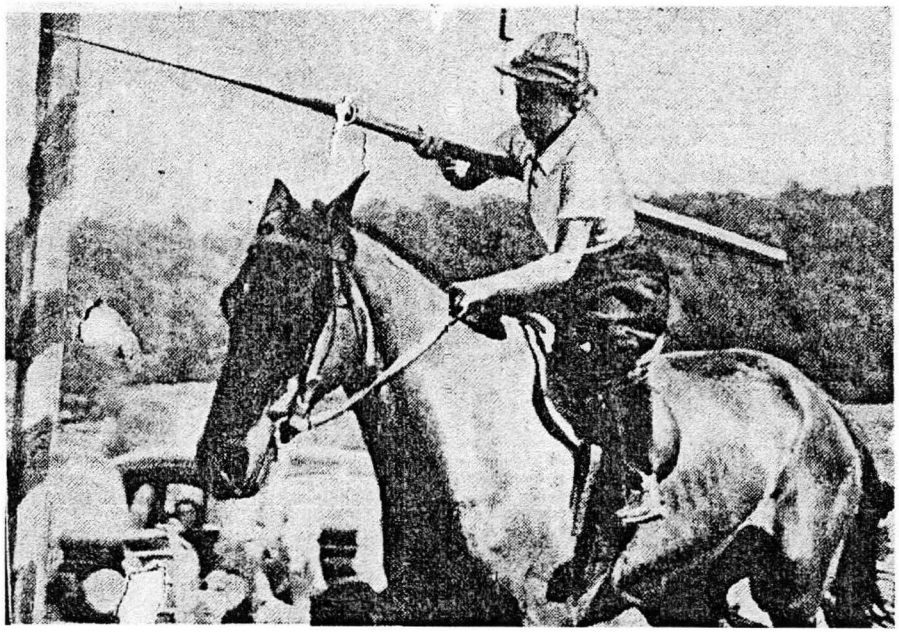
Maryland Delegate Henry Fowler,
the "Knight of Mechanicsville,"
ca. 1955

And what a ride it was going to be. The best riders from across the greater Chesapeake water shed showed up, some coming from as far away as Boonsboro, in western Maryland. Not only was Mary Lou going to face strangers: there was also her own brother, not to mention some of the Fleurry boys and other master jousters such as Howard Burtner and Charles Brady.

There were 8500 spectators there that August 20. The day was hot, but the betting was even hotter as the field winnowed. The one inch rings weeded out the inexperienced riders. The three-quarter inch rings stopped those who lost any iota of

concentration. The five-eighths inch rings ended the day for the unlucky. At the final round, there was the "Maid of Bartram Manor" facing her brother and one other man. She was confident. But Mary Lou found even greater motivation in a disagreement she overheard as she waited for the final round to begin. The men along the track had been "betting like crazy," Mary Lou remembered—and crazier as the rings and the field of jousters both got smaller. As she prepared to mount her horse, one gambler nearby turned to his compatriot: "Five dollars," he proclaimed, "says she can't take a single ring." Her anger and determination rising, the Maid of Bartram Manor took all three of the smallest rings and won the L.C. Campbell trophy cup and the $50.00 purse. She went on that year to win the Maryland State Championship.[12]

[12] Mary Lou Bartram was at the beginning of an illustrious sports career. She was to repeat the achievement of winning the Maryland State Jousting Championship two more times, in 1956 and 1960. She later won the National Jousting Championship two times, in 1971 and 1982. The Maid of Bartram Manner went on to teach many others the art of jousting, including her close friend Alice Blum. Mary Lou has been a tireless crusader for ring jousting beyond the track. She was a cofounder of Maryland Jousting Tournament Association in 1950, and later served on its Board of Directors and as president. She also helped to organize the National Jousting Association and was its secretary for many years. She appeared on the old game show To Tell the Truth to bring attention to ring jousting. She was the first jouster (male or female) elected to the Maryland Athletic Hall of Fame. She has written a number of newspaper and magazine articles on the sport, and has trained several riders. Perhaps most significantly, Miss Bartram wrote the bill that established jousting as Maryland's state sport. And in March 2004, she publicly defended the sport's status against those who sought to replace jousting with lacrosse ["Miss Bartram Wins Jousting," 22; Winzola McLendon "She Spurs Prison Reform," 14 August 1960: F11; Adrienne Saunders. Capital News Service, Thursday, 4 March 2004, http://newsline.umd.edu/politics/specialreports/symbols/jostledjousters030404.htm; http://www.geocities.com/marylandjousting/marylou.html; Mary Lou Bartram, Personal Communication, 21 March 2007.



Mary Lou Bartram, the "Maid of Bartram Manor," and Winner of the 1953 Marshall Hall Jousting Tournament[13]

The Marshall Hall Tournament was, in spite of its long tradition, an annually galvanizing event. Spectators were drawn to the power of the horses, the finesse required of the lancer, and the rivers of cash flowing from hand to hand as the "experts" in the crowd bet on nearly everything associated with the tournament. Politicians, too, were drawn to the crowds. No less a personage than Maryland governor Millard Tawes served as the grand marshal of the 1960 tournament, giving the opening cry of "Charge Sir Knights!" Little did he know that a different activity at Marshall Hall would soon consume his administration and the Maryland state government in a controversy with national ramifications.[14]

**Slots at the Pot o' Gold**

Throughout the twentieth century, gambling of one sort or another was available to Marshall Hall customers. Visitors to the park would bet on anything, according to

[13] http://www.geocities.com/marylandjousting/marylou.html.
[14] McLendon, "She Spurs Prison Reform," F11.

George Bartram. He recalled one day in the early 1950s when the *Mount Vernon* was having trouble docking at the Marshall Hall wharf due to swirling winds whipping along the shore. A man behind Bartram turned to another fellow and laid down a bet: "Five he takes him, ten he don't." For Bartram, the bet was proof positive that "those old Southerners, they loved to gamble." Indeed, from the 1880s into the 1930s, a wide array of goods and services could be found on "river arks" (scow-like, flat-bottomed shallow-draft vessels about twenty feet long and ten feet wide) anchored at Bull Town Cove near the mouth of Piscataway Creek. Boaters on the Potomac could obtain mundane wares from sundries to medicine to haircuts. They could also procure such illicit goods as liquor, prostitution, and gambling.[15] Gambling devices could be found at a number of other Charles County sites in the 1920s and '30s, including slot machines at the Charles County Fair and at Chapel Point (a small Potomac River amusement park owned by the Jesuits).[16] The MVMHSC and later the Wilson Line saw the gains to be gotten and tried at various times to horn in on the money that could be made through gambling, particularly with slot machines. "One-armed bandits" (as the slot machines were nicknamed) appeared on the *Charles Macalaster* as early as 1921. They may even have been available in the Penny Arcade at Marshall Hall from time to time.[17] But due to their being illegal, their appearance could only be spotty. Someone at MVMHSC in 1928, for

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[15] Frederick Tilp, *The Chesapeake Bay of Yore* (Alexandria, Virg.: Author, 1982), passim; Earl Arnett, Robert J. Brugger, & Edward C. Papenfuse, *Maryland: A New Guide to the Old Line State*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 41.

[16] Susan Hickey Shaffer, *Slot Machines in Charles County, Maryland, 1910-1968* (MA Thesis, University of Maryland, 1983), 18-19 (from the *Times Crescent*, 19 September 1924 and an interview with Aubrey J. Burch, Sr., 7 June 1982).

[17] Shaffer, *Slot Machines*, 18, 28 (from interviews with former state senator Paul J. Bailey, 5 June 1982 and minister Harold Milstead, 23 March 1982).

example, outfitted the *Charlie Mac* with four illegal slot machines. A raid by the Maryland state police quashed this effort to institutionalize gambling along the watery border between Maryland and Virginia.[18] By the late 1940s, various forms of gambling had become a regular, if illegal, feature of Marshall Hall.

Gambling received the semi-official imprimatur of the state government through the 1940s. A series of local options gambling laws passed in nearby western shore counties (Anne Arundel in 1943, St. Mary's in 1947, Calvert in 1948).[19] The liberalization of gambling laws in these counties led to an orgy of gambling in Charles County, although through 1948 the activity was still illegal.

Not everyone in Charles County was happy about the new money-making industry, and Marshall Hall was the chief source of their irritation. The Charles County district attorney, hoping to bring the gamblers to justice, empanelled a grand jury in May 1948 to put a stop to the illegal activity. But they were frustrated at every turn.[20] The very next month, June 1948, a scandal erupted when the Washington *Post* published a photograph of a young boy playing illegal slots machines, seemingly unsupervised (although the kindly woman next to him did insert the nickel for him!).

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[18] "Maryland Police Raid Marshall Hall Boat" 24 August 1928: 2.
[19] Louis F. Goldstein, brother to Joseph Goldstein, was instrumental in getting these bills passed when he was a Maryland state senator in the 1940s.
[20] On the history of the grand jury's work, see Shaffer, *Slot Machines*, 23ff.



To make matters worse, the photographer took the picture during one of the biweekly "Kiddies' Days." A few days later, in early July, the twenty slot machines disappeared just before Charles County Sheriff Elmer M. Quade arrived to investigate. If the sheriff seemed unconcerned with cornering the gamblers, few others showed any interest in bringing charges. As one jury member complained, "If nobody in the county has the guts

to complain about the conditions, there's nothing we can do about it." With neither evidence nor complainants, the prosecutor could not bring any cases before the courts.[21]

The incident, however, revealed to the Wilson Line owners of Marshall Hall Park the possibility of a new service to be provided there. No matter the public outcry of a child gambling at the slots, the managers of the park discovered that the slots were the most popular attraction that day among the adults waiting for their kiddies. Very quickly the Wilson Line became a proponent of legalized gambling in Charles County. The line and other service and retail outlets strongly supported legislation in the state's general assembly to allow Charles County to join its neighbors in licensing what the legislation euphemistically called "coin-operated mechanical or electrical amusement devices or machines." The bill passed the assembly and was signed by Governor William Preston Lane in May 1949. The citizens of Charles County approved the measure on June 21, 1949 (1,973 voting for and 1,040 voting against). The law went into effect days later, on July 1.[22] Lorenzo Addison then placed twenty-one slot machines in the Marshall Hall Park arcade. But instead of quelling the lust for other forms of betting at the park, the addition of legalized betting machines seemed only to spur a greater desire for throwing money at chance.

On Tournament Day, August 17, 1949, the crowds pushed the park to capacity, and the hunger for betting was already whetted by the long tradition of putting money on

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[21] 1948 June 29: 1, "Slot Machines Get Big Play at Park"; 1948 July 1: B1, "Marshall Hall's Slot Machines Vanish Before Sheriff's Visit."

[22] *Archives of Maryland*, vol. 590: *Laws of the State of Maryland* (Baltimore: Author, 1949), ch. 678 (Senate Bill 295), 1617-22; Shaffer, *Slot Machines*, 31. See also the amendments to the bill that raised the limit for the number of machines allowed in any one venue, *Archives of Maryland*, vol. 642: *Laws of the State of Maryland* (Baltimore: Author, 1959), Chapter 824 (Senate Bill 672), 1405-12.

jousters. But hundreds if not thousands of these and other visitors found their way to a whole series of money games away from the track. Some visitors pitched their coins into the twenty-one legal slots. But others played "Over and Under," a dice game in which players bet on whether the total number of dots on a throw will be above, below or equal to seven. The table sat right out in the open on the midway between the jousting track and the arcade. At any moment, as much as $100 was piled on the game table. "It's a money game," chanted the tempter at the table, "for money players." Inside the arcade, a money wheel offered speculators another game. The wheel was marked with three dice combinations, and bettors wagered that one or another of these would come up on a dice throw. Unlike the nickel, dime, and quarter limits on the slots, "There's no limit here," shouted the shill who ran the wheel. The illegal games could have gotten their operators thrown in jail, not to mention providing the grand jury with the case the Charles County prosecutor craved. But, in a highly suspicious irony, Sheriff Quade—despite being a member of the committee on arrangements for that day's tournament—came down sick and could not witness what we might call the "Sodom by the River."[23]

Marshall Hall thus became part of a powerful social experiment that, for a while, provided a few people with a massive income, not to mention ballooning tax revenues for the down state counties where gambling was legal. Through the 1950s, Maryland was only one of two states that condoned the use of slots (the other being, of course, Nevada). The machines appeared in any and all retail establishments: drug stores, restaurants, gas stations, grocery stores, barber shops, motels. "The only place I *never* saw them," recalled state senator Roy P. Dyson, who grew up in Great Mills in St. Mary's County,

[23] "Hundreds Gamble Openly at Amusement Park on Potomac," 18 August 1949: B1.

"was in churches—otherwise they were pretty much everywhere else." The popularity of the slots fueled the quick expansion of night life in Charles County. The number of taverns rose sharply, until by 1960 there were more drinking establishments per capita in Charles County than in the rest of the state.[24] Southern Maryland garnered the nickname "Little Vegas," and Highway 301 through Charles County became known as the "Sin Strip." The thoroughfare became a mecca of casinos and nightclubs. Some of the biggest names in show business played at the venues there, including Guy Lombardo, Doris Day, Paul Newman, Ray Charles, Brenda Lee, Conway Twitty, Dolly Parton, Roy Clark, and Link Wray.[25]

By 1960, there were about 2,300 slot machines in the county, or about one device for every thirteen residents. The machines paid their owners and operators a total of as much as $4.5 million annually, and that was only the *reported* figure—the real take was likely much higher. The county government benefited from the gaming: slots taxes brought in as much as $340,000 in annual county tax revenue, or about 25 percent of the

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[24] According to figures provided by Hume, there was one tavern for every 160 residents of Charles County, while the figure rose to one for every 442 residents in the rest of the state [David Hume, "Maryland's Jolly Jackpot," *Nation* (13 February 1960): 140].

[25] Hume, "Maryland's Jolly Jackpot," 140; Shaffer, *Slot Machines*, 43; Steven Janis, "Little Vegas: What Can Maryland's Troubled History with Slot Machines Tell Us About the Odds for the Future?" *Baltimore City Paper* (1 December 2004), 17. The appellation "Little Vegas" actually diminishes the size of Maryland's gaming industry in the 1950s and early 1960s. By 1963, the Old Line State had three times more federally licensed "coin-operated amusement machines" than all the casinos of Las Vegas combined. Moreover, the total take of Little Vegas slots in 1963 was $24 million. As Steven Janis has pointed out, this compares with the $20 million take of Harrah's in Lake Tahoe in 1961. The Maryland slots income is all the more impressive when one considers, as Janis did, that slots are limited to nickels, dimes, and quarters while Harrah's players could take advantage of games with much higher stakes, such as blackjack and craps [Janis, "Little Vegas," 17].

county's entire budget. The federal government also received gambling revenue, to the tune of $250 per machine for a total of well over $500.000.[26]

By far the largest slots venue in the county was "Happyland," which sat squarely in the middle of Marshall Hall Park.[27] A group of investors known as "Pot o' Gold, Inc." spent $100,000 to tear down the old dance pavilion and build the concession within weeks of passage of the 1949 law legalizing slots gambling in Charles County.[28] Happyland included a snack bar, an alcohol bar, and a gambling hall. The hall originally packed 185 slot machines, a wide variety with names such as "Camille's Centaur," "The Venus," and "On-the-Square."[29] Happyland was within a few yards of some the park's most popular children's' concessions, but was organized to prevent any more children from pulling the "one-armed bandits," or "wonderboxes" as park manager L.C. Addison preferred to call them ("'One armed-bandits,'" he once protested, "is a crude expression.")[30] Happyland expanded quickly. Only a year after its opening it had 233 wonderboxes. The park also added a second gambling building (known as "Sportland") that boasted forty-two slot machines.[31] This offering of 275 one-armed bandits was by far the largest in Charles County, practically doubling the largest collection out on Sin

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[26] Hume, "Maryland's Jolly Jackpot,"141; Edward R. Sisson (of Bryans Road, near Marshall Hall), "Maryland, Nevada Only States to Legalize Slot Machine," 7 January1961: D2, reprint from *America: The National Catholic Weekly Review*; Arnett et al., *Maryland*, 111.
[27] Shaffer, *Slot Machines*, 56.
[28] Shaffer, *Slot Machines*, 63; Southern Maryland Study Center, College of Southern Maryland Archives, Finding Aid, 6
[29] Shaffer, *Slot Machines*, 3.
[30] "'Happyland'—185 Slot Machines," *Washington Daily News*, 23 July 1958: 25.
[31] Laurence Stern, "Slot Machine Curb Is Signed by Tawes," 6 May 1959: A1; Hume, "Maryland's Jolly Jackpot,"141; Sisson, "Maryland, Nevada," D2; 7: "Making People Happy Is Her Business," F7; Arnett et al., *Maryland*, 41.

Strip, the 140 machines at Club Waldorf.[32] (No other venue in the county had more than 100.) The concentration of slots at Marshall Hall brought a new wave of patrons to the park. But the rise in attendance was offset by a series of events that destabilized both Marshall Hall Park and the Wilson Line.

**Hard (Financial) Times Behind the Scenes**

Despite the financial boon gambling brought to Marshall Hall Park, the various owners and operators of the park experienced a series of personal events and financial setbacks that paved the way for a wholesale change in ownership. The fate of Marshall Hall was put in doubt by the 1956 death of Frederick Mertens, long-time president of MVMHSC and owner of the Marshall real estate.[33] The property passed to his widow Mary and two married daughters, Frederica Galloway and Katherine Hynson. Over the next three years, the Mertens survivors experienced a series of life changes that complicated the ownership of the property. Mertens's widow Mary sold her interest in the park to her daughters for a nominal price of $10 in March 1957, although she retained a "life interest" in the property.[34] But before the year was out, Frederica died, leaving her share of the property to her husband Donald Galloway and a series of trusts for their four children.[35] Over the next year these new owners searched for a way to remove themselves from management

[32] Stern, "Slot Machine Curb Is Signed by Tawes," A1.
[33] So closely had Mertens been associated with the MVMHSC that his obituary was headlined "F.A. Mertens, Steamship Firm Head" [29 March 1956: 14].
[34] The "life interest" meant that Mary Mertens would retain the benefits of ownership until her death, when her interest in the property would automatically transfer to the other owners of the property (ie, her two daughters and their heirs) [Charles County Land Records, Liber PCM 131: 129-32].
[35] "Galloway Estate Worth $400,000," 27 November 1957: B2.

of Marshall Hall Park. They were not the only Marshall Hall players facing serious dilemmas.

Gambling did not save the Wilson Line. As a matter of fact, ownership of Marshall Hall Park never had materialized as the financial blessing the line hoped for. The fickle nature of the amusement industry meant that the company had to repeatedly borrow money and hustle to keep the park afloat financially. To make matters worse, the shipping company fell on hard times through the 1950s, victim to the increasing popularity of automobile travel and its own internal financial problems. These problems already were acute by 1952, and the Wilson board of directors began searching for a buyer to bail them out of their woes. By the end of the year, the line's stockholders voted to liquidate the company if a buyer could not be found. No buyer came forward, but a series of financial maneuvers prevented the break-up of the line. One of these maneuvers was to transfer the line's interest in Marshall Hall Park to an entity known as "Marshall Park, Inc." in December 1954. The hope was that the continuing financial headache of managing the seasonal park could be separated out from the company's shipping business. There may have been some thought of selling the park interests in order to make purchase of the rest of the company more attractive. Days after the transfer of the park holdings, City Investment Company of New York bought the Wilson Line. Rather than selling Marshall Hall Park, however, CIC announced plans to expand the amusement venue. "It's our ambition," Robert W. Dowling, president of CIC, claimed grandiosely, "to make Marshall Hall as good as the Tivoli in Copenhagen." Dowling backed up his words by promising a $150,000 investment in the park to add more rides, enlarge the

flower gardens, and eventually build a magnificent swimming pool.[36] CIC changed the name of the steamboat company to "Wilson Excursion Line," suggesting that the New York firm planned to transform the Wilson holdings into a vast entertainment organization. But these plans came to naught.

CIC soon realized that the days of the steamship industry were numbered. Dowling began selling off pieces of the company. Matters were complicated by the death of long-time Marshall Hall Park manager Lorenzo Addison on November 6, 1958. The 69-year-old had run the park for a quarter of a century. Together, these events meant that there was room for a new figure to enter the history of Marshall Hall, a man bent on scratching for gold dust in a well-worked vein of entertainment.

**Joseph Goldstein and the Search for Amusement Gold**

The last owner of Marshall Hall was the shadowy and controversial Maryland entrepreneur Joseph Goldstein. The son of a Jewish immigrant peddler from Prussia who settled in Prince Frederick, Calvert County, Maryland, in the 1910s, Goldstein was born in the early 1920s and grew up around the general store operated by his father, Goodman Goldstein. He had a brother, Louis, who went on to become the longest serving comptroller in Maryland state history. Louis recalled that his father taught him to "give people responsibility, accountability and service."[37] But Joseph seemed to have missed these lessons in dealing with the customers who came into Goodman's store. Rather, he

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[36] "Wilson Line Holders Vote To Liquidate," 13 December 1952: 20; Charles County Land Records Liber PCM 115: 216; "Wilson Line Is Purchased By N.Y. Investing Company," 4 January 1955: 34; "Marshall Hall Park, Mt. Vernon Ship To Get $250,000 Beauty Treatment," 23 January 1955: A13.

[37] Martin Weil, "Maryland Comptroller Dies at 85," 4 July 1998: A1; Michael Janofsky, "Louis Goldstein, 85, Maryland Comptroller," *New York Times*, 7 July 1998: B11.

was a wily entrepreneur whom his critics believed was cut more from the mold of the stereotypical Yankee peddler.[38] They saw him as a classic "sharper" who would stoop to any level to make a buck. He had several run-ins with government officials over various business dealings, notwithstanding his brother's high position in the state government.[39] Ken Ringle, a reporter for the Washington *Post*, described Goldstein as "a wheeler-dealer extraordinaire." Goldstein described himself in vivid language: "I'm just a little country Jew boy trying to make a buck."[40]

Goldstein, perhaps due to growing up near the water in Calvert County, had a great faith in the future of water transportation in the 1950s. He scraped together enough backing to purchase the Washington assets of the Wilson Excursion Lines in late 1958 or early 1959. The deal made him the owner of the steamship *Mount Vernon* as well as all wharf and other agreements of the Wilson Excursion Line relating to its Potomac operations. Then, in a quick series of deals, Goldstein gained control of Marshall Hall Park. On February 16, 1959, the Mertens's heirs signed documents that canceled the twelve-year-old lease that gave the now-defunct Wilson Lines control over virtually all the families' 377 Marshall Hall acres. The family turned right around that day and signed

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[38] On this stereotype, see, for example, William R. Tayler, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), 108-09; Joseph T. Rainer, "The 'Sharper Image': Yankee Peddlers, Southern Consumers, and the Market Revolution," *Business and Economic History* 26.1 (Fall 1997): 37-38; John Seelye, *Memory's Nation: The Place of Plymouth Rock* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 308.

[39] See, e.g., accusations of bribery (he was cleared) [John Hanrahan, "2 Area Businessmen Indicted in Bribe Case," 13 February 1970: C1], illegal dumping [Ken Ringle, "Marshall Hall Firm Indicted," 17 December 1971: B2], forced into bankruptcy [Paul Hodge, "Marshall Hall Park May Close Down in the Fall," 18 August 1977: MD1], and his running battle with the federal government over control of the Potomac shoreline at Marshall Hall, which will be detailed below.

[40] Ken Ringle, "View From Mt. Vernon Is Bitter," 5 September 1971: 41.

a new lease with the Wilson Lines' successor company, the Wilson Excursion Lines. These two moves guaranteed that the latter enterprise was the proper agent for the park. Three weeks later, Wilson Excursion Lines sold the Marshall Hall Park lease to Wilson Line of Washington, Inc., the new company that Joseph Goldstein founded with the Potomac remnants of Wilson Excursion. This lease gave Goldstein control over all the amusement devices and other "personal" property at Marshall Hall for twelve years. The cost of the lease was not disclosed in the various agreements.[41]

Goldstein apparently sought to create stability in his new venture. He appointed a man named Harry H. Baker to be executive general manager of the Wilson Line of Washington. Baker had been the former Wilson Line's Potomac district manager from 1934 to 1942. (His name also suggests that he was descended from the Harry Baker, whose firm had managed Marshall Hall Park in the 1930s.) And at Marshall Hall, Goldstein chose Lorenzo Addison's widow, Margaret Addison, to manage the park.[42] Stability, however, would elude Goldstein's tenure as director of Marshall Hall's fate over the next decade.

The first problem that confronted Goldstein was a sea-change in political and public support for gambling in Charles County and the state of Maryland beyond. Almost before Goldstein had time to sail down to Marshall Hall in his new steamship,

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[41] Charles County Land Records, Liber PCM 115: 216. The lease excluded from the Wilson Line of Washington's control several buildings, including the mansion house, a number of buildings described as "slave quarters," and the Addison home (which suggests that the Addisons had found living in a colonial era dwelling surrounded by park enthusiasts to be somewhat distracting—the records do not indicate when the Addison home was constructed).

[42] Lorenzo's brother helped manage the park until his own death in 1969. Margaret Addison managed the park until its very last day ["Heads Wilson Line," 17 March 1959: 69].

Charles County delegate John H. Mitchell introduced legislation to limit the total number of slot machines in any one establishment to thirty-five. Two other provisions could restrict slots operations even further. One required slots operators to disclose publicly the names of all parties with a financial interest in the slots. The other set several residency requirements that threatened to undermine Goldstein's Pot o' Gold concession, which controlled more than 200 slot machines in Happyland and Sportland. Goldstein, fearing the end of his lucrative gambling business, threw himself into opposing the bill. He wrote letters (on the letterhead of both Marshall Hall and the Wilson Line) to Charles County's state delegate John T. Parran, Jr., disparaging the legislation.[43] He traveled to Annapolis intent on saving his recently purchased gambling empire. He met with Governor Millard Tawes on April 30 to urge a veto of the measure—to no avail. Tawes signed the curb on the "wonderboxes" less than a week later, on May 5, 1959. The bill was to take effect at the beginning of June 1960 (actual implementation was delayed for a year, until May 31, 1961). Goldstein was not alone in thinking that, as the *Post* reporter put it, the restrictions would "doom Charles County's gaudy, big-scale gambling casinos."[44] More attacks on the wounded beast of gambling came quickly.

The opponents of gambling at Marshall Hall and beyond mounted a series of assaults in the halls of the legislature and in the national media. The wording of the 1959 revision of the slots law suggested that Pot 'o Gold, Inc. might be able to maintain the slots it owned in excess of the thirty-five-machine limit.[45] The law stated that "if any

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[43] Shaffer, *Slot Machines*, 51.
[44] "Tawes Silent on Charles Slots Curb," 1 May 1959: D6; Stern, "Slot Machine Curb Is Signed by Tawes," A1; House Bill 672, *Archives of Maryland*, vol. 642: *Laws of the State of Maryland 1959* (Annapolis, Md.: Author, 1959), 1405-12.
[45] *Laws 1959*, 1407.

person, firm or corporation held licenses under Chapter 678 of the laws of Maryland of 1949, in excess of three, on January 1, 1951, such licenses may be renewed from year to year." To close this loophole, the opponents of gambling took several tacks. Delegate Mitchell exposed a ruling from the former attorney general for the state of Maryland, Alexander Harvey, which stated that only those establishments that had licensed slots before an amendment to the state's gaming laws which took effect in January 1951 could place more than three machines on their premises. The question for Goldstein was whether the law would apply to Pot 'o Gold, Inc. (in which case he would be able to continue with all of the current number of slot machines), or whether the company he formed, "Wilson Line of Washington," would be judged to be a new owner (in which case the number of slots at Marshall Hall might be reduced to a paltry total of three). Harvey's ruling, however, never took root. So, to further close the loophole, gambling opponents put a referendum on the November 1960 ballot that would impose a thirty-five-machine limit on all business places.[46]

The fiercest opponent of gambling in Charles County was David Hume, treasurer of the Maryland Democratic Party and proud resident of the county. He began appearing on local television in 1958 criticizing the social effects of slots in Maryland.[47] He published an article decrying the social effects of gambling in the February 13, 1960, issue of *The Nation*, a nationally circulating magazine of opinion. Hume argued that, while the slots had certain benefits for Charles County's tax rates and revenue, gambling had depressed land values, impoverished numerous citizens, brought in racketeers from

[46] It is not clear who suppressed Harvey's interpretation. "Suppressed Slots Ruling Clouds Casinos' Legality," 20 March 1960: A14.
[47] Shaffer, *Slot Machines*, 87ff.

outside the state, and greatly exacerbated political corruption among local officials. Hume's arguments carried the day at the November 8, 1960, referendum. The people of Charles County, by a slight majority of 260 votes (3999 to 3789), decided to pass the thirty-five-machine limit, effective May 1961.[48] As Joseph Goldstein saw his gambling income dwindle, still the opponents of slots carried on their fight. Now they set their sights on a total ban.

Edward R. Sisson of Bryans Road (a stone's throw away from Happyland at Marshall Hall) called for the end of all gambling in Charles County in an article in the New Year's 1960 edition of the fifty-year-old Catholic weekly *America*. He was clearly in agreement with Hume, for he brought much of Hume's *Nation* argument into his own argument. He agreed that the poor suffered disproportionately from gambling, claiming that "The typical poor person who is addicted to the slots is not the type who keeps a careful account of his income and outgo and seldom realized the extent of his losses. Many a father throws away his paycheck on the slots and his family must turn to the church for assistance." He added new points to the anti-gambling argument, arguing that the presence of gambling had dissuaded big industry from relocating to the county. He reported that just before the November referendum on gambling in the county a grand jury had indicted nine people for "irregularities in slot machine and liquor operations."[49] Sisson was clearly supportive of the many local ministers who planned to turn the 1962 gubernatorial race into a referendum on gambling in Maryland.

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[48] Sisson, "Maryland, Nevada," D2.
[49] Sisson, "Maryland, Nevada," D2.

Hume pushed the issue himself in 1962 by running as a single-issue candidate. [50] He challenged Millard Tawes's reelection campaign in the primary by criticizing the governor's waffling position that gambling was a local issue. Hume did not carry the primary, but he grabbed a very threatening 101,319 votes. Tawes suddenly switched his opinion about slots, and declared just before the November general election that mechanized gambling was "no longer a local issue." He proclaimed his belief that slots "should be abolished." Soon after beginning his second term in the governorship, Tawes introduced legislation to outlaw slots machine gambling in Maryland. The debate over the ban raged in both the state senate and the house for weeks. The anger was so virulent that the controversy, according to an editorial in the Baltimore *Sun* "almost ripped the House of Delegates asunder." But the ban cleared both houses (if by fairly narrow margins). On April 30, 1963, Tawes signed a bill that halted all new slots licenses and began a phase out of the existing machines over the next five years. The total ban was set to take effect on July 1, 1968.[51]

But already in 1963, the number of wonderboxes at Marshall Hall had been severely diminished. The thirty-five-machine limit passed by both the legislature and the voters of Charles County cut the number of slots at the park by 75 percent. There were

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[50] Wendell P. Bradley, "State Asks For 2 Tapes In Md. Probe," 10 May1962: A1. In an ironic twist of fate, Hume endorsed Louis Goldstein in his reelection bid for Comptroller of Maryland. One of Goldstein's opponents, Marshall Levin claimed that Hume's anti-gambling campaign was thus disingenuous. Levin pointed out that, not only was Goldstein brother to Joseph I. Goldstein, the reputed "slot machine king" of lower Maryland, but it was Louis Goldstein who had introduced the local option gambling bill for Charles County back in the 1940s when he was a state senator from Calvert County ["State Asks For 2 Tapes In Md. Probe," A1].

[51] House bill 475, *Archives of Maryland*, vol. 671: *Laws of Maryland* (Annapolis, Md.: Author), 1345-48; Shaffer, *Slot Machines*, 89ff.; Janis, "Little Vegas," 17; all quotations are from Janis.

thirty-five wonderboxes in Happyland, and another thirty-five in the separate building known as Sportland. The glamour of gambling had worn off the Pot o' Gold. The main audience for the slots was older people who cared nothing for the rides and other amusements Marshall Hall Park offered.[52] There was an air of desperation to it all. In June 1965, an advertisement for Happyland meekly proclaimed that the joint was open twenty-four hours a day. Cocktails were available until 2 a.m. on weekdays and Saturdays, and until midnight on Sundays.[53] Goldstein had decided that if he couldn't have a gambling economy of scale in terms of the number of machines, he would achieve one by running them nonstop throughout the night.




The campaign against gambling was only one of the major social forces that inundated Marshall Hall after Goldstein gained control of it. Another was much wider in scope. The movement for black civil rights burned through the South in the late 1950s

[52] "Making People Happy Is Her Business," F7.
[53] Display ad, 5 June 1965: D3.

and broke down all manner of traditions in the North as well. If discriminatory Jim Crow laws in the South blatantly separated blacks from whites, the tacit segregation in the North was just as prevalent. Maryland state law segregated the races at numerous public places, such as Marshall Hall. Even in the nation's capital, white businessmen barred blacks from numerous public places, including hotels, theaters, movie houses, and amusement venues.[54]

**The Color of Amusement: Segregation at Marshall Hall**

Supreme Court Justice John Marshall Harlan was known as "the great dissenter." He gained this title to a large degree because of his lone protest the Plessy v. Ferguson decision of 1896. Harlan had argued that the "separate but equal" doctrine of racial segregation advanced by the majority ran counter to the Constitution's guarantees of political equality. "There is no caste here [in the United States]," the justice proclaimed. "Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens."[55] And yet, when Harlan sailed down the Potomac on the ships of the MVMHSC to the annual District of Columbia Bar gatherings, it seemed that his racial vision turned cloudy to the fact that they barred African Americans from sailing on board

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[54] Flora Bryant Brown, "NAACP Sponsored Sit-ins by Howard University Students in Washington, D.C., 1943-1944," *Journal of Negro History* 85.4 (Autumn 2000): 274-286. For more on segregation and protest in the nation's capital around mid century, see Pauli Murray, *Song in a Weary Throat, An American Pilgrimage* (New York: HarperCollins, 1987), 200; Constance M. Green, *The Secret City: A History of Race Relations in the Nation's Capital* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967), 94, 101-39; Beverly W. Jones, "Before Montgomery and Greensboro: The Desegregation Movement in the District of Columbia, 1950-1953," *Phylon* 43 (1982): 144-54.

[55] *Plessy* v. *Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 [1896].

their ships.[56] He seemed equally untroubled that this limitation extended to Marshall Hall, where he played baseball and fired rifles at the shooting range.

Marshall Hall hardly was alone in barring blacks. The first great amusement parks at Coney Island were white only, except for certain specific days reserved for black patronage. The Chicago World's Fair had largely made visits by blacks unwelcome, except for the infamous "Colored People's Day at the Fair." Other parks in the North made any potential black visitor uncomfortable with stridently racist games, such as "Coontown Plunge" or "Nigger Baby Rack." (The plunge—also known as the "African Dip"—was a dunking game in which players tried to hit a target that would dump a black man or a white man in blackface into a vat of water, or if there were no bucket, then contestants merely threw baseballs at the man's head. The rack was an arcade game in which contestants shot a toy cannon or other light gun at a tin cut-out of a black child.) Such crude diversions were available in amusement parks from Coney Island to Kansas City. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, virtually all amusement parks in the South and as many as two thirds in the North actively practiced segregation. Few of these parks had explicit, written policies about segregation. As historian David Nasaw has written, the parks did not need to explicate their separatist practices because "there were almost universal proscriptions against interracial dancing, dining, and swimming in

[56] For a fascinating exploration of Harlan's racial ideas, see Linda Przybyszewski, *The Republic According to John Marshall Harlan* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), esp. ch. 4: "Every True Man Has Pride of Race: Civil Rights, Social Rights, and Racial Identity."

the early twentieth century...." Until the late 1950s, few blacks felt inclined to actively challenge these quietly destructive limits.[57]

Marshall Hall followed the widespread practice of tacit segregation, at least after 1900. Before that date, there is only one mention of an African American at the park, and that mention is a racist portrayal of its subject. The author of the piece reported that there had been three black women among the Iowa state Republicans who took an excursion to Marshall Hall in the middle of August 1891. One of the women, according to the writer, was exceedingly fat, and broke a chair she tried to sit on while the boat sailed down the Potomac. "Golly," the writer claims the woman said, "only de cha'r busted. 'Most thought from the scrash dat de hull boat done gone flyin' to de riber bottom."[58] The humor of the piece comes from the use of the false "negro" dialect that had become a stock element of stereotypical depictions of African Americans after the Civil War. After the 1890s, white supremacy raged across the South. Jim Crow laws became more widespread and more constricting. No doubt the managers of Marshall Hall followed Jim's suit.

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[57] Forrester B. Washington, "Recreational Facilities for the Negro," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 140 (November 1928): 276-77; Robert Peter Tristram Coffin, *Lost Paradise: A Boyhood on a Maine Coast Farm* (New York: Mcmillan, 1934), 105; Alan Havig, "Mass Commercial Amusements in Kansas City before World War I," *Missouri Historical Review* 75 (April 1981): 351; Judith A. Adams, *The American Amusement Park Industry* (Boston: Twayne, 1991), 65; David Nasaw, *Going Out: The Rise and Fall of Public Amusements* (New York: Basic, 1993), 92-94; Michael Immerso, *Coney Island: The People's Playground* (Piscataway, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 168. The "coontown plunge" was also known as the "hit-the-nigger" game. A version of can be seen in the 1935 Spencer Tracy movie, *Dante's Inferno*. To show the depths to which Tracy's character has fallen, the film shows him accepting the job to smear his face with black grease and sit on the platform waiting for the dunking. A story about the degrading effects of the game on white contestants can be found in Asher Gerecht's short story "The African Dip" [*Antioch Review* 9 (1949): 467-76].

[58] "'Only de Cha'r Busted,'" 16 August 1891: 2.

Lorenzo Addison and other managers of the park had little trouble keeping it virtually all white into the mid twentieth century because the vast majority of visitors came via the boats. All the dirty work of segregation was done at the MVMHSC ticket office at the D.C. wharf. There, ticket sellers told blacks who attempted to purchase passage to Marshall Hall that the park was segregated. Further, the MVMHSC representatives claimed that blacks were free to ride on the boats, but that they would not be allowed to disembark at the Maryland amusement venue.

To some degree there was a separate but equal policy at work at the Potomac amusement parks. Notley Hall provided blacks with an amusement alternative. It was on the Maryland side of the Potomac and offered many of the same appliances of entertainment and rituals of relaxation available at Marshall Hall, at least through the 1920s, when it closed.[59] But this alternative did not blunt African Americans' frustration at being barred from Marshall Hall.

Rev. S.L. Corrothers, the influential pastor of the Galbraith A.M.E. Zion Church in the District, made this frustration clear in a 1908 speech. Corrothers was deeply angered by what he believed to be the racial hypocrisy of the Republican Party. On the one hand, he pointed out that D.C. Republicans were "always professing an undying friendship for us [African Americans]." On the other hand, the party undertook actions that directly contradicted their claims of racial amity. Corrothers's prime example of this two-faced sensibility was the party's choice for a meeting site to ratify the party's choice of William Howard Taft as its candidate for presidential contest. "Where are they going to have it [the ratification meeting]?" Corrothers asked rhetorically. "They are going to

[59] There is excruciatingly little scholarship on the history of Notley Hall.

have it at Marshall Hall," he noted, "where no negro is allowed, and they are all going on a boat on which no negro is permitted unless in a menial capacity." Barely controlling his ire, Corrothers quipped sarcastically, "There's undying friendship for you!"[60]

But segregation at Marshall Hall was filled with odd contradictions and bruising fights over race that have characterized American history from the Civil War to the present. While MVMHSC barred blacks, there seems to have been no similar proscription against peoples of other nonwhite races. A handful of articles in the Washington *Post* around the turn of the twentieth century attest to the presence of Chinese at Marshall Hall. One squib related a political argument between a "Chinaman" and a "well-known Republican." It showed the Chinese American to be somewhat well-versed in the fight over the 1888 presidential election. Although the reporter of the piece put the Chinese American's quotations into stereotypical dialect, it nonetheless shows that Asians were welcome visitors to the park.[61] Another paragraph-long piece reported on several Chinese flying kites at Marshall Hall. Whereas the first article contained a sense of mockery, this one reads more like a bit of ethnology. The "anthropologist" at the *Post* described the massive "peculiar" kites (one was twenty-seven feet long, another "was shaped like a man's body"). He then sought a reason for the affair at the Chinese Legation. There he was told that the kite event was not a display of any particular national celebration, but was sign of appreciation for a visitor's arrival or departure. To help his audience understand the significance of the kites, the reporter/anthropologist approvingly compared the act to America's greatest sport: "Among Chinamen flying

[60] "Race Ratifies Bryan," 11 August 1908: 3.
[61] "The Chinaman Knew All About It," 11 July 1888: 4.

kites is regarded in the same manner that baseball is in this country—in other words, it is a national pastime."[62]

By the early 1900s, Chinese still traveled to Marshall hall, seemingly with no impediments, but there was a different mood in the coverage of their visits in the *Post*. A long article in 1908 covered the visit of Chinese ambassador Wu Ting-fang to Marshall Hall. He was the guest of a Union army veterans' organization, the Burnside Post, No. 3, of the Grand Army of the Republic. The *Post*'s reporter noted his numerous questions to the girls who gathered round him, such as what exactly was a "Merry Widow." The heart of the article, though, concerned Wu's dietary habits. At the requisite Marshall Hall shad dinner, Wu declined to eat the fish. He explained to all there during an impromptu speech that he had become a vegetarian, and he urged everyone there to do likewise. His decision had come, he explained, on the advice of an American woman after numerous doctors failed at treating his sciatica. He now planned, he proclaimed, to live for 200 years.[63] A very different event revealed Chinese Americans at Marshall Hall a year later. A young orphan boy, Lee Pong—after becoming something of a cause célèbre—stole some money from an uncle. He used the money to fund a trip to Marshall Hall for himself and several other youths where they apparently spent lavishly.[64] Sandwiched between these two events, however, was a speech that showed some whites developing a distinctly anti-Chinese prejudice.

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[62] "With Kites in the Air: Party of Chinamen Celebrate at Marshall Hall," 25 June 1889: 6.
[63] "Wu to Live 200 Years," 3 May 1908: 2.
[64] "Lee Pong in Sad Mood: Chinese Boy Says That Everybody Hates Him," 3 September 1909: 14.

M.F. O'Donoghue, president of the California State Association, used the occasion of a celebration of his organization's merging with Joseph McKibbin's old California Pioneers group, to warn of the supposed dangers of Chinese immigrants. O'Donoghue brought California prejudices into Marshall Hall by claiming that, according to a reporter's paraphrase, "if chop suey houses and Chinese laundries were not eliminated from the United States the next century would be one of demoralization and decay." He went on to disparage the idea that Chinese would or could convert to Christianity. Any sort of mixing of the American and Chinese races he wailed would spell disaster, arguing that (again according to the reporter's paraphrase) "The two civilizations were the antitheses of each other, and their amalgamation would lead not to the survival of the fittest, but the survival of the most unfit...."[65] It seems, given Lee Pong's adventures at Marshall Hall, that the managers of the park did not heed O'Donoghue's ravings.

There seems to have been no problem for American Jews in gaining access to Marshall Hall. In August of 1916, for example, the Council of Jewish Women went on an excursion to Marshall Hall aboard the *Charles Macalaster*. Twenty years later, the Jewish War Veterans of the U.S. and its ladies' auxiliary held their annual picnic and outing at the park.[66]

Before the 1960s, African Americans were not entirely barred from Marshall Hall, at least not certain events. The crowd at the annual jousts was a salt-and-pepper mix of blacks and whites in the 1950s, according to Mary Lou Bartram. They mingled

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[65] "Should Eliminate Chinese: Chop Suey Houses Lead to Moral Decay, Says M.F. O'Donoghue," 28 June 1908: 2.
[66] "Many to Visit Marshall Hall," 22 August 1916: 3; "Jewish Veterans' Outing," 21 July 1935: S6.

together, not only standing shoulder-to-shoulder while spectating, but also actively betting with one another over the outcome of the jousts. At least one African American man entered the tournament itself. George Bartram recalled that the fellow drove up in an old car, with his horse in tow on a trailer. He paid his fee, rode like anyone else—and like the majority of riders was washed out in the first round. (This rider was not a fluke. Jousting was popular among a number of African Americans, especially around Mechanicsville in St. Mary's County.)[67]

The white management of Marshall Hall may have allowed blacks to participate in the jousting tournament for several reasons. First, the event was rural in nature. As such, it was in line with Marylanders' experience of the countryside to find whites and blacks mutually involved in agriculture-related activities. Second, all of the black participants in the tournament day arrived by land, and the jousting track was an open space. These two factors would have made it difficult to police the racial makeup of the crowd. Third, there could have been a supremacist element to black participation. On the one hand, some whites may have believed that they would easily prevail in bets with blacks, and thus welcome African Americans as supposedly easy marks. On the other hand, the prejudice at Marshall Hall may have been against blacks with some measure of class power and urban social status. This would explain the racial bar at the water's edge.

The Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and '60s radically altered the relations of whites and blacks in Washington, D.C., in general and specific public places such as Marshall Hall. Back in the mid 1940s, students from the historically black Howard

[67] This is not to say that jousting was a thoroughly integrated sport. In the face of Maryland's de facto practice of racial segregation, blacks often staged separate tournaments [Mary Lou Bartram and George Bartram, personal communications].

University had initiated the use of the "sit-in" to protest the deep segregation of Washington, D.C. Other activists would continue to work to bring down the vestiges of Jim Crow in the D.C. area in the following decades. While segregation was not legal in the District—African Americans and whites rode together on streetcars and buses—the city had a de facto Jim Crow system that prevented blacks from eating at virtually any restaurant in the city frequented by whites. This invisible-but-blatant racism was a tradition at Marshall Hall.

Throughout the post-World War II decades, the main focus of discrimination at Marshall Hall was on African Americans—or anyone the managers and workers perceived as black. In the summer of 1959, workers at Goldstein's Wilson Line office turned away at least five black families. One of these incidents turned out to be particularly embarrassing—virtually an international incident. On Sunday, July 19, 1959, Wilson Line employees refused to allow a Colombian doctor and his family to board the *Mount Vernon* for an excursion to Marshall Hall Park. Dr. Arturo Morillo was of mixed ancestry, claiming Spanish, Colombian, and "Negro" blood. Officials for the steamship company followed the old script and asserted that they had no Jim Crow policy per se. They claimed to be happy to let the doctor board the boat. But once at Marshall Hall, the officials warned, workers would prevent him from disembarking at the wharf "because of the segregation" there. The doctor and his family decided to forego their planned day of amusement. In the ensuing controversy, Smith Linthicum, office manager for the Wilson Line of Washington, claimed that informing "Negroes" of the Marshall Hall policy at the Washington wharf was standard practice. A lawyer for both the Wilson Line and Marshall Hall declared that the two "enterprises" were separate entities, with only a

"working agreement" for transporting passengers between the District and Marshall Hall (although the fact that the two entities shared a single lawyer, plus Joseph Goldstein's ownership of both, would seem to undermine this assertion). The lawyer attempted to justify the segregation policy by asserting that it was standard practice in Charles County and Southern Maryland in general.[68] This stance, however, was becoming increasingly untenable in the Civil Rights era.

Pressure to desegregate Marshall Hall Park mounted in several quarters. In March 1961, the George Washington University student council ended its ten-year tradition of taking students on an excursion to the park. The event, which attracted as many as 500 students, was billed as the annual "Colonial Cruise." But by 1961 the "colonial" aspect of the title had taken on a new and detrimental connotation. No longer a gesture toward a nostalgic past, it suggested to the students of GWU the odious history of slavery and the repressive present of 1960s segregation.[69] The student council decided that it would not continue the cruise if Marshall Hall would not rescind its segregation policy, at least for the duration of the university excursion. Negotiations over providing a waiver for the event broke down when Joseph Goldstein refused to take decisive action. He stated that the policy of the Wilson Line was color blind. If the line prevented blacks from disembarking at the Marshall Hall wharf, it was solely "by arrangement" with the

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[68] "Race Bars Colombian's Boat Trip," 27 July 1959: B1.

[69] The number of black students at GWU in 1961 was likely quite small. In 1967 (the first year in which the federal government required schools to keep records regarding the ratio of black and other minority students to whites), there were 93 African American undergrads at the school, compared to 4,188 whites. There were 92 international students and 11 "other" making the total number come to 4,384. This made blacks about 2 percent of the undergraduate population at GWU. It is quite likely that the percentage was even smaller in 1961 (Joachim Knop, Associate Director for Institutional Research, George Washington University, Personal Communication, 7 June 2007).

managers of the park. When a reporter pursued Goldstein's involvement with the park, he admitted to owning stock in the venture. But he claimed that he had "nothing to do with running it." He then undercut his own attempt at passing the buck by adding, "Nobody can make Marshall Hall take anyone they don't want." Marshall Hall attorney Ernest F. Henry justified the segregation policy by noting that it had been in place since 1888 when the park opened. Echoing Goldstein, the lawyer argued that, as a private venture, the park had the right to exclude any patron it chose. "The park maintains facilities," he continued, reading out of the same legal playbook used in the Morillo debacle, "only in accord with local and county practices." In Charles County, Henry pointed out, "The practice is to have separate facilities for Negroes, but we can't afford duplicate services." He suggested the park's policy was not a heartfelt position of its owners and managers, and that the policy could change: "Anytime the neighborhood changes," he temporized, "Marshall Hall will go along with the change." This dissembling did not satisfy the GWU student council. Its feelings were best summed up in the testimony given before the council by Don Carols Faith, director of men's activities at GWU. Faith said, "I can think of nothing worse than that any University student would not be admitted to one of our activities. We must go all-out to find a substitute for the cruise."[70] Such sentiments were not good for Goldstein's business.

Lawyer Henry's claim that the park would change when the surrounding society dropped its segregationist ways was soon put to the test by events at an amusement park on the opposite side of Washington. Two years before the GWU student council's decision to forego excursions to Marshall Hall, a group of young black and white

[70] "Racial Ban Stops Student Cruise," 8 March 1961: B2.

activists decided to reveal the area's unwritten segregationism. The group entered Glen Echo Park on June 30, 1960, to test its policy of barring blacks. A sheriff's deputy, who was moonlighting at the park as a security guard, arrested the five blacks of the group as they sat on the wooden horses of the carousel waiting for the ride to begin. The state courts convicted the activists of criminal trespass. The defendants filed suit to have their convictions overturned based on the right to due process enshrined in the Fourteenth Amendment. The case eventually ended up in the Supreme Court of the United States, where a majority of the justices found in 1964 that the state of Maryland was guilty of racial discrimination.[71] The effect of this decision put great pressure on Joseph Goldstein to throw down Marshall Hall's barriers to African American visitors.

Marshall Hall loosened its racial strictures against black visitors. Some African American high school students, for example, took advantage of the chance to escape the city and went on dates down the Potomac to the park by the middle 1960s. (Deborah Fleming recalled that each of the Wilson Line ship's three decks had a particular attraction: the lowest deck was for hamburgers, the mid-deck was for dancing to live music, and the top-most deck was for "smooching" out under the stars in the cool river breeze.)[72] By the early 1970s, segregation was relaxed to the point where the park could be the site for a fundraiser for a racially mixed community center. The Capital East

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[71] The connection to the state of Maryland and its authority came through the position of the deputy sheriff. Although he was not in uniform at the time he arrested the activists, he did use his deputy badge during the arrest and also filed for a warrant as a deputy, not as an employee of Glen Echo. The case was argued in November 1962, reargued in October 1963, and decided June 22, 1964. A great irony of the case is that Justice John Marshall Harlan II voted with the minority in Griffin. He was the grandson of the Great Dissenter, John Marshall Harlan, who had penned the biting minority opinion in Plessy v. Ferguson. (*Griffin* v. *Maryland*, 378 U.S. 130 [1964]).

[72] Deborah Fleming, "The Party's Over," 10 May 1987: Sunday Magazine 30.

Children's Center was a program dedicated, as the center's director Gloria Panton put it, to "trying to build the diversity of the Capitol Hill community into the structure of this place."[73] More African Americans began to frequent the park. Their presence led Goldstein to play a different race tune. Where he had been content at one time to continue the old policy of racial exclusion, he now used blacks' presence as ammunition in a bitter struggle that developed over the fate of the park through the 1960s and '70s. "What they don't like," said Goldstein referring to home owners in the Moyaone Reserve, "is that I bring inner-city blacks downriver on the Wilson Line."[74] The Moyaoneites were only one army arrayed against the embattled entrepreneur. He also faced several branches of politicians, conservationists, and patriots over his plans to build a monstrous development and theme park on what was now *his* Marshall Hall property.

**Ghost Park**

Washington's angel of amusement announced the beginning of the end of Marshall Hall quietly, unceremoniously, without cataclysm. It came on a winter's night just after the start of the New Year in 1963. On the morning of January 5, dockworkers discovered the *Mount Vernon*, foundered in twenty feet of water at its Maine Avenue pier. Overnight, the boat took on water and, like a great elephant wobbling on its last legs, just lay down and died.[75] The cause of the leak was never ascertained. Many Washingtonians took the *Mount Vernon*'s final departure personally. One confided that "Some of us even wept over her loss. She was, after all, one of Washington's 'personalities' and she symbolized our youth...." Speaking of the boat and the world it represented, he added (significantly

[73] Robert Donin, "Capitol East: Mix of Race, Class, Paints," 26 August 1971: B1.
[74] Ringle, "View From Mt. Vernon Is Bitter," 41.
[75] "Wilson Line Steamer Sinks at Potomac Pier," 6 January 1963: A1.

in the past tense): "Washingtonians loved that boat."[76] Goldstein raised her up, but could not (or would not) find the funds to reconstruct her.[77] Instead of making her ship shape, the Wilson Steamboat Corporation bought another, the old *Hudson Belle*, and rechristened it the *George Washington*.[78]

The new ship still carried thousands of passengers to Marshall Hall in the summer months, but something was different. It seemed that the organized excursions were chiefly made by out-of-town groups rather than native Washingtonians.[79] Jousting fizzled. The last Marshall Hall tournament took place around 1964.[80] The seventy remaining slot machines ground out their chunks of wonder for a few years, but faded into oblivion with the state of Maryland's 1968 ban on gambling. River traffic had fallen off dramatically, thus reducing both the number of passengers on the *George Washington* and the sense of camaraderie that sometimes obtained on the cruises up and down the

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[76] Richard V. Elliott, *Last of the Steamboats: The Saga of the Wilson Line* (Cambridge, Md.: Tidewater, 1970), 169

[77] Elliott, *Last of the Steamboats*, 170. On the fate of the ship, which Goldstein had raised and towed to Marshall Hall, see Peter S. Diggins, "Dilapidated Once-Proud Steamer Awaits Fate, None Too Hopefully," 18 July 1965: B10.

[78] Goldstein staged a "gala ceremony" for the name change at Mount Vernon on April 5. The bottle broken by Mrs. Frances F. Beirne, regent of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association (the owners of the home and grounds). Those attending included Goldstein, Douglas Smith (president of the National Savings and Trust Company), Maryland Senator Glenn Beall, George Thomas Washington (Circuit Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals, D.C. District, and a direct descendent of George Washington's younger brother Samuel). This ship would be the last of the Wilson line fleet on the Potomac.

[79] See, e.g., "Beavers Busy at Play" [22 August 1965: F15] about the Oregon State Society's plans for an excursion to the park, open to "all Oregonians and friends of Oregon." See also Adelaide Harris, "Smooth Sailing Ahead" [16 August 1964: F9], which concerns an "all states" party open to former residents of fifty states, that is, immigrants to Washington, not those who would have gone to Marshall Hall as children. One of the last excursions to Marshall Hall reported on by the Post was Oxfam America's "Jumna Jamboree," held to raise money for the hunger organization's Bangladesh fund. ("Benefits & Bazaars," 28 May 1972: M14).

[80] Bartrams' testimony, SMCS finding aid, p. 4.

Potomac. Increasingly rowdy passengers made the boat less attractive.[81] More park goers drove their cars to reach Marshall Hall. The number of visitors seems to have remained fairly consistent through the middle 1960s (around 350,000 annually), but the tenor had changed. While the park ran a longer season to bring in more visitors, this gave Margaret Addison less time to repair the facilities. She had difficulty finding labor to repair and run the park. The rides grew rickety.[82] Prominent politicians no longer ventured to Marshall Hall in search of amusement and romance.

Joseph Goldstein refused to see the dark descending. Instead of reducing his investment in Marshall Hall, he scrambled for ways to transform his financial albatross into an eagle of fortune. He bought several parcels of land around the Marshall property in the early 1960s, including the Washington Marina on the north side of Piscataway Creek's mouth.[83] He took over complete control of Marshall Hall Park in 1966 by buying the 35 acres of land underneath it from the Mertens heirs for $1.2 million. (This tract included the mansion house.)[84] He bought the rest of the Marshall land from the Mertens heirs by 1969 for an undisclosed sum. Goldstein then sold all this land to a company he set up, called Star Enterprises, and began developing a series of grand projects.

But his ideas of transformation met with the cold shoulder of fate, if not the outright hostility of numerous political and financial figures. The 1960s was a horrible

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[81] See, e.g., "The Greek's Landing," 27 May 1964: A24; Paul Hodge & Joseph D. Whitaker, "River Boat Ransacked on Cruise," 13 June 1970: 69.
[82] "Making People Happy Is Her Business," F7.
[83] Brady A. Hughes & Sarah S. Hughes, "A Historical Study of the Marshall Hall Site, 1634 to 1984," prepared for the National Park Service (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1985): 53.
[84] Charles County Land Records, Liber 181: 222-25, 229-36; "Marshall Hall Is Bought by J.L. Goldstein," 30 April 1966: F11.

time for the old-time amusement park throughout the country. Parks of the Marshall Hall sort experienced a steep decline. Two key factors rapidly changed the amusement park industry. First, Disneyland opened in 1955. Traditional parks paled in comparison to the vast cartoonscape of the Disney park's brave new world. Disneyland quickly spawned a new sort amusement venue, the "theme park," which offered whole imaginary vistas and wilder, more gut-wrenching rides. New forms of transportation (the ease of air travel, the sprawling interstate highway system) made it possible for amusement seekers to travel greater distances to visit theme parks. Second, the racial integration of traditional parks made a number of the old parks sites of social conflict. Olympic Park (outside Newark, New Jersey) closed in 1965 after many years of decay and one disastrous riot in the park.[85] By the time the owners of Chicago's old Riverview Park sold it to redevelopers in 1967, it had become infamous for racial and gang clashes.[86] Glen Echo, the old rival to Marshall Hall, closed in 1968: a riot had broken out on Easter Monday, 1966. The management then closed the roller coaster claiming mechanical problems. Soon, park officers closed more rides. African American park goers claimed the closings were racially motivated attempts to diminish their interest in the park. Violence and vandalism became routine. Many whites shunned the park for fear of having to rub elbows with blacks.[87]

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[85] Adams, *Amusement Park Industry*, 71.
[86] Adams, *Amusement Park Industry*, 75.
[87] "Glen Echo Park—Then and Now" [Pamphlet] (Montgomery County, Md.: Glen Echo Park Partnership for Arts and Culture, Inc. 2005) [available on the web at http://www.nps.gov/glec/upload/Then%20and%20Now.pdf] ; Adams, *Amusement Park Industry*, 75.




As if these general trends in the amusement park industry were not enough, Goldstein faced a number of specific problems all relating to land use along the Potomac River. Plans by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission to build a sewage treatment plant at Mockley Point (where the Piscataway Creek empties into the Potomac directly across from Mount Vernon) sent shockwaves through the halls of Congress.[88] The Mount Vernon Ladies Association, the private organization that owned and operated the first president's plantation, had many friends among the nation's elected representatives. They began pushing legislation that would block development within the

[88] On the WSSC's planned sewage plant, see "Mount Vernon Sewage Showdown Nears," 9 July 1961: A1; "$500,000 Gift Spurs Sewer Plant," 14 September 1962: D2; Wendell P. Bradley, "Ol' Man River Just Keeps Rollin' Amid Furor," 16 September 1962: E2.

sight lines from Mount Vernon. Their concerns quickly turned from the proposed sewage treatment plant to Joseph Goldstein's plans for Marshall Hall. Joining the MVLA were three other groups concerned about the Potomac: land owners in the private Moyaone Reserve (developed in the 1940s as a planned community of five-acre parcels, where homes were built in close harmony with the natural surroundings); environmentalists concerned with both the WSSA's proposed sewage treatment plant and plans by the Army Corps of Engineers to dam the lower Potomac; and proponents of an Accokeek nature preserve to be designated in an area along the mouth of the Piscataway and south along the Potomac. The MVLA and the Accokeek Foundation (established in 1957 as one of the nation's first land trusts) had succeeded in having Congress create Piscataway Park in 1961.[89] The aim of the project was to experiment with the use of easements to protect parklands and other nationally important sites from obtrusive urban development. The national park originally encompassed the land occupied by the Marshall Hall amusement park, but intense lobbying on Goldstein's part saved the entertainment venue—at least for the time being.[90]

Goldstein's tenacity in this fight pitted him against a growing phalanx of Washington's most powerful individuals and institutions. The Washington *Post* called in a February 23, 1963, editorial for a federal take-over of all the land across from Mount

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[89] Piscataway Park was created by Public Law 87-362.

[90] On the role of the Moyaone Reserve, see Ringle, "View From Mt. Vernon Is Bitter," 41; Robert Ware Strauss, *The Possible Dream: Saving George Washington's View* (Accokeek, Md.: Accokeek Foundation, 1988). On the building of a Potomac dam, see "Loudoun Favors New River Plan," 18 November 1964: D1; Elsie Carper, "Dam Below Washington To Be Studied by Board," 19 November 1964: C4. On the development of a national park, see Sterling Seagrave, "Piscataway Bay Park Development Plans Set," By 13 November 1963: B2; "Kirwin's Motives," 15 May 1964: A22.

Vernon to protect the "natural" viewscape.[91] President Lyndon Johnson proclaimed the Potomac a "national disgrace" in 1965 and supported efforts to make it a "national river." His Secretary of the Interior, Stewart Udall, was a leader in environmental conservation and strongly supported efforts to protect the Potomac from pollution and development. Congressional leaders from both political parties (including Michael J. Kirwan and Frances Bolton of Ohio, John Saylor of Pennsylvania, Wayne Aspinall of Colorado, and Joseph Skubitz of Kansas), and Senators Charles Matthias and J. Glenn Beall of Maryland all strongly supported wresting Marshall Hall away from Joseph Goldstein at various points in his ownership of it.

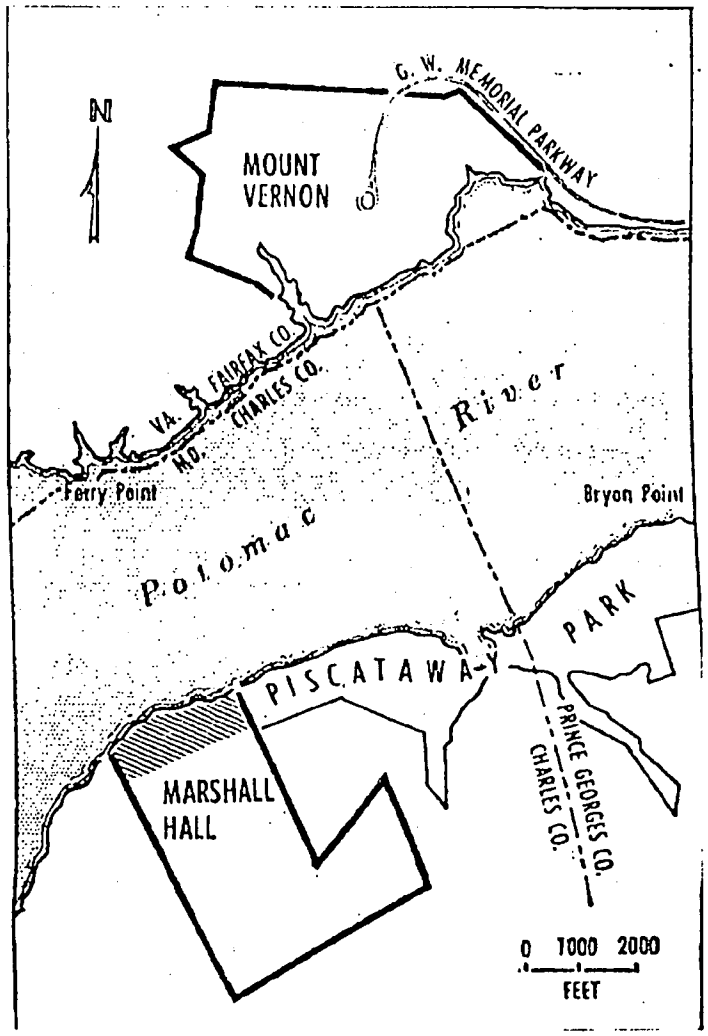
But Joseph Goldstein was undeterred. He was an entrepreneur with a head full of ideas that were driving him insane. The rising interest of the federal government in the Marshall land began a decade of brinksmanship as Goldstein devised plan after plan for increasing the value of his Potomac property.

His first grand vision was to build a self-contained community at Marshall Hall that would project the same ambiance as Florida's Fort Lauderdale. The project would provide town houses and garden apartments for 20,000 to 30,000 permanent residents, as well as a high-rise hotel for vacationers. There was to be a marina, with a canal cutting across the old plantation to create more waterfront properties. The citizens of this posh, redeveloped Marshall Hall would have access to stables, tennis courts, and a golf course. All of this flew in the face of President Johnson's desire to make the Potomac a national river and Congress's move to protect the sight lines from Mount Vernon.

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[91] "The Mt. Vernon View," 23 February 1963: A8.

To shield his development from the federal government, Goldstein offered a scenic easement on some of this waterfront property in exchange for a guarantee that he could proceed as he wished on the remaining property. The Interior Department balked at the conditions and their potential costs.[92] When this gambit fell through, Goldstein shifted to a different scheme.




[92] "Interior Offered Easement on Marshall Hall Property," 20 June 1967: B1; "Marshall Hall," 23 June 1967: A20; Philip A. Smith, "Mt. Vernon View Accord Near," 20 July 1967: F2.

It was clear to all in the amusement industry by 1970 that the traditional parks could not hold their audiences. Recognizing this, Goldstein decided to throw his lot in with the new entertainment regime and transform quaint old Marshall Hall into a massive $12 million theme park. The concept was to be the "Spirit of America." Goldstein dreamed of using the nation's history as the basis for rides, concessions, and exhibitions. Many of these would be housed inside as many as fifty climate-controlled geodesic domes. Passengers would travel down to Marshall Hall and back to Washington on Mississippi River-style side-paddle steamboats.

Goldstein cajoled a majority of the Charles County Commission to go along with the plan by voting to rezone his land (the deciding vote was two commissioners to one). The commissioners, looking for ways to replace the tax revenues once generated by slot machines, were apparently seduced by Goldstein's claims that the revamped park would provide as much as $300,000 for the county's budget every year. The Interior Department (now headed by Nixon appointee Walter J. Hickel) adamantly opposed Goldstein's plans. Hickel brought suit, and the Maryland state courts struck down the county's rezoning measure. Some members of Congress began calling for a take-over of the Marshall Hall property. The Interior Department initiated a condemnation suit to claim the easements without offering any concessions to Goldstein. But the Maryland entrepreneur sensed there was money to be made in the turmoil. When one of his opponents suggested that he replace his grandiose development plans with a development

similar to the Moyaone Reserve, Goldstein rebuffed the idea, growling that "I don't have the beard, I don't have the white hair and I don't have the red suit."[93]

If Goldstein was an expert in anything, it was in knowing precisely how to rile his opponents. Apparently disgruntled with how slow the federal government was in making an offer for his property, he made a threat that would goad all of his opponents: the Mount Vernon Ladies Association worried about sight lines, environmentalists and Moyaone Reserve residents concerned about preserving natural habitat, and the federal government anxious to gain control of the property without controversy. Goldstein warned that he would cut down trees on a daily basis if his demands were not met. The number of trees changes according to who tells the story, but the threat was real. It was so real in fact that Goldstein acted on it. In February of 1971, the owner of Marshall Hall began sawing. Wielding the chain saw himself, Goldstein felled at least forty trees and tossed them into the Potomac. The outrage was immediate. The Washington *Post* editorial board condemned the act. Robert Strauss and other members of Moyaone attacked Goldstein. Goldstein then followed a two-pronged strategy of denying that he had cut down trees along the river while continuing to threaten further clearing. He had his lawyer, Ernest F. Henry, claim in a May 31 letter to the editor of the *Post* that the downed trees "in no way detracted from the view from Mount Vernon." Rather, Henry claimed, they were "small and rotted trees." He further maintained that an Interior

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[93] Douglas Watson, "Zoning Is Approved For Amusement Park," 26 February 1970: E5; "U.S. Seeking To Stop Park On Potomac," 13 March 1970: C1; "The View from Mt. Vernon," 16 March 1970: A22; Stephen Neary, "N.J. Senator Proposes Legislation To Purchase Marshall Hall Park," 21 June 1970: 61; Douglas Watson, "Park Plan Set Back By Court," 23 September 1970: C2; Douglas Watson, "Interior Suit Filed On Park," 29 November 1970: 55; "Park Purchase," 18 March 1971: E1; Nancy Scannell, "Marshall Hall Rezoning Loses in Court Appeal," 13 December 1971: C1.

Department representative had admitted to him that *he* would get rid of the trees if the property were under the Department's control (Henry did not divulge this individual's name). While Goldstein had his lawyer declare that they had "genuine concern for the scenic maintenance of the area," he also placed an advertisement in the Washington *Post* in August offering "LARGE TRACT TIMBER FOR SALE" at Marshall Hall.[94]




Goldstein went further. He accused the MVLA and the Moyaoneites of racism. "They don't want them [African Americans] at Mount Vernon," he charged, "and they don't like them being at Marshall Hall." When both groups responded that such claims constituted "a monstrous libel," as Cecil Wall (resident director of Mount Vernon) termed it, Goldstein pushed the charge further. "Just visit Mount Vernon," Goldstein recommended: "How many blacks do you see there? The Mount Vernon people don't want them there and they discourage them coming." The chief discouragement Goldstein

[94] A federal grand jury indicted Goldstein's Star Enterprises in the tree incident for violating the Refuse Act of 1899. The firm was found guilty in a 1972 trial and fined $1000. Ernest F. Henry, [Letter to the Editor], 1971 May 31:A23; Advertisement, 1971 August 10: D9; Ringle, "Marshall Hall Firm Indicted," B2; "Marshall Hall Firm Fined for Pollution," 28 February 1972: C2; Strauss, *Possible Dream*, 87.

said was the 50¢ admission charge. To this, Wall responded that Mount Vernon's admission policy was "color blind," and that it waived its fee for all school groups no matter their race. And Robert Strauss pointed out that there were no racial covenants on the Moyaone properties and the Reserve had even recruited black families to buy into the community (albeit unsuccessfully). Moreover, he noted, he and other Moyaoneites had spearheaded making nearby Accokeek public school the first integrated one in the county.[95]

Goldstein's machinations infuriated his detractors. Conservationists accused him of "blackmail by chainsaw." Helen Magargle, a local resident and key opponent of the entrepreneur's plans, reviled him as "that shyster." She also admitted to having called in Maryland safety inspectors out of spite. Wall condemned the social effects of the visitors Goldstein attracted: "A Marshall Hall type amusement park is not a credit to any community... because of the clientele it attracts. I just wouldn't care to have them near my home. Just last year a boat bringing some typical clientele soon had a riot on board before it left Washington." Goldstein seemed to go out of his way to anger Magargle, Wall, and the others. When a reporter asked him to comment on the idea that another of his properties (the Washington Marina in the mouth of Piscataway Creek) presented a worse intrusion on the Mount Vernon view than did Marshall Hall, he gloated: "That's why I bought it!... So I could stick it to 'em at both ends!"[96]

Goldstein upped the ante further in the fall of 1971. He advertised his intentions to sell off parcels of the Marshall Hall property surrounding the amusement park as well

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[95] Ringle, "View From Mt. Vernon Is Bitter," 41; Ringle, "Marshall Hall Firm Indicted," B2.

[96] Ringle, "View From Mt. Vernon Is Bitter," 41; Ringle, "Marshall Hall Firm Indicted," B2.

as numerous other properties Goldstein owned on both sides of Piscataway Creek. He thumbed his nose at his adversaries: "Let them put up their money or shut up."' He hoped to use the proceeds from these sales to build his "Spirit of America" theme park. The MLVA and the Accokeek Foundation were both interested in putting up their money. But on the day of the auction, there were strange goings on.

The *Post* captured the spirit of the event with its headline: "Goldstein Sells, or Does He?" The event took place at Goldstein's Washington Marina. He had the interior decorated with maps and bundles of balloons. The organist for The Night Trippers wailed such apropos pieces as "There's No Business Like Show Business." Pitchmen for the J.L. Todd Auction Company, wearing bright red blazers, worked the crowd to drive up the bids. But bidding was slow, until a mysterious man named K.B. Leemon put in a shockingly high bid of $20,000 an acre for the 360-acre parcel that surrounded Marshall Hall Park. Such prices were far beyond the reach of the conservation organizations that hoped to solve the sight-lines problem.[97] (The Accokeek Foundation, for example, had a total budget of only $32,000.[98]) Goldstein was unsatisfied with the results of the sale. He approached the Accokeek foundation, claiming that he desired above all that they take control of the land, and agreed to sell most of the Marshall tracts to them for $2000 per acre.[99] In 1972, the Interior Department obtained the easement on much of the Marshall

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[97] Ken Ringle, "Owner of Marshall Hall Selling Land," 30 September 1971: B1; Ken Ringle, "Goldstein Sells, or Does He?" 13 October 1971: C1.

[98] As Robert Strauss recalled the auction, there were more mysterious buyers at the auction than just the one: He counted three who placed whopping bids on parcels the Accokeek folks sought—and then these bidders melted awayas soon as the auctioneer declared them the winner! [Strauss, Possible Dream, 88].

[99] Strauss, *Possible Dream*, 88-89.

property's waterfront for $900,000.[100] But this did not put an end to amusement park. Goldstein still owned the land under it and the appliances of entertainment that sat on the land.

Goldstein's tactics—notwithstanding his deal with the Accokeek Foundation—created immense anger in Congress. Republican representative Joseph Skubitz in particular lost patience. The Kansas Congressman got behind House bill H.R. 4861, which called for the expansion of Piscataway Park to encompass the Marshall Hall Park. Skubitz marshaled the legislation through the House in late 1973 and early 1974. When the bill appeared about to stall in the Senate, he lobbied key senators to come to its defense. Finally, when the bill languished on President Gerald Ford's desk—due to veto-recommendations from the Park Service, the Department of the Interior, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Justice Department—Skubitz orchestrated a public campaign (that included the MVLA, national conservation organizations, and patriotic groups) to spur an outpouring of letters and newspaper editorials in favor of the bill. Finally, on October 15, 1974, with only hours left for Ford to avoid a pocket veto, he signed the bill into law in a Rose Garden ceremony.[101]

Goldstein had raged against a whole array of powerful, determined, and well-connected people to squeeze money out of his Potomac investment. Even in the midst of Skubitz's attempts to wrest Marshall Hall away from him by legislative fiat, Goldstein announced plans in September 1973 to pump $2.2 into a major restoration of Marshall Hall Park. His gamesmanship finally brought a deal with the federal government. Uncle Sam wrote out a check for $3.6 million to his Star Enterprises on June 16, 1975.

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[100] Claudia Levy, "Goldstein Set To Refurbish Marshall Hall," 25 September 1973: D14.
[101] Strauss, *Possible Dream*, 90-98.

Goldstein turned over the reins of the ninety-year old park to a New Jersey management company that was charged to run the site until 1980.[102] That was the year when HR 481 mandated the final close of the amusement venue.[103]

The frenzied financial and legal battles over Marshall Hall had virtually no relation to visitors' experience of the amusement park's decline. Even if Goldstein's announcement that he would pour millions of dollars into the park was sincere, it would probably have been too little, too late. The park was in a shambles. Joseph Goldstein tore down Sportland (the former gambling parlor) in 1968 to make way for the giant slide, but the huge hunk of fiberglass quickly showed its age.[104] The engine of the carousel fell apart, and Margaret Addison sold the ride's battered stallions to raise money for the upkeep of other rides.[105] In1973, eleven visitors were injured when the Chair-Plane ride collapsed. The ride whirled chairs around a central column and they rode out and up through centrifugal force. But on the fifth of August, the column gave way and the chairs went flying higgledy piggledy. Fortunately, none of the injuries was serious.[106] In 1976, an era ended when the Wilson Line announced that it would no longer sail to

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[102] Joseph Goldstein soon lost his fortune in bankruptcy proceedings in 1977. He owed upwards of $10 million to various creditors. The Wilson Line went belly up in 1978 when no buyer stepped forward to purchase the outmoded system. The remnants of it were sold at auction and netted $1.5 million, but left the firm still owing debts totaling $2 million [Elliott, *Last of the Steamboats: The Saga of the Wilson Line* (Cambridge, Md.: Tidewater, 1970), 149, 164-65; Levy, "Goldstein Set To Refurbish Marshall Hall," D14; Morris D. Rosenberg, "Commuting Down the Potomac In Ships," 10 March 1974: E1; Hodge, "Marshall Hall Park May Close Down in the Fall," MD1; Stephen J. Lynton, "Wilson Boat Line Sold for $1.5 Million But $2 Million in Liabilities Remain," 8 September 1978: C1].

[103] Levy, "Goldstein Set To Refurbish Marshall Hall," D14; Charles County Land Records, Liber 402: 199-202; "Marshall Hall Park Closing Attractions After 91 Years," 24 May 1979: MD1.

[104] SMSC Finding Aid, 2.

[105] Michael R. Weiss, "Laughter Is Mostly an Echo," 21 July 1978: Weekend 7.

[106] "11 Injured at Marshall Hall," 5 August 1973: B4.

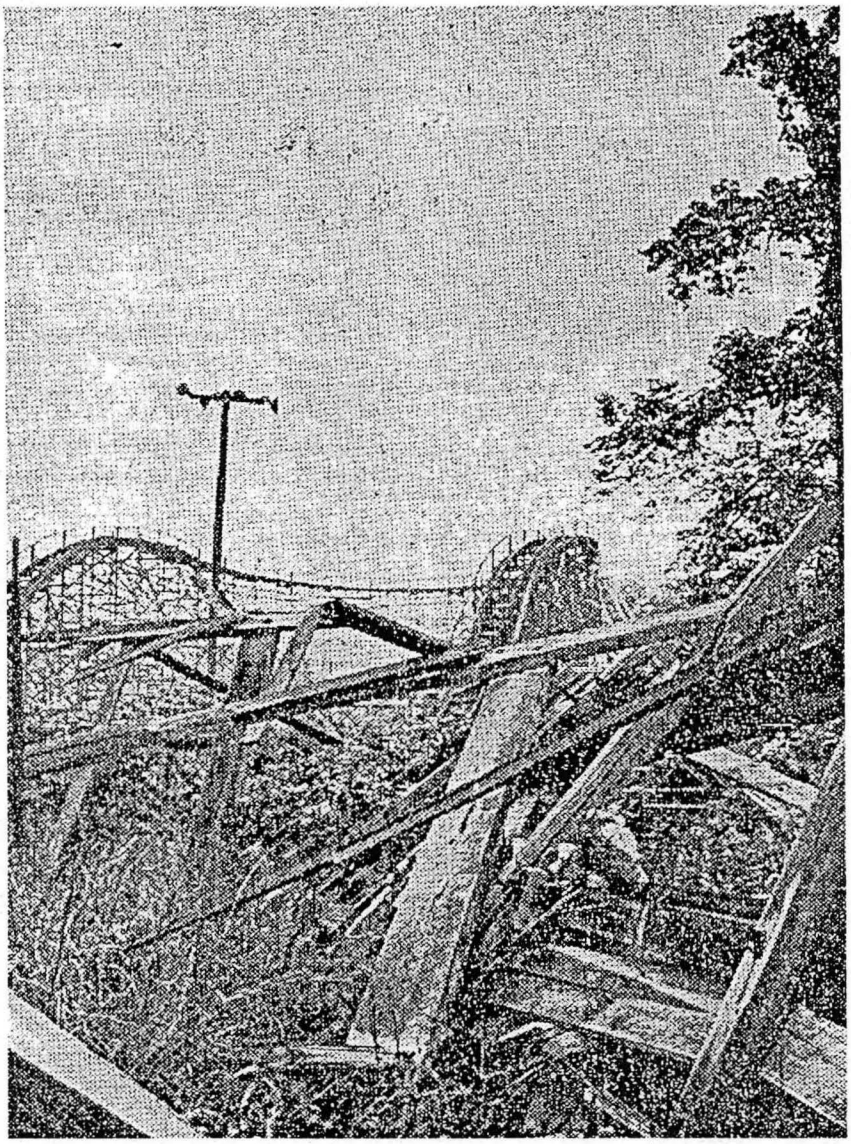
Marshall Hall.[107] Rumors of the park's closing soon followed.[108] Then, on July 21, 1977, the park's main attraction, the roller coaster, blew over in a wind storm. Winds of 70 miles per hour picked up the ancient structure, twisted its old steel rails, splintered its wooden structure, and slammed the contorted ride into the ground. Addison, so aware of the ride's importance in drawing customers, did not even inform visitors (or the National Park Service) of the event. "We don't want a lot of publicity.... We don't want to advertise that the roller coaster isn't working because a lot of people come down here just for the roller coaster," she explained, apparently with a straight face.[109] Many of the other rides were either inoperative or unreliable. The remains of a ski-lift ride littered one section of the park.[110] The Ferris wheel no longer turned. The park was only open three days a week. The once vast array of sno-cone flavors was reduced to two. Selling them, said the girl behind the counter "gets kind of monotonous." While some excursions still brought church, camp, and school groups down to Marshall Hall, the once buzzing park now pulled in only about 500 customers on an average weekend afternoon in 1978.[111] Perhaps most symbolic of all, one old man interviewed for a 1978 article on the park's fall from grace recalled that "It was a lovely place to sit and do nothing."[112]

The gasping park was put out of its misery on May 24, 1979. The last of the rickety rides ceased operation forever. The last sno-cone passed over the splintered counter. The curtains fell over the concessions never to be opened again for paying

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[107] Lynton, "Wilson Boat Line Sold for $1.5 Million But $2 Million in Liabilities Remain," C1.
[108] Hodge, "Marshall Hall Park May Close Down in the Fall," MD1.
[109] Hodge, "Marshall Hall Park May Close Down in the Fall," MD1.
[110] Weiss, "Laughter Is Mostly an Echo," Weekend 7.
[111] Weiss, "Laughter Is Mostly an Echo," Weekend 7.
[112] Weiss, "Laughter Is Mostly an Echo," Weekend 7.

customers. Soon, the National Park Service brought in the bull dozers, wrecking cranes, and dump trucks to remove all vestiges of the ghost park (see Epilogue). The only positive plan for the site came from Billy Tayac, a descendent of the Piscataway Indians. He called for the creation of an authentic Piscataway village to resurrect and commemorate the memory of the original inhabitants of the Potomac shoreline, a piece of property whose European name had erased their presence from their home for centuries.[113]



[113] "Citizens Urge Razing of Park," 11 October 1979: MD8.

# Epilogue

## *Ghosts*

Today, the wind drifting off the Potomac meets only the merest resistance from Marshall Hall. The amusement park is gone. The house is only a shell—neither tiles nor timbers of roof, no panes of wavy, handblown glass in the window sashes, a vast hole through its two longest walls. There are no voices crying in agony over lost loved ones, or calling out commands to slaves, or screaming in wild, roller-coaster abandon. There are only the slight lapping of river wavelets, the occasional mechanical roar of motor boats, the songs of cardinals and crows in the spring lilting their mating songs with no care for the human history that has come and gone over the ground below them.

Since the National Park Service took control of Marshall Hall in 1975, the site has seemed to suffer from a curse of history, as if the stern and decorous ghost of George Washington has sought to punish his children for casting levity upon his ancestral shores. The Park Service stripped away all vestiges of the amusement park after closing its gates for the last time in 1978. The old mansion house stood vacant, except for the occasional visit from Park Service personnel studying the old structure for clues about its history. There were apparently other visitors, too, stealthy people who found in the old house a shelter from the cold, from prying parents, or perhaps from the law. Late in the night of

Friday, October 16, 1981, one of these latter visitors set the home on fire, whether by accident or design is not clear.[1] The fire rioted through the old timbers, charred the floors and roof until they collapsed, gobbled up the plaster walls and wooden mantels and cabinets. The whitewashed walls and smoke-black windows left the house looking like a tortured checkerboard. The three chimneys loomed over the hulk of walls like sculpted Egyptian sentinels guarding a desecrated tomb. The NPS, along with local agencies, scraped together $2,500 in reward money for information about the arson.[2] But no one ever came forth to claim the money.

The old property filtered into the news a time or two more. Controversy arose in 1983 over the Park Service's use of part of the land for composting sludge (that is, solid waste blended with wood chips, aerated and incubated, then screened to remove the wood chips).[3] Various organizations have dreamed about developing the Potomac shoreline at or near Marshall Hall, but such plans have never gone far.[4] The mansion stood through the next two decades, too decrepit to even gather moss.

The last insult to the integrity of the old house came on January 11, 2001. A truck driver for the WEL Companies directed his rig down the long drive way in front of the once imposing structure, gunned the accelerator, and crashed right through the front and rear walls as if he were trying to tumble the hulk into the Potomac. When the Park Service removed the rig, two gaping holes, surrounded by piles of broken brick and

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[1] 1981 October 17:A1, "Fire Destroys Historic Md. Mansion" By Paul Hodge
[2] 1981 December 10:C6, "$7,500 Offered For Information on Shooting, Arson." The $7,500 figure refers to the total for two different reward offers, $2,500 for Marshall Hall and $5,000 for an unrelated shooting.
[3] 1983 November 26: , "Sludge-Dumping at Marshall Hall Halted," by Jim Brady
[4] See, e.g., 1985 October 15:B7, "P.G. Offers Shoreline Proposal." The article mentioned various plans in consideration, including "Port America," a residential and commercial site with slips for over 1000 boats, a beach, trails etc. There were hopes among the various developers to revive the park at Marshall Hall.

splintered posts, separated the eastern and western portions of the house. They were barely held together by a single beam running along the old roofline.

The Park Service has found the meager funds to fill in the holes. There are no plans to reconstruct the old, once marvelous house. The site offers a historian's conundrum. History happened here. Not the sort that flowers a hero's reputation, or discovers a once lost civilization. But the history of Marshall Hall was the history that everyday people know in their hearts. It was the history of small events, of the mundane, of the quotidian practices that delineate the hearts and minds of past ways of being American. If history is to be reconstructed here, there is a difficult choice: Whose history should take precedence? That of the Piscattaway who first tilled the land, who altered it according to their cultural lights? That of the Marshalls who reframed the land as their family seat, as the center of their agricultural barony in a slave economy? Or that of the frolicking Washingtonions who found at Marshall Hall one of the best examples of the American amusement park? Perhaps the greatest story that Marshall Hall as to tell is precisely the story of historical change itself. Here in one place, Americans of wildly different sorts envisioned and re-envisioned the sort of culture a piece of land can support. This is the history that most Americans experience, the history small things that, sooner or later, tell us who we are and how we came to be and how we understand the meaning of our world.

