

## CHAPTER TWO

### NORTHERN PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY IN THE TOBACCO ERA, 1696-1780

**Stephen G. Hardy**

In 1696, the newly-created Prince George's County encompassed the entire western part of Lord Baltimore's colony. The land in this area was largely unpatented and unpopulated. The best tobacco lands in Prince George's County, lying directly on the Patuxent, Potomac, and Anacostia [or Eastern Branch of the Potomac] Rivers, had been recently claimed, and were still lightly populated. Over the next eighty years, this county's population and wealth would explode, making it one of Maryland's premier tobacco-producing areas.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>Four major works deal with the colonial history of Prince George's County. The first is Louise Joyner Hienton, *Prince George's Heritage: Sidelights on the Early History of Prince George's County, Maryland from 1696 to 1800* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1972). She provides very useful background chapters on various subjects relating to the colonial history of Prince George's County that are fully footnoted.

The second is R. Lee Van Horn, *Out of the Past: Prince Georgians and Their Land* (Riverdale, MD: Prince George's County Historical Society, 1976.) This work is largely a chronicle of facts covering the period to 1861, culled mostly from the court records of the county. While this chronicle is not footnoted, the sources for most of the facts can be easily discerned from the text.

The third is a printed transcription of earliest court records for the county: Joseph H. Smith and Philip A. Crowl, *Court Records of Prince George's County, Maryland, 1696-1699* (Washington, DC: The American Historical Association, 1964). This work is also available online as volume 202 in the "Archives of Maryland Online" series from the Maryland State Archives <<http://www.archivesofmaryland.net>>.

The final work is Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1986) which is an expansion of his dissertation "Tobacco and Slaves: Population, Economy and Society in Eighteenth-Century Prince George's County, Maryland" (Ph.D. diss, Brandeis University, 1976). Distinctly Marxian in its analysis and interpretation, Kulikoff's book is divided into three major sections: The Political Economy of Tobacco; White Society; and Black Society.

In the fifteen years since Kulikoff's book appeared, the historiography of the colonial Chesapeake has changed rapidly. Most significantly, the history of enslaved African-Americans has been recently explored in three prize-winning monographs: Phillip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); and Lorena S. Walsh, *From Calabar*

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The map that accompanies Louise Hienton's book shows the lands that were patented when Prince George's County was formed. The distribution of these lands reinforces the point that rivers were the transportation highways of the colonial era. Today, with numerous roads and highways criss-crossing the Heritage Area, it is easy to forget this important fact. One set of tracts was clustered along the Patuxent River; the other, sparser cluster was situated along the Potomac and Anacostia.<sup>100</sup> In between, there were large empty spaces. Planters and farmers chose lands for their accessibility to water and thus to the markets for their agricultural products. A location close to a river meant that a planter's tobacco was easily rolled to a dock and loaded onto a tobacco ship. The rolling of large tobacco hogsheads overland over long distances tended to damage the tobacco, lowering its sale price in Europe. So, riverside land was the most desirable land for tobacco cultivation.<sup>101</sup>

In 1696, the land that now lies within the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area was on the fringe of European settlement, and there were interactions and disputes with the Piscataway Indians that were native to this region. In general, relations between the Piscataways and the English colonists were good, and Maryland's officials saw the Piscataways as a valuable buffer between English settlement and the war-like Susquehannocks, who dominated in northern Maryland and southern Pennsylvania at this time.<sup>102</sup>

Shortly after the formation of the county, Maryland's Governor called a session of the Assembly in May 1697 to consider the matter of "the

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*to Carter's Grove: The History of a Virginia Slave Community* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1997).

Because the area encompassed by the ATHA was on the fringe of the main plantation area described by Kulikoff, Morgan, Berlin, and Walsh, any generalizations about the extent of plantations and/or slavery must made carefully made. Colonial plantations did exist in the region — most notably the Snowdens' massive landholdings, joined by the Darnalls, Calverts, Hills, Magruders, and Brookes — but there were fewer large plantations toward the Potomac side of the area. Determining the extent of slave-based plantation agriculture in this transitional area (relatively little slaveholding to the north and very large slaveholding to the south) would be an excellent research project. Using parish tax records and land records, such a project would yield a much clearer picture of the structure of the agriculture — large, slave-based plantations vs. small, individual farms — in the area.

<sup>100</sup>In the late seventeenth century, the upper Potomac is still a sparsely settled frontier area that tobacco ships did not always call upon. A sense of the isolation can be readily seen in a unique resource from a seventeenth-century, Potomac River resident in Richard Beale Davis, ed., *William Fitzhugh and His Chesapeake World, 1676-1701* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1963).

<sup>101</sup>See William Tatham, *An Historical and Practical Essay on the Culture and Commerce of Tobacco* (London, 1800) for a contemporary description of tobacco growing. These points are also reinforced in Arthur Pierce Middleton, *Tobacco Coast: A Maritime History of Chesapeake Bay in the Colonial Era* (Newport News, VA: Mariners Museum, 1953).

<sup>102</sup>The relations between Native Americans and white Marylanders is covered in the chapter entitled "Indian Alarms in Prince George's County," Hienton, *Prince George's Heritage*, 26-36. A more modern and nuanced account of the implications of Indian-White relations in this area can be found in James H. Merrell, "Cultural Continuity Among the Piscataway Indians of Colonial Maryland," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 36 (1979) 548-570.

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Piscattoway Indians lately deserting their Fort and withdrawing themselves into another Government [Virginia] which it is Imagined to proceed chiefly from a murder lately committed at the Eastern Branch of the Potomack upon the Body of a certain negro Boy belonging to one Mr Stoddert against whom it is believed they had some Grudge upon the Account of Trade."<sup>103</sup> Encounters and negotiations between the British colonists and the native Piscataways took place regularly during the latter years of the seventeenth century. Although cooperative relations had been established between the British and the Piscataways, the native populations were frequently under attack from the warlike Susquehannock tribes to the north. These constant raids, as well as the failure of the colonists to guarantee the protection of the Piscataway populations, eventually led the Piscataways to abandon their Maryland hunting grounds and resettle in the mountains of Virginia. Almost all of the local native population left this area in 1697, leaving the area essentially open to the British to settle and develop.

About the time that Prince George's County was established, three interrelated developments were taking place that would change Maryland and the Chesapeake forever. The first change was a decrease in the number of white, English men and women who were willing to come to the New World as indentured servants. Before the 1690s, a rapidly expanding population, a poor economy, and changes in the agricultural labor system in England combined to push many young English men and women to try a better life in the Chesapeake. They came as "indentured servants," and agreed to work a set number of years for the person who paid for their Atlantic passage.<sup>104</sup> Indentured servants were the primary source of unfree labor for seventeenth-century tobacco planters. By the 1690s, things had changed in England. The population was growing more slowly, there was greater economic opportunity after almost a century of stagnation, and young English men and women found more appealing opportunities at home than in the strange, hot world of the Chesapeake.

The second change was a demographic one. By the 1690s, the population of the Chesapeake had become less susceptible to disease and learned how to live successfully in the region's unfamiliar climate. In short, people began living longer. As they did, they created more stable family units and social networks. This change affected not only the English population, but also the African population. Slaves were much more expensive than

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<sup>103</sup> William Hand Browne, ed. *Archives of Maryland*, 19:508. A full discussion of this affair can be found in chapter 3 of Hienton, *Prince George's Heritage*, 26-36.

<sup>104</sup> The fuller background for this description of the fundamental change in the Chesapeake can be found in Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: Norton, 1975) and Russell R. Menard, "The Tobacco Industry in the Chesapeake Colonies, 1617-1730: An Interpretation," *Research in Economic History* 5 (1980) 109-177.

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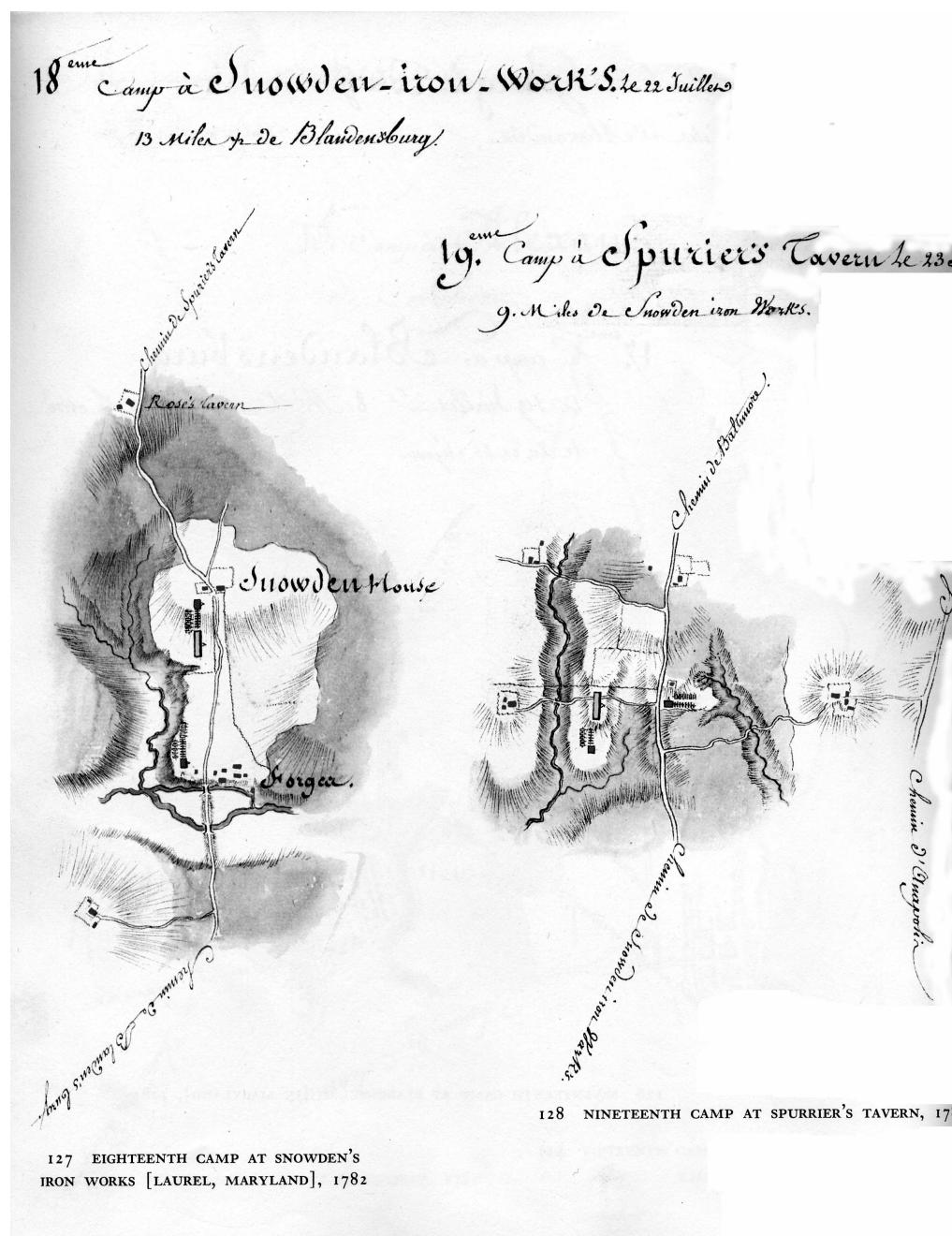
indentured servants because of their chattel status; if servants and slaves were both going to die relatively quickly as a result of the harsh climate, why pay the extra money for a slave? Up until the end of the seventeenth century, indentured servants had been preferred because they were cheaper and more plentiful than African slaves.

The final change of the 1690s increased the supply of slaves available to Chesapeake planters. In 1696, the Royal African Company lost its monopoly on the slave trade. Beginning in the seventeenth century, this company had been the exclusive supplier of slaves to the English colonies. The Company had kept supplies relatively low, and concentrated on selling slaves to sugar planters in the West Indies, where enslaved Africans fetched premium prices. The abolition of this monopoly meant that the supply of African slaves available for Chesapeake planters greatly increased.

These three factors, the decrease in the supply of indentured servants, increases in longevity that made owning slaves economically attractive, and an increase in the availability of slaves transformed Maryland in the thirty years between 1690 and 1720. By 1720, a slave-based plantation agriculture predominated here. The exploitation of this slave labor and the geographical expansion of the tobacco culture were critical to Maryland's economic growth in the eighteenth century. Prince George's County was the direct beneficiary of this growth, particularly in the first half of the century.

While slave labor was a boon to the expansion of the tobacco culture into Prince George's County, it was not required for growing the sot-weed. The use of slave labor did not generate any "economies of scale." Proportionally, an individual farmer was just as productive growing tobacco as was a large planter with hundreds of slaves, and was economically competitive in the market. It was the forcible appropriation of the labor of the slaves that generated the tremendous wealth of the great tobacco planters. These factors resulted in a landscape where large planters with slaves and small farmers or small slave-holders tended to be intermixed. This was probably especially true around the Prince George's fall line, which runs through the Heritage Area.

In 1736, the Patuxent Iron Ore Company was established by Snowden family members in the Laurel vicinity. The Snowdens, a Quaker family of Welsh origins, took advantage of the rich iron ore and timber resources in this area, and located their furnace on the far side of the Patuxent, on land in modern-day Fort Meade near the Old Forge Bridge.



Berthier's Map of Snowdens Iron Works

The population in Prince George's County grew relatively slowly in the years after its founding in 1696. By 1701, the county had a total population of

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2,358.<sup>105</sup> By 1704, there were 3,104 inhabitants in the County: 416 were "masters of families;" 530 were free and servant women; 464 were free men and servant men; 1,166 were free children, boys and girls; 92 were servant boys and girls; and 436 were slaves.<sup>106</sup> By 1710, the population of 3,994 included 845 masters and taxable men; 637 women; 1,215 white children; and 1,297 slaves.<sup>107</sup> Most of the growth during the six years between 1704 and 1710 was in the slave population.

By 1733, the number of taxables increased to 3,924, or about 12,000 people, which was about triple the number in 1710 (the population is estimated to be three times the number of taxables).<sup>108</sup> The rapid and constant growth continued; by 1748, there were 6,624 taxables, or about 20,000 people, in Prince George's County.<sup>109</sup> When Frederick County was separated from Prince George's County in 1748, it removed 13,969 inhabitants from the latter's total; in 1755, the population of Prince George's County was 12,616.<sup>110</sup>

During the 1750s, the population of Prince George's County grew slowly, but in the 1760s the rate of growth accelerated again.<sup>111</sup> On the eve of the American Revolution, the county had 6,253 taxables, or about 18,500 people.<sup>112</sup> In 1782, the county had a population of 18,610 — 9,864 were white and 8,764 were black.<sup>113</sup>

The only town that existed in northern Prince George's County before 1740 was Beall Town. Beall Town never reached its potential because the General Assembly never gave it the official status of a town, but it performed some of a town's functions. The county court ordered a set of stocks to be erected there in 1732.<sup>114</sup> In 1739, the Justices of the County Court ordered a survey of roads, which listed more than 50 that connected the towns of Upper Marlborough, Piscataway, Queen Anne, Nottingham, Milltown, Aire and Beall Town<sup>115</sup>. In 1744, Thomas Cramphin received a license to operate an

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<sup>105</sup> Arthur E. Karinen, "Numerical and Distributional Aspects of Maryland's Population, 1631-1840," Ph.D. diss., Department of Geography, University of Maryland, College Park, 1958, 184.

<sup>106</sup> Karinen, 185.

<sup>107</sup> Karinen, 187.

<sup>108</sup> Karinen, 192. A taxable was any white male 16 years or older, and any black slave 16 years or older. In some cases, the county court exempted elderly or infirm persons from taxation, but this was relatively rare. See. R. Lee Van Horn, *Out of the Past: Prince Georgians and Their Land* (Riverdale, MD: Prince George's County Historical Society, 1976), *passim*.

<sup>109</sup> Karinen, 195. The population is estimated to be three times the number of taxables.

<sup>110</sup> Karinen, 198.

<sup>111</sup> Karinen, 197-202.

<sup>112</sup> Karinen, 203. The population is estimated to be three times the number of taxables.

<sup>113</sup> Karinen, 207.

<sup>114</sup> Van Horn, *Out of the Past*, 69.

<sup>115</sup> See S. Pearl, "Early Roads in Prince George's County," in *Historic Contexts in Prince George's County*, Upper Marlboro, MD: M-NCPPC Historic Preservation Section, June 1990/July 1991, 21.

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ordinary [tavern] at Beall Town.<sup>116</sup> A 1747 land sale advertisement used it as a reference point, and in 1748 the creditors of Samuel Hyde (an English tobacco merchant) were paid there at Thomas Crampton's.<sup>117</sup> After the late 1740s, Beall Town seems to have faded from existence as Bladensburg grew.

In 1742 the General Assembly chartered the new town of "Bladensburg," at a nearby site downriver known as Garrison's Landing.<sup>118</sup> The site consisted of sixty acres, to be divided into sixty one-acre lots, and was located just north of the property of the Presbyterian Church that had been erected in 1725 on the land of Archibald Edmonston. Presbyterians continued to worship at this location until 1818 when they built a new brick church in the center of Bladensburg proper. The original church site is now the Evergreen Cemetery (or Old Presbyterian Cemetery), and is maintained by the Town of Bladensburg. The 1818 church building still stands, enlarged, in the center of Bladensburg; it became the home of an African-American congregation, St. Paul's Baptist, after the Civil War.<sup>119</sup>

Development of the town of Bladensburg began slowly after its official establishment in 1742. Each purchaser of a lot had to agree to build a house of at least 400 square feet, with a brick or stone chimney, within eighteen months or forfeit his lot.<sup>120</sup> In 1744, the Assembly extended this deadline by two years, and allowed lot owners to build a 400-square-foot warehouse or a house, in order to secure title to the lot. This procedure was repeated several times, until all lots were improved by 1787.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>116</sup>Van Horn, *Out of the Past*, 79.

<sup>117</sup>*Maryland Gazette* 21 April 1747 and 16 November 1748.

<sup>118</sup> See entry on Bladensburg in Part Two of this document.

<sup>119</sup> Pearl, Susan G., *African-American Heritage Survey*, M-NCPPC, 1996, entries on Bladensburg and St. Paul's/Free Hope Baptist Church.

<sup>120</sup> "An Act for Laying Out and Erecting a Town," 1742, Chapter 13, *Archives of Maryland* 42: 413-417

<sup>121</sup> "Supplementary Act to an Act Entitled, An Act for Laying Out and Erecting a Town..." 1744, Chapter 13, *Archives of Maryland*, 42:604-606. More sources related to Bladensburg can be found in the *Record Book of the Town of Bladensburg*, the Reverend John F. Biddle Collection (Maryland State Archives, SC 456) and the Susanna Kyner Cristofane Collection (Maryland State Archives, SC 4885).



**Magruder House**

In August 1745, the new residents of Bladensburg petitioned for a parish chapel, but most of them were parishioners at Addison Chapel, the nearest Anglican place of worship, just over three miles to the south. (Addison Chapel was the “upper” chapel of King George’s Parish; its parish church was St. John’s at Broad Creek.) Bladensburg did not get its own Anglican/Episcopal church until the establishment of St. Luke’s in the 1840s.

The growth and success of the new town of Bladensburg was immeasurably aided by passage of the tobacco inspection act of 1747. During the early years of the eighteenth century, the quality of the tobacco exported from the Chesapeake area had gradually declined, to the extent that in 1730 the Virginia colony had instituted a warehouse inspection system to ensure uniform quality of the tobacco to be shipped. The Maryland colony soon saw its neighbor’s commercial advantage, and in 1747, just five years after the establishment of the port town of Bladensburg, instituted its own “Act for Amending the Staple of Tobacco.” By this act, there were created, among other things, tobacco inspection warehouses in the various counties; the tobacco inspectors themselves were to be selected by the vestry of each Parish. One of the tobacco inspection stations in Prince George’s County was to be “at Bladensburg on the Lot and at the Warehouse belonging to Dr. David Ross . . .

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...” a designation that can only have increased the success of the new town.<sup>122</sup>

Warehouses were designated in every county in Maryland. In Prince George’s County, six other warehouses were established.<sup>123</sup> All tobacco grown in the colony had to be brought to one of these warehouses to be inspected and packed. Bad or unmerchantable tobacco was burned; it was expected that the remaining good tobacco would fetch a higher price.<sup>124</sup>

The warehouse system also allowed small tobacco farmers to deposit amounts of tobacco less than one hogshead (about 1000 pounds) in the warehouse and received a “crop note,” denoting how many pounds of inspected tobacco had been deposited. Crop notes could be easily exchanged or assigned, so they became a type of currency in a cash-poor society. Any person holding a crop note could retrieve the tobacco, or the money resulting from its annual sale.<sup>125</sup>

Around each tobacco warehouse, businesses that catered to tobacco growers sprang up. Taverns were opened that offered a place to relax, drink, and exchange news and opinions. Blacksmiths and coopers offered important services. But, most importantly, retail stores owned by British tobacco factors made imported goods like cloth and farm implements immediately available.

Before the store system evolved in the mid-eighteenth century, tobacco planters had largely used a consignment system. Large tobacco planters consigned their tobacco to factors in London. These factors sold the tobacco for the planter and shipped back the goods that the planter ordered. Often the factors also extended credit to planters in bad years or for exceptional purchases. The large planters consigned the tobacco of smaller, neighboring planters and provided them with goods and credit.

The store system changed much of this. Large planters still continued to consign their tobacco to London tobacco factors, but smaller planters were increasingly attracted to stores offering ready goods and ready credit, established by tobacco firms in Liverpool, Bristol, London, and especially Glasgow. The firms clustered their stores around the warehouses where the business of tobacco buying and selling went on.<sup>126</sup> By the time of the Panic of

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<sup>122</sup> *Archives of Maryland*, 44:609, *Proceedings and Acts of Assembly, May-July 1747*; “An Act . . .” 1747, ch. 2.]

<sup>123</sup> “At the head of Rock Creek at the Rolling House which George Gordon built; at Broad Creek on the land of Humphrey Batts; on Piscataway Creek, at Richard Rawling’s Landing; at Queen Anne Town on the Patuxent; at Upper Marlborough; and at Nottingham at Truman’s Point on the Patuxent River.” See “An Act for Amending the Staple of Tobacco . . .” 1747, chapter 2. *Archives of Maryland*, 44:595-638.

<sup>124</sup> “An Act Amending the Staple of Tobacco . . .” 1747 ch 2. *Archives of Maryland*, 44:595-638.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid. See Mary M. Schweitzer, “Economic Regulation and the Colonial Economy: The Maryland Tobacco Inspection Act of 1747,” *Journal of Economic History* 40 (1980) 551-569, for a description of how the tobacco notes operated as currency.

<sup>126</sup> See Jacob M. Price, *France and the Chesapeake* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan

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1772, which hit tobacco firms especially hard, there were at least seven British firms and three local merchants with stores established in Bladensburg. The local merchants were Edward Magruder and Co.; Christopher Lowndes; and Alexander Hamilton.<sup>127</sup>

As early as 1755, Christopher Lowndes had also established a ropewalk at Bladensburg.<sup>128</sup> Lowndes continued to operate the ropewalk up to the time of the American Revolution, and apparently supplied ropes for the "navy" that Maryland established when she became a state.<sup>129</sup>

Bladensburg was an important gathering point and entertainment center for northern Prince George's County residents. In October of 1753 and 1754, horse races were held at the "old fields."<sup>130</sup> In 1755, the town formed the Bladensburg Independents to defend the colony during the French and Indian War.<sup>131</sup> In 1764, there was an advertisement for a dancing master in Bladensburg, and by 1773, Rev. James Hunt had started a grammar school there.<sup>132</sup> And, in 1771, a second Presbyterian Church was being built in the town.<sup>133</sup>

Some of the new residents of Bladensburg built fine homes to display their status and wealth. First among these was Christopher Lowndes, who built Bostwick.<sup>134</sup> The original Bostwick (without its later modifications,

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Press, 1972) 2 vols. This detailed, masterful work explores the international web of credit and tobacco sales that began with Chesapeake planters and ended with French tobacco consumers. See also Jacob M. Price, "The Rise of Glasgow in the Chesapeake Tobacco Trade, 1707-1775," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 11 (1954) 179-199 and T. M. Devine, *The Tobacco Lords: A Study of the Tobacco Merchants of Glasgow and Their Trading Activities, c. 1740-90* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1975). The best introduction to the historical literature describing the tobacco economy in the Chesapeake is found in Chapter 6, "The Upper South," of John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

<sup>127</sup>The British firms were John Glassford and Co; John Buchanan and Son; Judson Coolidge; James Brown and Company; George and Andrew Buchanan; Peter Campbell and Co.; George Oswald and Co., Simson, Baird and Co.; and Cunningham, Findlay, and Co. (Van Horn, *Out of the Past*, 138) Maryland Chancery Records also indicate that the English merchant firm of the Millisons kept a store at Bladensburg. ("Archives of Maryland Online," volume 198, volume 3, page 104). Stephen West was a partner in "West and Hobson," which operated stores in many Prince George's County locations, including Bladensburg. Edward C. Papenfuse et al., *A Biographical Dictionary of the Maryland Legislature, 1635-1789*, 2 vols. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press (1978 and 1985) 878-879.

Some of the records of the Bladensburg store that was operated by John Glassford and Company are in the Library of Congress. These records are mostly the ledgers and journals that would have recorded the sales to individuals who patronized the store.

For Christopher Lowndes, see connections with Heritage Area sites in entries on Bladensburg, Bladensburg Waterfront Park, and Bostwick in Part Two of this document.

<sup>128</sup>*Maryland Gazette*, 26 June 1755.

<sup>129</sup>*Archives of Maryland* 16:12, 28, 34, 81.

<sup>130</sup>*Maryland Gazette*, 13 September 1753 and 16 October 1754.

<sup>131</sup>*Archives of Maryland*, 52:335.

<sup>132</sup>*Maryland Gazette*, 31 May 1764 and 4 March 1773.

<sup>133</sup>*Maryland Gazette*, 21 February 1771.

<sup>134</sup>More information can be found on Lowndes in Van Horn, *Out of the Past*, 84.

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which include the brick buttress) was a typical grand house of the eighteenth century. Constructed on the slope of ‘Lowndes Hill,’ Bostwick had a fine view overlooking the river, town and port below.<sup>135</sup>



**Bostwick House**

Colonial Bladensburg had its share of “urban” problems as well. The town petitioned for a law to prevent swine and geese from running loose in the town. This seemingly simple piece of legislation became embroiled in a power struggle between the Upper House’s defense of Proprietary interest and the Lower House’s desire to lessen the Lord Baltimore’s power, and was never passed.<sup>136</sup> Disease also struck the fledgling town. In 1759, an epidemic of smallpox was so severe that the store belonging to Edward Trafford and Sons of Liverpool was moved to the Eastern Branch Ferry.<sup>137</sup> In 1753, the *Maryland Gazette* reported that Peter Wrensh was attacked by four men on horseback near Bladensburg.<sup>138</sup> In 1757, John Grimpshaw and Samuel Salbrie escaped

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<sup>135</sup> Bostwick’s west lawn consists of three attractive terraces, created early in the twentieth century, but similar to those common in eighteenth-century colonial gardening and landscape design.

<sup>136</sup> See *Archives of Maryland*, volumes 46 and 50, *passim*.

<sup>137</sup> *Maryland Gazette* 17 May 1759.

<sup>138</sup> 29 March 1753.

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from the county jail, where they were being held for robberies of stores in Bladensburg.<sup>139</sup> And, in 1759, the *Gazette* carried news of several robberies and shootings in Bladensburg.<sup>140</sup>

The varied nature of the economic activities that were pursued in Bladensburg are reflected in advertisements for runaway slaves and servants that were taken out by area subscribers to the *Maryland Gazette* and the *Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser*.<sup>141</sup> Billy Carroll and William were both identified as carpenters who ran away from Notley Young. Joe, who ran away from Christopher Lowndes, was a Ship Carpenter or Caulker. When Davie ran away from Daniel Stephenson, he, too, was identified as a carpenter. And, when James Mason ran away, his disgruntled owner, Walter Beall, said that Mason “. . . understands a little of the blacksmith’s business, and is a tolerable good waggoner.”<sup>142</sup>

The advertisement for the Harry, who ran away from John Jenkins near Bladensburg, demonstrates the family structure that existed within the slave community. He “. . . is supposed to have removed among Acquaintances on Potowmack; he is also well acquainted with the Negroes at Clement Wheeler’s Quarter, on Zekiah, and a Negro Wench of Mr. Wall’s named Rachel; a few Miles from that Quarter is his Aunt, and he may possibly be harboured thereabouts.”<sup>143</sup>

From anecdotal evidence, we know that slaves were directly imported into the Heritage Area. For instance, Jasper Manduit advertised in 1759 that “a New Negro Man imported in the Ship Upton” had runaway from his plantation.<sup>144</sup> However, the anecdotal evidence also suggests that most of the importations of unfree labor into the area around Bladensburg consisted of convict servants.<sup>145</sup> These convict servants were men and women who had been convicted of a felony in British courts.<sup>146</sup> Many crimes, including

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<sup>139</sup> *Maryland Gazette* 10 March 1757.

<sup>140</sup> *Maryland Gazette* 19 July 1759.

<sup>141</sup> The ads for runaway slaves can be found in Latan A. Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History from the 1730s to 1790*, Vol. 2, Maryland (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983). The advertisements are originally found in the *Maryland Gazette*, from 1745 to 1790 and the *Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser* from 1773-1790. The following pages have advertisements that clearly relate to the Heritage Area for the period to 1780: 33-34, 43-44; 45; 55; 89; 89-90; 90; 91-92; 92; 92-93; 94; 104; 109; 119-120. Runaway servants were advertised as well, and these advertisements can be accessed through the comprehensive Karen Mauer Green, *The Maryland Gazette, 1727-1761: Genealogical and Historical Abstracts* (Galveston, TX: The Frontier Press, 1989) and the more selective Edith Moore Sprouse, *Along the Potomac River: Extracts from the Maryland Gazette, 1728-1799* (Westminster, MD: Willow Bend Books, 2001.)

<sup>142</sup> Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements*, 43, 45, 55, 109.

<sup>143</sup> Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisement*, 92.

<sup>144</sup> Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements*, 33-34.

<sup>145</sup> Several advertisements in the *Maryland Gazette* refer to importations of convict servants into Bladensburg; none refers to slave importations.

<sup>146</sup> Abbott Emerson Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in*

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relatively minor charges of theft, were felonies in eighteenth-century Britain. The only punishment for felonies in British law was death by hanging. However, this sentence could be commuted to transportation to the colonies, where the offending party would be sold as a servant. Like other servants, their time of service was limited to a period between three and seven years; unlike slaves, convict servants had some rights.

Records in the *Maryland Gazette* show that on two separate occasions, once in 1749 and once in 1761, Dr. John Ross sold cargoes of convict servants in Bladensburg.<sup>147</sup> Runaway servants from this area were often identified with a variety of skills: shoemaker, blacksmith, gardener, apothecary, stone mason, bricklayer, ropemaker, hempdresser, weaver, and baker.<sup>148</sup>

Unfortunately, we know almost nothing certain about the quantities and types of exports from or imports to northern Prince George's County in the colonial period.<sup>149</sup> The portion of Prince George's County that abuts the Potomac River was in a customs district called "North Potomac." This district covered the entire Maryland side of the Potomac River from its mouth to the Great Falls. (A similar district called "South Potomac" covered the entire Virginia side of the Potomac from its mouth to Great Falls.) The North Potomac District was the administrative unit, or "port of entry," that collected both proprietary and Royal revenues, and it included Georgetown, Bladensburg, Piscataway, Port Tobacco, and any other Maryland landing or town on the Potomac River.<sup>150</sup> Virtually no records for this district survive.

The exceptions are a few records for this district between 1693 and 1698, and summaries for the district for the period between 1768 and 1772.<sup>151</sup> So there is no way to accurately state how much tobacco was produced, or how many slaves were imported into this area.<sup>152</sup>

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*America, 1607-1776* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1947) and A. Roger Ekirch, *Bound for America: The Transportation of British Convicts to the Colonies, 1718-1775*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

<sup>147</sup> *Maryland Gazette* 26 July 1749 and 29 January 1761.

<sup>148</sup> Runaway servant advertisements from the Bladensburg area were numerous in the *Maryland Gazette*. For advertisements through 1761, see 8 November 1745; 12 August 1746; 20 April 1748; 24 August 1748; 14 September 1748; 9 November 1748; 30 August 1749; 21 February 1750; 30 July 1752; 26 October 1752; 19 April 1753; 17 May 1753; 16 August 1753; 27 Jun 1754; 8 May 1755; 14 August 1755; 23 October 1755; 12 June 1760; and 24 December 1760.

<sup>149</sup> Some sources have claimed that Bladensburg was the largest tobacco port in Maryland or that more slaves came through Bladensburg than anywhere else. These claims are without factual foundation.

<sup>150</sup> See Stephen G. Hardy, "Trade and Economic Growth in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake," (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland 1999) Appendix 1, for a listing of surviving Chesapeake shipping records.

<sup>151</sup> The seventeenth century records can be found in CO 5/749; the summaries can be found in CUST 16/1.

<sup>152</sup> The Act of 1747 required that each tobacco warehouse submit an annual report to the County Court (*Archives of Maryland*, 44:618-619). For Prince George's County, a separate Liber with

## Chapter Two

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The eastern part of Prince George's County fronted on the Patuxent River and fell into the jurisdiction of the Patuxent District. However, the Patuxent District included the entire river and the parts of Anne Arundel, Calvert, and St. Mary's Counties along its banks. While some records do survive for the district, it is impossible to distinguish exports and imports into any one county or region.<sup>153</sup> After independence, the new State of Maryland apparently used the same districts to regulate trade and collect revenue.

While the amount of tobacco grown in the area cannot be accurately determined, the ecological effects of the eighteenth-century planters' agricultural practices are known to have been profound. Ultimately these ecological effects had economic effects. The silting of the Patuxent River is a well-known story in colonial Maryland history. In the seventeenth century, ocean-going vessels easily navigated up to Prince George's County's wharves and warehouses. This silting also affected the Anacostia. Less than twenty years after Bladensburg was established, the *Maryland Gazette* advertised a lottery to be held in Bladensburg "... For removing the shoals in Eastern Branch from the wharf at Bladensburg down, and from there to the bridge upwards."<sup>154</sup>

The flooding that plagued the Anacostia and Bladensburg all the way until the 1950s was a constant worry in the colonial era. In 1767, tobacco planters petitioned for reimbursement for tobacco that was damaged by a flood.<sup>155</sup> And, in 1772, a committee of Bladensburg citizens asked the Prince George's County Court for a replacement of the bridge over the Eastern Branch that was destroyed by an ice jam the previous winter. The replacement, built by Benjamin Beall, was 130 feet long, twelve feet wide, and scheduled to be completed by 15 October 1773.<sup>156</sup>

In 1779, Bladensburg's tobacco warehouse was moved from David Ross's property. That year, the county court was authorized to purchase part of the market lot from the town's commissioners and to erect the tobacco

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just these reports start in the 1780s; earlier reports may be recorded in the general County Court minutes for the period before this. The reports from the Bladensburg Warehouse could shed some light on the level of tobacco production in ATHA.

If an estimate could be made of the number of slaves imported into the North Potomac District, this number would probably be high. Because of high Virginia duties on slave importations, many slaves were apparently imported into North Potomac (Maryland) instead of South Potomac (Virginia). Virginia planters could then purchase their slaves in Maryland, and bring them into Virginia duty-free because of a loophole in the law. For a full discussion of this, see Donald M. Sweig, "The Importation of African Slaves to the Potomac River, 1732-1772," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 42 (1985) 507-524.

<sup>153</sup>Hardy, *Trade and Economic Growth*, Appendix 1.

<sup>154</sup>*Maryland Gazette* 21 January 1761.

<sup>155</sup>*Archives of Maryland*, 64:322. The petition was rejected by the Lower House (64:323).

<sup>156</sup>Van Horn, *Out of the Past*, 134, 137.

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warehouse there.<sup>157</sup>

The disruptions of the American Revolution were economic as well as political. War interrupted most of the traditional tobacco trade to Europe. While the war's end in 1783 meant that much of the tobacco trade with Europe was resumed, a steadily growing part of the Maryland economy was changing from the growing of tobacco to growing wheat and corn.<sup>158</sup> This continued a trend that had begun in the mid-eighteenth century; it was a trend that was to profoundly affect Maryland in the nineteenth century.

Although none of the battles of the American Revolution took place in Prince George's County, the area was not untouched by the great tide of events during those years. Local residents organized committees to assist the Revolutionary effort and sent many of their sons to fight for the cause of independence. The area played one small part in the Revolution when the Comte de Rochambeau's supply troops came through Bladensburg in September 1781 on their way to Yorktown. Then in July 1782, after the victory at Yorktown, the whole of Rochambeau's army made the return march, camping just north of Bladensburg (East Hyattsville), and then at the Snowden Iron Works as they made their way north to New England. One benefit from this brief sojourn are the beautiful and informative sketches of their campsites along the way produced by the French officer, Louis-Alexandre Berthier.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>157</sup>"An Act for Erecting New Warehouses in the town of Bladensburg" 1779, ch. 8. *Archives of Maryland* 203:216. The Market Master's House, discussed in an entry in Part Two, was built ca. 1765 by Christopher Lowndes, on the edge of the market square.

<sup>158</sup>The best accounts of this trend are found in Carville Earle and Ronald Hoffman, "Staple Crops and Urban Development in the Eighteenth-Century South," *Perspectives in American History* 10 (1976) 5-78, and Jean B. Lee, *The Price of Nationhood: The American Revolution in Charles County* (New York, Norton, 1994).

<sup>159</sup>*The American Campaigns of Rochambeau's Army*, edited by Howard C. Rice, Jr., and Anne S.K. Brown, 1972; Robert Crawley, "Rochambeau." *News and Notes from the Prince George's County Historical Society* 31 (July-August 2002): 2-3; Susan Pearl, "More on Rochambeau's Army." *News and Notes from the Prince George's County Historical Society* 31 (July-August 2002): 4-5. See also the entry in Part Two on Bladensburg.



Berthier's Map of Bladensburg

In 1790, when the Congress in Philadelphia decided to locate the new Federal capital somewhere along the Potomac River, Prince George's County ceded most of the land necessary to establish the District of Columbia. The 10-mile-square area was surveyed in 1791, and stone boundary markers were erected during the following year at the four corners and at one-mile intervals along the lines. (Five of these boundary markers are located within the Heritage Area.) The development of the Federal city was greatly aided by Benjamin Stoddert, then living in Georgetown but soon to take up residence at Bostwick in Bladensburg; Stoddert was one of a group of men who acquired from local landowners much of the land needed by the Federal government. Beginning in the early 1790s, the new capital was laid out and gradually developed, a change within the landscape that was to have a profound and permanent impact on the adjoining region which is today the ATHA.

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