

the governorship needed to be rotated among three sections of the state: the Eastern Shore, Central and Southern Maryland and Western Maryland. The Constitution of 1776 provided for a weak governor since the document was written during the Revolutionary War with its cry to rid the land of a tyrannical ruler and its goal to eliminate the colonial concept of a governor who was not only an overly strong chief executive, but often one who controlled the Legislature and the courts as well.

In the early period of the state, death or resignation sometimes brought improvement in the chief office. Indeed, Heinrich Buchholz, the noted biographer of Maryland governors, in speaking of Governor George Plater's death in office on February 13, 1792 says, "His brief service . . . contains no single event of great moment . . ."

In those days the Constitution of 1776 stated that ". . . upon the death, resignation or removal . . . of the governor, the first named of the council (Governor's Council—a body of five men elected yearly by the Legislature) shall act as governor . . . and call a meeting of the general assembly . . ." for the purpose of selecting a governor to fill the unexpired term of a part year. So, Thomas S. Lee, who had been governor during the latter part of the Revolutionary War (1779-82), was voted back into office by the Legislature (with minor competition) to fill out Plater's term, and later reelected by that body unanimously for two more terms. Lee was one of a small band of great Marylanders like Thomas Johnson, William Paca, William Smallwood, and John Eager Howard who bridged the colonial and statehood periods serving with honor in the War for Independence, in state and national constitutional conventions, and winding up as governors.

In 1809 Governor Robert Wright resigned during his third one-year term knowing that he was ineligible for a fourth term, and hoping to pick up a judgeship while it was still open. (Wright didn't get that judgeship until some years later, but he did get to be elected to Congress the year after his resignation). The Legislature, called immediately by the Council, didn't wait for Wright to change his mind but elected Edward Lloyd who had served in the House of Delegates earlier at the tender age of 21 and was serving in the United States Congress when voted in as governor. Lloyd proved so effective that he was brought back for two more terms and during his administration much reform was brought about including the free ballot act of 1809, repealing property qualifications for voting.

When Governor Daniel Martin died in July 22, 1831, but a few months after beginning his split second term, the Council selected George Howard, its Chairman, to assume office until the Legislature was called into special session, when it then elected him to an official term. History records Howard as accepting the job in the first place because of his great passion for "finishing the task of the fallen chief." History also notes that though Howard was reelected for a second one-year term, he never really took the work seriously and spent much of his time denouncing President Andrew Jackson and opposing the then popular lotteries. Though he challenged some of the newer democratic ideas, Governor Howard also fought South Carolina's emerging nullification policies equally hard. Unfortunately, George Howard lived in the shadow of his great father—John Eager Howard—a valiant Revolutionary War general and a wise early governor of Maryland.

The Period After 1838

The 1838 revisions of the Constitution of 1776 were of major importance. The changes flowed from democratic uprisings that brought blood-