

THE CHARTER OF MARYLAND

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ON JUNE 20, 1632, Charles I, King of England, Scotland, and Ireland, gave his blessing to the founding of a new colony in America to be called Maryland in honor of his Queen. He did so by means of a grant, called a charter, to Cecil Calvert, second Lord Baltimore. By virtue of this charter, Cecil Calvert became the sole proprietor or owner of a vast tract of land to the north of Virginia on the Chesapeake Bay, the limits of which were only vaguely defined. The land was Calvert's to sell and govern if he could translate the formal clauses of a legal document into a successful colony.

The charter of Maryland proved to be a firm foundation upon which democratic government and religious toleration grew. The charter supplied the framework for a social experiment that has left its mark on our present-day society in the separation of church and state. It guided a successful effort to colonize a wilderness and establish there a refuge for English Catholics. Under the protection of the charter a struggling settlement of immigrants became a prosperous province of Americans. In 1776, when the State of Maryland joined the new "United States in Congress Assembled," it did so with a written constitution that could easily trace its origins to Lord Baltimore's charter.