5-2023

"The Unlucky Rebel": William Claiborne and the Evolution of the Kent Island Dispute

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in History from
The College of William and Mary

by

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Accepted for HIGH HONORS
(Honors, High Honors, Highest Honors)

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Williamsburg, VA
May 10, 2023

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my honors advisor, Professor James Whittenburg, for his patience, wisdom, and his help throughout the process of writing this thesis.

I would like to thank the other members of my honor committee, Professors Matthew Schueller and Paul Mapp, both for agreeing to serve on my honor committee and for being excellent professors (as is Professor Whittenburg).

I would like to thank my family and my friends for all the support they have given me over the course of this thesis, especially Zipora.

Finally, I would like to thank the staff at Swem Library for introducing me to the proper use of microfilm.

Introduction

William Claiborne was an English merchant and Virginian politician mainly active in the Chesapeake Bay region during the first half of the seventeenth century.[1] He is an important figure in the early history of Maryland for his opposition to the colony, originally over his ownership of Kent Island. This escalated into a decades-long political struggle over Maryland itself. This thesis will demonstrate that religious politics played an increasingly important role in the evolution of this transatlantic conflict. The effects of William Claiborne's feud turned the Chesapeake frontier into a minor theater of the English Civil War and indirectly established the patterns of religious violence that would characterize Maryland's internal politics for the rest of the century.

The conflict was not static, as it was waged over tumultuous decades of English war and English peace, and it intersected a vast tapestry of local and transatlantic events that are otherwise rarely connected. By both examining how these events influenced the Kent Island dispute and using the Kent Island dispute as an interpretive lens, this thesis seeks to contribute to a more connected view of the social evolution of the colonial Chesapeake.

Structure and Sources

This thesis benefits from its subject being in the well-established field of early American colonial history. Primary documentation from the early seventeenth century is sparse compared to more recent centuries, but this deficit is more than made up for by the wealth of secondary literature. The first chapter concerns the establishment of Kent Island, the local and transatlantic

[1] Surnames were not standardized in the seventeenth century, and many sources refer to William or his family as "Clayborne", "Cleburn", "Clyburn", "Cliburn", etc. William himself always spelled his surname *Claiborne*, and most academics follow suit. However, alternate spellings of his family in England will be used as they appear in sources.

context it occupied, and the beginning of the conflict between William Claiborne and the Calvert family of Maryland over Kent Island. The second chapter describes the Plundering Time, a fairly understudied event in Maryland's history whose primary sources are particularly few. This chapter is thus by necessity greatly indebted to Timothy Riordan's seminal work on the Plundering Time from 2004, *The Plundering Time: Maryland and the English Civil War, 1645–1646*, for uncovering the true extent of the connection between 'Ingle's Rebellion' and Kent Island. The third chapter is a coda that covers the late stage of the Kent Island dispute, during Claiborne's final political ascendancy as an administrator in the English Commonwealth.

Historiography and Genealogy

Due to the nature of prior scholarship on William Claiborne, and due to his relative obscurity, his historiography should be discussed. Claiborne's first evaluations were in the earliest American histories, from the first half of the nineteenth century. There was an interpretive consensus on his legacy in this time, as is succinctly overviewed by John Esten Cooke in an 1883 article:

> His political opponents described him as a "villain" and a "Judas Iscariot," and the modern historians have dutifully followed and adopted the same view of him. Mr. [John Daly] Burk, losing his head as usual, calls him "an unprincipled incendiary and execrable villain." Mr. [Robert R.] Howison informs us that he was "a turbulent character who had been tried and found guilty of murder and sedition;" worthy Dr. [Francis Lister] Hawks, the Church historian, styles him "a felon convict who had escaped from justice": various writers a "pirate"; Mr. [George] Bancroft "the malignant Clayborne"; and even the excellent Chief

> Justice [John] Marshall has his fling at the unlucky rebel as the "Evil Genius of Maryland."[2]

Clearly, William Claiborne's reputation throughout the antebellum years was overwhelmingly negative and could perhaps be described with the title of an 1846 historical novel concerning his life – *Clayborne the Rebel*.[3]

However, a reputation for rebellion took on more positive connotations in Virginia following the end of the Civil War, and so in the following decades 'William Claiborne of Virginia' was vigorously reappraised. John E. Cooke's article in *The Magazine of American History* seen above was the first post-war publication on William Claiborne. It must be emphasized that John Cooke was not an academically trained historian. Cooke was a Confederate staff officer and Virginian novelist who spent the majority of his career writing florid pieces promoting the Lost Cause and the generals he worked under. This background dramatically affects his article on William Claiborne – it is nakedly biased, prone to poetic flourishes and romantic musings, and is the only article in the *Magazine* that contains no citations. This last point is already bad practice when he clearly deals with published works, as in the quoted section, but Cooke's greatest academic sin comes when he claims an indefinite but substantial part of his work is "taken from unpublished records to which access is difficult".[4]

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[2] John Esten Cooke, "Clayborne the Rebel", *The Magazine of American History with Notes and Queries*, Vol. X August 1883, 86-87. See also John Daly Burk, *The History of Virginia: From its first settlement to the Present Day* volume 2, Petersburg: Dickson and Pescud, 1805, pages 40-42; Lambert Lilly [a pseudonym of Dr. Francis Lister Hawks], *History of the Middle States, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland*, Boston: Allen and Ticknor, 1833, 155; George Bancroft, *History of the United States from the Discovery of the American Continent* vol. 1, 253; Robert Reid Howison, *A History of Virginia: From Its Discovery and Settlement by Europeans to the Present Time. Volume I.* Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1846, 271; John Marshall, *The Life of George Washington* vol. 1, Philadelphia: C.P. Wayne, 1803, page 47. The 'title case' capitalization of Marshall's quote is Cooke's emphasis.

[3] Charles Campbell, *History of the Colony and Ancient Dominion of Virginia* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Co., 1860), 324. The novel in question was written by "William H. Carpenter, Esq., of Maryland".

[4] Cooke, 90.

Despite his methodological shortcomings, Cooke's work would provide the model used to interpret William Claiborne and the Kent Island dispute until the 1920s. The main thrust of this model is that Claiborne was a regionalist or a proto-patriot, seeking the repatriation of Virginian lands and defending Virginia's territorial sovereignty. While Marylanders would continue to dismiss him as a bigoted pirate and a rebel with an irrational hatred of the young colony, among genteel Virginian literati and Claiborne's descendants his rebellion was deemed respectable.

Perhaps to reinforce this sanitized image of Claiborne as a gentleman, Cooke and the later John Herbert Claiborne, the earliest biographers of William Claiborne[5], gave an elaborately elite pedigree for the Virginia secretary. Descending from Scottish and English kings and a Norman second cousin of William the Conqueror,[6] William Claiborne was claimed to be in the direct line of descent of the Clyburn noble family of Westmoreland, born in 1587 as the second son of Edmund Cliburn of Clyburn Manor and a baron's daughter.[7] Cooke claims Claiborne traveled to London at some point after the establishment of the Virginia colony, where he met John Smith – Cooke claims William was "around thirty", while John Herbert Claiborne amends that statement to "thirty-three or thirty-four". [8] Regardless, both agree that this one meeting was

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[5] Boyd Lee Spahr's review of Nathaniel C. Hale's 1951 book *Virginia Venturer: A Historical Biography of William Claiborne, 1600-1677* describes Hale's work as "the first full-length biography" of William Claiborne, but it was preceded by Dr. John Herbert Claiborne's 1917 book *William Claiborne of Virginia: With Some Account of His Pedigree*. See Boyd Lee Spahr, [Review of *Virginia Venturer: A Historical Biography of William Claiborne, 1600-1677. The Story of the Merchant Venturers Who Founded Virginia and the War in the Chesapeake*, by N. C. Hale], *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 76(4) (1952), 480.

[6] J.H. Claiborne, *William Claiborne of Virginia* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1917), 2-3. On a flap between cited pages there is a genealogical chart.

[7] Ibid, 18-19. John Claiborne provides an interesting digression in a lengthy footnote across pages 17-18, saying "a number of writers" before him referred to William's apparent father as 'Sir' Edmund Cliburn due to his descent from a knight. John disparages this practice as a misrepresentation of English knighthood and does not name the offending writers, but it further underscores the elite-focused lens through which William Claiborne as a family-founding planter was viewed.

[8] Ibid, 45-46; Cooke, 88-89.

so successful that John Smith named a cluster of islands off the coast of Boston in William's honor, and William was either offered the job of Virginia's surveyor by Smith immediately or was quickly able to secure it through familial connections.[9]

This sort of life narrative with its emphasis on noble genealogy and Great Man impulses is hardly unheard of in popular genealogies or older colonial scholarship, particularly concerning the founders of planter families. What makes William Claiborne's case worthy of note is that it is completely wrong.

In 1925, Virginian historian William G. Stanard wrote a review of a book of Cambridge alumni. While reviewing, he found a line stating that the minor noble traditionally assumed to be William Claiborne of Virginia, the son of Edmund Cliburn, was ordained into the Anglican clergy and became a prebendary of Ripon Cathedral in Yorkshire – meaning the conventional family history was wrong. Stanard, who had already written on William Claiborne and repeated the traditional origin of Cooke and J.H. Claiborne, made a note of it in his review and called for further research.[10] That call would be answered only in 1948, more than two decades after Stanard's review, when Clayton Torrence published a two-part article in *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*.[11]

Torrence's first article pinpoints the origin of the traditional narrative. The claim of the noble William Claiborne originated in an August 1852 letter to Herbert A. Claiborne from Reverend Sebastian F. Streeter, secretary of the Maryland Historical Society and amateur

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[9] Ibid. Cooke appears to directly quote Smith on the name "Claiborne Isles" but a cursory read of Smith's *A Description of New England* [is this another citation?] fails to find that name used. The niece of Edmund Cliburn was the countess of Pembroke, married to a prominent investor in the Virginia Company.

[10] Clayton Torrence, "The English Ancestry of William Claiborne of Virginia: Part I: A Critical Study of the Traditionally Stated English Origin." *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 56, no. 3 (1948): 328-9.

[11] Ibid; "The English Ancestry of William Claiborne of Virginia: Part II. The English Connection." *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 56, no. 4 (1948): 431–60.

researcher. Streeter had acquired two census-based genealogies of the English Clyburn family and assumed the otherwise unaccounted-for 'William Cleborne' was "most probably" the same as the secretary of Virginia.[12] This claim was copied verbatim by Herbert in his own notes, but then after his death his notes were acquired by Dr. Christopher John Cleborne, a Scottish-born medical doctor who had corresponded with Herbert on their genealogies. Christopher Cleborne was descended from an Anglo-Irish branch of the English Clyburn family and connected William Claiborne to the Clyburns in his own charts. Cooke met with Dr. Cleborne in 1878, where Cleborne's collection of material were the "unpublished resources" of Cooke's article. Cleborne later published his research in the form of several genealogical charts through the Virginia Historical Society, corroborating Cooke and formed the basis of scholarly circular reporting on William Claiborne's origins in subsequent decades.[13] Having established why even trained academics like Stanard were misled for so long, Torrence's second article establishes the true origins of William Claiborne…

[12] Torrence, "The English Connection", 339. These 'censuses' were more properly 'visitations' and Torrence uses that term where applicable over 'census' – e.g. 337 [note 1].
[13] Ibid, 330-331.

Chapter I: Claiborne the Merchant

William Claiborne was born in Kent, England, in the year 1600, to Thomas Cleyborne and Sarah Cleyborne (née Smith).[14] The detail on the personal seal William and his immediate descendants would later use in Virginia is the same as that of Clyburn noble family.[15] However, whatever connection he did have to the landed gentry of England was distant – Torrence could only trace back his genealogy to his paternal grandfather – and the immediate family of William Claiborne were merchants, not the landed gentry. Thomas Cleyborne, who is recorded in primary documents as a merchant, lord mayor, and alderman of King's Lynn in Norfolk.[16] William's father, also named Thomas, inherited the merchant business, which a lawsuit revealed to be in Icelandic fishing, with some commercial interest in a local white salt monopoly proceeding from the same.[17] William's mother Sarah (nee James) came from a family of brewers; his elder brother, yet again named Thomas, became an apprentice hosiery-maker before switching careers to become a tobacco merchant.[18] Nathaniel Claiborne Hale also tentatively connects William Claiborne to more prominent figures: Sir Roger James, a prominent shareholder in the Virginia Company, may have been a half-brother through Sarah's first marriage; Maurice Thomson, a Puritan merchant, was both one of Claiborne's closer business partners and his cousin.[19]

There is little direct evidence to establish William Claiborne's social or sectarian beliefs during his early years in England. He was certainly no stranger to the world of trans-Atlantic commerce, and he was from a similar background to several of his contemporaries who would

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[14] Torrence, "Part II: The English Connection," 431.
[15] Ibid, 432-433 [first page of foldout between these pages]. See also J.H. Claiborne, 24.
[16] Ibid, 433-434. This section is a reproduction of the original documents.
[17] Ibid, 435.
[18] Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, 121.
[19] *Virginia Ventuerer* citation.

also come to prominence in Virginia, such as William Tucker, Samuel Matthews, John Utie, and Thomas Stegg.[20] This was part of an even wider social trend in England during the early and middle decades of the seventeenth century; merchants from less-wealthy families that had lacked the capital to join the companies that dominated London trade found lucrative opportunities overseas in the colonies, forming a social stratum which Robert Brenner called the "new-merchants".[21] These upwardly-mobile figures stood in contrast, and sometimes in opposition, to the old-money aristocracy that had previously held monopolistic control over commerce; similarly, they were often more amenable to Puritanism and radical Protestant rhetoric, and inclined to anti-Catholicism. In that vein, Hale describes William Claiborne's father as a committed Anglican, celebrating the news of his distant Clyburn cousins renouncing Catholicism. William also attended Pembroke College at Cambridge in 1617, at that time a center of Puritan and pro-Parliament politics. Regardless of the source, William Claiborne emerged as a product of a Puritan-sympathetic environment, one which would become important in the future. After graduating from Pembroke, William was selected as a neutral candidate by the board of the Virginia Company to be the surveyor of the colony.[22]

The Native Context

William Claiborne arrived in Virginia in June 1621, to a colony in flux. Tobacco was emerging as the definitive cash crop, while the Virginia Company in London under Sandys was attempting to diversify the colony's economy and prevent it from becoming a monoculture. The new Governor Francis Wyatt was Claiborne's shipmate, and his instructions stated that he was:

[20] Brenner, 120, 143.
[21] Ibid, 159.
[22] Hale, 45-47. Brenner, 159.

> "To take care of every plantation upon the death of their chief; not to plant above one hundred pounds of tobacco per head; to sow great quantities of corn for their own use, and to support the multitudes to be sent yearly […] to keep cows, swine, poultry, &tc. and particularly kyne, which are not to be killed yet. Next to corn, plant mulberry trees, to make silk […] to try silk grass; to plant abundance of vines, and take care of the vignerors sent: to put prentices to trade, and not let them forsake their trades for planting tobacco, or any such useless commodity[.]"[23]

However, a financial dependence on what the King had called "this vile custome of *Tobacco* taking" was not the only danger to Virginia in 1621.[24] Opechancanough succeeded his brother Wahunsenacawh as de facto of the Powhatan paramount chiefdom in 1614, and by 1621 he was planning an attack to drive off the English settlers.

Opechancanough had played an instrumental role in the formation of the Powhatan state as the war leader under his brother. The rapid centralization of Tsecommecah is often viewed as a response to prior European encroachment – specifically a Spanish Jesuit mission established in the region in the 1560s. Opechancanough's age and name, meaning "he whose soul is white", has led to his controversial identification by some historians as Paquiquieno or Don Luis, a Powhatan youth taken by Spanish explorers and educated in New Spain, only to lead his people against the mission on his return.[25] Regardless of whether Opechancanough was the same as Don

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[23] William Waller Hening, editor, vol. 1, *The Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature in the Year 1619*. New York: R.&W.&G. Bartow (1823), 115.

[24] King James I and IV Stuart, *A Counterblaste to Tobacco*, 1. Emphasis in original. [cannot find "noxious weed"; Unsure about this lead-in; important to note Company collapse and the failure of Sandys's diversification plan on account of the war]

[25] See Carl Bridenbaugh *Early Americans*, 5-49, 239-247, and James Horn, *A Brave and Cunning Prince*. For a dissenting view, see Helen C. Rountree and E. Randolph Turner III, *Before and After Jamestown*, 53-54.

Luis, Spanish warships were deployed as a reprisal for the destruction of the mission, spurring on regional consolidation under "the house of Pamunkey" – Wahunsenacawh and Opechancanough. Opechancanough also took a harder line towards the English settlement in the Chesapeake than his brother did, culminating in the massacre of March 22, 1622[26].

Much has been written on the 1622 massacre and the ensuing Second Anglo-Powhatan War, relative to the first or third; it has been argued to be the defining event in not only relations between the colony of Virginia and the Powhatan, but also Anglo-Native American relations as a whole.[27] The early war was incredibly disruptive to Virginian society; beyond the initial attack, which killed hundreds and destroyed several tobacco plantations and the infrastructure of nascent industries such as the silk trade, the tribes of Powhatan hegemony were the closest and largest trading partners of the colony. This was especially the case with corn – the winter of 1622/3 saw mass starvation in Virginia.[28] Complete collapse was only averted by the Patawomecks, on the fringes of the Powhatan authority, who maintained the corn trade with the English on their own terms during the war.[29] However, another attack on the scale of the 1622 massacre – which might have sealed the fate of the colony – never materialized. Opechancanough's strategy following his shock-and-awe surprise attack was conservative and cautious, employing hit-and-run tactics that were better suited for the sort of limited warfare that had been practiced between the natives of the region before the arrival of the Europeans – a doctrine he personally would have been

[26] The contemporary English used the Julian calendar with the year beginning on March 25, meaning the massacre was understood in its own time as occurring in late 1621, while most academics retroactively date it using the Gregorian calendar. See Steven J. Schroeder, ""Not with Sword and Spear": The Evolution and Disintegration of the Anglo-Powhatan Economy, 1622-1646", master's thesis, St. Cloud University (2016), 8 [note 6].
[27] Michael J. Kramer, "The 1622 Powhatan Uprising and its Impact on Anglo-Indian Relations", master's thesis, Illinois State University: 2016, 2.
[28] Horn, 204-205; Schroeder, 36.
[29] Horn, 207.

familiar with and used to unite Tsecommecah in prior decades.[30] This in turn meant the Second Anglo-Powhatan War became a protracted conflict of small-scale skirmishes and seasonal campaigns, a climate in which the normal processes of government could still be observed.

However, the long course of the war disrupted the early political establishment of Virginia, especially among the traders. When William Claiborne arrived, native trade was dominated by the likes of Captain Henry Spelman, and Captains Thomas and Ralph Hamor, all original settlers at Jamestown who had built their relationships with the Powhatan tribes. Spelman was particularly competent, having lived for five years among the Patuxent as a "boy-interpreter" for Captain Samuel Argall among the Patuxent.[31] But in 1623, after Ralph Hamor led a Patawomeck attack on the Natchotchtank to shore up trade relations with the former, Spelman was ambushed and killed by the Nachotchtank while on a potentially peace-making trading mission. The Hamor brothers would die soon after of natural causes, Thomas Hamor in 1623 and Ralph in 1625.[32] These deaths created opportunities in the market that would go unoccupied until later in the decade – largely due to large-scale commercial trade with the natives being politically unviable on account of the war.[33] However, one death in particular would ensure William Claiborne's rise to prominence; that of Virginia secretary and councilman Christopher Davison in January 1624.[34]

As a planter and college-trained surveyor increasingly familiar with the layout of Virginia and its properties, Claiborne understood the land in a way that would prove useful both in peace

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[30] Rountree, 53.
[31] J. Frederick Fausz, "Present At the "Creation": The Chesapeake World that Greeted the Maryland Colonists" in *Maryland Historical Magazine* vol. 100, issue 1 (Baltimore: Spring 2005), 30-31. [note this is a centennial reprint]
[32] Ibid.; Schroeder, 45. [not sure about this paragraph]
[33] Cynthia J. van Zandt, *Brothers Among Nations: The Pursuit of Intercultural Alliances in Early America, 1580-1660,* 118.
[34] Hale, 108.

and wartime, and thus was an excellent candidate to assume the responsibilities of the formally-vacant Secretary position.[35] He served unofficially on the Virginia council as Secretary following the death of Davison and became the first royally appointed Secretary of State in 1626; he also became a colonel of the new militia formed at the beginning of the conflict. From his new position of power, Claiborne established himself as an ambitious force in Virginian politics and commerce. As unofficial Secretary, in 1624 he asserted his office's right to a small herd of ten cattle; in 1626, with his commission on the council secured, he was granted a monopoly on the comparatively small industry of native slaves in Virginia; in the same year, he ambitiously proposed the construction of an enormous palisade that he would fund in exchange for exclusive land rights on either side of the wall – a project that would eventually be approved to another proposer at a much smaller scale in 1632; finally, in 1629, Colonel William Claiborne led a "daring and successful attack" on Opechancanough's Pamunkey capital. It was not the first raid of the Pamunkey capital, as Governor Wyatt had carried out his own in 1624, but it was a prestigious feather in Claiborne's hat nonetheless, as well as an example of the ability of the colonial elites to enrich themselves from the war.[36]

By the time of Claiborne's attack, the Second Anglo-Powhatan War was drawing to a close in the Virginians' favor, though it would only formally end in 1632. William Claiborne had risen to great heights during the war, albeit more as a politician than as a military officer. His political prominence in the colony and his trans-Atlantic commercial connections would be

[35] Hale, 108-114.
[36] Ibid.; J. Frederick Fausz, "Merging and Emerging Worlds" in Lois Green Carr, Philip D. Morgan, Jean B. Russo, eds., *Colonial Chesapeake Society* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 59; Kramer, 58; Council in Virginia. "Letter to the Earl of Southampton and the Council and Company of Virginia, December 2, 1624," in Kingsbury ed., *The Records of the Virginia Company of London*, volume 4, 507-508.

decisive in his next major venture, which would spark the conflict that would come to define the rest of his career.

Kent Island: The Fur Trade

The Second Anglo-Powhatan War led to significant economic changes in Virginia. The war had cemented the tobacco economy of the colony, in part through the destruction of the economic infrastructure that had been intended to diversify the colony's exports; the war had also demonstrated the risks inherent to trading with bordering nations; the previous Anglo-Powhatan economy and social understanding was damaged and could never be wholly repaired. However, while trade with the peoples under Powhatan hegemony was declining, there were still potentially lucrative business relationships to be had in the Chesapeake Bay. The beaver fur trade in particular had excellent prospects; the lands around the Bay in this period were later described as "a pelt-keeper's Eldorado".[37] This was not a new industry – furs had formed the basis of Virginia's export economy prior to the famous adoption of Rolfe's tobacco, and Captain Henry Fleet and his brothers had plied a rather unspectacular beaver pelt trade with the northern Nacotchtanks in the late 1620s – but William Claiborne would be the first to capitalize on the trade at scale and during a uniquely profitable time.[38]

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[37] Schroeder, "'Not With Sword and Spear'", 2 and *passim*; J. Frederick Fausz, "Present At the "Creation": The Chesapeake World that Greeted the Maryland Colonists" in *Maryland Historical Magazine* vol. 100, issue 1 (Baltimore: Spring 2005), 35. For a wider analysis of the Chesapeake fur trade and its relationship to English geopolitics, see J. Frederick Fausz, "'To Draw Thither the Trade of Beavers': The Strategic Significance of the English Fur Trade in the Chesapeake, 1620-1660", in Bruce Trigger, editor, *Le Castor Fait Tout: Selected Papers of the Fifth North American Fur Trade Conference, 1985* (Montreal, 1987).

[38] van Zandt, 116; Fausz, "Present At the "Creation"", 34. Fleet had been imprisoned by the Nacotchtanks for several years during the war and took up trade with them following his release in 1627, even doing business with some of Claiborne's future associates. For his story, see Fausz, "Merging and Emerging Worlds", 60-61, and "Present At the "Creation"", 34-36.

In 1627, Claiborne set out on an expedition to the northern Chesapeake Bay and came across the island of Monoponson.[39] Monoponson is the largest island in the Chesapeake Bay, and at the time was inhabited and named by the Matapeake and Wicomisse, Eastern Algonquian peoples like the Powhatan but not under Tsecommecah's political authority. Claiborne thought the island's climate reminded him of his native Kent and named the land Kent Island. Despite older scholars like Hale emphasizing the impact of Claiborne's affinity for the island on his interest in settling it, when viewed in a wider context this expedition was more economically astute. As a wealthy and well-connected councilman of Virginia, Claiborne was in a position to oversee and negotiate Chesapeake native trade for increasingly interested merchants in London.[40] His government-sanctioned monopoly on the native slave trade from the previous year may even indicate an early preparation for future trading ventures by giving him a supply of captive interpreters through the ongoing war.[41] At any rate, Claiborne was able to quickly follow up his 1627 exploration by establishing trade relations with the Wicomisse the following year.[42] With the status of secretary of state, an interest in the comparatively uncontested fringes of Virginia's de facto authority, and the means to form profitable connections on both sides of the Atlantic, William Claiborne began to work on a more ambitious goal.

The Susquehannock, who lived along the Susquehanna River in the northern Chesapeake, seemed a natural next step. They were powerful geopolitical rivals of the Powhatan, close enough for easy trade relations, and far enough away to not view or be viewed by the English settlers of Virginia as an existential threat. The "fur-rich" Susquehannock were also familiar with

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[39] Hale, 117-119; Bernard C. Steiner, "The Maryland Charter and the Early Explorations of That Province", *The Sewanee Review* (Johns Hopkins University; 1908), 160.
[40] Brenner, 120; Hale, 117.
[41] Fausz, "Merging and Emerging Worlds", 36-37.
[42] Hale, 117. The Wicomisse (the spelling used by Hale and Steiner, alternatively Wicomiss) are also known as the Ozinie.

the benefits of trade with Europeans – as early as the summer of 1608, John Smith found them with European trade goods and they sought to ally with him against Haudenosaunee enemies to the north – and by the latter years of the 1620s, the Susquehannock were still keenly interested establishing a firm partnership with European traders.[43] At the same time, English interest in the beaver fur trade was increasing rapidly. New felting innovations in the late 1620s spurred global demand for beaver fur, while the loss of Quebec in the 1629 Treaty of Susa had closed off New France as an avenue of expansion for English traders. William Clobbery and Claiborne's possible cousin Maurice Thomson were two such fur traders from London; their other ventures were in the New World tobacco trade, whose boom had collapsed by 1630, providing yet another incentive for them to look to the fur trade. [44] Claiborne met Clobbery and then Thomson while he was in London – for reasons which shall be discussed presently – and the three parties entered business together.[45] By linking his outpost to the Susquehannock and to Clobbery and Thomson's network, Claiborne hoped to establish Kent Island as a transatlantic mercantile hub – the seat of his own influence, as "king of the Chesapeake trade!".[46]

The groundwork for Kent Island as a proper settlement was begun in 1631, when Claiborne sailed from England in May aboard the *Africa* with twenty indentured servants. This was not an inexpensive venture, and was only possible due to significant investment from

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[43] Fausz, "Present At the "Creation"", 30-31; van Zandt, 117-120; Fausz, "Merging and Emerging Worlds", 59-60.
[44] Fausz, "Merging and Emerging Worlds", 60-61; Brenner, 122-123. The Anglo-French War of 1627 had brought with it the possible seizure of French Canada and its valuable pelt trade by a coalition of adventurers and merchants. This coalition, under royal favorite David Kirke, had merged with the Scottish Company for Canada to form the Canada Company – effectively representing English interests in the seizure of New France. However, the governor of Quebec had surrendered to Kirke after the peace had been signed, causing it to be returned to France and the Canada Company to collapse over the next several years as it failed to establish a proper economic base. See Brenner, 123 [note].
[45] Erich Isaac, "Kent Island, Part I: The Period of Settlement", in *Maryland Historical Magazine* vol. 52 (Baltimore, 1957), 100.
[46] Hale, 119.

Clobbery and Thomson, as well as affiliated prominent London merchants such as John de la Barre and Simon Turgis and domestic political support from Virginia councilmen such as William Tucker.[47] Through Clobbery's connections, Claiborne had even secured a Scottish royal charter from Sir William Alexander, former head of the Scottish Company for Canada and royal secretary of Scotland, firmly legitimizing his claim.[48] The initial settlement on Kent Island included Crayford plantation and Kent Fort. The first free settlers included farmers, millers, coopers, shipwrights, and Anglican clergymen. Most of these settlers came from Claiborne's Accomac property – he had found a significant squatter community on his land grant during his initial voyage to the northern Chesapeake Bay in 1627 – and he encouraged the growth of their communities and in return they were personally loyal to him. Later Kent Island settlers included indentured servants and enslaved Africans.[49] Claiborne's trading fleet started with four pinnaces, while an additional ancillary outpost was established at Palmer's Island near the mouth of the Susquehanna River to facilitate trade with the Susquehannock, while two further islands near Kent were dedicated to the raising of hogs and the facilities at Kecoughtan were expanded.[50] All of this effort began to pay off quickly, as J. Frederick Fausz calculates:

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[47] Brenner, 124; Raphael Semmes, "Claiborne vs. Clobbery et als.", *Maryland Historical Magazine* volume 26 (1931), 386. The precise division of the profits was given as: "Two sixths partes thereof for the account of William Cloberrye one sixt part for the account of John Dela-barr one sixt part for the account of Maurice Thompson one sixt part for the account of Simon Lurgis and one other sixt parte for the account of the saied William Cleborne and the said Clebornne was to goe and proceed uppon the said discoverye of plantation and did promise and agree to give just and true accounts of all tradeinge truckeinge buyeinge sellinge barteringe planteinge soweinge increase of cattle and generally that all increase and profitt whatsoever." Brenner also notes that Tucker, who had loaned the *Africa*, was Thomson's brother-in-law.

[48] Fausz, "Present at the "Creation"", 37. The importance of this will be discussed in the following section.

[49] Ibid; Isaac, 100-104, 110. An abbreviated list of indentured settlers is reproduced from the trial documents of "Claiborne v. Clobbery" from pp. 106-110. One apparently unnamed black Kent Islander had been a captive of the Susquehannock and served as an interpreter – see Fausz, "Merging and Emerging Worlds", 63.

[50] van Zandt, 126. Kecoughtan had been established by William Tucker and his store supplied Claiborne's operations. See Fausz, 63.

> Claiborne's elaborate preparations and large scale operation brought in 7488 pounds of beaver pelts (worth £4493 at 12 s./lb.), 6348 pounds of tobacco (worth £106 at 4 d./lb.), 2843 bushels of maize (worth £568 at 4 s./bushel), and £124 in cash from the sale of meat and livestock in [six years].[51]

The Kent Island enterprise was a significant commercial success for both parties involved. Though it more difficult to quantify the benefits the Susquehannock received on their end of the trade, they did move south in apparent response to the establishment of Claiborne's network, pushing out or establishing suzerainty over the Eastern Algonquian tribes around the mouth of the Susquehanna River.[52] For Claiborne, his dominance of the regional beaver fur trade – confirmed as a *de facto* monopoly with the arrest of Captain Fleet in 1632 – cemented his power in the northern Chesapeake.[53] It was so successful, in fact, that he had just "planted the seeds of his own destruction".[54] By drawing attention to the economic potential of the northern Chesapeake region and its fur trade, he ensured there would be more organized competition to challenge his control over Kent Island and the flow of beaver pelts. However, William Claiborne's downfall would not come from Virginia's governing council or Claiborne's native associates, but from the halls of London.

Kent Island: Transatlantic Context

In the October of 1629, George Calvert, the first Lord Baltimore, visited Virginia with the intent to survey the unsettled land in the Chesapeake Bay and to the south of the colony.[55] He

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[51] Fausz, "Present at the "Creation"", 39.
[52] van Zandt, 134.
[53] Fausz, 36. The arrest did not stick – in fact, Governor John Harvey soon released Fleet and 'encouraged' Fleet to steal his own ship so that Fleet could work as a transatlantic merchant directly for the governor.
[54] Ibid; "Merging and Emerging Worlds", 65.
[55] To underscore the importance of the Calvert family – George, Cecil, and Leonard – the custom of addressing the latter two only by their aristocratic title will not be observed.

was not well-received. Vicious anti-Catholic rhetoric surrounded him, such as rumors such that he abducted Protestant children to baptize them in the Roman church, and one Virginian named Thomas Tindall 'gave him the lie' and threatened him. The council of Virginia, including William Claiborne, was no exception. Within a few weeks of George Calvert's arrival, the Virginia assembly demanded he take the oath of supremacy. George Calvert had refused to take the oath on religious grounds as a Catholic in 1625 as demanded by the newly ascendant King Charles I. This objection cost Calvert his position on the Privy Council, despite his continued personal closeness to the King. The demand by Claiborne and rest of Virginia's governing council was thus a religiously hostile move. George Calvert refused to take the oath, and the Virginia council refused to allow him to take a modified form of it; Calvert left for London in late November 1629.[56]

This episode was William Claiborne's first explicit brush with religious politics. However, the oath of supremacy given to George Calvert was simply a pretext; Claiborne and other elites of Virginia had more mundane reasons to distrust the visiting Baron of Baltimore. George Calvert had long held interests in the English colonization of the Americas. He had been a prominent backer of the Virginia Company until its dissolution and later attempted to settle the Province of Avalon in Newfoundland. His presence in Jamestown and his interest in touring the frontier after the Avalon project failed led Virginia leaders to the correct assumption that Calvert was scouting out a new colony in the vicinity of Virginia. A new colony in the Chesapeake would introduce English competition to a market already contested by Dutch and Swedish

[56] Hale, 133; John Fiske, *Old Virginia and Her Neighbors*, vol. 1., 1897 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin), 264; William H. Browne, *George Calvert and Cecilius Calvert: Barons of Baltimore* (1890), 27-28; John Pott, William Claiborne, et. al. "Governor Pott and others to the Council", 30 November 1629, *Maryland Archives* volume III, 16-17. John Pott (alias Potts) served only as acting Governor for the absentee Governor John Harvey.

settlements to the north – an issue that was clearly of great importance to William Claiborne in particular, given his plans for Kent Island, and the "new merchant" elite of Virginia in general. [57] It is likely due tohis prior involvement and investment in the northern Chesapeake that Claiborne was selected by the acting governor John Potts to follow up the coerced departure of George Calvert by traveling to London himself to hinder the aristocrat's colonial designs.

William Claiborne's arguments against George Calvert were tinged with rhetoric against the "Romishe Religion", and the political alliances he formed to further his cause reflected that fact. While most of these negotiations are not preserved and likely were not recorded in the first place, two letters from Claiborne that bookend his time obstructing Calvert's ambition provide some evidence to his conduct. On his arrival in London, he was carrying a message for the Privy Council – a letter from Virginia's acting governor co-signed by Claiborne as the colony's secretary and two other Virginia burgesses, explaining the circumstances of Calvert's departure from Maryland. In the letter, Claiborne and the Virginians explicitly adopted an anti-Catholic stance, stating "noe papists have beene suffered to settle their abode amongst us, the Continuance whereof wee most humbly implore from his most sacred Majestic".[58] This firm stance against Catholic settlement in general may have been simple xenophobic suspicion, or it may have been informed by George Calvert's association with the Jesuits, or his peculiar zeal for colonial proprietorship even after the costly failure of Avalon in Newfoundland. In either case, the letter

[57] Fausz, "Merging and Emerging Worlds", 65; van Zandt, 132; Julia A. King, Skyler A. Bauer, Alex J. Flick, "The Politics of Landscape in Seventeenth Century Maryland" in *Maryland Historical Magazine* vol. 111, issue 1, 11. On George Calvert's plans to settle in the vicinity of Virginia prior to his arrival, see George Calvert [Geo. Baltimore], "George Baltimore to the King", 19 August 1629, *Md. Archives* III, 16.

[58] Pott, et. al., "Governor Pott and others to the Council", *Maryland Archives* III, 17. The Privy Council was the only recourse for this action, as Parliament had been dissolved in 1639 and had not been reconvened.

and William Claiborne formed the basis for religious opposition to George Calvert's dream of establishing Catholic haven in the New World.[59]

The two English coalitions of interest groups that emerged were broadly defined by religious affiliation. Claiborne's included many Puritan merchants; George Calvert's was predominantly Catholic. However, neither group was a religious or social monolith. Claiborne's coalition was divided between Virginian and London commercial interests as well as the extremity of individual Protestantism; George Calvert's interest group also included some Protestants – the Lord Baltimore had promised freedom of conscience – and while all members accepted the establishment of a colony to serve as a tolerant Catholic haven, not all were as keen on potentially sharing that colony with the Jesuits.[60]

It was during his time in London politicking against George Calvert that William Claiborne met William Clobbery. Clobbery had previously worked closely with Sir William Alexander, the secretary of state for Scotland and a favorite of the King, when both were members of the ill-fated Canada Company. [61] This made Clobbery an appealing political ally for William Claiborne in addition to their shared commercial interests in the fur trade. In 1631, when the two entered into partnership alongside Maurice Thomson to enact Claiborne's Kent Island plans, it was with Sir William Alexander's assent as an official representative under the Crown

[59] Maura Jane Farrelly, *Papist Patriots* (Oxford University Press; 2012), 59.
[60] Browne, 28; Fausz, "Merging and Emerging", Table 1-3, 93-98; Hale, 252. Fausz identifies two relevant political factions that emerge in the early 1630s, the "Calvert-Maryland-Piscataway-English Catholic" coalition in favor of Maryland, and the "Claiborne-Virginia-Susquehannock-London Puritan merchant" coalition in favor of Kent Island.
[61] Brenner, 122-4. As Brenner notes, the exact details of Claiborne and Clobbery's first meeting – who sought whom out – would be contested in their later trial. Brenner also defines this commercial compact – the "Claiborne-Clobbery-Thomson syndicate" – in opposition to Virginia tobacco planters seeking greater local control over the economy.

of Scotland.[62] This legally granted Claiborne royal authority, and with the promise of strong and continuous opposition to George Calvert's colonial plans, Claiborne felt it was politically safe to leave England and oversee the establishment of the Kent Island settlement.

There was an additional factor that likely influenced Claiborne's decision to leave on the *Africa* in 1631 and quickly establish the Kent Island project: the potential of Dutch encroachment on the fur trade. The Dutch were fellow Protestants, but this did not change the fact that they were also the largest competition to Claiborne's relationship with the Susquehannock through their colony of New Netherland. Claiborne's Dutch counterpart, colonial secretary Isaack de Rasière, had established a 'friendship' and trade between the Susquehannock and New Netherland in 1626; in 1631, the Dutch established the short-lived settlement of Swaanendael on the Delaware, closer to the Susquehannock than any previous settlement.[63] While the Swaanendael settlement itself would not outlast the year – and its founding in April would not have influenced Claiborne's departure from England in May – it nonetheless underscores the contested nature of native trade. Claiborne's fundamentally mercantile conflict between himself and the Dutch would become a prominent influence on the course of the later Plundering Time.

Nearly a year after Claiborne had commenced with his ambitious project, George Calvert's tenacious pursuit of a royal grant finally paid off. In February 1632, King Charles I granted George Calvert a territory to the south of Virginia, between the James and "Passamagnus" (or Chowan) Rivers. However, this grant sparked intense pressure from a group of London-Barbados merchants who desired the same area for sugar plantations. This pressure caused Calvert to renounce his grant and suggest a tract of land to the north of Virginia's

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[62] Ibid; see also note 49; for a pro-Claiborne interpretation and the text of the Scottish royal license, see J.H. Claiborne, *William Claiborne of Virginia*, 48-51.
[63] Isaac, 102; van Zandt, 127-129.

settlement.[64] The patent for Maryland received royal assent and was chartered on June 20th, 1632; George Calvert famously died before he could receive it, so the charter passed on to his son Cecil Calvert, the second Lord Baltimore.[65] The text of the Maryland charter used the same language as the charter for George Calvert's previous colony of Avalon – a wide-ranging grant for all land not already under agricultural production, and authority over a vast swath of territory, specifically designating "all that part of a *Peninsula*" between the ocean and the Chesapeake Bay as part of the Maryland grant – dimensions which included Captain Claiborne's Kent Island.[66]

William Claiborne did not take this news well. He had returned to London in time for the granting of the great seal and was likely present at the Privy Council for its passage, for he wrote "Considerations upon the Patent to the Lord Baltimore" dated to the same day as the charter's promulgation. This second document from the end of Maryland's legal genesis employs a markedly different tone than Claiborne's original letter from the Virginia council. The "Considerations" still argue against the creation of Maryland, but through a list of more concrete "Inconveniences" to the Maryland patent. It is telling that the first "Inconvenience" is that Cecil Calvert might incorporate "Aliens, Savages, and Enemies of the Kingdome" in his territory. This reflects a distrust of the international reach of Catholicism and is likely in reference to the impending Jesuit presence in the new colony. However, the majority of Claiborne's presumably desperate and ultimately futile last arguments were aimed at emphasizing Virginia's pre-existing claim to and partial settlement of the region and how a new colony might upset the native

[64] Farrelly, 61. See also Fiske, 264; Brown 30. Fiske erroneously credits the dissenting faction to Claiborne.
[65] See e.g., Manfred Jonas, "The Claiborne-Calvert Controversy: An Episode in the Colonization of North America" in *Jahrbuch für Amerikastudien* 11, (1966), 242.
[66] Steiner, 149; King Charles I Stuart, Maryland Charter, 1.

balance of power that had recently become so favorable to the English settlers – arguments clearly influenced by his personal stake in Kent Island.[67]

"Guns Over The Chesapeake"[68]

The Calvert-Claiborne conflict over the ownership of Kent Island during the 1630s has been given ample scholarly attention from a variety of lenses and is a core part of the narrative of early Maryland. Thus, only a brief summary is within the scope of this paper. Claiborne returned to Virginia – and Kent Island – after his unsuccessful lobbying in London. From a legal standpoint, he still had his charter with conflicting royal authority; from an economic standpoint, he had already invested significant financial and political capital into his project. In Virginia, his base of political power, he planned to resist the newly chartered colony. Claiborne and his political allies continued to petition the king against the charter, to no avail; when the first settlement of St. Mary's was established in 1634, Claiborne attempted to coax the Susquehannock into attacking the Marylanders and avoided arrest due to the efforts of his "private friends" Captains Utie and Matthews.[69] In spring 1635, Virginia's governor John Harvey started to openly side against Claiborne, forbidding any Virginians from trading in Maryland waters while Captain Fleet, now working for Maryland, requisitioned one of

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[67] Robert Emmett Curran, "'Aliens, Savages, and Enemies of the Kingdome': Maryland and the Repercussions of the English Civil War," in *Papist Devils*, Catholic University of America Press, 2014, 58; Fausz, "Merging and Emerging", 67 and note 30; William Claiborne, "Considerations upon the Patent to the Lord Baltimore," June 20, 1632, *Maryland Archives* volume III, 17-19; Farrelly, 61.

[68] Taken from Hale's Chapter X, 188-209.

[69] Brenner, 141-142; William Claiborne, "Declaration shewing the illegality and unlawful proceedings of the Patent of Maryland," 1649, *Archives of Maryland* V, 175-181; Thomas Yong, "Captain Thomas Yong to Sir Tobie Matthew," October 20, 1634, in Thomas Aspinwell, George Ellis, William Bartlet, John Sibley, eds., *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Boston; Library of the College of New Jersey, 1871), 104-106; Feeley, 48. For the "Declaration" being authored by Claiborne see Fausz, "Merging and Emerging," 67 [note]. The "Declaration" was sent in a packet of documents for royal review in 1677.

Claiborne's pinnaces.[70] In response, Claiborne engaged in piracy, ordering his men on Kent Island to recapture the pinnace by ambushing Maryland's nascent trade fleet, commanded by Thomas Cornwallis, at the mouth of the Pocomoke River with an armed sloop.[71]

The Battle of Pocomoke, on April 23, 1635, was when Claiborne was at the height of his power. It was also a disaster for the Virginia politician, with the mission a failure and his sloop captured. Though he was able to recoup his material losses a month later on May 10, in a battle with Cornwallis on the banks of the Wicomico River, he had opened himself to legal action as a pirate. It is likely for this reason that he joined with Samuel Matthews and allied Virginia planters and "thrust out" Governor Harvey just five days after his victory on the Wicomico.[72] But this was in effect a delaying tactic – Harvey was a royal appointee, and when he returned two years later in January 1637, he arrested many of Claiborne's allies and stripped Claiborne himself of his seat on the council. Claiborne's bold moves against the governor and the increasingly established Maryland also caused his investors to lose faith in the Kent Island project. This began as a withdrawal of investment in the island starting in 1635, with the resulting supply shortages forcing Claiborne to trade with native nations outside the bounds of his charter; by 1636, trust had diminished to the point that Clobbery and Company appointed a new commissioner for Kent Island named George Evelyn. He arrived on Kent Island in December of 1636, and summoned Claiborne to London to stand trial.[73]

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[70] Ibid, 71. Fausz frames this as Cecil Calvert's political allies in London gaining the often-absentee governor's loyalty over that of his own planter constituents. However, Claiborne's antics and attempts to damage Maryland's reputation among the natives of the northern Bay area had caused a diplomatic crisis in the summer of 1634 requiring Harvey's personal intervention, so this policy likely had a personal dimension; see Fausz, 68.
[71] Fausz, 71; Mark P. Donnelly and Daniel Diehl, *Pirates of Virginia: Plunder and High Adventure on the Old Dominion Coastline* (Mechanicsburg; Stackpole Books, 2012), 13-14, 17.
[72] Ibid; Fausz, "Merging and Emerging", 72.
[73] Fausz, 72; Semmes, "Claiborne v. Cloberry," *Maryland Historical Magazine* (1931) 381-3.

The London trial, under the aristocratic Commission for Foreign Plantations, convened to settle not just the dispute between Claiborne and his associates at Clobbery and Co., but to resolve the Calverts' grievances over and determine the ownership of Kent Island. In Claiborne's absence, a Maryland force under Cornwallis and Governor Leonard Calvert took the initiative and seized Kent Island in 1637.[74] This was not a popular move with the people of Kent Island, and the year was also marked by a rebellion by Claiborne's subordinates later that year that had to be put down by force.[75] On April 4, 1638, Claiborne lost the trial; he was forced to cede Virginia's legal claims and his charter for Kent Island to Maryland. However, far from ending Claiborne's rivalry with the Calverts, the trial only deepened it.

Chapter 1 Conclusion

The Claiborne-Calvert rivalry that came to dominate the Chesapeake during the 1630s had its origins in William Claiborne's Kent Island project and his failed attempt to stymie the creation of George Calvert's colony with its overlapping claims. The conflict arose from a complex and multifaceted transatlantic world. Religious tensions were a part of this world, but there were other factors more prominently involved in the dispute, chief among them the economic stake Kent Island represented in the lucrative Chesapeake beaver pelt trade and the financial investments put into it.

While Claiborne's determination was driven primarily by his ambitious plans for the Chesapeake fur trade, religious rhetoric and religious politics undeniably played a role in the political camps that formed around the issue in England. The allies that Claiborne made shared a Puritan-Protestant worldview, just as the allies of the Calverts were predominantly Catholic.

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[74] Fausz, "Merging and Emerging," 72-73.
[75] Donnelly and Diehl, 17.

However, these alliances are also tied to their relative socio-economic statuses. Claiborne was a rising star in the emerging world of the English transatlantic merchant class; the Calvert family was a part of the traditional aristocracy whose power was gradually being challenged and eroded by men of Claiborne's background. Even the manner in which they made their claims to Kent Island can be narrativized and interpreted through a historical materialist lens as a conflict between mercantilist capitalism with its reliance on connections through business partnerships against feudalism with its dependence on royal favor.

But to allegorize the conflict is to hide its reality. In this stage, the conflict over Kent Island was not predominantly a matter of religious politics because the circumstances were not conducive for it. It was a hypothetical colony of Catholics against a vision of a successful commercial venture, both projected on a vague wilderness. Claiborne's ability to hold de facto power on Kent Island for several years after the landing of the *Ark* and the *Dove* was not dependent on his sharing a religion with the Kent Island settlers – he was just there first, and the Chesapeake was large enough and Maryland small enough that he could operate with relative impunity for a time. The trial marked an end to that frontier era. When Claiborne returned to Virginia, he would continue to be an opponent of Maryland. Meanwhile, transatlantic English society fell into crisis during the Wars of the Three Kingdoms. These two factors culminated in Claiborne's orchestration of one of the most devastating episodes of religious violence in Chesapeake history: the Plundering Time.

Chapter II: The Plundering Time

The mid-1640s saw the most impactful event of the Kent Island dispute; "Claiborne and Ingle's Rebellion", more commonly referred to as the Plundering Time. Despite the event defining William Claiborne's reputation among early historians and bearing his name, there has been comparatively little scholarly attention given to the Plundering Time or Claiborne's involvement in it.[76] Though understudied, the Plundering Time was a rhetorical turning point in the Kent Island dispute; it marked the beginning of Claiborne's successful exploitation of religious tensions inflamed by the English Civil War to advance his political agenda, and the expansion of the conflict from control over Kent Island to control of Maryland in general, both of which became key aspects of Claiborne's policies during his later career as one of Oliver Cromwell's Parliamentary commissioners.

The Providence Island Company

A month after his legal failure in the Kent Island dispute in April, William Claiborne was once again the proprietor of an island. Through Maurice Thomson's suggestion to his (Thomson's) fellow board members of the Puritan-run Providence Island Company, Claiborne secured a grant of incorporation for the island of Ruatán in the Bay of Honduras, then claimed by Spain as a part of the Captaincy-General of Guatemala. The island's settlement was sponsored by Claiborne and his associates, and the colony was christened "Rich Island" in honor of Earl Robert Rich of Warwick, whose aptly fantastic wealth made him the primary backer of the

[76] Regarding Claiborne and Ingle's rebellion, e.g., John H. Claiborne dedicates the shortest chapter of his biography of William to the Plundering Time, see J.H. Claiborne, *William Claiborne of Virginia*, 109-114; Hale's chapter is longer relative to J.H. Claiborne's and many of the other chapters of his own book but the section directly on the rebellion is the same length, see Hale, 238-266; Donnelly and Diehl end their account of Claiborne's 'piracy' with the 1638 court decision. A notable exception to this and the most comprehensive source on the Plundering Time is Timothy Riordan's *The Plundering Time: Maryland and the English Civil War, 1645-1646* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 2004), which forms the basis of much of this chapter.

Providence Island Company as well as the similarly Puritanical Bermuda Company. Despite the precedent set by his active involvement in the affairs of Kent Island, Claiborne never visited Ruatán himself and was content to be an "absentee grandee" like most of his fellow investors.[77]

Partly as a result of this distant method of governance, the Providence Island Company and its isolated outposts were poorly managed, short-lived, and unsuccessful. The main company colony, the eponymous Providence Island, was seized by the Spanish Plate[78] Fleet under General Francisco Diaz Pimienta in 1640, potentially spurred on by known plans for a mass migration of New England Puritans to solidify the struggling settlement. Many Providence Island colonists would flee to Ruatán before it too was captured by Pimienta in 1642.[79] But despite the brief and failed existence of the Company and its colonial projects, it nonetheless complicates the image of William Claiborne. While in the Providence Island Company, Claiborne was working alongside many prominent Puritans. Some were distant kin, such as the influential Thomson and former Bermuda governor Nathaniel Butler.[80] Others would become powerful supporters of Parliament during the English Civil War: Robert Rich was a close associate of Oliver Cromwell to the point of their families intermarrying; John Pym, the main organizer of the Providence Island Company, would emerge as an early Parliamentarian leader.[81] Through these relationships, Claiborne was deeply connected to ideologues of Puritan radicalism as well as "a trans-atlantic Puritan network of religio-political opposition to the Crown."[82] This indicates that, contrary to the conventional Chesapeake-centric narrative of the loss of Kent Island, Claiborne was not

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[77] Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Providence Island, 1630-1641: The Other Puritan Colony* (New York, 1993), 17-21, 280-281.
[78] "Plate" as an anglicization of *plata* meaning silver – cf. Rio de la Plata, River Plate Football Club.
[79] Ibid, 336-340 and 340 note.
[80] Ibid, 213 note.
[81] Brenner, 110-111; Kupperman, 10 and *passim*.
[82] Brenner, 113.

politically or materially ruined. He could utilize a wide network of merchant associates even after losing the suit brought against him by his former business partners.

William Claiborne as an absentee proprietor based in England, like the later Penns or the Granville tract landlords, complicates the image of him that writers after the American Civil War tried to create – that of the local, heroic Virginian rebel. Such an image is back-projecting on Claiborne a sense of regionalism that he likely did not feel. Nevertheless, when John Harvey was replaced as Virginia's governor in 1639 by Claiborne's old friend Francis Wyatt and Wyatt removed his predecessor's appointees, Claiborne quickly returned to Virginia in the April of 1640.[83] That May, while moving his family to a new house and dealing with other lands he had been granted by the Virginia colony, Claiborne gathered depositions from nineteen gentlemen witnesses to once again ask the King for the return of Kent Island.[84] In November, he additionally petitioned Maryland – through an intermediary George Scovell, as the colony still considered him a pirate and had a bill of attainder against him – for the return of his seized property and for the revocation of the bill against him.[85] Thus, while he was perhaps not a firm Virginian proto-patriot, he still clearly felt his grievances with the Calverts and Maryland were

[83] Carole Watterson Troxler, "Land Tenure as Regulator Grievance and Revolutionary Tool," in *New Voyages to Carolina: Reinterpreting North Carolina History*, Larry E. Tise and Jeffrey J. Crow eds., (University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 110–43; Hale, 238. Fausz claims a "five-year exile" starting from 1637 in "Merging and Emerging," 73, but he gives no explicit citation for a 1642 arrival while Hale cites a land patent collected in *Cavaliers and Pioneers* volume 4 as well as other documents, as shown below. On post-Civil War scholars, Cooke, J.H. Claiborne, and Hale all frame him as a 'Virginian', the latter two in the titles of their biographies; for further discussion of historiography, see also the introduction. On Claiborne's haste, see footnote 26.

[84] Hale, 240; William Claiborne, "Claiborne Testes Examinati [et jurati] per contra Allegationem ex parte Clobery & al Will Claiborne," May 1640, in *Maryland Archives* volume V, 181-239. Claiborne sent the extant document as part of the 1677 packet mentioned in note 68; the depositions are attributed. Interestingly, as Hale notes, one of the witnesses acknowledging Claiborne's right to Kent Island was his former rival ex-Governor Harvey.

[85] Hale, 241; William Claiborne, "Copy of Captain Cleyborns Letter of Attorney," August 21, 1640, in *Maryland Archives* volume III, pages 92-93; [George Scovell and William Claiborne], "To the Right Worshipful Leo: Calvert Esqr and Governor of Maryland and the rest of the Commissioners," ibid, 93.

unresolved. However, when Claiborne returned to England to relitigate his case, he arrived in a kingdom on the brink of a religious war.

The English Civil War

The English Civil War is an extremely complex topic; a full account of its course is certainly not within the scope of this paper, but this paper would not be complete without some overview of its precipitating events. King Charles I dissolved Parliament on March 2, 1629; conventionally described as uncompromising, the second Stuart king ruled without Parliament for 11 years – a period known as the years of Personal Rule. All major political issues, such as the establishment of colonies like Maryland, were considered by the Privy Council and the king directly. This created an environment of extreme political nepotism and shut out many powerful individuals who were not personally connected to royal favor. Without an institution like Parliament to address their grievances and alter policy, the disenfranchised men of means were prone to radicalization.[86]

It was ultimately a religious conflict that caused the system to break. Personal Rule was predicated on careful financial management and peace; taxes were raised only through powers established in royal prerogative, such as ship taxes, and expensive wars were to be avoided. However, King Charles I acted on the advice of several early "High Church" figures such as the Archbishop of Canterbury William Laud to force the Book of Common Prayer and Anglican liturgy on the Church of Scotland. This resulted in the Scottish Covenanters rising up in 1639 and waging the Bishops' War. The Covenanters' cause was politically supported by Puritans in England, and in the resulting costly peace, King Charles I was forced to reconvene Parliament to

[86] Charles Carlton, *Charles I: The Personal Monarch*, 156-157.

levy new taxes – a duty which was dwarfed by the release of more than a decade of repressed political opinions. Charles's losses to the Covenanters had also invigorated London opposition to Archbishop Laud and stoked the fires of anti-clericalism more generally. By the likely time of Claiborne's return to England in March 1641, this culminated in Laud's arrest the previous December and the Root and Branch Petition which was then under Parliamentary committee. A few months later, the Irish rose up in a major rebellion due to fears of an anti-Catholic crackdown.[87]

Despite the chaos in London, Virginia was still a royal colony and reported to the Privy Council, and Claiborne was not the only petitioner from Virginia. Richard Kemp, an associate of Governor Harvey and nemesis of Governor Wyatt, had been exiled from Virginia on the excuse of incendiary remarks made against Archbishop Laud. Due to Laud's arrest and Kemp's complaints of Wyatt's mismanagement, the Privy Council recommended that the King place a new governor in Virginia. Wyatt's replacement was the famous William Berkeley, a staunch royalist like his older brother Sir John Berkeley. Richard Kemp was given back his old position of Secretary of State of Virginia. Joining him as a fresh royal appointee was William Claiborne, now Treasurer for Life.[88]

William Claiborne's appointment on April 6, 1642, has no obvious explanation. Just a few months prior in early January, the King had attempted to arrest his Providence Island Company associate John Pym along with four other members of Parliament. The King's

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[87] Ibid, 157-159; Hale, 245; Brenner, 324-325.

[88] Hale, 242-4; Charles I Stuart, "Pro Willielmo Claiborne", in Ebenezer Hazard, editor, *Historical Collections: Consisting of State Papers, and Other Authentic Documents, Intended as Materials for an History of the United States of America*. Volume I. (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 493. Sir John Berkeley would also be instrumental in King Charles I's escape from Parliamentary custody, see Carlton, 320-326. The "Pro Willielmo" section itself is taken from one "Rymer, Volume 20, page 541".

appointment came from York, where he and his supporters had evacuated after failing to storm the House of Commons. In the context of these incredibly high partisan tensions, Claiborne's anti-Catholicism, his business network of Puritan merchants, and his fraternization with prominent Parliamentarians would have been known. Hale suggests that Charles felt "pity" for Claiborne, but that fails to account for Charles's observed lack of interest in governance.[89] However, a possibility is that Claiborne was made Treasurer "durante vita" as a placative gesture by the recommendation of Governor Berkeley. A permanent restoration to the Virginia Council with all the rights and duties entailed by his new position would personally indebt him to the King and possibly prevent Claiborne from further prosecuting his feud with the Calverts. Berkeley had undertaken a similar policy with other members of his original Virginia council; members of the Harvey administration such as Richard Kemp served alongside members of the Wyatt cabinet such as Samuel Matthews in a sort of unity government.[90]

William Claiborne would not return to Virginia to take up his post until the spring of 1643. This is a most intriguing gap, especially given that Kemp had taken up his position in Jamestown by October 1642. Two months prior in August, King Charles I had raised his banner at Nottingham and mustered his forces to crush the Parliamentarians, and October also marked the first major battle of the war.[91] Claiborne had been in England during these critical months, with a commission from the King and friends in Parliament, but no evidence has yet been discovered to reveal his immediate reactions to the rapidly developing crisis that would soon spread to the Chesapeake. However, it was made clear on his return that he had not yet given up his claim to Kent Island, and he had thrown in his lot with the Parliamentarians.

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[89] Hale, 244; Carlton, 158.
[90] Charles I, "Pro Willielmo Claiborne"; Hale, 245.
[91] Ibid; Carlton, 238.

Maryland Divided

Maryland itself faced several crises during the early years of the English Civil War. The beaver trade had not proved as profitable as hoped: part of this was the specific issue that the Susquehannock with their lion's share of the pelt-grounds had refused to do business with Calvert's initially hapless and un-diplomatic colonists and instead shifted their commerce to New Sweden and the Scandinavian trade; part of this was a more general decline in the Chesapeake beaver market. Maryland and the allied Piscataway tribe tried to break into the regional monopoly. Simultaneously, the Susquehannock urbanized and their economy became increasingly dependent on a flow of European goods while the net export of beaver furs declined. The resulting tensions led to an intense seasonal raid-warring by the Susquehannock starting in 1642, to which Maryland was unable to mount an effective defense – unlike their southern Chesapeake neighbor two decades prior.[92]

A significant reason for the lack of external effectiveness was a lack of internal cohesion. Settled by both Catholics and Protestants as the Calverts' personal palatinate, tensions naturally arose when the ruling government was predominantly composed of members of the former group.[93] However, the social divide ran deeper than a difference in dogma. Catholic manor lords of early Maryland were predominantly aristocratic English allies of the Calvert family and were

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[92] Fausz, "Present at the 'Creation'," 43; "Merging and Emerging," 74, 76-77; van Zandt, 134. Fausz alleges in "Merging and Emerging Worlds" that Claiborne's strong alliance with the Susquehannock caused their rejection of Maryland, and that Claiborne may have partially orchestrated the raids of 1642, but Riordan argues it was for their own self-interest; see Timothy Riordan, *The Plundering Time: Maryland and the English Civil War, 1645-1646*, (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society , 2004), 35.

[93] This religious reductivism is a position held by many older scholars, see for example Cooke, *passim*; Edward Ingle, *Richard Ingle, the Maryland 'pirate and rebel', 1642-1653* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1884), *passim*.

intent on reproducing a traditional system of administration and governance. This brought them into conflict with the Protestant landowners that came from less privileged origins.[94]

One sectarian issue was the prominence of members of a Catholic priestly order – the Jesuits. The Jesuits wielded significant political power in the international Catholic world and had been instrumental in securing financial support for Maryland; Cecil Calvert and most of the Catholic backers of his father's charter wanted them to have a presence in the colony. However, the political rights of the Jesuits were a source of great contention. Early Maryland by design occupied a legal liminal space with regards to religious rights – it was the only corner of England's emerging transatlantic empire where the Jesuits as an institution could exist without fear of imprisonment or exile, and the Catholic manor lords who patronized individual Jesuits strongly supported giving Jesuits the institutional rights they enjoyed in Catholic countries. Many Protestants opposed this, both within the colony and in England – the Jesuits had a malevolent reputation for conspiring with the natives against European colonists. Claiborne's "Declaration" played directly on those assumed biases when he claimed, "the great name of Maryland is in effect made but a factorie for trade a nursery of Jesuites."[95]

The impact of the Jesuits on the Protestant population was compounded by poor timing; the inability of Maryland to effectively deal with the first seasonal raids by the Susquehannock in 1642, the same year as the Jesuits were granted land as gentlemen in Maryland, led to more intense raids the next year. The Society of Jesus had already been involved in missions to the Susquehannock and other tribes prior to attack, but their pre-existing reputation for collusion and

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[94] Russell R. Menard, "Economy and Society in Early Maryland," PhD diss., (University of Iowa, 1975), 135-136.
[95] Claiborne, "Declaration," *Archives of Maryland* V, 180; Riordan, 51-52; Helen Kilburn. "Jesuit and Gentleman Planter: Ingle's Rebellion and the Litigation of Thomas Copley S.J." *British Catholic History* 34, no. 3 (2019), 374–376.

conspiracy with the natives was thus retroactively confirmed, inflaming anti-Catholic sentiments among Protestants in the young colony. Similarly, many balked at the special legal protections and social status among the Catholic gentry that the Jesuits possessed, despite the rights being less extensive than those enjoyed in Catholic kingdoms.[96]

Whether Maryland entered the mid-decade years of the 1640s on the brink of collapse has been debated by social historians of the colonial Chesapeake for decades. Scholars of the aptly-named Chesapeake school – known more informally as the "St. Mary's mafia" – were the first to approach this issue.[97] Russell Menard dealt with the Plundering Time as part of his 1975 doctoral thesis and concluded that Maryland's society was dangerously unstable due to a host of internal and regional issues. Per Menard, Maryland was practically on the brink of collapse even before Ingle's arrival.[98] Menard's view was challenged by Garry Wheeler Stone in his own doctoral dissertation just over half a decade later, where Stone attempted to restore Ingle's importance as an "intervention of the English Civil War" on Maryland's society. Stone downplayed the disagreements between the Catholic proprietors and Protestant settlers as "more like those separating the management and employees of a small, struggling manufacturing firm than those dividing nations," and described Maryland's instability as no worse than that of contemporary Virginia. [99] Both the local and transatlantic viewpoints are convincing, reflected in a trend

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[96] Riordan, 51, 58-59.
[97] Philip D. Morgan, "Conclusion," in *Early Modern Virginia: Reconsidering the Old Dominion*, ed. John C. Coombs and Douglas Bradburn (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 300-301.
[98] Menard, 135-136 and *passim*.
[99] Garry Wheeler Stone, "Society, Housing, and Architecture in Early Maryland: John Lewger's St. Mary's," PhD diss. (University of Pennsylvania, 1982), 7; "Manorial Maryland", Maryland Historical Magazine 82, (1987), 30. Stone's position should also be viewed in the context of the moderating trend of the 1980s and 1990s described by Philip Morgan, as the "starker and more simplistic" models of the Chesapeake propagated by the "first wave" of social historians were tempered. See Morgan, 301.

towards synthesis – the Plundering Time as a result of a confluence of both local and tranatlantic conflict.[100]

Ingle's Rebellion

Richard Ingle, much like William Claiborne, was an English merchant from Kent with Parliamentary leanings. Ingle traded on an annual basis with Maryland since at least 1639, when he is first recorded doing business with the prominent planter and political figure Thomas Cornwallis – the captain who a few years prior had seized Claiborne's pinnace and sloop and eventually Kent Island itself. [101] Ingle's rise was less meteoric than Claiborne's. He served as Maurice Thomson's function in the Chesapeake tobacco industry and as such had successfully captained several ships during the late 1630s and early 1640s.[102] By 1644, Ingle was the captain and likely part owner of the twelve-gun ship *Reformation*, a name which belies his religious values and his affiliation with the Parliamentary cause.[103]

In January of that year, Ingle laid anchor at the port of St. Mary's to take on cargo. While disembarked, Ingle had a lawsuit brought against him by William Hardige. Possibly motivated to recoup his losses from a previous suit by one of Ingle's crew, Hardige sued Ingle over his history of incendiary anti-royalist comments. The case went before the acting governor, Giles Brent. Brent was also a debtor of Ingle, and prior to his departure for England Leonard Calvert claimed Maryland had received a royal commission to seize ships from Parliamentary London. In an attempt to kill two birds with one stone, Brent ordered Ingle's arrest and seized the *Reformation*

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[100] See Riordan, 4, 5; John Appleby, *Fur, Fashion and Transatlantic Trade* (Boydell Press: Woodbridge, 2021), 145.
[101] Fausz, "Merging and Emerging," 67; Lois Green Carr, "Sources of Political Stability and Upheaval in Seventeenth Century Maryland," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 79 (1984), 54; Riordan, 29.
[102] Fausz, 80; Riordan, 30-31.
[103] Riordan, 91, 130.

while the two were having dinner at Brent's mansion. The governor tasked Thomas Cornwallis with taking Ingle into custody. However, with at least tacit aid from Cornwallis, Ingle escaped and reclaimed his ship. But rather than return to England immediately, Ingle sailed around the Chesapeake, collecting tobacco from outlying Maryland plantations. Riordan uses this to illustrate a key point; Ingle as a businessman and the community of Maryland had a co-dependent relationship. Ingle as the representative of Thomson's commercial syndicate enjoyed an effective monopoly on Maryland trade, but his commercial success depended on the continuation of that monopoly. In late February, more than a month after his escape, the merchant sailed back to England, with Cornwallis as a passenger.[104]

Ingle returned to the Chesapeake Bay in December 1644 with letters of marque and Parliamentary sanction to transport duty-free military supplies to Virginia. Tensions developed in the intervening months between the Calverts and Thomson's merchants, as Cecil Calvert challenged Thomson's customs-free status in an April petition King Charles I, but with Leonard Calvert's return and Brent's removal as acting governor, Ingle bore no specific grudge against the Maryland establishment. However, while in Virginia, Ingle was approached by a pro-Parliament faction of Virginia planters, chief of which being William Claiborne.[105] They informed Ingle that Leonard Calvert had directly threatened any London merchants in general and Ingle in particular with death. It is likely at this meeting where Ingle learned of rumors that a Catholic coup in Maryland was imminent and that the Protestant planters would soon be

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[104] Ibid, 137-149; John C. Appleby, *Fur, Fashion, and Transatlantic Trade*, 139-140.

[105] Riordan, 164-165; Fausz, 79 [note]; Cecil Calvert, "Oxford Petition," April 10, 1644, in Clayton Hall ed., *Narratives of Early Maryland 1633-1684* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), 238-240. Fausz interprets Ingle's late-1644 voyage as a cruise of revenge approved by Thomson and the Earl of Warwick due to the aforementioned letters of marque, but Riordan cautions against overestimating the letters given the ongoing war. Fausz also assumes the House of Commons deliberated on Cecil Calvert's petition to the King, which is likely Fausz's error given the ongoing civil war. Argall and Francis Yeardley are also mentioned as part of the Parliament Party, but Ingle had a longstanding feud with them, see Riordan, 97.

disarmed and arrested; at a later trial it would also be revealed that Claiborne gave Ingle a copy of Calvert's commission to seize ships.[106]

Ingle arrived in Maryland in January 1645. He did not disembark or begin unloading his cargo as usual. Instead, he sent a letter to the prominent Protestant landholders of Maryland – such as Hardige, Thomas Sturman, and Nathanial Pope – informing them of his Parliamentary privateering commission and that he would plunder all those who did not take up arms with him. However, after the arrival of the Dutch ship *Der Spiegel* (or the *Looking Glass*) at St. Mary's, Ingle left quickly and without explanation. Ingle returned on February 14, having hired many more men with promises of plunder.[107] It is safe to assume Maryland's government was caught unawares, despite the warning – Giles Brent and Leonard Calvert were on board *Der Spiegel* at the time and only the latter narrowly escaped before Ingle seized the Dutch ship and its crew. With no naval resistance forthcoming, Ingle bombarded St. Mary's with the *Reformation*'s cannons, forcing its inhabitants to scatter into the surrounding woodlands.[108] He then sent out armed parties to capture and pillage strategic houses. This even included the strategically located house of his friend Thomas Cornwallis, who was absent in England.[109]

Ingle's cause would soon be taken up by the Marylanders he had contacted. Protestant assemblyman Thomas Sturman captured the manager of Cornwallis's house and delivered him to the *Reformation*. Nathanial Pope would have a rebel fort hastily constructed on his property, where the Maryland assembly had last met in the weeks prior to Ingle's attack. More generally, attempts by Governor Leonard Calvert to raise a militia failed to create a coherent response to

[106] Riordan, 172-173.
[107] Ibid, 184-186.
[108] Ibid, 186-190; Appleby, 141.
[109] Riordan, 191-193.

the incursion. Meanwhile, Ingle continued send out armed parties to hunt down prominent Catholic Marylanders, like Secretary John Lewgar, Jesuit Father Andrew White, and most importantly the governor. While the former two were captured and brought aboard Ingle's ships, the brother of the Lord Baltimore rallied Maryland Catholics and the remains of the old government around St. Thomas's Fort on Margaret Brent's property, in opposition to the Protestants in Pope's Fort.[110]

With both sides entrenched behind their fortifications, it is worthwhile to understand what each side had at stake. The rumored Protestant disarmament had possibly been considered, but if it had it would have quickly been understood as too impractical and too dangerous to undertake. The Catholics and their allies were fighting for the status quo. Their Protestant foes however were not anarchists and sought the establishment of a new government – hence their fort being located on the symbolically significant meeting-place of the Maryland assembly, rather than the already-constructed fort of St. Inigoe's.[111] The civil war of the Plundering Time was a violent expression of the grievances that Maryland Protestants had against the existing colonial authority. The desire for a Maryland government aligned with Parliament did not have a significant political basis among Protestant elites from before Ingle's attack, but it did provide a contextual framework – in other words, an excuse – for them to revolt and topple the existing administration.

To further the cause that his actions had been so critical in instigating, Ingle left St. Mary's in late March or early April 1645.[112] His destination was London, to plead the case for recognition before Parliament, using what captives he had as evidence of a subversive Catholic

[110] Ibid, 190-217, 224-226.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid, 217.

plot. Ingle's departure marks the end of any close following of the events of the Plundering Time, as most of the previous narrative is derived from statements made by Ingle and his crew before the courts in England of his conflict with "'wicked Papists and Malignants'".[113] The Maryland that Ingle left was in religio-political deadlock, a state of affairs that lasted until the end of the summer of 1645. At some point in the second half of the year, the Catholic stronghold of St. Thomas's Fort fell to the Protestant forces and Governor Leonard Calvert fled to Virginia. However, the victorious rebels apparently found the creation of a government far harder than the destruction of an old one; no government records have survived from or of their time as the isolated administration of Maryland.

In March 1646, more than a year after the Plundering Time began, the Virginia House of Burgesses authorized an expedition led by Captain Edward Hill to venture into Maryland territory. Despite the ominous disappearance of the colony to the north being a credible concern, the House of Burgesses's proximate cause for organizing the expedition was plantation owner Nicholas Stillwell dodging Virginia's military obligation by escaping the colony.[114] However, Hill's expedition did more than find the draft dodging landowner; through an unclear chain of events, Hill became the governor of Maryland. Who gave him the governorship, under what circumstances, and with what authority is unknown, but he would have effective control over the ruins of St. Mary's for several months, presiding over a diminished assembly of former rebels such as Nathanial Pope.[115] During this time, Leonard Calvert laid the groundwork for his own return. Rebels were granted amnesty, and the displaced governor assembled an army of

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[113] Appleby, 142; Hale, 260. Richard Ingle, expecting to be received as a roundhead hero, was brought to court first by the Admiralty – on account of his seizure of the Dutch *Der Spiegel* – and then by a lawsuit from his former friend Cornwallis. Parliament did not recognize the new government in Maryland, nor did they command its dissolution.
[114] Ingle, 42-43.
[115] Ibid; Riordan, 260-270; G.W. Beale, "Col. Nathaniel Pope and His Descendants." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 12, no. 3 (1904), 192.

Maryland exiles and Virginian mercenaries with some help from the Puritan merchant Richard Bennett.[116] When Calvert returned at the head of his expeditionary force in late 1646, he reclaimed the capital with little opposition – Hill was recalled by the House of Burgesses at the same time, leaving a power vacuum for the Catholic governor to fill. With the assembly back under proprietary control, the disunity of the Plundering Time was nearly at an end. The only remaining resistance was on Kent Island, from William Claiborne.

Claiborne and Ingle's Rebellion: The Kent Island Connection

William Claiborne orchestrated the Plundering Time. The efforts of Ingle to overthrow the Calvert government were inspired by Claiborne and planned in collaboration with him. Despite the lack of an explicit 'smoking gun' source that directly claims the transatlantic politician as a mastermind, the circumstantial evidence is considerable. Claiborne was a prominent member of the pro-Parliamentary faction that approached Ingle when he arrived in Virginia; it was Claiborne who showed Ingle proof of Maryland's charter to seize his ship and it was he who turned the captain of the *Reformation* against his longstanding yet estranged business partners in the northern Chesapeake colony. [117]

More damningly, William Claiborne arranged for an attack on Kent Island in coordination with Ingle. Shortly before Christmas 1644, Claiborne landed on Kent Island by Edward Cummins's plantation with two pinnaces, one captained by himself and the other by Maurice Thomson's brother Richard. Claiborne riled the islanders with false promises that he had a commission to retake Kent Island. Within days of Claiborne's landing, Governor Leonard Calvert wrote instructions for an armed force of Marylanders to land on Kent Island and to

[116] Riordan, 267.
[117] Ibid, 173-175.

kidnap whoever answered the door at Edward Cummins's house for interrogation, and also "to deliver my Ire to [Kent Island's administrator Giles] Brent" for allowing this to happen. A marginal note of "vacant p. alles" indicates these orders were never sent. Brent fled to St. Mary's, allowing him to give information and receive the governor's ire in person; Claiborne's attempt at rebellion petered out after his fictitious commission was questioned.[118] When news of this and Claiborne's subsequent withdrawal to Virginia reached St. Mary's, Ingle left Maryland's capital for Virginia himself. The men he returned with were men from the port of Chicacoan in Accomac – not only were they from Claiborne's original political base in Virginia, many had family ties to Kent Islanders, and some of them had been crewmates aboard Claiborne's failed expedition.[119] Given this, it is highly likely that Richard Ingle's return was not only to recruit more men in general but to coordinate with William Claiborne specifically. Thus, while Claiborne was not directly involved in the Plundering Time and the Plundering Time was reliant on pre-existing social factors, to the extent that it was initiated by Ingle with Claiborne's support and direction it can be considered an outgrowth of the latter's Kent Island dispute.

Nor was 1644 the only time that Claiborne attempted to reassert control over Kent Island during the Plundering Time. In late 1646, as Leonard Calvert was planning his re-occupation campaign, Claiborne once more sailed to Kent Island. His luck was not better the second time, and he made the same mistakes – after landing shortly after Christmas with a larger force accompanied by Richard Thomson, he was able to successfully whip the Kent Islanders into a warlike fervor with fiery invective and vague promises of a commission from Virginia which he

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[118] Ibid; Leonard Calvert, "Instruccons to goe vpon the west shore over agst Comins plant & to land 4. & I. to hollow at house, & surprise some one & bring him away," January 1, 1645, in *Archives of Maryland* vol. III, 161. The collusion between Claiborne and Ingle is thus further supported by Ingle's claim in his letter to the Protestant landowners that he had three vessels under his command – the Reformation and Claiborne's pinnaces.
[119] Riordan, 173-175, 185.

did not have, only for the rebellion to fall apart after the ransacking of Giles Brent's house and his legal grounds were questioned.[120] Order on Kent Island was restored soon after – in early 1647 – by Leonard Calvert's small army.

Leonard Calvert aimed for a pacific coalition government and "in that case favorably provided that all persons whatsoever interested in the aforesaid Rebellion (Richard Ingle Mariner only excepted) expressing sorrow for their facts & coming & craving for their Pardon before Michaelmas last past should have their Pardon for their offence committed" to keep the peace. The indefatigably litigious Giles Brent had no such concerns. While he had sued Leonard Calvert for the loss of his Kent Island property following Claiborne's first attempt at rebellion in January 1645, in 1648 he sued the Protestant Kent Island planter Edward Cummins for his involvement in the second rebellion. Francis Brooks's testimony against Cummins reveals the religious extremism underpinning Claiborne's attempted takeovers. Cummins allegedly threw all of Brent's books from the roof of Brent's house and shouted "[']Burne them Papists Divells,['] or words to that effect".[121] While Cummins's actions may have been an isolated occurrence, they nevertheless exemplify the increasingly fraught religious atmosphere of the Chesapeake during the English Civil War and its influence on the course of the Kent Island dispute.

The Last War of Opechancanough

Claiborne's late-year attacks and lack of follow-through have additional context that it would be remiss not to mention. In April 1644, at the start of the raiding season, Opechancanough launched a major attack on Virginia, initiating the Third and final Anglo-

[120] Ibid, 290-291.
[121] *Archives of Maryland*, Judicial and Testamentary Business of the Provincial Court, 1637-1650, vol. IV, 441. As an example of the wide range of Leonard Calvert's pardon, Nathanial Pope would serve on Calvert's council, albeit briefly.

Powhatan War. By the 1640s the great chief was hard of seeing and suffered from mobility issues, but despite being in his tenth decade, and despite being poisoned, shot in the head, and presumed dead during the previous war, he retained effective leadership of the Powhatan hegemony he had spent most of his life creating. Nor was he less politically shrewd due to his age; the opening massacre may have been prompted by a brief naval engagement in the Chesapeake just days before between Parliamentarian and Royalist ships from England, the significance of which was not lost on Opechancanough.[122]

The entry of the Powhatan into the war has three relevant connections to William Claiborne and his Kent Island dispute. The first is that Colonel William Claiborne was the commander-in-chief of the Virginia militias during the war. Much like the previous conflict, he led major expeditions deep into Pamunkey territory and sought not only to defend Virginia but to capture Opechancanough himself. This in addition to his councilor duties would have distracted him during most of the campaigning season, thus explaining why his landings were only in early winter around Christmas. The second connection is that the Third Anglo-Powhatan War directly led to Claiborne's meeting with Ingle; the duty-free military supplies that Ingle delivered to Virginia from Parliamentary London were for the Third Anglo-Powhatan War.[123]

The third connection is less explicit and speaks to broader trends in the Atlantic world. According to an enslaved Powhatan warrior sold by Virginian slavers in Massachusetts, all the native peoples "within 600 miles […] were confederate together to root all strangers out of the country" – a broad expanse that included contested English, Swedish, and Dutch settlements

[122] Horn, 219-222.
[123] Ibid, 223; Riordan, 164.

from Virginia to New Amsterdam.[124] While no evidence points to an alliance between so many tribes, formal or otherwise, it does indicate a fundamental shift in regional geopolitics from prior decades. The encroachment of European colonies was now a serious concern for native societies across the Mid-Atlantic region – native societies like the Susquehannock which had expanded, centralized, and subjugated their neighbors, significantly helped by intertwining their economies with those of the European colonies. But the Mid-Atlantic economies of the 1640s were not the same as they had been one or two decades earlier; the Susquehannock had a permanent urban capital and a less agrarian economy.

After more than a year of general success, Opechancanough's Tsecommecah and his allies faced a series of fatal reverses in the first half of 1645. Their attempts to establish conditional peace were met with betrayal, just as they had been in the second war. In the spring of 1646, Opechancanough's authority had evaporated, his hegemony had crumbled around him, and the old chief himself was living in hiding when a task force led in person by Governor Berkeley finally captured him. After a fortnight in jail at Jamestown, Opechancanough was shot in the back.[125] The chief mattered little to William Claiborne except as a prize he failed to catch, but he was similar to the old man in at least one respect; just as Opechancanough's hopes of forcing out "all strangers" from the Mid-Atlantic[126] was based on unrealistic notions of reversing decades of social and demographic changes, Claiborne's ambition of reclaiming Kent Island as the center of a trade empire was a dream of a world which no longer existed.

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[124] Horn, 220. The quote comes from a primary source written by John Winthrop; the Mid-Atlantic dimension comes from Lars Adams's 2017 book *Breaking the House of the Pamunkey*; see Horn, 286, note 8.
[125] Ibid, 225-228. Horn claims that "Calvert's fate sealed that of Opechancanough" in reference to the Plundering Time disrupting the exercise of his commission. However, Riordan notes that Berkeley's Virginia would have been amenable to its use, and the Plundering Time began in the active governorship of merchant-planter Kemp; see Riordan, 158-159.
[126] As he may have done with the Spanish mission as a young man.

Chapter Two Conclusion

The Plundering Time is a complex yet understudied topic. Within the context of Maryland, it was simultaneously an external disruption from the civil war engulfing the British Isles and an exacerbation of extant local tensions. Viewed through a lens which centers William Claiborne and the Kent Island conflict, it presents a shift in Claiborne's approach and goals. The reclamation of Kent Island itself still remained Claiborne's main objective – when that ambition was thwarted, he did not join Richard Ingle in person during the attack on St. Mary's or see the subsequent establishment of Pope's Fort – but to reclaim his island, he would need to not only dislodge but overthrow the government of Maryland.

Claiborne clearly did succeed in creating an existential threat to Maryland's government by leveraging religious tensions and exploiting the ease at which a society already in a state of civil war could be urged to violence, but he failed to effectively legitimize his usurpation of authority. Despite the political *status quo ante bellum* being restored – with the notable exception of Claiborne losing his life-long Treasurer seat on account of his escapades on Kent Island and the post was given to Governor Berkeley's brother John[127] – the Plundering Time had established mass violence as a political tool and the social impact of the Plundering Time needed to be addressed. The policies implemented to restore Maryland after the Plundering Time, and Claiborne's involvement in Maryland's politics afterwards, set in motion the cycle of religious violence that would dominate the colony for the next several decades.

[127] Hale, 271.

Chapter III: A Protestant Revolution

The Plundering Time, as previously covered and as the name suggests, was not a time of great economic or social stability. By the time Leonard Calvert fully restored order in 1647, the population of Maryland had dropped below the number with which the colony had been founded more than a decade before. Saint Mary's had less than 200 people; Kent Island had just 20.[128] The restoration of Maryland was of the utmost importance to the Calverts; the Plundering Time had revealed the weakness of the original plan of a traditional manorial palatinate and the progress of the English Civil War necessitated a change in tack to appease Parliament. But as these issues were being considered, Leonard Calvert suddenly died, and a new Maryland governor needed to be selected by his brother.[129]

The English Civil War and William Stone

Cecil Calvert – who never visited Maryland – had spent the years of the Plundering Time in England. Like many of his fellow peers, he had remained officially neutral and privately royalist for the majority of the struggle between Charles I and Parliament. Following the capture of the king in 1646, this position was no longer tenable.[130] Though Calvert was able to narrowly avoid political relegation and the revocation of his charter through an "improbable alliance" with Oliver Cromwell, the Puritans and Parliament were ascendant, and the second Baron Baltimore needed not only to proclaim his allegiance but to avoid accusations of religious bias by more radical members of Parliament.[131] For that reason, a Protestant governor was preferable.

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[128] Stone, 206; Riordan, 294-295, 316. Some estimates are even bleaker, such as Lois Green Carr's, which claims that the whole colony had been reduced to 150 people, see Carr, 55.
[129] Riordan, 297-298, 300-301.
[130] Hale, 267-268.
[131] Owen Stanwood, *The Empire Reformed: English America in the Age of the Glorious Revolution* (University of Philadelphia Press: 2011), 62; James W. Vardaman, "Lord Baltimore, Parliament, and Cromwell: A Problem of

Even with the requisite religion, William Stone was in many ways the last person one might expect Cecil Calvert to select as governor. Stone had been resident in Virginia since the 1620s and had a prominent career as a member of the House of Burgesses and as a tobacco merchant in the pattern of Brenner's "new merchants". His uncle Thomas Stone was a leading tobacco merchant in London with strong business ties to Maurice Thomson and other prominent Parliamentarians. William himself was also tied to the rebel leader Nathanial Pope, and he had a business history and likely worked in Virginia's government with William Claiborne. Stone had additionally served as a collector of Richard Ingle's goods when the latter traded under Thomson's license. Despite these terrible 'references' and despite the fact that Cecil Calvert had never even met him, Stone was made governor in 1648 because the one thing that Stone promised was exactly what Calvert wanted to hear: Stone had a plan to repopulate Maryland with five hundred new settlers.[132]

The first legal act of religious toleration in an English colony was passed by the Maryland Assembly in 1649. This act, encouraged by Cecil Calvert and Governor Stone after discussions of similar acts in the English Parliament, was intended not only to keep the religious peace post-Plundering Time but also to attract more settlers. One major group that this attracted was Virginia Puritans. Governor Berkeley had taken an aggressive stance against Puritans during the course of the civil war – for example the sizable community of Puritans at Nansemond, established by Richard Bennett, had their hard-won New England ministers exiled in 1643. Taking advantage of this promise of religious freedom, Virginia Puritans moved in greater numbers from Nansemond and settled by the mouth of the Severn River. However, they

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Church and State in Seventeenth-Century England," *Journal of Church and State* 4, no. 1 (1962): 31; Riordan, 319-321.

[132] Riordan, 321-322.

continued to view the Catholic and moderate Protestant leadership of the colony with deep distrust, and they would not integrate with wider Maryland society or participate in the Assembly.[133]

Kent Island: William Claiborne's Return

Claiborne had – unsurprisingly by now – refused to accept that he would not regain Kent Island. In the same year as the Act of Toleration, he petitioned Parliament with his "Declaration shewing the illegality and unlawful proceedings of the Patent of Maryland" with an eye towards the revocation of Maryland's charter.[134] Much like his prior attempts at garnering support in England for his claim, this initiative failed. However, in the years following his petition to Parliament, Claiborne would receive an unexpected revival of his career.

During the absence of Governor Stone in late 1649, Maryland's acting governor was Thomas Greene. After the execution of Charles I, Greene had recognized the accession of Charles II – a royalist move that even Cecil Calvert had not been initially aware of. A similar move had been made, albeit more openly, by Governor Berkeley in Virginia. Compounding this was testimony given by Richard Bennett, the Puritan leader of the Nansemond settlement who had fled Virginia for the Severn settlement. Bennett alleged widespread religious discrimination and mistreatment of Puritans in both colonies.[135] This news prompted Parliament, by 1652 reorganized as the English Commonwealth by Oliver Cromwell, to send two warships to bring the Chesapeake colonies in line. To maintain control after the fleet pacified the royalist

[133] Riordan, 332; Hale, 268; Kevin Butterfield, "The Puritan Experiment in Virginia, 1607-1650," master's thesis, William and Mary, 1999, 7, 22-24.
[134] Claiborne, "Declaration", in *Archives of Maryland* V, 181.
[135] Hale, 274-275.

administrations, several individuals were designated Parliamentary Commissioners – including Richard Bennett and William Claiborne.[136]

Governors Stone and Berkeley yielded to the Parliamentary task force, and Claiborne and Bennett took over the administration of Virginia and Maryland. These commissioners had far-ranging powers. They administered the "engagement", an oath of allegiance to the Commonwealth analogous to the royal oath of supremacy that had been asked of George Calvert and all other government officials decades prior; the commissioners could also raise armies, pardon and indemnify, and were generally tasked with the creation of governments loyal to the Commonwealth. These broad powers were initially exercised lightly; in a 1653 letter responding to the complaints of the Puritan communities in Maryland against Lord Baltimore, Bennett and Claiborne downplay the alleged "Imposition of an Oath upon you against the Liberty of your consciouses" and other excesses which their commissions had been given in part to address.[137]

However, a few months later Bennett and Claiborne were involved in a power struggle with Governor Stone, leading to the dissolution of Stone's government in Maryland. The commissioners gave several justifications for this move, among them that Stone had listened to "divers Councilors, all of the Romish Religion" while ignoring the Assembly members picked by the commissioners, and that he had attempted to force an oath of loyalty to the Lord Baltimore on threat of removal of legal protections. This latter claim, which uses the earlier petitions from the Patuxent and Severn Puritan communities as evidence, also has a distinct Claiborne flair:

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[136] Ibid; Fausz, "Merging and Emerging," 83. The extent of royalism in the governments of both Berkeley's Virginia and Stone's Maryland has been contested; see e.g. Butterfield, 21.

[137] Hale, 275-276; Richard Bennett and William Claiborne, "An Answer to the Petitions Lately Received from the Inhabitants of the Rivers of Severn and Patuxent," March 1653, in Hall, 221-222.

> "By which strange, and exorbitant proceedings, many great Cruelties and Mischiefs are likely to be committed, and many hundreds, with their Wives and Families, are utterly ruined, as hath been formerly done here, and at Kent, though Planted before the Lord Baltamore's Claim to Maryland; with many Murders, and illegal Executions of men. Confiscations of Estates and Goods, and great miseries sustained by Women and Orphans[.]"[138]

After decades of aspiring to control Kent Island, Claiborne's dream seemed to finally be in reach. With his commission, he had also been restored to his former position as Secretary of State of the colony of Virginia; Bennett had been made its governor.[139] With their broad powers over both Chesapeake colonies, it would seem natural for Claiborne to leverage this opportunity for his own gain. And yet, according to Hale, Claiborne never set foot on the island during his time as a commissioner of Cromwell's Commonwealth.[140] A treaty with his old allies, the Susquehannock, implies that he was legally in control of Kent Island, but no evidence exists that he administered it in any capacity.[141] What could possibly justify this lack of initiative on Claiborne's part, who had so single-mindedly pursued Kent Island for so long?

The most likely answer is that Claiborne may have been less willing to risk his career a third time and was confident that the poorly-defined powers he and Bennett wielded would be sufficient to eventually earn the island through legitimate means. For example, William Stone resigned as governor of Maryland five days after Bennett and Claiborne challenged his

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[138] Bennett and Claiborne, "A Declaration published in Maryland," July 15, 1654, in Hall, 224.
[139] Their authority over Maryland was established by a liberal interpretation of the phrasing of their commission giving them authority over "all the plantations of the Chesapeake," see Hale, 274-275.
[140] Hale, 282.
[141] Herbert Levi Osgood, *The American Colonies in the Seventeenth Century* (London: MacMilland and Company, 1907), 127-128.

government. In his place, Bennett and Claiborne appointed additional Maryland commissioners from the ranks of the radical Puritans – men like Captain William Fuller and Richard Preston.[142] It was this event, as well as the proximal cause of the new Maryland commissioners reversing the Act of Toleration in order to persecute Catholics, that caused Stone to once again attempt a military overthrow of Maryland's government. The resulting Battle of the Severn, a bloody fight on Sunday, March 25th, 1655, was a military defeat for Stone and his forces but one that demonstrated the limits of Puritan power in Maryland. This presented an opening for Cecil Calvert to petition the Lord Protector for the restoration of his colony. The next two years may have felt like déjà vu for William Claiborne, as once again he was desperately fighting a losing battle against a Lord Baltimore over the charter for Maryland.[143]

Chapter Three Conclusion

The debate leading to the restoration of the Maryland charter to Cecil Calvert in 1657 was not rhetorically innovative. For example, Claiborne released an anonymous pamphlet in London in 1655 which summarized all of the arguments that he had made against the Calverts and Maryland in general since the 1630s – the main difference being a greater emphasis on their royal connection to account for the current Cromwellian administration. The outcome was not without precedent either: Cecil Calvert was victorious, and Claiborne returned defeated to Virginia. He would retain the post of Secretary of State for the colony until the Restoration three years later in 1660. After the return of the Stuarts, like Richard Bennett and other colonial

[142] William Stone, "Captain William Stone's Resignation of the Government," July 20, 1654, in Hall, 225-226; Bennett and Claiborne, "Order for Settling the Government of Maryland," July 22, 1654, in *ibid*, 226-228; Farrelly, 104; J.D. Krugler, ''With Promise of Liberty in Religion': The Catholic Lords Baltimore and Toleration in Seventeenth-Century Maryland, 1634–1692," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 79 (1984), 24.
[143] Curran, 71-72.

administrators appointed by Cromwell, Claiborne retired from politics and managed his plantation.

And yet, in 1676/77, in his last year of life, William Claiborne would fruitlessly petition the restored King Charles II for a grant of Kent Island to himself, a self-styled humble servant of the King's father and grandfather.[144] In a way, that petition – with its packet of assorted documents that span the entire decades-long contention – reveals more of the Kent Island conflict than Claiborne's deliberately Kent-less administration in the name of the Commonwealth of England. Why then should the latter be the subject of this chapter? It was chosen because, despite lacking a direct conflict over Kent Island, it remains the high watermark of political Puritanism in Maryland during the English Civil War, and the Battle of the Severn was both the last battle of the English Civil War and the second battle of Maryland's seventeenth-century cycle of religious conflicts (the first being the Plundering Time), marking the firm transition from a conflict over Kent Island to a broader social conflict.

[144] Fausz, "Merging and Emerging," 44.

Conclusion

The Kent Island dispute was a decades-long conflict between William Claiborne and the Calvert family of Maryland throughout the middle of the seventeenth century. Because of its length and the continuous prominence of both of its central figures, it deeply involved both regional and transatlantic religio-social trends. Claiborne's manipulation of Ingle and orchestration of the Plundering Time is the start of a cycle of religious strife that would wrack Maryland until the Protestant Revolution of 1689. But that did not happen because Claiborne was a great man with a plan to destroy St. Mary's – it was the result of a complex web of social and mercantile relationships as they operated in and adjusted to a multifaceted political and social crisis.

As a part of that web, William Claiborne's decades-long Kent Island dispute evolved from a competition over a frontier outpost to a small-scale religious war to an attempted imposition of post-Civil War English society on the Chesapeake. By recognizing the nuanced and shifting nature of the conflict, we can better understand the chaotic dynamism of the Chesapeake and the transatlantic world.

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