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Competition and Conflict: Maryland's First Ten Years

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts  
in  
History

by

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B.A. East Central University, 2004

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## Abstract

England's first settlers arrived in Virginia hoping to achieve the same success Spaniards had in the West Indies. Yet, North America held little wealth in the forms of gold or silver and the hopes of finding a Northwest Passage proved fruitless as well. For over ten years British holdings in the New World showed little sign of producing profits. It was not until 1614, and the introduction of tobacco, that Virginians finally discovered a commodity that could be sold back in Europe. Tobacco cultivation, however, was not the only activity that offered the possibility of wealth. Between the years of 1629 and 1635 there existed an opportunity for the creation of trade networks between the white man and Indian. Unfortunately, almost as quickly as these trade networks emerged, competition between the natives and Europeans led to the exhaustion of the beaver population, and ultimately caused the colonies of the Chesapeake to erupt into warfare.

When Governor Leonard Calvert and his fellow colonists sailed up the Chesapeake Bay in 1634 to found Maryland, the region drained by the Susquehanna River watershed had already become a thriving center of trade between English colonists and the native inhabitants, largely because of the efforts of a leading Virginia colonist, William Claiborne. Claiborne's trading tied Maryland not only to Virginia, but to important mercantile houses in London, and for half a decade the Marylanders struggled to expel him and his partners before the proprietor, Cecilius Calvert, second baron Baltimore, finally succeeded in ridding his colony of Virginians in 1638. But no sooner had he ousted the Virginians than he and his colonists found themselves caught in the middle of a series of inter-tribal wars, the upshot of which was the demise of the fur trade in the upper Chesapeake. Excessive trapping caused the decline of the beaver population because European settlers in the Hudson and Delaware River valleys encouraged the local natives to over harvest the supply. Consequently, the affected Indians encroached on their neighbor's land, which led to conflict in the Susquehanna River region, and by 1644 Maryland sat amidst a war zone.

This thesis will explore Baron Baltimore's unsuccessful attempts to prosper from the fur trade. It will argue that he failed because William Claiborne already dominated the Indian trade in the upper reaches of the Chesapeake Bay. Moreover, it will suggest that by the time the Marylanders drove Claiborne off, the beaver population of the Chesapeake was in decline, so Baltimore won a hollow victory.

Virginians had trucked with the local Indians from the founding of the colony in 1607. Instructions from the Virginia Company ordered the settlers to trade with the Indians "for Corn and all Other lasting Victuals if you [they?] must".<sup>1</sup> Because many colonists came from the

gentle and artisan ranks of English society, most were either unable or unwilling to perform the necessary tasks to survive. Consequently, colonists soon found themselves more dependant on the local native population than the Company could have expected. For the Powhatan Indians the presence of the newcomers gave little cause for alarm. Many colonists died quickly and it seemed likely the white men would eventually give up their designs of settling in the Chesapeake. In the meantime, however, the natives decided to take advantage of the opportunity to barter for European goods.<sup>2</sup>

Regardless of how promising Anglo-Indian relations appeared at first, the colonists quickly succeeded in alienating the Powhatan. Arrogance and the consistent disregard of native culture led to the-Anglo-Powhatan War of 1609-1614. For four years both sides struggled until Samuel Argall captured Powhatan's daughter Pocahontas, which brought hostilities to an end. To symbolize the truce, Pocahontas married John Rolfe in 1614. Ironically, Rolfe's marriage was overshadowed by his trials with tobacco. His success with tobacco insured that Virginia would prosper, but the need for farmland also guaranteed that the Indians and English would continue to contest one another.<sup>3</sup>

As settlers dispersed throughout the colony English encroachment into native lands only reinforced the barrier between the white man and Powhatan. The change in Virginia's landscape from a few large and well-protected plantations to that of small and scattered settlements also left planters in a vulnerable position. Seeing an opportunity to block English expansion, on March 22, 1622, the paramount chief Opechancanough led the Powhatan Indians in a surprise attack against the settlers that claimed one-third of their population. The colonists were not the only ones who suffered. In 1624 King James I revoked the Virginia Company's charter, and a year later his son declared the colony a royal province.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the damage caused by the Anglo-Powhatan War of 1622-1632, the colonists refused to abandon the large-scale production of tobacco. Rather, leading planters capitalized on fears of Indian reprisals. Using the threat of native attacks prominent landholders influenced many of the colony's small farmers to move onto the larger plantations, thus centralizing a large workforce. The consolidation of labor proved efficient. For instance, the colonists produced 200,000 pounds of tobacco in 1622, which reinforced planter confidence in a single-crop economy. Over production, however, caused stagnation and an eventual fall in tobacco prices. By mid decade some planters grew skeptical about the future of agricultural pursuits and began to look towards the establishment of a large-scale trade with more distant natives. For the Indian trade to succeed the English realized, that not only would they have to contain the Powhatan, but they would also have to be more diplomatic with their new trade partners than they had been with the Powhatan chiefdom.<sup>5</sup>

After 1622, the English ceased to show any pretense of a desire to live peacefully among the local natives. Governor Sir Francis Wyatt laid out his plan stating that, "our first work is the expulsion of the savage to gain free range of the countrey".<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately for Wyatt not all settlers agreed with his strategy. Rather than extirpate the Powhatan, some colonists thought the natives would serve a better purpose if held in a tributary status. By launching "harshe vissitts" or "feedfights" the English used force to procure corn from the Indians in order to sustain the colony's workforce. In addition to providing food for the colonists, leaders of Indian raids also recognized an opportunity to rise in social standing. Men such as William Tucker, Samuel Mathews, and William Claiborne were examples of individuals who were able to capitalize on tragedy and to profit handsomely from the Indian war.<sup>7</sup>

William Tucker got involved in the Anglo-Indian War of 1622-1632 at the outset, when he launched some eight raids against the Powhatan and was responsible for killing several Indian *werowances* (chiefs). As a result, Tucker was elected a burgess in 1624, and by 1626 he gained a seat on the Council of State. Using his political position to conduct trade with the more friendly Indians along the Potomac River, Tucker was also able to continue exploiting those Indians who allied with the Powhatan. Yet Tucker's power and wealth rested on more than his political position. Kinship ties to the prominent London merchant Maurice Thomson enabled him to keep his store at Kecoughtan stocked with goods, which, he, in turn, sold to Indians and colonists alike. Not only did the Tucker-Thomson alliance earn both men great wealth, it became a vital commercial link between Virginia and London.<sup>8</sup>

Like Tucker, Samuel Mathews also took part in the Second Anglo-Powhatan War of 1622-1632. Along with his success at stealing large quantities of Indian corn, Mathews became one of Virginia's leading planters within a short period of time. Within three years of arriving in Virginia, he became a councilor of state, whereby he used his political position to acquire even more land, as well as to obtain short-term monopolies to barter among the Indians along the Potomac River. Despite their efforts, neither Tucker nor Mathews ever enjoyed a thriving exchange in beaver pelts. The southerly climate of the Potomac proved too warm to yield the superior furs to be had further north. Nevertheless, both men were instrumental in shaping and expanding Virginia's reach, which paved the way for William Claiborne.<sup>9</sup>

Of Kentish stock, Claiborne was exposed to English colonizing activities from a young age. Kent's maritime location on England's southeast coast made it a hub for information about overseas exploration, and moreover, the Claiborne family was well connected to the London



mercantile establishment. Stories about Virginia fascinated Claiborne as a youth, and upon leaving the University of Cambridge he obtained the post as the colony's first surveyor.<sup>10</sup>

Claiborne arrived in Virginia in 1621 and set about carrying out his duties. Company instructions required that he lay out its lands as well as those of individual planters, but his most significant contribution as a surveyor came when he designed the Jamestown suburb of New Towne. Claiborne's rise in colonial politics did not come solely from his position as the colony's surveyor, but rather he, like Tucker and Mathews, used the Anglo-Powhatan War of 1622-1632 for his own personal enrichment. Within two years of arriving in Virginia, Claiborne was appointed to the Council of State, and in 1626 he became secretary of the colony, which made him second in importance only to the governor-general politically.<sup>11</sup>

When Sir George Yardley replaced Sir Francis Wyatt as governor-general, Charles I ordered him to grant commissions for additional explorations of the Chesapeake Bay. A commission of this type included the right to barter with the Indians in a designated area, and Claiborne saw the perfect opportunity to enter into the fur trade. Thus, in the spring of 1627 "At the Court there was leave graunted that Mr. Secretary should have a commission to goe with a boate and a sufficient Company of men into the bay And to discover . . . rivers [and] creeks . . . and trade with the Indians . . .".<sup>12</sup> As Claiborne trekked eastward from Jamestown and thence north of the Potomac, he became only the third Englishmen to venture into the upper reaches of the bay since John Smith and Samuel Argall explored the region in 1608 and 1612 respectively.<sup>13</sup>

Little seems to have attracted Claiborne's attention until he entered the narrow neck of the bay and came upon an island that seemed to him ideally situated for trade. Kent Island, as he called the place, was located approximately twenty-five miles southeast of present-day Baltimore and sixty miles from the mouth of the Susquehanna River. The land mass was large enough to

build a fully operational plantation, an observation Claiborne made upon first seeing the island. Despite Claiborne's excitement, however, the Indians of the area were not particularly receptive to his presence, and the Virginians often found themselves on the defensive from native attacks.<sup>14</sup>

Known as the Piscataway, these natives were scattered along the northern rim of the Chesapeake. The majority of them inhabited the lands between the Potomac River and the Western Shore of Maryland, while the Monponsons and Wicomiss (Ozines) lived along the Eastern Shore. (Linguistically the Piscataway were Algonquian and believed to be distant cousins of both the Powhatan and Nanticoke Indians.) Despite his less than warm reception Claiborne refused to leave Kent Island, as his primary goal was not to establish relations with the Piscataway necessarily, but with the Susquehanna Indians at the head of the bay.<sup>15</sup>

Little is known of the Susquehanna Indians prior to European contact, apart from their being Iroquoian and their having migrated to the Susquehanna River valley from what is now the state of New York. Then too, the French explorer Samuel Champlain described the tribe as being, "situated on the upper waters of the Susquehanna, and consequently south of the Five Nations" (Iroquois League of Five Nations).<sup>16</sup> Captain John Smith also noted that the Susquehanna were no more than two days by land from the upper reaches of the Chesapeake Bay. Smith's account provided evidence that these Indians were living throughout the entirety of the Susquehanna River valley into present-day southern Pennsylvania, to northern Virginia, and what later became Maryland, which was the same area Claiborne attempted to penetrate in 1629.<sup>17</sup>

After Claiborne returned to Jamestown, he petitioned the Council of State to grant him license to make contact with the Susquehanna Indians. Authorization in hand, Claiborne set out for the Susquehanna River. At the mouth of the river, he and his party came upon a small island

that had been granted to Edward Palmer in 1622. Claiborne recognized in the island an optimal site to trade with the Susquehanna. They, like many other native peoples opposed Europeans settling in their homelands, but Palmer's Island was situated on neutral ground where both the English and Indians could conduct trade amicably. Claiborne soon faced two problems, a lack of a steady supply of trade goods and the arrival of George Calvert, first baron Baltimore in Virginia.<sup>18</sup>

Lord Baltimore became involved in overseas colonization when he purchased 25 shares in the Virginia Company in 1609. Besides being one of the early investors in the Virginia venture, he spent £25, 000 to fund an exploratory expedition into Newfoundland. It was Lord Baltimore's conversion to Catholicism in 1625, however, that caused him to take an even more active role in colonization. As a result of England's anti-Catholic sentiment Lord Baltimore was removed from his position Secretary of State, and hoping to seek his fortunes elsewhere he uprooted his family and departed for Newfoundland.<sup>19</sup>

Newfoundland was not what Lord Baltimore had expected. "Ayre so intolerable cold" proved any attempts at large-scale agriculture a near impossibility.<sup>20</sup> Realizing there was little profit to be had from remaining in his colony, Baltimore informed Charles I in 1629 that he was leaving Newfoundland. He was a tenacious man, and rather than giving up on his designs of establishing a Catholic refuge in America, he petitioned the King for a patent in Virginia. Without waiting for a reply, he left Newfoundland and headed to Jamestown.<sup>21</sup>

Officials in Virginia were less than pleased to see him. Besides their distaste for his religious persuasion, it was obvious to them that he had designs on settling in the Chesapeake. To rid themselves of the "Papist," the Council of State demanded he take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy to Charles I, something his religion forbade him from doing. Rather than take the

oaths, Baltimore left his family in Virginia and made a hasty departure for London. He had no intentions of abandoning his plans for a Chesapeake colony, but rather to resume his fight back in England where he had powerful allies among England's Privy Council. Fearing that they had not seen the last of his lordship, the Virginians decided to send someone to keep an eye on him, and the council elected William Claiborne for the task.<sup>22</sup>

Claiborne's suspicions were soon confirmed. Baltimore had indeed begun to garner support for his Chesapeake colony, though the exact location of the grant was in question. He hoped to obtain a piece of land to the south of Virginia, which if approved presented little threat to Claiborne's interests in the upper Chesapeake. The Virginians had no way of knowing where the patent might lie, so Claiborne tried to block Baltimore. Claiborne recruited allies among the old members of the Virginia Company who hoped to regain control of the colony. As Claiborne soon discovered, after the revocation of the charter in 1625 there was little chance of Virginia being returned to the original investors. His Lordship's plans for establishing a Chesapeake colony were put on hold, however, after his family was lost at sea on their return trip from Jamestown.<sup>23</sup>

With the threat of Lord Baltimore gone for the time being, Claiborne took the opportunity to seek out a trade partner. Kent Island showed signs of success, but the Virginians needed greater stores of goods to supply all of the wants of the Indians. To that purpose, Claiborne formed a joint-stock company with the London merchant William Cloberry. Cloberry's interest in the North American fur trade dated back to 1627, when he financed Henry Fleet's trading ventures throughout the Potomac River basin. Hoping to extend his influence into the upper Chesapeake, Cloberry agreed to a partnership with Claiborne. The company that emerged became known as Cloberry and Company, and consisted of William Cloberry, William

Claiborne, John Delabarr, Simon Turgis, and Maurice Thomson (also related to Claiborne). In addition to providing capital, Cloberry claimed that through his connections with the Privy Council he could obtain a trading commission under the broad seal of England, such a trade license would prevent Baltimore from encroaching on the company's interests if he resumed his aspirations of establishing a Chesapeake colony. Disappointed with Cloberry's efforts, as they continuously resulted in failure, the only trade license that Claiborne's new partner was able to obtain was from Sir William Alexander, Viscount Sterling and secretary of State for Scotland. Supplied with trucking stuff and a trading license under the privy seal of Scotland, Claiborne boarded the *Africa* and set sail for Virginia.<sup>24</sup>

Putting his grief aside at last, Lord Baltimore renewed his interest in establishing a Catholic refuge in the Chesapeake, and he again pressed Charles I for permission to settle there. Three years passed before Charles granted letters patent, but unfortunately Baltimore died shortly thereafter, and he never saw his colony come to fruition. Nevertheless, on June 20, 1632 the charter devolved upon his eldest son, Cecilius, who succeeded as the second baron Baltimore. It was under the leadership of Cecilius Calvert that the colony of Maryland was actually founded.<sup>25</sup>

Cecilius Calvert, second baron Baltimore appreciated the possibilities the Indian trade offered. Many would be Maryland colonists believed that "fures alone [would] largely requite . . . [the] adventure' in the first year of settlement".<sup>26</sup> Prior to arriving in America Father Andrew White wrote that "a certain merchant last year exported 40,000 gold crowns, and the profit of the traffic is estimated at thirty fold".<sup>27</sup> Although Baltimore wanted full control of the upper Chesapeake fur trade, he was not adverse to Claiborne continuing his operations at Kent Island. In the first set of instructions to the Maryland colonists his lordship specified that a

“trusty messenger that is likewise conformable unto the Church of England . . . invite him (Claiborne) kindly to come unto them . . . to discuss the matter”.<sup>28</sup> In exchange for a pledge of loyalty, Lord Baltimore was willing to grant Claiborne a trading license. Claiborne refused the offer, and Governor Leonard Calvert was forced to leave the Virginians unobstructed until the Lord Proprietor could determine proper course of action. Maryland’s attempts to reach a diplomatic solution ended in failure and relations between the Virginians and Marylanders quickly disintegrated.<sup>29</sup>

To Claiborne’s pleasure, in 1635 the King granted him a commission giving him the right to “peaceably enjoy the said Iland, and trade (and such other places, as they shall there first settle upon before others) freely without any interruption or molestation”.<sup>30</sup> Charles’ instructions were clear; Claiborne had exclusive trade rights to both Kent and Palmer’s Islands. Nonetheless, Lord Baltimore paid little attention to the King’s order, and in the spring of 1635 a group of Marylanders led by John Tomkins and Robert Vaughn were captured trading with Indians near Palmer’s Island. After showing his commission to the prisoners, Claiborne released the men, though the Virginian’s victory was short lived because Governor Calvert issued a proclamation banning Claiborne or any other Virginian from trading in Maryland waters. Inflaming matters, Lord Baltimore played upon his friendship with the English secretary of state, Sir John Windebank, to gain the assistance of Virginia’s governor Sir John Harvey to enforce Calvert’s order, who was already at odds with the colony’s council of state.<sup>31</sup>

From the time of his arrival at Jamestown in 1630, Harvey found himself at odds with the General Assembly. Impulsive by nature, he often times acted without the advice of the Council of State, and nothing infuriated the councilors more than Harvey’s support of the Marylanders. Despite the fact that the Harvey was acting on orders from London the councilors regarded the

governor as a traitor. Things came to a head in April 1635 when a group of Virginians under the command of Captain Thomas Smith, sailed into the Patuxent River to trade with the local Indians. Smith and his comrades were surprised when a group of Marylanders arrived and escorted them back to St. Mary's City, the colony's principle settlement. The Virginians did not receive the light treatment Claiborne handed out to the Marylanders. Rather, their possessions, including their boat the *Long Tayle*, were seized and the men were sent away on foot "without any meanes" other than what they could "fiend from the Indians".<sup>32</sup>

Despite the efforts made by Calvert and Harvey to end Claiborne's dominance in the Chesapeake fur trade, both men discovered their competitor to be a more formidable opponent than they realized. No sooner had Smith made his way back to Kent Island than Claiborne dispatched the *Cockatrice* with orders to retake the lost boat and to inflict as much damage on the Marylanders as possible. After a brief search the Virginians sailed into the Pocomoke River and spotted one of Lord Baltimore's vessels, the *Helen*. As the men of the *Cockatrice* prepared to attack they were surprised when the *St. Margaret*, commanded by Thomas Cornwallis, came into view. As the Virginians attempted to board Cornwallis' vessel they were fired upon. Once the smoke cleared four Kent Islanders and one Marylander lay dead, among the deceased was Virginia's commander Ratcliff Warren. With little other option left to them, Claiborne's forces withdrew from the battle and made a hasty retreat back to Kent Island. Nevertheless, Claiborne refused to give up his struggle for control of northern Chesapeake, and after reorganizing his forces, the *Cockatrice* was once again sailing under the command of Thomas Smith.<sup>33</sup>

There are few reports detailing Smith's excursion against the Marylanders, other than he did find Cornwallis trading among the Indians of the Pocomoke River. And though it is fair to speculate that the Virginians inflicted damage on the Marylanders, they did not retake the *Long*

*Taylor*. Shortly after Smith's failed attempt, Claiborne commanded Philip Taylor to "sett sayle to Patowmack and Patuxent Rivers or elsewhere, and to demand of them my said pinnace and men: and if you can obtain them take possession of them for my use and bring unto this place, or missing them, make stay of such boates of theirs as you can light on . . .".<sup>34</sup> Yet, Taylor achieved little success in retaking Claiborne's boat, and he was captured. It was not until a truce was negotiated by the various councilors of Maryland and Virginia that the hostilities in the upper bay ceased, and each faction had their property returned to them.<sup>35</sup>

With Lord Baltimore out of the way members of Virginia's Council of State shifted their attentions to ridding themselves of Governor Harvey. Instigated by Claiborne and Samuel Mathews the councilors succeeded in "thrusting out" Governor Harvey and shipped him back to England in 1635. Thereafter, Claiborne and his Kent Island partners continued their operations in the upper bay unhindered until the arrival of George Evelin in 1636. Evelin, a supporter of Maryland, infiltrated Cloberry and Company when he bought out John Delabarr's share in the joint-stock venture. Using the turmoil that followed Harvey's removal, Evelin convinced Cloberry that Claiborne was now a liability, and he manipulated his way into being named the new post commander at Kent Island. Though Cloberry's removal of Claiborne was done without his partner's consent, Claiborne could hardly argue with the change. After failing consistently to supply his fellow investors with an accounting of company profits, Cloberry had ceased to send trade goods to Kent Island as early as 1634. And in an effort to placate his financier Claiborne asked company investors to "send a yonge man over" to keep track of the Kent Island books.<sup>36</sup>

Claiborne was unhappy about being replaced by Evelin. The change was temporary because Cloberry intended for Claiborne to return sail back to England in order to give an accounting of company profits and assist in suing Lord Baltimore. Thus, while Claiborne was



suspicious of Evelin's motives early on, he was soon put at ease after the new commander of Kent Island seemed determined to protect Virginia's interests. Actively seeking out Claiborne's advice on the day-to-day operations of the post, Evelin often times spoke out against the Lord Proprietor. Evelin's attitude soon changed after the arrival of Governor Harvey, which gave Claiborne reason to be concerned with his new partner's intentions.<sup>37</sup>

Governor Harvey ouster was not taken lightly in England. King Charles viewed the episode as a direct affront to his royal prerogative, and he dispatched Sir John back to Jamestown to resume his old duties as governor-general. Seeking revenge on his enemies, Harvey arrested Samuel Mathews and his fellow coconspirators and shipped them back to London to stand trial for their offenses. Because Claiborne had not taken an active part in Harvey's removal he escaped a return trip to England, though. Wasting little time in capitalizing on an opportunity to check his old Virginia enemies Lord Baltimore not only succeeded in having himself named Harvey's successor, but also used his alliance with Virginia's governor to gain the appointments of several Maryland supporters to Virginia's Council of State, one of which was George Evelin's brother Robert Evelin.<sup>38</sup>

The turn of events after Harvey's arrival presented a serious threat to Claiborne's Chesapeake operations. Already obligated to travel back to England, Claiborne made an attempt to protect his interests by requesting of Evelin a £3000 bond as a guarantee that Cloberry and Company property would not be handed over to the Marylanders. Claiborne's appeal was refused, and no sooner had he left Virginia than Evelin presented himself at Kent Island to take possession of all Cloberry and Company holdings. With Harvey's help, he also obtained warrants to seize Claiborne's personal possessions as well. With almost all lost, the only thing that remained to the Virginians was Palmer's Island.<sup>39</sup>

Evelin soon traded freely among the Marylanders at St. Mary's City, and it became obvious to the Kent Islanders they had been betrayed. If there was any doubt among them it quickly disappeared after Governor Calvert appointed Evelin Commander of Kent Island. Evelin's first order was to bring them under the Lord Proprietor's control, but he discovered that the Virginians were not to give up so easily. Hoping to achieve a diplomatic solution he tried to persuade them that "it would be better to live under the government of Maryland than under the government of Virginia, because they might carry their tobacco and pipe staves into what country they would, which the Virginians could not . . .".<sup>40</sup> His ploy did not work, because through the instigations of Thomas Smith and John Butler the Virginians denied Evelin ever had the authority to turn over Cloberry and Company property to Lord Baltimore in the first place. Evelin then threatened Claiborne's men by falsely claiming Governor Harvey had "latelie come from England [and] brought absolute authoritie from the King that the Isle of Kent should be under the government of Maryland", which meant that if the Virginians refused to render up Kent Island the militias of both colonies would force them into submission. Evelin's pleas were to no avail.<sup>41</sup>

Governor Calvert viewed the actions of the Virginians as an affront to his authority, but he was reluctant to resort to force to suppress the colonists. Cloberry and Company had a pending lawsuit against Lord Baltimore, and any move against Claiborne might be construed as contempt for royal authority. On the other hand, inaction would give the appearance that Calvert was too weak to exert his authority as the governor of Maryland. He cleverly devised a scheme to bring the Kent Islanders under his control by spreading rumors that John Butler and Thomas Smith were inciting the Susquehanna Indians against Maryland, and in order to prevent such an attack he needed to order a preemptive strike against the island Kent Island.<sup>42</sup>

The gambit succeeded, and in early February 1638 a contingent of Marylanders under the commands of Thomas Cornwallis and George Evelin landed at Kent Island to arrest both Thomas Smith and John Butler, men the Marylanders felt held "such power amongst them that they persuaded them (Kent Islanders) to continue in their former contunacie".<sup>43</sup> To prevent the Island inhabitants from interfering with the arrest of Smith and Butler, the Maryland militia gained entrance to the island fort through the back gates and took the post by surprise. After containing their prisoners one detachment of troops traveled six miles up the island capture Butler at his plantation. At the same time another detail seized Smith. After installing a government friendly to Maryland the prisoners were pardoned, with the exceptions of Smith and Butler, who traveled back to St. Mary's City to stand trial.<sup>44</sup>

It was not until the Marylanders overtook Kent Island that Cloberry and Company began to pursue their suit against Lord Baltimore. Upon hearing of the February attack, Claiborne filed a petition with King Charles requesting that he give a "confirmation of your Majesty's said Commission and Letter".<sup>45</sup> Claiborne's efforts produced results, and after he offered the King £100 *per annum* for the right to trade at both Kent and Palmer's Islands Charles reconfirmed his previous letter then referred the matter to the Laud Commission for Regulating Plantations.<sup>46</sup>

William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, headed the Laud Commission. Comprising of various members of the England's Privy Council, the Commission was formed in 1633 to oversee disputes in the British colonies, though much of their focus was devoted to quarrels in New England. Numbered among the members of the commission was England's secretary of state, Sir John Windebank, Lord Baltimore's ally in London. Windebank's position on the Laud Commission caused Claiborne and his partner such concern, that Cloberry sought a trade license

from Lord Baltimore. The lord proprietor, however, turned down Cloberry's request and decided to leave the question of who had trade rights in the upper bay to the Laud Commission.<sup>47</sup>

Ignoring the king's license to Claiborne the Laud Commission viewed the Kent Island matter as a personal dispute between the Lord Proprietor and Cloberry and Company. Commissioners concluded despite the fact that the Virginians had arrived and established Anglo-Indian trade alliances before the Marylanders stepped ashore in America, Lord Baltimore's charter took precedence because it bore the Great Seal of the England. Accordingly, it ruled that "The Right and Tytle to the Isle of Kent & other places in question to be absolutely belonging to the Lord Baltimore, & that noe Plantation or trade with the Indians ought to be within the precincts of his Pattent without Lycense from him".<sup>48</sup> To his great pleasure, after four years of struggle, Lord Baltimore finally had control of the Indian trade in the northern Chesapeake.<sup>49</sup>

With Claiborne gone Marylanders shifted their focus to establishing profitable relations with local Piscataway, and at the forefront of Maryland's Anglo-Indian affairs were the English Jesuits. Led by Father Andrew White, members of the order hoped to succeed in a two-part mission, monopolizing on the fur trade and converting the Indians. So it was in 1639 Governor Calvert authorized the Jesuits to live among the natives, and within the year missions were established in the several villages of the Patuxent and Piscataway peoples. The greatest feat, however, came after the local Piscataway *tayac* (chief) fell ill and traditional practices failed to cure him. By giving the chief "a certain powder of known efficacy mixed with holy water" Father White was able to restore the man's health.<sup>50</sup> Impressed by the white man's medicine and religion, the *tayac* and his family agreed to be baptized in the Catholic faith. Anglo-Indian relations in Maryland proved more peaceful than those of early Virginia, and within five years of Maryland's founding a profitable trade alliance with the Piscataway showed signs of promise.<sup>51</sup>

Marylanders were to be disappointed, however. The beaver trade of the St. Lawrence, Delaware, and Hudson River Valleys declined sharply about the same time that Claiborne and Lord Baltimore began to contest one another over the ownership of Kent Island. As the various native peoples struck out to obtain richer hunting grounds, Lord Baltimore's colonists found themselves caught in the middle of a series of inter-tribal wars that were instigated by their European neighbors to the north.

During the early colonial period of North America no European power exploited the rich supply of beaver pelts more than France. Arriving along the St. Lawrence River in 1603 white *voyageurs* traded with the Nipissing, Ottawa, and Tobacco tribes for over a decade before establishing a trade alliance with the Huron Indians in 1617. Inhabiting the area between the St. Lawrence River and the Georgian Bay, the Huron were able to extend their influence even further west acting as middlemen. Exchanging agricultural goods for furs with outlying tribes, the French-Huron trade alliance was able to tap into the pelts of the continent's interior. France's monopoly on the fur trade soon came under threat, however, after the Dutch began to establish outposts along the Hudson River.<sup>52</sup>

Holland's first trading outpost, Fort Orange, was established in 1613 on the present site of Albany, New York. Initial investors of the Dutch East India Company recognized the great profits to be had from the Indian trade and in 1621 founded the permanent settlement of New Amsterdam. Like the French, who formed a French-Huron trade alliance, the Dutch allied themselves with the Iroquois League of Five Nations. Throughout the 1620's the Dutch-Iroquois alliance operated throughout the Hudson River Valley and westward towards the St. Lawrence River until the beaver population of New Netherland began to show signs of depletion during the third decade of the seventeenth century.<sup>53</sup>

Unlike the Huron, who controlled the vast hunting area west of the St. Lawrence River, the Iroquois were confined to a relatively small region. Excessive trapping practices had limited their resources, and as fewer pelts arrived in New Amsterdam the Iroquois found their trade with the Dutch endangered. Dependant on European goods, the beaver-rich trade grounds of the Huron proved too tempting, and in 1638 Iroquoian trappers crossed over the St. Lawrence River and initiated the first large-scale inter tribal war in North America.<sup>54</sup>

Like the Iroquois, the Susquehanna were also positioning themselves in the fur trade. In 1626 they moved successfully against the Lenni Lenape Indians (Delaware) to make contact with the Dutch. Unfortunately traders in New Amsterdam gave preference to those tribes of the Five Nations. Though relegated to a lower status than their Iroquoian counterparts, the Susquehanna continued to travel the many miles to New Amsterdam to obtain European trade goods. It was not until 1638, after Swedish colonists began arriving along the Delaware Bay, that the Susquehanna saw a new potential trade partner. The Susquehanna were not the only Indians competing for the northern Chesapeake hunting grounds, and soon found themselves in competition with the Piscataway Indians.<sup>55</sup>

Marylanders could have had little knowledge of what was transpiring among the Susquehanna Indians, since Governor Calvert and many of his fellow colonists kept a safe distance from Claiborne's old trade partners. The Jesuits did not let past events deter them from making a profit in the New World. After the Laud Commission turned Kent Island over to Lord Baltimore, Catholic traders began to venture up the Susquehanna to barter with the Indians there. Nevertheless, the exchange of goods between Marylanders and the Indians of the Susquehanna River Valley never evolved into anything more than a small-scale trade.<sup>56</sup>

The first signs of hostility against the Marylanders occurred in 1641 after a Jesuit pinne under the command of Mathais de Sousa was threatened with attack. Although there were no casualties on either side, the encounter created panic among the colonists. In an effort to calm the colonists Governor Calvert issued a proclamation making it “Lawfull to any Inhabitant whatsoever of the Isle of Kent to Shoot wound or kill any Indian”.<sup>57</sup> His order did little to ease fears, as the Susquehanna-Piscataway war was escalating and starting to spread into Maryland.<sup>58</sup>

In August 1642 the Susquehanna launched an attack on the Piscataway village of Mattapany. Why the Susquehanna targeted this location is uncertain. Mattapany was the center of Indian conversions in Maryland and it is possible the Susquehanna resented the Jesuit’s outward show of favoritism towards the Piscataway. Whatever the reason, several Marylanders died in the raid, and Governor Calvert viewed the Indians hostilities as being directed towards the English. In retaliation Thomas Cornwallis raised a group of militia to “use all power and means conducing in his discretion to the resistance and Castigacon of the enemies and vanquishing of them in as full and ample manner as any Cap<sup>t</sup> General of any army may”.<sup>59</sup> Hoping for assistance from Virginia, Cornwallis appealed to Governor-general Sir William Berkeley for assistance, but found Sir William and the Council of State little concerned with Indian affairs in Maryland, so Cornwallis’ entreaties were to no effect.<sup>60</sup>

After the attack at Mattapany members of the Maryland’s Council of State took notice of the Susquehanna threat and decided a force was needed to march against the Indians. Governor Calvert appointed Giles Brent to command Maryland’s forces and ordered him to raise men from St. Mary’s City and Kent Island. Both Maryland contingents were to rendezvous at Kent Island and then proceed north. Though the militia made it as far as Claiborne’s old trading post, the

expedition went no further. Without ever facing the enemy, Maryland's second effort to bring the Susquehanna Indians under submission ended in failure.<sup>61</sup>

Governor Calvert seems to have lost little trust in his councilor, and prior to departing for England he "appointed & elected Mr. Giles Brent Esq. to be Lieutenant General of this Province of Maryland . . . until further order from his Lordship therein".<sup>62</sup> As Lieutenant General of Maryland, Brent devised a plan to block the Indian's access into Maryland by ordering Cornwallis to fortify Fort Conquest (Palmer's Island). Nevertheless, Cornwallis soon grew tired of being in a defensive posture and requested a commission to raise volunteers to go into Susquehanna territory.<sup>63</sup>

There are few records detailing Cornwallis' 1644 expedition other than the Marylanders intended to attack the main Susquehanna stronghold located along Conestoga Creek. Most likely setting out from St. Mary's City with approximately fifty men, the strategy was to land near the Indian village, and then proceed overland to take the natives by surprise. Using cannon to knock down the palisades the militia were then to lay ruin to the fort. The plan was foiled, however, after the Susquehanna were able to slip out of the stronghold and surround Cornwallis' men. Outnumbered and attacked from all sides, the Marylanders were forced to retreat and leave their supplies and two cannon behind, and again the Marylanders proved unable to defeat the Susquehanna Indians.<sup>64</sup>

Stepping ashore in the Chesapeake in 1634, Marylanders had hoped to prosper from the rich fur trade taking place in the upper bay. To their disappointment their own countrymen were already trading within the boundaries of Maryland. Because of William Claiborne, the Susquehanna River valley had already been connected to the mercantile houses of London by 1630. Lord Baltimore, however, was not easily excluded from the profits to be had from beaver



skins. Between 1635 and 1638 an inter-ethnic war erupted pitting Virginians and Marylanders against each other and it was only after the Laud Commission ruled that Cecilius Calvert, second baron Baltimore had ultimate authority over the lands within his patent that the hostilities ended.

No sooner had Baltimore ridded himself of Claiborne, than he discovered the fur trade was coming to an end. Trade practices of the French, Dutch, and Swedes along the St. Lawrence, Hudson and Delaware River valleys led to a decline in the beaver population as early as the 1630's. As natives sought out new hunting grounds, inter-tribal wars broke out from present-day New York to northern Maryland. After four years of struggling to remove his Virginia competitors from the fur trade of the upper Chesapeake Bay, by 1638 Lord Baltimore not only found his colony engaged another war with neighboring Indians, he also came to the realization that by the mid seventeenth century the Indian trade had come to an end.

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<sup>7</sup> Fausz, "Merging and Emerging Worlds," 52-59.

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<sup>9</sup> Fausz, "Merging and Emerging Worlds," 58-59.

<sup>10</sup> Horn, Adapting to a New World, 13; Hale, Virginia Venturer, 3-10, 19, 45-46.

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- <sup>22</sup> Land, Colonial Maryland, 5; Hale, Virginia Venturer, 133.
- <sup>23</sup> Hale, Virginia Venturer, 136, 137; Land, Colonial Maryland, 4-8; Craven, Southern Colonies, 187-189.

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<sup>25</sup> Land, Colonial Maryland, 6.

<sup>26</sup> Fausz, “Merging and Emerging Worlds,” 65.

<sup>27</sup> Hall, ed., NEM, 8.

<sup>28</sup> Hall, ed., NEM, 19.

<sup>29</sup> Hall, ed., NEM, 18-20; Land, Colonial Maryland, 5-6.

<sup>30</sup> Browne et al., eds., Md. Archives 3:28.

<sup>31</sup> Hale, Virginia Venturer, 195-197.

<sup>32</sup> “Thomas Smith’s relation concerning Claiborne,” (1635), Calvert Papers, (Baltimore Maryland, 1889), 6:189; Billings, A Little Parliament, 71-72; Hall, ed., NEM, 56; Raphael Semmes, Captains and Mariners of Early Maryland, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1937), 140-141.

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## Vita

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