

LIVING HISTORY AMERICA

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES
IN DOCUMENTS, ESSAYS, LETTERS,
SONGS AND POEMS

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than they can have them taught for in other towns. And it is further ordered, that where any town shall increase to the number of 100 families or householders, they shall set up a grammar school, the master thereof being able to instruct youth so far as they may be fitted for the university. Provided, that if any town neglect the performance hereof above one year, that every such town shall pay five pounds to the next school till they shall perform this order.

Maryland Act of Toleration

MARYLAND ASSEMBLY

Maryland was settled in 1634 under a grant to the Catholic Calvert family, the Lords Baltimore, as a Catholic refuge. It became the only English colony in North America with a large Catholic minority. In 1649, the second Lord Baltimore feared neighboring Puritans in Virginia would be emboldened by the Puritan victory in the English Civil War. The Maryland Assembly passed the Act of Toleration, a major step in the principle of freedom of religion in America.

The act, however, was highly qualified, allowing freedom of religion only for those who believed in Jesus Christ: Blasphemers were subject to capital punishment, Jews were not allowed to hold public office for almost two centuries, and believing in God was a requirement for holding public office until 1961. Nevertheless, the concept of freedom of religion was established and resulted in relatively harmonious relations between the religious sects. The success of religious toleration in Maryland served as a model for the nation a century later.

Be it therefore enacted That whatsoever person or persons within this Province shall from henceforth blaspheme god, or shall deny our Saviour Jesus Christ to be the sonne of God, or shall deny the holy Trinity the father sonne and holy Ghost, or the Godhead of any of the said Three persons of the trinity or the Unity of the Godhead shall be punished with death and

confiscation or forfeiture of all his or her lands....

Be it Therefore enacted (except as in this present Act is before Declared and sett forth) that noe person or persons whatsoever within this Province, or the Islands, Ports, Harbors, Creekes, or havens thereunto belonging professing to believe in Jesus Christ, shall from henceforth bee any waies troubled, Molested or discountenanced for or in respect of his or religion nor in the free exercise thereof within this Province or the Islands thereunto belonging nor any way compelled to the beleife or exercise of any other religion against his or her consent, soe as they may be not unfaithful to the Lord Proprietary, or molest or conspire against the civil Government established or to bee established in this Province under him or his heires.

"Said persons shall enjoy exemptions"

TAX RELIEF FOR CHILDREN IN NEW NETHERLANDS

New colonies such as the Dutch New Netherlands (which would soon become British New York) needed to sustain themselves for the long term. They frequently took measures to encourage existing settlers to have children themselves and potential colonists to bring children with them. In 1650, New Netherlands offered to relieve residents one-year's taxation for every child brought or beget to the colony.

On the arrival of the aforesaid persons in New Netherland, they shall be allowed and granted the privilege of choosing and taking up, under quit rent or as a fief, such parcels of land as they shall in any way be able to cultivate for the production of all sorts of fruits and crops of those parts, on condition that they shall be bound to commence the same within the year, on pain of being again deprived of said lands.

Said persons shall enjoy Exemption from tenths of all aforesaid fruits and crops of the term of years, and thenceforth one additional year's Exemption for every legitimate child they shall convey thither or get there.

"This indenture made"

A TYPICAL INDENTURE CONTRACT

The most common way for prospective colonists to pay their way for the cross-Atlantic journey to America in the 17th century was to become an indentured servant. In exchange for passage, the shipowner would "sell" the passenger to a master for a certain number of years, or the would-be passenger could make the arrangements himself. At the conclusion of the contract, the servant would be free. Often the servant would have also gained knowledge of a trade and receive a payment. Most indentured servants were under 19 years old, with average being between 16 and 18. The following is a standard contract between a servant and his master outlining their mutual obligations, including moral responsibilities on the part of the servant.

This indenture made the 6th day of June in the year of our Lord Christ 1659, witnesseth, that Bartholomew Clarke the sone of John Clarke of the City of Canterbury, sadler, of his own liking and with the consent of Francis Plumer of the City of Canterbury, brewer, hath put himself apprentice unto Edward Rowzie of Virginia, planter, as an apprentice with him to dwell from the day of the date above mentioned unto the full term of four years from thence next ensuing fully to be complete and ended, all which said term the said Bartholomew Clarke well and faithfully the said Edward Rowzie as his master shall serve, his secrets keep, his commands most just and lawful he shall observe, and fornication he shall not commit, nor contract matrimony with any woman during the said term; he shall not do hurt unto his master nor consent to the doing of any, but to his

power shall hinder and prevent the doing of any; at cards, dice or any unlawful games he shall not play; he shall not waste the goods of his said master nor lend them to anybody without his master's consent; he shall not absent himself from his said master's service day or night, but as a true and faithful servant, shall demean himself. And the said Edward Rowzie in the mystery, art, and occupation of a planter...the said Bartholomew shall teach or cause to be taught, and also during said term shall find and allow his apprentice competent meat, drink, apparel, washing, lodging with all other things fitting for his degree, and in the end thereof, fifty acres of land to be laid out for him, and all other things which according to the custom of the country is or ought to be done.

The E Mary Dyer

MASSACHUSETTS COURT RECORDS

With the English Revolution of 1649 and the ascent of a Puritan government in England, Quakers were targeted for persecution. Many sought refuge in America. Puritan New England did not welcome them. The first Quakers to arrive in Boston were forced back on their ship bound for England. Two years later, Massachusetts Bay banished Quakers entirely from their settlement upon pain of death.

In 1660, the government made good on its pledge and condemned four Quakers to death by hanging. One of them was a woman named Mary Dyer, as recorded in this excerpt from the Massachusetts Court Records. Public anger at the hangings led to the repeal of the death penalty. The only colony that accepted Quakers at the time was Rhode Island.

The whole Court mett together sent for Mary Dyer, who rebelliously, after sentence of death past against hir, returned into this jurisdiction.