

## KENT COUNTY.

The first permanent settlement by the English in what was later Maryland was made between 1629 and 1631 by William Claiborne of Virginia, who established an Indian trading post on Kent Island, and this settlement existed when Maryland was granted to George Calvert in 1632. We cannot concern ourselves here with the details of the struggle between the Calverts and Claiborne which for a few years made a mimic battleground of Kent Island. In 1638 an end was put to the struggle, and the rule of the Calverts on the island was established, although this authority was to be interrupted again in 1645-1646, when Richard Ingle staged his rebellion. In the latter year the rule of the Proprietary was reinstated, to be disturbed again in the civil wars when the Parliamentary Commissioners seized control of the Province in 1652. The county records of Kent which have been in part preserved begin in 1648, and while there are several breaks, there is a definite continuity in the county government of what was at first called the Isle of Kent County and the present Kent County, which does not include the Island. There is no territorial continuity, however, between them; nor do we have the usual history of a Maryland county which has had successive new counties cut off from the part first settled, the latter retaining the original name. In the case of Kent the original settlement, the Isle of Kent, has found itself successively in two other counties, and what has been known as Kent County since 1662 has not since 1695 included the island from which it derived its name.

There were several waves of immigration into Kent Island. In addition to the first settlers from Virginia under Claiborne, after Baltimore gained firm control over the island in 1638, there was a constant addition to its population from St. Mary's. When the Puritan migration from lower Virginia to Maryland took place in 1649-1650, many of these nonconformists found their way to Kent Island, either directly or after a short stay in Anne Arundel, and in the fifties, with control of the Province in the hands of the Commissioners of the Parliament, these became the controlling element, not only on the island but on the neighboring mainland.

That down through the year 1658 the Kent court met "upon Kent" at the homes of the various justices, is disclosed by the county court record itself. Thus the levy for 1657 shows a payment of 1200 pounds of tobacco to Mr. [Thomas] Hynson for keeping court three years at his house (p. 104). Beginning with the January and February 1658/9 courts, however, we find two entries that it was "holden at the Courthouse on Kent" (pp. 152, 154). A clue to the location of the court house is to be found in the following assignment of a patent. At the December 1, 1659, court, John Meconnikin "assigned over the Pattennt of th<sup>e</sup> Land & what theiron remaineth belonginge therto, w<sup>th</sup> all privileges to th<sup>e</sup> Inhabit<sup>s</sup> of Kent where th<sup>e</sup> Court is now kept" (p.175). But in August 1661 it was again held at a private house, that of Mr. Thomas