

ST. MARY'S COUNTY.

St. Mary's County is the parent county of the State as in it the first settlement was made in 1634 under the grant to Lord Baltimore. During the succeeding years the settlement on the St. Mary's River was slowly extended along the shores of the Potomac towards the present western limits of the county. At an early date settlements were also made along both shores of the Patuxent River as high as Mataponi Creek. During the first year or two of settlement when the few colonists present were busily engaged in establishing their homes, there appears to have been no county government, the affairs being regulated directly by Governor Calvert and his advisers.

The date of the erection of a county government for St. Mary's is not known, the first reference, however, is under date of June 29, 1637, when a commission was issued to James Boldridge as sheriff (Md. Arch., 3:61). A few months later the county was spoken of as such and county officials were mentioned. During February following a bill was introduced incorporating the Isle of Kent as a Hundred of St. Mary's County. Other documents show that the inhabitants along the Patuxent were also included in the same jurisdiction. It is therefore evident that at first St. Mary's County maintained control over all of the settlements within the limits of the Province, even though far beyond the confines of the present county.

The first abridgement of its jurisdiction is indicated in October, 1640, when Kent Island is first spoken of as a county, although John Langford had been appointed a sheriff for the Island about the time that St. Mary's county itself was erected. This earlier date is the one usually chosen for the creation of Kent County but the conceptions of county limits and county authority were somewhat vague at that time.

The second curtailment of the territory included within St. Mary's County was made in 1650, when Charles County was erected as a favor to Robert Brookes, a friend of Lord Baltimore, who was on the point of bringing a company of colonists to the Province. This Charles County, usually spoken of as Old Charles County, included the settlements on either side of the Patuxent River to the head of navigation. It was the