

TERCENTENARY HISTORY
OF
MARYLAND

EMBODYING
BIOGRAPHICAL RECORDS OF COLONISTS, PIONEERS, JUDGES,
GOVERNORS, MILITARY OFFICERS, ETC.

COMPILED PRINCIPALLY BY
HENRY FLETCHER POWELL

ILLUSTRATED

VOLUME IV

CHICAGO—BALTIMORE
THE S. J. CLARKE PUBLISHING COMPANY
1925

continued a member of that body until 1837. In the senate, he rose to a place among the influential members, but his ambition and tastes took the direction of the woolsack rather than the forum, and in 1834, when he was offered an appointment to the chief judgeship of the second judicial circuit of Maryland, with a seat in the state court of appeals, he resigned from the senate to accept it. He remained on the bench until 1851, when a new state constitution was adopted which made the state judiciary elective by popular vote. He was a member of the convention which framed this constitution. In 1852, President Fillmore invited him to enter his cabinet as secretary of the navy, but Chambers declined the honor on the ground of ill health.

During the war of secession, Judge Chambers' sympathies were warmly with the south, but he deprecated secession as a remedy for the wrongs of that section. He acted with the democratic party throughout the four years of conflict in opposing what he regarded as the invasion of the constitutional rights of the people and the supremacy assumed by the military over the civil authorities in Maryland. In 1864 he was a member of the convention called to draft a new constitution for Maryland embodying the views and purposes of the political party then holding power through the disfranchisement of citizens who could not take the "iron-clad" oath. In this body he opposed without success the incorporation of the drastic provisions intended to perpetuate minority rule in the state. He was the democratic candidate for governor of Maryland against Thomas Swann in 1864, but under the conditions which then prevailed at the polls had no chance whatever of election. This candidacy was his last active participation in politics. He died at his home in Chestertown, January 30, 1867. Judge Chambers was deeply interested in the promotion of popular education throughout his career and from 1843 until his death presided over Washington College in Chestertown. He was also prominent in the councils of the Episcopal church, serving many times as a delegate to its diocesan and general conventions. He received the degree of LL.D. from Yale College in 1833 and was similarly honored by Delaware College in 1853.

MORDECAI GIST.
(1743-1792.)

Mordecai Gist, brigadier general in the continental army during the war of American independence, was born in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1743, the son of Captain Thomas and Susan (Cockey) Gist. The martial ardor for which he was distinguished was inherited from a line of adventurous forefathers, the first of whom, Christopher Gist, came from England to Maryland in the seventeenth century and died there in 1691. He married a Miss Cromwell, said to be the daughter of a kinsman of Oliver Cromwell. His son, Richard, was appointed surveyor for the western shore of Maryland, and in that capacity traversed large areas of the province when they were a wilderness peopled only by Indian tribes. He assisted in laying out Baltimore town and was presiding magistrate of the court there in 1736. Richard's son, Christopher, spent much time in the outlying sections of the province, became well acquainted with Indian life, and because of his intimate knowledge of the wilderness and its inhabitants, was selected to accompany George Washington on his mission to warn the French away from western Pennsylvania in 1753. With his two sons he also went with General Braddock on his fatal expedition against Fort Duquesne. Nathaniel Gist of the Virginia line in the Revolutionary war was also a member of this family.

Mordecai Gist was engaged in mercantile pursuits when the colonies revolted against Great Britain, and became a member of the nonimportation committee in 1774. He had been interested in military affairs before the war broke out, and was elected captain of the first independent company organized in Maryland after hostilities were begun. In January, 1776, he was appointed major of Smallwood's regiment of regulars. At the battle of Long Island, Colonel Smallwood and Lieutenant Colonel Ware were detained in New York city as members of a court martial, and it fell to the lot of Major Gist to command the detachment of four hundred Maryland troops who at the battle of Long Island won imperishable glory by their heroic stand against an overwhelming force of British veterans, and at the sacrifice of two hundred and fifty-six of their number averted a probably irreparable disaster to the American arms. At White Plains he took command of the regiment when Colonel Smallwood was wounded. This regiment was the first to use the

bayonet against British regulars. In the spring of 1777 seven new battalions were raised in Maryland, and Gist, whose capacity as a soldier had been amply demonstrated, was made colonel of the third battalion. On August 25, 1777, the British landed an army at the head of the Elk river in Maryland and prepared to march against Philadelphia. The Maryland militia was mobilized at the head of Chesapeake bay, and Smallwood and Gist were detached from their regular commands to lead them, Gist being assigned to the command of those from the Eastern Shore. These two officers remained with the militia while the British under Howe occupied Philadelphia, the Maryland line, under strange officers, missing them greatly. In December, 1777, Gist and the Eastern Shore Militia, in conjunction with Morgan's Rifles, were thrown forward to meet Howe's forces which had marched out of Philadelphia as if to attack Washington's army. In a sharp skirmish they drove back the advance parties of the enemy, but were compelled to retire when the British were reinforced.

On January 9, 1779, Gist was promoted to the rank of brigadier general. In the following year he accompanied the Maryland line to the Carolinas and at the battle of Camden, his brigade stood immovable in the midst of the panic flight. "Firm as a rock, the resistance of Gist," was the comment of an eye witness, a parallel phrase to that which, four score years later, practically changed the name of Thomas J. Jackson to "Stonewall." In fact, the Maryland bayonet had nearly turned the tide of victory, and but for Gates' folly in failing to recognize the need of cavalry in his campaign, the disaster to the American arms at Camden might have been averted. Howard's impetuous charge broke the British front and Cornwallis, becoming genuinely alarmed, concentrated his whole strength against the two American brigades numbering only eight hundred men. The struggle was desperate. Beset by cavalry in front and rear while still engaged with the infantry, the little band of Americans were overwhelmed. Gist and Howard managed to effect their escape, each with a small part of his men. The brave Baron De Kalb, commanding the Maryland line fell mortally wounded and died with praise of the valor of his Marylanders on his lips. At the very moment of its distress over the humiliating outcome of Gates' campaign, from which it had hoped for such a different ending, congress took occasion to vote thanks to Gist and Smallwood for their conduct at Camden. The ranks of the Maryland line had been by this time so depleted by its losses in battle that it had become necessary to recruit new levies and General Gist was sent to Maryland for that purpose. He returned to the army later and was present at the surrender of Cornwallis.

At the close of the war General Gist returned to Baltimore on November 21, 1783, the officers of the Maryland line who met to organize a state branch of the Society of the Cincinnati, chose him as its vice president. Shortly afterwards he removed to South Carolina, in which state his uncle, Richard Gist, had settled before the war and had been killed at the battle of King's Mountain. General Gist died at his home near Charleston, August 2, 1792.

JOHN CARROLL LE GRAND.
(1814-1861.)

John Carroll Le Grand, chief justice of the court of appeals of Maryland, was born in Baltimore in 1814. He was the son of Samuel D. Le Grand, who settled in Maryland in 1780, and the grandson of Gen. le Comte Claudius Just Alexandre Le Grand, count of the empire, peer of France, chevalier Grand Cross Double Eagle, Legion of Honour, etc., Inspector General of the French Armies under Emperor Napoleon I. Judge Le Grand was educated in private schools. His first intention was to be a merchant and he entered a counting room, but a short experience in business caused him to change his mind, and he commenced the study of law. Reverdy Johnson has said of him: "He prepared himself for the profession which he was destined so soon and so signally to honor under difficulties that would have proved insurmountable to most young men; with laudable ambition and mental energy and that almost intuitive confidence that nature would seem ever to impart to her favorite intellectual sons, he persevered until—even though without much practical experience at the bar and at an early comparative age—he became, in the judgment of the profession and of his judicial associates, an able and accomplished judge." He studied law under the direction of Hon. James M. Buchanan, minister at the Court of Denmark, during the administration of President Buchanan and a