

**“Merchantable Lease Tobacco,”** like that promised in a 17th-century note (below), long kept colonial purses fat and European smokers happy. Though diminished in importance, it is still a major crop along the Bay’s western shore, where young Richard Lee Burch (left) impales stalks on a

stick for curing in the family barns.

A tiny flaw in a block of type (bottom right) identifies it as the “M” in the 1685 document. Thought to be the oldest found in this country, the type was discovered at an archaeological site (bottom) in old St. Marys City—Maryland’s first capital.

