

Population statistics either for the county or the province at the close of the seventeenth century are scanty and not altogether reliable. Governor Blakiston in April 1701 estimated that there was in the province (excluding Baltimore County) a total of 32,258 inhabitants (including servants and negro slaves), equally divided between the eastern and western shores of the Chesapeake, and in Prince Georges County alone a total of 2,358. Assuming the ratio between taxables and untaxed inhabitants remained constant, it would appear that in 1696 the entire population of the province was about 27,000 inhabitants (10,381 taxables). Again, for 1698, by extending the figure of 818 taxables a total population for Prince Georges County of about 2,000 is arrived at.¹³

Most of the inhabitants were engaged in the production of tobacco. The greatest part of the scarce, highly-paid artisans were coopers and carpenters, also largely engaged in pursuits connected with the production and marketing of tobacco. A few inhabitants navigated sloops, shallops and brigantines on the Chesapeake or in intercolonial trade—there were about 165 ships built since 1689 or building in the colony in 1697.¹⁴

The majority of the inhabitants were members of the Church of England but there were a substantial number of Quakers and Roman Catholics, as well as some Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Labadists.¹⁵

Negro slavery had yet to establish its absolute sway over the plantation economy of Maryland. The number of slaves in the province in 1700 probably did not greatly exceed 3,000, largely employed as domestic servants; of this number there were probably not more than 300 in Prince Georges County. There was no mass importation of negro slaves into the colony at this time. In the year 1698 Governor Nicholson reported the arrival of only about 470 negroes into the province. One account of slaves imported into the province for the period from mid-summer 1698 to the end of 1699 shows only 352 imported.¹⁶ In the court records here reproduced, references to negroes are rare. There are no cases involving runaway slaves or the sale or transfer of slaves. But for a few fleeting references to mulatto bastards born to white servant women there would be no indication that the institution of negro slavery existed in the province.

In Maryland, as elsewhere in the English continental colonies at the time, the principal supply of labor consisted of white servants bound by indenture. Most of this class of laborers, before leaving England, obligated themselves to work in the province for a term of years, usually four to seven, transportation across the Atlantic constituting part of the consideration. Freemen in the province, frequently former servants, unable or unwilling to make their living independently, sometimes bound themselves out as indentured hired servants. In the case of servants "by the custom of the country", there was no indenture and the terms and conditions of servitude were fixed by law. Transported convicts provided another source of labor and for certain offences the provincial courts were authorized to punish by imposition of servitude or by extensions of existing terms. In some cases judgment debtors were bound out by courts to satisfy the judgment; impoverished debtors sometimes voluntarily bound themselves to satisfy their debts. Children

13. 25 *MA* 255; *infra* 53, 615. For the definition of a taxable see 22 *MA* 515. Karinen estimates population for the entire province of 26,000 in 1694 and 34,000 in 1701, and for Prince Georges County of 2,300 in 1700. *Maryland Population: 1631-1730: Numerical and Distributional Aspects*, 54 *MHM* 365, 373, 405 (1959).

14. 19 *MA* 540; 22 *id.* 14; Morriss, *op. cit. supra*, 114-15.

15. Thompson, *Maryland at the End of the Seventeenth Century*, 2 *MHM* 165 (1907); 2 Andrews, *op. cit. supra*, 355; 23 *MA* 81.

16. 22 *id.* 256-57; 23 *id.* 498; Morriss, *op. cit. supra*, 79-80.