

# Preface

Publication of this second volume of the *Biographical Dictionary of the Maryland Legislature, 1635–1789*, occurs in Maryland's 350th year. The Hall of Records Commission is particularly pleased to contribute to the state's commemoration of its long and distinguished history by presenting these biographical profiles of men who in large measure, for more than a century and a half, shaped Maryland's government. The stalwart adventurers who braved the seas on the *Ark* and the *Dove* found in Maryland a "fruitful and delightsome land." The climate, soil, bountiful bay and rivers, and cooperative Indians proved auspicious omens for Lord Baltimore's colony in the New World. But despite these favorable aspects, many challenges and travails would have to be met before the colony's success would be assured.

That Maryland did grow and prosper was owing to the toil and dedication of its citizens—gentry and servants, slaves and freemen, men and women. But the ones most directly responsible for the development of a public policy for the new colony and for shaping its course through good times and bad are the men described here and in the preceding volume. The individual characteristics and accomplishments of these men varied considerably and changed substantially over time. What they all shared was their desire to serve their constituents and their state as well and as responsibly as possible. These biographies, it is hoped, will provide a better appreciation of the nature of political participation and leadership during the formative years of Maryland's history.

When the authors of this project defined the rationale and developed a research design for what became known as the Maryland Legislative History Project, their implicit goal was to create the best dictionary of its type. Most of all they wanted a balanced presentation, where the same kinds of information in a dozen different categories would be sought for each man who served in the General Assembly. The political history of colonial America has too often focused on the lives and actions of a few prominent men for whom salient information is readily available. The authors were convinced that providing comparable data on each of the nearly fifteen hundred men who served in the General Assembly in the time period covered was the only way to achieve a full and accurate understanding of the political process in early Maryland.

Fully cognizant of the ambitiousness of the undertaking, the project directors assembled a team of part-time researchers to undertake the exacting work required to complete the project. The composition of the research team changed over time, but the expertise gained in the early stages of research was perpetuated and perfected as new members were added to the team. The accumulated knowledge of primary sources and the sensitivity and creativity in their use developed by the research team cannot be overemphasized. Furthermore, the printed biographical profiles are but a condensation of the research conducted on each legislator. The materials in the legislators' research files are fully documented and contain invaluable information for anyone investigating any particular legislator or group of men who served in the General Assembly. All of these research files are available to the public, either in the Hall of Records search room or on microform through interlibrary loan. In