

*A Bicentennial Commemoration of the Departure of
Maryland's Last Proprietary Governor*

SIR ROBERT EDEN

From Annapolis June 23, 1776

Welcome to St. John's College, and Introduction of the Chairman
by Dr. Richard D. Weigle, President of St. John's College, Annapolis

The National Anthems

Annapolis Senior High School Band, Michael J. Svec, Director

Presentation of Colors: 97th United States Army Reserve Command
Fort George G. Meade, Benjamin L. Hunton, Major General

Invocation: The Reverend Richard V. Landis, Rector, St. Anne's Parish

Introduction of Guests on the Platform by the Chairman,
Charles Mathias, United States Senator

Remarks and Introduction of The Lord Avon tape, by His Excellency,
The Honourable Sir Peter Ramsbotham, K.C.M.G., Ambassador of
Great Britain

Taped Remarks by The Right Honourable Sir Anthony Eden,
Earl of Avon, former Prime Minister of Great Britain

Remarks by The Right Honourable Sir John Eden, M.P.,
7th Baronet of Maryland

Presentation of Annapolis Bowl to the Earl of Avon, to be received
in his behalf by Mrs. W. Averell Harriman

Maryland, My Maryland, by the Annapolis Senior High School Band



This program commemorating the departure of Sir Robert Eden, 1st Baronet of Maryland, and last Proprietary Governor, and the commencement of the Independence of the State, has been made possible through the kindness of the Society of the Ark and the Dove, George Davis Calvert, Jr., Governor

The Annapolis Bowl is presented through the courtesy of The Stieff Company, Baltimore

Taped by The Right Honourable The Earl of Avon

in March, 1976 at the home of

Governor W. Averell Harriman, Hobe Sound, Florida.

I AM VERY GLAD to have this opportunity to send to you in Maryland my warmest congratulations on this very happy Bicentennial anniversary. I do this with all the more sincerity because, as some of you know, my great-great-grandfather, Sir Robert Eden, was the last Colonial Governor of Maryland and felt much sympathy for the Marylanders and their point of view. This he expressed forcefully to government, family and friends in England, so much so that when he wrote to them he frequently used the pronoun "we", meaning himself and the people of Maryland, and this was accepted. For instance, his brother William, who was later sent from England as a Commissioner to negotiate for peace, wrote to him, "You have rather a predilection for America." This was true and Eden's preference was no doubt reinforced by his affection for Maryland as well as by some inept handling by the British Government. As one of the Governor's contemporaries in Maryland wrote of him, "His views appear solely directed to advance the interests of the community; and to preserve, by every possible method, the public's tranquility."

This he contrived to do through many troubled years during which Eden was striving to make his Government see that there was justice in the demands of the Colonies. He was still in Annapolis in the Spring of 1776, in spite of complaints from Virginia on the one side and Pennsylvania on the other. Maryland had resented any suggestion of interference and its Council had allowed Governor Eden to remain. It was indeed not until May 24th that a committee of five, appointed by the Maryland Convention, called upon Eden to tell him that he was "at full liberty to depart peaceably with all his effects." Eden replied that he should "still continue most sincerely to wish for the welfare and prosperity of Maryland, and consequently, for a reconciliation with and constitutional dependency on Great Britain." He sailed away on His Majesty's ship *Fowey*, on June 23, 1776, eleven days before the Declaration of Independence. I believe it is true to say that in no other state did the hand-over take place so smoothly and with such good humour on both sides.

But you had not seen the last of my ancestor. During his Governorship he and a Colonel of Militia from Virginia across the river, George Washington, became close friends. When, after the peace was signed, the former Colonial Governor, Robert Eden, returned to Maryland, Dr. Upton Scott gave a dinner at his home on Shipwright Street in Annapolis. His principal guests were the Commander-in-Chief, the victorious General George Washington, and Robert Eden. The ex-governor spent some months in Annapolis. Unfortunately, as one observant lady wrote, "Sir Robert Eden seems in bad health. He does not flirt now." He died of a fever that summer.

Several of your historians have written generously of my great-great-grandfather's governorship, but I like best this tribute: "This last colonial governor has become a symbol of the close ties between the English-speaking peoples. He stands as a strong link in the chain that makes for happy relationship between Maryland and Great Britain." These words could well serve as his epitaph and I would like to think that in my time I have been true to them also.

In the same context, I would now like to speak of more recent history. In March 1943 I was paying an official visit to the United States. I was then Foreign Secretary in Winston Churchill's wartime government and spent nearly three weeks in meetings with President Franklin Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull discussing the many international problems which confronted our two countries then and which would arise when the victory was won. John Winant, your invaluable Ambassador in London in those war years, was with me. One evening the President said to me, "Anthony, you will have to make a speech to us before you go home. Where shall it be?" After some talk the President commented, "I know where you must speak, in Annapolis. The State Legislature of Maryland will meet to hear you and we will link you up with all the other State Legislatures across the country."

And so it came about. I shall never forget that evening. In Annapolis my ancestor had laid the foundation stone of the State House during his term of office. When I spoke in its beautiful hall with his portrait behind me—all this and the kindly welcome extended to me—made me feel that I was an Annapolis boy who had made good. I often wonder whether if my ancestor had not died so suddenly at a comparatively young age on his return to Annapolis in 1784, he might not later have brought his family out to join him and made his home among you. This is all conjecture, of course, but it gives me, I feel, a special right to congratulate you on the progress, remarkable by any standards, which you have achieved in this state and throughout your great country in the last 200 years.

The practise of self-government by a free people is the most exacting exercise of which the human mind is capable. Yet to succeed in it is an inescapable condition of happiness. Material gains for the massed millions across the world are not to be despised, but to you and we who have once tasted and enjoyed freedom and equality before the law, they can never take first place. It is because you have understood this and have set us an example in the practise of open and virile democracy, against all trials and hazards across this vast continent, that I say to you that your success in the art of government is vital to its success throughout the free world. There can be no future for any of us otherwise. Yours is a record which has nowhere been surpassed in the long and checkered history of this restless planet. I pray that the United States will continue to grow in strength and kindness and lead us all into those conditions of freedom and peace upon which the true progress of the world depends.

"June 23, 1776 . . ."

ROBERT EDEN, Governor of Maryland since 1769 when he was appointed to the post by his brother-in-law, Frederick, sixth Lord Baltimore, was just twenty-eight years old when he arrived in the colony on June 5 of that year. As governor of a proprietary colony, the private preserve of the Calvert family, Eden had great power through his ability to make patronage appointments. Unlike some of his predecessors, however, he did not abuse his power and he was generally well-liked by the citizens of Maryland during his six-year term as governor, even by many members of the "anti-proprietary" party.

Handsome and convivial, Governor Eden did remarkably well keeping himself out of serious trouble during the turbulent months of early 1776. On the basis of two intercepted letters to Eden written by Lord George Germain of the British Colonial Office, the Continental Congress ordered his arrest in April, but the Maryland Council of Safety refused to obey on the grounds that Congress had no right to interfere in the internal affairs of the colony. By late May, however, it had become clear that events were inexorably propelling the colonies toward declaring independence from Great Britain, and Eden recognized that his usefulness in the colony he loved was at an end. On May 26, Eden dispatched his secretary, Robert Smith, to the commander of the ship *Roebuck* stationed off Gwynn's Island near the mouth of the Rappahannock River in Virginia asking that a vessel be sent as soon as possible to take him aboard. Days passed, but the vessel failed to arrive. Tension mounted as those who opposed permitting Eden to leave unmolested became more vocal. On June 16, William Eddis, a close friend and supporter of the Governor, expressed the apprehension of the Governor and his friends: "Not any intelligence is yet received of the expected ship. The governor appears rather anxious for her arrival, and his friends are solicitous for his immediate departure, as there are busy spirits at work who labor to excite commotions with a view to his detention." The Council of Safety kept its promise to permit Eden to leave peacefully, however, and on Saturday evening, June 22, the *Fowey* man-of-war arrived in the Bay outside the Annapolis harbor. The following morning, June 23, Governor Eden was visited for the final time by the members of the Council of Safety and he was then "conducted to the barge with every mark of respect." About an hour later, Eden reached the *Fowey* and "was received on board under a discharge of cannon." The *Fowey* weighed anchor three days later.

Shortly after his arrival in England, King George III created Robert Eden a Baronet in gratitude for his service to the crown in Maryland. Sir Robert returned to Maryland soon after peace was declared, dying in Annapolis on September 2, 1784 at the house of his friend, Dr. Upton Scott. He was interred at the old St. Margaret's Church a few miles outside town; in 1926 his remains were removed to St. Anne's Church in Annapolis.

DR. GREGORY A. STIVERSON,
Assistant State Archivist
Hall of Records, Maryland