

## COLONIAL HISTORY OF HORN POINT

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The written history of Horn Point begins in the summer of 1659 at a pivotal moment, not only in the Chesapeake, but also in England. Since the beheading of King Charles I in 1649 by Puritans in Parliament, Englishmen had been in a quandary about what alternative government might be appropriate. Rising from obscurity because of his organizational and fierce fighting skills, Oliver Cromwell soon filled the leadership gap becoming 'Lord Protector' of the Commonwealth. Sensing an opportunity, Puritans in the Chesapeake overthrew crusty old governor Berkeley in Virginia and eventually wrested control of Maryland from Cecil Calvert the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lord Baltimore and sent his Governor Stone into private life. However back in London, Lord Baltimore ingratiated himself with the new Puritan regime and by the late 1650s was regaining political control of the Province. And another little detail: in September 1658, that mighty old warhorse, Oliver Cromwell passed away leaving a muddled succession. By the middle of 1659, it was clear to many that some change had to occur in England or they would drift in to utter chaos. Adjusting to the new changes and sensitive to encroachment of his Province from the East, Cecil Calvert began granting land patents on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. These were not outright grants but instruments of ownership in which the land was held in common succage by the proprietor (Lord Baltimore) and the patentee and depended on the latter paying an annual rent. The rules were unchanged from the ones he had laid out in 1649: a hundred acres would be granted for each certified person the patentee brought into the province. The Eastern Shore boom began in 1658 and continued for a decade as prime tracts became ripe for settlement and speculation.

On August 13 of 1659, ten years before the name Dorchester County appears in the historical record of Maryland, three properties were surveyed as a group on the south bank of the Choptank River. The smallest, a tract for 200 acres, was laid out for John Jenkins for which Jenkins Creek is named, east of the Country Club. John Jenkins did not settle however and quickly transferred his property later named "Cliff" to Mark Benton in April of 1661 who in turn sold it to William Stevens five years later. Using an oak tree as a beginning point on the northwest side of the "Cliff", the surveyors continued in 1659 to lay out a much larger 600 acre tract for John Horne, a London merchant who had bought property on the Patuxent River the year before. The third property was "St Anthony" (later also called "Antonine"), an 800 acre plantation laid out for a French Huguenot, Anthony LeCompte who did indeed settle with a large family on what was then called Horne Bay (now called LeCompte's Bay). Although Anthony LeCompte lived only a few more years, his sons Moses, John and Anthony split the property after his death and their descendants lived for many more generations around LeCompte Bay.

John Horne is notable in Maryland history not only because Horn Point would be named after him, but also he transported a man from England who later cut a wide swath through the land records of the Eastern Shore, John Edmondson. Because the high bluff of "Horne" had a magnificent view downriver it was an ideal location for an enterprising wealthy merchant-planter and it attracted someone itching to move to the Eastern Shore. John Horne soon transferred his 600 acres on the south bank Choptank (via a mariner of London, Walter Dunch) to Richard Preston of Calvert County.

Having emigrated from Virginia in 1649 when Governor Berkeley threw out the Puritans, Richard Preston rose to prominence in Maryland. But this was a tumultuous period and Lord Baltimore's fortunes in London waxed and waned in the English Civil Wars. Indeed Preston's house on the Patuxent (just upstream from our Solomons Lab), was the place they kept the records of Maryland during the Puritan take-over from Cecil Calvert. One of the most remarkable aspects about the political struggle was that after Lord Baltimore was able to regain political control of the province in the late 1650s, he did not vindictively eject his previous opponents and Richard Preston remained a potent political figure in Maryland, serving thereafter in the assembly. Richard Preston was not only wealthy but charismatic as well, representing Calvert County as a burgess from 1653 to 1668 and in later life was known as the 'Great Quaker'. In 1668 he re-patented "Horne" and the next year was elected the first representative to the Maryland Assembly from Dorchester County. Unfortunately, he died just as he moved in to a well-built brick house at "Horne" a couple of hundred yards west of the marsh behind our new Aquaculture and Restoration Ecology Laboratory. In his will, Richard Preston left numerous properties to his children. "Horne" was split between two of his daughters: Sarah and Rebecca.

When Sarah Preston married William Ford in January of 1670 the year he emigrated from Bristol, England, the couple made "Horne" their dwelling plantation. In 1674 and 1675 William Ford served as a delegate to the Assembly and was made a Justice for Dorchester County from 1774 to 1676. Also he obtained patents for several other properties in Dorchester, including one which is now underwater at Blacker National Wildlife Refuge, before his death in 1679. Sarah then married Edward Pinder. The Pinders added another parcel to their plantation, "Pinders Garden". Richard Preston's other daughter Rebecca married Lovelace Gorsuch, a Quaker who had also been driven out of Virginia in Governor Berkley's 1649 purge with his two brothers.

Late in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the brick dwelling plantation house at "Horne" burned and was abandoned to be excavated by Judy Jull and her colleagues in the 1970s. In many ways this was fortuitous for us. Her archeological research revealed that "Horne" was one of the showplace houses on the Choptank. Around 1700, Lord Baltimore's rent rolls show that "Horne" was still owned by Lovelace Gorsuch and the 'widow Pinder', but eventually it passed to three owners: Henry Trippe, James Dossey, and David Perterkin. However, in the 1740s another powerful headstrong lawyer-legislator, Charles Goldsborough (1707-1767) fancied "Horne" and bought them out. By 1747 he had consolidated several parcels into an enlarged "Horne" containing 1,020 acres. He was the third son of Robert Goldsborough of "Ashby" in Talbot County and his elder brother Robert became the master of "Myrtle Grove" on the Miles River.

Charles Goldsborough settled in Dorchester when he married Elizabeth, daughter of Joseph Ennals in 1730. When his first wife died, Charles Goldsborough married Elizabeth Dickinson daughter of Samuel Dickinson of Kent County Delaware and he eventually rose to take a seat on the Maryland Council in 1760. At his death in 1767, Charles Goldsborough owned over 10,000 acres of land. His son Robert was born at "Horns Point" and became a member of the Council of Maryland and later a delegate to the constitutional convention in Philadelphia after the Revolution. In many ways succeeding generations who included the Goldsboroughs and Duponts added to the luster of this property. Indeed very few colonial tracts have managed to survive intact in about the same size anywhere on the Chesapeake and we are fortunate to have this legacy as part of our Horn Point heritage.