



The Dove:

**MARITIME**

**MYTHBUSTING**

**WITH MARYLAND'S**

**ORIGINAL**

**"COMPANY TRUCK"**

by Kate Livie

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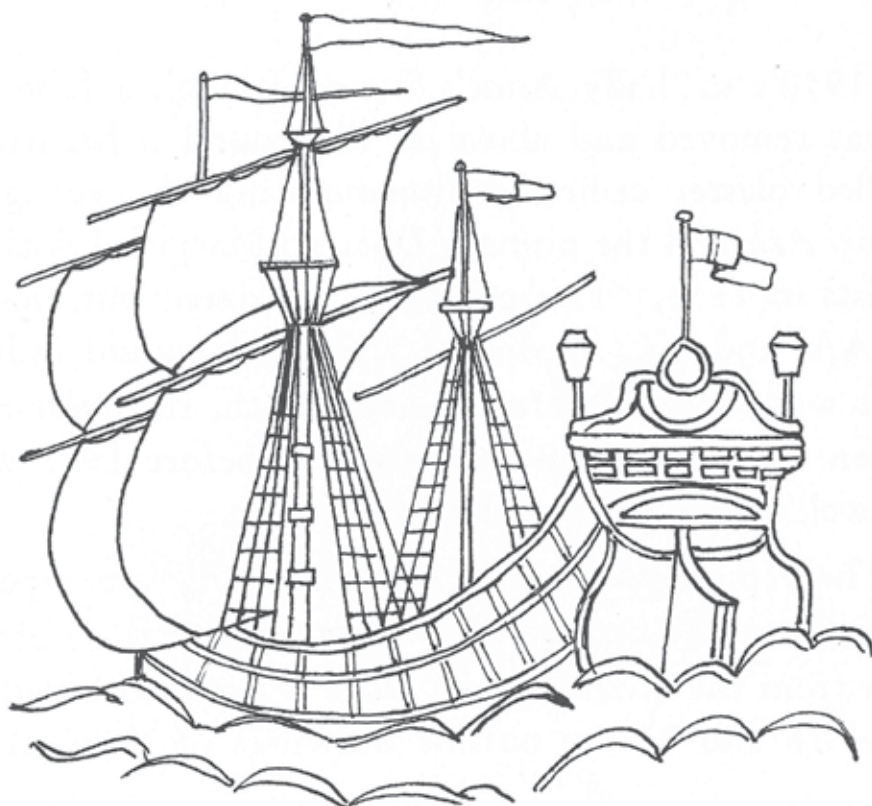


Figure 16. Ship *Ark*, 1633.

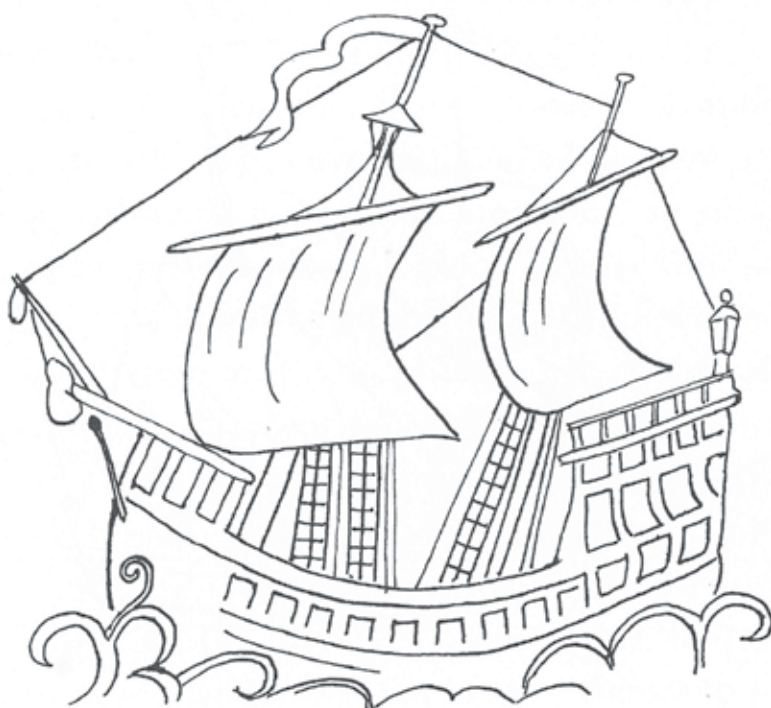


Figure 17. Pinnace *Dove*, 1633.

**E**VERY CHILD IN MARYLAND, at some point, learns the basics of Maryland's founding story. In 1632, we learn, English King Charles I gave George Calvert a royal charter for the colony of Maryland. George promptly died, but his son Cecil Calvert—Lord Baltimore—inherited the land. Seeking to establish a colony founded on religious freedom, Cecil Calvert sent his brother, Leonard, to lead a group of settlers to Maryland in 1634. The colonists, mostly Catholic, traveled aboard two ships on a voyage of four months; the larger ship, *Ark*, carried passengers, while the smaller pinnace, *Dove*, carried provisions. Facing hardship, the colonists persevered, ultimately establishing the town of St. Mary's, which would be the capital of the colony for many years.

While that summary might have garnered you an "A" in history class in 1975, thanks to modern scholarship, we know now it is almost entirely incorrect. According to Will Gates, maritime curator for Historic St. Mary's City, and Joe Greeley, former site supervisor for *Maryland Dove*, very little about our Maryland origin story has held up under the rigorous microscope of historical research. From the size of the original *Dove* to the religious leanings of the settlers bound for Maryland, almost all of the elements central to our founding myth just don't hold water.

So here, we have provided the opportunity for Gates and Greeley to set the record straight—and reveal a more nuanced, accurate version of events that is far more compelling than your grammar school history book might have suggested.

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**Left:** Pen-and-ink drawing of plaster ornaments that adorn Hook House, home of Anne Arundell Calvert in Tisbury, Wiltshire, England. Figures 16 and 17, *Colonial Vessels: Some Seventeenth-Century Ship Designs* (1962), William A. Baker. Barre Publishing.

**Right:** This watercolor shows the 1634 *Dove* with coastal rigging. The depiction of *Dove* here is based on research by Joe Greeley, Historic St. Mary's City former site supervisor for the *Maryland Dove*, providing a "best guess" for what it likely looked like. Painting by Carolyn Corbin, 2016. Courtesy of Historic St. Mary's City.

# MYTH #1

## THE ORIGINAL DOVE WAS A SUPPLY SHIP

"THE *ARK* WAS 400 TONS, THE *DOVE* WAS 40 TONS," explains Gates, "and to give you a sense of scale, the *Mayflower* was 180 tons—that's pretty typical for ships crossing the Atlantic. The reason the *Dove* is hired and comes over is not to carry supplies, which is what Maryland history books are still telling people. At 400 tons, the *Ark* is definitely big enough to carry 150 colonists, equipment, supplies and everything else, but it's too big to be useful once they get here. The *Dove* was purchased by Lord Baltimore so that the colony would have a ship to use once the *Ark* dropped everyone off and departed for England."

Gates says that according to the only period account of the voyage, written by Jesuit priest Father Andrew White, there were only seven crew on the *Dove*, which also indicates a smaller vessel intended to be used for shorter voyages around the Chesapeake Bay region and along the East Coast. Gates' research also suggests that the original *Dove* may have been

brought over empty, but for ballast—something also indicated by White's account. "Very early into the voyage, two days off the Isle of Wight, the *Dove* is presumed lost—and nobody turns around to get her," Gates says. "If essential provisions had been on board, and the *Ark* was still in the English Channel, they would have gone back to investigate if she sank or if they needed to go back for more supplies."

The reason for bringing a nimble vessel like the *Dove*, says Gates, was not for cargo, but for her value in the New World. "In the 17th century, if you have a chance to choose between land or water travel, you'll choose water every time. Moving roughly 40 tons of goods overland in that time period would require 40 wagons, 80 horses or oxen, and 40 drivers, and the farthest you could get in a day's travel is 15 miles, maybe 20, whereas the *Dove* could move 80 to 100 miles on a decent day." To Gates, the real story behind the *Dove* is not about religious freedom. "The *Dove's* significance is much more about the importance of maritime travel to the survival and growth of the Chesapeake colony."

# MYTH #2

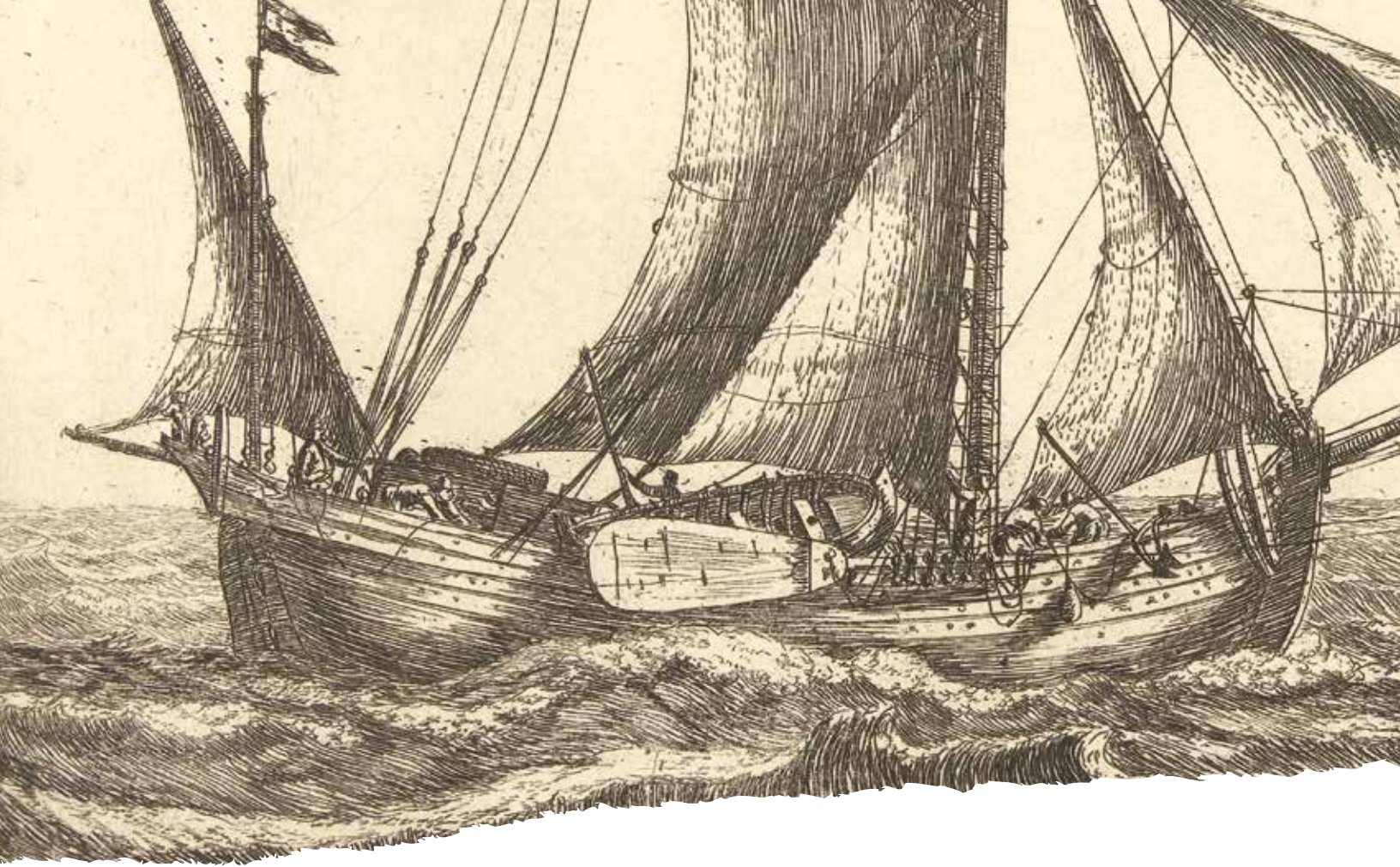
## MOST OF THE ENGLISH SETTLERS WERE CATHOLIC

**THERE WERE 140-150 PEOPLE ABOARD THE *ARK*** headed for the Chesapeake, Greeley explains. Prior to departure, 120 of these passengers took an oath of allegiance to Charles I. Part of that oath of fealty was not just to England, but to the king as the head of the Anglican church.

"That tells us we have at least 120 Protestants," says Greeley. "And maybe 12 or 15 Catholics, but not that many more. The ratio of Catholic to Protestant in Maryland from the founding until prior to the Revolutionary War is 90% Protestant, 10% Catholic."

The colony, Greeley notes, is a moneymaking venture for the Calvert family, who happen to be Catholic—but commerce and fortune-seeking are not a particularly uplifting message for a founding story, which is why the Catholic origin story has been so steadfastly promoted. Gates agrees. "It's harder to justify the noble westward expansion of European culture when it's just about resources and money."





## MYTH #3

### THE COLONISTS FACED A REMOTE WILDERNESS AND SEVERE HARDSHIP

**"UNLIKE JAMESTOWN, ST. MARY'S COLONISTS** never had to look at their neighbor and wonder how he would taste with Tabasco sauce," jokes Gates, referring to the infamous instances of cannibalism at the Chesapeake's struggling first colony. "At the end of the summer in 1634, the *Dove* is actually loaded with corn and sent up to Boston, to trade that corn for salt cod. That tells us a number of things—that there's already an established trade network and that St. Mary's colonists know where to trade what they have for what they want, and importantly, that Maryland has no starving time. Maryland, has a surplus of grain at the end of its first year."

The success of St. Mary's is a radically different story than Jamestown's rather dismal beginnings, which Gates attributes to several factors. There were good relations with the local Piscataway people, perhaps because the colonists and their firearms were seen as a potential deterrent to the raiding Susquehannock tribes, who had long plagued the native communities.

That element of safety—and putting the colonists between the Susquehannocks and the Piscataways' town—also may have played into the negotiations between the settlers and the Piscataway regarding the colony's settlement location. Gates explains, "We think that the Indians looked at the English and thought, 'we were already thinking over moving to the other side of the river. We'll move and let the English deal with the Susquehannocks.'"

This deal proved immensely valuable for the St. Mary's colonists, who were able to move into an established Piscataway town, complete with houses, a good anchorage, and cleared fields. "The location—a high plain with springs coming out of bluffs, well-drained, with crops already in the field—gave them a heck of a head start," Greeley says.

Ultimately, that head start meant a bright future for St. Mary's, which would remain the state capital of Maryland for 61 years. It did not, however, spell success for the *Dove*,



**Above:** The vessel on the left, labeled "Een Boeyer," is rigged in the way Gates and Greeley feel the 1634 *Dove* most likely would have been. "Two ships: a bogeier and a galleon A Boeyer, a Galioot." Print by Reinier Nooms, 1652-1654. Courtesy of Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

which remained at St. Mary's to operate, Gates explains, "as basically the company truck."

In August of 1635, *Dove* is loaded with furs and corn—the bounty of a fruitful colony—and sent to England to sell her cargo.

"She never gets there. She's lost at sea, somewhere between Maryland and England," Greeley says. "It could be 20 feet off our dock, it could be right off the coast of England. We'll never know. It's a big ocean and, ultimately, if the ocean wants you, the ocean will take you."

The reconstruction of the new *Maryland Dove* at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum will provide the opportunity to set the record straight about Maryland's founding.

"When Historic St. Mary's City commissioned the vessel in the early '70s, what they wanted was a 200-ton tobacco ship," says Gates. "At the time, there was this idea that Historic St. Mary's City was going to be a sort of Williamsburg affair. But 200 tons was way out of their price range. Instead they made it a more affordable and smaller tobacco ship but named it after the *Dove*, which allowed them to raise money more easily."

Gates' hope is that the new *Maryland Dove* will be truer to the original—a small vessel, like the shallop at Jamestown or the *Speedwell* at Plymouth, that was intended for coast-wise use in the new colonies. The rigging and sails are especially important.

"What we're going with is what we think is as close as we can get to the original vessel," says Greeley. "With ketch rigging, the mainmast will have a big fore and aft sail, probably a standing gaff, a square topsail, and the ability to set the square mainsail for those times when she's running above the wind, a staysail, and a jib. My hope is that she will work to windward much better than the current square rig of the vessel."

When complete, this new *Maryland Dove* will be her own sort of rebuttal to the myths of the past—a new take on history that also meets the needs of the 21st century.

"My wish is that we end up with something that is more accurately representative of the original 1634 vessel," says Gates, "but also to have a vessel that's a little handier in the waters that we're sailing, and meets the modern needs of the program with safety standards while combining historical accuracy."

Rebuilding St. Mary's 17th century "company truck" to meet these specifications will pose a steep challenge, but one that the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum—long known for maintaining and creating skipjacks, log canoes, and other water-going pick-up trucks and tractor-trailers—is all set to tackle. ★