Charles County

# Birthplace
## of Religious Freedom...

The desire to freely worship is a theme that runs throughout American history and its roots are deeply planted here in St. Mary's County. Founded in 1634 by a Catholic Lord Baltimore under a land grant from an Anglican King Charles I, Maryland was the first English Colony where the concepts of religious freedom and the separation of church and state were practiced and protected by law, at least for a time.

**ST. MARY'S COUNTY**

LEONARDTOWN

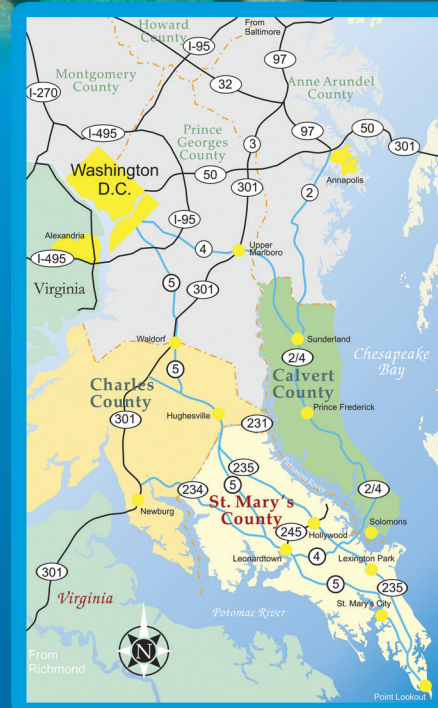Patuxent River Naval Air Museum & Visitor Center

ST. MARY'S CITY

The religious and political conflicts in England ignited tensions in Maryland between Catholics and Protestants. An increasing Protestant population was resentful of the control Catholics and friends of Lord Baltimore had over the government. They were also outraged over the government's reluctance to acknowledge the new Protestant King William and Queen Mary. In 1689, Protestants attacked the capital at St. Mary's City and seized control of the government. Ownership of the colony shifted to the Crown.

In 1692, a law was passed establishing the Anglican Church as the official church of the colony. The 1649 Act Concerning Religion, among the first laws in North America allowing liberty of conscience for all Christians, was abolished. It became illegal to build a Catholic church in Maryland or for Catholics to hold public office until after the American Revolution. Belief in the separation of church and state and in religious liberty survived and is now protected by the United States Constitution.

*Many of St. Mary's Historic Churches are on the National Register of Historic Places and the Religious Freedom National Scenic Byway.*

*A few of the sites included in this brochure are state parks or publicly-accessible museums. However, most are private churches. If you would like to tour any of the churches, we recommend you contact their administrative offices.*

**VisitStMarysMd.com**

Where the Potomac meet the Chesapeake
**St. Mary's** COUNTY MD

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Listings are based on information provided to the St. Mary's County Division of Tourism and reasonable efforts have been made to insure accuracy. Please call ahead to individual locations to confirm details when planning your visit.

*Cover photo: Stained glass window in Trinity Church, St. Mary's City.*
*All photos by Conni Leigh James*

St. Mary's County, Maryland

# Historic Churches
## and Religious Sites

Where the Potomac meet the Chesapeake
**St. Mary's** COUNTY MD

**Explore the birthplace of religious freedom in the U.S., just south of the nation's capital!**

**VisitStMarysMd.com**

## ~St. Clement's Island~

**1**

l 38370 Point Breeze Road, Colton's Point, MD 20626
301-769-2222
www.stmarysmd.com/recreate/Museums.asp

In March of 1634, Father Andrew White stepped ashore at St. Clement's Island with the first Maryland colonists. It was there that he celebrated the first Catholic mass in the English speaking colonies. A 40' cross was erected on the island in 1934 to commemorate the mass and to mark Maryland's founding. The island is now a state park and is accessible by private boat or by a seasonal water taxi operated by the St. Clement's Island Museum.

## ~St. George's Episcopal Church~

**5**

19167 Poplar Hill Lane, Valley Lee, MD 20692
301-994-0585 • www.stgeorgesvalleylee.org

The first wooden church was built here between 1638 and 1642. The current church, built in 1799, is home to the oldest Episcopal Parish in Maryland and has held continuous services on site since 1638. *National Register of Historic Places.*

## ~Trinity Episcopal Church~

**9**

47477 Trinity Church Rd, St Marys City, MD 20686
301-862-4597 • www.trinitysmcmd.com

Originally established in 1638, the first Trinity Church was a wooden structure located on Smith Creek. In 1642, it was moved to St. Mary's City and in 1694, when the state capital was moved from St. Mary's City to Annapolis, the local State House served as the church for 134 years. The present-day church was constructed in 1829 using bricks salvaged from the original 1676 State House. *National Register of Historic Places.*

## ~St. Mary's Chapel~

**12**

12960 Point Lookout Road, Ridge, MD 20680
301-862-4597

In 1884, Trinity Church, located in St. Mary's City, sold a portion of its land to the State and used some of the proceeds to establish a chapel of ease in Ridge for its members who had to travel long distances to services. The stained glass windows, installed in 2002, were designed in a "Victorian/Art Nouveau" style. *National Register of Historic Places.*

## ~The Brick Chapel of 1667~

**2**

18751 Hogaboom Lane, St. Mary's City, MD 20686
800-SMC-1634 0149 • www.HSMCDigsHistory.org

This Roman Catholic Chapel, originally built in 1667, served as the focal point of the Catholic faith in Maryland until 1704, when the royal governor ordered the building locked and never again used for religious purposes. The Jesuits dismantled the building and used its brick to construct a new manor house at St. Inigoes Mission. The chapel has been reconstructed using 17th-century techniques on its original site at Historic St. Mary's City, a premier outdoor living history museum.
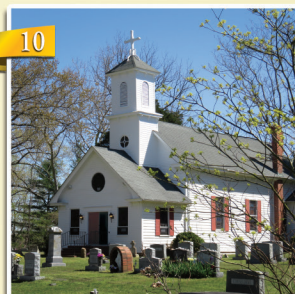
## ~All Faith Episcopal Church~

**6**

38885 New Market Turner Road
Mechanicsville, MD 20659
301-884-3773 • www.allfaithchurch.com

The Parish of All Faith was created in 1692. This church was built in 1767, replacing the original log structure. Highlights of the church include the rose window above the altar, the barrel shaped ceiling, a slave gallery, and original hand-wrought hardware. Complete records of its founding exist in the Hall of Records in Annapolis. *National Register of Historic Places.*
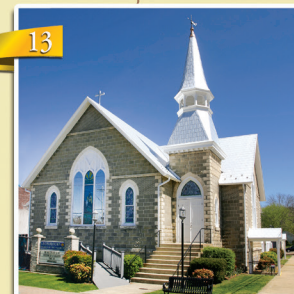
## ~All Saints Episcopal Church~

**10**

21569 Oakley Road, Avenue, MD 20609
301-769-2258 • http://allsaintsoakley.edow.org

The church began in 1642 when Thomas Gerard, a Roman Catholic, had a "chapel of ease" constructed for his Anglican wife. The present church dates to 1846.

## ~Leonardtown Church of the Nazerene~

**13**

22730 Washington Street, Leonardtown, MD 20650
240-561-5925 • www.lcotn.com

This Gothic-style concrete block building features six different types of concrete blocks molded on site. Pressed tin was used on the interior walls and ceiling of the church. It was built in 1915.

## ~St. Francis Xavier Church~

**3**

21370 Newtowne Neck Road, Leonardtown, MD 20650
301-475-9885 • www.stfrancisxavierchurch.org

Built in 1731, St. Francis Xavier Church replaced the original Newtown Chapel (1662). Unusual features include the barrel vault ceiling and two octagonally shaped brick ends. Also on site is Newtown Manor (1789) whose Flemish bond brickwork indicates its early construction. The church and manor (plus the now state-owned 700-acre farm that once was part of the property) are an example of a self-contained Jesuit community. *National Register of Historic Places.*
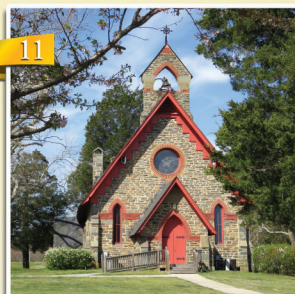
## ~St. Andrews Episcopal Church~

**7**

4078 St. Andrews Church Road, California, MD 20619
301-862-2247 • www.standrewsleonardtown.org

Built in 1767, the church was designed by William Boulton, who crafted the woodwork at nearby Sotterley Plantation. It is an outstanding example of Colonial architecture. The church's brick exterior has an unusual inset portico, a large Palladian window, and two towers. The interior features balconies and original box pews. A hand-lettered altarpiece, or reredos, was painted in 1771, and is one of three surviving in the country. *National Register of Historic Places.*

## ~Dent Chapel~

**11**

29449 Charlotte Hall Road, Charlotte Hall, MD 20622
301-934-6873 • www.stannes-acc.org

This chapel was erected in 1884 on the grounds of the Charlotte Hall Military Academy in memory of Reverend Hatch Dent, the academy's first principal. Built of granite with a decorative brick belt, it is considered one of the finest examples of Victorian Religious Gothic architecture in Maryland.

## ~St. Peter Claver Church~

**14**

16922 St. Peter Claver Road, St. Inigoes, MD 20684
301-872-5460 • www.stpeterclvr.org

When the original 1918 church burned in 1934, Philip Frohman, architect of the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., designed the new church which was completed in 1938. St. Peter Claver is the only predominantly African-American Catholic parish in the county. St. Peter Claver Catholic School was begun in 1916, and was the first Catholic school to provide education opportunities to African American children in St. Mary's County.
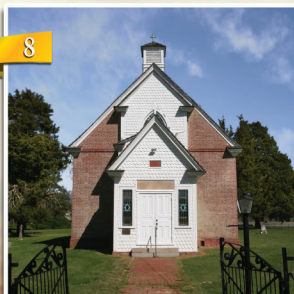
## ~Christ Episcopal Church~

**4**

37497 Zach Fowler Road, Chaptico, MD 20621
301-884-3451 • www.cckqp.net

Built of brick in a Flemish bond pattern with glazed headers in 1763, significant interior features include a semi-circular chancel, arched ceiling, crowned columns, and boxed pews. During the War of 1812, the British sailed up the Potomac River, vandalized the village of Chaptico, dug up graves, and stabled their horses inside the church. Several members of the Francis Scott Key family are buried in the Key Family vault. *National Register of Historic Places.*

## ~St. Ignatius Church~

**8**

End of Villa Road, St. Inigoes, MD 20684
GPS Coordinates: 38.150379, -76.423851

The first chapel of St. Ignatius was built in 1641 in St. Mary's City. In 1704, the colony's early policies of religious toleration were abolished and the chapel was closed. The church was dismantled and the bricks taken down river to land owned by the Jesuits. After the American Revolution, in 1785, the present-day St. Ignatius Church was built. *National Register of Historic Places.*

# Historic Churches and Religious Sites
## of St. Mary's County, Maryland