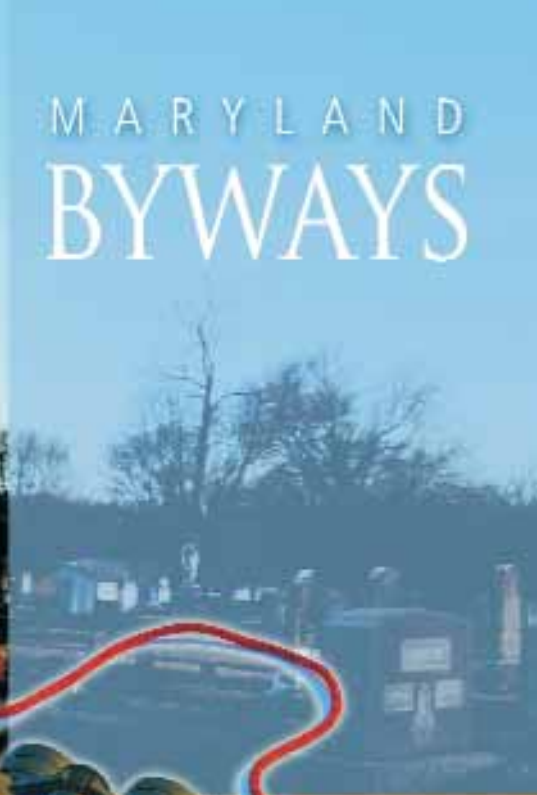
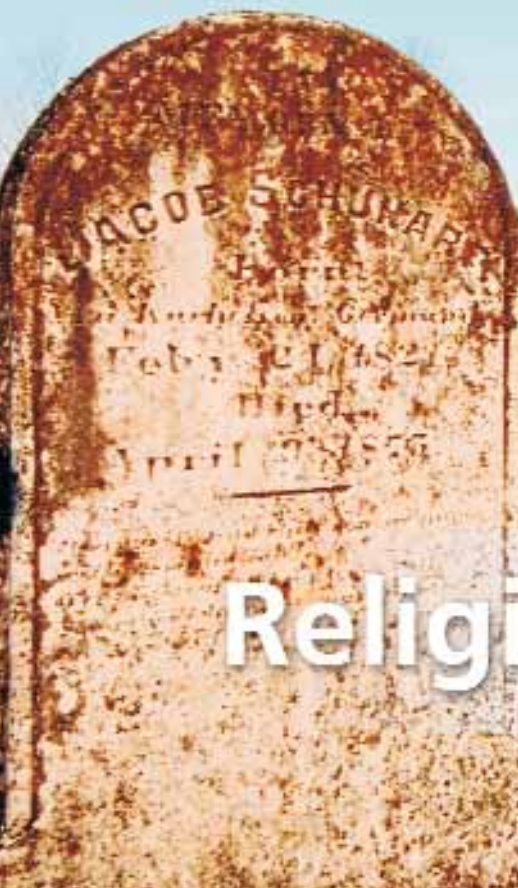


MARYLAND
BYWAYS

Religious Freedom Tour

16



America's roots of "toleration" run throughout Southern Maryland, where the original English settlers – Protestant and Catholic alike – recognized the rights of individuals to hold dissenting religious opinions. Now, such freedoms are celebrated at long-established places of worship all over the region.

This byway, with several branches that reach toward the Potomac River, incorporates many of the nation's oldest churches, the site of the first Roman Catholic Mass held in English-speaking America, and Maryland's colonial capital, Historic St. Mary's City. For some travelers, it's a spiritual pilgrimage; others simply admire the history. Either way, it's an inspirational journey through beautiful countryside, allowing you to commune with

nature while traveling into the heart of the Southern Maryland Heritage Area.

Upper Loop from Port Tobacco – Rose Hill Rd, MD 225, MD 224, MD 425 & MD 6

Port Tobacco was built on one of the earliest settlement sites in Maryland. When the first Europeans arrived, they found a Potopco Indian village here. Soon after, a missionary outpost was established by Jesuit Father Andrew White, one of the colony's original settlers. As you travel through town, drop by a one-room schoolhouse that was built in 1872, and then tour the Port Tobacco Courthouse, now a museum containing tobacco exhibits and archaeological finds.



189 miles from Port Tobacco to Point Lookout

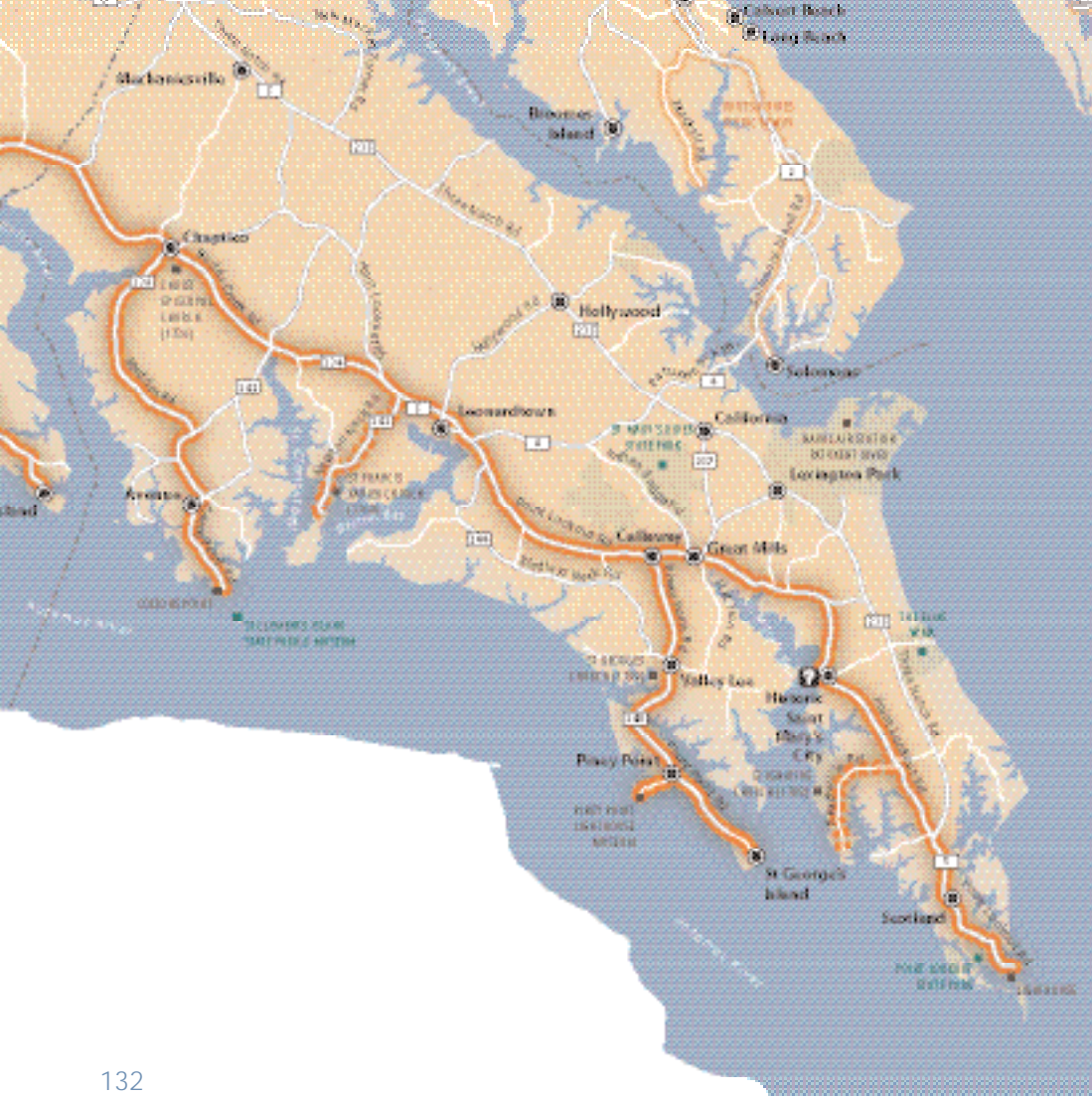


Southwest along MD 6, below an inviting place named Welcome, sits the Christ Church-Durham Parish. Dating to 1692, it is one of the original 30 parishes of the Church of England chartered in the Province of Maryland. The brick structure you see today was constructed in the 1730s.

Keep Mattawoman Creek to your left as you drive up MD 224 and arrive at Smallwood State Park. The estate of General William Smallwood, a Revolutionary War hero and fourth governor of Maryland, is the centerpiece of the park, which also has a marina that is the launching point for national bass-fishing competitions. From there, sidetrack into Purse State Park, a popular fossil-hunting location set on the Potomac River at Wades Bay.



The Religious Freedom Tour incorporates many of the nation's oldest churches.



As you loop back toward Port Tobacco, northwest of town along MD 225 is the Myrtle Grove Wildlife Management Area, which offers hunting, fishing and hiking around a 23-acre lake. Another option is to veer off of MD 225 into Mt. Carmel, site of the first nunnery in the colonies. Buildings have been restored using the original foundations of the convent, which was founded in 1790 by four Carmelite nuns together with Father Charles Neal of nearby Chandler's Hope. All five of Neal's brothers also became Catholic priests, with one, Leonard Neal, ascending to the position of Archbishop.

Your last stop on the first portion of this byway is the Thomas Stone National Historic Site. Stone, one of four signers of the Declaration of Independence to hail from Maryland,

lived in the 18th-century, Georgian mansion that dominates this 322-acre plantation.

Chapel Point to St. Clements Island – Chapel Point Rd, Pope's Creek Rd, US 301, MD 234, MD 238, MD 242

A spectacular view of the Potomac and Port Tobacco rivers awaits as you head toward Chapel Point, stopping at St. Ignatius Catholic Church and St. Thomas Manor. The church, founded by Jesuits in 1641, has remained active longer than any other parish in the country, and the manor house, constructed a century later, is the oldest Jesuit residence in continuous use in the world.

Just beyond the village of Popes Creek, which provides a link to the Booth's Escape byway (page 115),

you soon arrive at a branch that follows MD 257 and MD 254 to Cobb Island, well-known among fishermen and seafood aficionados. On the way to the island is Christ Protestant Episcopal Church, which was built in 1750 and counted a young Thomas Clagett among its parishioners. In 1792, Clagett became the first Episcopal bishop consecrated in the United States.

Back on the main route, you head east through the Zekiah Swamp Natural Environment Area toward Budds Creek, and then follow MD 234 into Chaptico, a port town that was occupied by the British during both the American Revolution and War of 1812. Christ Episcopal Church, King and Queen Parish, was built here in 1736, on land donated by Francis Scott Key's grandfather.



Branching off from Chaptico, follow MD 238 south to MD 242, which leads to Coltons Point. Here, the nationally accredited St. Clement's Island Museum features exhibits on Maryland's earliest history. Inquire about water taxi service to St. Clement's Island, the "Birthplace of Maryland," where Father White celebrated the first Catholic Mass in the British-American colonies. Today, the island is a 40-acre state park on which a 40-foot-tall cross honors those first colonists who, in 1634, conceptualized separation of church and state. The principles of religious liberty that they championed were a precursor to democratic ideals that inspired the framers of Maryland's Bill of Rights and later contributed to the United States' Bill of Rights.

Chaptico to Point Lookout – MD 234, MD 243, MD 5 & MD 249

Back on MD 234 and heading east once again, look for a sidetrack that takes you down MD 243 to St. Francis Xavier Church, the oldest Roman Catholic church in the state. Father James Ashby is believed to have built the present, wood-shingled structure just before his death in 1767.

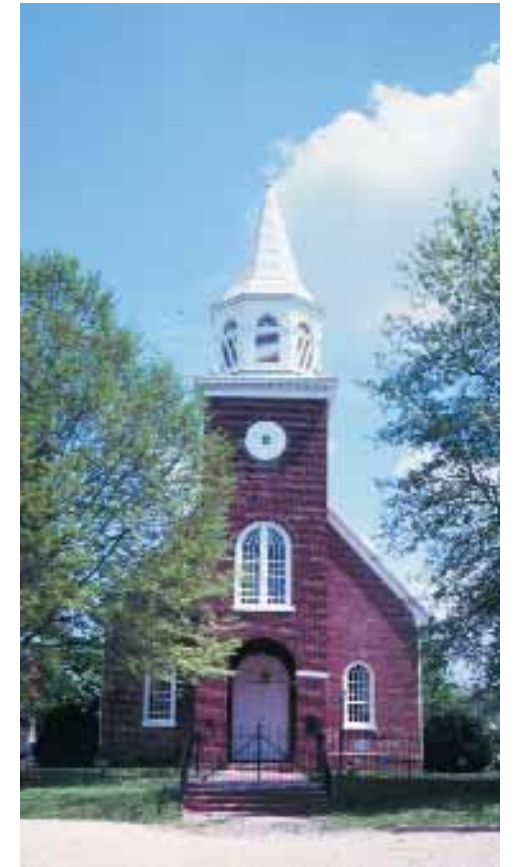
MD 234 becomes MD 5 as you proceed farther east, entering the heart of Leonardtown. Attractions of note include the Old Jail Museum, a tourist information center that also contains early Maryland artifacts, and Tudor Hall, a 250-year-old Colonial house that the St. Mary's County Historical Society operates as a genealogical research center. The next branch of



this byway comes up in Callaway, where MD 249 leads to St. George's Episcopal Church in Valley Lee. The oldest Episcopal parish in Maryland, St. George's has held services since 1638. Before returning to the main route, follow MD 249 down to Piney Point, site of the oldest lighthouse on the Potomac River. Built in 1836, the sentinel has been called the "Lighthouse of Presidents" because its surroundings were a popular summer destination for U.S. heads of state such as James Madison and Theodore Roosevelt. Beyond the lighthouse, the U-1105 *Black Panther* Historic Shipwreck Preserve is an excellent place to go boating.

Probably the most visited destination on this byway is Historic St. Mary's City. Maryland's capital from 1634 to 1695, it was the fourth permanent

English settlement in America, and site of the first Catholic chapel in the colonies. At the museum, archaeologists, historians and living history interpreters continue to work toward re-discovering and demonstrating life in St. Mary's City as it was in the 1600s, with a tobacco plantation, Town Center, Indian hamlet and replica of the Maryland *Dove*, one of the two square-rigged ships that brought those first settlers here. Nearby is Trinity Episcopal Church, which was built with bricks salvaged from the original State House, and at the entrance to Historic St. Mary's City is the Freedom of Conscience Monument. Erected in 1934, the monument commemorates a 1649 Act passed by the General Assembly that mandated religious toleration of all Trinitarians, laying the foundation



for the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Along Mill Creek is St. Mary's College of Maryland, established in 1840 as a female seminary and now operating as a co-educational state college. Then you pass the late-18th-century St. Ignatius Church, off Beachville Rd, before making your way to Point Lookout State Park. Point Lookout once flourished as a summer resort, and today the state park offers beaches, a boat launch, fishing areas and campgrounds. But there's another side to this picturesque peninsula – during the Civil War, Point Lookout was a notorious prison camp where more than 4,000 Confederate soldiers died. A museum and monuments are found on site.

OLD LINE LORE: *As St. Thomas Manor was being built on the Port Tobacco River in 1741, some observers commented that the Jesuits were "raising a palace unbecoming a religious order." But it didn't deter many Catholic missionaries, including John Carroll, first Bishop of the United States, from enjoying the manor's ambience while meeting here on business.*

Christ Church-Durham Parish
8685 Ironsides Road,
Nanjemoy 20662
301-743-7099

Christ Episcopal Church, King and Queen Parish
Maddox Rd, Rt 238
Chaptico 20621
301-884-3451
www.christepiscopalchaptico.org



Historic St. Mary's City
P.O. Box 39
St. Mary's City, 20686
800-762-1634 ~ 240-895-4990 ~
240-895-4960
www.stmaryscity.org

Myrtle Grove Wildlife Management Area
Myrtle Grove Road
La Plata, 20646
www.dnr.state.md.us/publiclands/southern/myrtlegrove.html

Old Jail Museum
11 Courthouse Drive
Leonardtown, 20650
301-475-2467
www.smchistory.org

Piney Point Lighthouse Museum & Historic Park
St. Mary's County Government
23115 Leonard Hall Dr
Leonardtown, 20650
www.stmarysmd.com/recreate/museums

Point Lookout State Park
11175 Point Lookout Road
Scotland, 20687
301 872-5688
www.dnr.state.md.us/publiclands/southern/pointlookout.html

Port Tobacco Courthouse
P.O. Box 344
Port Tobacco, 20677
301- 934-2474
Smallwood State Park



St. Clement's Island Museum

38370 Point Breeze Road

Colton's Point, 20626

301-769-2222

www.stmarysmd.com/recreate/muse-ums

St. Clement's Island State Park

c/o Point Lookout State Park

11175 Point Lookout Road

Scotland, 20687

301-872-5688

www.dnr.state.md.us/publiclands/southern/stclements.html

St. Ignatius Church/St. Thomas Manor

8855 Chapel Point Rd

Port Tobacco, 20677

301-934-8245

www.chapelpoint.org

