Museums in Strange Places
"The Lost City: Historic St. Mary's City, Maryland"
(S02/E05)

Episode Description:

In the early 17th century, 300 English settlers traveled to the new colony of Maryland in search of new opportunities and a place where they could practice their Catholic faith in peace. They built Maryland's first capital, St. Mary's City, and their city thrived...until its founders fell from power in England. Soon, St. Mary's City was abandoned and it's wooden structures rotted. The city lay hidden under farm fields and forests until archeological efforts led to the formation of Historic St. Mary's City, a living history center that tells the story of the fourth permanent English settlement in America.

This episode is sponsored by the Lyndhurst Group. Music in this episode is by Hesperus, from their albums *An Early American Quilt* and *Colonial America*, released on the Maggie's Music Label.

TRANSCRIPT:

Hannah (Scripted): *Today, Maryland is one of the most densely populated states in the country, its historically distinct towns blended together by the many commuter communities spreading outward from the edges of Washington, D.C. But in the early 1600's, Maryland's rich natural resources and temperate climate made it prime land for British colonization. One man in particular saw Maryland an opportunity to solve two problems with one colony.*

The right honorable George Calvert, Lord Baltimore was given the grant to the Colony of Maryland by the English King Charles I, as thanks for his loyal service. But Lord Baltimore's favor in his home country took a turn for the worse when he decided to publicly declare his Catholicism. England at the time was Protestant and anti-Catholic sentiments were strong, leading to a hostile environment for anyone seeking to practice outside the tenets of the Protestant Church of England.

So Calvert looked to the uncolonized Maryland as both a home for settlers of different Christian denominations to live in harmony...and as a money-making venture. But before he could gain official permission to settle Maryland, George Calvert died, leaving his plans for a new colony in the hands of his sons, Cecil and Leonard.

Led by Leonard Calvert, the first 300 settlers of St. Mary's City set sail from England in 1633. After months at sea, they sailed up the Chesapeake Bay, into the mouth of the Potomac River, and landed at a site they would name...St. Mary's City.

St. Mary's City was only the fourth permanent English settlement in America. It would become the first capital of Maryland, and a bustling trading town. But after the capital was moved to Annapolis, the city faded and eventually disappeared, leaving no visible trace. The land was farmed, fallow fields became forests, and centuries passed. But the story of St. Mary's City was not gone forever. Artifacts and ghosts of building foundations lay underground, just waiting to be rediscovered.

Hannah (Scripted): *Welcome to Museums in Strange Places. I'm your host, Hannah Hethmon.*

Museums are the keepers of our history and culture, but they are also reflections of who we are now. In each season of this podcast, I explore a different country, state, or region through its museums. In Season 1, I traveled around Iceland, and now I'm visiting the museums of Maryland to discover how they reflect and shape this state's unique identity.

This episode is sponsored by the Lyndhurst Group.

Dr. Regina Faden: There were two reasons that, uh, George Calvert was interested in Maryland...and Cecile because, well, first of all they were interested in creating a colony and they were interested in earning money, you know, money was a motivator, but they also came to Maryland to create a place where Catholics and Protestants could live together in freedom to worship as they please. And to me that's a really astonishing idea that the Calverts said we're not going to do it like it isn't like we've been doing it in England where people are killing each other over religion and we're going to set up policies and practices at that will allow people to live together. And I think it's a very timely story, particularly for us in the last 15 years since America is deeply involved in questions of religion, belonging, citizenship, and how we live together.

My name Is Regina Faden. I am the executive director of Historic St Mary's City.

We are in the region we call Southern Maryland. So we're about an hour and a half southeast of Washington DC and about two hours southwest of Baltimore, almost on the Chesapeake Bay.

St. Mary's City..iIt was established in 1634. The town didn't really develop until the 1660s. And then by 1695, the Calverts lose power in England, and the Protestants gain ascendancy. And then the capital is moved to Annapolis and then after 1695, essentially the city falls apart. It was largely a wooden structure city. And by the 18th century it's largely gone.

People knew for years that this was the first capital of Maryland. It wasn't until the 1960s that a man called Robert Hogabone, who was a four star Marine general, moved to St. Mary City and began to understand the story of the first capital and he was the one who really kicked off the initiative to get the state to create a museum here because he thought the story was really important.

Hannah (Scripted): *There wasn't much material history immediately available for the founders of Historic St. Mary's City to start interpreting. Standing on the site of Maryland's colonial capital, they would have looked out over unremarkable farm fields and forests. The only traces of the city lay buried in the ground and in archives, where a few documents and records from the city's history had survived. The stories of this early experiment in religious coexistence lay buried with them.*

In 1966, a research department was established to study the history of the site, and an archeology program was launched soon after. Thanks to researchers, archeologists, and state funding, today Historic St. Mary's City is a vibrant living history museum on 800 acres of beautiful riverfront property.

[Cicada Sounds fade in]

Hannah (Scripted): *It's a hot July day on my visit. The air is thick and humid, the sun beats down from a clear sky, and the hum of cicadas in heat can be heard everywhere, the ubiquitous soundtrack of summer in Southern Maryland.*

Dr. Regina Faden: People generally knew where it was. They said, oh, that's where St. Mary City was...stories handed down over time, but we didn't really know what it looked like until the museum began. And then the state started funding research here, and so again, with a no maps, no letters, how do you figure out what it was like, you know, how people lived….archeology.

People were expecting, some of the scholars in earlier times were expecting either something like Boston that grew up around the [....?] and sort of not on a grid pattern, not organized like a Philadelphia or something like that. Um, but they, and this is where I want to show you when we get to town center, this was a planned city. This was really unusual. Lord Baltimore, the first Lord Baltimore, the Second Lord, Baltimore, educated at Oxford, Ira Berlin who wrote many thousands on this, talks about the first generation that comes in to America. Say I'm from Europe who are far more sophisticated because they've had that experience of two continents and they get here and the later generations of course are, are here on this site, but they're the first Lord of Baltimore is educated. He has a bachelor's degree. He gets a masters in municipal law. These are very sophisticated people coming here and the Baroque city plan that we we see that's revealed by the archeology really shows a planned city, so that's what's

interesting to me too, when and when I came here in 2008 and we're in the middle of the war that's still going on or the war on terrorism or whatever you want to call it, but all these arguments about religion that we're seeing now with Muslim bans and other things going on in politics, and you see what's written on the landscape here, which you can visibly see when you get here is a church on one side of the city and the State House on the other and when you go to Annapolis, what they do is they have state circle and and church circle in their name that linked. They're there physically adjacent to each other and of course when you go to New England, if you were there in the 17th century, both of those functions would have been in the same building. So it's really an interesting illustration here of that separation of church and state.

Hannah (Scripted): *We begin our tour of the museum grounds at the reconstructed Catholic chapel, a place that symbolizes so much of what made St. Mary's City unique.*

Dr. Regina Faden: You could not have built this chapel in any part of the English speaking world or the English world because it just wasn't allowed. This is far too prominent. Catholics, if they're going to worship, were supposed to keep it more private. So the fact that this large building for St. Mary City stands here is really remarkable.

Okay. So what we're looking at now is a very substantial building for a 17th century landscape. It's a brick chapel. If people were to travel around different areas of the world, they would see similar types of buildings. I saw one when I was in Marseille. It's a facade that links to the Jesuits. This is a jesuit chapel would have been building in the 17th century. We didn't know exactly what it looked like, but the foundation of this building was still on the ground in the, uh, up until well, it's still there. This chapel that we see now is built on the 17th century foundation. They were very good about recycling in the 17th century when St. Mary City disappeared. Basically they recycled the bricks. They took the bricks away. They built other chapels, or they used the bricks for other purposes. The State House was taken down. Eventually it was repurposed into other, the bricks repurposed into another building.

When we go inside there, we'll see a remarkable discovery that the archeologists made when they were going over the field in the 1990s. They were doing ground penetrating radar and they sign a signature of something significant under the ground and they discovered three lead-clad coffins. Really unusual. And so they weren't quite sure what to do with these things, so they covered them up and how to handle them? These are artifacts...and the best way to treat them. So it became a very large project. Project lead coffin. NASA got involved, they wanted to test for 17th century air inside the coffins. People from the Smithsonian, researchers from the Smithsonian got involved and are still involved with the research related to this project. And through deduction, figured out that the man inside the lead coffin was probably Philip Calvert, the youngest son of Lord Baltimore, his first wife and a baby probably from his second wife. And at first they thought that the baby was a girl...and very fragile bones. Even the most wealthy person here….they were not spared from health problems. The baby had rickets. It had vitamin D deficiency. It's skeleton was bird-like, it was so delicate. Only two years ago, we were working with a geneticist at Harvard who did testing on these very old bones and discovered the baby was a boy and

definitely related to the man who is in the largest coffin, so we can go over and take a look at them, actually on a new exhibit.

Hannah: So you cut a see through in the glass panel in the floor. Oh Wow. Look at those, down there under the side of the chapel....The transept.

Dr. Regina Faden: This would have been a very special place if you were buried inside the chapel is the transept that meant typically in Europe that you were royalty in particularly this type of burial there. There was a wood coffin inside and then it was in lead and they tried to seal it, but this was very unusual treatment.

Hannah: So they're in there?

Dr. Regina Faden: No, the remains are not there. They're still at the Smithsonian and when they come back they will.... Where we're standing. There's a crypt beneath the chapel floor here that we put in. And so then there were 70 remains when they were doing the excavation is around the chapel before they recreated it, they had to do an excavation around 10 feet. And so there are about 70 remains. One of the things you can't see....

Hannah: 70 the remains discovered in 10 feet?

Dr. Regina Faden: Yes. Well this is an incredibly rich area for human remains because around this chapel are about 500 graves of the founders of Maryland. They're unmarked. So you don't know that they're there now, but we have done, not I, but we have done ground penetrating radar and want to continue to do some research. But we know that this, this whole area around the chapel is filled with graves.

Hannah: Wow. Yeah. It is crazy that the unmarked. I mean, it makes sense. Of course there'd be graves around the church, but uh, if you don't see them, you don't think about it.

Dr Regina Faden: We don't think we can genetically figure out who these people are, at least at this point. Um, and we don't know exactly. We don't have exact records, like I said, of who would have been worshiping at the chapel, we know is of course some of the more important people, but you know, there would have been, wooden markers like we have out here now, but they disappeared and they rotted and they're gone. So one of the things we want to do hopefully in the next couple of years is at least identify the boundaries of the cemetery here and then mark it because right now, yeah, it looks like it's just a field, but it is it a sacred ground and that you have remains everywhere.

Hannah: It's kind of interesting looking out from the chapel and what you see also from the road and approaching is these frames of houses spread out...every time I see it I think of like ghost houses. Um, it's this kind of a outline and memory of the city and I think it's nice that it, it kind of, it doesn't feel like recreation. So, you know, this is just kind of an echo of what it looked like. Um, but you, do you sense the echo of where people might have lived down here, which is now just a large field and trees.

Dr. Regina Faden: Yeah, exactly. And, and not everybody understands that interpretation. We do call them ghosts frames and we know that building stood where they are. We don't necessarily know what they are all the time, but it is exactly that... to give an echo what it might look like because again, looking at this field today, it's hard to imagine it as a city.

[SPONSOR BREAK]

Hannah (Scripted): *I want to take a quick break to talk out about this episode's sponsor--the Lyndhurst Group. Are you trying to build stronger communities through your history organization or museum? Do you wonder if your organization is working as efficiently as possible? Bob Beatty and the Lyndhurst Group can help with organizational assessments and in-depth strategic planning. I've known Bob for a few years now, and I've long been impressed by his passion for our field and commitment to making it stronger. If you need help at your history organization, I highly recommend giving visiting lyndhurstgroup.org to learn more about how the Bob Beatty and the Lyndhurst Group can help make your institution the asset your community wants and needs.*

Hannah (Scripted): *Before we walk down to town center, Regina and I head over to the other side of the historical park, where the museum interpretes the daily lives of the people who lived here before Europeans arrived.*

As you might imagine, the lands around the Chesapeake Bay were not uninhabited when the English settlers named the region Maryland and moved in. People had been living here for over 10,000 years, since the end of the last Ice Age. By the year 1,000 AD, what we now call Maryland was home to 8,000 people in about 40 villages, all speaking the same Algonquian language. Around this time, they began producing pottery, hunting with bows and arrows, and collecting oysters as a large part of their complex diet.

When the first settlers arrived in Maryland in the 17th century, the Chesapeake Bay area was home to the Algonquian-speaking Nanticoke, Piscataway, Assateague and Pocomoke tribes. On the site of St. Mary's City, where the Calverts planned to establish the seat of their colony, there was a village of the Yaocomaco people. According to some sources, they were already on their way out of the area when the settlers arrived, slowly relocating north after a series of raids by the Susquehannock tribe. The English bought the lands from the remaining indigenous people, and for a short time they lived together in peace.

[Cicada Sounds}

Dr. Regina Faden: Okay. What was it a little different than what happened in Massachusetts and in Virginia. And we have worked with a historian at the National Museum of the American Indian named

Gabrielle Tayac. And there was a more peaceful interaction and she would say not because Maryland, weere better people, but because maybe we learned a few things that it wasn't going to initially start off in a war-like fashion. It's not typical. It doesn't last. But in the early part of the 17th century here in St Mary's city, it was more peaceful.

Hannah (Scripted): *It's this brief period of peaceful co-existence that Historic St. Mary's City is interpreting at the Woodland Indian Hamlet, a mini-village of reconstructed Yaocomaco dwellings named after the Woodland era of Native American culture.*

Dr. Regina Faden: The village that we're looking at, if people had been to Plimoth Plantation or a place like that, very similar. We have what we call witchets here, which are basically the long houses. They're covered in grasses.

Hannah (Scripted): *The witchetts are long oval structures made from light poles bent over to form a frame for bark and rush mats on the interior, and dried grass on the exterior. The Yaocomaco, who settlers described as taller and generally healthier than the English, would have kept a fire going in the center of the homes in order to ward off insects and animals and preserve their buildings and the food stores they contained. Cooking would have been done outdoors. As anyone who's spent the summer in Southern Maryland knows, the mosquitos and other wetland insects are ubiquitous, so the Yaocomaco decorated their faces with a mixture of oil and red and blue pigments to keep them away.*

Dr. Regina Faden: And um, so I said we have a, basically they said a small village here and we have staff who are not in regalia. Okay. So our interpreters are not dressed in Indian regalia. They're dressed in polos with our logo on them, but they are demonstrating their traditional skills, canoe building, farming, hide tanning, flint knapping, and our staff get to get trained in these different skills so they can demonstrate them for the visitors.

Dr. Regina Faden: So this is Ken, he's a here at a staff member here at the Indian hamlet and he might want to tell you a little bit about what he's doing.

Ken: Hi, how are you?

Hannah: Good. What are you working on here?

Ken: So we are current….I'm currently working on a deerskin. So right now there's a lot of darkness that you can probably see on a per people listening probably, but it's um, it's like a very dark kind of membrane, like thing that's left on the deer skins once they come to us. So right now we are just working on getting it, like, scraped off so that way there's like this little softer part that you guys can see in white. Um, that kind of helps us to like stretch this out more so that way we can use it for a lot, a lot more different things.

[Sound of hide scraping]

Dr. Regina Faden: The hamlet has been here since the museum began, we have told the story of the people who lived here before there was a Maryland since the beginning of the museum and trying to strengthen our relationship always to the local people so that we're telling the story in a way that is respectful of their history- is not necessarily.... it is part of everybody's history, but of course we want to make sure that I said the local tribes understand what we're doing and that they feel involved and that they have something to say about how we're, I said again, telling the story

Hannah (Scripted): *Today, Maryland is home to 40,000 self-identified Native Americans belonging to eight recognized tribes. It was only in 2012 that state officially recognized The Piscataway Indian Nation and Piscataway Conoy Tribe, both descended from the historic Piscataway tribe that was once the most powerful group in the region.*

Dr. Regina Faden: Okay. So now I'm going to take you over to town center and we can stand, like I said, right at the center of the city and we'll talk a little bit about what we do there. We talk about an inn and ordinaries and how people would have traveled through the city, why they might have come.

Okay. So now we're on the other side of the city and we're looking at the brick State House that was rebuilt in 1934 for the 200th anniversary celebration of the state of the establishment of Maryland. So you can see it's a pretty substantial building. It's got a ground floor and second floor and then there's some storage that we use up on the third floor, but it's a very substantial building by the 17th century. When you get to see the view from the front of the statehouse, it's spectacular against the tidewater landscape. So we're going to take a left to go into the State House.

Hannah: Oh Wow. Yeah. We can see. Turn the corner and through the hedges you can see straight through the building onto the water.

Regina: And so I said where we're standing now is what the court would have looked like... sometimes reenact a court cases. We have what we call the adults only tour, which our staff developed when students are coming through here and they want to know about things like privacy or adult relations or adultery. Um, you know, you can't ask those questions when the fourth graders are around. So our staff came up with this program that's called the adults only tour . So one of them is murder magic and mayhem that they do around October. And another one is about adultery and debauchery. And so, I mean, they take these cases that were on records that actually happened and they pretty much tell, you know, and reenact them verbatim and there it's a very effective program. One that they do for the murder, magic mayhem to her as a witch trial, which we think of more…. It's not common in Maryland is not like it, you know, the big Salem witch trials. But there was a woman who was accused here and our staff, uh, enacted and even though I know the end of it, you're sitting on the edge, you see like what's going to happen and it's very effective way of presenting the stories. And so there's some that are where they have a pig thief or they have someone who is a maligned somebody else. And so I said, so those, those are some of the programs that we do here to really enable people to understand. It's easy to think

about people in the past as being quaint. They were just as a difficult and challenging and a obstreperous as they are today. So that sort of helped bring that to life.

When you look out here, right over the St Mary's river, it's not exactly like, it wasn't a 17th century, but you can see that there is a great deal of protection that's gone on here. It isn't formal right now, but if you go to some places, and not to point fingers at anybody, but you can go to some museums on the waterfront and it is surrounded by marinas and condominiums, and in some ways I'd love that traffic, but in other ways you get to look out here on the river St Mary's River and almost be able to imagine what it was like to sail up the river or to have lived here. Like I said before, the Europeans arrived and sort of look through it sort of narrow lens. But again, see so much of the wooded landscape around here.

[MUSICAL BREAK]

Dr. Regina Faden: One of the challenges for the people who started the museum is how do you talk about some abstract concepts such as freedom, religion, or planting the seeds of democracy and put it into a physical place. And so there were debates going on among some of the founders, how do we do that? And so at one point they were thinking about memorials, like statues where you would just have a park and we'd have statues and it would sort of get memorialized, what had happened here, it wasn't until the 1980s that a public historian named Burt Kermerough (sp?) who, who's still living in the state of Maryland, brought living history to historic St. Mary City. And this was started in the mid 1980s when we had a anniversary of big anniversary of 350 for the founding of the state. And he literally, he called it Lord Baltimore's world. I just saw some pictures of it again yesterday where it looks like a medieval English village. And they had actors and people putting on plays. And the story is that also Denzel Washington was one of the young actors who came down here and was portraying Mathias D'Souza. And um, I wasn't here but anyways, but that was, that was sort of how it began and became living history that really is our signature right now. I want to take you to the town center first.

And actually I wanted to point out a memorial to Mathias D'Souza, which is really interesting story and I think that's one of the things that the 17th century allows you to do is talk about how we developed. So mentioned before plantation, most people think of terror and the 19th century, Matthias Sousa was we believe of African descent and probably Portuguese. And he came as an indentured servant and he's listed as a Mulatto or described as a Mulatto in one record. So we think he's said of African descent. This is his memorial here. So he comes here, he gains his freedom, ends up being a fur trader, and he's allowed to participate in the legislature here in Maryland. So what this points out is that slavery didn't arrive here as an institution. It's developed over time through choices, not everybody's choices as we know, those people in power. But there were rules in the 17th century and people might be familiar with the rule of thumb, like you couldn't beat your wife with a stick that was bigger than the circumference of your thumb. Well, there were rules for servants and how you had to treat them. So Mattias D'Souza coming here as a Mulatto or African person of African descent who has this freedom is an illustration or you know, an example of someone who came who was black, okay, who was not enslaved. And as I mentioned before, Indians were enslaved here. And as during the 17th century, when

those laws become codified, that say no enslavement is a status for people of African descent. And it becomes that

Hannah: and becomes a racialized institution.

Dr. Regina Faden: Yeah. And it's because you can talk about race in many different ways and some people didn't the 17th or early, even earlier in time, that race was something that made you distinct and set you apart. So there was a group you could identify, and I'm no great, you know, a scholar of this, but it, it does become, like I said, a status in this country of identified by race and physical characteristics, let's put it that way. And so, uh, the Occupy movement was fascinating to me when that happened within the last 10 years because what people were saying is how do systems of power get established? Who makes a decision, what effect do they have on people's life? And that's exactly what we're talking about: Slavery as a system of inequality. So it didn't arrive here. So by understanding how it happened and that it didn't just come, it isn't this monolith, it's people making choices, it’s people living together, deciding who gets to have a benefit, who doesn't, who gets enslaved and who doesn't, and who has privileged. It all happened here. The good and the bad of it all happened here. So that's where it's very interesting.

And then another case that I'm the historian Jacqueline Jones recently focused on in a chapter of one of her books was Antonio, who was an enslaved person, was brought to St Mary City by his owner. He had been resisting his status by running away. He ends up coming here, being brought here for medical treatment, and when he is at what we call the St John's site, um, and his owner was Simon Overzea. He resists his status. His owner was Simon Overzea. Overzea, hangs him from the building, pours hot lard over him, beat him, and then leaves them to hang there. And eventually he suffocates. This isn't the mid 17th century, okay. That is not uncommon for the way people of African descent were treated. Uh, but what was unusual at the time was the owner was brought to court to see whether he was within bounds of how he treated him. So we’re having this negotiation than law and in the culture of what can you do to certain people. The owner was acquitted. But again, it's a case to point out that slavery didn't come here in the, in the chattel form that it eventually becomes in the 19th century and with the ramifications that we're still living with today.

When people say history doesn't matter to them, it's because they don't understand that they're living in it, um, that so many of the structures and so many of the ways we behave with one another. Everything from police violence to drug problems today to poverty, to where people live and why they live in certain places or have certain jobs are all related to how we've lived over centuries.

[MUSIC BREAK]

Dr. Regina Faden: So one of the things that Henry Miller discovered is the actual geometrics of the city and between the State House and the chapel is exactly half a mile between two other buildings. Everything is very orderly and laid out. Like I said this is a plan that you would see in Rome at the time,

even when you think about some place like Washington where you have a center and then the roads radiate out from there.

Hannah (Scripted): *Standing in the middle of this orderly, planned city, Regina pauses and waves at a woman dressed in period clothing just down the road. The interpreter walks over, and introduces herself.*

Donna Bird: My name is Donald Bird. I'm the site supervisor for town center and we're just about sending a standing in the center of town.

Hannah (Scripted): *Regina has taken every opportunity during my two-hour visit to introduce me to the people who bring Historic St. Mary's City to life every day. You know what they say: It takes a village to recreate a historical village.*

Donna Bird: Uh, all the buildings you see here have been rebuilt. Placed new original locations. And the ghost frames are markers of where buildings once stood. We have about 800 acres here, so I'm sure there are more buildings that need to be uncovered, but this is a good start. This lays out the townscape quite nicely.

Hannah: We could walk, we could lock down to the State House and the three minutes and maybe the chapel another five minutes, so probably walk across town in 10 minutes.

Dr. Regina Faden: Yeah, so it was again small. We get most frequently compared to someplace like Colonial Williamsburg, which of course is far larger and far more developed than we are. And they're benefits to the city being forgotten for a long time because it's so well preserved. It's one of the best 17th century sites in the, in the country. And um, again, archeology is here, even though it was farmed, all this land was farmed. When you're turning up the soil, things don't go that far from where they were originally were. And anything below about eight inches is really preserved in place.

Donna Bird: We are now approaching Cordia's Hope. It was owned by a French immigrant by the name of Mark Cordia. It was his storehouse and what you will see inside are things that we know that the Marylanders were using back then. We know this through inventories and archaeological digs.

Hannah: And what do we have in here?

Donna Bird: As you can see, looking at the shelves, we had a global economy even back then, things were coming from all over Europe, but of course we had the navigation act in place so they had to arrive on English ships. So for instance, we have China coming from China, would have been shipped in a container like this for their journey. We have belamines (sp?) that would have arrived from Germany. Um, they would hold fine wines, things of that nature. And then we had our fine Venetian glass. The archaeologists actually found the heads and tails here on site during the excavation. They were used for more of your seal the deal transactions with colonists he wanted to impress. What we have here is an example of how things were shipped. This is a very fine exhibit. We have cast containers of all different sizes. This is your hogshead. Leaving the colony, It would hold a 350 to 450 pounds of tobacco arriving

back in the colony. It could be filled with sugar, could be filled with brandy, things of that nature. We have a barrel. This could hold lead and shot nails. We have a kilderken (sp?), which would have been arriving filled with molasses, vinegar. And you're little ferkin (sp?) in here, which one would arrived with soft soap butter, things of that nature.

Well now we're crossing the center of town. Um, we are now approaching Smith's ordinary.

Hannah: And what's an ordinary?

Donna Bird: An ordinary was a place where you could receive a hot meal or a drink and a night stay at a fixed price. Public ordinaries were strictly regulated by the assembly set prices. They wouldn't go up, wouldn't go down. You were never turned away as long as they room. Um, so two to three people to a bed would not be uncommon. They never promised you a bed to yourself. So in the mid 1600s, 10 pounds of tobacco for a hot meal, four pounds for a night stay. Ordinaries where the center of political, economic, and social activity. Socially, it would be a gathering place. Most people lived on plantations, they were far in between. So while you were here in town, gave you the opportunity to find the news of the colony, um, politically you're going to have government officials inside of here going over government business. Economically, it was not rare to find a merchant or even someone like Mark Cordia, 90 percent of his transactions took place here in the ordinary.

Hannah: A working lunch,

Donna Bird: A working lunch.

[WALKING AWAY NOISES]

Hannah: I thought was very interesting. How regulated the taverns where, you know, sometimes I kind of think of early period as kind of this wild, wild east, so to speak, you know, everyone coming in to the new land and forging their own life and living without government interference. But it's not the case.

Dr. Regina Faden: Not at all. And that's one of the fascinating things I think about Lord Baltimore. But you have to think about, yeah, what were they doing at the time? How did he manage a colony across an ocean, which to us again, seems so far removed and so distant, but really even for them that didn't seem, Maryland didn't seem that far away. Okay. Um, and that they were tied, they said legally, socially, but Lord Baltimore, he's in England trying to manage a colony that's far away. He has people here who are in his counsel who at first were Catholic. You have to live amongst each other, you have to have relationships with each other, trade with each other, do business with each other, government. And so he has to have the ability to communicate well, to be very diplomatic and maintain his colony when he's over in England and as we know that's going to end by the 17th century, to manage all this, to conceive of the city and to make it happen. And so he must have been an extraordinarily skilled person. Again, not a perfect person. We know that there was slavery here and he had looked into slavery and uh, so there are all those parts of history, but just as there are today, nobody's perfect. And we do want to tell

those stories like about the past and all its complexity. Good and bad, because that's just the way it is with humans. It's always a more complicated story than think it might be.

[MUSICAL BREAK]

Hannah (Scripted): *Donna had mentioned that most citizens of St. Mary's City actually lived outside of the city, on plantations. What was life like on a 17th century Maryland plantation? Lucky for me, the team at St. Mary's has reconstructed a typical plantation home, complete with gardens and some chickens, cows, and pigs.*

Without the historical documentation needed to reproduce a specific historical farm, the Godiah Spray Plantation is a composite. It represents plantation life in 1668, and though the Spray family is made up, they are based on the very real lives of a settler named Robert Cole and his family.

On the Godiah Spray plantation, they are almost entirely focused on one crop: Tobacco, the primary export of Maryland for centuries. Everything revolved around tobacco in the 17th century.

Dr. Regina Faden: So this is one of the only places, uh, it is the only place where we do first person interpretation. So when you meet people here it is 1668, they don't know anything after that, only before that. So they'll speak to you in English dialect. We have heritage breed animals down here, cows, pigs, chickens, and they actually grow tobacco here, which most people in Maryland don't do anymore.

Hannah: What would life have been like for people living on a plantation like this? How many people would have lived here? Um, who else would have worked here? Would they have had servants or enslaved Africans?

Dr. Regina Faden: All the above. So the, what we're representing here at the Godiah Spray plantation is a middling family. So this is not what people typically think of as a 19th century plantation. This is much smaller. I said the owner would have been working beside the indentured servants and if there were enslaved Africans here, they might be here in the 17th century. Not everybody understands that Indians were enslaved. I'm not saying it was necessarily here at this plantation, but, um, everybody worked and there was a great shortage of women here in the 17th century. So you're not always talking about families, but at this plantation we are, but they would have young men, indentured servants, women and men coming over from England to, to work here until they gained their freedom.

Dr. Regina Faden: So here is one of our residents here at the plantation, so I might want to introduce himself, but is that okay? Yeah, absolutely.

Hannah: Hi there!

“John Elton”: What does bring you to my master's plantation this day? I'm coming to seeing your way of life. Oh, excellent. Well, you, you're looking at it just behind you. Of course. That is, that is the tobacco right there. And that is everything that our life is based around.

Hannah: Who are you?

“John Elton”: I'm John Elton. I am one of the masters hired hands. How did you come to Maryland? Uh, I did sell my denture to a ship's master who then sold it in kind to master spray.

Hannah: And is he a kind master?

“John Elton”: He has been. Absolutely.

Hannah: What's your day to day life like on this foundation work?

“John Elton”: I'm getting up before the sun being out as the sunrise is being in the fields at this time of, of year. We do have um, each man is responsible for three acres of tobacco and that is 3000 plants that must be checked every leaf, top and bottom for the worms to make sure they are not eating away at them. So, uh, it is from sunup to sundown other than an hour or two in the middle of the day for taking respite. It is otherwise that, all day.

Hannah: I'll let you get back to your work. Thank you so much. A good day to you.

Dr. Regina Faden: What we're looking at right now is that of plantation house, which actually has glass windows two floors. It's pretty impressive building for the 17th century.

Hannah: So this is a typical. This is the plantation house and of course it's not what people might expect when they thinking plantation house. They're probably thinking, gone with the wind. Um, no one's thinking this is a small wooden structure. I mean probably pretty big for the people at the time. There's a brick wall in between. You got a nice big room, a shed down here. There's some, some windows and some ventilation. It's probably could be a lot worse. Um...actually quite, quite cozy. Big fireplace in the middle and I seen some sleeping quarters upstairs.

Dr. Regina Faden: Well, I mean the interpreters will tell the visitors that Master and Mrs Spray would stay, you know, be here on the ground floor in front of the fire because that would be a nice place to stay. Indentured servants and people would, uh, children maybe would be upstairs. And so we do talk about this, like I said, as being a place where people are better off. One of the things you can see hanging over there, um, on one of the doors post is a rosary. So if people ask the question, the sprays are Catholic, they are here and they can talk about the chapel in the town center and how they can worship there. And again, that was unusual where Catholics could worship. They were supposed to sort of keep it a little bit quiet. So it was not to create any disturbance or you know, uh, and Lord Baltimore instructed the settlers when they were coming here to treat the Protestants well and so that people could live together peacefully

Hannah: And they manage to do that?

Dr. Regina Faden: For a while.

So, um, so what we have at the Godiah spray plantation, and we have this, uh, interpretive garden and so this is usually what the staff will talk about.

Hannah (Scripted): *As we step out of the plantation house and into the garden, we're greeted by two women in period dress working in the garden. A young woman pulling weeds in her bare feet stops to chat with us about her life in St. Mary's City in 1668.*

Hannah: Hello. How are you today?

"Isabelle Jones": I'm quite well. How are you?

Hannah: Would you introduce yourself?

"Isabelle Jones": I'm Isabelle Jones. I'm a one of the master's indentured servants.

Hannah: And what are you working on today? What, what do we have here?

"Isabelle Jones": A well, we're standing in the garden right now and this day I'm working on weeding out if you didn't want the weeds to crowd out all the herbs that we're growing. So it's important to keep it and weed free as much as possible, but it's very difficult to keep ahead of that at times, but that's what I'm doing at the moment.

Hannah: Um, did you come with special gardening skills or did you have to learn these on, on the job once you arrived here? I've always known how to garden, my mother taught me in England. It's very important to keep a garden because, um, it's where you're making your medicine from and where you're growing your vegetables. So a very important to have that skill.

Hannah: How did you arrive here? How did you become indentured?

"Isabelle Jones": Um, I decided to indenture myself that for years ago and came over on the ship and my intention was then sold to monster spray. It was a personal decision. Uh, I didn't see there wasn't much opportunity for me left in, uh, in England. So I decided to come here because I knew there was a lot of opportunity to be had. I have one more year left. Uh, so after one more year, next November I will be free to try to find my own plantation. I'll be given the rights to 50 acres of land. Uh, so I have my freedom dues. I'll have the, I'll get a new suit of clothes and um enough corn to feed me for year and new tools and I'll, I'll be ready to hopefully start a plantation of my own. Good day.

Hannah: I didn't realize that's something that would happen. They'd get their own land.

Dr. Regina Faden: That's one of the draws for people to, um, get an opportunity to own land on the way they wouldn't, not that, that was common for women, but they were here in one of our more famous stories is Margaret Brent, who was, some people call her an attorney. There's actually an award for her and the American Bar Association, but she was an educated woman. She came here on her own plantation, was here with her sister, never married. One of the interesting stories is she was the, the executor of Lord Baltimore's estate and uh, she represented him with the council and at one point she asked for the vote for herself and for Lord Baltimore, since she represented him, she was denied. But that's one of our very famous stories about Margaret Brent.

And one I think it was even a little bit more interesting, during the English Civil War when Virginians came, parliamentary forces came and seized the capital of St. Mary City. Uh, she had organized the soldiers and he said to, and these were people who were hired to defend Maryland and the conflict with Virginia ends, but the soldier there, they're not getting paid and people aren't getting paid and sometimes maybe get a little unruly. So she needed a solution. How am I going to pay the soldiers who had fought for Maryland? Well, she has the cattle from Baltimore. She sells them, she pays the soldiers and she puts down any sort of protest that might have happened and Lord Baltimore isn't too pleased with her, but the privy council here writes and said Maryland was better in her hands in any man's. So she saved the colony. And I wish we knew more about Margaret Brent. She is now in the women's history books. I've seen her in there. I've taught women's history, but this is really a story that needs to be told.

Hannah (Scripted): *For some reason, I was really drawn to the fictional narrative of Isabelle Jones, the woman we met in the garden, and the true account of Margaret Brent.. It must have taken so much courage to indenture yourself and travel to a new country in the 17th century. You would have had to be so tough, particularly as a woman. These stories kept bouncing around my head after leaving the museum. And later in the week, I was talking to my Uncle about the podcast, and we got on to the subject of Isabelle and Margaret. He's done a lot of research into the family genealogy, and long story short, it turns out that I have a personal connection to journeys of these women. In 1685, only 15 years after Margaret Brent's death, a woman with the last name Heathman came from the Devon, England to Maryland as an indentured servant. She came off the boat somewhere in Anne Arundel County, worked off her indenture, and became a land-owner. We don't know much else about her, but thanks to detailed records kept by her descendents, who went west with the Mormons two hundred years later, we can be sure she's part of our family. Growing up, I never felt like I had roots in Maryland. My parents moved here from the west coast just before I was born, and none our extended family lives anywhere close. But learning about this fearless woman whose DNA I share, and being able to step into her world for a few hours...well..the experience has left me feeling more connected to this place than ever before.*

[Cicada noises]

Hannah: Wow. This is so beautiful out here.

Dr. Regina Faden: If the sprays were here, you can see the river from where we're standing. And so if they had tobacco, one of the things that they would do is put it into barrels and I'm not going to talk about the different sizes of them and all the names, but anyways, they would essentially pack it into barrels and roll it down to the river and then put it on a ship and it would go over to England. And this was, it's hard for us to imagine that the ships came in once a year. They had possibly placed orders for cloth or windows or whatever it might be. Whatever goods they needed from England, there's almost no manufacturer here. And so the way they did everything was on credit, um, what we would think of as credit against their tobacco harvest. And as I said they would load up the tobacco once a year. They will have someone sell it for them in England or wherever it was going. And then, like I said, they were able to purchase whatever they needed. Again, this was very much an agricultural community, very focused on raising tobacco to the point where in Maryland they were required, people who were here were required to grow corn, so they'd feed themselves because they'd almost prefer to grow tobacco entirely and then they'd have nothing to eat.

And then one of the interesting things, we think people might be living off the land and it takes a lot of time to go out and to fish and to hunt and actually there's more beef here than you would think beef consumption than you might think. So pigs, like I said, beef. And they did of course go out into the river, gathered oysters. We were just, the bay was filled with oysters at that point, but again, um, they were really, really focused on making money.

Hannah: I'm sure some people even to their detriment focused too much on tobacco and end up with a bad crop and no way to pay for food.

Dr. Regina Faden: And so Maryland actually, I mentioned most people don't grow tobacco here anymore. The culture in Maryland, even up until 20 years ago, there were a lot of tobacco farms here, but the federal government bought it out and so we're one of the few places where people come, a younger generations whose family grew tobacco and then they find out about how we do it here and then they are going back and sharing stories with the family who actually had done it, you know, raised tobacco. But from what I understand, tobacco is a nasty, dirty, hot business. No one I've talked to misses Tobacco Farming.

Hannah (Scripted): *In 1850, Tobacco was grown in every county in Maryland. 21 million pounds of the leaf was produced that year. By 1970, development of farmland and a decrease in profits on the crop had reduced Tobacco's domain to the five counties of Southern Maryland: St. Mary's, Prince George's, Charles, Calvert, and Anne Arundel. Still, in 2001, there were still a thousand farmers growing Tobacco in Maryland, and it wasn't until a state subsidy policy passed that year and discouraged the tobacco production that it finally died out. In 2004, only 150 farmers grew the plant.*

Today, St. Mary's county has replaced tobacco with a very different industry. Since 1943, a Naval Air Station has provided more and more jobs for the region along with the State College located just down the street from Historic St. Mary's City. Now, defense is one of the county's primary industries. Thanks to these jobs and an influx of D.C. commuters, the population of St. Mary's County has doubled since 1970.

But the importance of tobacco to Southern Maryland life is still visible as you drive through the region. About 5,000 distinctive historic tobacco barns survive. Designed to hang dry tobacco, the big, airy multi-story spaces are difficult to repurpose, and most are falling into disrepair, doomed to eventually crumble and disappear...just like the original buildings of Historic St. Mary's City.

[MUSICAL BREAK]

Dr. Regina Faden: My family was always a museum family. We went to museums everywhere we went. That was the only thing we did other than Catholic shrines or something. But um, it wasn't until I was in my twenties that I went through an exhibit on Navajo blanket weaving at the museum in Lexington, Massachusetts. The Museum of our National History, I think it was, and it was walking through and being informed about something that I didn't know anything about and I walked out of the exhibit and I thought, oh, I know a lot relatively speaking about Navajo blanket weaving now and what a great way to learn. And that was what got me interested, not only in going to museums but then actually working in a museum, because I just see it as a different learning environment and it's a place that….hands on...on where people can learn in a variety of different ways. It doesn't matter your age. Even my dad is almost 90 now. He goes to a museum, he says, what am I going to do? You know, you don't want to read labels anymore. And people really want to find out what the experience is going to be. And like I said, we are very much an experiential site.

So again, this is why you see so much of the material culture as well because this is the stuff that tells us what the past was like for people, the lived experience, you know. And that's again, people get their.... We are a hands on place, we are not a hands off. Come in, don't pet the cows. I mean that we're not completely hands on. But uh, you can grind corn, you can try scraping a skin, you can plant a seed, you can do all those things here.

I think we want to make Maryland better known to people and the story here at St Mary City. Uh, we're going to continue to do research and look into maybe different avenues of the past that we haven't,, but I think I said we really, we want to attract more people here and we get more people to know the story. So things like podcasts are helping us do that. Um, Maryland public television was just here. And so getting that story out, I think we have to be more conscious of the public that doesn't see us and really be…. We've been very focused on research and interpretation. We're going to continue to do what we're really great at. But again, reaching out to the broader world and things like technology help us do that in ways that you couldn't have done 10 years ago. You know? And so I think that's, that's our focus and to really make sure that the stories that are here, that are instructive for today, that have relevance with the questions that we're asking about ourselves and our experience today, we can look to the past and say, this is how it was done in the past. What can we learn from that? How could we do it differently? Because there are things that are unique at St Mary City, um, as unique as every human experience. So we want to tell those stories.

Hannah (Scripted): *When people say history doesn't matter to them, it's because they don't understand that they are living in it. Everything that we are today as Marylanders and Americans is a result of what*

happened in the past. To understand why Maryland is the way is today, to understand why America is the way it is today, we have to examine our past. And there's no better place to do that than our museums and historic sites.

Hannah (Scripted): *Thanks for joining me on this adventure as I explore Maryland's museums. Today's episode was sponsored by The Lyndhurst Group.*

Music in this episode is by Hesperus, from their albums An Early American Quilt *and* Colonial America, *released on the Maggie's Music Label. Find more Hesperus music, information about Historic St. Mary's City, and pictures of the museum on my website, hhethmon.com*

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