



Something Amazing Happened Here...

The Religious Freedom National Scenic Byway

Something amazing happened here...

and it became a fundamental American belief. The Religious Freedom National Scenic Byway is more than just a glimpse of history. Visitors traveling along the Byway as it winds through Southern Maryland's scenic roads can immerse themselves in the natural and cultural spaces that shaped the early story of a cherished American Right. Along this Byway you will discover the story of the very first attempt in America to introduce the radical idea of religious toleration and to separate church from state. These concepts are now enshrined in the First Amendment to the Constitution guaranteeing everyone living in the United States the right to believe as they wish.

The Beginning of the Journey

Maryland's founding in 1634 was economically motivated, intended to further the Calvert Family's financial interests while extending their King's dominions. The Calverts were Catholic, and in Anglican England, Catholics were persecuted for their beliefs. To hold beliefs contrary to the official religion meant that loyalty to your country was suspect. Although the venture was to be led by Catholics, the Calverts took every measure to demonstrate that they and their colony were fervently loyal to the King and to England, not to the Pope.

Hoped for Peace and Prosperity

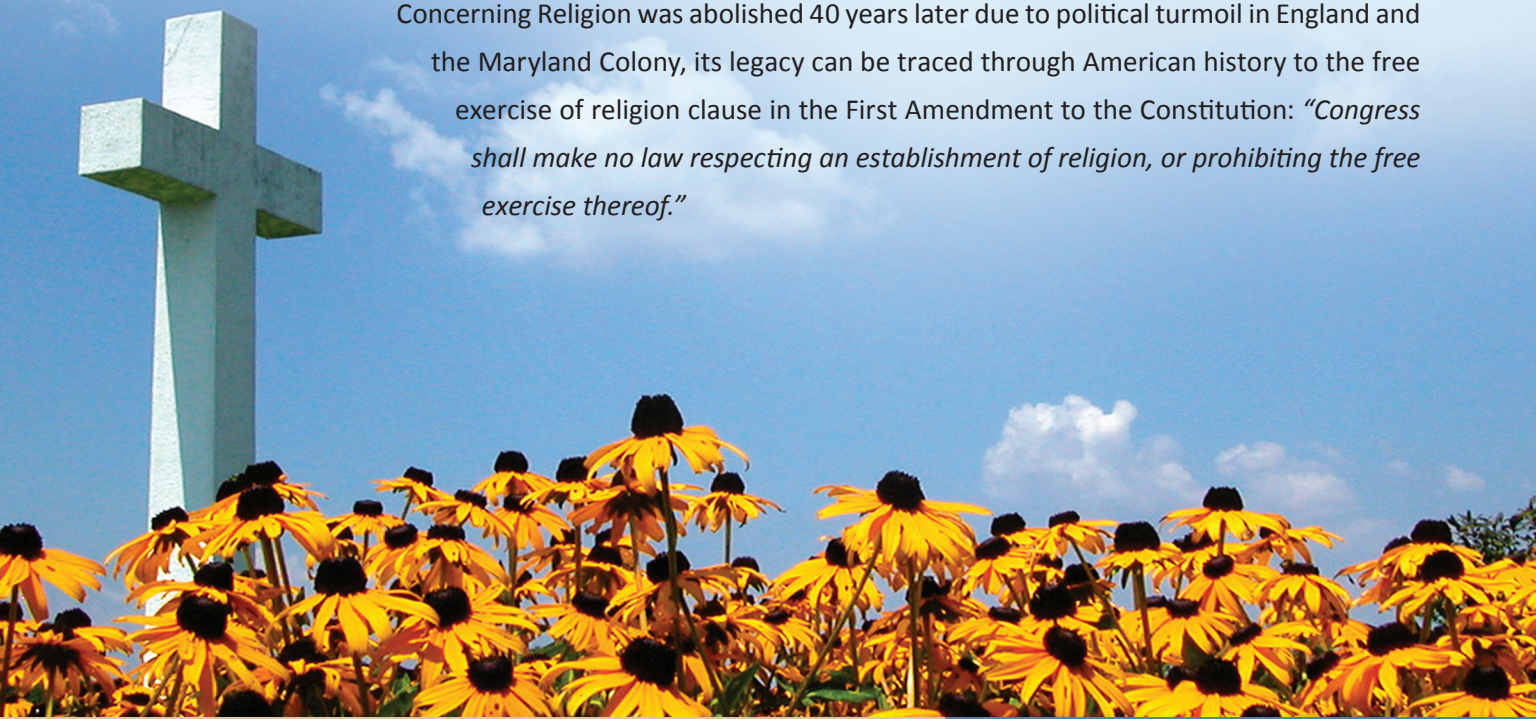
Maryland's early years were fraught with tension over the differing religious beliefs of its founders, its colonists, and the English government. In an effort to maintain peace and attract colonists of differing religious beliefs Lord Baltimore adopted a policy of freedom of belief and worship for all who settled in the colony. This practical measure was intended to prevent religious rivalry in the colony and fear in the King's court that Catholicism would be promoted as the religion of the colony.

An Act Like No Other

"...in a well Governed and Christian Commonwealth matters Concerning Religion & the honor of God ought in the first place to be taken into serious Consideration and endeavoured to be settled." The Act Concerning Religion, passed by the Maryland General Assembly on April 21, 1649, was among the first legislative acts in North America allowing liberty of conscience, though only for Christians. *"No Person or Persons...shall henceforth be in any ways troubled molested or discountenanced for or in respect of his or her Religion nor in the free exercise thereof..."*

A Founding Principle, a Basic Human Right

Most significant to the advance of western ideas, the Calverts introduced the concept of the division of Church and State into the New World and into Western political discourse. Even though the Act Concerning Religion was abolished 40 years later due to political turmoil in England and the Maryland Colony, its legacy can be traced through American history to the free exercise of religion clause in the First Amendment to the Constitution: *"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."*



Religious Freedom National Scenic Byway

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Southern Maryland Heritage Area Consortium

www.destinationSouthernMaryland.com
www.charlescountymd.gov
www.visitstmarysmd.com



Blackstone Lighthouse

The Religious Freedom National Scenic Byway

The Religious Freedom National Scenic Byway follows the Potomac River from Point Lookout where the Potomac River meets the Chesapeake Bay to the town of Indian Head. Recreational and educational opportunities enable children and adults to learn about our nation's beginnings, experience the outdoors and appreciate the region's natural beauty. Come and explore a place as beautiful now as when the first colonists arrived in Maryland in 1634.



★ **Christ Episcopal Church, Old Durham Parish**
8685 Ironsides Road, Nanjemoy, MD 20662
301-743-7099 • www.christchurcholddurhamparish.com
Old Durham Church was one of the original 30 Episcopal churches chartered in Maryland by the Colonial Assembly in 1692. Its history is tied to the establishment of the Episcopal Church as the official religion of the colony at the end of the 17th century. The church building dates to 1732.

★ **Thomas Stone National Historic Site**
6655 Rose Hill Road, Port Tobacco, MD 20677
301-392-1776 • www.nps.gov/thst/index.htm
The Thomas Stone National Historic Site is a 322-acre site that tells the story of the relationship of Thomas Stone and his family in the social, political, and economic development of the region from early settlement through the Revolution.

★ **Chiles Homesite Trail**
9699 Riverside Road, Nanjemoy, MD 20662 • (703) 339-8009
www.wm.edu/sites/wmcar/research/chiles/index.php
This site features the remains of the home of the Reverend William J. Chiles, a former pastor for Nanjemoy Baptist Church during the 1800's. Rev. Chiles is noted for helping the Nanjemoy Baptist Church flourish during the 19th century, his work in the local temperance movement, and his involvement with the African-American Baptist community in Newburg.

★ **Mount Carmel Monastery**
Carmel of Port Tobacco
5678 Mount Carmel Road, La Plata, MD 20646
www.carmelofporttobacco.com
The first Carmelite Monastery in the United States, Mount Carmel was established in 1790 by Mother Bernardina Matthews, her two nieces, Sister Mary Aloysia and Sister Mary Eleanora, and Sister Clare Joseph.

★ **St. Ignatius Catholic Church, Chapel Point**
8855 Chapel Point Road, Port Tobacco, MD 20677
301-934-8245 • www.chapelpoint.org
St. Ignatius Church, one of the oldest continuously active Catholic Parishes in America, has one of the most spectacular views along the Byway. Francis Neal, a former pastor at St. Ignatius, is responsible for bringing the Carmelite Nuns to America in 1790.

★ **St. Clement's Island Museum and State Park**
38370 Point Breeze Road, Coltons Point, MD 20626
301-769-2222 • www.stmarysmd.com/recreate
Situating on Coltons Point across from St. Clement's Island State Park, the St. Clement's Island Museum tells the story of the English colonists who reached the Potomac River in their two small ships, the Ark and the Dove. Exhibits document Maryland's beginnings as a colony founded in the spirit of religious toleration and trace the region's rich river heritage, which featured crabbing, fishing and oystering.

★ **Trinity Episcopal Church, St. Mary's City**
47477 Trinity Church Road, St. Mary's City, MD 20686
301-862-4597 • www.trinitysmcmd.com
Construction on the present Trinity Episcopal Church began in 1829 using bricks salvaged from the original 1676 State House, the seat of Maryland colonial government until 1694. From 1695 to 1829 the State House was used as a church for the Protestant faith. The church and surrounding graveyard is located on a scenic bluff overlooking the St. Mary's River.

★ **Piney Point Lighthouse, Museum and Historic Park**
44702 Lighthouse Road, Piney Point, MD 20674
301-994-1471 • www.stmarysmd.com/recreate
The Piney Point Lighthouse was built in 1836 and retired by the U. S. Coast Guard in 1964. It was known as the "Lighthouse

of Presidents" because several American presidents spent their summers on Piney Point. Today the Museum chronicles the construction and operation of the lighthouse and documents the efforts of the U. S. Coast Guard to provide safe passage for boats on the Potomac River.

★ **Historic St. Mary's City Museum**
18751 Hogaboom Lane, St. Mary's City, MD 20686
800-762-1634, 240-895-4990 • www.stmaryscity.org
Historic St. Mary's City is a museum of living history and archaeology located on the site of Maryland's first capital. Costumed interpreters, re-created colonial structures, and modern exhibits engage visitors in stories of the state's founding and its contributions to religious freedom.

★ **Point Lookout State Park**
11175 Point Lookout Road, Scotland, MD • 301-872-5688
www.dnr.state.md.us/publiclands/southern/pointlookout.asp
Point Lookout State Park offers recreation amidst St. Mary's County's most beautiful water views. The park offers camping facilities, the Marshland Nature Center, the Point Lookout Lighthouse built in 1830, and the Civil War Museum which documents the park's history as a prison that held an estimated 52,264 Confederate soldiers during the Civil War.

There are many more sites...
beautiful views and things to do along the Religious Freedom National Scenic Byway. For more information, visit...

www.bit.ly/rfsbyway

www.destinationSouthernMaryland.com
www.charlescountymd.gov
www.visitstmarysmd.com



● Towns

🍴 Food

⛽ Gas

ℹ Information

🏠 Lodging

🚻 Restrooms

— Official RFNS Byway — RFNS Byway Side Track

★ **Byway Anchor Sites:** These fully-accessible visitor attractions offer interpretive programs such as exhibits, tours, living history presentations, and educational events and programs all year.

★ **Byway Interpretive Sites:** These attractions are mostly self-guided, though some may have limited hours of operation. If you would like to tour any of the churches, we recommend you contact their administrative offices.

