



# The Linden Times

A bi-weekly newsletter for the members & friends of the Calvert County Historical Society – May 14, 2020



*"First Landing of Leonard Calvert in Maryland," ca. 1865 -70 by D.A. Woodward (1823-1909)*

**It is important** to begin any writings about colonial Maryland with an understanding and appreciation of the Native People or Maryland Indians and how they interacted with the newly arriving peoples from across the Atlantic Ocean. It was in large part for at least the first three years and with the support and cooperation of the Native peoples, that the first Maryland colonists not only survived in the New World but thrived.

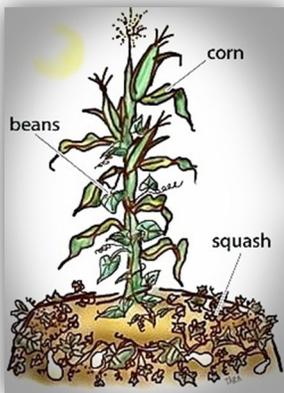
The Maryland Algonquian People were far more hospitable to the colonists than the Virginia Algonquians, under Chief Powhatan. Principally the peaceful Maryland tribes farmed, fished, hunted, and lived in small hamlets and cultural tribes. These native tribes were, just to name a few, the Choptank, Nanticoke, Patuxent, Chaptico, Yaocomaco, Pamunkey, and the Piscataway-Conoy. These tribes referred to themselves as, "The People".

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Before Europeans came into contact with the People, most Algonquian settlements lived by hunting and fishing, although quite a few supplemented their diet by cultivating corn, beans and squash known as the, "**Three Sisters**". The Three Sisters are the main agricultural crops of various indigenous groups in the Americas, the three crops benefit from each other. The maize provides a structure for the beans to climb, eliminating the need for poles.



*Three Sisters on the reverse of the 2009 Native American U.S. 1 dollar coin*



The beans provide the nitrogen to the soil that the other plants use, and the squash spreads along the ground, blocking the sunlight, helping prevent the establishment of weeds. The process to develop this agricultural knowledge took place over 5,000 – 6,500 years. Squash was domesticated first, with maize second and then beans being domesticated. Squash was first domesticated 8,000 – 10,000 years ago.

At first, the Native People didn't know how to react to the newly arriving Europeans. They were curious as to who these colonists were and, most importantly, if they were a danger to their families and villages. *cont. on page 2*

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Following the landing at St. Clements Island (1634) the colonist looked for a more permanent settlement and found one about five miles up-river, “so charming in its situation that Europe can scarcely show one to surpass it”, reported Father White. Upon landing at this better location, (St. Mary’s), they found an Indian village near there, called Yoacomac where the King of the same name dwelt with his people. Governor Calvert and his advisors were graciously received. The first night the King gave Calvert his own bed which consisted of a mat laid on boards. The next day Calvert explored the possibilities of a permanent settlement.

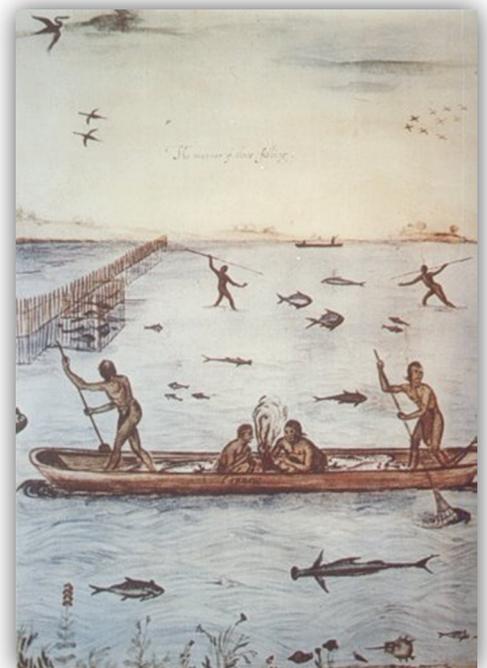


Governor Calvert negotiated with the tribal leaders to buy some land and food to survive with their trade goods; axes, hatchets, hoes and several yards of English cloth. It had been one of Calvert's father's goal that the Native Americans be treated fairly and he knew that this would benefit the Maryland colony in the long run. After a few days of talks between Governor Calvert and the King, they struck a bargain for the land (about 30 square miles). Prior to the visit from the colonists Yoacomac was planning to abandon the village to move farther up the Potomac to elude the Susquehannocks of the north who frequently raided the village and devastated the land. It was agreed that at the end of the harvest the People would leave the village entirely to the colonists. The Indians gave up their village, their cleared and cultivated land and even left the colonist stores of corn. The colonists

lived in the Indian village huts until they could build more familiar English style houses.

Records show that in the first months and years the Yaocomaco helped the colonists explore the land and often shared small game, vegetables, corn, fish and oysters. The members of these tribes taught them many important skills that would help them survive in their new colony. They taught them about plants that could be eaten and about the land and their surroundings. With the help of the Native Peoples the colonists of Colonial Maryland learned how to fish, hunt and make weapons from native materials. The tribe also sold them their boats and fishing gear and showed them how to use them. With the help of the Yaocomaco, the Maryland settlements did not have to suffer through a hostile environment and endure the “starving times”, as did the early Virginia settlements.

The Maryland settlers continued to maintain good relations with the Yaocomaco through the next few decades. The colonists included provisions to protect them in treaties with neighboring tribes. But, by the late 17th century, the Yaocomaco had disappeared from the historical record. Historians now believe that Eurasian infectious diseases carried by the English were the most likely cause. The Natives had no immunity to such diseases, by then endemic among European populations. There was also continuing encroachment and competition by settlers or other native groups.



*The Manor of Their Fishing* by John White, painted 1585-1593

“With the new day comes new strength and new thoughts.” — Eleanor Roosevelt