



Crime and Punishment in Early Maryland (The Maryland Paperback Bookshelf)

Raphael Semmes

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"The subject of this book pertains to events, often unpleasant, in the domestic lives of the 17th-century Maryland colonists."?publisher's catalog description, 1938

Marylander Edward Erbery called members of the colony's proprietary assembly "rogues and puppies"; he was tied to an apple tree and received thirty-nine lashes. Jacob Lumbrozo, a Maryland Jew who suggested Christ's miracles were done by "magic," was imprisoned indefinitely, escaping execution only by the governor's pardon. Rebecca Fowler was accused of using witchcraft to cause her Calvert County neighbors to feel "very much the worse;" she was hanged on October 9, 1685. Mrs. Thomas Ward whipped a runaway maidservant with a peachtree rod, then rubbed salt into the girl's wounds; the girl died, and Mrs. Ward was fined three hundred pounds of tobacco.

Now available in a new paperback edition, Raphael Semmes's classic *Crime and Punishment in Colonial Maryland* contains a wealth of colorful?though often disturbing?details about the law and lawbreakers in 17th-century Maryland. Semmes explains, for instance, that theft was rare among early Marylanders?if only because the colonists had little worth stealing. But what the colonists valued, they endeavored to protect: A 1662 law punished a person twice-convicted of hog-stealing by branding an "H" on his shoulder. (Widely perceived as being too lenient, the law was amended four years later: first offense, "H" on the forehead.) Men caught in adultery were often fined; women were often whipped. And knowing how to swim was so rare among 17th-century women that suggesting one could do so was tantamount to accusing her of witchcraft: a minister's son who claimed as much was sued by the woman for defamation of character.

Crime and Punishment in Colonial Maryland offers fascinating and detailed case histories on such crimes as theft, libel, assault and homicide, as well as on adultery, profanity, drunkenness, and witchcraft. It also explores long-forgotten aspects of old English law, such as theftbote (an early form of "victim compensation"), deodand (an animal or article which, having caused the death of a human being, was forfeited to the Crown for "pious uses"), and the blood test for murderers.

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