

A Little More Detail about Charles Carroll, Barrister (1723-1783)

Charles Carroll, the barrister
MSA SC 3520-208

Biography:

Born March 22, 1723, in Annapolis, Maryland. Son of Dr. Charles Carroll, the surgeon (1691-1755) and Dorothy (Blake) Carroll. Dr. Charles Carroll is believed to be the first to immigrate from Ireland to the colonies (about 1715) in the line of Carrolls that owned the land in Baltimore County which eventually became known as Lansdowne.

Charles Carroll, the barrister attended the English school at Bairro Alto, Lisbon, Portugal, and Eton College. Admitted to Clare College, Cambridge University in January 1741/42. Admitted to the Middle Temple in 1751. Married Margaret Tilghman (1742-1817), daughter of Matthew Tilghman, June 23, 1763. Children: twins who died in infancy. Died March 23, 1783, at "Mount Clare" in Baltimore County, Maryland.

Mr. Carroll chose to be called Charles Carroll, Barrister, in an effort to distinguish himself from the other Charles Carroll's living in Annapolis at this time. While placing an order with the merchants Scott Pringle & Company, Carroll wrote "There are so many of the name in this town that some particular distinction is necessary to prevent mistakes please therefore to direct to me Counselor or Barrister at Law."

He is generally credited with framing Maryland's declaration of independence, which was adopted on July 3, 1776. He trained in England as a lawyer, but apparently never practiced the profession in the United States. Rather, he had numerous business endeavors, among them the Baltimore Ironworks Company, flour mills in Baltimore County, a warehouse and wharf in Annapolis harbor, and rental properties.

He represented Anne Arundel County in the Lower House, 1756-1761. He was elected to all 9 Maryland Constitutional Conventions held between 1774 and 1776. Carroll resigned from the 9th Constitutional Convention on August 27, 1776, "because the opinions of his constituents concerning the establishment of a state government were incompatible with good government and the public peace and happiness". During this time he was also elected to four Councils of Safety from 1775-1776.

Carroll represented Maryland as a Delegate to the federal Continental Congresses from 1776-1777. Upon his return, he was elected to the Maryland State Senate, representing the Western Shore from 1777, until his death in 1783. He was appointed a Judge of the General Court in 1777, but declined to serve. Other positions included the St. Anne's Parish Vestry in Anne Arundel County, to which he was sworn in 1762, and the St. Paul's Parish Vestry in Baltimore County, 1779-1782.

Carroll supported artist Charles Wilson Peale, who studied in England during the 1760s, through money and encouragement. He had numerous interests, having an extensive library, including books in horticulture and agronomy. Maintained an orangery and ornamental garden at Mount Clare, his home in Baltimore. Mount Clare was so named after Charles' sister, Mary Clare. Today, Mount Clare is the only colonial building still standing in the Baltimore City limits. Carroll died in office in 1783. Having no surviving children, his nephews, Nicholas Maccubbin Carroll and James Maccubbin Carroll, inherited his estate, provided they legally take his surname.