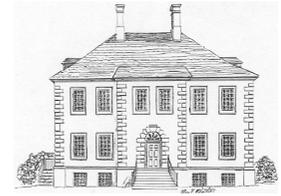




Carlyle House

Docent Dispatch



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Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority

Charles Carroll, Barrister (1723-1783):

Patriot, Statesman, Entrepreneur, Patron of the Arts, and Gentleman

By Jim Bartlinski



Miniature by Charles Willson Peale

Charles Carroll, the barrister (a distant cousin of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence) was born in Annapolis, Maryland on March 22, 1723, to Doctor Charles and Dorothy Blake Carroll. His mother, Dorothy Blake of Queen Anne’s County, was a member of one of the most prominent families of Maryland’s Eastern Shore. His father, Doctor Carroll, the “Chirurgion”, was a native of Ireland who arrived in the colonies sometime between 1712 and 1715 and settled in Maryland’s new capitol, Annapolis.

By 1716 the doctor had built up a respectable medical practice and began investing his profits in diverse entrepreneurial pursuits. Included among these pursuits were various mercantile ventures, land speculation, agriculture, milling, shipbuilding, and the manufacture of iron. Through an advantageous marriage and his own wits, Doctor Carroll soon became one of the most affluent men in Maryland. One of his undertakings that would figure greatly in his eldest son’s life would be the 1732 purchase of a tract of land west of Baltimore Town (now Baltimore City) that he named “Georgia,” in honor of His Royal Majesty George II. By the time of his death in 1755, the industrious doctor had accumulated “a handsome estate,” that Charles would eventually inherit.

As the eldest son, Charles was sent abroad to be educated. In 1734 “Charlie,” as his father called him, sailed with the doctor for Europe. It is presumed that Charlie was to attend the Jesuit College at St. Omer near Calais, France. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, St. Omer was where Irish and English

Catholic families of note sent their sons to be educated. During the voyage the Carrolls’ vessel encountered heavy seas and was blown off course, forcing them to put in at Lisbon, Portugal. Not wanting his son to endure another rough passage, the Chirurgeon enrolled Charlie at the “English College” in Bairro Alto. Sometime around 1738 Doctor Carroll converted from Roman Catholicism to Anglicanism. Although the

Catholic and Protestant Carrolls continued to conduct business and engage in politics together, the doctor’s departure from the Roman church caused a rift in the family that was felt for years to come. As a consequence of the elder Carroll’s conversion to the Anglican faith, the fifteen-year-old Charlie left Catholic Portugal for a Protestant education in England where he attended Eton.

By 1742, Charlie had completed his studies at Eton and entered Clare College, Cambridge. Doctor Carroll’s first son stayed at Cambridge until 1746 when at the age of twenty-three, he returned to the colonies. While at his native Annapolis, the young Carroll applied himself to learning the management of his father’s various business enterprises. After only four years in Maryland’s capitol, the doctor decided that Charlie should improve his future prospects by

<p>CARLYLE HOUSE</p> <p>Mary Ruth Coleman, Director Jim Bartlinski, Curator Cindy Major, Curator of Education</p>
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Charles Carroll, Barrister, ca. 1770
By Charles Willson Peale

furthering his education. Therefore, in 1751 Charlie returned to England where he read law at the Middle Temple, Garden Court. Charles Carroll returned to Annapolis in 1755 and was admitted to the practice of law before the Provincial Court of Maryland. Soon Carroll was arguing cases before the courts of Anne Arundel County, and in a few months' time, before that of the Chancery.

Three months after the thirty-two-year-old Charles' homecoming, his father passed away. This left Charles as the sole male heir to Doctor Carroll's considerable assets, including Georgia, his plantation on the middle branch of the Patapsco River west of Baltimore Town. The tract originally consisted of 2,568 acres and was rich in iron ore. Soon after his purchase of the property, the doctor sold all but 800 acres to the Baltimore Iron Works or Baltimore Company, as it was also known, of which he was a shareholder. On the tract of land that the Chirurgeon retained, he raised wheat and tobacco and established two gristmills, a shipyard, an iron works, and brick kilns. In addition to his plantation near Baltimore Town, the doctor left his son a warehouse and wharf in Annapolis, rental properties, and slaves. Needless to

say, Doctor Carroll left his son financially secure and one of Maryland's most eligible bachelors.

In 1756, Charles decided to build a new summer home on his Patapsco River plantation. Charles replaced the one-and-a-half story clapboard structure that sat on a rise at the center of his plantation with a two-and-a-half story brick structure that would become his countryseat, "Mount Clare." In early 1760 Barrister Carroll's country home and its dependencies were nearing completion, and by the close of September, Mount Clare was ready for occupancy. In less than three years, the middle aged Charles ended his bachelor days by marrying a woman nineteen years his junior.

On June 23, 1763, the forty-year-old Carroll, who had been taxed twenty shillings a year by Maryland's colonial government for being a "persistent bachelor," married his cousin Margaret Tilghman (1742-1817). "Peggy," as Charles called her, was born on Maryland's Eastern Shore in Talbot County in January 1742. Like his father, the middle aged Barrister married well. The Tilghman family had been in Maryland for over a century and had become one of the Colony's most influential families. In addition to the Tilghman name, Margaret brought to the marriage a respectable dowry consisting of land, slaves, and capital. With Charles' inheritance and Peggy's dowry, the newlyweds were securely established as one of Maryland's wealthiest and most prominent residents. Family tradition dictates that the marriage produced two children, twin girls who died in infancy.

In an effort to distinguish himself from the other Charles Carrolls living in Annapolis at the time, Charles chose to be called the "Barrister." In December 1766, while placing an order with the merchants Scott Pringle & Company for 126 gallons of Madeira wine, 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 Councillor or Barrister at Law.*

Charles Carroll, Barrister is generally credited with framing Maryland's first state constitution and declaration of independence, which was adopted on July 3, 1776. The Barrister also represented Anne Arundel County in the Lower House; was elected to all nine Maryland Constitutional Conventions; selected to four Councils of Safety and represented Maryland as a Delegate to the Continental Congresses from 1776-1777. Carroll was also appointed a Judge of the General Court in 1777, but declined to serve. He was



elected as one of Maryland's first US senators, representing the Western Shore from 1777 until his death in 1783. Other public positions included the St. Anne's Parish Vestry in Annapolis, to which he was sworn in 1762, and the St. Paul's Parish Vestry in Baltimore, 1779-1782.

In addition to his public life, the Barrister's interests included agriculture, hunting, the breeding and racing of thoroughbred horses, and the arts. During the 1760's Carroll helped make up a purse of 83 £'s to send Charles Willson Peale to London to study painting for a year. In the correspondence that remains between the two, Carroll urged Peale to paint portraits rather than miniatures. Charles Carroll's numerous interests were reflected in his extensive library, which included books on history, philosophy, law, militaria, and horticulture. At Mount Clare, his country estate, the Barrister maintained stables for his well-bred horses, ornamental gardens, orchards, and an orangery.

Charles Carroll, Barrister died at Mount Clare the day after his sixtieth birthday, on March 23, 1783. The Barrister is buried at Annapolis in the burial ground of St. Anne's Parish. Having no surviving children, his nephews Nicholas and James Maccubbin inherited his estate, with the condition they legally take his surname.

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