

8.4 - Background on James Carroll and the Carroll Family

Born in Ireland in approximately 1680, James Carroll emigrated to Maryland in approximately 1703 to take advantage of the financial foundation set by his uncle Charles Carroll (known as Charles Carroll the Settler, 1661-1720) who emigrated from Ireland and amassed the largest fortune of any person in Maryland by the time of his death. James followed in his footsteps, taking proprietary offices such as rent roll keeper, practicing law, and charging commissions to family and neighbors for basic financial transactions.

James's plantations - and his ownership of enslaved people - resulted in an impressive fortune, and his lucrative business practices served as a model for his cousin Charles Carroll of Annapolis (son of Charles Carroll the Settler and father of Charles Carroll of Carrollton), whose earnings from interest and commission fees enabled that line of the family to become one of the wealthiest in the British colonies. James Carroll's property also embroiled the family in an internecine conflict that had the potential to reshape the colony of Maryland. Family member Dr. James Carroll (a convert to Anglicanism), challenged the terms of James's will by arguing that the Jesuits could not legally take ownership of what had been personal property. In response, Charles Carroll of Annapolis threatened to move the family from Maryland, an action that would have collapsed the colony. Ultimately, the defense was successful, and the Jesuits maintained ownership of the property.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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