

Mathew Carey

Pamphleteer for Freedom



Portraits in Faith and Freedom

Jane F. Hindman

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Pamphleteer for Freedom

by Jane F. Hindman



Mathew Carey

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Portraits in Faith and Freedom

SET 1: FOUNDING VOICES FOR FREEDOM IN THE U.S.

Charles Carroll and the American Revolution
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Mathew Carey: Pamphleteer for Freedom

Statement on Portraits in Faith and Freedom

Bethlehem Books is bringing back this series of biographies originally made available in the 1950's and 60's by publishers who wished to introduce young people to a wide range of arresting and faithful Catholic lives. Slightly edited now for the modern reader, these biographies present key people and events from the past that help us reflect anew on the meaning of freedom. They depict how powerfully men and women of faith have formed and influenced the world in which they live.

Web Resources

To access printable maps, a timeline, and other information, visit <https://www.bethlehembooks.com/mathew-carey-pamphleteer-freedom-815>

About Usage of Outdated Terms

In republishing the books that form our *Portraits in Faith and Freedom* series, the editors considered whether it would be worthwhile to update the authors' usage of words like "Indian" and "Negro" to the more current preferences: "Native American" and "African American." Though some editing at times proved reasonable, it was found that changing the original terms did not always work well for the context of the times in which the story takes place. Additionally, in these works—written in the 1950s and early 1960s—it is clear that the authors, as well as the original publishers, held attitudes of genuine interest and respect for Native Americans and African Americans. For that reason, in most cases, we have let the words stand.

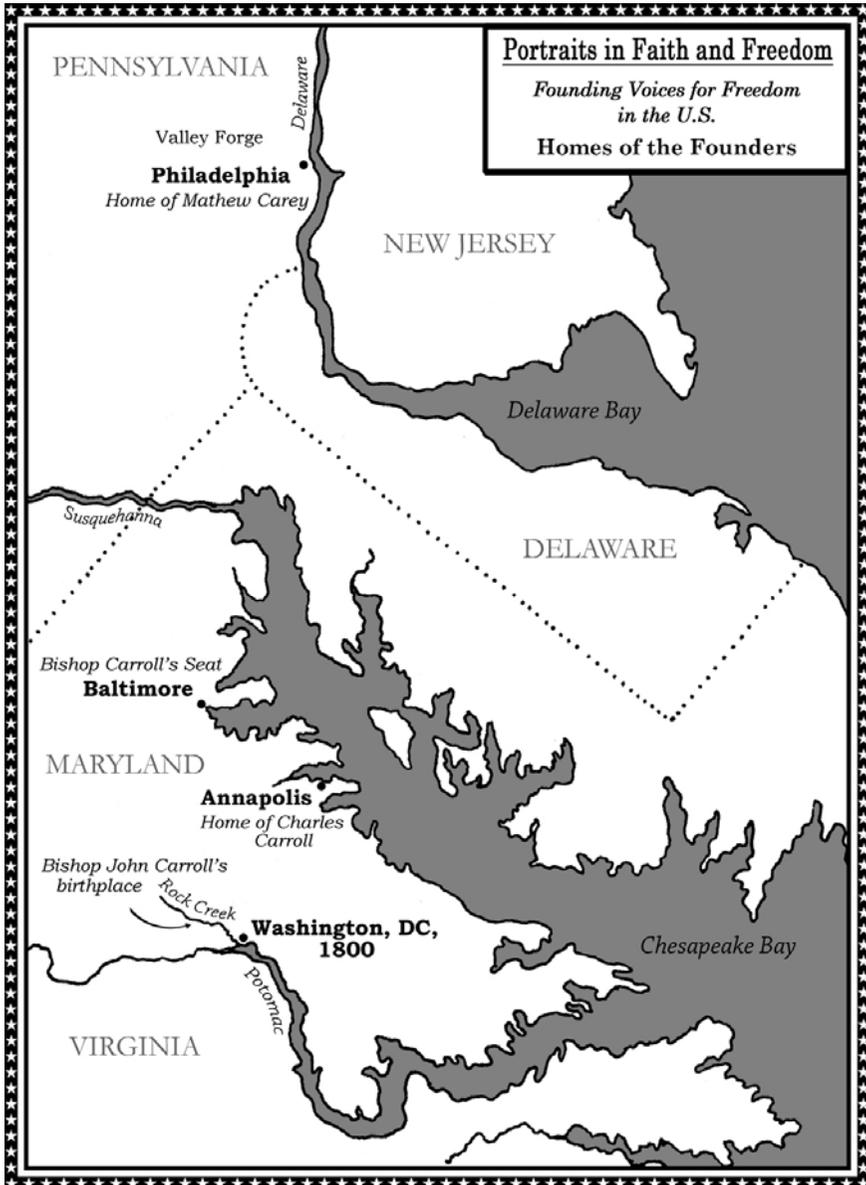
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To all my nieces and nephews
whether real or adopted

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Maps



1. A Dublin Lad

MATHEW CAREY and his mother stood by the casement window watching for the neighborhood boys to come into view. Faint sounds of voices rising above the moaning of the wind heralded their approach. The murmur strengthened into shouts as a sudden blast of wind swept boys around the corner. Then, Redmond's Hill, a short bit of a street, came alive with shrieking, shoving youngsters. Would it be better for Mathew this time? Mrs. Carey wondered.

As the first of the group appeared, she looked down at her trembling son. "See, Mathew," she said, "they're the same boys your brothers know and play with. Hurry now, or you'll miss them."

Stooping, she pulled the bright blue cap over the ears of the frail nine-year-old and tightened the woolen shawl around his shoulders.

Dread in his dark solemn eyes, the little fellow tried not to think of the horde of boys about to descend on him as he stared into the fitful Dublin sunshine that blustery March afternoon in the year 1769. Instead, he concentrated on a group of clouds marshaled by great gusts of wind into a vast army charging the sun, then breaking up to re-form into giant squalls. He wished the noisy battalion of children could be dispersed by the gale. But no, the hubbub filled the street and no longer could he ignore the sound of lusty voices.

His mother placed her hand on Mathew's shoulder and gently propelled him away from the window. "Hurry now, here they come," she urged.

Reluctantly, but without a word of protest, the child limped beside his mother to the door, and, leaving the security of her protecting arm, plodded down the steps and across the street to meet the children. As he stepped onto the green, the youngsters swirled around him in a hilarious game of tag. Before he even could draw a breath, he was caught, and boys, like giant tops, spun in and around just out of reach, no matter where he lunged.

"Limpy, oh, Limpy, catch us if you can," they taunted.

As he staggered distractedly first one way and then another, the boys rolled on the ground, overcome with laughter. In a moment,

Mathew's big brother John, appearing out of nowhere, clouted a few of the tormentors, then ran to Mathew crying, "Tag me," and without a pause, chased after the fleeing boys.

Mathew, left standing forlorn and alone, looked longingly after his brother, then with head bowed, turned and plodded home.

As he reached the steps, he saw his mother standing in the doorway. Slowly, with his hand on the cold iron railing, he climbed to meet her. Burying his head in the folds of her skirt, he broke into sobs.

His mother's gentle face became grim as she swept her son into the hall and closed the door with a decisive bang. Sighing, she undid the shawl she had so securely fastened a moment before, and sitting on a bench, gathered her son in her arms. She held him close and crooned softly:

"Cry it out, my child. My gossoon is too young to know such sorrow." Tears filled her dark eyes, so like her son's. "Even an Irish lad is entitled to a few years of laughter," she continued fiercely. "God knows we all taste bitterness soon enough, and thanks to others, you have more than your share."

For a long time, Mrs. Carey held her boy, soothing him, trying to make up in love for his sorrow at being different.

When Mathew was born in 1760, his father boasted of the new baby, a bright, whole, and healthy dark-haired boy. For eighteen months he was the happiest of the Carey babies. Then a flighty, new nurse, in a hurry to meet her young man, had let him slip from her grasp and drop on the flagstone floor of the scullery.

"The saints preserve us," she cried, "it's destroyed I'll be, if the missus ever finds out!" Snatching up the wailing child, scolding all the time, she hurried him off to bed.

For a week or so, the nurse kept Mathew away from his mother, who was ill. When Mrs. Carey was well enough to pick up the child, she noticed that he whimpered when she touched his foot. The doctor, when summoned, said that the child's foot had been injured, and asked if he had been dropped.

Mrs. Carey looked questioningly at the nurse whose guilty blush betrayed her. She was dismissed on the spot, but it was too late to correct the damage. So all his life Mathew Carey was to walk with a limp.

As he grew, the little fellow found it such an effort to drag himself around, that instead of joining the children at their games, he sat in a corner and watched. Both his parents thought he was not very bright, yet hoped that he would be happier if he mingled with other children. But day after day, when he had been sent out to play, after a few minutes, he was always found sitting on the front steps, waiting until his brothers returned from their sport.



After Mrs. Carey had seen the humiliation of her sensitive little boy and listened to his sobs, she never again forced him to go out to be taunted by other boys. He spent his days listening to the tales spun by his father's coachman, marveling at the stories told by the cook, or sitting quietly in a corner drinking in all that was said by his mother's callers.

Since he spent much of his time with older people, Mathew soon heard of the Penal Laws. He did not know that some fifty years before his birth the English had imposed laws on Irish Catholics that were intended to grind all loyal souls into dire poverty. He did know, however, that they must be bad, for in speaking of them, everyone spat words out as though they made a foul taste in the

mouth. Talk, whether in the drawing room or the scullery, was centered about ways of getting around the Penal Laws, but the boy was not exactly sure what they were about until one day when he was standing by his father's knee, admiring his big watch. Looking up, he asked casually:

"Father, when will you be made Mayor of Dublin?"

"Never, my lad, they won't have me," replied his father, offering him the watch to hold.

Mathew's eyes widened. Losing interest in the timepiece, he wanted to know why the best and most important man in all Ireland couldn't be Lord Mayor.

Tucking his watch into his pocket, Mr. Carey smiled at the boy.

"I'm sure they'd not be proud to have a baker as their Mayor, and you're forgetting I'm a Catholic to boot."

"What difference does that make, Father?"

Mr. Carey's face became grave. "Don't you know . . . ?" Rubbing his chin thoughtfully, he continued: "On second thought, how could you know that because of their religion, four-fifths of the inhabitants of Ireland, your father among them, are denied their rights as citizens, being forbidden to vote or hold office."

As Mathew grew older, the Penal Laws were brought home to him, one by one. His next experience was early one morning before the birds had begun to twitter. Wakeful, the lad heard moving about and went to investigate. Voices came from his mother's sitting room; they sounded as though Latin were being spoken, the way their pastor, Father Betagh, did in church.

The boy stole down the hall to the front room and peered through the door that had been left ajar. To his astonishment, he saw his mother, father, the cook, and maid kneeling before a table on which was spread his mother's best linen cloth, with two candles burning on either side of a crucifix. Standing before the table and raising a tiny chalice was the Mr. Hannigan who had come the previous evening for dinner and to spend the night. To add to the mystery, his brother Tom was ringing a small bell just as he did when serving Mass at St. Michael's Church. Glancing up and discovering Mathew at the door, his mother motioned him to come kneel at her side.

After Mass, Mrs. Carey took her son's hand and led him to the priest. "Father Hannigan," she said, "it is time that Mathew shares

the burden of the Irish. Will you please tell him what he should know?"

The tall, muscular man, who could have been a sea captain, sat in a big chair and drew the boy to his knee. Taking the frail hands into his gnarled ones, he said solemnly:

"Mathew, my lad, you now hold my life in your hands." He cupped the child's fingers as though he were holding something precious.

The boy looked at his clenched fist, and then into the eyes of the big man.

"You see, Mathew," Mr. Hannigan continued, "I am a priest. That makes me an outlaw. Should you ever tell anyone about what you saw today, I would be hunted and killed and your parents would suffer."

In answer to the lad's questions, Father Hannigan explained that Father Betagh was one of the few priests who were permitted to keep a church open in Ireland and to say Mass.

"But I am one of the hunted priests," added Father Hannigan, holding the child a little closer. "I do not fear that any Irishman will inform on me. My greatest danger is from idle boasting."

"Father," said Mathew earnestly, "you can trust me. Never a word will I breathe. I'll not be an informer."

"That I know well, my lad," answered the priest, giving the boy his blessing. He then rose, saying it was time for him to leave.

After that, Mathew found a corner where he could sit quietly and dream about the priest being hounded from place to place . . . and he, Mathew, frail and though only a lad, protecting him by silence.

From that time on, when the hunted priests and bishops called at the Carey home, Mathew was permitted to listen to their adventures. He compared the lives of these men with the dull existence of Father Betagh who each Sunday said Mass and preached to the same congregation. There was little excitement in this weekly routine.

Every Sunday as they were driving to church behind their old horse, Nellie, Mathew's father would say, "If it were not for the Penal Laws forbidding a Catholic to own a better horse, I'd put poor Nellie to pasture."

But on Monday of Holy Week there had been an accident. Nellie was killed and the carriage damaged. The next day, Mr. Carey drove home in a new carriage behind a fine bay horse. In