tality, the blessings of civilization and the gospel should be extended to a benighted land: And whereas, acting with these views, it becomes the duty of the state society to afford to the settlements which they may cause to be established, a system of equal laws, that shall secure to every emigrant and his descendants, the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—Therefore, be it known, that the Maryland State Colonization Society, do hereby solemnly enact the following 'CONSTITUTION,' as the basis and foundation of the government of any, and every settlement, or colony, which may be established as aforesaid, under their auspices and control in Africa, ratifying and confirming the same, according to its tenor, to all emigrants to such settlements, and their descendants, so long as the powers of government shall continue to be exercised by the Maryland State Colonization Society.

ART. 1. The Maryland State Colonization Society shall have full power and right, from time to time, as they may think fit, to make and ordain rules, regulations and ordinances, for the government of the territory acquired by them in Africa, called Maryland in Liberia, not repugnant to the provisions of this Constitution, until the state society shall withdraw their agents, and yield the government wholly into the hands of the people of the territory.

ART. 2. Every emigrant of full age, before he or she shall be received in Maryland in Liberia, shall read or have read to him or her this Constitution, and sign a declaration to support the same, and they shall in so doing, bind themselves to refrain from the use of ardent spirits, except in case of sickness.

ART. 3. No person shall hold any office in the said territory, who either uses ardent spirits, with the above exception, or traffics in it; and the state society are pledged to carry the principal of abstaining from it, and preventing a traffic in it, into the local government of the territory, and have all the powers necessary for that purpose.

ART. 4. Religion, morality and knowledge, being necessary to good government, and the happiness of mankind, schools, and the means of education, shall forever be encouraged. The utmost good faith shall always be observed towards the natives; their land and property shall not be taken from them without their consent; and



in their property, rights and liberty, they shall never be invaded or disturbed, unless it may become necessary to do so, to repel aggressions on their part: but laws founded in justice and humanity, shall, from time to time, be made for preventing wrongs being done to them, and for preserving peace and friendship with them.

ART. 5. No taxes shall be laid in the territory, except for the purpose of defence, of internal improvement, education, and the support of the local government of the territory.—Duties and port charges, for the same purposes of revenue, shall be imposed, from time to time, at the discretion of the state society.

ART. 6. All elections shall be by ballot, the qualifications of voters to be fixed by the state society.

ART. 7. That the great and essential principles of liberty and free government may be recognized, and forever unalterably established, it is hereby declared, as part and parcel of this Constitution:

1. All men have a natural and unalienable right to worship Almighty God, according to the dictates of their own consciences, and no one shall be hurt, molested, or restrained, in his person, liberty or estate, for worshipping God in the manner and season most agreeable to the dictates of his own conscience, nor for his religious professions or sentiments, provided he does not disturb the public peace, nor obstruct others in their religious worship; and all persons demeaning themselves peaceably, as good members of the community, shall be equally under the protection of the laws; and no subordination or preference of any one sect or denomination to another, shall ever be established by law; nor shall any religious test be required as a qualification for any office or trust in the community: and all religious societies in the community, shall, at all times, have the exclusive right of electing their public teachers, and contracting with them for their support and maintenance.

2. Every member of the community may freely speak, write and publish his sentiments on all subjects, being responsible for the abuse of that liberty.

3. The people shall be secure in their persons, houses, papers and possessions, from unreasonable seizures and searches: and no warrant to search any place, or to seize any person or thing, shall issue, without describing them as nearly as may be, nor without probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation.

Maryland Historical Society

The Maryland State Colonization Society Papers

XIII. Colonization Pamphlets

1. The Declaration of Rights,
The Constitution of the
State of Md. in Liberia
(rough draft, engrossed copy, printed copy)