



Maryland Resources

Family History Sources in
the Old Line State



Maryland History

Maryland's history is long, rich and varied. In many ways, it is exceptional, in that you can often say that something was true of the 13 original colonies, "except for Maryland."

George Calvert, 1st Lord Baltimore, applied for a charter for the land that became Maryland. Calvert, a Roman Catholic, sought to have a safe haven for Catholics in North America. He died before the charter was granted; the charter was issued to his son Cecilius Calvert in 1632.



Maryland is noted for legislation it enacted in 1649. "An Act Concerning Religion," sometimes called the Maryland Toleration Act, protected the rights of Christians of any denomination to practice their religion. (Though founded as a Catholic colony, by 1649, Protestants were in the majority.) The act went further and set punishments for blasphemy and other statements against Christianity. The law also prevented Jews and other non-Christians from voting or holding office. The law was repealed in 1654, reinstated in 1658, and finally repealed in 1692 when the Church of England became the established church in Maryland.

Settlement in the Maryland colony was encouraged through the headright system. With headrights, people paying for the passage of others – family members, indentured servants, and others – were granted a certain number of acres of land in Maryland. Headrights were granted between 1634 and 1680.

Slavery was legal in Maryland until 1864. Although the state remained part of the Union during the Civil War, southern sympathies ran strong, especially in eastern Maryland. Several Confederate infantry, cavalry and artillery units were raised in the state. The Battle of Antietam, considered the bloodiest single day of the Civil War, was fought near Sharpsburg.

Transportation has been integral to Maryland's development. The port at Baltimore allowed for trade and immigration and spurred the city's expansion and importance. Railways, such as the Baltimore and Ohio, opened up trade to the lands in the west and fostered growth in Maryland's expanding industrial base.



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Maryland Censuses

Maryland took a colonial census in 1776. Though it only lists the head of household by name, some entries do include that person's age and the number of male and female residents of the household.

Maryland is included in the surviving portion of the 1890 Special Schedule of Union Veterans and Widows. Some non-population schedules (1850-1860 agriculture, 1850-1860 industry, 1850-1880 mortality) are available on National Archives microfilm. Other non-population schedules (1870-1880 agriculture, 1870-1880 industry, and 1880 defective, dependent, and delinquent) are available at the Maryland State Archives.

Related Censuses Available on Ancestry.com:

- [Maryland, Colonial Census, 1776](#)
- [Maryland, Compiled Census and Census Substitutes Index, 1772-1890](#)
- [1850 U.S. Federal Census – Slave Schedules](#)
- [1860 U.S. Federal Census – Slave Schedules](#)
- [1890 Veterans Schedules](#)
- [1930 Census of Merchant Seamen](#)

Significant Dates (through 1952)

1608 – John Smith explored the Chesapeake Bay.

1631 – English established a trading post on Kent Island.

1632 – King Charles I granted Maryland Charter to Cecilius Calvert.

1634 – The ship Ark and Dove arrived at St. Clements Island.

1649 – Providence founded; later renamed Annapolis.

1649 – An Act Concerning Religion (also known as the Maryland Toleration Act) enacted. It was an attempt to protect the religious freedoms of Catholics (then in the minority) while showing respect to the British government and Puritans.

1664 – Slavery allowed by law.

1670 – Voting restricted to planters with at least a 50-acre freehold or property worth 40 pounds; officeholders had to have at least 1,000 acres of land.

1692 – Church of England became the established church. Local parishes were required to record the birth, marriage, and burial of all of the people in the parish, with the exception of blacks. (Some of these early parish records do contain records of blacks in the area.)

1694 – Capital moved from St. Mary's City to Annapolis.

Population

1790	319,728
1800	341,548
1810	380,546
1820	407,350
1830	447,040
1840	470,019
1850	583,034
1860	687,049
1870	780,894
1880	934,943
1890	1,042,390
1900	1,188,044
1910	1,295,346
1920	1,449,661
1930	1,631,526
1940	1,821,244
1950	2,343,001



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- 1698** – Slave trade increased after the monopoly of the Royal African Company was abolished.
- 1708** – Annapolis chartered as a city.
- 1719** – Principio Iron Works opened the Principio Furnace near Perryville, Cecil County. It was the first blast furnace in Maryland and one of the first in the U.S.
- 1727** – *Maryland Gazette* was founded. It is the oldest continuously published newspaper in the U.S.
- 1729** – Baltimore was founded.
- 1742** – First Baptist church in Maryland founded at Chestnut Ridge in Baltimore County.
- 1743** – First Lutheran church in Maryland was built along the Monocacy River.
- 1744** – Tribes of the Six Nations relinquished all of their claims to land in the Maryland colony.
- ca. 1750** – Goods began to be exported out of the port at Baltimore.
- 1767** – Maryland's border with Pennsylvania established at the Mason-Dixon Line.
- 1776** – The Declaration of Rights (Maryland's version of the Bill of Rights) was adopted; Church of England removed as the established church. Officeholders had to make "a declaration of belief in Christian religion."
- 1787** – Friends Yearly Meeting at Baltimore condemned slavery.
- 1788** – Maryland ratified the U.S. constitution, the seventh state to do so.
- 1789** – Georgetown College founded.
- 1791** – Land was split from Maryland to form part of the District of Columbia.
- 1794** – Yellow fever epidemic hit Baltimore.
- 1806** – Construction began on Basilica of the Assumption, the first Roman Catholic cathedral in the U.S.
- 1808** – Elizabeth Seton opened a female academy in Baltimore.
- 1810** – Voting laws changed. Voters and officeholders no longer needed to be property owners. Free blacks were disenfranchised.
- 1811** – In Cumberland, construction began on the National Road.
- 1813** – British forces raid Havre de Grace.
- 1813** – First steamboat travels on the Chesapeake Bay
- 1814** – British forces bomb Fort McHenry. Francis Scott Key witnessed the bombing from a ship in the Chesapeake Bay and wrote the poem "Defence of Fort McHenry," later set to music as "The Star Spangled Banner."
- 1826** – Law establishing public school enacted.
- 1826** – Non-Christians were no longer banned from holding public office, though they were required to profess belief in a "future state of rewards and punishments." This requirement was dropped in 1867.
- 1828** – Construction began on the Baltimore & Ohio (B & O) Railroad. It opened in 1830 and was the first to offer scheduled freight and passenger service to the public.
- 1828** – Construction began on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal (also known as the Grand Old Ditch). The first section opened in 1830.
- 1829** – Oblate Sisters of Providence, the first order of African-American nuns, established in Baltimore.
- 1837** – *Baltimore Sun* newspaper began publication.
- 1838** – Frederick Douglass escaped from slavery in Baltimore.
- 1844** – Telegraph established between Baltimore and Washington, DC.
- 1845** – Naval School established at Annapolis. In 1850, it was renamed the United States Naval Academy.



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1845 – Lloyd Street Synagogue, the first in Maryland, was constructed.

1861 – The Baltimore Riot (aka the Pratt Street Riot) occurred when Confederate sympathizers fought with Massachusetts soldiers on their way to Washington. Considered by some to be the first bloodshed of the Civil War.

1862 – The Battle of Antietam was fought. It is considered to be the bloodiest day of the Civil War with more than 23,000 men killed or wounded.

1864 – Maryland abolished slavery.

1865 – Birth, marriage, and death records begin to be recorded on the county level. Early compliance for birth and death records was low.

1871-1872 – Smallpox epidemic killed more than 2,000 people in Baltimore.

1876 – Johns Hopkins University was founded.

1898 – Statewide registration of births and deaths began. Full compliance did not occur until the 1910s.

1904 – The Great Baltimore Fire destroyed more than 1,500 buildings in central Baltimore.

1952 – The Chesapeake Bay Bridge opened.

Maryland Vital Records

The Maryland Assembly required the clerk of courts to record births, marriages, and burials beginning in 1640; however, very few of these records still exist. From 1692-1776, while the Church of England was the established church in the colony, church parishes were required to register births, marriages, and deaths of all in their parish. African-Americans were excluded from that requirement, though some parishes did record them.

Civil registration of births and deaths began again in 1865, but with very poor compliance by the clerks of the county circuit court. The city of Baltimore began recording births and deaths in 1875. Maryland counties began recording births and deaths in 1898, with full compliance occurring around 1910. Marriages began to be recorded in the county courts in 1865.

Maryland Vital Records on Ancestry.com

- [Maryland Marriages, 1655-1850](#)
- [Web: Maryland, Find A Grave Index, 1637-2012](#)
- [Maryland, Births and Christening Index, 1662-1911](#)

Military Collections

- [U.S., Confederate Soldiers Compiled Service Records, 1861-1865](#)
- [U.S., Union Soldiers Compiled Service Records, 1861-1865](#)
- [Maryland Military Men, 1917-18](#)
- [Maryland Revolutionary War Records](#)



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Other Collections

- [Maryland Calendar of Wills](#)
- [U.S., Indexed County Land Ownership Maps, 1860-1918](#)
- [U.S., Indexed Early Land Ownership and Township Plats, 1785-1898](#)
- [U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989](#) (Use the browse box in the upper right corner to determine what directories are available for your ancestor's area. If they lived in a rural area, check to see if that area was included with a larger city in the vicinity.)

Other State Resources

- [Enoch Pratt Free Library: Maryland Department](#)
 - [Guide to Genealogical Research in the Maryland Department](#)
- [Maryland Genealogical Society](#)
- [Maryland Historical Society](#)
- [Maryland State Archives](#)
 - [Legacy of Slavery in Maryland](#)
- [MDGenWeb](#)

Help and Advice

- [Maryland Family History Research](#)
- [Maryland County Resources](#)
- [Colonial Maryland](#)
- [Map of Maryland](#)

[View all Maryland collections on Ancestry.com](#)

