

# STATE GUIDE

## MARYLAND

by NANCY HENDRICKSON

**TO MANY TOURISTS**, Maryland conjures up visions of fine dining on blue crabs from the Chesapeake Bay, which nearly bisects this Mid-Atlantic state. Others think of the Baltimore Orioles or the US Naval Academy at the state capital, Annapolis. But for those whose roots lie in Maryland, it's simply "home." If that's you, it's time to explore those roots—and our guide will get you going.

### NETTING ASSISTANCE

Those trolling for Maryland ancestors should head right to prime fishing waters: the Maryland State Archives (MSA) website <[msa.maryland.gov](http://msa.maryland.gov)>. Click Digital Resources to find links to newspapers, photos, land and death records. To see a list of searchable online databases, click Search Online Databases.

Next, sail to MSA's Archives of Maryland Online <[aomol.msa.maryland.gov/html/index.html](http://aomol.msa.maryland.gov/html/index.html)> for more than 471,000 digitized historical documents, including city directories, military records, a colonial probate index and provincial court land records back to the mid-1600s. Search by topic or date range by clicking Search at the top of MSA's home page, or use the left column to navigate directly to the database of interest. Some matches display entire documents, while others are indexes or have source information so you can request records on microfilm. Once you've clicked over to a resource, you can search within that specific volume by using the top right search box.

Net more Maryland ancestors in other waters. The Family History Library (FHL), through FamilySearch <[www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)>, has more

than 20 free Maryland-specific searchable collections, including passenger lists and cemeteries. Subscription sites Ancestry.com <[ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com)> and MyHeritage <[myheritage.com](http://myheritage.com)> offer rich Maryland datasets, too.

### STARTING EARLY

The colony of Maryland dates to a 1632 grant from King Charles. To entice new settlers, Maryland employed the headright system of land grants, common throughout the colonies. Anyone willing to settle in America (or to pay an indentured servant's passage) received land, usually in 50-acre parcels. The system worked well for wealthy landowners, but made it almost impossible for indentured servants to own land, as they had to repay their passage.

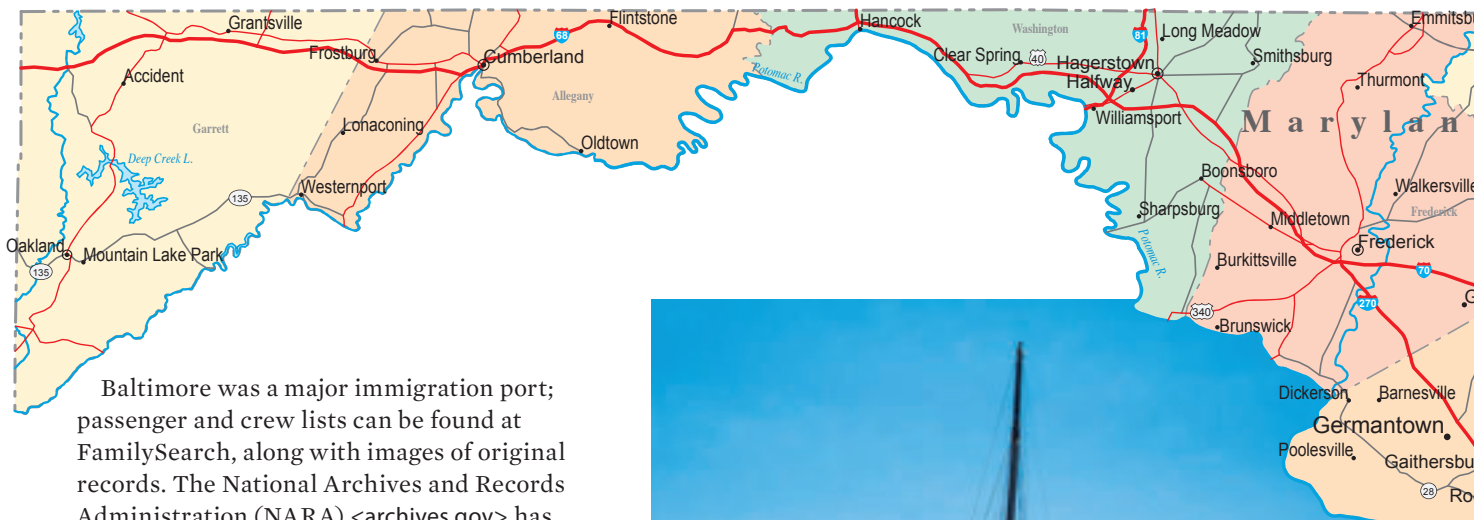
The first settlers, mostly English Protestants, entered Maryland in 1634. The colony briefly became a haven for Roman Catholics, thanks to the Maryland Toleration Act (enacted in 1649 and again in 1657). But then, after the Glorious Revolution in England, Catholicism was outlawed in the colony from 1688 until the American Revolution. Several Colonial datasets list pioneering residents, including the Early Settlers index, which is listed under the MSA's Search Online Databases link.

To access Maryland land records, you can search the Archives of Maryland Online, or sign up for a free account at MDLANDREC <[mdlandrec.net/main](http://mdlandrec.net/main)>. Once your account is activated (you'll receive an email confirmation), you can access many land records via the County list, with search criteria that includes name, date, and Book number.

### FAST FACTS

- ★ **Statehood:** 1788
- ★ **First federal census:** 1790
- ★ **Statewide birth and death records begin:** 1898
- ★ **Statewide marriage records begin:** 1865
- ★ **State-land state**
- ★ **Counties:** 23 (plus Baltimore)
- ★ **Contact for vital records:** Division of Vital Records, P.O. Box 68760, Baltimore, MD 21215, (410) 764-3038, <[health.maryland.gov](http://health.maryland.gov)>

# MARYLAND



Baltimore was a major immigration port; passenger and crew lists can be found at FamilySearch, along with images of original records. The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) <archives.gov> has pre-1987 passenger lists since 1897 on microfilm. Thousands of Maryland naturalizations (1797–1951) are indexed on FamilySearch, as are naturalization petitions (1906–1931).

## ACCOUNTING FOR ANCESTORS

St. Mary's City was the colonial seat of government. But in 1708, the capital moved to Annapolis. Maryland became the seventh US state when it ratified the Constitution in 1788.

The Continental Congress took Maryland's first census in 1776 for a population-based tax to fund the Revolution. Information recorded varies: In some counties, the census lists only heads of household and a count of other individuals. In other counties, you'll find each person's name, age, sex and race. A separate 1778 "census" listed free males age 18 and older. You can access indexes for surviving records from both through the MSA <census.msa.maryland.gov>.

The 1776 census is on Ancestry.com. It's also in *Maryland Records, Colonial, Revolutionary, County and Church from Original Sources* by Gaius Marcus Brumbaugh (downloadable PDF is searchable at Google Books <google.com/books>), along with marriages, tombstone inscriptions, and other data.

Federal census records are available at various databases, including FamilySearch and Ancestry.com.



City Dock in Annapolis

## GETTING STATS

Maryland's vital records are proverbial deep waters: They reach back to the 1600s. Start your search in online indexes to Maryland births since the mid-1600s at FamilySearch and Ancestry.com.

Formal birth and death records begin in 1875 for Baltimore and 1898 for the rest of the state. Birth certificates up to 1924 are microfilmed at MSA; requests for records less than 100 years old must include identification as detailed on the site. Birth records from

## timeline

**1608**

Captain John Smith explores the Chesapeake Bay

**1633**

English settlers on *The Ark and Dove* set sail for Maryland

**1696**

King Williams School (later, St. John's College) opens in Annapolis

**1729**

A charter establishes Baltimore Town

**1744**

American Indian chiefs of the Six Nations relinquish claims to land in the colony

**1845**

The US Naval Academy is established in Annapolis

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**1849**

Harriet Tubman escapes slavery in Dorchester County

**1904**

The Great Baltimore Fire destroys downtown Baltimore

**1914**

The immigration station at Locust Point closes after processing 1.2 million arrivals since 1868

**1967**

Baltimore native Thurgood Marshall is the first African American Supreme Court justice

**2007**

Baltimore native Nancy Pelosi becomes the first female Speaker of the House

## TOOLKIT

## Websites

**Archives of Maryland Online** <aomol.msa.maryland.gov/html/index.html>

**Cyndi's List: Maryland** <www.cyndislist.com/us/md>

**Digital Maryland** <www.digitalmaryland.org>

**FamilySearch Research Wiki: Maryland**

<www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Maryland,\_United\_States\_Genealogy>

**Maryland GenWeb Project** <www.mdgenweb.org>

## Publications

**Colonial Families of Maryland: Bound and Determined to Succeed** by Robert W. Barnes (Clearfield)

**A Guide to Genealogical Research in Maryland** by Henry C. Peden Jr. (Maryland Historical Society)

**Revolutionary Records of Maryland** by Gaius Marcus Brumbaugh (Clearfield)

## Archives &amp; Organizations

**Baltimore County Genealogical Society** Parkville Senior Center, 3rd Floor, Room 308, 8601 Harford Road Parkville, MD 21234 <www.baltimoregenealogysociety.org/BCGShome>

**Maryland Genealogical Society** 201 W. Monument St., Baltimore, MD 21201 <www.mdgensoc.org>

**Maryland Historical Society** 201 W. Monument St., Baltimore, MD 21201, (410) 685-3750 <www.mdhs.org>

**Maryland State Archives** 350 Rowe Blvd., Annapolis, MD 21401, (410) 260-6400 <msa.maryland.gov>

**National Archives at Philadelphia** 14700 Townsend Road, Philadelphia, PA 19154, (215) 305-2044 <www.archives.gov/philadelphia>

**Western Maryland's Historical Library** 100 South Potomac Street, Hagerstown, MD 21740, (301) 739-3250 <www.whilbr.org>

after 1924 are held by the state vital records office, and they're restricted to immediate family.

Death records beginning in 1875 (Baltimore City) and 1898 (Maryland counties) to 2009 are available from MSA, depending upon the location of the death. Follow the instructions in the PDF <msa.maryland.gov/msa/refserv/pdf/instructions-deathrecords-counties-name1.pdf> to find death records up to 1987.

For more death data, check newspaper obituaries through MSA's Maryland Newspaper Project <speccol.msa.maryland.gov/pages/newspaper/digitized.aspx>, or look for Maryland newspapers digitized or indexed online like those at Newspapers.com <www.newspapers.com> or ProQuest <proquest.com> (available at many public libraries).

For marriage records dating to the 1700s, go to FamilySearch <www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1675199>. This name index contains marriages dating from 1666 to 1970.

For up-to-date cost and availability of birth, death, marriage, and divorce records, go to the Centers for Disease Control website <www.cdc.gov/nchs/w2w/maryland.htm>.

## HOLDING THE OLD LINE

In 1777, Maryland raised eight Revolutionary War regiments to fight the British; many served in major engagements. If your ancestor was in the Maryland "Line," as it was called, search *Muster Rolls and Other Records of Service of Maryland Troops in the American Revolution* on the Military Records page at Archives of Maryland Online.

Maryland gave Revolutionary War veterans some of its western lands in the form of bounty-land grants. Various published indexes of Maryland's bounty-land awards are at major genealogical libraries and online databases. Plat maps and ledgers of Revolutionary War era-awards are at MSA.

Though much of the state supported the South in the Civil War, the North essentially forced Maryland to stay in the Union. Many Marylanders enlisted in the Confederate Army in Virginia. The Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System <www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm> can tell you which side your ancestor fought for. The Archives of Maryland Online has soldier rosters; order Union service records from NARA.

All these resources will likely help you net some great "fish" on your next expedition for Maryland ancestors. Throw out a line (or two, or three) and start hauling in your catch. ●