A Brief History of Maryland (for kids)

Capital: Annapolis
State Bird: Baltimore Oriole
State Football/ Baseball: Ravens/ Orioles
Largest City: Baltimore
Nickname: The old Line State
State Song: "Maryland, My Maryland"
State Flower: Black-eyed Susan
Geography: The Chesapeake Bay, the largest estuary in the world divides the state. Maryland is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean on the east, Pennsylvania to the north, West Virginia to the west, and Virginia to the south.

NATIVE AMERICANS
For thousands of years before the Europeans arrived in Maryland, Native American tribes lived on the land, over forty tribes in total, including the Patuxent, Assateaque, Piscataway and Nanticoke. These Native Americans lived in wigwams, not teepees. The men hunted deer and turkey and the women farmed corn and beans. They wore ornaments of beads, shells, animal bones, and copper. Although both men and women wore their hair long, men’s styles were more elaborate. In addition, men sometimes adorned their bodies with paint or tattoos.

COLONISTS ARRIVE
During the Age of Exploration many men from Europe set out to in order to understand the world better. It was during this time that Europeans first recorded traveling to American, or “The New World” as most called it. In 1632, English King Charles I gave a man named George Calvert the colony of Maryland. In 1634 one hundred and fifty English men and women set sail for Maryland on two ships, the Ark and the Dove. It took them 3 1/2 months to reach Maryland. Everyone on the ship was cramped; it was dirty, and there were terrible storms on the sea. But they arrived in the very south of Maryland and received permission to settle on the land by the Piscataway Indians, the Native Americans who lived there at the time. In celebration of their arrival, the colonists held a Catholic mass on March 25th. Today people from Maryland still celebrate on March 25th, it is now know as “Maryland Day.”

FARMING
Most Maryland colonists farmed tobacco. Marylanders made lots of money growing tobacco, but farming the crop was hard work. In order to grow more, the farmers hired “indentured servants.” An indentured servant is someone who agrees to work for a wealthier person for several years. After working those years, the person is free and is given some basic tools and a small farm of his own. Servants were mostly young men, generally between the ages of 17 and 28, who served a master for four or five years in return for payment of their passage.
LABOR
As years went on, farmers hired less indentured servants and more enslaved workers. Enslaved workers were people that were forced to come to America against their will, and were owned by the farmers. The farmer was allowed to make the enslaved men, women, and children work for long hours, in terrible conditions, with no pay. So while some families made lots of money as farmers, there were many who were enslaved, and forced to work with no pay for the rest of their lives.

REVOLUTIONARY WAR
During the mid 1700s the relationship with American colonists and England became very negative. The colonists were angry because they were forced to pay very high taxes to Britain. In 1776, Maryland joined the other American colonies in declaring their independence from Britain. To declare independence, the new nation (The United States of America) declared war on Britain. There were many battles up and down the East Coast of America during this war that continued until 1782. While there were very few battles in Maryland, many of Maryland’s men left their homes and jobs to join the fighting, and many other Marylanders concentrated on producing food and equipment for the American army. Americans won the war against England, and became their own country.

Baltimore
In the early 1800s, Baltimore was the largest city in Maryland. In fact, it was the 3rd largest city in the United States. It grew so large because its shipping port allowed direct trade with the rest of the country and many places in the world.
WAR OF 1812

Because so much of Baltimore’s success depended on trading, it was very important to Baltimoreans that there was “free trade,” or the ability to trade freely with all countries. During the first decade of the 1800s (1800-1810) Great Britain began to interfere with Baltimore’s trading (again). Furthermore, Britain was known to steal American soldiers and force them to work and fight for the British militia. They also forced the Americans to stop trading with several countries. This angered the Americans, and they declared war on Britain. Not everyone in America supported this war; in fact, Baltimoreans were the main group of Americans pushing for this war to happen. The war lasted about three years, and much of the fighting took place in Maryland. One of the most famous battles, the Bombardment of Fort McHenry was fought in Baltimore. It was for this battle that a Baltimorean, Mary Pickersgill, sewed the Star-Spangled Banner flag. It was also at the end of this battle that Francis Scott key wrote our National Anthem, “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

CIVIL WAR

During the Civil War, Maryland remained in the Union but was very divided. The northern and western parts of Maryland were more like the Union in the north, with little slavery and a focus on industry/manufacturing and crops like wheat and corn. But the southern and eastern parts of the State were more like the Confederation in the south, growing crops with the labor of enslaved African Americans, with very little industry, and with many family ties to people in the South. One of the major battles of the civil war was fought in Maryland, the Battle of Antietam. It was the bloodiest battle in American history. It only lasted one day, but over 22,000 people were killed or injured.

IMMIGRATION

After the Civil War, the number of immigrants arriving in Baltimore increased dramatically. At the beginning, most of the immigrants were from Russia, Poland, and Italy. They arrived by train from New York, or by boat, at Locust Point in the inner harbor, where they received health inspections. Coming to a new country was difficult for immigrants. Most did not speak English, and so it was hard for them to find a job. Organizations, such as the Hibernian Society, grew as aides to the immigrants. Churches also reached out to the members of their church community who were immigrants. Because of this, pockets of immigrants began to form around the city. These pockets still exist today and are now known as Little Italy, Little Lithuania, etc.
THE FIRE of 1904
In February 1904 a large fire started in Hurst Dry Goods Company on Liberty Street and spread through the city. At the time, there were no electrical wiring regulations or codes for safe building construction and so the fire covered more than 70 blocks of the downtown area. When the smoke cleared 2 days later, more than 1,500 buildings and 2,500 businesses were destroyed, and estimates of the damage reached $125 million. Baltimore’s architects and businessmen met shortly after the fire to plan the city’s reconstruction. They widened the roads and sidewalks, moved telephone wires underground, and increased the

WOMEN

By 1870 men over 21 years old, black or white, could vote in Maryland. But women could not vote until 1920 (50 years later!) Women fought hard for their right to vote, but without the ability to vote, women could only try to pursued men’s votes. The men in charge of government wondered why women would want or need to vote if they stayed at home all day to raise children. But the truth was that women were entering the work force, joining organizations and charities to promote improved relief, health, and sanitation for the poor, like the Charity Organization Society, established in Baltimore. Women were an important part of the community, but it took a while to be recognized as such.

Between 1910 and 1920 owning cars increased rapidly. By 1917, there were 55,000 cars and 4,000 trucks in Maryland. To accommodate the rapidly growing numbers of automobiles, Maryland built a new system of roads, highways, and bridges. But debates occurred on how to pay for these new roads, and what laws to create to regulate traffic. The Automobile Club of Maryland, formed in 1901, proved to be an effective advocate for improving the conditions of roads.

The majority of the Maryland’s Historical Society’s collections are comprised of items from the 17th century to the beginning of the 20th century.