

Frederick County offers a rich and colorful history that remains an important part of the lives of its residents. The people of Frederick County are proud to share their heritage through the stories and historic landmarks that have been lovingly preserved for our enjoyment today and for generations to come. With over seventy sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places, lively historic districts in several communities, as well as countless other sites of historical significance that contribute to the historical landscape of the county, visitors to the “Crossroads of History” will enjoy an enriching experience not soon forgotten.

Settlers began arriving in the area that is now Frederick County throughout the 1720’s. Settlement of the area began in earnest after 1732 when Maryland began offering inducements to settlers, with Germans arriving by way of Pennsylvania and the English and Scotch migrating from Virginia and the Southern Shore of Maryland. Schifferstadt Architectural Museum offers a glimpse into the life of an early German settler.

By 1748 the population in this area was sufficient to warrant the formation of a new county. At the urging of Daniel Dulaney, one of the area’s largest landowners, the Maryland General Assembly provided for the formation of the new county of Frederick. The act went into effect on December 10, 1748 and named Frederick Town as the seat of government for the new county.

As a prelude to the Revolutionary War, one of the first acts of contempt against the British in the colonies took place in Frederick in 1765. In open defiance of the Parliament’s unpopular Stamp Act, the twelve judges of Frederick County’s Court repudiated the act by issuing documents on unstamped paper. Their actions fueled the fire of revolt and led to similar acts of defiance elsewhere.

Throughout the war, Frederick County supplied men and materials to support the effort. In the summer of 1775, two companies of Frederick riflemen joined the Continental Army. Frederick County also played an important role in supplying Washington’s Army. Cannon balls were produced at the Catoctin Furnace, gunpowder at mills along the Monocacy River and gunlocks at a factory in Frederick. The Hessian Barracks, originally built as an arsenal and barracks for American troops, became a prison for Hessian mercenaries and British troops who were captured in battle. A portion of the Barracks has been preserved on the campus of the Maryland School for the Deaf.

Frederick County’s reputation as a “Crossroads of History” was achieved through the construction of the National Road, the C & O Canal and the B & O Railroad, all of which passed through substantial portions of the county. The legacy of these notable transportation systems can be appreciated through a visit to the C & O Canal National Historic Park and the Brunswick Railroad Museum, or by visiting the National Road town of New Market.

Union and Confederate forces passed through the county on their way to do battle at Antietam in September of 1862. Troops again passed through the county in the days surrounding the fateful Battle of Gettysburg in July of 1863. Many of the wounded of those battles were treated at hospitals established throughout Frederick County. The plight of the war’s sick and wounded can be experienced through a visit to the National Museum of Civil War Medicine in Frederick.

In the spring and summer of 1864, Confederate forces under the command of General Jubal Early made their final advance into Maryland. Badly in need of supplies, Early demanded and was paid a ransom of \$200,000 from the citizens of Frederick. That same day, July 9, 1864, Early's troops defeated Union forces under the command of General Lew Wallace at the Battle of Monocacy, a few miles south of Frederick. Though Wallace's outnumbered men were defeated by the Confederate forces, they were successful in delaying Early's intended march upon Washington. Today visitors can learn more about "the Battle That Saved Washington" by experiencing the Monocacy National Battlefield near Frederick.

Through its location along vital transportation routes, its many natural resources and the ingenuity of its people, Frederick County has continued to be a prosperous and dynamic region. Unique industries such as the Frederick Seamless Hosiery Company, the Ox-Fibre Brush Company and the Everedy Company (maker of bottle cappers and other kitchen items), have given way to innovative research and product development in bio-medicine, energy generation and transmission and other technology-based fields.

Upon first arriving in Frederick County, visitors will experience the excitement of Oliver Wendell Holmes, who said upon his arrival in 1862, "The town had a poetical look from a distance, as if seers and dreamers might live there." In Frederick County you will have the opportunity to walk amidst the memories of seers and dreamers like Francis Scott Key, author "The Star-Spangled Banner;" Roger Brooke Taney, Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court from 1836 to 1864; Barbara Fritchie, the flag waving heroine of Whittier's poem; Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, the first American born saint of the Roman Catholic Church and Claire McCardell, a fashion designer who revolutionized women's clothing during the mid-twentieth century.

At the "crossroads of history" Frederick County offers a rich and varied heritage that has been thoughtfully preserved through museums, historic sites, and historic districts throughout the county.