A Brief History concerning Prince George’s County, Maryland

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In 1608, Captain John Smith described the landscape of what would become Maryland thus, “All the Country is overgrown with trees.” This land looked like England: “And so it must have seemed to men who carried with them the recollection of England’s green and pleasant land, dotted with fields and pastures, laced with roads and pathways. Only here and there had the native Indians cleared patches for corn and vegetables and built their huts, or wigwams. These Indians proved friendly; when they shortly agreed to quit the area peaceably, leaving their fields and dwellings to the adventurers, Father [Andrew] White exclaimed, ‘The finger of God is in this.’”

The Founding of Maryland and Prince George's County

Maryland is one of the original thirteen states on the Eastern Seaboard. “Its small size belies the great diversity of its landscapes and of the ways of life that they foster, from the low-lying and water-oriented Eastern Shore and Chesapeake Bay area.” Maryland’s current size is 10,454 square miles and has an estimated population of 5,618,344 people. Much has changed from 1634 when the first permanent settle was established, but diversity in landscape and inhabitants still exists. Prince George’s County, Maryland was founded in 1696. It is located in south-central Maryland on the Potomac River, close to the District of Columbia. It was named for Prince George of Demark, husband to Princess Anne, heir to the English throne. The County’s current size is 486 square miles and has a population of about 774,000 people, being the second most populous county in Maryland.

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3 Katharine D. Bryant and Donna L. Schneider, Prince George’s County, Maryland. Images of America (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2000), 7.
The story of the founding of Maryland is heavily dependent on the history of the Calvert family. George Calvert was born in 1580 in Yorkshire, England. He graduated from Oxford in 1597 and after a “grand tour” entered government service. He served as a Secretary of State from 1619 to 1625 where upon his conversion to Catholicism, resigned his position and was given the title “Baron of Baltimore” by King James. Due to his new religious persuasion, he could no longer hold public office and thus turned his attention to his investments in the New World including the “Colony and Plantation of Newfoundland” and the Virginia Company. In 1622 he “obtained a patent from the Crown to the whole southeast coast of the island” of Newfoundland, but his attempt to establish a colony there was hindered by the “cold climate and rocky soil.” He asked for a new grant in the Chesapeake area and amid conflict with the Virginia settlers, King Charles I granted the charter in 1632 to establish a “new English colony in honor of Queen Henrietta Maria.” George Calvert died two months before the charter was finalized, so it went to his son and heir, Cecil Calvert, Second Lord Baltimore. Cecil became the Lord Proprietor of Maryland, sole owner of the 6,769,290 acres by this royal patent. Proprietary control stayed in the Calvert family until 1689 when a “rebellion by Protestants overthrew the proprietary officers, leading to an interval of crown rule in the royal colony of Maryland (1692–1715). During that period the Church of England was formally established. In 1715 Maryland once again became a proprietary colony of the Calverts, who had converted to Protestantism.”

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9 Land, *Colonial Maryland*, 6, 8.  
Maryland is also a story of religious refuge, tolerance and conflict. Upon George Calvert's conversion to Catholicism in 1625, he refused to take the Oath of Supremacy, the recognition of the “ultimate authority of the king in English ecclesiastical affairs.”\(^{11}\) His son, Cecil, followed in his father’s footsteps in his religious preference and wanted the settlement of Maryland to be a “climate of religious and political orthodoxy.” England was in much turmoil with the reign of King Charles I and because of this “Puritans and Catholics suffered for failing to conform to the Church of England.”\(^ {12}\) Maryland would be different from Virginia in that it would provide religious asylum.\(^ {13}\) Jesuit missionaries were on the first ships for the Maryland settlement. These missionaries taught the Piscataway nation and baptized their chief, Kittamaquund in 1640.\(^ {14}\) Many religious differences and transitions have existed in Maryland’s history. Its religious culture is varied and strong and continues to be part of its history.

**Native American Presence in Prince George's County**

The first settlers to Maryland did not experience the hardships of Jamestown for many lessons had been learned, one being that the colonists and the Indians of the area needed to be on friendly terms. They found this accommodation in the Piscataway tribe: “For twenty years after the Maryland settlers landed they successfully befriended the closest Indian tribes by promising them protection from the Susquenhannocks, who for their part acted as a buffer against their aggressive Iroquois enemies farther north. Both whites and Indians had later examples of the other’s treachery. Even so, good fortune promised to fulfill [Lord] Baltimore’s hope for peace with the Maryland Indians.”\(^ {15}\) There were alliances between several of the native tribes in the area; the Piscataways were “in charge of a loosely knit smattering of tribes that included the

\(^{11}\) Brugger, *Maryland*, 4.  
\(^{12}\) Brugger, *Maryland*, 5.  
\(^{13}\) Brugger, *Maryland*, 7.  
Anacostan, Mattawoman, Nanjemony, and Portobaco.” The location of where the Piscataway tribe lived from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century is today’s Prince George’s County. John Smith traveled in the region in 1608 and most likely would have come in contact with the Piscataway tribe. There was strife and small warfare between tribes in the area and trading and additional settlement went on between the Indians and the colonists. Historian James Merrell wrote of the integration of the Piscataways: “The history of the Piscataway Indians of Maryland, one tribe that accepted the authority of the English, demonstrates that it was possible for Indians to follow successfully a path that lay between total war and complete capitulation. Heirs to a cultural tradition characterized by stability and stubborn resistance to outside influences, and accustomed to dealing with incursions by other peoples, the Piscataways used their geographic distance from English settlements and the colonists' need for Indian allies and Indian corn to preserve their way of life after the English arrived.”

However, the alliance between the Piscataways and the colonists did not always prove beneficial to the Native Americans. Their tolerance of the white man was taken advantage of as the colonists would settle closer and closer to their land. Little was done to protect their land from the encroachment: “The Indian had no notion of private property in land, and, particularly when compensated by a little in the way of trade goods, offered no immediate opposition to white occupation.” This issue was first addressed in 1662 with the creation of a reservation through a land grant to William Calvert and the establishment of Calvert Manor. Some additional measures, including preservation of the Accokeek Creek area, were taken to preserve the hunting

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16 Bryant, 88.
and fishing lands and waterways, but as time went on “the settlers had occupied all the fertile land along the river, forcing the Indians to leave their towns and plantations.”

Fighting between tribes and the colonists happened periodically from 1642 to 1685 leading to the destruction of the Susquenhannocks in 1676 and the removal of the Piscataways in 1699 to Virginia. By 1711, the Piscataways no longer existed as a separate tribal community.

As a result of this early Native American settlement, the Accokeek Creek site has proven to be a rich and valuable archeological site. Purchased in 1923 by Mrs. Alice L.L. Ferguson, the Accokeek Creek Site “is one of the most important sources of information on the prehistory of the Middle Atlantic Seaboard area.” This site not only documents the presence of the Piscataway tribe, it also gives clues concerning prior occupants. The archeologists and volunteers thought to use stratigraphy to distinguish between the different eras and peoples, but this was not possible because the remains were not preserved in layers, being mixed due to the shallow ground and years of cultivation. The artifacts were separated by the typological method from earliest people to later. 200,000 potsherds were collected and many were able to be pieced together as to give the general shape of pots that would have been used by the people of the Accokeek. They also found arrowheads, spearheads and dartpoints along with awls, punches and needles as well as bone pieces, shells and ornaments.

Other archeological features were discovered in addition to the artifacts, primarily burial grounds. There were many burial grounds discovered on the site and Mrs. Ferguson “discovered three basic styles of burial customs. One was the individual interment with a single body in each

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19 Stephenson, Prehistoric People, 9.
20 Stephenson, Prehistoric People, 10.
22 Robert L. Stephenson, The Accokeek Creek Site; a Middle Atlantic Seaboard Culture Sequence (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1963), 4. Hereafter cited as Accokeek Creek.
23 Stephenson, Accokeek Creek, 8.
The positions of the body varied in individual graves, one being a “flexed” position where the body has the knees drawn to the chest. The other main position was fully extended with both the arms and legs straight. The second burial style was two or more bodies in a single grave. The third is an “ossuary”- a mass grave where 250 to 600 bodies are placed in a single interment site. Many of the bodies in the ossuary would have been buried in one of the two previous styles prior to being placed in the mass grave. As a result, many of the bodies were not whole. “In the largest of the ossuaries at the Accokeek site, 618 skulls were found.”

Additional archeological features include post molds, firehearths, and refuse pits. The post molds can be considered the most informative, showing the location of “stockades, house walls, drying racks, cooking frames, and other structures.” This can show the shape and presumed structure of the dwellings of the former inhabitants. The three main excavation sites where post molds were found are Clagett’s Cove, Mockley Point and Moyaone. From the “styles of artifacts and features” found in the three areas indicate that these areas were never occupied concurrently. The sequence of the inhabitants at the Accokeek Creek Site is: the Archaic Period: before 500 BC; the Early Woodland Period: 500 BC – AD 300; the Middle Woodland Period: AD 300 – AD 1200; the Late Woodland Period: AD 1200 – AD 1700; and the Historic Period: after AD 1700. The Piscataway tribe belongs in the Late Woodland Period.

Because of this site’s history, preservation of the Accokeek Creek Site has been assured. The National Park Service created Piscataway Park in conjunction with The Accokeek Foundation in 1961. The description given on the National Park Service website for Piscataway

24 Stephenson, Accokeek Creek, 8-9.
25 Stephenson, Accokeek Creek, 9.
26 Stephenson, Accokeek Creek, 9.
27 Stephenson, Accokeek Creek, 173-174.
Park shows the relevance and value of Piscataway Park and the Accokeek Creek Site to Mount Vernon:

Two hundred years ago, George Washington described Mount Vernon by saying, “No estate in the United America is more pleasantly situated than this.” Today, the breathtaking view of the Maryland fields and hillsides across the Potomac River look much as they did in Washington's time. The view from Mount Vernon will continue to be protected thanks to the Accokeek Foundation's efforts to develop a public-private partnership to create Piscataway Park. Piscataway Park, part of the National Park Service, was established in 1961 as a pilot project in the use of easements to protect parklands from obtrusive urban expansion. Today, Piscataway Park covers approximately 5,000 acres and stretches for six miles from Piscataway Creek to Marshall Hall on the Potomac River. A place of great natural beauty, Piscataway Park is home to bald eagles, beaver, deer, fox, osprey, and many other species. To complement the surroundings, the park has, in addition to a public fishing pier and two boardwalks over fresh water tidal wetlands, a variety of nature trails, meadows, and woodland areas, each with unique features.28

Maryland has a long and rich history that began well before it received its modern name. To gain a full appreciation for its history and diversity, a full and complete story must be available. George Calvert is essential to the story of Prince George's County as much as Kittamaqund, John Smith, and George Washington, the slaves, freed blacks, revolutionaries, soldiers, and today’s residents. Let us remember all the players in this history and the reason as to why this area and memories need to be preserved.

The Environment of Prince George’s County

Captain John Smith, an explorer of Chesapeake Bay, wrote: “Within is a country that may have the prerogative over the most places known, for large and pleasant navigable rivers, heaven and earth never agreed better to frame a place for man's habitation.... Here are mountainees, tails, plaines, valleyes, rivers, and brookes, all running more pleasantly into a faire bay, compassed but for the mouth, with fruitful and delightsome land.”29 Prince George's County continued to grow into the 1700's. While other areas of trade would emerge, Prince George's

County remained predominantly agricultural. Agriculture was the basis of the economy and directly or indirectly provided the livelihood for every resident. The one crop at the heart of this agricultural economy was tobacco.

The wealth of Prince George’s County centered on the cash crop of tobacco. This wealth helped to build the homes and educate the children of the plantation owners and “supported the work of the religious faiths including Maryland's established church, the Church of England.” Tobacco also helped the smaller farmers earn a living. It was even used as legal tender for debt repayment. Tobacco remained the prominent crop in Maryland into the nineteenth century as farmers began to test new crops. “In 1817, the first county agricultural society in Maryland was founded here in Prince George's County, and agriculturalists such as Charles B. Calvert, Horace Capron, and Dr. John Bayne attracted national attention with their agricultural experimentation. The location of the nation's first research agricultural college here in the 1850's further attests to the leadership of Prince George's County in that field.” This college is known today as the University of Maryland. Prince George's County continued to flourish as the agriculture basis in the County was expanding and industry was developing: “the fisheries of the Patuxent and Potomac yielded rich harvests; steamboats plied the Patuxent linking the County to Baltimore, while proximity to Washington afforded a second market, and above all, the growth of the staple crop, tobacco, remained a profitable enterprise.”

After the Civil War, agriculture continued to be the principal means of life, with tobacco being the most important crop. At the end of the 18th century, smaller farms run by freed blacks began to appear. “As the nineteenth century ended, small farms growing tobacco and a good

30 Virta, History.
31 Virta, History.
32 Virta, History.
many other crops played a larger role in the county's economic life.”

Many of these new smaller farms were run by freed blacks and new people moving to the county.

Today, Prince George’s County is the largest county in Maryland. From the plantation and farm, the county has “developed into a diverse, goal-and-business-oriented urban community.”

Slaves no longer labor in the fields, nor do blacks live segregated from whites; Prince George’s County is diverse in many ways, not only racially, but in cultural and economic diverse peoples. Because of Prince George’s County proximity to Washington, D.C., the District has played part in the economic development of the County. Many people travel daily to Washington for work, but return to the County, where their comfortable homes give them an enjoyable suburban setting.

**African-American History in Prince George’s County**

Although Maryland did not become a state until 1788, in 1663, Maryland lawmakers passed a law enslaving all African-Americans that were brought into the colony. Before Prince George’s County was founded in 1696, several more laws governing the lives of the slave community were passed. Importation of slaves increased so that by the end of 1750, the inhabitants of Prince George’s County consisted of 40,000 black people to 100,000 white people. Between 1658 and 1710, almost 3 out of 4 slaves lived on farms with 20 or fewer slaves, while half lived on farms with 10 or fewer, and nearly a third lived on farms with five or fewer. Because of the influx of slaves from various parts of Africa and the allocation throughout the county, the social and cultural traditions of the slave communities were unique and distinct. By 1730, slaves born in Maryland outnumbered the amount of Africans imported to the state.

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33 Virta, *History.*
With large plantations and small farms employing slave labor to work their lands, slave houses were a fundamental part of the landscape of Prince George’s County during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The highest proportion of slaves on the plantations lived in these slave houses which they themselves built. In addition to the slave houses, visitors to these areas would have found wood piles, outhouses and even a garden and pen to hold chickens raised by the slaves. Most likely, African slaves in Maryland continued the traditional construction methods from the part of Africa they were descended. According to George McDaniel, slaves were an integral part of Maryland history that “without them the history of Maryland, the South, and America would have been dramatically different.”

Cultural practices most likely came from the native land of the enslaved and would have been passed from generation to generation. Objects such as baskets, traditions such as religion, and musical instruments, such as drums and the “banjar” or banjo, were taught to younger slaves by their elders. Even farming techniques that the Africans used in their native land were shared and employed in Maryland and other colonies.

While tobacco was the main crop grown by the planters and plowed by the slaves, by the nineteenth century, new crops were introduced. As a thriving county in the nineteenth century, Prince George’s benefited from the diversity of the new agriculture endeavors. Prince George’s County grew more tobacco and required more slaves to work in the fields than any other county in Maryland. By the 1860’s, with 90% of the black community in Prince George’s County enslaved, the prosperity would continue, at least for awhile, until the beginning of the Civil War. With many of the leading families in the County owning slaves and half the population of the

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county being enslaved, the Civil War would greatly impact Prince George’s County and abolish the plantation society.

The Underground Railroad operated predominately in the Upper South and the North, including Maryland and Prince George’s County. Prince George’s County served as a stop on the Underground Railroad. This well-organized system helped slaves in Maryland to travel to Philadelphia or Canada and eventually gain their freedom. Fugitive slaves used networks of shelters among black communities that effectively made up an “underground network of committees, stations, and information.”

By 1860, most enslaved African Americans found ways of coping with slavery. They used strategies to allow themselves to have lives beyond the reach of the master and to reach beyond the daily experience of bondage. The strategies that the enslaved used to transcend their experiences of slavery was not to allow it to completely determine personal worth and values, differed depending partly on the work they did and where they lived.

After the Civil War and the abolishment of slavery in Maryland in November of 1863, the former slaves could begin to work for themselves. Since Maryland had been a border state and had not seceded from the union, the government had not taken possession of the plantations, so freed blacks were left to find other ways to acquire land from the white landowners. What emerged was land ownership and “though a minority, black landowners were present throughout Maryland and the South in the post-bellum nineteenth century.” Changes in landownership signaled the end of the large tobacco plantations and breakup of these plantations into smaller landholdings of two to ten acres of the tobacco crop. With the end of slavery, many of the ex-

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37 McDaniel, Hearth & Home.
slaves became farmers of their own land, built houses of their own, and reached out to live in communities with white landowners, while still others joined with other blacks to form their own neighborhoods.

Although the white population still did not see blacks as equal to whites, they had no problems with selling portions of their land to blacks they deemed acceptable to them. These were probably blacks known to them or former slaves of the family. With the fortunate location of the Potomac River, many of the now freed slaves used their acquired skills as watermen. They were able to operate their own boats or work for others to earn a living by using skills acquired under slavery by catching fish and other sea foods like oysters, clams and crabs. Now that African Americans were owners of their own land, they were able to take control over the building of their homes. The houses began to take on a middle-class look with the ethnicity of African culture. But these houses were not isolated; they were in communities and as before under slavery, the free blacks continued to provide help and support to one another.

Prince George’s County is the most affluent county in the United States for African Americans. In 2007, the percentage of blacks living in Prince George’s County was 62.7%, with the White Non-Hispanic population next with a percentage of 27.0%. In the early 1980’s, African Americans began building communities around the perimeter of the District of Columbia. Many people commute to Washington, but live in Prince George’s County, away from the city. Preserving the history of the black community in the County has taken a back seat to that of non blacks, but this is changing as more of the descendants of former slaves are researching their family history. In addition, Prince George’s County has the gratification of having the first African American county executive and first African-American representative

from Maryland. According to Bianca Floyd, “If you want to see African American history past in the making, you should come to [Prince George's County].”

Military Contributions of Prince George's County

Since the founding of our nation, Maryland and Prince George's County has paid a high price for our nation's freedom. During the American Revolutionary War, Maryland's location in the middle of the coastal colonies made it essential to moving supplies between the numerous theaters of war. Although major military campaigns did not occur within the state, its resources were vital to the war effort. "In 1777 [George] Washington called on Governor Johnson for more troops from Maryland, and the State raised five more regiments, making seven in all. As his [Washington's] whole army consisted of but forty-three regiments, it is easy to see that Maryland was furnishing more than twice her proportion, and probably more than three times her share in proportion to population." Besides a great contribution in manpower, Prince George's County's fields and farms provided invaluable supplies to the Continental forces. It was this economical importance that often made Prince George's County the target of British raiding parties to destroy or capture all that could be produced.

After providing this priceless service during the American Revolution, the people of Prince George's County would once again be called to serve during the War of 1812. Prince George's proximity to the new United States capital in Washington, DC made it an important strategic position for both the Americans and the British. After the Revolution, many leaders in the newly created federal government recognized the importance of Maryland's waterways during the war, as well as how easy it was for the British to sail through them. With this in mind,

39 Alexander, “Celebrating a Milestone.”

the construction of a fort was ordered for the purpose of protecting the nation's new capital city. "Land on the Maryland shore of the Potomac opposite Mount Vernon was acquired from the Digges family of the Warburton Manor, as a site for a fort. The location had been selected earlier by George Washington in 1794, when construction of a fort on the Potomac was under consideration." Although what was known as Fort Warburton was completed and standing by the time the British came back up the Chesapeake in 1814, it offered no resistance. The commander of the fort at the time, Captain S. T. Dyson, ordered the fort destroyed and abandoned, allowing the British to sail onto Washington and burn the city. After the War of 1812, a fort was built again in order to protect the Capital from any advances up the Potomac River towards Washington. This fort, known as Fort Washington, still stands to this day. It would not be completed until 1824, and would cost over $426,000 to reconstruct. Fort Washington, although insignificant during the War of 1812, would go on to play larger roles in other American conflicts.

After the War of 1812, life in Prince George's County returned to normal. Farming continued on many Maryland's plantations, many of which were worked by slaves. The issue of slavery would lead Maryland again into a military conflict, only this time, foreign invaders on the water would not be the only attack Maryland feared.

As the Country entered the 1850's, tensions between the agricultural Southern states and industrial Northern states began to reach a boiling point. Slavery, an issue that had plagued the colonies since before the start of the American Revolution, was becoming too important an issue to be ignored. This issue would cause many problems for the state of Maryland. Slavery was essential to many plantations, especially in Prince George's County. Maryland's proximity to the

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North, however, fostered anti-slavery views to a large portion of the population. As a result, when the Civil War began, Maryland as a whole refused to secede from the Union, but many citizens would end up fighting on both sides of the conflict.

As was the case during the American Revolution, Maryland's location along the coast and between the Northern and Southern states left many of the citizens of the state in the middle of what would become some of the bloodiest battlefields in America. Washington DC, located just north of Prince George's County, was the target for many Southern hostilities, and Northern forces would often move through Maryland on their way to battle Southern forces in Virginia. This proximity to Washington would once again make Prince George's County essential to military operations.

At the start of the war, Washington DC turned towards Fort Washington to protect the city while other fortifications were built and soldiers were trained. Although the fort had not been updated since work had been completed in the 1840's, its location was ideal to protect Washington from any Southern attempts to travel up the Potomac River. "…On January 5, 1861, the first order issued by the Secretary of the Navy for the defense of Washington assigned 40 marines to protect Fort Washington, at the time the only fortification defending the city. During the war, troops from the 4th Artillery and other units manned the fort."42 The threat of a Confederate invasion left the Federal government scrambling to construct forts around Washington and Northern Virginia to prevent any incidents similar to 1814 from happening again. Although Fort Washington offered some protection to the Union Capital, it was too outdated to offer serious protection against an invasion. The Potomac River proved to be a weak point in the defensive line, and "[a] threat of attack via this route [along the Potomac]

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42 Pogue, *Old Maryland Landmarks*, 312-313.
existed as long as European powers like Great Britain and France showed a willingness to aid the
Confederate cause."\(^{43}\)

In 1864, as a result of this possible threat from the Potomac River, "[c]ivilians…
constructed elaborate river works at Fort Foote… to deter naval attacks -- a threat not so much
from the Confederates as from European powers seeking to intervene."\(^{44}\) Fort Foote, which can
still be seen today, was built across from Alexandria, Virginia, and provided protection at the
southernmost point within the circle of forts around Washington DC. "Fort Foote was even
regarded as the most elaborate [fort], in its internal arrangements, of all the defensive works in
Washington… [Fort Foote had] water batteries and mounted 200-pounder Parrott rifles and 15-
inches guns."\(^{45}\) The construction of Fort Foote greatly diminished the need for Fort Washington,
but both were still manned throughout the war. Unlike the American Revolution, Maryland
would see great bloodshed within her boundaries during the American Civil War. The battle of
Antietam would become the costliest single-day battle in American history and Northern and
Southern troops would continue to cross and engage in battles throughout the state for the
duration of the war.

The end of the Civil War signaled the end to the defensive contribution of Prince
George's County. The ownership of Fort Washington and Fort Foote went from the Department
of the Interior to the War Department shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the outbreak
of the Second World War, but the old forts would offer no military use during the war itself.
They were quickly returned to the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service after
the war to become national parks.

\(^{43}\) B. Franklin Cooling III, "Civil War Deterrent: Defenses of Washington," *Military Affairs* 29, no. 4
Many men and women from Prince George's County have fought and died in the military campaigns of the 20th century. The fields and factories of the County continue to feed armies thousands of miles away in many parts of the world. Prince George's County, however, will never again have the military impact that it did during the early history of the American republic.

**Prince George's County Connection to Washington, D.C.**

Prince George's County was founded in 1695, much before the founding of our Nation and our nation's capital city. Prince George's County had a population of thousands and a booming plantation economy in the 1790's when what would become the District of Columbia and the city of Washington was still swampland. The end of the American Revolution would forever change Prince George's County, and once Washington D.C. was established, the growth of this Capital city would have great affects on the County.

In the 1790's, George Washington, along with men like Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, began to consider locations for a new federal capital, since the Constitution allowed such a capital to exist. Cities such as Baltimore and Philadelphia offered to become the new Federal capital, but Washington felt that a new capital, equal to the great capitals of the world, had to be built. "It was the physics of London and Paris, the solidarity, the energy, and the brilliance of the great metropolitan capital in the life of the nation that he [Washington] admired and wished to introduce to America - not some modified version of monarchical government."[46] Washington began to look at possible sites for the new capital, and chose one along the Potomac River, much of which was located in Prince George's County. Although some in Congress disputed the decision, "Washington's brilliant negotiation on the agreement with the 'original

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proprietors' of lands on the Maryland bank of the lower Potomac, by which they would cede one-half of their holdings to the public…. This ceding of lands provided the starting point for our nation's Capital, and "[t]oday, each of the great symbols of our three branches of government the Capitol, the White House, and the Supreme Court building stands on land that was once part of Prince George's County."

The placement of Washington D.C. would bring a new level of importance to Prince George's County. Prince George's County would become one of the first lines of defense for the national capital in times of war, as well as a source of invaluable personnel and resources. Fort Washington was built in the County for the sole purpose of guarding the still growing national capital. In the War of 1812, British forces would capture Fort Washington and British warships raided the coastal farms as they moved to burn Washington D.C. During the American Civil War, Prince George's County would once again face the responsibility in aiding the defense of Washington D.C. Fort Foote was constructed along the Potomac for the purpose of protecting the Potomac waterways from Confederate attacks. Prince George's County would also serve a vital role with the coming of the Second World War.

The coming of the Second World War brought with it a great influx of people into Washington D.C. to support the numerous war industries that were quickly being organized. "As early as April 1941, the Property Owner characterized Washington as 'the No. 1 boom town of defense program as thousands of government workers pour monthly into the national capital.'" This unprecedented and rapid expansion led many to move outside of the city limits, and Prince George's County grew as a result.

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47 Harris, 536.
48 Virta, History.
As Washington grew, many people moved to Prince George's County to be close to the nation's Capital without living within its boundaries. The coming of the 20th century still saw Washington as a small city, and farming still remained the main way of life in the County. As the city grew, however, and more and more people moved into the County, farmland began to disappear. "What had been a county of 30,000 in 1900 became a county of 60,000 in 1930. By 1950, there were almost 200,000 people. Ten years later, in 1960, there were 350,000; in 10 years more, 661,000."50 Soon, government installations were built in the County, and the rise of mass transit and transportation infrastructure meant that more and more people could live in Prince George's County and commute into Washington D.C.

Prince George's County has also recently benefited from its location near Washington D.C. The 21st century brought a new source of growth to Prince George's County known as National Harbor. "Part town center, part waterfront resort, part outdoor mall, the $4 billion development will comprise 7.35 million square feet…Three of its hotels, a trio of commercial buildings and an array of public spaces are already completed, providing an early indication of how this long-anticipated community is taking shape."51 This expansive commercial development provides a new opportunity for Prince George's County to benefit from its location near the Capital. Although National Harbor is still many years from being completed, the progress that has been made so far shows the value Prince George's County still has to offer.

The relationship between Prince George's County and Washington D.C. has changed dramatically since the Capital was first imagined. The construction of Washington fully depended on land in Prince George's County, and without its ceding, could never have been

50 Virta, History.
built. As the Capital city grew, many people in the Federal government often depended on Prince George's County to help protect and cultivate it. The coming of the 20th century saw the rapid rise of Washington D.C., and Prince George's County was able to benefit from being a good neighbor.