



## Maryland and World War One

America's declaration of war against Germany in April 1917 found the nation unprepared for the multitude of tasks that had to be performed before an American Army could contribute in any meaningful way to an international land war on the scale of the fighting in Europe.

During the war, Fort McHenry became the site of the U.S. Army General Hospital No.2 while military installations such as Camp Meade, now Fort George G. Meade, and Aberdeen Proving Ground were created.

The government federalized the state national guards, including the Maryland National Guard, on August 5, 1917. Just under 6,900 Maryland national guardsmen mobilized and deployed to Camp McClellan, Alabama, where they became part of the 29th Division. The 29th Division was known as the 'Blue and Gray' Division because its combat regiments came from both northern and southern states. Maryland contributed the 115th Infantry Regiment, and the 110th Artillery Regiment. Together with the 116th Infantry Regiment from Virginia, this constituted the 58th Infantry Brigade - the Gray part of the division. The 29th remains a National Guard today, and includes units of the Maryland National Guard.

The 79th Division was one of the new national army divisions. It followed a path similar to that of the 29th, though its ranks were filled with the new inductees rather than national Guardsmen. As a result of its service in France, the division was nicknamed 'The Cross of Lorraine Division.' Like the 29th Division, the 79th suffered about 30% killed and wounded during the offensive.

Men and women from Maryland served throughout the military, including the Army, Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard. Maryland was especially noted for its contribution of medical officers to high positions in the American Expeditionary Forces.

More than 11,000 African Americans from Maryland also served in the US military in World War I. The military at that time was largely segregated and, to a large extent, African Americans served in non-combat logistics roles in the rear areas. While unglamorous, the functions they performed were critical to military success, and literally kept the wheels of the American Expeditionary Force turning.

Maryland also contributed its share to the naval forces, supporting the regular Navy and Marines as well as the Naval Reserve and Coast Guard with nearly 11,000 servicemen, including more than 500 African Americans. In July, 1917, the U.S. navy also took over a small maritime organization belonging to Maryland's State Conservation Commission. The 'Oyster Navy,' as it was called, was redesignated as Squadron 8, Fifth Naval District. With about 100 men and 19 small craft, it patrolled Maryland waters until early December 1918, after the war ended. The city of Baltimore also became a navy center for a variety of activities, including recruiting, naval intelligence, and securing the region's waterways.

***Over 62,000 Marylanders served in WWI, nearly 2,000 of whom lost their lives.***

Adapted and excerpted from the Maryland WWI Centennial website:

[www.worldwar1centennial.org/maryland](http://www.worldwar1centennial.org/maryland)