

The Mid-Atlantic States are located between New England and the South. They include Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Washington D.C., and Virginia. Sometimes New York and West Virginia are included. Shipping and trade have been important to the Mid-Atlantic economy since the beginning of the colonial era.

Native Americans inhabited this region beginning before 1000 BC. They hunted for geese, venison, turkey, fished for eel, sturgeon, striped bass, and bluefish, clammed, crabbed, and oystered. Corn or maize, beans, squash, pumpkins, leeks, watercress, dandelion greens, peas, sweet potatoes, Jerusalem artichoke, and mushrooms were some of the vegetables available. Berries, plums, grapes, melons, and nuts such as walnuts, acorns, peanuts, and chestnuts were gathered. Parsnips, turnips, and carrots would later be introduced by English settlers.



The Italian explorer Giovanni da Verrazzano was the first European to explore the Atlantic coast, travelling from what is now called The Carolinas to Newfoundland. He entered what is now called Lower New York Bay in 1524, greeted by Native Americans, the Lenape, in canoes. Henry Hudson later explored that region in 1609 and claimed it for the Dutch. The Jamestown Settlement was the first permanent English colony in North America, founded in 1607 in Virginia. The English were to settle in other states, the Dutch in Delaware. Many came here for religious reasons - Catholics to Maryland and Quakers and Anabaptists to Pennsylvania.

During the Revolutionary War these states saw fierce battles, culminating in British surrender at Yorktown. Philadelphia, midway between the northern and southern colonies, was home to the Continental Congress, the convention of delegates who organized the American Revolution. The same city was the birthplace of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the United States Constitution in 1787, while the United States Bill of Rights was drafted and ratified, and the first Supreme Court of the United States sat for the first time, in the first capital under the Constitution at New York City.

The early settlers were mainly farmers, traders, and fishermen. But the Mid Atlantic states provided the United States with heavy industry and

served as the "melting pot" of new immigrants from Europe. Cities grew along major ports, shipping routes, and waterways. Such flourishing cities included New York City and Newark on opposite sides of the Hudson River, Philadelphia on the Delaware River, and Baltimore on the Chesapeake Bay.

During the 1800s oystering became a major industry, and with ice oysters could be transported long distances from New York, or the Chesapeake Bay. For more on this *The Big Oyster* by Mark Kurlansky is a fascinating read. Farms sprung everywhere as people had to provide their own food, but market houses were common. Several well known ones that survive today are in New Castle, Annapolis, and the Lexington Market in Baltimore. Railroads provided easy shipping across the American continent for all sorts of goods.



Today the Mid Atlantic still has some of the finest corn, tomatoes, melons, and other agricultural products in the U.S. Hunters flock to the region for deer, goose, and duck. Herbs are in abundance - bay, watercress, rosemary, lavender, dill, basil, parsley and mint, to name a few. Peanuts are grown in Virginia, mushrooms in Pennsylvania, oysters and crab from the Chesapeake. Who can resist a funnel cake or shoofly pie in Kutztown; a frankfurter in Baltimore; scrapple from Rapa (Delaware); duck from Long Island; oyster fritters from the Chesapeake; wines from Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and New York? McCormick & Co. in Baltimore is the world's largest spice company, founded in 1889. Dairy and poultry farms produce dairy products, ducks and chickens for the nation. We are still a "melting pot" with every ethnic group represented.