



# *legendary* ladies

## 10 WOMEN WHO CHANGED THE FACE OF MARYLAND

BY JENNIFER KEATS CURTIS

Last year, with help from the Maryland Women's Heritage Center (MWHC) and an outstanding nominating committee, *Maryland Life* started a new tradition by identifying "10 Women Who Changed the Face of Maryland."

This year, 10 more women were selected by an impressive array of female committee members who scrutinized Marylanders past and present and then came together to whittle the list down to the final number.

Although not every woman chosen was born in the Free State, each honoree embodies a strong element of "Maryland." And while their accomplishments are individual and unique, these legendary ladies all share dedication and drive, boundless energy, persistence, and sheer will.

HERE ARE THEIR STORIES.

# legendary

MARGARET BRENT (1601-1671)



**I**N 1648—A FULL 200 YEARS BEFORE the Seneca Falls Convention, an influential women's rights convention considered one of the most important precursors of the suffrage movement—Margaret Brent went before the legislature and requested the right to vote for herself as a landowner and as Lord Baltimore's attorney.

As the nation's first suffragette, this early immigrant to Maryland should be celebrated, especially in our state, says Frances Hughes Glendening, former first lady of Maryland and current MWHC president.

Although a Baltimore school retains her name, few people may know of Brent, a courageous woman whom Glendening considers "a great source of pride."

Despite the hardships of colonial life, particularly for an unmarried woman, Brent became a prominent businesswoman and land owner. From his deathbed in 1647, Governor Leonard Calvert selected her as executor of his estate.

Unfortunately, little is known of this extraordinary woman, whose actions were all the more remarkable given that they occurred in the 17th century.

"She was not always successful, but that didn't dissuade her from continuing to try to overcome great obstacles," says Glendening.

"Like a few other great women, even though she didn't get to open the door all the way, she opened it a crack, enough for someone else to come along. We should all find strength in her determination and courage to move forward and help ensure that she is as well known as possible."