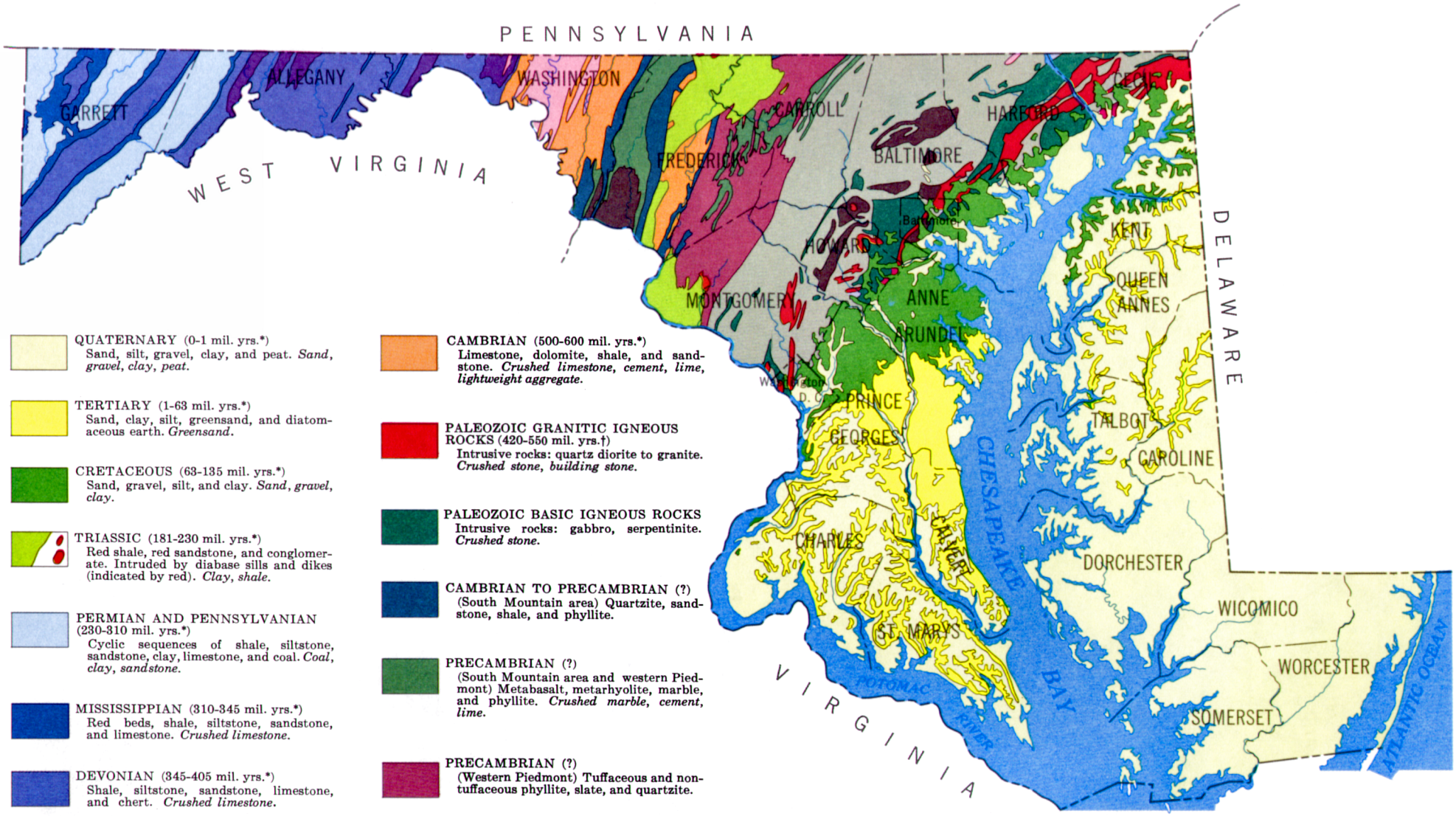


QUATERNARY (0-1 mil. yrs.*)
Sand, silt, gravel, clay, and peat. *Sand, gravel, clay, peat.*

TERTIARY (1-63 mil. yrs.*)
Sand, clay, silt, greensand, and diatomaceous earth. *Greensand.*

CRETACEOUS (63-135 mil. yrs.*)
Sand, gravel, silt, and clay. *Sand, gravel, clay.*

TRIASSIC (181-230 mil. yrs.*)
Red shale, red sandstone, and conglomerate. Intruded by diabase sills and dikes (indicated by red). *Clay, shale.*

PERMIAN AND PENNSYLVANIAN (230-310 mil. yrs.*)
Cyclic sequences of shale, siltstone, sandstone, clay, limestone, and coal. *Coal, clay, sandstone.*

MISSISSIPPIAN (310-345 mil. yrs.*)
Red beds, shale, siltstone, sandstone, and limestone. *Crushed limestone.*

DEVONIAN (345-405 mil. yrs.*)
Shale, siltstone, sandstone, limestone, and chert. *Crushed limestone.*

SILURIAN (405-425 mil. yrs.*)
Shale, mudstone, sandstone, and limestone. *Glass sand, crushed limestone.*

ORDOVICIAN (425-500 mil. yrs.*)
Limestone, dolomite, shale, siltstone, and red beds. Slate and conglomerate in northern Harford County. *Crushed limestone, cement, clay, lime.*

CAMBRIAN (500-600 mil. yrs.*)
Limestone, dolomite, shale, and sandstone. *Crushed limestone, cement, lime, lightweight aggregate.*

PALEOZOIC GRANITIC IGNEOUS ROCKS (420-550 mil. yrs.†)
Intrusive rocks: quartz diorite to granite. *Crushed stone, building stone.*

PALEOZOIC BASIC IGNEOUS ROCKS
Intrusive rocks: gabbro, serpentinite. *Crushed stone.*

CAMBRIAN TO PRECAMBRIAN (?)
(South Mountain area) Quartzite, sandstone, shale, and phyllite.

PRECAMBRIAN (?)
(South Mountain area and western Piedmont) Metabasalt, metarhyolite, marble, and phyllite. *Crushed marble, cement, lime.*

PRECAMBRIAN (?)
(Western Piedmont) Tuffaceous and nontuffaceous phyllite, slate, and quartzite.

PRECAMBRIAN (?)
(Eastern Piedmont) Schist, metagraywacke, quartzite, marble, and metavolcanic rocks. *Crushed stone, crushed marble, building stone.*

PRECAMBRIAN BASEMENT COMPLEX (1100 mil yrs.†)
Gneiss, migmatite, and augen gneiss.

Most important mineral products in italics.
* Age ranges from Kulp, J. L., 1961, Geologic time scale: Science, v. 133, no. 3459, p. 1105-1114.
† Radiometric dates made on Maryland rocks.

MARYLAND GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
Kenneth N. Weaver, Director

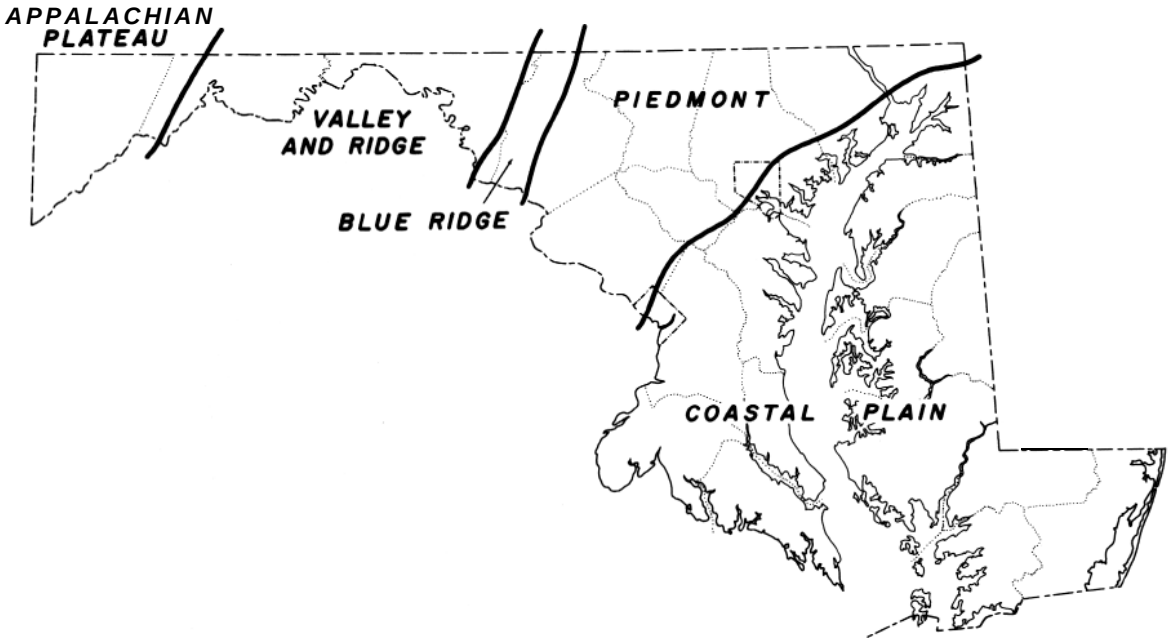
GENERALIZED GEOLOGIC MAP OF MARYLAND‡

1967

10 0 10 20 30 40
1 inch equals 25 miles

‡ A detailed Geologic Map of Maryland, 1968 at a scale of 1 inch equals 4 miles, is also available.

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE GEOLOGY OF MARYLAND



Maryland is part of three distinct physiographic regions: (1) the Coastal Plain Province, (2) the Piedmont Province, and (3) the Blue Ridge, Valley and Ridge, and Appalachian Plateau Provinces. These extend in belts of varying width along the eastern edge of the North American continent from Newfoundland to the Gulf of Mexico.

The Coastal Plain Province is underlain by a wedge of unconsolidated sediments including gravel, sand, silt, and clay, which overlaps the rocks of the eastern Piedmont along an irregular line of contact known as the Fall Zone. Eastward, this wedge of sediments thickens to more than 8,000 feet at the Atlantic coast line. Beyond this line is the Continental Shelf, the submerged continuation of the Coastal Plain, which extends eastward for at least another 75 miles where the sediments attain a maximum thickness of about 40,000 feet.

The sediments of the Coastal Plain dip eastward at a low angle, generally less than one degree, and range in age from Triassic to Quaternary. The younger formations crop out successively to the southeast across Southern Maryland and the Eastern Shore. A thin layer of Quaternary gravel and sand covers the older formations throughout much of the area.

Mineral resources of the Coastal Plain are chiefly sand and gravel, and are used as aggregate materials by the construction industry. Clay for brick and other ceramic uses is also important. Small deposits of iron ore are of historical interest. Plentiful supplies of ground water are available from a number of aquifers throughout much of the region.

The Piedmont Province is composed of hard, crystalline igneous and metamorphic rocks and extends from the inner edge of the Coastal Plain westward to Catoctin Mountain, the eastern boundary of the Blue Ridge Province. Bedrock in the eastern part of the Piedmont consists of schist, gneiss, gabbro, and other highly metamorphosed sedimentary and igneous rocks of probable volcanic origin. In several places these rocks have been intruded by granitic plutons and pegmatites. Deep drilling has revealed that similar metamorphic and igneous rocks underlie the sedimentary rocks of the Coastal Plain. Several domal uplifts of Precambrian gneiss mantled with quartzite, marble, and schist are present in Baltimore County and in parts of adjacent counties. Differential erosion of these contrasting rock types has produced a distinctive topography in this part of the Piedmont.

The rocks of the western part of the Piedmont are diverse and include phyllite, slate, marble, and moderately to slightly metamorphosed volcanic rocks. In central Frederick County the relatively flat Frederick Valley is developed on Cambrian and Ordovician limestone and dolomite. Gently undulating plains underlain by unmetamorphosed bedrock of Triassic red shale, siltstone, and sandstone occur in three areas in the western Piedmont.

The Piedmont Province contains a variety of mineral resources. Formerly, building stone, slate, and small deposits of non-metallic minerals, base-metal sulfides, gold, chromite, and iron ore were mined. Currently, crushed stone is important for aggregate, cement, and lime. Small to moderate supplies of ground water are available throughout the region, but favorable geological conditions locally may provide larger amounts.

Unlike the Coastal Plain and Piedmont Provinces, the Blue Ridge, Valley and Ridge, and Appalachian Plateau Provinces are underlain mainly by folded and faulted sedimentary rocks. The rocks of the Blue Ridge Province in western Frederick County are exposed in a large anticlinal fold whose limbs are represented by Catoctin Mountain and South Mountain. These two ridges are formed by Lower Cambrian quartzite, a rock which is very resistant to the attack of weathering and erosion. A broad valley floored by Precambrian gneiss and volcanic rock lies in the core of the anticline between the two ridges.

The Valley and Ridge Province between South Mountain in Washington County and Dans Mountain in western Allegany County contains strongly folded and faulted sedimentary rocks. In the eastern part of the region, a wide, open valley called the Great Valley, or in Maryland, the Hagerstown Valley, is formed on Cambrian and Ordovician limestone and dolomite. West of Powell Mountain, a more rugged terrain has developed upon shale and sandstone bedrock which ranges in age from Silurian to Mississippian. Some of the valleys in this region are underlain by Silurian and Devonian limestones.

For many years the limestone formations have been used as local sources of agricultural lime and building stone. Modern uses include crushed stone for aggregate and cement. A pure, white sandstone in the western region of the province is suitable for glass manufacturing.

The Appalachian Plateau Province includes that part of Allegany County west of Dans Mountain and all of Garrett County, the westernmost county in Maryland. The bedrock of this region consists principally of gently folded shale, siltstone, and sandstone. Folding has produced elongated arches across the region which expose Devonian rocks at the surface. Most of the natural gas fields in Maryland are associated with these anticlinal folds in the Appalachian Plateau. In the intervening synclinal basins, coal-bearing strata of Pennsylvanian and Permian ages are preserved.

The sedimentary rocks of the Blue Ridge, Valley and Ridge, and Appalachian Plateau Provinces yield small to moderate supplies of ground water. Under favorable conditions large amounts may occur.

Jonathan Edwards, Jr. 1981
Geologist

STATE OF MARYLAND
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Prepared by the
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