

*Baltimore City
Circuit Court
Visitor's Guide*

Clarence M. Mitchell, Jr. Courthouse

This brochure made possible by:
Maryland State Bar Association, Inc.
Maryland Judiciary

History of the Courthouse

Baltimore's first courthouse stood in the middle of Calvert Street on the present site of the Battle Monument from 1770 until 1809.

The Battle Monument, erected on the former site of the colonial courthouse, 1815-22, is the first war memorial constructed in the United States. It commemorates the heroic defense of Baltimore at North Point and Fort McHenry during the War of 1812, and is featured in the seal of the City of Baltimore.

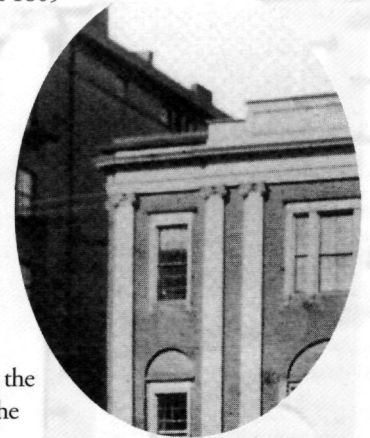
The second courthouse stood on the southwest corner of Calvert and Lexington Streets from 1809 until 1895, when it was razed to make way for the present courthouse.

When first dedicated as the Baltimore City Courthouse on January 8, 1900, this beautiful building was referred to as "this noble pile."

The most striking features on the exterior are the eight Ionic columns on the Calvert Street facade. These are the largest monolithic columns in the world, built from single blocks of marble, each weighing 35 ton and measuring 31 feet, 2^{5/8} inches, 7 feet taller than the columns on the U.S. Capitol. Each column rises two stories to support the base of the roof. The structure is topped by a balustrade which borders the entire perimeter of the roof.

The three doorways at the Calvert Street entrance are surmounted by a balcony, from which the heads of three angry lions peer menacingly down at visitors. Other noteworthy features are the huge bronze doors at each entrance on the four sides of the building.

The exterior of the building is white marble quarried in Cockeysville, except for the basement which is Woodstock granite. The building occupies the entire city block bounded by Calvert, Fayette, Saint Paul and Lexington Streets.



Points of Interest

Second Floor

Cecil Calvert Statue (Saint Paul St. entrance)

Saint Paul Street Lobby
Clarence M. Mitchell, Jr. Exhibit
Mural: Ancient Lawgivers

Museum of Baltimore Legal History
(Old Orphans Courtroom)
Mural: Surrender at Yorktown

Criminal Court Lobby

Mural: Calvert's Treaty with the Indians
Memorial to Attorneys Killed in WWI
Mural: Burning of the Peggy Stewart
Restored Artglass Skylights

Fourth Floor

Old Court of Common Pleas
Mural: Washington Surrenders His Commission

Old Circuit Court
Mural: Religious Toleration

Severn Teackle Wallis Monument

Sixth Floor

The Baltimore Bar Library

The Supreme Bench Courtroom

Directory of Court-Related Offices

Bar Library- Room 618	(410) 752-4759
Business Licenses - Room 628	(410) 333-3790
Criminal Assignment Office - Room 220	(410) 333-3811
Criminal Clerk's Office - Room 200	(410) 333-3750
Jury Assembly - Room 240	(410) 333-3778
Jury Commissioner's Office - Room 239	(410) 333-3775
Juvenile Clerk's Office- Room 142	(410) 333-4278
Land Records - Room 610	(410) 333-3760
Marriage Licenses - Room 628	(410) 333-3780
Marriage Ceremony - Room 621	No Phone
Security Office - Room 455	(410) 396-5069
Sheriff's Office - Room 104	(410) 396-1155
State's Attorney's Office - Room 208	(410) 396-4000

A Message from Court of Appeals Chief Judge Robert M. Bell



Welcome from the Maryland
Judiciary.

Historically, the courthouse functioned as the government center for the community it served, housing many non-judicial government functions.

That tradition continues today. Like many others of your fellow citizens, you visit the courthouse for services regarding matters that are important to you.

Today's courthouse continues to be a symbol of the administration of justice for Maryland citizens. Within these walls daily occur, and indeed, there is encouraged, spirited debate as cases are heard and decisions rendered.

Every day in this courthouse, judges make decisions that affect the lives and well being of countless citizens, including those who may never bring matters before the court.

This guide was developed to help you obtain access to court services and to assist you in learning more about your court system.

I encourage you to visit the courthouse and become familiar with the various functions housed within.

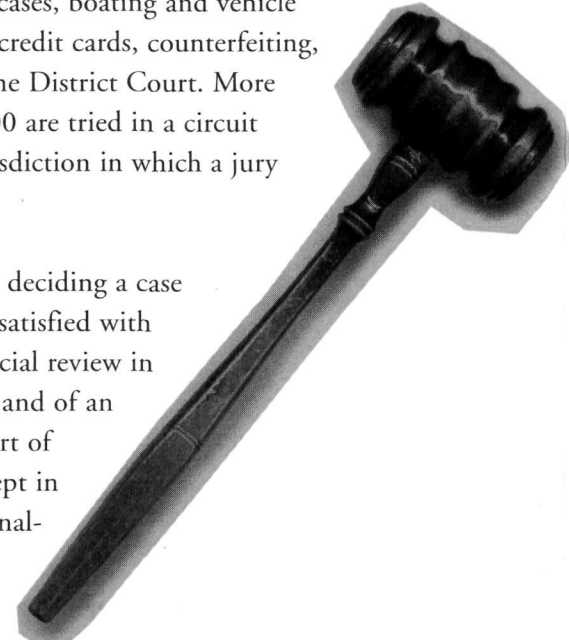
The Maryland State Court System

The Maryland Constitution prescribes a four-tiered judicial system consisting of two trial courts, the District Court of Maryland and 24 circuit courts, and two appellate courts, an intermediate appellate court known as the Court of Special Appeals, and the State's supreme court known as the Court of Appeals. Normally, District Court judges sit alone, circuit court judges may sit alone or with a jury, and the Court of Special Appeals sits in three-judge panels. The Court of Appeals sits *en banc*, that is, as a panel of seven. Additionally, there are 22 Orphans' Courts which ordinarily sit in panels.

Statutes and court rules define the kinds of cases each court is authorized to hear and prescribe the manner in which cases are to be heard. Ordinarily, civil cases as to landlord/tenant matters or involving amounts \$25,000 or less, misdemeanor cases, boating and vehicle offenses, and minor criminal cases involving bad checks, credit cards, counterfeiting, insurance or workers' comp fraud and theft are tried in the District Court. More serious crimes and civil cases involving more than \$25,000 are tried in a circuit court and cases otherwise within the District Court's jurisdiction in which a jury trial is allowed and desired are tried there.

A party who believes that a court has made an error in deciding a case may appeal to a higher court, and a party who is dissatisfied with certain decisions of administrative agencies may seek judicial review in a circuit court. Generally, decisions of the District Court and of an Orphans' Court are reviewed by a circuit court. The Court of Special Appeals reviews most circuit court decisions. Except in certain types of cases such as those in which the death penalty has been imposed, review by the Court of Appeals is discretionary; it may choose on its own, or grant a request, to review a decision involving matters of public importance, whether that decision was rendered by the District Court, a circuit court, or the Court of Special Appeals.

Once the Court of Appeals decides or declines to review a case, there is no further review within the State court system. Review by a federal court may be available, either directly by appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, or collaterally by action such as a habeas corpus petition in the federal District Court if, for example, a violation of federal Constitutional law is alleged.



State and Federal Courts

Courts are authorized by Constitution, the Maryland Constitution in the case of the Maryland courts, and the U.S. Constitution in the case of federal courts. This dual court structure is a distinguishing, and innovative, feature of the American judicial system.

The principle federal courts are the District Court, the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court. There are, in addition, other specialized courts, such as the Bankruptcy Court and the Tax Court.

Courts handle such diverse matters as contract disputes, personal injury actions, product liability cases, criminal prosecutions, divorces, child custody matters, and probate of estates. There are rules, sometimes complex, governing whether a matter will proceed in a state or federal court. For example, a case in which citizens of more than one state are involved may be brought in a federal court and, if brought in a state court, may be removed by one or more of the parties to federal court. At its simplest, federal courts deal with issues involving laws enacted by Congress, while state courts apply the laws of their state and local governments.

