BALTIMORE (October 28, 2014) – On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln famously signed the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring "that all persons held as slaves" within the rebellious states "are, and henceforward shall be free." Knowing it was a pivotal moment in history, Lincoln then declared, “I never, in my life, felt more certain that I was doing right, than I do in signing this paper. If my name ever goes into history it will be for this act, and my whole soul is in it.”

Still, for many states including Maryland, the Proclamation left slavery in place. Maryland amended its constitution on Nov. 1, 1864, more than a year before slavery would be abolished nationwide with the passage of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

This year, in honor of the state’s action 150 years ago, Maryland will host a series of events, festivals and exhibits to mark the end of slavery in the state and recognize its most important supporters.

“As a state that played such a large and poignant part in our nation’s history, we are excited about the opportunity to celebrate and share this special moment for Maryland, when slavery was abolished for good,” said Margot Amelia, executive director, Maryland Office of Tourism.

Here are a few of the events statewide honoring Emancipation Day this fall:

- In honor of the 150th anniversary of emancipation in Maryland, The Children’s Museum of Rose Hill Manor will highlight the history and path to freedom of enslaved people at Rose Hill Manor and across Maryland in a special exhibit on view now through December 2014. Young visitors can explore the story of Addy and complete the Junior Historian booklet.
- Beginning Oct. 25 through Nov. 1, Annapolis will host Annapolis 1864, a multi-event commemoration celebrating Maryland emancipation. Events begin with an encampment re-enactment on Sat., Oct. 25, where reenactors portraying African-American Union soldiers will explain life during the Civil War. An opening week reception follows on Oct. 27 with exhibits, lectures and a play titled “Four Women of Annapolis” throughout the week.
- Hike the Underground Railroad, tour a slave cabin, visit an African-American history museum and enjoy living history demonstrations at Montgomery County Parks Oct. 31- Nov. 2. Saturday and Sunday park events are free.
- On Nov. 1, Renaissance Tours and Productions will offer a one-time only African-American Legends & Legacies Heritage Tour of Baltimore’s three African-American museums; The Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African-American History & Culture, the National Great Blacks In Wax Museum, and the Frederick Douglass-Isaac Myers Maritime Park Museum. During the bus tour, three actors will be part of the experiences at each of the museums; Frederick Douglass, Mary Eliza Mahoney (the first degreeed and certified nurse), and Henry "Box" Brown (the first man to ship himself to freedom). A "Shoe Box Lunch" will also be provided as part of the historical experience. Bus tour seating is limited.
- On Nov. 1, the C. Burr Artz Public Library in Frederick will host a lecture by noted author Gail Stephens titled “The Revolution is Complete: Emancipation in Maryland.” This talk will explore how the efforts of Lincoln, Maryland Union commander Lew Wallace, Maryland politicians and those most affected – Maryland’s enslaved – all combined to make Emancipation happen.
- Also on Nov. 1, Jane’s Church in Chestertown will feature music, readings and dramatic plays featuring living historians in honor of Emancipation Day.
- Head to the Antietam National Battlefield in Sharpsburg on Nov. 1 to catch the exhibit “Avenues to Freedom.” The Emancipation Day activities will also feature talks on emancipation from the local, state
and national perspectives. Then join in a celebration at Tolson’s Chapel at 2 p.m., featuring gospel music, emancipated slave re-enactor Teany Watson and keynote speaker Dr. Hari Jones from the African-American Civil War Memorial & Museum in Washington, D.C.

- Benjamin Banneker Historical Park and Museum will launch its “From Banneker to Douglass: The Quests for Freedom and Equality” exhibit on Nov. 1 through Feb. 28, 2015. The exhibit will commemorate the early efforts of Maryland’s African-Americans and their allies in their pursuit for freedom and equality for all. These efforts took on many forms that include protest literature, conventions, enslaved people seeking freedom, and educational initiatives.

- Don’t miss local historian Louis Diggs as he leads a Maryland Emancipation Tour through Baltimore County on Nov. 1. The tour will include the Hubert V. Simmons Negro Leagues Baseball Museum and the Benjamin Banneker Historical Park and Museum to see the “From Banneker to Douglass: The Quests for Freedom and Equality” exhibit. It will also feature historic Winters Lane in Catonsville, a national historic district, where Morning Star Baptist Church is located, as well as Turner Station in Dundalk, a respected African-American community dating back to 1888. Lunch is included. Reservations required.

- Hampton National Historic Site, a former plantation, will pay homage and give respect to those who helped make Maryland great with its Maryland Emancipation Day Commemoration on Nov. 1. Join African drummers and dancers along with National Park Service Ranger Anokwale, and visit the cemetery on site to learn about those forced into servitude on the Hampton estate. See a portrayal of Harriet Tubman by storyteller Janice Greene, or take a guided tour of the slave quarters, overseer’s house and dairy.

- On Nov. 1, the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African-American History & Culture in Baltimore will host Envisioning Emancipation: Black Americans and the End of Slavery, which uses photography to explore the black community before and after freedom and the impact of emancipation. Also, the museum will hold a family-friendly production of the Maryland Emancipation Play: Uncle Nace’s Day on Nov. 8. The play features actors dressed in period clothing and highlights the day’s historical significance and continuing relevance in 2014. Teaching artist Culture Queen and her friends use drama, music and movement to evoke this historic event.

For more information on any of these events or Emancipation Day, go to visitmaryland.org.

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About Maryland Tourism

The Maryland Office of Tourism is an agency of the Division of Tourism, Film and the Arts within the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development. Visitors to the state spent more than $14.9 billion on travel-related expenses in 2012. During 2012, the Maryland tourism industry also generated $2 billion in state and local taxes, and provided more than 135,000 jobs for Maryland residents.