

Frostburg Maryland

Written by **Dan Whetzel**
Photography by **Lance C. Bell**

Deep Roots In History and Coal Beginnings

Frostburg is Allegany County's second largest city and a Maryland Mainstreet Community.

Known for its cool summers and snowy winters, many visitors assume that Frostburg's

climate is responsible for its name.

The town, however, was named for the Frost family who owned land along the National Highway.



FROSTBURG'S EARLY HISTORY is intertwined with the National Pike and coal industry. The opening of the National Road, America's first federally funded highway, provided a steady flow of commerce through the region and town during the 19th century; transportation related businesses prospered. The beginning of large scale coal mining operations along George's Creek in the late 19th century supplemented Frostburg's commercial growth.

The "Big Vein" and "Small Vein," local terms for the seams of semi-bituminous coal running from West Virginia through Western Maryland, provided hundreds of jobs for Frostburg residents. In the early days, miners used picks and shovels to extract the natural resource. The Cumberland and Pennsylvania and Georges Creek and Cumberland Railroads were built in the mid to late 1800s primarily for the purpose of transporting coal from Frostburg and surrounding communities to Cumberland, where connections were made to major markets. Colorful names of towns and mines originating from the deep mining era include Pekin, Nikep (the reverse spelling of Pekin), Broken Hart, Ocean, Lucky Jock, Hungry Hill, No Tick, Du Well, and Klondike. Western Maryland coal enjoyed a reputation of being particularly well suited for use in ocean going vessels.

Frostburg's diversified economy meant that coal companies did not monopolize trade and commerce as they did in more remote areas of the Appalachian region. Schools, churches, banks, and retail establishments made Frostburg a commercial destination for residents of nearby communities.

Frostburg Museum

Artifacts of Frostburg's history are preserved in the former Hill Street School, located at the corner of Hill and Oak Streets. The brick school house was built in 1898 and served as an elementary facility until nearly three decades ago when the Allegany County Commission provided the Frostburg Museum Association with the title. Museum Historian Betty Van Newkirk, commented, "Like other things in Frostburg, the museum is homegrown. There was a realization that items were being thrown away that should be saved." The museum started as a one-room facility to showcase memorabilia and has grown to a multi-room museum that captures the essence of the city's past.

Highlights of the Frostburg Museum include a coal mining display (see facing page) accurately depicting a George's Creek miner at work; genealogical information; a school room display; photography equipment; and Frostburg memorabilia. One large room is dedicated to schools, particularly Beall High School (photo at right) and Frostburg State University; class lists and other information not found on the internet are available for researchers.

The museum is open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm.



Full size mining shaft display including equipment.



Apple Press for making apple juice or cider.



Class lists and photos from Beall High School and Frostburg University.



Frostburg State University

Photo courtesy Frostburg State University

FROSTBURG STATE UNIVERSITY is one of 13 institutions within the University System of Maryland and the only one west of the Baltimore-Washington corridor. Founded in 1898 for the purpose of training public school teachers, the institution was first called Frostburg Normal School #2. Frostburg State University's past is deeply rooted in the generosity of George's Creek coal miners who valued the benefits of a quality education.

Many of the 19th century immigrants arriving in Allegany County were literate and supported formal educational programs for their children. When the *Frostburg Mining Journal* proposed that a state of Maryland institution for the training of public school teachers be built in Frostburg, the miners vocally and financially supported the initiative. However, competition for the school's location quickly developed among several cities, including Cumberland and Baltimore and it was not certain that Frostburg would prevail.

The most ardent supporter of building the state normal school in Frostburg was J. Benson Oder, founder of the *Frostburg Mining Journal*. Mr. Oder published several reasons for Frostburg being a superior location for the school. His most persuasive argument, however, may have been the clean drinking water Frostburg offered. Mr. Oder

pointed out that Cumberland's water supply was drawn from the Potomac River and had likely contributed to typhoid and other maladies.

While local support through newspaper editorials was helpful, political support at the state and local levels was necessary to carry the plan forward. Plans were finalized when the local delegation to the state legislature amended a bill in March 1898, that included a \$20,000 appropriation for the erection of State Normal School #2 in Frostburg, Maryland, and an additional \$5,000 appropriation annually to support it. Only one obstacle remained; the amendment stated that "people of the town of Frostburg (must) furnish the ground for the site and said building." A community campaign to purchase land for Frostburg Normal School #2 was quickly organized.

A plot of land known as Beall's Park became available for purchase and the subsequent community campaign to acquire it became an exercise in civic duty and pride. While the school's location was to be within Frostburg city limits, coal miners from the surrounding villages of Lord, Carlos, Eckhart, Ocean, and Borden supported the greater good that would be created by establishing an institution of higher learning near their communities. The amount collected exceeded the purchase price of \$2,000, mostly with pledges

of 25 cents to \$1.00. A facsimile roster listing the names of contributors is displayed in Pullen Hall and the July 7, 1899, edition of the *Frostburg Mining Journal*, which published the list of more than 900 names, became sealed within the school's cornerstone. The total return on the individual 25 cent investments is nearly impossible to calculate.

The first to enroll at the new school has been described as a "motley group." Some had completed a high school education; others had partially completed a program; and a few had not even started. The state of Maryland moved to correct the situation by eliminating high school equivalency courses in order to focus on a two-year program for teacher certification.

The daily routine in those days varied considerably from what one would expect in today's teacher education program. The entire school held daily assemblies, which included group singing and teaching skills. Physical training was also required to lift community spirit. Despite growing pains, the normal school grew.

In 1934 the State Board of Education converted Frostburg Normal School into a four-year teachers college, marking a major step forward. The academic program continued until the outbreak of war following the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Teacher shortages soon developed because of the draft—male elementary teachers were not exempted from military service

and women increasingly moved into industrial jobs that supported the war effort. The war caused a sharp decrease in enrollment and prompted a discussion about closing the institution as economically unviable. Lillian C. Compton, President of State Teachers College at Frostburg in 1945, staved off efforts to close the school. Her strong leadership, along with the support of members of the community, is credited with keeping the school open during troubling times. Fortunately, the school survived the lean war years and then enjoyed the postwar boom brought about by Lillian Compton's expansion of programs and the GI Bill, which provided incentives for veterans to attend college.

Today Frostburg State University remains dedicated to its original mission of training teachers, while also providing a variety of programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Academic programs in business, education, applied science and technology, creative and performing arts, and additional selected programs in the humanities and social sciences, are offered to residential students and non traditional students through online courses, distance learning and collaborative programs. The school is mostly residential and hosts more than 4,500 undergraduate and 600 graduate students.

I know where I'm going. I plan to get there first.

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FROSTBURG, MD ~ www.frostburg.edu

For more information or Open House dates, call 301.687.4201 or click on www.frostburg.edu



Sumer Rohrs, six-time NCAA National Champion, hurdles, and 2009 NCAA Division III Outdoor Track Scholar Athlete of the Year

The Great Allegheny Passage



Travelers on tour by way of the Allegheny Passage pause for a break in front of the Frostburg Depot. These happy bikers are from New Zealand.

THE GREAT ALLEGHENY PASSAGE is a biking and hiking trail that connects Cumberland, Maryland, with McKeesport, Pennsylvania, a distance of 135 miles. The trail's connection with Cumberland also means that bikers and hikers may choose to continue their journey on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal towpath to Georgetown near the nation's capital for a continuous distance of 318 miles. Increased tourism has resulted from the trail's completion, as active vacationers and residents enjoy the first class limestone path that traces the gentle grade of the Western Maryland Railway over Big Savage Mountain into Pennsylvania. While sections of the trail were completed at different times, it was not until 2006 that final connections were opened. Plans are in the works to add segments that will take the path from McKeesport into downtown Pittsburgh.

The Great Allegheny Passage offers plenty of spectacular natural beauty and an engineering marvel—the Big Savage Tunnel. Located near the Maryland/Pennsylvania border, the 3,200 foot long tunnel, built in 1911 by the Western Maryland Railway and abandoned in 1975, had fallen into a state of dangerous disrepair. At a cost of 12 million dollars, the tunnel was renovated (including the installation of lights) and reopened to recreational traffic in 2006. The view from the Big Savage Mountain portal is spectacular. On a clear day one can spot the historic village of Mount Savage, farms nestled in valleys, and the Cumberland Narrows cliffs. Exiting the portal also means bikers will enjoy a long downhill journey, passing by the towns of Frostburg, Mount Savage, and Corriganville on their way to Cumberland.

Inspiration for the trail is credited to the steadfast efforts of the Allegheny Trail Alliance, a coalition of seven

trail organizations in Pennsylvania and Western Maryland. Support from the National Park Service through its Potomac Heritage Alliance program brought federal expertise, while the Maryland Department of Planning provided the necessary local support to make the trail a reality. All partners acknowledge the economic benefits the trail provides.

Bill Atkinson, Principal Planner and Trail Towns Coordinator for the Maryland Department of Planning, has worked on the Great Allegheny Passage since it was first proposed and has witnessed the positive economic contribution it has made to Pennsylvania and Western Maryland. A 2008 economic impact study concluded that 12 million dollars in direct spending and 3 million dollars in direct wages occurred because of trail activity. The study also stated that 41% of the hikers and bikers plan to stay overnight and that most of them are affluent; about one third have annual family incomes of more than \$100,000. Campgrounds, restaurants, bike shops, and related hospitality services are now available along the Great Allegheny Passage. And trail use keeps increasing. A new record was set in July 2009, when 10,000 users were counted.

Bill Atkinson explains, "The trail is still in its infancy. We are going to see a steady increase in its use and economic impact on Allegany County. We are now seeing visitors stay for two and three nights which accounts for the increased activity. Nearly each month this year has seen a doubling of activity on the trail."

Information concerning the Great Allegheny Passage is available at www.atatrail.org.

Queen City Creamery & Deli

1940's Style Soda Fountain – cones, shakes, sodas, sundaes, floats, splits featuring *Homemade Frozen Custard*

Coffee Bar – Espresso drinks, Latte, Cappuccino, etc.

Deli Counter – Boar's Head Meats & Cheese

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Cumberland, MD
I-68, Exit 43C

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Friday Evening Dinner Buffet 4:00 - 8:00 p.m.
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Restaurant Closed Sunday

Rooms (301) 895-5055

We offer comfortable, favorably priced rooms in both our motel and historic hotel.

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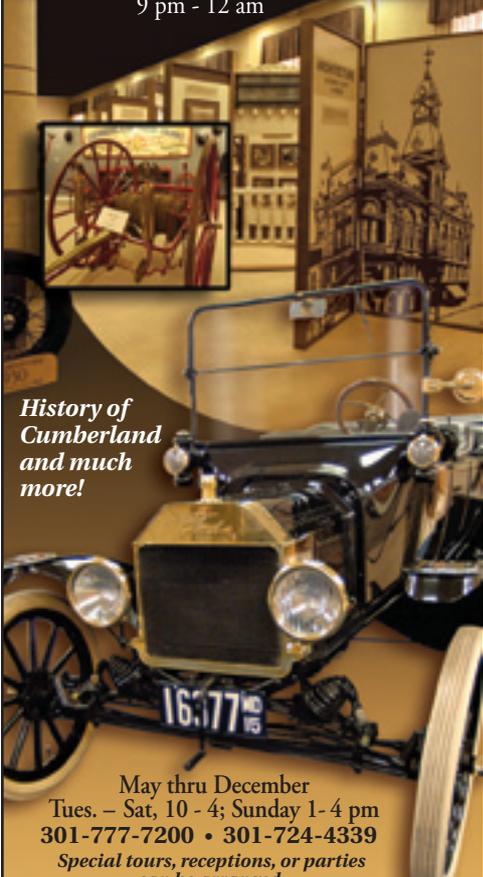
Complimentary Wireless Internet Access
www.thecasselmann.com

Allegany Museum

81 Baltimore St., Downtown Cumberland

2009 Calendar of Events

- May 15** **Allegany Museum Open House**
Exhibits New Museum Mission Refreshments, entertainment 5-9 pm
- May 15** **Allegany Museum Opens**
- June 13-14** **Heritage Days Open House**
Special tours and exhibits. Sat. & Sun. 10 am - 4 pm
- May-Sept.** **"Friday After Five"**
Friday evenings 5 - 9 pm
- May-Oct.** **Bus Tours** – *Allegany Museum, Gordon Roberts House, Castle, etc.*
- Sept. 19** **9th Annual Ford Model T & Model A Car/Truck Show**
Dash plaques, goodie bags, etc. 10 - 4
- Sept. 26** **Canal Fest/Rail Fest**
Museum Antique Car/Truck Show, model canal boats, etc. 10 - 4
- Nov. 6-15** **Cumberland Goes to War**
Tours, Military appraisals 12 - 4 pm
- Nov. 20-** **Festival of Trees** 12 - 4 pm
Dec. 12 *Chefs, Children's Day, Ladies Night*
- Nov. 27** **Holiday Open House** 5-9 pm
Special decorations, quartet, carols.
- Dec. 4, 11, 18** **Santa Claus Visitation**
Mr. & Mrs. Claus, carriage rides, photos, treats, etc. Free 5 - 9 pm
- Dec. 31** **New Year's Eve Open House**
Music, exhibits, refreshments. 9 pm - 12 am



History of Cumberland and much more!

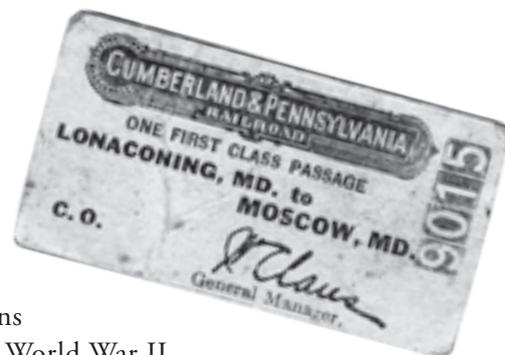
May thru December
Tues. – Sat, 10 - 4; Sunday 1-4 pm
301-777-7200 • 301-724-4339
Special tours, receptions, or parties can be arranged.

The Cumberland and Pennsylvania Railroad and Depot

THE CUMBERLAND AND PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD DEPOT, located at 19 Depot Street, Frostburg, was one of four similar buildings constructed in the late 19th century to provide freight and passenger service from Cumberland to Frostburg and the George's Creek region of Allegany County, a distance of about 20 rail miles. Today, only the Frostburg station remains completely intact. It is believed the Queen Anne building was the work of E. Francis Baldwin, who was also responsible for designing hundreds of stations for the B&O Railroad.

The C&P was Allegany County's most significant short line railroad. Passengers were offered service from the Frostburg depot twice daily and sometimes more often to accommodate special events such as theatrical productions, Chautauqua's, and athletic events in the Cumberland-LaVale area. The C&P Consolidation 2-8-0 locomotives, pulling dark red coaches, are still remembered by long time residents who looked forward to the train rides during a time when trips from George's Creek to Frostburg and Cumberland were not taken for granted. The C&P depot was also a major center of trade for the city of Frostburg because goods were shipped and received daily.

Panoramic photo below: The scenic railroad's "Mountain Thunder" on the turntable in Frostburg, turning around for the return trip to Cumberland. Also below (center) is the "Trail Inn and Cafe" and to the far right is the Depot. The C&P Tunnel is hidden by trees just behind Mountain Thunder in this view.



C&P

passenger trains ceased during World War II, thereby ending decades of service to the region. The Western Maryland Railway continued to serve the George's Creek region for the purpose of transporting coal to Baltimore and other major markets, thereby lessening the importance of the small town depots. Consequently, the stations at Mt. Savage, Barton, and Lonaconing were razed leaving no trace of their existence. The only other C&P depot remaining in existence is located in Piedmont, West Virginia.

Rail passenger service from Cumberland to Frostburg was revived in the 1980's by the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad. Following a combination of former Western Maryland Railway and C&P rail beds, the WMSR 1916



Facing page: A Cumberland & Pennsylvania Railroad ticket, circa 1930.

Left: A view of the C&P Tunnel from the Frostburg Depot toward Bowery Street. The tunnel has not been in use since the 1970s.

Below: A C&P Railroad crew poses for a photograph at the Frostburg Yard in 1901.



Baldwin steam locomotive recreates the nostalgic era of rail passenger service from Cumberland to Frostburg during a May through December schedule. Thousands of passengers disembark each year on the renovated C&P platform in much the same way they did from 1891 to 1944. One noticeable difference in the contemporary view is the locomotive turntable located adjacent to the depot. Formerly, C&P trains would continue through a long tunnel on a southerly route to George's Creek. The tunnel entrance may be viewed from the turntable area.

The C&P Tunnel

THE C&P TUNNEL was a major construction feat completed in 1857. The purpose of the tunnel was to provide a more direct connection between Frostburg on the north side and George's Creek coal mines on the south side. The tunnel crossed under Center Street and emerged near the Bowery Street Bridge. Street improvements in recent years caused the bridge to be removed but remnants of the old C&P rail bed can be followed along its southerly route. The tunnel was last used for rail freight service by the Western Maryland Railway nearly four decades ago.

The Trail Inn and Cafe

THE TRAIL INN AND CAFE, 20 Depot Street, is near the terminus of the C&P Railroad Tunnel and across the street from the depot. Built in 1888, the two story building, originally called the Tunnel Hotel, provided inexpensive lodging for travelers on the C&P railroad and from the city of Frostburg. The original hotel was an "L" shaped brick structure supported by a stone foundation. A terraced vineyard was located behind the building and small cave-like structures provided storage for the variety of alcoholic brews that were served at the hotel. A moonshine still located in the basement of the building kept the brews flowing even during prohibition of the 1920's, thereby adding to the historical mystique of the property. Although bought and sold many times over the years, the hotel structure and surrounding area remained relatively unchanged until the 1980s, when the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad offered new opportunities to serve the public and the depot area became the terminus of the scenic railroad.

John and Beth Sayler purchased the Tunnel Hotel in 1997 and renamed it the Trail Inn and Café. Additional



View of the upstairs gallery of the Thrasher Carriage Museum.



changes included adding nine rooms, a café, and gift shops. In 2006-2007 eleven rooms were converted to lodging purposes and a primitive campground opened nearby. John Sayler notes that his campground “Is the cleanest in the country. We furnish soap, shampoo and towels. And we will put our guest rooms up against anybody’s.” Since the opening of the Great Allegheny Passage trail, the Saylers have enjoyed hosting visitors from many countries including Germany, Great Britain, Spain, the Netherlands, Poland, New Zealand, and Argentina.

The Thrasher Carriage Museum

LOCATED AT FROSTBURG terminus of the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad is one of the best collections of horse drawn vehicles in the United States. The collection was assembled over many years by Midland, Maryland, resident James Thrasher who traveled across the country in search of unusual and rare types of wagons. Painstakingly restored and conserved, the Thrasher carriage collection illustrates wagons from all walks of life and occupations. One highlight is President Theodore Roosevelt’s inaugural carriage. Guides and interpretive signs assist visitors through the 50 beautifully displayed items.





Hotel Gunter

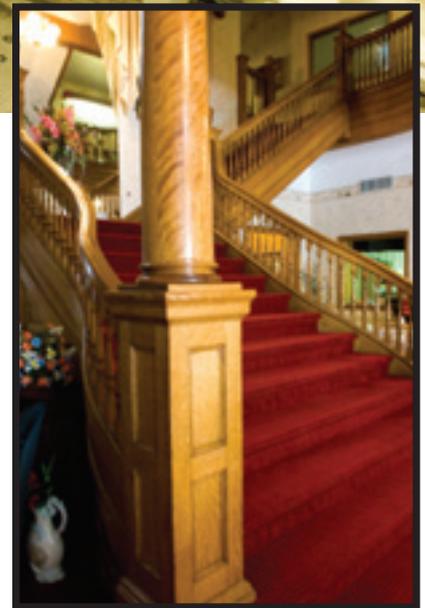
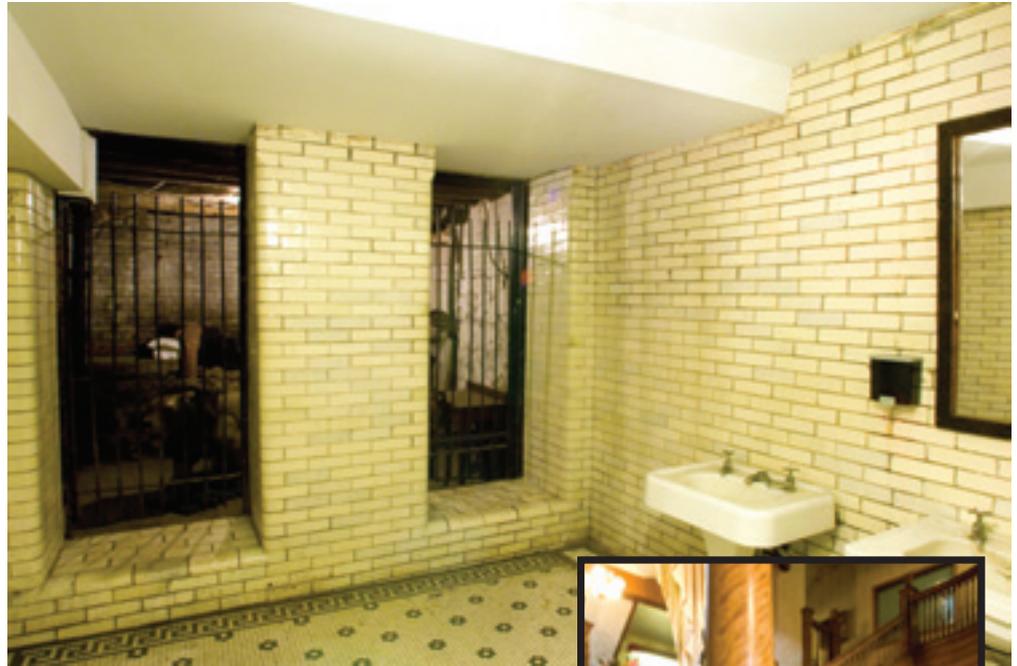
NOT FAR FROM the C&P Depot at 11 West Main Street is the Hotel Gunter that has been hosting guests since it opened on New Year's Day in 1897. Originally built by William R. Percy and his son-in-law Gladstone Hitchens, the Hotel Gladstone (as it was called in 1897) included 100 rooms, a first class dining room, uniform bellboy service, tennis courts, and an entertainment venue. The construction price tag of \$125,000 was a statement of

its prominence. According to one historical report the facility "attracted visitors from near and far... and was one of the foremost hotels along the National Road." Businessmen associated with the coal, rail and transportation industries, as well as British Government officials, frequented the Gunter during the summer months.

William Gunter purchased the business in 1903 and made additional improvements, including gas and electric lights. His ownership also meant the hotel was renamed Hotel Gunter. The business continued to offer lodging for decades to travelers along the century old National Highway.

Interstate highway construction during the 1960-1970s influenced small towns in Western Maryland. The east-west flow of traffic that had occurred on the National Highway since the early 1800s drastically declined when dual lane highways encouraged motorists to save time by speeding past towns. The Gunter was influenced by the reduced traffic and patronage declined. The once noteworthy building steadily deteriorated until purchased by the Failinger family in 1986. Major repairs and intensive renovations were required to return the Gunter to a first class hospitality facility. One noteworthy renovation is the oak stairway that ascends from the lobby to the first floor; natural oak beauty was revealed only after the Failingers painstakingly removed layers of paint.

Today the Hotel Gunter serves as a modern hotel and apartment complex with turn-of-the 19th century charm and ambiance. Guests and tourists today are also welcome



Facing Page:
Hotel Gunter on
Main Street,
Frostburg.

**Above: The
old jail in the
basement.**

**Right: Grand
staircase in lobby.**

to enjoy the Gunter's eclectic artifact collection located in the basement that makes it a virtual museum of local memorabilia. The tram railway and hopper that formerly transported coal from mines directly to the basement (and related coal mining implements) remain in their original environment. A jail cell also remains in place long after it served as a temporary holding room for prisoners being transported along the National Highway. Law enforcement officers would rest comfortably upstairs, while the prisoners were safely provided for in the basement.

Another unusual feature of days gone by is a basement barroom containing a stone gamecock fighting arena. It is known that the bar area served as a speakeasy during the days of prohibition. Old newspapers, bottles, baby dolls, a 1930s era kitchen, and other displays are behind glass enclosures.



Princess Restaurant

President Harry Truman proclaimed to newspaper reporters in June 1953, "We lunched at Frostburg at the Princess Restaurant, which is run by an old Greek who is a damn good Democrat."

The presidential visit to Frostburg, Maryland, on Father's Day, 1953, caused quite a stir around town as word spread like wildfire that President and Mrs. Truman were seated in a booth at the Princess Restaurant enjoying the Sunday special of roasted chicken. Mr. Truman had stopped at the Princess previously, but as a United States Senator from Missouri who was virtually unknown on the national political scene. His last stop at the Princess which occurred after leaving the highest office has once again been brought to national attention through historian Matthew Algeo's book, *Harry Truman's Excellent Adventure*. The author retraces the 2,500 mile journey of the last citizen-president from Independence, Missouri, to the East Coast and back again—a trip without secret service agents or any of the trappings of office.

Unlike recently retired Presidents who enjoy virtually unlimited expense accounts, generous pensions, and six figure speaking fees, Mr. Truman left office as a person of modest financial means only entitled to an army pension of about \$111.00 per month. A benefit the former president did enjoy was a great deal on a new vehicle provided by the Chrysler Corporation. As one who enjoyed driving and maintaining cars, the president accepted several invitations back East as a way of giving his new Chrysler a work out. Laying out road maps on his dining room table as if he were planning to redraw the boundaries of Europe after World War II with Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin, the trip was meticulously planned.

The Truman's hope for a low profile journey was not realized because they were recognized at each stop along the way. Always cognizant of how "big shots" typically acted, Mr. and Mrs. Truman graciously signed autographs, shook hands, and made conversation with interested onlookers whenever the occasion arose. Father's Day in Frostburg was no exception. Mr. Truman even agreed to stop and visit with Elizabeth Byrnes of Eckhart, who had recently broke her hip and was bedridden. Only intending to say a quick hello, the Truman's spent nearly a half an hour with the elderly Elizabeth Byrnes, who was described as a Democrat for the past 92 years.

The Princess Restaurant, founded by George Pappas Sr. in 1939, is the only family owned business remaining in operation that the Trumans visited on their 1953 road trip. George W. Pappas, third generation owner, proudly maintains the 70-year tradition of the Princess and enjoys the recent publicity generated by the release of Mr. Algeo's book. Out-of-town visitors have recently sought out the restaurant and the "Harry Truman booth," as



a way of enjoying presidential history and a great meal. George Pappas is quick to point out that many current menu selections are identical to ones offered in the 1950s. George is also proud that the Princess Restaurant is one of the longest continuously operated family businesses in Allegany County.

The Princess Restaurant is located at 12 West Main Street, Frostburg, Maryland.

Facing Page: The Princess Restaurant at 12 West Main Street, Frostburg, is known for great food and special guest Harry Truman, who stayed for lunch in 1953. The booth (left photo) is known as the "Harry Truman booth" and includes a photo of Mr. Truman during his visit.

Below: The Frostburg Reservoir, known by the locals as "Piney Lake" was created as a result of the Big Piney Run Dam and is located just inside the Garrett County Line. Fishing with a permit is allowed on the lake. For more information call: Maryland Department of Natural Resources at 301-334-8218 or visit their website at: www.dnr.state.md.us/fisheries/

