

# Autumn Glory Festival

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**Every year since 1968**, the Garrett County Autumn Glory Festival has celebrated fall foliage and attracted thousands of visitors to Western Maryland. The combination of scenic beauty, cultural events, and entertainment makes the fall festival a premier event. The festival's fame has spread beyond the region and now attracts visitors from across the United States.

The Autumn Glory Festival has its origins in discussions among Garrett County citizens who sought to showcase the scenic beauty of Deep Creek Lake, Swallow Falls, and surrounding areas as a means of promoting year round business. In 1951, the Deep Creek Promotion Council spearheaded the effort and decided that autumn would be the best season. Arrangements were subsequently made with the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad to offer scenic excursion train rides from the metropolitan areas

of Maryland to Oakland's train station; visitors would be transported by charter buses to locations around the county. Governor Theodore McKeldin cooperated in the venture by proclaiming October 12 – November 1, 1951, as "Autumn Glory Time." The Governor referred to Garrett County as being one of the country's most beautiful, scenic spots and suggested that "Marylanders should see the miracle of nature which will soon turn the mountain peaks from verdant green into a kaleidoscope mantle of beauty." A tour of the area for travel editors from large eastern seaboard newspapers was arranged and conducted by the Department of Maryland Information. Also participating in the first event was "Miss Maryland TV," Phyllis Maygers of Baltimore, who read Governor McKeldin's proclamation at a meeting of the Deep Creek Lake Promotion Council.

The inaugural event was deemed a success, so a second program was offered in 1952, called the Autumn Glory Turkey Festival. Announcement of the program was made in August, 1952, by the Mountain Top Chamber of Commerce. During the festival, turkeys were to be featured in all grocery stores and restaurants throughout the area, as a means of promoting the local industry. Charles Briner, secretary of the group, also announced that the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad would run autumn excursion trains from Baltimore and Washington to the town of Oakland. Included in the package deal would be charter bus excursions to nearby beauty spots and a turkey shoot. One hundred seventy-six metropolitan residents made the trip to Oakland and visited Hubert Bowman's Turkey Farm, Point View, Stone Tavern, Cabin Lodge, and Thayer's Barn. Guests were also hosted at Hinebaughs, Wards, William James Hotel, and Bill's Barn where they were served a turkey dinner for \$1.50 per plate. A water skiing exhibition on Deep Creek Lake and square dancing lessons at Thayer's Barn were also added to the itinerary.



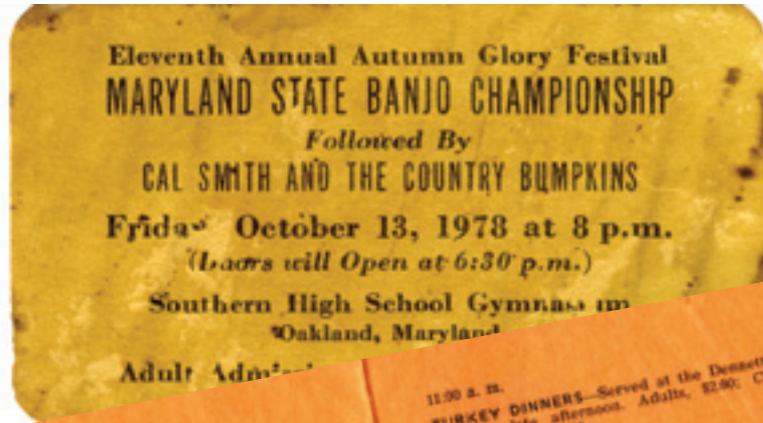
**Local fiddle  
contestant,  
Kathleen Myers.**



In 2007 popular travel website, MSM.com listed the Autumn Glory Festival “#1 Fall Festival in the World.” The 43rd Annual Autumn Glory Festival will be held on October 6-10, 2010 in Garrett County, Maryland and it is expected that 60,000 residents and visitors will attend the festival.

This year the annual Saturday parade will be held on October 9 — marching bands, floats, fire trucks and equipment, as well as various organizations are featured each year.





Left: Ticket from the 11th Annual Autumn Glory Festival (1978).

Below: Program from the "First Annual Autumn Glory Turkey Festival" — because of expanded programming the 1968 festival was billed as the "First Annual" even though previous fall foliage events had occurred.



The Garrett County Turkey Growers' Association acted as primary sponsors of the festival in 1954 and decided to name it the First Annual Turkey Festival. The key event was held at Deep Creek Lodge in McHenry and featured a turkey dinner with all the trimmings. Members of the committee were Gerald Glotfelty, Roy Glotfelty, Marvin Beitzel, Blaine Glotfelty, and John Beckner, Jr. The turkey growers continued to be involved in promoting their industry through the years by hosting dinners in concert with other organizations.

The fall promotion continued into 1955, when the governor again proclaimed "Mountain Glory Time," and the B&O scenic excursions were enhanced to include two-day package tours. Visitors departed from Baltimore, Washington, and Silver Spring for their Oakland destination and expanded itineraries. Similar events were held each year into the 1960s with the Turkey Growers' Association, the Mountain Lake Park Lion's Club, and the Deep Creek Lake Promotion Council acting as key partners in organizing the events.

A major change in the fall foliage event occurred in 1968 when the Deep Creek Lake Promotion Council announced the First Annual Autumn Glory Turkey Festival would be



Some of the many events held during the five days of the festival: Glorious Harvest Farmers Market & Craft Show, Oktoberfest Dinner & Celebration, Car Show, and Children's entertainment shows.

held October 10-12. The reason for the 1968 festival being the "First Annual," even though previous fall foliage events had occurred, was the expanded programming; a variety of community groups volunteered their time and expertise. In keeping with previous festivals, however, one of the stated purposes was "to emphasize the importance of the area's poultry production."

The First Annual Autumn Glory Turkey Festival produced the "greatest display" ever seen in that area (Oakland). The parade included a United States Army band, drill team, and color guard from Fort Belvoir, Virginia, 24 marching bands, and 32 floats. Lonnie Marsh, state of Maryland Commander of the American Legion, held the title of parade marshal. Thirty thousand people lined the streets of Oakland to enjoy the parade.

Additional entertainment at the first festival included a performance by Billy Joe Royal of "Down in the Boondocks" fame, country music stars, Jim and Jesse and the Virginia Boys, and the Maryland State Fiddlers Championship. There was an antique car show, a moto-cross event, a turkey shoot, scenic ski lift rides at the Wisp Ski Area, a horse pulling contest, carnival rides and games at Southern High School, a horse show, a fireworks display, a rodeo at the Triple R Ranch, and a Turkey Bowl football game between Southern and Terra Alta High Schools. Lynn Beckman, Executive Director of the Deep Creek Lake – Garrett County Promotion Council, announced that organizers were prepared to serve 40,000 turkey dinners during the extended celebration with the help of area restaurants, churches, community groups, and street vendors. Tom Butscher of the promotion council and Art Naylor of the Oakland-Mountain Lake Park Lions Club were instrumental in organizing the inaugural event. The Lions Club and promotion council are credited as co-sponsoring organizations.

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A “Friends of Garrett County” dinner held at the Wisp Ski Area featured noted syndicated newspaper columnist Jack Anderson; his appearance at the dinner helped to raise \$4,500.

The Autumn Glory Turkey Festival was declared an “overwhelming success” by the sponsors and has continued through the years. A couple of changes were noted for the second annual event when “Turkey” was dropped from the title, and the sponsors were listed as the Deep Creek Lake–Garrett County Promotion Council.

Noted entertainers have appeared since the first festival, including traditional country musicians Lester Flat, Grandpa Jones of “Hee-Haw” and Grand Ole Opry fame, Little Jimmy Dickens, Carl and Pearl Butler, Roy Acuff, Jean Shephard, Skeeter Davis, Kenny Price, Don Gibson, the Lewis Family, Ernest Tubb, Junior Samples, the Wilburn Brothers, Roy Dano, Rhonda Vincent, Billy Walker, Kitty Wells, and Charlie Louvin.

Grand Marshals of the parade have included Ted Koppel of ABC News and Art Rooney, Jr. of the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Word of the festival spread beyond the region when in 2007 popular travel website, MSN.com., listed it as tops among fall festivals of the world, beating out the world famous Oktoberfest in Munich, Germany.

Plans are finalized for the 2010 event which will be held October 6-10. It is expected that 60,000 residents and visitors will attend the 43rd Garrett County, Maryland, Autumn Glory Festival festivities.

For more information, contact the Garrett County Chamber of Commerce, Inc., 15 Visitors Center Drive, McHenry, MD 21541 or [info@garrettchamber.com](mailto:info@garrettchamber.com) or [www.visitdeepcreeklake.com](http://www.visitdeepcreeklake.com).

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