

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS

The Western Maryland Railway Station opened for business on Sunday July 27, 1913,

and the first passenger train scheduled during regular business hours was for the company's amusement park called Pen-Mar that was located in Washington County Maryland and Franklin County Pennsylvania. The new brick station reflected the growing importance of Cumberland as a commercial center and railroad hub for the east coast. Although the station was new, the Western Maryland Railway's presence had been established earlier with the completion of the railroad's Hagerstown to Queen City extension in 1906.

When Western Maryland trains arrived in Cumberland prior to 1913, passengers were served by a two-story frame

and the first passenger train scheduled during regular business hours was for the company's amusement park called Pen-Mar that was located in Washington County Maryland and Franklin County Pennsylvania. The new brick station reflected the growing importance of Cumberland as a commercial center and railroad hub

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

station on the corner of Baltimore and Canal Streets at Will's Creek Bridge. Built by the West Virginia Central Railroad in 1887, the passenger station also served as a depot for the Georges Creek and Cumberland (GC&C) and Pennsylvania (PRR) Railroads.

Upon completion of the new Western Maryland Railway Station, the former West Virginia Central Station was razed over a two week period of time. According to a Cumberland Evening Times report, railroad officials were busy moving old desks to the new station as demolition work began.

Designed by architect C.N. Patterson, the station expressed the importance and success of the railroad in the region.

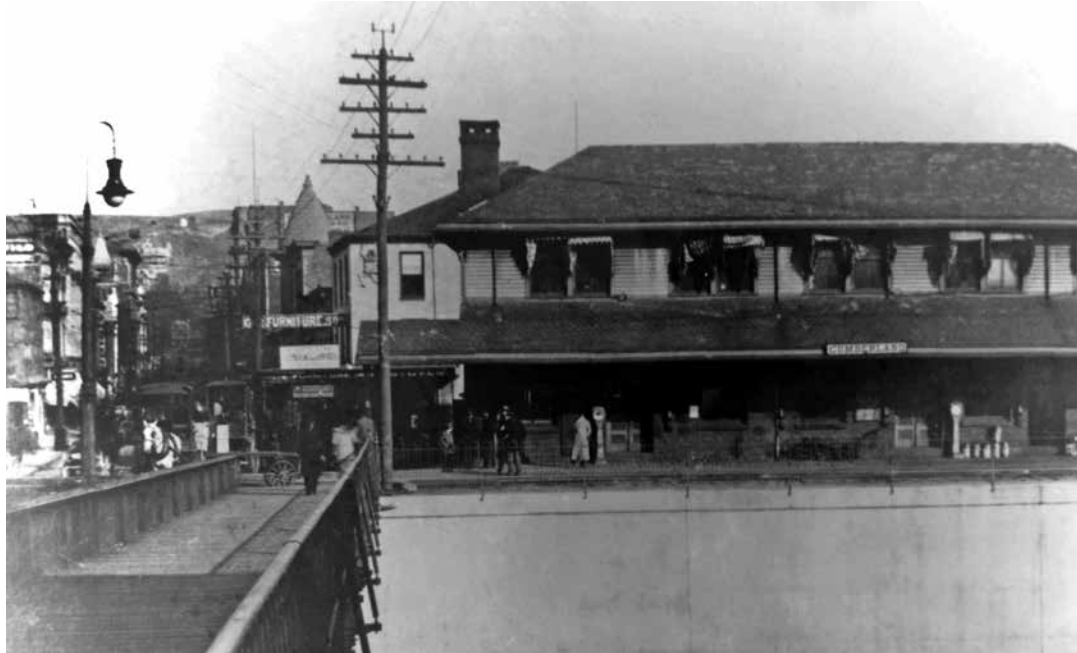
The building's style also reflected architectural functionalism that was typical at the turn of the twentieth century. It was two stories high on the west side and three on the east side. Nine long bays marked the length while three narrower bays defined the width. A massive modillion cornice encircled the building and three dormers over the three central bays created the most noticeable features of the exterior. Oak wainscoting and trim throughout the offices, particularly in the trackside ticket office and passenger waiting room, were notable interior features.

Within two months after opening a repurposing of the basement was required. Increasing numbers of west bound immigrants and the establishment of an immigration bureau operated jointly by the Hamburg-American Steamship Company and the Western Maryland Railway prompted the changes. A new agent's office and accompanying waiting room served as a distribution center for recently arrived Europeans heading west and north. A September 1913 Cumberland Evening Times report noted that 350 immigrants were expected to arrive at the station on October 1st, thereby underscoring the railroad's willingness to accommodate the additional passenger traffic. And based on the immigrant population of Allegany County listed in early twentieth century census records, it is apparent that Cumberland was also a destination, as the immigrant workers found employment in local coal mines, the glass industry, railroading, and related enterprises.

The Western Maryland Railway and station prospered for nearly 40 years before declining revenue required severe cutbacks, including the elimination of passenger service (1958) and the closing of facilities. In 1973, the Western Maryland Railway was absorbed by the Chessie System (a holding company that owned the former B&O, C&O, and Western Maryland railroads) and in 1976 the station

was abandoned. The Kelly-Springfield Tire Company later leased the building for storage purposes and as a front-end alignment facility.

Campaigns to preserve the historic building were launched by the Preservation Society of Allegany County, the Western Maryland Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society, and concerned individuals. In 1981,



Prior to 1913, passengers were served by this two-story frame station on the corner of Baltimore and Canal Streets at Will's Creek Bridge.

the preservationists efforts took a major step forward when the Chessie System conveyed the station to Kelly-Springfield Tire Company which in turn deeded it to the city of Cumberland.

Discussions about possible uses of the building ensued and recommendations were made to the Mayor and City Council of Cumberland. As a result of those discussions, the Western Maryland Station Development Committee (WMSDC) was established by the city for the purposes of maintaining the exterior appearance, renovating the interior for possible use as a cultural center and transportation museum, and other commercial enterprises. The WMSDC began operations in 1982.

In 1983, a nonprofit foundation called the Western Maryland Station Committee Inc. accepted transfer of the



Today, images of the past still exist within the interior of the restored Western Maryland Railway Station.

property from the City of Cumberland for the sum of one dollar. More than \$418,000 was raised by the foundation that oversaw cosmetic improvements and an endowment to pay for ongoing operations of the building.

In 1996, work began on an elevator tower attached to the south side. It was believed the station's full potential would be enhanced by an elevator and wrap around stairway to facilitate access to the top two floors. The tower would make the station compliant with federal laws regarding access to public buildings. Work on the elevator tower was completed in 1997.

Upon completion of the elevator tower, the Western Maryland Railway Station, festival grounds, and 58 acres of surrounding property became part of the Canal Place Heritage Area, a property managed by the Canal Place Preservation and Development Authority, a State of Maryland agency. Canal Place was the first certified Heritage Area in Maryland.



Extensive renovations occurred under the state agency's direction that preserved the structure and enhanced its utility to meet the needs of contemporary business applications. Today, the station is host to The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historic Park and Allegany County Visitor's Center, The Western Maryland Scenic Railroad Administrative Offices, Canal Place Authority Administrative offices, Kramer's Deli, and professional offices. In addition, the concourse and plaza area of the station may be rented for parties and events. For more information, contact the Canal Place Preservation and Development Authority at 301-724-3655.

One hundred years after opening, The Western Maryland Station remains a vital part of downtown Cumberland. Who would have imagined in 1913 that a century into the future a Baldwin steam locomotive would be regularly steaming into the Western Maryland Railway Station for the purpose of serving passengers visiting Frostburg?

The Western Maryland Railway Station was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.

The Western Maryland Railway Station prospered for nearly 40 years before declining revenue forced elimination of passenger service in 1958.



Allegany Museum

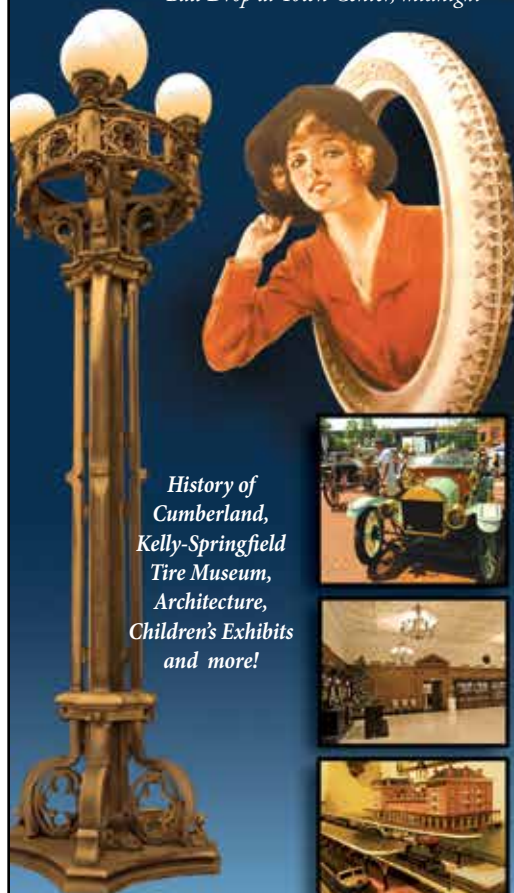
www.alleganymuseum.org

NEW LOCATION !
3 Pershing Street, Cumberland, MD
2ND FLOOR

Open March – Dec.; Tues. - Sat. 10 - 4; Sun. 1 - 4 pm

2013 Calendar of Events

- March 9 Allegany Museum Opens
- March 9 Musical Heritage – *Britain/Blue Ridge*
- Mar.-Dec. Bus Tours – *Allegany Museum, Gordon Roberts House, Castle, etc.*
- April 7 Musical Heritage – *Concert*
- June 8-9 Heritage Days Open House
Special tours. Sat. & Sun. 10 - 4
- Sept. 21 13th Annual Ford Model T & Model A Car & Truck Show
Dash plaques, goodie bags, etc. 10 - 4
- Nov. 29 Holiday Open House
*Entertainment / refreshments 7:30-9 pm
Downtown Tree Lighting*
- Dec. 31 New Year's Eve Open House
*Entertainment, 9-11:30 pm
Ball Drop at Town Center, midnight*



History of
Cumberland,
Kelly-Springfield
Tire Museum,
Architecture,
Children's Exhibits
and more!

Receptions and Parties
and special tours can be arranged.

301-777-7200 • 301-724-4339 • 301-268-2226
www.alleganymuseum.org