

Kitzmiller

Garrett County
MARYLAND

Rich in Coal and Timber Heritage

Kitzmiller is one of those off-the-beaten-path places, with plenty of natural beauty, fishing, hunting, and camping. Jennings Randolph Lake, Deep Creek Lake and the North Branch of the Potomac River are all nearby.

and now there's **THE COAL BUCKET CAFÉ**



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These photos are reminiscent of the coal mining days of Kitzmiller, MD. The train is at the Elk Garden, WV Station, just across the Potomac River from Kitzmiller.



KITZMILLER, MARYLAND prospered as a coal mining and timbering town in the late 19th century. Abundant natural resources found along the North Branch of the Potomac River meant that Kitzmiller and nearby Blaine, West Virginia, would become important stops on the West Virginia Central and Pittsburgh Railroad as it developed in the 1880s. The WVC&P reached Kitzmiller–Blaine and then wound its way along the rugged valley, fostering the establishment of smaller coal mining towns for several decades as natural resources were removed and transported to eastern markets. Kitzmiller's workforce became significant by the early 20th century because it served a variety of customers in the expanding industrial markets along the east coast.

Continued prosperity meant that Kitzmiller was to become one of the largest settlements in the valley by 1920 with a population of 1,500 residents. While coal was king in Kitzmiller and Garrett County, the town was unique because it was home to other industries through the years including a grist mill, wool mill, and shirt factory. Churches, school houses, doctor's offices, a post office, a bank, an opera house, and a small commercial district provided residents with virtually all their needs.



Before 2007: The Kitzmiller Company Store.

The Great Depression hurt residents of the river valley when demand for coal plummeted. And while World War II saw a brief resurgence in the industry, the relief proved to be short lived, causing many of the smaller mining towns to be abandoned, as coal producers adopted more efficient methods of removing the natural resource. Today the river valley is marked by the ruins of ghost towns, reminders of a different era. Free standing brick chimneys, concrete steps leading to nowhere, and stone foundations are the only visible relics of towns that have been reclaimed by the forest.

Kitzmiller was influenced by the economic downturn and its population fell to fewer than 300 residents by the 1970s. Residents remained strong throughout the hard times and fought to maintain their close knit community. Progress has been made on many fronts. A rejuvenated Potomac River and vibrant fish population have produced trophy-sized catches for fishermen, who enjoy the quiet valley setting. And Kitzmiller's proximity to the river and



After: The Kitzmiller Company Store (home of the Coal Bucket Café).

convenient services makes it attractive to all recreational visitors.

The most recent accomplishment in the town's renaissance is the renovation of the old coal company store, a project supported by Maryland Historical Trust, the Maryland State Highway Transportation Enhancement program, the Garrett County Chamber of Commerce and Garrett County commissioners.

The coal company store, once operated by Johnstown Coal and Coke Company and now referred to as the Kitzmiller Company Store, handled a variety of mining supplies and general merchandise. Jackie Brady, a lifelong resident of Kitzmiller, enjoys fond memories of the business, "The store was called Schwinabart's when I was growing up. They sold meat and groceries in the downstairs and boots and clothing in the upstairs section. They even had home delivery. Later on the store was owned by the mining company and they sold a little bit of everything."



Today, the Kitzmiller Company Store is home to **The Coal Bucket Café**. Owner Bobbi Jo Hanlin chose the coal mining theme because, “My daddy worked in the coal mines for 52 years and there is a lot of coal mining heritage in Kitzmiller.” Bobbi Jo creatively engages customers in the town’s heritage by displaying artifacts provided by individuals and the Kitzmiller museum. Out of town customers are likely to encounter residents who will enjoy interpreting the displayed items and sharing memories of Kitzmiller’s past.

The company store location was brought to the attention of Bobbi Jo by town officials, who believed that a café style business would be embraced by residents. And the timing was right for her and a group of close friends. According to Bobbi Jo, “We decided in June 2007, to open the café and by July it was open for business. We have home cooked food that is made from recipes passed down through the generations. Everything we serve is made from scratch.”

According to Mayor Jim Browning, “The Kitzmiller Company Store’s importance to the community can’t be overemphasized. This is the only business in town and the only one like it for more than 20 miles. Bobbi Jo’s operation fulfills the town’s vision for the store and we hope that it will continue for years to come.”

Mr. Browning also points out the renovated building serves as the town’s Visitor Center. “The Kitzmiller Company Store and Visitor



Center has given us an opportunity to preserve our heritage. Equally important, it has provided a destination in Kitzmiller for recreational and heritage tourism. We feel strongly that this project can provide a boost to our local economy.”

The Coal Bucket Café is popular with residents and visitors who enjoy the great food and conversation that comes with a Garrett County dining experience. The café is open from 6:30 am to 8:30 pm.

A short walk down the street from the Coal Bucket Cafe will take visitors to the Kitzmiller museum that has become the town’s repository for photographs, newspaper articles, and memorabilia. There are also displays and artifacts of interest.

Top: The Coal Bucket Café owner, Bobbi Jo Hanlin, always has a friendly smile for her customers.

Bottom left: The balcony of The Coal Bucket Café displays a variety of handcrafted items for sale.

Bottom right: Hot, home-cooked meals are a feature of The Coal Bucket Café with daily specials available.

Kitzmiller is proud of its past and equally proud of the current revitalization programs. A walk down Main Street and conversations with residents will reveal why Kitzmiller will always be called home, even to those who no longer reside in the community.

For additional information contact Town Hall at **301-453-3449** or **townofkitzmiller@cebridge.net**.

Memorabilia from the coal mining heritage of Kitzmiller.



Special For March 10-15
Tuesday = Meatloaf + Mashed Potatoes + Broccoli + Cheese + Rolls + Dessert \$5.99
Wednesday = Potatoes Soup/Chili + Peanut Butter or Fried Bread \$5.99
Thursday = Fried Chicken + Mashed Potatoes + Corn Seniors/Children \$4.99 Hot Rolls + Dessert \$5.99

Interior of The Coal Bucket Café and menu of the daily specials (inset) as it appeared in the front window.