



Garrett County Artist Charles “Chip” Evans

Scenes of Historical Interest

Chip’s wife, Mary Evans and daughter, Rebecca McClive, with the 1890-era town of Oakland painting on display at the museum.



The Garrett County Museum of Transportation is hosting a series of paintings that depict scenes of historical interest. Garrett County artist Charles “Chip” Evans completed the works over a series of years in response to commissions from John and Christine Blundell who reside during the summer months at Alpine Lake Resort, Terra Alta, West Virginia.

Mr. Evans’ oil paintings are best described as realistic. According to Mary Evans, wife of the artist, “My husband preferred to paint a scene as it would have actually appeared. He didn’t paint *en plein air* (in the open air) or in impressionistic styles. What a person would have observed at the location at a particular time is what he depicted. Chip had a great eye for detail.”

In addition to historical works, Chip Evans enjoyed painting night time urban scenes, rainy landscapes, and occasionally portraits. Mrs. Evans reflected on the variety of subjects painted by her husband. “Chip was interested in a variety of time periods. What mattered was an accurate portrayal of the scene he was painting. He would take time to research a subject to make sure it was presented in an authentic way, particularly with the train paintings that are in the Transportation Museum.”

Chip Evans was born and raised in Washington, DC and after a 25 year career in the US Navy, as a Gunner’s Mate he retired as Chief Petty Officer. He then moved his family to Garrett County where his primary occupation was that of a master electrician working for Helmuth Hiese at the Wisp Ski Resort. According to Mary, “Chip had fond memories of going to the airport in DC, with his father and loved to depict scenes from his childhood and decided to paint the airport where the Pentagon was later built. Mr. Blundell saw the painting in the local art gallery and that is how the commissions began.”

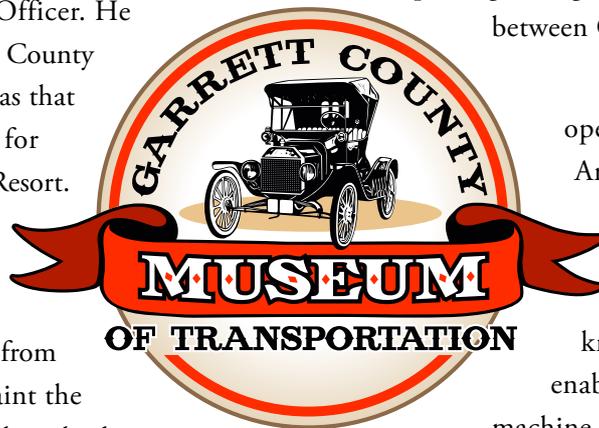
Robert Boal, President of the Garrett County Museum of Transportation, welcomed the paintings as an important addition to the region’s railroad heritage. “We have five of Mr. Evans’ oil paintings that relate to rail transportation and were commissioned by Mr. Blundell.”

The first painting visitors notice when they arrive at the museum is a rendering of a 4-4-0 Baltimore & Ohio steam locomotive pulling a passenger train into the town of Oakland. According to Mr. Boal, “Chip completed extensive research on the town and other locations prior to painting, so we know the train is heading west toward Terra Alta, West Virginia, and beyond. Important to this painting are the stores and hotels along Railroad Street, as well as the passenger boardwalk and nearby water tank.” Also noticeable is the Oakland train station and a gathering of townspeople enjoying a summer day in 1890.

The second painting depicts a B&O passenger train arriving at the Terra Alta Station, as the sun sets in the west. The Terra Alta view is circa 1920.

Mr. Boal describes the third painting as a B&O freight train “crossing over the Cheat River Bridge at Rowlesburg, West Virginia, just 30 miles west of Oakland. Interestingly, the bridge shown in the painting was destroyed in the flood of 1985.”

In the fourth painting, a circa 1940 B&O passenger train, approaching Terra Alta from the west, is shown passing a freight train in the Cranberry Glade between Oakland and Terra Alta.



Visitors interested in timbering operations will enjoy the “Swamp Angel,” the name of Mr. Evans’

fifth painting on loan at the museum. The 13 ton, upright boiler Climax locomotive was known for its low gear ratio that enabled it to be a rugged and reliable machine in remote areas. Mr. Boal noted this Climax “was built for Sylvester Rinard, ran on wooden rails from the Cranesville area to the lumber mill at Rinard (now Hopemont), and could pull six log cars, three in the front and three behind, over the 11 mile long track. The Swamp Angel, the name given to the Climax locomotive, operated through what is now the Alpine Lake Resort.”

Mr. Boal expressed appreciation to the Blundell family for their support of the local museum. “John and Christine Blundell now live in Florida for seven months of the year and we are free to borrow the paintings whenever they are away.”

The Garrett County Museum of Transportation is located on Liberty Street in downtown Oakland. See their website at www.garrettcountymuseums.com for information and hours of operation.