



The Iron engine at left was built by Stephen Pagenhardt; see *Mountain Discoveries* Spring/Summer 2012.

## Small Museums have Hometown Features

The Williams Community Museum has become a showcase for highlighting the heritage of Westernport and the Tri-Towns area. Since opening in 2010, residents have generously donated artifacts that have enabled the Westernport Heritage Society to carry out its mission of collecting, preserving, and interpreting the community's history. Exhibits have been created so that visitors may discover the unique industrial heritage of the Tri-Towns that began with the opening of coal mines and railroad operations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Exhibitions are organized by themed galleries titled, the Westernport Room, Home and Hearth, Business and Industry, Military Room, Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Barber Shop, School Room, Library, and Archives. Reference materials include a selection of local history books, Westvaco (paper mill) Christmas books, Bruce High School yearbooks, and the Oliver H. Bruce Journals, ledgers that provide extensive documentation of the 1871-1921 time period

## Westernport, Maryland

Written by: **Dan Whetzel**  
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in Westernport. Mr. Bruce served as town clerk of Westernport, teacher/principal of Westernport's first elementary school, and civic leader. *Reflections, Remembering A Beloved Hometown*, a publication of the Westernport Heritage Society, Inc., provides an extensive survey of the town from its first recorded history in the mid 1700s to contemporary times. The book is also offered for sale.

The museum's success has been made possible by the generosity of residents, friends who have moved from the area, and by dedicated local volunteers. According to Patrick McCarty, treasurer, the museum project proceeded quickly. "We initially raised money by sending letters and the response was excellent. Our second plan is to pay off the balance of the mortgage. Both local and former residents have been most generous."

## Western Maryland Railway Station Museum

The former Western Maryland Railway Station was acquired by the Westernport Heritage Society in 1996. Members successfully collected artifacts and memorabilia that were cataloged and displayed during special events and by request. Since the Williams Community Museum opening in 2010, the railway museum has served as a repository for railroad and coal mining artifacts while displays capturing other aspects of the Tri-Town's life and culture are now featured at the 135 Main Street facility.

The Tri-Towns were an important link for railroads that offered passenger and freight service for nearly a century from the coal rich George's Creek Valley. The George's Creek, Cumberland and Pennsylvania, and Western Maryland railroads directly served Westernport and Piedmont while the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad interchanged with those carriers a short distance away.

Residents have generously donated railroading tools, rails, switches, control panels, a full size "speeder" that railroad crews used to transport workers, and personal items. Coal mining artifacts include lunch pails, carbide lanterns, and mining augers. A large photograph collection represents a cross section of Tri-Town's life.

*The Western Maryland Railway Museum is located at 117 Maryland Avenue in Westernport and is open on Saturday 1:00-4:00 p.m. during the months of April-October and by appointment.*



Western Maryland  
Railway Station Museum

The officers and board members strategic plan is to increase the number of exhibits and programs that will engage students and residents of all ages. To continue expansion of programming, the museum staff relies on Jack Fazenbaker, Milt Hart, John Daniels, Sarah Jane Albright, and Dan Laffey among others.

The Westernport Heritage Society officers are Terry LaRue, President; Kitty Mitchell, Vice President; Kelly Sydow, Secretary; and Pat McCarty, Treasurer. Directors are Michael Cleveland, Thomas Clayton, Ronald Wiltison, and Jack Fazenbaker.

The Williams Community Museum is located at 136 Main Street, Westernport. Hours are Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, 1:00-4:00 p.m. and by appointment. The phone number is **301-359-0683**. Also see [www.westernportheritagesociety.com](http://www.westernportheritagesociety.com).

### Civil War Collection – Westernport

Mike Cleveland, board member of the Westernport Heritage Society, has collected Civil War artifacts since the mid 1980s. Most of the artifacts were found in Washington County, Maryland, particularly near Antietam. After acquiring a sizeable collection, family circumstances caused the collection to be sold to an antique dealer. Always regretting the sale of artifacts, Mike later began to search for replacements. With good fortune on his side, Mike located his collection through an online search. Amazingly, most of the artifacts were found in the original case and appeared just as they did when he arranged them. The collection includes a variety of bullets, belt buckles, uniform buttons, and pieces of artillery shells. Mr. Cleveland's collection will be on display at the Williams Community Museum in the near future.

