

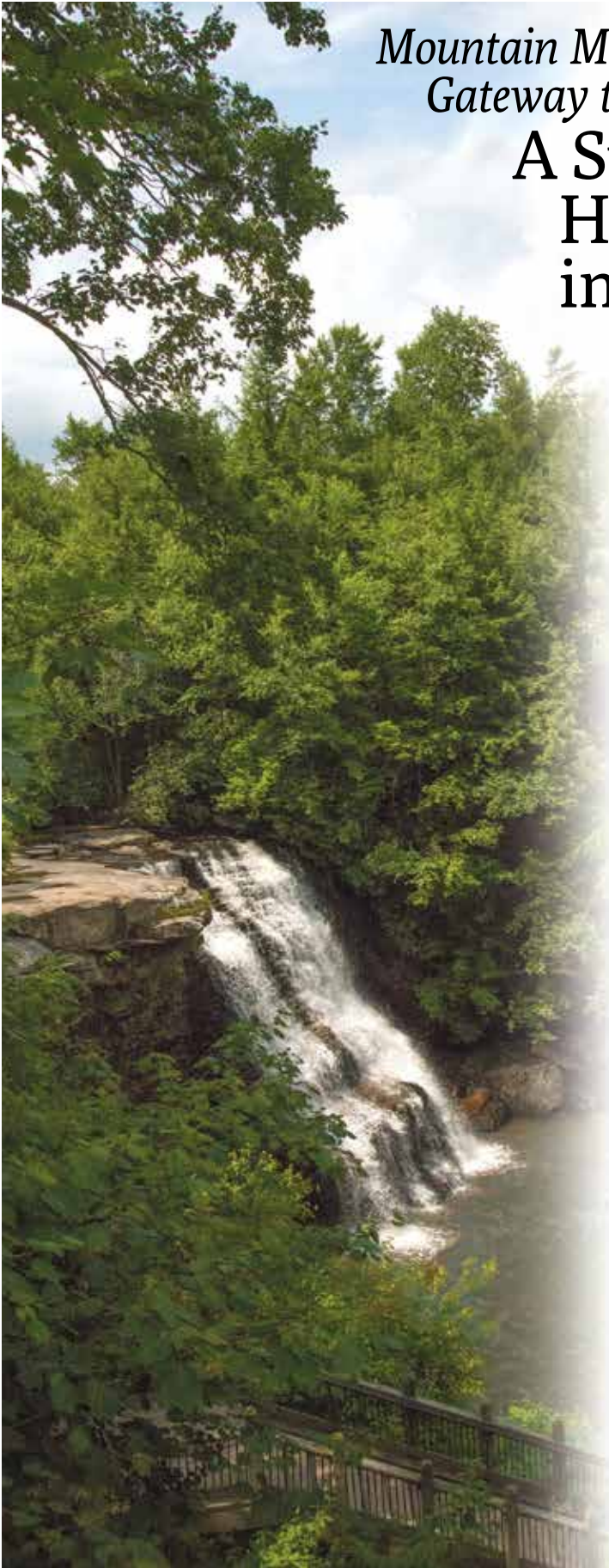
# Mountain Maryland Gateway to the West A Story of History and Heritage in Western Maryland



Written by: **Kim Folk**  
Photography by: **Lance C. Bell**

Garrett County is one of 13 certified Heritage Areas in Maryland. What is a Heritage Area you ask? Well, Heritage Areas are regions where historic structures, landscapes, cultural traditions, and other resources (such as parks and museums) work together to tell patterns of history unique to the location. The Mountain Maryland Gateway to the West tells Garrett County's story of historic transportation, recreation, cultural uniqueness and the natural wonders that represent the people and landscapes of our beautiful county.

Garrett County, not unlike other areas, has a rich history to tell. In the early 1800s, the western most portion of Maryland, Garrett County became a popular destination for folks who wanted to escape the heat of our surrounding counties. They quickly found out that the fresh mountain air of Western Maryland was much cooler and crisper than those to our east. Many travelers made the commute to Western Maryland by train. The completely restored B&O Train Station in Oakland still hosts visitors today but, instead of stopping by to catch a train, they are most likely stopping by to stroll through the museum or take photos of the 1920 Baldwin Steam Engine on display just outside the station. In 1811 the historic National Road, the first federally funded highway in the country, provided a relatively quick and easy route to travel frequently to the mountains. The Casselman River Bridge which was completed in 1815 was at one time the longest single-span stone arch bridge in the United States. It is still as beautiful and magnificent today as it was back then! This area, once known as Little Crossings, is now Casselman River Bridge State Park. Thousands of people stop each year to walk across the bridge, take photos, have a picnic and just relax while passing through. It is these stories and structures that make historic transportation one of our heritage themes.



**Top to bottom: Casselman River Bridge State Park;  
Oakland B&O Train Station; Amish horse and buggy;  
and kayakers on Deep Creek Lake.**

**Facing Page: Muddy Creek Falls at Swallow Falls  
State Park.**

Historic recreation has long been a calling card for Garrett County. With such a rich history of outdoor recreation throughout our county, you do not have to look far to see how important recreation was and still is to our local economy and everyday life of the locals and visitors to our area. Being home to so many waterways, fishing, boating and all types of watersports are and have always been a driving force of outdoor recreation. As home to the mighty Youghiogheny and Savage Rivers, kayakers and whitewater enthusiasts from all over the country travel to this region to experience these challenging waters, while boaters love to spend a day on Deep Creek Lake, Maryland's largest manmade lake. The Deep Creek Lake area sees 1.2 million visitors each year who come to Western Maryland to get away from the "city life" for a bit. Hiking our beautiful scenic trails is a popular pastime for locals and visitors. Swallow Falls State Park, where you will see Maryland's tallest free-falling waterfall was once a popular vacation spot for Henry Ford and Harvey Firestone. And Wisp Resort, the only ski resort in Maryland, has grown from a few trails in 1955 to over 30 trails, 8 chairlifts, 2 terrain parks, and a tubing park along with a full array of summer activities. Recreation in this area is still inspiring people to get outside and unplug in a world that is often too connected.

It goes without saying that Garrett County is unique in so many ways. Our Heritage Area celebrates our uniqueness in the stories and people that make us so special. From our tour of over 40 barn quilts, that you can drive our scenic byways to visit, to the Amish influences throughout our county. Don't be surprised if instead of parking beside a car you are parking beside a horse and buggy at the local "bent and dent." If you don't know what that is, ask a local. They are sure to explain and tell you where to find one. With over 8 museums celebrating our history and heritage and the numerous historic trails and markers throughout the county you are sure to find your connection in Garrett County even if that connection is just finding a reason to relax. For more heritage related stories, resources and information visit [www.GarrettHeritage.com](http://www.GarrettHeritage.com).

