

# Garrett County Celebrates Its *150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*

GARRETT COUNTY, IN THE FAR WEST  
OF MARYLAND,  
IS A PLACE OF NATURAL BEAUTY,  
HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE, CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES,  
AND FOUR SEASON RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES.

Written by: **Mary Reisinger**



PHOTOS BY LANCE C. BELL

Garrett County is marking its sesquicentennial year in 2022 with special events and exhibits, commemorative coins and walking tours. Events include the National Road festival in May, the Celtic Festival in June, the Victorian tradition of Chautauqua in July, and the Garrett County Agricultural Fair the first week of August. Walking tours have been designed to showcase various places in the county.

The eight towns in the county—Accident, Deer Park, Friendsville, Grantsville, Kitzmiller, Loch Lynn, Mountain Lake Park, and Oakland—have designed coins with images emblematic of each community. Be sure to look for these coins at the festivals and open houses being held this year. A handy place to learn more about the calendar, the walking tours, and the coins is the county's anniversary website: <https://150.garrettcounty.org>.

This year also highlights the fascinating story of the region's development and the intrepid individuals who helped shape Mountain Maryland before and after 1872.

The colony of Maryland was first settled by Europeans in the mid-1600s. The colony developed quickly; within a century, Europeans had ventured to Maryland's western edge, searching for a passage through the mountains to the West.

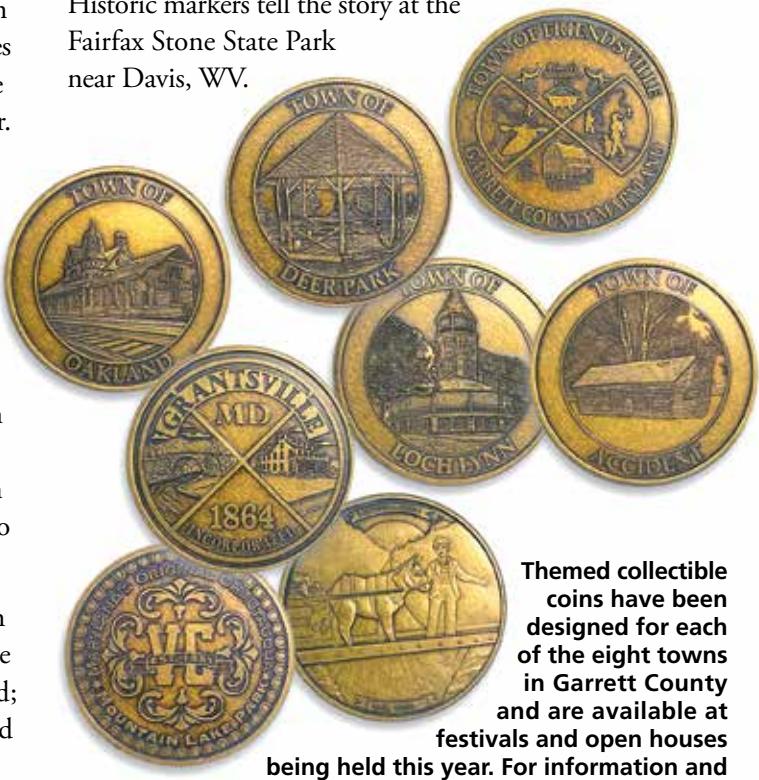
Of course the story of Garrett County didn't begin with European settlers. Indigenous peoples lived in villages here for thousands of years before European explorers arrived; however, by 1700, most Native Americans in the area used the forests, rivers, and glades as seasonal hunting and fishing grounds.

Travel and transportation of goods was challenging. The terrain was steep, heavily wooded, very snowy in winter, and filled with springs, streams, rivers, and marshy glades. Native Americans had established several viable paths through the area including Nemacolin's Trail and the Seneca Trail, which became modern Routes 40 and 219. Traders and hunters also used the rivers, particularly the Youghiogheny (Waters Flowing in the Contrary Direction) and the Cohongoroota (River of Wild Geese), which later came to be known as the Potomac.

The first Europeans to reach Garrett County, in 1736, were mapping the boundaries of Lord Fairfax's land grant. They left Harpers Ferry in October and traveled until early December. Their food ran out and, according to historian Stephen Schlosnagle, one of the party later reported that they voted to kill and eat John Savage, a surveyor, because

his failing eyesight made him the least useful member of the party. Fortunately, Mr. Savage was saved by the timely arrival of supplies. The men then decided to name the river by which they were camping Savage River in his honor.

Ten years later, a survey party including Thomas Jefferson's father Peter returned to the area, located the blazed trees left by the earlier explorers, and set the Fairfax Stone, a more permanent marker of the colony's boundary. The original stone, vandalized in 1880, was replaced in 1910. Historic markers tell the story at the Fairfax Stone State Park near Davis, WV.



**Themed collectible coins have been designed for each of the eight towns in Garrett County and are available at festivals and open houses being held this year. For information and event dates, see <https://150.garrettcounty.org>.**

George Washington enters into Garrett County's history first as a surveyor and then as a soldier. He mapped land for Lord Fairfax, traveling through the northern part of Western Maryland on the Nemacolin Trail. Because of this experience, in 1753 he delivered the English demand for the French forces to leave the Ohio River Valley. He returned in January 1754 with their refusal.

A few months later, Washington was sent to drive out the French forces. He made some improvement to the Nemacolin Trail for easier movement of troops. This campaign turned out to be a military disaster for Washington, ending in the only surrender of his career. Washington's failed mission effectively started the French and Indian War. When the British sent General Edward Braddock to take charge in 1755, Washington joined Braddock's forces. Braddock's forces were defeated by the French. He died

as a result of his injuries, and was buried in the road he had built so that the passing of troops would obscure his grave's location.

Nevertheless, Braddock's efforts left two enduring legacies. One was the road, which came to be called Braddock's Road. This was the basis for the first federally funded highway, the National Road, begun in 1811. Much of the National Road was later incorporated into Route 40. Traffic along this highway contributed significantly to the development of the northern part of Garrett County, especially in the Grantsville area. Today, stone markers and historic plaques along the road identify significant spots such as the campsites used by Braddock's army.

The other important result of the French and Indian War was that it led to a broader struggle in Europe, the Seven Years' War. When the conflict

ended in 1763, the English emerged as the winners. The king of England proclaimed that there would be no English settlement west of the Appalachians, but his order was largely ignored. Settlers poured into the mountains and many continued westward.

In August 1764, John Friend, with his brother and his young son, walked from his Virginia plantation over the Eastern Continental Divide of Western Maryland. His Virginia farm having been destroyed by floods, he was looking for a more promising place to live. When he encountered a friendly group of Native Americans, he stayed several days, watched their celebration of the corn harvest, and

obtained their agreement that he could settle in the fertile land along the Youghiogheny River, giving them the gift of an iron kettle.

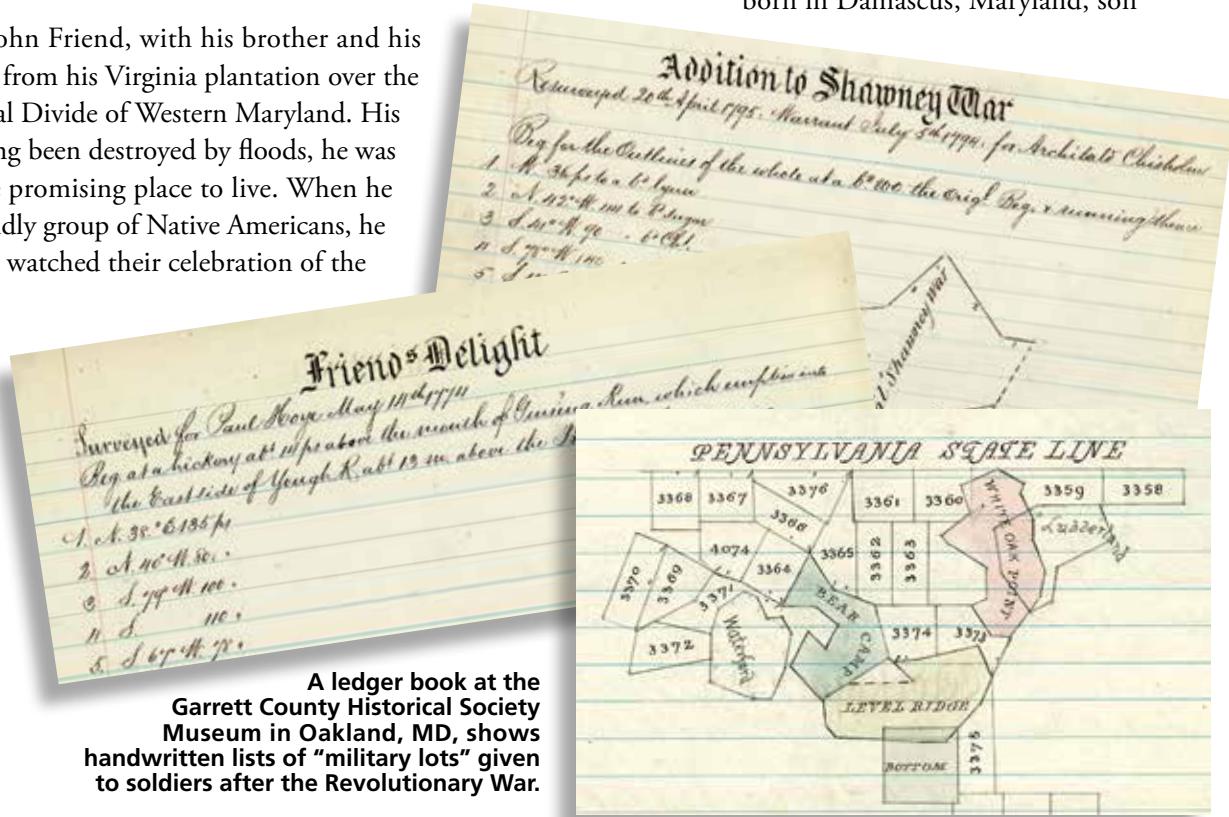
The next year, he returned with his



This likeness of George Washington (by Charles Willson Peale, 1772) depicts the uniform he wore during the French and Indian War. It is the earliest known painting of Washington.

of Maryland, bought a large section of military lots that included Braddock's fifth campsite.

In 1781, Mary McMullen was born in Blooming Rose, near John Friend's property, and Meshach Browning was born in Damascus, Maryland, son





and grandson of British soldiers who had served with Braddock's forces. Mary and Meshach were destined to meet and marry and raise a family of eleven children. Late in life, Meshach recorded his memories with a turkey quill pen. His account is still considered a classic of literature about early frontier living. Meshach and members of his family are buried in the Hoyes Cemetery on Friendsville Road, not far from Route 219. The Oakland Historical Society Museum exhibits many artifacts of his life.

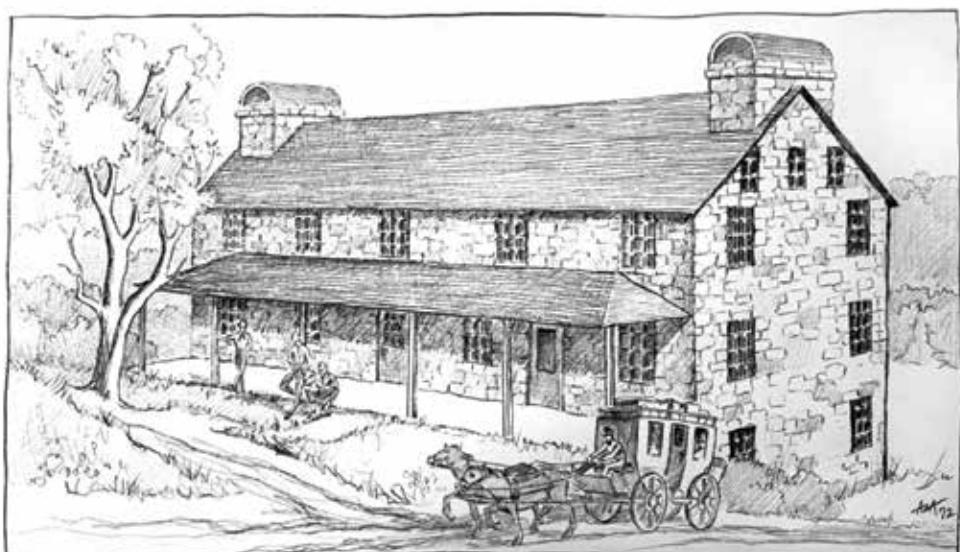
The Brownings at one time lived near the James Drane family. The Dranes, like several others in the area, tried tobacco farming, but the cool climate thwarted them. Unlike the disappointed growers who left, the Dranes stayed and adopted farming practices better suited to local conditions. The Drane house, built in 1797, is the oldest standing structure in Garrett County. It has been restored and can be seen in Accident, near the Zion Cemetery.

There are at least two different accounts of how the town of Accident acquired its unusual name, but the common feature of the stories is that two surveying parties "accidentally" chose and surveyed the same land. Accident is a charming small town with businesses such as an automobile shop that is over a hundred years old and a shop opened in 2002 that manufactures and sells cheese made from locally-sourced milk.

**The Drane house, 1797, is the oldest standing structure in Garrett County. It has been restored and can be seen in Accident, near the Zion Cemetery.** PHOTO BY LANCE BELL

As Braddock Road's traffic increased, and the National Road took shape, inns and taverns were built to serve travelers. The Fuller Baker House, a log cabin constructed around 1815 on the site of Braddock's fifth campsite (on the land purchased by Governor Thomas Johnson after the Revolutionary War) is large enough that it may have been built as a tavern.

A few years later, at Little Meadows, on the site of Braddock's fourth campsite, Jesse Tomlinson built the Stone House Inn, with walls two feet thick and ten fireplaces. The first county post office was located in this building from 1822-1834; the inn was also used as a polling place. Presidents-elect James K. Polk and William Henry



**Tomlinson's Stone House Inn on the "National Pike," east of Grantsville, erected about 1818.** Drawing by Aza Stanton.



#### LEO BEACHY PHOTOGRAPHY

Born in 1874 Leo Beachy was a school teacher and poet who at the age of thirty-one, turned to photography to express his love of the environment and his community.

Fighting through a crippling illness Beachy was compelled to reflect what he saw in the everyday life of his community. Upon his death in 1927 tens of thousands of his glass plate negatives were destroyed with only 2,887 plates known to remain.

The photographs in the collection range from individual studio portraits to beautiful and expansive landscapes. These pictures taken between 1905 and 1927 are an expressive and eloquent window into Garrett County's past and represent the life's work of Leo J. Beachy.

Photos: Overlook area called "The Cove" along US 219 South in Garrett County; the stone bridge at Grantsville, MD, is on the original National Road; a bygone chore of harvesting ice in Grantsville.  
COURTESY GARRETT COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



**The beautiful Cove overlook today hasn't changed much since Leo Beachy's photo from more than 100 years ago. Inset: The Casselman Bridge has been preserved and is now a park open to foot traffic only.**

PHOTOS BY LANCE BELL

Harrison were guests at Tomlinson's Inn. The Stone House continued as an inn through the 1800s. Both the Fuller Baker House and the Stone House Inn, though privately owned, remain along Route 40.

Another National Road business, the Casselman Inn, opened in 1842 and still offers rooms and meals. A short distance away, the Casselman Bridge, built in 1813, was at the time the longest single-span stone arch bridge in the country. It was an important part of the National Road until 1933. Today, visitors can walk across the bridge in its four-acre state park.

The area around the bridge is known as Little Crossings because it is where Washington and Braddock forded the Casselman River. Near the bridge are a 1797 gristmill known as Stanton's Mill; Penn Alps, a restaurant, craft shop, and concert space using a former log stagecoach stop; Spruce Forest Artisan Village, a collection of old and new buildings that serve as studios and shops for traditional artisans; and other small businesses. Penn Alps and Spruce Forest Artisan Village were the brainchild of Alta Schrock (1911-2001). The Little Crossings businesses are well worth visiting.



The National Road made the mountains more accessible and enabled thousands of settlers to head west. Mail delivery expanded to rural areas. The Chesapeake & Ohio Canal expanded on the earlier Potomac Canal built by George Washington's company, but the canal system could not compete with the B&O Railroad. The routing of the railroad through Western Maryland was the single most significant factor in the growth of what is now Garrett County.

After some impressive engineering feats such as the aqueduct required for the 17 Mile Grade from Piedmont, West Virginia, to Altamont, Maryland, the B&O Railroad reached Oakland, Maryland, opening a station there in 1851, and continued expanding to Wheeling, West Virginia. The



trains carried lumber, coal, and other freight, but they were also a way for people to travel long distances in less time than had ever before been possible.

The B&O Railroad played a vital role in the Union cause during the Civil War, continually repairing the lines and keeping supply routes open. When the railroad bridge outside Oakland was burned during a raid, the railroad's president John Work Garrett had the bridge rebuilt within ten days.

Garrett's other major influence on the area was to promote tourism. Under his leadership, the railroad built grand hotels along its lines and advertised the delights of these vacation spots. Other hotels, inns, boarding houses, and restaurants also flourished in the towns where the trains stopped.

In Oakland, the Glades Hotel, thought to have been the first railroad-oriented hotel ever built on a mountaintop, was constructed in the mid-1850s by Perry Lyles. It was purchased in 1859 by John Dailey, future father-in-law of Union General George Crook, and father to a member of McNeill's Raiders who kidnapped General Crook during the Civil War. The Glades Hotel burned in 1874 and was reconstructed near its original location in the same year.

In 1873, the B&O Railroad built an elegant hotel in Deer Park, just a few miles from Oakland. In its heyday, the Deer Park Hotel had 200 rooms, ten cottages, fine dining, tea dances, bowling, billiards, golf, tennis, archery, trap shooting, and two indoor swimming pools under a glass roof. The Deer Park springs supplied water to the hotel, and each winter blocks of ice were packed into the hotel's ice house. John Work Garrett had his own cottage on the grounds.

**Top to bottom:** The Glades Hotel in Oakland was constructed in the mid-1850s and served as the meeting place for county business for several years before the first courthouse was built.

The Deer Park Hotel, built in 1873 by the B&O Railroad, was a favorite resort for wealthy and prominent tourists.

The boardwalk along the railroad in Oakland with the B&O station in the background. Circa 1890s by amateur photographer, W.E. Shirer.

The Loch Lynn Hotel, opened in 1895, offered a ballroom, indoor pool, bowling alleys and a casino.



By 1875, another railroad hotel began construction in Oakland. The Oakland Hotel had a telegraph office with a line connecting it to the Deer Park Hotel. In the late 1890s, the telegraph line was connected to telephones, creating the first telephone line in the county.

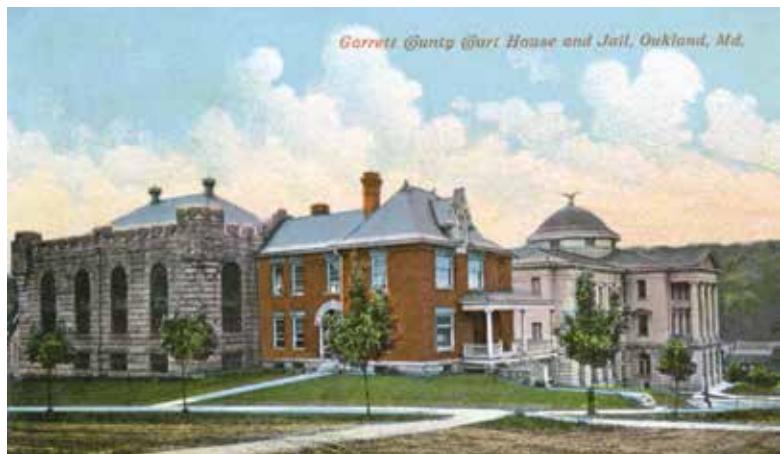
Both the Oakland and the Glades Hotel were on Railroad Street, the busiest street in Oakland, with boardwalks lined with businesses on both sides of the tracks. These hotels were torn down in the early 1900s. Though the boardwalk and the two hotels are no longer there, the same view of the train station is the subject of many photographs.

The Deer Park Hotel did not survive the advent of car travel and the financial crash of 1929 and was razed in 1942, but some of the other vacation homes of the era are still in Deer Park. One such gem is the former Pennington Cottage that is now a small inn and restaurant named the Deer Park Inn.

The original railroad station house in Oakland burned in 1874, and was eventually replaced with a grand new station completed in 1885. The station has been preserved and is now a museum, complete with antique rolling stock out front.

Other communities grew as part of the summer resort trade. The Chautauqua Movement, designed to provide wholesome refreshment for mind and body, inspired the creation of Mountain Lake Park. Today, many of Mountain Lake Park's Victorian summer cottages are being maintained as permanent homes, and Chautauqua summer activities continue to be held.

Prominent visitors to Garrett County during this era include President Cleveland and his bride, who honeymooned in a cottage on the grounds of



**Top Left:** Drawing of first Courthouse, built in 1877. It continued as a courthouse for thirty years and then was used for other purposes.

**Top Right:** The 1907 Courthouse, as seen from Third Street, was constructed just a block away from the original courthouse.

**Middle:** Courthouse with nearby Sheriff's House and Jail.

**Bottom:** Modern view of Oakland with St. Peter's Catholic Church (completed in 1904) and the Courthouse in the background, and the B&O Railroad Station and the Historical Museum in the foreground. The original B&O Station burned in 1874 and in 1885 was replaced with this station, now a museum. The Historical Museum (yellow building) has replicated the Deer Park Hotel's front porch on its side. The original gas house and gazebo from the Deer Park Hotel are in the park space next to the museum. *PHOTO BY LANCE BELL*



**Henry Ford, left, camping with friends (Thomas Edison, President Warren G. Harding, and Harvey Firestone) in Garrett County, MD, 1921.**

the Deer Park Hotel. The Clevelands worshipped in Oakland at what is now St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, often called the Church of the Presidents because Presidents Grant, Garfield, and Harrison also attended services there.

While summer visitors enjoyed vacationing in Garrett County, a growing number of year-round residents found success on farms and in small towns. Coal, lumber, and other industries strengthened due to better access to markets. The disadvantages of remoteness and cold winters had been overcome by much improved transportation and the attractiveness of the cool, refreshing summer weather.

With this increased population and prosperity, momentum grew to break away from Allegany County, which had encompassed all of the western part of the state since 1789. Residents felt the revenue generated in their area benefited Cumberland and other parts of Allegany County, and they found it inconvenient to travel to Cumberland to transact government business. This part of the state also met the requirements the state had set for a new county: an area of at least four hundred square miles and a population of ten thousand or more.

In response to the growing demand to form a new county, the Maryland General Assembly set a referendum for November 4, 1872, and citizens voted to create a new county, narrowly choosing Oakland as the county seat. On December 4, 1872, Garrett County officially became the final county in Maryland. The name Garrett was chosen to recognize John Work Garrett's significant contribution to the region.

Garrett County used the Glades Hotel for court proceedings and other meetings (with a brief interruption when the hotel burned down and had to be rebuilt) until a courthouse was constructed in 1877 on the corner of 4th and Green Streets.

Design and construction of the modest new courthouse proceeded quickly despite a few problems. The *Republican* newspaper reported one incident that could have been tragic. Three officials went to test newly-installed vault doors in the courthouse under construction. Two boys, 4 and 6, sons of one of the men, went along to watch. When pulled open, one of the seven-foot-tall, 1450-pound doors fell toward the children. Fortunately, the three men redirected the massive door as it fell so that the children were unhurt, and

the men received only minor injuries themselves. A later article noted that because of the B&O Railroad strike, no trains had run for over a week and the town was growing short on flour and sugar. Furthermore, "the workmen on the courthouse are idle" due to running out of materials such as coal to fire the brick kiln. Work resumed, and the building was finished by fall. The final accounting, published in November 1877, showed that the net proceeds from the bonds and the expenditures on the courthouse were exactly the same: \$14,275. The first courthouse remained in place for thirty years. Then it continued to be used for different purposes, including schools and board of education offices, before it was torn down. A church now occupies the site. A second, much grander courthouse was built in 1907, just a block away from the first courthouse. An addition in 1977 was constructed for additional office space. This has obscured the view from the street, but the original courthouse remains in use.

During the transition from the 1800s to the 1900s, more plentiful print and media sources record the county's development. The Historical Society Museum in Oakland has recently received glass plate negatives from an amateur photographer, W.E. Shirer, who took pictures primarily in Oakland in the 1890s. Leo Beachy, a school teacher from Grantsville, documented the early part of the 1900s in the northern end of the county with his skillful photography. Though many of his glass plate negatives were discarded after his death, the hundreds remaining give us a wonderful window into the era in which he lived. A museum in Grantsville exhibits his work.

Tourism by train gave way to vacation travel by car. One of the men who made this possible, Henry Ford, enjoyed road trips with friends. In 1921, Ford drove through Garrett County with Thomas Edison and Harvey

Firestone. The party, who called themselves the Vagabonds, lunched along a creek in Deer Park and then camped next to the highest waterfalls in Maryland, Muddy Creek Falls.

This property is now Swallow Falls State Park, named for one of the other two waterfalls within the park. A hundred years later, this is still a popular place for day-trippers and campers. Visits by travelers such as the Vagabonds were factors in the development of the park system. Today there are ten state parks in Garrett County.

In 1925, another significant influence on modern Garrett County took place. The Youghiogheny Hydro Electric Company decided to create power from damming the water of Deep Creek, a tributary of the Youghiogheny River. The resulting Deep Creek Lake, with 65 miles of shoreline and covering 3900 acres, is the largest freshwater lake in Maryland. The lake is celebrating its 97th anniversary with special events June 2-5, 2022. Deep Creek Lake quickly drew summer visitors, some of them quite famous. Albert Einstein spent two weeks at the lake in September 1946. Betty O'Brien Mattingly recalls meeting him that fall while on lunch break from Oakland High School, but Einstein's visit was not known to the public for several decades. Garrett Countians also respected the privacy of another renowned visitor when Jonas Salk and his family spent summers at a lakefront cottage.

The Heise family and others sought to increase year-round tourism by opening the Wisp Ski Resort and promoting winter sports. Their hopes were realized as the mountaintop became a four season vacation destination.

Many artists have reflected Garrett County in their work. The hymn "There is Power in the Blood" was *continued on page 58*

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## Garrett County Celebrates...

*continued from page 17*

written by Lewis Edgar Jones when he attended a camp meeting in Mountain Lake Park. The drawings and paintings of Aza Stanton (1923-1981) earned him the title of "Garrett County's Artist in Residence," and are still in demand more than forty years after his death. *Once Upon a Mountain-top: The Improbable History of Mt. Lake Park, MD* (1987) by Mary I. Love, and the quartet of books featuring 12-year-old Emma Graham by Martha Grimes reveal insights into summers in Mountain Lake Park. James Rada, Jr., Lauren Carr, Ellen Callahan, Mary K. Tilghman, and Roger Alan Skipper are contemporary writers of books featuring local settings or stories.

Garrett College, established in 1966 in McHenry, offers many programs, including one that is particularly suited to the area—adventure sports management. Today the school has three outreach centers, a state of the arts STEM teaching center, and the Community Aquatic and Recreation Complex. A new performing arts center will be opening late summer of 2022.

In some ways, Garrett County has changed dramatically since its inception in 1872, but in other ways, it remains much the same. It is still possible to hike to Hoye Crest, the highest point in Maryland, and to visit the Cranesville Swamp, one of the southern-most boreal bogs in the country. Travelers on many county roads are tracing the ancient Native American trails. Winters are often snowy, summer weather is pleasant, the growing season is short, the scenery is beautiful, and the people tend to be rugged individuals with strong community spirit. As John Work Garrett recognized long ago, this corner of the world is a very special place.



An advertisement for "The Deep Creek Experience". It features a waterfall in the background, a sign that reads "The Deep Creek Experience", and a person kayaking on a lake. The text "EXPLORE THE GREAT OUTDOORS" is on the right. The Maryland Garrett County logo is in the bottom left, and the phone number "888.387.5237" and website "visitdeepcreek.com" are in the bottom right.

An advertisement for Springs, Pennsylvania. It features a young girl holding a pretzel in front of a table full of food, with a windmill in the background. Below this are two smaller images: one of a person at a piano and another of people dancing. The text "Visit Springs, Pennsylvania" is at the top, followed by details about the Farmers' Market, Folk Festival, and Museum. It also mentions the Somerset Co. Tourism Grant Program and provides contact information: "(814) 442-4594 • springspa.org 1711 Springs Road, Springs, PA 15562".

An advertisement for Schoolhouse Earth. It shows a display of various items for sale, including lamps, ceramics, and books, set against a backdrop of a lake and mountains. The text "Unique Gifts \* Gourmet Foods \* Fine Jewelry \* Garden Accents \* Home Decor \* Children's Gifts \* Christmas \* Free Petting Zoo!" is displayed. The "Schoolhouse Earth" logo is in the bottom left, and the text "Open Daily 10am-6pm" and "1224 Friendsville Rd Friendsville, MD 21531" is in the bottom right, along with the phone number "301-746-8603" and website "www.schoolhouseearth.com".