

# For The Love of Place

WILLIAMSPORT, MARYLAND

Written by: **Sara Mullins**

Photography provided by: **Elmwood Farm**



Elmwood Farm, a bed and breakfast located just outside the Western Maryland town of Williamsport, invites guests to unwind and enjoy its peaceful rural setting and unique amenities. The Farm sits alongside Kendle Road as it passes by working farms, pastures and woodlots, yet it is easily accessible from Interstates 81 and 70. Guests will find a wide choice of activities and attractions nearby, ranging from athletic to restful, whether visiting on business or pleasure – or a combination of both.

Built in 1855 by carpenter John Corby for a wealthy C&O Canal Merchant, John R. Dall, Elmwood Farm has achieved national recognition in the United States as a significant historic site in the heart of Civil War History.

In 2012 the National Park Service included the Elmwood Farmstead in the National Register of Historic Places, stating, “Elmwood Farmstead retains a high level of integrity of location, setting, materials, design, workmanship, feeling and association... The farmstead includes ten contributing buildings and structures, dominated by the house, a third quarter of the nineteenth century frame barn which replaced the original building, a frame milking barn, a hog barn, a ca. 1960 milking parlor, a silo, and a concrete block garage. A smokehouse and milk house, along with stone and wood fences, complete the scene.”

Since John M. Kendle purchased Elmwood Farm in 1909, it has remained in the Kendle family for more than 100 years. Innkeepers Selena and Lettie Wilkes are both 5<sup>th</sup>-generation descendants, committed to maintaining the family’s stewardship of the farm as an historic treasure.

Central to the 6-acre Elmwood farmstead is its imposing Greek Revival style brick farmhouse. With some assistance

from subcontractors, Selena undertook most of the work herself to restore the farmhouse to its original character, while adding modern amenities. Elmwood Farm Bed and Breakfast began welcoming guests in 2014. Today its historic farmhouse, spacious gardens, lawns, historic red barn, outbuildings and countryside mountain views provide a bucolic and memorable setting for weddings, festivities, fundraisers and other special events.

Selena and Lettie bring diverse backgrounds to their Elmwood Farm enterprises. Selena, a retired LPGA (Ladies Professional Golf Association) Futures Tour Golfer, learned about various aspects of the hospitality industry as a frequent traveler. She gained knowledge and experience in entrepreneurship, agritourism, historic preservation and interior design through her work with the restoration of Elmwood Farm. Lettie contributes experience and expertise in marketing, organizing and executing ideas for weddings and special events. Both women excelled as successful scholar collegiate athletes. Selena and Lettie are active in their local community and church, and have completed training as Certified Tourism Ambassadors, a professional hospitality training and certification program.

“Our goal is to make Elmwood Farm a true destination for visitors,” Lettie says. “We want our guests to have the whole farm experience, where they can make themselves at home,” Lettie says. “It can be peaceful or adventurous, depending on personality.” At Elmwood Farm, visitors can interact with their “Girls” – a bevy of 16 Alpacas that produce prized alpaca fiber. Several of their Alpacas enjoy participating in weddings.



**Top: Sunset on the 6-acre Elmwood Farm B&B.**  
**Above left: The scenic farm is a fabulous wedding venue.**  
**Above right: One of the 16 friendly Alpacas at the farm.**  
**A scrumptious country breakfast with a rotating menu is served daily at the B&B.**

The farmhouse’s five guestrooms feature names and décor evocative of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. All are furnished with queen-size beds, and each has a private bathroom with shower or bathtub. Cozy bathrobes are also provided. In a nod to the era when the house was built, all but one are referred to as “Quarters.” “Dall Quarter,” “Ripple Quarter,” “Lemen Quarter,” and “Kendle Quarter” bear the names of Elmwood’s former proprietors. The Innkeepers’ description of the handicap-accessible and pet-friendly “Soldier’s Retreat” suggests that this room would have been a comfortable secret hideaway for General Lee as he fled from Union forces.

Every morning, a scrumptious country breakfast is served downstairs in the Dining Room. While every day’s menu

is different, the feast always begins with a first course of fresh, seasonal fruit served with homemade ginger syrup. Favorites include Maryland Crab Eggs Benedict, Bake House Homemade Crepes, Waffles, Cheery Sun Dried Egg Frittata, plus other delights. The Innkeepers will accommodate special requests to meet any dietary needs.

Guests have access to several Common Areas at Elmwood Farm. The Grand Parlor and Living Room offers space to retreat into the pages of a book, celebrate a special event, or just hang out and watch TV. The General's Tavern in the lower basement features a fireplace, recliners, large table, flat screen TV and, of course, a pool table and bar.

The Western Maryland area surrounding the Farm is steeped in history. Options for day trips range from hiking to golfing to spelunking to exploring Civil War battlefields or neighboring towns. Bicycling is popular and convenient. The farm sits approximately 2.5 miles from Mile Marker 99.4 on the C&O Canal Towpath in Williamsport. Selena and Lettie offer convenient bike storage and shuttle service to cyclists. They'll even help you clean your bike if you get stuck in the mud during your cycling adventure. For a more relaxing option, guests can take the Ice Cream, Wine and Brewery Trails to enjoy a scenic drive along country roads and through small towns, with stops to enjoy. Given Elmwood Farm's relative proximity to urban centers, National Parks consisting of Antietam Battlefield and the C&O Canal National Park along with MD State Parks, historic sites and shopping opportunities, guests have a wide range of options from which to choose, in all seasons.

Elmwood Farm sells several handcrafted items in its gift shop. Elmwood Farm's Soapworks, branded as "natural and organic handcrafted soap art," include a variety of scented bars and lip balms. Also available are Elmwood Farm pottery mugs and crocks and apparel made from the farm's Alpaca wool. Plans are underway for the 2024 opening of a distillery to be named "Slick and Letts Distillery at Elmwood Farm."



PHOTO BY LANCE BELL



PHOTO BY MIKE CALHOUN

**Some area attractions include the C&O Canal National Historical Park at the Cushwa Basin in Williamsport, Wine and Brewery Trails, and biking along the C&O Canal. Joe Vargo and Andrew Fortune are riding the towpath to Washington, DC.**

The Wilkes sisters' vision of creating a destination goes beyond Elmwood Farm. In 2019, Selena and Lettie joined three other women entrepreneurs to form the Port 44 partnership, a real estate development group focused on revitalizing and transforming the town of Williamsport. Selena, founder and chief executive officer, oversees all aspects of Port 44's real estate development group. She is also a motivational speaker. Lettie, co-founder of Port 44, serves as its chief marketing and communications officer. She is a Certified Tourism Ambassador for Washington County, MD. Jesse Burgoon specializes in residential leasing and property management in addition to owning Elmwood Mortgage LLC. Susie Miller specializes in commercial leasing and acquisitions while serving real estate clients as owner of the Miller Group of Keller Williams Premier Realty. Dr. Brenda Paul focuses on the financial side of



The Port 44 partnership is focused on revitalizing and transforming the town of Williamsport, Maryland. *Left to right:* Dr. Brenda Paul, Jesse Burgoon, Susie Miller, Lettie Wilkes, and Selena Wilkes. Visit [Port44.com](http://Port44.com)

real estate development for Port 44 while maintaining a practice at River City Dental.

As stated on Port 44's website, the partnership seeks to "repurpose, revitalize and maintain quality properties in our community." These include both commercial and residential properties centrally located downtown on Conococheague and Salisbury Streets.

"All five members are businesswomen who were either born and raised in Williamsport or have run their businesses in Williamsport for some time," Lettie says. Each member brings a wealth of experience to Port 44, and all hold key roles within the team. The five women derived the Port 44 name from two names with local significance: WilliamsPORT and Lockhouse 44, located in Williamsport on the C&O Canal. The women of Port 44 envision Williamsport as a destination, given its proximity to Interstates 81 and 70, and its location at the midpoint of the C&O Canal.

"The area has dealt with a depressed economy for several decades," Selena says. "We're revitalizing our community, one historical building at a time. The exterior façade is important. We're reconstructing these buildings from the inside out to feature elements that show the history reflecting the years 1787 through the mid-1800s.

"We want to help our hometown make a comeback by providing services the town needs, and by revitalizing



current buildings and telling their stories," she adds. Their committed tenants include Mile Marker 99 Bike Shop, PowerHouse Health Hub, Sweet Notes Bakery, Andra Wealth Management, Kuczynski and Kuczynski Law Firm and Meadow Haus, an interior design and home goods store. Currently open are the Lotus Moon Café and the Still Smokin' BBQ eateries. Other local businesses in the works with Port 44 include Slackwater Art Gallery, a fine dining restaurant with a rooftop bar, fresh market grocery, a new home for the local food bank, a candy store, a brewery, a boutique, lodging and a general store.

"It's very rewarding for us, seeing the transformation of every building, engaging in a community project and transforming Williamsport into a quaint 'walking town,'" Selena says. "We're crossing the turn to be halfway done. There are challenges, but they make you grow. It's a beautiful spot."