

Photography by **Lance C. Bell**

CanalFest/RailFest 2008



On October 10, 1850, after 22 years of back breaking labor, the city of Cumberland, Maryland celebrated the

opening of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. As the Independent Blues Band played, five canal boats loaded with western Maryland coal began the first complete run from Cumberland to Georgetown. It took 35,000 laborers, mostly Irish and western European immigrants to build the "Grand Old Ditch" connecting Georgetown to Cumberland, 184.5 miles of ditch and towpath. They built 74 locks, 7 dams, 11 aqueducts and the Paw Paw tunnel, measuring 3,118 feet. It was hard, back breaking work.

Canal boaters and their families lived and worked on their canal boats. It took two weeks to complete a round trip from Cumberland to Georgetown, working 18 hours a day, seven days a week. Canal boaters cleared about \$15 - \$20 per trip.

In the meantime, the nation's first railroad, the Baltimore & Ohio, steamed into Cumberland in 1842. The construction of the rails for the B&O Railroad (east-west



route) and the C&O Canal began the same day. The B&O reached Cumberland eight years before the canal was finished. Eventually rail killed commerce on the C&O Canal.

Today, the C&O Canal is the nation's only linear national park, still running from Georgetown to Cumberland. It has become a favorite for hikers and bikers, many of whom travel the entire 184.5 miles. Canal Place, located at the base of the C&O Canal in Cumberland is right beside the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad. No longer locked in a train vs. canal battle of supremacy, the city of Cumberland celebrates its transportation heritage with the CanalFest/RailFest, **Saturday, July 12, 2008**. The festival kicks off at the Western Maryland Scenic Railway, home to Canal Place, with the 8th annual train pull benefitting Special Olympics. Teams of 20 compete for the chance to break the speed record of pulling Western Maryland Scenic Railroad's 1918 Baldwin steam engine, weighing in at 250 tons. The Train Pull is sponsored by the Allegany County Sheriff's Office and was the brain child of Sheriff David Goad. Goad and the Sheriff's Office, along with the Allegany County Special Olympics Committee, have been the driving force behind this fun, fundraiser since its beginning in 2001. Organizations and individuals interested in participating, entering a team, or sponsoring opportunities

should contact Marilyn McKenzie at 301-724-1559. Pull registration begins at 8 a.m. and pulling starts at 9 a.m.

Later in the day passengers can take a nostalgic ride on the train or wait for the evening ride to Frostburg and back, complete with dancing and refreshment.

Highlights of the festival include the dedication of a Celtic Cross monument honoring the Irish immigrants who labored to build the canal, a model railroad exhibit, exhibits by local artisans and craftspeople invited by the Allegany Arts Council, tours on the canal boat replica, an antique car show, local food vendors and the National Park Service mule. Music at the Canal Place amphitheatre will include The Shanty Irish and the 257th Army Band, also known as "The Band of the Nation's Capital." A fireworks extravaganza from Zambelli Fireworks Internationale will light up the skies during the 257th Army Band finale.

While most of the festival's activities are scheduled for Saturday, many of the activities will be offered Friday - Sunday, including Shanty Town, special WMSR train excursions, shopping in downtown Cumberland and Shops at Canal Place, exhibits at several historical/transportation museums.

For a complete CanalFest/RailFest schedule or more information, visit www.canalplace.org or call 301-724-3655.



The "Train Pull", a main event of the CanalFest/RailFest, features teams of 20 competing for the best time pulling the 250 ton 1918 Baldwin steam engine. This photo is from last year's pull.

Volunteer Center of Allegany County, Inc. 6th Annual Wills Creek Duck Derby

Once again this year the waters of Wills Creek will be flowing with a swarm of little ducks. It's time for The Volunteer Center of Allegany County, Inc. 6th Annual Wills Creek Duck Derby. The little duckies will start their path down Wills Creek from the Market Street Bridge at 2:00 p.m., Sunday, July the 13th, making their way down to the finish line at the Baltimore Street Bridge.

You can purchase tickets from the Volunteer Center by calling Marilyn at 301-724-1559 or e-mail her at mmckenzie@allconet.org. to get info on other locations for tickets.

Up to 3,000 ducks will be released into Wills Creek from the Market Street Bridge. The first duck to cross the finish line at the Baltimore Street bridge will win the grand prize of \$1,000. There will be prizes for the First, Second, Third and Fourth runners up, as well as an additional prize for the Unlucky duck that places last.

Duck tickets will be sold until July 1st. Each duck sells for \$5.00, which means for every duck that an organization sells, they keep \$2.50. All proceeds will help support the Volunteer Center of Allegany County Inc. to promote the volunteer needs in the community, volunteer recruitment, program development, after school programs, tutoring and mentoring, emergency preparedness, RSVP-Retired & Senior Volunteer Programs, emergency food shelter programs, Meals on Wheels, and many others.

