

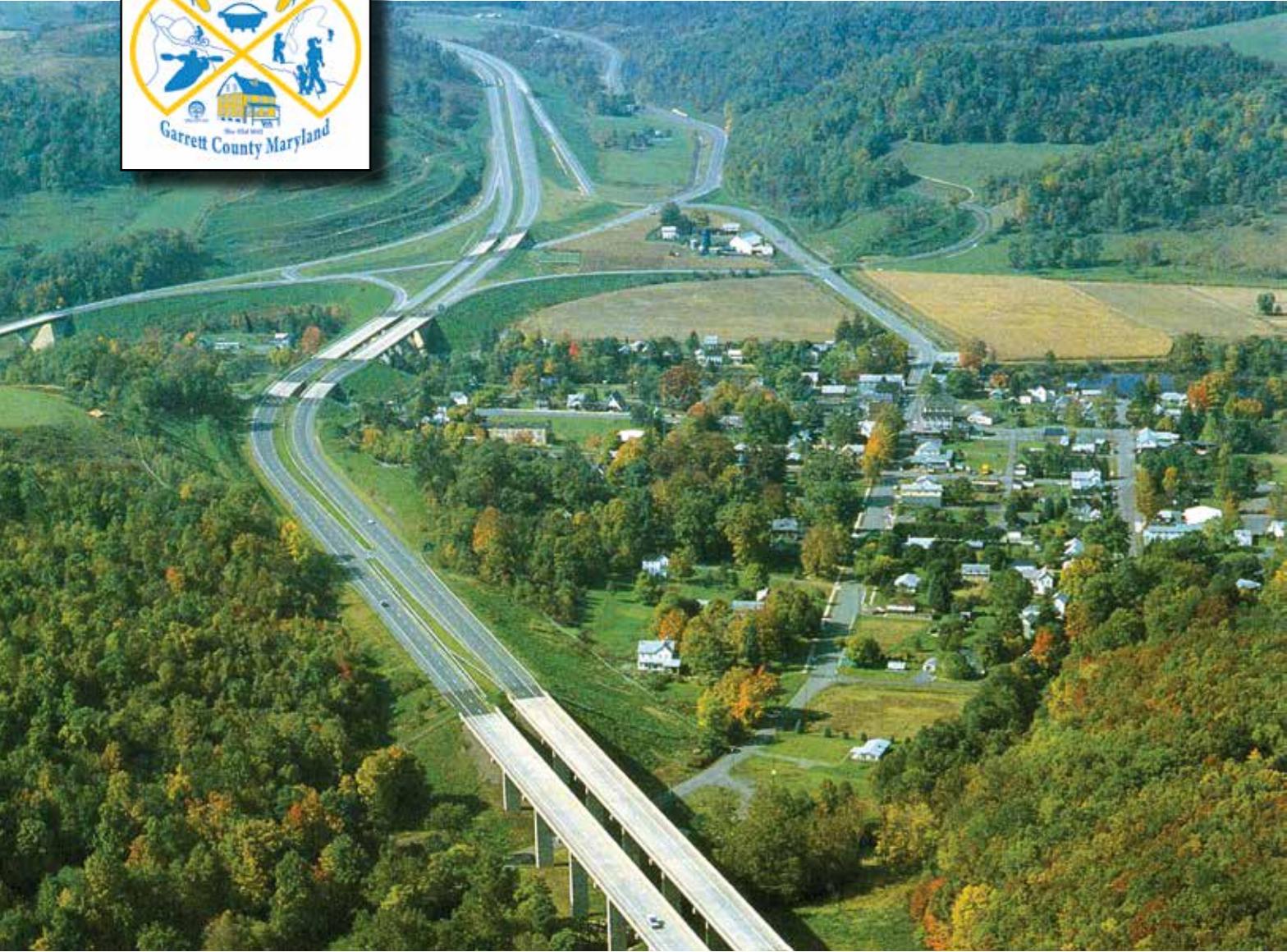
Friendsville, Maryland

Celebrating the Past, Embracing the Future



Written by: **Dan Whetzel**

Old photos courtesy of the Friend Family Association of America



Interstate 68 looking west with the town of Friendsville on the north side.

Garrett County's past is associated with the descendants of the John Lewis Friend family. The family was the first of European descent to locate along the Youghiogheny River and their settlement marks the beginning of commercial development in lands originally inhabited by Native Americans.

John Friend was born in Delaware County Pennsylvania in 1732. He later moved from Pennsylvania and settled in

Virginia on land adjacent to the Potomac River near the present day village of Oldtown, Maryland. According to oral tradition, flooding from the Potomac River destroyed his lands, thereby causing him to explore new territory. In 1764, Mr. Friend, his son, and brother departed Virginia following trader and animal trails until they reached John's uncle at Turkeyfoot, today known as Confluence. Later they resumed traveling until encountering a village along

the Youghiogheny River inhabited by Shawnees, an Eastern Woodland tribe. Reportedly, the initial meeting with the Native Americans proved to be congenial and they engaged in commerce. Mr. Friend requested permission to occupy the land and traded implements for a few dwellings. The travelers soon returned to Virginia with a promise to come back the following year.

John Friend subsequently sold the Virginia property, loaded belongings on packhorses, and gathered livestock for the trek to Fort Cumberland, a British outpost located at the confluence of Will's Creek and the Potomac River at present day Cumberland. After arriving at Fort Cumberland in 1765, the family traveled west on Braddock's Road and then to Bear Camp Trail and the Youghiogheny River. The Friend family's tract, later called "Friends Fortune," marked the beginning of Friendsville. John Friend and wife, the former Karrenhappuck Hyatt, became parents to seven children.

Friend's legal basis for settling in the area was not formally secured for several years because Maryland's Proprietor and the Royal Proclamation of 1763 forbid it. As a condition of ending the French and Indian War, the British government sought to prohibit its subjects from migrating and settling in western lands. Furthermore, the agreement between John Friend and the Shawnees was not valid according to proprietary or king's law.

Lord Baltimore's opening of lands for settlement in 1774 did not cause Mr. Friend to formally acquire a legal title. Not until the awarding of two military lots for his service in the Revolutionary War did a formal document exist. Francis Deakin's survey of military lots west of Fort Cumberland recorded in 1787 included John Friend's property.

In 1808, John Friend Sr. deeded property in Sang Run to his son John Jr., thereby providing the last official record of the Garrett County's pioneer. Another son, Gabriel, later became Postmaster of Friends, later called Friendsville.

The Friend's settlement attracted additional settlers as hardy individuals established farms in the area. Subsistence farming along the Youghiogheny was soon augmented by industrial development because natural resources provided incentives for entrepreneurs to establish themselves in the county.

The first reported Industrial development in what is today Garrett County occurred first at Friendsville in 1802 when Oliphant of Uniontown, Pennsylvania built an iron furnace.

A *Glades Star* account of the first iron maker is brief and it may be concluded the business was short lived because a second enterprise owned by Johnnie Brobst was operating by the early 1820s. A third iron business, called The Allegheny Iron Company, incorporated in 1828 and located in the same area. Allegheny Iron Company, the only iron maker in Garrett County, was located on the left side of Bear Creek, one mile above Friendsville, and consisted of a charcoal furnace and two forges. The company's name was changed a year later to Youghiogheny Iron Works. Instruments, kettles, and tools were its primary products that required the labor of one hundred workers who lodged in company housing. The furnace and auxiliary services became a noteworthy industrial site in far western Maryland.

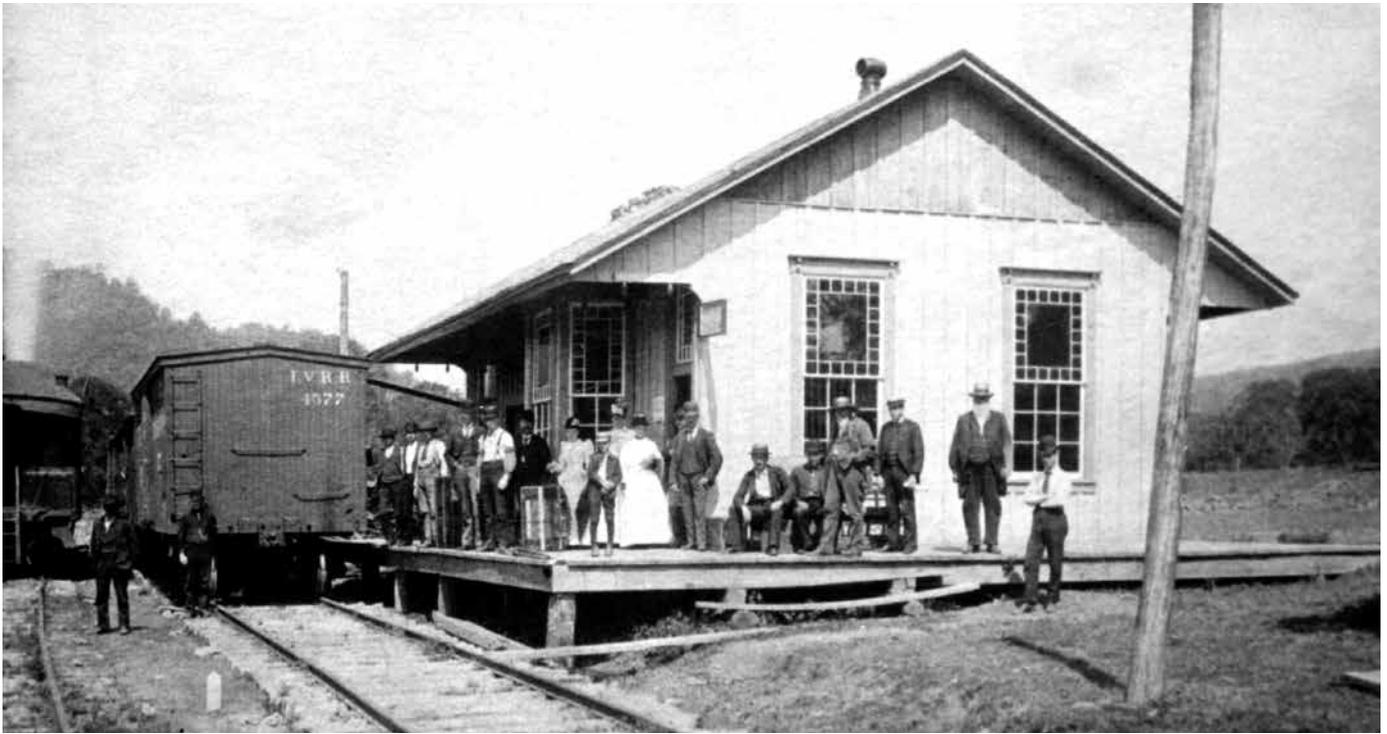
The iron works created the need for additional goods and services for employees and others in the area. A grist mill, saw mill, company store, blacksmith shop, wagon maker shop, corn house, smoke house, Post Office (established in 1830), and twelve dwellings occupied the area around the furnace, thereby marking the beginning of Friendsville as a village.

Transportation difficulties created a financial hardship for the company because the iron had to be carried by wagons to the National Highway before making its way to Baltimore. Less expensive sources of pig iron became available to buyers causing the Garrett County operation to enter bankruptcy.

Historical accounts of the pig iron operations are brief and the sites deserve additional archaeological attention. A Maryland Historical Trust survey conducted in the 1980s



Remains of one of the Friendsville iron furnaces.



Friendsville B&O Railroad Station.

documented the location of the furnace but provided only basic conclusions including, “only traces of the furnace are existent.”

A feature of the old furnace works resurfaced in 1895 when electricity came to Friendsville. A mill race that carried water from the Youghioghney River to the forges’ hammers was repaired and used by Leslie Friend who built a small power plant near the site. The privately owned company provided electricity to residents and businesses in Friendsville for a number of years.

The economy of the fledgling settlement began to diversify during the mid nineteenth century from pig iron production to farming, milling operations, and commercial trade. A number of flour and grist mill owners diverted the Youghioghney River to power their equipment.

According to a report by the Maryland Historical Trust, there were a number of goods, services and shops available in Friendsville during the late nineteenth century including those of “Wheelwrights, carpenters, founderers, bridge builders, tanners, blacksmiths, and others.” The report also noted that “Some of the early commercial buildings in Friendsville, especially on Morris Avenue and Water Street, date from this period of high commercial activity.”

Friendsville’s commercial and industrial development accelerated when the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad decided to build a branch line that would serve timbering operations

in the area, particularly at Manor Land, a settlement located two miles south of Friendsville. Although the saw mill machinery was initially centered in Manor Land, Friendsville was affected by the timber boom of the 1880s because the railroad would pass through the town. Support services for locomotives and timber operations promised to increase economic activity in the town and surrounding areas.

In February 1889, the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad incorporated the State Line and Oakland Railroad in Maryland and two months later a similar process was conducted in the state of Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania incorporation, however, produced a different name—the Confluence and State Line Railroad. Merger of the two parent companies resulted in the Confluence and Oakland Railroad, commonly called the C&O. Although the railroad’s name included the town of Oakland, the line never extended that far. The B&O quickly purchased the railroad’s stock and operated it as a subdivision, referred to as the Kendall Branch. The B&O/C&O Railroad combination brought efficient transportation to Friendsville for the first time and opened the town to eastern markets.

The new railroad extended south from the B&O mainline at Confluence, Pennsylvania to Friendsville, Maryland and was ready for service by November 1889. Italian laborers built the first leg of the line while local workers were hired near Friendsville. Completion of the railroad

was cause for a grand celebration in Friendsville when speeches and contests marked the event.

Extension of the line from Friendsville to Manor Land took several months longer. A major supporter of the railroad was the Manor Land Company, property owner that stood to benefit from increased access to metropolitan centers. Manor Land later became known as Krug, and then, Kendall before World War I. Both towns enjoyed a period of rapid commercial expansion, as railroading and timbering operations combined to create boom town conditions.

Friendsville hosted a water tank and depot to serve the steam locomotives that maintained a regular schedule for public passenger service between Somerfield and Kendall. By 1920, additional stops at Watson and Selbysport were added. The train's one hour layover in Friendsville provided for express and mail service, baggage transfers, and passengers boarding. Passengers and crews were also afforded time to eat during the layover. Another indication of Friendsville's growing importance to the railroad was the hiring of Dr. A.J. Mason, a surgeon, who maintained an office in town. Dr. Mason treated employees and passengers of the C&O Railroad.

Friendsville immediately benefitted from rail service when a stove and heading mill opened in 1890 under the direction of A. Knabb and Company. Mr. Knabb's business affiliations linked him to Oil City and Warren Pennsylvania before he established a residence and office in Friendsville. High quality pine timber was sought by Mr. Knabb for the production of wooden oil barrels, a big business before the railroad's development of metal tank cars. Production moved from the town to Kendall in 1891 where the business prospered; The *Connellsville Courier* reported in 1904, "It only takes 180 seconds to finish a barrel."

Another Pennsylvania native interested in Garrett County timberlands was John W. McCullough who arrived in Friendsville in the early 1890s. Mr. McCullough

and two partners, John W. Clark and Harry E. Clark from Indiana County, Pennsylvania, purchased land along Bear Creek and set up a sawmill east of Friendsville. A fire destroyed the mill but its memory survives to this day through the naming of Burnt Mill Road. A second mill was constructed and serviced by a wooden rail tram railroad. Mr. McCullough later replaced the wooden rails with steel ones that supported a small steam locomotive, thereby making a connection with the C&O Railroad at Friendsville.

Timberlands continued to provide incentives for McCullough and partners who decided to improve upon the original narrow gauge line and extend operations to an area between Negro and Meadow Mountains. In 1899, a new 36 inch narrow gauge line, called the Bear Creek Railroad, started at Friendsville and moved along Bear Creek in an easterly direction before climbing to the west slope of Negro Mountain, a rise of nearly 400 feet and distance of approximately 14 miles. Logging spurs added another 11 miles of track that would eventually serve four lumber companies in rugged terrain.

The Bear Creek Railroad worked four locomotives, No. 1 "Dinky" (small steam engine); No. 2, a 30 ton Climax locomotive; Number 3, a 20 ton Climax locomotive; and Number 4, a 30 ton Climax. The amount of work carried out by the engines was impressive. In 1900, a letter from Bear Creek Railroad officials to the Climax Manufacturing Company provided insight into the daily work routine. "We thought you might be interested to know that our 30 ton Climax locomotive has been handling an average load of 15 cars for a round trip, taking out empties and bringing in loads for our sawmill to the top of the mountain, a distance



B&O Railroad bridge coming into Friendsville.



The Bear Creek Lumber Company, circa 1890.

of 15 miles; it makes this trip twice daily.” Similar workloads were described for the other three locomotives used by the railroad.

A second account of the Bear Creek Railroad was provided in 1970 by Totten Kimmel, resident of Mountain Lake Park; his story later appeared in the *Glades Star*. Mr. Kimmel noted “The many cars used by the company...could carry from 4 to 6 cords of pulpwood per car. We need to remember that this was a narrow gauge facility and the longest railroad of its kind in the county.” Mr. Kimmel further noted that “hundreds of men were employed by the company” and were proud of their work.

The Meadow Mountain Lumber Company (chartered in 1899) built a band mill at Friendsville to process the softwoods that were unloaded from Bear Creek Railroad cars and floated in a pond prior to being processed. The Bear Creek Lumber Company, built on McCullough’s second mill site at Jenkins Flat, used a circular saw for cutting hardwoods.

A story about the Meadow Mountain Lumber Company appearing in the *Cumberland Alleghanian* on April 12, 1900 summarized the capabilities of the railroad and mills. “The Bear Creek Lumber Company has completed the narrow gauge railroad to a large tract of timber called ‘The Right of Man,’ a distance of about 15 miles and is taking the timber to the mammoth sawmill plant at Friendsville. The mill has been sawing from thirty to fifty thousand feet a day and is not yet running to its full capacity.”

Boom town conditions created the need for financial and retail services. The opening of The First National Bank of Friendsville in the spring of 1902 marked an important commercial milestone; Mr. H.C. McCandish was appointed to head the enterprise. The Garrett County Telephone Company extended service to the town in the same year. A statement from the *Connellsville Courier* in 1904 appraised the community’s prospects, “Friendsville is destined in the near future to become a town of some importance.” As an exclamation point to the town’s progress, Friendsville became incorporated in 1904.

Friendsville’s economic prosperity fostered fraternal, cultural, and social organizations. The most significant fraternal organization during the early twentieth century was the Knights of Pythias. One story demonstrates the influence and financial resources the group enjoyed.

In 1910, veteran soldiers from the Federal Army, Confederate Army, and Spanish American War gathered in Friendsville for a reunion. The Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), a Civil War fraternal organization dedicated to Union soldiers, lacked the financial resources to support the event. According to a (Cumberland) *Evening Times* article, the Knights of Pythias financed the reunion, sparing no expense. This was a considerable achievement considering there were seven thousand veterans in attendance.

Kolb’s Opera House regularly hosted events, including an Old Fiddlers Contest (1904) that drew 30 contestants and a production of “Knights of Athens” (1905) which was supported by a special excursion train from Connellsville, Pennsylvania.

Dances were also reported. One glimpse into the popularity of the activity appeared in an August 1905 issue of the Connellsville newspaper. A group, referred to as members of Camp Bachelor from Connellsville, broke camp and headed for town. “The members were invited to a swell dance on Friday. They (campers) compliment the Friendsville dancers very highly for their graceful dancing and sociability, and hope to have the pleasure sometime again.”

Department stores, hotels, food stores, hardware stores, a furniture store, and other merchandisers provided residents with goods and services typical of a small but growing town.

The good times would not last; Friendsville's prosperity was based on limited resources that began to suffer from depletion within a decade.

Exploitation of raw materials caused rail traffic on the Bear Creek and C&O railroads to decline. The narrow gauge railroad was the first and most adversely affected and ended operations around 1904. Mr. McCullough kept the No. 1 locomotive but sold or leased the other equipment to nearby companies, including the Loch Haven Lumber Company. The Loch Haven apparently entered into an agreement with Bear Creek and Meadow Mountain Lumber Companies to use some of the equipment and track until it, too, closed. In a similar way, both saw mills began to wind down business in 1904.

The C&O continued to run because of freight traffic to Friendsville merchants and the coal trade generated by McCullough's coal mine. Friendsville residents maintained regular freight and passenger service through the C&O/B&O railroads every day except Sunday into the 1930s when the Great Depression slowed business activity.

The Great Depression eventually tightened its grip on the C&O and runs were curtailed to three days per week in 1932 and only twice a week in 1937. With no prospects of better times ahead, the B&O abandoned the C&O in



Maple Street in Friendsville, looking west.

1942. Despite an attempt by the McCullough Coal Company to block the abandonment, a Federal Appeals Court upheld the B&O's decision. The federal government was seeking to construct the Youghiogheny Dam and Lake on C&O right-of-way. Although delayed by World War II, much of the former Confluence and Oakland Railroad property was acquired and then submerged beneath the water of a lake impoundment, thereby permanently ending most of the railroad's five decades of physical presence in Garrett County.

The mountains near Friendsville beckoned coal operators beginning in the early twentieth century and about the time timbering operations were winding down. Large deposits of easily acquired coal were not to be found but the coal field around Friendsville was worth development, approximately 66 square miles. Coal mining activity helped to offset the loss of the timber industry and contributed to the economic well being of the town and railroad industry.

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One of the earliest mines was operated by David Fike and a few employees who transported coal from the site in small cars and to Friendsville in horse drawn wagons. In 1915, the Fike Mine was acquired by the J.W. McCullough Coal Corporation and became the longest operating coal mine at Friendsville.

The McCullough mine closed briefly around 1916 but then began producing enough coal for commercial rail shipments to eastern markets. McCullough's mine became the most significant shipper on the Kendall Branch until 1942 when all work ceased because of the B&O Railroad's decision to abandon the line. The last year of production netted 574,930 tons of coal.

Smaller mines in the immediate vicinity of Friendsville included the Ryland Mine (1927-1935), W.W. Savage (1936-1940), and the Vitez Mine (1954-1954). The Ryland Mine was owned and operated by several individuals over the years, thereby giving the site several names.

World War II's conclusion and the end of large scale coal mining brought an end to Friendsville's industrial days; the town became a residential location. The good news was commutes to four metropolitan areas were relatively short for residents who continued to enjoy the small town atmosphere.

In recent years Friendsville has once again turned to natural resources as a means of reinventing itself. This time around, however, the natural resources are sustainable and managed with the utmost care.

Newspapers regularly reported fishing trips to the Friendsville area in the early twentieth century, so the town's recreational credentials are well established. And while fishing remains one of the popular activities available in the town, many more are now offered including world class rafting and kayaking on the Youghiogheny River and Bear Creek, float trips, biking on the Kendall Trail, and exploration of the Cranesville sub-Arctic Swamp. Recent improvements in parking and river access make the outdoor experiences more enjoyable than in past years and lodging is available to accommodate guests who wish to stay for extended periods of time.

Town projects include repurposing of the former Fox Hardware store that was built in 1885 and became a local landmark. In years past, the 5,000 square foot wooden building hosted the Friendsville Post Office, a tin shop, and a thriving retail business selling paint, lumber and furniture to settlers headed out west via the then-thriving railroad. Some of the original features, including wooden bins for containing nails and hardware, an original bank



Top: Quincy Murphy standing in front of his building on Maple Street. It served as a garage and confection/soda fountain; circa late 1920s.

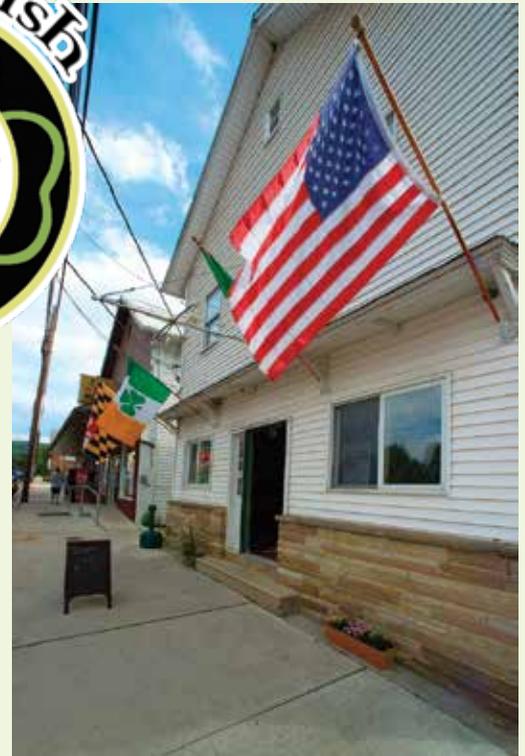
Middle: One of Friendsville town projects includes restoring the former Fox Hardware store.

Bottom: In recent years kayaking and world class rafting have become popular sports on the Youghiogheny River and Bear Creek with access at Friendsville.

wall safe, and the original 20-foot display counter remain in place and will be incorporated into future plans for potential retail and commercial use.

As Friendsville residents celebrate a milestone anniversary in 2015, they once again rely on natural resources and entrepreneurship to lead the way. One resident best stated the town's future, "Friendsville's star is on the rise."

Ken's Irish Pub is an important link between Friendsville's past and current revitalization plans. Originally constructed in 1910 and known as the local Drug Store, the business was part of Friendsville's commercial district when railroad service, coal mining, and timbering kept the town busy. Ownership passed to the "Turkey Bill" and Effie Friend family who maintained it as a commercial venture until Raymond McCullough Sr. converted the building to a general store featuring a small lunch counter. Around 1950, the building became the local tavern known as "Ken's Den," "Ken's Tavern," and simply "Ken's." A single neon "Beer" sign marked the location. Bob Sines acquired ownership in 2005 and renamed the bar "Sugar Shack," a name that remained until a small investor group led by Fred Fox purchased the business. Fred Fox, great-grandson of F.G. Fox, owner of Fox Hardware Store and a well known figure in Friendsville, renamed the bar, "Ken's Irish Pub." Renovations to the business have maintained the historic structure's integrity but also add to the spirit of renewal that has come with Friendsville's anniversary celebration.



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