

Miners Park — Coal Miner Memorial

HONORING WESTERN MARYLAND'S COAL MINING HERITAGE,
FROSTBURG, MARYLAND

Written by: **Dan Whetzel**

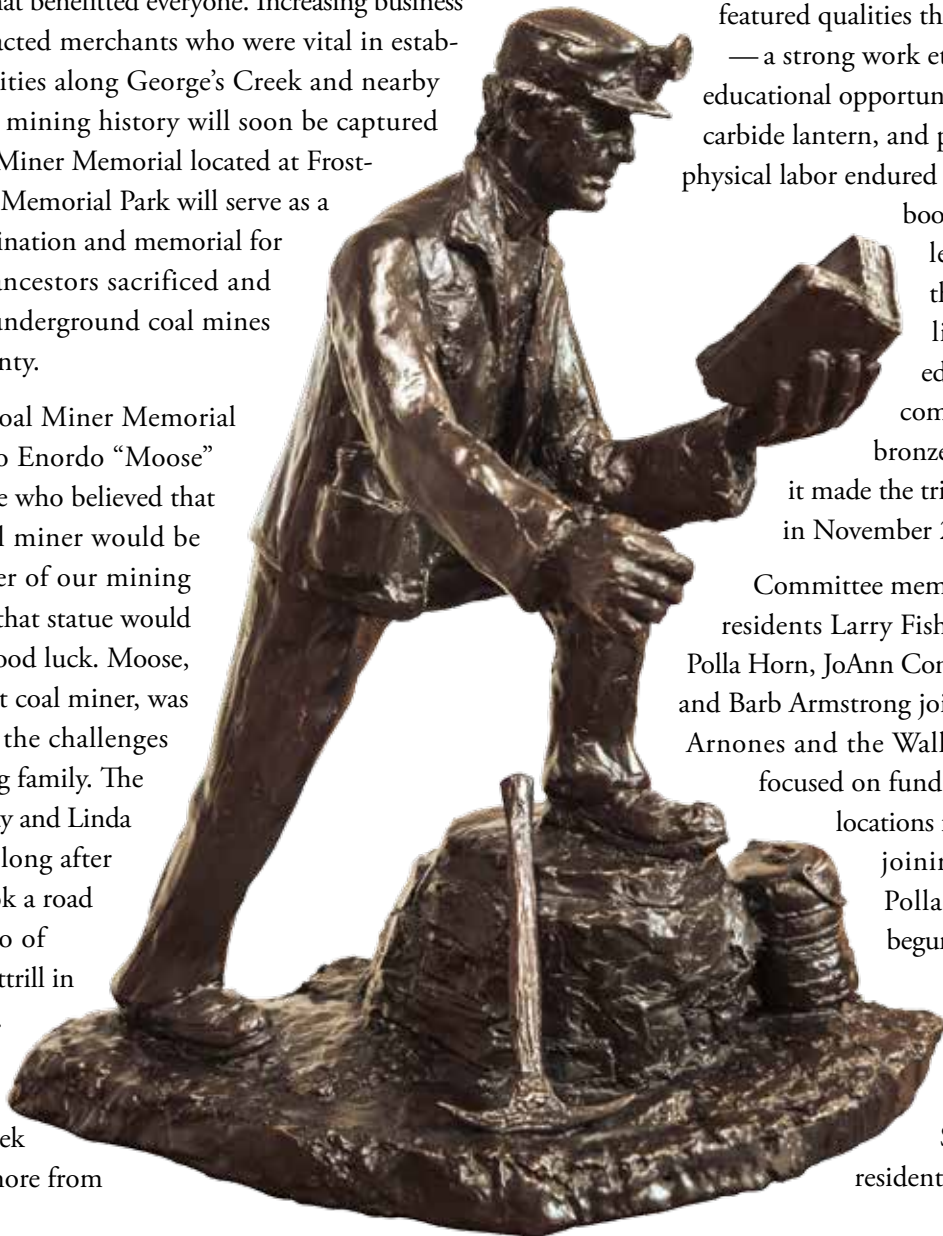
The coal mining story of Western Maryland is one of determination, sacrifice, and hard work that began more than two centuries ago. From explorers and early settlers along George's Creek who happened upon outcroppings for personal use to current commercial enterprises, coal mining has been associated with the region. Those who labored in the coal fields laid an economic foundation for Allegany County as railroads, highways, and the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal created transportation opportunities and advantages that benefitted everyone. Increasing business activity also attracted merchants who were vital in establishing communities along George's Creek and nearby areas. Local coal mining history will soon be captured within the Coal Miner Memorial located at Frostburg, Maryland. Memorial Park will serve as a major travel destination and memorial for families whose ancestors sacrificed and perished in the underground coal mines of Allegany County.

Credit for the Coal Miner Memorial Statue belongs to Enordo "Moose" and Ellen Arnone who believed that a statue of a coal miner would be a fitting reminder of our mining legacy. Rubbing that statue would certainly bring good luck. Moose, son of an Eckhart coal miner, was raised alongside the challenges faced by a mining family. The duo contacted Ray and Linda Walker, and not long after the foursome took a road trip to the studio of sculptor Alan Cottrill in Zanesville, Ohio. It was stressed to Mr. Cottrill that George's Creek miners wanted more from

life than laborer's wages. Many were literate and placed a high value on formal education. Their dedication to progress became apparent when funds were needed to purchase land for Normal School #2 in Frostburg. Coal miners and civic minded organizations responded in a positive way and the land for what began as a school for teachers is today's Frostburg State University.

Mr. Cottrill was subsequently commissioned to create a maquette, a small replica of the actual statue. The maquette featured qualities that miners possessed — a strong work ethic and a desire for educational opportunities. The lunch pail, carbide lantern, and pick symbolized the physical labor endured by a miner, while a book held in the miner's left hand captured the desire for a better life through formal education. Mr. Cottrill completed the life-sized bronze statue in 2018 and it made the trip home to Frostburg in November 2023.

Committee membership expanded as residents Larry Fisher, Charlie Walker, Polla Horn, JoAnn Condry, Bucky Schriver, and Barb Armstrong joined forces with the Arnonos and the Walkers. Discussions focused on fund raising and possible locations for the statue. Before joining the committee, Polla Horn had already begun the task of researching and recording the accidental deaths of local miners. Bucky Schriver, Midland resident and local historian,





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Robinson (Detailed text about miner's life and death)	Royce (Detailed text about miner's life and death)	Sawano (Detailed text about miner's life and death)	Schuyler (Detailed text about miner's life and death)
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Alexander Smith • Margaret Ryan
 Elizabeth Smith Carr • John S. Carr



You Leland Stone left letters for George's County, a brand new life. A slip of coal bit away Smith's death took him from his wife. To stay that course and take his better, proud Margaret possessed. Daughter Laine was John Carr and no longer more approved. These letters, O, with sorrow, faith, each trial rose George Carr. An iron dream, O, in heart, they had from love and life. The faith and life with Scotland never grew among its hills and soil. As Canada's Trade we're grateful for our Smith's ever and still.



joined her and together they compiled the stories of more than 700 deceased miners from 1838-2007. Their findings proved to be significant and ongoing; six years were required to verify names, dates of deaths, location of mines, and descriptions of specific causes of deaths. Their research is ongoing; they recently discovered the demise of two more miners. Results of Polla and Bucky's work were edited by Barb Armstrong into weekly biographies printed in the *Cumberland Times-News* and later compiled into a series of three books. As of 2024, 714 deaths have been recorded and at least 40 of that number were 16 years of age or younger.

The Foundation for Frostburg, a 501c3 formed in 1995 to serve the community, accepted the project in 2012. Since that time, all donations and fund raising proceeds have been placed in the Coal Miner Memorial Statue Fund.

As the statue neared completion, discussions shifted to finding an appropriate setting. The scope of the project had grown. What began as a statue had morphed into an educational

Opposite page: The life-sized bronze statue of a coal miner is the focal point of the Memorial. It features qualities that the miners possessed — a strong work ethic and a desire for educational opportunities. PHOTO BY LANCE BELL

Above: The Memorial in progress, ready for installation of the graphic panels. PHOTO BY BUCKY SCHRIVER

Left: One of the 14 panels with names in alphabetical order of accidental deaths of local miners.



Left: Visitors can experience the feel of entering a coal mine, simulated by overhead timbers and narrow walls.

PHOTO BY BUCKY SCHRIVER

Below: Committee members and volunteers Bryon Arnone and Brynn Arnone (left) and Brett Arnone and Barb Armstrong (right) work on attaching the 18 graphic panels to the final display boards in preparation for installation at the Memorial.



memorial. After several site visits, interest narrowed to a location in Frostburg between the former Cumberland & Pennsylvania Railroad Depot and the Great Allegheny Passage. The site was owned by Allegany County and offered the advantage of sufficient space to augment the statue.

Proposals for the park's design and construction required collaboration among the miner's committee, A.C. Armstrong Design Group LLC., Bennett, Brewer & Associates, the City of Frostburg, Kathie Smith of Advertising Art Design, Inc. and Allegany County officials. Corey Armstrong, associate at A.C. Armstrong Design Group of Frostburg, recalled the initial contacts and early planning. "The committee visited us and showed old photographs of local underground mines. We also made a site visit and discussed ideas for designing the park. We agreed the park should honor the memory of those who labored and accidentally died in the mines—we wanted to tell their story in a personal way."

All agreed the setting should include the experience of entering a coal mine, so simulated overhead timbers and walls were integrated into the design. "We wanted visitors to feel the experience of a deep mine," recalled Corey.

As visitors follow the pathways, they will also encounter interpretive signage that leads to the statue. Fourteen large panels will identify the names of those miners who typically immigrated to the United States seeking a better life, only to suffer a tragic ending. The meticulous research that went into compiling the information will provide guests with a self-contained history lesson. Major topics include The Early Days,

Railroads and Canals, The Rise and Fall of the Coal Empire, Meet Our Miners, The Importance of an Education, Contemporary Coal Mining, Children in the Mines, and a Map of Coal Mines and Railroads. The memorial will likely motivate and inspire guests to further research family and local history.

Barb Armstrong, Frostburg resident and long-time committee member, reflected on the memorial park's development over a decade in time. "The project began in 2012, and there's a reason it took such a long time to reach fruition. It's one-of-a-kind, dedicated to the natural resource of coal and those who mined it for a living. Coal brought both prosperity and despair to Western Maryland. Coal brought talented immigrants

from Europe and beyond who packed up their culture, and brought it with them, and learned to combine their old lives with the new ones. As we uncovered their stories and took in the history we knew it was really important—no matter how long it would take to do it right.”

And to do it right the project required significant additional funding. A State of Maryland Bond Fund, the Rocky Gap Foundation, Allegany County Commissioners, Project Open Space, City of Frostburg, and the individuals who contributed to the Foundation for Frostburg were instrumental in funding a project that now hovers above the \$550,000 mark. In addition, Allegany County Department of Public Works handled the bid/award procedure and oversaw the construction.

A dozen years in the making, the Coal Miner Memorial will soon offer a unique learning experience for residents, riders of the trail and train, and other guests who want to take a peek through a window to the past. While much of the work has been completed, installation of signage and other tasks are still pending prior to the dedication. It is anticipated that descendants of deceased county coal miners will attend the memorial's opening ceremonies.

Reflecting on the park's progress over the years Bucky Schriver, committee member, is complimentary. “We researched other coal miner memorials around the country, and we believe ours is the best one.”

The memorial park dedication ceremony is tentatively planned for early August 2024.

For more information on Western Maryland Coal Mining see www.mountaindiscoveries.com Past and Present Issues: Fall/Winter 2018 and Fall/Winter 2019.



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