

Canal Place Heritage Area

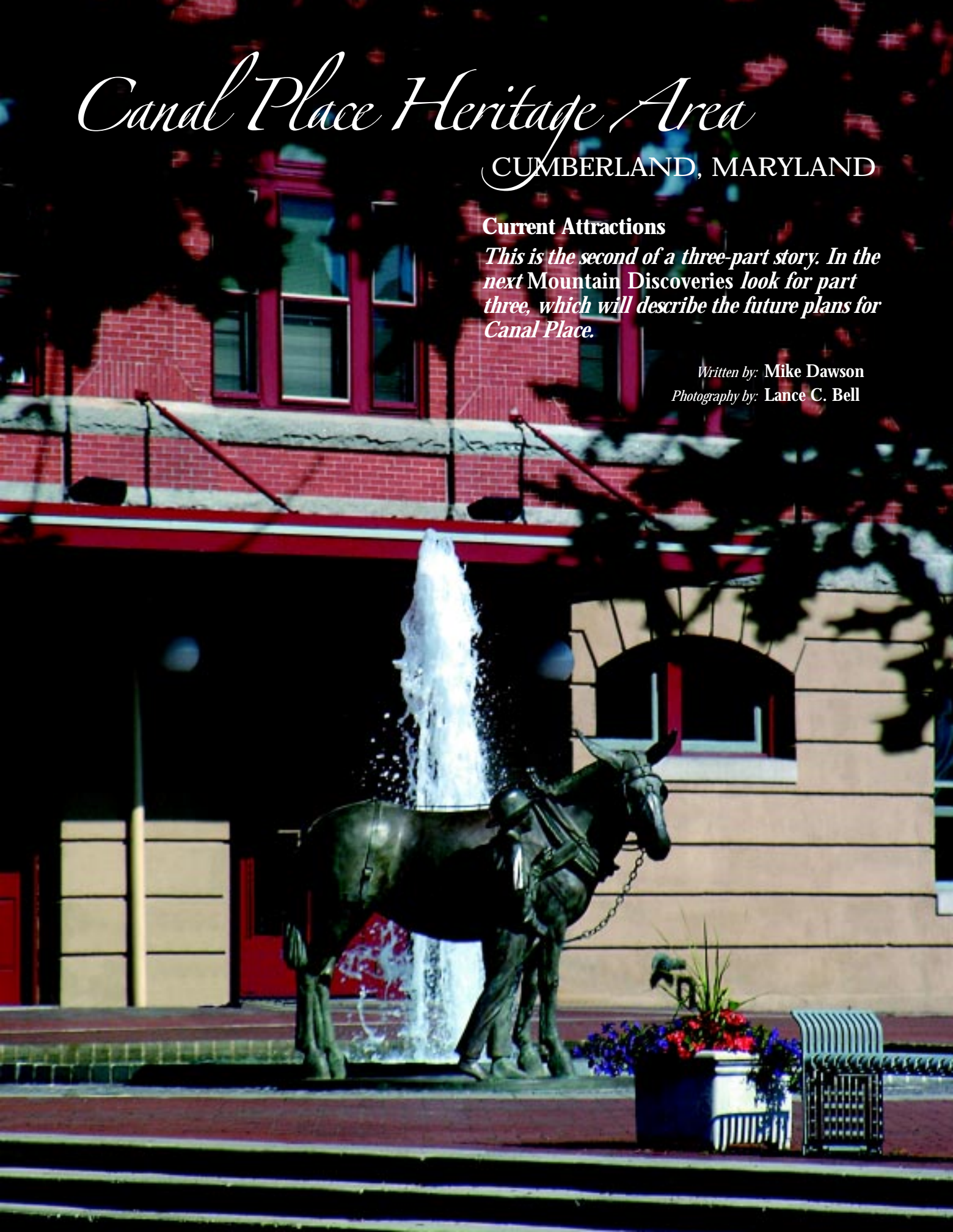
CUMBERLAND, MARYLAND

Current Attractions

This is the second of a three-part story. In the next Mountain Discoveries look for part three, which will describe the future plans for Canal Place.

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Canal Place is Growing

The Canal Place Heritage Area is home to a variety of historical attractions and educational activities for the whole family to enjoy. Here's a closer look at some of the exciting things to do and see during a visit to Canal Place in Downtown Cumberland:

New in 2003

The Shops at Canal Place - opening in May, the Shops at Canal Place bring a unique shopping and dining experience to the grounds of Canal Place. The new businesses include Adventure Sports, Arts at Canal Place, Crab Alley Seafood, La Caffe, Queen City Creamery, Timeless Treats, Treehouse Toys and Westmar Tours. The \$3 million project encompasses 14,000 square feet and is housed in three newly constructed buildings. The distinctive architecture of the buildings is reminiscent of the warehouses that dotted the landscape in the heyday of the C&O Canal. From May through October, The Shops will be open seven days a week with hours from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. They will also be open year-round.

CanalFest - celebrate Cumberland's C&O Canal heritage and rich transportation history at the sixth annual CanalFest, which runs May 16-18. This unique festival has become a yearly tradition that draws visitors from throughout the Mid-Atlantic region. During the festival weekend, visitors can enjoy a variety of musical entertainment, educational programs, living history activities, artisans, a wide variety of fabulous foods and much more. Excellent live entertainment is always featured and this year is no exception with Grand Ole Opry stars Gene Watson and George Hamilton IV performing. And the best part is that all of the entertainment and activities are absolutely free of charge.

Trestle Walk - a new addition to Canal Place, the Trestle Walk will open in May in time for CanalFest. Extending from the brick promenade at Station Plaza to the C&O Canal Towpath, the Trestle Walk is designed to connect the canal and the train station. Offering a scenic view of the entire Canal Place project, it will take visitors alongside the historic canal boat replica. The walk will eventually cross over the rewatered canal on a new steel bridge, which will be dedicated on May 16 during CanalFest. The walk will also provide a link between the historic C&O Canal and the Great Allegheny Passage to create the Allegheny Highlands Trail.

Existing Attractions

Western Maryland Scenic Railroad - depart from the Railway Station on a round trip that winds through 16 miles of spectacular, rugged mountain scenery between the towns of Cumberland and Frostburg. The railroad offers a variety of train rides including scenic excursions, dinner trains, murder mysteries and special theme trains. The Western Maryland Scenic Railroad, or "Mountain Thunder" as it is referred to, is usually pulled by a vintage 1916 Baldwin steam locomotive or a classic diesel locomotive.

Western Maryland Railway Station - the focal point of Canal Place is the historic Western Maryland Station Center, a grand passenger train terminal that opened in 1913 and was in service until 1958. In 2000, the station reopened after a series of renovations were completed. Today, the station is the home of the offices for the Canal Place Authority as well as several other offices. Visitors can catch a bite to eat at Kramer's Deli, browse the Railway Station Gift Shop or discover all there is to see and do in the area at the Allegany County Visitor Center.



New facilities and attractions at Canal Place are near completion. Completion is expected by Memorial Day.

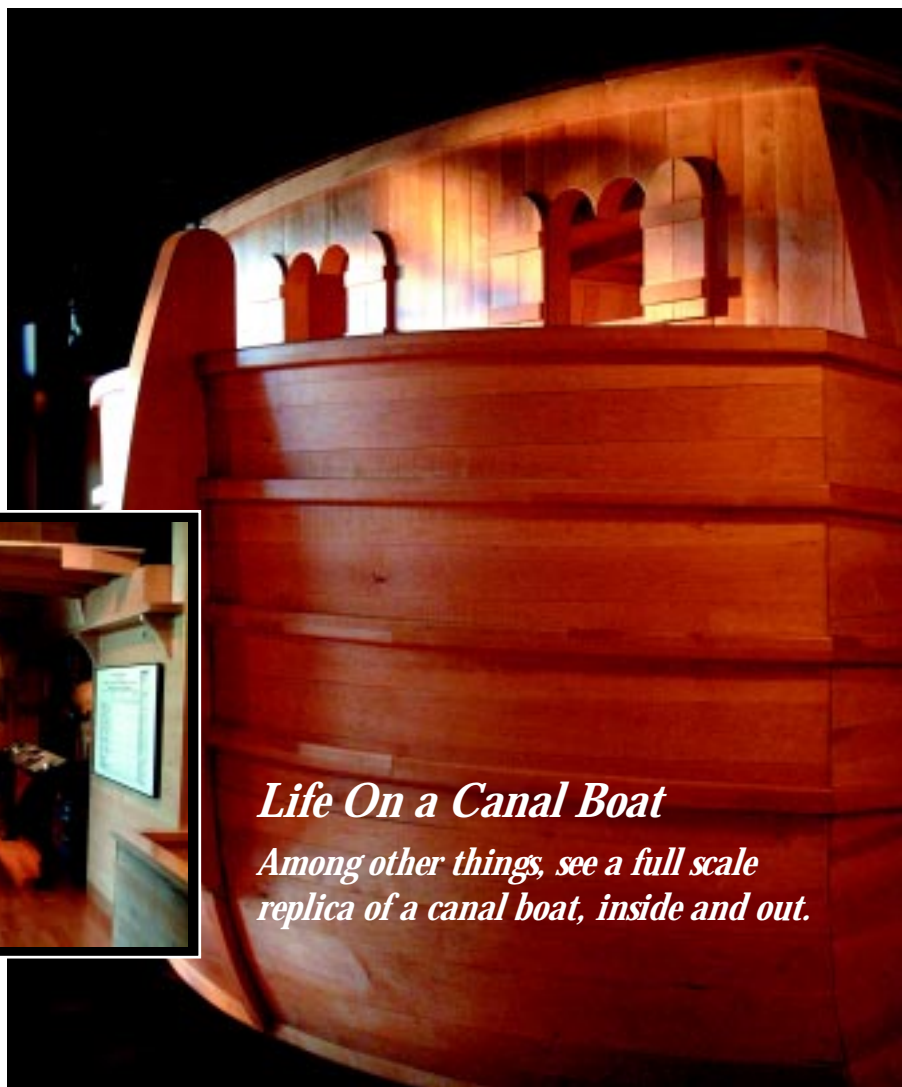
Canal Boat Replica - one of the most fascinating attractions at Canal Place is "The Cumberland," a full-scale replica of a canal boat. Located along the Canal Place trestle walk, it gives visitors a chance to learn what it was like to live and work on a canal boat during the glory days of the C&O Canal. In fact, it's an authentic canal boat identical to the ones that traveled the waterway at the turn of the century. Guides in period clothing will take you on a tour and discuss daily life aboard the boat and the history of the canal.

C&O Canal National Historic Park Cumberland Visitors Center - the Visitors Center is a world class exhibit center and information center located on the first floor of the Western Maryland Railway Station. This spacious, one million dollar National Park Service exhibit features historic artifacts and interactive educational displays that depict life on the canal during its heyday. You can also take a closer look at a model of a canal boat, see the tools used to build the canal, listen to recorded accounts of life along the canal and visit a partial re-creation of the remarkable Paw Paw tunnel. There's also a small gift shop that features books and collections related to the C&O Canal.

Historic C&O Canal and Towpath - the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal towpath represents one of the finest opportunities for outdoor recreation activities in the country. The C&O Canal National Historical Park stretches from Cumberland to Georgetown, covering a total of 184.5 miles. Whether it's a relaxing bike ride or a slow leisurely walk, the towpath is a great way to experience the awesome natural beauty and abundant wildlife. The entire Canal Place project is located within the boundaries of the C&O Canal National Historical Park.

Fun Festivals and Events - throughout the year, Canal Place plays host to a variety of festivals, musical performances, cultural events, historical programs and holiday activities. The C&O CanalFest has already established itself as one of the premier festivals in the region and this Fall, the long awaited return of Railfest to Canal Place is scheduled for September 18-21. Railfest is a proud salute to Cumberland's railroad history that was a local staple in the 1990's. The highly successful "Summer in the City" and "Friday After Five" music series, sponsored in conjunction with the Allegany Arts Council and Cumberland's Downtown Development Commission, was a rousing success last summer and will return again this year. For more information on upcoming events, visit the Canal Place web site at www.canalplace.org.

Mike Dawson is an award-winning writer who has contributed feature articles for newspapers and magazines throughout the region. His work has appeared in the Cumberland Times-News, the Hagerstown Herald Mail and the Garrett County Vacation Guide. For nearly 20 years, he was a staff writer for the Voice of America and ABC Radio in Washington, DC. A native of Frostburg, he resides in LaVale with his wife, Beth, and their two children.



Life On a Canal Boat

Among other things, see a full scale replica of a canal boat, inside and out.