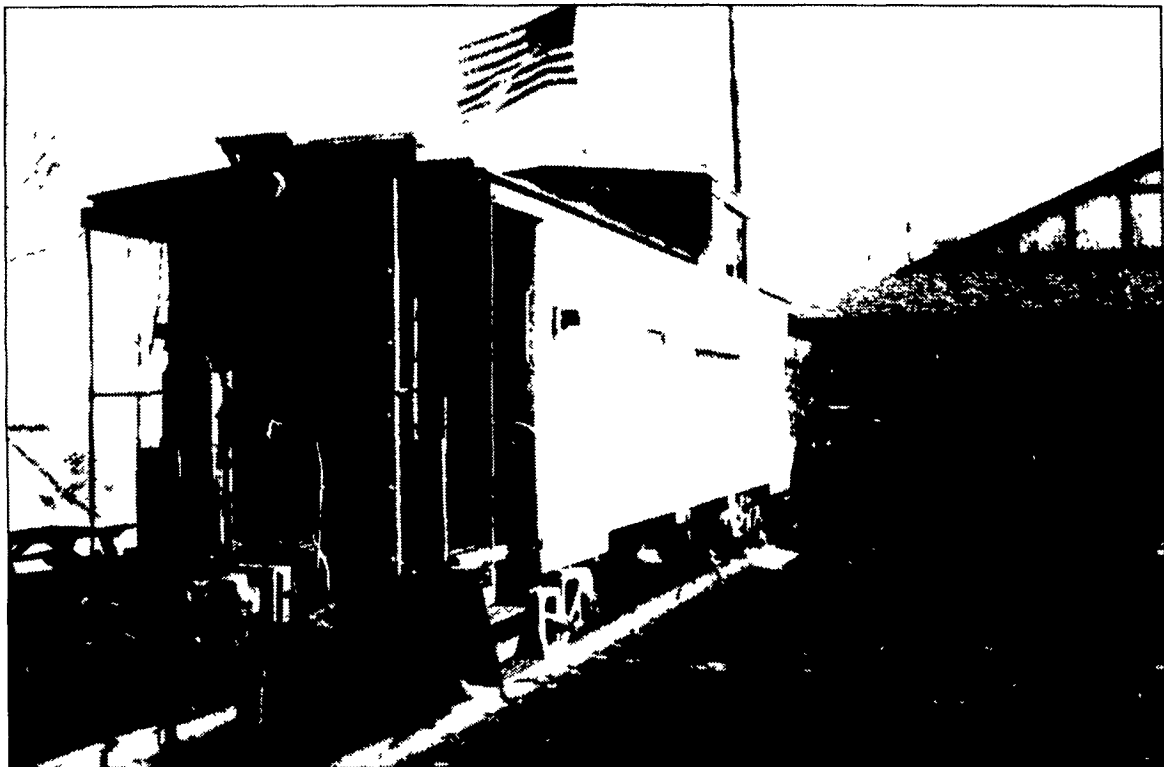


Lancaster Farming

# Antiques Center



The Meyersdale Area Historical Society's newest project is restoring a CSX Wide-Vision Caboose, which has been moved to the society's headquarters at the restored Western Maryland Railway Station on the Allegheny Highlands Trail.

## Railroad Landmark Restored

**SANDRA LEPLEY**  
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**MEYERSDALE** (Somerset Co.) — The Western Maryland Railway Station in Meyersdale serves not only as a restored, historic landmark on the Allegheny Highlands Trail but also its completion has led to more recent projects, including the revival of a caboose.

Ironically, the impressive railway station, open on weekends for travelers on the Allegheny Highlands (hiking and biking) Trail and other tourists, was once on the brink of demolition before 1993, when the restoration began.

"I thought to myself when I first came up here and looked

around 'there's no way this is going to work,' but with a lot of volunteer help we just kept going and this is the result," said Mary Neimiller, one of the original members of the Meyersdale Area Historical Society, the organization formed to restore the station.

The once-obsolete and discarded station is now the home of the society as well as many community activities.

The historical society was formed as a non-profit in 1994 to preserve historic structures and encourage awareness of the cultural heritage of southern Somerset County, explained Neimiller. The station now stands as a shining example of local history.

Constructed in 1912 by the Meyersdale Planing Mill for \$10,000, the Meyersdale Train Depot was one of several stations along the Western Maryland Railroad. The mill also had contracts to construct depots for the Western Maryland Railway at Rockwood and Confluence in Somerset County, both of which have been demolished, and Ohio in Fayette County, and Garrett in Somerset County, which was dismantled and moved to Listie in Somerset Township.

Although the CSX caboose is not from the original Western Maryland line, its lure is no less significant than that of the station.

According to Ken Snelson, a committee member for the restoration of the caboose, it was built in April 1969 by the International Car Company in Kenton, Ohio, and is numbered No. 3235. It was among the first acquired by the C&O (Chesapeake and Ohio) since 1949. The Chessie System acquired and painted it in their colors in 1978. However, it was originally painted dark blue with silver window frames, roof and running boards. The letters, numbers, roof ends, stripe along the bottom edge of the car body and grab irons were yellow.

It is the intention of the society to restore the caboose to its original glory and a future fundraiser is currently under consideration as well as the obtaining any possible grant money.

The caboose, much like the railway station, allows the general public to see a part of American history in an area steeped with an industrial heritage.

"Without the railroads, neither industry nor prosperity would have come to Meyersdale or Somerset County for that matter," explained Dennis Stahl, president of the historical society and a retired history teacher.

The Western Maryland line was the second main line through Meyersdale. The need for an additional rail line was apparent due to the extreme amounts of



Lester and Barbara Breiningers, ninth generation Pennsylvania Germans, show a photo of Katie Fox who originally owned the Early American cookie cutters. A traveling tinsmith fashioned the cookie cutters from scrapes leftover from making pots and pans for early Americans. At the holiday workshop sponsored recently by Berks County Extension, the Breiningers shared their collection of items relating to Christmas observances among 18th century Pennsylvania Germans.



After the discontinued use of the Western Maryland railroad line in the 1970s, the Western Maryland Railway Station built in 1912 became an eyesore by the 1990s. After much volunteer effort, the structure has been restored to its original glory.

production from local coal mines. The route was popular because it offered a lower grade route from Pittsburgh to Baltimore, Maryland.

The first freight trains, for which the line was most noted, came through in August 1912. The passenger trains followed in October of the same year.

"This station has quite an impressive history and it has had a second life because of the people who worked hard to make it happen," said Stahl.

Ironically, a conflict between the Western Maryland Railway and the Meyersdale Borough Council actually resulted in a unique twist of fate back in 1912. The council didn't want to allow the railroad to cross through the town, and the railroad wanted to avoid any expensive right-of-way. The alternative ended up being an agreement that the railroad would be allowed to build if it constructed one of the finest depots along the entire route and it did.

The brick passenger and freight depot with wide, overhanging eaves and a hipped roof with several small gabled dormers were first restored on the outside. The interior with original wooden walls was restored. The society is in the third phase of the restoration process by con-

structing an exhibit in the interior rooms for the public to enjoy.

"Right now, the society is completing exhibits in the interior rooms of the station, and we are looking forward to the restoration of the caboose as well to add to the historical significance here in this area," said Neimiller. "I can see the potential of this station as a major draw from D.C. and Pittsburgh."

According to Stahl, the station's guest book had 1,500 signatures this year alone and that doesn't count the Christmas season.

The station is situated on the biking trail between two historic viaducts incorporated into the recreational pathway of the Allegheny Highlands Trail. In addition, the Big Savage Tunnel, located outside of Meyersdale on the trail, will serve as a major draw and will be completed next year. Because of the attraction of these structures it is anticipated by the Rails to Trails Association that this region will experience the most activity of the Great Allegheny Passage.

"We've come a long way," said Stahl, "but we anticipate an active future as the exhibit is installed, the trail nears completion and the caboose is restored. It's an exciting time for the society as well as the community and Somerset County."



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