

■ DOWN HOME SERIES

Again in the year 2011, we're making our way around the region, each issue visiting a small town and meeting some of the folks who make up the heart of electric co-op country.

On this second stop, we'll be ...

DOWN HOME IN

PURCELLVILLE

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Contributing Writer



The small-town character of Purcellville and its setting in the scenic Loudoun Valley countryside make it a welcoming place to live, work, play and visit.

Rich in history, Purcellville has evolved from a crossroads settlement on the Leesburg and Snickers Gap Turnpike into a thriving 20th-century agricultural center for western Loudoun.

Today, Purcellville is one of the fastest-growing suburbs of the Washington, D.C., metro area, and Loudoun is among the fastest-growing counties in the nation.

Purcellville's setting and character are among its strongest attributes. Residents have worked hard to see that the community retains its small-town flavor and charm.

With its 750 businesses, Purcellville is the growing commercial hub of western Loudoun, but is dedicated to promoting community pride and awareness of the historical and natural resources, as well as enhancing the town through preservation and beautification.



"We have a great community. You could say this is, indeed, small-town America," says **Robert W. Lazaro Jr.**, who has served as the town's mayor the past 4½ years.

He adds, "Purcellville has changed a lot through the decades but has retained its small-town flavor and charm. We are all working hard to keep it that way."

The phases of historic change in the town were driven by agriculture, business and transportation.

One of the community's highlights was in 1874, when Purcellville became a stop along the Washington & Old Dominion rail line, which carried goods and supplies to and from the rural countryside and points east. Families also traveled by rail to visit western Loudoun County during weekends, vacations and summers.

The rail line, which ran from Alexandria to Purcellville, ceased operations in 1968. The rail bed was replaced with a trail used by residents for hiking and bicycling.

A series of disastrous fires, the first in 1900 and then two more in 1914, virtually wiped out the town's business district and eradicated much of its early architectural heritage. After the fires, many of the areas were rebuilt and the Downtown Business District has expanded considerably over the years.

Today, many of the older structures remaining in the town reflect the Victorian architecture popular around 1900.





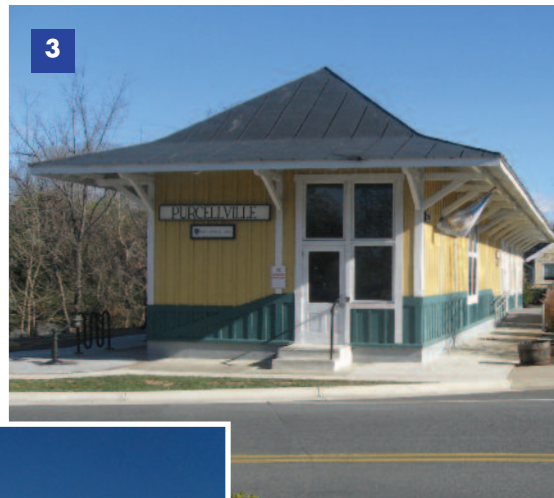
AT A GLANCE ...

POPULATION: 7,000

LAND AREA: 3.18 square miles

ELEVATION: 550 feet above sea level

FACTOIDS: The "Village of Purcell Store," named for the area's first postmaster, was initially settled in 1764. It was located along a road that was little more than an ox-cart path. In 1832, the path was expanded and built into a historic turnpike later known as The Great Road. On July 9, 1852, the Village was officially renamed Purcellville and 56 years later, the town of Purcellville was incorporated by an Act of the General Assembly.



1. The congregation of Bethany United Methodist Church is active in the community. **2.** Meredith Thomas, Purcellville Preservation Association's president, is writing a book about the town. She is pictured in front of White Palace restaurant, western Loudoun County's longest-running eatery, which opened in 1929. **3.** The restored Purcellville Train Station can be rented for a meeting or a social event. **4.** Robert W. Lazaro Jr. has served as the town's mayor the past 4½ years. **5.** Magnolias at the Mill Restaurant is located in what was formerly Loudoun Valley Milling, an orchard-grass seed mill.

From its beginning, the town's dependence upon transportation links to the more populous eastern sections of Northern Virginia has remained strong, and is now more important than ever. Purcellville's traditional dependence upon agriculture as its primary source of income has diminished as more and more residents are employed outside of the community.

The challenge is to accept this change without the town losing its historic identity and those small-town amenities that have developed over its long history.

The Purcellville Preservation Association is taking the lead in keeping the charm of the town alive.

"Through our events and programs we share the rich and colorful history of Purcellville with hopes that, by feeling a connection to our past — for example, learning the story of a building a person passes every day — there grows a sense of pride and the desire to preserve what is historically significant to us," says Meredith Thomas, president.

Thomas is writing a book, *Images of America: Purcellville*, due out in the summer.

"In the short 10 years here I have discovered there are lots of stories in this town. It's important to me that others know these stories too and understand what has helped make this town tick from the late 1700s to today," says the 47-year-old Thomas.

The town now has a mixture of old and new businesses and even offers 50-50 grants to new businesses that improve the appearance of the front of their establishments.

The first to take advantage of the offer was Scott Kinney, 43, who has opened Shamrock Music Shoppe on 21st Street.



1. Scott Kinney in the newly opened Shamrock Music Shoppe. 2. Kenneth Nichols in his hardware store. 3. Darryl C. Smith Sr., Purcellville police chief. 4. Postmaster Joseph Cox Jr., left, helps Ray Charah, rural carrier, load up his mail truck. 5. Leah E. Bromser-Kloeden, branch librarian. 6. David Swartz, rescue squad captain.

"I've always dreamed about owning a business in a small town like Purcellville, and this location has turned out to be perfect for me," says Kinney, who offers a selection of accessories for traditional and band instruments as well as music lessons. Scott is the brother of Jeff Kinney, author of the popular Wimpy Kid book series.

Scott is proud of his brother for following his dream and as a small-business owner is seeking his own dream-come-true.

A RETAIL INSTITUTION

Across the street is Nichols Hardware Store, which has been an institution in the town since its doors opened in 1914.

It is still owned by the Nichols family, and offers hardware, paint and furnishings, with sales tallied on handwritten receipts.

Kenneth Nichols, 80, is president of the company that has 16 long-time employees.

"We have the reputation of helping our customers any way we can. They know that even if it is a rare, hard-to-find item we probably have it, or will help them find it," says Nichols.

Crime is rare in the community, and Police Chief Darryl C. Smith Sr. and his 14 officers work tirelessly to keep the town safe.

"I enjoy working in the town because of the closeness of the community. It's a place where people want to know and communicate with their neighbors. We have a lot of youth activities, and I like to get involved with them," says Smith, who has been a policeman for 31 years and chief at Purcellville for the past five.

AWARD-WINNING DISTILLERY

Catoctin Creek — Loudoun County's first distillery since prohibition — is owned and operated by Becky and Scott Harris.

"This area of Virginia has many wineries to draw tourists. We are hopeful that trying to be a little bit different will prove to be profitable for us," says Becky Harris, CEO and production manager.

Catoctin Creek produces small-batch, handcrafted whiskeys, gins, spirits, brandies and liqueurs.

"All of our products are made completely from scratch. Each step of the distilling process, from mashing to bottling, is done by us entirely by hand. Sure, it is more difficult to produce this way but the results speak for themselves. We are only a year old but have already won several awards," Becky adds.

One of the busiest men in Purcellville is Postmaster Joseph Cox Jr., who oversees

delivery of mail to the growing community of 7,000 residents.

"My job is to see that the 20 employees who cover 11 routes deliver the mail accurately and on time every day," says Cox. He has been a postal employee for 38 years and in Purcellville since 1990.

With so many young people living in the town, Purcellville Library is also a busy spot.

Leah E. Bromser-Kloeden, branch manager, makes sure everything is running smoothly at the facility.

"I've really enjoyed my 15 years — the last 9½ as manager — working here. It's always a pleasure to be able to help a customer get what he or she wants or to answer a question," says Bromser-Kloeden, who oversees a staff of 22.

Like so many of Purcellville's residents, **David Swartz** is a native who likes to volunteer his time with the rescue squad and is its captain.

A firefighter medic at Dulles Airport, Swartz has been with the Purcellville department for 19 years and estimates he spends upwards of 100 hours of volunteer work each month, helping to make emergency runs.

"I'm particularly proud of the unit because we have grown from 40 volunteers to more than 100," he notes. The rescue and fire departments share a modern, new building.

SEE IT ON FOOT

A historic walking tour of the town is available, and a brochure listing the highlights is published by the Preservation Association.

Included on the tour is the Purcellville Train Station; Loudoun Valley Milling, now Magnolia's at the Mill Restaurant; 21st "Depot" Street, where businesses set up soon after the railroad came to town; Hampton's Hall, built in 1908, which now houses White Palace Restaurant, western Loudoun's longest-running eatery that opened in 1929; and the Bush meeting grounds, where Purcellville Prohibition and Evangelical Society held its "Bush Meeting" each summer from 1870 to 1931, attracting thousands of visitors. It is now the Tabernacle/Skate Rink, which also houses special social gatherings.

The Tabernacle and Train Station are now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

"We are blessed to live in a community that respects its history. As such, it was with great pride when we learned that both the Train Station and the Tabernacle were both accepted for listing. It's another plus for our wonderful town. It is what makes Purcellville a great place to live and raise a family," Mayor Lazaro concludes. ■

IF YOU GO...

Here's a list of events taking place in Purcellville throughout the year. For more info on many of the following events, visit www.purcellvilleva.com.

Feb. 19: Loudoun Grown Expo from 2-6 p.m. at the Tabernacle/Skating Rink.

April 2: Keep Loudoun Beautiful.

May 21: Public Safety Day and Community Shred/Drug Recycling Event.

June 11: Purcellville Vintage Auto Show, www.purcellvillevintageautoshow.com, and Rock the Field.

July 4: July 4th Parade.

Sept. 11: 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony, Bush Tabernacle.

Sept. 17: Emancipation Day.

Oct. 8 & 9: Town-Wide Tag Sale/
Antique Flea Market,
www.townwidetagsale.com.

Oct. 31: Trick or Treating.

Nov. 6: Turkey Trot 5k and Fun Run.

Dec. 9: 5th annual Christmas Light Trolley Tour.

Dec. 10: 8th annual Christmas Parade.

Dec. 11: 5th annual Christmas Light
Trolley Tour.

Historic Walking Tour: A brochure is available from the Purcellville Preservation Association. Visit www.ppa-va.org.

Fireman's Field property and park: Site of many youth athletic activities and historic "Dillon's Woods," the town's most significant remaining urban forest and only local park with full amenities available for full public access.

Purcellville Train Station: Located in the downtown business district by the Washington and Old Dominion Trail, where it meets North 21st Street. It can be rented for a meeting or a social event. 540-751-2333.

New Town Hall: The purchase of Fireman's Field by the town of Purcellville prompted officials to also buy the old Purcellville Baptist Church, which is across the street. The building is being renovated and will become the new Town Hall later this year.

Wineries: Nearby wineries include Breaux Vineyards, 36888 Breaux Vineyards Lane, 540-668-6299; Hillsborough Vineyards, 36716 Charles Town Pk., 540-668-6216; Sunset Hills Vineyard, 38295 Fremont Overlook Lane, 540-822-4560; and Notaviva Vineyards, 13274 Sagle Rd., 540-668-6756.

Inns: Middle Grove Inn, 37175 Jeb Stuart Rd., 540-338-0918; Montrose Bed &



Becky Harris of Catotkin Creek, Loudoun County's first distillery since prohibition. All products are made from scratch, and each step of the distilling process, from mashing to bottling, is done entirely by hand.

Breakfast, 19060 Lincoln Rd., 540-751-0815;
Silverbrook Farm, 15286 Woodgrove Rd.,
540-668-6056.

Heritage Day will take place at historic Fireman's Field on May 14. This year, in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the four years of the Civil War, there will be a realistic Civil War-era encampment where fairgoers can meet the soldiers in uniform and learn more about local battles. Also featured will be the annual wine garden, local music, local food, donkey rides, farmer's market, craft fair, and book nook with local authors. For more info, visit www.ppa-va.org.

Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship: 11661 Harpers Ferry Rd., bird walks, butterfly and wildflower trails, organic farm and camping by reservation, 540-668-7640.

Endless Summer Harvest: 36515 Osburn Rd., gourmet-quality lettuce, greens, and herbs grown year-round in a hydroponic greenhouse, using no soil, 540-751-0900.

Twenty-seven restaurants are located throughout the town, offering everything from gourmet meals to pizza and subs.

Antique shops such as Carousel Antiques, Irene Mary Antiques, Iron Gate Antiques, Ray Fields Antiques and Antiques Unusual dot the downtown shopping area.

Performing Arts Venue: Franklin Park Performing & Visual Arts Center, 36441 Blueridge View Lane, 540-338-7973. ■