

## TOWN HISTORY

Williamsport, Maryland is located in the heart of the Cumberland Valley where the serpentine, tree-embowered Conococheague Creek mildly flows at long last into the Potomac River. Here over 275 years ago smoke was rising from a few scattered cabins of a then western frontier trading post called "Conococheague" - the native Indian name Conococheague meaning "a long way"; and the name Potomac (Potomack) meaning "trading place" in the Algonquin tongue. Before any settlement, the area was inhabited by Delaware and Catawba Indians.

The first grant of land known as "Sweet's Delight" occurred in 1738. The King of England granted Jeremiah Jack 175 acres known as "Jack's Bottom" in 1739. This area constituted the present site of Williamsport. Jack built himself a log cabin near the location of the former W. D. Byron Tannery. Thomas Cresap, a renowned Indian fighter, also settled in Williamsport and located on Springfield Farm where he supposedly built the stone building over the spring from which the farm derives its name. In 1750 Colonel Cresap sold the property to Joseph and Prudence Williams, parents of Otho Holland Williams.

Williams served with the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. At one point he was captured by the British and jailed with Ethan Allen. After an exchange was arranged for his release, he fought with Maryland troops and gained great honor for his skillful leadership. General Williams in 1787 laid out a formal township, much as it is today, and the once swashbuckling "Conococheage" became Williams Port, the second oldest town in Washington County. At one time the town was considered as a possible site for the nation's Capitol, explaining the very wide streets incorporated into Williams' plan. George Washington was very familiar with the town often staying at Springfield Farm.

Since that time, the Town of Williamsport has had a rich, colorful history of commerce, manufacturing, transportation, and shipping. Because of the Potomac River and C & O Canal, Williamsport was the cross-road and gateway to the South, West and East. Settlers, travelers, and pioneer families passed through the thousands on their way south and east. Williamsport was known as a jolly, honest, whole-souled, sometimes raucous town.

At the turn of and through the 19th century Williamsport was the County's second largest town. It boasted its own light plant established in 1879, a trolley line to and from Hagerstown, and public schools. The

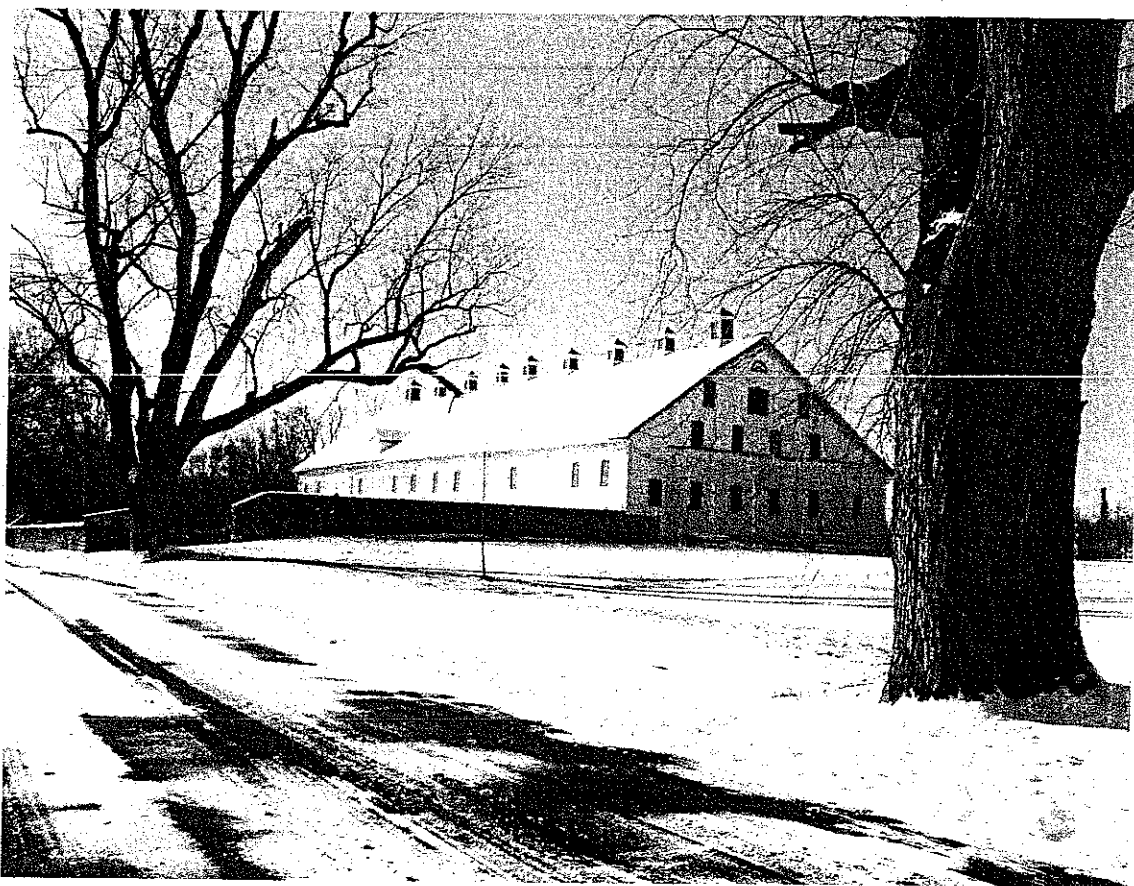
railroads and C & O Canal provided ample transportation facilities for the thriving businesses. The town was described as being attractive to summer visitors and fishing parties due to the fine hotels and abundance of bass in the Potomac River. The Town is still considered as an attractive area for fishermen.

In addition to the vital role Williamsport played in the operation of the C & O Canal through the 19th century, the town was historically important during the Civil War because it was one of two (Harper's Ferry being the other) gateways to the Shenandoah Valley. General Abner Doubleday (the founder of baseball) commanded Union forces here where he mounted cannons on the hill at Riverview Cemetery now called Doubleday Hill. The 1st Maryland Cavalry consisting mostly of Williamsport men saw action at Gettysburg and Antietam. General Robert E. Lee and the Confederate Army made their retreat from Gettysburg through Williamsport evading General George Meade's Union forces. Additionally, Stonewall Jackson pushed Union troops back into Union territory across the Potomac through Williamsport during the 1862 Shenandoah Valley Campaigns.

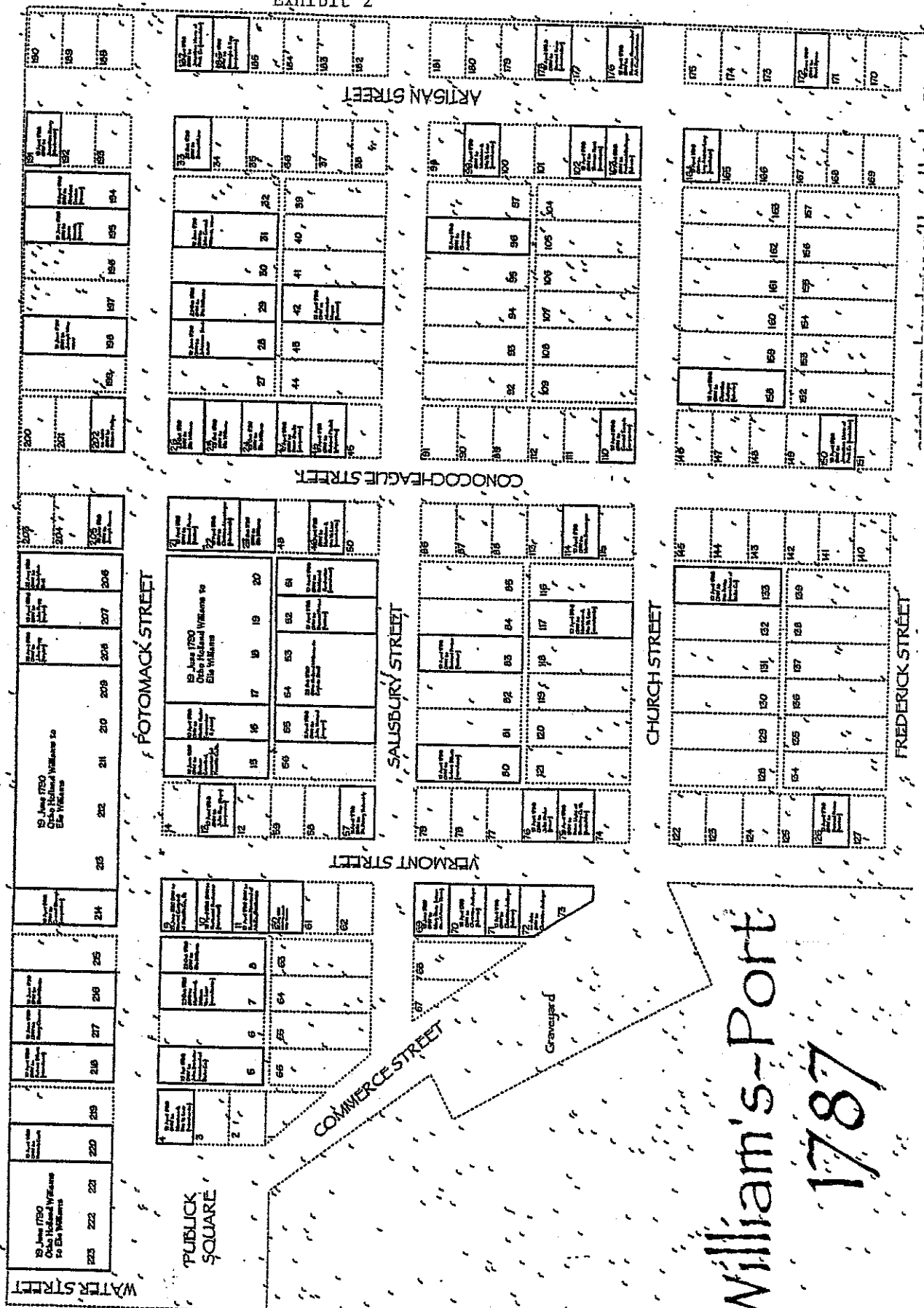
Williamsport is still the "gateway" to the south, west, east, and north because it lies just south of the intersection of Interstates 81 and 70 near the West Virginia and Pennsylvania state lines. Williamsport welcomes visitors

to enjoy its pleasant shops, restaurants, parks, concerts, parades, museums, library, cultural activities, and recreational facilities. The town's unique location makes it a great place to stay while exploring the rich history, sites, and attractions of Washington County and the surrounding area.

Williamsport, then and now, is interspersed with large shade trees, imaginative rain spouts, beautiful old homes and churches, historic sites, modern complexes, affordable housing for senior citizens, retirement communities, and hospitable people. Enjoy Williamsport! The Town extends a hearty Welcome to you. Share our community and vision of a bright economic revival and future. Be a part of history!!



Historic Barn - Museum - Amphitheatre



William's-Port  
1787