



# Iron Manufacturing in 19th Century Western Maryland (Trains)

*Patrick Stakem*

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This book expands on previous works with new material, and discusses a specific topic of the Industrial Revolution in Western Maryland, the iron-making Industry. Starting around 1837, and ending early in the 20th century, the rich natural resources of the western portion of Maryland were used to produce iron, a necessary building block of the Industrial Revolution. By the 1870's Maryland was 5th in the Nation in iron production, and the facility at Mount Savage had rolled the first iron rail in the United States. The facility at Mount Savage, and the earlier one at Lonaconing were cutting-edge, state-of-the-art high technology research, development, and production centers. Essential Patents were issued. Mount Savage was a who's who of industrialization, invention, and technology vital to the nation. In the end, they missed producing the first true steel in the United States, probably by a few months.

There were two major iron manufacturing sites in Western Maryland, both in Allegany County. Lonaconing was the first, and served as a model for the later Mount Savage site. Both were blessed by abundant supplies of raw materials. Both were handicapped by being located in the middle of nowhere. They addressed this issue by building transportation systems involving roads and railroads. Lonaconing was not successful in their timing, but Mount Savage was. By the time the railroad from Lonaconing was built, the furnace was out of production, and coal became the major commodity being shipped. Mount Savage not only built the first iron rails produced in the United States, they built a railroad with their rails to meet the B&O railhead at Cumberland. They went on to sell rail to the B&O so that road didn't have to keep importing it from England. Mount Savage went on to be a manufacturer of locomotives, producing maybe a hundred of their sturdy iron-workhorses. Lonaconing and Mount Savage both lie along Maryland Route 36, some 14 miles apart.

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