



THE LAUREL LIGHT

Preserving Laurel's Past for the Future

December 2006 Volume X, Number 3

News from the Laurel Historical Society and The Laurel Museum

www.laurelhistory.org

Email: info@laurelhistory.org

Upcoming Calendar & Meeting Notice:

- Dec. 9th Saturday Laurel Museum Annual
Holiday Open House 10am – 4pm
See enclosed Flier
- Dec. 22nd Friday Last Day Museum Open
- Jan. 25th Board of Directors Meeting
- Feb. 2nd Museum Re-Opens
- Feb. 8th Program: *The Importance of
Supper 7:30 Pool Meeting Room*
- April 14th Annual Gala: *An Evening in the
Garden*

MUSEUM HOURS OF OPERATION:

Wednesday & Friday 10 AM – 2 PM
Sunday 1 PM – 4 PM. Admission is FREE.
Visit our web site for updated information
about exhibits, programs and new special
events: www.laurelhistory.org



Looking for Something easy and
memorable for a holiday Gift?

BUY A BRICK!

Single Brick is \$50; Brick with logo is \$200
TO ORDER:

Fill out a form at the Laurel Museum where
we can provide you with a gift certificate
(copies of the form are available on our
website) www.laurelhistory.com

Or order at:

www.brickrus.com/order/LaurelMuseum :

We need your Email

If you've never had an email from the
LHS: we DO NOT HAVE A GOOD Email
address for you. Please help us save
postage \$\$ and communicate more
frequently with you by sending your
current email address to:
email@laurelmuseum.org

Volunteers Needed:

**Can you spare a couple of hours per
month or every other month?**

*Share your skills, meet new people and enjoy
the camaraderie of a wonderful group of
volunteers. Flexible hours. Some work can be
done at home. The museum and Society have
the following volunteer opportunities:*

Write a monthly press release or event
announcement

Prepare monthly computer graphic poster/flyer
to

publicize events

Help plan special events or exhibit opening
(approx. twice a year)

Serve as host or hostess at special events
(approx. twice a year)

Weed or water once a month to maintain our
beautiful grounds

Be on our sub list to fill in as a receptionist or
work in the shop during museum open
hours in the absence of a regular volunteer
(training provided.)

Help set up or take down an exhibit (people to
paint walls or do minor carpentry as well as
people to simply move, pack, frame, etc.)

Can you only work at home? (Make calls to
members, computer entry in Excel, mail
merge, etc.)

*If you think you can work as a docent or in the
shop from 1 pm to 4 pm one Sunday per month
or every other month, come check out one of
our training classes to be held in January.*

To volunteer for any of these activities or sign up
for a training class, contact Shari Pollard at 301-
776-5229 or shari.pollard@verizon.net. If you
noted on your membership application that you
want to volunteer but have not heard from me,
please contact me. I don't want to miss anyone.

From the Desk of the Director:

2006 LHS Holiday Ornament:

Last summer we asked the Laurel community to help us pick a theme for our annual brass ornament. As a result, this year's theme is the original St. Mary of the Mills Church. This ornament begins a series of the ornaments featuring four historic Laurel churches. The next church ornament will be issued in 2008. Also available in the Museum Shop are the ornaments from previous years: the Laurel Museum, the Laurel Cotton Mill, Avondale Mill, Laurel High School, Old Liz (Fire Truck), the B&O Railroad Station, Citizens National Bank, Main Street 1940's Postcard, and 10th Anniversary Commemorative ornament. All ornaments cost \$12.00. Fill in the missing ornaments in your collection this year – the ornament price will be increasing in 2007.

The Laurel Museum Rendered in Paint on Wood - Mary O'Bara's Hand Crafted Ornament:

Mary O'Bara, of Chestertown, Maryland, uses a color photograph and a piece of wood to create a charming hand-painted reproduction of an image. This year the Laurel Museum commissioned Mary to create an image of the Laurel Museum, the mill worker's house. Each piece is handcrafted and would liven up any holiday decorating scheme. Mary's ornaments are available in the Laurel Museum Shop and cost \$12 a piece. Don't wait until the last minute, the supply is limited.

Laurel Museum Shop Open House:

On Saturday, December 9th the annual Laurel Museum Shop Open House will be held from 10am until 4pm. The Museum will be decorated for the season and refreshments will be served. Our 2006 annual Holiday Ornament, St. Mary of the Mills Church, will be in stock and available for \$12.00 each. The hand painted wooden ornaments depicting the Laurel Museum Millworker's House will also be available. Other handmade and manufactured ornaments include: Vintage decorated candy-box ornaments; Bobbie

Marchinko's Maryland themed ornaments; small bears, birds and more will be available. Don't trim your tree without a visit to the Laurel Museum Shop. We also have a number of small gifts for children and adults.

John C. Brennan Research Library is Cataloged:

This fall, we have welcomed intern Donna Gray to the staff of the Laurel Museum. A student at UMBC, Donna is just finishing her studies for a graduate degree in Public History. She will be with us through December 2006. Among other projects, she has sorted out and cataloged the collection of books in the John C. Brennan Research Library. For the first time, the books are shelved in a conventional library numbering system. Books without catalog numbers are grouped by subject area. Donna has also created a database to store a record for each book. She has also prepared a finding guide to enable library researchers to find the materials that they need.

Riverfest 2006:

A beautiful fall day made up for the wet 2005 washout of this annual festival. The Laurel Historical Society and the Laurel Museum were represented by volunteers Jeannette Cartron, Gerry Chappell, Frieda Weise, Vi Turley, Joan Fitzgerald and Jane Bulla who manned the booth from 10am until 4pm. Jim and Marlene Frazier donated their time and the use of their truck to assist with the set up and break down. Lots of folks stopped by to learn more about the LHS and the LM and a number of them made purchases of Laurel shop items.

Stories from the Attic Exhibit Continues:

Our current exhibit, "*Stories from the Attic: 10 Years of Collecting*" continues through December of 2007. An added feature of this exhibit is an interactive game for children called the "*Young Collector's Challenge*." The answers to questions posed in the Challenge lead children through each section of the exhibit. The game can be played by a single child or in a group. Prizes are awarded to each child who participates. A great Sunday afternoon activity!

Focus on People

By Jean Anastasi

Meet Charlie Hessler, Laurel Historical Society Volunteer:



Interviewer (I): Tell me a little bit about yourself.

Charlie (C): I have lived in the Laurel area for more than 30 years. I currently reside in Scaggsville. I have been volunteering at the Laurel Museum for 1½ years. I retired from the Federal Government after working 34 years for the General Accounting Office in Washington, DC.

I: What special talents and skills do you bring to your work at the Museum?

C: I visited the Museum and volunteered to work as a research genealogist. The volunteer coordinator, Shari Pollard, asked if I knew anything about computers. She told me that what the Museum really needed at that time was someone to help with management of the Museum collections. I began working with another volunteer, Ireene Ohlmacher and she began to train me in collection management. Shortly thereafter, Ireene fell and broke her ankle and was unable to continue my training. And like any resourceful Museum Director, Elsie handed me the 1-800 number for PastPerfect (the provider of our museum management software) and asked if I could pick up where Ireene left off! Thanks to the patient and helpful people at PastPerfect, I was able to learn the program and have been managing the data collection ever since.

I: What do you enjoy most about volunteering at the Museum?

C: I usually come in and volunteer several mornings a week and if I didn't like it I wouldn't continue. Our director, Elsie, is great and all of the other volunteers are very friendly. Additionally, I am a history buff and I love being surrounded by the old photos, memorabilia and the history of Laurel. When you put friendly people and interesting subject matter together you have a great place to volunteer.

I: What do you like to do in your spare time?

C: I love genealogy research, travel (especially foreign travel) and photography.

I: Anything else you would like to say to prospective volunteers to the Laurel Historical Society?

C: If you've got the time, there are so many ways to put your personal talents to use. Regardless of your skills come in and volunteer! There are lots of tasks to do; something for everyone. The Society will even train you. They just sent me to Richmond to be trained on museum data base management that is specific to our museum's needs. Now I can use the information learned to continue my work at the Museum.

Welcome New Members

Sue Bennett

Susan Block

Chief and Mrs. Crawford

Elizabeth Ann Evans

Michael Hait

Joanna Hubbard

Steve and Maggie Hubbard

Beth John

Don't forget to ask neighbors, friends and family members if they would consider joining the Laurel Historical Society! Members receive a newsletter with updates on programs and exhibits, email bulletins on events and activities, and a 10% discount at the Museum gift shop. Members also receive advanced reservation opportunities for programs and special events. And don't forget, membership dues are nominal and are fully tax deductible!

MILL STORIES FROM THE ATTIC:

***STRIKES & FIRES* by Karen Lubieniecki**

The years 1853-1857 were traumatic ones for workers in Laurel. Materials researched by John Brennan tell us that workers at the Laurel Machine Company fought at least two hard battles to reduce the 11 hour day and maintain a 10 hour work-day.

According to a story in the files from the *Baltimore Sun* of April 17, 1855, "The employees of the Laurel Machine Company, situation [sic] in this village (i.e. Laurel) turned out en masse this morning, in consequence of the proprietors wishing to work eleven hours per day. The mechanics employed in this establishment struck for the ten-hour day some two years ago and finally accomplished the object, since which time they have been working ten hours per day."

In striking the workers were part of a labor movement that had been slowly moving south. Workers found the shorter work day difficult to achieve. In 1844 The New England Workingmen's Association was formed to fight for the ten-hour days. The next year, female workers in cotton mills in Allegheny Pennsylvania struck for the ten-hour day. Workers in Lowell, Mass and Manchester supported them. How or what influences brought the issue to Laurel aren't known. Mechanics of the period were more skilled workers, considered the artisans of the period, with a long tradition of training and apprenticeship.

A tragedy struck the Laurel area workers a brief two months after the strike. The Laurel Cotton Factory (work from which supported the Machine works) burned to the ground on June 20, 1855. *The Baltimore American* of June 22, 1855 reported, "more than two hundred and sixty operators were thrown out of employment..." By the end of the year, the mill owners were selling the property and George P. Tiffany placed a for sale ad in *The Baltimore American* of November 3, 1855. This ad, by the way, gives us a construction date for the Mill dam of 1850. It would be two more years before the mill was rebuilt and operational again. The fate of the towns' workers, shops and supporting industries

during that period is unknown, but it is difficult not to believe that there was widespread hardship. It's not unlikely that many people left the town during this interval. Ultimately, The Laurel Machine Shop workers may have prospered. A story on the newly re-opened mill in the October 6, 1857 *Baltimore Sun* notes..."machine half in...made by S.P Heath at Laurel Machine Shop."

For more on the Mill fire, the strike and other closings and strikes visit the current exhibit "Stories from the Attic." Ten Years of Collecting at the Laurel Museum. The site of the original machine shop is believed to have been near 612-614 Main Street; a stone building constructed from stones of the original machine building. 612-614 is site # 16 on the Laurel Walking Tour.

GET WELL WISHES TO OUR OWN CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

The Laurel Historical Society would like to extend get-well wishes to Chairman of the Board, Jim McCeney. Our best wishes to Jim, his wife Bobbi and the whole McCeney Family!

Program Available

We have a PowerPoint presentation that provides a pictorial introduction to Laurel history. If you have a community association, church group, or other organization that would be interested in learning about local history, a representative from the Society would be happy to present at a meeting. Just contact Karen Lubieniecki at karenlub@aol.com or Elsie Klumpner at director@laurelmuseum.org. You can also call 301-725-7975.

The Laurel Light

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