



**Catherine Johnstone Hopkins**, lovingly called “Miss Katie”, was born in the Grove neighborhood of Laurel, in 1906. Her parents were Elizabeth and Frank J. Hopkins. The surname is suspected to have been given from ancestral enslavement.\* Miss Katie was one of only two children. Her sister Ethel died just seventeen days before her 100th birthday and Miss Katie lived in Laurel for all of her 105 years. She attended day and night school in Prince George’s County and was taught piano lessons from Mrs. Dora Mack Carter, of the entrepreneurial Carter family of Guilford, MD; the first black woman to provide private music lessons in Howard County and own a country music studio. Miss Katie grew to share her talent as a singer, during the 1940s, in the Union Gospel Chorus, a local community band and as the organist and pianist, 46 years in service to St. Mark’s Church, for which she received recognition.



**Laurel Historical Society Celebrates Black History Month and Salutes Contributions and History Makers in Our Community**

During her early years of employment, she worked with children at the St. Mildred’s Academy; known today as St. Mary of the Mills School. She later worked as a seamstress at Ft. Meade, during WW II, a job for which she expressed a lot of love and enjoyment. Thereafter, she was employed at the University of Maryland for many years. Through her retirement in 1973, Miss Katie worked at the O.W. Phair Elementary School, which was located at 1100 West Street (intersecting with Park Avenue). The school ceased operation around 1979 and was later renovated and used for temporary WSSC offices in the 1980s.

Prior to the passing of Miss Katie and her sister Ethel, both sisters were featured in a 1983 *Laurel Leader* article\*\*, where they described remembering when there was an oak grove in the Grove community, named for the stately, shady trees. They also recalled when the streets were dirt roads and the sidewalks were wooden boardwalks.

*Photograph and information pulled from the Laurel Museum Collection. Updated by LHS/AVF, 2021*

\*In 2020, new evidence showed that Johns Hopkins claimed four men as his property on the 1850 Census and often had business dealings using Black people as collateral). <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/12/09/johns-hopkins-university-founder-enslaved-people/>

\*\**The Grove: Rooted in a Proud Tradition.* *Laurel Leader*, September 1, 1983.