



The Laurel Light

FEBRUARY 2011
Volume XIV, Number I
The Laurel Light
Published Quarterly by:
The Laurel Historical Society, Inc.
817 Main St. Laurel, MD 20707-3429

News and History from the Laurel Historical Society

The mission of the Laurel Historical Society, Incorporated is to encourage the understanding and preservation of the history and cultural heritage of Laurel.

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

February is always an exciting time for the Laurel Historical Society. This is the time of year when we premier a new exhibit. On February 6th we opened our newest exhibit "And They're Off! 100 Years at Laurel Park." When I arrived in 2008, I was promptly told at my interview that the 2011 exhibit would be on the Laurel Race Track's 100 year anniversary. Now almost three years later, we have that exhibit up just in time!

I've done three exhibits with the Laurel Historical Society and I have enjoyed developing them all. Learning the stories of the people in Laurel has fascinated me endlessly, and the stories from this exhibit were particularly interesting. Interviews with jockeys, trainers, owners, track doctors, and Laurel residents revealed not only the impact the track has had on Laurel, but also the family atmosphere that pervades the track.

In the exhibit we celebrate the 100 years of Laurel Park's history, bring to light some of the controversies, highlight the glamour of the track, and more. But my favorite part is the stories that we use throughout the exhibit to highlight certain aspects of Laurel Park. These stories came from

interviews that were done while developing the exhibit. During this process, I met many new and exciting "characters" that help tell the story of the track. Using the stories of some, from Nick Jimmie to Randy Kroop, is a truly fascinating way of telling the story of the track.

What has been even more exciting is seeing the people interviewed come in and see what we've done. They've been truly pleased to see not only their own stories, but that of the track they love, highlighted for the entire community to see. When you're free, come check out the exhibit. I promise, you'll be excited to not only learn about the track, but meet all of the interesting people that make it work day in and day out.

Lindsey Baker
Executive Director

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As I shoveled myself out over these past few weeks, I have had plenty of time to reflect on a variety of subjects; one of them being the Laurel Historical Society. Between the unprecedented ornament sales (Whoa!), the super-successful Holiday Open House (I told you that the cookies would be delicious), the well-attended Volunteer Appreciation Reception (Thank

you Karen & Ken for hosting) where both Irene Ohlmacher and Virginia Mentall received much deserved accolades, the eagerly awaited opening of the new exhibit "And They're Off! 100 Years at Laurel Park" (Wow!!!) last Sunday, and the informative Track Talk (to think that we have 3 female jockeys living and working within our city limits) at Venus Theatre - there has been so much for me to think about. Good thing there was a lot of snow for me to shovel.

As I've said before, one of my favorite things about being a resident of Laurel is the sense of community that we all share. It is at these events, seeing old friends and making new ones, that the feeling truly comes alive for me. It is the connections made, the friendships solidified and the concern for our fellow residents that makes us special.

Thank YOU for being a part of that "specialness" whether it was contributing financially to our Annual Appeal, volunteering your time at an event, participating in an event, inviting a neighbor to join you at an event, buying your Gala tickets, sponsoring something at the Gala, shopping at the museum gift shop during the holiday season or just taking the time to read the newsletter. We appreciate you!

I hope to see you at the Gala on April 9th, at our 15th Year Anniversary celebration in April, and at the Annual Meeting in May. Stay tuned for more information.

Yours in preserving Laurel's history one story at a time,

Jhanna Levin
President



Please consider the LHS in your Planned Giving. It's easy. For more information please contact Lindsey Baker (301)725-7075.

Society Recognizes Volunteers of the Year

Submitted by Karen Lubieniecki



Volunteer of the Year Virginia Mentall with Lindsey Baker, Executive Director

Congratulations to two long-time members who share Volunteer of the Year honors for 2010. Former teacher Virginia Mentall was cited for her efforts with the LHS' children's programs, including children's tours, and her ability to engage children in understanding the organization's different exhibits. Her co-honoree, Irene Ohlmacher

has not only served as an engaging and knowledgeable docent, but has contributed significant time and effort to help keep LHS membership records up-to-date, and help with other Museum projects. In addition to the award, both received two tickets to the LHS's April 9th Gala, "A Night at the Races." The Awards were presented at the Society's annual volunteer recognition reception in January. In addition to the Volunteers of the Year, Charlie Hessler, the LHS' volunteer registrar, was recognized for five years of service. Noted LHS Executive Director Lindsey Baker, "Our volunteers are the most important part of the Laurel Historical Society; helping us to accomplish all that we do throughout the year."



Volunteer of the Year Irene Ohlmacher with Lindsey Baker, Executive Director

MUSEUM NEWS

The Laurel Museum's new exhibit, "**And They're Off! 100 Years at Laurel Park**" runs through December 2011.

Charlie Hessler, volunteer registrar shared that as with each of the exhibits he has worked on, "this exhibit has been a great vehicle to learn about the history of Laurel in general as well as the topic of the exhibit". Charlie was able to meet Virginia Scagliarini who shared first-hand stories of her colorful experiences at the Laurel and Bowie race tracks. Her family's prize-winning racehorse, Mountain Rose II, is featured in the current exhibit. And according to Charlie, "You never know what kind of interesting folks you will meet or the stories they may tell."



Randy Kroop poses by the exhibit about her family's business A. M. Kroop and Sons.

You may visit the exhibit and shop on Wednesdays and Fridays from 10 AM – 2 PM or Sundays from 1PM – 4 PM. For more information on the exhibit or to schedule a group tour please visit www.laurelhistoricalsociety.org.

HOLIDAY HOUSE TOUR

2011



This December we will have our Holiday House Tour and we are looking for committee members and properties to feature! Is your house your pride and joy? Do you have a wonderful or interesting decorating style? Does one of your neighbors? Is your business part of the history and fabric of Laurel? We need you!! Please email committee member Jeanie Anastasi at jmanastasi@verizon.net if you are interested in serving on the committee or would be willing to have your house or business featured on the tour. It's a great incentive to get those little "to do" items completed and a fun way to share your home with the community!

Children's Corner

Please spread the word about our children's programs. We invite you and yours to learn a little bit about Laurel; history, customs, and

traditions, and experience the interactive space Diven's Den. Come and visit the Museum with the kids during Spring Break!

Laurel Historical Society Book Club

The LHS Book Club meets monthly to explore history and culture related topics one book at a time. We meet the third Wednesday of every Month at 7 PM at Mango's restaurant. Join us!

LHS Genealogy Group

The Laurel Historical Society Genealogy Group assists members in conducting Genealogy research. Whether you are just thinking about beginning your journey into genealogy or you are an experienced genealogist, please join us and learn how we can help each other. For more information, contact Mike Boivin at mikeB98159@aol.com.

Museum Shop News

The Laurel's Christmas Tree ornament was a huge success. We sold almost 2,000 ornaments compared to a normal ornament sale of 100. Our volunteers worked very hard, dealing with the record breaking crowds, wait lists, and a very busy Christmas rush. As an added bonus, we made many new friends who had never before heard of the LHS. Thank you to all who helped out or bought ornaments. You can always shop from the comfort of your own home as you can find many of our items online. Please log on to www.laurelhistoricalsociety.org/shop.

MEMBER NEWS

Please welcome our newest members:
Alexis Koss
Theresa Morris
Donna Schneider
Mary Rose Walsh

We are happy to have you!

Welcome New Volunteers!

No new volunteers to welcome this time...can you help???

The Laurel Museum is in need of volunteers for the **Sundays from 1 PM - 4 PM**. Anyone interested in volunteering at the Museum may contact Monica at assist@laurelhistoricalsociety.org for more information. Thank you!

Volunteer Luncheons

Please consider joining other volunteers for our monthly luncheons at local restaurants. Dates and times are emailed to volunteers. Bon appétit!

GALA NEWS



If you have not already received your invitation to *A Night at the Races*, you will soon. Preparations are well underway for this exciting night. We already have sponsors for the invitations and dessert table; thank you Main Street Pharmacy and Glenn Feagin! We are still looking for more sponsors to make the night a success. Since our theme this year celebrates Laurel Park we will have a mock race. If you haven't seen one, it's a lot of fun. Those of you who purchase premium tables get to name a horse in the race. Everyone can then "bet" on a horse, and prizes will be awarded for the winner. We are also working on the silent auction. Many local businesses support the gala, but members contribute a large number of items too. We already have art work, restaurant gift certificates, homemade lasagna, antiques, pottery, and more. The silent auction allows you to "responsibly re-gift." If the set of coffee mugs

your Aunt gave you for Christmas or the flower vase from your cousin are gathering dust, they would be better off being bid on April 9th and going to someone else to treasure. We also love to have vacation rentals, gift certificates, tickets to sporting events - just about anything. We look forward to seeing you April 9th at Laurel Park and thank you for your support! Contact Margie McCeney at 301-776-7267 or mcceney@yahoo.com for more information.

DID YOU KNOW?

Saint Mary of the Mills Catholic Church was built in 1843 and is the oldest continuous church in use in the City of Laurel. It was built under the leadership of donor Dr. Theodore Jenkins who hired two Catholic stonemasons en-route to Richmond and asked them to stay in "Laurel Factory" (as the city was then named) to begin building the chapel. The massive stones were hauled by ox cart from nearby Guilford quarry. The first baptism recorded in St. Mary's Baptismal register is that of Mrs. Theodore Jenkins, who became a Catholic like her husband. Dr. and Mrs. Jenkins and several of their children are buried in St. Mary's cemetery. The original church bell disappeared but stories passed down tell of a swap of bells between the Laurel Cotton Mill and the church because the bell was so loud it shattered glass in the mill. The bell remains (although mechanically muffled) in the present tower still standing today.

**IF THESE WALLS COULD
TALK: 336 MONTGOMERY
STREET**

Submitted by Jeanie Anastasi



***The Leader*, May 26, 1911: Messrs. William Shaffer and William Fulton are erecting a store on the corner of 4th and Montgomery Street.**

The Victorian at 336 Montgomery Street started out as a small grocery and meat store when it was built in 1911 by William C. Shaffer and William Fulton. The store, which occupied the oldest part of the house, was actually located closer to Fourth Street. Pickle barrel stains remain on the previously black painted floors. In 1913 an addition was added and then in 1917 the whole structure was moved over onto a poured concrete foundation. After subsequent additions, the house took on its current dimensions which are reflected on the 1923 Sanborn Company insurance maps.

William C. and Susie Shaffer owned the property until 1920 when it was deeded to their daughter, Lily “Mae” (Shaffer) Fulton and her husband William A. Fulton. In 1953 the property size was reduced from its original dimensions to the alleyway when the back portion of the property was sold and two brick homes erected on it. The original garage from the property remains on the alleyway and belongs to one of the

brick homes. The house remained in the family until the death of the last owner, Charles Fulton, and was sold to a venture group in 2001.

After a several county search for the perfect “This Old House”, my husband Randy and I saw this much neglected structure on a nice flat lot that had the best views from the second floor, front and back staircases and functional pocket doors. We were smitten! Despite many friends and family who said we were crazy, we purchased our home on July 31, 2002, after some tough negotiations and at the tail end of a “gut rehab” of the property. Prior to our acquiring the property, walls were removed to recreate a single family dwelling, drywall was hung over plaster and the windows and the mechanical systems were replaced. Upon purchase, we finished the work to meet code requirements. The original lightning rods on the roof were rewired to be functional. We had the original heart of pine floors refinished and although several companies gave estimates, only one company was willing to tackle the black paint in the oldest part of the house! We had the exterior painted and added black shutters, gutters, lattice, new back doors and storm doors, as well as a new Bilco door to the cellar. We added railings to the front porch and two new back porches. Interiorly, the entire house was painted and all of the original woodwork was stripped, primed and painted. Crown molding was added to the first floor and one room on the second (there is always more to do). The guest bathroom features an original claw foot tub found in the cellar that was refinished and moved to the second floor.

In the yard, we had the privet hedge removed as it was very overgrown and full of poison ivy but we replaced it with a scalloped white picket fence. We salvaged some plant material on the property

including peonies which were relocated to a single bed, a small tea rose, and a lace cap hydrangea which we divided and replanted. The rest of the landscaping was accomplished over time with all of it planted by my husband and me. We have received generous gifts of plant material, bulbs, and cuttings from family, friends and neighbors which have only added to the gardens over time. I really enjoy changing the seasonal plantings on the corner of the property.

Mrs. Dorothy Ashby, Great granddaughter of William C. Shaffer and her brother, Richard Bedell have provided many family stories and shared their memories of the house. They recall that rooms were rented to jockeys from the Laurel Race Course during the October racing season. During WWII the house was divided into two separate units, presumably for renting. Treasures we found during renovation included; one remaining ceiling light fixture, plate rails that are now mounted in our dining room, 5 cordial glasses, towel racks, and miscellaneous hairpins, nails, pottery and glass shards. Neighbors who attended the home's estate sale brought back a club chair, a nice set of china that was a "give away" at the Laurel Movie Theater and an egg beater that was used in the kitchen, as well as a family photo album. Mrs. Ashby recently gave us some lovely pink Depression glass that used to be in the home's china cabinet. These treasures and family items help us to discover the history of the family who once lived here as well as add to our own family's history.

Our home renovation has been a labor of love and we have met many new friends and like minded neighbors who have supported our journey. Laurel is a fantastic place to raise our daughter and has afforded us close access to work, family, church,

school, and activities that we could not have enjoyed elsewhere. As I was cleaning the house for a party today and mulling over my article out popped an old rusty hairpin from who knows where. I haven't found one of these in years I thought...I hope she likes what we've done.

The Anastasi Home at 336 Montgomery Street celebrates 100 years in May!

We would love to have your story ideas particularly for the *Did You Know, My Memories of Laurel* and *If These Walls Could Talk* sections of the newsletter! Please email The Laurel Light editor, Jeanie Anastasi jmanastasi@verizon.net with your comments, suggestions or story ideas.

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR CORPORATE SPONSORS!



Laurel Historical Society
817 Main Street
Laurel, Maryland 20707
301.725.7975/301.725.2675 (fax)
 info@laurelhistoricalsociety.org
 www.laurelhistoricalsociety.org

Address Service Requested

Lindsey Baker, Executive Director
 Monica Sturdivant, Assistant to the Director

Board of Directors:

Elizabeth Compton, Founding Co-Director
 Jhanna Levin, President
 Lisa M. Losito, Vice President
 James B. McCeney, Chairman & Treasurer
 Marlene Frazier, Recording Secretary
 Regina Mima, Corresponding Secretary
 Jeanie Anastasi
 Jeff Edwards
 Chris Erdle
 Stephen Hubbard
 Scott Lilienthal
 Karen A. Lubieniecki
 Kevin J. McNulty
 Joseph Robison
 Frieda Weise
 Jean Wilson

The Hon. Craig A. Moe (ex officio)
 Gertrude L. Poe, Director Emeritus



Laurel Historical Society Calendar

February 2011 - April 2011

For more information, visit: <http://www.laurelhistoricalsociety.org/pages/calendar.html>

Feb 6 through December “And They’re Off! 100 Years at Laurel Park” Museum hours Wed and Fri 10 AM – 2 PM and Sun 1PM – 4 PM.	March 14 & April 11, 7 PM Genealogy Group Meeting at the Laurel Pool Room.	Apr 28, 7:30 PM LHS Board Meeting at the Laurel Pool Room
March 10, 7 PM Movie Night “Secretariat” and Laurel Highlights at the Laurel Pool Room.	March 16 & April 20, 7 PM Book Club at Mango’s Grill.	May 12, 6:30 PM Annual Meeting
	April 9, LHS Gala!	June 9, 6:30 PM Family and Friends Potluck
	April 17, 1- 4 PM Community Celebration	