



The Laurel Light

November 2013
Volume XVI, Number IV
The Laurel Light
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The Laurel Historical Society, Inc.
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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.

Laurel Historical Society

Holiday House Tour

Saturday December 14th 2pm–6pm

Tickets available at:

Laurel Museum
817 Main St.

Main Street Pharmacy
653 Main St.

Rainbow Florist & Delectables
370 Main St.

Hey Red
641 Main Street

Minuteman Press
335 Main Street

Tickets: \$15 in advance
\$18 the day of the tour
(Tickets sold only at the museum on tour day)

For more information or to purchase tickets online:
www.laurelhistoricalsociety.org
301-725-7975
info@laurelhistoricalsociety.org

Museum
Holiday Open House
Gifts for young and old
December 6 10–2
December 7 10–2
December 8th 1–4

Ornaments:

- New St. Mark's United Methodist Church
- Laurel's Christmas Tree
- Laurel landmarks or historic sites

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In mid-November I met with the staff of the Banneker Douglass Museum in Annapolis at the Museum. The Banneker Douglass Museum is the state's official repository of African American culture. Six members of their staff came to "pick my brain" about

what we do at the LHS.

The meeting was arranged by a colleague at the Museum who attended graduate school with me. When she arranged for the meeting to take place, I was initially hesitant. Of course I love meeting with other museum professionals, but I wondered what I might be able to shed light on that they don't already do more competently than we do. They are, after all, a large state organization with many resources that we lack.

When she let me know that she'd like to talk a little bit about the volunteer program we have here at the LHS, I happily agreed. In conversations with colleagues around the state, I have come to realize that we have one of the strongest volunteer programs of any of the small museums I am familiar with. Yes, we are constantly looking for new volunteers and docents (if you're interested, email me!), but the volunteer program we currently have is one worth talking about.

We have approximately 70 volunteers who take part in all kinds of different tasks and activities for the Museum. Each of these volunteers is someone who takes seriously the work they are given and many of them work on

projects at home or individually. The bulk of our volunteers are our public face—greeting people at the museum, at public events, and more. Without all of our volunteers we would be a shell of the organization we are today.

So in my conversation with the Banneker Douglass Museum staff, I talked about how we manage our volunteers, how we recruit them, how we train them, and most importantly how much I appreciate them. So, this holiday season, I would like to say “Thank You” to all of our volunteers—in each of the roles they fill. Without you, our organization would not be what it is today!

Lindsey Baker

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

We may not be impartial but we think we've done a pretty good job this year. And now it is your time to let us know if you agree. Other than for dues, the gala, and the Annual Appeal, we don't bug you for money very often. Well, it is time again for the Annual Appeal and you will receive our letter soon. The appeal letter is different this year and we hope it is effective. Let us know what you think of it please. The important thing is that we really do need a better response from our members and other supporters. We missed our goal last year and will be unable to continue at the same pace unless things pick up this year. Our goal last year was \$22,000, and we are shooting for the same this year. We are hoping for **at least \$100.00** from no fewer than 50 donors. We know that is too much to

expect from many of our supporters, but we also know that for many of you, it is not out of reach – less than two dinners out for the two of you, for example. For many families, the largest recipients of support are their religious institution, their schools, and their favorite national charity or cause. We do not expect that we will be in the top three for most of you, but we would be most pleased if you could make us number 4 or 5. We truly believe we serve our community well. We know full well that a part of our resources go for programs that serve those in our community who are not able to make any or only nominal contributions. We are fine with that and we hope you are too – we want everyone to know about the history and cultural heritage of Laurel.

I think I have rambled on enough. We will be most grateful for any amount you are able to help us with. And we wish you the very best for the holidays.

Jim McCeney

PS: And while money is very important to us, do not forget that we owe a big “Thank You” to our dozens of volunteers who help us throughout the year.

BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE

LHS Board meetings are held the 4th Thursday of each January, April, July, and October. The next meeting is January 23, 2014. Members are welcome to attend. They are held in the Pool Meeting Room at 7:30 PM.



LHS Speakers Bureau Expands Looking for Speakers?

Do you know a group who is looking for speakers or who schedules programs? Would you like to learn something new about Laurel's history or the Civil War in Laurel? How about topics such as the following: Lost Laurel, The Snowden Family, Genealogical Research, African American History and The 1950s. These are among the 15 topics available through the newly expanded LHS Speakers Bureau. If you are involved with a civic group, scouts, neighborhood or other organization or home school group, the LHS would be delighted to provide a FREE presentation on some aspect of Laurel history.

The LHS has pulled together a cadre of knowledgeable speakers. Regular presenters include Lindsey Baker, Mike Boivin, Amy Junewick, Kevin Leonard, Karen Lubieniecki, Shari Pollard and Ken Skrivseth.

In addition to basic topics, LHS volunteers are also prepared to do walking tours for groups. Programs for children are available with our traveling trunk, and can be tailored to a particular age group. A full description of all topics is available on our website. Check it out and call the museum to schedule your group!

LHS Visits Laurel-Beltsville Senior Center this Winter

Members from the LHS Speakers Bureau will be presenting on a variety of topics this winter – anyone over the age of 50 is welcome to attend. All programs start at 10:00 AM and run about an hour. The Laurel-Beltsville Senior Center is located next to the Laurel Hospital. Coming up:

December 10: *Your Laurel Museum*

January 17: *From Laurel to Japan: The Horace Capron Story*

February 21: *African American History in Laurel*

Laurel Leaders Coming to the LHS

The LHS will soon be the home of the Laurel Library's bound and microfilmed copies of the *Laurel Leader*. As part of its new library plans, the Laurel Library is eager to dispose of the space-taking collection, and the LHS is happy to give them a new home. The microfilmed collection includes issues from 1887-1985. We are also receiving the library's microfilm reader.

The John Brennen Research Library is open Mondays and by appointment for use by members, students or just the curious history buff wanting to study historical events in Laurel. Come on by!



HOLIDAY HOUSE TOUR 2013

**SAVE THE DATE FOR THE
HOUSE TOUR ON DECEMBER
14TH FROM 2 PM TIL 6 PM.**

Enjoy all the beautiful décor as well as door prizes, carolers and refreshments at a tour point of interest! The tour starts at the museum and tickets are available before the day of the event for \$15 at:

Main Street Pharmacy
653 Main Street

Hey Red!
641 Main Street

Rainbow Florist and Delectables
370 Main Street

Minuteman Press
335 Main Street

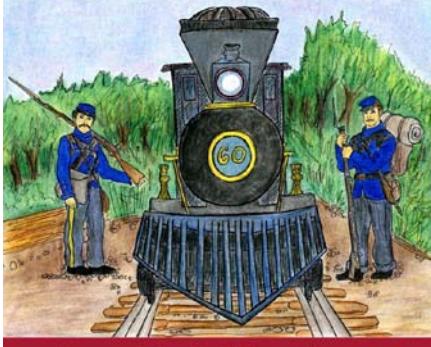
Laurel Museum or
on line at laurelhistoricalsoociety.org.

Tour tickets on the day of the event
**may only be purchased at
the Museum** and are \$18.

Please, no high heels or strollers on the tour. Hope to see you there!

MUSEUM NEWS

Stationed in Laurel



Our Civil War Story

Last Chance to See Stationed in Laurel: Our Civil War Story

December 22nd marks the last chance to see the Laurel Museum's current exhibit, *Stationed in Laurel: Our Civil War Story*. The exhibit includes surprising, and often moving details about the soldiers stationed in Laurel. Many were young men away from home for the first time. Among the soldiers you can meet is Jeremiah Reed, a young man whose photo is displayed in a case. Reed died in Laurel July 10, 1863 when he fell between some cars.

Laurel had at least two Civil War hospitals. Visitors will also see a recreation of nurse "Aunt Becky's" room, and what a local hospital room might have looked like, down to the soup. Many of the artifacts, including letters, a sword, "dog tags" etc. on display are on loan, and once the exhibit closes, they will be returned to their owners. Former Laurel resident Jack Bowen, a

dedicated collector of Laurel-related memorabilia, has generously lent the LHS items for exhibits, including a number of particularly important objects for *Stationed in Laurel: Our Civil War Story*. Mr. Bowen, who lives in Hawaii, was in Laurel November 13th and had a chance to see the exhibit for the first time.



Photo of Jack Bowen by Karen Lubieniecki

Stationed in Laurel: Our Civil War Story runs until December 22, 2013. The Laurel Museum is open Wednesdays and Fridays 10 AM - 2 PM, and Sundays 1 - 4 PM and is free. Visits by school groups and tours over 10 people can be scheduled on other days by appointment. The John Brennan Research Library is open Mondays by appointment. For more information visit laurelhistoricalsociety.org.

ASK THE LHS – NEW COLUMN!

Submit your most burning questions about Laurel to the editor and we will investigate and answer them for you! Please submit to the Laurel Light editor Jeanie Anastasi at jmanastasi@verizon.net.

MEMBER NEWS

Please welcome our newest members:

William J. Ferguson
Kim and Jeff Jones and family
Christy and Ezra Richter and family

We are happy to have you!

Membership Committee

Do you have ideas about how we can make membership in the LHS more meaningful? Contact Membership Chair Mike Boivin at mikeb98159@aol.com or by phone at 301-385-6090. Thank you.

Welcome New Volunteers

Christie Dunne – docent and shop
Lisa Everett – docent and House
Tour Committee

Thank you for volunteering!!!

Volunteers Needed!

The Laurel Museum is in need of volunteers for the second, third and fourth Sundays of each month and the first and third Fridays of each month. On Sundays, volunteers are needed during the hours of 1 pm - 4 pm. On Fridays, volunteers are needed during the hours of 10 am - 2 pm. Volunteer duties include giving tours, answering questions about the Laurel Historical Society and handling gift shop sales. Training is available. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Monica Sturdivant at assist@laurelhistoricalsociety.org or 301-725-7975. Thank you!

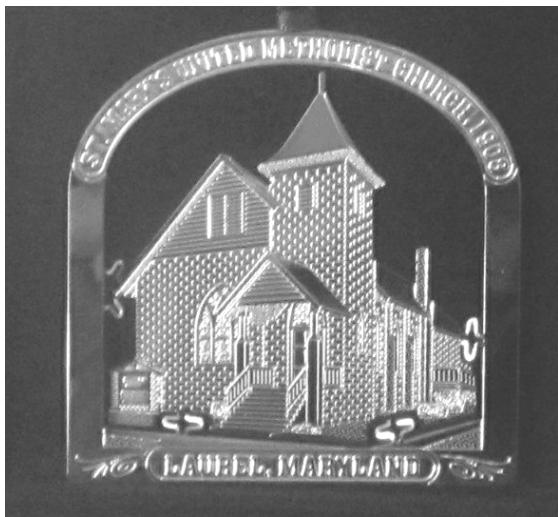
Volunteer Luncheons

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

MUSEUM SHOP NEWS

St. Mark's Ornament Now Available!

The historic St. Mark's UMC Church, this year's holiday ornament, is available now at a cost of \$18. Complete your set of historic Laurel churches! The ornament is the fourth and final ornament in the series of early historic Laurel churches. Other historic church ornaments include St. Mary of the Mills (1843), St. Philips Episcopal Church (1848) and First United Methodist Church (1884).



St. Marks was established in 1890. The traditionally African American Church has played an important role for Laurel's African American community since it's

founding. A history of the church and the Laurel African American community can be found at <http://bit.ly/15vkJfe>. The St. Mark's ornament will be available through the Laurel Historical Society Museum Shop, online, and at select sites around town through the holiday season, including the LHS Open House and the Holiday House Tour December 14th.

The Museum shop has many things available for your own use or to give as gifts. All proceeds benefit the Society and members receive a 10% discount every day. Please visit our Museum shop in person during Museum hours or on line at laurelhistoricalsociety.org/shop.



Children's Corner

See the Civil War exhibit before it closes forever in December! There is great information for students working on school projects and for those budding history buffs in your family. Diven's Den is also set up with children's activities for all ages. The "den" is located on the lower level of the museum. Bring the kids for a tour and some fun!

MY MEMORIES OF LAUREL

LET'S TAKE A WALK PART III

Childhood Memories of Main Street in the 1930s

Submitted by Elizabeth Lee Miles Compton

CONTINUED FROM THE PREVIOUS LAUREL LIGHT...

Now back to the corner of Second and Main Streets to review the homes or businesses on the south side of Main Street. After Morton Marlow's house on the corner was the neat front yard of an elderly couple, Mr. and Mrs. Pilan. Then one of my favorite places to visit, the home of my friend Patricia Gray and her dear mother Delia, a friend of my mother. The Grays lived in a home added to the side of their store. Their store sold magazines, newspapers and sundries and had four duckpin bowling lanes in the rear. There was a pretty garden and a shady porch with plants and comfortable furniture where Pat and I played. Mrs. Gray was a talented, gracious lady and lovely hostess. She and my mother worked together at St. Philip's Church. She gave my mother a colorful baby shower prior to the birth of my sister, Maryland, in 1937. Eleven years later in 1948, she gave me a bridal shower, also in her home with a beautiful three-tiered homemade white cake she designed, baked and decorated with flowers. There were happy memories of places Mrs. Gray took Pat and me. The day after Easter we took our hard boiled eggs to Haines Point in DC and rolled them down a little slope into the Potomac River where gulls scooped them up and flew away. Another ride to Pretty Boy Dam, north of Laurel was a pleasant outing. Years later Mrs. Gray called me to investigate a gift given to the church bazaar. Because of that, I have a cherished

little silver candy dish once belonging to another friend of my mother. Every time I use it, I think of the lovely ladies who were so kind to little girls growing up in Laurel.

Next to the Grays on the east was a narrow alley, then "Spimps" empty storefront. It was a secret but everybody knew it was a "bookie" where one could place racetrack bets. We walked fast by it to Frost's Grocery Store on the southeast corner of Route 1. An incident on its Main Street side delivery door, vivid in my childhood memory, was the arrival of a stalk of bananas. Just resting inside was a huge tarantula, a little sluggish I imagine due to the cold. The creature, new to many, drew a crowd before Mr. Frost pulled the bananas inside out of the view of the local yokels.

We now cross the Boulevard to see the Laurel Drug Store. There were always a few people gathered outside visiting, checking on the happenings at this major intersection of the National Highway and Laurel's activities. Inside the store were curved metal chairs and round tables where one could enjoy an ice cream treat as you waited for a prescription to be filled. All of your pharmacological needs could be met here or at the Maryland Drug Company nearby, south on the Boulevard. Greyhound bus tickets could be purchased for Baltimore or Washington. The Laurel Jewelry Store was next (to the west of the pharmacy) and sold, among many other pretty pieces, the Laurel High School ring. My mother told me she purchased hers there in 1924.

There was a large grocery next door where the rug store is now located.

The next area on the south side of Main Street was the site of the Frosts and other homes that were torn down or moved to make room for the new post office erected in 1937. In this area was the Beall's Department Store that carried many necessities for home and individuals. It was also the gathering place of local gentlemen who sat around the black iron pot belly stove discussing civic affairs and other topics of interest. West of this area was the Laurel Theatre. On its east side was an ice cream store; on the west side the Swaffield Barber Shop. In the middle, with colorful posters on each side was the theatre entrance. The "movies" meant exciting memories of Saturday matinees, news, serials and licorice. The small attractive grocery of Mr. St. Clair was on the corner of Main and C. Street. Its original sign is still in use by the present owner.

Not all of the businesses on Main Street are remembered. Also interspersed along this pathway in each block were private homes with green lawns, shrubbery and trees softening the environment. Barkman's Flower Shop was in the next block. They sold greeting cards, gifts and beautiful blossoms. They were one of the seven Charter Members of the Laurel Chamber of Commerce. Their daughter Jean was a high school classmate and friend with whom I communicated all her life. She was the Godmother to our younger son, Peter. All of the Barkman family members have been good citizens of Laurel.

The Citizens National Bank, built in 1890 on the corner of Main and Fourth Streets, was one of Laurel's notable establishments. I remember the many high stone steps with metal railings at

the truncated entrance. They led inside to the teller's window surrounded by light green-tinted, bullet proof glass. To a child it was an interesting journey to visit an uncle who was beginning his 40 years of employment with the Citizens National Bank. They kept his job open for him while he served in the Army during WWII as many employers did. He retired as Vice President. To the left of the entrance were the beveled double glass doors to the Board Room. During the enlarging of the bank the doors were removed and were not used in the new space. One was stored in the basement of the Laurel Furniture Company across the street. The other was placed in the basement of 612 Main Street. Twenty years later when we built a home at the intersection of Route 216 and Baltimore Avenue we hung the door to bring light into the foyer. As I removed years of green paint to reveal beautiful wood grain I was reminded of its original home.

On the southwest corner of Main and Fourth Streets is the beautiful, Pre-Civil War McCeney home. In the 1930s there was an open field between the McCeney and the Miles homes. Mrs. Lelia McCeney told me years later that when the wind was right she could tell what my grandmother was preparing for dinner at 414 Main. Jim and Bobbi McCeney restored this landmark home which now graces the area. Bobbi, with her landscape skills, has surrounded it with a lovely garden...to be continued.

If you would like to receive the entire *Let's Take a Walk: Childhood Memories of Main Street Laurel, Maryland in the 1930s*, please email, Jeanie Anastasi at jmanastasi@verizon.net.

Laurel Historical Society

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Starting at the \$250 Level

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BECOME A MEMBER

Are you reading this newsletter but not a member? We'd love for you to join!

Membership enables the Society to:

- * Sustain the Laurel Museum
- * Research Laurel history
- * Preserve artifacts
- * House a research library
- * Host special children's events
- * Develop educational materials for schools and scout groups

Membership benefits include:

- * Quarterly Newsletter with articles about Laurel history, museum exhibits and programs
- * Member's only events
- * Member's only discount in the museum shop
- * Discounts on LHS events, including our annual gala
- * Contributing to the preservation of Laurel's past and present for future generations

Join today by visiting
laurelhistoricalsociety.org.



Please consider the LHS in
your Planned Giving. It's
easy. For more information
please contact Lindsey Baker
(301)725-7975.

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Laurel Historical Society Calendar

December 2013 – February 2014

For more information, visit: laurelhistoricalsociedad.org/pages/calendar.htm

November 28, 8:05 AM
Historical Fun Walk for LARS

December 6-8
Holiday Open House
Laurel Museum

December 14, 2-6 PM
Holiday House Tour
Start at the Laurel Museum

December 22
Closing: "Stationed in Laurel:
Our Civil War Story"

January 26, 1:30-4:30PM
Kids Event at the Laurel
Museum

February 9, 1:00-4:00 PM
Exhibit Opening
"Lost and Found in Laurel"