A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Laurel Historical Society has been experimenting. In the spirit of exploring the museum’s role in the community, we asked ourselves what kind of programs might showcase the work we do in a way that is personal and has the greatest impact on our audience. What kind of activities could empower our community to invest in a shared role in preserving and promoting local history? How could we raise awareness of the museum as a center for conversation and information – both historic and contemporary? We spent some time brainstorming and looking at models of innovative programming at other museums both large and small. We then developed a series of activities to experiment with that might help us build toward answering these questions.

Like many small museums, the LHS has limited staff that makes piloting programs a little tricky. For this reason, we decided that field-testing new activities would need to be integrated into programming that was already planned and established. So this fall we’ve been trying new things, adapting approaches to material and incorporating feedback from volunteers, colleagues, board members and our community.

With adult audiences, we designed more interactivity into regularly scheduled monthly programs. On one Friday evening, we engaged participants around artwork in a changing exhibition, asking them first to explore and then respond through a label-writing activity. This activity was a lot of fun, showcased our collective and varying perspectives on the exhibit, and also demystified the art of label writing.

During another evening program, we experimented with a play on “Wait, Wait, Don’t Tell Me” (people seemed to really recognize the name when I mentioned it to them), and asked participants to guess which news headlines from the past were true and which were false. What started out as a light hearted exercise, inspired a deeper conversation about preconceived notions and museums as historical sources, interpretation and citizenry.

With camp and afterschool audiences, we experimented with “making your own exhibit”
activities. Activities are adaptable for varying ages, time constraints and themes but, at their core, they invite kids to explore a topic, identify objects, create artwork, craft labels and produce an exhibit that represents their experiences. Sometimes this means sharing objects from the museum collection that might resonate (for example, old yearbooks from high school) or thinking about kids’ memories and experiences that relate to a larger theme. By bringing youth together around objects, images, and stories, we’re introducing them to museum work and how and why that work can be important and relevant.

Lindsey Baker engages kids at Summer Playgrounds

Focusing on activities that expose the work of museum staff and experimenting with what works has great benefits. There are more opportunities for building relationships with our community through new and innovative activities. And this process of focusing on widening the circle regarding the work we do within the Museum benefits both our audience and ourselves. Committing to the team effort, to testing things out, and to taking the time to learn and practice the creative process helps sustain and keep our practice flexible. And by working together and widening the circle, we hope to foster an increased sense of accountability and investment within our community. That kind of relationship building is valuable on so many levels to museums of all sizes, especially small museums. Can we add something specific to the story of Laurel while empowering our community to learn how to tell their own stories? I think we can.

Lindsey Baker

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Having been elected LHS president back in June, I’m glad to have this opportunity to tell you a little about myself. Through my eighth grade year I grew up in the small town of Goldendale, Washington during its “boom” days – its population peaked at around 3,800 souls -- while the John Day Dam was being constructed on the Columbia River. Goldendale is the county seat of Klickitat County, one of the counties bordering the north bank of the Columbia along the stretch where it separates Oregon and Washington. I mention this because that is where I first became interested in community history. I was actually working to fulfill the requirements for the “Citizenship in the Community” merit badge in the Boy Scouts. Our merit badge counselor was the town’s mayor who came from a long lineage of Goldendale residents and had many interesting stories he was more than happy to share. My grandmother was very active in the Klickitat County Historical Society, serving as an officer for many years. She was born in 1896 and, as I vaguely recall now, her father was one of the pioneers who originally settled Goldendale in the mid-1800s (the town was established in 1872).

I have found a lot of similarities between Goldendale and Laurel. Some are obvious, such as each town’s “birth” date (1872 vs. 1870). Of course, I wasn’t around Laurel when it was small like Goldendale, but in the Baltimore-Washington region Laurel has that small town feeling that I remember growing up with as a kid in Goldendale. I’ve often heard that “everyone knows everyone” in Laurel. Well, in Goldendale that was even truer than it is here. I couldn’t misbehave as a child without my mom hearing about it long before I got home that day! Both my mom and my step-dad had grown up in and around Goldendale as well.

From Goldendale we moved down river to Vancouver WA, which is where I went to high
school. My first trip east of the Rocky Mountains, and my first ever airplane ride, came as I headed to the Naval Academy for college three weeks after high school graduation. That is what eventually led me to Laurel (another story for another time).

Of course, as a kid I never would have predicted I would leave the Pacific Northwest, let alone settle in an East Coast location. Falling in love with a local girl, however, tends to impact those kinds of decisions! After moving around the country a bit with the Navy, we came here in 1987 when I received orders to a command in Suitland, not even suspecting then that Laurel would be our forever home. So, here we are!

Thanks for electing me as your president. I look forward to many good times working with lots of good people to keep the LHS moving forward.

Steve Hubbard

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

We are close to ending another year – how quickly they pass us by. As we end 2014, I just want to thank a few folks. First, the thousands who visit the Museum and attend our programs; the rest of us would not be needed without them. They are the beneficiaries of the understanding and preservation of the history and cultural heritage of Laurel. Next, our wonderful volunteers; they spread our message and do so much more. And of course I thank our supporters, families and businesses who obviously have trust in us. Additionally our Board of Directors past and present; all experts in something that allow us to learn and guide the organization. And finally our tireless staff -- both of them. They could hardly put more effort into what we ask of them and we are so proud to have them. To all, the very best wishes for a wonderful 2015.

Jim McCeney

BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE

LHS Board meetings are held the 4th Thursday of each January, April, July, and October. The next meeting is January 22, 2015. Members are welcome to attend. They are held in the Pool Meeting Room at 7:30 PM.

MUSEUM NEWS

The LHS has formed a group of volunteers to begin recording oral histories of Laurelites. Oral histories are a valuable way to capture first person accounts of life in Laurel. If anyone is interested in helping please contact Amy Junewick at amyjunewick@gmail.com

Now available in the Library for genealogy research are three volumes titled "Freedom & Slavery Documents of the District of Columbia". These include the years 1792 to 1822 and are a record of bills of sale, certificates of freedom, certificates of slavery, emancipations and manumissions recorded in the District.

The Lost and Found Laurel exhibit runs until December 21, 2014. 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 and by appointment. For more information visit laurelhistoricalsociety.org.

CHILDREN’S CORNER

We are planning some big changes to Diven’s Den. Stay tuned through the winter to learn more about the exciting new plans!
TASTE OF LAUREL A HUGE SUCCESS!

Thank you to each and every one of our volunteers who made the annual Taste of Laurel such a huge success.

We had about 225 people, and with 130 of them coming in the first 30 minutes, it was quite a rush. We saw many new faces and lots of smiling returning ones as well. We would like to thank our “TASTY” vendors:

Cakes Plus
Curry Leaf
Mango's
Oliver’s
Olive on Main
Tampico

Please patronize our participants!

Many thanks to our Taste of Laurel sponsor Main Street Pharmacy!

Museum shop News

The 2014 ornament is in and on sale in the Museum gift shop! This wonderful depiction of our current exhibit Lost and Found Laurel was designed by Richard Friend and Marlene Frazier and depicts many iconic lost Laurel businesses. Add this wonderful ornament to your collection. Include all of our ornaments on your tree, or highlight on a smaller tree and display your Laurel pride.

The shop also now features a number of thematic packages. Looking for that perfect gift for someone from your church? Come by and pick up the St. Mary’s package? Thinking you’d like a unique gift for someone who loves Laurel? Come check out our Lost Laurel packages.

Stop and shop during Museum hours or shop online for extended access. Mark your calendars for our expanded hours December 5th thru the 7th for the Holiday Open House.
Volunteers Needed!

The Laurel Museum is in need of volunteers for Sundays, 1 PM - 4 PM and Fridays, 10 AM - 2 PM. Volunteers greet visitors, give tours and assist with gift shop sales. Training is provided. For more information, please contact Monica at assist@laurelhistoricalsociety.org or 301-725-7975.

Volunteer Luncheons

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

CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS

Pick Your LHS Game Up—If you’re ready.
Per usual, the LHS has been shaking things up here on our end of Main Street. Because we’re doing so much, we’re always in need of brave souls willing to join us in the battle to preserve and promote Laurel’s history and culture.

Well... maybe it’s not as serious as a battle, but we do need a couple more hands on deck. Have you ever thought how you might be able to help? (Or maybe you’re wondering now?) Consider this: the LHS has a role for everyone. Really, everyone.

Do you like the challenge of talking to people you’ve never met before about super exciting exhibits? Then maybe you’re up for being a docent of our annually changing exhibits. Are you comfortable in front of a large crowd? Do you like the challenge of engaging people in a topic they might otherwise assume isn’t for them? Then you’d probably make a great volunteer to help do the LHS song and dance in front of adoring crowds of summer campers, school kids, and wine tasting participants.

Do you prefer to be behind the scenes and learn as much as you can about Laurel’s history? Our research library has had a real increase in research requests since the acquisition of the Laurel Leaders and this might be the role just for you. We could go on, but we won’t. Because we’re sure you’re already convinced to join us in this fight...right?

In all seriousness, if you’re interested in learning more about volunteering with the LHS, mark your calendars for January 25, 2015. January 25 will be the official Pick Your Game Up for the LHS Day, requisite with some wonderful training sessions by experts in the field. If you think you’re ready to join in on the fun as we shake things up in Laurel, be there.

MEMBER NEWS

Members are the life line of our organization. If you have not yet joined, please do so today! Also please consider becoming a Life Member. Many of your friends and neighbors have done so and their dedication is much appreciated.

Please welcome our new members:
Christopher Casula
Jim and Laurel Cross
Maureen Johnson
Stuart Kohn
Virginia Reeves
We are happy to have you!

Please welcome our new volunteer:
Anna Raybits
Thank you for volunteering!!
If you haven’t had a chance to read *Gertie* by Faye Green and you live in Laurel, then chances are that you’ve heard about the book. Locals seem inspired by the fictional story of the first divorced woman in Laurel, but they are just as intrigued by the setting of the book. *Gertie* is set in Laurel and many of the places mentioned are very familiar to Laurel residents. The story begins in the year 1909 and ends in 1946. When I read the book, I had very vivid images of Laurel, but mine came from looking at the photos taken by Bert Sadler (1875-1963), a Laurel resident whose photos have been the focus of several exhibits at the Laurel Museum. I recently had a chance to talk with Faye Green at the museum and show her some of the photos. “I like to tell a story and embed truth and history within it,” she told me as she flipped through printed images of the Sadler plates. Although the book is a work of fiction, she wanted to write about streets and places that she knows. Alison Gertrude Watts Beall, Green’s grandmother, was the inspiration for the book and *Gertie* is dedicated to her. “She became involved with veterans and Fort Meade in World War II and continued that her whole life until she passed away in 1972.” Green wrote this book to honor her and her service to veterans. The author was born and raised in Laurel and she currently lives in Middletown, Delaware. She told me that she is thrilled about the response to the book and she is especially happy that people are reading the story in Laurel.

Although *Gertie* is inspired by Faye Green’s grandmother, it is not her grandmother’s story. The character Gertie is a divorced woman during the early 1900s. In those days, even if people were aware that a wife was being abused by her husband, divorce carried a huge stigma. The author paints a pretty vivid picture of what it may have been like for a woman to be ostracized by an entire town.

“I love the classics,” Green said when I asked her about what writing mostly influences her work. Green was born and raised in Laurel, she worked for Prince George’s County School System and Department of Defense and she has been writing most of her life. “After I retired and became more serious about my writing, I visited the classics again.” She loves Charles Dickens, Jane Austen and Edgar Allan Poe.

One message that Green wants readers to take away is that we can never thank our veterans enough for their service. “…one person can do something…one little person…one little woman can do something and make a difference.” The other message is about the strength of family and the significance of family support. “There are always times in people’s lives when all you have is your family to support you.”

To meet Faye Green and hear more about *Gertie* and what inspires her to write, please come to her book talk on Sunday, December 7th at 12 PM in the Laurel Municipal Pool Room. For more information please visit laurelhistoricalsociety.org, email info@laurelhistoricalsociety.org or call 301-725-7975.
We are including recipes in the The Laurel Light, originally submitted by local residents for an unpublished cookbook. Each recipe includes a brief history or interesting facts associated with the origin of the recipe. If you would like to donate for future issues please email your recipes and stories to Jeanie Anastasi at jmanastasi@verizon.net.

Cajun Shrimp Appetizer
Contributed by Kathy Peterson

When I first moved to Laurel, I was invited to the infamous “Epiphany” parties. These parties are held in the “Old Town” section of Laurel. Each person invited brings a dish to share. The host of the party prepares a cake, and places a baby inside. At the end of the party, the cake is served, and whoever gets the baby hosts the next party. This recipe was one of the first ones I took to a party.

Ingredients:
4 quarts of water
1 large lemon sliced
5 pounds peeled, cleaned large fresh shrimp
1 cup vegetable or light olive oil
¼ cup hot sauce
1 Tab minced garlic
1 ½ tsp seafood seasoning
1 ½ tsp dried whole basil
1 ½ tsp dried whole oregano
1 ½ tsp dried whole thyme
1 ½ tsp minced fresh parsley
Leaf lettuce (for garnish)

Directions:
1. Bring water and lemon to a boil.
2. Add shrimp and cook 3 to 5 minutes
3. Drain well and rinse with cold water; place in large bowl.
4. Combine remaining ingredients, except lettuce; beat with a whisk.
5. Pour over shrimp and toss.
6. Cover and chill for 8 hours.
7. Drain shrimp and serve in a lettuce-lined bowl.

This recipe can be doubled or halved but cannot be frozen. Enjoy!
PSALM 23 WINDOW AND DEDICATION IN POE CHAPEL

On September 21st, the congregation of First United Methodist Church, as well as the current and previous pastor and family and friends gathered together for the dedication of The Poe Chapel and stained glass window depicting Psalm 23. The service was followed by a luncheon where Miss Gertrude Poe greeted guests in her typical fashion.

The following is excerpted from the information received by this writer at the event and from FUMC website; used with permission:

The newly established Poe Endowment Fund at First United Methodist Church of Laurel is supporting the Poe Chapel and Parlor that will provide an intimate gathering place for spiritual events and personal reflection. The chapel also will pay tribute to the history of Methodism in the Greater Laurel area. As part of this Chapel, a stained glass window depicting Psalm 23 is being installed.

The Poe family has been a part of this church community for over 100 years. The dedication will include a celebration of the 99th birthday of Gertrude L. Poe, who is still a member of this congregation. The Poe Endowment and Poe Chapel are made possible by generous donations from the family of lifelong member Gertrude L. Poe and her late sisters and parents who were all members of the church: Myrtle Poe Donaldson, Margaret Poe Vogts, Ruby Poe King, and Verna Poe, and her parents Bertha Frances Gore and Worthy Gibson Poe.

The Poe family moved to Laurel in 1927 and began worshiping at the then-Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church on Main Street in Laurel. “The Poe Sisters” dedicated their life to working in various capacities, committees and fundraisers for the FUMC as well as making it their spiritual home. At the time of Margaret Poe Vogts and Myrtle Poe Donaldson’s deaths in 1997 and 1998 respectively they were the longest-lived members of FUMC. Gertrude L. Poe is currently the longest-living active member of FUMC of Laurel.

In her autobiography, “Lady Editor,” Gertrude L. Poe writes:

“I take pride in the involvement of the Poe family in the history of this church, and I thank God for the spiritual influence it had in my life. I call it ‘my church’ for good reason. Funds given in memory of my sister Ruby were used to purchase the fountain shown here, and I redecorated the church parlor in memory of my sister Margaret. My sister Myrtle’s memorial funds are still in escrow awaiting specific use.” (Excerpt from page 255.)
On April 25, 1999 Gertrude Poe was joined by about 100 members of FUMCL to dedicate the site of the first Methodist Church as well as the first church office, in Laurel, known as “the Old Stone Church.” The building was built in 1842. It no longer exists, but Miss Poe commissioned Dr. Richard Compton to do an oil painting of it that now hangs in the Poe Chapel. Also dedicated was a plaque designating the nearby 1830 building where Methodism in Laurel was founded in 1840. The historical markers were a personal project of Miss Poe.

Gertrude played a significant role in the creation of the memorial brick garden and renovations to the church over the past 75 years. Myrtle was active in many organizations at FUMCL and her daughter, Joyce Ann, attended Sunday school here. Margaret was a leader on many fronts and a founding member of The Keystone Club, very active in the Altar Committee at FUMCL and chairman of the 150th Anniversary Celebration in 1991. A fountain in the lobby of FUMCL was given in memory of Ruby and the involvement of her family at the church. Jo and Jackie grew up attending Sunday School at FUMCL. Jackie and Jack Ryder were married here in 1954.

Family members involved in the establishment of the Poe Endowment Fund and the transformation of the parlor to the chapel include: Gertrude L. Poe, Joanne King Rodgers, Jacqueline King Ryder and John H. Ryder, Joyce Ann Donaldson Burk and Vicci Rodgers.

Visitors to the Museum that Sunday were surprised to find one of the first floor galleries transformed into an active workspace filled with individuals working diligently on their laptop computers. The event was promoted and funded by Wikimedia DC, a local non-profit “dedicated to the advancement of general knowledge and the collection, development, and dissemination of educational content under a free license or in the public domain.” Not only did Wikimedia DC provide a grant to fund refreshments for the event, volunteer Wikimedians showed up to train our volunteers on editing Wikipedia and to assist with editing and formatting.

In recognition of the upcoming exhibit, we first created a Wikipedia page for the Laurel Leader, providing information on its history and notable stories it covered. Then, inspired by the important role that Gertrude Poe played in the success of the paper, we created a separate page for the venerable former editor. At the first LHS Wikipedia edit-a-thon in 2013, participants created pages for the Laurel Mill, Patuxent Iron Works, Laurel Sanitarium, and former Mayor Edward Phelps. Additionally, about a dozen existing articles were updated or linked to the new articles.

Contributing material to Wikipedia is important for the LHS because the increase of material related to Laurel online can greatly enhance the presence of the city, and in turn the Museum, to a massive audience. Wikipedia is one of the ten most visited websites in the world, and by far the largest free online encyclopedia. These contributions are an easy way to make a significant impact on a potentially huge public.

If you are interested in contributing to Wikipedia, let us know and we would be glad to help you. The LHS includes many local historians and many content area experts who could make great additions to the world’s knowledge. If you want to check out (or enhance!) any of the pages created during Laurel Historical Society Wikipedia edit-a-thons, visit any of the following links below.

**GETTING HISTORY OF LAUREL RIGHT ON WIKIPEDIA**

As the LHS continues to fulfill one of its guiding principles of striving to reach new and diverse audiences, we have increased our attention on digital outreach. On September 21st that effort took the form of our second Wikipedia edit-a-thon, where a group of LHS staff and volunteers joined representatives from Wikimedia DC to create and edit Wikipedia pages related to the city’s history.
Hopefully we’ll see you at our next Wikipedia editing event!

Abram Fox (Abram is the Vice President of the LHS)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laurel_Leader
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gertrude_Poe
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laurel_Mill
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patuxent_Iron_Works
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laurel_Sanitarium

Do You Have Laurel Yearbooks?

We would love to have a complete collection of Laurel school yearbooks digitized for public use. If you have a copy of any of those listed, we would love to add it to our Library. If you do not wish to donate your yearbook, it can be scanned and returned to you in the same condition that it is received.

The missing yearbooks are:

Laurel High School: Any before 1927 (except 1924); 1928; 1929; 1931 to 1943; 1949; 1971; 1979; 1982; 1984; 1989 and 1994 to present day.

Laurel Junior High: Any before 1966; 1968; 1981

Laurel Elementary School: Any except 1964

Eisenhower Middle School: 1983 to present day

Martin Luther King: 1991 to present day

St. Vincent Pallotti High School: Any before 1983; 1990 to present day

St. Mildred’s Academy: Any except 1940 & 1949

St. Mary of the Mills: inception to present day

To arrange to drop off your yearbooks, please email info@laurelhistoricalsociety.org.

DID YOU KNOW?

Oliver’s at 531 Main Street was originally a trolley station. This building, originally the Washington and Berwyn Electric Railroad Station, was the northern terminus of an electric trolley system that ran from Laurel to Washington, DC. The southern terminus of the trolley was G Street near the US Treasury Building. The railroad operated from 1902 to 1925 and many “Laurelites” used the trolley to commute to work in Washington. Service was on the half hour, with the trolley making several stops on the one-hour trip to DC. The fare was 20 cents. In 1937, the building was rotated 90 degrees to make the longer side parallel with Main Street. It has been a popular tavern for many years. Check it out!

Join Us!

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

Membership enables the LHS 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.
BECOME A PART OF LAUREL HISTORY!
Purchase a personalized sidewalk brick and literally become a part of Laurel’s history!!
A Laurel Museum brick is the perfect way to celebrate your children, parents, grandparents or other family members. Businesses can also show their support and ensure that their involvement and support of the Laurel community will be remembered. You may purchase on line by visiting laurelhistoricalsociety.org or by calling 301-725-7975. Already have a brick? Purchase another and ensure that you and your loved ones continue to be on Laurel’s historical path!

Laurel Historical Society
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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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Jean Wilson, Director Emeritus

Laurel Historical Society Calendar
December 2014 – January 2015
For more information visit laurelhistoricalsociety.org

NOVEMBER 28th
Wreath Pre-Order Deadline
Laurel Museum

DECEMBER 5th – 7th
Holiday Open House
Friday and Saturday 10 AM – 2 PM
Sunday 1 PM – 4 PM
Laurel Museum

DECEMBER 7th
GERTIE by Faye Green
Talk about the Book
Laurel Pool Room

DECEMBER 21st
Last day for exhibit!! 1 PM – 4 PM
Laurel Museum

JANUARY 25th
Docent Training
Laurel Museum

Stay Tuned...

Volunteer Appreciation Event in January

Exhibit Opening in February