



# The Laurel Light

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The Laurel Light  
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## News and History from the Laurel Historical Society

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

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### **A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD**

We are approaching the end of the year when non-profits turn their attention to that all-important fundraising season. We held our first "Friendraiser" reception in October with seven local business people – two prior donors and five unfamiliar with the LHS. We think it was a success and we will find out for sure over the next few months. We know that the LHS can provide value to businesses; we just have to get the message across to them.

It will not be too long before we will write to you asking for your support. We do our very best to see that we use contributions wisely. Without contributions from individual members and businesses we cannot continue the many worthwhile educational programs and exhibits that we believe have nurtured over the years. We are proud of what we have been doing and we hope you recognize the value that we bring to the community. Thank you for the trust and confidence you have shown the LHS. We hope that you will continue to support us.

James B. McCeney, Chairman of the Board

### **BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE**

LHS Board meetings are held the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of each January, April, July, and October. The next meeting is January 21, 2010. Members are most welcome to attend Board meetings. They are held in the Pool Meeting Room at 7:30 PM.

### **A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

One of the most interesting aspects of my job is convincing people to support the Laurel Historical Society, Inc. The support I seek comes from many different sources—local businesses donating food, volunteers donating time, members donating to the annual appeal, and more. For these people, it is usually a pretty easy sell. They have heard of us, they like us, and they know how important we are to the community.

Another source I have to approach is granting organizations. Granting organizations come in all shapes and sizes, with all types of conditions, matching requirements, and other hoops to jump through. Members of our Board of Directors often work with me to seek out grants that fit our needs. We look to organizations such as the Maryland Historical Trust, the Prince George's

County Council, the Maryland Humanities Council, and Preservation Maryland to fund our programs, exhibits, and if we're lucky, our daily functioning of the museum. Oftentimes these granting agencies don't know quite as much about us as other people who we look to for support. Therefore, we must work harder to tell them about the LHS and the work that we do, and to quantify our impact on the community.

For me, at times, this task is daunting. If all I saw were numbers, I might have an easier time thinking of our members and our visitors as mere statistics. But because I am often on the front line in the museum, discussing exhibits with a group of special needs visitors or explaining different cultures' traditions for the New Year during a children's program, I have a hard time switching gears and thinking about the smiling and interested faces as mere numbers.

That said, it *is* important to quantify our impact. It is important to realize who we serve well, who we serve poorly, and how we can serve even more people better. Granting organizations force us to think about this. They also force us to think about why we are important—why we deserve the funds over another small museum down the road. Although I have to work harder to convince granting organizations to support us, in the end it is worth it. The internal evaluation of what we do and who we are is a good thing. I hope we can continue to evaluate the LHS, whether we are asking someone for support or not—for that is the only way we can continue to grow and improve.

Lindsey Baker, Executive Director

## **A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT**

Since this is my first official message as president, I'll try to be brief. The beginning of November marks the end of my third month as president of the Society. As I begin to find my way past the gala committee (that's been my domain for a while...), make my way around to the various committees, attend events, and in general find my niche as the new president, I have been finding myself staring at the museum a lot with a big smile on my face. I am smiling because it reminds me very quickly of the tremendous amount of work and love that has been put into this organization over the years. The sheer amount of volunteer power and commitment that goes into building and maintaining a quality museum and powering a historical society can be quite humbling to stand before. I want to thank all of the volunteers, board members, and past presidents for their part in this process. I am proud to step into line and help to continue the journey. I have an easier job than most before me as I have Lindsey and Monica, who are patient, good humored and work tirelessly every day. The amount of work that goes on "behind the scenes" to keep the LHS functioning is mind-boggling. As the holiday season approaches, please introduce yourself to me at an upcoming event. I'd love to hear how you came to this place, to help fulfill our mission to preserve Laurel's history.

Happy fall,

Jhanna Levin

## MUSEUM NEWS

The exhibit, *Shake, Rattle 'n' Roll: Laurel in the 1950s*, continues until December 18<sup>th</sup>. Please stop in and visit to learn about Laurel in the 1950s. Lindsey Baker has made available a brief history of Laurel and the Mill in different languages! We currently have French, Spanish, Mandarin and Arabic available. If you have the ability to translate our history into additional languages please call the museum. Thank you.

### What's Your Current Story?

We are planning for our next exhibit, tentatively titled, *Snapshots in Time: Our Story 1910/2010* is underway. To make this exhibit a success, we need your stories about life in Laurel in 2010. What members comprise your family, where do you work, what do you enjoy about Laurel, where do you shop, what do you do for recreation, etc. For more details, please visit:

<http://www.laurelhistoricalsociety.org/documents/CallforImagesFlyer.pdf>.

### Museum Shop News



New Ornament available at the Museum Shop

If you are looking for a special Holiday gift, the Museum Shop is the place to go! The 2009 holiday ornament is just in,

featuring the 500 Block of Main Street, circa 1910. It is three-dimensional with a cut-out of a horse and wagon from the Laurel Bakery which was once on that block. It is a charming addition to our series of ornaments. Newly arrived is the plush, cuddly "Diven Dog", based on one of the museum's most treasured artifacts. He's wearing a t-shirt with the LHS logo. For humans, new polo shirts with the LHS logo are now for sale as well. Special items for the holiday season include vintage 1950's Shiny Brite tree ornaments and vintage bubble lights, as well as "handmade in Maryland" ornaments and gift items. Must-haves for the nostalgic among us! For kids, there is an array of cute stuffed toys, a new selection of books, and toys with a historical theme. For the plant lover, Poinsettias will be available during the Open House in a variety of colors and sizes. The Holiday Open House and Museum Shop hours are as follows:

Friday, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 10AM – 2PM,  
Saturday, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 10 AM – 2PM  
Sunday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1PM – 4PM

Join us to see the Museum decorated in 1950s style, find unique Laurel themed gifts, and purchase the new ornament. You can visit the online shop anytime at [www.laurelhistoricalsociety.org/shop](http://www.laurelhistoricalsociety.org/shop)

### Poinsettia Sale

The LHS is sponsoring a Poinsettia sale to help raise funds for the museum. The poinsettias will be a quality product from Behnke's Nurseries. Pre-orders are due by November 15<sup>th</sup> and you will be given \$2 discount per plant. The poinsettias will be available for pick up during the museum's Holiday Open House. Prepaid

orders may be delivered to the museum and credit card orders may be given via phone and email. Don't miss out. They make great gifts!!

### *Holiday House Tour*



The 2009 Holiday House Tour will take place on December 12, 2 PM -6 PM. Discover renovations, additions, and decorations hiding inside beautiful Laurel homes. Tickets are \$15 in advance and \$18 the day of the tour. Call the Museum for details.

### **Children's Corner**

The museum is happy to offer a new interactive space for kids! "Diven's Den" is open during museum hours and provides a number of interactive toys and craft projects as well as independent children's activities. Monica Sturdivant, our own Assistant to the Director, is using her artistic talents to supply creative artwork for the space. And don't forget, our research library is available for children and their parents to research topics of interest related to Laurel History.

The museum's Research Library is open to the public on Mondays 10 AM -12PM. If you are interested in doing research or helping in the research library, please call the museum.



Abram Fox and Friend at Children's Activities

### **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 in the Laurel Museum. Join us!

### **New Genealogy Group Forming**

We are now forming the Laurel Historical Society Genealogy Group and will be holding an organizational meeting December 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM in the Laurel Pool Meeting Room. 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.

### **MEMBERSHIP UPDATE**

Please welcome our new members:  
Janice Clark  
Kristin and Ryan Sullivan  
Anne Wagner

We are happy to have you!

## **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 at

[www.laurelhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.laurelhistoricalsociety.org).

## **VOLUNTEER UPDATE**

Please welcome our newest volunteers:

Lauren Hanna: Summer intern and collections volunteer

Gena Vasaitis: Docent and special events volunteer

Pamela White: Collections volunteer

## **Volunteer Luncheons**

Please consider joining other volunteers for our monthly luncheons at local

restaurants. Dates and times are emailed to volunteers. Call the museum for more information.

## **Got Scraps?**

If anyone has scraps of cotton fabric which can be cut into 12" x 12" squares, please consider donating some to the museum. We use them for a craft for children but have exhausted our supply. We'd appreciate having them cut into squares before receiving them as we use them with children too young to cut fabric.



Board of Director and Executive Committee Chair Jean Wilson and friends

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

Mrs. Eliza Ann Riggins Schaeffer writes "Route 1 used to be a two way street, so if you were going to Washington on either Greyhound or Trailways you stood on the side headed south, and the reverse if you were going to Baltimore (on the side headed north). The drugstore had a counter selling Greyhound tickets, and another store (maybe a newspaper store?) sold the Trailways tickets. Laurel at the time before WWII, had a population of about 3,000. Most people knew each other, so you had to be careful of how you behaved, or someone would 'tell your Mother'."



## **ADAPTIVE REUSE**

### ***FIRM FOUNDATION: A STORY OF SOLID STONES***



The imposing stone structure at 612-614 Main Street in Laurel, Maryland was chosen in 1976 for the first house tour of the Laurel Horizon Society, now the Laurel Historical Society, Inc. because it is an example of adaptive reuse. This twenty-six inch thick, hand-quarried stone walled building, was constructed of granite from a demolished 1840 machine shop located 300 feet east of the present structure. Pig bristle was used to strengthen the mortar in the fifty-foot square building with a two-story center stone interior wall. The history of the stones begins in 1840 when the original Laurel Manufacturing Company machine shop was built to produce and repair machinery for the Laurel Cotton Mill. The original structure was conveyed by Eliza and Elizabeth Snowden to Horace and Louisa Capron in 1848. In 1849, the Caprons deeded the building to A. C. Tiffany and his son George and wife, Anne; daughter Susan was added in 1884. John Whiteside, attorney for Susan (Tiffany) Eaton sold to William and Mary H. Miller and Osmond Tiffany on October 3, 1885. On June 15, 1886, T. Hooper Eaton, as attorney for Miller and Tiffany sold the property to Thomas A. Bond and Augustus Webb. In 1894, in the half-

razed building, stragglers from “Coxey’s Army” occupied the site. The men were Civil War veterans who had walked to Washington, DC to request veteran’s benefits.

And so ends the history of the Laurel Manufacturing Company, afterwards known as the Laurel Machine Company – but not of its stones! The very same granite blocks were reused in 1894 to build a slate-roofed foundry at 612-614 main Street for August Webb by contractor Arthur Nichols. Clifford Graham, a life long resident who lived across the street, remembers playing in the foundation at age six as his father worked for Arthur Nichols. The completed Foundry repaired machinery for the Laurel Mill and others.

By 1903, the Eclipse Rug Weaving Company occupied the building which was managed by George S. Gobbett for owner Mr. Huhn, who lived in Savage. Nine years later, in 1912, the building was used as a warehouse downstairs with apartments above. The site was owned by the Webb family for 36 years, when Lillian Webb sold it in 1930 to Kent Mulliken who leased it to two grocery store owners with apartments above. In the early 1940s, the building lay idle with trees growing from the earthen floor right out of the basement window. Clyde L. Miles, Sr. and his wife Naomi purchased the property and added a concrete basement floor and a rear addition in 1946. They remodeled and established a grocery store on the west side and an ice cream parlor, known as “The Fireside”, on the east side. They also improved the apartments which had fourteen-foot ceilings.

In 1956, "The Fireside" was replaced by Clyde Miles Real Estate. In 1959, the spaces were modified to provide medical offices for J. Richard Compton, MD, Clyde's son-in-law. J. Richard and his wife, Elizabeth Miles Compton, assumed the mortgage in 1961 and developed the west side as additional medical offices. The property remained in the family for 32 years, and had been referred to in the Laurel Leader as "The Miles Building".

From 1958-1978 the stone edifice held happy families living in the apartments upstairs and working in medical offices downstairs. The frame rear addition was an efficiency apartment on the 612 side and medical offices on 614. The 612 first floor was occupied by Dr. J. Richard Compton's Internal Medicine and Gastroenterology offices which were composed of a reception room, physician's office, secretary-nurse's station, three examining rooms, laboratory, x-ray and dark rooms, and a bath. The 614 first floor had a reception room, two secretary-nurse's stations, four physician's offices, and a bath. Upstairs were two apartments, one with three bedrooms, two baths, living room, dining room, breakfast room, enclosed porch and kitchen. The Compton family, Dick, Betty and sons Gregory and Peter occupied this apartment. The second one was the home of Clyde and Naomi Miles, Betty's parents. The ceilings were fourteen feet high so a molding strip was placed fourteen inches from the ceiling from which pictures could be hung to avoid nailing in the stone. The space above the molding strip to the ceiling was painted a shade darker than the side wall to provide a cozier atmosphere. The twenty-six inch deep windowsills were an architectural feature on which art

objects or flower arrangements could be displayed. In the back of the property, there was a garden enclosed by a woven slat wooden fence surrounding a fifty by thirty space with a central lawn. It was anchored with a Magnolia grandiflora and dogwood trees, a leather leaf viburnum, evergreen eleagnus and Korean boxwood along the western border. Several varieties of clematis, perennials, bulbs and berried shrubs provided year round color. The east side parking lot was planted with four trees; a Willow Oak, flowering Cherry, Pin Oak and a Magnolia grandiflora. Left over stones from the 1840s machine shop were placed as a low wall between the walk and parking lot. Existing beautiful, large hemlock trees on west side of the lot balanced the site. When not occupied with office duties or family events the development of the garden was a welcomed project for the family. United States, Maryland and Prince George's County flags were hung on the second floor Main Street side on all holidays.

Gregory and Peter walked to school, Church, the library, the theatre and friends' homes. They played along the Patuxent River nearby, sledged on its slopes and were called home by a bell rung at dinner time. These years on Main Street, during which the Comptons felt an integral part of the Laurel community, hold many spiritually and professionally satisfying life experiences. The story of solid stones continued when in 1978, one granite block from the site was taken across the Patuxent River, just three hundred yards north, to serve as a cornerstone for a new Compton home on the corner of Baltimore Avenue and Route 216.

The property was purchased in 1978 by Charles Haugh, owner of Resource Realty, Inc., who was interested in establishing his offices in an historic building. His son-in-law, Kevin McNulty, who currently serves on the Board of Directors of the LHS will bring the history of the stones of this structure up to date. This is a proven example of adaptive reuse and a tribute to the lasting workmanship of solid stone.

Sources: Maryland Hall of Records  
Laurel Centennial Book  
Conversations noted in the  
1960s with life long  
residents of Laurel;  
Clifford Graham, Nonie  
O'Brien, Thomas Tapscott,  
Carlisle Crooke and Clyde  
L. Miles, Sr.

Submitted by Elizabeth L. Miles  
Compton, Co-Founder and Director,  
Laurel Historical Society Board

***CONTINUATION OF MRS. COMPTON'S  
ARTICLE ON 612-614 MAIN STREET***

Resource Enterprises, Inc. (Formerly Resource Realty, Inc.), a Laurel based commercial real estate development and management company has owned and managed the building since 1978. REI converted all of the available lease space to commercial space and the building does not have any residential tenants. During our ownership, the building has been the home of several general and service oriented businesses. Featured uses have been a day spa, a job recruitment center, a medical office, a weight loss clinic, and several home improvement businesses. Our current

tenants are an eye care business and our real estate office.

The challenges of managing and maintaining a building of such advanced age are different than those associated with most buildings. We truly view the care of this historic building as a labor of love, and we look forward to operating our business inside these stone walls for many years to come.

Kevin J. McNulty  
Senior Vice President, Resource  
Enterprises, Inc.  
Director, Laurel Historical Society Board

**MY MEMORIES OF LAUREL...**

Memories from the McCeney brothers of the Quigley Farm:

"I was very small when we used to visit the Quigleys either on my dad's house calls or on some special occasion. The farm was on Ft. Meade Road, just east of the race track where a car dealership is now I think. It was a fascinating place for little guys, and I remember being very, very cautious moving around the two legged livestock. All the Quigley's were gracious, friendly and seemingly all-knowing to Jim and me." George McCeney

"Their home (the Quigley's) was where they are now building Tischer Acura, next to their present location that George refers to. I believe their Dad worked at the Agricultural Research Station in Beltsville. I liked to go to see them because I could collect eggs from the hen house." Jim McCeney



## **BECOME A PART OF LAUREL HISTORY!**

Celebrate The Laurel Museum and become a part of its history. Purchase a brick on the Laurel Museum Brick Walk and become part of the historical fabric of this 1840s building. 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. Purchase on line at [www.laurelhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.laurelhistoricalsociety.org) or by calling (301)725-7975

## **WITH DEEPEST REGRETS**

We regret to inform the membership of the passing of Claire Bergeron, who died October 20<sup>th</sup> after a long illness. Claire worked alongside Betty Compton and Jane Cole, Society Co-Founders, helping to archive the growing LHS collection while construction was in progress to open the museum. When the museum opened, Claire was the first docent and won the distinction of LHS Volunteer of the Year in 1996. She continued to volunteer until poor health forced her retirement from volunteer work and years of service to the Society. Co-founder, Betty Compton says "Claire's help was invaluable to opening the museum and to operating the museum for several years after it opened". Chris Erdle remembers "She was a loving and thoughtful person with a talent for history and a quiet but intelligent and beautiful way about her. She has always been missed." Our condolences go to Joe, Claire's husband and to the rest of the Bergeron family and friends for their loss.

## **ANNUAL LHS GALA – SPRING 2010**

Coming soon, to a venue near you.....

The annual Laurel Historical Society Gala. Be ready to mark your calendars for late March, early April. Come dance the night way, under the beautiful 1910 Laurel sky.

You are invited to a Comet Party. Haley's Comet, that is! It will be a blast and an out of this world experience. We promise.

Details to follow...

## **THANK YOU**

## **LHS CORPORATE SPONSORS!**



## **SHARE YOUR MEMORIES**

We would love to have your story ideas particularly for the Did You Know and Memories of Laurel sections of the newsletter! Please email The Laurel Light editor, Jeanie Anastasi [jmanastasi@verizon.net](mailto:jmanastasi@verizon.net) with your comments, suggestions or story ideas.



# Laurel Historical Society Calendar

## November 2009 – January 2010

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

*November 8, 1:30 – 3:30 pm*  
Taste of Laurel, Laurel  
Museum

*November 16, 6 pm*  
Members Only Event:  
Genealogy Lecture and Pot  
Luck at Red, Hot and Blue,  
Lower Level

*November 18, 7 pm*  
Book Club Meeting on  
*Revolutionary Road* by  
Richard Yates

*December 4 – 6, times vary*  
Holiday Open House at the  
Museum featuring 1950s  
décor, poinsettia sale and  
NEW Main Street  
Ornament!

*December 12, 2-6 pm*  
Holiday House Tour  
featuring beautiful homes  
and businesses in the City  
of Laurel; start at the  
Museum.

*January 4, 7 pm*  
History's Mysteries Lecture  
at the Savage Library.

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Monica Sturdivant, Assistant to the Director

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