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Images: Exhibit logo, Iron Dog, Bi-lingual menu.

Unpacking Laurel's Past Exhibit Opens February 2, 2020

Laurel, MD....2020 marks the 150th Anniversary of Laurel, Maryland's incorporation. The Laurel Historical Society celebrates this anniversary by presenting some of the best, and many never-before-seen items in its collection. "Unpacking Laurel's Past: 150 Years on Display" opens February 2, 2020 at the Laurel Museum. The often-ordinary exhibited objects tell stories of the people, places, commercial, community, civic and faith-based activities that distinguish Laurel, Maryland throughout its 150 year + history. For example: an iron dog opens a window into to Laurel's manufacturing past. A bi-lingual menu reflects the town's increasing diversity. As part of the effort to encourage all members of the community to visit and enjoy the exhibit, the Introductory Panel will be in English and Spanish, and Spanish versions of the remaining panels and objects will be available. "Unpacking Laurel's Past" is also the first Passport event for the City of Laurel's 150th Anniversary Celebration, and will be the only Passport site where visitors can get their Passport stamped throughout the year.

Each Section Features Unique Objects

The exhibit is divided into sections that focus on a different part of Laurel's story. *Laurel Before 1870* introduces the community before incorporation, and features several of the earliest objects in the Museum's collection including an 1845 Ledger from the Patuxent Manufacturing Company found in the Laurel Museum's walls. *City of Laurel* objects trace the evolution of the community as it incorporated and grew into the town we see today. Objects featured there include a 1972 **Life Magazine** of the George Wallace shooting autographed by George Wallace, and a plaque honoring Ruth Sussman, Laurel's first female council member.

A World War II plane spotter arm band and a 1997 Riverfest poster address both sides of civic involvement in *The Community of Laurel*. *That's Entertainment* visitors can enjoy a bobblehead of Xtra Heat--a champion sprinter honored at Laurel Park, and an antique ruby flashed glass pitcher. Roads, the river and especially the railroad, have played a key role in Laurel's history, as the variety of train tickets from 1887 to the present remind us in *Laurel's Transportation*. An embroidery business at the Avondale Mill used the beautiful patterns on display in the *Business* section. A school bell owned by teacher Alice McCullough highlights the *Grade School Days* and *High School Years* sections. An F stop from a vintage organ at St. Phillip's Episcopal Church and Knights of Columbus sword, scabbard and baldric from 1923 are among the objects that illustrate *Building Faith in Laurel*. In *Home*, visitors will see Maude Marie Phelps' 1922 wedding dress, and something many young folks have never used: a rotary phone.

In addition to illustrated panels and displays, a slide show takes us through Laurel's architectural past and present.

A special section of the exhibit celebrates the 100th and 125th Laurel Anniversary celebrations. Among the special items on display there will be a watch from the 1970 time capsule, buttons and a costume worn for several 100th events by Jean Wilson.

LHS Executive Director Ann Bennett noted

Each object we have on display reflects some part of Laurel's story. Some objects included in the exhibit may make us uncomfortable and remind us that our past is not always perfect – but it is important we include them. Together these objects tell stories of who we were, and who we are. They remind us that we all – residents and visitors alike – continue to play a part in the evolving story of Laurel.

“Unpacking Laurel's Past” will run through December 20, 2020. Admission is Free. The Laurel Museum is located at 817 Main Street, Laurel, Maryland. Hours are Wednesday/Friday 10a.m.-2p.m.; Sunday 1-4p.m. Tour groups by appointment. For more information visit www.laurelhistoricalsociety.org or contact info@laurelhistoricalsociety.org, 301-725-7975. ##