



Winter 2022

NEWSLETTER

P. O. Box 102
Laurel, DE 19956

laureldehistoricalsociety.org

Rosemont (still) Rocks Yuletide

AROUND 1955, Laurel's Nan Fooks Campbell shared a number of local stories with Dr. James E. Marvil, who typed them up and passed on several copies around the community. One of them came to the late Dr. Joseph A. Elliott, whose wife, M.L., gave them to us. Rosemont may, indeed, have been the scene of great festivity during Yuletide 2021, but it wasn't anything new. Long the center of Laurel's social scene, the house and its occupants have seen it all before. As "Miss Nan" put it:

After Governor Mitchell died, Mrs. Mitchell disposed of the house and it was bought by [Mr. and] Mrs. Mesback Elliott who lived out at Elliott's Pond on the old road to Georgetown. A great many people call it "Midnight Thicket." When Elliott took over the house, I heard from [the] family there was a great deal of the Mitchell furniture left in the house and also one old servant remained with Mrs. Elliott. When her grandchildren used to come and visit here, they used to be put to bed at night by this old servant and entertained with stories about the Mitchells. She would always say "now children be good and I'll tell you about the parties that Governor and Mrs. Mitchell had." They would ask who came to the parties and she'd say "the Coopers were here, all the Coopers came and then the Mathias Ralphs came and they all had satin dresses and satin slippers to match their dresses." They'd say, "who else was here?" and she'd say, "of course General Dagworthy came because he was the



Photograph courtesy of Paula Shannon.

uncle of Governor Mitchell—he and Mrs. Dagworthy would come." I was told there was a big trunk in the attic there that contained a lot of these fine dresses and slippers, furs, and fans and chiffons and shawls.

The Laurel Historical Society, over the years, has received a number of Campbell's recollections—some factually documented and others simply passed down by word of mouth. Nonetheless, they all give us a window through which to glimpse another day and time. ❁

— Ned Fowler

Preparing for Yuletide at Rosemont — page 5

Celebrating Yuletide at Rosemont — pages 6–7

IN THIS ISSUE: Nanticoke Indians at Tidewater Park, Upcoming Events, New Members, Yuletide at Rosemont, 100 Years of Laurel School, and more!

President's Corner

by George Denney

2021 was a fantastic year for the Laurel Historical Society thanks to our many volunteers, our board, and our dear friends and members like you.

First, last year's successful Annual Appeal provided us the opportunities to realize the mission of the society (and, by the way, the ongoing 2021-2022 Annual Appeal is off to a great start, having already brought in over \$36,000!). Second, your generosity enabled us to preserve items of significant historical value. Last but not least, our return to events with "Yuletide at Rosemont" made 2021 a memorable and a significant year! Check out a sampling of Paula Shannon's photos of this extremely popular event on pages 6 – 7.

Please plan to attend our annual meeting on January 30, 2022, at Abbott's on Broad Creek. You'll have a great opportunity to meet the board, visit with other members, and learn about the society's extensive collections.

It gives me great pleasure to be able to direct your attention to a *long* list of upcoming events on the back page of this newsletter. More information about events



George Denney and Chef Matt Whaley pose together before "Yuletide at Rosemont" on December 4th. Courtesy of Paula Shannon.

scheduled for the summer and fall will be included in future newsletters.

Finally, please take time to renew your membership for 2022; if you receive this issue in the mail, you'll find a membership form enclosed. Thanks to the many members who have already done so.

Happy 2022! 🍷

Members pitch in at Broad Creek Bike & Brew



Members of the Laurel Historical Society manned a station at Old Christ Church during the annual Broad Creek Bike & Brew on September 25th. Volunteers greeted hundreds of cyclists and distributed snacks and beverages.



ANNUAL MEETING & ELECTION

All are welcome!

The nominating committee is pleased to announce the following slate of candidates for election at the Laurel Historical Society's annual meeting at 2:00 p.m. on January 30, 2022, at Abbott's on Broad Creek:

President.....George Denney
Vice President.....Artez West
Secretary.....Dee Cross
Treasurer.....Doug Marvil

At large:

Woody Disharoon, Norma Jean Fowler, Trina Giles, Matt Parker, Don Phillips, Maggie Proctor, Brian Shannon, Chris Slavens, Brad Spicer, Patrick Vanderslice, and Emily Whaley Spicer.

This year's annual meeting will also feature a presentation about the society's collections.

2021 – 2022 Annual Appeal by the Numbers

As of January 1st, the society's Annual Appeal has brought in over **\$39,000** from more than **40** generous donors. Not one, but two donors have given gifts of **\$10,000!**

We are grateful for each and every contribution. Annual Appeal funds enable the society to operate year after year. They *literally* keep the lights on, and cover countless other expenses, including the production of this newsletter.

The 2021 – 2022 Annual Appeal drive continues. It's never too late to give!



Beverly Warrington Smith poses with a hanging Victorian prism lamp which she donated to the society in 2021. Thank you!

Tidewater Park celebrates Nanticoke heritage

REPRESENTATIVES of the Nanticoke Indian Association offered a ceremonial blessing at the recently constructed Phase 1 of Tidewater Park in north Laurel on October 21st. Local elected officials and community leaders were in attendance.

The nature-themed park is located alongside the north bank of Broad Creek, west of Central Avenue, a site which was prime real estate within the 3,000-acre Nanticoke Indian reservation for most of the 18th century. The reservation established in 1711 encompassed an existing Nanticoke settlement at that time, and much of today's Laurel.

Future phases of the unique park will highlight additional aspects of Nanticoke folklore and culture. ❁



Nanticoke storyteller RagghiRain recounts the creation story of Turtle Island. One of the playground elements is based on that story.



Nanticoke chief Natosha Carmine, right, and spiritual leader Herman Jackson lead the blessing ceremony.



Members of the Laurel community and guests watch RagghiRain tell the story of Turtle Island.



An aerial view of the first phase of Tidewater Park. "Turtle Island" and "How the Beaver Got Its Tail." All photos and captions courtesy of Lee Ann Walling.

Preparing for Yuletide at Rosemont

by Maggie Proctor

ONE OF THE BEST THINGS about living in a small town is the spirit of cooperation that surrounds any project that needs to be done. An example of that coming together occurred on Saturday, November 20, at Rosemont, 121 Delaware Avenue, Laurel. Although the property is full of signs of restoration, most of the enthusiasm regarding Rosemont centers on its potential, what is dreamed of for the future. But with Yuletide at Rosemont looming in two weeks, the time had come to concentrate on the present and give the *“grande dame”* a final polish.

Volunteers assembled at Rosemont from many segments of Laurel society. As expected, there were Laurel Historical Society and Laurel Redevelopment Corporation board members, as well as other past frequent helpers. There were folks new to Laurel, some of whom lived within walking distance of Rosemont. There were

other helpers who lived nearby but outside of Laurel. All of these people assembled in Laurel on November 20 to do whatever needed to be done to help Rosemont.

Most impressive was the turnout of almost the entire Laurel High School boys’ basketball team. Included in the hard-working group were:

Elijah Foreman, Khalid Burton, Jamari Holden, Nifere Griffen, Frank Green, Cade Vanderslice, Conner Scye, Tyronn Kane, Deshawn Copes, Azante Lofland, Terez Dickerson, Phil Doughty, and Keishaun Copes; Kevin Walmsley (C), Joe Wenke (AC), Patrick Vanderslice (AC).

Although the basketball team was located outside for most of the morning, the rest of the volunteers gravitated to the jobs that needed to be done, inside and out. Outdoors chores included raking, clearing leaves and ground cover, as well as clamshell walkway and sidewalk maintenance. Inside workers dusted china and artwork, sorted donated antique toys and photographs, and swept floors. Truly something for everyone.

As the morning drew to a close, there were some group photographs taken, and many promises to return if Rosemont would need any volunteers in the future. Since the restoration of Rosemont is a work in progress, we are sure there will be many such opportunities. 🍁



Top: The gang poses in front of Rosemont. Bottom, left to right: Debbie McElroy, Ned Fowler, Austin Messick, and Tavar Wilson. Photos courtesy of Paula Shannon.

Celebrating Yuletide at Rosemont

ON THE EVENING of December 4th, Rosemont blazed like a beacon on a hill, illuminated from within and without, light pouring from every window into the cold night, beckoning to guests as they approached the venerable columned mansion.

Not since the days of the Mitchells or Collinses had the grand old house been the scene of such merrymaking. By 5:30—thirty minutes into the four-hour event—every room was full of smiling faces. Guests snacked from tables loaded with enough cheese, charcuterie, and the like to have provisioned General Nathaniel Mitchell's army, but the real treat was the regular appearance of servers bearing trays of Chef Matt Whaley's culinary

gems, including roasted scallops, Wild Ass Pony Oysters (Chincoteague), Old El Paso miniature tacos, chicken & dumplings, whoopie pies, and Chocolate Cremeux, among other delights.

Ben Parker was kept busy tending a well-stocked bar, while Tom and Joe Baione played luxuriously jazzy Christmas tunes. The house had been elegantly decorated for the holidays under the direction of Karen Pugh, and many important local artifacts and photographs were on display in each room.

The most frequently overheard comment was, without a doubt, "We should do this *every* year!" ❁





*All photos courtesy of
Paula Shannon.*

Cap Off a Great Year With a Gift to the Annual Appeal

by Don Phillips

IN LAST FALL'S NEWSLETTER, my "ask" for support of the Laurel Historical Society's Annual Appeal was really a call for rededication to *all* of our organization's bold and ambitious new projects and initiatives. We had ground to make up for the pause Covid forced upon us. We had brave new challenges imposed upon us in our new partnership with the Laurel Redevelopment Corporation in ensuring the Rosemont joint development and restoration project enjoyed a vibrant start. We had to protect and fund all of our traditional responsibilities and programs even with all of the financial uncertainties and challenges of the post-Covid economy, even as we geared up to meet the expanded goals we set for ourselves. And finally, we needed to renew and expand our volunteer-base and leadership ranks.

We staged Yuletide at Rosemont, a fundraiser (and image raiser) that sets us on the way toward a new level of community leadership and financial sponsorship, and we are now working toward a record of Annual Appeal

giving. We are implementing a new level of governmental aid and grant requests, and our planning for financial gifting is working toward a multi-year consistency as we expand our circle of friends and supporters.

Add these successes to greater volunteer, service, and leadership building levels, and you can see where the Laurel Historical Society is about to cap its greatest year ever!

Don't forget!

If you are of an age and taking distributions from your IRA, it may be advantageous to make before-tax gifts directly from your IRA to the society.

Check with your tax consultant for details.

Remember, in my article last fall, the most important point was that we as a society need to consistently demonstrate our willingness to donate our own service, our own leadership, our own financial generosity, before we can earn the help and sponsorship of others. Please do your part if you haven't already done so! 🌸

Free Money Available!

amazonsmile
You shop. Amazon gives.

A little-known and nearly effortless way to support the Laurel Historical Society is to shop on Amazon—something most of us already do all the time. Through its easy-to-use AmazonSmile program, the online retailer donates a small percentage of eligible purchases to the nonprofit organization of the shopper's choice. You can ensure that your future purchases benefit the society by completing three steps:

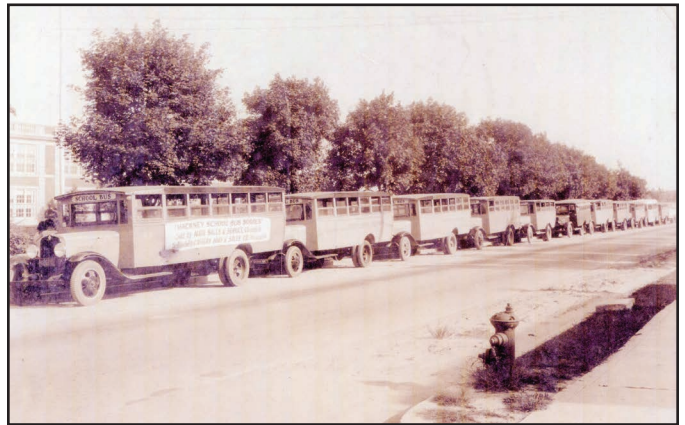
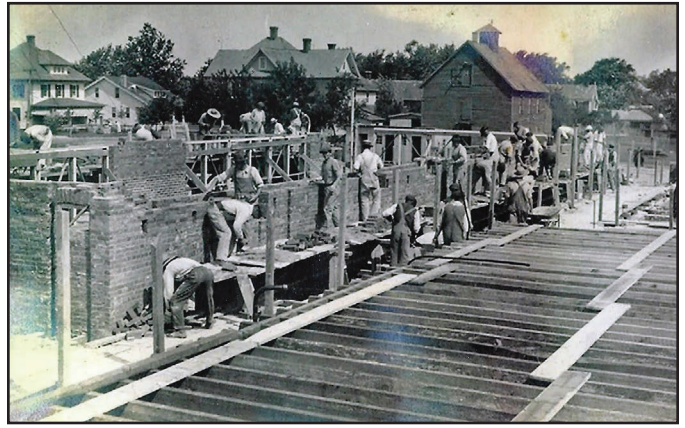
1. Go to **smile.amazon.com** and log into your existing Amazon account.
2. Go to Your Account and, under Settings, click on "Your AmazonSmile."
3. Add a charity. Search for the Laurel Historical Society and select "Laurel Historical Society Inc, Laurel, DE" from the list of options. Amazon will save your choice.

Note: You must shop at smile.amazon.com to participate in the program. Purchases made on Amazon's main site will not result in a contribution.

LAUREL SCHOOL

1921 - 2021

Thanks for the memories!



Daughters of the American Revolution honor Laurel's Nathaniel Mitchell

CAROL EVANS, regent of the Major Nathaniel Mitchell Chapter, Daughters of The American Revolution, places a wreath at the grave of the chapter's namesake at Old Christ Church, Laurel, on December 18, 2021. Part of the Wreaths Across America project, this pays tribute to our country's patriots, such as Laurel's Nathaniel Mitchell of Rosemont. Mitchell served in the Continental Army, wintered with Washington at Valley Forge, was taken prisoner during the siege of Petersburg, and released after the British defeat at Yorktown. He served as a delegate to the Continental Congress between 1786 and 1788 and as governor of Delaware from 1805 to 1808. ❀



Gravestones Cleaned



HAVE YOU NOTICED something new (but old) at the corner of Delaware Avenue and Culver Drive? Society friend Jerry McTernan of Delmar has recently given a "facelift" to the old tombstones there. Barely readable, their "spirits" have now been renewed, thanks to a sensitive cleaning. The five remaining stones, the earliest dated 1815, are all that remain from the Broad Creek Presbyterian Church (built in 1791). ❀

Welcome our new members:

Wade Moore

Delores Springer

Chris Calio

Scott Townsend

Barbara Joseph

Bob Bethards



Old News

From the *Morning News* (Wilmington, Del.),
January 7, 1904:

From the *Baltimore Sun* (Baltimore, Md.),
January 22, 1904:

TROUBLE OVER GAME

Fine Recovered by Force From Officers in the Store of George Wiley, a Laurel Merchant.

Special to "The Morning News."

LAUREL, Del., Jan. 6.—Armed with a search warrant, Game Warden N. H. Hutchins of Dover, and Constable Brown of Seaford, entered the store of George Wiley, a prominent merchant here, for the purpose of searching for game. The possession of which would be illegal. Wiley admitted having sold three rabbits yesterday which Hutchins had confiscated from the purchaser and readily agreed to pay the fine of \$19.

His wife, however, could not view it in this light and slipped outside and returned in a few moments with William Stewart, locking the door. Stewart lost no time in mauling the officers and recovered the fine and also the legal papers which they possessed. These were immediately passed to Mrs. Wiley who stood guard at the door and after pocketing the money she tossed the papers in the stove. Mr. Hutchins was rendered helpless by a crippled hand and being unarmed could not interfere.

TWO TOWNS ARE AT WAR

Rivalry Between Laurel And Seaford Leads To Resisting Officers.

[Special Dispatch to the Baltimore Sun.]

LAUREL, DEL., Jan. 21.—The stores of George Wiley and William Stewart here are surrounded by a large crowd of their friends who will try to prevent officers from taking them to Seaford to answer a charge before a magistrate there.

Anticipating trouble, the Sheriff of Sussex county may be appealed to. It was proposed to take the two merchants to Seaford at once for trial, but the hot-headed people in the crowd here say that the officers will have to carry the Laurel men if they want to move them.

There is much rivalry existing between some of the people of Seaford and Laurel.

The climax was reached this morning when Officer Warrington and four deputies came here to take Wiley, his wife and Stewart, well-known merchants, to Seaford, charged with robbing and threatening to kill Constable Brown and Detective Hutchins, who came here last week to take them to Seaford, charged with violating the game laws.

Both communities fear trouble unless the Sheriff interferes.

Retrieved from newspapers.com.

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A big thank-you to Jared Allen, owner of JA Pressure Washing, for pressure washing the train station.



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• UPCOMING EVENTS •

January 5th	•	Work Wednesday	•	Train Station	•	8:00 a.m.
January 12th	•	Work Wednesday	•	Train Station	•	8:00 a.m.
January 19th	•	Work Wednesday	•	Cook House	•	8:00 a.m.
January 26th	•	Work Wednesday	•	Cook House	•	8:00 a.m.
January 27th	•	Life in Laurel <i>Informal Roundtable Chat</i>	•	Rosemont	•	10:30 a.m.
January 30th	•	Annual Meeting <i>All members welcome!</i>	•	Abbott's on Broad Creek	•	2:00 p.m.
February	•	Nostalgia Night African-American Heritage	•	St. Matthew's — 32129 Wolfe Street	•	<i>to be announced</i>
February 17th	•	Life in Laurel	•	Rosemont	•	10:30 a.m.
March 17th	•	Life in Laurel	•	Rosemont	•	10:30 a.m.
March 19th	•	The Kendal T. Jones Inaugural Lecture & Dinner	•	St. Philip's	•	6:30 p.m.
April 9th	•	Walking Tour of Central Ave	•	Park at 6th & Central	•	10:00 a.m.
April 21st	•	Life in Laurel	•	Rosemont	•	10:30 a.m.
May 1st	•	All Museums Re-open!	•	Rosemont, Hitchens, Cook, Train Station	•	1 – 4 p.m.

. . . and many more!

**It's time to
renew your
membership!**

Please complete and mail in the enclosed membership renewal form.*

Forms are also available online at
laureldehistoricalsociety.org

*Excluding lifetime members.