



Spring 2020

NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 102
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laureldehistoricalsociety.org



Cover image: View of Poplar Street looking south from the water tower which once stood across Poplar Street from Centenary Church.

SPECIAL ONLINE EDITION

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and associated restrictions on public gatherings, the Laurel Historical Society has chosen to produce this issue of our triannual newsletter—usually assembled and mailed by a merry band of volunteers—as a special online-only edition in PDF format, downloadable from our website. Please feel free to share copies of the file with friends and family.

LRC Purchases Rosemont!



By Ned Fowler

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The Harriet Tubman Marathon



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IN THIS ISSUE: LRC Purchases Rosemont, Reverend Adam Wallace, 1930s Laurel, Kendal Jones Interview, Harriet Tubman Trip Recap, Roofed Graves Book, & more!

THIS NEWSLETTER FINDS the Laurel Historical Society at a crossroads of exciting events and progress on projects. This issue covers many of those events and projects in detail, and highlights how our activity has grown over recent months.

Unfortunately, as a result of the Coronavirus, events scheduled in March had to be postponed. *Talking Crayons*—featuring local children’s artwork—and a book launch and signing for *The Roofed Graves of Delmarva* will be rescheduled as soon as possible. Watch for updates on our website and social media pages, as well as by email.

Please remember, it’s never too late to send in your Annual Appeal gift and/or your membership renewal.

My parting thoughts for this issue are to remind us all how blessed we are to have such a wonderful society. In forty-three years, look at all that’s been achieved. I would like to acknowledge the three

three people who have influenced me most. That being said, I know there have been many others. First, Kendal Jones, whose contributions to the society have earned him the title of “Laurel’s Historian.” Next, Norma Jean Fowler, whose many hours at the Cook House teaching, researching, cataloging, etc., is unparalleled. Finally, Ned Fowler, who inspires and informs us all about the importance of Laurel’s history and culture.

Stay safe! ■

Janosik Family Donates \$5,000 to Society’s Annual Appeal



ON DECEMBER 31ST, 2019, the Laurel Historical Society received a \$5,000 donation to its Annual Appeal from the Janosik Family Charitable Foundation Trust. *Left to right: Lori Janosik Morrison, George Denney, and Ned Fowler.*

Scott Phillips Honored at Annual Membership Meeting

RETIRING BOARD MEMBER Scott Phillips was honored at the society’s annual membership meeting on January 26th, held at Abbott’s on Broad Creek.

President George Denney presented a certificate of appreciation to Phillips and thanked him for his years of service, crediting him with “bringing the society into the 21st century” through his important work on the society’s website. ■



Photo courtesy of Paula M. Shannon.

Repairs Underway at Old Christ Church



Laurel’s colonial house of worship is getting a facelift. Photo courtesy of the Old Christ Church League.

Society takes children's artwork project on the road

AT THE RISK OF BORING YOU with yet another article about the children's art project, we'd like to share with you a correlating first for the society. As you know, our society was selected for two University of Delaware internships last summer, which were to scan and rehouse the children's artwork. It was quite successful, and we hope that by the time this newsletter is published, we will have a new date for the corona-killed March public program.

However, in December, society collections manager Norma Jean Fowler was asked to participate in a panel discussion at the Small Museums Conference held in College Park, MD, in February. This conference draws attendees from all over the East Coast, ones who share the issues common to smaller historical and cultural institutions. The topic of this panel was how small and volunteer organizations could apply for, supervise, and benefit from student internships. The UD staff we had worked with felt that our

experience would be a good model for other groups. To our knowledge, this is the first time the Laurel Historical Society has been involved at this level. Not only did we benefit from the overall conference sessions, but valuable networking connections were established.

The Small Museum Conference is held every February in College Park, and is of great value for anyone interested in improving our society's endeavors. If you are interested in attending next year, please email Norma Jean Fowler at laurelhistoricalsociety@hotmail.com or call 302-875-2820. ■

Talking Crayons: Discovering Laurel History Through Children's Artwork

will be rescheduled as soon as possible.

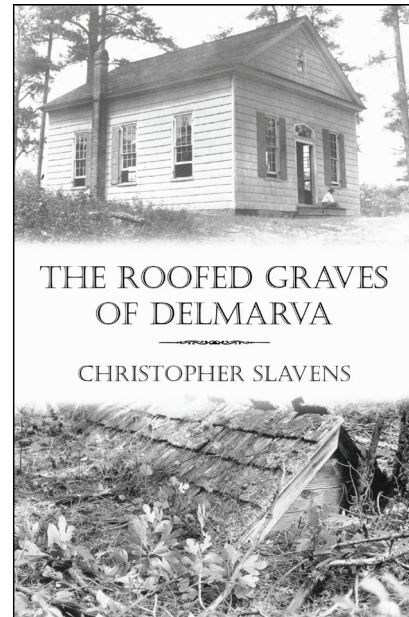
Local "roofed grave" custom featured in society member's book

SOCIETY BOARD MEMBER and newsletter editor Chris Slavens recently published *The Roofed Graves of Delmarva*, a chronicle of a nearly forgotten local burial custom which consisted of placing a wooden, shingled roof over a grave. A short article about the tradition appeared in the Winter 2017 issue of the society's newsletter.

Roofed graves were documented in local cemeteries—notably Bethel M. E. Church in Gumboro, the John C. West family plot on Wootten Road, and King's Church on Gordy Road—as early as the 1930s, with the graves themselves dating back to the 1850s, if not earlier. The custom was also reported in Wicomico County. At present, seven sites are known, but Slavens believes there were more. No roofs are known to survive today, and there are only a handful of photos of the structures, four of which are held by the Delaware Public Archives.

The book features only one living eyewitness: Kendal Jones, who saw two roofed graves in a small plot below Lowe's Crossroads during his youth.

Slavens self-published the book under the name Bald Cypress Books, and intends to publish more titles in the future, including reprints of out-of-print works related to Delmarva history.



A book launch and signing event was planned for March, but was postponed indefinitely due to the statewide restrictions on public gatherings prompted by the coronavirus. The society plans to reschedule the event and announce the details through email, social media, and our website.

Copies of the book will be available at the rescheduled event, or via baldcypressbooks.com. ■

Laurel Redevelopment Corporation Purchases Rosemont

by Ned Fowler

CENTRAL TO LAUREL'S IDENTITY is Records' Pond. Our community has revolved around it for over 230 years. Once home to Delaware's largest mill, it is located at the headwaters of Broad Creek, busy years ago as the area's main transportational artery. Long dormant, things along the creek are bustling once more: our mill dam is getting a much-needed makeover; new residential construction has begun at The Villas on Broad Creek; the Laurel Historical Society is developing the Hitchens Homestead into a community-wide historical, cultural, educational, and recreational center; and *THE LAUREL REDEVELOPMENT CORPORATION HAS PURCHASED ROSEMONT!*

On a bucket list over 20 years in the making, and now joining a stable of successful commercial properties plus nearly one-half mile of beautiful parkland on both sides of Broad Creek, Rosemont caps the LRC's remarkable endeavor to "make Laurel great again." It's all too easy to forget what it was like before LRC took the leap and began the long road to reclaiming the town we love. But now the cards are in place to make it all come together and start anew.



Rosemont in the 1930s. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

What locals know as the Collins house, Delaware Avenue's Rosemont has long been Laurel's most important residence. It's also the oldest, as well as home to our most distinguished native son. The LRC's plans for the property have yet to be determined at press time, but first and foremost are recognition of its historic significance and a desire to safeguard its well-being. Congratulations to the Laurel Redevelopment Corporation for stepping up to the plate! ■

The View from The Top

From the hillside north of the creek, the Mitchells and the Elliotts of Rosemont kept watch over all that made them prosperous: their 500-acre home farm, pond, mills, ships, and wharves. Over the course of nearly 200 years, they oversaw the transformation of the Indian wading place on Broad Creek to the founding of Laureltown as it spread out at their feet. The movers and shakers of early Laurel, these people were active in social, political, and business circles and visible on the religious, educational, and fraternal scene. Notable among Rosemont's residents is General Nathaniel Mitchell - founding member of Washington's Society of the Cincinnati (1783), delegate to the Continental Congress (1786 - 1789), and Governor of Delaware (1805-1808).



THESE WERE A MILL ON T. B. ST. AS ONLY AS THIS BUILT BY JOHN MITCHELL. THE ORIGINAL BUILDING BURNED IN 1870. THE CURRENT BUILDING WAS COMPLETED IN THE EARLY 1800S. FROM THE EARLY 1800S TO THE 1870S THE MILL WAS USED AS A WAREHOUSE AND STORAGE. THE ORIGINAL WOOD DAM STRUCTURE AT RECORDS POND IN PUBLIC MARKET - THE MILLING HISTORY OF LAUREL, DE.

AFTER THEOPHILUS COLLINS (son and grandson of Delaware Governors John Collins and David Hall) died at Collins' Pond east of Bridgeville, his widow held an auction on December 17 and 18, 1857, to pay off debts of his estate. Numbering 23 pages, the clerk's record of the sale still survives. Judging from items delineated, it would appear that nearly everything was sold—household items, mill equipment and machinery, farm output, and working tools. The buyers at the sale read like a list of the most prominent Sussex Countians of the day.

When the dust was finally settled, Mary Ann Elliott Collins came back home, to Laurel's Rosemont. Having grown up at the Sandy Fork farm on present-day Sycamore Road, it was here that she had moved, at age 13, in 1832, when her parents, Meshack and Margaret Boyce Elliott, purchased the property (and a stake in the nearby mill and pond). It was also from here that she had married Theophilus Collins in 1839.

Her father had died the previous year, in 1856, so she returned home to be with her mother, who would live another 10 years. Mary Ann stayed on until her own death in 1902. Title then fell to her son, John Meshack Collins, and eventually to his widow, Elizabeth Stevenson Collins, until finances forced her to sell the place on June 27, 1953, ending 121 years of Elliott family ownership of their beloved house “on the hill.” Under much reduced circumstances, Mrs. Collins and her daughter, Mary Catherine, left Rosemont for a small home next to Centenary Methodist Church.

Rosemont would have numerous owners and many, many renters over the next 67 years. Its neighborhood changed as parts of the original acreage were sold off. Woodland Heights sprouted up, and the Marvil Package Company's operations

on the north side of the creek eventually closed down.

The previously-separate entity of Brooklyn (what we now know as North Laurel) had grown out to the newly-built Route 13; and Phillips Canning was gone from the creekside, now home to the Villas on Broad Creek just beyond the front yard overlooking the pond. America has since gone to war and man has landed on the moon, and here we are today amidst the coronavirus. Yet, there are somehow things hiding in plain sight under the radar that never seem to change.

When the LRC recently bought Rosemont, our society was given the opportunity to go through the house and trample down into the basement, up in the attic, and out in the garage. Much to our amazement, hanging from nails on the wall in a dirt-floored shed open to the elements, we found four very remarkable chairs, survivors from Rosemont's golden days.

If you'll refer to the inset photo of Rosemont in “The View from The Top” (page 4), you'll see these same four chairs on the downstairs porch. Showing John Meshack Collins (born 1853) at right, this picture dates to 1903. So, at the very least, these chairs have survived the ravages of time and have aged more-or-less gracefully at Laurel's Rosemont for at least 117 years, and in all probability much longer since they actually date from the second quarter of the 19th century. The chairs belonged not only to Mary Ann Elliott Collins, but perhaps to Meshack and Margaret Elliott as well.

Much to our delight, the Laurel Redevelopment Corporation has now entrusted these local heirlooms to the Laurel Historical Society for safekeeping.

Priceless! ■



In these times of social distancing, it might be a bit uplifting to hear about just the opposite: how close we all are, how small our world really is, and how so very few degrees separate us.

ABOUT THE SAME TIME THE LRC was consummating its purchase of Rosemont, something surfaced from a Laurel garage, where it had been languishing in a moldy old cigar box for gosh-only-knows how long. It was a small book actually printed in 1851, but inscribed to its new owner on November 24, 1859. *Bridal Greetings: A Marriage Gift* was presented to Elizabeth Caroline Williams upon her wedding to Isaac W. Connelly. Rev. Adam Wallace, their pastor, documented this union three different times with his signature.

So amazing here is the long, yet relatively short, journey this volume has made over the course of 161 years. The Connelys lived by their pond at Connelly's Mill, just a little south of Delmar over the Maryland line. Today, we know it as Connelly Mill Road. After the Connelys' demise, the book then fell to their daughter Martha (1863-1931) and her husband Louis B. Lowe (1858-1925), who lived on Grove Street in Delmar. On its slow path northward, it next followed the Lowes' daughter Pearl (1882-1958) and her husband, former State Senator and Collector of Internal Revenue for the District of Delaware Willard F. Deputy (1877-1938), to their Laurel home on 8th Street. And here it remained, at last, with their daughter Helen Kirk Deputy (Mrs. Frank G.) Ellis (1906-1993), long-time LHS Latin teacher and great-granddaughter of original owners Isaac and Caroline Connelly.

Of course, you're now wondering what all of this has to do with Rosemont? In the years after the American Revolution, the Church of England (the officially-sanctioned state religion in the American colonies) quite obviously fell out of favor. Seizing an opportunity, various sects began infiltrating the Delmarva peninsula. Among them were the Methodists, who were trying to gain a stronghold around Laurel by the early 19th century. First established was Moore's Chapel, the predecessor of today's Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church. Others soon followed. But first, to get things going, they sent in itinerant or fledgling pastors called circuit riders, who went from place to place in search of new flocks to convert into the fold. One such man was the Rev. Adam Wallace, who was assigned to the Laurel Circuit in 1848-1850.

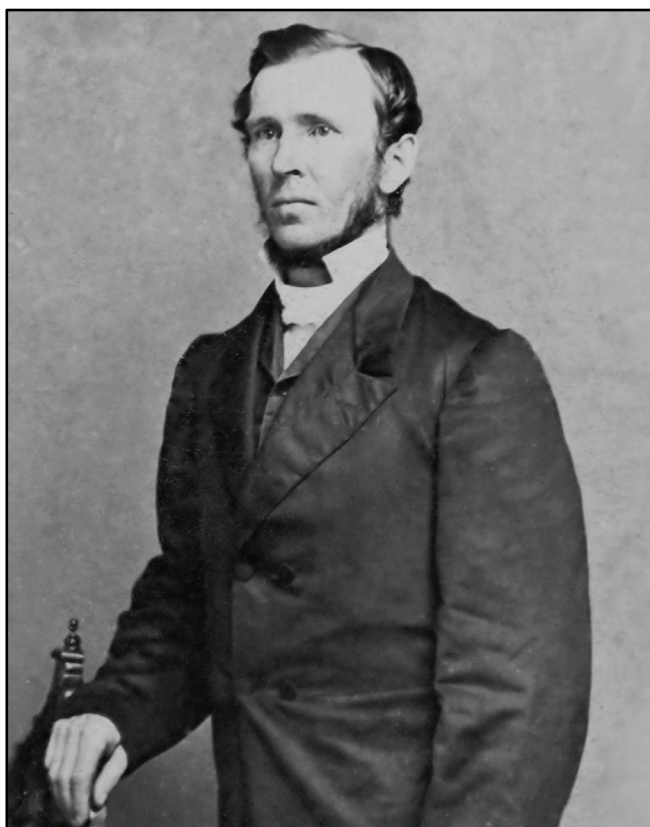


Marriage book inscribed by Rev. Adam Wallace in 1859.

Wallace's comings and goings are well documented in Joseph F. DiPaolo's *My Business Was To Fight The Devil: Recollections of Rev. Adam Wallace, Peninsula Circuit Rider 1847-1865*. The information therein ensued from a series of letters penned by Wallace himself. He writes about time spent in Laurel, and especially revealing is the account of his first visit as guest at the home of Meshack Elliott, today's Rosemont. It was well known by Elliott's descendants that their Methodist-leaning forebears hosted circuit riders during their local travels, attesting that one bedroom and bedstead at Rosemont were reserved for this special purpose.

As for Wallace, he went on to bigger and better things. The 18 year-old who had emigrated alone from Ireland in 1843 (and arrived without even one shilling to his name) was ordained a full-fledged minister in 1852, served various appointments around the peninsula over the next few years, and, by 1861, was appointed presiding elder (what we today would call district superintendent) of the Snow Hill District. It was also in this same year that Wallace authored and published *The Parson of the Islands*, his rendering of the life and times of the renowned Joshua Thomas, who preached to the British occupation army on Tangier Island during the War of 1812 and became legendary for having warned the British they would be defeated if they went to Baltimore. In 1852, Adam had married Margaret, the daughter of prosperous Laurel land and ship owner Captain Kendal M. Lewis of Spring

Garden farm. During the Civil War years from 1861 to 1865, he and his family lived here amid rising tensions on the issue of slavery, not only within the Methodist church but in the Laurel community as well. Things got so difficult at one point that three companies of the Union-oriented Eastern Shore Home Guard were called in, one of which from this “occupation” army actually being posted by the front door for his personal disposal. From Laurel, Wallace went on to a brief pastorate in Philadelphia, was a newspaper publisher, and is credited as a founder of camp meeting associations in both Rehoboth Beach and Ocean Grove, New Jersey. A strong anti-slavery advocate, he is also called the father of the Delaware Conference, the first black conference in the Methodist Episcopal Church.



Methodist circuit rider Rev. Adam Wallace, c. 1865.
Collection of the Milton Historical Society.

Now back to the bed. It's interesting how stories come about when closeness, associations, and possibilities arise. Sometimes things get distorted, though, as time moves along. The so-claimed circuit rider bed still provides a good night's sleep right here in Laurel, and it is well-documented to have come from Rosemont (see photo taken *in situ* prior to the Collins family - Rosemont auction in 1953). Atop it, however, is an original paper shipping label stating “Theophilus Collins, Collinsville.”



Bed at Rosemont, c. 1953.

Dating from the 1830s or 1840s, the bedstead is attributed to Baltimore and would have been a custom order sent to its new owner (perhaps around the time of his 1839 wedding) at family landholdings up near Collins Pond, east of Bridgeville. Collins' wife, of course, was the former Mary Ann Elliott of Laurel and, from the time she was a teen, grew up at Rosemont. As for the bed, though, it wouldn't have come from the Collins home near Bridgeville down to Laurel until the recently-widowed Mary Ann Elliott Collins returned to Rosemont to live with her own widowed mother in late 1857 or early 1858. By that time, so we read, Wallace had moved on to other circuits across Delmarva. More specifically, he was on the Salisbury circuit in 1859 when pastor at the marriage of the Connellys. Consequently, it would only make sense that, when in the area, Wallace would have then stayed with his in-laws at Spring Garden, rather than at Rosemont. We'll probably never really know how it all went down when the last pages of this chapter in Laurel history were turned, but the book nonetheless makes a good “bed-time” story. ■

The Connellys' marriage book and Laurel circuit rider Adam Wallace's biography are both now in the collection of the Laurel Historical Society, as are two Connelly-family period chests of drawers with local attributions.

SOMETIME DURING THE SUMMER of 1931, I was in Harrington, when we had a big rain storm. At first, there was no way of knowing the extent of the storm. The first that we knew of it was when a paper boy came down the street calling, "EXTRA." As you might imagine, that was an extremely rare occurrence. The Wilmington paper told of the damage done along the coast by a nor'easter. Also, there was a mention of a flood in Laurel that had washed out the bridges over Broad Creek, disrupting all vehicular traffic to and from the North. When we got to Laurel 138, the hotel's phone, we were told that everyone was all right, but that I would have to wait until at least one bridge was usable, to return.

When I did get back, my father was upset about what had happened, because he had predicted just such an occurrence. Earlier that year two dirt streets east of the pond had been paved. One of them was crossed by a stream leading from Trussom Pond and the other by a stream leading from Trap Pond. Prior to the paving, there were small bridges over the streams. When they paved those roads, they put in small culverts under the roads, which he knew would cause lakes to form back of the culverts. That happened even when there was a small rain, but no harm was done. My father went to the Mayor, a well liked retired family doctor, and begged him to have those culverts replaced, alas, to no avail. Also draining into the Laurel Lake via a mill race was Chipman's Pond. This proved to be too much for the dam and spillway to hold. The critical time was high tide in the creek. Again, Daddy appealed to the Mayor; this time, to dynamite a path through the dam at low tide when the creek would stand a better chance of passing the extra water along to the bay. Again, nothing was done.

Normally the tide in Broad Creek was about three feet, more during stormy weather. The flow was so strong that we always timed our boating up and down the creek to take advantage of the current. On that day at high tide the road crossing the stream from Trussom's Pond washed out; and the dam and spillway at Laurel gave way. Many houses, the canning factory, a good part of Marvil Package Company, Valliant Fertilizer, and three bridges were destroyed or badly damaged. The railroad bridge, which was higher than the others, survived. There was no loss of life. The Mayor had the police and firemen alert those downstream. To

the best of my knowledge, the creek had never before overflowed its banks.

Another disaster. This happened in the winter. I can't remember which one. After we had gone to bed, we were awakened by sirens and a great commotion outside. It was what came to be known as the Sussex Trust fire. The Sussex Trust was one of two banks in Laurel. It was located on the northwest corner of Market Street and Central Avenue, the very center of town, and, incidentally, the location of the only stoplight, then. The Laurel House Hotel was on the southwest corner. So, you can imagine that we were quite concerned.

Later it was determined that the blaze started in a small soda fountain adjoining the bank. Fortunately for us, there was a breeze from the south. For the rest of that block, however, that was not so good. The whole block was destroyed. Fire companies from Laurel and several nearby towns fought the blaze all night. With the help of the manager of the A & P store, which was on the southeast corner, and other townspeople, my mother made sandwiches and coffee and my father and I took trays of both to the firemen. We didn't do it for that reason, but it was good for community relations.

I'll never forget the first Christmas in Laurel. What a surprise—a bicycle! Guess what. There was a big snow. But Daddy found some sidewalks that had been cleared and ran by my side until I was able to keep my balance. There were a few spills, but nothing serious. For a kid those days, a bicycle was a must. I can't imagine what my life would have been like without one. And, another plus for that Christmas was the snow, even though it had curtailed my cycling. There was a hill just a block from the hotel. It ran from Market Street down almost to the creek, about two blocks. We called it "The Big Hill." By the standards of almost anyone from another part of the country, it would not qualify as a hill, let alone a big hill. But it was the biggest hill in Sussex County. And it was great for sledding. All in all, it was a great Christmas.

** Collection of the Laurel Historical Society. Gift of Daniel Risdon Twilley, son of John Emanuel Twilley, and great-grandson and only living descendant of Emanuel Twilley, the original owner of today's Hitchens Homestead.*



*"Ernest Purnell, Prop. The Laurel House. Laurel Del."
Collection of the Laurel Historical Society.*

In 1933, Christmas was pretty bleak. There was, however, one bright spot. My present was a Boston Terrier puppy, which I named Buddy. I did feed him every meal – shredded wheat with a raw egg on it for breakfast and Red Heart dog food or scrapple for dinner. Don't ask how that menu came to be. I have no idea. There were two grades of scrapple at Lowe's Butcher Shop, five cents a pound and ten cents a pound. Buddy ate the five cent kind and didn't seem to mind. By the way, if you like scrapple, don't ever watch it being made. I made that mistake at Lowe's; and it took awhile to get over it.

Prohibition had been repealed; and late in 1933, Delaware began issuing liquor licenses. It presented quite a dilemma for my mother. First of all, she was a Methodist, as were all of her family. Ernest Purnell, the owner of the hotel, was an old time saloon keeper. He was determined to get a liquor license, whether or not we stayed. Mother's Uncle Ed Culver and others told her that it would be unthinkable for us to stay. Mother went to her father for help in making the decision. Granddaddy asked, "did Edwin or any one else offer to give you a job or help you in any way?" "No, then you have yourself and a son to support. No matter what you do, liquor is going to be sold at that hotel. The

community will be better off if a person of your character is the manager."

Mr. Purnell took an active part in preparing for the inspection that the liquor control commission required before issuing a license. For example, there was a partition between the counter (now the bar) area and the dining area, that had to be lowered. Also, the booth sides had to be lowered. Apparently, the commission wanted drinking to be out in the open. There were many strict rules that had to be adhered to. Also, there were practical considerations.

The tables were suitable only for use with table cloths. Since it was anticipated, correctly, that there would be times when table cloths would not be appropriate, all of the tables were replaced. Other rules that caused a problem were that beer barrels had to be kept in a locked room even after they were tapped, and that the spigots could not be back of the bar. Some carpentry and plumbing took care of those problems. Mr. Purnell was very helpful in telling Mother what to order in the way of glasses and other things.

Shelves were built back of the bar to display the various half pints, pints and quarts (fifths came later). At first there were not many brands. Old Overholt and Old Fitzgerald were the first two. However, soon many others appeared. One piece of advice that Mr. Purnell had that didn't pan out was this: he said to allow the bar customers to fill their own shot glasses from a bottle left on the bar. That did not work to our advantage. It didn't take long to find out that the overflow was digging into the profits. That practice was discontinued.

By law, I was not allowed to serve drinks, but there was no law pertaining to washing glasses. That was my job on some Saturday nights. Saturday night was special in Laurel. All the stores were open and all the farmers came to town. Market Street, where most of the stores were, was closed to vehicular traffic, not by being roped off, but because of the crowds. There was a lot of shopping and a lot of socializing. And, now, a lot of drinking, but no rowdiness in The Laurel House, except once. A man, very well known to us, threw a glass against the wall. His friends escorted him out. Later he came back and apologized and offered to pay for the damages. Mother refused his offer and told him not to come back. That was a smart move. The word got around and there was no more trouble. And he never did come back. I suppose that the Rigbie gained a customer. ■

The Harriet Tubman Marathon

by Vern & Maggie Proctor

ON SUNDAY MORNING, February 23, more than 50 members of the Laurel Historical Society (LHS), their guests, and interested third parties boarded a bus at the Laurel Middle School for what proved to be an eventful day of sightseeing. (Since several people drove themselves, the total count was 62.) The focal points of the day's journey were activities related to Harriet Tubman, a heroine of the Underground Railroad, who was born a slave in Dorchester County, Maryland.

Our group's first objective was Cambridge, Maryland, a hub of Tubman historical sites and memorabilia. En route, the bus pulled over briefly at the Middle Point Mason-Dixon marker on Route 54, at the Maryland state line. Ned Fowler made a few remarks about the significance of the location as the starting point of the Mason-Dixon survey. The bus then continued to Cambridge, where we made a short but scenic pit stop at the Sail Winds Park Visitors Center, on the banks of the Choptank River.



Mural at the Harriet Tubman Museum in downtown Cambridge.
Courtesy of Paula M. Shannon.

Following Sail Winds Park, the LHS group visited the Harriet Tubman Museum, located on Race Street in downtown Cambridge. The Museum was filled with books, art, and artifacts relating to Tubman's life and her career as an abolitionist leader. Attendees chose between two instructive videos about Tubman's life and historical significance, and the Museum staff answered questions. A variety of souvenirs were available for purchase. On the way back to the bus, we saw beautiful murals relating to Tubman that had been painted on the building's exterior.

At that point in our trip, we picked up our guide for the next stage of our tour: a delightful



The Stanley Institute. Courtesy of Paula M. Shannon.

gentleman named Herschel Johnson. While in downtown Cambridge, we drove by an old courthouse, on the steps of which slaves were sold in Tubman's day. We then drove out to Long Wharf Park on the Choptank, turned around, and drove back past many historic antebellum homes that housed judges and local politicians. On the road into the countryside, Mr. Johnson regaled us with stories about Tubman and the troubled civil rights history of the Cambridge area.

We then arrived at the Stanley Institute Museum in Dorchester County, also known as the Rock School—one of the oldest schools organized by the African-American community for the purpose of educating African-American students. The Stanley Institute is a one-room schoolhouse dating to about 1867, and it remained open until 1966. The LHS group entered the building and sat in student desks, listening to Mr. Johnson's spellbinding lecture about the history of the school and his own experience as a student there. We were surrounded by one hundred years of memorabilia (including report cards), furniture, blackboards, and class pictures. After the lecture, we bid a fond farewell to Mr. Johnson. The Stanley Institute was a highlight of the trip for everyone.

Our next stop was the Bucktown General Store, the location where Tubman was inadvertently struck in the head by a metal weight thrown by a slave-owner at a runaway slave. The store contained a variety of vintage dry goods, remedies, and food items. Our visit was hosted by the current owner, who provided a rapid-fire narrative of the history of the store and its renovation, with a bit of family history thrown in. The store was not far from the location of the Dorchester County plantation



Attendees pose in front of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center in Church Creek. Courtesy of Paula M. Shannon.

where Tubman (then known as Araminta Ross, before her marriage to John Tubman) and her family were enslaved.

The LHS bus then proceeded to the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center in Church Creek, Maryland. At the Visitor Center, our group saw exhibits, panoramas, and another video describing the life and works of Harriet Tubman and the history of the Underground Railroad. Mr. Johnson was cast in a supporting role in the film. Following our tour of the Visitor Center, the LHS group posed for group pictures, taken by our own Paula Shannon. Other photos of the trip were taken by Debbie Mitchell.

We then embarked upon a pre-dinner drive across the two Hoopers Islands (Upper and Middle) that are reachable by road. The islands are surrounded on one side by the Chesapeake Bay and on the other by the Honga River. The water views and landscapes were spectacular, and Ned Fowler provided a running commentary. We eventually

had no choice but to turn around on the narrow road, a maneuver expertly handled by our bus driver. After backtracking, we drove to Old Salty's Restaurant in Fishing Creek, Maryland. There, our hardy band was treated to an Eastern Shore buffet, featuring crab cakes, fish and shellfish, fried chicken, soups, and salads. The accommodations were tight, and it took some time for everyone to get their food, but the traditional LHS good humor and healthy appetites carried the day.

Night was falling when our group returned to the bus for the last time. On the way back to Laurel, we were treated to a private screening of the Academy Award-nominated motion picture *Harriet*, starring Cynthia Erivo in the title role. Although the bus reached Laurel before the movie's end, everyone enjoyed the film. Our twelve-hour "tour de Tubman" was happy and memorable, leaving everyone with a deeper understanding of the life and times of one of America's most prominent anti-slavery activists. ■



Dinner at Old Salty's Restaurant. Courtesy of Paula M. Shannon.



Scenic view in lower Dorchester. Courtesy of Debbie Mitchell.

Our recent Facebook posts are the result of a collaborative effort. Photos were provided by Kendal Jones, selected by Ned and Norma Jean Fowler, and posted by Debbie Mitchell. We've been delighted by the success of this initiative and pleased to offer a little sunshine in folks' lives during these uncertain times. So far, total reaches for 15 posts come to a staggering 39,579, an average of 2,639 per picture. The most popular photo, of the crowd at the mill dam watching a dolphin cavort in the waters of Broad Creek, has reached more than 10,000 people! If you're one of them, but are not yet a member, why not join us and enable us to continue this project and many others? After all, we are *your* historical society.

CONNECT WITH US ONLINE



If you have provided us with your email address, keep an eye out for occasional updates from the Laurel Historical Society!

You can also find us on:

FACEBOOK

facebook.com/LaurelDEHistoricalSociety

INSTAGRAM

@laureldehistoricalsociety

YOUTUBE

Laurel Delaware Historical Society

Feeling isolated?

Well, Kendal Jones isn't feeling sorry for you. The thing is, he grew up *beyond* total isolation, or so some thought. Listen to the tales of a country childhood near Lowe's Cross Roads in the 1930s.

Luckily for us, Mr. Jones was the subject of an interview taped on March 26, 2018. Go to the link below and you'll be regaled for over an hour on his upbringing.

<http://archive.org/details/ncoho00700001>

Subjects include: the 1933 Laurel flood, the Burnt Swamp fire of the 1930s, Truitt's Store, Carey's Camp, and many more which so easily could have been lost over time. Thanks go to Don Ward for taking on this initiative and saving such a delicious slice of local lore for all to enjoy and appreciate.

UPCOMING EVENTS

All society events have been postponed indefinitely due to restrictions associated with the coronavirus pandemic, and uncertainty about their duration.

Updates will be shared via our website (laureldehistoricalsociety.org), social media, and email. We look forward to seeing you soon!

LAUREL HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2020 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

By becoming a member of the Laurel Historical Society you are part of a living, vital organization that is giving back to its community. As a member, you show you care about greater Laurel and publicly support the goal of protecting and preserving our heritage for generations to come.

Learn about Laurel's past, have fun in the present, and prepare for the future!



Cook House



Heritage Museum



Hitchens Homestead

Complete this form and
mail with check payable to:

Laurel Historical Society

P O Box 102

Laurel, DE 19956

or pay online at:

www.laureldehistoricalsociety.org

WHAT WE ARE WORKING ON FOR YOU

Website updates Creating new exhibits
Hitchens Homestead preservation and restoration
Continued cataloging of our collection items
Creating new and interesting programs and experiences
Documenting day to day life in Laurel for future generations
Building community relationships
Print and emailed newsletters

MEMBERSHIP TYPES AND RATES JANUARY - DECEMBER

Individual (\$30.00) _____ Family (\$50.00) _____

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

Telephone: _____

Type of Membership: New _____ Renewal _____

WE APPRECIATE VOLUNTEERS!

What special skills can you offer the society?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance and repair |
| <input type="checkbox"/> House cleaning | <input type="checkbox"/> Baking/ Food preparation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> Research |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yard maintenance | <input type="checkbox"/> Carpentry/plumbing/electricity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Publicity | <input type="checkbox"/> Museum Hosting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Officer or Board member | <input type="checkbox"/> Program Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Telephoning | <input type="checkbox"/> Cataloging and Accessioning |

Other: _____





Annual Appeal

P.O. Box 102
Laurel, DE 19956

laureldehistoricalsociety.org

November 1, 2019

Dear friends and members of the Laurel Historical Society,

Time flies when you're having fun, they say. It feels like it was only yesterday that we acquired the Hitchens Homestead, and began cleaning up the historic buildings and imagining their future—yet it has been over a year. 2019 has been an exceptionally busy year for the society, as volunteers have spent countless hours working in and around the house and outbuildings, painstakingly preparing these architectural treasures for thorough and historically accurate restoration.

In September, an enthusiastic crowd gathered on the lawn for the long-awaited unveiling of the house's original color scheme. We have a long way to go, but it is becoming increasingly clear what the property looked like during its heyday in the late 19th century—and what it will look like when it is carefully and beautifully restored to its former glory, with your support.

While the ongoing work at the Hitchens Homestead is a highly visible and exciting venture, it is by no means the society's only project. We continue to welcome visitors to our museums, the Laurel Heritage Museum and the Cook House; at the latter, our vast collection of thousands of Laurel artifacts and photographs grows larger every month through generous donations. Additionally, we publish three newsletters per year, each of which offers a blend of news, photos, and members' personal recollections or historical research. In the background of all of this history-focused activity, the routine tasks associated with any organization are carried out: Lawns are mowed, weeds are pulled, lightbulbs are changed, restrooms are cleaned, bills are paid, etc.

Many of our immediate financial needs concern such operational expenses. Things like security systems, utilities, and stationery are not very exciting, but they are necessary. For example, the society budgeted \$1,800 for sewer, water, and trash pick-up this year, plus an additional \$2,200 for electricity. Publishing and mailing our newsletter cost approximately \$2,000. Phone and Internet service runs about \$160 per month. Other expenses—like those involving the expertise and supplies required to restore a 141-year-old home—are exciting, but nonetheless challenging.

Your past support has enabled the society to come this far, and it is only with your continuing support that we are able to keep moving forward. **Your donation of any amount is deeply appreciated**, and will help to preserve and celebrate the history of Laurel. It's an exciting time to be a part of the Laurel Historical Society!

Sincerely,

George R. Denney III
President

President
George Denney

Vice President
Artez West

Secretary
Dee Cross

Treasurer
Doug Marvil

Ex Officio President
Ned Fowler

Board Members
At Large:

Woody Disharoon

Norma Jean Fowler

Trina Giles

Matt Parker

Don Phillips

Scott Phillips

Maggie Proctor

Brian Shannon

Chris Slavens

Brad Spicer

Patrick Vanderslice

Emily Whaley

Our 2018 Donors

Records' Pond \$5,001+

Paul & Pat Downes
(*\$10,000*)

Trap Pond \$1,001 - \$5,000

Gareth Deitzel
Edward & Norma Jean Fowler
Warrington Properties
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Chipman's Pond \$501 - \$1,000

George Denney
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Richard (Dick) Whaley
Laurel Redevelopment Corp.

Trussum Pond \$101 - \$500

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Mark Whaley
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Amy Lowe & Blair Whaley
Real Estate Market

Horseys Pond \$25 - \$100

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Thank you!



P.O. Box 102
Laurel, DE 19956

Annual Appeal

Category	Level	Select Your Level of Support
Horseys' Pond	\$25 - \$100	
Trussum Pond	\$101 - \$500	
Trap Pond	\$501 - \$1,000	
Chipman's Pond	\$1,001 - \$5,000	
Records' Pond	\$5,001+	

Please mail your 2019 donation to the address shown above,
or you can make a donation via PayPal by visiting our website at
www.laureldehistoricalsociety.org and clicking on the donate button.