



P O B O X 1 0 2 L A U R E L D E 1 9 9 5 6

## FALL 2018



Baubles, Bangles & Beads June Dinner

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RSVP BY OCTOBER !**

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### *A NOTE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT*

BY GEORGE DENNEY

This summer has been an exciting convergence of major events that will have a lasting impact on Laurel Historical Society for many years if not decades to come.

Summer is usually quiet around the Cook House, however, not this summer! A major purchase, a major gift, major improvements in the Fowler Center, and major connection with Laurel schools have made this an exceptional summer for LHS.

First, the purchase of the Hitchens Homestead in July fulfills a major dream of LHS members to work on preserving a significant property with potential for festivals, public/private affairs and cultural events. A major theme of the property will be our agricultural history. Impressive research has been conducted in the Fowler Center and State Archives which has revealed the history of the Homestead.

Next, this summer Penny and I were called to the Cook House late one hot July night to meet Ned and Norma Jean. We greeted Norma Jean who was carefully and expertly driving an extended cargo van on a return trip from Boston, Massachusetts! I opened the back double doors of the van and holding onto the precious cargo was Ned with one hand on the gorgeous 18th century tall case clock and one hand clutching the Lewis bible close to his heart. Please be certain to visit Spring Garden on September 23, 2018 to see what will be a memorable occasion. We are indeed excited and delighted with this exceptional and important gift.

This summer concluded the second year of work with Emily Whaley. The Fowler Center has taken on a new life with the work of our two girls! Many thanks to Norma Jean's leadership and dedication volunteering hundreds of hours. The Center would not be what it is without her. Please take time and make an appointment to visit with her at the center. I guarantee you will be amazed what the Fowler Center has to offer.

Last, in mid-August, just before teachers and students came back to school, Superintendent Dr. Shawn Larrimore and his staff came to the Cook House for a tour/lecture/overview. I'm very proud of our superintendent, his leadership, accomplishments and his vision. This visitation was arranged by our LHS board member Trina Giles, assistant principle, Laurel elementary school. We are fortunate to have Trina on the LHS board.

And what did you do over your summer vacation?



LHS President George Denney presents July 4 house decorating winner Carla Hankins with a \$50.00 Abbotts Gift Card on July 04

H O E D O W N A T

# THE HUDSON'S

OCT. 27, 2018

A LAUREL HISTORICAL SOCIETY FUNDRAISING EVENT  
at the home of Lem & Jessie Hudson - 16498 Goose Nest Road - Laurel De  
\$40.00 per person in advance

*The dress code for this unique fundraising event is country casual. Bring your lawn chairs and since you will be outside part of the evening we suggest dressing warmly. Portable bathrooms will be available and to reach the dining level some steps are involved... This event is open to the public and space is limited. There will be a 50/50 drawing.*



See you @ The Hudson's - 16498 Goose Nest Rd - Laurel De

*"Meetin' in the Meadow"*

*5:30 pm - 7:00 pm  
Social Time, Cash Bar*

*"Puttin' on the Feedbag"*

*7:00 pm - 8:00 pm*

*"Made in Laurel...or Pret' near"*

*8:00 pm - 9:00 pm*

*"Star Gazin' 'Round the Fire"*

*9:00 pm 10:00 pm  
Social Time, Cash Bar*

## SPACE IS LIMITED!

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ NO. OF GUESTS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \_\_\_\_\_

SORRY, I AM UNABLE TO ATTEND BUT I HAVE ENCLOSED A DONATION \_\_\_\_\_

MAIL \$40.00 PER PERSON BY OCTOBER 12, 2018  
PAYABLE TO LAUREL HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P O BOX 102, LAUREL, DE 19956  
OR ONLINE @ WWW.LAURELDEHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG



Photo by Debbie Mitchell

## “Little house on the hill” to be restored

Most Laurel residents, if asked if they are aware of the house on the hill by the mill pond, will respond with “oh, I love that house” or “oh, I’ve always wanted to see inside that house.” These sentiments are shared by the Laurel Historical Society, which has purchased the entire acreage for restoration and development as a living history site right in the heart of the town.



***The Hitchens Homestead will be the Laurel community's centerpiece, serving as a backdrop for all types of social, educational, recreational, and cultural events.***

Although initiated by the society, this is a project for the entire town to get behind. Anyone interested in joining in with this exciting endeavor is encouraged to contact the society at [www.laureldehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.laureldehistoricalsociety.org) or call 302-875-1344 and leave a message.

**Come "Take a Gander" on Sunday October 7, between 1 pm and 4 pm**

Laurel's iconic Rural Gothic Revival cottage, one of only a handful left in Delaware, will soon take on a new life. The Hitchens Homestead on the Willow Street hill is slated to become a museum celebrating Laurel's agricultural heritage and heyday. The 4.33 acre property, owned and/or occupied by six generations of the Edmund Hitchens family, will be the crown jewel of Laurel's public parklands stretching one-half mile through the center of town on both sides of Broad Creek. It borders Rossakatum Run branch and overlooks Records' Pond.

The 1878 residence and its original outbuildings were constructed by Emanuel Twilley, owner of the pond and its grist mill, which was the largest mill in the state at the time. Also on the premises is a miller's house built before 1868. The dwellings will be furnished to reflect the Twilley and Hitchens occupancies, whereas the outbuildings will focus on farm life and the products of local factories, fields, and forests. Imagine Laurel bustling with baskets, a creek teeming with ships, trains chugging up and down the tracks, and the output of canneries, lumber yards, fertilizer plants, and fruit evaporators going off to Northern markets.



An aerial view of the homestead by Woody Disharoon



Spring Garden, the National Register property located at 10905 Delaware Avenue Extended, Laurel, will be the site of a homecoming party on Sunday, September 23, 2018 at 1 p.m. The celebration commemorates the return to Laurel of a tallcase clock after an absence of nearly 90 years. Sponsored by the Laurel Historical Society, the event is free and is open to the public.

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## WELCOME HOME CELEBRATION AT SPRING GARDEN

The late-18th - early-19th-century house is the only surviving early brick structure in southwestern Sussex County. Also on the premises is a rare 19th-century barn, once home to the Spring Garden Dairy. Last open to the public in 1989, the older section of the house will be available for tours and a small display of Spring Garden-related items will be on hand.

The Spring Garden tract is recorded as early as 1768 when it belonged to John Mitchell. Ownership passed to John Creighton in 1782, when the oldest section of the present dwelling was probably built. But here's where the real story begins: on May 14, 1814, Spring Garden was purchased by Kendall Major Lewis and remained in the hands of his descendants for the next 138 years until May 26, 1952.

The clock whose return to Laurel is being celebrated belonged to Kendall Lewis at Spring Garden and has recently been presented to the society by his great-great-granddaughter, Rosalind Williams, of Newton, Mass. For this one day, the timepiece will once again stand sentry in the house where it resided for over a century. It will be joined by other Williams gifts, also from Spring Garden: 4 early 19th-c. Windsor side chairs and the 1789 Kendall Lewis family bible.

Lewis, a Nanticoke River and Chesapeake Bay ship captain, bought Mitchell's Harbor, a tract on which stands present-day Bethel, in 1794. From his wharf, he laid out the village in the 1840s and established a profitable trade with Baltimore, Annapolis, and the West Indies. The father of 21 children, Kendall Lewis was elected 7 times to the Delaware legislature.

At his father's death in 1862, Henry Clay Lewis became the next owner of both the clock and Spring Garden. A prosperous and community-minded farmer and dairyman, Henry Clay was also president of Laurel's Peoples National Bank, where it has been said that he would preside over bank board meetings in his bib overalls after having ridden up the Delaware Avenue hill from Spring Garden on his mule. The Victorian addition to the house was built during his tenure. His memory lives on in the spectacular stained glass window overlooking Market Street at Centenary Church.



Welcome Home Celebration continued:

Warren Kendall Lewis, Henry Clay's only offspring, inherited the farm and clock at his father's death in 1931. Having grown up at Spring Garden, Warren graduated from Laurel High School and went on to Boston's Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he later became a professor and engaged in such ground-breaking work as the Manhattan Project's secretive development of the atomic bomb during World War II. He is today credited as the father of American chemical engineering.

Giving remarks at 1:30 p.m. will be the donor of these objects, Warren's grand-daughter, herself a now-retired professor and dean of students at MIT. She will be discussing her book "Retooling" and the impact a small-town farm upbringing had on her grandfather and the influence he had on her own life. According to her grandfather, Rosalind gave to her own daughter the prettiest name ever: Laurel.

**Bring a lawn chair to sit under the shade at Spring Garden and experience this rare opportunity to re-imagine old Laurel for a brief shining moment.**

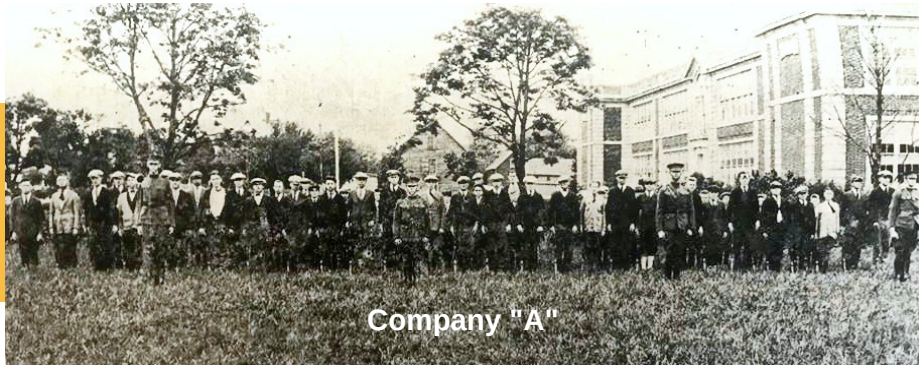
## 2018 summer snap shot



## SOCIETY SURPRISES SUPERINTENDENT

When Laurel School Superintendent Dr. Shawn Larrimore recently visited The Cook House for the first time, he was amazed at what we have, and what we have done. He told us “Despite being born and raised here, I learned a lot about Laurel—specifically its proud economic standing within the State, how it leveraged its access to water routes and railroads for great commercial success, and its deep political clout.”

Dr. Larrimore was one of ten central office administrators and building level principals who attended an end-of-summer luncheon hosted by our society, for the hopeful purpose of introducing our history to the student population. Long-time society members often forget that those that come along after an event, often have no knowledge of it, until they are taught. The historical society hopes that we can partner with the school district to insure that all students have an opportunity to learn about their hometown. This was seconded by Dr. Larrimore’s parting comment: “I am happy to say that the School District is going to work in partnership with the Historical Society in ensuring that Laurel History becomes a fitting part of our Social Studies curriculum!” Society board member Trina Giles get all the credit for getting this project off the ground. Thanks Trina!



Company "A"

## Recalling Laurel’s years as a Military Academy

When Norma Jean Fowler showed the Laurel School personnel photographs of students in WWI era uniforms in front of the 1921 building they were floored! None of the group had heard of this time, when Superintendent Col. Al Tanner ran the school as a military academy. The new brick building has been built and many country schools had consolidated with the district. The school was run as a tight ship in the classrooms, complete with brigades, regiments, and companies. Boys made up one company and girls another, with the company leaders entitled to wear the uniforms.

This all happened around 1921-1926, and we have the pictures to prove it! Companies would compete in inter-scholastic athletics, with the winning companies receiving an engraved trophy, which we also have! The earliest school magazines, The Bellman, (we have them too!) have many articles and photographs outlining this form of school curriculum and discipline. It makes for fascinating reading. Call Norma Jean at 302-875-2820 or email [laurelhistoricalsociety@hotmail.com](mailto:laurelhistoricalsociety@hotmail.com). Make a date to read all about it!



*"My knowledge of Laurel has increased which has increased my appreciation for the Laurel community,"*  
Emily Whaley

### *Another successful summer with Emily*

It's been a busy summer in the Laurel Historical Society workroom. Once again we are thankful to have Emily Whaley as an intern. "We are light years ahead of where we were three years ago when Emily first started," says Norma Jean Fowler. This summer Emily worked on organizing collection items, improving the retrieval process and rehousing archived materials according to professional standards.

Emily, a junior at the University of Mary Washington, enjoys her work with the Laurel Historical Society and says the experience has been beneficial to her. "Last year when I went back to school I was ahead of the class because of what I learned here," says Whaley. Emily is able to put in to practice what she has learned in the classroom, and what she has learned with the Laurel Historical Society she is able to apply in her coursework. The Laurel Historical Society also benefits as Emily shares her knowledge with us. "My computer skills have increased this summer," says Norma Jean. Emily is majoring in Museum Studies and hopes to return to Delaware when she graduates.

### *Eye on Laurel*

A Laurel Historical Society member recently approached us with an idea to preserve Laurel History as it is currently happening. We felt this was a great idea and after a series of planning meetings devised a plan with Debbie Mitchell and Woody Disharoon co-chairing the project. To start, we have captured photos and video of events in and around Laurel that we hope to compile into a series called Eye on Laurel 2018. Our second scope of work will be a bit more ambitious with a series of videos depicting Laurel's past to present. To do this we plan to utilize photos from the society archives along with drone footage created by Woody Disharoon. Thanks to a very generous donation for the project, we are working on updating our website and have purchased a series of software programs that will enable us to work together with a team to share and edit work. This will be an ongoing project and more details will be announced in the future.



Pat Ellis Downes, a native of Laurel, joined the Work Wednesday team this year. Pat enjoys taking the time to explore the collection items. Most recently a poem about the Dutch Inn caught her attention. According to Pat, her parents influenced her involvement in the Historical Society. Reflecting back she wishes she had done so sooner and says "you reach a time and point when you realize the significance. I am totally impressed by the volume of the collection that is being documented here".

# SAVE THE DATE

EVENTS YOU DON'T WANT TO MISS!

Welcome Home- September 23, 2018 - 1: 00 pm - Spring Garden, Delaware Avenue Laurel DE  
Take A Gander - October 07, 2018 - 1 pm - 4 pm - Hitchens Homestead (Willow St Laurel)  
Hoedown at the Hudson's - Annual Fall Fundraising Event - October 27, 2018 - 5:30 pm  
GI Normous Veterans Day Yard Sale - November 10, 2018 - 7:00 am - 11:00 am - Hitchens Homestead  
Member Christmas Party - December 02, 2018 - Laurel Heritage Museum - 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm  
Annual Meeting - January 27, 2019 - 2:00 pm - Abbott's on Broad Creek - Laurel

Laurel Library Presents - "Antique Appraisals" Free Event, Monday, September 24, 2018, Laurel Public Library between 2:00 pm and 3:00 pm - Registration is required in advance by calling 302 875 3184.

## Museum Openings:

The Cook House and the Laurel Heritage Museum are open to the public the first Sunday of every month from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM. If you haven't stopped in lately please plan a visit in 2018. There is something for everyone and we ask that you encourage your friends, colleagues, and family to come see our wonderful collection. Help us spread the word!

## "Life in Laurel" Series

Laurel Public Library - 10:30 AM - 12:00 Noon

September 17, 2018, "One Woman's Gift to Laurel - Laurel's Community House"

Come share your memories of the Community House and other pieces of Laurel history over light refreshments. During the first Life in Laurel, we'll be planning topics for the rest of the season, so bring ideas you'd like to discuss. Please contact Gregg McCullough at 302-875-3184 or [Gregg.mccullough@lib.de.us](mailto:Gregg.mccullough@lib.de.us) with questions or for more information.

Life in Laurel is a monthly roundtable discussion of Laurel history co-sponsored by the Laurel Public Library and the Laurel Historical Society.



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

[www.facebook.com/LaurelDEHistoricalSociety](http://www.facebook.com/LaurelDEHistoricalSociety)

### INSTAGRAM

[laureldehistoricalsociety](https://www.instagram.com/laureldehistoricalsociety)

### WEB

<http://www.laureldehistoricalsociety.org>

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