



Fall 2023

NEWSLETTER

P. O. Box 102  
Laurel, DE 19956

[laureldehistoricalsociety.org](http://laureldehistoricalsociety.org)

## Exciting happenings at Rosemont

by Ned Fowler

AT ROSEMONT this summer, there's been a lot more going on than sipping mint juleps under the magnolia blossoms on the veranda. Historic restoration architect Barton Ross has submitted his 168-page preservation plan to the Laurel Redevelopment Corporation. Included here are historic overview, property conditions evaluation, and reports from architectural historians, structural engineers, and dendro-chronologists. Thanks to the latter and their tree-ring growth data, we now know, for certain, that Rosemont was built in 1772. LRC is digesting the plan and prioritizing its next steps.



*Graham Robb, descendant of Nathaniel Mitchell, at Rosemont.*



*Artist's depiction of a restored Rosemont. Courtesy of Barton Ross.*

Very appropriately, on the 4th of July, we had a visit from Laurel's #1 Revolutionary War patriot Continental Congressman and Governor Nathaniel Mitchell's 4th great-grandson. Like his ancestor, Graham Robb is an attorney. Well-educated and turned out, he is a published author who gives bike tours of colonial Philadelphia and referees soccer. This was his first trip to Rosemont, and he stayed for our society picnic.

We were excited to learn of the existence, in his family collection, of oil portraits of both Nathaniel's son, Theodore, and his wife. Theodore is known to have lived, too, at Rosemont and also owned the mill on the

**IN THIS ISSUE:** News, Photos, Truitt's Store, Fall Dinner on October 14th, Rosemont, Progress at Hitchens, Exciting Acquisitions, Old News, and more!



*Graham Robb stands in his ancestor's pew at Old Christ Church.*



*Theodore Mitchell, son of Nathaniel Mitchell.*

pond before heading to Philadelphia in the mid-1830s. Graham lastly showed us an original 1805 document in his possession pertaining to Manaen Bull, an early storekeeper and mill owner, who just happened to be one of the appraisers of Nathaniel Mitchell's estate and later married his widow.

One thing about history is that there's something new every day. Thanks to society friend John Fillmore, who recently enlarged and enhanced our oldest photo of Rosemont, we have now seen evidence that Rosemont, in all likelihood at one time, had a second front door and an addition or outbuilding off to the south of the house.

New this season in the garage is a small exhibit showcasing Laurel agri-business with a 14-foot long mural painted by Marie Wheeler, an art teacher in the Laurel elementary school in the early 1950s. Be like the 72 people who toured our properties in August and check it out. Thanks to Snicky Davis and Brian Seeba for putting this together. 🌻



*Laurel agri-business exhibit featuring mural by Marie Wheeler.*

## Society wins “Best Overall Theme” in 4th of July Parade

On behalf of the Laurel Historical Society, Bryce Wharton drove wife Erin Wharton, Kendal Jones, and Artez West in a 1912 Model T Ford in Laurel's annual 4th of July parade. The society's entry won “Best Overall Theme!”



## President's Corner

George Denney

HITCHENS HOMESTEAD restoration remained our primary focus over the summer. Restoration work requires a higher level of scrutiny when dealing with materials which must be hand-crafted. We are fortunate we have such a highly skilled team working on Hitchens. A special note of thanks goes to Ned Fowler who spends a considerable amount of time consulting with our contractors and overseeing the project. Thanks go to Representative Tim Dukes and Senator Bryant Richardson for their continued support of the project with a \$200,000 grant award. Stop by and observe the transformation of the Hitchens Homestead!

Our museum openings have been successful this year with approximately 100 people visiting our museums. Many thanks go to our docents: Snicky Davis, Louanne West, Matt and Dona Blaine, Marci Scott, Ned and Norma Jean Fowler, Chris Calio, Marlene Collins, Don Phillips, Mary Jones, Jane Anne Smith, Jane Ellen Hiller, Scott Venables, Moggie Moyer, Melinda Tingle, Emily Abbott, Charlotte Baker, Bill Acker, Jared Allen, Chris and Crystal Slavens, Trina Giles, Tammera Ward, Karl Holland, Triss Holland, and Sharon Whaley.

We hope to see you at our fall dinner on Saturday, October 14th, at St. Philip's Church. We have engaged Lighthouse Catering to provide a delicious buffet-style dinner of made-from-scratch rolls, stuffed chicken, crab cakes, roasted potatoes, mac & cheese, and green beans, with apple crisp for dessert. Chris Slavens will give a presentation about his new book about the Nanticoke Indians.

On November 1st we will begin our annual appeal. Please remember that your contribution enables the Laurel Historical Society to maintain our museums and ever-growing collections. We have been delighted by the amount you have contributed in the past, and look forward to your renewed support of the society this year.



*Courtesy of Paula Shannon.*

We have recently received a gift of Twilley furniture, clocks, sterling tea service, and other items that belonged to the Twilley family. They built and lived in the cottage at the Hitchens Homestead, so the items will be returning home! These are generous and important gifts from Michele and Dan Twilley. Dan, who recently passed away, was an enthusiastic supporter of the restoration.

Finally, the annual "Yuletide at Rosemont" gala will be held on December 2nd. We are pleased to announce that Chef Matt Whaley will be returning and preparing a delicious meal. More details will be announced. 🌸

## Welcome our new members!

William Hitchens  
Fishers, Ind.

Albert & Laurie Joseph  
Laurel

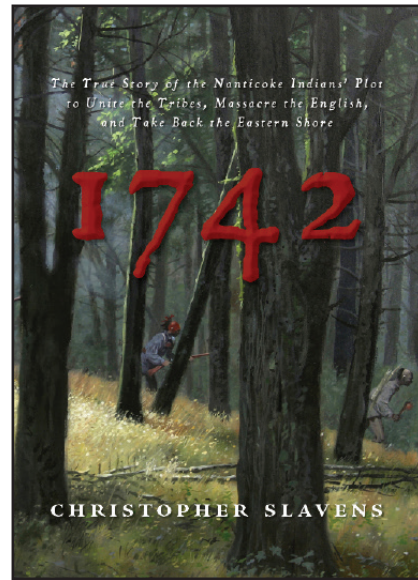
Jim & Linda Marvin  
Laurel

# Chris Slavens to speak at Society's fall dinner

YOU PROBABLY KNOW that the town of Laurel is located on the site of a Nanticoke Indian reservation, but did you know that Rossakatum Branch was named after a local Nanticoke chief in the early 1700s? Or that there was an Indian fort located near Trap Pond? Or that the Nanticoke Indians leased land to Englishmen who built commercial buildings along Broad Creek decades before Laurel town was founded? Or that a secret meeting in 1742 could have changed the course of history for all of North America, if not the world?

Author and Laurel Historical Society member Chris Slavens will give a presentation about these and other little-known details of Laurel's colonial history at the society's fall dinner on **Saturday, October 14th**, drawing from his new book *1742: The True Story of the Nanticoke Indians' Plot to Unite the Tribes, Massacre the English, and Take Back the Eastern Shore*.

Despite the title, the book is not only about the events of 1742—it begins with Captain John Smith's trip up the Nanticoke River in 1608, and covers a period of more than two centuries—nor is it solely about the Nanticoke. Other peninsula tribes including the Choptanks, Assateagues, and Pocomokes are examined in detail. However, much of *1742* focuses on the Broad Creek community between the 1680s and 1760s. Slavens



dedicated the book to his neighbors around Whaley's Crossroads, "especially the Ellis, Perez, Whaley, Hudson, and Young families."

The event will be held in the St. Philip's Church hall, and will begin at 6:00 p.m. Food will be provided by Lighthouse Catering. The cost is \$45 per person; please see the registration form on page 5. Copies of Chris's book will be available for \$20, or can be purchased online at [baldcypressbooks.com](http://baldcypressbooks.com). 🌸

This event is sponsored by:

**2023**  
*Nanticoke River*  
**Jamboree**  
 at  
*Handsell*  
*Women in History*  
**Saturday, October 14**  
**10 a.m. - 5 p.m.**  
 4837 Indiantown Road  
 Vienna, Maryland  
 Admission \$5 Adult  
 children 12 and under free

Event sponsored by the Nanticoke Historic Preservation Alliance  
 Info: [www.nanticoke riverjamboree.com](http://www.nanticoke riverjamboree.com)

THE LAUREL HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS

*The Nanticoke Indians of Broad Creek*

— Dinner, Presentation, & Book Signing —  
Speaker: Christopher Slavens

Saturday, October 14, 2023  
6 o'clock p.m.

St. Philip's Church  
600 S. Central Ave  
Laurel, Del.

\$45 per attendee — please register by October 1<sup>st</sup>.

*Join us for our fall dinner and a presentation by Christopher Slavens.  
Copies of his new book 1742 will be available for \$20.*

SPACE IS LIMITED! REGISTER BY OCTOBER 1<sup>ST</sup>

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ No. of Guests: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send \$45.00 per person to the Laurel Historical Society, P.O. Box 102, Laurel, DE 19956, or pay online at [laureldehistoricalsociety.org](http://laureldehistoricalsociety.org). For more information contact George Denney at 302-745-1963.

# Shootin' the breeze at Hitchens

by Ned Fowler

AT LONG LAST, we have been able to find evidence of and re-construct the elusive piazza, or breezeway, at the 1878 Emanuel Twilley House at our Hitchens Homestead. Based on what was left behind, strict adherence was given to mirroring original rooflines, floor levels, and passageways. Even with our hot summer weather, it's rare not to catch a breeze there coming off the pond. Thanks to legislators Tim Dukes and Bryant Richardson, the project got a breath of fresh air with the generous input of an additional \$200,000 in Delaware Community Reinvestment grant funds. This also made possible a second round of professional paint analysis in the upper portion of exterior siding due to the discovery of a continuous run of decorative trim around all four perimeter walls of the house. Word has last been received of a \$5,000 grant from Preservation Delaware to help defray some of these costs.



*Photos courtesy of Ned Fowler.*

Okay, so we're going to have a cute little hilltop cottage fit for Anne of Green Gables or Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm. What else? We're working in earnest to furnish the place in period-appropriate trappings and tell Laurel's story along the way. Years in the making, your historical society has been quietly collecting things with local backgrounds. A recent gift from Laurel native Terri Milligan Collins is an Ellis-family Renaissance Revival sideboard, c. 1880. Tacked under its marble top is a paper shipping label for T. C. Horsey, Laurel, Del. Thomas Clayton Horsey (1849-1932) lived in the Dr. Joshua Ellegood house at 403 S. Central Avenue and served as president of Laurel's Marvil Package Company. How the piece got from one of Laurel's most prestigious homes to a farm on Old Hickory Road is a mystery yet to be solved. ❀



*Ellis-family Renaissance Revival sideboard with Horsey shipping label, circa 1880.*

## Old News

**LOST at Ocean City, Md., on July 20, a gray card case containing a lady's diamond ring and a coin. Liberal reward. Notify W. F. Deputy, Laurel, Del. Jy-28-4t.**

*The Worcester Democrat (Pocomoke City, Md.),  
August 11, 1923*

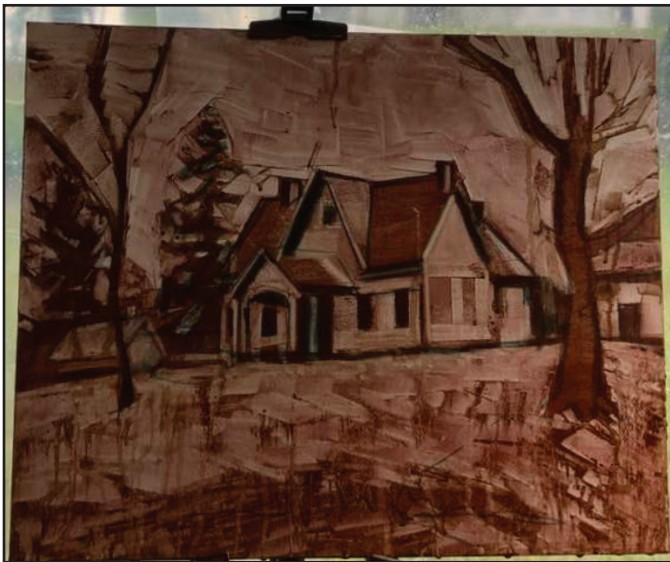
# Captured in a moment of time



LOCAL ARTIST Judith Loeber braved drizzly weather during the Paint Laurel plein air event on May 20th, and, after stopping by Trap Pond and deciding to save it for a nicer day, set up at the Hitchens Homestead. In doing so, she captured the historic home in the early stages of its ongoing restoration, resulting in a unique portrayal which blends visual fact with imagination.

“I opted to lie about the Tyvek wrap on the house, and replace it with the board and batten peering out here and there under breaks in the Tyvek,” she says.

In the weeks and months after Loeber completed the painting, restoration work continued at the Homestead. The house now looks much closer to its original 1878 appearance, with a re-created piazza connecting it to the kitchen (see page 6). *Photos courtesy of Judith Loeber.*

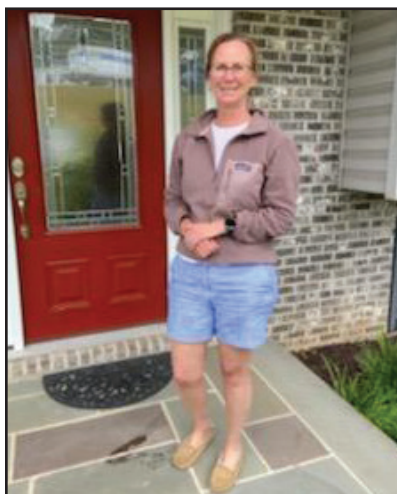


## New Exhibit at the Cook House: The Twilley Family Legacy

IT WAS a made-for-TV saga reminiscent of *Ward Bond and Wagon Train*: the uncertainty of weather, unfamiliar terrain, scant directions, questionable proximity to food, and a new untested prairie schooner. Instead, it was wind restrictions threatening closure of the Bay Bridge amid summertime beach traffic, pulling a cumbersome trailer up and down the hilly backroads of the western Maryland countryside, the possibility of no reception on our GPS, wondering whether our burgers at Five Guys could be had without carbs from a roll, and a brand-new SUV in which we barely knew more than how to turn on the headlights. Nevertheless, we got there and, boy, did we strike gold!

At the invitation of Michele, the wife of the late Dan Twilley, of Sykesville, MD, society members Danny LeCates and Ned Fowler ventured outside their comfort zone on June 21 to pick up a treasure trove of furniture and other objects that descended to her husband from his family in Laurel. Most of the pieces date to the 1880s and earlier, and were original to our Emanuel Twilley House at The Hitchens Homestead. Among them were: 21 pieces of furniture (including two early 19th-century chests of drawers, an outrageously inlaid marble-top table, and a Delaware Valley Queen Anne dropleaf table c. 1740-60), probably 150 photos and tintypes of five generations of the Twilley family (including the builders of our house), three mantel clocks, andirons, Bible records, and sterling silver hollow ware and flatware. Some of these pieces are even monogrammed “NET” for Nettie and Emanuel Twilley, Dan’s great-grandparents, who built our Homestead’s main dwelling as well as the mill that some of us remember on their nearby pond.

Four tablespoons are engraved “Adams,” for Nettie’s father, a partner in the mill operation; but then there are also five coin silver teaspoons bearing Baltimore silversmith John Lynch’s touchmark dating from around 1820-30. The latter are monogrammed “B,” most likely for Nettie’s Bell grandparents of Bethel.



*Michele Twilley.*

In the small world department, Michele was sifting through a box of family papers headed our way and found a 1921 baptismal certificate for Dan’s father, John Emanuel Twilley, at St. Philip’s Church here in Laurel. “Somebody Fowler’s name is on this,” she said. It was Ned’s grandfather, Leighton, who apparently was John’s godfather.

Do yourself a favor by visiting the Cook House this fall and see the Twilley legacy for yourself. With the exception of the carpet, everything in the exhibit gallery is a Twilley family heirloom which will, once the Emanuel Twilley House is restored, return home. Thank you, Michele Twilley, for giving us the opportunity of a lifetime by making this all possible! 🌸



# Local shopping—100 years ago

by Kendal T. Jones

The country store at Lowe’s Crossroads was owned by Mr. Clarence Truitt from 1910 to 1947, the year of his death. The store closed but most contents remained until a final sale in 2010. At that time many ledgers and day-books (daily records of sales) were sold and some purchased by Mr. Joel Wharton, who recently let me see them. There were accounts for every family in the neighborhood I knew as a child, as well as many other names, which proves Mr. Truitt served a large customer base.


One of the ledgers was for the year 1923, and the prices from one hundred years ago were amazing, and the great variety of stock available also surprising.

Below are some copied samples:

1 lantern	\$1.25
1 box salt	.05
1 gal. gasoline	.23
1 qt. motor oil	.15
1 pr shoes	2.73
1 plug tobacco	.20
1 mattress	6.00
1 set bed springs	3.25
1 doz. qt. jars	1.00
1 lb sugar	.10
1 pr. gloves	.20
1 shell	.05
1 jar peanut butter	.35
25 yds matting @ 25	6.25
1 stove	3.25
1 bag flour	.75
1 box shoe polish	.15
1 shirt	1.00
Matches	.02
1 pkg cigarettes	.10
1 pr stockings	.25
1 lb cheese	.36
1 lb #8 nails	.06
1 lb lard	.20
1 baking powder	.10
1 comb	.15
1 collar button	.05
1 loaf bread	.07
1 pt turpentine	\$ .55
1 lb coffee	.30
1 box carpet tacks	.05
1 blanket	2.09
1 pot	.97

1 yd. serge	.57
1 spool silk	.10
1 #2 pump	2.75
1 yd table damask	.77
1 waist	2.47
1 lard can	.25
1 basin	.33
1 pr scissors	.50
1 cement block	.28
25 yds carpet	11:25
1 stove	11:50
1 pr boots	4.00
1 tablet	.05
1 snuff	.10
1 yd muslin	.09
1 rug	12.27
1 sweater	1.27
1 chair	2.75
1 lamp burner	.12
1 window shade	.50
1 union suit	1.38
1 pr overalls	2.25
stove parts	3.25
1 wick	.07

Happy 97<sup>th</sup> Birthday



Kendal T. Jones

SEPTEMBER 1ST

*We're Standing on  
Your Shoulders*

The 328 Members of the  
Laurel Historical Society

Laurel  
Historical Society

## • SAVE THE DATE! •

September 16th	•	Bike & Brew	•	Old Christ Church (LHS station)	•	a.m.
September 21st	•	Life in Laurel	•	Rosemont	•	10:30 a.m.
October 1st	•	Museums Open	•	Six Museums	•	1:00 – 4:00 p.m.
October 14th	•	Lecture and Dinner Speaker: Chris Slavens	•	St. Philip's	•	6:00 p.m.
October 19th	•	Life in Laurel	•	Rosemont	•	10:30 a.m.
November 5th	•	Four Museums Open	•	Rosemont, Train Station, Cook House, Bethel	•	1:00 – 4:00 p.m.
November 16th	•	Life in Laurel	•	Rosemont	•	10:30 a.m.
December 2nd	•	Yuletide at Rosemont	•	Rosemont	•	5:00 – 9:00 p.m.
December 3rd	•	Open House	•	Rosemont	•	1:00 – 4:00 p.m.
December 10th	•	Open House	•	Rosemont	•	1:00 – 4:00 p.m.
December 17th	•	Open House	•	Rosemont	•	1:00 – 4:00 p.m.
December 31st	•	New Year's Eve Party	•	Abbott's on Broad Creek	•	6:00 p.m.



*“Truck accident at bridge on US 13 in Laurel,” 1940. State Highway Department Collection, Delaware Public Archives.*



02 Dec  
5 PM TO 9 PM



# Yuletide *at Rosemont*

Hosted by the Laurel Redevelopment Corporation and the  
Laurel Historical Society

This year we will be “Rockin’ around the Christmas Tree” with fine wine, spirits, entertainment, and culinary delights prepared by Laurel’s own renowned Chef Matthew Whaley. Join us for an evening of food and festivities as we celebrate the revitalization of Laurel and the restoration of Rosemont.

**TICKETS**  
**\$100.00 PP**

**RSVP BY**  
**11/20/23**

**JOIN US!**

For more information contact George Denney at 302 745 1963. Purchase on the LHS website, or by check to Laurel Historical Society / P O Box 102 / Laurel DE 19956



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