

## Notes for Anyone Leading a Tour of the New Signs

### **Town Hall**

- This building was constructed in 1887 for William and Ida Bell, who lived here with their seven children. The Bell family's general store was built in 1883 on the space that is now the Town Hall parking lot. The Bell farm stretched out behind here to the First/Second Street area.
- The Bell family history poster is displayed inside Town Hall.
- William and Ida Bell lived here; his sister Annie and her husband Joseph Higgins lived in the home across the street; the house to the south was their tenant house. William and Annie had grown up in the Temperance Hall home, now housing Jennifer's Rutherford's art gallery and owned by St. Bartholomew's Church. They walked to school at the Goshen intersection every day.
- The Town of Laytonsville was incorporated in 1892.
- In the distant past, any meetings, official events, auctions, etc. happened in the upstairs storage spaces at the general stores or at the old Mobley general store at the crossroads.
- Laytonsville's previous town hall, built in spring 1924, was the Modern Woodmen Hall, used for a meeting place, dances, movies, plays, storage of town records, etc.
- After that building burned in 1965, Mayor Washington W. White, Sr. converted an old medical office from a previous doctor to his own office and town file storage. After that, file cabinets were moved to the next mayor's basement.
- In 2002, this location became our Town Hall, providing a place for the Historical Center as well as for items previously stored at the "Archives Room" at Laytonsville Elementary School. This dual use had been the plan from the beginning, thanks to Mayor Charles T. White and Laytonsville Elementary School Principal Laura Turner.

### **The Green Water Tank**

- In the 1890s, people would purchase two half-acre lots (@\$100) and build their new house next to their business here in town on the west side of Rt. 108.
- In 1926 a terrible fire destroyed the business structures in the middle of town. It killed the livestock kept behind the businesses (farmers paid their bills with livestock) and ruined nearby homes.
- In 1927 this water storage tank was paid for through donations from townspeople and money raised by the town's young people – they gave a dance at the new Woodmen Hall as a fundraiser. At that time the Bell family owned both lots (now parking lot and house next door), and that's why the tank now stretches across two lots.
- Before Laytonsville had its own fire department, this tank supplied water when other fire departments were called to town – Two examples: Sandy Spring FD used it for the Burke/Dwyer house in 1946 (a summer fire). But the water tended to freeze up during the winter, so it could not be used when the old firehouse burned in February 1965.
- Fire department personnel would check it regularly to be sure there was sufficient water.
- The tank was restored as an Eagle Scout project in 2011 by Colin Headrick of Scout Troop 1323. Colin transformed it from rusty to green at that point.

## Miller Park

This sign highlights why we use the phrase “From crossroads to community.”

A small geographic sign on it shows how Laytonsville is a crossroads area between key points. Frederick is to the North, Georgetown to the South, Baltimore to the East, and the Potomac River to the West. Travelers heading from the north and west to major waterways and markets followed the natural topography and ridges. They established trails to these key points, and these trails intersect at Laytonsville.

These trails began with indigenous people crossing through the area. The creeks here provided water to rest by while they sharpened quartz into projectile points. Some of these points have been found by local farmers. We do not have a name beyond “Woodland Indians” for these travelers, but we know they stopped in the Laytonsville area before continuing their journeys.

The fertile soils drew settlers to establish farms. Today the Agricultural Reserve map highlights the importance of agriculture past and present to our community.

The “Now and Then” photos show how our Laytonsville history is both past and present. We continue today to be a thriving community. Note the Wheat Harvest in 1895 and the Corn Harvest in 2012. The Blacksmith Shop was built in 1874, and today on the same spot is ATCO Tire, established in 1945.

Our town continues to matter. It will continue to thrive as long as all people continue to support it and give their time to helping our community stay strong.

## The Jones Pond Trailhead

We learned about this September 1862 time period through reading soldiers’ diary entries and letters, military maps, and records, plus stories handed down by local families.

You can read more about the Civil War in the Laytonsville area in Chapter Two of our town history book, *Laytonsville From Crossroads to Community*.

A member of the Warfield family told one story of the amicable contact between these thousands of soldiers and the people of Laytonsville. The farm of Israel and Maria Warfield, now the Rolling Ridge neighborhood, was used as the quartermaster depot for horses and mules. Elisha Warfield related this family story:

*A large detachment of Union soldiers was encamped on the farm not far from the house. Elisha was in his crib on the front porch. He was 7 months old at the time. His mother was sitting nearby. It was about ten a.m. An officer walked up to the porch, picked up the boy without a word, and quietly walked away with the infant. The mother was apparent too terrified to protest. About noon the officer brought Elisha back put him in the crib, and explained to the mother, “The boys have been away for so long that they are pretty homesick, and a visit from that little babe made them a bit happier.”*

Another story about the Ohio troops has a lesson about political campaigns. General Jesse Lee Reno observed that the 23<sup>rd</sup> Ohio troops were helping themselves to hay for forage and straw for bedding from Laytonsville farms. General Reno was furious at Colonel Rutherford B. Hayes about this because Maryland was officially a Union state, and Union troops should not be stealing from the farmers. General Reno considered it an embarrassment to his division. General Reno reprimanded Hayes in front of his men for taking the hay and for allowing his soldiers to bed down anywhere they liked, not bivouacking together.

Hayes defended his men, saying that they needed whatever they took to feed horses or to be more comfortable while camping in a plowed field. He told General Reno, "Well, I trust our generals will exhibit the same energy in dealing with our foes that they do in the treatment of their friends." Reno was offended, and Hayes's troops cheered him for defying the general. That further angered General Reno, and he spoke of putting colonels in irons if their men stole. Later General Cox explained to Hayes that the quartermasters would pay for the straw if the farmers were proven loyal to the Union, and that troops in the presence of the enemy should sleep "closed in mass" so that they would be ready to fight if necessary. Cox was planning to switch the 23<sup>rd</sup> Ohio away from Reno's command to avoid future trouble between them, but only a few days later General Reno was killed by a Confederate sharpshooter at the Battle of South Mountain. This incident seemed to be forgotten, but it resurfaced to be held against Rutherford B Hayes in his campaign for the presidency in 1876.

### **The Cracklin Trailhead**

The name of the Cracklin District was officially changed to "Laytonsville District" in 1888 by the Maryland legislature.

Various companies make copies of this map. You can get a high-resolution file for this "Cracklin" map for free from the Library of Congress website along with similar maps for the Clarksburg-Damascus district and the Olney-Mechanicsville District. The Montgomery County Historical Society sells an atlas of all the 1879 county district maps with an index.

Cracklins used to be a seasonal treat. Most farmers butchered at Thanksgiving. The cracklins were a byproduct of rendering lard. They were meatier and chewier than the pork rinds or chicarrones you buy at the supermarket. The Cracklin Tavern in Laytonsville became well known for making Cracklin Bread, a cornbread with cracklins mixed in. See the recipe on this sign. The names Cracklin Town and Cracklin District came from the tasty Cracklin Bread and cracklins.

This area used to be part of the John L. Layton farm. He owned property on three of the four corners at the crossroads, and he owned all of the farmland along 108 in town, this development, and the fields to the west of here.

A tricky part of doing research on the Layton family is that there were three men by almost the same name living in the Clarksburg – Rockville – Laytonsville area: John Layton and John R. Layton and John L. Layton. The one living in Laytonsville was John L. Layton.

**About the Wayside Historical Signs Created by the Laytonsville Historical Center for the Town of Laytonsville and installed February 2024**

The Wayside Historical Signs help to tell the story of our Laytonsville Community, both past and present. They were created by an amazing team of people. Much credit goes to all involved including:

The Mayors both emeritus, Jim Ruspi and present, Charles Hendricks and all the Town Council Members from 2022-2024

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 grant that funded the project

The members of the Sign Committee: Shirley Riggs Dorsey, Charles Hendricks, Cody Hidayat, Kathleen Hurley, Amenda Becker Mosko, Richard Rutherford, Anne Burke Wolf and Chair, Jane Griffith Evans

All the members of the Laytonsville Historical Center

Susann M. Mick, Graphic Designer, MPC Design

Pannier Graphics Sign Company, Gibsonia, PA

Kevin Bohrer and Goshen Enterprises, sign installation

The Laytonsville Parks and Trails Committee

The Laytonsville Historic District Commission members