

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

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K-79
Lauretum
Kent County, MD

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General Description

Lauretum is a large stuccoed frame house located northwest of Chestertown, seat of Kent County, Maryland. The house was built in 1881 for Chestertown lawyer Harrison W. Vickers. The form and massing of the house are complex, reflecting the eclecticism of the late Victorian period. It comprises a three-story A-roofed rectangle with clipped gables whose ridge runs east-west, and three-story gambrel-roofed sections extending to the south and west. A two-story service wing extends to the west, and a small one-story gambrel-roofed wing--originally an office--projects to the north. The principal facade faces east, consisting of a central entrance flanked on either side by double windows. The window openings have granite sills, and are headed with shallow segmental arches which are trimmed with applied fretwork. The sash is 20/2 lights in the pattern associated with the Queen Anne style (rows of multiple square panes in the upper sash). The double entrance doors are paneled with applied bolection molding, and are surmounted by a single-pane, segmental-arched transom; the transom bar is decorated with applied fretwork. A Stick-style porch shelters the entrance, with a jerkinhead roof supported on four square posts; the porch is decorated with fretwork above a row of dentils. The second story of the east facade is four symmetrical bays wide, with three bays under the gable and the fourth bay in the gambrel-roofed section. The third floor has a double window under the clipped gable, and a dormer in the gambrel. The building's prominent overhanging eaves feature exposed decorative rafter ends and stickwork brackets at the corners.

The south elevation of the main block is two bays wide, defined on the ground level by tall 16/4 windows with granite sills. These open onto a broad porch which spans the south end, its shed roof supported on exposed members with simple chamfered brackets and some decorative fluting. Two 20/2 sash mark the second floor. At the third-floor level, an elaborate oriel contains a triple window, each sash comprising 8/8 vertical lights, with panels above and below. The frame projection is clad in wainscot boards and sawtooth shingles, and is decorated with fretwork, scalloped and drilled molding, and spool molding.

The porch continues across the south elevation of the west wing. On the ground floor there are two tall windows in the living room area, and a door giving onto the porch from the family dining room. Four windows with granite sills and 16/2 sash are arrayed across the second story. The roof is sheathed in asphalt in a convincing imitation of the original decorative slate.

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A two-story, two-bay service wing with a slate-covered gambrel roof extends to the west. This wing represents an early addition to the house, constructed in 1886 by the same contractor, R. K. Pippin & Sons (it is not clear, however, whether it was included in the architect's original plans). A narrow two-story projection extends from the south elevation of the wing; it has one window on each floor, and terminates in a tower with a pyramidal roof with a louvered Gothic vent. To the west of the tower is a one-story, one-bay enclosure which serves as a pantry. In the west end wall of the wing there is a central door under a hip-roofed porch, and two windows above; simple brackets support the overhanging eaves. The north side of the wing features a one-bay, two-story porch, whose upper level has a balustrade of pierced Gothic slats.

The north elevation of the main block is four bays wide. On the ground floor, the westernmost bay is defined by two closely-spaced 42/4 sash; a one-story shed-roofed entrance projection covers the adjacent bays to the east, and the easternmost bay is occupied by a small projecting wing. The fenestration is similar on the upper story, with 16/2 sash in all openings; the windows are paired in the easternmost bay, and at the level of the stair landing. The north slope of the roof is dominated by a tower. A pair of tall 24/2 windows lights the shaft, and the steep mansard roof is clad in fishscale patterned polychrome slate. The north, east and west faces are pierced by narrow Gothic peaked dormers with semicircular-headed 1/1 sash. Two shed dormers with 9/4 sash are located to the west of the tower, and a dormer with a paired 9/4 window is to the east.

The east entrance has transomed double doors opening into a small, square vestibule. Reeded plaster moldings on the north and south walls form panels with tombstone heads. Up one step, double glazed doors (20th century) with a semicircular single pane transom open into an interior vestibule, whose ceiling is finished with a molded plaster cornice and circular medallion. This vestibule opens into a formal entrance hall which runs through the main block. Double doors formerly separated the vestibule and hall.

The floor of both the vestibule and the hall comprises 2- $\frac{1}{2}$ " oak and mahogany boards laid in an alternating pattern, resulting in a striped appearance. The hall has a bold plaster cornice with a beaded fascia, reeded soffit and dropped coffering. The architrave trim comprises molded recessed pilasters on plinth blocks, with cornerblocks treated with a pressed shell design.

The rooms flanking the hall have plain pine floors. A large parlor

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Significance Summary

Lauretum is significant under Criterion C for its architectural character. Designed by Baltimore architect Edmund G. Lind and constructed in 1881, Lauretum combines features of several late 19th century architectural fashions in a highly picturesque composition which represents an outstanding expression of late Victorian eclecticism. The irregular massing, multiple roof forms, clipped gables, and windows comprising numerous small (frequently colored) lights in the upper sash evoke the Queen Anne; the oriel window, exposed rafter ends, and the rectilinear posts and brackets supporting the porches and overhanging eaves relate to the Stick Style; the decorative designs of Charles Eastlake are reflected in the exterior fretwork and interior mantels and stair; and Gothic influence is seen in the towers and in the exceptional decorative treatment of the parlor ceiling. Lind, the architect, was born and trained in England, and became one of Baltimore's most influential practitioners during the period 1856-1883. He was among the founders of the American Institute of Architects, and the first president of its Baltimore chapter. Lauretum is Lind's only work on the upper Eastern Shore, and the only residence of the period in Kent County firmly attributed to an architect. The house retains a high degree of integrity, with the majority of its character-defining features intact on the exterior and interior. Especially noteworthy details include a variety of well-executed plaster ornament and the unusual striped alternating oak and mahogany flooring in the entrance hall; several of the windows retain colored lights in the multipane upper sash. The property derives additional significance under Criterion B from its association with Harrison W. Vickers (1845-1911), who was prominent in commercial, legal, and political affairs in Kent County.

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HISTORIC CONTEXT

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

Geographic Organization: Eastern Shore

Chronological/Developmental Period(s):

Industrial-Urban Dominance: A.D. 1870-1930
Modern Period: A.D. 1930-Present

Historic Period Theme(s):

Architecture/Landscape Architecture/Community Planning

Resource Type:

Category: Building
Historic Environment: Rural
Historic Function(s) and Use(s):
DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Known Design Source:

Lind, Edmund George, architect
R. K. Pippin & Sons, builder

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RESOURCE HISTORY AND HISTORIC CONTEXT

Lauretum was constructed in 1881 for Harrison W. Vickers, a prominent Chestertown lawyer. Harrison Vickers was born on June 24, 1845, the son of U. S. Senator George Vickers and Mary Mansfield Vickers.

Harrison Vickers attended Penn Military Academy and was a graduate of Washington College; he later served on the college's Board of Visitors and Governors for thirty years.

In the early part of his career, Harrison Vickers and his brother ran a mercantile business in Chestertown, Maryland. Their headquarters were located in what is now known as Stam's Corner.

Vickers was admitted to the bar in 1870 and later entered into a law practice with his father. Their partnership was known as Vickers and Son and covered the vicinities of Cecil, Kent, Queen Anne's, Caroline, and Talbot counties.¹ Harrison Vickers established a reputation as a successful criminal lawyer.

Vickers' interests and influence were wide-ranging; one source observed, "from the time of his admission to the bar to the day of his death, he was a conspicuous figure in the civic, business and political life of the county [Kent County, Maryland]".²

He served two terms as State's Attorney (1875-1883), and became well-known in politics throughout Maryland. He was a frequent delegate to State and Judicial conventions, and served as Chairman of the State Central Committee of the Democratic Party. He was a Democratic candidate for Congress and for the State Senate.³

His business interests included the Transcript Publishing Company, of which he was a director, and the Second (later called the Third) National Bank. He was among the founders of that bank and served on its board of directors until failing health caused him to resign in 1910.⁴ He was President of the Chester Cemetery Company, which developed a local cemetery on land that his father, Senator George Vickers, donated to the community. It is still maintained by descendants of George and Harrison Vickers.

Vickers received the rank of Captain in the Kent Guards, a local military organization. His private library was held to be among the most extensive in the State of Maryland.⁵

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Harrison Vickers was married on May 22, 1873 to Jane Bruce Yates Shemwell, a native of St. Mary's County, Maryland. Her father was a physician, and Jane (known as Jennie) was a descendant on her mother's side of Colonel Philip Luke Barber, the first Lieutenant Governor of Maryland during the colonial period. Jennie B. Y. Shemwell Vickers was an active member of the Chestertown Methodist Episcopal Church.⁶ Harrison and Jennie Vickers had eight children, six of whom survived to adulthood.⁷

Harrison Vickers died of a stroke at Lauretum on Monday, June 5, 1911 at the age of sixty-six.⁸ He was the last surviving son of Senator George Vickers. Funeral services were held for him at Lauretum. All of his pallbearers were respected judges.

In 1881, Vickers purchased the property upon which Lauretum stands from Henry W. Carville and his wife for \$2,000. At that time, the property was known as the "Peach Field", and comprised 40 acres and 11 perches.⁹ According to legend, Vickers had won \$75,000 in a lottery drawing, and used \$10,000 of his winnings to construct Lauretum.¹⁰ The house was built in 1881 by Chestertown contractors R. K. Pippin and Sons, to the design of Edmund George Lind, a prominent Baltimore architect.

Lind was among Baltimore's most prominent and influential architects in the latter half of the 19th century. Born and educated in England, Lind arrived in Baltimore in 1855, having been sent by Nathan G. Starkweather to carry out his design for the First Presbyterian Church. He subsequently established his own practice in Baltimore, first in a short-lived partnership with William T. Murdoch. Lind was a founding member of the American Institute of Architects and first President of the Baltimore Chapter, A. I. A. He undertook numerous projects in Baltimore and Maryland before he removed to Georgia in 1883. Among the most important of these is the Peabody Library (1858-1878), whose cast iron interior stacks are a monument to innovative design and construction. Lind's meticulously-kept project list (in manuscript at the Maryland Historical Society) documents the scope of the architect's achievement, recording over 900 projects between the years 1856 and 1902, ranging from patent drawings, tombstones, and bird boxes, through residential and commercial buildings and alterations, to the Peabody Library and an entry in the competition for the Library of Congress.

Lauretum was Lind's only project on the upper Eastern Shore. Harrison Vickers' daughter, Clara Vickers Perkins described the design of her family home as "English style;"¹¹ Lind's conception, however, reflected the eclecticism of the late Victorian period, combining features of the Queen

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Anne style with detailing influenced by the designs of Charles Eastlake.

The property remained in the Vickers family for nearly seventy-five years after Vickers' death in 1911. He left Lauretum to his wife, Jane, who maintained the property until her death in 1934; her will stated that all of the property that she inherited from her husband was to be sold and the profits were to be divided between her children. She named her sons George and Harrison and her son-in-law Herbert E. Perkins as executors of her will. In 1945, Rose Vickers Brooks, daughter of Harrison and Jennie Vickers, bought Lauretum from her mother's executors for \$12,000.¹² On December 20, 1954, Philip Medford Brooks, widower of Rose V. Brooks, sold the property to their children, Jane Brooks Sprinkle and Philip Medford Brooks, Jr., for the sum of \$10.00. On November 6, 1980, Jane Brooks Sprinkle, for no cash consideration, granted her half of Lauretum to her brother, Philip Medford Brooks, Jr. He sold Lauretum on February 21, 1985, to George M. Thomas for \$53,500, transferring the property out of the Vickers family. By that time the land had been reduced to 6.025 acres. In 1988, George M. Thomas sold the property to Terrance A. and Jennifer Corcoran of Earleville, Maryland for \$145,000. Finally, in 1991, the current owners, Bill Sites and Peg Trotters Sites purchased Lauretum with its 6.025 acres for \$357,000. The present owners have undertaken the restoration of Lauretum and currently operate the house as a bed and breakfast inn.

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Notes:

1. Business Card, original card from the firm of "Vickers and Son"; copy is in possession of Jane Sprinkle.
2. "Death's Doings", Obituary for Harrison Vickers, Newspaper unknown, copy is in possession of Jane Sprinkle.
3. "Grim Reaper", Obituary for Harrison Vickers, Newspaper unknown; copy is in possession of Jane Sprinkle.
4. *ibid.*
5. "Death's Doings".
6. "Deaths", Obituary of Jennie B.Y. Vickers, Newspaper unknown, copy is in possession of Jane Sprinkle.
7. "Grim Reaper".
8. *ibid.*
9. Kent County Court House, Deeds, SB 2/2, March 28, 1881.
10. H. Hurtt Deringer, "The Strange Tale of Lauretum Place," The Kent Shoreman, February 1971, p. 5. [Note: The architect's project list records the construction cost as \$7,000.]
11. H. Hurtt Deringer, p. 5.
12. Kent County Court House, Deeds, RAS 37/197, 11 September 1945.

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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Beirne, Francis F., "Lind, Edmund George," Baltimore Sun, November 8, 1954.

Biographical Encyclopedia of Representative Men of Maryland and District of Columbia, Baltimore, 1878.

Business Card, original card from the firm of "Vickers and Son"; card is in possession of Jane Sprinkle.

Obituary of Jennie B.Y. Vickers, newspaper unknown, January 12, 1935; copy is in possession of Jane Sprinkle.

Obituaries of Harrison Vickers, newspapers unknown; copies in possession of Jane Sprinkle.

Deringer, H. Hurtt, "The Strange Tale of Lauretum Place," The Kent Shoreman, Earlesville, MD., February 1971.

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Kent County Court House, Wills

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Usilton, Fred G., City of the Chester: History of Chestertown, Kent County, Maryland: 1650-1899. Chestertown, Maryland: William B. Usilton and Son, 1899.

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GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Verbal Boundary Description: The nominated property includes all that parcel of land which was transferred from Terrance A. and Jennifer Corcoran to William George Sites and Peg Trotters Site by deed dated 30 November 1991, recorded among the Land Records of Kent County, Maryland in Liber EHP 259, folio 17, containing 6.025 acres.

Boundary Justification: The nominated property, 6.025 acres, comprises the resource within its immediate setting, and represents the remnant of the property historically associated with the resource.

5762 1 SW
(HANESVILLE)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

K-79

76°07'30"
39°15'

HANESVILLE 2.1 MI.

405000m E

406

4344000m N

4343

4342

4341

12'30"

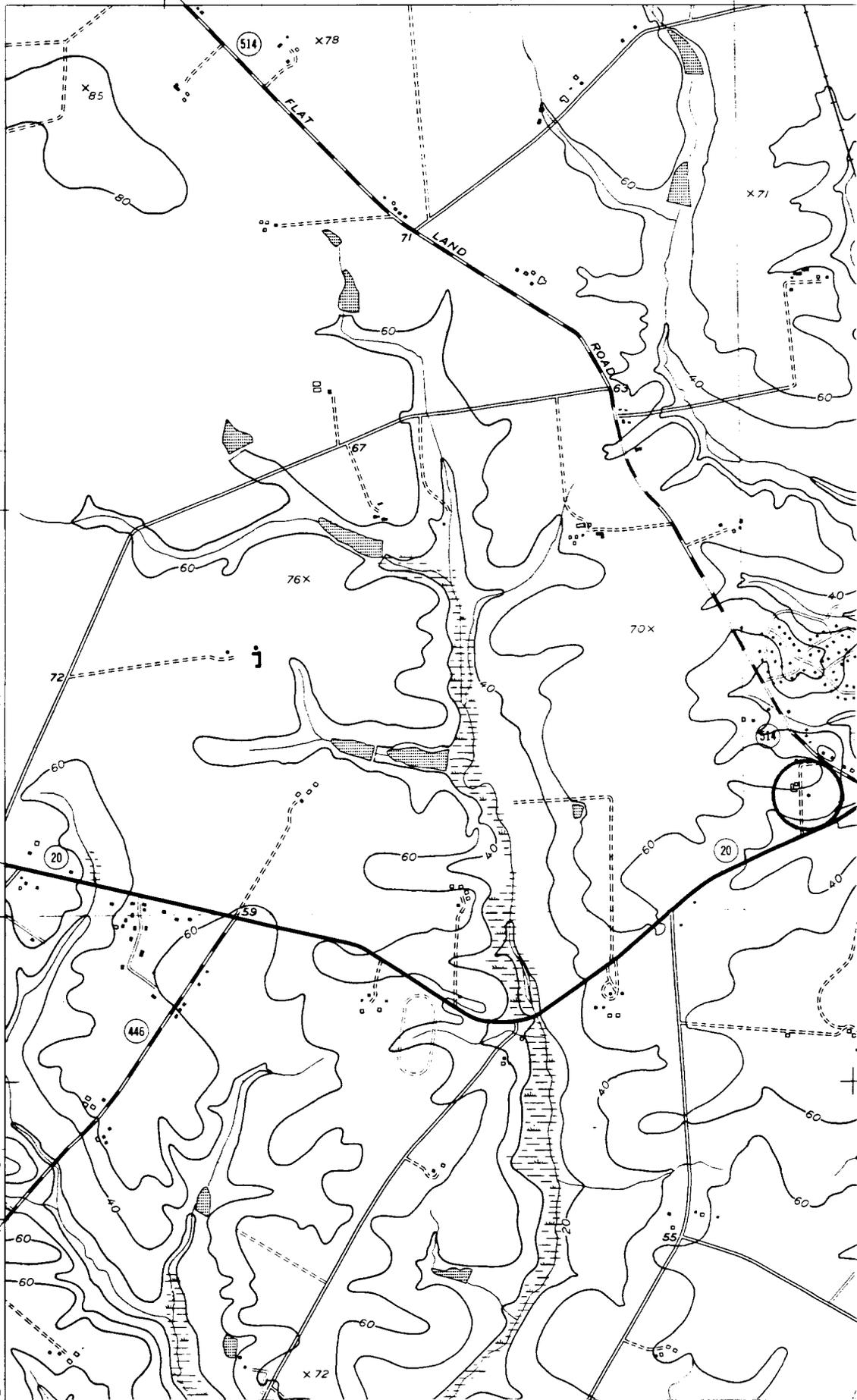
4340

4339

ROCK HALL 11 MI.
FAIRLEE 2.7 MI.

LANGFORD 1.4 MI.

K-79
LAURETUM
KENT COUNTY
MARYLAND
18-406280-
4341490





K-79

LAURETUM

KENT CO., MD

PETER E. KURTZE, S/97

NEG AT MD SHPO

VIEW FROM SE

#1 OF 7



K-79

LAURETUM

KENT CO., MD

PETER E. KURTZE, 5/97

NEG AT MD SAPO

SOUTH ELEV.

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K-79

LAURETUM

KENT CO., MD

PETER E. KURTZE, 5/97

NEG AT MD SHPO

NORTH ELEV.

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K-79

LAURETUM

KENT CO., MD

PETER E. KURTZE, 5/97

NEG AT MD SHPO

VIEW FROM NE

4 OF 7



K-79

LAURETUM

KENT CO, MD

PETER E. KURTZE, S | 97

NEG AT MD SHPO

PARLOR

5 OF 7



K-79

LAURETUM

KENT CO., MD.

PETER E. KURTZE, S/97

NEG AT MD SHPO

DINING ROOM

6 OF 7



K-79

LAURETUM

KENT CO., MD

PETER E. KURTZE, 5/97

NEG AT MD SHPO

NORTHEAST ROOM

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