
HALLEY'S COMET | 1910

In May 1910 Earth passed through the tail of Halley's Comet—an event which occurs only every seventy-six years, and which has been observed and recorded by humans since at least 483 BC. The arrival of this celestial phenomenon was widely covered, and both eagerly anticipated, and the cause of widespread fear. People were excited to see the comet, but many worried that its gases might be poisonous, that the comet might cause earthquakes, or that the world might end (none of these came to pass!). Front page stories were common from *The Baltimore Sun* to *The New York Times*. The papers reported that telescope sales were brisk and Comet parties common. 1910 was particularly important in the history of Halley's Comet, because it was the first time it had been photographed.

LAUREL, MARYLAND | 1910

Laurel in 1910 was a small town of just under 2,500 when Halley's Comet passed overhead between May 19th and May 22nd. While we don't know whether Laurelites hosted their own Comet Parties and bought telescopes, it is likely that many gathered together to see it on what must have been very exciting evenings for most of them. *The Laurel Leader* reported, "the comet passed Laurel without doing any other damage than arousing the fear and superstition of some of our citizens, who seem to think there was danger of the end of all things."

In 1910 many of Laurel's citizens still worked in mills and local factories, though railroads and the government also employed many. Laurel was still one of the largest communities in Prince George's County and a commercial center. Farms still encircled the town. In addition to the comet, Laurel in May of 1910 was celebrating the opening of its library, preparing for a Strawberry Festival at the Baptist Church, and planning the First Grand Lawn Fete of the Season on May 27th and 28th at the Grove to assist the Laurel Volunteer Fire Department.

*The Laurel Historical Society
requests the pleasure of your company
at*

Night of the Comet

*Saturday, March 27, 2010
The Carriage Room at
Laurel Park Racetrack*

*Cocktails at half past six o'clock
Dinner at half past seven o'clock*

*Silent Auction
Dancing*

*Black Tie Optional
Complimentary Valet Parking
RSVP by March 12th*