

ARTS

Taking a tour of history in Gaithersburg

By Rebecca Campbell
Special to the Sentinel

Long-time Gaithersburg resident, photographer and author Shaun Curtis has spent his life exploring local historic sites and promoting the history of the city. In doing so, he founded the website Gaithersburg: Then and Now, a site dedicated to the rich history of Gaithersburg, and is author of the soon to be released book Gaithersburg on May 3.

"Putting the book together was fun," said Shaun Curtis. "I had originally created a website called Gaithersburg: Then and Now (www.shauncurtis.com) in my spare time, for family and friends. Word got out to the community about the site and I received so much positive feedback that I decided to publish a book."

Once known as the small community of Log Town in the 1750s, Gaithersburg has since turned its agriculture way of life into a community filled with businesses, housing developments and shopping centers, and since the growth of the city expanded has become a center of technology and science in the United States.

Split up into five chapters; early settlement, agriculture, the railroad and commercial development, community life, and growth and development, the pictorial book transports the reader into the past where they can examine photos of past and present side-by-side, making history come alive.

"When I look at old photographs of Gaithersburg, a place where I grew up and spent most of my life, it's like stepping into a time machine," Curtis said. "It's magical, especially when you can only recognize one or two landmarks in the photo, like an old tree."

Researching and documenting local history through photographs has been a growing passion of Shaun Curtis' that started at a young age. The research side of his book often saw him interacting with fellow residents as they took a trip down memory lane.

"The fun part was meeting with many of the older residents, who have the best photographs and stories," Curtis said. "I would trade a life in 2010 Gaithersburg for a life in 1910 Gaithersburg in a heartbeat! And I'm only 28 years old."

On sale May 3, Gaithersburg was put together with the intention of increasing residents' interest in their local history and community in people. Shaun also hopes that his book will spark an interest in the newer and younger residents as well.

Plans for future historical books on places in Montgomery County

may however be on the distant horizon.

"Who knows, maybe", Curtis said. "Researching and photographing local history is so exciting for me. I would definitely like to pursue the hobby and see where it takes me."

Author Shaun Curtis will be making an appearance in May and June in Gaithersburg at the following places:

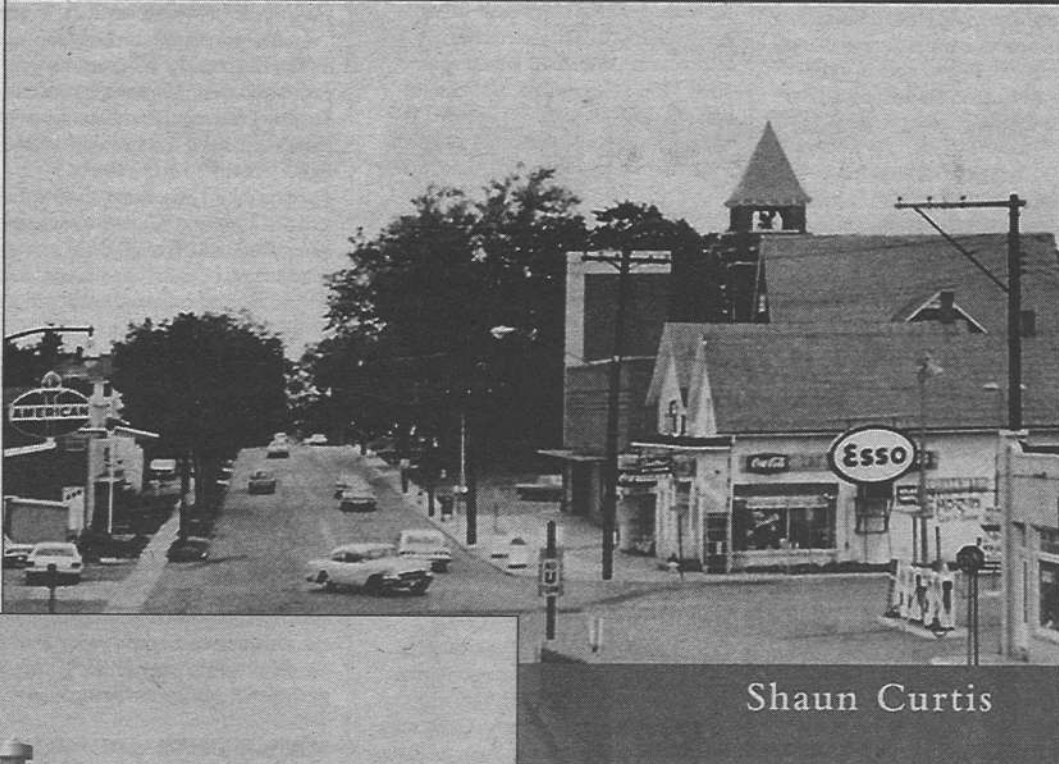
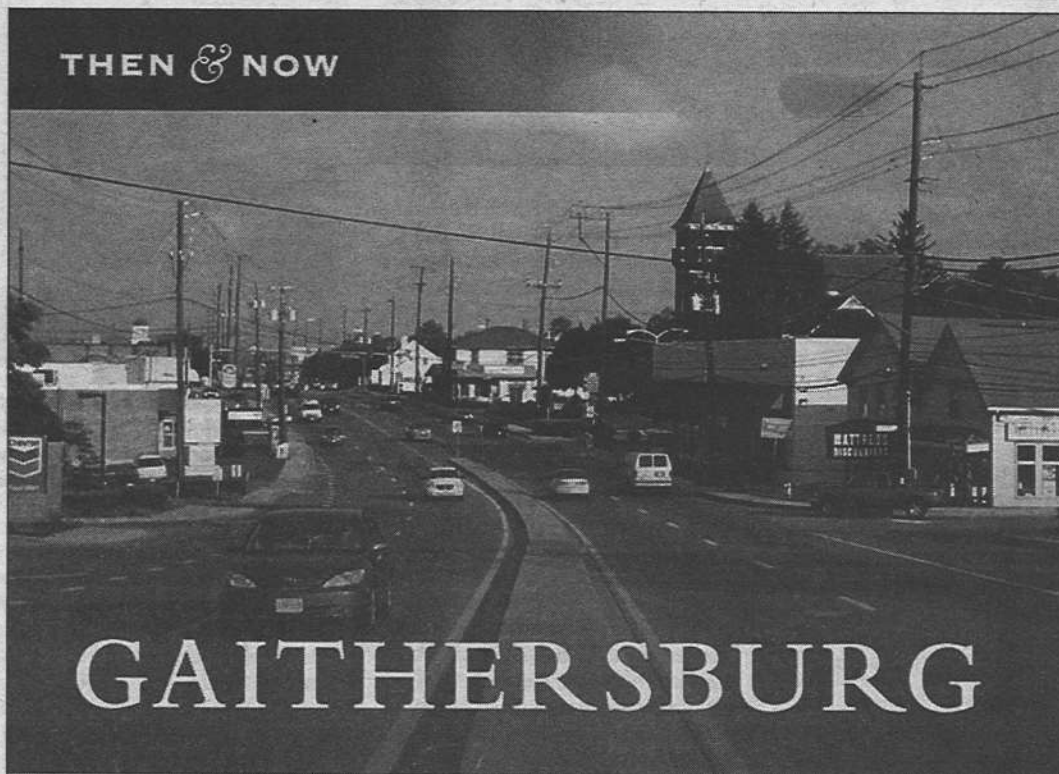
The Gaithersburg Book Festival
Saturday May 15, 2010, 10 a.m., to 6 p.m., at Gaithersburg City Hall Grounds, 31 S. Summit Avenue, Gaithersburg

Book Signing
Saturday, June 19, 2010, 1 p.m., to 3 p.m., at Costco, 880 Russell Avenue, Gaithersburg.

On sale May 3, 2010, Gaithersburg, \$21.99, Arcadia Publishing. Available at local retailers, online bookstores, or through Arcadia Publishing at (888) 313-2665 or www.arcadiapublishing.com

COURTESY PHOTOS

The cover of Shaun Curtis' new book, at right, and below two views of the Gaithersburg farm, then and now.



Shaun Curtis

