

RECORDATUR

BURNED RECORDS ON RECORD NEW DATABASE AVAILABLE

The Library of Virginia recently unveiled the Burned Record Counties database on its Web site at <http://www.lva.lib.va.us>. This database marks an ongoing effort by the LVA staff to index and make available the Library's collection of documents from Virginia's burned counties.

The collection, known as the Burned Record Counties Collection, is composed of a continually growing group of local court records, principally deeds and probate records, found while processing the chancery cases and other court records of non-burned counties. The collection was organized and indexed by Miranda Cherry-Ashby who then compiled the database. The indexed database contains records from collections housed and processed at the Library of Virginia as well as those processed in localities under the auspices of the Virginia Circuit Court Records Preservation Project (CCRP). While these documents have been assembled by Library staff members for more than ten years, the collection has grown considerably as a result of additional staff and resources allocated to process the approximately 19,000 cubic feet of local records stored at the LVA.

The documents included in this collection were typically exhibits in a court case. The original records remain

with the court materials in which they were found, but photocopies are made, placed the Burned Record Counties Collection, and indexed into the database. The significance of these burned record items is that the recorded original record is generally from a locality other than that in which the case occurred. Additionally, the original is usually from a locality for which there has been a substantial records loss. In most cases, the copy may be the only extant copy of the document. In addition to records from burned counties, there are also documents for counties with extant records, but for which the document was recorded in a higher [District or General] court, those originals no longer being extant.

For veterans of genealogical study, this collection promises to open doors to family research that were once thought forever closed, providing access to information long presumed gone. Remember to check the database frequently as records continue to be added as they are found. To access the database page directly go to <http://www.lva.lib.va.us>, click on "What We Have," "County and City Records," "Burned Record Counties Database."

—Carl Childs, Local Records Program Manager

Prince William Order Book Returns

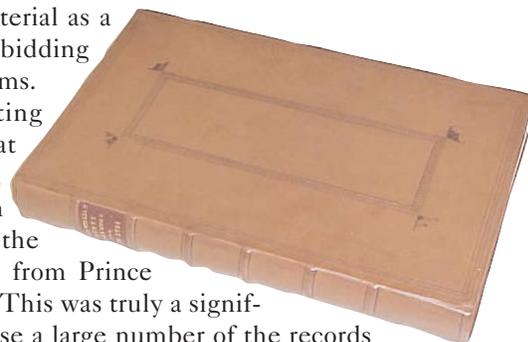
As a part of the Description section's collection development efforts, both catalog and online auctions are carefully monitored for interesting Virginia-related items. Recently, Jim Greve spotted a Revolutionary War item for sale on eBay. It appeared to be a list of public service

claims. The item was successfully obtained and, on further examination, appeared to have been removed from a volume, perhaps being records entered before the county court.

A similar item was soon offered for bidding and Jim approached the vendor to inquire if the Library could purchase the material as a lot, rather than bidding on individual items.

The exciting response was that there was indeed a volume—an Order Book for the years 1778-1784 from Prince William County. This was truly a significant find, because a large number of the records for Prince William County have been lost or destroyed.

Negotiations were successfully concluded and the volume returned to Virginia. In order ...see **William** page 4



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“An entry made on record to prevent any alteration of Record”

This newsletter is published twice a year to keep circuit court clerks informed about the court records preservation program in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Reader participation is invited.



Records Management and Imaging Services Division

800 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219
(804) 692-3605
(804) 692-3603 fax
www.lva.lib.va.us
e-mail: gsmith@lva.lib.va.us

Nolan T. Yelich
Librarian of Virginia

C. Preston Huff, CRM, CA
State Records Administrator

Conley L. Edwards III
State Archivist

Glenn T. Smith
*Grants Administrator,
Circuit Court Records
Preservation Program*

Amy Judd
Assistant Grants Administrator

Michelle Washington
Administrative Assistant

Lyndon H. Hart III
*Manager,
Description Services Branch*

Amy C. Winegardner
Production

ADMINISTRATOR'S CORNER

As 2002 closes, I want to offer a word of thanks to Lil Hart, Pat Payne, and Frank Overton for serving on the Grants Review Board this year. They did a wonderful job, and the program benefited greatly from their diligence. Lil is staying on the board for 2003, and will be joined by Bruce Patterson and Gene Coleman. We look forward to working with these three clerks in the coming year.

Two significant enhancements to the grants program this year have been testing the capabilities of digitally imaging historic chancery records and upgrading the specifications of camera-monitoring systems from analog to digital. Seems everything is going digital. The pilot on scanning historical court records is still in its infancy. For every solution to one specification come two additional questions. Final specifications should be in place by the end of January. The first round of digitally recorded camera systems has been awarded and, pending notification to vendors, installation should begin in those offices within the month.

Like many of your offices, the Library of Virginia felt the sharp blade of budget reductions in the fall. There were 39 people displaced, as well as 14 vacant positions cut. We will be many years rebuilding some of the programs, some will never come back. Obviously our biggest hit affecting the clerks' offices was the near-dismantling of the Imaging Services branch. With Dick Harrington and all but three of his staff gone, there is a big hole in the services that the Library provided (you will be glad to know that Dick started a job as the Archivist and Records Manager for Fairfax County on December 30). What services do remain are the inspection, acceptance, and storage of security microfilm sent from the clerks or their designated vendors,

reproduction of missing pages from microfilm, and the ongoing quality maintenance of the security film stored at the State Records Center. This section is now headed by Sue Woo, with Belinda Pillow and Dwight Sunderlin rounding out the staff.

The latest "set back" at the Library was the announcement by Preston Huff, the Director for Records Management and Imaging Services, of his resignation in order to take a job with the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Preston's six years at the Library have contributed beyond measure to the building up of the records program that has become recognized as one of the very best in the nation. He and his talents will be moving to Fort Worth, Texas, where he will be the number two person in NARA's Southwest region. We are truly going to miss him, but are grateful for the leadership he has provided and wish him every success in the challenges he will be facing.

The next round of grant applications will be due in the Administrator's office by 5:00 P.M. on Tuesday, April 15. If there is a project that you would like to undertake, please contact either Amy Judd or me; we will be glad to assist you.

Realizing that 2003 is going to be another tough year fiscally, and probably physically, please accept our best wishes for a healthy, prosperous 2003.

—Glenn Smith, Grants Administrator

CIRCUIT COURT RECORDS PRESERVATION PROGRAM

Grant Applications due by 5:00 P.M. on Tuesday, April 15, 2003.

Contact Amy Judd (804-692-3601) or Glenn Smith (804-692-3604) before submitting an application.

ARCHIVES DISCOVERIES

DEATH OF A FACTORY MANAGER STEWART-McCALL LETTERS, 1800–1818

About a year ago, I was examining a box of miscellaneous Arlington County papers to see if it contained business records. I found no business records but the box did contain several folders overflowing with correspondence between William Stewart and Catherine McCall that were dated in the mid-1810s. A cursory examination of the letters showed that Stewart had deep affection for McCall, worked for her in some capacity, and was regularly in debt. Notations on the back of the suggested that they were used as evidence in a court case. I made a note of the letters and the box number in case I had the good fortune of coming across the court case in the future.

Several months later, I was assigned the task of processing the Arlington County chancery records. I was working in the 1820s folders when fortune smiled on me. I found a chancery case dismissed in 1827 entitled “Administrator of William Stewart Jr. versus Catherine Flood McCall and others” containing several more folders of correspondence. After combining the correspondence in chronological order, I read through the letters to determine their contents and discover why they were used as evidence in the chancery case.

The collection of letters covered the period from 1800 to 1818. They were either written by, to, or about William Stewart, Jr., manager of a nail factory and blacksmith shop in Alexandria owned by Catherine Flood McCall. The collection consists largely of correspondence written by Stewart to McCall. The major themes found in Stewart’s letters to McCall include his affectionate feelings for McCall and desire to marry her; business matters related to McCall’s nail factories in Alexandria

and Richmond and her plantation in Tappahannock; his difficulties with McCall’s slaves who worked for him at the factory; his constant lack of money to pay his personal debts; his efforts to make additional income outside the factory (one effort led to his being sued by the United States government for violating the Embargo Act of 1807); his repeated requests to be given total authority over McCall’s financial interests; his poor health, both emotional and physical; and his great unhappiness with his life in Alexandria.

The collection also includes correspondence between Stewart and Archibald McCall, father and business manager of Catherine McCall and prominent Tappahannock merchant and landowner. The correspondence mostly deals with business matters such as factory production, inventories of stock, sales, expenses, machinery used to make nails, labor issues, and other matters surrounding Catherine McCall’s nail factory in Richmond.

Stewart regularly refers to Catherine McCall’s slaves in his letters. A total of twenty-four were sent from the McCall plantation in Tappahannock to work at the nail factory in Alexandria. The slaves labored as blacksmiths and nailors or they were hired out by Stewart to people in the city. Stewart writes about his bitter relationship with the slaves; the work they performed either at the factory or for others; the slaves’ unhappiness with working at the factory and the ways they expressed that unhappiness; slave escapes and efforts by Stewart to recover them; the forms of punishment Stewart meted out to slaves for poor work or for escaping; expenses related to the upkeep of the slaves in Alexandria; the amount Stewart charged for hiring slaves to people in

...see [Stewart-McCall page 4](#)



Q. CAN I USE GRANT FUNDS FOR BACK-SCANNING?

A. Many clerks have inquired whether they can apply for a grant to back scan their deeds. If there are deeds that have no security microfilm, grant funds are available to scan those records. The scanned images would then be converted to microfilm for security and the clerk's office may use the digitized images in his or her office. For those who wish to back scan strictly for access purposes, grant funds can not be used as the funds are marked for preservation.



Prince William Order Book before conservation

William... to protect the record and yet provide access to the information it contained, the record book was microfilmed and is currently available in that form to researchers in the Reading Room and through interlibrary Loan.

After completion of the filming, the volume was sent to the ECC lab in North Carolina, where it was carefully conserved. It was rebound with a period appropriate binding and is now a part of the archival collection.

This is a truly happy ending to a story—after an arduous journey of maybe 130 years, the Order Book has returned to its proper home and is being used by researchers to fill in gaps in family and local history from more than two centuries past.

—Lyn Hart, Description Services Director

Stewart-McCall... Alexandria; the value of McCall's slave property; and his constant request that they be sold because of their behavior and expense.

Catherine Flood McCall presented the letters as evidence in her defense in the chancery case brought against her by the administrator of William Stewart, Jr. The plaintiff argued that Stewart, as manager of McCall's Alexandria nail factory, had complete authority to make decisions on her behalf. Therefore, McCall was obligated to repay the numerous debts Stewart incurred in Alexandria. McCall responded that Stewart did not have the authority to make decisions on her behalf. He had to have her or her father's approval in all matters related to the factory including taking out loans. She provided many of the letters written to her by Stewart to prove her argument. In the letters, Stewart often requested her or her father's consent in matters related to the factory. Whatever debts Stewart incurred, he did so without her knowledge; therefore, she was not obligated to repay them.

The Stewart-McCall letters are a cornucopia of research topics. They contain information useful for stu-

dents of business history, social history, women's history African-American history, and labor history, particularly the latter two. It was unusual to find slaves working in a factory setting at the beginning of the 19th century. The letters also are also entertaining in a voyeuristic sort of way. Stewart's life, personal and professional, are exposed for all to read. The emotional vein in which he wrote made the letters even more riveting. One can feel his initial excitement at serving the McCalls in Alexandria, his heartbreak when Catherine McCall regularly refused to return his affection, his hatred for the slaves, his frustration when the McCalls rejected his advice, his anguish over his dire financial problems, and the deep emotional depression at the end of his life. Like Willy Loman in "Death of a Salesman", Stewart had dreams, yet his dreams somehow eluded him. And much like Loman, Stewart died beaten and discouraged, believing to his grave that he had nothing to show for a lifetime of hard work.

—Greg Crawford, Local Records Archivist