



LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

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Librarian of Virginia

The Land We Live In, the Land We Left: Virginia's People Exhibition Opens January 11 at the Library of Virginia

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For Immediate Release

(Richmond, Virginia) Raising his glass at a July 4th celebration in 1852, a young Irish-American resident of Richmond toasted "the land we live in; not forgetting the land we left." The sentiment reflects the history of more than four centuries of Virginia immigrants, who nurtured traditions from their homelands even as they contributed to the local economy and culture. Their stories come alive in a new exhibition opening January 11, 2010. The exhibition continues through August 28, 2010.

Who is a Virginian? Anyone who lives within the state's borders? Someone who was born here? Do working and paying taxes here make you a Virginian? Or is it something more complicated, having to do with how you feel about the state?

Those debates take place in the state legislature and at the corner convenience store. They are often heated, because the consequences are serious—the right to vote or get an education, the responsibilities of paying taxes, the privileges of home ownership, and financial success. In Virginia these debates started centuries ago, when the immigrants in question were largely from the British Isles. They continued throughout the nineteenth century, encompassing enslaved blacks who were denied the rights of citizenship, as well as waves of immigrants from Europe. In the more recent past, immigrants from Asia, Africa, India, South America, and Central America have sparked the same kind of soul-searching. Different communities in Virginia have responded in different ways, enacting a variety of policies and demonstrating a range of attitudes toward immigrants, both legal and illegal.

The Land We Live In, the Land We Left: Virginia's People explores the lives of immigrants from a wide variety of homelands, who settled in every part of the state. Some, like the Henkels of New Market, have well-known stories that have long been interwoven with the history of the state. Others, like the Rosenstocks of Petersburg, left behind detailed records and family photographs. Still others, such as the Campas family of Norfolk, were unknown until their stories were pieced together by the Library's own history detectives. The exhibition not only illustrates the history of immigration, but also reflects the personal sense of rupture, loss, and sacrifice that many immigrants shared. The state's efforts to control the flow of immigration—recruiting certain groups of immigrants while discouraging others—will provide a common thread among the stories.

The 2010 federal census and current debates over the treatment of illegal immigrants in the state and the nation make this a timely exhibition. Virginia has always been home to a diverse array of nationalities, races, and ethnicities. **The Land We Live In, the Land We Left: Virginia's People** will underscore the diverse population in Virginia at the time of colonization and the waves and troughs of immigration to and emigration from the Old Dominion.

The Library's collections hold an array of records, photographs, and artifacts documenting this topic. Collections of broadsides, personal papers, Harry C. Mann photographs, book arts, WPA life histories, newspapers, fine art, and unclaimed property (an unusual but very rich source) all contain items appropriate for the exhibition. Additional materials are being lent to the exhibition from private collections as well as from the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, Blue Ridge Institute, Beth Ahabah Archives and Museum, the Virginia Historical Society, Valentine Richmond History Center, and the Library of Congress.

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Lisa Goff, an intern at the Library from the University of Virginia's Institute for Public History, is guest curator for the exhibition. She is a doctoral candidate at the University of Virginia and holds a master's degree in history from the University of Virginia, a master's degree in journalism from the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University, and a bachelor's degree in English literature from the College of William and Mary. She has worked as a freelance journalist and as managing editor and reporter for *Crain's New York Business* and *Crain's Chicago Business*.

The Land We Live In, the Land We Left: Virginia's People is sponsored by the Norfolk Southern Corporation. The Library of Virginia, located at 800 East Broad Street in downtown Richmond, is the state's oldest institution preserving Virginia's history and culture. There is limited, free underground parking, which is accessible from either Eighth or Ninth streets. The Library is open to the public Monday through Saturday from 9 AM to 5 PM.

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About the Library of Virginia

The Library of Virginia (www.lva.virginia.gov), located in historic downtown Richmond, holds the world's most extensive collection of material about the Old Dominion and has been a steward of the commonwealth's documentary and printed heritage since 1823. The story of Virginia and Virginians has been told in many ways since 1607. At the Library of Virginia it is told through more than 110 million manuscripts and more than 1.9 million books, serials, bound periodicals, microfilm reels, newspapers and state and federal documents, each an individual tile in the vast and colorful mosaic of Virginia's experience.

Editor's Advisory:

Numerous images are available related to this exhibition for your use on the Library's server or on a disk. Please contact Jan Hathcock (jan.hathcock@lva.virginia.gov 804-692-3592) for more information on the images.