



## LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

**Dennis T. Clark**  
*Librarian of Virginia*

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### **“Mapping the Commonwealth, 1816–1826,” a new exhibition at the Library of Virginia, tells the story of the creation of Virginia’s first official state map**

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA – A new, free exhibition at the Library of Virginia will tell the story of 10 years, five governors, two principal surveyors and one lead engraver — the time frame and team needed to create one of the first official state maps in the nation in the early 1800s. “Mapping the Commonwealth, 1816–1826,” will be on view at the Library of Virginia Oct. 21, 2024–June 7, 2025.

The exhibition will present examples from 40 manuscript maps that highlight the painstaking task of creating Virginia's first official state map. Correspondence and other documents related to the publication of the map, as well as copperplates — printing plates used for engraving — will also be displayed in the exhibition.

“Combining art and science, these surveys attest to the dedication, skill and stamina of surveying teams who worked without the benefit of GPS and today's technology,” said Cassandra Farrell, the Library of Virginia’s senior map archivist and the exhibition’s curator. “Many of the maps completed under the supervision of these important surveyors are impressively large and have rarely been seen by the public.”

Between 1816 and 1822, teams of surveyors fanned out across the state to survey the counties. Surveyors were asked to make two maps, one for the county and the other for the governor. These surveys became the foundation for a general map of Virginia printed in 1826 and measuring almost 44 square feet. “A Map of the State of Virginia Constructed in Conformity to Law” was a modern map from which Virginia’s Board of Public Works could direct the Commonwealth’s internal improvements.

“We are excited to have these original manuscript maps on display for the public to view,” said Librarian of Virginia Dennis T. Clark. “They reveal the labor involved in early efforts to survey and record the breadth and details of Virginia’s counties as well as the artistry of 19th-century map-making.”

A series of Library of Virginia events and programs related to the exhibition will be announced soon.

### **Find related images here:**

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/g1sjdq30j6mm88n28v0wv/AITdYfPkEkXptrel29nmY8M?rlkey=tmnrscdreyw3x32wt8vbqbk0&dl=0>

## **ABOUT THE LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA**

The Library of Virginia is the state's oldest institution dedicated to the preservation of Virginia's history and culture. Our online offerings attract nearly 4 million website visits per year, and our resources, exhibitions and events bring in nearly 100,000 visitors each year. The Library's collections, containing more than 130 million items, document and illustrate the lives of both famous Virginians and ordinary citizens. The Library is located in downtown Richmond near Capitol Square at 800 East Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23219. Learn more at [www.lva.virginia.gov](http://www.lva.virginia.gov).

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