



LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

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Spoils of War, Symbols of Reunion to Showcase Items “Liberated” in Richmond during the Last Days of the Civil War

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For Immediate Release

In April 1865, after four years at the heart of the Civil War, Richmond—the capital of the Confederacy—finally fell. The Confederate government evacuated and Union army units—including United States Colored Troops—entered the city and arrived at the Capitol. To commemorate the 150th anniversary of the end of the Civil War, the Library of Virginia will offer a temporary exhibition, *Spoils of War, Symbols of Reunion*, April 1–18, featuring a selection of rare archival materials that Union soldiers plundered from the State Capitol’s archives during the chaotic days following the fall of Richmond to federal forces. These “liberated” artifacts that continue to trickle back to the commonwealth include such iconic documents as the Ordinance of Secession and the last volume of the Journals of the House of Burgesses. Collecting “spoils of war” is a time-honored tradition of victorious armies, but the collecting of books, state papers, and other manuscripts by Union soldiers was not always simple souvenir hunting. The soldier who removed Virginia’s Ordinance of Secession from the Capitol certainly understood its symbolic meaning as a rending of the federal Union—a union that Yankee soldiers had fought four bloody years to reunite. These artifacts connect strongly to the records and artifacts of the slave trade found in the Library’s continuing exhibition, *To Be Sold: Virginia and the American Slave Trade*—pieces taken by soldiers and civilian relief workers that symbolized for many Northerners the causes of the war.

Among the items in exhibition will be:

- George B. Cheever. *The Journal of the Pilgrims at Plymouth*. New York, 1848. Written on the flyleaf: “Found in Va State Library/ Borrowed Richmond Apl 7 1865 / Returned May 1911.” The borrower was Clavin G. Hutchinson, of Dorchester, Mass.
- Francis Quarles. *Enchiridion*. London, 1856. Another “borrowed” book that was returned. A letter from the donor is pasted on the inside front board.
- Material from Warwick County. Letter dated January 10, 1952, from Claude L. Fichthorn to the Recorder of Deeds, Warwick County: “These papers came to light in my mothers (sic) effects. Her first husband was a civil war veteran and I presume they were acquired during the

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duration of that event. I presume they are of no value, except perhaps, of clearing a bit of the record. I feel, however, that they belong in Warwick County Virginia, and am pleased to enclose them.”

- Isaac Hammond Collection, 1839–1875. Isaac Hammond was a New York soldier stationed in Richmond who collected miscellaneous papers. The collection was given to the Huguenot Historical Society, New Paltz, New York, and later transferred to the Library of Virginia. It includes items such as letters from shopkeepers in Richmond to the provost marshal asking permission to reopen their shops.
- Checkerboard from Charles City County.
- Prince William County Deed Book, Liber A, 1731–1732.
- Sallie Ellen Elsom Crowder Williams letter book, 1856–1901. Although it was not liberated or repatriated, this item has an interesting story. Williams and her mother, Elizabeth Meriweather Robertson Elsom, both of Nelson County, alternated writing letters to each other in the book. In a letter dated March 24, 1865, Williams noted that the book was almost taken by a Union soldier.

On Saturday, April 4, the Ordinance of Secession, one the rarer items in the Library’s collections, will be on display for that day only as part of the citywide activities associated with Richmond’s Journey. The Ordinance of Secession was penned on parchment by William Flegenheimer in May 1861. It has been in the Library’s records of the 1861 Convention since 1929, when it was returned to the state archives after having been taken from the Virginia capitol in April 1865 by a Union soldier.

From April 1 through 4, 2015, numerous Richmond museums and cultural attractions will explore the end of the Civil War and the end of slavery in Richmond through a powerful and inclusive four-day series of programs. To learn more, visit <http://richmondsjourney.org/programs.html>.

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