The Newsletter of Virginia's Circuit Court Records Preservation Program ▪ No. 10 ▪ Spring 2021

CCRP NEWS

LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

Page County Courthouse, Court Records, and the Library of Virginia

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No. 10 ■ Spring 2021

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

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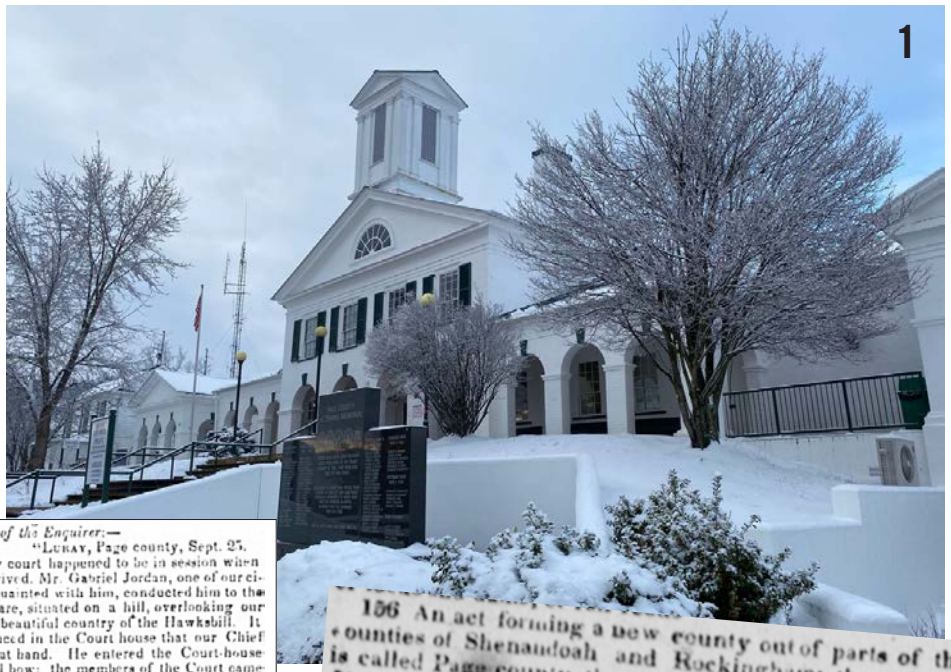
FRONT COVER: The Page County Courthouse, August 25, 2016. TOP OF THIS PAGE: Page County Courthouse, circa 1890s. PAGE 2: 1. The Page County Courthouse in December 2020 following its $320,000 facelift, courtesy of Page County circuit court clerk Grayson Markowitz. 2. Page County Court House, WPA Historical Inventory, page 2, October 1937. 3. *Richmond Enquirer*, Volume 35, Number 43, October 5, 1838. 4. The act establishing Page County in the *Richmond Enquirer*, Volume 27, Number 117, April 22, 1831. 5. The ground floor arcade of the Page County Courthouse, October 18, 2018. (Unless otherwise noted, images from: Visual Studies Collection, Local Government Records Collection, and the Virginia Newspaper Project, all at the Library of Virginia.)

The Page County Courthouse, Court Records, and the Library of Virginia

This past year the historic Page County Courthouse received a "$320,000 facelift," according to circuit court clerk C. Grayson Markowitz. Construction of the building, the county's first and only courthouse, was completed in 1833, two years after the creation of the county. Over the course of its history, the building has seen a few additions, including those in 1974 and 1997. However, a more detailed history of the courthouse, like a more detailed history of Page County and its residents, is easily told through the local records held in the circuit court clerk's office.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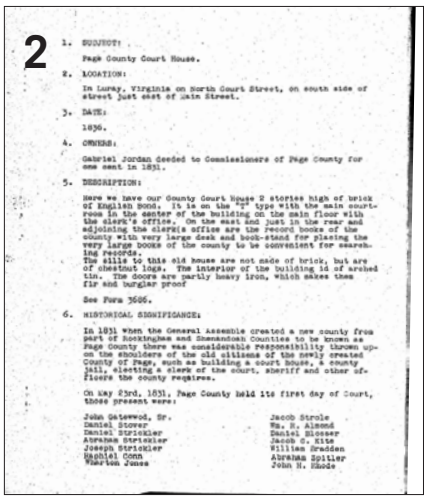
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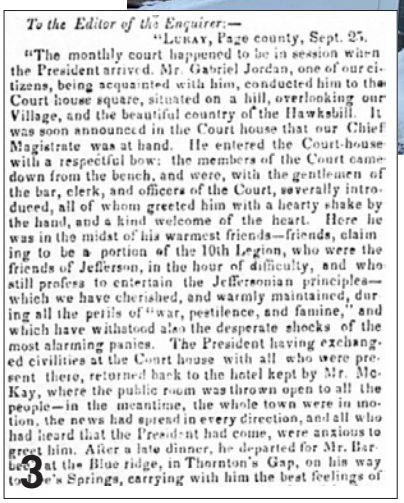
1. SUBJECT:
Page County Court House.
2. LOCATION:
In Luray, Virginia on North Court Street, on south side of street just east of Main Street.
3. DATE:
1836.
4. OWNERS:
Gabriel Jordan deeded to Commissioners of Page County for one cent in 1831.
5. DESCRIPTION:
Here we have our County Court House 2 stories high of brick of English Bond. It is on the "T" type with the main courtroom in the center of the building on the main floor with the clerk's office. On the east and just in the rear and adjoining the clerk's office are the record books of the county with very large desk and book-stand for placing the very large books of the county to be convenient for searching records.
The sills to this old house are not made of brick, but are of chestnut logs. The interior of the building is of arched tin. The doors are partly heavy iron, which makes them fir and burglar proof
See Form 3606.
6. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:
In 1831 when the General Assemble created a new county from part of Rockingham and Shenandoah Counties to be known as Page County there was considerable responsibility thrown upon the shoulders of the old citizens of the newly created County of Page, such as building a court house, a county jail, electing a clerk of the court, sheriff and other officers the county requires.
On May 23rd, 1831, Page County held its first day of Court, those present were:

John Gatewood, Sr.	Jacob Strole
Daniel Stover	Wm. B. Almond
Daniel Strickler	Daniel Blosser
Abraham Strickler	Jacob C. Kite
Joseph Strickler	William Bradden
Nashiel Conn	Abraham Spitler
Thorton Jones	John H. Rhode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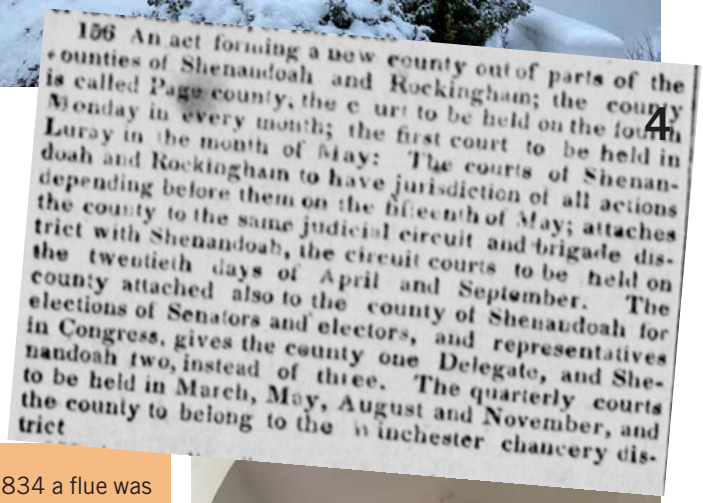
To the Editor of the Enquirer:—

"LURAY, Page county, Sept. 25.

"The monthly court happened to be in session when the President arrived. Mr. Gabriel Jordan, one of our citizens, being acquainted with him, conducted him to the Court house square, situated on a hill, overlooking our Village, and the beautiful country of the Hawksbill. It was soon announced in the Court house that our Chief Magistrate was at hand. He entered the Court-house with a respectful bow: the members of the Court came down from the bench, and were, with the gentlemen of the bar, clerk, and officers of the Court, severally introduced, all of whom greeted him with a hearty shake by the hand, and a kind welcome of the heart. Here he was in the midst of his warmest friends—friends, claiming to be a portion of the 10th Legion, who were the friends of Jefferson, in the hour of difficulty, and who still profess to entertain the Jeffersonian principles—which we have cherished, and warmly maintained, during all the perils of "war, pestilence, and famine," and which have withstood also the desperate shocks of the most alarming panics. The President having exchanged civilities at the Court house with all who were present there, returned back to the hotel kept by Mr. McKay, where the public room was thrown open to all the people—in the meantime, the whole town were in motion, the news had spread in every direction, and all who had heard that the President had come, were anxious to greet him. After a late dinner, he departed for Mr. Barbee's at the Blue ridge, in Thornton's Gap, on his way to [illegible]e's Springs, carrying with him the best feelings of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156 An act forming a new county out of parts of the counties of Shenandoah and Rockingham; the county is called Page county, the c urt to be held on the fourth Monday in every month; the first court to be held in Luray in the month of May: The courts of Shenandoah and Rockingham to have jurisdiction of all actions depending before them on the fifteenth of May; attaches the county to the same judicial circuit and brigade district with Shenandoah, the circuit courts to be held on the twentieth days of April and September. The county attached also to the county of Shenandoah for elections of Senators and electors, and representatives in Congress, gives the county one Delegate, and Shenandoah two, instead of three. The quarterly courts to be held in March, May, August and November, and the county to belong to the winchester chancery district

The minutes from a court session held on July 28, 1831, indicate that a lot for a future courthouse and jail was conveyed to the county. On November 27, 1832, the magistrates appointed a commission to advertise for proposals to construct the new courthouse and clerk's office for a cost not to exceed the sum of $6,000 (with the details of the payments spelled out). These commissioners also reported back to the court on the progress and the quality of the work. In February 1832, the county was gifted a "suitable bell," and in June the justices appropriated $200 for the erection of a steeple on the courthouse, which was still under construction. On December 23, 1833, officials announced that the new courthouse and clerk's office were completed "in a very satisfactory way." In January 1834 a flue was added to "receive the stove pipe," and the next month a plank fence was constructed around the courthouse. Apparently unhappy with the (free) bell they had received, the magistrates ordered a new bell with the cost to be no more than $60, including the yoke and transportation to the courthouse. In July a lightning rod was added.

In January 1835 the courthouse was designated as one of the three voting precincts in the county. Surveyor of the Road papers indicate that in March 1835 a road from "Michael Shuler's cording machine" to the courthouse was opened. The courthouse may appear in circuit court records for any number of reasons, from the days of its inception to today.

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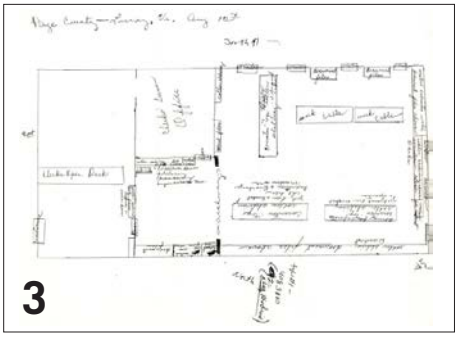
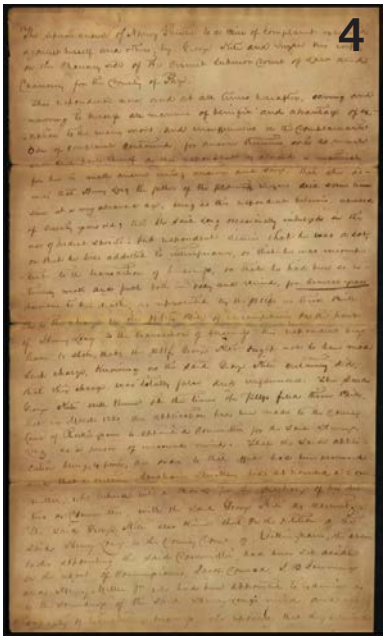
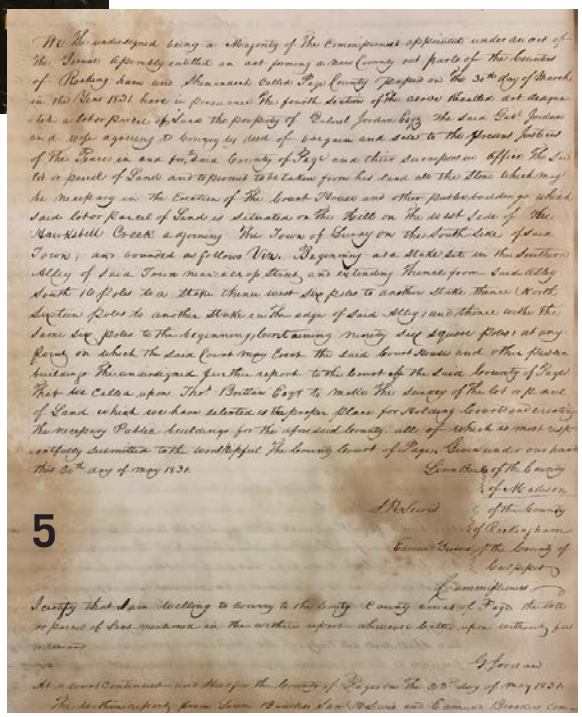
In his August 1971 survey, local records archivist Connis Brown described the Page County Circuit Court clerk's office and records room: "This is a pleasant office, spotlessly maintained, asphalt tile floor in sheets with rubber along the countertop roller shelving. The furniture here is some wood, but mostly metal. There are some boxes of forms sitting around but are in good order and well kept and in cardboard cartons. The old section of the vault has a metal ceiling. The new section has concrete, lighted by florescent lights, air conditioned by window unit. Everything is waxed here, even the old books are waxed and dusted regularly. An old record room will need additional space in the near future but certainly one is well maintained and the records are well maintained, and is obvious from even brief examination. The old minute books, common law books are leather bound and they are waxed or at least polished with regularity because they glisten under the fluorescent lights. There is not dust and dirt in this vault, and the air conditioning." An August 1993 survey by Linda V. Ellsworth, executive director of the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts, pronounced the clerk's office records room to be "very clean and tidy."





The Library of Virginia's institutional archives can trace its preservation partnership with the Page County Circuit Court clerk's office back to 1920s correspondences between the clerk and the state librarian. Since then the files document collaborations regarding the inventorying, conservation, microfilming and ultimately the digitizing the chancery records (1831–1914) which are now available online in the Library of Virginia's Chancery Records Index. Since the CCRP program began in 1992, the Page County Circuit Court clerk's office has been awarded over $233,936.14 in grants.



1. Page County Courthouse, circa 1937. 2. Page County circuit court clerk Grayson Markowitz standing next to Woodruff Drawers containing Page County Chancery Causes Ended, August 25, 2016. 3. Page County records room floorplan from local records archivist Connis Brown's survey, August 12, 1971. 4. Answer of Nancy Painter to the bill of complaint, George Kite & Wife vs Nancy Painter etc. (1832-008) in the online Chancery Records Index maintained by the Library of Virginia. 5. Deed from Gabriel Jordan and wife conveying the property for the Page County courthouse and other public buildings, May 23, 1831. 6. Page County Courthouse, circa 1966. (Images from: Visual Studies Collection, and Local Government Records Collection, at the Library of Virginia.)

What Makes a Good Candidate for a CCRP Item Conservation Grant?

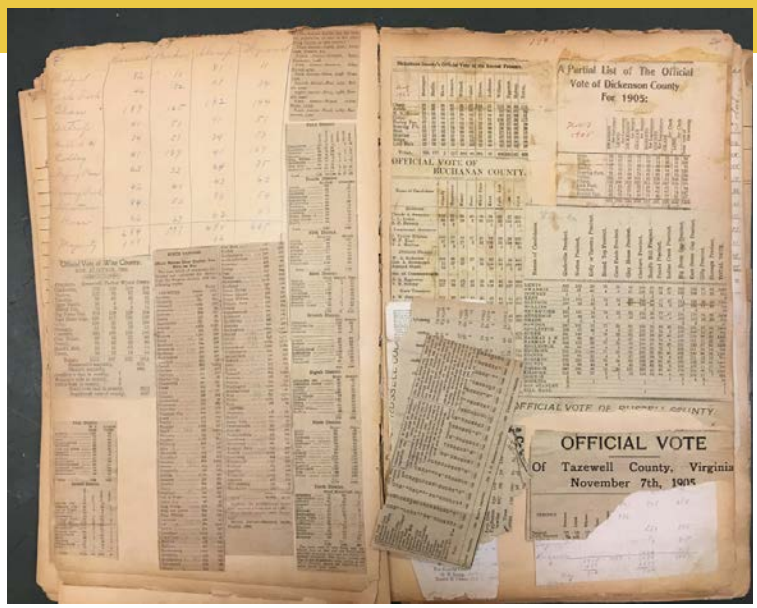
Researchers can find themselves in Virginia circuit court clerks' offices for a variety of reasons. Undoubtedly, however, most researchers are there for title searches and genealogical research. Because the records in a circuit court clerk's office document the history of not only of the locality, but also of its inhabitants, the records are sometimes used by historians as they attempt to tell the story of the community and the people who lived there. Because of the wide variety of information contained in local government records, it can be difficult to prioritize the importance of the different types of records in a circuit court clerk's records room. They are all important; it just depends on what one is looking for.

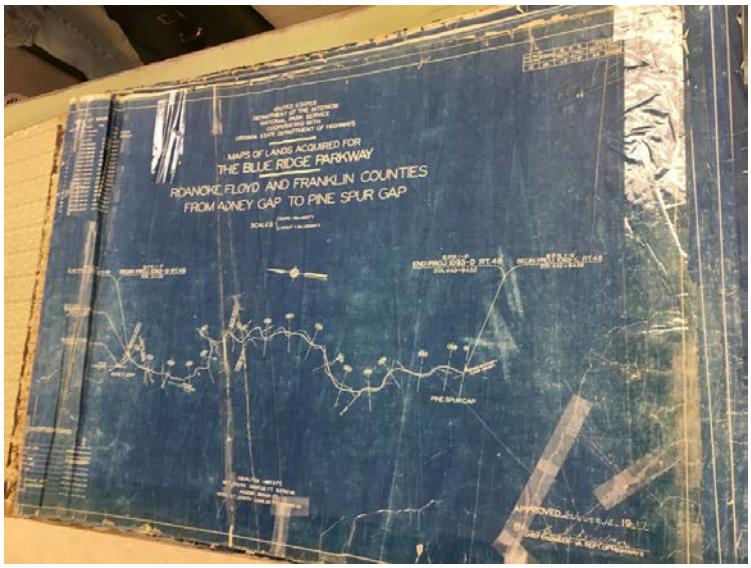
Should records such as land books and will books that are used more frequently be prioritized for conservation ahead of others? All things being equal, probably so. However, competing factors make the criteria for conservation more of a sliding scale than a popularity contest. Some records that are used infrequently may have intrinsic value. The information in the records might only be available there and nowhere else. This can be especially important when other records are lost and these less-frequently used, or second-tier, records can help to fill the gaps.

Additionally, some less-frequently used records might be rare, unique, or have a specific importance to that particular locality, such as containing information about a certain person, place, or thing associated with the locality. That goes for records that might document historic events, whether locally, regionally, or on a national scale. The size, shape, or artistic qualities sometimes found in plats, maps, or blueprints might make them distinctive, and for any of these reasons, some records may have an unusually high monetary, exhibit, or educational value. The fact that the records are permanent and/or pre-1913 will also factor into the evaluation, and, naturally, the older the records, the higher a priority, especially if they are pre–Civil War.

Popularity or frequency of use must be factored in, of course, but only as a part of the equation. Because we are concerned with the conservation of the records, we must evaluate their actual physical condition when prioritizing for treatment. We are all familiar with documents or pages in a volume that are chipped and torn, have tape and tape repairs, are overly acidic, or possibly display signs of water damage or mold. Record books can have all of these maladies, plus loose or detached spines, boards, signatures, and pages.

Records that are fragile or in an unstable medium or format, such as the Emory Silking Process, cellulose acetate lamination, or modern lamination are good candidates, as are records with other existing damage or noticeable deterioration over time. Records that are improperly housed or stored in poor environmental conditions are



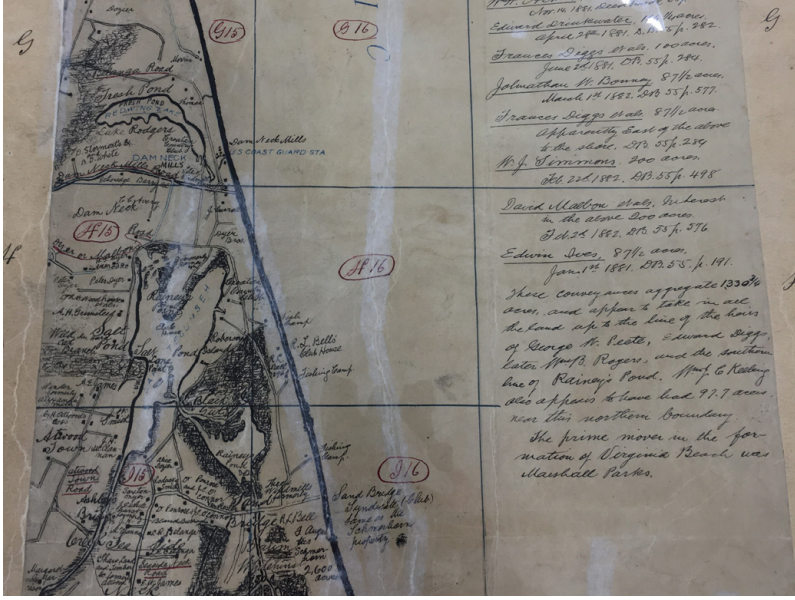


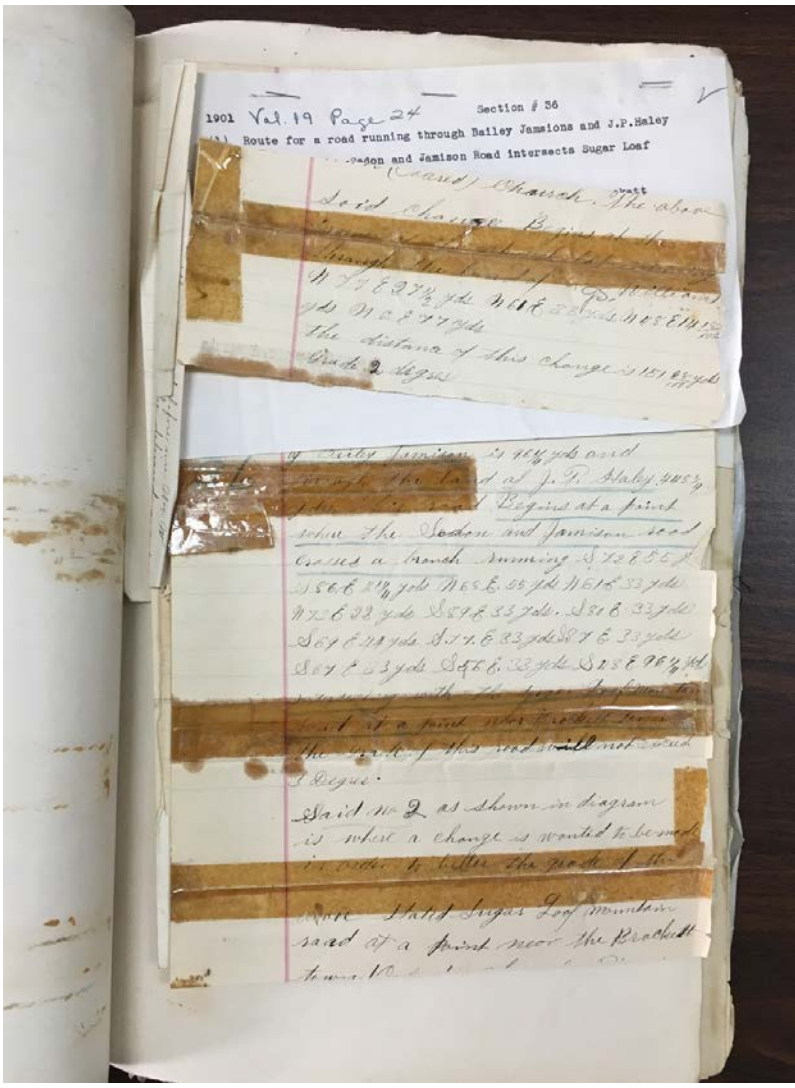
Dickenson County Election Record Book 1, circa 1883–1960 (top); Floyd County Maps of Lands Acquired for Blue Ridge Parkway, 1937 (middle); and Smyth County Record of Smyth County's Centennial Celebration, 1832–1932 (bottom).

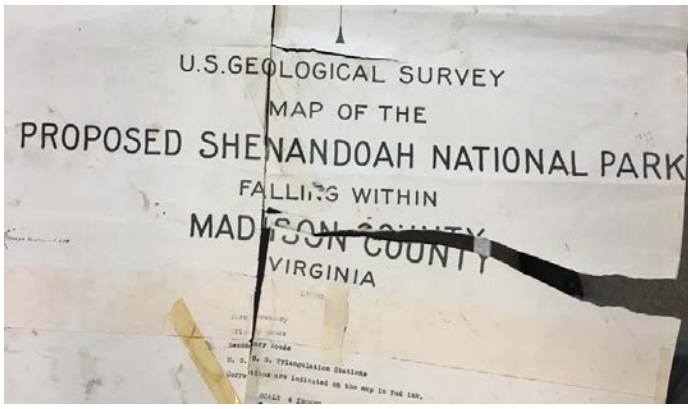
good candidates, as are records that need conservation treatment before they can be imaged safely. Whether or not the records have been microfilmed or digitized will also factor into the evaluation, especially for permanent and/or pre-1913 records.

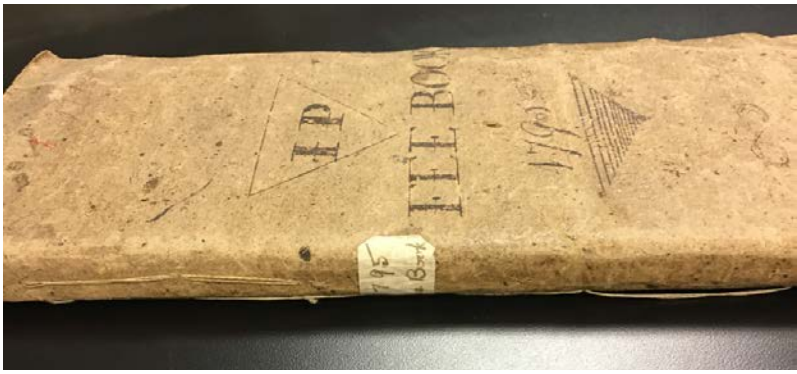
Therefore, coming up with the formula for a good conservation candidate can sometimes be tricky, as the importance and usage of the records must be considered along with the actual condition and needs of the records. A record such as a 1940s deed book that is used frequently, but has little or no damage or deterioration, is probably not as good a candidate as an 1850s road book that is rarely used, but has detached signatures and pages, tears and tape repairs, and no spine or boards. An 1870s minute book in bad condition might not be a good candidate, except if other records such as land books, deed books, or marriage registers are missing. If that's the case, then the minute book becomes a good candidate and a high priority, because it helps to fill the information gaps left behind. The same holds true for something like a 1780s fee book if no other records survive.

So in the scheme of things, it's true that some records have a higher research value than others, and, all things being equal, they would be prioritized at the top of the queue for conservation treatment. When determining which of the competing items ranks higher in need of conservation, however, all things are not equal, and numerous variables must be evaluated in making the selection.









Virginia Beach Atlas of Princess Anne County, 1930 (top); Roanoke County Roads Vol. 19, Section 36a (middle right); Mathews County Fee Book, 1795 (bottom right); and Map of Proposed Shenandoah National Park Falling Within Madison County, Virginia, Madison County, 1932 (above).

Rick Francis Is a Giant of a Virginia Circuit Court Clerk—IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE

No one can help but notice Southampton County Circuit Court clerk Rick Francis when he enters a room. The tall southern gentleman commands attention, not only with his size, but with his warm and gregarious personality. One way or another, you know he's there.

He also commands attention for other reasons. Rick Francis knows a lot about a lot of things. Born and raised outside of Boykins, Virginia, he attended Wake Forest University, taking a degree in sociology before earning his law degree from the University of Richmond. He returned to his hometown to practice law and, two years later, at the age of 28, he became the mayor (a position, according to Francis, with "other duties as needed," including that of pesticide applicator and wastewater operator). After 20 years (1984–2004) as mayor, he took a brief reprieve from public service before he was elected to the Southampton County circuit court clerkship in 2007. As is plain to see, Francis knows a lot about a lot of things (and by his own admission he is very proud of his Class III wastewater license). However, he is most renowned for his knowledge of Southampton County's most famous, albeit notorious, historical event.

According to a 2019 *Washington Post* article, Southampton County residents say, "If you want to know anything about Nat Turner, Rick Francis is the man."

The title of a 2000 *Virginian-Pilot* article about Francis sums it up: "Nat Turner's Trail is Personal Quest." Turner and his band had killed more than 20 residents of Southampton County by the time they reached the home of Francis's great-great-grandparents, Nathaniel and Lavina Francis. In mid-August 1831, Nat Turner, an enslaved person who served as a local preacher, led a four-day insurrection of enslaved and free persons of color that resulted in the murders of between 55 and 65 men, women, and children, the majority of whom were white. It is considered today to be the most successful rebellion by enslaved people in United States history. In suppressing the uprising, more than 120 enslaved persons were killed by local militias and mobs, and in the end, 56 of the rebels, including Turner, were executed by the state.

When Turner and his men arrived at the home of Francis's great-great-grandparents, Nathaniel was gone and Lavinia, with the help of an

Actor/director Nate Parker, Rick Francis, and Anderson Cooper in the Southampton County circuit court clerk's office records room during the recording of a *60 Minutes* segment on the controversial film, *Birth of a Nation*, about Nat Turner and the insurrection (top); 28-year-old Rick Francis when he was the mayor of Boykins, Virginia (bottom right); "Discovery of Nat Turner" (bottom left). (Images from: Rick Francis and Local Government Records Collection, Library of Virginia.)

enslaved servant, hid in a second-floor closet, saving her life. The majority of Francis's other ancestors, however, were not so lucky.

Francis came to his interest in the Nat Turner rebellion naturally through the tutelage of his father, Gilbert Francis, who would take young Rick and their family on outings retracing the steps of the Turner and his band. Rick's father ravenously consumed all the information he could about the event and passed it, along with his passion for it, to his son. Rick Francis grew up assisting his father on bus tours that recounted the famed insurrection, and he continues with those tours to this day. Historians from around the world seek his knowledge and expertise, and it is difficult to find a publication, scholarly or otherwise, that does not acknowledge him as a source on the subject. Because of his knowledge about Nat Turner's insurrection, the subject of Nate Parker's controversial feature film *Birth of a Nation,* both Francis and the filmmaker were interviewed by Anderson Cooper for a segment on the television show *60 Minutes.*

Today, Francis continues to lead four-hour bus tours sponsored by the Southampton County Historical Society.

Because of his well-known expertise on the subject, in his role as Southampton County circuit court clerk he is pursued daily with requests for interviews and questions from historians, genealogists, and other truth seekers. Some call, some email, and some arrive unannounced requesting information about the infamous rebellion. Fortunately, Francis is able to meld his duties as clerk with his love for the subject and his responsibility to both protect and make accessible these historic local government records.

RICK FRANCIS—In His Own Words

I conduct "Nat Turner Tours" not to elevate the man Nat Turner, but to educate the public of the importance of the insurrection that compelled the 1832 Virginia General Assembly to hold a general debate (behind doors not open to the public) on slavery in Virginia. The legislature came within seven votes of ending slavery in the commonwealth through transportation, not emancipation, but along with Governor John Floyd, the legislators lacked the moral courage to end slavery. This failure resulted in "ratcheting tighter" the harsh condition of slaves. It would take a bloody civil war to do what our legislature could not.

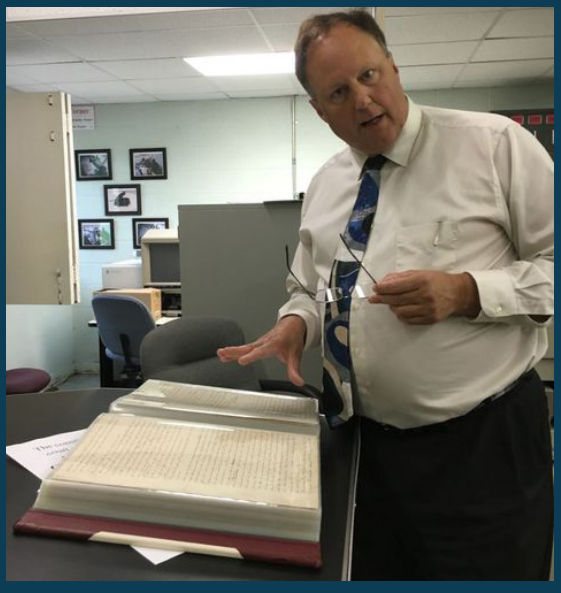
My parents always emphasized the importance of the insurrection in the development of America and forcefully impressed upon me and my brothers that "we would not be alive but for the loyalty of three slaves, who acted independent of each other, to save our family."

I can talk until I am blue in the face, take folks touring all over Southampton, but there is no substitute for bringing out Benjamin Turner's last will and testament, where Nat's name is first introduced to the world, or displaying the actual, original sentencing order in which Nat is to "be taken hence to the Jail from whence he was taken therein to remain until Friday the 11th day of November instant, on which day between the hours of ten O'Clock in the forenoon and four O'Clock in the afternoon he is to be taken by the Sheriff to the usual place of execution and then and there be hanged by the neck until he be dead." I don't care who you are, that order, with its stark, final words, makes the event "real" to all. And when I am able to bring out Nat's sword…. Words fail and the room becomes silent. The original records are a force, providing a "bucket list" kind of satisfaction that few historians can resist.

As circuit court clerks, we are but temporary trustees of the records that our great-grandchildren may one day hold. I doubt the voters make their choices upon this issue. But, while I am a funny guy, I take seriously the trust and responsibility inherent in this aspect of the "clerk's job."

Southampton County, the CCRP Program, and Nat Turner

In the 1970s, Nat Turner's original sentencing order was encased in Barrow lamination and had darkened from handling by the public over the years. The insurrection remains Southampton County's most sought out and discussed aspect of history. A Library of Virginia Circuit Court Records Preservation program grant provided funding to have the lamination removed; however the initial conservator returned the book, afraid to attempt the removal on such a historically significant document. At the next grant cycle, the Library increased its award and suggested a different conservator. The conserved document, now encapsulated in Mylar, has regained the brightness and protection that it deserves.



Rick Francis and the Nat Turner sentencing order in the Southampton County circuit court clerk's office records room. (Image courtesy of Rick Francis.)

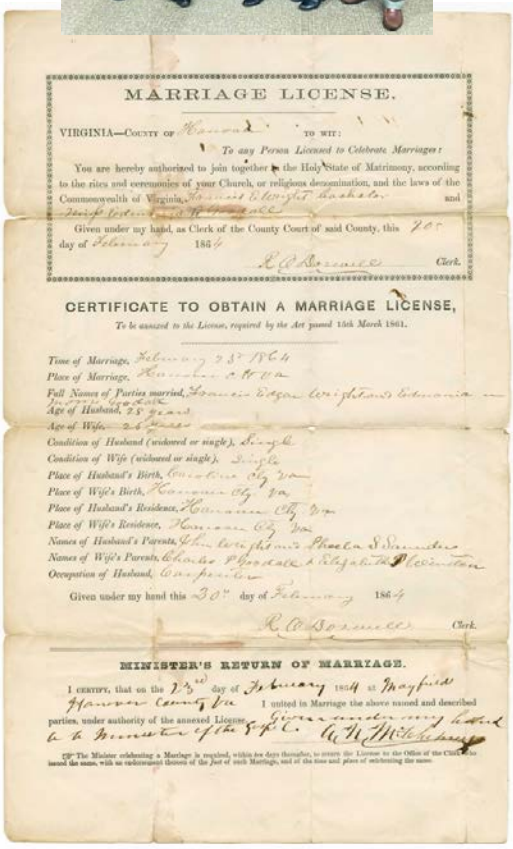
Hanover County Circuit Court Clerk's Office Digitizes Marriage Licenses Dating to 1864

In November, Hanover County Circuit Court clerk Frank D. Hargrove Jr. announced the completion of a multi-year project to digitally scan, index, and conserve all the clerk's office marriage licenses going back to its oldest license issued in 1864. Since starting work in October 2016, the clerk's office has added digital copies of 28,350 licenses issued between 1864 and 2000 to its records management system, which the public can access at the clerk's office.

"We wanted to find a way to make marriage licenses easily available, since they are of great interest to genealogists," said Hargrove. "Chief deputy clerk Jan Major suggested loading high-resolution digital copies into the records management system searchable database so that copies could be printed without disturbing the fragile originals. She deserves credit for envisioning this project and managing it for five years. As it turned out, the work proved to be more involved than we anticipated. We wanted to finish by Jan's retirement earlier this year to mark the end of her exceptional career of public service, but we missed by a few months."

Deputy clerk Joan Eddleton started indexing and scanning the licenses working backwards in time from 2000. In three years, Eddleton processed 70 years of licenses dating to 1930, while keeping up her daily work. After Eddleton's retirement in 2019, part-time clerk's office employees Diana Sadler and Cheryl Harris indexed and scanned licenses issued between 1864 and 1930. Before they started work, Sadler and Harris received training in paper conservation from the Library of Virginia. The licenses issued between 1864 and 1930 were tri-folded and tied in bundles with red string. Poor paper quality made them especially susceptible to damage. Sadler and Harris flattened the tri-folded licenses and mended them using special tape before they were scanned. Now copies of the licenses can be printed from the digital images, saving the originals from further damage.

"When we conserved the licenses from the 1800s and early 1900s, we were surprised to find that some were filed with a letter from a parent or an acquaintance vouching for the parties' ages or granting permission for the marriage. Some of the letters contained touching personal information about the applicants" said Hargrove. "We scanned the letters along with the licenses."



MARRIAGE LICENSE.

VIRGINIA—County of Hanover TO WIT:

To any Person Licensed to Celebrate Marriages:

You are hereby authorized to join together in the Holy State of Matrimony, according to the rites and ceremonies of your Church, or religious denomination, and the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Francis Edgar Wright bachelor and Nancy Edmonds Woodall

Given under my hand, as Clerk of the County Court of said County, this 20th day of February 1864

R. O. Boswell Clerk.

CERTIFICATE TO OBTAIN A MARRIAGE LICENSE,

To be annexed to the License, required by the Act passed 15th March 1861.

Time of Marriage, February 23rd 1864
Place of Marriage, Hanover C.H. Va
Full Names of Parties married, Francis Edgar Wright and Edmonds Nancy Woodall
Age of Husband, 28 years
Age of Wife, 26 years
Condition of Husband (widowed or single), Single
Condition of Wife (widowed or single), Single
Place of Husband's Birth, Caroline Cty Va
Place of Wife's Birth, Hanover Cty Va
Place of Husband's Residence, Hanover Cty Va
Place of Wife's Residence, Hanover Cty Va
Names of Husband's Parents, John Wright and Phoebe S Saunders
Names of Wife's Parents, Charles P Woodall & Elizabeth P Weinstein
Occupation of Husband, Carpenter

Given under my hand this 20th day of February 1864

R. O. Boswell Clerk.

MINISTER'S RETURN OF MARRIAGE.

I certify, that on the 23rd day of February 1864 at Mayfield Hanover County Va I united in Marriage the above named and described parties, under authority of the annexed License. Given under my hand to be Minister of the Gospel. A. N. McKenney

☞ The Minister celebrating a Marriage is required, within ten days thereafter, to return the License to the Office of the Clerk who issued the same, with an endorsement thereon of the fact of such Marriage, and of the time and place of celebrating the same.

Hanover County marriage license digitization project members (left to right) Cheryl Harris, Joan Eddleton, Diana Sadler, Jan Major, and circuit court clerk Frank Hargrove (top); and this 1864 Hanover County marriage license is the oldest surviving marriage license in the collection. (Images courtesy of Frank Hargrove.)

Many clerk's office records were destroyed during the Civil War by fire or vandalism. Only one marriage license issued before the conflict ended in April 1865 survived the war. That license, issued in 1864, has a letter written on the reverse side by a Union soldier during the Battle of Cold Harbor that starts, "In The Rifle Pits before Richmond June 9th 1864." The soldier wrote, "I took it from Hanover C. H. while we were skirmishing with the Rebs."

The low number of licenses issued in the months immediately after the April 1865 surrender at Appomattox suggests that clerk's office operations were disrupted at the war's end.

By September 1865, five months after the war ended, the clerk's office seems to have gotten back to business as usual, with six licenses were issued in that month. One of the licenses was issued to 59-year-old Thomas Harris and 45-year-old Charlotte Coy, who may be the first Black couple to obtain a marriage license in Hanover County.

"The clerk's office will make the images and index of the oldest licenses available via the Internet once that capability is added to our records management system," said Hargrove. "To help researchers in the meantime, we added a searchable list of licenses issued between 1864 and 1939 to the clerk's office Genealogical Research web page at HanoverCounty.gov. The searchable list, which can be downloaded, allows genealogists to determine whether we have a license without visiting the office."

"Chief deputy clerk Jan Major believed that making marriage licenses easily accessible would satisfy growing interest from researchers and genealogists," said Hargrove. "I am proud of what my staff members accomplished and am excited about what researchers will find."

Conservation: Lamination Is Bad, Encapsulation Is Good, But Encapsulation Over Lamination Is Horrible

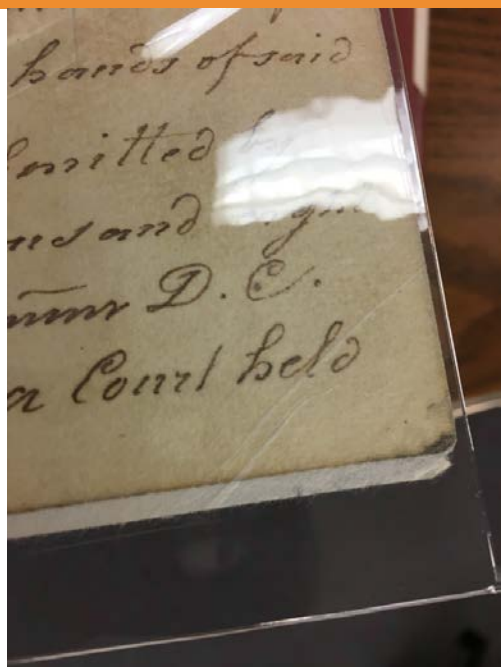
In past issues of the *CCRP News* we have outlined conservation and preservation issues that Library of Virginia field archivists commonly find in circuit court clerks' offices across the Commonwealth of Virginia and described the common conservation and preservation treatments for these maladies.

Unfortunately, we often find ourselves attempting to undo conservation treatments of the past. These discredited processes and methods, some of which were once highly regarded, are understood today to have detrimental effects on the items we are trying to preserve. We have talked about the problems resulting from tape stripping (or loose leaf conversions), deteriorating plat sleeves, and the different forms of document lamination, such as the Emory Silking Process, cellulose acetate lamination, and modern lamination, among others.

Conservation treatments can vary depending on the issues, but the process frequently involves mending and/or tape removal before the "standard treatment" of deacidification of the paper, encapsulation in archival quality polyester sleeves, and binding in a new post binder. If a volume has been laminated, the lamination must be removed prior to this treatment.

Document lamination is a problem for a number of reasons. The most common type, cellulose acetate lamination, which was popular from the mid-1930s to the 1980s, proved to be unstable. That is to say, the laminate's composition changed over time, resulting in the deterioration of the laminate and, as a result, the documents. Unfortunately, it is difficult to determine exactly why, how, or when a laminated document will begin to deteriorate. The laminating process (or the person doing the laminating), the chemical composition, the heating process, or the environmental/storage conditions are among the many things that could be at fault. A huge problem is that, frequently, the documents were laminated without deacidifying the paper first. Or if the paper was deacidified, the process might have been improper, defective, or inconsistent. Unfortunately, sealing the acidic paper in laminate without any means for off-gassing hastens the deterioration of the paper. Because of the many variables in the lamination process, there is no rhyme or reason to when or how the documents will begin to deteriorate. When laminated documents or volume pages begin to harden, bubble, chip, turn yellow/brown, break at the gutter, or reek of vinegar, however, they are in critical condition.

As previous issues have mentioned, the removal of lamination is a costly, challenging, and time-consuming process, and in some instances, especially with modern lamination, it is difficult to remove without damaging the documents (or pages) the lamination was intended to protect. With some conservation vendors, the successful removal of cellulose acetate lamination appears to be a hit-and-miss proposition. As a result, today, conservation vendors are encouraged to spot-check or sample the documents to make sure that the lamination can be safely removed before chopping the pages out of their binding.



Dinwiddie County Will Book No. 1, 1830–1832, "conserved" (encapsulation over lamination) in 2011.

As unimaginable as it might seem, Library of Virginia field archivists sometimes encounter situations where a CCRP item conservation grant was awarded for lamination removal, but the conservation vendor simply chopped laminated pages from their bindings instead, and then gave them the treatment outlined above without removing the lamination. This means that the acidic pages are not only still sealed in the laminate, but are also encapsulated in the polyester sleeves, effectively doubly-sealing the acids in the paper without any means of off-gassing. Although archival quality polyester sleeves do not hermetically seal the pages like laminate, the sleeves undoubtedly make it more difficult for the laminated paper to air out, if possible.

In these instances, the honesty of the conservation vendor is a factor. Going through the motions of encapsulating and post binding laminated pages, and then returning them to the circuit court clerk's office without any mention of the problem is not only dishonest, but also detrimental to the documents (or volumes) that were sent to the conservation lab in the first place. In other words, the items returned were worse off than when they left for treatment via a CCRP item conservation grant. In some cases, vendors even went so far as to attempt to trim an excess laminate from the individual pages so that it would be more difficult to notice that the pages were not, in fact, delaminated.

As a result, when Library of Virginia field archivists examine items in the records room and identify volumes that are "encapsulation over lamination," these are considered prime candidates for CCRP item conservation grants. We are working to not only undo discredited conservation methods of the past, but also to undo the fraudulent conservation treatment that was falsely used to conserve them—with CCRP item conservation funding.

The Circuit Court Records Preservation Program
JULY 1, 2019–JUNE 30, 2020

GRANTS CONSULTING PROGRAM

CCRP consulting staff members conducted 45 site visits to 41 localities. They examined 478 items and 19 cu. ft. of loose records and created 321 condition reports for Item Conservation grant candidates. CCRP staff members continue to consult with local interns on processing projects in two localities.

The Circuit Court Records Preservation Grants Review Board met once in December 2020 to consider 96 grant applications submitted from 95 localities totaling $1,633,800.19. The grant review board evaluated and discussed all of the applications, and awarded 96 grant projects for $1,633,800.19 in the following categories: Item Conservation, Security System, Storage, and Reformatting.

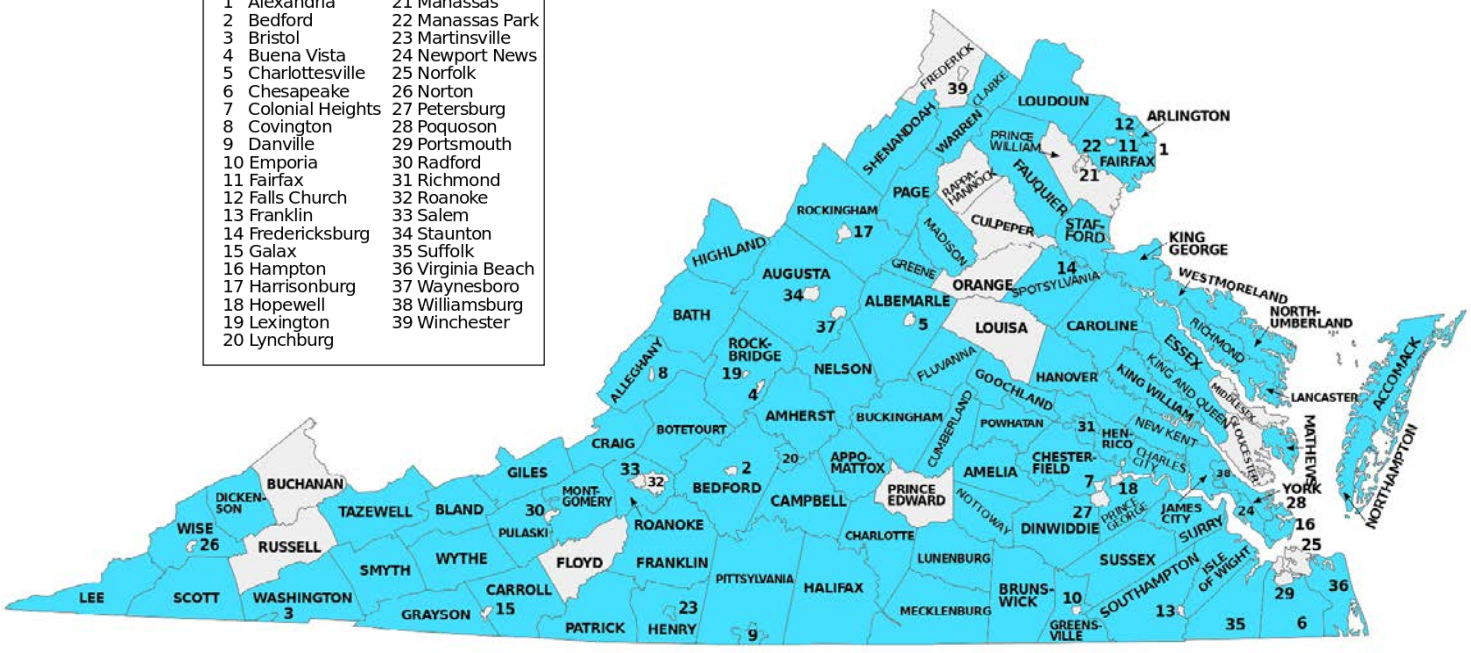
IN-HOUSE RECORDS PROGRAM

Work continues to reduce the backlog of unprocessed circuit court records collections housed at the Library. Staff members continue to flat-file, folder, index, conserve, and re-box materials, incorporating in-depth arrangement and description of court records of higher-research potential. The collections are made more accessible to the public with the creation of catalog records and electronic finding aids. Images of chancery causes from four localities previously accessible only on microfilm were made available to the public through the web-based Chancery Records Index. The professional staff continues to process and index chancery records as well as processing other important loose papers having high research value. In addition, indexed chancery records data (names, cause of action, topics, etc.) is entered into the Chancery Indexing Processing System (CHIPS), the data entry system used by Library staff. CHIPS allows for uniform searching of records by the public and staff through the web-based Chancery Records Index.

CCRP Grant Awards - FY2021

Independent Cities

1	Alexandria	21	Manassas
2	Bedford	22	Manassas Park
3	Bristol	23	Martinsville
4	Buena Vista	24	Newport News
5	Charlottesville	25	Norfolk
6	Chesapeake	26	Norton
7	Colonial Heights	27	Petersburg
8	Covington	28	Poquoson
9	Danville	29	Portsmouth
10	Emporia	30	Radford
11	Fairfax	31	Richmond
12	Falls Church	32	Roanoke
13	Franklin	33	Salem
14	Fredericksburg	34	Staunton
15	Galax	35	Suffolk
16	Hampton	36	Virginia Beach
17	Harrisonburg	37	Waynesboro
18	Hopewell	38	Williamsburg
19	Lexington	39	Winchester
20	Lynchburg		



IN-HOUSE RECORDS PROGRAM

Chancery Records Index Statistics

Chancery Records Index Search page visits: 119,267
Chancery Records Index Search page views: 890,103
Total indexes available on the Chancery Records Index: 100
Digital chancery images scanned: 1,007,719
Total images available on the Chancery Records Index: 11,578,103

Digital images were added to Chancery Records Index for: Carroll Co., Floyd Co., Grayson Co., city of Lynchburg, Rappahannock Co., Smyth Co., Southampton Co., Washington Co., and Westmoreland Co.

PROCESSING/INDEXING/CONSERVATION

Cubic footage examined: 97.9
Cubic footage processed: 48.6
Chancery causes indexed and entered: 1,604
Chancery causes edited: 5,218
Additional names indexed: 15,541
Items mended: 3,520
EAD (Encoded Archival Description) records created: 150
ALMA (LVA catalog) records created: 147
Cubic footage accessioned: 3.15
Items/volumes accessioned: 60
Transcription pages approved – Circuit Court records: 8,667

The processing of circuit court records was greatly reduced due to the COVID pandemic. From mid-March through June 2020, the processing staff teleworked daily in accordance with the governor's COVID guidelines. They were assigned digital chancery collections found on the Chancery Records Index to ensure the indexing of names met current standards. There was particular emphasis placed on identifying and indexing names of enslaved people not currently found on the Chancery Records Index. The processing staff members were also assigned with approving transcriptions of circuit court records found on the Making History: Transcribe website. Once approved, the transcribed records will be added to the Virginia Untold: the African American Narrative website.

The following localities have been subjects of archival work this year:

- Accomack County chancery causes – mending
- Albemarle County chancery causes – processing, indexing, mending
- Albemarle County health and medical records – processing, indexing, mending
- Amelia County deeds – indexing
- Amelia County health and medical records – processing, indexing, mending
- Amherst County chancery causes – processing, indexing, mending
- Bristol (city) chancery causes – processing, indexing, mending
- Brunswick County chancery causes – processing, indexing, mending
- Brunswick County health and medical records – processing, indexing, mending
- Campbell County health and medical records – processing, indexing, mending
- Caroline County chancery causes – indexing
- Caroline County coroners' inquisitions – processing, indexing, mending
- Caroline County health and medical records – processing, indexing, mending
- Chesterfield County health and medical records – processing, indexing, mending
- Cumberland County health and medical records – processing, indexing, mending
- Franklin County chancery causes – indexing
- Gloucester County health and medical records – processing, indexing, mending
- Goochland County health and medical records – processing, indexing, mending
- Hanover County chancery causes – indexing
- Henry County chancery causes – indexing
- King and Queen County chancery causes – indexing
- King George County chancery causes – indexing
- Lancaster County chancery causes – indexing
- Lynchburg (city) coroners' inquisitions - processing, indexing, mending
- Middlesex County chancery causes – indexing
- New Kent County chancery causes – indexing
- Norfolk County health and medical records – processing, indexing, mending
- Pittsylvania County chancery causes – processing, indexing, mending
- Prince Edward County District Court – processing, indexing, mending
- Prince George County miscellaneous records – processing
- Rappahannock County – indexing
- Richmond (city) chancery causes – processing, indexing, mending
- Richmond (city) deeds – indexing

MEDIA INVENTORY

The Imaging Services Branch continues to provide limited services to the localities, such as providing photo prints of missing pages, inspecting microfilm and digital images, retrieving microforms upon request, and delivering microfilm to our vendor for duplication. Imaging Services continues to maintain media in security storage by inspecting it for content and deterioration, replacing deteriorating film, and migrating all media to the new Infolinx database.

Imaging Services staff assisted two circuit court clerks' offices with requests for duplicate copies of film, having six reels duplicated. Imaging Services processed 102 requests from 20 circuit court clerks' offices to replace missing records in their offices that Imaging Services staff found on the security film. 600 pages were scanned or printed and sent to clerks' offices. Five circuit court clerks' offices and one town made nine requests for film to be sent to vendors for back-file scanning. 131 reels were sent for back-file scanning.

Imaging Services, received, inspected, entered, and stored 355 new reels of security microfilm/microfiche cards from circuit court clerks' offices. Imaging Services continues to store and swap media tape backups from circuit court clerks' offices compiled by the Supreme Court of Virginia. Imaging Services inspected 2,124 images for the Digital Chancery project. They also pulled 632 reels of chancery causes for three localities to be sent to Backstage for scanning.

Imaging Services continues to inspect older film for deterioration as well as content in an effort to migrate nearly 375,000 pieces of media in security storage to the Infolinx database. 7,228 reels were inspected for deterioration and entry into Infolinx. Arrangements are being made to replace all deteriorating film in security storage.

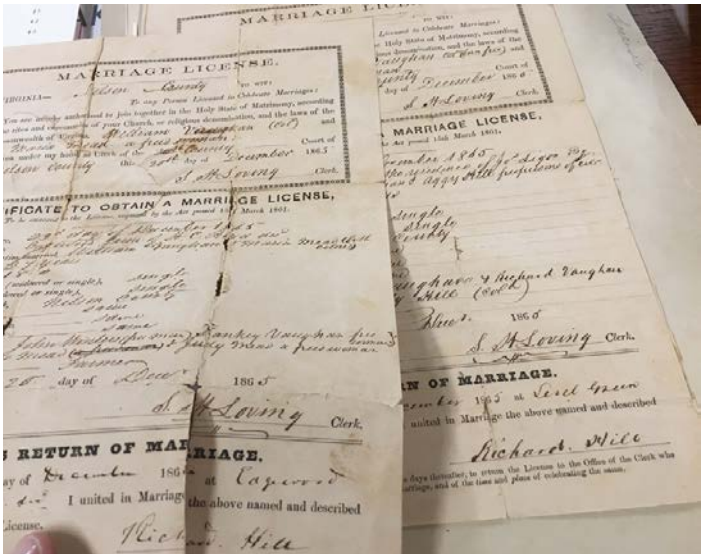
CCRP Grants Review Board AWARDS FUNDING

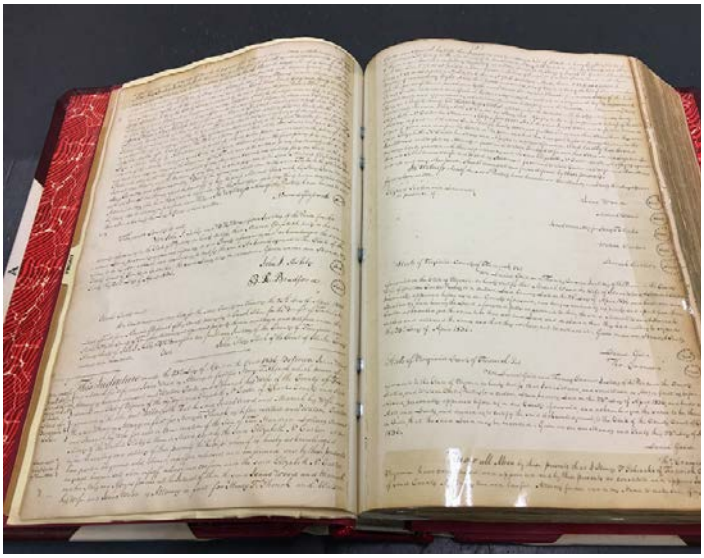
The Circuit Court Records Preservation Program (CCRP) Grant Review Board met on December 8, 2020, at the Library of Virginia to consider records preservation grant requests from circuit courts across the commonwealth. Five voting members comprise the board: three circuit court clerks, appointed by the president of the Virginia Court Clerks' Association; and two staff members from the Library of Virginia, currently the State Archivist and a senior local records archivist. Board members meet once a year to evaluate applications. Clerks of the circuit courts are eligible to apply for funds to conserve, secure, and increase access to circuit court records. In all, 95 localities submitted 96 applications.

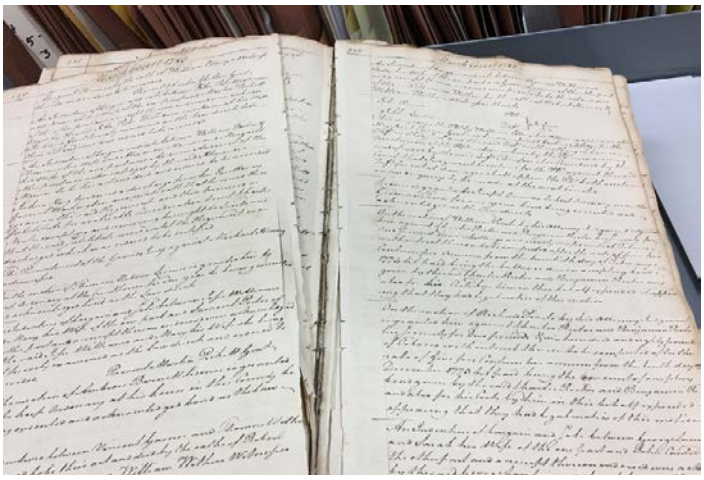
The board approved all 96 grant projects totaling $1,633,800. Ninety-two of the approved applications covered professional conservation treatment for almost 350 items, including deed books, will books, land tax books, marriage licenses, minute books, and plat books, housed in circuit court clerks' offices, which suffered damage from use, age, pests, water, or previous nonprofessional repairs. The remaining four grants funded records reformatting, storage, and a security system.

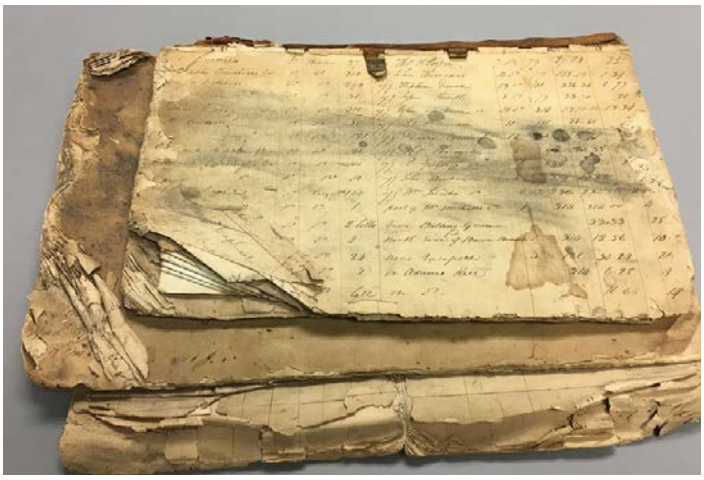
The Library of Virginia's Government Records Division administers the CCRP. A $3.50 recordation fee on land instruments recorded in the circuit court clerks' offices funds the program. The CCRP provides resources to preserve and make accessible Virginia's permanent circuit court records. Since 1992, the CCRP has awarded over 1,800 preservation grants totaling over $24 million dollars.

THE FOLLOWING ARE A FEW OF THE ITEMS THAT RECEIVED GRANT FUNDING:









Nelson County Marriage Licenses, 1865–1877 (top left); Clarke County Deed Book A (top right); Fauquier County Minute Book, 1773–1780 (bottom left); and Henrico County Land Book, 1814–1818 (bottom right).

Virginia Circuit Court Records Preservation Grant Program
FY2021 GRANT CYCLE AWARDS

Accomack County	Item Conservation	$18,137.50
Albemarle County	Item Conservation	$20,610.00
Alexandria City	Item Conservation	$15,375.00
Alleghany County	Item Conservation	$11,959.00
Amelia County	Item Conservation	$34,317.50
Amherst County	Item Conservation	$19,170.00
Appomattox County	Item Conservation	$13,555.50
Arlington County	Item Conservation	$12,276.00
Augusta County	Item Conservation	$12,598.00
Bath County	Item Conservation	$14,430.50
Bedford County	Item Conservation	$23,179.00
Bland County	Item Conservation	$18,116.00
Botetourt County	Item Conservation	$28,432.50
Bristol City	Item Conservation	$15,879.50
Brunswick County	Item Conservation	$10,054.00
Buckingham County	Item Conservation	$15,206.00
Campbell County	Item Conservation	$33,941.00
Caroline County	Item Conservation	$22,918.50
Carroll County	Item Conservation	$21,680.00
Charles City County	Item Conservation	$21,765.50
Charlotte County	Item Conservation	$16,240.50
Chesapeake City	Item Conservation	$21,195.00
Chesterfield County	Item Conservation	$17,188.00
Clarke County	Item Conservation	$18,913.25
Craig County	Item Conservation	$24,275.00
Cumberland County	Item Conservation	$26,688.50
Danville City	Item Conservation	$11,119.00
Dickenson County	Item Conservation	$11,905.00
Dinwiddie County	Item Conservation	$9,802.50
Essex County	Item Conservation	$18,160.50
Fairfax County	Item Conservation	$11,777.00
Fauquier County	Item Conservation	$15,213.50
Fluvanna County	Item Conservation	$18,819.00
Franklin County	Item Conservation	$19,364.00
Fredericksburg City	Item Conservation	$15,931.00
Giles County	Item Conservation	$21,557.50
Goochland County	Item Conservation	$14,322.50
Grayson County	Item Conservation	$23,166.00
Greene County	Item Conservation	$11,275.00
Greensville County	Item Conservation	$14,047.00
Halifax County	Item Conservation	$17,899.50
Hampton City	Item Conservation	$15,244.00
Hanover County	Item Conservation	$11,971.75
Hanover County	Reformatting	$397.50
Henrico County	Item Conservation	$20,301.50
Henry County	Item Conservation	$11,863.00
Highland County	Reformatting	$6,440.00
Isle of Wight County	Item Conservation	$18,212.00
King and Queen County	Item Conservation	$12,599.00
King George County	Item Conservation	$18,386.75
King William County	Storage	$9,100.00
Lancaster County	Item Conservation	$23,804.00
Lee County	Item Conservation	$5,007.50
Loudoun County	Item Conservation	$16,549.50
Lunenburg County	Item Conservation	$10,509.00
Lynchburg City	Item Conservation	$24,793.50
Madison County	Item Conservation	$11,667.75
Martinsville City	Security System	$2,336.89
Mathews County	Item Conservation	$11,214.00
Mecklenburg County	Item Conservation	$18,387.50
Montgomery County	Item Conservation	$13,591.00
Nelson County	Item Conservation	$22,197.00
New Kent County	Item Conservation	$15,982.00
Newport News City	Item Conservation	$11,340.00
Northampton County	Item Conservation	$27,196.00
Northumberland County	Item Conservation	$15,726.00
Nottoway County	Item Conservation	$21,485.50
Page County	Item Conservation	$4,656.00
Patrick County	Item Conservation	$17,994.00
Pittsylvania County	Item Conservation	$13,939.00
Powhatan County	Item Conservation	$27,519.50
Prince George County	Item Conservation	$12,861.50
Pulaski County	Item Conservation	$16,895.50
Richmond City	Item Conservation	$25,358.50
Richmond County	Item Conservation	$16,573.00
Roanoke County	Item Conservation	$12,868.80
Rockbridge County	Item Conservation	$15,631.50
Rockingham County	Item Conservation	$19,702.00
Scott County	Item Conservation	$38,356.50
Shenandoah County	Item Conservation	$10,964.00
Smyth County	Item Conservation	$12,956.00
Southampton County	Item Conservation	$22,733.50
Spotsylvania County	Item Conservation	$13,505.00
Stafford County	Item Conservation	$17,898.00
Suffolk City	Item Conservation	$13,984.00
Surry County	Item Conservation	$22,368.00
Sussex County	Item Conservation	$9,161.50
Tazewell County	Item Conservation	$26,693.00
Virginia Beach City	Item Conservation	$24,422.50
Warren County	Item Conservation	$12,107.00
Washington County	Item Conservation	$21,974.00
Westmoreland County	Item Conservation	$22,549.00
Williamsburg/ James City County	Item Conservation	$22,216.00
Wise County	Item Conservation	$1,580.00
Wythe County	Item Conservation	$16,399.00
York County/Poquoson	Item Conservation	$21,171.00
		$1,633,800.00