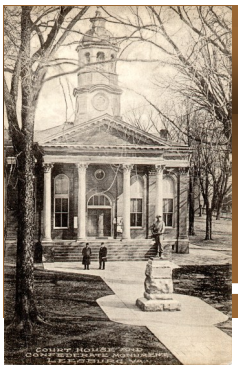


Clerk of the Circuit Court-Historic Records

Volume 1, Issue 1
January 2016

# "Little Gems"

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Accomplishments & Awards* | 2 |
| *Library of Virginia Grant* | 2 |
| *Tips and Tricks* | 2 |
| *2016 Programs* | 3 |
| *By the Numbers* | 3 |
| *Fife, Drums and Forged Steel* | 3 |
| *Feature Story* | 4-5 |

**Historic Records and Deed Research Staff**

Gary M. Clemens,
Clerk of Circuit Court

Eric Larson
Historic Records Manager

Sarah Markel
Historic Records Clerk

Alyssa Fisher
Historic Records Clerk

Volunteers
John Fishback
Rose Marie Walters
Shannon Fuller

## 2015 Year in Review

Welcome to the first issue of "Little Gems", the newsletter for Loudoun's Clerk of the Circuit Court Historic Records and Deed Research Department. "Little Gems" will provide the latest information on our conservation projects, programs and historic finds. The past year brought many changes to the archives, department name change, new staff, the addition of all land records 1757-present, and expanded public area. With additional staff and volunteers, Historic Records was able to index many of its miscellaneous records, digitize books, and provide public programs. Grant funding provided the resources to scan and conserve will and deed books and the storage of thousands of loose court papers. All deed books from 1757 to present are now digitized, and the will books have been scanned up to the 1860s. We expanded our website to include dozens of indexes, helpful links, and suggestions to aid customer research. We had two successful open houses and two special events. Lastly, with the addition of all land records and deed research, the number of customers quadrupled in 2015! When I became Historic Records Manager in 2014, I set four goals: Digitization, conservation, increase access to the collection, and public programs. These same goals will continue in 2016 as our staff and volunteers move forward with new projects to conserve and exhibit one of the best preserved collections of county court records in Virginia. Please take the time to read about our accomplishments, upcoming events, and articles on exhibits, grants and historic research. In 2016 come in and do some research, view one of our exhibits or open houses and meet the staff and see our new expanded archives. I hope you enjoy our first edition of Little Gems, and look for our next issue in spring 2016.

**Eric Larson, Historic Records Manager**

## What are Little Gems: By Sarah Markel, Historic Records Clerk

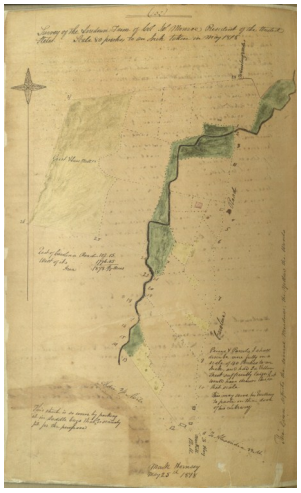
Since the formation of the county, the Clerks have squirreled away notes. These notes listed things to remember, interesting facts, and things that were just down right oddities. Over time these notes went from scraps of paper tucked in a desk and books to a binder. Today we call this binder the "Book of Little Gems" compiled by Retired Deputy Clerk, Louisa Hutchison. It contains references to everything from church deeds to town plats.

If the Clerk was working on a project, say, "Who was able to perform marriages in the late 1700's?" He/She would have looked in the bonds to see who had given a bond to the Governor entitling them to perform the rite of matrimony.

Once this list was made, the Clerk would have put a copy in the "Book of Little Gems" so that they had this information close at hand if someone requested it in the future.

Today we are still adding to the "Book of Little Gems". Recently we found a deed for James Monroe's property at "Oak Hill". This deed included a vivid hand drawn color plat. So, we added the reference Deed Book 4I pgs150-152 to the "Book of Little Gems" so that anyone reading it would be able to find this amazing plat.

While this book was compiled to help the Clerks do research, some of the entries are listed just because they're interesting. One example is a reference to "The Beginning of the World" in one of the deed books. But, you will have to visit archives to hear more about that one.



*Plat of James Monroe's property at "Oak Hill".*

# 2015 Awards & Accomplishments

**Awards**
National Association of Counties Technology Achievement Award (NAC)
Virginia Association of Museum Honoree for the 2015 Top 10 Endangered Virginia Artifacts
**Accomplishments**
Militia Book and Papers Indexed
Deed Books A-5Z Scanned
Will Books A-2Q Scanned
Judgment Papers 1757-1766 Indexed
Expanded Online Indexes
Criminal Papers 1880-1929 Flat Filed & Indexed

Historic Records and Information Technology Team Receiving 2015 NAC Technology Award
Sarah Markel, Brenda Butler, Alyssa Fisher, Gary Clemens, Jason Jerrell, Steven Thompson & Eric Larson

*"Alyssa was so incredibly helpful as we went through some mind numbing tedious Research. She's a gem!"*
Customer comment card

# Historic Records Receives Library of Virginia Conservation

The Clerk of the Circuit Court Historic Records Division received an $18,360 Conservation Grant from the Library of Virginia. The Library of Virginia Circuit Court Preservation Grant program offers Virginia's Clerk of the Circuit Courts two grants per year to conserve mandated court records. Since Mr. Clemens became Clerk in 2000, the Clerk of the Circuit Court has received $554,176 in preservation grants from the Library of Virginia. In the last fifteen years, $223,165 was used to preserve hundreds of will and deed books. The largest grant amount of $296,449 was used to flat file, index and scan all of Loudoun Chancery records from 1757-1912. Other grant money funded security cameras, and flat filing and indexing county road cases.

# Tips and Tricks For Researching Historic Records

The Clerk's Office Historic Records and Deed Research Division provides access to a number of documents that can be used for property research, genealogy, and local history. Based on some of the questions we have received from patrons, or have experienced in our own work, this exhibit provides some tips and tricks for finding information within Historic Records. Have you ever wondered what kind of businesses existed in the county at the turn of the 20th century? Chancery Records, though normally researched for recordation of the distribution of property, or a divorce, often include old bills and receipts with the letterhead of different businesses and proprietors. Are you trying to find out if your ancestor was a tradesman, or had a particular occupation in the 19th century? Consider looking in the Death and Birth Records where occupations were sometimes recorded. Trying to find an ancestor you believe lived in Loudoun but you cannot find them in the Deeds? Try looking at the Land Tax Books under the personal property tax lists, or consider looking in the Road Cases. Your ancestor may have worked as a road hand to maintain the road on which they lived. The Historic Records in the Clerk's Office provide much more information than what they may seem to provide at face value. These suggestions are meant to help you consider more sources for the kinds of information you may seek. Exhibit is located on the 3rd floor of the Clerk's office.

**Exhibit by Alyssa Fisher, Historic Records Clerk**

# 2016 Programs and Events

**February Black History Month**
February 6 (Snow date February 13), 2016 (Time TBD) *Leonard Grimes and the Network to Freedom* by: Deborah A. Lee Article on Leonard Andrew Grimes

**Home Brew-Sale and Production of Liquor in Loudoun**
April 1, 2016 Spring Open House (First Friday) 6:00-8PM
This presentation will display court records of the legal and not so legal consumption and sale of alcohol in Loudoun County from 1757-1930s.

**Mold, War and Grants: Preserving Loudoun's Historic Court Papers**
June 3, 2016 Summer Open House (First Friday) 6:00-8PM
Learn how Loudoun's court papers have held up against time, history and environment. The staff will discuss and demonstrate how the records are being preserved in the 21st century.

**Presentments, Sentencings and Punishments: Crime in Loudoun County 1757-1944**
October 7, 2016 Fall Open House (First Friday) 6:00-8PM
This exhibit will display and explain the sentencing and punishment of criminals using the court's historic criminal records.

More events and exhibits will be added throughout the year. Please check our website for more details. All Open Houses will be held at:

Court Complex
18 E. Market St
Leesburg Virginia

# By the Numbers

How many visitors, copies, and phone calls does the Historic Records staff handle a year. You'll be surprised! The following stats are from January 2015-December, 2015.

Visitors-4,583
Correspondence Requests-1,590
Phones-3,860
Archives Files Pulled-1,203
Total Copies-26,925
Volunteers Hours-746.5
Total Scans-32,865

*"Wow! Everything is well organized, neat accessible , and well conserved. Staff is amazing-friendly helpful respectful."*
Customer comment card

# Fifes, Drums, and Forged Steel

The Clerk of the Circuit Court's Historic Records Division is displaying militia papers (1781-1866) and the county Militia Book 1793-1809. During the Colonial period and after 1776, the Commonwealth of Virginia has maintained a state militia. During the American Revolution, Loudoun County had the largest militia (1,746 men) in the state of Virginia (Militia History). Exhibit includes reproductions of clothing, a fife, drum and a brief history of Virginia's militia from colonial times to the formation of the Virginia National Guard. The militia papers and books were recently indexed and include almost 20,000 names of male residents who were required to muster 6 times a year (Militia Index online). The militia records maintained by the Clerk's office and by the county tax commissioners served as a militia and tax roll for each district of Loudoun. The rolls list the names, attendance and fines of officers and privates.

Militiamen were fined 75 cents for failing to appear at muster. In 1795, Lt. Townsend Payton was fined for failing to attend training at Gumspring on September 28-29, 1795. Ruben Schooly was exempted from the militia for being "over age." In 1806, Jas. M. McCray, fifer, and John Howell, Drummer were paid $2 a day "for being instructed in music."

Militia Papers and Books will be on display in the Historic Records Division located on level B2 in the Court House complex.

**Exhibit by Sarah Markel, Historic Records Clerk**

## David Caldwell's Home: A Case Study of Probate Inventories

By Alyssa Fisher

Probate inventories found in will books and miscellaneous will papers provide information regarding the kinds of objects a deceased person possessed prior to their death. Many of these documents are listed with no particular order, but on occasion, an inventory will be listed by rooms. David Caldwell's inventory from 1859 is divided as such, with a list of multiple rooms and their contents, which inspire questions about the individual as well as where he lived. Researching probate inventories such as Caldwell's can provide information about the people, structures, and customs of a particular time period and place.

*"David Caldwell's library consisted of mostly theology books, and with further research Caldwell is identified as one of the rectors who served the St. James' Episcopal Church from 1856 until his death in November of 1858."*

The appraisers of David Caldwell's estate referenced several rooms including a Dining Room, Store Room, Hall, Front Parlor, Study, East Front Chamber, East Back Chamber, West Front Chamber, West Back Chamber, and Kitchen, in that order. According to this list of rooms, the home most likely had a central hall with four rooms on each floor, two on either side of the hall. The chambers of the second floor extended along the east and west axis, suggesting the hall ran along the north and south axis. The Kitchen, while listed last and after the chambers, is unlikely to have been on the second floor of the home. Its position in the list of rooms may suggest the kitchen to have been either in a separate building near the home, or in the basement. Additional spaces included a China Closet, and Library. The appraisers listed the China Closet, which held a few small objects, after the Dining Room suggesting the storage space may have been a small built-in closet, or cupboard in one of the walls of the Dining Room. The Library consisted of an extensive list of books taking up eight full pages of the inventory, but only including book titles. Meanwhile the appraisers only listed a few pieces of furniture in the Study. Though not noted in the inventory, the Library most likely resided in the Study while inventory appraisers listed it separately due to its size.[1]

David Caldwell's library consisted of mostly theology books, and with further research Caldwell is identified as one of the rectors who served the St. James' Episcopal Church from 1856 until his death in November of 1858. Based on this information, it is possible Caldwell lived in the church's rectory for a short time. Further research indicates that around the time of Caldwell's election to serve the church, the vestry sought a new location for a rectory, moving to purchase a lot owned by Lucy Ellzey and to sell the old rectory lot. David Caldwell served on the committee to build the new rectory. Little else is written about the new rectory other than in December of 1858 it is noted that the structure had just been completed. Unfortunately, by that time David Caldwell had already passed away, but records state:

> It appears that our late rector, Rev. David Caldwell, has expended on the rectory premises, out of his own funds, the sum of four hundred dollars, and whereas there are some articles of furniture, such as carpets and oilcloths, placed in the rectory by Mr. Caldwell, and adapted to that building, and not fitted to any other house, to the amount of one hundred and fifty dollars, all of which sums we think ought to be paid by the congregation.[2]

Caldwell's inventory includes an oil cloth found on the floor of the Hall, and a carpet found in almost every other room except the Kitchen, in addition to a number of pieces of furniture. Though records suggest completion of the house did not occur until December of 1858, the house may have been finished enough structurally for the rector and his family to live there for a time while workers made final adjustments.[3]

---

1.Loudoun County Clerk's Office, Will Book 2N, 199-210.
2.Lizzie Worseley, *Old St. James' Episcopal Church, Leesburg, VA, 1760-1897* (Leesburg, VA: Washingtonian Print, 1897), 18.
3.Worseley, 16-18; Loudoun County Clerk's Office, Will Book 2N, 199-210.

The staff of the Thomas Balch Library helped locate a Leesburg Architectural Survey file for the St. James' Episcopal Church Rectory which includes a Historic Land Marks Commission Survey Form from 1974, with updates from 1998. This file includes a survey drawing of the rectory and description of additions and alterations to the home from its original construction (Figure 1). It is noted that the kitchen moved from the basement to the first floor of the home. Additions included bathrooms, and a new wing with a utility room. Other than these changes, the house at the time of the survey, looked similar to the house's original construction in 1858. Today the house, still situated on the north side of West Cornwall Street, faces south. According to this position, and the survey drawing of the first floor, the Hall of the house runs along the north and south axis, with four main rooms on each floor, two on either side of the Hall. Following the footsteps of the appraisers as they inventoried Caldwell's estate in 1859, they began in the Dining Room, moved to the Store Room, then to the Hall from which they entered the Front Parlor, and then the Study. According to the survey drawing, the first room on the right as you enter the home would be the Dining Room followed by the Kitchen, previously noted as having been moved from the basement. Next would be the Hall, then the front room on the left labeled as a Living Room, followed by the Library. If the second floor mirrored the first floor of the drawing, minus the alterations and additions of bathrooms, there would be an east front chamber, east back chamber, west front chamber, and west back chamber exactly as the appraisers indicated in Caldwell's inventory.[4]

*"If the second floor mirrored the first floor of the drawing, minus the alterations and additions of bathrooms, there would be an east front chamber, east back chamber, west front chamber, and west back chamber exactly as the appraisers indicated in Caldwell's inventory."*

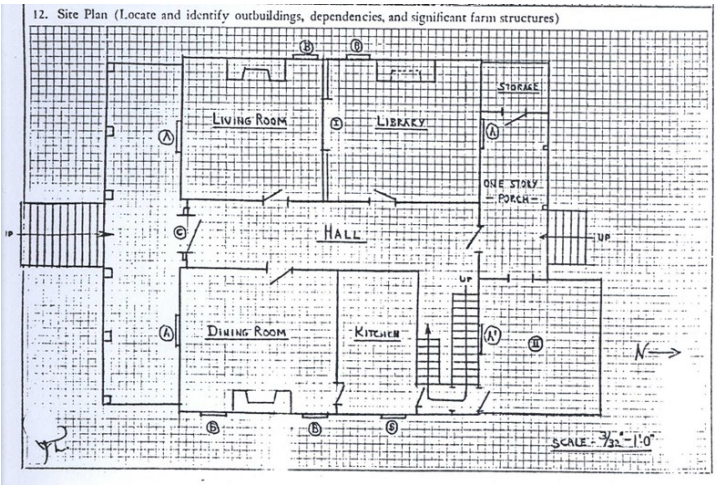



**Figure 1.** Survey Drawing of the Rectory of St. James' Episcopal Church (Courtesy of Thomas Balch Library)

Though a house with a central hall and symmetrical chambers on either side would not have been unique in the mid-nineteenth century, the records of Caldwell's involvement in the building and furnishing of the rectory, as well as the orientation of the home, survey drawing, and explanation of the kitchen, provides evidence that suggests Caldwell did live in the newly constructed rectory on Cornwall Street. To further this claim, Robert W. Gray, and John M. Orr, two of the three individuals who inventoried Caldwell's estate, also served as a part of the vestry of the St. James' Episcopal Church. Elected to the vestry in April of 1858, these men would have had a vested interest in the property of the church. While documents, such as David Caldwell's Inventory may not include the names of family members for genealogical purposes, or may only look like a list of "things," these kinds of documents can lead to many questions and answers which give a broader perspective of the individual and local history.[5]

4."Cornwall St, NW, 8; St. James' Rectory, 1858," Leesburg Architectural Surveys 1971 – 2002 (M 016), Thomas Balch Library, Leesburg, Virginia; Katheryn Gettings Smith et al., *Exploring Leesburg: Guide to History and Architecture* (Leesburg, VA: The Town of Leesburg, 2003), 58.

5.Worseley, 17.

**Clerk of the Circuit Court-Historic Records**

Clerk of the Circuit Court
Attn: Historic Records
P.O. Box 550
Leesburg, VA 20178

Phone: 703-737-8775
E-mail:
Clerks-Archives@Loudoun.gov

# Land Records & Deed Research

Loudoun is one of only a few counties in the Commonwealth that has records dating from its formation in 1757 from Fairfax County. The Historic Records and Deed Research division includes all historic court records 1757-1980s and land records from 1757-present. Research can be conducted by using both in-house and online databases and paper indexes. Our staff can provide guidance and suggestions to start your research but **cannot provide research services or legal advice**. To prepare for your visit please review our online links to indexes and county databases which provide a starting point in your records research.

## If you Visit the Archives

There is a court order that establishes court security protocols that serves the best interests of all visitors to the various courts and court-related offices in the Courts Complex. Therefore, electronic mobile devices such as cellphones with cameras, laptop computers, and electronic tablets are currently not permitted in the Courts Complex. To assist the patrons of the Historic Records/Archives research room, the Clerk's Office provides computer workstations with internet access so our patrons can review the websites of other historic records museums and historic records research organizations to assist with research needs in the Clerk's Office.

# Don't Forget to check our updated webpage!

Dozens of Updated & New Indexes

Helpful Links & Resources

Have a Question?