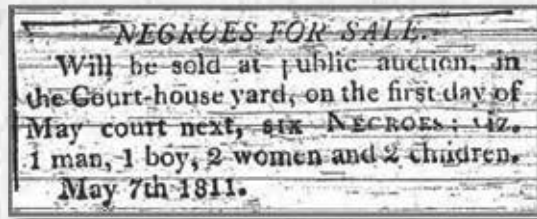


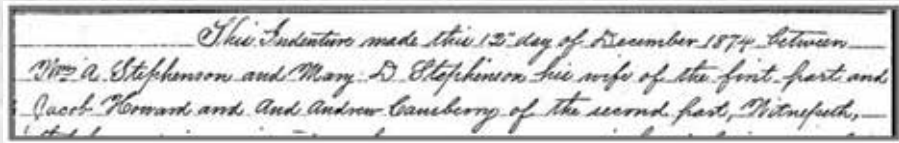
African-American history is intertwined with the courthouse history through its historic court cases, actions by judges and juries, court records retained in the Circuit Court Clerk's Office, and activities held on the courthouse grounds.

Loudoun County was founded in 1757, and its records from those early days through 1865 document the institution of slavery—the sale of people held in bondage, often on the courthouse steps; the transfer of human property within wills to spouses and children; and punishment for acts of resistance to inhumane treatment. This newspaper advertisement, using the vernacular of the time, announced the sale of enslaved people at the courthouse. *(Image courtesy of the Thomas Balch Library)*



Less often, deeds of emancipation were recorded that granted freedom from bondage. A 1793 Virginia law required freed Black people to go to the courthouse every 3 years to certify their freedom, accompanied by a White person who would testify on their behalf. An 1806 law required people freed after May 1806 to leave the Commonwealth within a year or risk being returned to slavery. The Register of Free Negroes, as it was called, was one of the most precious and important records to the African-American community pre-Civil War, and it remains one of the most treasured documents in the courthouse's archives.

The hope of equality after freedom came in 1865 can be seen in the marriages recorded at the courthouse, previously illegal during the time of slavery, and in deeds for purchases of land by formerly enslaved people, such as Jacob Howard.



However, the reality of a resistant South soon became evident. The African-American community was not represented on juries until the mid-1900s and rarely as elected officials. Segregated tax records became the norm in 1890 until 1963, and some land deeds prohibited the sale of property to African-Americans. Separate schools for African-American and White children existed from the time public education was established in 1870 through integration in 1968.

The courthouse continues to be a place where our community's history is made. The annual Loudoun County NAACP march on Martin Luther King Jr. Day in January starts at the courthouse. Swearing-in ceremonies for judges are held in the 1894 courthouse, the third to be built on the property.



Lorrie Sinclair Taylor, Loudoun County's first African-American judge, was sworn in at the 1894 Courthouse on August 13, 2021. Judge Taylor sits on the bench for the General District Court in Loudoun. *(Image courtesy of Damon Decker)*



THE COUNTY JAIL

A county jail stood across from the courthouse on Church and Market Streets from 1814 until 2007 when the mid-1900s version was demolished and a new facility built on Sycolin Road in Leesburg. The new courthouse is being constructed on the old jail site.

Two lynchings are associated with the 1800s-era jail. In 1889, Orion Anderson was pulled from the jail by an angry mob and hung a few blocks away. The horror occurred again in 1902 when Charles Craven was seized from the jail and lynched several blocks east of the courthouse complex.

During segregation, White and African-American prisoners lived in separate areas and shared few facilities.



The Clerk of the Circuit Court maintains county court records dating from the formation of Loudoun County in 1757. The Clerk's Office possesses one of the most complete collections of court records in Virginia and is one of only a few of the ninety-eight counties and twenty-two cities whose records have not been destroyed by fire, war, or environmental factors.

Clerk of the Circuit Court Historic Records Division
18 E. Market Street
Leesburg, VA 20176
Phone: 703-737-8775
E-mail: Clerks-Archives@loudoun.gov

The Black History Committee of the Friends of the Thomas Balch Library preserves, collects, promotes, and shares the history of African-Americans who contributed to the emergence and development of the county.

Black History Committee
P.O. Box 2184
Leesburg, VA 20177
Email: bhc@balchfriends.org
www.balchfriends.org

For more information:

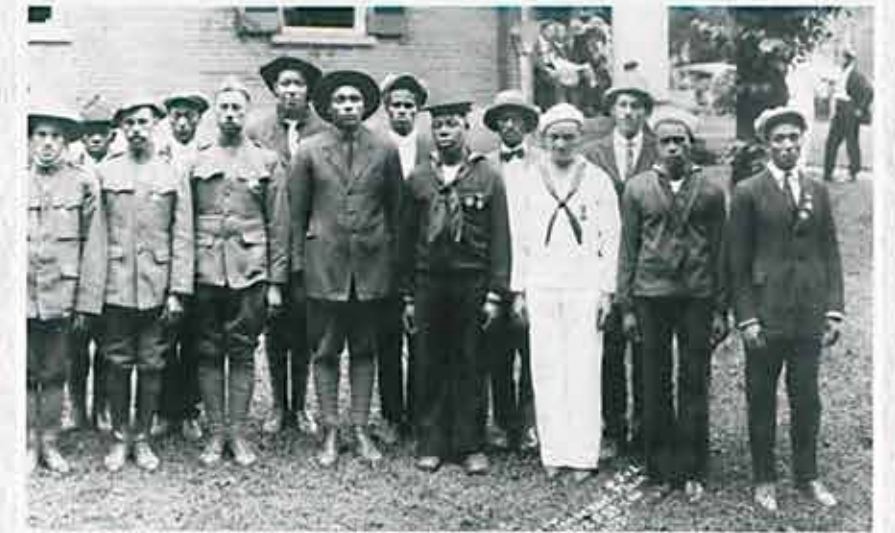
A companion brochure, "Loudoun County Courtyard Walking Tour" is available.

Scan the QR code to link to the Historic Records Division web site to learn more about each topic. Or go to: www.loudoun.gov/2173/Events-Research-Tips-Exhibits



AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY

at the
Loudoun County Courthouse



WORLD WAR I VETERANS

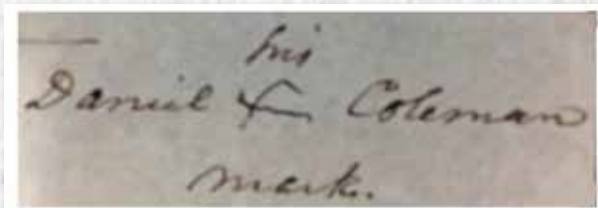
Of the 610 men from Loudoun County who served in World War I, 179 were African-American. Veterans posed for this segregated photograph by the 1894 courthouse. Valentine B. Johnson, Samuel C. Thornton, and Ernest Gilbert lost their lives during the War. Until November 2021, their names were listed separately on the monument on the courthouse grounds. Their names were integrated alphabetically on the plaque that is seen now. *(Image courtesy of the Loudoun Museum)*

Gary M. Clemens
Clerk of the Circuit Court

Historic Records Division
Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court

Black History Committee of the
Friends of the Thomas Balch Library

DANIEL COLEMAN, REVOLUTIONARY WAR SOLDIER



Daniel Coleman was a free African-American who enlisted in the Continental Army in Maryland in 1781. He served at the Siege of Yorktown in October that secured the United States' independence from Great Britain. He was discharged in Loudoun in late 1781. At age 93 and unable to work, he filed a claim at the courthouse to prove he served during the war and could receive a Revolutionary War pension.

WILLS - DOCUMENTS OF FREEDOM OR TRAGEDY

One of the most significant legal records that impacted an enslaved person's life was the enslaver's will. That single document could provide freedom or it could bring new horror if enslaved people were divided among family members or directed to be sold.

LEONARD GRIMES AND THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD



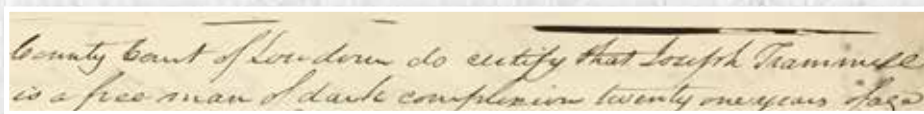
Leonard Grimes was born free about 1814 in Leesburg. In 1839, he was accused of smuggling enslaved people out of Loudoun so they could escape slavery. The court case Commonwealth vs. Grimes was conducted in the second courthouse in 1840. His attorneys argued that evidence was circumstantial, and he received the lightest sentence possible. He and his family later settled in Massachusetts and he became a minister. (Image courtesy of the Library of Congress)

Court cases involving freedom seekers and abolitionists were tried in the second courthouse (1811-1894). As a result of their advocacy for freedom, the courthouse was designated by the National Park Service in 2003 as an Underground Railroad Network to Freedom site.



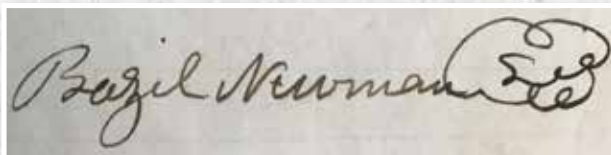
FREEDOM PAPERS

Joseph Trammell first registered as a free person in 1852, as required by law. His registration number was 1952. After the appropriate legal documents were recorded in the Register of Free Negroes in the Clerk's Office, he received his freedom papers. This valuable document descended through his family and was donated to the National Museum of African American History & Culture, Smithsonian Institution, where it is on permanent display.



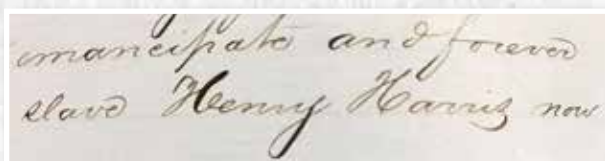
BAZIL NEWMAN, FERRY OPERATOR AND BUSINESSMAN

Despite laws that limited their rights, African-Americans who were not enslaved, such as Bazil Newman, owned land, operated businesses, and were successful in their endeavors. Newman operated a ferry at Goose Creek and the Potomac River, transporting people and goods between Virginia and Maryland. He owned a warehouse near the ferry and was part owner of Elizabeth's Mill on Goose Creek. Some historians believe he was a conductor on the Underground Railroad.



THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

Over 200 African-American men from Loudoun served their country during the Civil War, primarily in the U.S. Colored Troops. Veterans returned home to marry, buy land, raise a family, and become leaders in their community. Henry Harris had been freed before the war, as shown in this Deed of Emancipation from 1857. The original freedom certificate is at the courthouse.



RECONSTRUCTION AND EARLY CIVIL RIGHTS

In 1883, seventeen African-American men petitioned Loudoun County Judge James B. McCabe to serve as Jurors and Judges of Election. Although laws had been enacted to expand their civil rights after slavery, in actuality they were being eroded. These brave men, who owned land and businesses, were advocates in the early Civil Rights movement.

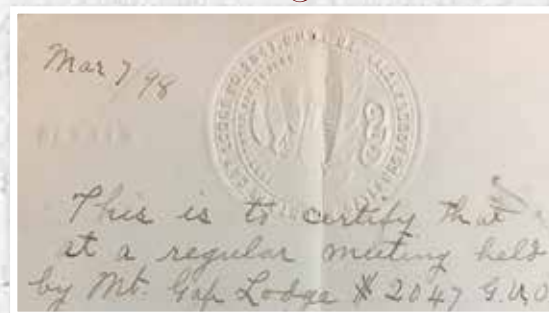
LOUDOUN COUNTY EMANCIPATION ASSOCIATION

The Association was organized in Hamilton in 1890 to commemorate the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation of Sept. 22, 1862. The organization formally incorporated with this charter at the courthouse in 1906. There was an annual celebration, conventions, pageants, revivals, and school activities held on the Emancipation grounds. The Association was formally dissolved in 1973.



COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

Numerous churches, mutual aid societies, and other formal organizations were formed after the Civil War. Fraternal organizations such as the Mt. Gap Odd Fellows provided fellowship, community service, and aid to its members.



ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INGENUITY

By 1918, William and Flora Fitts Edds moved from Southwest Virginia to buy 254 acres in Sterling. They operated a dairy farm, known as Pidgeon Hill. Using their own milk truck, William and Flora transported product to Washington D.C. for processing, often carrying milk for nearby farmers as well. It is believed that Pidgeon Hill was the largest African-American owned farm in the county. (Image courtesy of Joan Martin Smith)



CHARLES HAMILTON HOUSTON

Mr. Houston, prominent legal counsel to the NAACP and Dean of Howard University's Law School, argued Commonwealth vs. Crawford in the 1894 courthouse. It was one of the most important cases in the Civil Rights movement. His legal team fought in 1933 against the segregated jury process and ability to get a fair trial by a jury of one's peers. (Image courtesy of the Thomas Balch Library)



MARIE MOTON MEDLEY-HOWARD

Born in Leesburg, Mrs. Howard was a business woman and champion of equal education for African-American children, believing it was the key to civil rights. She fought tirelessly for improved facilities and curriculum. She was the first president of the local branch of the NAACP, formed in 1940. The organization presents an annual award named in her honor. (Image courtesy of the Thomas Balch Library)



FREDERICK DOUGLASS HIGH SCHOOL

Organizing to achieve their desire for better educational facilities, community members purchased land in Leesburg to construct a high school. The School Board resisted even after the land was given to the county. It was only after attorney Charles Houston threatened a lawsuit that the county agreed to pursue funding for the school.

