

Virginia Circuit Court Records Preservation Grant Program
Awards for 2008-B Cycle

Locality	Project Type	Awarded
Louisa County.....	Security System - Camera	\$ 21,726.00
Prince Edward County	Security System - Camera	10,715.00
Rockingham County.....	Security System - Camera	35,094.00
Wise County.....	Security System - Camera	22,977.78
Montgomery County	Security System - Upgrade	12,320.51
New Kent County.....	Processing - Indexing.....	1,478.70
Appomattox County	Reformatting - Plats to Digital.....	5,260.00
Pulaski County.....	Reader/Printer	11,214.19
Appomattox County	Preservation - Plat Cabinet	6,650.00
Cumberland County	Preservation - Plat Cabinet	3,754.00
Northampton County	Preservation - Plat Cabinet	4,998.00
Bedford County	Preservation - Storage	1,455.66
Accomack County.....	Item Conservation - Book	11,051.00
Albemarle County.....	Item Conservation - Book	4,650.00
Alleghany County	Item Conservation - Book	11,616.00
Augusta County	Item Conservation - Book	4,232.00
Bland County.....	Item Conservation - Book	4,797.00
Caroline County	Item Conservation - Book	330.00
Charlotte County.....	Item Conservation - Book	4,998.00
City of Chesapeake.....	Item Conservation - Book	4,997.00
Cumberland County	Item Conservation - Book	5,842.00
Fluvanna County	Item Conservation - Book	11,464.00
Loudoun County	Item Conservation - Book	9,477.00
Lunenburg County.....	Item Conservation - Book	4,655.00
Mecklenburg County	Item Conservation - Book	4,822.00
Nelson County.....	Item Conservation - Book	2,191.15
Pittsylvania County.....	Item Conservation - Book	4,995.00
Prince Edward County	Item Conservation - Book	4,914.00
Prince William County	Item Conservation - Book	13,356.00
Pulaski County.....	Item Conservation - Book	4,942.00
City of Radford.....	Item Conservation - Book	4,393.56
Rappahannock County	Item Conservation - Book	3,739.00
Rockingham County.....	Item Conservation - Book	5,872.00
Smyth County.....	Item Conservation - Book	11,068.00
City of Staunton.....	Item Conservation - Book	7,187.00
Tazewell County.....	Item Conservation - Book	11,196.00
Wise County	Item Conservation - Book	4,978.00
Goochland County	Item Conservation - Paper	3,180.00
		Total: \$302,586.55

Records . . . seventieth anniversary. Her great-uncle, Herman Melville, and his brother, Alan, had come to Virginia in 1864 to visit a cousin serving in the New York Cavalry, and during their stay they rode with Col. Charles Russell Lowell’s scouting party in Loudoun County.

We may never know how these materials left the Culpeper courthouse (in the pocket of a Union soldier or other souvenir-seeker?), or what prompted their return (perhaps the Civil War Centennial or Morewood’s advancing age?). Whatever the

circumstances, a small part of Virginia’s rich documentary heritage has come home.

—Submitted by Jennifer Davis McDavid

These examples represent a small fraction of the stories told through circuit court records housed at the Library of Virginia. Local Records Services archivists continually turn up new and fascinating material that would otherwise be unknown to researchers.

RECORDATUR

Digitally Reformatted Chancery Causes Available Online

The Library of Virginia is now digitally reformatting pre-1913 chancery causes from twenty localities, making the Library the only state institution in the nation to digitize historic local court records. Funding for this initiative is provided by the Library through its innovative Circuit Court Records Preservation Program. To date, over 1.2 million chancery images from the following localities have been digitized and made available: Alexandria, Caroline, Fauquier, Hanover, King and Queen, Lancaster, Middlesex, New Kent, Northampton, Prince William, Rockbridge, Shenandoah, and Staunton. The images, along with their accompanying indexes, can be accessed through the Library’s Chancery Records Index (CRI) at: www.lva.virginia.gov/whatwehave/local/chancery/index.htm. This online resource allows researchers to perform surname searches on the more than sixty chancery indexes currently available.

Chancery collections indexed and included on the CRI have been processed either in the locality, under a grant from the CCRP, or at the Library. Documents from each case are re-housed in acid-free folders and boxes and indexed to record information useful to researchers. Many documents are cleaned and stabilized, with items needing professional care sent to our in-house conservation lab. Ensuring that collections are processed to archival standards is a critical component of any successful reformatting project. Many of these collections are quite large—the Rockbridge County chancery collection alone spans more than 600 document boxes and will include an estimated 700,000 images when scanning is complete. After archival processing is complete, chancery collections are sent to one of two vendors for digital imaging. These projects involve a more complex process than does scanning and maintaining a small collection of documents on a home computer. The vendor scans each case file and names their corresponding digital images using a set file-naming convention established by the Library. The file names are based on an index number established by the processing archivist

and allow images to be linked to the corresponding case index.

Prior to leaving the vendor’s facility, each original document is compared against its corresponding digital file to ensure that it has been successfully scanned.



Scanning chancery documents.

When this process is complete, the boxes containing the original documents and accompanying digital quality-control images are returned on DVDs to the Library to undergo further quality-control processes. A “sample” method of inspecting documents is used to inspect a representative group of documents to ensure that files meet strict Library of Virginia standards. Images deemed unacceptable are pulled and returned to the vendor for rescanning.

Once a group of boxes has been scanned and accepted by the Library, the vendor creates final images in two formats: JPG2000 and PDF. These files are returned to the Library on large external drives capable of holding up to three terabytes of data. The PDF version will be loaded on the CRI and viewed by researchers. The JPG2000 is used as the archival master image for long-term preservation. This image is placed in a “dark archive,” a dedicated server that functions as a secure storage unit for master images, and will not be accessed by researchers. This ensures preservation of the master image so that the information it contains will be permanently available. Technical information about each digital image is captured to assist in preserving the document. Referred to as metadata, this technical information is defined in simple terms as information about an image that assists the archivist in maintaining its integrity. The file size of these images is quite large and storing and ensuring their preservation requires considerable cost in personnel, software, and hardware. Digital preservation is an active process—images should not be placed on a server and forgotten. They will need to be migrated to new platforms and inspected at regular intervals. The Library creates security microfilm for each digital collection as an added preservation copy.

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RECORDATUR

“An entry made on record to prevent any alteration of Record”

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.



LOCAL RECORDS SERVICES

800 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219
804.692.3605
804.692.2277 fax
www.lva.virginia.gov

Sandra Gioia Treadway
Librarian of Virginia

Conley L. Edwards III
State Archivist, State Records
Administrator and Director of the
Records Management Services Division

Carl M.C. Childs
Local Records Services Director

Glenn T. Smith
Grants Coordinator

Rachel Muse
Circuit Court Program Archivist

Michelle Washington
Administrative Assistant

Christopher Hibben
Production

Grant Applications Due October 15, 2008
Contact Rachel Muse at
rachel.muse@lva.virginia.gov
or 804.786.6356 for information.



DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Since this issue of *Recordatur* is packed with so much good information on various Circuit

Court Records Preservation activities, my column has been greatly shortened—good news for everyone! Included in this issue is an article that discusses the Library of Virginia's ongoing initiative to digitize pre-1913 chancery case files. This project now boasts over 1.2 million images scanned and posted to our Web site along with their accompanying indexes. Among the articles you can find information on the many ongoing preservation projects taking

place here, including tales of interesting finds by some of the Library's archivists. Glenn Smith provides details of the latest CCRP grant review board meeting, which took place in May 2008. Again, I'd like to thank Larry Palmer of Lynchburg, Linda Timmons of Orange County, and Rex Davis of Newport News for serving on the board and providing valuable input. If you have any questions about anything you read here, please feel free to contact me.

—Carl Childs
Local Records Services Director
804.692.3739
carl.childs@lva.virginia.gov

Latest Round of Preservation Grants Awarded

The most recent meeting of the Circuit Court Records Preservation Program Grants Review Board was held by teleconference at the Library of Virginia on May 28, 2008.

In this cycle, 2008-B, there were forty grant applications submitted from thirty-two localities requesting \$317,728.55. Following their review and evaluation, the board awarded thirty-eight projects in the amount of \$302,586.55. A summary of the awards is included in this newsletter.

As a part of the review process, there was considerable discussion among the members about current priorities of the grants program, and potential alternatives that would encourage clerks to address the issues of records preservation through greater use of reformatting, as opposed to relying mainly on the traditional methods of increasing storage space and item-level conservation. It was agreed that this issue should be discussed among the clerks, as well as between the clerks and Library of Virginia staff members. Board member Linda Timmons volunteered to bring the issue to the attention of the Virginia Court Clerks' Association, with the intention of generating interest and determining the best venue for discussion. If you believe there is an addition that could enhance the program, or if you're concerned about an existing issue within the program, please let us know. As the *Code of Virginia* cites, the Library

administers this program in cooperation with the clerks.

As board members' terms come to an end, program staff members would like to extend our thanks to Rex Davis, City of Newport News; Linda Timmons, Orange County; and Larry Palmer, City of Lynchburg for their contributions to the administration of each grant cycle and for their thoughts on the direction of the program as a whole.

The next deadline for grant applications is October 15. If there is a project you'd like to undertake, or if you have any questions at all, please give us a call.

—Glenn Smith
Grants Coordinator

Chancery . . . The following localities have also received grant funding for reformatting their chancery collections: Bedford, Cumberland, Fairfax, Highland, James City/Williamsburg, Northumberland, Petersburg, Prince Edward, and Rockingham. While the Library expects that these projects will be completed within the next two to three years, we are also planning to scan additional collections already housed at the Library. As we continue to add to our digital collections, we will continue to work in partnership with Virginia's circuit court clerks to preserve and provide access to these fascinating collections.

—Carl Childs
Local Records Services Director

What's Happening at the Library of Virginia

Archivists Turn Up Interesting Finds in Circuit Court Records

Archivists in the Local Records Services division of the Library of Virginia are constantly working with circuit court records that have been transferred to the Library to make them available to the public. Currently, chancery records from the following localities are being processed: Augusta, Botetourt, Frederick, Hampton/Elizabeth City, Henrico, Nelson, Northumberland, Portsmouth, Powhatan, and Rockbridge.

While processing chancery causes from across the commonwealth is a major priority for local records, other records series are also being worked on to provide better access to researchers. Campbell, Caroline, Fauquier, and James City County judgments and criminal causes are being processed, as are Commonwealth causes from the City of Staunton. Wills and deeds from Madison and Richmond Counties are also being processed. A series of Norfolk County road and bridge records was recently completed. Another unusual records series being processed is a group of Matthews County Red Cross records that document relief and response to a 1930s hurricane.

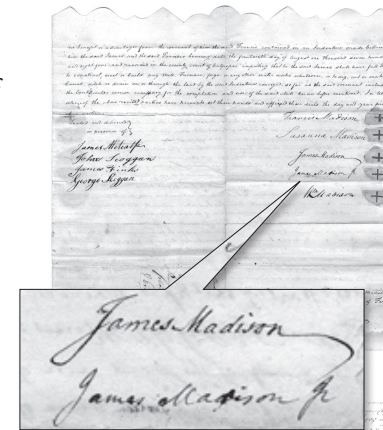
Archivists are continually amazed by what they turn up as they process a series of records. Recent finds in the Local Records Services division have included:

Founding Fathers Had Fathers Too

James Madison (1751–1836) was a president and founding father of the United States and is considered to be the father of both the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. So it is odd to see his name signed as “James Madison Jr.”

A recently processed Madison County deed shows just that. The deed, recorded in Madison County in 1796, involves four other family members including two of his younger brothers, a sister-in-law, and his father, James Madison Sr. It records one Madison brother, Francis, and his wife, Susanna, giving an equal interest to two brothers and his father in land that was to be used for a “water grist mill.” Though the future President James Madison was in his mid-forties at the time he signed the deed, as long as his father lived he was always referred to as “James Madison the younger.” The deed is indicative of a then-recent change for many western Virginia planters; wheat began to supplant tobacco as soils became exhausted and demand from European markets drove wheat prices higher. Correspondence between father and son during this period often concerned improvements in wheat cultivation.

—Submitted by Dale Dulaney



Madison County deed including the signatures of James Madison and his father, 1796.

A Legal Battle for Freedom

In 1790, Joseph, Dick, and Liddy, slaves held by Henry Travers, brought suit in the Northumberland County Court for their freedom. Having been informed by members of an abolitionist society in Alexandria that Travers had failed to register them, as required by law, when he moved the three of them from Maryland to Virginia, the enslaved individuals used written instructions provided by the abolitionists to develop their argument and initiate legal proceedings. The jury ultimately ruled in favor of Travers, however, and allowed him to keep possession of Joseph, Dick, Liddy, and their children.

—Submitted by Sam Walters

Stories from the Road: Culpeper County Records Return to Virginia

On December 13, 1965, Margaret Bruce Brown, the Culpeper County clerk of court, was opening her mail. She had been on the job for six years, and had previously served as deputy clerk. What she found in a thick envelope postmarked “Pittsfield, Massachusetts,” therefore, probably came as a pleasant surprise.

The envelope held a packet of early county court records, dating from 1792 to 1830. If a letter of introduction or explanation was included, it has since been lost. This group of materials recently came to light when a group of archivists and records managers from the Library of Virginia, led by local records services director Carl Childs, visited Culpeper to survey materials stored in the courthouse near the bell tower. Some voter registration books and court records were transferred to Richmond; among them was this packet. It had been carefully tied with red string years ago, probably by Brown, who added a typed note to the top of the pile: “Misc. papers received from Miss Agnes Morewood.”

How Agnes Morewood (1879–1966), a great-niece of author Herman Melville, came into possession of these Culpeper documents is a mystery. Few Culpeper County records were lost during the Civil War, although some court minute books were missing by the time Margaret Jeffries, a staff member with the Virginia Historical Inventory, visited the courthouse in 1937. A wayward plat book was purchased at a sale during the 1930s and returned to the clerk. Somehow, a bundle of early county records made it all the way to western Massachusetts and back to Virginia, including eleven partial chancery cases and three cases of the Commonwealth of Virginia prosecuting free blacks. The law required any slave freed after May 1, 1806, to leave the state within twelve months of being emancipated or face reenslavement. All of the cases in the packet came from the July 19, 1830, session of the court, and in each case the slaves—Billy, Rachel, and Pompey—were found guilty and sentenced to be jailed and sold back into slavery.

Morewood had traveled to Virginia at least once—she visited Hampton Institute in 1938 with a delegation from Massachusetts to attend celebrations for the school's

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