

THE CIRCUIT COURT RECORDS PRESERVATION PROGRAM HAS AWARDED

649 grants over 27 cycles from February 1992 to May 2005, totaling approximately \$11,018,100

The project types and the number awarded are:

General Preservation	37	\$296,802
Item Conservation	167	1,060,532
Microfilm Reader/Printers	62	801,598
Records Processing	126	2,110,964
Reformatting	169	6,243,999
Security Systems	85	504,205

Awards for 2005B Cycle

Locality	Project Type	Awarded
King William County	Security	14,810.00
Loudon County	Security	11,657.00
Nottoway County	Security	12,808.00
Pittsylvania County	Security	13,794.00
Prince William County	Security	17,795.98
Rockbridge County	Chancery to Digital	522,885.00
Lee County	Paper to Digital	14,000.00
Wise County	Paper to Digital	5,115.00
Wise County	Paper to Digital	4,800.00
Loudon County	Processing	30,742.00
Caroline County	Reader/Printer	10,671.93
New Kent County	Reader/Printer	10,671.93
Accomack County	Item Conservation	10,519.00
Campbell County	Item Conservation	8,322.00
New Kent County	Item Conservation	8,840.00
Pittsylvania County	Item Conservation	4,177.00
Russell County	Item Conservation	7,995.00
Dickenson County	Item Conservation	3,690.00
Total: \$ 713,293.84		

RECORDATUR

“Orphan” Business Records
WHAT ARE THEY GOOD FOR?

ARCHIVES
DISCOVERIES

One of my responsibilities as Local Records Archivist is to identify and catalog the approximately 1,500 business records volumes that are part of the local records collection. These volumes were added to the archival collection over the years as localities transferred their collections of loose papers to the library. Exactly why the volumes were filed in the locality is a more difficult question to answer. It is believed that the bulk of these business records were brought to the courthouse to be used as evidence in suits heard in the local court. After the resolution of the suit the volumes were separated from the loose suit papers, thus making it difficult to establish a link between the two. The volumes essentially have become “orphans.”

For decades these volumes sat in the basements or attics of courthouses gathering dust and being exposed to mold and pests. Since they were transferred to the Library of Virginia they have been sitting on shelves unread, providing little access and no documentation of the valuable information contained within their pages.

In July 2000, I was assigned the task of identifying these “orphan” business records so that catalog records could be created, making them more accessible to Library patrons. I have researched our holdings and prepared a list of business records for each locality. The cataloging is done alphabetically and I am currently working on the volumes from Shenandoah County.

The record types that make up the business records collection include ledgers, journals, account books, day-books, cashbooks, bank draft books, payroll books, hotel registers, memorandum books, and minutes. The first four types listed represent the predominant genres of business records that I have cataloged to date. The numerous businesses responsible for the creation of these records include general stores, banks, individual merchants, tanyards, taverns, physicians, insurance companies, printers, pharmacists, blacksmiths, mills, and farmers’ cooperatives. The records of general stores and banks compose the majority of the business records collection, perhaps due to legal efforts on the part of these businesses to collect unpaid debts of customers.

The amount of information and the style in which it is presented varies depending on the type of record, type of business, and the individual(s) responsible for entering the information. For example, ledgers and journals of general stores contain less information than daybooks. Bank ledgers tend to have more detailed information than those of general stores. A store clerk may keep a thorough record of financial transactions, but his successor may not because of a change in business practice or sheer laziness on the clerk’s part. Despite the myriad types of records, businesses, and practices, there is standard information found in all of these volumes. One can generally find the names of individual customers, date of financial transaction, goods or services transacted, amount owed or paid, and the style of transaction—credit, cash, or barter.

Why not let these “orphans” remain unused on the shelf where they sat for decades? What valuable information can a researcher possibly glean from such records? Granted, there may be little practical history of the business that created these records. From reading these volumes, one may be left without answers to the following important questions: Who owned the business? What was the owner’s business philosophy? How did they relate to their customers? Why did they go into this particular business? When did the business begin? When did it end? How did it end? Despite these obvi-

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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 in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Reader participation is invited.



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DIRECTOR'S CORNER

I'm pleased to share the good news that The Library of Virginia (LVA) has restructured several of its programs to improve services to your offices. Effective April 15, 2005, the LVA merged the Circuit Court Records Preservation Program (CCRPP) with its Local Records Services Branch. This change was one step in an overall evaluation of the Library's organizational structure. A position was created to oversee the new branch and I was fortunate enough to be appointed Local Records Services Director.

First, let me take an opportunity to share a little background information about myself. I hold a B.A. and M.A. in history from James Madison University and have been employed at the LVA since December 1993. My first experience working with court records was processing chancery causes of Scott and Mecklenburg Counties that had been transferred to the archives. Although I have served in a variety of positions at the Library, I always seem to gravitate back to working with local and circuit court records. Since 2000, I have been overseeing the Local Records processing unit and I truly value the importance of these records.

The reorganization consolidated two programs that share a similar function: preserving the archival records of Virginia's circuit courts. We will continue to process and preserve the archival records that have been transferred to the archives for safekeeping. Currently, there are eleven staff members dedicated to this work and providing access to these records housed at the LVA. Additionally, the branch is ready to assist you with any records questions you may have, either by phone, email, or by visiting your office.

The CCRPP portion of Local Records Services will continue to

consult with you on the many records issues you face in your offices. Glenn Smith and Amy Judd will be available to answer your questions concerning grants and I will be working closely with them to evaluate the Library's services to your offices. Along with the grants traditionally funded by the CCRPP, we hope to expand the program to provide additional services. I have met with Paul Garrett, Linda Timmons, and other circuit court clerk representatives of the Virginia Court Clerks' Association to solicit their input and ideas on the program. One of the results of these meetings is the enclosed brochure outlining the services at the LVA provides to your offices. I also look forward to hearing from each of you.

Towards that end, I have enclosed a survey that will help us determine areas of greatest concern in your offices. I hope each of you will take time to complete the survey and to call or email me if you have additional ideas to offer.

I look forward to meeting and working with each of you in the future on the critical records issues that affect all of us. Please let me know how we can better serve you.

—Carl Childs, Director,
Local Records Services
Library of Virginia (804) 692-3739

Circuit Court Records Preservation Program

Grant Applications due
by 5:00 P.M. on

**Tuesday,
March 15, 2006.**

Contact Amy Judd (804/692-3601,
ajudd@lva.lib.va.us) or Glenn Smith
(804/692-3604, gsmith@lva.lib.va.us)
before submitting an application.

The Analyst's Couch by G. Mark Walsh, C.A. Records & Information Analyst, Library of Virginia

The Analyst has looked at the patient, diagnosed a severe condition of *sine spacial majorum* (a major lack of space), and recommends a strenuous regime of schedule implementation. To that end, Records Officers of the Circuit Courts are provided with an annotated version of the series entries from General Schedule 12 that permit destruction. Following this regimen in combination with appropriate use of RM-3 forms (Certificate of Destruction) will lead to a significant recovery.

It is the intention of the Analyst to administer this treatment to the patient on an annual basis. As an example, the first record series entry in GS 12 where the disposition is destruction reads in the annotated version as follows:

Adoptions—Incomplete Files—Series No. 010434

Documents an attempt to change a person's legal rights toward natural parents that is not completed. Records may consist of docket and index, adoption case files and petitions.

Retain 10 years, then destroy (Code of Virginia, Section 17.1-213(B)(7)) in compliance with No. 8 on schedule cover page.

In 2005, files closed in 1994 and previous may be destroyed as indicated.

There are, in total, forty-four series entries in GS 12 that call for eventual destruction of the materials described. The annotated version of GS 12 concerns these series only, and the directional statement given above “In 2005, files closed in....may be destroyed as indicated” is given for each of the 44 series.

An updated version of the annotated GS 12 will be prepared in 2006, giving information as to what may be destroyed in that year. For this year, however, to find out what Circuit Court records may be destroyed, please visit <<http://www.lva.lib.va.us/whatwedo/ccrp/index.htm>>. The full text of GS 12 is available at <http://www.lva.lib.va.us/whatwedo/records/sched_local/gs-12.htm>.

As always, the Analyst for Circuit Court Clerks is available for consultation at (804) 692-3650 or <mwalsh@lva.lib.va.us>.

Orphan ... obvious research limitations, the business records in the Library's collection provide a rich source of research potential regarding the community in which the business was located as well as the individuals with whom they interacted on a regular basis.

If one studies the goods sold by a general store, one can determine the economy that dominated the local community—agricultural, industrial, or commercial (fur, timber, marine, etc.). If business records of a locality stretch over a significant length of time, one can study the economic evolution of that community from commercial to agricultural to industrial. The records also provide practical information about the costs of food, manufactured goods, clothing, and other basic necessities. As a result, researchers can compare and contrast the standard of living of one community, county, or region of the state with another. Bank ledgers and journals record checking accounts, loans, deposits, and investment accounts. Such records can assist researchers in determining the wealth of a community. And, if they extend over a period of decades, a researcher can track periods of economic growth and reduction.

Business records can also be a useful source of genealogical information for experienced researchers. Certainly those researching family history should not consult the business records collection first. Rather, I would direct them to the U.S. Census data as well as vital statistics records initially. But if while searching the census data they happen to find an ancestor living in Charlotte

County in 1850, a knowledgeable genealogist might consider researching the business records of that county for that era. It is possible that an ancestor had an account with the local general store, blacksmith, or tavern. As a consequence, the genealogist might discover additional information, such as names of relatives of a particular ancestor that were previously unknown. From studying ledgers and daybooks of a general store, a genealogist can learn about the wealth of an ancestor by looking to see what he or she purchased and how much was spent. Genealogists also can learn interesting facts about their ancestors such as a favorite beverage or snack, style of dress, types of entertainment or hobbies pursued, etc.

Business records are a tremendous, and mostly untapped, source of information for social historians. They document the lives of average, everyday people. Business records can give us a glimpse of the John and Jane Does of history, forgotten but for their inclusion in these volumes. Historians seeking fresh topics on which to research and write will find the business records collection to be an excellent resource. By cataloging these “orphan” records and presenting the information found within their pages to the public, perhaps researchers will reap the benefits of this rich collection of material rather than letting them simply sit on shelves unread.

—Greg Crawford
Senior Local Records Archivist, Library of Virginia