

Archives News

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In This Issue

Straight to the Source 2015 1

Friends Adopt 1817 Map of Richmond 2

Flora's Plight: A Montgomery County Freedom Suit 3

Friends Honor Peter E. Broadbent 4

16th Annual Slatten Lecture 8

"History is too fragile to be left to chance; only dedicated support can preserve it."

Richard Slatten

Straight to the Source 2015 Twenty-third Annual Spring Conference

The Friends of the Virginia State Archives presented their annual Spring Conference on Friday, March 27, 2015.

In its 23rd year, it is the longest continuous program featuring presentations by the professional staff about the collections at the Library of Virginia. Friends President Conley Edwards welcomed sixty-two participants to this year's program.

This year our presenters gave us tips for using the Library's website and discovering before lesser-known Revolutionary War resources, as well as the progress on the ongoing Chancery Records and Transcribing initiatives.

Session 1 – Webwise: Using the Library of Virginia's Website

Kathy Jordan, Digital Initiatives & Web Services Manager, began the morning with her talk about navigating the Library of Virginia website. Kathy and her group were recently crowned "rising stars" by the Society of Archivists for their work on developing resources and tools for using the Library website. She began by showing the group an example of how the website looked fifteen years ago. By 2005 it was "research-oriented," targeting librarians and educators. In 2009, it received a brand new look and digital content was continuously being added, including Virginia Memory, an online collection of manuscripts, personal papers, photographs, Chancery records, and much, much more. Also included is Virginia Chronicle, a free digitized searchable newspaper database.

The Library website for searching for genealogical resources has been greatly enhanced since its humble beginnings. And this is where Kathy shared her best

practices expertise starting with the Home page.

First she explained the **Search** function (found in the top right area), which when a keyword is entered in the entry box, searches Virginia Memory, the website, the catalog, and the research guides. It will not search names, but will get you to where you want to go for finding those Virginia ancestors.

The **Site Index** (found at the very bottom of the Home page) displays an alphabetical list of all the links in the Library database. Once here, if you click Ctrl-F on your keyboard, the "Find" entry box displays. Type your search item and press

Enter. It will take you to that entry.

We also learned that on the Home page, the **Search the Catalog** link is a good start to begin your search. The tab Full Catalog brings up a lot of information when you enter a keyword. The other tabs—Books and Journals, Archives and Manuscripts, Images and Indexes—allow you to narrow your search and return more specific results. You can access Bible records, journals, maps, digitized military records, and land grants and patents, just to mention a few of the wealth of resources available. New records are continuously being digitized and added, including one wonderful online collection, the Northern Neck Land Grants and Northern Neck Surveys, covering grants issued in the Northern Neck area from 1692 to 1862.

Another helpful link is **Using the Collection**. You can search for documents and records by time period and for genealogy "how to" records. There are several websites that are accessible outside the Library with the use of your Library of Virginia library card that would otherwise require a paid subscription, including Fold3, the military database. The **Virginia Memory** link takes you to some great

(Continued on page 6)



Participants listen intently to presentations by Library staff members at the 23rd annual Straight to the Source program.

Archives News

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Sandra Gioia Treadway

Friends Adopt 1817 Map of Richmond for Conservation

At a recent board meeting, the Friends heard the Library's map archivist, Cassandra Farrell, explain the critical need for conservation treatment of a nineteenth-century map of the City of Richmond. In 1995, the Surveys Division of the Richmond Department of Public Works transferred to the Library several important nineteenth- and twentieth-century maps, plans, and drawings from the city engineer's office. Included in the transfer was a map by Richard Young, a surveyor for the City of Richmond. Young compiled at least three early-nineteenth-century manuscript maps of the city that show streets, land ownership, canal locks, the downtown area, and Capitol Square.

Completed in 1817 by Young, the map described by Farrell has suffered considerable separation and loss; current conservation costs are \$1,800.00. The map needs to be cleaned, repaired, and re-backed with linen cloth. Once the conservation work has been completed, the map will be cataloged and stored safely in a custom folder with a protective overlay. An inkjet print will be created for patron use in the map reading room. Unlike Young's manuscript map of Richmond completed in 1809, this map does not show the "burial ground for negroes" near Shockoe Creek.

The record of Young's time as a surveyor in Richmond is incomplete. He appears in Henrico County records in 1795. He served as surveyor for the city between 1828 and 1832. In addition to the maps mentioned, he produced a map (circa 1822) of the "New Burying Ground," Shockoe Cemetery, the first city-owned municipal burying ground in Richmond. He had secured a contract in 1832 with H. Tanner of Philadelphia to engrave his map of Richmond but died that year.

Young's works illustrate and document nineteenth-century Richmond at a time of growth. You can participate in the preservation of this important map by contributing to its conservation with a donation to the Young Map Fund. Send contributions to the Friends at PO Box 4804, Richmond, VA 23220. Mark your check "Young Map Fund."



Library of Virginia staff Leslie Courtis (left), Cassandra Farrell (center), and Audrey McElhinney (right) examine the 1817 map of Richmond by Richard Young before it is sent for conservation treatment.
(Image: Library of Virginia)

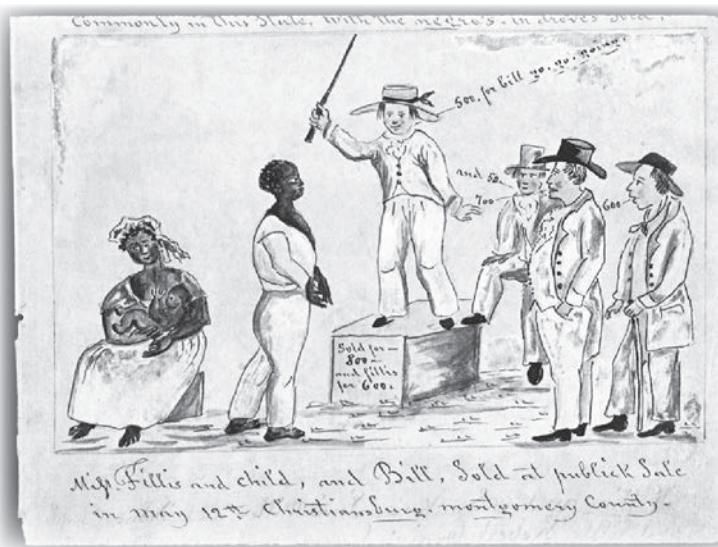


Flora's Plight: A Montgomery County Freedom Suit

Women had more to lose in the system of slavery. Saying this is not in any way meant to downplay the pernicious effects of slavery on the lives of men. At least in the slave system of the U.S. South, however, women ensnared within slavery saw their children and, if they lived long enough, their grandchildren caught in a chain of matrilineal descent predicated on the bondage status of the mother. Conversely, if one could prove that a woman was unjustly or illegally forced into slavery, she and her descendants had much to gain. The story of Flora and her daughters, Cena and Unis, makes public the double bind experienced by female slaves in the antebellum South. Their story also reveals the ongoing claims to freedom made by Flora and her family over sixty years, across three states, and throughout multiple counties in Virginia.

Flora, an African American later held as a slave in Montgomery County, Virginia, was born in the late 1750s in either Massachusetts or Connecticut. In the late 1770s Flora married "Exeter, a Negro man of Southwick," Massachusetts, a marriage recorded by the Reverend John Theodore Graham on April 26, 1781. Although the couple was legally married and had two or three children, they lived apart—literally in separate states. Exeter, a free man, remained in Southwick and Flora lived just over the border in Suffield, Connecticut, at the home of her master. At the time of her marriage, Flora was listed as a "servant" to Benjamin Scott, but later in 1781 Scott sold Flora to Oliver Hanchett, a former Revolutionary War officer, for £30. This sale provoked Flora to run away—from her master to her husband. When Hanchett pursued Flora and forced her to return to Suffield, Exeter sued for his wife's freedom, the theft of her clothing, and £600 in damages suffered for the loss of her company. Hanchett's response was to declare that he was simply asserting his right to retrieve his property because his right of ownership trumped Exeter's right to his wife's company. Initially and significantly, the jury of the lower court in Massachusetts agreed with the plaintiff in *Exeter, a Negro vs. Oliver Hanchett* (Massachusetts, 1783), by finding Hanchett guilty and awarding Exeter damages (though these were greatly reduced to £65 and court costs). This judgment, however, was overturned on an appeal to the superior court of Massachusetts.

Exeter's loss in court culminated in a much-larger loss, that of his wife and children. He told his Massachusetts neighbor that Hanchett "had taken her [Flora] away and he did not know where she went. He could not find her." He did not stop looking; later depositions gathered



"Miss Fillis and child, and Bill, Sold at publick Sale," by Lewis Miller.
(Image: Library of Virginia)

a great deal."

Thus in the very year in which the *Quock Walker* case freed slaves throughout the state of Massachusetts, Flora found herself bound to a master in Connecticut. Oliver Hanchett rid himself of Flora quickly; by 1784 she and her two young daughters (Cena/Caena and Rose, subsequently known by the name Unis or Eunice) had traveled to New York and later that same year appeared in Virginia. Her new, debt-ridden master, James Stephens, hoped to make a fresh start for his own family in Virginia. Stephens and his family traveled with James Simpkins, who had facilitated Flora's purchase in New York and who was also implicated in the sale of her family in Virginia. The 1784 date was crucial as it reinforced claims made by Flora and her descendants that she had been brought into the state in violation of the 1778 Slave Nonimportation Act. This legislation made it illegal to import slaves "by sea or land" into the state with the intention of selling or reselling the slave. Slave owners who wished to move to Virginia were permitted to retain their slaves but also had to swear an oath within ten days of their arrival in the state that they had not imported their slaves for the purpose of sale. Violation of this law was punishable by forfeiture of the slave, a £1,000 fine for the person importing the slave, and a £500 fine for "every person selling or buying such slaves" (*Hening's Statutes*, 9:471–472). Presumably James Stephens took the oath regarding his ownership of the slaves (and his agreement not to sell) as mandated by state law, but by 1785 he had sold Flora and her daughters to James Charlton. Both men stood to lose a great deal if found guilty of violating the nonimportation act.

The statute also established "that every slave imported into this commonwealth contrary to the true intent and meaning of this act, shall, upon such importation become free." While it's unclear whether Flora knew about this possible avenue to freedom, she clearly felt that

for the Virginia cases offered ample evidence that Exeter continued to speak openly about his wife's kidnapping; his search for her led him as far as New York. In an 1849 deposition, neighbor Submit King said Exeter spoke "often about how they came and stole his wife Flora out of the bed in the dead of the night. He would weep and appear to feel very bad, and said that he clung to her ... and then they put her into the wagon and drove off with her, and he said as far as he could hear she was hallooing and begging of him to come and help her. I heard him tell this a number of times and he would weep and appear to feel

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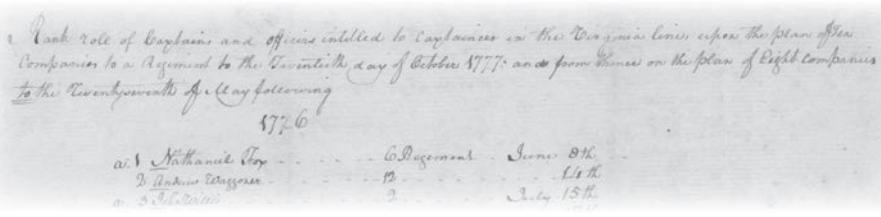
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Friends Honor Peter E. Broadbent as Chairman of Library of Virginia Board

Last year, the president of the Friends of the Virginia State Archives announced that the group would honor Peter E. Broadbent, Jr., for his service as chairman of the Library of Virginia board for 2014–2015, and for his many years of service as a member of the board of the Friends, with a donation of \$1,000 to support conservation of three items from the archival collection. The items selected for conservation were the Order Book of the First Brigade of Virginia Militia of Cumberland County (1814), a manuscript letter of Thomas Ludwell Lee who was a delegate to the Fifth Virginia Convention (1776), and a Rank Roll of Officers of the Virginia Line kept by Lt. Col. John Cropper, Jr. (1776–1778).

The Order Book of the First Brigade details brigade and general orders for troops in War of 1812 service and includes information about patrols, drills, guard details, troop discharges, officer appointments and retirements, orders to furnish various reports, usually on supplies, and orders for various persons to report to various people and places. Other information recorded includes details of regimental courts convened for courts-martial for offenses including insubordination, cursing an officer, striking another soldier with a sword, taking men into battle unarmed, sleeping on watch, being absent without leave, and being drunk while in command. Sentences and punishments are recorded for the courts-martial.



*A portion of the Rank Roll of Officers of the Virginia Line kept by Lt. Col. John Cropper, Jr.
(Image: Library of Virginia)*

Thomas Ludwell Lee represented Stafford County in the Fifth Virginia Convention. He writes to his brother Richard Henry Lee, Virginia delegate to the Continental Congress, concerning the passage of resolves by Virginia calling for independence. Thomas Lee informs his brother on the scene at the Capitol during the vote. He also comments on the potential form of government for the new nation.

The Rank Roll of Officers of the Virginia Line written by Lt. Col. John Cropper, Jr., consists of rank rolls of captains and field officers in the Virginia Line during the Revolution. The ranking was based on length of service, and the date of appointment/promotion is included.

Conservation performed on the items includes delamination, cleaning, mending, repairing, resewing, refurbishing of boards, and microfilming of the Order Book.



her rights had been violated well before 1785. We can trace the second half of her story from the freedom suits initiated by her children and grandchildren in Montgomery County in 1826 (*Unis alias Eunice, et al. vs. Adms of James Charlton, et al.; Phillis et al. vs. Adms of James Charlton, et al.; Randall vs. John Swope; and Rhoda Ann vs. Adms of William Currin* (1853-011).

According to Henry Carty of Montgomery County, Flora attempted to assert her freedom in 1787. Carty learned of Flora's efforts from none other than James Charlton himself. In an 1832 deposition Carty claimed that Charlton knew that Flora had visited a local justice of the peace (Howard) for a warrant of freedom. While this visit did not result in a warrant, Charlton said, "If ever she went there again on that errant [sic] he would correct her for it." Carty also admitted that Flora "told me at different times that if she had her just rights she would be a free woman" and she asked him to "write her a letter ... to send back where she came from to obtain information from the people there concerning her freedom." Carty refused to assist her but later found himself in the unusual position of having to describe his actions to one of Flora's descendants. In an 1840 deposition from *Unis alias Eunice, et al. vs. Adms of James Charlton, et al.* (1851-011), one of the plaintiffs directly questioned Henry Carty:

Q: How long was my Grandmother [Flora] in the possession of James Charlton before you hear of her claiming to be free?

A: In less than two years, after she came into the possession of James Charlton—she stated th[at] she had been made a slave, in this county, and requested me to write back to her former place of residence and ascertain whether she was not entitled to her freedom.

Other residents of Montgomery County knew Flora and her history as well. Elijah Meacham's deposition indicated that he'd known Flora in Hartford, Connecticut, where she was owned by Benjamin Scott, and that he next saw Flora in 1791 at James Charlton's farm in Montgomery County. Meacham said, "He saw Flora the mother of the plaintiff tied to the bedposts. I told him [James Charlton] that I heard that he was going to send the negroes away. He said no that he never had talked of runing [sic] them, but James Simpkins said he would run them to Hell before they should get their freedom. James Charlton said the damn old bitch had been to Ezekiel Howard Esq. to get a warrant for her freedom, that Howard did not grant it, and he hoped no magistrate ever would." Meacham's evidence indicates that both Charlton and Simpkins knew what the financial cost to them would be should Flora be granted her petition for freedom. As a seller Simpkins could be penalized with a £1,000 fine and Charlton, the purchaser, could be fined £500. Clearly Charlton had considered the implications of these punishments, as he told Henry Carty in 1791 that it "would

not hurt him so bad, but it would ruin James Simpkins, and he did not want to do that."

Flora continued to live with the Charltons, eventually moving to the Seven Mile Tree home built by James Charlton. While there is no further evidence that Flora was able to pursue a freedom suit prior to her death, her narrative served

as the basis for suits filed by her daughters and their children. James Charlton's death in 1825 probably served as the trigger for this series of chancery suits, as Cena and Unis contemplated the possibility that their own families might be broken up and sold away. An 1825 appraisement of James Charlton's estate indicates that he claimed twenty-one slaves, at least twelve of whom petitioned for freedom. The size and value of Flora's family had

increased since her 1784 arrival in Virginia; by 1825 they were worth more than \$3,000 dollars.

The series of freedom suits initiated in 1826 would not be resolved until 1853. Cena and Unis sued for their own freedom and by extension that of their children and grandchildren: Andrew, Reuben, Julius, William, Helen, Mary, Tarlton, Matilda, James, and Flora. All of these individuals were designated paupers and represented by counsel. In addition to claiming that Flora had been brought into the state in violation of the nonimportation law, attorneys acting on behalf of the petitioners also sought to establish that Flora had been a free person in Massachusetts when her first two children were born. The cases dragged on for years and across multiple counties; having been heard twice in Montgomery County with no resolution, the cases proceeded to Smyth, Giles, Roanoke, and Rockbridge Counties. Depositions for the case were taken in Indiana and Connecticut and attorneys for both the plaintiffs and defendants traveled to Connecticut to gather evidence. An 1842 ad from the *Connecticut Courant* indicates the extent of their efforts. Friends and neighbors of Exeter and Flora, many by then over the age of seventy-five, gathered to offer information. Even Sylvester Graham (of graham cracker fame) was called on to offer testimony; he verified his father's handwriting that recorded Flora's marriage to Exeter. Finally, in 1842 a jury ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, declaring Cena, Unis, and their sons free, with damages set at one cent. Their victory was extolled in the *Liberator*, which reported that the case had led to the emancipation of forty-five slaves.

Victory was short-lived; in July 1847, the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals overturned the Circuit Court judgment and ordered a new trial. By the 1840s laws regarding manumission had changed again. Flora's family increasingly faced procedural roadblocks that limited the type and scope of testimony that petitioners could submit on their behalf. New rules prevented the use of evidence designated as "hearsay" despite, or perhaps because of, the fact that this evidence was pivotal to establish a petitioner's narrative of kinship, movement, and sale.

(Continued on page 7)

links—current Library Blogs, including Fit to Print (newspapers), Multiple Exposure (online photo collections), Out of the Box (Archives), a link to the Transcribe feature (more about that in the last session of the day), and more digital collections. Here you can access Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Instagram.

Session 2 – Lesser-Known Sources for Virginia Revolutionary War Research

Minor Weisiger, Coordinator of Archives Reference Services, presented this session—“Lesser-Known Sources for Virginia Revolutionary War Research.” Revolutionary topics are always popular and Minor did not fail to provide the group with more ways to dig deeper.

He began with some things to remember about Virginia during that time period. Even though Virginia was very large with many Revolutionary soldiers, not everyone served. There were Tories (Loyalists) residing in Virginia and, of course, we all know records were lost over time. And we need to remember that records were not created for genealogists, but for other reasons depending on what role the ancestor played in the war. Those records were some of the types Minor talked about.

To understand these lesser-known records, we need to understand the structure of the military during the Revolutionary War. There were several categories of soldiers. The Continental Line served under General George Washington, including artillery, cavalry, and independents. The Virginia State Line consisted of those soldiers and naval personnel who stayed in Virginia. The militia contained those who served within the county; each county had its own militia. All free males between 16 and 50 years old generally would have served in the militia. Fewer militia records than Continental records were created. Some Virginia residents could have performed a public service, such as by providing supplies. These all resulted in records.

For the Continental and State Line records, you can search for compiled service records, payrolls, pension, and bounty land warrant applications, for your ancestor. The list of these records and many more can be found on microfilm at the Library of Virginia. With your Library of Virginia library card, however, you can log in and access Fold3, the National Archives’ online database and HeritageQuest to view Revolutionary War records. To encourage enlistment, individuals were offered bounty land and pensions, creating claims, rejected claims, and pensions. Again, these actions created records.

The Legislative Petitions Database is online with digital images and is searchable. Citizens petitioned the government for all kinds of reasons so it contains records from the Revolutionary War to the

Civil War; all counties are included and not just war-related requests. It includes divorces, manumission of slaves, maps, wills, deeds, and much more. To get to the database, on the Home page, click Virginia Memory. And then click on the Digital Collections link; next click Collections A to Z, and locate the database in the list. Just enter a name in the Keyword entry box and click Search. With luck you may find a document relating to your ancestor.

Some other resources are the George Rogers Clark Papers and the Draper Manuscripts, which are available on microfilm. Both contain many references to Revolutionary War events and people. In the Private Papers Collection, you will find the Latham Papers, James Wood Papers, and Byrd Samuels Papers, rarely used but possibly useful.

Some lesser-known sources may not be indexed and may or may not have names of interest. When soldiers submitted claims for the loss of property or wanted reimbursement for supplies, a record was created, even if the claim was rejected. Minor wanted us to remember that it took a large administrative structure to run a war. Whenever something was petitioned for or ordered (e.g., supplies), the result was a record.

Session 3 – A Story in Every Box

Sarah Nerney, Senior Local Records Archivist, related her experience processing the Montgomery County/Fincastle Chancery records, aptly entitled “A Story in Every Box,” for each chancery record is indeed a story. The Library received a grant of \$80,000 and Sarah was sent to Montgomery County for two years to prepare the documents for digitizing, which will begin in January 2016. During her time there, she went through all the documents—thousands of pieces of paper and file cabinets filled with bundles and bundles of more papers. She oversaw the flattening of each one, properly identified what was in each paper, and then indexed it. Fortunately Montgomery County had a special room for storing these important historical records. It was temperature- and access-controlled.

A chancery case was one that was administered by a judge, without a jury. It was a case that would be based on fairness and equity. These cases dealt with estate disputes, business disputes, the resolution of land disputes, and divorces, to name a few. These cases, or suits, are especially useful for genealogists. They often have women’s maiden names, birth and death dates of relatives, children and children’s husbands and wives. A suit could contain a bill, and then the decrees (actions), depositions, reports, plats, and maps.

To locate the Chancery records, enter chancery in the Search box on the Home page, and then select Search the Index. You can search by any of the following: name, plaintiff, defendant, and/or county.

Session 4 –

Crowdsourcing Transcriptions@Library of Virginia

Sonya Coleman, Digital Collections Specialist, presented the fourth session on transcribing at the Library. She talked about how important it is for volunteers to participate in this effort. “Crowdsourcing” allows many people to contribute. Everyone can participate by entering the contents of documents. Just type what you see and don’t try to correct spelling or punctuation. No need to worry, there are several layers of review before a transcription is uploaded to the website. At the time of the Straight to the Source lecture, more than 4,000 pages had been transcribed, approved, and uploaded. There are several projects in the works. CW150 (Civil War 150 Legacy Project) is a multiyear initiative that was enacted to provide access to diaries, letters, and manuscripts of Civil War-era content. The African American Narrative Project contains the stories of African Americans, enslaved and free, that have not yet been told. To start adding to this project, go to the Library website and select Virginia Memory or go to www.virginiamemory.com/transcribe. You too can make a contribution by helping with this transcribing effort.

Comments about the program this year were all positive. The Friends are especially appreciative of the staff’s willingness to participate each year in Straight to the Source when there are increasing demands on the staff members’ time. Each individual exhibits the professionalism and dedication that makes the staff at LVA unique.

*Catherine Southworth
Friends of the Archives Board Member*



Flora’s Plight (continued from page 5)

The final trial took place in 1853 with all four cases heard together in Montgomery County. The court ruled in favor of the Charlton estate. Although the plaintiffs appealed, the state’s supreme court affirmed the decision in 1855. Despite tenacious efforts by Flora, her daughters, and even her namesake granddaughter, the family would not be legally freed until after the Civil War.

It is easy to lose sight of the individuals caught up in the slave system when your focus is on the institution of slavery itself. Flora’s story, along with the actions and narrative of her children and grandchildren, enables us to see not only the plight of slaves but also the ways in which individuals worked to define and free themselves. Although ultimately their case was denied on appeal, Flora’s family could **geographically** establish her movements from Virginia to New York to Connecticut and Massachusetts and they were

able **genealogically** to trace their origin to the marriage of Flora and Exeter. In so doing they established and maintained a remarkable claim to freedom that resonates today.

The Montgomery County chancery records are currently being processed and indexed as part of a two-year grant program funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC). The project is a pilot program coordinated by the Library of Virginia’s Local Records Branch and the Montgomery County Circuit Court Clerk’s Office.

Regan Shelton, Local Records Contract Archivist

Regan Shelton is a graduate of Radford University and Virginia Tech and is an adjunct instructor in Tech’s History Department. Her areas of interest include southern history, women’s history, and the history of Appalachia.



Slatten Lecture 2015 ♦ September 12, 2015

Annual Slatten Lecture Features Victor S. Dunn

The Friends of the Virginia State Archives present the annual Richard Slatten Lecture as part of its annual meeting to be held on Saturday, September 12, 2015, at the Library of Virginia, 800 East Broad Street, Richmond, VA, with registration commencing at 8:30 A.M. Victor S. "Vic" Dunn, CG, will deliver four lectures focusing on laws of Virginia as they apply to inheritance, women, children, aliens and servants and genealogical problem-solving using tax records and indirect evidence.

Vic Dunn has been a Board Certified Genealogist since 1999. He is the coordinator and instructor of the Virginia Research Track at the Institute of Genealogy and Historical Research at Samford University in Birmingham, AL, and specializes in Virginia and eastern West Virginia records with an emphasis on brick-wall solutions.

The day begins with "Women, Children, Aliens and Servants: The Law in Early Virginia." Virginia's laws had an impact on these individuals and caused the creation of unique records. Learn how to interpret the laws and locate related records.

"The Law of the Land: Inheritance in Early Virginia" discusses laws of inheritance and how they affected testate and intestate inheritance from the founding of Jamestown through 1800. The concepts of primogeniture and entailment are explained.

"Solving Problems with Tax Records" discusses the types of tax records

surviving from the colonial period through the nineteenth century. Learn how to access and interpret often-neglected genealogical gems to extend your ancestral lines.

"Beating the Odds: Using Indirect Evidence in Problem Solving" demonstrates that when direct evidence is not forthcoming or is questionable, indirect evidence may solve troublesome problems. A variety of Virginia research examples will be discussed.

The cost of the program is \$35 for members of the Friends and includes a box lunch. The cost for non-members is \$50 and includes a box lunch. To receive registration information by e-mail, send a request to SlattenLecture2015@gmail.com or call 804-741-0136. The registration deadline is September 4, 2015.

Membership Categories

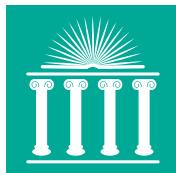
Individual Membership

One Year \$35 • Two Years \$65 • Three Years \$90

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*Share this newsletter with fellow researchers
and ask them to join the Friends in 2015.*



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