

Calendar of Events:

- Sept. 11 **Horses and Loudoun County.** 1-3 pm. Donna Rogers, speaker.
- Sept. 19 **Restoring America's Treasures - Dodona Manor.** 1-3 pm. Anne Horstman, speaker.
- Sept. 25 **Planning for Successful Research in Northern Virginia.** 10 am-3 pm. Marty Hiatt, CGRS, speaker. Pre-registration required: 703-737-7195.
- Oct. 4 **Clerk's Office Tour - Historical Records.** 7-9 pm. Led by John Fishback. Meet at Balch Library at 6:45 pm.
- Oct. 10 **African American Horsemanship in Loudoun County.** 1:30-3:30 pm. BHC Roundtable Discussion. Banneker Elementary School, Middleburg. For more information, contact TBL: 703-737-7195.
- Oct. 16 **Deed Research.** 1-3 pm. Wynne Saffer, lecturer.
- Oct. 24 **Appraisal Fair - Balch Antiques Roadshow.** 1-3 pm. Willis Van Devanter, appraiser. The cost is \$5.00 per item, all proceeds to the Thomas Balch Library. Printed materials only. Cash or check only.
- Oct. 30 **Census Records.** 1-4 pm. LaVonne Markham and Mary Fishback, lecturers.
- Dec. 5 **Preserving the White House.** 1-3 pm. Neil Horstman, speaker.
- Dec. 18 **Military Research - War of 1812.** 10-12 noon. James Lucier, speaking on James Monroe, and at 1-3pm. Craig Scott, CGRS, speaking on Military Research.

Friends of the Thomas Balch Library Annual Meeting - November 7, 2004 - 2:00 PM

Unless noted, all events are held at the Thomas Balch Library, 208 W. Market Street, Leesburg, VA 703-737-7195



The Thomas Balch **Chronicle**

Friends of the
Thomas Balch
Library
P. O. Box 2184
Leesburg, VA 20177



Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Inc.

P.O. Box 2184,
Leesburg, VA 20177

E-Mail:
info@balchfriends.org

Website:
www.balchfriends.org

Board of Directors: Paul Bice, *President*;
Jane Bogle; Terri Coleman; Phyllis Cook-Taylor,
Corresponding Secretary; Tom Crutchfield,
Treasurer; Doug Foard; Annie L. Hulen, *Vice-*
president; Carol Kupchik; Lewis Leigh; Leland
Mahan; Fred Morefield; Peggy Roberts; Reginald
Simms; Pauline Singletary; Rachel Thompson;
Sallie Vaaler, *Recording Secretary*; Susan Webber,
Assistant-treasurer.

Thomas Balch Library

208 West Market Street
Leesburg, Virginia 20176

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balchlib@leesburgva.gov

Website:
www.leesburgva.org

Hours:
Mon., Thurs & Fri. 10-5
Tues. 10-8 • Wed. 2-8
Sat. 11-4 • Sun. 1-5

**Advisory Commission for
The Thomas Balch Library
The Town of Leesburg, Virginia**

Commission Members:

Martha Schonberger, *Chairman*
Francis Fera, *Vice Chairman*
Thomas H. Durand
Shirley McClain Hall
Jim Hershman
Jim Roberts
Lou Etta Watkins
Jim Clem, *Representative,*
Board of Supervisors
Kelly Burk, *Representative, Leesburg*
Town Council
Alexandra S. Gressitt, *Secretary and*
Library Manager

Letter from the President

As this Summer draws to a close, we all are looking forward to the wonderful series of programs organized by the Library. One highlight will be the return of well-known appraiser Willis Van Deventer conducting the very popular *Balch Library Antiques Roadshow*. The Friends' Black History Committee is presenting a roundtable program on the African Americans and the horse industry of Loudoun County.

Our Annual Meeting and Election of Directors will be held at Balch Library on Sunday, November 7 at 2:00 PM. The Honorable Kristen Umstadd, Mayor of the Town of Leesburg, will formally introduce Alexandra S. Gressitt to the community. Ms. Gressitt will comment on the changes made during her first months as Library Manager as well as on her personal vision for the future of the Thomas Balch Library.

Changes within the Town Council, thus entailed changes within the Balch Advisory Commission. We will miss the leadership and wisdom of two long-time supporters of the Balch Library: Joan Rokus and Jim Lucier. Both were actively involved with the Library long before its ownership transfer

to the Town in 1995. Joan Rokus began as the Board of Supervisors representative to the Commission and later became a commissioner in her own right. Jim Lucier, appointed by the Town Council to serve on the first Advisory Commission, previously served as its chairman. The Friends look forward to working with the new commission members, Tom Durand and Shirley Hall, and Council representative, Kelly Burke.

I encourage each of you to take a moment to drop by the Thomas Balch Library. We invite you to become better acquainted with the building's architectural perfection, the gardens, and the tremendous amount of resource materials and artwork contained within its walls. Enclosed with this issue of *The Chronicle* are copies of our brand new brochures, explaining some of the ways in which you may become involved with supporting this institution. I urge you to share them with your friends and neighbors. I hope to see you at our annual meeting on November 7, 2004.

Paul Bice, President

Letter from the Library Manager

Filling a part time vacancy, we recently welcomed Marsha Barg-Karp as a new staff member. She has a BFA with teaching certification from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and had previously held graphic arts positions and worked with libraries at Strayer University and the Loudoun County Public Library.

Balch continues to be the recipient of many fine donations. Two such recent acquisitions are photographs of the Leesburg Airport from Stanley Caulkins and the records of the Women's Club of Loudoun, Inc.

Thanks to a grant from the Loudoun Library Foundation we were able to purchase the following microfilm: Loudoun Times Mirror 1970-74, 2003; Loudoun County Records of Free Negroes 1844-1861; Loudoun County Naturalizations 1908-1910; Loudoun County Marriages 1871-1895 & 1886-1914; Loudoun County Guardian Books Vols. A-H 1759-1904; and Northern Neck Land Grants H -Z 1751-1801; A2-G2 1802-1862 and Surveys 1-6 (1786-1809) and A-E (1810-1854). The microfilm is available for research use.

The Friends have continued to demonstrate support for the Balch by underwriting the cost of computer upgrades. These upgrades along with professional literature

and preservation supplies purchased earlier in the year enable Balch Library to continue providing quality service.

The Town of Leesburg recently mounted a new website. Working with it on a very short schedule we were able to revise our website content and add new links. Visitors are now able to link directly from our website to various databases. We are currently investigating ways to provide direct access to catalogue records of our ninety plus manuscript collections currently in the National Union Catalogue of Manuscript Collections (NUCMC). These records are currently accessible only through the Library of Congress website.

The Thomas Balch Library Fall lecture schedule has been set with many wonderful and exciting programs. These include talks horses in Loudoun County, preservation and restoration of historic sites, genealogical research, a tour of the Loudoun County Clerk's Office, an appraisal fair and a pair of talks on the War of 1812 and military research. For additional information see the Calendar of Events on page 4 or call 703-737-7195. There is a bit of something for everyone here and we look forward to seeing you.

Alexandra S. Gressitt, Library Manager

Friends of the Thomas Balch Library Annual Meeting

November 7, 2004
2-4 pm

Thomas Balch Library

Please join us to hear about your organization and its workings.

Guest Speakers:

The Honorable Mayor

Kristen C. Umstadd
and

Library Manager

Alexandra S. Gressitt

Learn about future plans for your library and ways you can help in its continuing success in becoming the premier history and genealogical institution in Northern Virginia.

A Reminder to Friends of the Thomas Balch Library:

Be certain to renew your Friends' membership. It is truly an investment in the future; by contributing to the preservation of our past, you ensure that this information is available to the generations to come. Use this form to enlist your friends, now.

Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Inc. invite you to join us!

Yes! I wish to join the Friends and play an important role in supporting the collections and programs of the Thomas Balch Library.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____

Individual	\$ 20.00
Family	\$ 25.00
Student/Senior	\$ 15.00
Business/ Professional	\$ 35.00
Patron	\$ 50.00
Sustaining	\$ 100.00
Benefactor	\$ 250.00

Please forward with your check to:

**Friends of the
Thomas Balch Library, Inc
P.O. Box 2184 Leesburg, VA 20177**

Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Inc. is a 501(c)3 corporation

A Glimpse into the History of African Americans, Phase II

At the Friends website you will soon see additions to *A Glimpse into the History of African Americans in Loudoun County*, a documents-based project which was launched in late February. Whereas the first phase at this site focused on the institution of slavery, reconstruction, and the early efforts of free blacks in Loudoun to build economic and social stability after emancipation, the next phase centers on a period in the late 1930s when black citizens of the County pressed the school board and board of supervisors for better educational opportunities for their children.

Until Douglass High School was built in 1941, Loudoun County black students had very limited access to a high school education. The only black secondary school in Leesburg was the Loudoun County Training School housed on the second floor of an unsafe, antiquated building on Union Street. The curriculum offered at the school was sparse, lacking many standard academic courses, including the laboratory sciences. The school was not state-accredited, so parents who wanted their children to attend college had to send them to credentialed boarding schools in Manassas or Washington, D.C. Although some bus service was offered within the town, many black students had no transportation to school.

For a long time black parent-teacher associations had worked to improve conditions in their respective schools. In 1938, the African American supervisor of elementary schools, Gertrude Alexander, suggested that all of these parent-teacher associations come together and work under the umbrella organization known as the County-Wide League. According to local historian Elaine Thompson, "Their most pressing concerns were to get the county to provide school bus transportation and to build an accredited high school. These requests were brought before the Loudoun County School Board, which routinely listened to the complaints of the community and made idle promises or gave excuses, but rarely took any action."

One strategy used by the County-Wide League to move things along was to raise enough money to purchase land upon which a black secondary school could be built. This they accomplished in 1939. The League also sought the help of

Charles Hamilton Houston, a brilliant Harvard Law School graduate, whom Walter White of the NAACP had recruited in 1935 to establish a legal department for the organization in Washington. In this capacity, Mr. Houston agreed to provide legal assistance to the County-Wide League, and represented the group at county meetings as they sought needed changes. During this time, at Houston's suggestion, a Loudoun County branch of the NAACP was formed. As Ms. Thompson notes: "A flurry of activity ensued. Inquiries were made, records examined, petitions presented, and the local NAACP received its charter." In the end, and in response to the activism of both the League and the local NAACP chapter, the School Board agreed to build an accredited high school, and to provide county-wide transportation for black students.

The documents presented at this new segment of *Glimpse* cover this "flurry of activity," and include a set of remarkable letters. A few years ago Betty Morefield and Elaine Thompson, whose interest in African American history is well known, went to the Howard University Spingarn Research Center in Washington and searched primary documents about Houston vis-à-vis Loudoun County. There they discovered correspondence between him and County-Wide President, John Wanzer, other members of the League, and Loudoun's school superintendent. These letters reveal in rich detail the complexity of the issues relating to efforts on the part of African American citizens in the community to achieve quality education for their children. With permission from the Spingarn Research Center we are able to include fifteen of these letters at the site. Other featured documents include newspaper articles related to this story, the deed of sale that secured the land upon which Douglass High School was built, along with photographs of the school. Visitors to the website will also be able to read excerpts from *The Essence of a People* about key participants in this activist effort, including John Wanzer, Marie Medley-Howard, Elizabeth Johnson Quisenbury, Willard Clark, Sr., and William McKinley Jackson. As Elaine Thompson said of these leaders: "It took more than a little courage to live in Loudoun County during the time when these honorees were paving the

New & Renewing Members

Allen County Public Library
Robert E. Ash
Mrs. James (Janet) Bartlett
Jinsie S. Bingham
A.D. & Jane Bogle
Mildred L. Bowers
Warren & Anne Braham
Alice H. Calhoun
Phyllis Cook-Taylor
Dr. Stanley K. Dickinson
Maurice B.K. Edmead
Connie Fletcher
Douglas Foard
Robert & M. Carol Gallagher
(In Memory of Thomas Jacobs)
Bill & Vicki Gallant
Jean W. Granger
Rebecca W. Groff
Dr. John T. Hall
Shirley McClain Hall
Mary W. Harris
Margaret E. Hopkins
M. Ann Jenkins
Mary B. Lightner
Mr. & Mrs. James P. Lucier
Joe & Bobby May
Elizabeth L. McNair
Mr. & Mrs. E. Lawrence Moison
Fred & Betty Morefield
Ann W. Munsey
Rosa A. Raneri
Calvin & Mary Jean Reynolds
Carolyn & Samuel Rogers, Jr.
Joan G. Rokus
Bret E. Russell
Wynne C. Saffer
Robert & Sherry Sanabria
Pauline S. Singletary
Mrs. Thomas E. Taylor
Richard & Sallie Vaaler, Jr.
Patricia G. Ward

way for those who followed."

These documents, then, clearly support the *Glimpse* "Essential Understanding" that "By the mid-1930s, certain activist African American organizations were stepping up efforts to ensure that the rights described in the U.S. Constitution were realized." With this phase of the site completed, we will move on to the 1960s where the central issue was the full desegregation not only of Loudoun County Schools, but of all public facilities. This fall, with school in session, we will meet with department chairs and team leaders in Loudoun County to make sure they are aware of this valuable resource for their classrooms.

Rachel Y. Thompson



The Thomas Balch Chronicle

The Newsletter of Friends of the Thomas Balch Library of the Town of Leesburg, Virginia
A Library for History and Genealogy

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1922-2004

Sensing the Census

At Thomas Balch Library, patrons have access to microfilm containing the entire Virginia (Federal) census 1790 - 1930 (except for those years where originals were burned, such as 1790 & 1800 Loudoun County Census, and the entire U.S. census for 1890). We also have a few neighboring Maryland counties for census years 1820 through 1880. Staff can direct patrons in finding the indexes for each census year, as the census itself is not in alphabetical order by personal names. Then staff can teach them to use the microfilm reader/printer to view and print the desired pages, and interpret the data on the census page itself. Remember, access to the census is restricted for privacy reasons for seventy-two years, so we have another eight years until the census of 1940 is available.

For the fastest, easiest way to access the census, nothing can equal the joy of having the entire U.S. census online. This is possible through subscriptions to genealogical websites that Thomas Balch Library and others have provided for patrons to use at no charge. All years of all states that have not been lost are indexed by a person's name and then linked to the digital images of the census page itself.

There currently is no one particular website which has completely indexed all the census years, so we have access to three different websites to cover all years. We have AncestryPlus, the library version of Ancestry.com, also available at all Loudoun County Public Library branches. We also provide access to Genealogy.com. The third website (HeritageQuest) is available for patrons from their home computers using their Loudoun County Public Library card number.

It is important to remember that our ancestors did not write down this information themselves. This was done by a census enumerator, paid and appointed locally, going up and down the roads on foot, horseback, and later by car, stopping at

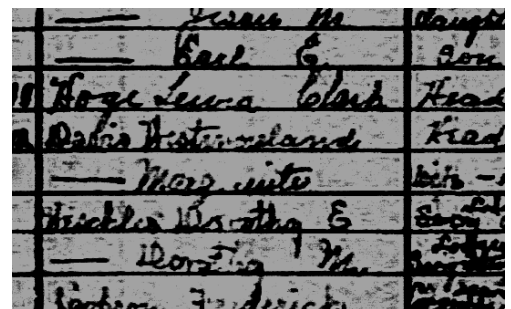
each residence, asking questions of whom ever answered the door, then writing the answers in cursive – many times illegibly – with the spellings for names being however the enumerator thought they should be spelled. Many times the person answering the questions for the enumerator would be a servant in the household, an old aunt, or perhaps young children, or a visiting mother-in-law. Therefore, answers were not always correct. But if you look at each year of the census you will be able to compile a picture of that household by averaging the answers.

It is helpful to have the spirit and mindset of a private detective to be able to find names in the census. For instance, while helping a patron look for an ancestor whose last name was "Ink", it took some time to realize that whomever had indexed the census for that year for this particular website had interpreted the handwriting for that surname as "Luc". We found it only because he had a slightly less common first name and these powerful search engines can search by first name only, or age, or birthplace. It can be fun, and helps create many an "A-ha!" moment.

Tracing our ancestors through each ten years' census can give us a slice of life at that exact time in their lives. For instance, the 1930 census asked who owned a radio set – not exactly vital information, but a small peek into the household then. Other census years give information about the value of their real estate holdings, whether they own or rent their home, first or second marriage, how long married, how many children a wife has given birth to and how many still are living, year of arrival in America, and whether naturalized citizen or alien. 1850 was an important year as women and children were finally listed by name in addition to the head of the household. 1880 was the year that people were asked the birthplace of each parent as well as their own birthplace.

As indexers in other states are not famil-

iar with local surnames, it is important to remember that locally indexed censuses have greater value over those done elsewhere. At Thomas Balch Library, we have indexed all of Loudoun County by surname – using volunteers and staff – for 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, and most recently 1930. An example of why this is important is the 1930 census in Loudoun County listing Westmoreland Davis, former governor of Virginia. He could not be found by computer index on AncestryPlus, yet we knew he was listed in the 1930 census from our having published the Loudoun County version. He was found online finally by using the page references from that local index. After locating him, it was discovered that the extractors at AncestryPlus had misread his name as "Dario, Westrnouland."



Digital Image from 1930 Census

To learn more "Sensing the Census" facts and fun, register for an upcoming Fall class sponsored by the library on Sat., Oct. 30, 2004, from 1:00 to 4:00 PM in our downstairs meeting room. Taught by Mary Fishback and LaVonne Markham, the emphasis will be on explaining ways you can learn from the census to aid you in family research, and using Print and Online Electronic Sources to access the census. We will demonstrate, using the LCD projector, how to navigate and print on such website subscriptions as: AncestryPlus, Genealogy.com, and HeritageQuest. Join us!

LaVonne Markham, TBL Library Specialist