



1922-2009

# The Thomas Balch Chronicle

The Newsletter of Friends of the Thomas Balch Library of the Town of Leesburg, Virginia

208 WEST MARKET STREET, LEESBURG, VIRGINIA 20176

*A Library for History and Genealogy*

Volume 13 Issue 4

Winter 2009

## Friends Meet Governor and Mrs. Westmoreland Davis At Morven Park Event

By James P. Lucier

On September 27, Friends of the Thomas Balch Library and their guests assembled at Morven Park to meet Governor and Mrs. Westmoreland Davis and to hear a lively discussion of Gov. Davis' career by scholar Brent Tarter.

The occasion was the Friends' second annual fundraising event, which resulted in more than \$13,000 to benefit Thomas Balch Library. Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)3 corporation supporting Thomas Balch Library. The funds will continue to create a permanent endowment for the regional history and genealogy library, owned by the Town of Leesburg. Co-chairs of the event were Marilyn Rogers-Renner and Susan Webber.

Mr. Tarter discussed the competing visions of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Virginia provided by Westmoreland Davis and Harry Byrd. Davis was a wealthy New York lawyer who came to Virginia to promote agricultural reform and gradually moved into politics. He bought Morven Park in 1903 to make it into a model of scientific cultivation, and bought *Southern Planter* magazine in Richmond to disseminate his methods throughout the South. Later he owned the *Loudoun Times-Mirror* and was a passionate local foxhunter. His portrait as Master of the Hunt hangs in the Westmoreland Davis Room of Thomas Balch Library.

According to Mr. Tarter, Davis realized that he would have to go into politics to become a wider advocate of reform. In 1917, exploiting divisions in the Democratic Party over prohibition by quietly supporting local community option, he was elected governor in a three-way race, calling for increased funding for schools. However after the Davis term was up in 1922, Harry Byrd succeeded in reuniting the party, became governor in 1928, controlling Virginia's politics until his death.

A wide-ranging question and answer period followed Mr. Tarter's remarks. The historian was

the founding editor of the *Dictionary of Virginia Biography*, and is senior editor in the Division of Publications and Educational Services of the Library of Virginia.

Before Mr. Tarter's presentation, guests strolled through the ancient boxwood gardens. Rain earlier in the day cleared to provide a fine evening. At the portico of the mansion, they met Gov. and Mrs. Davis who discussed current [i.e., 1917] politics and Mrs. Davis' fortunate thrift in finding a homemaker's pattern in the Butterick catalogue for her beautiful gown. The Davises were reenacted by Paul Shiltz and Judy Martin.

The guests were then invited to tour the mansion, where construction started in 1750. The size and appearance of the house were changed by a succession of owners, including the Davises. Now owned by the Westmoreland



Governor Westmoreland Davis

Davis Memorial Foundation, it has been newly reopened after \$9 million in badly needed repairs and renovations. The work involved not only the rebuilding of the foundations, the repair of the stucco and the re-laying of floors but also the installation of an extensive series of 71 geothermal wells to provide eco-friendly heating and cooling and a consistent interior atmosphere necessary for the preservation of the antique furnishings. The best part was, that aside from the freshness of the paint, a visitor would not realize that any renovations had taken place.

In the cobblestone courtyard of the old carriage house, the party munched treats prepared by the catering of Karen Harper-Fuog, while sipping wines provided by Loudoun's Tarara Winery.

At the conclusion of the event, Friends Board President Lewis Leigh, Jr. thanked William O'Keefe, executive director of Morven Park, Tracy Gillespie, director of historical operations, and Gia Anderson, executive assistant, for all their cooperation in making the party a success. After the lecture, finger-tip desserts were served as guests mingled under the beautiful night sky.

### Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Inc.

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### Library Director

Alexandra S. Gressitt

ADAPTED FROM THE FIFTH ISSUE OF THE *THOMAS BALCH CHRONICLE*, JANUARY 1997, THIS ARTICLE BY SARAH E. SARGENT EXPLORES THE LIFE AND TIMES OF SAMUEL B.T. CALDWELL, FOUNDER, OWNER AND EDITOR OF *THE GENIUS OF LIBERTY*, A VERY EARLY LOCAL NEWSPAPER. THERE ARE ALSO EXCERPTS OF HIS DIARY, THAT GIVES EVEN MORE FLAVOR OF LIFE IN LEESBURG IN THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY. THE DIARY WAS TRANSCRIBED FOR THE LIBRARY BY NANCY MINOGUE.

BACK ISSUES OF THE CHRONICLE ARE ARCHIVED AND AVAILABLE FOR READING AT THE LIBRARY.



## THE GENIUS OF LEESBURG

*Samuel B. T. Caldwell was a diarist, a businessman, and a man of letters in 19th Century Leesburg.*

Samuel B. T. Caldwell, important in Leesburg in the 1800s as a man of letters and a newspaper publisher, is important today for his diary, which records Leesburg as he knew it.

Samuel Caldwell was born in New Hampshire and worked for some years as a law clerk in Newburyport, Mass. He started the diary in August of 1811, at the age nineteen, and kept at it until December of 1820. The diary breaks off from March of 1814 to January of 1817. At some point during these years, Samuel Caldwell made his way to Leesburg, and started a newspaper called *The Genius of Liberty*. The first issue was printed Wednesday January 11, 1817. It was a troublesome business for him. An entry from January of 1817 is typical:

"Spent the day writing on the papers and doing them up. Had a few additional subscribers, but little money come in yet." A subscriber paid \$2 a year for the paper and \$1 for an ad run of three weeks.

However difficult this newspaper was for Samuel Caldwell, it was invaluable to the citizens of Leesburg. For instance, the Leesburg Library was advertised by Mr. R. R. Hough in 1817: "it is requested by me that all those members . . . who have in their possession any book or books belonging to the Leesburg Library, will please forthwith to return them, as there are 40 or 50 volumes out . . . I wish to get them all together once more if it is possible. I hope this notice will be attended to."

Caldwell advertised for an apprentice in June 1817. He wanted, "a steady industrious lad of 14 to 15 year of age who can

read and write well." He was careful to note, "One would be preferred who understands the English language." Whether or not the advertisement was answered, Caldwell's diary always mentions his shop helpers as more of a hindrance than anything else.

Finally, in 1820, Caldwell sold the paper to B.T. Sowers. It was, he wrote, "a perplexing, harassing business." It had, however, given him "a new view of human nature." He added philosophically, "The great object of life is to live and learn. Shall endeavor to attend to my diary in the future."

Using the \$1,200 that Sowers paid him for the paper, Caldwell opened a stationary and book shop, which he advertised in *The Genius of Liberty*. He sold such diverse items as Finley's *General Atlas*, maps of Virginia and Maryland, surveyors' compasses, drawing paper, pencils, crayons, band boxes, sponges, shoe thread, India rubber, bed cords, plough lines, buttons, pins, needles, buckles, thimbles, scissors, fish lines, watch chains, waist ribbands, cologne water, tooth brushes, pen knives and razors.

An advertisement in *The Genius of Liberty*, July 12, 1825 reads, "S.B.T. Caldwell has just received a new supply of School books and Stationary, together with Children's Books, also Blank and Memorandum Books, Ciphering and copy books."

The stationary store is frequently mentioned in the diary, usually as an encumbrance. However, Thomas Balch Library still has in its rare book collection a book entitled *Flowers of Ancient History* by the Rev. John Adams, published for S.B.T. Caldwell by B.W. Sowers, printer, in Leesburg, 1822.

--Sarah E. Sargent

## THE DIARY OF SAMUEL B. T. CALDWELL

The following is an extract from Caldwell's "Liber Cupidiarum", transcribed for Balch by Nancy Minogue. Caldwell's diary begins with this note:

*"Containing in a very brief style the ordinary business of each day as it transpires--The excellency and utility of such a plan ought to be recommended to every person as it may be made the great repository of past events, with which they could not easily burthen their memory; but upon application to such a memorandum they could easily recognize any past event that took place within their knowledge-- That this may be the case is the earnest wish of him who founded this book." August 1811.*

August 1820

Sunday 13. Returned this morning from Capt. Vandevanters with the ladies--Spent the forenoon very idly--Attended meeting this afternoon--heard Calvinism thundered from the pulpit of Mr. Mines--Spent an hour or two in company with Miss Ann Bennett--After tea spent an hour at Mr. Charles Binns and then attended meeting--a fine shower about noon but continues very warm

Monday 14. The day is August court--or it might be more properly termed watermelon fair. A general collection of all sorts, grades and colours paraded our streets today. Trading, trafficking, eating, drinking. Swearing &c. appeared to be the order of the day. The streets were crowded with wagons loaded with watermelons. Mechanics from a distance being articles here for sale. Saddles, hats &c. It has been a busy bustling day and I have found myself closely engaged without doing much to profit--clear and pleasant.

Tuesday 15, Attended to my business and commenced writing a piece on the subject of the right of suffrage in reply to a "Virginian." Spent the evening idly. A fine warm shower to day.

Wednesday 16. Finished writing my communication on the right of suffrage signed "~~Circimiatub~~" [crossed out in original] "Algernon Sydney"--Idled away considerable time--carried Mrs. Richards and Miss C. Rose to Mrs. Samuel Murry's in my gig--Spent part of the afternoon and took tea there. Spent the rest of the evening at Capt. Rose's. Miss S. M. in company, cannot fully

*Continued on page 3*

Continued from page 2

understand her--possesses some coquettish airs, but they appear to be blended with a portion of candour. Warm morning--a very severe thunder shower this evening.

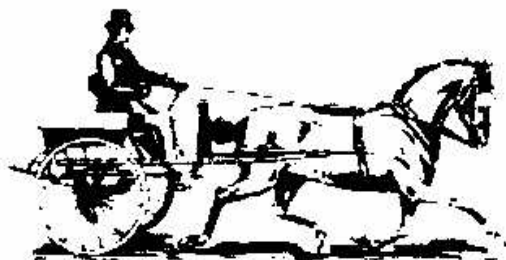
Friday 18. Settled some business this forenoon--Went to Mr. Brooks, near Aldie this evening in my gig--Supped there--find him a very inquisitive yankee--no fool neither--knows how to make money--and keep it too--continues very pleasant weather

Saturday 19. Lodged and breakfasted with Mr. Brooks--rode to Aldie--Spent an hour--Settled with Mr. Miller--Dined at Tavern near Middleburg--went to Middleburg--Gave some accounts to constable for collection-- Settled some by taking notes--attended lodge this evening--presided by particular request--finished the business and gave a lecture-- pleasant.

Sunday 20.--Lodged and breakfasted with Mr. Brooks--Started to camp meeting about sunrise --carried a Miss Harriet Oden in the gig with me--found her a very agreeable companion--of fascinating appearance and manners--Should be induced to love her, had I not some slight suspicions of the whole sex and in short of the whole human race. "I find mankind and (?) (?) and little to be trusted" Arrived at the camp ground about 9 o'clock--a great and mixed collection -- much zeal used but little effect evinced --Such zeal appears to me to border on madmen--the understanding--the judgment has nothing apparently to do with such religion; yet I find some really pious good and great men engaged in it--To me it is a mystery that may someday unveil itself--Dined in Mr. Mathias' tent--returned to Mr. Brooks and supped there--very pleasant--

Monday 21--Breakfasted with Mr. B. --Spent an hour at the Skinners in company with Miss Oden--returned to Leesburg to dinner with Mr. B's horse and a boy to take it back--Attended to some business--Spent an hour or two at Capt. Roses' and the remainder of the evening at Mr. R..Houghs--pleasant--

[See a genealogy for Samuel Caldwell compiled by Theresa Perkinson Dye in Loudoun Legacy of 1757 ]



MR CALDWELL'S GIG MAY HAVE BEEN MUCH LIKE THIS ONE.

## New Acquisitions at Thomas Balch Library

*The Baylors of Newmarket* by Thomas Katheder

*Three Hundred Years of the Episcopal Church* by George Hodges

*George Washington & the Virginia Backcountry* by Warren Hofstra

*From Colonials to Provincials* by Ned Landsman

*My Family Story* by Sophie Nichols

*Papers of James Monroe, Volume 1-2 (Vol 3 at cataloguing)* by Daniel Preston

*Life of Patrick Henry* by William Wirt

*Bodies of Belief: Baptist Community in Early America* by Janet Lindman

*The Jett Family of Virginia* by Jeter Jett

*Lillard: A Family of Colonial Virginia* (2 volumes) by David Lillard

*Mosby's Keydet Rangers* by Eric Buckland

*People of the Underground Railroad: A Biographical Dictionary* by Tom Calarco

*Farming, Always Farming* by H. Winslow Fegley

*Winchester Divided: The Civil War Diaries of Julia Chase & Laura Lee*  
by Michael G. Mahon

*Take Care of the Living: Reconstructing Confederate Veteran Families in Virginia*  
(*A Nation Divided*) by Jeffrey W. McClurken

*Many Thousand Gone* by Charles Nichols

*Cherokee Commission Dockets, Volume One: 1880-1884 & 1887-1889*  
by Jeff Bowen

*Albemarle Parish Vestry Book, 1742-1786*

by Virginia Lee Hutcheson Davis and Andrew Wilburn Hogwood

*Merion in the Welsh Tract, With Sketches of the Townships of Haverford and*

*Radnor: Historical and Genealogical Collections Concerning the Welsh Barony*  
*in the Province of Pennsylvania Settle by the Cymric Quakers in 1682*

by Thomas Allen Glenn

*Field Guide for Genealogists* by Judy Jacobson

*Honoring Their Paths: African American Contributions Along the*  
*Journey Through Hallowed Ground* by Deborah Lee

*1955 Farm Directory* by Loudoun County Junior Chamber of Commerce

*Ida Lee Rust Diary, Books 1-3* by Ida Lee Rust,

transcribed by Henry B.R. Brown & Sheila James

*Ida Lee Rust Diary, Books 4-9* by Ida Lee Rust,

transcribed by Teckla H. Cox

*Fredericksburg to Orange by Rail* by Robert A. Hodge

(1973 manuscript, part of Vertical File cataloguing project)

*Plan of a Memorial for President James Monroe at "Oak Hill"*

*Loudoun County Virginia*

by James Monroe Foreign Service Educational Foundation

(1946 manuscript, part of Vertical File cataloguing project)

## Exhibits at Thomas Balch Library:

### MERCER ROOM

**January:** Mementos, Monograms & Keepsakes of Loudoun County Families  
-Loudoun Museum

**February:** Black History Committee, Friends of the the Thomas Balch Library

**March:** Mt. Zion Church (Aldie)

**April:** Civil War Arifacts - United Daughters of the Confederacy/Sons of  
Confederate Veterans

**May:** Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Inc.

**June:** Women In Loudoun County's History - Thomas Balch Library

### LOWER LEVEL MEETING ROOM

**January - March:** Virginia's Flora and Landscapes - Susan Potter

**April - June:** Historic Selma Mansion - Jim Hanna

## The Director's Letter

October is American Archives Month and it is generally recognized as Family History Month. We were pleased to have Town Council issue two proclamations: one recognizing Family History Month and the other in recognition of American Archives Month. Joan Whitener (Regent for Kettoctin Chapter DAR) was present to accept the Family History Month Proclamation and James Lucier (board member of the Friends of TBL; past chair and member of the TBL Commission) to accept the American Archives Month Proclamation. Six members of the commission, one member of the Friends, two representatives from the DAR and the library director were present for the presentation.

Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission presented their seventeenth annual Loudoun History awards on Sunday, November 8. Present representing the Town of Leesburg were Mayor Kristen Umstattd, Councilmember Marty Martinez, and Town Manager John Wells. The following outstanding members of the community were selected for recognition this year: Anne Donovan Larson for her work as an advocate for preservation of historic sites and local history research; W. Brown Morton, III for his work in architectural preservation and historical research and writing; Henry G. Plaster for his advocacy of and preservation of local history and Mary E. Randolph for her contributions in historic preservation of Loudoun's African American heritage. (See photo below.)

As always, there are many activities taking place at the Library. In the fall 2009 lecture, class and exhibit series there are two events remaining: a lecture by Hannah Giffert entitled "Revisiting John Brown in the Age of Obama" scheduled for Sunday, December 6 at 2Pm and a class by Annie McDonald, Leesburg Preservation Planner, entitled "Leesburg's Historic District Files and Sanborn Maps" scheduled for Thursday, December 3 at 10AM. Through December, Sandra Kane is exhibiting photographs in the meeting room of Historic Loudoun: Towns and their Architecture. In the Mercer Room during November there are two exhibits – one curated by Stephanie Adams-Hunter recognizes seventeen years of the Loudoun History Awards and the other, curated by Beth Schuster, is on Virginia Native American Heritage. During December, an exhibit displaying recent additions to Thomas Balch Library collections, curated by Stephanie Adams-Hunter, will be on display in the Mercer Room. Preparations are being made for the spring lectures, exhibits and classes. There will be a wide variety of author-book talks, lectures, and walking tours. A focus of the spring series will be the colonial and revolutionary era. As soon as the schedule is finalized events will be posted to the calendar on the Town website. *The Balch Column* will be distributed in January with a full listing of events.

It is always my pleasure to welcome you when visiting Thomas Balch Library or when attending our programs and exhibits.

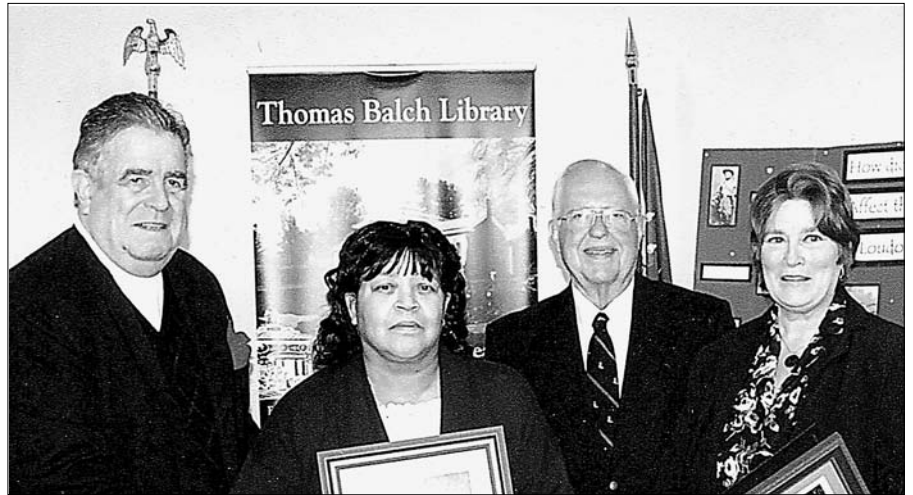
*Alexandra S. Gressitt, Library Director*

## History Awards Honorees

The Loudoun History Awards, sponsored by the Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission, was established in 1993, originally to recognize the contributions of local historian, the late John Elbert Divine, for his efforts in preserving Loudoun County history.

Today, the awards highlight diverse aspects of the county's history. They honor individuals who have made significant contributions to preserving Loudoun's past through collection of county documents, and memorabilia, preservation of historic landmarks, visual arts, writing, and long-term involvement in local history organizations. These awards have recognized some of Loudoun County's best known historians, writers, preservationists and conservationists.

And this year's group carries on that tradition in great style.



2009 Loudoun History Awardees, l. to r.: W. Brown Morton III; Mary Randolph; Henry Plaster; Ann Donovan Larson.

### FRIENDS' ANNUAL MEETING

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THE THIRTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING OF FRIENDS OF THE THOMAS BALCH LIBRARY, INC., JANUARY 24, 2010 AT 2 PM IN THE DOWNSTAIRS MEETING ROOM AT THOMAS BALCH LIBRARY. THE FRIENDS AND THEIR GUESTS WILL HEAR A REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE ORGANIZATION, LEARN OF FUTURE PLANS, AND ELECT THEIR DIRECTORS FOR THE YEAR 2010. OUR SPEAKER WILL BE DAVID Y. BOYCE, DIRECTOR OF OATLANDS HISTORIC HOUSE AND GARDENS.**

**ALL ARE WELCOME.**

**Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission** meets at the Library, at 7 PM, the second Wednesday of every month. The public is always welcome.

**Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Inc.**, a 501(c)3 corporation organized to provide support for Thomas Balch Library, meets at the library the third Tuesday of every other month at 9:15 AM. The public is always welcome. For more information call 703-737-2166 or visit [www.balchfriends.org](http://www.balchfriends.org).

**Black History Committee of Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Inc.**, meets at the library the fourth Tuesday of every month at 7 PM. The public is always welcome. For more information visit [www.balchfriends.org](http://www.balchfriends.org).

**NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS**

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

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

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 PO Box 2184 Leesburg, VA 20177

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- The Essence of A People: Portraits of African Americans Who Made a Difference in Loudoun County, Virginia** \$ 15.00
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- Journey Through Time**  
by Black History Committee of Friends of the Thomas Balch Library \$ 5.00
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The Thomas Balch  
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*Friends of the*  
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P. O. Box 2184  
Leesburg, VA 20177

*Save the Date:*  
*January 24, 2010*  
*FTBL Annual Meeting*

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS AT THOMAS BALCH LIBRARY

**Sunday, December 6, 2009 - 2 PM - Revisiting John Brown in the Age of Obama.** Hannah Giffert, author and expert on John Brown, will discuss *John Brown Mysteries*, a book on which she and a group of educators and community activists collaborated, to present the events at Harpers Ferry in 1859 from an African American perspective.

For additional information about Library programs, see The Balch Column, out early January, 2010.

**Sunday, January 24, 2010 - 2:00 PM - The thirteenth Annual Meeting of Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Inc.** in the downstairs meeting room of Thomas Balch Library. The Friends and their guests will hear a report on the state of the organization, learn of future plans, and elect their directors for the Year 2010. A highlight will be an address by David Y. Boyce, Director of Oatlands Historic Plantation and Gardens.

### THOMAS BALCH LIBRARY SPONSORED CLASSES TO ENHANCE YOUR BALCH EXPERIENCE

**Leesburg's Historic District Files and Sanborn Maps**-Thurs. Dec. 3, 10-11:30 AM - Preservation Planner Annie McDonald will demonstrate resources available at TBL for researching a property's history. Focusing on the Leesburg historic district, she will explain the purpose behind the architectural surveys of the late 1990s and how to use architectural survey files, Sanborn fire insurance maps and historic photographs to identify how a building changes over time.

**General Introduction to TBL** - Thurs, Feb. 4, 2010, 10-11:30 AM

Alexandra S. Gressitt, Library Director, will provide a general overview of the library, its history, organization and collections with emphasis on digital collections, services, programs, and volunteer and intern opportunities.

**Information Seeking Strategies**, Thurs. Mar. 4, 2010, 10-11:30 AM

Beth Schuster, Library Reference Specialist, will demonstrate methods for developing and implementing effective search techniques. While the techniques discussed are applicable in a wide variety of environments, specific attention will be paid to TBL's subscription databases, including *America: History and Life* and *Access Newspaper Archive*.

**NEW THIS YEAR: Researching Court Records** - Thurs. April 1, 2010, 10-11:30 AM - Jeanette Irby, Town Attorney, Town of Leesburg, will discuss using court records and other resources for data that are frequently overlooked in genealogical and historical research.

**Manuscript and Archives Research at TBL** - Thurs., May 6, 2010, 10-11:30 AM

**Traditional Genealogical Resources at TBL** - Thurs. June 3, 2010, 10-11:30 AM