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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

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Spring 2010

Fifteenth Annual Friends' Meeting: Election of New Directors; Presentation on Oatlands During the Civil War



PHOTO: DREW BABB

Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Inc. 2010 Board of Directors.

1st Row: Suzi Worsham; Patty Rogers-Renner, VP.; Ron Rust, Pres.; Brenda Schumacher, Sec.; Lori Kimball; Sarah Huntington.

Back Row: Robert Patton; Jim Lucier; Jeff Bolyard, Treas.; Lewis Leigh, Jr.; Wynne Saffer.

Not pictured: Paul Bice, Cindy Bridgman, Tracy Coffing, Phil Lo Presti, Peggy Roberts.

Despite blustery and threatening weather, a good crowd of members and their guests attended the Fifteenth Annual Meeting of Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Inc. Greeted by outgoing president Lewis Leigh, Jr., the group heard a report on the State of the Library from Director Alexandra S. Gressitt and the membership approved the presented slate of directors for 2010. From this group, the board chose the new officers for the upcoming year: Ron Rust, President; Patty Rogers-Renner, Vice President; Brenda Schumacher, Secretary; Jeff Bolyard, Treasurer.

An outstanding presentation by David Y. Boyce, Director of Oatlands Historic House and Gardens about the role played by the Carter family during the Civil War (see below) was a treat for all. Tasty refreshments and the opportunity to visit with old friends and new followed Mr. Boyce's talk.

***Secret Role of Oatlands During the Civil War* by David Y. Boyce**

From California to Texas to Maine, the American Civil War adversely impacted all 33 states. Particularly hard hit by the war was the Commonwealth of Virginia: Winchester, for example, was captured and recaptured over seventy times, making it the most conquered town in America. Nearby Loudoun County was ravaged by the war, too. Its location on the Potomac River with its many fords, made it the gateway for Union armies to attack the Confederacy and the Confederate armies to attack the Union. Thus, the two opposing armies frequently clashed along Loudoun's many roads, pastures, towns, and waterways. Oatlands, one of Loudoun's stately antebellum plantations, was one of the many places along Loudoun's war torn path.

There is no written history on Oatlands during the Civil War. The story that is known, which is the basis for Oatlands' interpretation, is based on few documented accounts. Collectively, these accounts paint a rather unflattering picture of Oatlands during the Civil War. The legacy owners of Oatlands, brothers George and Ben Carter, appear in these reports in a dark light. Case in point is the account, albeit true, of Ben walking home to Oatlands immediately after the Battle of Ball's Bluff to recover from the terrible wound he received on his *finger*. And the military records suggest that neither George nor Ben achieved any level of accomplishment or merit as evidenced by their lack of promotion. Additionally, neither George nor Ben are mentioned in the indexes of any published works on John S.

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Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Inc.

P.O. Box 2184
Leesburg, VA 20177

E-Mail:

info@balchfriends.org

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www.balchfriends.org

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Mosby. It's equally challenging to explain how Oatlands mansion, and especially its huge grist mill, survived the ravages of war when other nearby properties were torched.

This was part of the background I knew on Oatlands when Patty asked me to speak. Quietly I thought, "Great, we are approaching the sesquicentennial and I will have the unsavory task of being the character assassin of both George and Ben Carter." But after some investigation I contend the present history of Oatlands during the Civil War is fragmented and incomplete. I further contend that once some dedicated research is done on this topic, one will discover the whole is greater than its parts. So today, you will be the first to judge this opinion.

Elizabeth Carter, the widow of Oatlands, recorded in her unpublished diary on April 14, 1861, that 'news came yesterday that the Civil War has commenced - Fort Sumter attacked and surrounded.' The newly declared war's impact on Oatlands was almost immediate. Within weeks, representatives of the newly formed Confederate States of America "pressed" a number of Oatlands horses into military service. The horses taken included two favorites, Dido and Rob Roy.

Soon thereafter, her only two children, George and Ben Carter, took the oath of allegiance to the Southern Confederacy. Ben joined Mt Gilead Rifles of the 8th Va. Regiment under Capt. Simpson. Ben was assigned the rank of 3rd Lieutenant. The next day Ben left for Richmond to buy outfits for his company. George enlisted into the Quartermaster Corps and was assigned the task of building entrenchments around Leesburg. In doing so, George took six slaves with him in accordance to Confederacy's requisition that pressed slaves into service to work on the breastworks. According to the census of 1860, Oatlands held 128 enslaved African Americans, which was the largest slave population in Loudoun County.

Then came the first Battle of Bull Run, which Lt. Ben Carter fought in. The soldier next to him was killed. According to Elizabeth Carter's diary, the carnage was terrible but the enemy was repulsed.

But by late August, Ben Carter's health began to fail. In addition to a cold and cough, he also contracted measles which caused him to return to Oatlands to recuperate. George also took a sick leave furlough from Camp Waterford to Oatlands. Both would report back to duty.

In October, General Shank Evans and two Mississippi Regiments were encamped around Oatlands Mill. As the threat of Union invasion increased, Gen Evans encouraged Mrs. Elizabeth Carter to relocate to her home called Bellefield, outside of Upperville. She started packing on October 20. The next day the Battle of Ball's Bluff occurred. Ben Carter fought in this battle, too, but unexplainably walked home immediately after the battle with the infamous wound to his finger. On Wednesday, October 23, Mrs. Carter moved with Ben to Bellefield while General Evans with his staff of six made Oatlands their headquarters for the next ten days.

George Carter oversaw the move of his mother from Oatlands to Bellefield. George had wagons hauling furniture and foods for days. Included in the move was 4,000 pounds of pork. A Mississippi soldier wrote to his wife, describing Oatlands: "George Carter, who is one of two sons is at present the only inmate of the house, his mother having moved to her other place further removed from the battlefield - accompanied by the other son who was wounded at the Battle of Leesburg (Balls Bluff). The old paintings have been taken from the hangers that have held them for years and have their faces turned to the wall. Nothing is

left but a little furniture and the fixtures of the home."

By the spring of 1862, George Carter was discharged from the Confederate Army to maintain both Oatlands and Bellefield. In so doing, he began to sell large quantities of corn, beef, bacon and lard to the Confederacy. Meanwhile, slaves were leaving Oatlands for freedom; on March 31, eleven fled. Oatlands was also searched by Union soldiers for the first time in March.

During the summer of 1862, while in Charlottesville, Ben managed to shoot himself in the left arm with a pistol. Meanwhile, George traveled to Baltimore to attend to family business and was arrested and imprisoned at Fort McHenry. He was, however, released within a few weeks and returned to Oatlands. Health issues again struck Ben. First he fell from his horse and permanently damaged his shoulder and a month later he came down with the mumps. As a result, he was bedridden for months.

In 1863, one notices a shift of priorities at Oatlands. In the spring, George was sending enormous amounts of foods by wagon to Bellefield. In addition, he was also sending horses. But it's not until 1864 that one realizes why George is sending so much to Bellefield. The diary records countless nights where Mosby's men dined and slept at Bellefield. Names such as Captain Montjoy, Capt Bowie, Lieutenant Briscoe and others are listed. On many occasions numerous non-commissioned officers simply referred to as a company of men were dining at Bellefield. And all were eating food sent from Oatlands. And Mosby himself came to Bellefield to serenade Ben Carter on his wedding night in Feb. 1864. This was followed by a two-day party. Meanwhile, Capt. Montjoy was riding a horse from Oatlands as were Capt. Bowie, Lt. Grogan and Lt. Briscoe. All of these men are listed as Mosby's company commanders. But the most famous Oatlands horse was Croquette which was bought for Mosby after the Greenback raid.

Equally noteworthy, a Rev. Kinsolving of the Episcopal Church of Middleburg and Upperville frequently dined at Bellefield. He was a well known sympathizer for the southern cause. More to the point, he was a spy. Due to his clerical status, he was allowed behind enemy lines. In doing so, he obtained valuable information on Union troop movements which he readily shared with Mosby's Rangers. In short, Bellefield was a center for disseminating military intelligence. This intelligence often formulated Mosby's plan of action as to where and when to strike. And Ben Carter frequently attended Mosby's secret meetings in order to pass information on. In addition, Ben often rode reconnaissance at night with Lt. Briscoe and Lt. Grogan.

So given the above, I contend that Oatlands contribution to the war effort was far more significant than one realizes. Clearly George and Ben Carter were not standouts in the regular army but their services to Mosby's 43rd Battalion were invaluable. When George enlisted in the CSA, he became part of the Quarter Master Corps. He continued his duty as evidenced by his becoming the de facto quartermaster for Mosby's battalion. George maintained a steady flow of food stuffs and horses to Mosby until the war ended. Meanwhile, brother Ben played a key role in obtaining valuable intelligence for Mosby for the remainder of the war.

On April 2, 1865, Elizabeth Carter wrote in her diary that "The Yanks took possession of Richmond at 8:30 this morning." She never mentioned another word about the War after the fall of Richmond.

Recently Processed Manuscript Collections:

Williams Family Papers, 1819-1993 (M 010)

Caylor-Howser Postcard Collection (M 043)

Griffith Thomas Family of Virginia Collection (M 047)

Antebellum Aid From The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands: the Freedmen's Bureau

On the 203 rolls of a microfilm publication, M1913, at Thomas Balch Library, are the records of the Virginia field offices for the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1872. Betty Morefield, a member of the Black History Committee of the Friends of Thomas Balch Library, while researching another matter, became interested in the Freedmen's Bureau and its schools in Loudoun County. She has transcribed some 50 of the rolls and found many interesting items relating to the Bureau and the County. Along with some basic information about the Bureau, is the report of a specific happening in Loudoun.

The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, also known as the Freedmen's Bureau was established in the War Department by an Act of Congress on March 3, 1865. The life of the Bureau was extended twice by the Acts of July 16, 1866 and July 6, 1868. The Bureau was responsible for the supervision and management of all matters relating to refugees and freedmen, and of land abandoned or seized during the Civil War. On May 1865, President Andrew Johnson appointed Maj. Gen. Oliver Otis Howard as Commissioner of the Bureau, and Howard served in that position until June 30, 1872 when activities of the Bureau were terminated.

An important part of its mission was to provide relief and to help freedmen become self-sufficient. Bureau officials issued rations and clothing, operated hospitals and refugee camps, and supervised labor contracts. In addition the Bureau managed apprenticeships, disputes and complaints, assisted benevolent societies in the establishment of schools, helped freedmen in legalizing marriages entered into during slavery, and provided transportation to refugees and freedmen who were attempting to reunite with their family or relocate to other parts of the country. The Bureau also helped black soldiers, sailors and their heirs collect bounty claims, pensions and back pay.

Perhaps the most important task of the Bureau was the establishment of schools for black students. Mrs. Morefield reports there were twelve schools in Loudoun County, primarily established at the initiative of the African American population of the various towns. One of these, in Waterford, has been restored and is used as a learning center for Loudoun's school children, so they can contrast attending school today and what they would have experienced more than 100 years ago. The simple one-room frame



Waterford's Second Street School

WATERFORD HISTORIC ORGANIZATION

school on Second Street was built just two years after the Civil War ended. Opened under the auspices of the Freedmen's Bureau, it was Waterford's first school for the African American children. Early classes were large. The District Superintendent's report to the Freedmen's Bureau in 1868 recorded 63 enrolled, with an average attendance of 42. Twenty-eight were older than 16.

Among the papers is the May 31, 1867 correspondence between Leesburg Assistant Superintendent/Assistant Commander of the Bureau Sidney B. Smith, and then Mayor of Leesburg, John M. Orr. The bureau official reported ". . . there is to be a Union Mass meeting held at this place this afternoon and in order to prevent any breach of the peace by any of evil disposed persons or person, I have the honor to request that such measures will be taken by yourself and official associates as will summarily arrest any attempts made to disturb the meeting in question . . ."

Mayor Orr responded, ". . . I returned home a day sooner than I intended, in order to see that measures were taken to preserve order, though I had no reason to anticipate its violation. This morning I received an intimation that some disturbance by unruly boys might be possible. I shall have the sergeant and a special police force present at the meeting and on the streets . . . with strict orders to arrest anyone offering violence or attempting by word or deed to incite disturbance. . ."

The event, held in the Courtyard of the Loudoun Hotel was attended by some 200 people of whom three-quarters were African American. The speakers were a Congressman from Illinois and J.M. Langston, the black lawyer from Ohio who impressed both Loudoun's conservative newspapers with his fluency and oratorical skills. The meeting was orderly.

Black History Committee of Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Inc., meets at the library the fourth Tuesday of every month at 7 PM. For more information visit www.balchfriends.org.

Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission meets at the Library, at 7 PM, the second Wednesday of every month.

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. For more information call 703-737-2166 or visit www.balchfriends.org.

The public is always welcome to attend these meetings.

The Director's Letter

As I write this outside my window the snow is piled high, but the sun is shining and the sky a brilliant blue – spring cannot be too far off. Many exhibits and lectures have been scheduled (see calendar) and I hope you will find time to take in some of these events as the weather ameliorates.

As always we are busy acquiring and making available materials reflecting the history of Leesburg, Loudoun County, and Virginia. An item recently acquired is the documentary *Locked Out: The Fall of Massive Resistance*. James H. Hershman, Jr., vice chair of Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission is a participant in the film. Wells Fargo has begun to open banking facilities in Northern Virginia and has utilized images from our collection in their new Loudoun facilities.

We received by donation from the office of the Commonwealth's Attorney a

large collection of legal books dating from the 1790's through the 1940's.

Thomas Balch Library is the recipient of a \$250,000 bequest from the estate of long time volunteer, Virginia L. Bowie. As a volunteer Bowie transcribed documents and indexed materials of the Library's collections. Such contributions are invaluable to the success of the Library. Ms. Bowie was a very unassuming and private person and was extraordinarily generous to the Library, with her time and talents as a volunteer, and now, with this bequest. The Library also received a grant of \$200 on behalf of Northrup Grumman for the volunteer services of their employee Lisa Dezarn as part of Northrup Grumman's 2009 Community Service Grants Program.

The History Awards Brochure, revised to reflect the 2009 awards, and the winter-spring *Balch Column* are available free on re-

quest or may be viewed on-line. Also now available from the library for \$15 is the recently published Leesburg 250 Anniversary Lecture series packet.

Good news for those who, because of the recent harsh weather conditions thought they may have missed the February 14 lecture, *Emergence of Air-to-Air Combat in World War I: The Origin of the Fighter Aircraft* by Jon Guttman, research director for the Weider History Group. It has been rescheduled. Please mark your calendars for the revised date for the lecture by Jon Guttman to March 14 at 2PM.

As always it will be my pleasure to welcome you when visiting Thomas Balch Library or when attending our programs and exhibits.

Alexandra S. Gressitt, Library Director

New Acquisitions at Thomas Balch Library

Old Stafford County, Virginia: Overharton Parish Register, 1720-1760 by William F. Boogher

"He Loves a Good Deal of Rum" Military Desertions During the American Revolution, 1775-1783 (2 Vols.) by Joseph Lee Boyle

Real Patriots and Heroic Soldiers: Gen. Joel Leftwich and the Virginia Brigade in the War of 1812 by Stuart Butler

Sleuth Book for Genealogists by Emily Anne Croom

History for Genealogists: Using Chronological Time Lines to Find and Understand Your Ancestors by Judy Jacobson

Genealogist's Guide to Discovering Your African-American Ancestors by Franklin Carter Smith and Emily Anne Croom

The Loudoun Bulletin, Vol. I: 1932-3

From the Rhineland to the Promised Land of the Shenandoah by W. Harvey Wise, IV

American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities by Colin G. Calloway

Carmack's Guide to Copyright and Contracts by Sharon DeBartolo Carmack

You Can Write Your Family History by Sharon DeBartolo Carmack

History of the Lutheran Church in Virginia and East Tennessee by C.W. Cassell, W.J. Finck & O.Elon Henkel

Web Publishing for Genealogy, Second Edition, by Peter Christian

Tribal Names of the Americas. Spelling Variants and Alternative Forms, Cross-Referenced by Patricia Roberts Clark

Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory by James Oliver Horton, ed.

Ladies, Liquor, & Laughter by John G. Lewis

Virginia's Montgomery County by Mary Elizabeth Lindon

Southern Spy in Northern Virginia: The Civil War Album of Laura Ratcliffe by Charles V. Mauro

Practical Guide to Jewish Cemeteries by Nolan Menachemson

Abandoned: Foundlings in Nineteenth-Century New York City by Julie Miller

Basic Guide to Irish Records for Family History by Brian Mitchell

Indian Place Names in America by Sandy Nestor

New Kent County Virginia in 1863: Land Geography, Land Owners, Estate Names, Plantations, Acreage, Other by Dallas H. Oslin Jr.

Census Records for Latin America and the Hispanic United States by Lyman D. Platt,

Great War. A Guide to the Service Records of All the World's Fighting Men and Volunteers by Christina K. Schaefer

We're Still Here: Contemporary Virginia Indians Tell Their Stories by F. Waugaman and Danielle Moretti-Langholtz

Monacan Indian Nation of Virginia: The Drums of Life by Rosemary Clark Whitlock

Monacan Indians: Our Story by Karenne Wood

Patton, Montgomery, Rommel by Terry Brighton

Encyclopedia of the Underground Railroad by J. Blaine Hudson

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 Virginia and Beyond** \$ 15.00
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- Journey Through Time
 by Black History Committee of Friends of the
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 Fourth Earl of Loudoun
 by Douglas W. Foard, Ph.D.** \$ 15.00
- Billy Pierce: Dance Master, Son of Purcellville
 by Lemoine D. Pierce** \$ 15.00
- Loudoun 1757: On the Border of Mayhem Loudoun
 County 250th Anniversary Lecture Series** \$ 15.00

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS AT THOMAS BALCH LIBRARY

Sunday, March 7, 2010 - 2 PM - Man of Many Parts: Nicholas Cresswell - Kathy O. McGill, historian and researcher, will talk about this Englishman who came to the Colonies hoping to settle and make his fortune. The Revolutionary War and personal problems interfered with this plan, but he kept a fascinating journal of his travels, including his time spent in Leesburg and Loudoun County.

Sunday, March 14, 2010 - 2 PM - Emergence of Air-to-Air Combat in World War I: The Origin of the Fighter Aircraft - Jon Guttman, author and historian, tells the engrossing story of how this amazing invention became an integral component of warfare. Mr. Guttman's several books on this fascinating subject will be available for purchase.

Sunday, March 21, 2010 - 2 PM - Thomas Jefferson and Banking - Declan Gerald King will present a dramatic reading of "The Founding Father of American Financial Disaster" by John Steele Gordon, an article published in the April 2009 edition of *American History*. Thomas Jefferson's role in early U.S. financial institutions is particularly timely.

Sunday, April 11, 2010 - 2 PM - The Bayers of Newmarket: The Decline and Fall of a Virginia Planter Family - Thomas Katheder, historian and author of this well researched book will give the account of the little known, but prominent at the time, Baylor family and their efforts to emulate the British gentry in all forms, and their tragic denouement. Books will be available for purchase.

Sunday, April 25, 2010 - 2 PM - Oliver Twist & Jane Broadway: Naming Foundlings in Nineteenth-Century New York City - Julie Miller, author of *Abandoned: Foundlings in Nineteenth-Century New York City*, will tell the amazing story of the systems used by the authorities to identify and classify the abandoned children found within the city, and changes in the practice with the turn of the century. Books will be available for purchase.

Monday, May 10, 2010 - 7 PM - Clerk's Office Tour, Loudoun County Courthouse Historic Records - John Fishback, Historic Records Manager for Loudoun County will discuss the extent of the County's record holdings, how to find and use these records in research. (*Meet in the TBL parking lot promptly by 6:45 as no one is permitted to enter these restricted areas of the Court House after 7 PM.*)

Saturday, May 15, 2010 - 9-Noon - Walking Tour of Leesburg - James Roberts, Leesburg native and historian will lead a walking tour of Leesburg, giving an insider's view of local people, places and points of interest. Factual, historic and anecdotal information brings a special take on Leesburg and its environs. Not to be missed.

Programs sponsored by Thomas Balch Library are held in the downstairs meeting room and are free unless otherwise noted.
Because of limited seating, we recommend registering in advance by calling 703-737-7195